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WRITING A MATERIAL MYSTICISM:

H.D., HÉLÈNE CIXOUS AND DIVINE ALTERITY

Sarah Elizabeth Anderson, BA, MLitt

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School of Critical Studies
College of Arts

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The thesis begins with an exploration of the conversational mode of reading, modelled by Cixous, with which I bring Cixous's and H.D.'s texts into dialogue. A crucial point of contact between H.D. and Cixous is their exploration of the sacred in relationship to creativity and materiality. This project is situated in the context of critical studies of H.D. as a visionary poet, while I foreground her religious sensibilities through an exploration of the religious syncretism of her writing from the Second World War. The discussion of critical context leads to an outline of the theoretical tools employed through the project, which include trauma theory's engagement with the categories of testimony and witness, performance approaches to ritual theory and Paul Ricoeur's work on metaphor, imagination and ways of being in the world. This chapter presents my thesis that Cixous and H.D. write a material mysticism through their engagement with alterity, the sacred and the materiality of writing as a creative practice.

Chapter Two examines the ways the voices of the dead function in H.D.'s autobiographical novels, or 'spiritual autobiographies', *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. In these texts, H.D. draws upon her personal vision and experiences of spiritualism and Moravian history for the resources for a creative and spiritual response to the traumas of war. The chapter draws upon trauma theory's elaboration of testimony and witness as a way of speaking the unspeakable, of giving voice to trauma and providing the support and receptivity to allow testimony to emerge. Chapter Three explores the complexities of H.D.'s religious syncretism through the lens of ritual. It uses performance approaches to ritual to consider the productive meaning-making dynamic of Greek drama and ceremonial processions in *The Sword*, Moravian litany in *The Gift*, and Hermetic alchemical ritual in *Trilogy*. The literal transformation of words in *Trilogy* links the activity of ritual to that of language. This leads to a discussion of H.D.'s and Cixous's emphasis on writing itself as a ritual. Chapter Four draws upon Paul Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor as mobilised by the internal dynamic of sameness and difference to examine the ways in which Cixous and H.D. deploy the images of the orange and the bee. The proliferation of these images across Cixous's and H.D.'s writing allows creative explorations of how spirituality and creativity inheres in encounters with others, subjectivity and embodiment. Chapter Five considers the spatial context of Cixous's and H.D.'s attention to writing as a mode of creative transformation. I explore two spatial metaphors in Cixous and H.D.; the garden, with the associations of grounded, particular places, and flight, as the movement between places.

The conclusion recapitulates the concerns of the thesis and considers ancient wisdom as a locus for understanding H.D.'s texts and a resource for approaching the role of the imagination in literary Modernism.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses the intersection of religious sensibility and creativity in the poetry and prose of the American Modernist writer, H.D. It brings the French theorist Hélène Cixous into conversation with H.D. with the intention of exploring the nexus of writing, alterity and materiality in each of their texts. In this introductory chapter, I first highlight key areas of H.D.'s work: language, creativity, materiality and the sacred. I then turn to consider how Cixous's work intersects with these areas and sheds new light on the engagement of writing with subjectivity and embodiment in the context of war. This leads to an explanation of the conversational model of reading-writing that forms my approach to H.D. and Cixous, which is drawn directly from Cixous's own work as a critic and theorist. The chapter then outlines the key texts and critical context of the project before turning to a brief discussion of the theoretical tools and critical insights that supplement Cixous in my reading of H.D., and, finally, closing with a brief outline of the remaining four thesis chapters.

H.D.: spirituality and writing

Winged words, we know, make their own spiral; - caught up in them, we are lost, or found. It is what a poem does, or can do [...].
This winged victory belongs to the poem, not to the poet. But to share in the making of a poem is the privilege of a poet.¹

We must not step right over into the transcendental, we must crouch near the grass and near to the earth that made us.²

¹ H.D. 'Academy of Arts and Letters Acceptance Speech'. *H.D. Papers, Yale American Literature Collection*: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1960. H.D. received an Award of Merit Medal for Poetry in 1960.

² H.D., *The Gift by H.D.: The Complete Text*, ed. Jane Augustine (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998) 50.

These two passages provide key insights into H.D.'s thinking on language, creativity, materiality and the sacred. She employs images that reappear frequently across her work: spirals and wings, which both indicate dynamism and movement. She suggests that poetic language makes us, as much as, if not more so, than we make it. She emphasises that poetry is a craft, and a poem, an artefact. This brings us to the insistence on the material that marks both passages – the materiality of language and the materiality of the world. Making poetry is a craft that always exceeds the poet – who shares in the process but does not have dominion over it – as language exceeds, escapes, flies. The phrase 'Winged words' recalls the sacred figures such as angels and bees that populate H.D.'s poetry.³ 'Wings' also has a more personal meaning for her: it was an important word during her 1940s spiritualist experiments that in turn reminded her of a visionary experience from 1920.⁴ Thus 'winged words' brings together poetry, vision and unorthodox spiritual practices. The multilayered inventive delight in language evident in her work is generated by attention to the material world. In H.D.'s texts, alterity and mystery is located in the intersection of language, the sacred and the material. For H.D., writing is a spiritual practice.

This thesis examines the nexus of H.D.'s religious sensibility and her creative work. Her worldview involves a complex, idiosyncratic religious syncretism that has yet to be given due attention by critics and biographers. When considering poetic language as

³ The bee is both a pagan and Christian symbol for life and resurrection; Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (New York: Continuum, 2000) 38; Ralph Adams Cram and F. R. Webber, *Church Symbolism* (Cleveland, OH: J. H. Jansen, 1938) 76; Maurice Dilasser, *The Symbols of the Church*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont, Mary Cabrini Durkin and Caroline Morson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999) 38.

⁴ While travelling to Greece in 1920, H.D. had a curious experience on board ship. One evening she met Peter Welbeck (also called Pieter Rodeck and Peter van Eck in H.D.'s writing) and together they watched a pod of dolphins in the water, illuminated by an otherworldly soft blue light. Later, he did not remember the meeting, and H.D. concluded that it was a visionary experience 'out-of-time' in which she approached mythic Atlantis with Walbeck/van Eck initiating her into a sacred mystery. In the 1940s, the spiritualist Arthur Bhaduri (also called Ben Manisi in H.D.'s work) had a vision of a Viking ship decorated with wings. H.D. was convinced that the word 'wings', communicated during the séance, and the ship vision were a reference to her personal vision from 1920; H.D., *Majic Ring* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009) 4, 86-96; H.D., *The Sword Went out to Sea: (Synthesis of a Dream)*, by Delia Alkon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) 14-17.

excessive, as on the wing, as mysterious, who else to invite to the conversation but Hélène Cixous? A contemporary, poststructuralist French theorist may not initially appear the most likely guide to reading an American Modernist poet, but not only are there many points of contact between Cixous and H.D., but Cixous is also particularly helpful for my investigation of H.D.'s religious sensibility and concern with language. Therefore, this thesis stages a conversation between Cixous and H.D. Cixous, as reader-writer-critic-theologian (this is my term, not hers), is dialogical and mystical, so her work enriches this project in both method and content. I will briefly outline the points of contact between Cixous and H.D. before going on to consider my dialogical methodology more closely. There are four points that are significant for this thesis: formal and stylistic affinities, attention to difference, the context of the Second World War and, finally, their texts' engagement with language as excessive, mysterious and material.

Firstly, although they have many stylistic and formal differences (language difference being the most obvious example: H.D. writes in English, Cixous in French), H.D. and Cixous both employ a complex constellation of allusions within their texts; both bend genre conventions; both use non-realist narration and word-play. Cixous's texts are frequently in dialogue with Modernist texts and she can be read as part of the European avant-garde tradition.⁵ Both writers employ many signatures: 'H.D.', 'Hilda', 'Delia Alton', 'H. C.' 'the author', to name just a few. The near identity of 'H.D.' and 'H. C.' is a serendipity which highlights the permutations of the signature. Both repeat terms of tropes, ideas, themes and images across texts written years, or even decades, apart. Their writing style is reiterative. Themes, metaphors, ideas and images continue to circulate across their numerous texts (both writers are extremely prolific) and many of these concepts

⁵ Susan Rabin Suleiman, 'Writing Past the Wall: Or the Passion According to H.C.' *Coming to Writing' and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jensen (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991) x.

themselves bleed into one another. This presents a serious challenge to any attempt to systematically outline Cixous's and H.D.'s thinking and theoretical approach.

Turning to my second point, these stylistic qualities enable their attention to difference within and between subjectivities, which is the source of much of their writing's energy. From a theoretical perspective, their writing witnesses to the subjectivity of the other, while also, conversely, speaking from the other's place on the margins of dominant cultural narratives: as woman, as Jew, as queer. Their writing on subjectivity and alterity engages the relationship between culture, imagination and the material body. From her early manifestos in the 1970s to her recent fiction, Cixous has associated writing with the body: 'That the flesh writes and is given to be read; and to be written'.⁶ Her writing on the body has been critiqued by Anglo-American feminists as essentialist and ahistorical.⁷ However, this is a reductionist reading that misses the subtlety of her deployment of bodily metaphors and itself implicitly (or explicitly) assumes congruence between the body and the natural.⁸ For Cixous and H.D., the body and culture are always co-implicated.⁹ There is

⁶ Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing' and Other Essays*, trans. Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers, ed. Deborah Jenson (London: Harvard University Press, 1991) 26.

⁷ For example, Stanton argues that Cixous's maternal metaphors are indebted to, and reproduce, the phallogocentric symbolic order they intend to subvert; Domna C. Stanton, 'Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva', *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 159-64, 167-72. However, while she criticises Cixous for establishing a binary, Stanton herself insists on the binary of reading difference as a trap in which 'either we name and become entrapped in the structures of the already named; or else we do not name and remain trapped in passivity, powerlessness, and a perpetuation of the same'; Stanton, 164. Stanton's view of metaphor does not have the fluidity advanced in this thesis (I will explore this in greater depth in Chapter Four); she privileges metaphor's attachment to the same and does not allow for the circulation of difference, nor does she attend to the variety of subject positioning within Cixous's work.

Biological essentialism uses anatomy as the basis for assertions about identity and has been a point of contention between feminist scholars for the past several decades; Abigail Bray, *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 34. For an analysis of the feminist debate over essentialism, see Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment*, *Studies in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 8-21.

⁸ This is the misreading of Jones's essay; Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of L'écriture Féminine', *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Diane Price Herndl and Robyn R. Warhol (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997) 370-83.

⁹ Morag Shiach, *Hélène Cixous: A Politics of Writing* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 8-10. See also, Bray, 34-37; Deborah Jenson, 'Coming to Reading Hélène Cixous', *Coming to Writing' and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1991) 188.

no understanding of, or approach to, the body and the bodily without considerations of culturally inscribed meanings, myths and metaphors.

The third point of contact between H.D. and Cixous is the Second World War. A substantial portion of each writer's oeuvre is written out of the context of the Second World War and their aesthetic and spiritual concerns are contextualised by war and its traumas. A number of H.D.'s texts were written during or just after the war, while Cixous's work is a generation later. However, Cixous situates her work in the war by continuing to foreground her family's experiences as Jews in French-colonised Algeria and attending to the larger questions they raise for cultural activity.¹⁰ In her autobiographical writing, Cixous suggests that her work is writing against death, yet this assertion is immediately complicated by the engagement with loss: 'Writing: a way of leaving no space for death. [...] To confront perpetually the mystery of the there-not-there. [...] My writing watches. Eyes closed'.¹¹ She engages in a scandalous practice of placing celebratory passages alongside delineations of loss and the bleaker side of history. She refuses to bar poetry from the scene of trauma, positioning writing as witness, whilst also refusing to relinquish the delight of writing.

As I have indicated above, the final point of contact I wish to highlight is H.D.'s and Cixous's view of language as excessive, mysterious and material. Cixous writes:

I have never written without *Dieu*. Once I was reproached for it. *Dieu* they said is not a feminist. Because they believed in a pre-existing God. But God is of my making. But god, I say, is the phantom of writing, it is her pretext and her promise. God is the name of all that has not yet been said. Without the word *Dieu* to shelter the infinite multiplicity of all that could be said the world would be reduced to its shell and I to my skin. [...] God is not the one of religions [...] [but] [t]he force that makes me write, the *always unexpected Messiah* [...] the returning spirit or the spirit of returning.¹²

¹⁰ I will return to this point in my discussion of trauma theory later in this chapter.

¹¹ Cixous, 3.

¹² Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 200.

Here she demonstrates the capacity of language both to make a space for mystery and to celebrate the material. This passage can be read as one of H.D.'s spirals; the 'not yet' suggests orientation towards the future and yet the final emphasis on return invokes the past. It is circular, but not static. God is called into being by writing, 'of my making', and yet is other than writing, 'what has not yet been said'. The divine is both the shelter of the writing and the inexplicable unknown beyond the writer's knowledge, an elsewhere that is invoked and explored, but never fully understood or appropriated.

Cixous's concern with writing as such leads to an emphasis on the materiality of language. For Cixous, 'elsewhere' is a mystery within the text, located in the shifting layers of the density of language. Her work is resolutely literary, drawing attention to its textuality by wordplay, apostrophes to the reader and meta-discourse on the nature of language and writing. However, intertwined with these language games is an attention to the world beyond the text. Ordinary objects and experiences are ubiquitous in Cixous's oeuvre. She rhapsodises the pleasures of an orange, the magic of the telephone, the strange and wild love provoked by a cat, the insistent sweetness of a rancid cake, the witness of a rose. She brings these literary and material strategies together by de-familiarising ordinary objects and activities and then presenting them as strange and new: 'I believe that the stone is a diamond [...]. What interests me is precisely to enable the celebration of the grain of dust'.¹³ In the attention to the materiality of language and the signifying possibilities in objects, her work is concerned with the transformative potential of writing.¹⁴ The stone becomes a diamond – infinitely precious – without losing its stone-ness.

¹³ Hélène Cixous, *White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text and Politics*, ed. Susan Sellers (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008) 19.

¹⁴ Verena Andermatt Conley, *Hélène Cixous* (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 2; Shiach, 23.

Alterity is a crucial concept for understanding Cixous's oeuvre. I follow Abigail Bray's definition of alterity:

[T]he other of the other [...] a form of Otherness which is not reducible to the binary self/other. It is a concept of the other which is autonomous, [...] which exceeds the colonizing logic of the self/other binary. [...] Alterity signals [...] the space of difference.¹⁵

Cixous's writing is a search for an encounter with alterity and a welcoming gesture towards the other that does not appropriate or annihilate, but recognises, difference. Her writing approaches alterity through paradox. She alternately describes writing as an (internal) place – 'the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me' – or a movement, or a message – 'A poem merely passes, coming from elsewhere then moving on. Signifying to us, in passing, at its passage, this elsewhere'.¹⁶ Cixous's writing provides a way of reading H.D. by way of 'a tradition that [...] allow[s] us to read feminine speech as divine speech, as mystified writing'.¹⁷

Mystified, mystical, mysterious – these words occupy an uneasy space in academic discourse. They are often used as terms of abuse by scholars to dismiss work as not suitably materially, historically, or politically grounded. Alternatively, they are used to demarcate an unknown space beyond or aside (and therefore, irrelevant to) the matter at hand.¹⁸ Even those scholars who would choose to champion such terminology find these

¹⁵ Bray, 73-74.

¹⁶ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1996) 86; Hélène Cixous, *Firstdays of the Year*, trans. Catherine A. F. MacGillivray (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 6.

¹⁷ Patricia Yaeger, *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 16.

¹⁸ In *Sexual/Textual Politics*, a book which provided an early Anglophone interpretation of Cixous, Toril Moi asserts that Cixous's work avoids the political in a constant regression (and it is modelled as regressive) to a 'mythological' realm in which all gaps and disruption are filled with a joyous plenitude that has no weight in historical terms. However, Moi disregards the extent that Cixous's attention to gaps maintains, rather than dissolves, difference and this critique fails to adequately account for the potential of 'utopian visions' to provide the 'political inspiration' that Moi herself acknowledges; Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1985) 116-126.

words notoriously difficult to pin down. However, I find this usage problematic in a number of ways. Firstly, using ‘mystified’ or ‘mystical’ as a term of dismissal allows a critic to avoid a more nuanced critique of the matter at hand. Secondly, these terms demarcate a zone into which the argument will not enter. Both of these problems impoverish academic discourse. I want to recover these terms, while acknowledging their slippery, evasive nature. I am not persuaded that there is a *necessary* link between the mystical/mystified and the a-political, a-historical, non-material. What is perhaps most interesting is when politics, history, materialism and mystery intersect. Moreover, the use of ‘mystified’ or ‘mystical’ as a term of dismissal begs the question of what theorising about or exploring this terrain might actually involve. In this thesis, I explore how Cixous and H.D. theorise ‘mystical’, ‘mystified’, ‘mystery’ while considering what resources these terms might bring to materialist, historical concerns.

Scholars have found the term ‘mysticism’ itself notoriously difficult to define and many definitions begin with some sort of disclaimer about the ambiguity of the term.¹⁹ Some definitions are primarily historical, based on particular religious traditions in particular times and places.²⁰ Others look to the (primarily psychological) trends which

Additional examples of ‘mystical’ or ‘mystified’ used as a dismissive category:

‘The miraculous transformation in the alchemical bowl and the equally mysterious flowering of the rod [culminate] in this revelation of the muse who is not only the veiled goddess [...] but most importantly the female spirit liberated from precisely these mystifications’; Susan Gubar, ‘The Echoing Spell of H.D.’s *Trilogy*’, *Contemporary Literature* 19.2 (1978): 209.

Lawrence Rainey’s more damning dismissal of H.D.’s engagement with maternity: ‘she did indulge in mystical speculations about the maternal’; Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 167.

¹⁹ ‘Mysticism’. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Ed. James Hastings. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908-26. Vol. IX. XIII vols; Louis Dupré and Peter Moore. ‘Mysticism’. *Encyclopaedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. Detroit and New York: Thomson Gale, 2005. Vol. 9. 15 vols.

²⁰ Bernard McGinn employs a deliberately loose definition: ‘the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God’; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. I (London: SCM Press, 1992) xvii. His work involves the history of medieval European Christian mysticism, but this definition may have relevance for other traditions as well.

The scholarship of Caroline Walker Bynum has signalled a new approach to the study of medieval mysticism; she emphasises what analysis of previously neglected writings on and by women mystics reveals about the contours of mysticism, and, in particular, the complexity and diversity of medieval understandings of the

characterise mysticism across differing traditions; however, these run the risk of taking instances of mysticism out of context and eliding historical differences.²¹ Mystical writing has been described in terms that resonate with visionary poetics: ‘the [mystical] experience [...] can only be presented indirectly [...] by a series of verbal strategies in which language is used not so much informationally as transformationally’.²² Moreover, ‘the paradox of mystical language lies here, for it is a discourse predicated on its own impossibility’.²³ For my purposes, a loose definition will suffice. Mysticism involves a passion for the divine, without a specific delineation of who or what that divine is. Imagination and affect have primacy over doctrine. This understanding accords with H.D.’s and Cixous’s writing; their work is highly affective and involves a passionate attachment to the divine, which remains at most an ambiguous, changeable presence in their writing. The meaning of this mysticism will be explored in the course of this thesis.

‘Reading: writing the ten thousand pages of every page’²⁴

Cixous is the reader’s theorist; her own reading-writing-theorizing practice provides a model for this thesis. Three aspects of her mode of reading-writing are particularly helpful for this project: extended conversations with other writers, the development of theoretical frameworks out of these conversations and a creative slant on dialogism and intertextuality.

body; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992); Caroline Walker Bynum, ‘The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages’, *Church History* 71.4 (2002). For further examples of historical treatments of medieval Christian mysticism, see Sarah Beckwith, ‘A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe’, *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. David Aers (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986); Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

²¹ This approach tends to take William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* as a starting point. For a discussion of the development of the understanding of mysticism in late the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 305-21; Leigh Eric Schmidt, ‘The Making of Modern “Mysticism”’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71.2 (2003).

²² McGinn, xvii.

²³ Hollywood, 20-21.

²⁴ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 24.

Firstly, Cixous's critical and theoretical texts may be read as long conversations with other writers whom she refuses to leave out of her own work. As a reader-writer, she develops a process of reading that carries over into her writing. Her reading strategies are multiple: from direct engagement with named writers – James Joyce, Etty Hillesum, Marina Tsvetayeva, Franz Kafka, to name just a few – to the more elusive hidden dialogues with biblical and psychoanalytic texts; from her ongoing exchange with Jacques Derrida, to the fictionalisation of writers and other historical figures in *Manna: for the Mandelstams and the Mandelas*.

Her most significant reading-writing conversation has been with the Brazilian writer, Clarice Lispector. Since the late 1970s Cixous has been a devoted reader of Lispector, who appears frequently in Cixous's texts, even in essays dedicated to other authors. Cixous places her alongside other writers, illuminating them as well as continuing her ongoing conversation with Lispector. Through her reading of Lispector, Cixous undermines the distinction between orality and literacy by initially characterising text as voice:

A woman's voice came to me from far away [...] this voice was unknown to me, it reached me on the twelfth of October 1978, this voice was not searching for me, it was writing to no one, to all women, to writing, in a foreign tongue.²⁵

Cixous shifts rapidly between 'voice' and 'writing' – a common slippage in her work. Like H.D.'s 'winged words' Lispector's text is a place in which Cixous is returned to herself: 'a writing found me when I was unfindable to myself'.²⁶ Across Cixous's writing, Lispector becomes a key term for passionate creativity, embodied writing and courage in openness to the other: 'Clarice is the name of a woman who calls life by its first name. [...] Clarice

²⁵ Hélène Cixous, *Vivre L'orange / to Live the Orange*, trans. Sarah Cornell and Ann Liddle (Paris: Des Femmes, 1979) 10.

²⁶ Ibid. 12. See also, Cixous's references to Lispector in her essay 'The Last Painting or the Portrait of God' in Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 104-05.

unveils us; opens our windows. [...] How to call forth daricely: it's a long and passionate work for all the senses'.²⁷ Here we see how Cixous uses Lispector's writing to develop her own theoretical approach to writing. Using another person's writing to develop one's own theoretical approach is the second aspect of the conversational model I am drawing upon in this thesis and it brings me to consider the third: the contribution of dialogism and intertextuality to this practice of conversation.

Cixous's mode of reading and writing as a conversation with other authors provides a model for putting Cixous herself in dialogue with H.D. The conversational model is appropriate to this project as it coincides with my interest in H.D.'s syncretism. This is not a fully dialogical project in a sense of equal partners, or formal equivalents, but rather a more improvisational, deliberately uneven reading that takes H.D. as its primary focus. However, dialogism and intertextuality do provide an important methodological context; the conversational model is appropriate to this project as it coincides with my interest in H.D.'s syncretism by performing a theoretical/poetical syncretism of its own.

In theorising dialogism, Mikhail Bakhtin has argued that the novel presents a form for multiple, distinct voices (heteroglossia) to be heard, independent from the author, in dialogue with each other.²⁸ Thus the meanings (always multiple) in a text are generated by the interplay of voices at the many levels of discourse, down to the word: '[t]he dialogic orientation of a word among other words (of all kinds and degrees of otherness) creates

²⁷ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 98, 104.

²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 7. Bakhtin and some of his followers such as Julia Kristeva and Patricia Yaeger argue that the novel is the privileged (if not only) dialogical genre; however, other critics argue against this narrow definition and expand dialogics to include other genres. Lynne Pearce claims that dialogue is inherent in all language, but is most evident in poetic language, which includes poetry, fiction and creative prose like H.D.'s autobiographies and Cixous's theoretical essays; Lynne Pearce, *Reading Dialogics* (London: Hodder, 1994) 81-82, 86-89.

new and significant artistic potential in discourse'.²⁹ Dialogism argues that the processes of language are not only a matter of difference but also of relation.³⁰ Feminist critics have found the productive tension between relation and difference, and relation-in-difference, a compelling aspect of dialogics (although they protest Bakhtin's disregard of women novelists and gender as a significant category in textual power dynamics). For Bakhtin, the polyphonic text suggests that subjectivity is produced within heteroglossia, its aim is '[t]o affirm someone else's "I" not as an object but as another subject'.³¹ Bakhtin's view of subjectivity correlates with feminist psychological models of development such as Nancy Chodorow's theory that subjectivity arises from the dynamic tension between separation and relation: 'our separateness from others is the *dynamic* for our dialogical relation to them'.³² This model allows for explorations of both the social and linguistic elements of subjectivity.³³

Julia Kristeva's engagement with Bakhtin turns to considerations of dialogism between, rather than within, texts and thus she develops the theory of intertextuality. She gives an early formulation of what will become a hallmark of poststructuralism – an intervention into structuralism that puts it in process, emphasising dynamism and uncertainty in the activity of conducting formal analysis. This is enabled by:

[Bakhtin's] conception of the "literary word" as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.³⁴

²⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 276.

³⁰ Pearce, 10.

³¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 10.

³² Pearce, 91.

³³ Lynne Pearce warns against ahistorical applications of dialogic subjectivity as a universal model. Context is crucial to elaborating the specifics of various subjectivities that are determined and enacted in and through multiple factors, such as race, gender, and historical, geographic and socioeconomic position; *Ibid.* 96.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) 65.

In expanding the field of reference to include addressee, cultural context, etc., Kristeva lays the groundwork for a definition of intertextuality that argues that ‘any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’.³⁵ Writers also being readers, every text draws upon a wide range of conscious and unconscious references to other texts. Intertextuality does not denote a simple linear progression of influence, but a more complex iteration in which readers draw texts together and put their various quotations and allusions into an ever-shifting dialogue. The metaphors of ‘mosaic’ and ‘textual surface’ indicate a spatial, rather than temporal, reading practice.³⁶

In describing the textual practice of dialogue, Bakhtin invokes an openness to the future that implies a desire for an answering word that will enable the generation of meaning

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said* but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word.³⁷ [my emphasis]

This undecidable word – ‘that which has not yet been said’ – recalls my earlier quotation from Cixous, where she claims the divine as the shelter of future writing: ‘God is the name of all that has not yet been said’. She figures this future word as related to the divine name,

³⁵ Ibid. 66. See also, Judith Still and Michael Worton, ‘Introduction’, *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, eds. Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990) 19.

³⁶ Numerous critics have commented on intertextuality in Cixous’s and H.D.’s work, particularly those intertexts pertaining to the origins of Western culture: classical writers and the Hebrew Bible; Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Hugh S. Pyper, “Job the Dog”: Hélène Cixous on Wounds, Scars and the Biblical Text’, *Biblical Interpretation* 11.3/4 (2003): 438-48. Diana Collecott and Eileen Gregory have investigated the influence of Sappho and Euripides on H.D.; Diana Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism, 1910 - 1950* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Eileen Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Psychoanalysis is a significant intertext for both H.D. (particularly Freud) and Cixous (Freud and Lacan). For an intertextual reading of H.D. and Freud, see Dianne Chisholm, *H.D.’s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1992). H.D. and Cixous interrogate their intertexts in a variety of ways, challenging and appropriating them for their own ends. Sometimes this means imitation and direct quotation (H.D.’s homage to Sappho) and other times contradiction (Cixous’s denial of Freudian or Lacanian lack).

³⁷ Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination* 280.

thus inscribing the sacred in the space between the already spoken word, the living word and the answering word. Conversational sacred space appears in H.D.'s texts in numerous forms: the word in process (in linguistic and alchemical ritual), the pragmatic contact between air raid survivors and the séance table which mediates the voices of the dead.

In this linguistic haze of text and contexts, words and voices, the material is easily obscured. Bakhtin argues that monological texts exile other voices into the material domain.³⁸ H.D. and Cixous problematise Bakhtin's opposition of material object and heteroglossia by emphasising the life of the material world and the materiality and embodiment of writing. Objects have their own voices for Cixous (whose orange speaks for both the subject's desire for the other and the other's irreducible witness) and for H.D. (who sees hieroglyphics as stones' speech). Before elaborating the wider framework of theoretical tools that I will draw upon in the rest of the thesis, I will outline the key texts and contexts for this study, which involves situating this project within H.D. studies and sketching her religious syncretism.

H.D.: texts and context

Like many Modernists, H.D. was interested in art's potential as a resource for cultural renewal. However, she did not see art as a replacement for religion, but as a means to, and expression of, spiritual understanding. Neither atheist nor orthodox, H.D. – like W. B. Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Rosamond Lehmann and Mary Butts – exemplifies a third way. Her religious syncretism allows her to engage with spiritual concerns in her writing without subordinating it to the demands of doctrine, unlike writers such as T. S. Eliot who

³⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 12.

ultimately viewed art as subservient to religion.³⁹ H.D.'s continued interest in the Moravian Christianity of her childhood and her blending of pagan, Hermetic and spiritualist imagery with Moravian rituals and history distinguishes her from writers who express a more straightforward relationship to the occult.⁴⁰ This thesis focuses primarily on her writing from the Second World War because this is where her religious syncretism is most crucial to her writing and where the synergy between her texts and Cixous's is most evident. Before going on to outline the critical context of this study, I will summarise the three major texts in this thesis: *Trilogy*, *The Gift*, and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.

H.D.'s blurring of genre boundaries make her texts, particularly her prose, difficult to categorise. Alternately autobiographical fantasy, memoir, *roman à clef*, memorial tribute, recovery document, self-analysis, romance, hallucinatory travelogue, novel, the textual twists and turns evade attempts at classification. Jane Augustine's suggestion that the best description of *The Sword* (I would also include *The Gift*) is 'spiritual autobiography' is helpful in delineating the dual trajectories of the personal and the transcendent present in these

³⁹ See his essay, 'Religion and Literature' in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951) 388-401. For further discussion of Eliot's views on the relationship between art and religion, see Heather Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) 15-17.

⁴⁰ The Moravian Church, or *Unitas Fratrum* (United Brethren), can be situated within the German Pietist movements of the eighteenth century, although its roots lie in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth century Hussite movement. Followers of the pre-Reformation reformer, John Hus, established the 'Unitas Fratrum' which was suppressed in the course of the Thirty Years War (some Moravian historians indicate that the tradition was carried on by a small remnant – the 'Hidden Seed', while others find this unlikely) and blossomed again under the leadership of Count Nicolas von Zinzendorf in the early eighteenth century. Like some other Protestant sects, the Moravians emphasised personal piety over orthodox doctrine; Craig Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004) 21; James Henry, *Sketches of Moravian Life and Character: Comprising a General View of the History, Life, Character, and Religious and Educational Institutions of the Unitas Fratrum*, authorized facsimile of the original book ed. (London: University Microfilms International, 1981) 15; J. E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, second ed. (London: Moravian Publication Office, 1909) iv, 102-109; Edmund de Schweinitz, *The History of the Church Known as the Unitas Fratrum or the Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the Followers of John Hus, the Bohemian Reformer and Martyr* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Office, 1885) iv, 109. The Moravians, like many other religious groups, were drawn to the greater freedom of religion in Pennsylvania, and established a settlement, Bethlehem, near Philadelphia in 1741. H.D. linked the idea of a 'Hidden Seed' to other secret societies including the Knights Templar (this is particularly evident in the later novel, *The Mystery*). Her vision of the Hidden Church persisting through the generations, guarding the Church's wisdom, is consistent with her interest in Hermeticism.

works.⁴¹ In writing these autobiographies, H.D. troubles the boundary between life and literature; evidently much of the material in both books is close to her own life but, equally, she is clearly fictionalising her experiences.⁴² Her literary revision is situated on the borderline where memory becomes history and hallucination becomes vision. For H.D., spiritual autobiography may be fact or fiction; such distinctions are deliberately confused in her attention to the symbolic resonance of her writing. I refer to the texts as novels on occasion, in an attempt to avoid the temptation of reading them too autobiographically.⁴³

Trilogy

H.D.'s 'war trilogy', as she referred to it,⁴⁴ was originally published in three separate volumes; *The Walls Do Not Fall* (1944), *Tribute to the Angels* (1945) and *The Flowering of the Rod*

⁴¹ Jane Augustine, Preliminary Comments on the Meaning of H.D.'s *The Sword Went out to Sea*, *Sagetrieb* 15.1-2 (1996): 131. The history of 'spiritual autobiography' as a genre goes back at least to Augustine's *Confessions*, with its focus on the soul and religious conversion. Many conversion narratives of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries follow Augustine's pattern, although their authors may not have been familiar with *Confessions*. Belzen notes that introspective religious autobiographies were popular among Protestants, indicating the significance of individual faith and functioning as a replacement for the confessional, with greater representation by women writers than many other genres, see Jacob A. Belzen, 'Autobiography, Psychic Functioning and Mental Health', *Autobiography and the Psychological Study of Religious Lives*, eds. Jacob A. Belzen and Antoon Geels (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008) 124; Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) 86. Other early spiritual autobiographies reveal an alternate model to *Confessions*. Mary G. Mason argues that women writers such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe wrote 'in the mystical tradition of personal dialogue with a divine being who is Creator, Father, and Lover, [and] discover and reveal themselves in discovering and revealing the Other'; Mary G. Mason, 'The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers', *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 324. However, Linda Peterson suggests a more nuanced approach, citing seventeenth century autobiographies by women that follow an Augustinian model of struggle between opposing forces and spiritual progress. She argues that women drew upon a diversity of traditions, depending upon their priorities and circumstances; Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999) 2-6. Further discussion of the subject of H.D. and life writing is outside the scope of this project; for a variety of approaches to H.D. and life writing, see Chisholm, 68-164; Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 68-98; Cathy Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 160-194.

⁴² For example, of an episode in *The Gift*, H.D. later writes: 'I wrote a [...] novel about my grandmother and my mother and I used the psychic experience that Gareth [Bryher] and I had had, but I worked it into a sequence of reconstructed memories that I made my grandmother tell me, as if in reverie or half-dream or even trance'; H.D., *Majic Ring* 68.

⁴³ Much recent criticism on autobiography reminds us that this is a literary genre, and representation in language will always be at a remove from reality. Women's life writing was often a hybrid genre; Peterson, x.

⁴⁴ H.D. 'Letter to Sylvia Dobson, 3 March, 1945'. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Norman Pearson also referred *Trilogy* this way; Donna Krolik Hollenberg, ed.,

(1946). Each of the long poems consists of 43 sections, written in two-line stanzas (except for the first section of *Walls*, whose stanzas have three lines). Although *Trilogy*'s length and theme suggest that it is best classed as an epic, the form and style of its linked sections are closer to lyric, an example of H.D.'s challenge to genre conventions. The poem's theme – a quest for spiritual and cultural renewal for a world shattered by war – is explored through a complex palimpsest of allusions. Egyptian, Greek and Roman gods and goddesses join biblical figures and apocryphal angels to point towards regeneration found in the processes of the natural world, visions, rituals, and, most importantly, writing. The first volume, *Walls*, explores personal and creative transformation in the face of London's crumbling buildings. The second, *Angels*, focuses on the presence of angels within the war-torn city; in its central vision, a Lady (the Roman fertility goddess, the Bona Dea) joins the poem's other sacred figures in exhorting the poet and reader to search for renewal, signified by the blank book she carries. The final volume, *Rod*, moves from direct evocation of London to an imagined space where H.D. provides a feminist revision of the Gospel narratives. She focuses on Mary Magdalene and the Arab sage, Kaspar; between them, these two marginalised figures discover and deliver the gift of myrrh to Mary of Nazareth at the Epiphany. Through this narrative H.D. further explores the nexus of sacred materiality and visionary experience. *Trilogy* explores a feminist spirituality that is an ongoing concern in many of her texts from this period.

The Gift

The Gift was written between 1941 and 1943.⁴⁵ This autobiographical text oscillates between episodes from H.D.'s childhood in Pennsylvania, narrated by the child, Hilda, and the

Between History & Poetry: The Letters of H.D. & Norman Holmes Pearson (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997) 138.

⁴⁵ H.D. wrote an additional section of notes in 1944. These notes contain greater detail about Moravian history in Europe and America. Jane Augustine argues that they reveal H.D.'s desire to assert the historical

London Blitz, narrated by the adult writer, H.D. The childhood sections describe experiences that illuminate spiritual and artistic giftedness as rooted in the family and female genealogy. The gift is first presented as characteristic of artists and lacking in Hilda's generation. As the text progresses, Hilda challenges this interpretation as she discovers the spiritual meaning of the gift. Hilda's grandmother, Mamalie, shares memories of her discovery as a young woman of the 'secret' – a peaceful pact made between Moravian Christian colonists and Native Americans in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ A group of Moravians and Native Americans formed a Hidden Church that recognised the unity of the Moravian Holy Spirit and the Native American Great Spirit.⁴⁷ However, this peace was broken and the Hidden Church was lost. By the end of the novel, H.D. understands her spiritual and creative vocations as unified: to fulfil the broken promise and lost dream through passing on the message of peace in her own writing.

validity of her writing; Jane Augustine, 'Introduction', *The Gift by H.D.: The Complete Text* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998) 14-15.

⁴⁶ The history of encounters between European Moravians and Native Americans (mainly Lenape, Mahican, Shawnee, Iroquois and other Algonquian groups) is more complex and compromising than *The Gift* suggests, although the text does not entirely elide the history of conflict. H.D. included a detailed description of massacres of Native American and European Moravians at the hands of hostile tribes and European colonists; H.D., *The Gift* 272-4. As Susan Stanford Friedman points out 'this white betrayal of the peace made between Indians and Moravians was emblematic for H.D. of America's heritage, a mix of peace and violence, gift and theft, freedom and oppression'; Friedman, 347.

The Moravian Church owned land the Lenape (or Delaware) tribes lost through the fraudulent Walking Purchase and they contributed to the dispossession of the Native Americans in eastern Pennsylvania as even peaceful missionary efforts contributed to the weakening of tribal governance and culture; Siegrun Kaiser, 'Four Cases of Delaware Indian Land Loss and the Moravian Church', *Religion and Identity in the Americas* (Mckmhl, Germany: Anton Saurwein, 1997) 139; Clara Sue Kidwell, et al., *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001) 177; Earl P. Olmstead, *Bluecoats among the Delaware: David Ziesberger on the Ohio Frontier* (Kent, Ohio and London: The Kent State University Press, 1991) 7. A fuller exploration of this complex history is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, it is worth pointing out that Native Americans and Moravian communities did live peacefully together for some time despite the conflicts between various Native American tribes, British and French colonies (the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War did much to erode the relationships between communities); Daniel K. Richter and William A. Pencak, 'Introduction', *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, eds. William A. Pencak and Daniel K. Richter (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2004) ix-xxi. For further discussion of the encounters between Native American tribes and Moravian colonists, see also William A. Pencak and Daniel K. Richter, eds., *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Amy C. Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Here H.D. puts a syncretist spin on Moravian evangelism; she is much less concerned with the Christian nature of the Moravian and Native American allegiances than with the invocation of divine presence.

The Sword Went Out To Sea

The protagonist of *The Sword Went Out to Sea* is Delia Alton, a pseudonym frequently used by H.D. in her later writing. I will refer to the author as H.D., for clarity and to emphasise the shared authorship of *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *The Sword*, and to the character as Delia for textual accuracy and to emphasise the (always slippery) distinction between author and character. *The Sword* is a largely autobiographical account of H.D.'s experience as a medium in the 1940s when she received what she believed to be messages from RAF pilots killed in the Battle of Britain. The first part of the text, 'Wintersleep', describes Delia's attempts to pass on these messages to Lord Howell (a fictional version of Lord Hugh Dowding, the Air Chief Marshal responsible for the victory in the Battle of Britain and himself a spiritualist known to H.D.), her despair at his rejection of the messages and her subsequent mental breakdown. Part II, 'Summerdream', contains a series of linked vignettes, drawn from Delia's life (her youth in Pennsylvania, England in the First World War, European travels in the inter-war years) and earlier historical eras at times of great change or disaster (ancient Athens, imperial Rome, medieval France and Elizabethan London). Throughout these sections a number of characters re-appear in different guises. Delia and Lord Howell are repeatedly re-figured as estranged lovers whose eventual reconciliation will bring in a new era of peace.⁴⁸ Written during the post-war era, *The Sword* extends the historical scope of *The Gift*, focusing on the threat of a third world war and the destruction wrought by the atomic bomb.

⁴⁸ In her introduction to 'H.D. by Delia Alton', Adelaide Morris cautions against reading H.D.'s later work as 'conventional romance', but suggests reading texts such as *The Sword* as a key strand of H.D.'s spiritual writing: 'Though "romance" is a word that occurs frequently in this text, H.D. uses it to point not to sentimental "love stories" but to "Romany," the language of the gypsy seers. The search for the "Eternal Lover" is the visionary quest for an idea or an ideal, a messenger or visitor from another realm of consciousness, another field of vision or of knowledge'; Adelaide Morris, 'H.D.'S "H.D. by *Delia Alton*", *Iowa Review* 16.3 (1986): 177.

Critical context: H.D. studies

For an interdisciplinary project such as this, an extended literature review, covering all the fields implicated in the thesis, is impractical and would detract from my focus on Cixous's and H.D.'s texts. Therefore, discussion of secondary material will be integrated into each chapter as needed. However, at this point it is useful to situate my approach to H.D. in a critical context before turning to an outline of my understanding of her religious syncretism.

H.D. studies has grown into a complex and nuanced field of research since her work was taken up as part of the recovery of women's writing in the early days of feminist criticism. Certain critical assessments of Modernism persist in consigning H.D. to the margins of literary history.⁴⁹ However, these judgements are challenged in a series of interventions beginning in the 1970s and 1980s by critics such as Rachel Blau Duplessis, Susan Stanford Friedman, Susan Gubar and Alicia Ostriker.⁵⁰ While it still may be a stretch to call H.D. a 'major Modernist', she has certainly enjoyed a significant revival in terms of critical attention, revisions of literary history and increased archival research (which has led to greater attention to her significant prose oeuvre, much of it unpublished in her lifetime).⁵¹ The trickle of posthumous publications emerging from her archive is rapidly becoming a flood, as four novels have recently been published in scholarly editions by The

⁴⁹ In 1937, Douglas Bush criticised H.D.'s Hellenic poetry for being overly spiritual, emotional and escapist, (essentially decadent) while Lawrence Rainey makes a similarly dismissive judgement in his 1998 analysis of the cultural economy of Modernism. Rainey persists in seeing H.D. as a minor writer who was isolated in a small coterie of admirers and he ignores the variety of her engagements in the cultural sphere and the achievements of her mature writing; Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1957) 500-505; Rainey, 146-68.

⁵⁰ Rachel Blau Duplessis, *H.D.: The Career of That Struggle* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986); Susan Friedman, 'Who Buried H.D.? A Poet, Her Critics, and Her Place In "The Literary Tradition"', *College English* 36.7 (1975); Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Gubar; Alicia Ostriker, *Writing Like a Woman* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983).

⁵¹ Anthologies such as *The Gender of Modernism* and *Gender in Modernism* give H.D. a greater prominence in Modernist history, Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., *The Gender of Modernism : A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 85-138; Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., *Gender in Modernism : New Geographies, Complex Intersections* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007) 563-73, 809-813, 848-851.

University Press of Florida (*The Snord Went Out to Sea* in 2007 and *Majic Ring, The Mystery* and *The White Rose and the Red* in 2009). Since the early interventions, H.D. criticism has developed and diverged. Psychoanalytic readings – underwritten by H.D.’s engagement with Freud – took up the theoretical tools of Lacan and Kristeva to consider issues of familial psycho-sexual drama, bisexuality, and creativity while historical readings have considered her work in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century literary and material culture.⁵²

A particular strand of H.D. criticism is concerned with H.D. as a visionary poet. These studies are concerned with the transformative poetics inscribed in H.D.’s work and make reference to the religious elements in her texts, particularly esoterism. Susan Stanford Friedman’s magisterial monograph, *Psyche Reborn* (1981), is a, if not the, cornerstone of H.D. studies, particularly for any critic interested in H.D. and religion. *Psyche Reborn* focuses primarily on H.D.’s later work, the epic poems *Trilogy* and *Helen in Egypt* although it also references the prose texts written alongside these epics, particularly *Tribute to Freud*, *The Gift* and *The Snord Went Out to Sea*. Friedman argues that the two most significant influences on H.D.’s work, and those worked out within the writing, are psychoanalysis and esoterism: “The religious experience that inspires the poet to decode the runes of destruction and reveal the patterns of spiritual realism depends upon the poet’s strong identification with an ongoing mystical tradition”.⁵³ Utilising a largely

⁵² Psychoanalytic approaches to H.D. include Claire Buck, *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and Feminine Discourse* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Chisholm; Duplessis; Friedman, *Penelope’s Web*; Klopfer, *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H.D.* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1989). Readings focused on H.D.’s literary context include Collocott; Gregory; Cassandra Laity, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin De Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Readings focusing on historical materialist context include Sarah H. S. Graham, “We Have a Secret. We Are Alive”: H.D.’s *Trilogy* as a Response to War, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.2 (2002): 161-210; Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 124-54.

⁵³ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 212-13. In her second monograph on H.D., *Penelope’s Web* (which focuses on H.D.’s prose), Friedman relies much more on psychoanalysis to inform her approach.

biographical approach, Friedman charts the various elements of H.D.'s syncretist approach to the occult – astrology, alchemy, spiritualism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah – and their relationship to psychoanalysis: 'the dreams, daydreams, and hallucinations emerging from her own unconscious provided the medium for her direct, mystical experience of the hidden reality'.⁵⁴

Alicia Ostriker also turns her attention to H.D.'s long, mature poems. She engages in a strategy common to feminist redefining work, arguing simultaneously that H.D.'s long poems belong in the centre of the Modernist canon – '[t]hese are works that wrestle with the great modernist issues of faith's collapse and the possibility of reconstruction; self and society: the nature of language and the value of poetry in history; the meaning of the imagination' – and also that they challenge the parameters and values of that tradition.⁵⁵ Ostriker finds elements of H.D.'s early work that come to fruition in *Trilogy* (organic imagery, sexuality and war trauma), arguing that the early work itself deconstructs the categories of Imagism. She explicitly aligns H.D. with a tradition of visionary poetry that she traces back to William Blake. Ostriker defines the visionary poet as someone 'for whom, behind the flux of secular existence, there exist[s] permanent sacred realities that are both supremely beautiful and supremely forceful. The poet apprehends these realities, personally and intimately, during states of altered consciousness: "vision," "trance," "dream"'.⁵⁶ Ostriker locates the visionary apprehension of these 'sacred realities' outside the realm of religious orthodoxy. The task of the visionary poet is to 'retrieve from the world's thickets of orthodoxy, age-old and age-thick, the sharp berries of heterodox truth. To the visionary poet, poetry is not primarily Literature. It must be beautiful and forceful in

⁵⁴ Ibid. 196.

⁵⁵ Ostriker, 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 8.

order to bear witness and tribute to its source'.⁵⁷ Ostriker suggests that the substance of visionary poetry is located beyond, not within, the poem. Although Ostriker's reading is supported by H.D.'s own comments on her texts⁵⁸ and the references to a complex mythological syncretism within the text, the emphasis on the practice of writing and the significance of language cautions against too transcendent a reading.

Like Ostriker and Friedman, Adalaide Morris pays tribute to the complexities of H.D.'s writing: 'The three most important meta-languages in *Trilogy* – the discourses of mysticism, politics, and feminism – are intricately interwoven, a quality I want to respect by reading them in three different combinations'.⁵⁹ Morris deploys these meta-languages in considering the significance of ritual as cultural practice for the community (of readers) in the political context of the Second World War. Morris argues that feminist criticism such as Gubar's and Duplessis's 'tend[s] to mute the mysticism of H.D.'s practice by turning it back to the material realm and using it to reshape social definitions of gender'.⁶⁰ She locates her reading of *Trilogy* in the context of Friedman's, Ostriker's and Robert Duncan's work, arguing that the re-telling of the Christmas story in *The Flowering of the Rod* transforms traditional paradigms into a ritual that 'responds to current cultural dilemmas [...] [and] rejoins the secular and the sacred, in-time and out-of-time, politics and mysticism'.⁶¹ However, the difficulty of aligning feminism and mysticism is demonstrated here, as Morris does not explain how the two come together except to say that *Trilogy* works to undermine

⁵⁷ Ibid. 9.

⁵⁸ In a letter to Viola Jordan, H.D. described the angels of *Trilogy* as 'planetary angels', suggesting the union of Christian mythology and astrology within *Trilogy*. There are extensive references to astrology across H.D.'s letters to Jordan, and indication that this interest extended beyond her writing; H.D. 'Letter to Viola Jordan, 25 March, 1945'. *Viola Baxter Jordan Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

⁵⁹ Adalaide Morris, 'Signaling: Feminism, Politics, and Mysticism in H.D.'s War Trilogy', *Sagetrieb* 9.3 (1990): 127-8.

⁶⁰ Ibid.: 130.

⁶¹ Ibid.: 133.

estrangement that would pit men against women. While this may be no small thing, it does not encompass the liberation agenda that is feminism's hallmark.

Morris's monograph, *How to Live / What to Do: H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* (2003), develops her earlier material. In this volume, Morris argues for 'a case for poetic language less as a medium for identification and introspection than as an agent of thought, perception, and meaning in the ongoing life of a culture'.⁶² She argues that a feature of this language, and of H.D.'s poetry in particular, is a 'pressure of ongoingness, a generativity'.⁶³ It is this open dynamism that forms H.D.'s continued relevance to later twentieth-century poetry and cultural life more broadly. Morris's interest in reading H.D. is compelled by the action of the poetry: '[the poems] think about thinking and they think toward action: they are, that is, philosophical and ethical. They do cultural work'.⁶⁴ In focusing on thinking and action, Morris's project is somewhat different from writing on H.D. that emphasises her cultural context, or the complexities of the subject positions and desires in the texts.

How to Live / What to Do does not focus on religion, but Morris does approach the topic obliquely, providing a useful reference for this project. In exploring projection as a significant concept for H.D., Morris highlights the connection between writer and reader: the 'throwing forward' meaning of projection suggests the image 'forcibly cast onto the reader's imagination'. The images thrown in *Sea Garden* are of a world that 'glows with sacred energy'.⁶⁵ This view of the sacred is amplified when she turns to a brief meditation on alchemy: '*Projection* is the technical term for the final stage in an alchemical transmutation: the precipitation of a new, more perfect form'.⁶⁶ For the alchemist 'the

⁶² Adelaide Morris, *How to Live/ What to Do: H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003) 1.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 97.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 110.

universe was everywhere alive, all matter possessing body, passion, and soul'.⁶⁷ Alchemy is an important process for *Trilogy*, as it indicates creation and transformation. Morris argues that the entire poem participates in such a projection, as 'the sections [the three volumes] together retell the story of the making of the philosopher's stone' which is found in the figure of the child at the poem's dose.⁶⁸ I will return to Morris's analysis in my exploration of alchemy in *Trilogy* in Chapter Three, although my focus is the alchemical ritual within the poem (rather than the over-arching narrative) and how it relates to the larger question of writing and ritual.

Eileen Gregory's monograph, *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (1997), is largely concerned with charting H.D.'s lifelong engagement with Hellenic art, literature and mythology, in the context of the emerging twentieth-century formulations of classicism. Two areas of her work impact on the understanding of H.D. and religion as developed in this thesis. In the course of her exploration of nineteenth-century romantic Hellenism, Gregory considers the influence of Walter Pater's Hermeticism on H.D. In his writing on the Renaissance, Pater shaped a literary approach to pagan mysteries, a visionary approach which utilised the 'poetic theology' of Renaissance thinkers who 'borrowed from the Alexandrian *Hermetica* a metaphorical language of the pagan mysteries, suggesting manifestations to initiates of the God hidden within appearances'.⁶⁹ The use of sacred metaphors enabled literature itself to bear a sacred role. Moreover, it enables the humanist emphasis on this world (rather than an otherworld beyond death) as a place of sacred reality. For Pater:

[T]his recovery [of the old religions] seems to serve as a chief metaphor for the revival of the Hellenic spirit in philosophy and art, manifest as a return

⁶⁷ Ibid. 112.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 113.

⁶⁹ Gregory, 77.

of the sense of the sacred to the whole sphere of the human experience, to intellect, to erotic and bodily life, and to the things of the world.⁷⁰

This Romantic/Hermetic understanding of the sacred imbuing all of life is crucial for H.D. Gregory places H.D.'s early poetry in a Romantic tradition of 'theophanic poetry' in which the revelation of sacred presence manifests itself not in the appearance of the gods but in a transformation of vision.⁷¹ However, Gregory also points out that some of the implications of Pater's Hermetic Romantic Hellenism are problematic for H.D. as a woman writer. Crystal, (the 'final refined sublimate after evaporation'), asceticism and athletic discipline configure a homoerotic, masculine space that leaves little room for the explorations of a female poet. For Gregory, what is missing is the matrix, 'the material ground out of which the crystal is projected [...] rocky ground, occluded and shadowy body, visceral feeling – the matter out of which desire comes, from which it never escapes'.⁷² It is this material matrix which H.D.'s work explores.

Additionally, Gregory considers the role of archaeology and early twentieth-century fascination with myth and ritual, and their relationship to art, particularly the work of Jane Harrison (and her colleagues, Gilbert Murray, James Frazer, etc.) in H.D.'s work.⁷³ The ecstasy of Dionysian ritual, sacred marriage and birth as providing the ritual form the Eleusinian mysteries are elements of Harrison's theories that resonate with H.D.'s writing.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 79.

⁷¹ Lawrence Kramer qtd. in Ibid. 83-84.

⁷² Ibid. 88.

⁷³ The extent to which H.D. was familiar with Jane Harrison's work is unknown. Gregory suggests that the affinity between the H.D. and Harrison cannot be explained as direct influence but rather 'a broad and diffused intertextuality'; Ibid. 110. Gregory points out that while H.D. may not have read Harrison's work, she certainly would have been aware of her ideas as they were widely disseminated and directly influenced many of her friends and contemporaries. Myriad sites for indirect influence include: H.D.'s friendship with D. H. Lawrence (who read *Ancient Art and Ritual* shortly before meeting her); Gilbert Murray's writings, which included summaries of Harrison's arguments; and the novels of Mary Butts, which were influenced by Harrison and read enthusiastically by H.D.; Gregory, 11; Susan Stanford Friedman, ed., *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher and Their Circle* (New York: New Directions, 2002) 136-37. For a discussion of Jane Harrison's influence on other Modernists, see Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, Myth, and the Modernist Text: The Influence of Jane Ellen Harrison on Joyce, Eliot, and Woolf* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach 1998).

The drama of ancient ritual lends an active formulation to the abstract theories of Hermeticism, while reinforcing their creative potential.⁷⁴

The foregoing body of criticism tends to read religious vision as an analogue for poetic vision and to consider H.D.'s work as an exploration of feminine creativity,⁷⁵ or to treat the religious significance of her work as only a small element of a larger project. Most of the criticism that does foreground discussion of religion in H.D.'s work is limited to short articles or introductions to scholarly editions of H.D.'s prose.⁷⁶ Timothy Materer and Demetres Tryphonopoulos both argue for the primacy of Hermeticism and the occult in H.D.'s work and for the influence of this spiritual worldview in her thinking and stylistics: 'Perhaps the most distinctive feature of occult writing is its radical syncretism. I consider H.D. an "occult" writer primarily because in her prose and poetry radical syncretism constitutes the very fabric of her thought'.⁷⁷ Tryphonopoulos goes on to describe H.D.'s project as inherently religious: '[it] is a matter of collecting fragments of a faith forgotten – reconstituting or making sense of the gnosis or *sophia* of mystery religions'.⁷⁸ Materer joins Chisholm and Friedman in arguing that occultism and psychoanalysis are united in H.D.'s work because 'both explore the hidden'.⁷⁹ Like Tryphonopoulos, he emphasises H.D.'s syncretism, arguing that her approach to Ancient Wisdom 'is seen in her conception of a

⁷⁴ Gregory, 119, 122-25.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Friedman's analysis of alchemy: 'Alchemy serves as the metaphor of cultural metamorphosis, and the poet's "jewel" embodies the apocalyptic vision of life-in-death that directs the modernist search for transcendence'; Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 253. For a further reading of H.D. as visionary poet, see Helen Sword, *Engendering Inspiration: Visionary Strategies in Rilke, Lawrence, and H.D.* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995) 119-171.

⁷⁶ In addition to those discussed here, articles that foreground religion include Susan Acheson, "Conceived at the Grave's Edge": The Esoteric Eschatology of H.D.'s *Trilogy*, *Literature and Theology* 12.2 (1998): 187-204; Dennis Brown, 'H.D.'s Trilogy: Modern Gnosticism?' *Literature and Theology* 10.4 (1996): 351-60; Erin McNellis, "An Unusual Way to Think": Trilogy's Oracular Poetics', *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 10.2 (2010): 49-64; Roberta Quance, 'Self and Mystical Rebirth in H.D.'s *Trilogy*', *Self / Same / Other: Re-Visioning the Subject in Literature and Theology*, eds. Heather Walton and Andrew Hass (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 83-96.

⁷⁷ Demetres Tryphonopoulos, 'Introduction', *Majic Ring*, ed. Demetres Tryphonopoulos (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009) xxiv.

⁷⁸ Ibid. xxxviii.

⁷⁹ Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995) 88.

secret, syncretic wisdom best described as Hermeticism'.⁸⁰ However, Materer's attention to psychoanalysis – his chapter on H.D. is titled, 'H.D.'s Hermeticism: Between Jung and Freud' – forestalls a fuller exploration of Hermeticism in H.D.'s work.

Turning to a different strand of H.D.'s syncretism, Jane Augustine has highlighted the importance of Moravian Christianity to H.D.'s work in her primarily editorial work on H.D.'s later prose.⁸¹ Friedman's *Psyche Reborn* is an exception to the brevity of criticism on H.D. and religion, but while numerous scholars cite the importance of this work, few pick up the religious themes explored in the volume's second half. However, the critical editions of the 1940s and 1950s novels, which deal largely with spiritual and religious themes, may stimulate a greater interest in H.D. and religion. The recent special issue of *The Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* on 'H.D. and the Archaeology of Religion' may indicate a growing trend.⁸²

This thesis sits aslant to the stream of criticism which reads H.D. as visionary by foregrounding the religious concerns of her work. I argue that religious and poetic vision comes together in H.D.'s work but the two are not identical. Bringing Cixous into conversation with H.D. enables my exploration of writing in relationship to religious sensibility. I will now turn to consider the way vision, poetry and spirituality come together for H.D. As we will see, Hermeticism as the search for ancient wisdom, and the apprehension of that wisdom through visionary consciousness are the guiding forces of H.D.'s syncretism.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 89.

⁸¹ Augustine, 'Sword': 121-27; Augustine, 'Introduction', 1-28; Jane Augustine, 'Introduction', *The Mystery*, ed. Jane Augustine (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009) xxiii-xxxii.

⁸² Colbey Emmerson Reid, 'H.D. and the Archaeology of Religion', *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 10.2 (2010): 1-5.

Visionary Hermeticism

In attending to the religious aspects of H.D.'s work, I do not wish to neglect the visionary for it is certainly a feature of her writing, a source of inspiration and a mode of thinking and expression. As we will see, in examining the strains of religious syncretism in her work, the mythic and the visionary are rarely far away. To return to Ostriker's characterisation of H.D. as a visionary poet, I would suggest that for poets such as H.D., it is not so much that sacred realities lie *behind* secular existence, but that they permeate it. Certainly visions and dreams present opportunities for heightened awareness of the sacred, but for H.D., vision and ordinary reality are not two distinct spheres. Vision provides a dynamic that aligns her poetry with both the past and the future.

In 1919, H.D. travelled to the Sillies Isles with her companion Bryher; the following year the pair went to Greece, as H.D. had wished to do for some time.⁸³ She was still recovering from the numerous shocks of the war years as well as the influenza that had nearly killed herself and her baby daughter. However, in addition to these difficulties, she experienced a number of visions in the Sillies and Greece. These visions would preoccupy her for years, proving a creative catalyst for her imaginative, religious and mythological thinking and providing a counterpoint to the war's traumas. They would form a crucial element in her analysis with Freud in the 1930s and inspire works from the prose essay *Notes on Thought and Vision* (written in 1919) to her post-war autobiographical novel *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (written in 1947).⁸⁴

⁸³ Bryher, the self-chosen name of Annie Winifred Ellerman, was an heiress, a patron of the arts, devotee of psychoanalysis and active in numerous political and artistic pursuits. She provided support and encouragement to many artists, including H.D., Dorothy Richardson and the Sitwells. She and H.D. lived together off and on from the 1920's to the end of the Second World War. Following the war, H.D. lived in sanatoria and hotels in Switzerland and Italy until her death in 1961 but she and Bryher maintained close contact. Bryher and her second husband, Kenneth Macpherson legally adopted H.D.'s illegitimate daughter, Perdita and were intimately involved with her upbringing.

⁸⁴ I do not mean to imply that the visions of 1919 and 1920 were the sole inspiration for *The Sword Went out to Sea*. This is a complex work that draws heavily upon numerous aspects of H.D.'s thinking, research and

It is difficult to determine the appropriate terminology for discussing H.D.'s experiences and her writings on them. These strange psychic phenomena were not entirely visual, so 'vision' is not quite right. One of H.D.'s experiences was primarily kinaesthetic, while others were visual. Yet another had a stronger emotional cast than others (at least, the way she wrote about it and the meaning she invested in it suggest so). H.D. herself uses a number of different highly idiosyncratic ways of referring to the phenomenon – 'jelly-fish experience', 'a state of transcendental imagination', 'writing-on-the-wall'.⁸⁵ For the sake of simplicity I will use 'vision' or 'visionary consciousness' as broad term to include the range of these sorts of events.

H.D. describes the process of seeing visions as simultaneously spontaneous and willed as she indicates that intense concentration was required to maintain the frame of consciousness that allowed the images to appear. Moreover she describes the process of maintaining this concentration as a high-stakes quest:

I have the feeling of holding my breath under water. As if I were searching under water for some priceless treasure. [...] So I [...] am in a sense diving, head-down underwater – in another element, and as I seem now so near to getting the answer or finding the treasure, I feel that my whole life, my whole being, will be blighted forever if I miss this chance. [...] In a sense, it seems I am drowning. [...] I must drown completely and come out on the other side, or rise to the surface after the third time down, not dead to this life but with a new set of value, my treasure dredged from the depth. I must be born again or break utterly.⁸⁶

Thus visionary consciousness becomes a quest for transformation. H.D. combines the language of loss, danger, death and rebirth with that of seeking after treasure. Her treasure

experience, including spiritualism, classical myths and history, reincarnation, etc. However, the vision from the 1920 Greek cruise is an important influence on the novel.

⁸⁵ H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975) 41, 116, 182; H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision and the Wise Sappho* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982) 19.

⁸⁶ H.D., *Tribute* 53-55. This passage bears a marked similarity to H.D.'s writing in *The Giff*; 'Going down and down in the dark was a sensation to be watched, to be enjoyed even. I had touched rock-bottom. I had gone down under the wave and I was alive, I was breathing. I was not drowning though in a sense, I had drowned; I had gone down, been submerged by the wave of memories and terrors [...] but with the terrors, I had found the joys, too'; H.D., *The Giff* 219.

is the vision itself, new spiritual consciousness and inspired writing. Her own survival and transformation is the key to this new awareness.

For H.D., the Delphic oracle signifies healing. After her illness in 1919 she had dedared to Bryher, 'If I could only feel that I could walk the sacred way to Delphi, I know I would get well'.⁸⁷ Delphi is also connected to artistic inspiration; H.D. mourns the modern separation of religion, art and medicine and suggests that their unity is represented by the tripod (one of the images in her visionary experience on Corfu in Greece). In *Tribute to Freud* she describes telling her visions as 'laying cards on the table,' in expectation of Freud's analysis of the images.⁸⁸ With this reference to Tarot, she simultaneously casts Freud in the role of fortune-teller and aligns her visions with esoteric traditions (Tarot, alchemy, astrology). She connects her writing with her visions and Delphic prophecy, noting that the 'Priestess or Pythoness of Delphi' prophesied in couplets that 'could be read two ways' and 'we can read my writing [...] in two ways or in more than two ways'.⁸⁹ Moreover, by considering the images as writing and referring to them as 'picture-writing' she relates her vision to hieroglyphics.⁹⁰ Although the images are Greek, rather than Egyptian, H.D. considered them to resonate across cultures.⁹¹ Thus she connects her own visions with psychoanalysis, esoteric traditions, ancient religions and art. Vision becomes catalyst for writing, while writing gives expression to vision.

This brings my discussion of H.D. as visionary back around to the question of religion. The religious ideas, images, visions and practices that permeate H.D.'s writing result in a highly creative, idiosyncratic mysticism. As I have previously noted, H.D.'s work presents a profoundly syncretist view of religion; major strands include spiritualism,

⁸⁷ H.D., *Tribute* 50.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 40.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 51.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 44.

⁹¹ Ibid. 51.

Moravian Christianity, astrology and Hermeticism. I would argue that not only is Hermeticism the dominant religious philosophy of *Trilogy*, as Timothy Materer claims, but it is also the worldview that frames her entire oeuvre.⁹² Furthermore, Hermeticism subsumes the other elements of her religious syncretism, as they can all be understood, in H.D.'s formulations, as enabling a search for hidden wisdom. Thus we have Hermetic Christianity, Hermetic spiritualism, a Hermetic approach to pagan mythologies, etc.

Scholars of Hermeticism are quick to point out the complexities, contradictions, diversity and enigmas of this tradition. The proliferation of texts and myths and the complex dynamics of secrecy and revelation make this tradition difficult to track. It spins off in numerous directions – alchemy, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and other strands of esotericism – and has numerous similarities with systems that are, in fact, fundamentally different, such as Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. A pithy definition being hard to come by, Hermeticism is perhaps best characterised as a world-view marked by devotion to Hermes (both god and sage) and the ancient wisdom revealed and concealed in texts ascribed to the sage, Hermes Trismegistus; it is 'a form of thought rather than a doctrine'.⁹³

As well as being a worldview, or system of thought, Hermeticism contributes significantly to H.D.'s stylistics. The close association she draws between writing and Hermeticism is revealed not only in terms of content, but also in the form and style of her work. Umberto Eco argues that the interconnectedness the Hermeticist finds in the world enables an interpretive tradition based in reasoning by way of analogy; each interpretation is partial and unfolds into the next.⁹⁴ A Hermetic reading will always be plural.⁹⁵ As Materer

⁹² Eileen Gregory has pointed out its significance with relation to her early poetry in *Sea Garden* while the title of the late long poem, *Hermetic Definition*, suggests its continued relevance to H.D.'s late poetry; Gregory, 82-84.

⁹³ Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1995) 65. For a more in depth discussion of Hermeticism, see Chapter Three, 114-120.

⁹⁴ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: 1990) 24.

⁹⁵ Faivre, 67.

and Tryphonopoulos argue, H.D.'s associative style is not only a manifestation of her Modernism, but also an expression of Hermeticism: 'one mythical figure or image merges into another, in a manner that defies "fixed meanings", and in a process that her ply-overply stanza forms re-enforces'.⁹⁶

Having outlined the connection between writing and visionary spirituality, we are left with the question of the material. This thesis is titled 'Writing a material mysticism', so how does the material enter my formulation of H.D.'s religious sensibility? The material is a crucial element of H.D.'s work; it will appear and re-appear in different contexts throughout this thesis. Deliberately placed between 'writing' and 'mysticism', the 'material' becomes evident in H.D.'s emphasis on practice, on writing as a physical activity and ritual as a mode of religious praxis. The significance of embodiment, the location of the sacred in the material world and the intersection between the esoteric and the mundane all become arenas for the exploration of material mysticism. Flights of vision are anchored to particular places and transformation is a physical as well as a spiritual or psychological process.

Theoretical tools and critical insights

Drawing upon the interrelated tropes of witness, transformation, alterity and writing in Cixous's work, this thesis explores the construction of material mysticism in H.D.'s Second World War writing, using the following tools and critical insights: trauma theory, ritual theory and Paul Ricoeur's work on metaphor and imagination. As previously indicated,

⁹⁶ Materer, 104. See also, Tryphonopoulos, xxiv. H.D. shares this rhetorical strategy with Jane Harrison, another indication that she was likely familiar with Harrison's work. Gregory points out this feature of Harrison's work, although she does not correlate it to H.D.: 'Harrison's argument [...] relies not on philology or abstract theory but on imaginal association. She establishes a network of interrelated and recurring images from artifacts suggesting the survival in memory and tradition of an archaic theology'; Gregory, 115.

Cixous is the key theoretical conversational partner of this thesis so I will also discuss how her work relates to these additional theoretical models.⁹⁷

Trauma studies: testimony, witness and representation

Scholarship in trauma studies tends to begin with one of three kinds reference: to history (some description of the twentieth century as marked by war, genocide and other disasters); to the mental health profession (particularly the inclusion and definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III* and *IV*); or to the etymology of the word 'trauma' (from the Greek, meaning 'wound').⁹⁸ The last two decades have seen an extraordinary proliferation of research in this emerging interdisciplinary field. Drawing from diverse fields such as psychology (from psychoanalysis to neuropsychology), history, cultural studies, literary criticism, philosophy, critical theory, ethics and pedagogy, trauma studies presents a dizzying array of theories, methods and conclusions.⁹⁹ Trauma has been defined as an external event that happens to a subject, but is an event of such extremity that it evades the

⁹⁷ I am most interested in Cixous as a critic-theorist, therefore I will not consider her fictional or dramatic works at length here. I do make brief references to her novels because, as with H.D., there is a significant overlap between her fiction and non-fiction prose.

⁹⁸ *DSM IV* defines PTSD as follows: 'The essential feature of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate'; *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* Fourth ed. (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994) 424.

It is important to avoid collapsing the definitions of trauma and PTSD. Both of these are contested terms, but in the simplest sense, not all those who experience a trauma will meet the diagnostic requirements of PTSD (which really denotes a cluster of symptoms, rather than any larger claim about the nature of traumatic experience). Moreover, PTSD is a mobile term, particularly as it is deployed in civil and criminal courts, with the categories of symptoms and sufferers proliferating as social conception of what constitutes a traumatic event has changed; Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) 29.

For an etymology of trauma, see 'Trauma', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., 1989, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com 16 October, 2010.

⁹⁹ Neuroscience seeks to observe and/or quantify the biological function and structure that underpins what is subjectively experienced as trauma, including specific aspects of trauma including PTSD. However, biological concerns are beyond the scope of this project; I am interested in the theoretical and cultural approaches to trauma, rather than the scientific.

subject's ordinary mechanisms of incorporation and understanding.¹⁰⁰ Thus a problematic and problematising view of experience, memory and meaning is implicated in trauma's very definition. This forms the nexus of trauma studies relationship with poststructuralism, which shares these concerns, although it tends to approach them from the analysis of language and culture, rather than starting from psychological models of traumatic experience. From the wide field of trauma studies, what is most relevant to this project is the work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub on the related terms of 'testimony' and 'witness' and the implications for subjectivity, community and the construction of meaning as elaborated by a number of feminist theologians.

In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992), Shoshana Felman develops the term 'testimony' as an intervention in the fields of pedagogy, psychoanalysis and literary criticism to do with trauma, particularly the traumas surrounding the Holocaust and its subsequent representation. Felman defines testimony as the representation of trauma in texts that 'do not simply *report facts* but, in different ways, encounter – and make us encounter – *strangeness*'.¹⁰¹ Testimony provokes an encounter with alterity for the reader. For Felman and Laub, it is impossible to discuss testimony without taking up the related term, 'witness', which Laub daims as a necessary therapeutic presence that allows testimony to emerge. It is the witness that calls forth the testimony and thus witness and testifier are related in the production of the discourse that represents trauma.

While Laub focuses on the therapeutic encounter between testifier and witness and the production of knowledge as oral discourse, Felman emphasises the location of the encounter in literature: '*writing* [is] tied up with the act of *bearing witness*' and 'literature is the

¹⁰⁰ Cathy Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience: Introduction', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995) 8.

¹⁰¹ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 7.

alignment between witnesses'.¹⁰² Writing has the ability to foreground the alterity inherent in testimony: 'literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing'.¹⁰³ While trauma may be represented, it can never be fully disclosed, nor will the witness (or testifier) ever have complete mastery of texts of testimony. Critics have suggested that the formal experimentation associated with Modernist texts, especially fragmentation and temporal dislocation, may be attributed to the traumas of modernity, particularly those of the First World War.¹⁰⁴ The large body of criticism on trauma narratives, both fiction and autobiography, is primarily concerned with twentieth-century texts.¹⁰⁵

Influenced by deconstruction and avant-garde poetics, Cixous is concerned with the role of language in the struggle for representation, and the relationship between language and subjectivity.¹⁰⁶ Like many twentieth and twenty-first century thinkers, Cixous wrestles with the complexities of witnessing and representation in the face of the traumas of history, with 'the impossibility of speaking and [...] listening, otherwise than through this silence'.¹⁰⁷ Cixous explores the apparent conflict between creative work and activism in *Vivre l'orange / To live the Orange* (1979). *Orange* stages an encounter between poetics and politics in which Cixous grapples with the questions of how to engage in both writing and

¹⁰² Ibid. 2.

¹⁰³ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 3.

¹⁰⁴ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005) 15-19; Luckhurst, 81.

¹⁰⁵ However, some of these texts do consider traumas further removed, most famously, Toni Morrison's engagement with slavery in *Beloved*. For further discussion of autobiography and trauma, see Alison Easton, 'Subjects-in-Time: Slavery and African-American Women's Autobiographies', *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, eds. Tess Coslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Leigh Gilmore, 'Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity', *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Trev Lynn Broughton (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Janice Haaken, 'The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire in Women's Trauma Stories: Feminist Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychotherapy', *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Victoria Stewart, *Women's Autobiography: War and Trauma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ I will explore this point further in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Felman and Laub, 65.

activism.¹⁰⁸ She concludes that writing is an essential part of living in community with others; she dares it as an act of witness and of love. However, this answer is not definitive, as issues of aesthetics and ethics, writing and history will continue to be provocative questions at the heart of her writing.

In 'Poetry, Passion, and History: Marina Tsvetayeva' (1985-86), Cixous returns to the questions of poetry and politics raised by *Orange*, but now in the context of literary criticism. As critic and teacher, she poses the question '[h]ow does history make its path in a poetic work?' to a number of writers, including Paul Celan, Anna Akhmatova, and Etty Hillesum, in addition to Marina Tsvetayeva.¹⁰⁹ She argues that their writing can be seen as a journey 'toward more than the self, toward another than that self, toward the other'.¹¹⁰ She dares that this openness is writing towards life, even in places of disaster and despair.

The turn to poetics in trauma studies is taken up by Rebecca Chopp. Chopp challenges feminist theology to engage with responses to trauma and to consider what might bring about change. She suggests that a response to trauma demands a shift in the social imaginary which poetics can enable as it 'calls into question the ordering of discourse'.¹¹¹ Thus for Chopp, literature can change the world, as it refashions the myths we live by. I will return to questions of poetics and the social imaginary when I consider the work of Paul Ricoeur on metaphor, but first I will turn to the performative approaches to ritual theory that address the issues of transformation Chopp raises.

¹⁰⁸ I will return to this point in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁹ Hélène Cixous, *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 112.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Rebecca Chopp, 'Theology and the Poetics of Testimony', *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*, eds. Delwin Brown, Sheila Greeve Davaney and Kathryn Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 61.

Ritual theory

The move from trauma theory to ritual theory may appear a startling manoeuvre. However, my approach to each field involves a number of points of contact. Cixous's work allows me to trace these connections, which include transformation, performance and deconstruction. The categories of testimony and witness as developed by Felman, Laub, Chopp and Cixous may be understood as a nexus of performance and discourse. The scene of encounter between testifier and witness that allows the testimony to emerge suggests a ritualised encounter that privileges the performative elements of discourse. The implications for epistemology and representation provoked by the theory of testimony and witness are not limited to trauma theory, but extend to other cultural arenas. In considering the relevance of ritual theory for her reading of H.D., Adalaide Morris turns to performance: 'Like therapy, cultural performances help us think about how we think and discover what we don't know we know'.¹¹² Morris follows ritual theorists in connecting performance and knowledge production, but her link with therapy – the talking cure – connects ritual theory with the work of trauma theorists. The turn to performance in ritual theory, initiated by Victor Turner and Richard Schickel, presents a dynamic view of ritual in which the activity is not merely expressive, but constitutive, of culture: 'Performance approaches seek to explore how activities *create* culture, authority, transcendence, and whatever forms of holistic ordering are required for people to act in meaningful and effective ways'.¹¹³

If Felman has collapsed the distinction between written and oral discourse, ritual theory takes this textualising activity even further, by suggesting that rituals can also be approached as texts: 'We textualize, he [Frederic Jameson] implies, not because rites are intrinsically like texts, but because we approach both looking for meaning as something

¹¹² Morris, 'Signaling': 127.

¹¹³ Catherine Bell, 'Performance', *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 208.

that can be deciphered, decoded, or interpreted'.¹¹⁴ Catherine Bell argues that this is problematic because it requires that the activity of ritual be posited as a 'second-stage representation' of its previously given meaning, which devalues that very activity. However, Bell's critique rests on explicit assumptions of what interpretation entails: 'that the text [...] is autonomous and unified [...] and that its latent meaning is fully accessible'.¹¹⁵ This is a limited view of literary interpretation that does not account for the instability of meaning demonstrated by deconstructive readings. If we see a text as neither autonomous nor simply the code of a previously given, static meaning, but rather as dynamic, then we are able to foreground activity (of ritual, of reading, etc.) as the crucible in which meaning is formed. Bringing in the Hermeticist's desire to read a dynamic universe yields a position which asserts that the whole world, cultural and natural activity alike, is saturated with meaning; it is a text that acts *with* the reader in the production of meaning.

Amy Hollywood emphasises the connection between ritual as text, i.e. a meaningful artefact, and performance, i.e., an activity: 'just as language can be a form of action, so too can actions be forms of signification' and 'just as speech acts mean as well as do, rituals are meaningful actions'.¹¹⁶ Performance is a useful concept because it forms a nexus for text and activity, thus enabling an exploration of writing as a ritual. Deconstruction often accomplishes its aim by use of rhetoric, rather than logic, or by exposing the rhetorical strategies that uphold the texts it seeks to destabilise.¹¹⁷ In its attention to language's dynamism and its self-conscious linguistic virtuosity, deconstruction is a highly performative theoretical practice. Hollywood turns to Derrida's theorisation of the sign as

¹¹⁴ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 45.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Amy Hollywood, 'Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Ritual and Bodily Practice', *Difference in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Philip Goodchild (Ashgate, 2003) 74, 79.

¹¹⁷ Deconstruction attends to rhetoric as intrinsic to writing. As Jane Gallop argues, 'I don't take rhetorical gestures as frosting spread on top of thought; I take rhetoric to be the very place where thought happens'; Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002) 138.

always repeated, yet always changing: ‘it is this reiterative structure, the fact that the sign is the same and yet also differs and defers (both from possible referents and from other signs) that marks its force (and its power of signification)’.¹¹⁸ Here Hollywood argues for a ritual view of language mobilised by paradox; the tension between the repeatability and non-repeatability of the sign emphasises its performative activity.

Cixous elaborates on Derrida’s linguistic deconstructive performance. The adoption of various personas, the incessant word-play, the emphasis on the process of writing, and the interruptions of the unexpected all contribute to the performative in her texts. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, Cixous is concerned with writing as transformation. Transformation itself is a crucial term in performance approaches to ritual, representing the point of disagreement and dialogue between Turner and Schechner: ‘Turner locates the essential drama in conflict and conflict resolution. I locate it in *transformation* – in how people use theater as a way to experiment with, act out, and ratify change’.¹¹⁹ Writing-as-ritual, as transformation, is productive; it produces, not just encodes, knowledge. Bell links this epistemological project to world-creation: ‘attempts to understand our world do not yield simple answers so much as become part of the way we create our world’, which in turn relates to Chopp’s concern with transforming the social imaginary.¹²⁰

Imagination, metaphor and possible worlds

World creation is also important to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur; it emerges from his work on metaphor and imagination which is important to this thesis because it provides a mode of analysis of the intersection of the visionary and the linguistic in both Cixous and

¹¹⁸ Hollywood, ‘Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Ritual and Bodily Practice’, 76.

¹¹⁹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 170. Such transformations are often still contained, preserving the larger status quo (for instance, rites of passage mark changes for individuals without initiating social change) although sometimes rituals involve more significant change.

¹²⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 2.

H.D.'s work. Ricoeur employs a hermeneutical approach to theorising imagination by locating it in the realm of language and meaning-creation.¹²¹ In implicating the imagination in language, 'Ricoeur affirms the more *poetical* role of imagining: its ability to say one thing in terms of another, or to say several things at the same time, thereby creating something *new*'.¹²² Thus Ricoeur arrives at metaphor, which can also be defined as saying one thing in terms of another. Metaphor here is the crux of a dynamic activity of meaning-making. Ricoeur understands metaphor to be inherently creative because it creates new meaning by forging a connection between two things previously thought to be dissimilar:

[M]etaphor displays the work of resemblance because the literal contradiction preserves difference within the metaphorical statement; "same" and "different" are not just mixed together, they also remain opposed. Through this specific trait, enigma lives on in the heart of metaphor. In metaphor, "the same" operates *in spite of* "the different".¹²³

Difference within metaphor provides its dynamism and creative power.

The mobilisation of creativity affected by difference resonates with Cixous's work. She capitalises on Derrida's notion of difference – the always ongoing deferral of meaning from one signifier to another – by elaborating on the shiftiness of language. For Cixous, writing is a way of exploring the alterity hidden and revealed in language, within and between words. Word play and metaphors elaborated across multiple texts invite the mystery at the heart of language to emerge: 'Writing: touching the mystery, delicately, with the tips of the words, trying not to crush it'.¹²⁴ She insists on the mysteriousness and otherness of writing: it exceeds her control: 'I do not control, I do not concept, I chase

¹²¹ Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 35.

¹²² Ibid. 38.

¹²³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* trans. Robert Czerny (London: Routledge, 2003) 232.

¹²⁴ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 134.

after what goes beyond me'.¹²⁵ As an author, she witnesses what is new, unexpected and strange.

Although Ricoeur's thinking on imagination is grounded in linguistics, it is not an iteration of formalism that would seek a hermetically sealed text; the pressure of the world is always coming to bear on language. There is an urgency inherent in this formulation: '[i]magination can be recognized accordingly as the act of responding to a demand for new meaning, the demand of emerging realities to *be by being said* in new ways'.¹²⁶ For Ricoeur, the textual is always dialogical:

The text breaks the circuit of internal reflection and exposes us to intersubjective horizons of language and history. Meaning, as Ricoeur constantly reminds us, involves *someone saying something to someone about something*. This requires us to pay attention to the particular contexts and presuppositions of each speaker and each reader. [...] Interpretation explodes the confines of the timeless reflective subject and disdoses us as language-using beings in a world with others.¹²⁷

The meaning-making power of the imagination is generative, enabling openness to the future: 'This power, to transform given meanings into new ones, enables one to construe the future as the possible theatre of one's liberty, as a horizon of hope'.¹²⁸ As Ricoeur writes, we have not thought 'enough in terms of an imagination which opens up'.¹²⁹ This opening up accomplishes new ways of being in the world: 'to interpret is to explicate the sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text'.¹³⁰ Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor and imagination, difference and transformation, resonates with Rebecca Chopp's call for a poetics of testimony that would re-order discourse, revise the social imaginary and enable new ways of being in the world.

¹²⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

¹²⁶ Kearney, 40.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 39.

¹²⁹ Ricoeur, qtd. in Ibid.

¹³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995) 43.

The new meanings created by metaphor enable 'dislosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening onto possible worlds which transcend the limits of our actual world'.¹³¹ However, Ricoeur's work tends to privilege narrative and is teleological. Cixous's emphasis on the movements of wandering that are not goal-oriented finds a conversational partner in Michel de Certeau whose attention to space and movement provide an alternative to an overriding temporal concern.¹³² In 'Coming to Writing' and 'My Algerian' Cixous explores her sense of not belonging in Algeria and her multilingual childhood environment. She situates herself in sometimes antagonistic but more often amorous contention with the different languages of her childhood. She celebrates the difference of writing/ speaking in a foreign language as an opportunity for the circulation of desire, for a passionate play of language that avoids mastery. As we have seen, Cixous frequently turns to religious language to express the movements of her writing: struggle, mourning, celebration.

Cixous turns to sacred discourse in an attempt to be open to the unknown: 'one does not paint ideas. [...] And in the same way: no writing ideas. There is no subject. There are only mysteries. There are only questions'.¹³³ Yet this involves the very opposite of abstraction; an attention to the particular that is practiced over and over again. An element of this particularity and its interaction with imagination is her ongoing concern with the Algeria of her childhood. In 'My Algerian', she connects questions of language with politics and territory, describing the experience of being on the margins of French Algerian society as Jews, while also being seen as French, and therefore unwelcome outsiders, by the Algerian Arabs. In describing herself as both French and not-French, Cixous embraces being foreign as the experience that gives her access to literature as a place of belonging.

¹³¹ Ricoeur qtd. in Kearney, 41.

¹³² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 91-110; Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 299.

¹³³ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 124.

Never at home in Algeria but also passionately attached to it, she celebrates her own foreignness as a site of plenitude, not lack. Through writing, Cixous engages with the complicated questions of national identity and language at the limits of possibility.

This understanding of language as an exploration of limits brings us back to Cixous's evocative description of God as the shelter of writing. For Cixous, writing is also a sanctuary, the shelter of mystery, difference and new meanings. Yet she envisions sanctuary as the opposite of a safe, cosy space. Ricoeur's insistence that text involves dialogue, 'something said by someone to someone about something',¹³⁴ and his exploration of the creative unfolding of worlds is expressed by Cixous's delineation of writing as the space of encounter with the other: 'Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me'.¹³⁵

Thesis outline

From my opening reading of H.D.'s spirals and wings to these closing comments on Ricoeur, metaphor and imagination and possible worlds, this chapter has covered a wide range of territory. I have elaborated a conversational model of reading that will inform the thesis as a whole, outlined the key texts and contexts for the study and sketched the theoretical tools that will enable the more specific readings that follow. The remaining four chapters of the thesis elaborate the ways in which H.D.'s religious sensibility intersects with creativity, writing and materialism: from her relationships with others in the context of physical and psychic trauma, to the performativity of text and ritual, from the unfolding to metaphor to the emplacement of writing and movements between places. In all of these interventions, attention to the alterity within language and simultaneous grounding of writing in materiality is crucial.

¹³⁴ Kearney, 4.

¹³⁵ Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 86.

The following chapters draw upon the theoretical tools outlined above in analyzing H.D.'s work. Chapters Two and Three focus primarily on H.D.'s work, although they draw upon the theoretical framework outlined above, while Chapters Four and Five shift to a more balanced conversation, staging a dialogue between Cixous's theoretical work and H.D.'s literary texts. Chapter Two, 'Cloud of Witnesses', draws upon testimony and witness developed by Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Rebecca Chopp, Hélène Cixous and others to develop an analysis of trauma and cure in H.D.'s Second World War prose texts, *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. In both texts, the narrators rely on a circle of companions – occasionally casual acquaintances, neighbours temporarily bonded by the trauma of the Blitz, but more often those drawn together by shared spiritual and artistic concerns, circles of visionaries – to contain trauma, and participate in the discovery of hidden wisdom, the elaboration of which allows for a 'writing cure' which initiates healing.

Chapter Three, 'Writing as Ritual', begins by outlining the correlation between performance and the writing cure elaborated in chapter two. Dramatic performances in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* suggest a connection between performance and ritual. The performance approach to ritual theory provides the tools to explore this connection. This chapter argues that ritual may be understood as the nexus between writing and religion in H.D.'s work, as evidenced by Greek drama in *The Sword*, Moravian litany in *The Gift* and alchemical ritual in *Trilogy*. My reading of alchemy in *Trilogy* leads to a consideration of writing as ritual, drawing upon a deconstructionist approach to language and performance.

Chapters Four and Five both draw upon Ricoeur's work. Chapter Four deals more specifically with the inside of writing (metaphor and imagination), while Chapter Five turns to consider the context of writing and imagination. Chapter Four, 'Image, Imagination and Difference', draws upon Ricoeur's work on imagination, metaphor and difference in order to develop a dynamic understanding of image. The chapter focuses on two images –

Cixous's orange and H.D.'s bee/honey – to explore the intersection of materiality, difference and linguistic virtuosity in their work.

Chapter Five, 'Writing as Sanctuary', shifts focus; it turns from the way images traverse H.D. and Cixous's texts, to the context of writing. Cixous and H.D. are expatriates; dwelling places and the flights between and away from them are a significant part of their work. The chapter analyses three spatial metaphors: garden, flight and sanctuary, this last being the third term that mediates between the first two. As the dwelling place of the stranger, mystery, all that escapes, writing becomes the sanctuary that is a place of healing, but one that is open to the movements of flight, theft and encounter.

CHAPTER TWO – CLOUD OF WITNESSES

In considering her oeuvre in the prose reflection ‘H.D. by Delia Alton’ (written in 1950), H.D. comments on the significance of community to her identity as a writer: ‘It is the sense of continuity that inspires me, the feeling of intimate communion or communication that renewed my faith at the end of the war-years’.¹ This ‘intimate communion’ – with previous generations of Moravians through memory and vision, with the spirits of fallen RAF pilots through séance communication and with her companions in the Blitz through more mundane daily encounters – sounds the keynote of her religious belonging. The Moravian Christianity of her childhood and her spiritualist practice in the 1940s merges with her psychoanalytic pursuits and creative activity to yield an idiosyncratic set of beliefs and practices embedded in communities that enabled not only the renewal of H.D.’s faith, but also of her writing.² In H.D.’s writing from this period, the voices of the dead allow the narrator to situate herself within community and form a cloud of witnesses that calls forth her creative work. The significance of community is such that when she becomes isolated, desolation and breakdown follow. The restoration of communication and community through vision, witness and writing leads to healing and a turn from a focus on the past to openness to the future.

This chapter focuses on two prose works from this period, *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. Although *The Sword* was written after the end of the war and is more often

¹ H.D., ‘H.D. by Delia Alton’, *Iowa Review* 16.3 (1986): 195. At the end of the Second World War, H.D. suffered a physical and mental breakdown.

² H.D. joined the London Society for Psychical Research in 1941; there she met the medium, Arthur Bhaduri, and soon developed a spiritualist circle including herself, Bryher, Bhaduri (called Ben Manisi in *The Sword*) and his mother; Helen Sword, ‘H.D.’s Majic Ring’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 14.2 (1995): 347. The other significant strand of religious thought in H.D.’s work, Hermeticism, will be addressed in the following chapter.

compared with H.D.'s other post-war writing,³ the novel's reflections on war lend it to analysis in the context of her work from the early 1940s. *The Sword* is a significant text in terms of H.D.'s development as a writer and religious thinker; it represents a complex engagement with the spiritual, creative and psychoanalytic concerns of her previous texts from the Second World War such as *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *Tribute to Freud*. *The Sword* is a fluid, often highly abstract, text; dreams, séances, memories and interlocking fictional vignettes from different epochs are layered together in a jumble of dialogue, imagery and reverie, with little exposition to guide the reader. *The Gift* is more clearly structured, with a tighter plot and more limited shifts of time and place. Its narrower focus on the London Blitz and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries makes *The Gift*'s plot easier to follow, but it shares many of the concerns of *The Sword*.⁴ Reading the two texts together highlights the way H.D. brings together Moravian Christianity and spiritualism in her concern with attending to the voices of the dead. She uses her Moravian heritage and spiritualist practice as two related modes to explore the spiritual resonances of her wartime experiences; both provide a framework for interpreting dreams and visions, as well as traumatic memories.

In this chapter, I first consider the intersection of spiritualism in *The Sword* with war-time and previous traumas. This leads to a discussion of testimony and witnessing in trauma theory. Trauma theory indicates an aporia, the paradoxical necessity and impossibility of testifying and witnessing to traumatic events. Hélène Cixous and H.D. take trauma theory into a place where it usually does not go. They address the aporia of testimony by expressing the dynamic of testimony and witness in a mystical language of

³ Augustine, *Sword*: 121-32; Laity, 116-117.

⁴ It should be noted that many of the themes in this chapter are reiterated across both texts, but occasionally I choose only to examine one, for the sake of clarity. For example, I will focus less on breakdown and recovery in *The Gift* because I feel it is more fully explored in *The Sword*, although these are features of both texts.

community in which the voices of the absent are heard. Before moving to a reading of community (with the visionary legacy passed down through generations of Moravians) and the writing cure in *The Gift* and *The Sord*, I outline the significant elements of Moravian history for H.D., its affective, erotic spirituality and focus on ritualising communities.⁵ For H.D., healing, reintegration and restoration are worked out through her writing and drawn from the resources of her interpretation of Moravian history and spirituality and her spiritualist practice.

Haunting: spiritualism, trauma and memory

Discussion of trauma, survival and witness inevitably raises spectral questions: what of those who have not survived? Indeed, the traumatic event may be the witness of another's death, with its attendant loss. Patricia Yaeger argues that when writing of trauma, we have a responsibility to the dead to consider 'not only what is our stake in their narratives, but what is their stake in ours'.⁶ H.D.'s engagement with the dead – fallen RAF pilots, her own family members, past generations of Moravians and their Algonquian neighbours – suggests that their narratives and hers are mutually implicated.⁷ They remain part of her audience and interlocutors.

Both the First and Second World Wars witnessed a dramatic resurgence in spiritualism; the bereaved took up 'the paradoxical practice of mourning the dead by refusing to let them die [...] as millions of new dients flocked to spirit mediums in hopes of

⁵ Susan Stanford Friedman associates the writing cure with *The Gift* in her psychoanalytic reading of the text, while Colbey Emmerson Reid argues that H.D. refashions the Freudian talking cure into 'a religious discourse of oracular interpretation' which allowed her to re-enter writing; Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 329; Reid: 2. Diane Chisholm also reads *The Gift* in the context of a writing cure that engages with female sexuality and spirituality; Chisholm, 121-64.

⁶ Patricia Yaeger, 'Consuming Trauma; or, the Pleasures of Merely Circulating', *Journal X* 1.2 (1997): 230.

⁷ Many of the tribes who had contact with the Moravians in what is now Eastern Pennsylvania spoke Algonquian languages, including the Lenape (or Delaware), the Shawnee, the Nanticokes and the Mahicans and thus the related languages delineates a way of referring to these interrelated tribes as a group; Richter and Pencak, xiv; Schutt, 3.

making contact with their dead'.⁸ In this sense, the devotees of spiritualism have more in common with Derrida's melancholic subjects who strive to keep the dead present through discursive openings than with Freud's mourners who seek to incorporate the object of loss or to re-focus libidinal energies and so resolve grief.⁹ Perhaps the most significant difference between spiritualist practice and other forms of haunting is intentionality and desire. A medium may be surprised by the spirits she encounters and the nature of their messages; nevertheless, the presence of the dead is actively sought.¹⁰ In his study of nineteenth-century popular religion and the attendant manifestations of spiritual hearing, Leigh Eric Schmidt defines 'hearkening' as hearing 'a beckoning voice that requires a reply' or an interior listening, and he argues that it is the essential component of spiritualism, among other charismatic religious practices.¹¹ The practice of spiritualism is a process of listening to what the spirits of the dead have to say to the living. Schmidt frames spiritualist discourse as a communal activity, entered into willingly by mediums and spirits and constituting a certain intimacy. It involves both the inner lives of adherents and an external community, in the form of the medium's circle.

Colin Davis argues that the living dead – ghosts – destabilise the categories of presence and absence, past and present, life and death. In many narratives, the dead return in order to present some requirement. Once this demand has been fulfilled by the living,

⁸ Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 2002) 3. Spiritualism emerged in the United States in 1850 and spread to England, where it was popular from the 1860s to the 1880s. Armstrong, 123; Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Nineteenth Century England* (London: Virago Press, 1989) 1. For more on the popularity of spiritualism and the occult in the First and Second World War, see Armstrong, 18; Augustine, 'Sword': 1.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, eds. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', trans. Shaun Whiteside, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* (London: Penguin, 2005) 201-18.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the role of the medium in relation to gender and authority (literary, social and political), see Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism*; Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Nineteenth Century England* (London: Virago, 1989).

¹¹ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000) 35.

the ghosts are banished, thus enacting what is essentially a second death. Conversely, in other narratives, the disturbance remains; the function of the narrative (and the ghost) is to prevent closure: 'The tidy restoration of moral and epistemological orders is resisted, as is the clear delineation of the domains of the living and the dead. [...] They provide ways of thinking about how, in trauma, sadness or fond memory, we live with the dead'.¹² H.D.'s writing blurs Davis' distinction between narratives of closure and narratives of disruption. In *The Sword* and *The Gift*, the dead return for a particular purpose (to share visionary experiences, to pass on the message of peace, and to urge the prevention of war) and yet even as this purpose is fulfilled – the message given or the gift passed on – they do not fully depart, but instead constitute an ongoing openness in the text. The sense of strangeness, the names and voices of the dead, remain in the folds of both texts. Far from a return to the status quo, the texts' resolutions point to a new future. In *The Gift* and *The Sword*, H.D. makes her peace with the dead, and yet continues to attend to them.

In her book on spiritualism and Modernism, Helen Sword claims that '[v]irtually everything that H.D. wrote during and about the World War II years [...] bears witness to an abiding obsession with otherworldly communication, ghostly return, and the spectral phenomenology of memory'.¹³ She goes on to argue that H.D.'s post-war writing, particularly *The Sword*, shows a marked change from the optimistic writing of the war period itself, due to her post-war breakdown. *The Gift*, *Writing on the Wall*, *Majic Ring* and *Trilogy* all reveal H.D.'s conviction of 'the reality and importance of otherworldly inspiration', however, 'never again would she write so optimistically about prophetic and

¹² Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 157.

¹³ Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* 123. For another reading of H.D.'s spiritualism, see Rachel Connor, *H.D. and the Image* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004) 115-131.

visionary experience as during the war years'.¹⁴ While I agree with Sword about the change in tone of H.D.'s writing, I find continuity between *The Sword* and the works composed between 1941 and 1945 in terms of H.D.'s preoccupation with religious experience and artistic practice in the context of war. *The Sword* demonstrates H.D.'s ongoing commitment to her vision, tempered with a greater awareness of the risks and personal cost of such commitment. This sense of cost mitigates the optimism of her earlier work, but provides a greater urgency to her sense of vocation.

Written during the Blitz, *The Gift* figures the threat of being burnt alive in the opening line of the text: 'There was a girl who was burnt to death at the Seminary, as they called the old school where our grandfather was Principal'.¹⁵ Thus the text draws together 1880's Pennsylvania and 1940s London through symmetrical traumatic incidents. After *The Gift*'s opening with fire, and its delineation of H.D.'s fear of bombs more explicitly later in the text, her interest in the RAF airmen who fought the *Luftwaffe* is unsurprising. Her active interest in spiritualism began in 1941, and from early in the war, spirits appear in her writing.¹⁶ Spiritualism forms a larger part of *The Sword*; it is the connection between Delia Alton (H.D.'s pseudonym) and Lord John Howell (a pseudonym for Lord Hugh Dowding, Air Chief Marshal, who appears repeatedly in different guises through the novel's different epochs) as well as allowing the development of a circle of companions, both living and dead. Delia begins a circle with the medium Ben Manisi, his mother and Gareth (Bryher), eventually acting as a medium herself and finally working entirely on her own. It is at this point that she receives messages from a group of fallen RAF pilots.

¹⁴ Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* 254.

¹⁵ H.D., *The Gift* 35. For further discussion of the burning girl and H.D.'s war writing, see Madelyn Detloff, *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 88-106.

¹⁶ A poem from 1941, titled 'R.A.F.' describes an encounter with the ghost of a pilot, who is compared to Hermes as a winged divine messenger; H.D., *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983) 485-92.

The airmen's messages, while ambiguous in terms of exact content, are clearly directed towards political ends: an end to war and prevention of future disasters: 'They wanted to stop the bombs altogether. That is what they were after. We had no time for long descriptions of summer-land, no promise of felicity. There was no one that I knew'.¹⁷ As a medium, Delia acts as a witness to war traumas, although, as we will see, her dreams and hallucinations contain more traumatic detail, while the RAF spirits do not share their own traumas. The dead airmen's reiterated calls for peace indicate H.D.'s desire to resolve the question of survival in a meaningful way. Even a spectral return must have some purpose.

Delia reiterates her conviction of the interrelation between psychological experience, politics and spiritual realities: 'Probably, it was the struggle to comprehend the incomprehensible actions that were taking place outside, that forced me by a law of compensation, to try to grapple with the forces inside myself, or outside the material world'.¹⁸ There is a refusal of sentimentality here, an insistence on a practical aim and moving towards the future, rather than mourning the past. It is not Delia's own dead who return to her, but strangers. However, there is a double-haunting in the narrative, as Delia's experiences in the séances evoke her memories of the First World War, the breakdown of her marriage and eventual deaths of her husband and her brother.¹⁹ Presence and absence mingle; the RAF ghosts themselves are present in the spirit and absent in the flesh. Moreover, the presence of the ghosts indicates the absence of those dead who are not

¹⁷ H.D., *The Sword* 47.

¹⁸ Ibid. 67.

¹⁹ This is a clear example of the fictionalisation of H.D.'s life in *The Sword*. H.D.'s husband, Richard Aldington, did not die in the First World War, although they did separate at that time. Their relationship became more amiable in the late 1930s. They divorced in 1938 but they renewed a correspondence in 1937 that continued until H.D.'s death in 1961; Caroline Zilboorg, ed., *Richard Aldington & H.D.: Their Lives in Letters 1918-61* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 1, 241. H.D. consulted Aldington on the publication prospects of *The Sword*; although he read the text in draft, we have no indication of his reaction to being fictionally killed off; Zilboorg, ed., 263-67.

among their company. The descriptions of the séances convey an uncanny intimacy as Delia becomes attached to these anonymous spirits and vows to memorialise them: 'I have said that their dreams shall not be in vain, nor they forgot while I am alive to remember them'.²⁰

Although H.D. did not continue to practice as a medium after her post-war breakdown, *The Sword* does not repudiate this practice, or the ghosts themselves. The historical vignettes provide an opportunity to restage and (somewhat) resolve the war's conflicts and traumas, but she finally reiterates the significance of the paradoxical presence and absence of the airmen as the text concludes with the names of "the few," inscribed on the sheets of vellum of The Battle of Britain book that rests in the centre of the Memorial Chapel in Westminster Abbey'.²¹ Following the series of vignettes that layer the personal and the historical, the text concludes with a formalised, official remembrance. However, this short final chapter is titled 'Goldwings', which alludes to the RAF pilots, the eagle carried by the Duke of Normandy in the last historical story and the poem 'Golden Wings' by William Morris 'about a land that knew "[l]ittle war," which in the end must go to war'.²² Additionally, 'wings' is one of the key words for Delia's initial encounters with the medium Ben Manisi, so the word symbolises her spiritualism and her creative work, which are also linked through the William Morris table which was used for their séances.²³ Thus the final chapter brings together official remembrance with informal spiritualist practice and a creative vision that insists on the ongoing presence of the absent.

²⁰ H.D., *The Sword* 133.

²¹ Ibid. 267.

²² Cynthia Hogue and Julie Vandivere, 'Introduction', *The Sword Went out to Sea: (Synthesis of a Dream)*, by Delia Alton (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) xliii.

²³ H.D., *The Sword* 4-16, 9.

Helen Sword argues that in H.D.'s Second World War writing, 'memory proves a welcome and redemptive ghost'.²⁴ However, in *The Gift*, and even more so in *The Sword*, there is a negative side to this spectre. Many of the memories evoked in both novels are painful or destructive and must be transformed before they can be redemptive. H.D.'s interest in psychoanalysis here becomes evident. The narrator takes on a detached tone, as she analyses her childhood and her responses to her current predicament. In the first chapter of *The Gift*, H.D. suggests that the unconscious carries spiritual inheritance, as well as psychic drives and repressed trauma: 'Shock can also, like an earthquake or an avalanche, uncover buried treasure'.²⁵ For H.D., joyful and painful memories are folded together as her 'war terror' releases memories of childhood trauma, which in turn uncover memories of her spiritual inheritance:

I had gone down, been submerged by the wave of memories and terrors, repressed since the age of ten and long before, but with the terrors, I had found the joys, too. The gate that opens to let out the Old Witch serves [...] to release Saint Nicholas and the Princess with the Star on her forehead who was Mamalie's Morning Star whose name was Angelica and Aunt Agnes' name was Angelica, so when Mamalie called me Agnes, I was Morning Star or I was Anna von Pahlen.²⁶

H.D. links psychoanalysis to her gynocentric genealogy, taking on the spiritual gift of both her grandmother's generation and the colonial Moravian Anna von Pahlen through an intricate naming pattern.²⁷

²⁴ Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* 124.

²⁵ H.D., *The Gift* 50.

²⁶ Ibid. 219. In *The Gift*, the Moravian Anna von Pahlen exchanges names with the Shawnee chief Paxnoux's wife, whom H.D. calls Morning Star, as a sign of the peaceful pact between Moravians and Shawnee tribes; this creates another layer of spiritual genealogy; Augustine, 'Introduction', 22. Jane Augustine notes that H.D.'s primary source for Moravian history, Joseph Mortimer Levering's *A History of Pennsylvania*, does not mention Paxnoux's wife's name but her baptism is recorded; Augustine, 'Introduction', 28n46. Although Morning Star was baptised, in *The Gift*, H.D. is concerned with a more esoteric interaction that takes place between the two religious communities and their shared vision which passes on to Mamalie and Hilda than in the Christian baptism.

²⁷ For a discussion of H.D.'s imaging of a feminine divine through aligning Anna von Pahlen with both a feminine Holy Spirit and Christ, see Augustine, 'Introduction', 22-23. H.D. frequently uses word plays on names and nicknames to indicate sacred affinities. In *Tribe* she aligns Anna (she also includes the names Hannah and Grace) with the angel Annael – whose spelling she changes from Anael to more closely resemble

The importance of intimate communities to H.D. is also emphasised through the negative consequences of their loss. In *The Gift* we see the threat to community by the physical and psychological destruction of total war as an echo of the massacre of Native Americans after the peace with the Moravians was broken.²⁸ In *The Sword*, when communication is interrupted (by Lord Howell), Delia becomes isolated, which leads to confusion, hallucinations and breakdown:

It was only after his last letter, dismissing my communications as “frivolous and uninspiring,” that the poison took effect. It was then that I felt myself plague-stricken. It was then that I visualized the streets of gibbets. It was then that I walked with eyes wide open, into Hell.²⁹

Delia sees the disruption of her attempts at communion with the RAF pilots and Howell as the catalyst for her breakdown:

The work with the table had concentrated my scattered thoughts and energy and had given me hope. [...] I was asked to deliver certain messages. I had tried to do this. But when the messages were repudiated, I felt that I had no place any longer, in this world.³⁰

Here we see the connection between social and spiritual bonds and belonging in the world. Without a recognised place and project within a circle of others, Delia feels herself absolutely displaced.

The editors of *The Sword* point out that the description of H.D.’s breakdown is not ‘simply a catalogue of Delia’s hallucinations, but also a revisionary reading of them’.³¹ *The Gift* and *The Sword* are not purely confessional texts (if there are such things) but complex

Anna: thus aligning her own genealogy with the ‘planetary Angels’ (the name Morning Star may also reference the importance of the planetary Angels, especially Venus, to H.D.); H.D. ‘Letter to Viola Jordan, 25 March, 1945’; Hollenberg, ed., 45. In *The Sword* there are two Blanche’s (Blanchfleur/Blanchmain) and of course her has her own constellation of names, nicknames and pseudonyms (Hilda Doolittle, Hilda Aldington, KAT, H.D., Delia Alton, etc.).

²⁸ In her notes to *The Gift*, H.D. describes how peace was established and then broken by European settlers: ‘The savages at the new Gnadenhütten were white savages’; H.D., *The Gift* 273. Jane Augustine notes that ‘[i]n order to break down the stereotype of the Native American “savage” and to connect with the Second World War context, H.D. refers to the “white savages” as “Aryan,” the Nazis of their time’; H.D., *The Gift* 287 n220.

²⁹ H.D., *The Sword* 95.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hogue and Vandivere, xxxiv.

literary constructions in which H.D.'s experience is selectively recounted in such a way as to contribute to her pacifist project. Hogue and Vandivere suggest that *The Sword* is primarily a work of mourning:

[A] testament to and working through of [...] the grief sustained, repressed, sublimated by the generation of women who saw two world wars and were called "shrill" or mad or both when they tried to protest that *nur* is mad. [...] One might say that it is a mad grief – something that looks like madness but isn't, something that is closer to fury.³²

By writing out the repressed grief and fury of a generation, H.D. attempts to map out a cure through creative practice. Paradoxically, she presents madness as a reasonable response to the terrors of war, while simultaneously presenting Lord Howell as lacking in courage to face up to the consequences of the spirits' visits:

His barbed shaft had not killed me; perhaps, he feared that mine might drive him mad. Madness might do; provided I didn't gibber and hurl things at people, I didn't mind if he thought me a little crazy. But I didn't think I was. Later, I was to reconstruct a world of fantastic terror; I heard sirens and guns, after the war was over. I thought my friends were dead and the city struck down with plague.³³

Despite her desolation at Lord Howell's rejection, Delia is here suggesting that her spiritualist experiences are not the result of madness, although her later hallucinations may be. She writes on madness in a dual register, presenting it at one moment as a chosen refuge in which to express her grief and anger and the next moment as a terrifying episode of hallucinations and confusion. The text oscillates between Delia's confidence in her

³² Ibid. xv.

³³ H.D., *The Sword* 90. I use the word 'madness' here deliberately, partly because H.D. uses it herself in the course of *The Sword*, but also in order to avoid an anachronistic use of clinical language. To modern readers, it seems fairly likely that Delia suffers from some kind of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. However, this is problematic partially because this diagnosis did not come into use until the 1970s and also because the symptoms are unclear (there is uncertainty around whether Delia's experiences are hallucinations, flashbacks, or memories). *The Sword* is autobiographical fiction, not a case study and there is no diagnosis presented in the text (there is very little about Delia's treatment in the novel – it is clearly not the focus of the narrative). Therefore I find it more appropriate to use a generic word like 'madness' to indicate the strange, hallucinatory experience Delia undergoes, rather than a term like 'mental illness' which carries clinical connotations. Moreover, 'madness' also denotes the rage Delia feels at the ongoing destruction of war.

visions and despair at the meaninglessness of these experiences when they remain unshared:

[T]hrough the mediation of the little table, [the RAF pilots] were not dead. They spoke, they laughed, they crowded around the table. But what they said or what they would have said, could now no more concern us. There was the roll of drums. There was the moon-circle that was broken. It was all a dream, a fantasy, a delusion. The arrows of the Moon bring madness. It had never happened, really. It was far too beautiful to have happened, even in a dream. They were dead and I was a middle-aged, tired woman.³⁴

Here H.D. blurs the lines between madness and sanity, 'mad grief' and desolation. The subsequent historical narratives play against and alongside the initial hallucinatory return of the immediate past as she searches for meaning for her losses in the distant past and imagines alternative outcomes.

By foregrounding her 'mad grief', H.D. sets the stage for the rest of the narrative to develop various strategies for healing from the practical – removal from the scene of trauma – to the visionary – Delia experiences consolatory as well as frightening hallucinations. The text becomes a 'recovery document', as the psychoanalytic cast to the narrative highlights.³⁵ The analytic voice emerges early in the narrative, revealing how the changes to the physical cityscape prompt internal upheavals:

The debris that cluttered the streets of London, sometimes left a half-house open. [...] One looked into rooms in another dimension. So I think this externalization of peoples' private lives, somehow in the end, sliced open one's own house. One looked into one's own interior private life, a life shut off until now, even to oneself.³⁶

The reversal of inner and outer lives gives psychic and spiritual experiences greater political and social relevance, as well as establishing the reflection on Delia's inner life which will continue throughout the text. Her recovery is affected by returning to the distressing

³⁴ Ibid. 91.

³⁵ Augustine, *Sword*: 130.

³⁶ H.D., *The Sword* 57. The psychological reading of architectural destruction resonates with H.D.'s other Second World War writing. For further discussion of the significance of the London cityscape in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, see Graham: 164-67, 179-80.

symptoms of her illness and seeking to make sense of her breakdown by relating it firstly to her own previous experiences and then to the larger pattern she traces through the historical vignettes. Eventually, she consoles herself by explaining Howell's rejection as paradoxically sustaining her fragile health:

But if I had stayed in London [...] I would by this time, have broken down completely. Famine and constant preoccupation with the problems of sheer, every-day existence, would finally have undermined my constitution. [...] Is it possible that Lord Howell's Z [a spirit] prompted him to dissuade me?³⁷

Delia and Howell are here portrayed as led by the spirits, who have a greater awareness of their frailties. Delia adjusts her purpose from communicating the RAF pilots' message to Lord Howell to the broader project of writing *The Sword*. Therefore, writing becomes the vehicle both of self-analysis and the means of changing direction to a larger project with a visionary scope that encompasses all who have been traumatised by the wounds of war, as I will demonstrate through the remainder of this chapter.

Trauma: testimony, witness and intersubjectivity

Both *The Gift* and *The Sword* can be read as trauma narratives.³⁸ Written in the context of the Second World War and for a post-war audience (a survivor audience), they also address earlier traumas from H.D.'s childhood (in *The Gift*) and the First World War (in *The Sword*). *The Sword* briefly indicates her difficulties from the First World War, suggesting the return of these traumas as part of the later conflict.³⁹ From the wide spectrum of trauma theory,

³⁷ H.D., *The Sword* 121.

³⁸ Although Friedman does not refer to *The Gift* as a trauma narrative, her argument that it acts as a self-analysis and her delineation of several traumatic events in the text place *Penelope's Web* in this category of readings; Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 329-350. See also, Detloff, 88-101; Suzette Henke, 'H.D.: Psychoanalytic Self-Imaging', *Shattered Subjects*, ed. Suzette Henke (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) 25-42. *Trilogy* has also been read as a trauma text, see Sarah H. S. Graham, 'Falling Walls: Trauma and Testimony in H.D.'s *Trilogy*', *English* 56.Autumn (2007): 299-319.

³⁹ The First World War was an exceptionally traumatic time for H.D., with a stillbirth, the breakup of her marriage, the death of her brother in France and her father's subsequent death in February 1919. Following the war, H.D. and her newly born daughter, Perdita, became seriously ill with influenza. H.D. considered her

what is most relevant to this project is the terminology of testimony, witness (as developed by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub and deployed theologically by Rita Nakashima Brock, Rebecca Parker and Melissa Raphael) and survival (as explored by Rebecca Chopp and Bruno Bettelheim). After providing a brief overview of these terms and their significance for this project, I will then consider how Hélène Cixous's work provides a compelling approach to the dynamic interrelationships between these issues and writing. In her work, writing becomes both a means of expressing trauma, witnessing to it and generating a creative response. The intersection of Cixous's work and trauma theory provides the framework for my reading of H.D.'s creative and religious response to trauma. For both Cixous and H.D., writing is a mystical practice which opens a way through trauma's aporia, the paradoxical necessity and impossibility of speaking the unspeakable.

We can begin to map out the terrain of testimony and witness by considering Felman and Laub's volume, *Testimony*, a landmark text in trauma studies and one that bears particular relevance for this project. It is an interdisciplinary work, bringing together discourses of literary criticism, psychoanalysis, history and pedagogy in its analysis of oral narratives from Holocaust survivors and literary texts written about the Holocaust. The book is a result of a collaboration of the literary critic Shoshana Felman (known for her psychoanalytic and deconstructionist criticism), and the psychoanalyst Dori Laub (who co-founded the Holocaust Survivors Film Project in 1979; in 1981 the collection was deposited at Yale as the cornerstone for the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies).⁴⁰ Trauma has been defined as an extreme event that disorders the subject's normal capacity

lost child a war casualty, claiming that the stillbirth was brought about after she was told of the sinking of the *Lusitania*; H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975) 40. Trudi Tate discusses H.D.'s understanding of war trauma extending to her unborn child in the context of discourse on civilian war neuroses in the First World War; Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998) 10-20. See also, Henke, 42-53.

⁴⁰ 'Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies', 2009, Yale University Library, Available: www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/index.html, 11 August.

for understanding and engaging with the world. Trauma intersects with writing in the discourse of testimony, an important term for trauma studies. The term ‘testimony’ references both legal and religious discourse. In this formulation, what is retained from these other areas is a sense of the weight of response – responsiveness and responsibility.

In her development of a theoretical understanding of testimony, Felman collapses two kinds of discourse: written texts and oral narratives. She describes testimony as ‘a performative speech act’, yet the majority of her contribution to *Testimony* considers literary texts; this suggests that oral narratives are texts to be read and that texts function as speech.⁴¹ Testimony as the discourse of trauma has two primary characteristics; it is fragmentary and it is excessive in its attempt to delineate an event that evades coherent memory: ‘testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance [...] events in excess of our frames of reference’.⁴² This sense of fragmentary narratives, ‘bits and pieces of a memory’, is developed by Dori Laub, who cites writers such as Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel who claim a paradoxical impossibility and necessity of writing ‘through this silence’, of remembering and forgetting.⁴³

In *Testimony*, witness emerges as a related term to testimony, as a necessary precursor. Dori Laub theorises witnessing, or listening, as the necessary action that enables the testimony to achieve its form, however fragmentary it may be. Thus the discourse of trauma is inherently dynamic and relational. The residue of the courtroom and the religious community in the term testimony emphasises the relationship between the speaker and those spoken to. In her emphasis on testimony as performative speech, Felman suggests that the role of audience is crucial to testimony’s existence. One of the defining factors of

⁴¹ Felman and Laub, 5.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. 65.

testimony is its ability to appoint a witness.⁴⁴ Conversely, this encounter depends upon the witness, the listener, to enable the testimony to emerge, particularly in the case of oral narratives. For Laub, this demands an emotional investment of the witness to contain the testimony. Laub argues that the encounter between testifier and listener allows knowledge to emerge, knowledge that was unavailable to the traumatized subject before the encounter:

My attempt as interviewer and as listener was precisely to respect [...] the subtle balance between what the woman knew and what she did not, or could not, know. It was only at the price of this respect, I felt, [...] that what the woman did know in a way that none of us did [...] could come forth and could receive, indeed, a hearing.⁴⁵

This encounter is the site of dynamic knowledge production, as knowledge emerges that the speaker may not have had prior access to: 'In the process of the testimony to a trauma [...] what is important is the situation of *discovery* of knowledge – its evolution, and its very *happening*'.⁴⁶ As we will see in the later analysis of *The Gift*, H.D. experiences a similar discovery of knowledge when her inner exploration of war trauma reveals the spiritual insights of her childhood that she had unconsciously buried.

The therapeutic nature of the encounter is integral. The responsibility of the witness for containing the distress and hopelessness of the testifier is immense, but it is precisely this affect which allows the testimony to be heard: 'there has to be an abundance of holding and of emotional investment in the encounter, to keep alive the witnessing narration; otherwise the whole experience of the testimony can end up in silence, in complete withholding'.⁴⁷ The emergence of testimony is a fragile process. This 'libidinal investment', the containment and development of safe space for knowledge to unfold brings witness closer to the religious community than the courtroom. In considering the

⁴⁴ Ibid. 2-6.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 61.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 71.

response of theology to trauma, Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker argue that '[s]alvation begins with the courage of witnesses whose gaze is steady'.⁴⁸ However, as Brock and Parker admit in their analysis of the effects of violence, the transforming presence of the witness is all too often threatened and (nearly) annihilated. I would suggest that a theology of provisional presence holds together the gaze of the witness (steady or no), the hope for transfiguration and the acknowledgement of fragility.

Laub describes the Holocaust itself as an 'event without a witness [at the time of its occurrence]', arguing that there was no possibility of witnessing from outside or inside, without being contaminated by the traumatic event.⁴⁹ But I find this a limited understanding of witness that depends on absolute separation of victim/testifier, witness and perpetrator (and those who may not be perpetrators but guilty of some degree of complicity). There are both ethical and legal motivations for such clear categorisation; however, this begs the question of the flexibility of the category of witness and the complex ethical questions which arise from the messiness of reality.⁵⁰ The question of perpetrators who may have been coerced into their role, victims who victimise others in order to survive, witnesses who are traumatised *by* witnessing, and the fragmentary, provisional witnessing that may indeed occur in the traumatic scene complicate agency and attempts to construct clear demarcations between categories. Melissa Raphael argues that the activities of care between fellow victims in Auschwitz enacted a kind of witnessing to

⁴⁸ Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) 250. *Proverbs of Ashes* deconstructs theologies built on models of redemptive suffering and turns to the language of trauma studies to consider alternatives.

⁴⁹ Felman and Laub, 81.

⁵⁰ Laura Brown and Henry Krystal indicate the importance of clear categories in the legal arena. Laura S. Brown, 'Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Henry Krystal, 'Trauma and Aging: A Thirty-Year Follow-Up', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

the humanity of the other. She contends that the actions of care between women in the camps created a brief, provisional shelter for the presence of God:

From a post-Holocaust perspective, relationship in Auschwitz was a staying-there with the suffering other that was an act of gracious love: a love infused with a mysterious energy that was, in the circumstances, miraculous. [...] When even one woman in Auschwitz saw the neighbouring other and, moved by her seeing, refused to defect from the (obscured) humanity of that abjected other, hers was an ethico-aesthetic judgement made in the moment of not looking away. And the aesthetic is the theological in so far as it is grounded in a theology of image: the visibility of God (only just) present to experience.⁵¹

Raphael is at pains to point out that this in no way mitigates the horror of the Nazi atrocity and that all too often the concentration camp inmates had no ability or resources (internal or otherwise) to offer such care. She reminds us of the risks of encounter; that all too often an encounter, a moment of being seen, was deeply dangerous and could lead to death.

Rebecca Chopp has addressed questions of the significance of testimony as a discourse for theology. She suggests a reconfiguration of theology and theory in relationship to texts of testimony: 'I prefer to speak of the poetics of testimony for those discourses – poetry, novels, theory, theology – that speak of the unspeakable and tell of the suffering and hope of particular communities who have not been authorized to speak'.⁵² In considering testimony's challenge to theory and theology, Chopp remains close to the space of alterity: 'I want to underscore the importance of respecting and protecting this gap between the named and the unnameable. [...] We must resist sublating the gap, assuming that language either captures the event [...] or is itself the event'.⁵³ In this way, Chopp reiterates Felman's claim for testimony as exceeding our frameworks for understanding, including language. However, like Brock and Parker, Chopp is interested in testimony's

⁵¹ Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 100-101.

⁵² Chopp, 61.

⁵³ Ibid. 64.

power for transformation: ‘poetics seeks [...] to refigure, to reimagine and refashion the world. Poetics is discourse that [...] calls into question the ordering of discourse within [...] the “social imaginary”’.⁵⁴ Here, Chopp is close to H.D. and Cixous’s engagement with poetic language as transformative, a point I will return to in the following chapter.

As with psychoanalysis, theology considers trauma by asking what is required as a response. Chopp suggests that the purpose of testimony is survival: ‘The telling of these stories is for life, for the mending of life, the healing of life, the ability of life to live and survive and thus conquer this extremity. [...] [S]urviving is both resistance and hope’.⁵⁵ While I find the use of the language of conquest problematic because of its invocation of violence and domination, Chopp’s argument leads to a consideration of healing which is latent, if not explicit, in much of trauma studies. However, it is important to point out a contrasting understanding of survival. In a reading of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Cathy Caruth argues that survival itself is traumatic and presents a challenge to assimilation: ‘Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt *to claim one’s own survival*’.⁵⁶ H.D.’s work demonstrates the tension between these two modes of understanding survival and traumatic return, as she continues to struggle to make meaning out of her own survival: ‘what saved us? what for?’⁵⁷ This aligns with Bruno Bettelheim’s understanding of survivorship in which the post-traumatic subject is faced with the burden of ‘how to live with an existential predicament which does not permit of any solution’.⁵⁸ Bettelheim

⁵⁴ Ibid. 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 62.

⁵⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 64.

⁵⁷ H.D., *The Walls Do Not Fall*, Trilogy (New York: New Directions, 1998) 1:51. Friedman describes *The Gift* and *Triology* as ‘testaments to survival’; I would add *The Sword* to this list; Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 351. As Bruno Bettelheim points out, although these questions are common among survivors, it is important to affirm that survivors have no obligation to prove they were *worth* saving, as this would suggest that those who did not survive were *not* worth saving; Bruno Bettelheim, *Surviving the Holocaust* (London: Collins, 1986) 39.

⁵⁸ Bettelheim, 36.

suggests that reintegration after the disintegration caused by profound trauma is precarious and an ongoing process.⁵⁹

As Felman argues, texts of testimony may provoke a witness but this is not a straightforward relation. Testimony is bound up with alterity, with what we cannot know: ‘the texts that testify do not simply *report facts* but, in different ways, encounter – and make us encounter – *strangeness*’.⁶⁰ I suggest that this is exactly the work Cixous’s writing performs. Through these terms – ‘texts’, ‘encounter’ and ‘strangeness’ – she develops a mystical framework for the aporia of testimony, crafting a space for testimony and witness in which the witnesses not only encounter strangeness, but are transformed by it.

Cixous’s work invokes the etymology of trauma as wound. In her preface to the collection of essays, *Stigmata*, she stresses two contrasting results of a wound – scars and stigmata:

The texts collected and stitched together sewn and resewn in this volume share the trace of a wound. [...] The stigma is a scar that is difficult to efface. [...] The scar adds, the stigma digs, excavates [...] the literature in me wants to maintain and reanimate traces.⁶¹

The scar denotes both the healing of a wound and the inevitable, ongoing remnant of the wound, while stigmata encode an absence, the indentation of the wound without the addition of scar tissue. This notion of reanimated traces indicates the spectral return, the haunting, that is so prevalent in texts of trauma. In her work, Cixous addresses traces in her personal and familial history as well as the wider historical sweep of modernity’s traumas. In the section of *Rootprints* titled ‘Albums and Legends’, she records family history alongside photographs and lists of relatives, with their birth and death dates and location.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 36-48.

⁶⁰ Felman and Laub, 7.

⁶¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* x, xiv.

Born just before the Second World War, of a German Jewish mother and French Pied-Noir Sephardic father, she is aware of the fragility of survival:

My life begins with graves. They go beyond the individual, the singularity. I see a sort of genealogy of graves. [...] The families of my mother, very large as Jewish families often are, had two fates: the concentration camps on the one hand; on the other, the scattering across the earth [...] the echoes always came from the whole earth. From all the survivors.⁶²

The echoes of both the living and the dead animate Cixous's writing as she forms her work into an act of witnessing like we have seen in H.D.'s attention to the spirits of the RAF pilots and her own spiritual ancestors. For Cixous, the categories between living and dead, between witnessing to trauma and constructive renewal are always blurred, as she continues to daim the value of artistic practice: 'My own recipe stays always the same. It consists in urging readers to plant flowers, both metaphorically and concretely'.⁶³

Cixous adds another word of the courtroom and religious community; confess, as in 'I confess the orange'.⁶⁴ As with much of Cixous's vocabulary, the word deploys multiple meanings, indicating both belief or commitment and admission of guilt. Cixous clearly engages with the difficulties of witnessing in much more direct ways than H.D.'s more oblique indications. Cixous complicates the dynamic of testimony and witness by adding the third term of confession. Both response and silence are fraught with dangers: 'We are all guilty innocents. We are guilty of being innocent. That is, guilty of innocence. Or of guilt. That is, innocent guilty ones'.⁶⁵ She makes the scandalous daim for the value of poetic writing: 'Is it possible to write a poem in a concentration camp? Perhaps I am wrong

⁶² Pied-Noir refers to those of French nationality born in Algeria before Algerian independence; 'Pied Noir', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2009, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com, 16 October 2010. Cixous's father, Georges Cixous, had French nationality (although this was revoked during the Vichy regime) but his ancestors had 'followed the classic trajectory of the Jews chased from Spain to Morocco'; his grandparents settled in Oran, Algeria; Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 182-196.

⁶³ Cixous, *Readings* 122.

⁶⁴ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 32.

⁶⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 48.

in asking the question. It is rather the poem that allows one to stand the concentration camp'.⁶⁶ We can make (some) sense of this extravagant claim by noting that Cixous wrote this in the context of Etty Hillesum's joy in Rilke in the Westerbork deportation camp: 'Rilke owes an immense amount to Etty Hillesum, since she gives him a life. An exchange of life exists between the two'.⁶⁷ This connection between reader and writer is crucial to Cixous, and she approaches it again and again in her work. For Cixous, reading and writing are as intertwined as testimony and witness.

For Cixous, writing-reading is the place of encounter. She has recently written of Derrida, 'We speak to one another so as to hear ourselves read, to know how to read, to write ourselves speaking, to give ourselves the writing that is in speech, sometimes so as to take words from each other's mouths'.⁶⁸ She develops her understanding of writing as a movement towards encounter through the work of Paul Celan:

As Celan's themes tell us, poetry addresses and moves toward the other. Eventually, it becomes a calling to the other. It is the hope of the other, the other in us, in despair. [...] We have to go to its encounter. Such is poetic process, a move that becomes a political activity in an ethical mode. If we have a sense of the delicacy of the world, this is exactly what we have to do.⁶⁹

This calling to the other can be understood as testimony, while the place of encounter is that of the nexus of witness, testimony and confession. Cixous situates her writing and reading practice in the midst of hope and despair, where the stakes are high and yet the

⁶⁶ Cixous, *Readings* 113.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hélène Cixous, *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007) 13.

⁶⁹ Cixous, *Readings* 149. Celan is an important writer for trauma studies and is another point of contact between Cixous and Felman. For further discussion of his work in the context of testimony and poetics, see Cixous, *Readings* 130-32; Felman and Laub, 25-42; Heather Walton, *Imagining Theology: Women, Writing and God* (London: T & T Clark, 2007) 46-47, 57-58.

delicacy of the world, the fragility of survival and ‘the joy of loving a leaf’ also demands expression and a witness.⁷⁰

In Celan’s essay ‘The Meridian’, we see ‘encounter’ brought together with ‘strangeness’ in the poem’s movement towards the Other: ‘But doesn’t the poem [...] at this point participate in an encounter – *in the mystery of an encounter*? The poem wants to reach the Other, it needs this Other. [...] It searches it out and addresses it’.⁷¹ The sense of mystery involved in the encounter with the Other suggests the precarious and always only partially known development of mystical community, as well as the contribution that poetry makes to political responses to trauma. Celan draws upon the language of the sublime to indicate his understanding of the encounter that is both mysterious and intimate. He makes an ethical claim here, asserting the task of the poem to speak ‘in the cause of an Other’.⁷² I would suggest that this involves an eliding of the distinction between witness and testimony, that this poetic speech is testimony to witnessing. With Cixous, we can see the dangers of appropriating the voices of others in this configuration. Yet this is also required if silence is not to be the only response to trauma, hence her insistence on the writer’s lack of innocence. A striking feature of Celan’s writing throughout ‘The Meridian’ is the number of dashes, hesitations, repetitions and abrupt changes of direction. The precarious nature of Celan’s speech indicates evidence of trauma; it is a fractured discourse that resists closure.

The foregoing discussion of trauma theory has moved from an introduction of key terms such as testimony and witness to a consideration of how these terms are constituted in writing and what they bring to issues of poetics. In bringing together a diverse set of thinkers – psychoanalysts, cultural and literary critics, theologians – the resonances between

⁷⁰ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 78.

⁷¹ Paul Celan, ‘The Meridian’, *Chicago Review* 29.3 (1978): 37.

⁷² *Ibid.*: 35-36.

the terminology of trauma studies and the concerns of contemporary criticism with subjectivity and representation are brought into sharp relief. With the help of Cixous, we have seen how testimony and witness are in dynamic relation and emerge in the place of encounter (Cixous's 'confession'). The work of Paul Celan, Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker, Melissa Raphael and Rebecca Chopp suggests that the work of testimony and witness generates an encounter with the other that is both intimate and profoundly strange, both known and unknowable. This mysterious alterity allows for transformation and (provisional) healing (a healing that is always in process, as Bettelheim reminds us). The rest of this chapter considers *The Gift* and *The Sword* in this context; it explores the importance of encounter as evidenced by the intimate communion with others emphasised in these texts and draws upon H.D.'s religious understanding as a crucial factor enabling this communion. Finally, it returns to a more direct consideration of the role of writing in staging an encounter between testimony and witness and enabling survival.

Moravian genealogy and history

As I have already indicated, *The Gift* may be read as a self-analysis in which H.D. uses the tools from her encounter with Freud to grapple with both newly remembered traumas from her childhood and the current wartime traumas. In conducting a self-analysis, H.D. acts as witness to her own testimony – her writing providing the space for containment and libidinal investment needed to enable testimony and its associated knowledge to emerge. However, *The Gift* is not framed entirely by psychoanalysis; it is a spiritual narrative, in which a mystical communion with current companions, family members and long dead Moravians provides a way through the impossibility of testimony. Here the voices of the dead (or absent) are not those of young men killed in war, but H.D.'s own family (particularly her grandmother) and previous generations of Moravians. Through

construction of female genealogies, H.D. connects her personal and familial memories to Moravian history.

Although much of *The Gift* focuses on H.D.'s childhood memories, it is not an escapist novel of nostalgic desire, but a deliberate return to the past in order to recover the wisdom hidden in childhood for the benefit of the war-torn present.⁷³ *The Gift's* population of spectral figures is not limited to living memory. H.D. knits her immediate family to the wider Moravian church by constructing spiritual as well as familial genealogies. Her engagement with early Moravians in *The Gift* is expanded in the book's concluding series of notes, which include lengthy meditations on Moravian history.⁷⁴ Before considering H.D.'s appropriation and deployment of Moravian history and spirituality, I will briefly outline aspects of Moravian history, theology and practice relevant to this chapter, as well as to the overarching concerns of the thesis, including Zinzendorf's affective theology, the emphasis on ritual in community life and the intersection of gender, sexuality and spirituality (as we will see, this gender-sexuality-spirituality complex is particularly evident in blood and wounds devotion). In particular, the significance of community and affective spirituality and their expression in liturgy and hymnody reveal the importance of voice to Moravian spirituality. The voices of dead Moravians form a powerful presence within *The Gift* as their spiritual legacy is expressed in both H.D.'s audition of humming voices and the encoding of secret messages in musical scores. These elements of Moravian spirituality outlined below are crucial to understanding the visions in *The Gift* and contribute to the spiritual and creative resources that enable H.D.'s recovery from war trauma and inspire her subsequent writing.

⁷³ Augustine, 'Introduction', 3.

⁷⁴ The notes section of *The Gift* not only reveals H.D.'s deep interest in Moravian history, but also suggests an attempt to legitimise her work as historically based; Ibid. 14–15. Her ongoing interest in the early history of the denomination is also indicated in her second Moravian novel, *The Mystery*, written between 1948 and 1951 (published in 2009).

Following Pietist trends (although going much further than many of his contemporaries found acceptable), Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf developed an affective theology, a 'religion of the heart' during his tenure as leader of the Moravian Church in the mid-eighteenth century.⁷⁵ He did not reject rationalism so much as an over-reliance on rationalism as key to the mysteries of the universe. He insisted that it was not possible to understand the mystery at the heart of God and therefore Christians should focus their efforts on devotion to Jesus. Zinzendorf's view of incarnation, that Jesus Christ's identity held all the fullness of God, led to a side-lining of the first person of the Trinity in Moravian worship, with a devotional focus on Christ as both creator and saviour and the Holy Spirit who nurtured the Church and facilitated salvation. Zinzendorf believed that salvation for all was accomplished by Jesus' life and death; therefore Jesus' suffering was a cause for believers' rejoicing, not sorrow.⁷⁶ Because Zinzendorf was more concerned with joyful devotion and ethical practice than doctrine, 'all life became a liturgy' for eighteenth-century Moravians. Ritual and communal life erased traditional distinctions between secular and sacred.⁷⁷ Community life was an essential part of Moravian religion. During the eighteenth century, Moravian communities were centred not around nuclear families, but

⁷⁵ Atwood, 77. Zinzendorf was an aristocrat who offered sanctuary to Bohemian Protestants on his lands in Saxony and re-established the *Unitas Fratrum*, or the Moravian Church in 1727. He was a charismatic leader, who travelled across Europe and North America visiting Moravian communities. His writings, including sermons and hymns, were also highly influential for eighteenth-century Moravians. For an analysis of Zinzendorf and Moravian historiography, see Atwood, 9-19. H.D.'s interest in Zinzendorf is evident from the notes to *The Gift*, which contain lengthy meditations on his work with the Moravian communities; her later novel, *The Mystery*, in which fictionalised members of his family appear as main characters; and her unpublished notes on Moravian history and spirituality, which include numerous references to him; H.D. 'The Mystery - Zinzendorf Notes'. *H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1951.

⁷⁶ At this time, Moravians downplayed Christ's resurrection; theological and liturgical emphasis was on the passion and death; Margaret R. Miles, *The Word Made Flesh: A History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 362.

⁷⁷ Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 89-90.

rather on ‘choirs’, groups based on gender, age and marital status.⁷⁸ The choir system was enabled by a communal system (known as the General Economy) in which labour and its fruits were shared.⁷⁹

The more controversial elements of Zinzendorf’s theology included his understanding of the Trinity, his view of a divine marriage between Christ and each soul (and the implications for human sexuality) and zealous devotion to Jesus’ blood and wounds. Zinzendorf radically revised the language used to discuss the Trinity and the relationships between the three persons. His theology delineated a remarkable gender-bending. He advanced a view of the Trinity as a family; the creator as father and the Holy Spirit as mother to the son. The Spirit ‘prepared [Jesus] in the womb, hovered over him, and finally brought him into the light. She gave him certainly into the arms of his mother, but with invisible hands carried him more than his mother did’.⁸⁰ Zinzendorf repeatedly refers to the Holy Spirit as mother in sermons and hymns; she is mother to all living things (because she participates in creation), and mother to the church, and individual believers, because she is ‘the active agent in conversion’.⁸¹ Finally, and most importantly for Moravian life and worship, she is mother to the community, acting within to draw the community together and to uphold its common purpose. In arguing for the Holy Spirit’s ‘maternal office’, Zinzendorf and other Moravian leaders advanced a metaphorical view of gender, side-stepping biology and refuting claims they were making metaphysical statements about

⁷⁸ Zinzendorf believed that all stages of life were sacred because Jesus was born as an infant, grew to maturity and then died, thus blessing every stage of life. Child care was communal from a young age, leaving parents free to work as missionaries or other roles within the larger community; there were also separate choirs for young women, young men, married women, married men, widows and widowers. Atwood points out that a weakness of this theology is that those aspects of human life not experienced by Jesus would be downplayed in Moravian spirituality, particularly old age; Zinzendorf wrote extensively on death but not on old age; Atwood, 87-90.

⁷⁹ During the period of the General Economy the church owned the land, buildings and businesses. The breadth of economic communalism was unique to Bethlehem, most other Moravian communities had a more limited social communalism; Ibid. 118.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 68. Those who have borne the physical cost of bearing children might be less than thrilled with this elision of Mary’s role.

⁸¹ Ibid. 69. See also, Fogleman, 75.

God's being.⁸² However, language is crucial to our understanding of gender (and of the divine) and thus Zinzendorf's creative metaphors can be seen as a feminization of the Trinity.⁸³ When it comes to the identity of Jesus, this re-gendering process becomes more complicated.

For Zinzendorf, the primary expression of the relationship between human and divine was erotic. The mystical marriage between Christ and the Church was a common trope in medieval Europe. However, Zinzendorf went further than most in his endorsement of a physical expression of this marriage in terms of human sexuality and explicitly erotic devotion.⁸⁴ Zinzendorf insisted that male believers had to become feminine in order to approach Christ as bridegroom, while also standing in for Christ in their sexual relations with their wives (no such slippage was necessary or available for women, nor were women encouraged to take on the role of Christ in relation to their husbands). Although the configuration of male believer and male husband/saviour does indicate homoeroticism, Atwood argues that the emphasis on heterosexual marriage within the community and a heterosexual alignment of believer and saviour effectively suppress any homosexual tendencies.⁸⁵ However, Aaron Fogleman argues that one way of resolving the problem of an erotic relationship between a male Jesus and male believers was to embrace it and he

⁸² Fogleman, 76.

⁸³ This is the view of both Atwood (68) and Fogleman (75-76), although Kinkle argues otherwise, claiming that Zinzendorf's maternal metaphor is functional, and thus is not a new doctrine: 'The motherly office of the Holy Spirit referred to the Spirit's function, the Spirit's activity. It was a name for God in relation to humanity – a name for God in God's graciousness. [...] It was not an attempt to speculate about the divine life'; Gary Steven Kinkle, *Our Dear Mother the Spirit: An Investigation of Count Zinzendorf's Theology and Praxis* (London: University Press of America, 1990) 9. However, Kinkle overlooks the significance of God's actions for our understanding of divine life. Zinzendorf's formulations may be metaphorical, rather than ontological, but that does not make them any less formative for Moravian understanding and practice.

⁸⁴ Atwood, 91; Fogleman, 78-82.

⁸⁵ Atwood, 93.

points out that the single-sex choir system may have allowed for a certain amount of homosexual activity.⁸⁶

Fogelman also finds evidence of a feminine Jesus in Moravian iconography and hymnody.⁸⁷ The side-wound of the crucified Jesus was depicted as both a womb and a vagina and was the object of great devotion; thus Jesus becomes both mother and lover. The 'blood and wounds' theology of Zinzendorf formed the devotional locus for affective Moravian piety: a sign of Jesus' humanity, suffering and salvation they were the basis of much Moravian liturgy, a point I will return to in the following chapter.⁸⁸ Although Moravian devotion emphasised Jesus' suffering, this is in the context of its life-giving properties:

In Zinzendorffian piety, blood is thus a concrete symbol of health and well-being. It is symbolic of the healing of the soul and the release from sin and death. [...] Christ's blood becomes the lasting connection between the heart of the Christian and the heart of the Savior. It is a symbol of immersion in the divine life.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Fogelman also draws on evidence from Herrnhag (a German Moravian community) during The Sifting Time when a group of young men around Zinzendorf's son, Christian Renatus (who figures in *The Gift*) turned to explicitly homoerotic rituals involving penetration of Christ's side-wound; Fogelman, 79.

⁸⁷ A feminine Jesus is not, of course, Zinzendorf's invention. Many medieval images and texts emphasise Jesus' nurturing qualities and compare blood to milk as Christians feed from the wound in the crucified Jesus' side, while Julian of Norwich described Jesus as 'our Mother for we are for ever [sic] being born of him'; Karma Lochrie, 'The Language of Transgression: Body, Flesh and Word in Mystical Discourse', *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) 118; Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books, 1966) 164.

⁸⁸ Devotion to Jesus' body and blood was also a feature of medieval piety. Bynum outlines the complexity of conflict over Jesus' body and its fragmentation that was represented by controversies around blood piety. She argues that devotion to Jesus' body (represented by the host in the Eucharist) emphasised resurrection, containment and community, while blood was contradictory, symbolising life and death, salvation and destruction. Bynum also points out the violent legacy of devotion to Jesus' blood: its emphasis on destruction, sacrifice and accusation led to anti-Semitic violence in pogroms and crusades as the Jews (along with heretics, non-believers, or other marginal figures) were blamed for Jesus' suffering and death. Bynum, 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages': 699, 702-707. Here, we can locate the contrast with the later Moravian piety; the focus on Jesus' wounds brings body and blood together, but the Moravian emphasis is on the life-giving properties of blood, incorporation into Jesus' body and thus a matter for rejoicing, not condemnation or horror. Asceticism or other practices of imitative suffering were not a part of Moravian practice. Zinzendorf disagreed with many other Pietists on the necessity of suffering (i.e. Christ's suffering may be a consolation to Christians when they suffer, but it is not a requirement of conversion); Craig Atwood, 'The Passion of the Christ and Christian Devotion from a Moravian Perspective', *Covenant Quarterly* 63.2 (2005): 21-24.

⁸⁹ Atwood, 'The Passion of the Christ and Christian Devotion from a Moravian Perspective': 22.

The maternity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are here united as the believers are reborn through the side-wound and delivered into salvation by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ Wound iconography takes an erotic turn in the devotional cards carried by many Moravians which depict the wound – often entirely separate from the rest of Jesus’ body – with vaginal or womb-like imagery.⁹¹ The distinction between human sexuality and religious devotion was elided by the use of these cards during conjugal visits (with married couples living separately, sexual encounters were regulated by the community).⁹² Moravians were encouraged to view their own sexual experiences as a physical manifestation of a spiritual relationship. Taken together, the views found in Zinzendorf’s writing and wider Moravian devotion suggest an androgynous Christ, as depicted in hymn verses such as ‘My King [...] Thy royal desire [...] leads me on the militant path / with motherly love’.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid; Fogleman, 77.

⁹¹ Some of these small cards, of watercolour on card stock, had devotional verses and a simple red oval painted on them; others had larger red or pink ovals with verses printed inside them or on the rim and detailed domestic images – such as bed, chair and window, or the exterior of a house – within the oval; Fogleman, plate 4-5.

⁹² Ibid. 82.

⁹³ Qtd. in Ibid. 78. What this theological and liturgical discourse meant for real women is of course an open question. Fogleman argues that an additional controversy surrounding the Moravians stemmed from the practice of gender equity; Fogleman, 90. Zinzendorf rejected a view of sin which blamed women and found sexuality a source of wickedness, but his emphasis on Jesus’ masculinity upheld a traditional gender hierarchy and gender roles. The feminisation of men in a mystical sense did not lead to complete gender equality. On the other hand, Zinzendorf did emphasize a need for mutual devotion and honour between men and women. The dispersal of the patriarchal family allowed women to take on many leadership roles within the community. Women such as Anna Nitschmann, who became an elder at 15, were highly regarded as spiritual leaders. Another controversy surrounding the Moravians was provoked by women’s practice of teaching and preaching. However, Zinzendorf oscillated between advocating for women preachers and retreating from this position by arguing that their role was circumscribed. Despite the egalitarian rhetoric, Moravian women seemed afflicted with a glass ceiling of their own. Most of their pastoral work involved the women choirs, they seldom achieved the prominence of male leaders and their preaching was often presented as exceptional, rather than normative. After Zinzendorf’s death, the prominence of women in the church and their speaking and teaching roles declined, along with many other controversial elements of his theology and devotional practice; Atwood, *Community of the Cross* 90; Miles, 363. In North America, much of the contact between European Moravians and their Algonquian neighbours was between women; as women began to play a less prominent role in Moravian society, the relationships between the groups also eroded; Amy C. Schutt, ‘Female Relationships and Intercultural Bonds in Moravian Indian Missions’, *Friends and Enemies in Penn’s Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, eds. Daniel K. Richter and William A. Pencak (University Park: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 87-103. For further discussion of the role of women in the Moravian church in the eighteenth century, see Fogleman, 95-104; Peter Vogt, ‘A Voice for Themselves: Women as Participants in Congregational Discourse in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Movement’, *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, eds. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998) 227-47.

The reconfiguration of the nuclear family for the sake of an alternative vision; the imaginative linguistic virtuosity that challenges rigid understandings of body and gender (while at the same time affirming the importance of the physical); the conception of sexuality as sacred; and the unity of secular and sacred brought about by a community focused on liturgy, all resonate with H.D.'s writing.⁹⁴ In eighteenth-century Moravian theology, gender is produced by shifting layers of bodily and spiritual experience. Jesus is and is not female, is husband, mother and sibling (the Holy Spirit being mother of both Jesus and the Church).⁹⁵ These ideas are consistent with the fluid sexuality evident in H.D.'s writing, the connection she draws between sexuality and the sacred, and the situation of rituals and visions in the midst of the everyday. I will return to rituals and visions in H.D.'s writing in the following chapter, and sacred sexuality in Chapter Four. For now, I will focus on the significance of community and its voices in *The Gift* and *The Sword* as sites of trauma's intersection with religion (spiritualism and Moravian Christianity). In these texts, writing is the force that expresses attention to the voices of the dead and mobilises post-traumatic reintegration.

'Intimate Communion': circles of belonging

The Moravian emphasis on the communal nature of religion, evidenced by the significance of ritual and the elision of any distinction between sacred and secular, resonates with H.D.'s work in many ways. As Adelaide Morris has aptly noted, her poetry has a communal cast from the early Imagist poems: "The sustaining pronoun of H.D.'s poetry, however, is

⁹⁴ Adelaide Morris argues that H.D.'s unusual family life, especially her arrangements for her daughter's care (Perdita was adopted by Bryher and her then husband, Kenneth MacPherson, and often cared for by H.D.'s mother and aunt while H.D. and Bryher travelled), are best understood in the context of a gift economy; Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 124-126.

⁹⁵ Katherine Faull argues for an interpretation of Moravian spirituality that emphasises a 'polyvalent signification of male and female sexualities' in the figure of Christ, however, her analysis underplays the feminine attributes of Jesus; Katherine M. Faull, 'Christ's Other Self: Gender, the Body and Religion in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Church', *Covenant Quarterly* 62.4 (2004): 39.

not “I” but “we.” Most of her poems are social, creating an “I” that is one of a chorus, rewriting shared mythologies, or enacting rituals designed to draw others into alliance.⁹⁶ Likewise, Rachel Connor emphasises the enabling presence of others to H.D.’s creative and spiritual visions.⁹⁷ Just as Bryher’s presence is necessary to enable and support the visions described in *Tribute to Freud* and *Majic Ring*, so the support of the spiritualist medium, Ben Manisi, provides the impetus for Delia’s spiritualist experiences in *The Sward*. The communal experience of vision extends to other characters; Hilda’s presence (and perhaps the distant but audible presence of other family members) draws forth Mamalie’s recitation of her earlier visionary experience and the RAF pilots appear as a group. Hilda’s grandmother, Mamalie, is both a catalyst for Hilda’s apprehension of the gift of vision and an important figure in H.D.’s constructed genealogy. Mamalie connects Hilda/H.D. to the early Moravians and their Lenape and Shawnee neighbours, thus drawing together overlapping circles of community that encompass many generations, extending beyond living memory.

The use of the first person plural and the narrators’ commentary function to draw the reader into the circles of the texts. Thus, in addition to self-analysis, H.D. sets up a structure for the reader to act as witness to her writing as testimony. Throughout H.D.’s writing, even the most personal visions are embedded in her commitment to community (and they are idiosyncratic; she is not particularly interested in any kind of orthodoxy). *The Gift* focuses on family and Moravian history, while *The Sward* has a broader historical sweep, but each text emphasises the significance of a small, intimate group of fellow believers or

⁹⁶ Morris, *H.D.’s Cultural Poetics* 135. See also, Alicia Ostriker, ‘No Rule of Procedure: The Open Poetics of H.D.’ *Signets: Reading H.D.*, eds. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 346-47.

⁹⁷ Connor, 45.

practitioners: 'one must [...] begin with one's own private inheritance; there, already the measure is *pressed down and shaken together, and running over*'.⁹⁸

In both texts, H.D. focuses on her place in a small group of initiates nested within a larger community.⁹⁹ In *The Gift* this is the Hidden Church of the early Moravians, Zinzendorf and his companions, re-discovered by Mamalie and her first husband and revealed to the child, Hilda.¹⁰⁰ In *The Sword*, the spiritualist circle of Ben Manisi, Gareth and Delia first provides the necessary group of initiates within the larger group of spiritualists. Following the breakup of this group, the spirits of the RAF pilots form the community around Delia, although she continues to seek living communion in the form of an alliance with Lord John Howell. Howell is figured as part of the group of RAF pilots, partly as a father figure but more specifically through H.D.'s physical descriptions: 'I was face to face with him, before I knew who he was. I was looking straight into a white face and staring, grey eyes [...] he looked haunted. He looked like a ghost, anyway'.¹⁰¹ Describing Howell as a ghost marks the ongoing haunting in the text by constructing a (tenuous) community of the living and the dead.

The gift and the writing cure

Following *The Gift*'s beginning in fire (which links the two time periods of the novel: late nineteenth-century Pennsylvania and early 1940s London), Hilda begins elaborating her own interpretation of her genealogy by describing old family portraits and graves in the nearby cemetery:

⁹⁸ H.D., *The Gift* 50. H.D. is quoting the Gospel of Luke, 6:38. She employs biblical quotations in *The Gift* as a subtle signal of her Christian heritage, but she uses these quotations for her own purposes, revising the tradition she inhabits to indicate her own understanding of her communities, spirituality and inspiration.

⁹⁹ H.D.'s communities are intimate, but not exclusive. Her goal is to pass on her knowledge and experience; as she writes in *Trilogy*: 'that way of inspiration / is always open, / and open to everyone' H.D., *Walls* 29.

¹⁰⁰ It is also worth noting that H.D.'s frequently uses the other name for the Moravians, the *Unitas Fratrum* or United Brethren, which directly invokes the relational aspects of the denomination.

¹⁰¹ H.D., *The Sword* 36.

There is Mama who is a tiny child and Aunt Laura, who Mama said was the pretty one, two years older and Aunt Agnes in her long frock. [...] Aunt Agnes' children were young men, almost like undes, there had been eight altogether, five grew up. There had been a little girl; and in our own plot at Nisky Hill, there was a little girl who was our own sister and another little girl who had been the child of the Lady who had been Papa's first wife.¹⁰²

In the first page of the novel, the death of a liminal character (she is one of the students at the Seminary and so not an outsider, but she is neither named nor a member of the family) is twinned with the death of children that Hilda (and Hilda's mother before her) cannot remember. Each generation has its lost children: Hilda's Aunt Fanny (who died when her mother was a baby), Hilda's sisters, Alice and Edith, and H.D.'s own stillborn child of 1915 (although this child is not mentioned here). Hilda first defines herself in the family figuration by her fascination with these domestic ghosts: 'I was the inheritor. [...] I cared about Fanny. And she died. I inherited Fanny from Mama, from Mamalie if you will [...]. Was I indeed, Frances come back? Then I would be Papalie's own child, for Papalie's name was Francis'.¹⁰³ Hilda marks herself as the repository of family history, inheriting memories; through the novel this role will expand, until her inheritance includes spiritual and creative gifts as well, which also pass through the family.

The Gift and *The Sword* can be read as dual deployments of community belonging as Hilda explores her identity as part of a Moravian family in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and the adult H.D. grapples with the threat to her community in London. There is a significant emphasis on choice, as H.D. reiterates her decision to remain in London during the Blitz as a sign of solidarity with her adopted country.¹⁰⁴ In her openness to her own visions and the stories told her by Mamalie and her more active participation both spiritually (as a medium)

¹⁰² H.D., *The Gift* 35.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 37.

¹⁰⁴ As she wrote in 1941, 'if one has taken joy and comfort from a country, one does not like to leave it, when there is trouble about'; H.D. 'Letter to Viola Jordan, 10 November, 1941'. *Viola Baxter Jordan Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

and materially (by her location in London), she suggests that community belonging is a matter of individual action, not simply historical chance.

In attempting to make sense of Mamalie's revelations, Hilda incorporates the memory of Moravians past to her own unusual family, drawing upon the Moravian emphasis on community:

I did not know that we had a real Indian king or chief in the family – or that is how I thought about it, although Christian Seidel [...] and Mamalie's first husband, Henry Christian, weren't related to me at all, I suppose. Only if we were *United Brethren* and I was one of them, then it was really in the family. Anyhow, I had thought about that other Lady who was Papa's first wife and it seemed she was a sort of mother, then Aunt Aggie's father who was Mamalie's first husband, would be a sort of grandfather. Well, I did not really think this all out but that is the feeling I had. Anyhow, hadn't Mamalie called me Aggie?¹⁰⁵

Hilda reconfigures her family tree to include the Shawnee chief, Paxnous, who was connected to her through his wife's Moravian baptism, and the former spouses of her father and grandmother. She sees her own identity as mutable (later, through Aggie, she identifies with Anna von Pahlen and Morning Star), and defined, in part, by how her relatives refer to her, just as she shapes their identity by her own terms of reference.

Hilda's ability to redraw kinship lines is continued in a variety of ways by H.D. as an adult. Towards the end of *The Gift*, H.D. describes the community forged by the air raids to Bryher:

During the first real raid [...] before you had come back from Switzerland, I propped the front-door open and Mrs Williamson across the hall, sent her maid over to see if I were all right [...] People from upstairs came down and people below, dragged out their bedding and slept in the hall.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ H.D., *The Gift* 157. Hilda refers to Paxnous, or Paxinosa, the Shawnee chief whose wife H.D. called Morning Star; he is a historical figure and is mentioned in Moravian records of meetings with Shawnee and Nanticoke tribes; 'The Comprehensive Report on the Brethren's Negotiations in Bethlehem and Gnadenhütten with the Nanticokes and Shawnee Nations from April 1752 and Also on the Pact Made with Both Nations at That Time in Gnadenhütten, on the Same Visit to Bethlehem in July 1752 Etc.' 2000-2009, Bethlehem Digital History Project, Available:

http://bdhp.moravian.edu/personal_papers/journals/detailed12.html, 17 October, 2010.

¹⁰⁶ H.D., *The Gift* 214.

H.D.'s correspondence is peppered with references to gifts exchanged within her circle of friends and acquaintances. Certainly rationing and scarcity led to the increased value of material goods, but more significant is the excess value of affection mobilised and displayed by such gift-giving.¹⁰⁷ The exchange of domestic goods – tea, honey, flowers – marks and maintains these circles of friendship. H.D.'s correspondence with Bryher reveals similar exchanges, but far greater intimacy. H.D. returned to their key moments in their relationship many times in the course of her prose oeuvre, attaching great meaning to particular shared experiences.¹⁰⁸ In her writing of the Second World War, H.D. often returned to the scenes of the First World War and the intense experiences which followed; in 1945, when the strain of the war was beginning to fray her nerves she wrote to Bryher, 'maybe, I will get a new lease of life and if so, I will owe this next re-birth after this war to you, as I did the re-birth after the last'.¹⁰⁹

Bethlehem and London are brought together by psychological and spiritual resonances as the secret of the Hidden Church becomes the means for H.D.'s psychic survival of the Blitz and the continuity of her community. The 'secret' of the Hidden Church is revealed as the promise of intimacy given by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, as Mamalie tells Hilda:

There was the Hidden Church – the Moravians themselves had been a hidden church for centuries but the actual Hidden Church that had been

¹⁰⁷ Edith Sitwell wrote a gushy letter in response to one such wartime gesture: 'My dear Hilda, Thank you ever so much both for your letter and for the most magnificent present of tea, which is wholly appreciated. [...] I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw it'; Edith Sitwell. 'Letter to H.D., Undated, 1942-44?' *H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

¹⁰⁸ Bryher helped H.D. in 1919 when she had just given birth and was ill with influenza. In 1938, H.D. wrote in response to a gift of flowers from Bryher: 'Now Fido [...] a most lovely thing, one of those great wood boxes has just come and masses and masses of daffodils that come before the swallow dares. Thank you. But how can I? The room is filled with you and 1919, and all you did and ever do for me. [...] They are especially lovely and have that fragrance, like [...] forgetfulness and healing'; H.D. 'Letter to Bryher, 2 March, 1938'. *Bryher Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

¹⁰⁹ H.D. 'Letter to Bryher, 23 September, 1945'. *Bryher Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

destroyed and obliterated by the inquisition, Christian Renatus maintained, wasn't really destroyed. It ran underground. [...] The Secret that my Christian explained to me seemed very simple. It was simply belief in what was said – *and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*'.¹¹⁰

The ongoing presence of Anna von Pahlen, Paxnoux, and other members of the Hidden Church indicates not only the significance of maternal genealogy, but of the endurance of this unorthodox communion of saints. In receiving their secret, H.D. sees herself as linked to this group of initiates that spans many generations. She sees Mamalie's sharing of her memories as an initiation in which her spiritual gifts are awakened. This gift she in turn must pass on through her creative work.

Through Hilda's memories of the intimate world of the Moravian community in Pennsylvania, H.D. constructs a female genealogy in which artistic and spiritual giftedness are entwined. Mamalie understands the secret of the Hidden Church through her knowledge of music; the message was encoded in musical notations in old documents. When Mamalie shares her memories of the visionary experience she had as a young woman, Hilda stores the tale for later interpretation. By using two narrative voices, H.D. weaves together the terrors and discoveries of childhood with her adult fears and hopes; this palimpsest provides the key to understanding the gift itself. The gift is initially defined as artistic – 'Artists are people who are gifted' – but even this straightforward definition is immediately complicated: 'an artist is someone who – well – he can draw or paint or write a book or even do other things'.¹¹¹ The hesitation and vague reference to 'other things' suggests that the gift is not readily defined and it will take Hilda/H.D. the rest of the book to reach a mystical understanding of the gift: 'The Gift was a Gift of Vision, it was the Gift of Wisdom, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the *Sandus Spiritus*'.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ H.D., *The Gift* 157.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 43.

¹¹² Ibid. 214.

The presence of the Hidden Church is marked by moments of visionary consciousness where the mystic becomes one with the spirits of the earlier initiates and is sustained by the telling of this vision. Because she is a musician, it is unsurprising that Mamalie's hearkening to the voices of her spiritual ancestors takes the form of sound and music

It seemed, Mamalie outlined it, that in trying over and putting together the indicated rhythms, she herself became one with the *Wunden Eiland* initiates and herself spoke with tongues. [...] 'It was laughing, laughing all the time [...] we all laughed like scales running up and down,' said Mamalie. 'O,' said Mamalie, 'I could not tell you of that laughter, it was the laughter of leaves, of wind, of snow swirling, it was the laughter of the water; indeed, it was the outpouring of the Mystic Chalice that Paxnous' priest too, had a name for; it poured from the sky or from the inner realm of the Spirit, this laughter that ran over us.

The laughter ran over us and the deep tones of the men's voices and the high pure silver of Anna's voice, mingled in a sort of breathing hymn; it was breathing, it was breath, it was the S that was carved upon the Chalice that my Christian had recognized as the ordinary letter-seal of his own unde.¹¹³

The rapture Mamalie experiences culminates in a hymn, the musical expression of her religious community, a point I will return to in the following chapter on ritual. What I want to emphasise here is the integration of music and community. It is finally the relationships between the initiates, Mamalie, her husband and his unde that give the vision its value. Through identifying herself with these spiritual forebears, Hilda daims the gift of her inheritance. When she hears Mamalie's story, she engages in a complex weaving of names and relationships, situating herself as part of the visionary Hidden Church:

[N]ow I understood that I had another name; now I was Agnes, now I would really be Agnes and Aunt Aggie's name was Agnes Angelica, so perhaps they had named her Angelica because of Anna von Pahlen, then I would be part of Anna von Pahlen, too, and I would be part of the ceremony at *Wunden Eiland* and I would be Morning Star along with Anna.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid. 169.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 163-4. *Wunden Eiland* was an island in the middle of a river near the Moravian settlement where the Hidden Church met. H.D. draws upon historical records to describe the place in her notes to *The Gift*: 'Its

Here, Hilda's understanding of her own identity shifts again. Not only does her identity emerge from her family, but through those links, she is united with the eighteenth-century Moravian Anna von Pahlen, who in turn was linked with Morning Star when they exchanged names. Thus H.D. is able to call upon a rich and diverse spiritual inheritance.

Only as an adult in war-torn London does H.D. come into a full understanding of Mamalie's gift. The development of Hilda/H.D.'s spiritual understanding is revealed in the narrative form of the central chapter of *The Gift*, 'The Secret', which contains the episode of Mamalie sharing her memories with Hilda. The narrative is primarily told by the child, but the adult's voice occasionally breaks in, adding a reflective layer to the text in the form of analysis of both Hilda and Mamalie: 'Well, where had Mamalie's gift gone then? I did not ask her but I sense *now*, that she burnt it all up in an hour or so of rapture' [my emphasis].¹¹⁵ This dual register suggests that in dwelling on her childhood memories, H.D. is bringing the Hidden Church into the present moment of 1940s London.

She goes on to explain that a traumatic event caused the child Hilda to repress Mamalie's secret. One day, Hilda is the first of her family to see her father returning home after falling from a trolley, with blood on his face. She was unaware of the cause of his injury and was terrified. Furthermore, he does not respond to Hilda and the children are brushed aside by the adults and left alone. This silencing is deeply distressing to Hilda as she wishes to tell the story and be recognised for her discovery. The narrator reiterates the numerous questions that Hilda wishes her mother would ask; these questions would have allowed her to tell her story. Her resentment at being ignored echoes in the text: 'No one said, "but who found him?" They said, "run along, run along." Mama did not look at us, she was looking at Papa. She did not say, "O, children, children, who was it found your

name, "the Island of the Wounds," meant that it was dedicated to the remembrance of the wounds of Jesus, as then dwelt upon in certain special liturgies and hymns'; Bishop Joseph Levering, qtd. in H.D., *The Gift* 262.

¹¹⁵ H.D., *The Gift* 168.

father?’”¹¹⁶ The silencing of Hilda’s narrative and lack of explanation by the adults causes her to become even more frightened and bewildered and may have contributed to the memory’s suppression. The subsequent trauma of the Blitz leads to an ‘earthquake’ in H.D.’s mind; memories are brought to consciousness and she finally tells her story.¹¹⁷ The scene of writing provides a witness which allows H.D.’s testimony and its hidden knowledge to emerge, as we have seen described by Dori Laub. Thus H.D.’s initiation into the mysteries of the gift is twofold; the child receives Mamalie’s vision and the adult endures the traumas of war terror which return this vision to consciousness. Giving expression to this vision in writing brings healing for both old and new psychic wounds.

The presence of the Hidden Church in London is made explicit in the concluding chapter when H.D. recognises first England and then the world as *Wunden Eiland*, a place of sacred belonging: ‘Wunden Eiland? Was that this island, England, pock-marked with formidable craters, with Death stalking one at every corner? [...] Our earth is a wounded island as we swing round the sun’.¹¹⁸ In linking the shattered world of the 1940s with a Moravian holy place, H.D. implies that sacred communion can flourish even in the midst of destruction, while she also acknowledges the fragility of these places. The secret of communion and peace becomes H.D.’s gift to her companions in London, and the wider community of her readership, as she brings the spiritual resources of an intimate moment between grandmother and granddaughter to the predicament of a world at war. However, in *The Sword*, the vision of peace sustained by H.D.’s memories of Moravian community is obscured by further trauma. In this text, she utilises a broader historical scope and a greater emphasis on writing to respond to her own post-war breakdown.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 193.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 50. See also, Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 333. The recovery of this memory during the Blitz is fictionalised in *The Gift*. H.D. had in fact discussed this incident with her first analyst, Mary Chadwick, and also with Freud in the 1930s; Henke, 26.

¹¹⁸ H.D., *The Gift* 221, 223. I will discuss the significance of *Wunden Eiland* as a sacred place in Chapter Five.

As in *The Gift*, H.D.'s conviction in *The Sward* is the urgency of passing on the message of peace, which is located in a complex interplay between past, present and future. She reiterates the interconnection between individual and social health, suggesting that healing must come from within, radiating outward towards others:

I have said if you have consolation, do not try to share it, but eventually, if you are consoled or integrated, you help console and integrate the scattered remnant. I don't think society can be reconstructed from outside. [...] In saving oneself, one creates a shell, not the isolated, highly individual spiral-shell I spoke of, but a minute coral-shell, one of a million, or a single wax-cell of the honey-comb.¹¹⁹

This passage suggests the intersubjectivity mobilised by the reciprocity of testimony and witness following the traumatic event. In stressing the balance of individual and communal identity, H.D. resists privileging one over the other. There is repeated textual confusion over who is finally healed in *The Sward* – H.D., Delia, Delia's community, or, indeed, H.D.'s community. The blurring of the lines between character, author and intra- and extra-textual communities suggests that these distinctions are less important than the cure itself. Although community belonging is essential for psychic and spiritual health, H.D. emphasises the responsibility of individuals to build and rebuild their communities by attending to inner life as well as external concerns. Therefore, her interest in psychoanalysis and psychic health is not a turning away from society but a way of understanding the social world from the inside out and her devotion to her communities is matched by commitment to her particular vision.

Delia's recovery involves a renewal of her writing; psychic, spiritual and creative health is presented as unified and mutually enabling. In both *The Gift* and *The Sward*, H.D. responds to personal and social crisis with a deeper commitment to writing. *The Gift*

¹¹⁹ H.D., *The Sward* 67.

describes the development of her understanding of her vocation, which dimaxes in the midst of an air raid:

[H]ow could I see and be and live and endure these passionate and terrible hours of hovering between life and death, and at the same time, write about them? Yet now [...] I passionately regretted only this. That the message that had been conveyed to me, that the message that my grandmother had received, would again be lost.¹²⁰

She comes to understand the dual nature of the gift as creative *and* spiritual and believes that her inheritance is the task of reviving it. I suggest that this is H.D.'s way of making sense of her survival of the Blitz and her later breakdown and thus attaining reintegration.¹²¹ Her fear and anxiety is subsumed by the urgency of passing on the secret of the Moravian and Algonquian peaceful alliances. Likewise, in *The Sword*, the requirement of passing on the RAF message dominates the text. The prophetic nature of these messages unites H.D.'s religious thinking and experience with writing. In *The Gift* and *The Sword*, the urgency of witnessing to consolation, as well as trauma, becomes the driving force of the narrative. This leads to an emphasis on survival and the importance of a witnessing presence as explored by Chopp, Brock and Parker. In attending to the voices of the dead, and inviting them to resonate with her own experiences and to resound within her texts, H.D. explores a model of attention and renewal that allows her to move beyond trauma without disregarding the ongoing presence of its wounds.

Conclusion: haunted hermeneutics

Critical discussion of haunted Modernism repeatedly emphasises the hermeneutical significance of ghosts: 'Ghosts, after all, are hermeneutic entities, both etymologically – like

¹²⁰ H.D., *The Gift* 213.

¹²¹ This correlates with Bruno Bettelheim's analysis of survival: 'all attempts to extract meaning from life are to a very large measure actually a projecting of meaning into life. This can occur only when and to the degree that a person is able to find meaning within himself [sic], which he [sic] can then project outward. One must invest life with meaning, so that one may be able to extract insight from it'; Bettelheim, 48.

Hermes, the Greek messenger god, they possess a privileged ability to pass between the worlds of the living and the dead – and practically: all ghosts demand interpretation’.¹²² Not only do ghosts provoke hermeneutical activity, but haunting also indicates the instability of interpretation. In their reading of Elizabeth Bowen’s *The House in Paris*, Nicholas Royle and Andrew Bennett argue that causality is so radically disrupted that the ‘novel dissolves into eerie, uncontainable and undecidable reading effects’.¹²³ H.D.’s description of the medium as translator emphasises the hermeneutic framing of spectral activity. Rather than a passive ventriloquist of the spirits’ voices, the medium is an active participant: ‘it had come to me, as a poem or a myth, something that had to be translated’.¹²⁴ She aligns artistic and spiritualist practice, representing the medium as an artist in her own right. As a translator, Delia is implicitly a member of a community of both living and dead, interpreting one to the other. For H.D., haunting is something to be decoded like other visionary or mystical experiences.¹²⁵ However, in *The Sword*, Delia’s hallucinations and madness also indicate the instability and inherent risk of interpretation, while the repetition and variation of characters and events through the historical vignettes indicate the proliferation of meaning in which a final outcome or interpretation is never fixed. Haunting has implications for the future as well as the past.¹²⁶ In *The Gift* and *The Sword*, ghosts and memories indicate an excess of meaning, desire and wonder; they are compelling, intrusive and demand action.

Writing is aligned with haunting: as the ghosts seek to pass on messages to Hilda, H.D. and Delia, so H.D. in turn seeks to pass on these messages to the reader. Daniel Cottom argues that the spiritualist movement was primarily a *way* of speaking and writing.

¹²² Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* 165.

¹²³ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995) 56.

¹²⁴ H.D., *The Sword* 88.

¹²⁵ For an analysis of coding, decoding and hieroglyphics in H.D.’s poetry, see Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* 118–21.

¹²⁶ Bennett and Royle, xviii.

Spiritualism's appropriation of language made it 'appear more theatrical than instrumental, more creative than instructive, more potential than referential'.¹²⁷ Cottom's emphasis on the potentiality of language in spiritualist discourse suggests the openness within texts created by the movement of spirits undermines any totalising impetus of narrative. As we will see in the next chapter, which explores the connection between rituals and creative practice in H.D.'s writing, theatricality is also an important trope in *The Gift* and *The Sword*. The end of *The Sword* employs a performance metaphor: 'We went on with the play'.¹²⁸ This is an ambivalent ending; it can be read as an affirmation of ongoing life, or as an indication of the hopeless repetitions of violent histories and the marginalisation of non-violent interventions. I suggest that it indicates the repetition of the writing cure itself. As we see it worked out in these two different texts, written at different times with different emphases, the writing cure is a practice that must be engaged with again and again, as trauma returns, either through haunting memories or new catastrophes. This repeated return is also evident in Cixous's numerous engagements with the poetics of memory, wound and writing. As Bettelheim suggests, reintegration is an ongoing process and the outcome of an encounter with strangeness is never guaranteed.

However, not all returns are traumatic; the haunted gaps also make space for creative interventions, new growth and the mysterious proliferation of meaning. For H.D. and for Cixous, reading and writing themselves are seldom traumatic, but rather involve a process of witnessing which affirms, and moves towards, reintegration. It is those who return – the RAF pilots, her grandmother, the Moravians Anna von Pahlen and Christian Renatus – who call H.D. to the writing cure. The scene of encounter, whether one encounters the spectral return of the dead, or the precarious testimony of the survivor,

¹²⁷ Daniel Cottom, *Abyss of Reason: Cultural Movements, Revelations, and Betnyals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 109-110.

¹²⁸ H.D., *The Sword* 267.

demands a witness. The openness in the text creates the space for this encounter, which, according to Cixous, also partakes of an intimate communion. Alterity haunts Cixous's writing as she seeks to write a path towards the mysterious encounter. The unknown becomes present *through* poetic writing. Quoting Anna Akhmatova, another writer of testimony and witness: 'And the miraculous comes so close / to the ruined, dirty houses / something not known to anyone at all / But wild in our breast for centuries', Cixous goes on to add: 'We can read Akhmatova's lines in the shimmer of a light that comes from origins we can never know. It comes from the heart, but we may wonder at times how the heart keeps on beating'.¹²⁹ Here survival itself bears the mark of strangeness. The community of witness carries traces of alterity as the process of testimony itself is a mystical one that escapes containment and explanation.

The unknown haunts domestic ruins, as in the beginning of *Trilogy*: 'inspiration stalks us / through gloom: / unaware, Spirit announces the Presence'.¹³⁰ Cixous makes no claims for the due to survival, but she insists that the encounter with the miraculous, the unknown from elsewhere, is one that takes place *within*. It returns us to ourselves, but a self that contains an untamed alterity. Both *The Gift* and *The Sward* are texts that commit to the writing cure and the exploration of the resources of visions for healing, consolation and inspiration, resolving trauma through its incorporation in meaningful patterns of spiritual gift and creative practice. However, the healing of trauma through narrative frameworks is mitigated by the continued ruptures in the narrative, the insistent questions of spectral figures, named and unnamed, and ambivalent endings. H.D.'s writing is a practice of hope, rather than certainty.

¹²⁹ Cixous, *Readings* 111.

¹³⁰ H.D., *Walls* 1:20-22.

CHAPTER THREE – WRITING AS RITUAL

In her article ‘Signaling: Feminism, Politics, and Mysticism in H.D.’s War Trilogy’, Adalaide Morris argues that *Trilogy* is oriented towards the community of Londoners in which H.D. was situated during the Second World War. In addressing itself to the community in a mystical mode, the epic poem is like a ritual: ‘it labours to create a formal break with everyday life, a ritual space that invites the reader to return to, re-examine, and rearrange the *ethos* of a community in crisis. The work *Trilogy* initiates is the work of cultural reconstruction’.¹ Having examined the significance of ‘intimate communion’ and religious belonging as the context and catalyst for the writing cure in H.D.’s Second World War texts, *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, I now come to a consideration of ritual as a primary activity of religious communities, an activity which both expresses and shapes the cultural reconstruction called for by *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.²

Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos argues that *Trilogy* is a palingenic, or soul-making, text in its ‘incantations and liturgical or ritualistic rhythms’.³ This soul-making activity takes place throughout the poem, from the smallest movement in the poem – the worm spinning its own shroud – to expansive flights of vision. These movements, which indicate the regenerative transformations at the heart of *Trilogy*, are supported by the ‘ritualistic rhythms’ of the poem. *The Gift* is bracketed by a procession and play in the first chapter and a litany in the final chapter. The mystical experience at the end of the text unites

¹ Morris, ‘Signaling’: 121-22.

² H.D., ‘H.D. by *Debra Alton*’: 195.

³ Tryphonopoulos, xxv.

liturgy, performance, visionary consciousness and community, while ritual processions and plays throughout *The Sword* demonstrate the significance of these forms for the vitality of the community.⁴ The interplay between art and ritual emphasises the performative element of each.

Recent scholarship on ritual has emphasised the power of rituals to create and shape culture and meaning, rather than simply reflecting prior social values.⁵ The performance approach to ritual studies establishes a link between aesthetic and sacred activity by developing a dynamic, productive model of ritual. Morris uses Victor Turner's analysis of social drama as a way into the ritual dynamic of *Trilogy*, and while this is productive, I would suggest that the emphasis on transformation in Richard Schechner's theory of performance is more relevant to the entirety of H.D.'s Second World War oeuvre. Turner argues that social drama is about conflict and resolution and consists of four stages: breach, crisis, restorative action and reintegration or schism (harmony is restored either by a group's reintegration or by complete separation).⁶ Morris locates *Trilogy* in the third stage of social drama in which society reflects and acts – often in a ritual, liminal space – in order to move to the final stage, the resolution of conflict.⁷ However, my reading of *Trilogy*, as well as prose texts such as *The Gift* and *The Sword*, takes transformation as the texts' focus, while conflict forms their context.

⁴ Vision may seem an unusual element to add to a consideration of ritual and performance, yet H.D.'s texts continually associate visionary consciousness with any artistic endeavour or ritual practice.

⁵ Bruce Kapferer, 'Sorcery and the Beautiful: A Discourse on the Aesthetics of Ritual', *Aesthetics in Performance: Formations of Symbolic Construction and Experience*, eds. Angela Hobart and Bruce Kapferer (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005) 129-30. For overviews of the performance approach to ritual, see Bell, *Ritual* 72-76; Bell, 'Performance', 205-24.

⁶ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975) 38-41.

⁷ Victor Turner defines liminality as 'any condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life. It is often a sacred condition or can readily become one'; *Ibid.* 47.

Schechner argues that the essential drama is located in transformation and that theatre is used as ‘a way to experiment with, act out, and ratify change’.⁸ Changes may be temporary or permanent, or a more complex iteration in which transformation for the individual is permanent while the performance works to maintain a system-wide status quo. Schechner distinguishes between aesthetic drama – theatre – and social drama, only to elaborate a way of comparing the two: ‘The function of aesthetic drama is *to do for the consciousness of the audience what social drama does for its participants*: providing a place for, and means of, transformation. Rituals carry participants across limens, transforming them into different persons’.⁹ Thus ritual can be seen as related to both theatre and social drama in its ability to affect transformation.

This chapter explores the relationships between ritual, performance and vision through three examples: the sacred dramas in *The Sword*; the Moravian litany in the final vision of *The Gift*; and the Hermetic, alchemical ritual in *Trilogy*. While I use this rubric to separate the three texts for clarity of structure and ease of analysis, it should be noted that there is significant overlap and resonance between them. H.D.’s syncretism is such that the devotion to Moravian Christianity explored in *The Gift* does not conflict with the veneration of pagan deities such as Hermes and Venus evident in *Trilogy*. As I discussed in Chapter One, this syncretism is held together by an overarching search for ancient wisdom, her Hermeticism, and its expression and development through a materially grounded creative practice. Hermeticism as a mode of interpretation enables a turn to the topic of writing and ritual.

In *Trilogy* writing is a spiritual activity that both expresses and instantiates the dynamic interplay between ritual-as-performance and signification. An analysis of *Trilogy*

⁸ Schechner, 170.

⁹ Ibid. 171.

alongside Derrida and Cixous shows the dynamism of writing, or signification, as a ritual performance in time and space that depends on the proliferation of difference. My use of ritual as a framework for this chapter functions in two ways. Firstly, it allows for close readings of various ritual elements within H.D.'s writing; secondly, it is a heuristic choice that allows me to develop my understanding of material mysticism in H.D. and Cixous. In this way, the chapter itself is a reading performance that is primarily concerned with the activities of texts.

Drama and ritual in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*

In both *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, domestic and folk traditions blend with more formal art forms, such as Greek drama. These variations on dramatic performance form important elements of H.D.'s understanding of the gift and constitute a connecting thread through the different stories told in *The Sword*. The presence of drama in this text highlights a crucial aspect of writing for H.D. – the performativity that is essential to understanding the text as cure. Delia comes to understand her 'mad grief' as connected to the creativity she sees as the vibrant heart of culture: 'I have at last, traced my own madness to its source, the source of all western poetry, the source of philosophy and mythology, the Greek drama. I can to a certain extent, therefore, assess, recognise and marvel at it'.¹⁰ By identifying her madness with Greek drama/poetry, she realigns it with creativity, rather than destruction, and, therefore, embraces the possibilities for renewal nascent in even this painful episode. Although somewhat grandiose, this is an effective strategy for reconciling painful experiences, but there is more going on here than self-analysis and rehabilitation.

¹⁰ H.D., *The Sword* 101. There is a hint here of Dionysian madness or ecstasy. I have previously written on H.D. and ecstasy in Elizabeth Anderson, 'Dancing Modernism: Ritual, Ecstasy and the Female Body', *Literature and Theology* 22.3 (2008): 354-67.

H.D. also emphasises the connection between drama and poetry; she configures writing as performative, as an event as well as a material object.¹¹

If *The Sword* can be understood as the product of a writing cure, suggesting that art is a source of healing for a society as well as individuals ravaged by war, then one of the primary modes in which this cure is affected is drama. As Cynthia Hogue and Julie Vandivere argue, drama forms the central nexus of artistic practice and psychic health in *The Sword*:

[T]he approach H.D. adopts to work through her experience, representing it as a healing dream for a broken land, is to turn the “theatre of war” into the culturally originary ritual of the drama festival (that is, to *poetry*), as potential, curative performance: quite literally, acting/writing (out) *as* cure.¹²

H.D. plays on the expression ‘theatre of war’ when describing the results of the London Blitz: ‘the debris [...] sometimes left a half-house open, like a [...] stage-set’.¹³ The nexus of writing/drama and religion is evident through the relationship of drama and ritual, which *The Sword* presents as a site for healing, a performed cure: ‘One of H.D.’s Freudian emphases in *Sword* [is] that humanity finds its best hope for cultural recovery in marrying the ideals of art to the individual’s psychic health. This intersection can be facilitated by embodied participation in artistic ritual’.¹⁴ Hogue and Vandivere argue that the proliferation of performances in the text provides numerous sites for acting out psychic and spiritual cure. While these are crucial insights for understanding *The Sword*, Hogue and Vandivere collapse religious rites into artistic pageantry, thus eliding H.D.’s emphasis on the sacred. The placement of sacred processions at Delphi and in Athens alongside Greek tragedies and court plays implies that not only are religious ceremonies ‘culturally originary’, but also that plays are sacred rituals themselves. This reading also elides the distinction between

¹¹ I will consider writing as an object in this chapter’s conclusion.

¹² Hogue and Vandivere, xxxvi.

¹³ H.D., *The Sword* 57.

¹⁴ Hogue and Vandivere, xxxix.

drama and poetry. One of H.D.'s more important and repeated strategies is bringing concepts, activities and objects together and allowing them to resonate suggestively but not collapsing distinctions in order to argue that, for example, drama and poetry are identical.¹⁵

Performance functions as both a structuring device for *The Snord* and a flexible metaphor, which allows H.D. imaginative scope to engage with themes such as memory, history, creativity and vision. In this text, H.D. refines the metaphors deployed in earlier texts such as *The Gift* and *Trilogy*. In bringing together drama, vision and ritual, H.D. constructs a meta-discourse that allows her to comment on her own process of reading and writing history. Early in the text she indicates that performances will be used throughout the text to indicate the significance of vision to a view of history as palimpsestuous: 'The veil [...] was very thin. One saw right through it. Or, like a curtain before a play, the veil was drawn aside from time to time, and one looked on scenes of the near or far past or even of the future'.¹⁶ This metaphor indicates a potential reading strategy as the figure of the seer and the theatre-goer merge into one and plays assume a prophetic function. H.D. hints that the reader may also draw aside the veil in looking upon *The Snord's* scenes. Scenes of past and future are layered in *The Snord* through the recurring themes and performances of both plays and rituals that are embedded in the historical vignettes.

As is typical in H.D.'s work, the connection between ritual and drama is figured and refigured in *The Snord* – from ceremonial processions both ancient and modern, to the Elizabethan and Venetian plays, to the classical dramas presented both in ancient Athens and twentieth-century Philadelphia. The theatre of ritual is tied to the theatre of war through the procession and ritual remembrance of the fallen of the Battle of Britain. Delia

¹⁵ I will return to this point in my discussion of the influence of Hermeticism on *Trilogy*.

¹⁶ H.D., *The Snord* 64. Sarah Dillon defines 'palimpsestuousness' as 'a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation [...] preserving the distinctness of texts, while at the same time allowing for their essential contamination and interdependence'. She goes on to attribute the first use of 'palimpsestuous' in print to Gérard Genette, with reference to a then unpublished essay by Philippe Lejeune; Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007) 3-4.

attends a memorial service in Westminster Abbey; in the context of the other rituals in the text, this becomes a radical alignment of modern, state-sanctioned Christian rites with ancient, pagan, gynocentric rituals. H.D. believes that this ancient source will nurture healing for herself and her own society. Through the historical vignettes and reincarnated characters, H.D. links Athenian military culture (aligned with the modern world at war) with the older, goddess culture of Minoan Crete. The painted lady claims that the two cannot be fully separated:

We can not [sic] dismiss the serpent-goddess from the citadel. She has been there too long. It was not only the Delphian (the dolphin) Apollo who came from the cradle of Zeus, his sister came with him. Athens like Troy, Mycenae and Delphi was a Cretan colony. But shall our goddess be swept to oblivion? We will arm her and we will arm the youth of our city.¹⁷

In this narrative of besieged Athens, the painted lady asserts her confidence in the longevity of the serpent-goddess while simultaneously confessing her fear that this tradition will be lost. The presence of the older goddess is suggested in another scene, which points again to an earlier Greece. The Cretan spring festival – a ‘procession with the goddess’ is disrupted by war, but an Ariadne figure continues the rituals: ‘I had goat-milk, berries and spring-water. I talked to our dear master-of-festival. I sang songs with the old words. I wove garlands of wood-violets, and placed them on a flat stone for an altar’.¹⁸ H.D. draws together this simple ritual with more elaborate theatricals when she writes of the Sacred College of Delphi staging plays for the Athenian Dionysian festival.¹⁹

Like many other Modernists, H.D.’s interest in ancient Greek religion was influenced by the myth and ritual theories current in the early twentieth century. The work of Jane Harrison, one of the Cambridge ritualists, resonates with H.D.’s writing,

¹⁷ H.D., *The Sword* 172-3. For further discussion of the feminine sacred in *The Sword* and its significance as a resource for waging peace, see Hogue and Vandivere, xxxviii-xli.

¹⁸ H.D., *The Sword* 176 and 180. Although this character is unnamed, she is like Ariadne in her knowledge of the secrets of the labyrinth.

¹⁹ Ibid. 195-96.

particularly her theories about art's basis in ritual and the common purpose of art and religion: '[they] have a common root and neither can be understood without the other. It is [...] one and the same impulse that sends a man to church and the theatre'.²⁰ Harrison argued that ritual preceded mythology, therefore, studying what the Greeks *did* in relation to the sacred would yield greater knowledge of their religion as a whole.²¹ Unlike many of her colleagues, Harrison critiqued the imposition of patriarchal Olympian theology over ancient matriarchal cults.²² She argued that the Olympian religion replaced an older worship of earth spirits. However, she looked to the Olympians and their rituals for traces of the older gods: 'Apollo held the orade, but Apollo [...] was preceded by a succession of women goddesses [...] Gaia the Earth was first'.²³ The movement of religion toward mythology and theology evacuated the intensity from ritual, leaving it available for the development of art:

So long as people believed that by excited dancing [...] you could induce the coming of Spring, so long would the *dromena* [...] be enacted with intense enthusiasm. [...] [T]hese rites repeated year by year ended [...] in the mental creation of some sort of daemon or god. [...] In place of *dromena*, things done, we get gods worshipped. [...] So the *dromenon* [...] wanes, the prayer, the praise, the sacrifice waxes. Religion moves away from drama towards theology, but the ritual mould [...] is left ready for a new content.²⁴

The new content that she alludes to is Greek drama and subsequent art forms. Harrison emphasised the chorus as the remnant of ritual within drama, which resonates with H.D.'s

²⁰ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, Home University Library of Modern Knowledge, eds. Herbert Fisher and et. al. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913) 9-10. For a discussion of the influence of Jane Harrison on modern theatre, see Julie Stone Peters, 'Jane Harrison and the Savage Dionysus: Archaeological Voyages, Ritual Origins, Anthropology, and the Modern Theatre', *Modern Drama* 51.1 (2008).

²¹ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903) a5.

²² Carpentier, 46.

²³ Harrison, *Prolegomena* 261.

²⁴ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* 137-40. Contemporary ritual theory has been critical of the Cambridge ritualists' search for origins and their developmental models of the relationship between art and ritual. However, I would argue that the turn to performance in ritual studies suggests that the connection itself is vital, although I share the opinion that the quest for origins is unnecessary; Bell, *Ritual* 7-8; Schechner, 6.

use of the chorus in her poetry to emphasis community belonging.²⁵ Harrison understood ritual as a collective activity.²⁶

The significance of the community for the performance of ritual further underscores the centrality of community to H.D.'s writing. Eileen Gregory connects H.D.'s early poetry's concern with ritual with the responsibility of the artist to common life:

She conceives of the lyric as *dramatic* not in the traditional sense of emphasizing individuality and character [...] but precisely in the sense suggested by Harrison: drama as associated with *dromenon*, with liminal passage, with 'common life'. [...] She certainly saw her engagement with the lyric as a socially responsible gesture, a form of spiritual mediation.²⁷

This engagement with community, which Gregory sees as part of H.D.'s early lyric poetry, becomes more explicit in her writing of the Second World War where artistic practice and ritual is embedded in intimate religious communities.

H.D. configures history as both a drama and a ritual. In *The Sword*, as in most of her writing, the significance of religion is not lodged in particular beliefs, but in sacred practices, places and objects.²⁸ Periodic moments of vision serve to weave together various strands of history and ritual:

I saw the Parthenon frieze and I filled in the empty gaps, with a slim, athletic figure in a short kilt [...] I could see Orestes pursued by the Furies. He found the sanctuary by the altar of the goddess. I would stand by the altar. We were pursued by the Furies. Rat-ta-ta-tat – the years were revolving on their pedestal. They went slowly at first, then faster, faster as the drum beat louder.²⁹

Clearly, the insistent beat calls to mind the drums of war and the pursuit of the Furies suggests the all-too-present threat of destruction – a constant in past, present and future scenes – and the madness suffered. However, the drumbeat also may indicate the beat of

²⁵ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912) x-xi.

²⁶ Ibid. 48.

²⁷ Gregory, 123-25.

²⁸ I will discuss the importance of objects as a material location for the nexus of creativity and religion in H.D.'s work further in Chapter Four.

²⁹ H.D., *The Sword* 83.

an ancient ritual performance. Throughout *The Sword*, these two are held in tension: sacred ritual over and against the threat of destruction. The writer positions herself as the participant in ritual. She chooses to stand by the altar, but this choice will need to be made again and again through the numerous folds of time, as the Furies of madness and war continue to disrupt ritual's rhythm.

In H.D.'s prose, classical plays are joined by the medieval mystery play. The English mystery play provides a metaphorical vehicle to shift the scene from Athens to England. H.D. uses the mystery play to indicate the convergence of history, mythology and religion. The mystery plays were groups of pageants whose scope extended from early narratives in the Hebrew Bible to the end of time or doomsday and centring on the life, death and resurrection of Christ.³⁰ The cycles were performed in medieval English towns from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries as part of the celebrations of the feast of Corpus Christi. Authorised by the pope in 1264, Corpus Christi is a liturgy in celebration of liturgy, with devotion to the sacrament at its centre (the mass concludes with the priest processing with the host held aloft).³¹ This reflexive ritual creates a space conducive to the development of pageants concerned with layers of history and cosmology. Mervyn James argues that the location of the plays as part of this feast day indicate the significance of the body to urban society; it provided an organising concept allowing the affirmation of 'social wholeness and social differentiation' while simultaneously marking the creative tension between them.³²

³⁰ Katie Normington, *Modern Mysteries: Contemporary Productions of Medieval English Cycle Dramas* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007) 5; Eleanor Prosser, *Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961) 3.

³¹ The development of the observance of Corpus Christi is one indication of the growing medieval fascination with the humanity, and thus the body, of Christ. I would suggest that the blood and wounds piety of the eighteenth-century Moravian had its roots in the popular devotions to Christ's body and blood of preceding centuries. For more on blood piety in the Middle Ages, see Bynum, 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages': 685-714.

³² Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Medieval Drama: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. John C. Coldewey, vol. II: English cycle plays: studies past and present (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) 70-71.

Wholeness and differentiation can be seen in H.D.'s use of the mystery play as a metaphor for the complexities of belonging and the relationship of past, present and future. H.D. mobilises the themes addressed by such plays and their position between ritual procession and formal theatre to suggest the role of the artist as ritual participant: 'At last, I had a place in the vast pageant and a place that was near the altar'.³³ Delia is a participant, but through the act of writing the text (itself a performance), H.D. daims an authority for the artist as interpreter and creator of ritual.

H.D. doses the novel with the memorial to the fallen RAF pilots of the Battle of Britain in Westminster Abbey, thus returning to the theatre of war (never far off in *The Sword*). However, the continuity of history and openness to the future make a space for the healing and hope the text seeks to inscribe. She repeats the final line of the penultimate chapter in the opening of the final chapter: 'We went on with the play', choosing to emphasise the circularity of ritualised dramatic performance.³⁴ As we learn from deconstruction, a repetition is never identical to its predecessor.³⁵ Repetition also involves shift and change, and this is where H.D. locates her hope for healing.

Moravian litany in *The Gift*

As she does in *The Sword*, H.D. uses performance to explore artistic vocation, the connections between different historical moments and the gift that is simultaneously creative, spiritual and visionary in *The Gift*. However, there are important distinctions between the texts. In *The Gift*, the historical focus is tighter as she considers her family's heritage. Four different times are drawn together: the 1940s London Blitz; H.D.'s childhood in Bethlehem Pennsylvania; her grandmother's discovery of the Moravian

³³ H.D., *The Sword* 106.

³⁴ Ibid. 267. H.D. uses this linking device in other texts, including *Bid Me to Live* and *Trilogy*.

³⁵ Hollywood, 'Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Ritual and Bodily Practice', 78.

Hidden Church as a young woman; and the early years of the Moravian colony and their Algonquian neighbours (primarily Lenape, Nanticoke and Shawnee) in the eighteenth century (elements of which are revealed to Mamalie in a vision she later shares with her granddaughter, Hilda).³⁶ Contrasting with this precise historical framework, the use of performance throughout the text is much more loosely defined, ranging from a ritualised encounter with a fortune teller, processions, musical performances, religious rituals and a single play.

The correlation between drama and ritual is highlighted in the frame of the narrative. In the opening chapter a 'provincial' production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is one of Hilda's first experiences of the gift and the novel doses with a litany that brings together vision, liturgy, community and music.³⁷ H.D. describes the play as a 'Medieval mirade-play procession', a metaphor she uses in *The Snord*, as previously discussed.³⁸ For Hilda, the mirade of the play is how it transforms the world around her: 'Anyhow it was over. We went home. But the street would never be the same again, it would always be different, really everything would be different'.³⁹ Moreover, she explicitly links the play with religious ritual: 'The theatre was dark and the lights [...] were like ours in Church, when we sit in rows, grown people and children like this, and the Sisters walk down the aisles to hand the candles to the children'.⁴⁰ Before she becomes a writer herself, Hilda experiences artistic practice as something that changes the way she *sees*, something that partakes of vision and imbues the world with the sacred.

³⁶ In discussing *The Gift* I follow the text in referring to H.D. as a child as Hilda, while continuing to refer to the author and adult narrator as H.D.

³⁷ H.D., *The Gift* 46. As Madelyn Detloff points out, H.D.'s use of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is problematic as she 'is blind to the racist implications of her symbolic understanding of slavery as a human condition rather than a historical fact'; Detloff, 94.

³⁸ H.D., *The Gift* 47-8.

³⁹ Ibid. 47.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 46. For further discussion of Christmas candles as a symbol of the 'valorized womanhood' that H.D. considered central to Moravian spirituality, see Augustine, 'Introduction', 10-11; H.D., *Tribute* 124; H.D., *The Mystery*, ed. Jane Augustine (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009) 31.

Hilda also attends to the musical aspects of the play and imagines that her family's musical endeavours will bring the dramatic into her everyday domestic life. Music forms a significant element of her family's identity; one of her mother's losses is the suppression of her musical gift after her father's mockery, while Hilda's uncle is a renowned musician, frequently singing and playing.⁴¹ Most importantly for *The Gift*, her grandmother's music is an ongoing thread in the text and is crucial to the rediscovery of the Moravian Hidden Church. One of the original members, John Pyrlaeus, wrote down the secrets of the Hidden Church in a code formed by musical notation. Mamalie discovers this code through her knowledge of musical theory. Thus H.D. correlates music and text. She emphasises that music is not just a sound to be heard, but also has a written language of its own. With John Pyrlaeus's hidden message with the musical score, H.D. introduces the possibility of a text within a text, a hidden meaning that is only available to the initiated, which is an example of her Hermetic view of Moravian Christianity.⁴² However, as we will see, H.D. draws together musical performance and musical text. Before turning to the audition which the musical text inspires – where Mamalie hears past generations of Moravians singing – I will briefly outline the significance of hymn singing to Moravian devotion and H.D.'s spirituality.

Hymns play a central role in H.D.'s consideration of the nexus of musical performance, community and religious experience. From the days of Zinzendorf, the Moravian Church has been characterised by a strong tradition of hymn-singing.⁴³ In 1755

⁴¹ H.D., *The Gift* 51-52.

⁴² This resonates with H.D.'s abiding interest in code; signals, hieroglyphics, symbols, etc. Her interest in the ability of code to both conceal and reveal is element of Hermeticism in her thinking, which I will return to in the next section of this chapter.

⁴³ The significance of liturgy and hymnody to the Moravians is acknowledged by numerous scholars, see Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) 20-21; D. H. Tripp, 'Protestantism and the Eucharist', *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold, SJ (London: SPCK, 1978) 250. In Bethlehem, hymns were often written for special occasions such as birthdays, weddings and funerals; Atwood, *Community of the Cross* 142.

the Bethlehem bookstore had 15 different hymnals and the community owned thousands of published and unpublished hymns and litanies, which were frequently used in common worship.⁴⁴ Hymns knit together the community, providing communication as well as common worship. H.D. describes how her mother knew whether there had been a death or a birth in the community, and the gender of the deceased, based on what hymn she could hear from the church.⁴⁵

The enthusiasm for blood and wounds piety found expression in hymns that scandalized many other Protestants. Although these hymns were eventually dropped from Moravian hymnals, H.D. was aware of them through her research on Moravian history. Henry Rimius based much of his criticism of the Moravians on such hymns.⁴⁶ In her notes on Rimius, H.D. copied out the following, among others: 'My heart dwells in Jesus Side, / I kiss with the greatest Tenderness / the Scars on his Hands and Feet,' and:

pleuram
laudamus. Doth, not a little Child stick
wittingly to his little Mother: For this
Reason am I so much wrapped up in the Mark of his Side,
there is my Place, my House, my Hall,
my little bed and my little Table.
there make I – Ye Wounds!⁴⁷

Here every-day domesticity is conflated with religious devotion. The wounds of Jesus become a domestic scene where the relationship between Jesus and the devotees is

Zinzendorf himself wrote many hymns; while the more controversial hymns relating to the Holy Spirit as Mother, Jesus as female or explicit devotion to Jesus' blood and wounds have been dropped from nineteenth and twentieth-century hymnals, many of his hymns remain.

⁴⁴ Fogleman, 89.

⁴⁵ H.D., *The Gift* 57.

⁴⁶ H.D. took extensive notes on Henry Rimius's writing on the Moravians; H.D. 'The Mystery - Zinzendorf Notes'.

⁴⁷ Other hymns suggest even greater devotion if less eloquence:

The wounds Cross-God's Covenant's Blood, the Wound's, Wound's, Wound's. Flood, ye Wounds!
Yea, ye Wounds! Your Wound's, Wound's, Wound's, Good's make Wound's, Wound's, Wound's.
Courage and Wounds, Heart, Wounds.
Wounds! Wounds! Wounds!
Wounds! Wounds! Wounds!
Wounds! O! Ye Wounds! Ibid.

configured as that between a mother and a child.⁴⁸ This scene is comprised of ordinary objects – a bed, a table – which indicate the pleasure, comfort and sanctuary offered by devotions to the wounds.⁴⁹

While the emphasis on blood and wounds piety – and its attendant eroticism – may be mitigated in modern Moravian devotion, the central role of hymns remains. H.D.'s modern liturgical guides are primarily hymnals.⁵⁰ The liturgies for communion are mostly hymns, with brief words of institution, for example: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ said, Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you'.⁵¹ There are also indications for silent prayer. Several of the hymns reference blood and wounds before and after the words of institution for the wine, such as: 'E'er since by faith I saw the stream, / Thy flowing wounds supply, / Redeeming love has been my theme, / And shall be till I die'.⁵²

The hymns' attention to the physicality of Christ's body, while inscribing a celebration of divine presence rather than an emphasis on suffering, correlates with H.D.'s continued search for the sacred within the material. Moreover, the radical interpretation of gender and the focus on the domestic suggest H.D.'s understanding of Moravian devotion as centred in the family and female genealogy. During a more intimate scene in *The Gift*, hymns mark the nexus of religious devotion, creativity and domestic life that reaches its peak at Christmas. Hilda sees the story of the Nativity played out around her as candles, moss and evergreens, ginger-bread and the Moravian *putz* (crèche) suggest the presence of

⁴⁸ The controversy and subsequent violence stirred up by this conception of Jesus as female is explored in detail in Fogleman, 135-216.

⁴⁹ I will explore the role of sacred places in H.D.'s work further in Chapter Five.

⁵⁰ *Offices of Worship and Hymns*, third ed. (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Office, 1891); *The Liturgy and the Offices of Worship and Hymns of the American Province of the Unitas Fratrum, or the Moravian Church*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Office, 1908). H.D.'s copies of these books (held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library) have handwritten lists of hymns on the back fly-leaves.

⁵¹ *The Liturgy and the Offices of Worship and Hymns*, 85.

⁵² Ibid. Other hymns which denote a milder form of blood and wounds piety include 'Rock of ages, cleft for me / Let me hide myself in Thee' and 'O Sacred Head Sore Wounded'; Fogleman, 13.

the sacred in both church and domestic life. Creativity meets divinity as suggested by the hymn: ‘*Fir tree and pine and the laurel bough, We are twining in wreaths to greet thee now*’.⁵³

Throughout *The Gift*, music forms the connection between the different generations of the Hidden Church, as well as between the different stages of H.D.’s own life. She turns to the hymns of her childhood to express her fears during the Blitz:

I will be afraid too, there will be the *Storm of Death* that *roars sweeping by* that I sang to you in a hymn, and it was just a word in a hymn but it will be the *Storm of Death* and it will roar over my head and there will be children huddled in little shelters, and there will be fire.⁵⁴

Initially H.D. is sceptical of the significance of hymns, but her attitude changes when she begins to see their relevance to her current situation and when she has seen a connection between Moravian devotion as part of a Hermetic pattern revealing the ancient wisdom of the Hidden Church: ‘the trite, old words of the familiar, long forgotten hymn-tunes had come true. What had I known of the *darkness deepens* when I sang to my grandmother?’⁵⁵ The hymns express the hope that she sometimes wearies of maintaining and this hope comes to fruition when she finally understands Mamalie’s gift. The gift, the legacy of the Hidden Church – also referred to as ‘devotees of the Ritual of the Wounds’ – is re-discovered by Hilda’s grandmother and her first husband.⁵⁶ Rituals are at the heart of this legacy: ‘The later Christian [...] pieced out the story of the meeting, deciphered actually the words of strange pledges passed, strange words spoken, strange rhythms sung’.⁵⁷ H.D. emphasises the interplay between custom and inspiration; the words and rhythms ‘were prompted [...] by the Power of the Holy Spirit’.⁵⁸ This suggests that the rituals of the *Wunden Eiland* may have been loosely structured, with room for improvisation and a

⁵³ H.D., *The Gift* 88.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 181-82.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 217.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 168.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

tenuous relationship with the practice of the wider Moravian community. This would allow H.D. to describe, and to some extent invent, a tradition within a tradition.

Mamalie's discovery in the musical manuscripts, gives rise to a mystical audition. She hears voices of the older Moravians and the Shawnee leaders:

[T]he actual Power that had fallen on Anna and Zeisberger and Paxnoux and Morning Star, fell, a hundred years afterwards, on the younger Christian Seidel and his wife, Elizabeth Caroline, who was our grandmother. It seemed, [...] that in trying over and putting together the indicated rhythms, she herself became one with the *Wunden Eiland* initiates and herself spoke with tongues, hymns of the spirits in the air, of spirits at sun-rise and sun-setting, of the deer and the wild squirrel, the beaver, the otter, the king-fisher and the hawk and eagle. [...] 'O,' said Mamalie, 'I could not tell you of that laughter, it was the laughter of leaves, of wind, of snow swirling, it was the laughter of the water; indeed, it was the outpouring of the Mystic Chalice [...] it poured from the sky or from the inner realm of the Spirit, this laughter that ran over us. The laughter ran over us and the deep tones of the men's voices and the high pure silver of Anna's voice, mingled in a sort of breathing hymn; it was breathing, it was breath'.⁵⁹

'The Power' is earlier referred to as 'the Gift', indicating that spiritual inspiration is aligned with artistic vocation. Thus the hymn, which partakes of both art and religion, is an appropriate vehicle to express this power.⁶⁰ H.D. describes a mystical experience that goes beyond Christianity as the spirits of the natural world join the Holy Spirit and the sacred chalice. The spirits of the sun and the animals, the laughter of wind and snow suggest the paganism that is never far from H.D.'s conception of Christianity. How much this passage is influenced by H.D.'s knowledge of Algonquian religions is unclear, but certainly the

⁵⁹ Ibid. 169.

⁶⁰ H.D. also indicates here that this power is that of 'the Holy Ghost of the Christian ritualists and the Great Spirit of the Indians'; Ibid. 168-69. H.D.'s syncretism is evident in her emphasis on a singular divine spirit manifest throughout the material world. Unsurprisingly, she looked for traces of a mystery religion among the Algonquians, which is consistent with her Hermetic slant. Her interest in the history, culture, and language of the Algonquian tribes (particularly Lenape, Mahican and Shawnee) is evident in her notes on *The Gift*, although this research appears largely confined to a highly romanticised view of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Native Americans; H.D., *The Gift* 233, 246. For further information on contemporary Native American religious beliefs and practices, see Kidwell, et al; Elisabeth Tooker, ed., *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands: Sacred Myths, Dramas, Visions, Speeches, Healing Formulas, Rituals and Ceremonials* (London: SPCK, 1979).

sentience of the natural world plays a significant part in the cosmology and rituals of many Native American tribes.⁶¹

The Gift's dramatic opening – the play, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the actors' procession through the town – is paired with a liturgical dosing. The final scene includes the adult H.D.'s audition of the Moravian 'Litany of the Wounds'.⁶² The Blitz brings the adult H.D. to a moment that reconfigures Mamalie's discovery of the secret of the Hidden Church and her ecstatic mystical audition. Here her childhood memories coincide with the psychic shifts H.D. has experienced through war trauma:

I had gone down under the wave and I was still alive, I was breathing [...] I had gone down, been submerged by the wave of memories and terrors, repressed since the age of ten and long before, but with the terrors, I had found the joys too.⁶³

This leads to a visionary experience, which, like Mamalie's, is primarily auditory and liturgical.

Not only was hymn-singing a primary feature of Moravian liturgy, but rituals themselves were at the centre of Moravian life. Before considering the significance of H.D.'s audition for understanding the role of ritual in *The Gift*, it is important to place it in the context of the original 'Litany of the Wounds'.⁶⁴ *The Gift*'s litany is markedly different from the eighteenth-century Moravian litany. In the original, the litany is set for two choirs, the second making responses to the statements of the first.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Kidwell, et al., 35.

⁶² H.D., *The Gift* 222. A litany is 'an extended series of petitions with repeated responses' often used on penitential occasions, however, Moravian piety emphasised celebration rather than penitence, as does H.D.; John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy: From the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 136.

⁶³ H.D., *The Gift* 219.

⁶⁴ In the middle of the middle of the eighteenth century, the 'Litany of the Wounds' was the most popular and frequently used litany for Moravians, who declared it to be the centre of their theology, as well as their devotional practice; Atwood, *Community of the Cross* 203.

⁶⁵ I use Craig Atwood's translation of Zinzendorf's German text; Ibid. 'Appendix 3', 233-37.

Over its course, the litany praises Christ, invokes the blessing of the Trinity, requests mercy and culminates a long set of responses requesting blessings for the Moravian community and the wider world, which encourages adoration of the wounds themselves. Salvation and sanctification are dearly invoked – ‘Wondrous wounds of Jesus, / *Holy fissures, you make sinners holy, and thieves from saints.*’ – but more of the petitions celebrate an ongoing intimacy with Jesus, in which the believers are nourished by the wounds: ‘Soft wounds of Jesus, / *I like lying calm, gently, and quiet and numb. What should I do? I crawl to you*’ and ‘Eternal wounds of Jesus, / *[You are] my house to dwell in. In a million eons you will still be new*’.⁶⁶ Although the litany dearly refers to Jesus’ crucified body, what is evidently invoked here is his living presence. Not all the responses are so abstract; blood is part of this devotion: ‘Powerful wounds of Jesus, / *So moist, so gory, bleed on my heart so that I may remain brave and like the wounds*’ and ‘Purple wounds of Jesus, / *You are so succulent, whatever comes near becomes like wounds and flowing with blood*’.⁶⁷ However, even here, the Moravians wish to share the qualities of the wounds, not in Jesus’ physical suffering. The wounds do not begin with crucifixion, but with birth and circumcision:

May your painful first birth	Make us love our humanness!
May your holy first wound	Help us circumsise our hearts!
May your childlikeness	Help us to have childlike joy!
May your first exile	Teach us to be at home everywhere! ⁶⁸

The entirety of Jesus’ life is part of the litany; it emphasises the common humanity of Jesus and his worshippers and thus the relevance of his life as a model.

Returning now to *The Gift*, in an instance of hearkening, or spiritual hearing, the communal nature of ritual is emphasised, as H.D. connects the members of the Hidden

⁶⁶ Ibid. 235-37. The domestic image of dwelling aligns the litany with the devotional cards which depict the side wound as an interior with bed and chair, and occasionally a kneeling figure. The domestic emphasis is evident in other parts of the litany: ‘Warm wounds of Jesus, / *In no pillow can a little child feel itself so secure before cold air*’; Ibid, 236.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 235-36.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 234.

Church (represented by Christian Renatus, Zinzendorf's son) with the wider Moravian community (the choir) and her own family (her great-grandfather).⁶⁹ Moreover, this hearkening occurs in the midst of the Blitz, thus drawing together H.D.'s Moravian past with her present community in London and suggesting that the spiritual resources of the former may be a gift for the latter. Consonant with her previous configurations of religion and domesticity, H.D.'s audition occurs in a mundane environment; after an air-raid, she walks into the kitchen and into a mystical experience:

I heard Christian Renatus saying:
 Wound of Christ,
 Wound of God,
 Wound of Beauty,
 Wound of Blessing,
 Wound of Poverty
 Wound of Peace,
 and it went on and on, while underneath it, there was the deep bee-like humming of the choir of Single Brothers and then the deeper sustained bass-note that must have been Christian David who had a voice like my great-grandfather who made docks and kept bees and was called *princeps facile* of musicians.⁷⁰

H.D.'s litany is an abbreviation, almost a citation, rather than a full responsorial prayer. The response here is the humming of the choir and the overlaid memory of Hilda's great-grandfather. Christian Renatus's address to the wounds reflects H.D.'s belief in the Hidden Church as the caretakers of an ongoing mystical tradition. The description of the wounds is much more abstract than in Zinzendorf's version, indicating the general values of the Moravian community. The wounds are removed from their close identification with Jesus' crucified body, while still continuing to signal the living presence of the divine. Another point of connection may be found in H.D.'s subsequent recognition as the whole earth as

⁶⁹ Schmidt, *Hearing Things* 35. Christian Renatus was a central figure at Herrnhag (a Moravian community in Germany) at the height of blood and wounds piety during the Sifting Time (a time when the wounds devotions became excessive, leading to charges of 'scandalous mysticism' and contributing to the persecution of Moravians); Augustine, 'Introduction', 21; Fogleman, 89.

⁷⁰ H.D., *The Gift* 222. Bees are a recurring image in H.D.'s writing that I will explore further in Chapter Four.

'*Wunden Eiland* [...] a wounded island'.⁷¹ *Wunden Eiland*, the Isle of the Wounds, was a sacred place near Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where the rituals associated with blood and wounds piety were practiced and meetings between Native American and Moravian leaders were held.⁷² The wound as a *place* is emphasised in both the earlier litany and H.D.'s visionary counterpart, while the domesticity of the wounds as a place of rest accords with the domestic setting of H.D.'s audition.

The 'bee-like', hymn-like humming of the choir recapitulates the voices of Anna von Pahlen and Paxnoux, as well as the commingling of human voices with the voices of the natural world heard by Mamalie.⁷³ In this way, H.D.'s audition re-stages the visionary experience of her grandmother that was given to her second-hand as a child. This repetition allows the adult H.D. to fully inhabit her own childhood experience and bring this shared wisdom to fruition. The words suggest a sacred plenitude, drawing together divine presence, aesthetics and an end to war. She goes on to emphasise the liturgical nature of her audition, thus drawing together the ritual and the visionary consciousness that is the gift Hilda received from Mamalie. H.D. reconfigures blood and wounds piety. She aligns this liturgical tradition with the Secret of the Hidden Church, which is both the peace exemplified in the pacts between Algonquian tribes and Moravians, and the divine presence indicated by the words discovered by Mamalie's husband: '*lo, I am with you alway* [sic], *even unto the end of the world*'.⁷⁴ In *The Gift*, sacred presence leads to visionary transformation; the way one sees is changed. Such transformations are enacted through the performative rituals of litany and music.

⁷¹ Ibid. 273.

⁷² Joseph Mortimer Levering qtd in Ibid. 262. I will discuss the significance of *Wunden Eiland* as a sacred place in Chapter Five.

⁷³ Although this scene lacks the traditional trappings of spiritualism – the table and the tapped-out messages – H.D. signals her role as medium when she describes hearing the voices of the dead; Augustine, 'Introduction', 17-18.

⁷⁴ Matthew 28:20. H.D., *The Gift* 157.

Alchemical ritual and Hermeticism in *Trilogy*

In *Trilogy* ritual is allied with writing rather than with the performances that are so prominent in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* and *The Gift*. Reading the three texts together allows performance and writing to be drawn together. The poem's ritual aspects can be read in terms of performance approaches to ritual.⁷⁵ Before I turn to a consideration of the complex interactions of textuality, ritual and performance, I wish to consider alchemical ritual and its underlying philosophy, Hermeticism, in *Trilogy*. Among the many strands of H.D.'s religious syncretism, Hermeticism provides a worldview that allows diverse elements to be brought together in the search for ancient wisdom and hidden knowledge. I have demonstrated how this shapes her approach to her Moravian Christian heritage; I now turn to the more obvious syncretism of *Trilogy*. Amidst the numerous invocations, initiates, offerings and altars of *Trilogy*, the poem's central ritual – the ritual that prepares the way for the subsequent visions of the burnt yet blossoming tree, the Lady and the presence of the angels – is alchemical. H.D. uses this ritual and the multivalent interpretations mobilised by Hermeticism to explore the relationship between writing, materiality and the sacred.

As Morris and others have argued, *Trilogy* is concerned with a quest for healing a community damaged by the traumas of war.⁷⁶ Read alongside H.D.'s other Second World War writing, this common theme emerges even more clearly. In order to effect healing, the poet exhorts herself and the reader to undertake an inner journey in search of mystical knowledge that draws on Hermetic traditions:

[...] living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,

⁷⁵ Morris, 'Signaling': 126; Gregory, 122-25.

⁷⁶ Morris, 'Signaling': 126-27. See also, Graham, 'H.D.'s *Trilogy*': 161-66; Cyrena N. Pondrom, 'Trilogy and *Four Quarters*: Contrapuntal Visions of Spiritual Quest', *Agenda* 25.3-4 (1987): 156-64.

selfless,
 that pearl-of-great-price.
 [...]
 we are the keepers of the secret,
 the carriers, the spinners

of the rare intangible thread
 that binds all humanity

to ancient wisdom.⁷⁷

Critics have read the references to initiates and initiation in *Trilogy* in numerous different ways: as coded references to poetry, spiritualism, feminist spirituality or Hermeticism. I suggest that while all of these readings may be valid and there is certainly evidence for them, whether intra- or inter-textual, the invocation of ancient wisdom suggests the centrality of Hermeticism in the text. Indeed, Hermeticism can be seen to subsume the others, not by exdusion, but by indusion; it is a framework for thinking that does not exdude other practices or beliefs. Erik Hornung argues that because ‘Hermes Trismegistus is a god of hamony, of reconciliation and transformation’; Hermeticism is by nature tolerant, with no rigid dogma.⁷⁸

Hermeticism is a philosophical tradition with its roots in the cultural milieu of Alexandrian Egypt, the contact zone of Greek and Egyptian culture. It was transmitted to European culture via Greek texts known to early Christian apologists; Arabic writings (particularly on alchemy) disseminated during the Middle Ages; and more widely circulated translations of the older texts during the Renaissance. Hermeticism is more of a worldview than a set of doctrines. It is marked by devotion to Hermes (both god and sage), mediator between the divine and humanity, and the search for ancient wisdom, which will bring the seeker to God’s presence.

⁷⁷ H.D., *Walls* 443 - 15,9.

⁷⁸ Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 201.

The role of Hermes in Western culture is complex and varied. The messenger of the gods, he is the founder of cities, the creator of writing, the arts and alchemy, the bearer of souls to the after world, a trickster and a thief. He is the patron of ‘poets, orators, thieves’.⁷⁹ His thievery involves returning hidden treasures to circulation and thus is related to relay of knowledge.⁸⁰ Hermeticists conflate the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian Thoth, also credited with inventing writing (and, by extension, all of culture) and judging the souls of the dead as well as regulating the fate of the living.⁸¹ Hermeticism takes its name from texts ascribed to the Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, reputed to be of ancient origin. Hermes Trismegistus shares many of the attributes of Hermes/Thoth and is sometimes considered the grandson of the god, or his avatar.⁸²

Hermes’ conversion from god to sage allowed the resurgence of interest in Hermeticism in the Renaissance, as Christians could revere the sage and consider his writings to be a means of connecting pagan and Christian wisdom.⁸³ Many texts of diverse provenance have been ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. A collection of these writings, the *Corpus Hermeticum* (or *Hermetica*), was translated into Latin in the fifteenth century by Marsilio Ficino, which enabled the circulation of Hermeticism through Europe during the

⁷⁹ H.D., *Tribute to the Angels*, Trilogy (New York: New Directions, 1998) 1:6.

⁸⁰ Faivre, 15, 21.

⁸¹ Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: 1986) 22-23; Hornung, 52; Kurt Seligman, *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion* (New York: Random House, 1971) 272-73; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *The Avatars of Thrice Great Hermes* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982) 8.

⁸² Fowden, 25-29; Stanton J. Linden, ‘Introduction’, *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 10; Tuveson, 8. For more on the relationship between Alexandrian Hellenism and decadence, Modernism and H.D., see Gregory, 38-107.

⁸³ Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2007) 59; Tuveson, 9. This is not to say that Hermeticism was not present in European culture before the Renaissance. Many theologians, including Peter Abelard and Albertus Magnus, considered Hermes Trismegistus to be a celebrated ancient philosopher. Hermetic alchemy was widely practiced enough for Pope John XXII to forbid its practice in 1317. Early Christian apologists were divided on how to recuperate Hermes Trismegistus for Christianity, some rejecting Hermeticism entirely while others championed Hermes Trismegistus as a precursor of Christ (including Cyril of Alexandria) and still others choose a middle way. Augustine considered Hermes Trismegistus to be a precursor of Christian faith, a sage who ‘preached the one true God’; although he was also critical of his worship of idols, Augustine dedicated several chapters of *City of God* to the philosopher; Fowden, 180, 210; Hornung, 78-79. Moreover, Hermeticists in northern Europe tended to refer to alchemical texts such as the *Tabula Smaragdina* (the Emerald Tablet), not the *Corpus Hermeticum*; Ebeling, 60.

Renaissance.⁸⁴ In 1614 Isaac Causabon from Geneva discredited the ancient origin of most Hermetica, proving that most of the texts dated from the early centuries of the Common Era, although some still argued for ancient Egyptian theology in the *Asclepius* (another Hermetic text from the first centuries of the Common Era).⁸⁵ However, Antoine Faivre suggests that this may well have reinforced ‘belief in a hidden Tradition, all the more secret or primordial because one could no longer date it’, while Umberto Eco explains Hermeticists’ dismissal of Causabon’s findings by their refusal of linear causality, which extends even to history.⁸⁶

Like Gnosticism and related systems, Hermeticism indicates that salvation comes through knowledge. However, this knowledge is not primarily rational or intellectual, but experiential, attained through spiritual discipline, study and practice, passed on from teacher to disciple.⁸⁷ The Hermeticist seeks ‘*gnosis*, or direct awareness of the Divine’.⁸⁸ Hermeticism suggests that the divine is the soul of the world, and thus is hidden and revealed in creation.⁸⁹ Thus all of nature is sentient, full of the spirit of God; Paracelsus, a Renaissance alchemist, taught that ‘there is no corporeal thing, which hath not a spirit lying

⁸⁴ For a history and an overview of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, see Brian P. Copenhaver, ‘Introduction’, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation, with Notes and Introduction*, ed. Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸⁵ Fowden, xiv; Hornung, 98. The Latin translation of the *Asclepius* is cited by Augustine and became widespread in the twelfth century; Ebeling, 10. Although the Hermetic texts are not of ancient origin, it is important to bear in mind that the roots of this tradition may go back much further. For example, the Egyptian Amenhotpe, director of building projects such as the Colossi of Memnon and later worshipped as a sage and healing god, has inscribed on one of his statues at Karnak (c. 1360 B.C.E.), ‘I was introduced to the book of the god, I saw the transfigurations of Thoth and was equipped with their mysteries’; qtd. in Hornung, 5. Hornung goes on to point out the Hermetic features of these phrases; the initiation into wisdom, the importance of revelation and a divine book, and of course we can also see here a dynamic understanding of the nature of the divine. For more information on early applications of the title ‘Trismegistus’ to Hermes (beginning in the second century C.E.), see Fowden, 216.

⁸⁶ Faivre, 61; Eco, 19. This ‘spiral-like logic’ recalls H.D.’s belief in reincarnation and sense of interconnecting spirals of time, most evident in *The Sword*.

⁸⁷ Fowden, 149.

⁸⁸ Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, *The Celestial Tradition: A Study of Ezra Pound’s the Cantos* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992) xii.

⁸⁹ Tuveson, xiv.

hid in it, as also a life'.⁹⁰ The Hermetic understanding of the nature of God and creation thus differs from orthodox Christian doctrine: 'The Nous, the divine Self, is indeed uncreated and invisible, as in Christian theology, but it manifests itself in the physical world, which it has *generated*, not made'.⁹¹ In the *Hermetica*, God reveals this wisdom to Hermes Trismegistus:

And do you say 'God is invisible'? Speak not so. Who is more manifest than God? For this very purpose has he made all things, that through all things you may see him. [...] Nothing is invisible, not even an incorporeal thing; mind is seen in its thinking, and God in his working. [...] Everywhere God will come to meet you, everywhere he will appear to you, at places and times at which you look not for it, in your waking hours, and in your sleep, when you are journeying by water and by land, in the night-time and in the day-time.⁹²

Here, then, is Hermeticism's distinction from Gnosticism, which considers the material world to be irrevocably flawed, or even evil, and Neoplatonism, which also stresses a desired transcendence of the material world, through a series of hierarchical levels culminating in a perfect ideal.⁹³

This understanding of the world as the living revelation of divine being leads to an attention to the particular, as all of creation is understood as incarnation.⁹⁴ Both divinity and the created world are seen to be a mutually unfolding and dynamic rather than static 'even the divine image is not complete'.⁹⁵ Divine dynamism undergirds a way of reasoning

⁹⁰ Linden, 15. Paracelsus Qtd. in Tuveson, 51.

⁹¹ Tuveson, 11.

⁹² *Hermetica*, trans. Walter Scott, qtd. in Ibid. 13-14.

⁹³ Stephen A. McKnight, *Sacralizing the Secular: The Renaissance Origins of Modernity* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 23-4. Of course, in two traditions as varied as Gnosticism and Hermeticism, there will be diverse strands that are more similar, and others that are radically opposed. Some scholars suggest there are two strands of Hermeticism; one that affirms the value of the created world, and one (more Gnostic) that is dualistic and rejects the material; Ebeling, 32; Faivre, 56. For further discussion of the similarities and differences between Gnosticism and Hermeticism, see Roelof van den Broek, 'Gnosticism and Hermeticism in Antiquity', *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York, 1998) 1-20.

⁹⁴ Faivre, 58.

⁹⁵ Tuveson, 57.

by analogy; everything in the universe is related to every other part of the 'living whole'.⁹⁶ This holistic view includes incorporeal, spiritual and psychic realities as well materiality. In the *Emerald Tablet*, Hermes Trismegistus sums up this web of interrelated material and spiritual realms: 'That which is above is like to that which is below and that which is below is like to that which is above'.⁹⁷ The law of correspondences suggests that each thing is also an analogy for something else; thus the world is a web of signification. The world as signifying web allows knowledge to be hidden as well as revealed. The analogical relationship between things allows the Hermeticist to see the universe as a text to be decoded and read.⁹⁸ Part of the *gnosis* attained by the Hermeticist is the ability to see this web of connection and understand the ways in which the material expresses the spiritual: 'they find sense everywhere in things'.⁹⁹ As I discussed in Chapter One, this way of reasoning by analogy is crucial to understanding H.D.'s stylistics. In both her poetry and prose, she repeatedly brings together differing concepts, images and experiences in order to establish 'a web of correspondences' that both reveals and conceals the complexities of her vision. I will return to this point in my discussion of ritual, language and writing later in this chapter.

In addition to his numerous other attributes, Hermes Trismegistus is the founder and patron of alchemy, with Hermeticism forming its philosophical basis of alchemy.¹⁰⁰ Like Hermeticism, alchemy has a complex, diverse history. Some strands of the tradition focus on the pragmatic arts of metallurgy, goldsmithing and glass-making, while others are more concerned with the theological and philosophical implications of the transformation

⁹⁶ Antoine Faivre, 'Renaissance Hermeticism and the Concept of Western Esotericism', *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 119; Tuveson, 17.

⁹⁷ Hermes Trismegistus, 'The Emerald Tablet', *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 28.

⁹⁸ Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 57.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 70.

¹⁰⁰ Linden, 9.

of all nature. In this formulation alchemy becomes another mode of ancient wisdom, as the alchemist attempts to understand God and creation.¹⁰¹ At the heart of alchemy is the Hermeticist understanding of all matter as alive, and in dynamic relation. Alchemy, then, seeks to harness the principle of transformation at the centre of life towards the perfecting of all things. The two strands – exoteric and esoteric – are not mutually exclusive; turning lead into gold, or creating the philosopher's stone (which bestows eternal life) may also been seen as metaphors for spiritual, as well as physical, transformation. Many alchemists believed that personal transformation and spiritual purity was required before the physical processes would be successful.¹⁰²

The prototypical alchemical ritual describes a sacred marriage between sulphur (male) and mercury (female), which results in a holy birth – the elixir of life which will 'redeem all life to its highest form'.¹⁰³ This ritual can be mapped onto the Eleusinian mysteries and the Moravian formulation of the Trinity as Father, Mother and androgynous Son, where the holy child is the redeemer, the elixir of life.¹⁰⁴ With its resonance across diverse traditions, this ritual is a powerful metaphor for H.D. As Adalaide Morris notes, the process of distillation, transformation and birth of new forms is referenced repeatedly throughout *Trilogy*. From the metamorphosis of seed, shell and chrysalis, to the larger narratives of the poem which suggest alchemical change effected in the crucible of war, these transformations culminate in 'the ultimate, audacious hope [...] that [*Trilogy*] might itself carry and transmit a formula for regeneration'.¹⁰⁵ Here Morris returns to her earlier

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 4-5.

¹⁰² Ebeling, 26; Linden, 5.

¹⁰³ Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 113.

¹⁰⁴ Jane Harrison theorized that they enacted a sacred marriage and birth; Gregory, 119-122. Through an analogical system in which chemical processes were aligned with spiritual processes, Christian alchemists considered Christ to be the philosopher's stone, or elixir of life; Linden, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 115.

formulation of *Trilogy* as a ritual and refines this reading by focusing on the poem's alchemical references.

The quest for hidden knowledge, if not ancient than certainly of earlier epochs, is implicit in *The Gift* and *The Sword*, but is most evident in *Trilogy*, where questions of inspiration, discovery of ancient wisdom (the 'true-rune') and transformation are introduced in the opening sections and continue through all three volumes.¹⁰⁶ H.D.'s interest in Hermes is evident from her earliest poetry. In 'Hermes of the Ways', from her first volume of poetry, *Sea Garden*, the god is the changeable figure who watches over boundaries, pathways and meeting points: 'you have waited, / where sea-grass tangles with / shore-grass'.¹⁰⁷ The Hermetic understanding of the universe as participating in divine life is evident in the way H.D. describes materiality as suffused with the sacred, the individual as indissolubly material and spiritual and the juxtaposition of the quotidian and the extraordinary. Throughout *Trilogy* H.D. emphasises the interplay of the individual, the natural world and divinity in her material mysticism: 'the Kingdom is a Tree / whose roots bind the heart-husk / to earth'; the star Venus reflected 'In the field-furrow / the rain-water'.¹⁰⁸ Timothy Materer argues that H.D. gives Hermeticism a twentieth-century cast by blending psychoanalysis and the subversion of traditional sexual and gender identities with Hermeticism and channelling all three into visionary poetics.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ H.D., *Walls* 2:15.

¹⁰⁷ H.D., *Collected Poems* 39. Adaläide Morris argues that H.D.'s early work describes/invokes a world [that] glows with sacred energy; however, the poet is supplicant, absence haunts the poems and 'the gods function not as the poem's ornament but as its absent center'; Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 98.

¹⁰⁸ H.D., *Walls* 25:11-13; H.D., *Angels* 10:1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Materer, 88-89. Alchemical principles stressed the fusion of 'male' and 'female' elements in an 'alchemical marriage which produced a sacred child, the philosopher's stone (which 'redeemed all life to its highest form'), alternatively they combined to form the androgyne, the male/female figure of Hermes; Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 112-13; Arturo Schwarz, *Kabbalah and Alchemy: An Essay on Common Archetypes* (Northvale, NJ and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 2000) 65. This philosophy affirmed the importance of the female principal as equal to the male, but it does not necessarily provide any real challenge to gender roles and it clearly privileges heterosexual mythologies. However, I agree with Materer that H.D.'s use of alchemy leans towards subverting sexual and gender roles.

For the remainder of this section, I will focus on the alchemical ritual that is described in greatest detail in *Trilogy*, and trace its reverberations across *Tribute to the Angels* (where it first appears) and *The Flowering of the Rod*. As we have already seen in *The Sward* and *The Gift*, ritual and vision are closely connected for H.D.; ritual mobilises visionary consciousness. The visions that proliferate in these texts instantiate a material mysticism, as the rituals work to set the dynamism at the heart of Hermeticism's analogical system in motion. H.D. puts an idiosyncratic spin on Hermeticism by constructing an alchemical process that distils not metals or other matter, but words. Materer reads H.D.'s use of alchemy in the context of her interest in psychoanalysis, arguing that H.D.'s wordplay can be described by Lacan's 'play of the signifier'.¹¹⁰ However, I would suggest that while H.D. certainly does emphasise a verbal alchemy, material transformation is not discarded. She draws a correspondence between the poet and the alchemist when the distillation of words converts into matter (a jewel) and back into language.¹¹¹ This oscillating word/jewel allows H.D. to align the philosophy of Hermeticism and dynamic practice of alchemy with artistic practice.

In *Angels'* alchemical ritual, words (cognates of myrrh) become a jewel, which in turn becomes the word 'Venus/Aphrodite', redeemed from negative connotations. Through linguistic alchemy, the connotations of Venus are shifted from 'venery [...] venereous, lascivious' to 'venerate, / venerator'.¹¹² The possibilities of change mobilised by language are explored more fully in the alchemy of *marab*:

¹¹⁰ Materer, 100-101. For a nuanced discussion of H.D.'s word play in *Trilogy*, see Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 40-49.

¹¹¹ David Meakin points out the appeal of alchemy as an analogy for writing and interpretation: 'A body of thought that is in its own right so given to multivalent figure and symbol – what, for instance, is meant by "gold"? – is especially prone to being adopted as a symbol for writing, and the initiation structure enacted by alchemy easily becomes a figure, not only for the apprenticeship of the writer, but also for the problems of interpreting and reading with which modern literature is so preoccupied'; David Meakin, *Hermetic Fictions: Alchemy and Irony in the Novel* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995) 7.

¹¹² H.D., *Angels* 11:6-8 & 12:9-10.

Now polish the crucible
and in the bowl distill

a word most bitter, *marah*,
a word bitterer still, *mar*,

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

Now polish the crucible
and set the jet of flame

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

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

Star of the Sea,
Mother.

Bitter, bitter jewel
in the heart of the bowl.¹¹³

After describing its creation through the distillation of words, the poet/initiate contemplates the jewel, which reveals the divine life hidden in the heart of things: 'I want to [...] concentrate on it / till I shrink, / dematerialize / and am drawn into it'.¹¹⁴ The emphasis on the interplay between words and things is a point I will return to in the following chapter. The poet wishes to participate in the alchemical process herself; she does not stand apart from it. The alchemical ritual presents a twist on the earlier metaphors of transformation; this time H.D. refers not to a natural process but to human intervention in the natural world, or art.¹¹⁵ The words are subject to change, but it is the process of distillation that brings about this transformation. As many critics have noted, this ritual

¹¹³ Ibid. 8:1 - 9:2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 14:12-16. I have previously analysed *Angels'* word/jewel in the context of H.D., embodied spirituality and movement; see Elizabeth Anderson, "Dance, Dance, Dance Ecstatic": H.D.'s Embodied Mysticism', (unpublished master's thesis) University of Glasgow, 2007, 21-23.

¹¹⁵ Hermes is the god of art, of cultural construction, as well as words and communication; Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998) 261-62.

redaims a hidden tradition of the feminine divine.¹¹⁶ The words 'marah' and 'mar' (meaning bitterness) go through repetitive transformations; they become brine, sea, the mother goddess, the Roman goddess of the spring (Maia), the Star of the Sea (Astarte or Aphrodite/Venus), and finally Mary (both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene). In this process of transmutation, the bitterness of marah and brine are retained, suggesting that this is an essential part of the word-goddess-jewel transformation. All is transformed: word, material, divinity, the poet herself.

As a reflection of the Hermetist worldview, not only is the jewel transformed, it lives, with a 'faint / heart-beat, pulse-beat'.¹¹⁷ H.D. stresses the provisional and fluid by refusing to categorise the properties of the living, mutable jewel:

I do not know what it gives,
a vibration that we can not name
[...]
I said, I can not name it,
there is no name;
[...]
I said, it lived, it gave –
fragrance – was near enough

to explain that quality
for which there is no name;

I do not want to name it.¹¹⁸

Like the entirety of creation, the jewel is incomplete and its significance continues to unfold. The dashes before and after 'fragrance' bracket the word off, suggesting that it is special in some way. This invites the reader to ponder the strange quality of this 'jewel-in-formation'.¹¹⁹ The syntax is awkward, as if the word 'fragrance' needs to be read twice. It

¹¹⁶ For further discussion of alchemy in *Angels* as the redemption of the feminine divine, see Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 245-53; Gubar: 209; Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 113-15. It is worth noting that Gubar expresses discomfort with the 'mystifications' of the alchemical ritual and the litany of goddesses and considers them secondary to the more abstract 'female spirit'.

¹¹⁷ H.D., *Angels* 14:8-9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 13:9-14:17.

¹¹⁹ Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 214.

can be read as either, 'it gave fragrance', or 'fragrance was near enough to explain that quality'. The dash could also indicate a hesitation while the poet searches for the appropriate word. The reader is left wondering if 'fragrance' is indeed what the jewel gives, or if some other word would better convey the unnameable quality. Used ambiguously and in association with the 'unnameable', this might be better named an apophatic dash.¹²⁰ H.D. draws attention to the undecidability of the jewel itself, as well as fragrance grammatically as well as metaphorically.

Fragrance is uncontained by the ritual and drifts inexorably through *Trilogy*, drawing together the alchemical ritual and the first scene of the poem: the war-torn city. Morris reminds us that the crucible that contains the entirety of *Trilogy* is the crucible of war.¹²¹ The regeneration represented by the alchemical jewel corresponds to the renewal of bombed London: 'tell me, in what other city / will you find the may-tree / so delicate, green-white, opalescent / like our jewel in the crucible?'¹²² By analogy, the blossoming may-tree takes the elixir of life into the streets, the fragrance of jewel and tree consecrating the city-scape: 'no temple / but everywhere, / the outer precincts and squares / are fragrant'.¹²³

However provisionally the poet marks the word 'fragrance', it is the quality that unites the word/jewel, the blossoming tree and myrrh. Myrrh is an image that re-occurs throughout *Trilogy*. It brings together the blossoming tree, alchemical rituals and Mary

¹²⁰ I am indebted to The Very Reverend Kelvin Holdsworth for formulating this phrase; Kelvin Holdsworth, 'What's in Kelvin's Head', 2007, Available: <http://www.thurible.net/20070702/two-literary-questions/>, 17 October, 2010. Apophatic theology argues that God is completely other to anything that could be said or known about God. Therefore, apophasis is the process of 'unsaying' everything that has been said about God. It is the negative way, or way of ignorance, of un-knowing. Language is rendered unstable and collapses, leaving only silence; Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) 122-23; Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 22.

Catherine Keller's process theology, which draws upon the negative theology of Nicholas of Cusa (a Hermeticist) to develop a cosmology which continues to fold and unfold, can also be situated in the tradition of the Hermetic view of an unfolding universe; Catherine Keller, 'The Apophasis of Gender: A Fourfold Unsayings of Feminist Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76.4 (2008): 206-07.

¹²¹ Morris, 'Signaling': 110-113.

¹²² H.D., *Angels* 17:17-20.

¹²³ Ibid. 18:1-4.

Magdalene, who plays an alchemical role in *The Flowering of the Rod*. In the figure of Mary, H.D. draws a connection between the alchemical ritual that transmutes words and substances and the personal transformation also sought by alchemists. She plays on the linguistic connections between Mary, marah/bitterness and myrrh. Morris argues that Kaspar (one of the three 'kings' or wise men who followed the star to Bethlehem in the Gospel of Matthew) and Mary represent the distilled (masculine) sulphur and (feminine) mercury needed for the 'chemical marriage' and the product of the sacred marriage is the jar of myrrh, or the elixir of life. Thus in anointing Christ before the crucifixion with myrrh, Mary becomes the alchemist who prepares the way for transformation and resurrection.¹²⁴ However, Mary herself is also represented as myrrh:

I am Mary – O, there are Mary's a-plenty,
(though I am Mara, bitter) I shall be Mary-myrrh
[...]
I am Mary, the incense-flower of the incense-tree,
myself worshipping, weeping, shall be changed to myrrh.¹²⁵

Mary indicates that her identity mirrors the alchemical ritual in which the word 'marah' becomes 'Mary'. She participates in the alchemical process as the poet longs to do.¹²⁶

Through word play and analogy, H.D. suggests that the resonances of alchemical rituals in *Trilogy* move in a number of directions simultaneously. The mutability of myrrh and its drifting fragrance reveal Hermetic dynamism. Myrrh is an image for the divine life that permeates the universe, revealed by the alchemical practices of distillation and

¹²⁴ Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 115.

¹²⁵ H.D., *The Flowering of the Rod*, *Trilogy* (New York: New Directions, 1998) 16:9-10 & 19:1-2. There is a connection between *Trilogy's* 'Mary's a-plenty' and Mamalio's favourite ballad, 'The Four Marys', in *The Gift*; H.D., *The Gift* 152.

¹²⁶ The 'incense-flower' which is Mary may have been inspired by references to the Tree of Life from the apocalyptic *Book of Enoch*: 'And among the trees [...] there was one of unheard-of fragrance; there is no tree like it upon the earth; its fragrance is the sweetest of all fragrances. [...] And its fragrance shall give sap to their bones'; qtd. in Dmitri Merezhkovsky, *The Secret of the West*, trans. John Cournos (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936) 107. This passage is marked in H.D.'s copy (held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library), and the dates on the flyleaf suggest that she read the book in the early 1940s. *The Book of Enoch* is an ancient Jewish religious text.

projection.¹²⁷ Like Mary Magdalene and the word/jewel, the Christ child at *Trilogy*'s dose is also represented as 'the bundle of myrrh' which gives off 'a most beautiful fragrance / as of all flowering things together'.¹²⁸ Sensory but unseen, fragrance indicates the mingling of spiritual and material, vision and object. Fragrance reveals the dose connection between incarnation, epiphany and resurrection, which suggests the importance of materiality and vision for redemption. H.D. aligns fragrance with the wide variety of visions, rituals and experiences throughout the poem; it indicates bitterness and sweetness, death and resurrection, sensory experience and imagination, healing and transformation.

Conclusion: ritual and language

Since antiquity, Hermes has been associated with speech and language. Plato suggests that those aspects of language that have to do with circulation, trickery and transformation are the particular mode of Hermes; he is the interpreter, the messenger, the thief, the liar.¹²⁹ Lewis Hyde points out that Hermes, along with other trickster figures, is no ordinary liar: 'When he lies and steals, it isn't so much to get away with something or get rich as to disturb the established categories of truth and property and, by so doing, open the road to possible new worlds'.¹³⁰ Another thief, a thief on the wing (Hermes's wings?), is Cixous's figuration of woman writer, who performs the trick of re-negotiating her cultural status in order to access writing, thus disrupting established categories:

Flying is a woman's gesture – flying in language and making it fly. [...] [F]or centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying: we've lived in flight, stealing away, finding, when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers. It's no accident that *voler* has a double meaning, that it plays on

¹²⁷ Distillation (or sublimation) is the purification of each substance into its essence, while projection is the final stage in an alchemical process, 'the precipitation of a new, more perfect form', i.e. the philosopher's stone; Linden, 18; Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 112.

¹²⁸ H.D., *Rod* 43:7, 3-4.

¹²⁹ Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 15.

¹³⁰ Hyde, 13. I will return to the notion of 'possible worlds' in Chapter Four, when I consider Paul Ricoeur's work on metaphor and imagination.

each of them and thus throws off the agents of sense. It's no accident: women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds.¹³¹

In related sections of her more autobiographical essay 'Coming to Writing', Cixous makes it clear that *voler* describes her own relationship to writing.¹³² Language must be stolen, but for Cixous, wings themselves are writing: 'I can only count on my own wings. I unsheathed them. Crumpled, two leaves of paper'.¹³³ Hermes, like the woman writer, disrupts, as well as creates, culture.¹³⁴ Hermes' association with language and the creation and disruption of culture involves not only writing, but the related art of reading or interpretation. Not only is Hermeticism a worldview, but it is also a mode of interpretation.¹³⁵ As I have previously indicated, in the Hermetic worldview all things are related to each other as participants in divine life. The dynamic of revelation and concealment leads to a way of interpreting the world which functions analogically; each thing is related to each other thing through a web of association. The universe is a text to be read, a code to be cracked.

Umberto Eco points out that this interconnectedness suggests layers and multiple analogies in which each expression points to another. None are fully revelatory; all contain some measure of hidden wisdom: 'The original One is self-contradictory [...]. The One can be expressed only by negation and approximation, so that every possible representation of it cannot but refer to another representation, equally obscure and contradictory'.¹³⁶ This understanding of the multiplicity at the heart of reality, an irreducible difference, replicated in the world emanating from the divine, is related to the Hermetic mode of analogical

¹³¹ Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Diane Price Herndl and Robyn R. Warhol (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997) 356-57.

¹³² 'In German, I weep; in English, I play; in French, I fly, I am a thief. No permanent residence'; Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 36.

¹³³ Cixous, *Firstdays* 81.

¹³⁴ For more on the duality of Hermes' relationship to culture, see Hyde, 203-225.

¹³⁵ Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 66-67; Tuveson, 31.

¹³⁶ Eco, 18.

analysis. Hermetic readings are always diverse and multiple.¹³⁷ Eco suggests that Hermeticism may be linked to a style of hermeneutics:

I shall call Hermetic drift the interpretive habit [...] which is based on the principles of universal analogy and sympathy, according to which every item of the furniture of the world is linked to every other element (or to many) of this sublunar world and to every element (or to many) of the superior world by means of similitudes or resemblances. It is through similitudes that the otherwise occult parenthood between things is manifested and every sublunar body bears the traces of that parenthood impressed on it as a *signature*.¹³⁸

Here Eco unpacks, in a somewhat convoluted way, the Hermetic axiom ‘as above, so below’; the traces of connection between material and spiritual, heavenly and earthly, nature and culture, are there to be read.¹³⁹ He goes on to argue that what makes interpretation possible is that textual ‘symbols are anchored to their context’. The play of meaning is indefinite but not infinite: ‘any act of interpretation is a dialectic between openness and form’.¹⁴⁰ Eco implies a relationship between context and form, indicating that it is literary context as well as wider social, historical and material contexts that give structure to the hermeneutic project. The specificity of each text will suggest pathways of interpretation, some more compelling than others, and each hermeneutic decision does off numerous alternatives. A text may mean many things in an ongoing unfolding, but it cannot mean everything. Although the relationship between sign and referent may be arbitrary, those relationships often find general agreement within interpretive communities. Without these structured agreements, communication would be impossible, but without

¹³⁷ Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 67.

¹³⁸ Eco, 24.

¹³⁹ I take Eco’s curious and captivating phrase ‘furniture of the world’ to suggest both rocks and chairs.

¹⁴⁰ Eco, 21. Eco criticizes ‘many modern theories’ for advocating a completely unconstrained mode of textual interpretation that allows for infinite meanings without any limits. Eco does not name names here, but earlier in the chapter he refers to the Hermetic mode of interpretation as sympathetic to deconstruction. Certainly numerous scholars have criticised Derrida, amongst others, for lack of attention to contexts. However, other scholars have argued the opposite – that Derrida never denies the importance of context, but only claims that ‘context can never be fully determined’; Hollywood, ‘Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Ritual and Bodily Practice’, 77.

the play of (many) possible (mis)interpretations there would be no meaning. Both the hidden and the revealed are required for the dynamic of interpretation to be set in motion.

The slippage of meaning in a web of symbols is evident in *Trilogy*. Eco's Hemetic drift is evident in H.D.'s stylistics in which 'one mythical figure or image merges into another, in a manner that defies "fixed meanings", and in a process that her ply-over-ply stanza forms re-enforces'.¹⁴¹ The associative chain of couplets that comprises *Trilogy* allows for digressions and wandering, inscribing a quest that is more unsymmetrical spiral than dear trajectory; straight lines are unusual in H.D.'s work.¹⁴² Alicia Ostriker argues that *Trilogy*'s prosody is balanced 'between a sensation of crisp clarity and one of fluidity; between the closed and the open'; the regularity of the couplets is balanced by nonmetrical lines of varying length which are unrhymed but full of off-rhymes within the lines creating a unified web of sounds.¹⁴³ Ostriker finds a poetics (and therefore a politics) of openness emphasised in *Trilogy* through its 'forward momentum' (crafted through enjambed stanza breaks, long discursive sentences broken by pauses, repetitions and qualifications), open imagery and induction of the reader.¹⁴⁴

Ritual provides a useful lens for viewing the relationship between form and content in *Trilogy*. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the poem in its entirety has been read as a ritual, while within the poem, the connection between writing and ritual is emphasised by the invocation of Hermes/Thoth as sacred inventor of writing and the alchemical transformations of the word *marah-mar* into Mary (myrrh)/Mother. The process of this transformation, in the form of the accretion of numerous words, 'mer, mere, mère,

¹⁴¹ Materer, 104.

¹⁴² One example is the 'bee-line, / straight to the horde and plunder'; a few lines later, the bee-line is associated with myrrh, which, as we have seen, drifts and diffuses, expanding in many directions. Moreover, in *The Sword*, H.D. associates the bee-line with 'z-lines', this zigzag again emphasises changes of direction. I will return to the image of the zigzagging 'z-lines' in Chapter Five.

¹⁴³ Ostriker, 'No Rule of Procedure: The Open Poetics of H.D.' 339-40.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 347-48.

mater, Maia, Mary, / Star of the Sea, / Mother', constructs a web of associations.¹⁴⁵ The connection between form and content is revealed within the poem itself. In her argument with those who would call 'poets [...] useless', the poet draws attention to her own writing and in referencing 'what words conceal', she assigns this writing to the realm of Hermeticism.¹⁴⁶ Her frequent return to images of signification such as writing, hieroglyphics and maps emphasises the signifying object of *Trilogy* itself. The connection between form and content is usefully explicated by the metaphor of the hinge, which both separates and connects, allowing movement between the inside and the outside of the text. For Derrida the hinge is a crucial image of the writing of difference. This writing 'permits the difference between space and time to be articulated' and articulation (the hinge) is the connection that turns, the connection that preserves difference.¹⁴⁷ As a metaphor for writing, the hinge marks the movement within the separations and connections of language that implies a displacement which generates meaning: 'The hinge [*brisure*] marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and a signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence'.¹⁴⁸ Derrida himself is somewhat of a trickster; Hermes, after all, is 'god of the hinge'.¹⁴⁹

The rituals discussed in this chapter are textual; they are literarily, rather than literally, performed. However, the rituals of reading and writing are the hinge which connects extra- and intra-textual spaces; they are both literal and literary. Moreover, they highlight the text's performativity; in *Trilogy*, writing is a ritual: 'scrape a palette, / point pen or brush, / prepare papyrus or parchment, / offer incense to Thoth'.¹⁵⁰ Stones speak for

¹⁴⁵ H.D., *Angels* 8:12-14.

¹⁴⁶ H.D., *Walls* 8:6, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corrected ed. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 65-66.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 69.

¹⁴⁹ Hyde, 209.

¹⁵⁰ H.D., *Walls* 35:5-8.

H.D. as hieroglyphics ‘continue to prophesy’.¹⁵¹ The distillation of words in an alchemical ritual, the Lady’s ‘blank book of the new’ and the stylus of Thoth all indicate that writing and interpretation are sacred activities. The distillation of *marab-mar* in the crucible in *Tribute to the Angels* reveals the dynamism that words have for H.D.; language is slippage, movement, transformation and the poet is the sacred scribe who presides over this process and is transformed by it.

Turning aside from the linguistic associations and sacred rituals of Hermetic alchemy, we can also trace a connection between ritual and language through the signifying properties of performance. Amy Hollywood argues that rituals (as bodily practices) can be seen as signifying practices in which performance constructs meaning. She argues that for both Catherine Bell and Derrida, ‘ritual is like language’ in that ‘rituals are actions that generate meaning’.¹⁵² She makes this claim against scholars who would either discount ritual by privileging belief or dismiss the meaningful content of rituals by focusing exclusively on their form. In this sense, rituals are not static texts that encode a prior reality, but dynamic processes that produce meaning: ‘just as language can be a form of action, so too can actions be forms of signification’.¹⁵³ Hollywood draws upon Derrida to extend this understanding of ritual as signification to an understanding of all language as ritualised performance:

For Derrida, all language takes on the character of the performative and of ritual. [...] Key for Derrida is the iterability or repeatability of the sign; it is this reiterative structure, the fact that the sign is the same and yet also differs and defers (both from possible referents and from other signs) that marks its force (and its power of signification).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 1:8.

¹⁵² Hollywood, ‘Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Ritual and Bodily Practice’, 76.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 74.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 76.

The repeatability of the sign brings us to a consideration of writing as the scene of these iterations, of differing and deferral.

Differing, the ‘difference between this and that’,¹⁵⁵ enables deferral, the displacement (or substitution) of meaning from one sign to another in an associative chain that enables signification (here the affinity between deconstruction and Hermeticism becomes evident):

*The trace is the differance which opens appearance [...] and signification. [...] [O]rigin of all repetition, origin of ideality, the trace is not more ideal than real, not more intelligible than sensible, not more a transparent signification than an opaque energy and no concept of metaphysics can describe it.*¹⁵⁶

An ‘opaque energy’ that is outside metaphysical and physical systems, and yet enabling both, the trace is what makes language like a ritual. Paradoxically, it is the origin of repetition, yet repetition is undermined by the proliferation of differences. The paradox of same-but-different marks the tension (the energy) that generates meaning. Derrida coins ‘differance’ – a word whose only difference from ‘difference’ is the substitution of an ‘a’ for an ‘e’ (a shift that can only be read; it cannot be heard and therefore is entirely textual) – to indicate the ‘systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other’.¹⁵⁷ The play of differences implies spatiality; relation requires space for connectivity and distinction. Differences, then, are produced by differance. The focus on the dynamism of differences, their production and proliferation, their *action*, brings us back to reiteration (ritual) and writing.

For Derrida, writing (‘arche-writing’) is more than writing-as-script, as letters on a page (or hieroglyphics on stone).¹⁵⁸ It is the signifying dynamic that contains language-as-script/ glyph/ graphie, language-as-speech, language-as-gesture, etc. To what extent this is

¹⁵⁵ Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 27.

¹⁵⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 65.

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: The Athlone Press, 1981) 27.

¹⁵⁸ Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 56–57, 70.

also true of Cixous is difficult to ascertain. Certainly her writing on writing suggests a wider field of signification than marks on the page – she employs such a wide range of metaphors and modes of engaging with writing that it appears to exceed the merely graphic writing is wings, a lover in the night, an unexpected wild cat, breath and blood, the quenching of thirst. However, she tethers these expansive descriptions to an emphasis on the physical, psychological and practical process of writing-as-scripting:

What was the first stroke of the pen? And before the first line there were many others. In truth the first line is the survivor of the mêlée: everything starts in the middle.¹⁵⁹

How did I ‘write’ this? I took notes. [...] This isn’t a journal woven with daily threads. October [the topic of the essay] appeared in puffs of air, in fragments, in sorrows, and I think that’s the way one writes: discontinuously. Then, in another way, one cheats: one reassembles, pastes together.¹⁶⁰

I had written without turning on the light so as not to risk scaring the Comer [the book] off, quick, without a sound, I grab the pad of paper that never leaves my bedside and the thick-tipped pen for scribbling big across the page.¹⁶¹

For Cixous, writing precedes authorship: ‘This act of writing engenders the author’.¹⁶²

Thus, reversing the usual metaphor, the author is the child of the work. The process of writing draws the author into being; through the performance of writing the author is transformed.

H.D. and Cixous both traverse the divide between text and context, written word and material world, while their style draws attention to the writerly, to wordiness. As in *Trilogy*, Cixous’s texts frequently refer to their own production:

¹⁵⁹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 36.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 60.

¹⁶¹ Hélène Cixous, *Reveries of the Wild Woman: Primal Scenes*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006) 3.

¹⁶² Cixous, *Stigmata* 189.

For us writers, on the contrary, what's important is the process. The tempest, the rough draft. [...] That's love – that is, what passes away. It's the difference that passes away, it's what escapes us. This is why I've always had a passion for a particular kind of book: *books that get away*. Understand this by letting language resonate: books that get away, that escape on every page the fate of books. That can't be dosed, that leave us behind, that can't be finished.¹⁶³

In describing the process of writing, Cixous also makes broader claims for a more theoretical (while not impersonal) approach to texts. She complicates the distinction between reader and writer. In the passage above, it is unclear whether she is referring merely to her own texts and finishing as the finale in the performance of writing, or to books by other authors, whose final pages are never reached, or, once reached, continue to produce alternative meanings and to haunt the reader. The text goes on ahead while the writer-reader scrambles behind.

The address to the reader forms another hinge between inside and outside in H.D. and Cixous's ritualising style. They continually invite the reader into their texts. This is evident most clearly in their use of pronouns: the shift between 'I', 'we' and 'you'.¹⁶⁴ Of course, 'we' can also be read antagonistically, as an attempt by the writer to co-opt the reader. The slippage between 'I' and 'we' can be a violent disruption of a necessary boundary. However, I suggest an invitational reading; the reader is invited to participate in the dynamics inscribed within writing. These texts demonstrate a keen awareness of the reader's role in the construction of meaning. The narrators portray themselves as readers as well as writers and writing as a gift: 'The books for which I am the scribe belong to everyone'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Ibid. 55-56.

¹⁶⁴ Cixous, *Firstdays* 84; H.D., *Walks* 21:9-10, 35:1-36:7.

¹⁶⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 188. This positioning of writer as scribe is not unlike the role of spiritualist medium translating the messages of the dead.

H.D. and Cixous consistently represent writing as emerging from, returning to, and involved with, the material. This is not an attempt to identify signifier with signified, sign with referent, but a gesture towards the mutual implication of the corporeal and non-corporeal context of writing: there is no outside to the field of signification. Their texts posit a reciprocal intimacy between writing and the material world (including the bodily); hence their wordplay which foregrounds undecidability.¹⁶⁶ For example, in addition to the delight she takes in *voler* – to fly/steal, Cixous frequently plays on the metaphor of an organic leaf and a leaf as a page:

In God's place I have [...] both sides of a leaf of paper. [...] When I write I never know what side I'm on [...] if I'm writing on you or if you're writing on me; constantly I twist and turn. [...] Slight, infinite creature, tricky marvel of nature, an everything that seems like nothing, I write to you beneath the hours' wind'.¹⁶⁷

Likewise, for H.D., divine wisdom is hidden in the commonplace: 'their [the gods'] secret is stored / in man's very speech'.¹⁶⁸ What is hidden may be found, decoded. Throughout *Trilogy*, H.D. emphasises the physicality of writing as a practice, the scraping of parchment, the scratch of the stylus, the more casual scribbles and jottings in the margins. The emphasis on the actions of the craft suggests that performance is an element of writing. The ritualised language surrounding this emphasis on the material indicates that this is an activity which sacralises the mundane, as flowers transform rubble into a sacred place: 'the lane is empty but the levelled wall / is purple as with purple spread / upon an altar'.¹⁶⁹

The emphasis on the physicality of writing turns in two directions: writing as verb and writing as noun. Writing is both a physical activity and a material object. The materiality of the written object is suggested in the text by references to the permanence of

¹⁶⁶ I will return to the question of the body in Cixous and H.D. in the following chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Cixous, *Firstdays* 155.

¹⁶⁸ H.D., *Walks* 8:25-26.

¹⁶⁹ H.D., *Angels* 7:6-8.

writing scratched on parchment and etched in stone – the palimpsest that cannot be erased – and, conversely, the vulnerability of books and manuscripts to destruction by fire: ‘our books are a floor / of smouldering ash under our feet’.¹⁷⁰ By using words as the elements to be distilled and transmuted in the alchemical process, H.D. suggests that words are material substances that can be physically manipulated. Associating that same process with Venus, Maia and Mary indicates not only that both divinity and humanity are subject to transformation, but also that we participate, with the divine, in the web of signification. We are not separate from language.

To return to the spacing indicated by the dynamic of differing and deferral, Derrida calls *differance* ‘a structure and a movement’; it is both a space, and the process of making space.¹⁷¹ Spacing troubles the distinction between inside and outside.¹⁷² Likewise, the trace is neither fully present, nor fully absent and so it troubles the distinction between them. Cixous likens the writer to the trace: ‘Presence and absence are my wings’.¹⁷³ Spacing, or spatial and temporal distinctions, the slippage between presence and absence, enables the framework of ritualised repetition. It is the formed space in between gestures, speech and written words that gives their repetitions structure and allows meaning to inhere within them. However, the formality of spacing does not negate play and spontaneity. The performance of writing correlates to movement. Just as vision provides an idiosyncratic experience of ritual, so the movements of writing cannot be contained. For Cixous and H.D., writing is also a journey, a wild flight or ‘a departure, an embarkation, an

¹⁷⁰ H.D., *Walls* 9:3–4.

¹⁷¹ Derrida, *Positions* 27.

¹⁷² Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 70.

¹⁷³ Cixous, *Firstdays* 79.

expedition'.¹⁷⁴ Departure, not arrival, is emphasised here, a point I will return to in Chapter Five.

The movements of ritualised writing – the sacred dramas and visionary songs and literary alchemy – are associated with the sacred in H.D. and Cixous: 'One must play language quick and true like an honest musician, not leap over a single word-beat. Find the slowness inside the speed. [...] This speed is not superficial. It strikes deep. It is grace'.¹⁷⁵ This is a different suggestion of the divine than that found in *Of Grammatology*.¹⁷⁶ The difference at the heart of God, emanating throughout the world and setting multiplicity in motion, unfolds in divinity not as a transcendent being whose presence guarantees meaning, but as one whose drifting, hidden presence generates meaning through difference.

¹⁷⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 184–85.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 191.

¹⁷⁶ Derrida argues with the God of metaphysics: 'Only infinite being can reduce the difference in presence. In that sense, the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within classical rationalism, is the name of indifference itself'; Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 71.

CHAPTER FOUR – IMAGE AND DIFFERENCE

The previous chapter constructed the connection between writing and material mysticism through an exploration of writing as an activity or a ritual and the production of the written artefact. It drew upon the ritualising dimension in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, *The Gift* and *Trilogy* to establish writing as performative and connected this activity to the Hermetic process of reading the cosmos as a dynamic, unfolding web signifying divine life. The chapter closed with a consideration of ritual and language, and the dynamic undecidability of writing that is mobilised by difference. This chapter takes a narrower focus, turning from the broad sweep of writing to concentrate specifically on image and metaphor. In H.D.'s and Cixous's writing, images are dynamic as they traverse texts, accruing and dispersing the resonances of multiple meanings. They allow an exploration of difference in language and instantiate material mysticism by drawing together materiality and alterity. Drawing on the Hermetic understanding of the imagination as the faculty which enables apprehension of the divine life within the universe, I advance a view of the creative imagination that partakes of sensory experience and is open to the world, but is not merely the reproduction of sensory input. This chapter investigates the dynamic of imagination and metaphor as they engender the new, and how this productivity is fuelled by difference. Using the images of the orange and the bee as case studies allows me to investigate in greater detail the substantiality of language that was posited at the end of the last chapter.

The Hermetic tradition emphasises the transmission of hidden wisdom. However, the acquisition of wisdom is not merely a task for intellect and will, but requires the

sympathetic involvement of the entire person in a process of understanding and regeneration. Awareness of the universe as participant in divine life is apprehended by the Hermeticist through the imagination.¹ Ernest Lee Tuveson argues that the Hermetic emphasis on transformation (here is where the connection between Hermeticism and alchemy is most evident) is located in the dynamic interaction between world and imagination. For the Hermeticist, rebirth is effected by the imagination and consists 'not in escaping from the material creation, but in accepting it, celebrating it, identifying with its whole being'.² Paracelsus described the imagination as 'the intermediary between thinking and being' which brings about the 'incarnation of thought in the image'.³

Tuveson argues that the Romantic preoccupation with the imagination as the faculty which unites the self and the world extends the Hermetic tradition.⁴ Although this understanding of the Hermetic imagination can be seen in Cixous and H.D., these twentieth-century thinkers pay more attention to the *construction* of images within language. In their work, the relation between self and world is not transparent; subjectivity is shifting and multiple in a way that differs from the confident unity of the Romantic 'I'. David Meakin argues that the self-conscious literary experimentation of Modernist writing finds a partner in the playful, deceptive side of Hermes: 'Hermes himself, that tutelary god of alchemists, has frequently been associated with mediation, deviousness and irony, and the element of playfulness that can be read into him proves highly attractive to the spirit of

¹ Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 182-85; Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 65.

² Tuveson, 33.

³ Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*, trans. Christine Rhone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) 102.

⁴ Tuveson, 25. For a systematic overview of scholarship on esotericism and Romanticism, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection', *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). H. W. Piper does not address the Hermetic implications of Romanticism, but does claim that the 'living unity' of the universe 'known through the imagination' was of great importance to the English romantics; H. W. Piper, *The Active Universe: Pantheism and the Concept of Imagination in the English Romantic Poets* (London: The Athlone Press, 1962) 3.

Modernism'.⁵ Thus alchemical transformations form an apt metaphor for Modernist stylistics, provided the alchemist does not take herself too seriously. In attending to the creativity of women and children and their ludic engagement with unusual images such as the orange and the beehive, H.D. and Cixous position their creative work on the boundaries that are maintained by the trickster Hermes.

Paul Ricoeur's contention that metaphor functions because of difference, and that the unfolding of metaphor's meanings is constitutive of new worlds, correlates with the creative, excessive and dynamically open metaphorical writing of Hélène Cixous and H.D. According to Ricoeur's poetics, '[i]magination can be recognized accordingly as the act of responding to a demand for new meaning, the demand of emerging realities to *be by being said* in new ways'.⁶ Feminists and womanists have been arguing for the need for new realities to be spoken (or written) into being, for the complicity of language in both oppressive structures and vehicles of liberation, for decades.⁷ This implicates language in both creativity and communication. Metaphorical language is the vehicle for expressing the inexpressible to others:

Language itself is an immoderate testimony to our necessary flair for making present the ineffable, the maybe, the no-longer-here, the not-yet, the big-one-that-got-away. Whether made of words or images [...] symbols are the elemental bedrock of our communication with one another.⁸

Images, symbols and metaphors are both a net for the ineffable and a way of mobilising this alterity to create community; they locate the strangeness of the unspeakable *in between*. The paradox of language understood both as communication and as alterity – in other

⁵ Meakin, 8.

⁶ Kearney, 33.

⁷ Although language is a key concern of second and third-wave feminism, earlier examples can be found, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Women's Bible* and the rhetoric of abolitionists such as Sojourner Truth.

⁸ Laurel C. Schneider, *Re-Imagining the Divine: Confronting the Backlash against Feminist Theology* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998) 5. The relationship between image and symbol is ambiguous. I follow David Punter's distinction, that symbol has a broader 'cultural spread', that is, it has more widely recognised associations and meanings; David Punter, *Metaphor* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) 30. Writers may create new metaphors, but symbols have a history, although they may be used in new ways.

words, as structured around an absence (the ‘no-longer-here’ and the ‘not-yet’), yet as positive (a means of conveying the shape of this absence) – provides metaphor with its dynamism. Abigail Bray defines alterity as ‘the other of the other [...] a form of Otherness which is not reducible to the binary self/other. It is a concept of the other which is autonomous, [...] which exceeds the colonizing logic of the self/other binary. [...] Alterity signals [...] the space of difference’.⁹

In considering the relationship between image and metaphor, we are already in the realm of ambiguity. The word ‘image’ comes into English from the Anglo-Norman and Old French and meant ‘artificial imitation or representation (in solid or flat form) of a person or object’. The Latin, ‘imago’, is a ‘representation in art of a person or thing [...] reflection in a mirror, reflection of sound, echo, [...] illusory apparition, phantom, hallucination [...] mental picture’.¹⁰ In a literary context, ‘image’ becomes more complex. Formed in words, it produces a mental picture, although it is important to note that literary images are not exclusively visual, as I will show in my discussion of H.D. and Cixous, and frequently refer to senses other than sight. In literary texts, imagery refers to ‘those uses of language [...] that evoke sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or “concrete” objects, scenes, actions, or states [...] [including] metaphors’.¹¹

An image, then, is essentially a copy, imitation or representation of a material person or object; this copy may be a visual, verbal or mental representation. Although in literary terms, metaphor is included in imagery, it is a particular kind of image, and complicates the above definition. In metaphor, two dissimilar things are compared ‘in order to suggest some resemblance or make a connection between the two things’.¹² Many

⁹ Bray, 73-74.

¹⁰ ‘Image’, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2010, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com, 17 October, 2010.

¹¹ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 164-65.

¹² Murray Knowles and Rosamund Moon, *Introducing Metaphor* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 3.

definitions of metaphor emphasise similarities, beginning with Aristotle who claimed that ‘a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars’.¹³ However, as we will see, Paul Ricoeur shifts the emphasis onto the dissimilarity between the two halves of a metaphor. He foregrounds the paradoxical nature of metaphor: ‘the privileged procedure of metaphor is self-contradiction. The function of metaphor is to make sense with nonsense, to transform a self-contradictory statement into a significant self-contradiction’.¹⁴ What we have here is a kind of image that emphasises the dissimilarities and imperfections of the copy or echo. Rather than praising the accuracy of representation – a good image as one that is transparent, appearing to occur naturally and perfectly – Ricoeur’s emphasis on difference within the metaphoric image highlights the construction involved in both making and interpreting the metaphor. This emphasis on writing as crafted language is consonant with the approach to Cixous and H.D. elaborated in the previous chapter.

Having explored Ricoeur’s view of alterity within metaphor, the chapter then turns to the mobilisation of difference in Cixous’s writing, demonstrated through an analysis of the image of the orange. For Cixous and H.D., writing both as a practice and as the location of metaphorical language, is transformative and this transformation takes place in the intersection of the visionary and the material. The chapter concludes with a reading of H.D.’s material language, drawing upon Ricoeur and Cixous. I will consider the ways in which the image duster of the bee/honey/honeycomb in H.D.’s work partakes of sacred materiality. Situated in the productive tension between immanence and transcendence, H.D.’s images accrue a multiplicity of meanings, whose excess opens the text to an alterity wherein image is shadowed by mystery.

¹³ Aristotle qtd. in Punter, 112-113.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Word, Polysemy, Metaphor: Creativity in Language’, trans. David Pellauer, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 78.

Ricoeur: imagination, metaphor and alterity

Paul Ricoeur's work on linguistics leads him to develop an understanding of the imagination as inherently concerned with language. His thinking on the imagination is rooted in his concern with poetic language. For Ricoeur the productivity of metaphor is found in difference rather than sameness, and this is where he places his emphasis:

[M]etaphor displays the work of resemblance because the literal contradiction preserves difference within the metaphorical statement; 'same' and 'different' are not just mixed together, they also remain opposed. Through this specific trait, enigma lives on in the heart of metaphor. In metaphor, 'the same' operates *in spite of* 'the different'.¹⁵

The tension between sameness and difference yields a dynamic view of metaphor; both are required for metaphor to function. Metaphors compel their readers to *construct* meaning by recognising and navigating the tension between sameness and difference. Meaning is not simply inherent in the words of metaphor, but created by the recognition, indeed, creation, of similarity between two things thought to be different:

How do we make sense with self-contradictory statements? [...] [I]n novel metaphors, the similarity is itself the fruit of metaphor. We now see a similarity that nobody had ever noticed before. The difficulty therefore is to understand that we see similarity by constructing it, that the visionary grasping of resemblance is, at the same time, a verbal invention. [...] In other words, a novel metaphor does not merely actualize a potential connotation, it creates it.¹⁶

The similarity-in-difference that Ricoeur assigns to metaphor is not a case of difference being subsumed into sameness. For metaphors to remain dynamic, the tension between sameness and difference must not collapse, otherwise the metaphor dies.¹⁷ Difference is not dissolved within sameness but remains an irreducible presence within metaphor. The persistence of difference is productive, allowing readers to continue to generate new

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* 232. Sallie McFague follows this line of reasoning when she argues that 'metaphor is a strategy of desperation, not decoration; it is an attempt to say something about the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar'; Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987) 33.

¹⁶ Ricoeur, 'Word, Polysemy, Metaphor', 78-79.

¹⁷ Ibid. 80-81.

meanings. The production of metaphor is a complex process begun in the text and completed by the reader's (or listener's, in the case of speech) act of 'grasping of resemblance'. In this formulation, reading is a highly creative activity. This is echoed in Cixous's approach to the activity surrounding texts: 'Reading: writing the ten thousand pages of every page'.¹⁸ The understanding of metaphoric language developed by Ricoeur and Cixous suggests a dialogical relationship between text and reader. The construction of meaning that requires the reader to complete the metaphor, and grasp similarity-in-difference, widens the invitation to the reader that we saw in Chapter Three's exploration of ritual and language. The reader is invited to participate not only through direct address, but through a more subtle involvement with meaning-making. We have both a particular invitation formed by the use of plural first person and second person pronouns in H.D. and Cixous's texts, and a more general, perhaps more free, invitation that resides within all poetic language.

The new meanings generated by metaphor bring us to the realm of the imagination and the apprehension of possible new worlds. Ricoeur's argument that the attention to language and interpretation as creative activity leading to the new, involves radically revised notions of the imagination:

We are prepared to inquire into the power of imagination, no longer as the faculty of deriving 'images' from sensory experiences, but as the capacity to let new worlds build our self-understanding. This power would not be conveyed by emerging images but by emerging meanings in our language. Imagination, then, should be treated as a dimension of language.¹⁹

For Ricoeur, the imagination is generative, and the new worlds it produces are initially formed within the self, thus enlarging self-understanding. However, with the relational dynamic of metaphor, internal possible worlds proliferate through linguistic encounters.

¹⁸ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 24.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics', *New Literary History* 6.1, On Metaphor (1974): 110.

The power of imagination to generate new worlds via metaphor ‘point[s] towards a liminal space in language and textuality in which extraordinary things can happen’.²⁰

Ricoeur understands imagination not as the reproduction of images of sensory experience, or even creative re-assemblages of the same, but the faculty concerned with the meaning-making activity of language. Richard Kearney suggests that Ricoeur moves image entirely into the verbal dimension: ‘Replacing the visual model of the image with the verbal, Ricoeur affirms the more *poetical* role of imagining: its ability to say one thing in terms of another, or to say several things at the same time, thereby creating something *new*’.²¹ I would suggest, however, that Ricoeur does in fact forge a connection between sensory experience, the material world and language. The creativity of metaphor is expressed in ‘*poesis*, that is, fabrication, construction, creation’.²² I think it is no accident that he uses words that indicate material making: the sensual remains in his argument as an irreducible residue. It may be argued that this is merely metaphoric – that it is impossible to speak of metaphor in any way but by means of metaphors (for example, by describing the process of thinking as ‘grasping’). However, the recurrence of these active, bodily metaphors, suggests that the world of language and cognition cannot be fully divorced from the material.

Visionary may indeed be the most useful term, as it suggests the palimpsest of sensation (sight) and the imaginative emergence of something new, but this visionary language is multi-sensory and tactile, as we have seen in H.D.’s exploration of visionary consciousness. The world, or possible worlds, is always present in Ricoeur’s understanding of meaning-making and this allows for the interconnection between the material world and the imagination. New worlds are not only the result of metaphor, but also partake of

²⁰ Walton, *Imagining Theology: Women, Writing and God* 56.

²¹ Kearney, 38.

²² Ricoeur, ‘Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics’ 109.

sensation. Ricoeur's writing springs from the Protestant tradition, evidenced by his emphasis on the word. His work on metaphor may be read as an implicit Christology in the drawing together of word and flesh.²³ My reading of Ricoeur, which gives greater emphasis to the corporeal residue within language, indicates a stronger incarnational reading. In turn, this reading leads back to the Hermetic view of the physical world as suffused with divine life.

The surplus of meaning generated by difference, 'the enigma' that 'lives on in the heart of metaphor', leads to a theory of interpretation in which meaning unfolds between text and reader.²⁴ A living enigma within metaphor suggests that texts are never static, thus the organic image of unfolding provides a way of understanding the dynamic activity of texts and readers' engagements with them. For Ricoeur, meaning is not located behind the text (author) or within the text (structure), but in front of the text, as a possible world, crafted by reader and text together. In situating meaning between text and reader, Ricoeur presents a view of textuality that is open to the world, rather than closed in on itself or focused on a transcendent beyond:

[P]oetic language has a mimetic function inasmuch as it is a heuristic fiction preparing a redescription of reality. If it is true that poetry gives no information in terms of empirical knowledge, it may change our way of looking at things, a change which is no less real than empirical knowledge. What is changed by poetic language is our way of dwelling in the world. From poetry we receive a new way of being in the world, of orienting ourselves in this world.²⁵

What is crucial here is the configuration of mimesis not as description but *redescription*. By assigning to poetic language, or the smaller unit of metaphor, the ability to transform ways of seeing and ways of being, Ricoeur advances a view of language as profoundly creative. Metaphors do not merely represent or describe the world, but in *redescribing*, changing and

²³ See John 1:14: 'And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'.

²⁴ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* 232. Note again a corporeal image for metaphor.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdes (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 85.

making new, poetic language is transformative of the world. The last chapter considered transformation and language through the lens of ritual and performativity. This chapter again takes up transformation, here through the narrow lens of the image, and its movement across texts.

In considering ways of dwelling in the world, Ricoeur gestures towards an ethics of writing, suggesting that this is what poetic language is *for*. While I hesitate to depend overmuch on the utility of writing (I am more interested in what it *does*), this remains a powerful heuristic tool. Ricoeur's emphasis on the future indicates his preoccupation with time, but 'dwelling' and 'possible worlds' are clearly spatial, as well as temporal, categories.²⁶ I will return to the implications of Ricoeur's theory of texts as disclosures of modes of 'being-in-the-world' in the subsequent chapter on space and movement in Cixous and H.D., for now I wish to focus on the relationship of language and world. The openness in metaphor and text explored by Ricoeur as modes of possibility with attention to worlds and being-in-the-world provide a helpful mode of reading Cixous and H.D. Their work is concerned with possible worlds and modes of becoming. This indicates a view of subjectivity as co-constituted between self and other; whether the other is another subject, a material object or a text, alterity is found both without and within.

Cixous: difference and the orange

In my reading, Hélène Cixous's writing provides an exemplar of the play of difference within metaphor delineated by Ricoeur. Her work is highly metaphorical, and its style draws heavily on materiality. She can be read in the tradition of surrealist writing; her avant-garde stylistics create a generative space for word play, defamiliarisation and

²⁶ Ricoeur qtd. in Kearney, 41.

experimentation.²⁷ Her writing constitutes a search for an encounter with alterity and an effort to develop a welcoming stance towards the other that does not appropriate or annihilate, but instead recognises, difference. I will consider a number of ways in which alterity is important to Cixous's work in terms of metaphorical language and her engagement with subjectivity. In both of these areas Cixous foregrounds writing as a mode of encounter and transformation.

For Cixous, writing gestures toward alterity: 'Writing: touching the mystery, delicately, with the tips of the words, trying not to crush it'; 'Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me'.²⁸ Here Cixous, like Ricoeur, uses bodily language to refer to poetic language. The images of touch, ingestion and interiority in relation to writing appear frequently in her work. For Cixous, writing is a bodily action and a location of embodied encounter. Morag Shiach argues that for Cixous, language is always material and excessive: 'language is a material form, where signifiers and particularly sounds, create meanings that proliferate, exceed the resources of the descriptive, offer recognitions and pleasure'.²⁹

Cixous's attention to the material is caught up in alterity; she sees the mysterious presence of the other within the most mundane of objects. Cixous uses these objects as a locus for deconstructing cultural conventions and constructing new meanings. A key image across her work is fruit. In writing on the apple and the orange she revises traditional cultural inscriptions and constructs new meanings. Cixous returns to the apple to challenge ideas of the fall, or innocence and experience. For Cixous eating the apple does not represent the loss of a primordial innocence or a fall into language. She advances a more

²⁷ See Bray, 38-41; Sissel Lie, 'Life Makes Text from My Body: A Reading of Hélène Cixous' *La Venue À L'écriture*, *Hélène Cixous: Critical Impressions*, eds. Lee A. Jacobus and Regina Barreca (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1999) 2-7; Suleiman, 'Writing Past the Wall: Or the Passion According to H.C.' x, xx.

²⁸ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 134; Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 86.

²⁹ Shiach, 69-70. Abigail Bray makes a similar point about the corporeality of language for Cixous; Bray, 190.

complex dynamic of experience where knowledge partakes of seduction and begins with sensation.

In the essay 'The Last Painting or the Portrait of God', she engages with a number of painters that have influenced her writing and ponders the relationship between the literary and the visual. Despite her love for painting, writing 'toward painting', she dares to experience painting through other senses than sight: 'I love paintings the way the blind must love the sun: feeling it, breathing it in, hearing it pass through the trees, adoring it with regret and pain, knowing it through the skin, seeing it with the heart'.³⁰ Later in the essay she uses this tension between the visual and the unseen to engage with knowledge and experience through an encounter with an apple:

Myself, I would have eaten [the apple]. In this way, I am different from those [painters] I would like to resemble. In my need to touch the apple without seeing it. To know it in the dark. With my fingers, with my lips, with my tongue.
In my need to share with you the food, the bread, the words, the painted food and also the not-painted food.
In my need to make use of my right hand to hold the pen and write, and of my two hands to hold nothing, to caress and to pray.³¹

Here, in bypassing the hegemony of the visual, Cixous suggests a way of knowing that does not involve mastery. Knowing is always partial and requires an engagement with mystery, a movement into the unknown. It involves engagement with the other through the communion of sharing bread, words and art.

The conjunction of apple, bread, words and paintings suggests an intimacy between natural and constructed objects, between the embodied activities of eating and making (paintings or literature), and between sensory experience and knowledge.³² Seeing is mingled with unseeing and knowledge is relocated from abstraction to the body, from the

³⁰ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 106.

³¹ Ibid. 130.

³² Of course, the apple itself could be seen as a unification of nature and culture, as it is most likely a cultivated, not wild, apple that Cixous refers to, not to mention the symbolic meaning that she disrupts.

brain (still, of course, part of the body, but the organ most often disassociated from the rest of the body in discourse about body and mind) to the tongue. Fingers, lips and tongue are all associated with intimacy, and this is typical of Cixous, who frequently configures knowledge in passionate, bodily and intimate terms (as does H.D.). This sense of knowing in the dark suggests the attention to what is unknown and mysterious that is never far from Cixous's writing. Moreover, the body is the site of this meaning-making and, therefore, also of writing.

Before moving to consider subjectivity and difference in Cixous's work, I will outline her engagement with another fruit: the orange. This image does not appear in many texts (which makes it a useful case study), but the issues and ideas which form its textual partners appear frequently. With the orange, Cixous spins her own mythology of creativity, knowledge, innocence and experience. It enables her to engage with both her own past and the wider sweep of history, while also attending to questions of intimacy with (and as) the other that were raised in her address to the apple. In *To Live the Orange*, we see Cixous at her most linguistically virtuosic. She alternates sentences that are overloaded with imagery, carrying on for a page or more, with short spare sentences that abruptly pull up the sensual, headlong plunge of the writing. The central image of this text is the orange, which moves between numerous linguistic positions. It is a space of encounter, responsibility and desire: 'all of the sense relations that every orange keeps alive and circulates [...] the invisible links between fruits and bodies'.³³ It also indicates subjects, namely, the women to whom Cixous feels compelled to respond: 'I write to ask forgiveness. I also write the orange to ask her forgiveness for not being ripe enough for her'.³⁴ It is also the gift of another's writing, that enables her to begin writing again: 'She put the orange back into the deserted hands of my

³³ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 16.

³⁴ Ibid. 40.

writing, and with her orange-colored accents she rubbed the eyes of my writing which were arid'.³⁵ So this orange is space(s), person(s) and writing(s). It is a capacious metaphor that allows for word play.

Cixous's wordplay recalls the fluidity of meaning evident in Rabbinic hermeneutics, which tends 'towards differentiation, metaphorical multiplicity, multiple meaning'.³⁶ In Rabbinic thought, interpretation of Torah is paramount; it is 'not essentially separate from the text itself – an external act intruded upon it – but rather the *extension* of the text [...] a part of the continuous revelation of the text itself'.³⁷ The continuous unfolding of the Biblical text through interpretation emerges from the Hebrew understanding of the word which 'simultaneously reveals and conceals the hidden God,' and therefore is 'an aspect of the continuous divine creative force itself'.³⁸ For Cixous, the permutations of language lead to a mystical encounter with the other that takes place in writing. Divine creativity inheres in this encounter in language.

Cixous plays on the phonetic permutations of the word; 'orange' becomes 'oran-je', Oran being the city in Algeria of Cixous's birth. 'Oran-I' then suggests the author's own history, location and subjectivity.³⁹ Oran, located in an arid climate, gives Cixous the space to explore the absence of writing as a desert – 'at the extremity of my finite being, my writing being was grieving for being so lonely, [...] *I've numbered ten years in the desert of books*' –

³⁵ Ibid. 14.

³⁶ Susan A. Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982) 33. Handelman goes on to argue that Derrida's practice of deconstruction utilises this movement and multiplicity of meaning.

³⁷ Ibid. 39. The intimate connection between text and interpretation recalls Cixous's emphasis on reading, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

³⁸ Ibid. 30, 32. Cixous's wordplay also correlates with the more precise attention to the letter in the Jewish mysticism of Kabbalah, in which meditation on the Hebrew letters of Torah (particularly the letters of God's name) reveals hidden connections between different parts of Torah, the divine and the world; Ron H. Feldman, *Fundamentals of Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1999) 72; Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) 286; Byron L. Sherwin, *Kabbalah: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) 158.

³⁹ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 30-32.

and the sweetness of the orange as the oasis, the fluidity of creative practice, the being-able-to-write-again moment:

[A] writing found me when I was unfindable to myself. [...] From far away, from outside of my history, a voice came to collect the last tear. To save the orange. She put the word in my ear. And it was nearly the nymph of the orange that awakened in my breast and surged forth streaming from the heart's basin. [...] With all of my life I thought, with all of my thought I went toward it.⁴⁰

'She' refers to the writing of Clarice Lispector, which Cixous encounters as a call to return to her own writing. The sweet juice of the fruit connotes living creativity that is rooted in the body and the heart. Writing here is a matter of affect, and the orange marks the space of literary exchange that is emotional as well as linguistic.

'Oran' is also phonetically close to 'Iran'. During her meditation on writing, delighting in the gift of the sweetness of orange that she finds in Clarice Lispector's work, the author is interrupted by a call to join activists in Paris demonstrating in solidarity with women in Iran. This then prompts a discourse on the relationship between politics and poetry, between writing and activism. The orange is the writing the author yearns for, and yet also the women that she yearns to respond to: 'oranges that we have never seen are going out in the streets of Oran [...] oranges of a modern courage daring to give themselves as food for thought'.⁴¹ This brings her to contemplate the scene of history, the destruction of the twentieth century and its many losses.

Asserting the significance of writing in the face of calls for action, as a form of activism itself, Cixous nevertheless turns to a spare style to indicate the harsh responsibility of this position: 'I am not innocent', 'I confess the orange', 'I am unforgiveable'.⁴² These short sharp sentences contrast with longer, fluid sentences that call to others, and describe

⁴⁰ Ibid. 12-16.

⁴¹ Ibid. 96.

⁴² Ibid. 32, 40.

a rich, sensuous landscape, essentially a garden in the desert, that become another way of writing the orange, as its sweetness is evoked as an entire landscape.⁴³ In the end, the only answer that Cixous has for the questions she herself poses is, rather, her ongoing fidelity to these questions and to the desire for a witness and an answer, and her commitment to tracing these in writing.

The qualities of the orange – sweet, sticky, compromising – indicate the texture of desire and of Cixous's call for openness to the other. Her choice of metaphor indicates an understanding that alterity inheres in domesticity and wilderness, the gift of another's writing and the witness of another's activism. Moreover, the orange allows Cixous to explore the bodily nature of these ideas. The juice of the orange gets under her fingernails; it makes her lips sticky. It suggests an intimacy that is a feature of Cixous's writing – returning even the most abstract of texts to the immediate moment, suggesting that alterity is not situated in an unknown elsewhere, but neither is it unknown to the text. She does not dose off the possibility of an extraordinary encounter, but suggests that this possibility is always inherent in even the most mundane of life's encounters.

Turning now from the orange to the wider arena of Cixous's work, we can see how the issues of writing, a desiring sensuality and witnessing to (and with) the other raised by the orange play out in terms of embodiment, subjectivity and difference. As her use of metaphor attests, Cixous's writing is both abstract and concrete, yielding startling conjunctions such as women and oranges: 'all the sense relations that every orange keeps alive and circulates, [...] the invisible links between fruits and bodies'.⁴⁴ Her metaphoric dynamism suggests a community of many bodies. She argues that to forget the body in consideration of culture is to do violence to the complexity of human experience and,

⁴³ I will explore the garden landscapes of Cixous's writing further in the following chapter.

⁴⁴ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 16.

particularly, but not exclusively, to women. Her insistence on returning the body to the scene of writing, of culture, and her insistence that language is corporeal, and experienced in the flesh foregrounds the demands of material, historical bodies, while also challenging traditional ways of constructing the body's relationship to culture:

Life becomes text starting out from my body. I am already text. History, love, violence, time, work, desire inscribe it in my body, I go where the "fundamental language" is spoken, the body language into which all the tongues of things, acts and beings translate themselves, in my own breast, the whole of reality worked upon in my flesh, intercepted by my nerves, by my senses, but the labor of all my cells, projected, analyzed, recomposed into a book.⁴⁵

I will return to the relationship between body and culture when I consider Cixous's writerly inscription of sexual difference, but first I want to turn to the question of subjectivity, which will highlight some of the implications of writing the body.

Cixous does not posit a pre-verbal subjectivity; rather, subjectivity and language are inextricably enmeshed: 'we are born into language [...] I cannot do otherwise than to find myself preceded by words'.⁴⁶ A careful reading of Cixous's texts reveals a refusal to reify gender: 'take the time to unname yourself for a moment. Haven't you been the father of your sister? Haven't you, as a wife, been the husband of your spouse, and perhaps the brother of your brother, or hasn't your brother been your big sister?'⁴⁷ The construction of the subject in language allows for this flexibility: 'Writing and traversing names are the same necessary gesture: as soon as Eurydice calls Orpheus down to the depth where beings change, Orpheus perceives that he is himself (in) Eurydice'.⁴⁸ Here she not only assigns writing the ability to traverse cultural positioning, but in the process, she rewrites the inherited myth that establishes Orpheus as hero and rescuer. In Cixous's version, Eurydice initiates the action. For Cixous, subjectivity involves shifting between subject positions,

⁴⁵ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 150.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 49.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

allowing for difference to circulate within and between subjectivities. She argues for a self that is neither contained, nor diffuse, but permeable and moving: 'her understanding of subjectivity as being in a constant state of metamorphosis is yet another expression of her commitment to the notion of journeying rather than arrival'.⁴⁹ However, it is important to note here the strategic importance of naming for developing a feminist imaginary and for political action against the oppression of women, and Cixous cautions against allowing new names to function as old traps.

Cixous traces her theorising on subjectivity and writing to her experience of knowing/not knowing multiple languages as a child. Her writing disdoses an ambivalent relationship to language. Her mother tongue is German, she began her schooling learning French and continues to write in French, and she has a doctorate in English Literature. She situates herself in sometimes antagonistic and sometimes (more often) amorous contention with these languages:

It is she [German] who makes the French language always seem foreign to me. To her, my untamed one, I am indebted for never having had a rapport of mastery, of ownership with any language; for having always been in the wrong, guilty of fraud; for having always wanted to approach every language delicately, never as my own, in order to lick it, to breathe it in, to adore its differences, respect its gifts, its talents, its movements. Above all to keep it in the elsewhere that carries it along, to leave its foreignness intact.⁵⁰

Cixous reminds us that language lives in the mouth and on the breath as well as in the mind and the pen. The distance, or difference, of writing/speaking in a foreign language is celebrated here as an opportunity for desire, for a passionate play of language that avoids mastery. The word play indicated by language / tongue enables an embodied knowledge: 'Knowledge and taste go together'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sal Renshaw, *The Subject of Love: Hélène Cixous and the Feminine Divine* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009) 141.

⁵⁰ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 22.

⁵¹ Ibid. 151.

Thus translation becomes an intimate, amorous activity of knowing and unknowing that brings us again to the orange, which also becomes a vehicle of linguistic exchange:

She showed me a fruit, which had become foreign to me, and she gave me back the sight of this fruit. [...] she translated it, into my tongue, and I rediscovered the taste of the lost orange, I re-knew the orange.⁵²

This is a profoundly corporeal knowing that plays on the sexual connotations of the word. Moreover, the voice that accomplishes this translation (itself a textual voice – Cixous discovers Clarice Lispector through her writing) is ‘humid and tender’.⁵³ Humidity is a quality of air, most clearly communicated to the body through the skin and the breath. One feels humidity. In associating the voice with touch and breath, Cixous emphasises the inescapability of the body in reading as exchange. In aligning voice with *text*, Cixous troubles the distinction between spoken and written language.

The multiplicity of subject positions, the ability of an image to constellate numerous references and meanings, the significance of embodiment (the body inscribed by culture and speaking culture), the amorous encounters of foreignness on the tongue – all speak to the importance of difference in Cixous’s work. Sexual difference is of great importance to her, but that does not lead her to disregard other differences, such as race, nationality, personal histories, etc. The play of difference (play both as ludic activity and as give, or flexibility) in her texts creates space for ethical positioning. Abigail Bray argues that for Cixous, sexual difference always signifies in language (here she is with Lacan), but that how it signifies is never fixed (here she departs from Lacan). The mutability of the signification of sexuality allows the ‘creation of positive reinscriptions’ of subject positions that have been marginalised and vilified.⁵⁴ Hence the importance of bisexuality, and yet, Cixous presents an ‘other bisexuality’ that resists the implicit binary of masculine and

⁵² Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 52.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Bray, 48.

feminine.⁵⁵ The theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines queering as a performance that exposes ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically’.⁵⁶ For Cixous, the other bisexuality indicates a queer subjectivity which exceeds these limits and makes space for alterity within the sphere of desire. The other bisexuality does not oppose heterosexuality, but disrupts its hegemony, posing a plenitude of desire witnessed by the sticky sweetness of the orange.

For Cixous ‘[sexual] difference is a movement’.⁵⁷ She contends that the energy of sexual difference is a catalyst for writing and describes the movement of desire that creates writing as a libidinal economy.⁵⁸ The libidinal economy is the interaction between the subject and the world, the investment of passions in objects and others and the circulation of desire and difference marked by the orange. She envisions the feminine libidinal economy as a movement of generosity – an excessive spilling over. Embodiment, desire and writing come together and difference is produced, not erased.⁵⁹ Cixous creates a space for ‘the singularity of the other’s materiality’, while acknowledging that ‘[k]nowledge of the other can only ever be provisional, it is never complete’.⁶⁰ Cixous’s work inaugurates an exploration of the mysterious without dissipating that mystery by claiming complete knowledge or mastery over it.

Difference is not only located within and between subjects or within and between texts, but also gestures towards a radical alterity that will always disrupt certainties and

⁵⁵ Ibid. 50; Suleiman, *Subversive Intent* 127.

⁵⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994) 7.

⁵⁷ Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints* 52.

⁵⁸ Hélène Cixous and Verena Andermatt Conley, ‘An Exchange with Hélène Cixous’, *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine*, ed. Verena Andermatt Conley (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 130. See also, Bray, 52.

⁵⁹ Bray, 63.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 182-3.

foredose on a purely material reading of corporeality. Cixous has increasingly described her writerly engagement with alterity in the language of the sacred. Returning to the essay on painting with which I began this discussion, we see that Cixous's exploration of painting and writing moves her to the contemplation of divinity:

When I have finished writing, when I am a hundred and ten, all I will have done will have been to attempt a portrait of God. [...] Of what escapes us and makes us wonder. Of what we do not know but feel. Of what makes us live. I mean our own divinity, awkward, twisted, throbbing, our own mystery. [...] We who are bits of sun, drops of ocean, atoms of the god, and who so often forget this.⁶¹

As we saw earlier with her defiance of the prohibition on eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Cixous here apparently defies the Biblical prohibition against crafting an image of God.⁶² However, this is not quite as straightforward as the passage initially suggests. For one thing, although Cixous clearly uses the language of visual image, 'a portrait', she has indicated earlier that she is not a painter and her craft is done with words.⁶³ Secondly, this passage can be read as eschatology; the portrait is placed in the future as something Cixous writes towards. This 'finished' writing suggests a time beyond time. However, Cixous is clearly moving beyond orthodoxy in attempting such a portrait of God, as well as in this understanding of divinity. Bits of sun and drops of ocean suggest the Hermetic worldview of the living universe, but divinity here is synonymous with neither

⁶¹ In this reflection on the ongoing process of creative work, Cixous is responding to the following quotation from Hokusai on his repeated drawings of the same subject: 'nothing I produced before the age of seventy is worth counting. It was at the age of seventy-three that I more or less understood the structure of true nature. [...] Consequently, by the age of eighty, I will have made even more progress; at ninety I will penetrate the mystery of things; at a hundred I will definitely have reached a degree of wonder, and when I am a hundred and ten [...] be it a dot, be it a line, everything will be alive'; Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 129-130.

⁶² The understanding of the Second Commandment, the prohibition on creating images, has a complex and varied history in Judaism. It has generally been understood not to prohibit all images, but only those that provoke idolatry. This leaves much room for debate around what sorts of images are permissible and/or desirable. For a brief overview of the history of these debates, see Melissa Raphael, *Judaism and the Visual Image: A Jewish Theology of Art* (London: Continuum, 2009) 19-42. Making images of God not only is forbidden but is impossible, because God is spirit and can have no visible likeness or representation (it is more correct to say that the attempt is forbidden because it will always be unsuccessful and therefore a false image), although even this clearer prohibition is not entirely straightforward, as verbal images indicate, such as God appearing at Sinai as a thick cloud (Exodus 19:18); Raphael, *Judaism and the Visual Image: A Jewish Theology of Art* 25.

⁶³ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 106.

the material world nor human beings but something that emerges from and exceeds them both.

The escapability of God, the wonderment of author and reader, implies a divinity that may be immanent but can never be possessed, fully known, experienced or written. Yet the divine is also implicated in writing in flesh; Cixous refuses to privilege transcendence. Cixous's contemplation of God's portrait (written or painted) is not far from her mystical contemplation of the orange. Both reveal an irreducible mystery within the material and the literary. Cixous's engagement with difference – the divine as well as the human other – within the permutations of language, indicates that encounter with alterity is a crucial part of creativity. Thus Cixous, like Ricoeur, mobilises difference within language.

H.D. and the image

My reading of Ricoeur and Cixous foregrounds metaphor as the product of the creative imagination and the space of the dynamic interaction between language, sensory experience and the material world, thus mobilising possibilities for creating new ways of being in the world. Turning to H.D.'s poetics, we can see how her spiritual and literary commitments intersect in her use of language. In her article on *The Sword*, Jane Augustine emphasises the significance of theosophy for H.D.'s understanding of language – just as theosophists assert that 'thoughts are things', so 'for H.D., words are things'.⁶⁴ Augustine suggests that this materiality of language is a result of H.D.'s spiritualist practice. However, this insight resonates across H.D.'s work of the 1940s, if not further. Indeed, H.D.'s practice has a Romantic precursor in Coleridge, who argued for a material language in a letter to Godwin in 1800: 'I would endeavour to destroy the old antithesis of *Words* and *Things*, elevating, as

⁶⁴ Augustine, *Sword*: 130.

it were, Words into Things and living Things too'.⁶⁵ As we have seen, H.D. does just this in *Trilogy*, in the alchemical ritual which produces the word/jewel from the transmutation of words. The suggestion that words could be living things places them within a dynamic, living world and foregrounds their embeddedness in culture and human exchange (while also suggesting the reverse; things, too, can signify).

The materiality of language works in a number of ways in H.D.'s texts. The previous chapter explored the example of the ritual in which words literally become a thing and used the performance approach to ritual as a lens to view the materiality of writing as a practice. I will now consider the more subtle expression of material mysticism through the metaphorical density of H.D.'s language and deployment of the image in *Trilogy*, *The Gift*, and *The Sord*. The alchemical transmutation of *marab-mar* into Mary can be read as not only a ritual practice but as word play.⁶⁶ As I argued when considering Cixous's word play, these practices highlight the indeterminacy of words as meanings slip, slide and mutate.

In her recent book on the process of H.D.'s thought, Adalaide Morris borrows a term from Roland Barthes: 'mana-words'. For Barthes, these words 'function in a writer's vocabulary as nodes and relays of thought'.⁶⁷ For Morris, 'mana-words are alive and elastic [...] [They] are words that lead thought forward across time, sustain its openness and generativity, and maintain its relevance to events at work within a culture'.⁶⁸ In borrowing from Barthes and Morris, I want to emphasise the first half of this compound term: *mana*—the supernatural power and prestige that can accrue to people or objects.⁶⁹ Thus rather than considering a word purely as a node for thought, I am interested in the sacred charge of the word and its ability to sustain the generativity of the mystical. Barthes's description of

⁶⁵ Samuel T. Coleridge qtd. in Bper, 131.

⁶⁶ Chisholm, 64.

⁶⁷ Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 89.

⁶⁹ This concept emerges from Polynesian religions; 'Mana', *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2010, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com, 17 October, 2010.

mana-words is reminiscent of the flexibility of Cixous's orange and the openness of Ricoeur's metaphors:

In an author's lexicon, will there not always be a word-as-mana, a word whose ardent, complex, ineffable, and somehow sacred signification gives the illusion that by this word one might answer for everything? Such a word is neither eccentric nor central; it is motionless and carried, floating, never pigeonholed, always atopic (escaping any topic), at once remainder and supplement.⁷⁰

Morris's chosen mana-words – *projection*, *science*, *gift* – are all abstract, conceptual terms, but the words that I find particularly resonant through *The Gift*, *The Sword* and *Trilogy*, are simpler, more prosaic words. These words convey images and material objects, such as *bee*, *jewel*, *apple tree*, however, their repetition across the text generates more complex associations.⁷¹

The repetition and mobility of the image links H.D.'s mature work, both prose and poetry, with her earlier Imagism.⁷² Imagism marks an early exploration in Modernist poetry in which a small group of poets published under its banner initiated a revolution in style,

⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977) 129.

⁷¹ Even a more abstract mana-word like 'spiral' is frequently paired with concrete images such as a shell, a labyrinth or an unfurling flower.

⁷² The dominant critical view of H.D.'s work for many years was largely determined by her early Imagist poems, which were judged excellent but minor. Her early work has posed a problem for feminist criticism; those critics interested in re-evaluating and reclaiming her work in the 1980s and early 1990s tended to privilege the later poetry over the early work, claiming that Imagism limited her and that the critical reception of her poetry overlooked the value of her later work because of its radical departure from her early lyrics; Friedman, 'Who Buried H.D.?' 801; Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* xi, 2-6. The past few decades have seen a renewed critical interest in H.D.'s early poetry as a number of critics have approached this work from new angles. These re-readings are organised around embodiment, subjectivity, poetic strategies and literary engagements. Claire Buck, Rachel Connor and Rebecca Stott have considered the construction of subjectivity and sexuality in H.D.'s first volume, *Sea Garden*. Buck; Connor; Rebecca Stott, 'Posting Signs on the Bog: Fixing and Unfixing H.D., Imagiste', *Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity* 2.1 (1997). Diana Collecott and Eileen Gregory have analysed the subversive gesture of foregrounding desire in the early lyrics, the linguistic strategies that enable these gestures and H.D.'s engagement with Sappho and Euripides as a crucial contribution to the formation of Modernist Classicism; Collecott; Diana Collecott, 'She Too Is My Poet': H.D.'s Sapphic Fragments', *H.D.'s Poetry: "The Meanings That Words Hide"*, ed. Marina Camboni (Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, 2003); Gregory; Eileen Gregory, 'H. D.'s Heterodoxy: The Lyric as a Site of Resistance', *H.D.'s Poetry: "The Meanings That Words Hide"*, ed. Marina Camboni (Brooklyn, NY: AMS Press, 2003).

aiming for ‘direct treatment of the “thing” whether subjective or objective’.⁷³ Amy Lowell described the tenets of Imagism as follows:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms – as the expression of new moods – and not to copy old moods. [...]
- 3 To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. [...]
4. To present an image (hence the name: “Imagist”). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. [...]
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence in poetry.⁷⁴

Imagism, then, marked ‘a radical poetic reduction technique’.⁷⁵ However, confusion arises regarding the nature of the image itself. For Pound, the image was not a visual representation of an external object, but ‘that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’.⁷⁶ The image is ‘a state of perception’ rather than an object.⁷⁷ Imagism refers to a mode of presentation, a technique, rather than the content of that presentation, and the hallmarks of darity and hardness are not always present; the poet ‘may wish to convey a mood of indecision, in which case the poem should be indecisive’.⁷⁸ Dianne Chisholm points to the Imagists’ emphasis on the productive imagination: ‘It was not mimesis or the representative function of imagining which they emphasised but its creative and constitutive function, the capacity to present things that would otherwise

⁷³ The term ‘Imagist’ was coined by Ezra Pound to describe the poetry of H.D. and Richard Aldington. Pound sent a selection of poems by Aldington and H.D. to Harriet Monroe who published them in *Poetry* in 1912. The movement was fostered by Amy Lowell, who arranged for the publication of three Imagist anthologies between 1915 and 1917 (Pound left the group in 1914); David Ayers, *Modernism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 2; Connor, 33; Glenn Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1960) 34.

⁷⁴ Amy Lowell, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970) 239-40.

⁷⁵ Rainer Emig, *Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures and Limits* (London and New York: Longman, 1995) 106.

⁷⁶ Ezra Pound, ‘A Retrospect’, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954) 4. See also, Rebecca Beasley, *Theorists of Modern Poetry: T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) 39.

⁷⁷ Emig, 108.

⁷⁸ Lowell, 244-45. See also, Ayers, 5.

remain unperceived or inconceivable'.⁷⁹ This resonates with Ricoeur's emphasis on creation of the new, rather than representation.

Although H.D.'s Imagist's poems are an expression of Classicism, in terms of content, style and influence, Eileen Gregory argues that H.D.'s is a Romantic mode of Hellenism which owes as much to Walter Pater and other nineteenth-century decadents as to Sappho and Euripides.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Gregory links this Romantic Hellenism with Hermeticism.⁸¹ The Hermeticism that we have explored through *Trilogy* has its expression in H.D.'s earlier work as well. Chisholm notes that H.D. aligns herself and her writing with Hermeticism, claiming that her first published lyric, 'Hermes of the Ways', initiated 'H.D. – Hermes – Hermeticism and all the rest of it'.⁸²

Much recent criticism of H.D.'s early work has explored ways in which her Imagism cuts against the grain of earlier assessments of the movement. Freeing H.D. from the description 'crystalline' has been a major critical endeavour.⁸³ Her most popular and frequently cited poems demonstrate a dynamic energy that refuses to be confined. From the sea rose 'flung on the sand' to the 'whirl up, sea' of 'Oread', movement is at the heart of H.D.'s early poetry; the image may be clear, but it is not static.⁸⁴ Rachel Connor reads this movement as an invitation to the reader to engage in the production of meaning; 'Through an active relationship between author and reader – brought about by deliberate

⁷⁹ Chisholm, 52.

⁸⁰ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 2. See also Laity.

⁸¹ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 41-42.

⁸² H.D. qtd in Chisholm, 55. I will return to the Hermeticism of *Sea Garden* in the following chapter.

⁸³ Norman Holmes Pearson, 'Foreword', *Hermetic Definition* (Oxford: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1972) v.

⁸⁴ H.D.'s contemporaries also recognised the movement inherent in her images. Pound included 'Oread' in the first edition of *Blast*, the Vorticist magazine, in 1914 and considered it an ideal Vorticist poem, which indicates that H.D.'s work continued to influence him beyond the early years of Imagism; Connor, 35; Louis L. Martz, 'Introduction', *H.D. Selected Poems*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988) vii. When Pound left the Imagists in 1914, he joined Wyndham Lewis in founding Vorticism (with *Blast* as its vehicle). Pound shifted his understanding of the image to the more dynamic one, calling it 'a radiant node or cluster; [...] a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing'; Pound qtd. in Ayers, 9. For more on H.D. and Vorticism, see Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom, in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) 133-85.

and careful juxtaposition of visual elements – the image is constructed as *process* through which the reader actively engages in the text’s production’.⁸⁵ Likewise, the lyrics of *Sea Garden* and *The Gods* suggest ritualising activity and a process of invoking the sacred.⁸⁶ I will return to the implications of process for embodiment later in this chapter. For now I wish to emphasise the dynamism of the image, which is a legacy of H.D.’s early work and joins with the broader scope of her mature work to enable her writing to maintain material particularity.

H.D. uses a word to create an image, or cluster of images, in a repetitive way so that meanings accrue and overlap within an increasingly dense language. Read through the lens of Ricoeur’s and Cixous’s poetics, we can see that difference inheres within that density in metaphor’s openness and generation of multiple meanings. I suggest that these mana-words form a nexus for the material, the linguistic and the spiritual in H.D.’s writing. The words *bee*, *beehive*, *beeswax* and *honey/comb* form an image cluster that appears repeatedly across H.D.’s oeuvre; the poems of *Sea Garden* use honey as an image that draws together the bitter and the sweet, as well as indicating spiritual and erotic search, while in the final section of the late sequence, ‘Winter Love’, the bee represents the pain and hope of birth.⁸⁷ The image reoccurs in numerous contexts in *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *The Sward*. Like Cixous’s orange, bees and honey provide H.D. with a tactile, sweet, sticky, energetic, dynamic image. By tracing the appearances of these words and suggesting some of the various meanings that accrue across the texts, I will demonstrate the metaphorical density that contributes to the materiality of language.

Trilogy opens with a juxtaposition of the ruined sacred temple at Karnak with bombed London:

⁸⁵ Connor, 36.

⁸⁶ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 124.

⁸⁷ H.D., *Collected Poems* 8, 17, 28; H.D., *Hermetic Definition* (Oxford: Carcanet Press, 1972) 117.

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.⁸⁸

The image of the 'Luxor bee' indicates the possibility for regeneration even in the midst of ruins and unites image and word in the figure of the hieroglyphic carved in stone.⁸⁹ By using an image that is stony, linguistic and pictorial, H.D. signals an important aspect of her metaphors; they are both natural and cultural. She deploys organic objects, such as honey, the bee and the pearl, that have gathered a weight of cultural meaning and reference. These culturally weighted images enable multiple meanings, both old and new, while continuing to foreground materiality. The honey/bee image cluster brings together Greek and Hebrew texts. The use of images from the natural world, particularly honey, to express syncretism between mythologies – Greek and Hebrew, Pagan and Christian – emerges in the earlier poem 'Sigi'. As the poet moves between worlds, she dares that past and present are bound up in each other:

there is one mystery, "take, eat,"
I have found the due,
there is no old nor new:
wine, bread, grape and sweet
honey; Galilee, Delphi, to-day.⁹⁰

In the Hebrew Bible, honey is most frequently a reference for the Promised Land – 'a land

⁸⁸ H.D., *Walls* 1:1-9.

⁸⁹ This image links H.D.'s experience of healing after the First World War – she visited Karnak with Bryher in 1923 and this is written in the dedication to *The Walls Do Not Fall* – with her experience of the Second World War.

⁹⁰ H.D., *Collected Poems* 411. Likewise, in the 'Luxor bee', H.D. links Egyptian and Christian mythology, foregrounding a syncretism that will continue throughout *Tribhy* (another example is the unity of Christ and Ra, the Egyptian sun god).

flowing with milk and honey' – while also indicating the sensual delight of God's word, as well as the fulfilment of erotic desire.⁹¹ The associations with sacred space, nourishment, language and eroticism will reappear in H.D.'s use of the image. Likewise, these images appear in Euripides and Sappho, important intertexts for H.D.⁹²

Honey continues the image's tracing of the palimpsest of past and present, this time suggesting the sensual but ephemeral solace of previous spiritual experience in the face of current trauma. The poet declares 'we would feed forever / on the honey-comb / of your remembered greeting'.⁹³ However, the poet's subsequent anger at war's destructiveness denies nostalgic retreat; memory is not nourishment enough.⁹⁴ The honey of 'remembered greeting' sets the poet on a spiritual quest, discovering new life in the midst of this journey:

Yet resurrection is a sense of direction,
resurrection is a bee-line,

straight to the horde and plunder
the treasure, the store-room,

the honeycomb;
resurrection is remuneration,

food, shelter, fragrance
of myrrh and balm.⁹⁵

The bee becomes an image for the process of seeking; the honeycomb is the resource that fuels spiritual and cultural renewal. The honey that is physical, emotional, spiritual and creative nourishment echoes Cixous's orange. In *Trilogy*, resurrection is not so much the

⁹¹ Exodus 3:8, Psalms 19:10, Psalms 119:103, Song of Solomon 5:1

⁹² See H.D.'s translation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the epigraph from Sappho preceding her poem 'Fragment 113'; H.D., *Collected Poems* 85, 131.

⁹³ The greeting is from Jesus after the resurrection, an allusion to the end of the Gospel of John, which is also concerned with food: 'the baked fish is ready, / here is the bread'; H.D., *Walls* 29:5-7, 19-20. See John 21: 9-13. H.D. also associates bee/honey with memory in her late poetic sequence, 'Winter Love', (written as a coda to *Helen in Egypt* [1961], but published in the volume *Hermetic Definition* [1972]), where she describes memories as 'low-swarmed bees'; H.D., *Hermetic Definition* 98.

⁹⁴ H.D., *Walls* 29:8-13.

⁹⁵ H.D., *Rod* 7:1-8.

goal of the quest as the journey itself, both a movement and a sanctuary along the way. The honeycomb – food, shelter, fragrance – implies sensual renewal and solace, and yet the bee-line indicates the urgency and the speed of resurrection-as-flight. The previous chapter examined fragrance as the spiritual-material substance whose drift unites alchemical transformation and the scene of the London Blitz. In the context of the current chapter's interest in language, fragrance of myrrh here indicates the transformation mobilised by the movements of the bee/honey image traversing across *Trilogy*.

In *The Gift* and *The Sword*, the metaphoric use of 'bee' and 'honey' connects spiritual renewal with creative practice and the poet's relationship to language. In both *The Gift* and *The Sword*, H.D. describes an imagined sanctuary as a bee-hive; she goes on to use honeycomb as a metaphor for regeneration located in the midst of community:

[I]f you are consoled or integrated, you help console and integrate the scattered remnant. I don't think society can be reconstructed from outside. [...] In saving oneself, one creates a shell, not the isolated, highly individual spiral-shell I spoke of, but a minute coral-shell, one of a million, or a single wax-cell of the honey-comb.⁹⁶

Here the individual and the wider community are interdependent, but not undifferentiated. In *The Gift*, she connects the bee-hive as sanctuary with her relationship to language. A foreign word, spoken by her grandmother becomes a sacred space with the child as caretaker:

It seems as if something had come over me like the branches of a tree or the folds of a tent when she says *Wunden Eiland*. [...] The word is like a bee-hive, but there are no bees in it now. I am the last bee in the bee-hive, this is the game I play. The other bees have gone, that is why it is so quiet. Can one bee keep a bee-hive alive, I mean, can one person who knows that *Wunden Eiland* is a bee-hive, keep *Wunden Eiland* for the other bees, when they come back?⁹⁷

⁹⁶ H.D., *The Sword* 67.

⁹⁷ H.D., *The Gift* 154-5. Hilda later learns that Wunden Eiland is the sacred site of the Moravian and Native American alliance and the place of the Moravian Hidden Church's rituals, as discussed in Chapter Three.

I will return to this passage and the significance of sanctuary and sacred space for H.D.'s work in the following chapter. Here, I wish to highlight the connection between language, creativity and the sacred in these examples. The child Hilda's visionary experience emerges from the sound of the word, she emphasises that she doesn't know or care what it means; the sound itself carries the significance, as the voice of Clarice Lispector called Cixous back to writing. The bee-hive as the nexus of sound, sacred space and creativity is repeated at the end of *The Gift*, in H.D.'s audition of a Moravian choir singing, which sounds like the hum of bees.⁹⁸

In *The Sword*, H.D. returns to the bee-hive and honey as a metaphor for resurrection, but this time in the context of creative practice. One of the vignettes involves the production of illuminated manuscripts:

[W]e were working on the Ship that took St. Paul to Malta. I remembered how she had told me that Malta in the old text, is Melitta and melitta or Melissa is the Greek for Bee. I thought we should work some bee-hives into the opening letter [...] Mother Beata said, yes, there was Our Lord after the resurrection and the honeycomb and there was the proverb about wisdom from the old dispensation as well, 'sweeter also than honey in the honeycomb'.⁹⁹

Here we see the association of resurrection and the bee that H.D. adapts in *The Flowering of the Rod*. Moreover, Mother Beata's musings link resurrection with wisdom; both are characterised by the sweetness of honey. The illuminated manuscript indicates the identification of word and image, language and artefact, as the word itself becomes a work of art and bees become adornment.

Beeswax becomes the locus for divine immanence and human creativity in *The Gift*. In an extended reading of this image, I argue that it forms the place where domestic,

⁹⁸ Ibid. 222.

⁹⁹ H.D., *The Sword* 244-5. Mother Beata refers to Luke 24:42, where the resurrected Jesus eats fish and honeycomb and Psalms 19:9-10: 'the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. / More to be desired are they than gold, / even much fine gold: / sweeter also than honey / and drippings of the honeycomb' (NRSV).

particular objects coincide with literary metaphor. H.D. describes the crafting of Christmas decorations by Hilda and her brothers as a spiritual activity that instantiates the Incarnation:

As we pressed the tin-mould of the lion or the lady into the soft dough we were like God in the first picture in the Doré Bible who, out of chaos, created Leo or Virgo to shine forever in the heavens. [...] God had made a Child and we children in return now made God; we created Him as He had created us, we created Him as children will, out of odds and ends; like magpies, we built him a nest of stray bits of silver-thread, shredded blue or rose or yellow coloured paper; we knew our power. We knew that God could not resist the fragrance of a burning beeswax candle!¹⁰⁰

H.D. suggests that the domestic creativity of children echoes divine creativity, conjuring a scene of divine immanence; God is seduced into being.¹⁰¹ The writer as a child becomes artist and devotee in her activity of bricolage: 'Only the child, the artist or the devout have the gift of endowing material objects with life'.¹⁰² In this way, children, artists and devotees craft new worlds. H.D. reproduces this activity of creating out of scraps in the style of *The Gift*, patching together narrative fragments, multiple voices and temporalities.

H.D. uses the description of the Moravian Christmas to reflect on creativity. The festival is marked out from the everyday, and yet is enmeshed in the ordinary both in terms of cyclical return and in the domestic activity that marks the event itself. She introduces an unknown 'thing' that depends upon ordinary objects to come into being: 'The "thing" could not begin if there were not an old end or several almost burnt-out stumps of last year's beeswax candles'.¹⁰³ However, we soon discover that this mysterious 'thing' is not an

¹⁰⁰ H.D., *The Gift* 89.

¹⁰¹ This view of the divine parallels Alison Jasper's reading of the Prologue of the Gospel of John in which she argues that the text reveals 'a God who is necessarily dependent upon the materiality (Jn. 1.14) of both word (witness) and flesh (glorified presence), in order to enter into relationship with humankind'; Alison Jasper, *The Shining Garment of the Text: Gendered Readings of John's Prologue* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 178.

¹⁰² H.D., *The Sword* 119.

¹⁰³ H.D., *The Gift* 87-88.

object, although it partakes of sensation and is mobilised by beeswax candles, but an activity:

It was not only the smell of the moss, it was not only the smell of the spiced ginger-dough that was waiting under a doth in the biggest yellow bowl on the pantry-shelf, and yet it was all these; it was all these and the forms of the Christmas-cakes. [...] The 'thing' was that we were creating. We were 'making' a field under the tree. [...] We ourselves were 'making' the Christmas-cakes.¹⁰⁴

The incantatory repetitions and specific sensory details serve to conjure this scene for the reader. The scene's evident construction foregrounds the author's presence, drawing together the creativity of writer and child and aligning the scene of writing (1940s London) with the Moravian Christmas decades earlier.

The material objects crafted by the children become God, and yet, simultaneously, the objects make the children into God, endowing them with the power to create. The allure of beeswax and coloured paper reveals a religious intimacy and preoccupation with the stuff of the world. Elaine Scarry reads the Hebrew Bible as, among other things, a history of the way in which crafted material objects 'confer on God a body'.¹⁰⁵ Scarry corroborates H.D.'s description of creativity: 'the Object [God] *is* their creator, for by making this Artifact they have recreated themselves, altered themselves profoundly and drastically'.¹⁰⁶ She argues that making things projects embodiment, and its related sentience, out into the external world. Unlike Scarry's examples – dothing which takes up the task of skin, a chair which supports the skeleton – H.D.'s 'nest' of beeswax and silver thread is emphatically un-useful and is situated in an interstice of cultural production. Hilda's creation of God out of odds and ends resonates with Walter Benjamin's assertion that children focus on the discarded remains of culture: 'They are irresistibly drawn by the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 88-89.

¹⁰⁵ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 222.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 311.

detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. [...] In using these things they [...] bring together, in the artefact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship'.¹⁰⁷

H.D. puts the ancient practice of transformation – alchemy – into the hands of children. The patchwork of ordinary leftover threads and shreds form an idiosyncratic and subtle Hermetic gloss on the overt Moravianism in the text. The attention to the creative potential of domestic details resonates with the Hermetic regard for particularity: 'Because the universe is a forest of symbols, it is natural to wish to examine dosely all that it contains. [...] [T]he Hermetist showed an extremely pronounced taste for the particular, for the hidden face and form in being and objects'.¹⁰⁸ For Hilda and her brothers, the hidden form of scraps of tissue, silver thread and fragrant beeswax is divine, and their craft reveals God's face. The location of divinity within the human sphere, while retaining its mystery, resonates with Cixous's portrait of God discussed above.

I have lingered on the implications of Hilda's luring God into being with beeswax because I find this a key passage in understandings H.D.'s conception of creativity, transformation, spirituality and the everyday – themes that are explored in the previous instances of the bee/honey image. The appearances of this image in *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *The Sword* play against and alongside H.D.'s earlier work, both poetry and prose, where the

¹⁰⁷ Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London and New York: Verso, 2006) 52-53.

This mode of creativity also suggests the patchwork imagery that has been significant for numerous feminists. Kwok Pui-lan claims this trope for signifying the diasporic imagination: 'It is the image of the storyteller who selects pieces, fragments, and legends from her cultural and historical memory to weave together tales that are passed from generation to generation. These tales are refashioned and retold in each generation, with new materials added, to face new circumstances and to reinvent the identity of a people'. Kwok's diasporic subject is more conscious of the implications of her activity than Hilda and her brothers; Kwok Pui-land, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2005) 46. See also, bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009) 154-68; Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977* (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978) 76-77.

¹⁰⁸ Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes* 57-58.

images 'bee' and 'honey' signify eroticism or Dionysian ecstasy, thus bringing the deployment of the bee/honey image duster to the scene of embodiment.

In the essay *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1919), a manifesto on aesthetics and visionary consciousness, honey indicates the dangerous pleasures of moving outside normative practice, whether spiritual, creative or erotic. H.D.'s meditations on creativity and embodiment lead her towards a vision of passionate, sensual ecstasy:

Outside is a great vineyard and grapes and rioting and madness and dangers. It is very dangerous. An enormous moth detached himself from a bunch of yellow grapes – he seemed stupefied with the heat of the sun – heavy with the sun and his soft belly swollen with the honey of the grapes, I would have said, for there was a bead of gold – resinous – that matted the feathers at his throat. He fell rather than flew. [...] I would have rescued him but I myself was dizzy with the heat and the fumes of the golden wine and I heard a great shout of laughter as I tried to steady my cup and I shouted in reply, he is drunk – he is drunk. So he was drunk. Outside is a great vineyard and rioting and madness and dangers.¹⁰⁹

The passage evokes wild revelry, although H.D. also emphasises the dangers and disorientation of such abandonment. She locates herself in this uncertain, Bacchanalian outside. The wild vineyard becomes the location for the coalescence of spirituality and eroticism as the grape and bead of honey signify female sexuality while the honey and wine engulf the poet in ecstasy.¹¹⁰ In her pursuit of ecstasy, H.D. is not seeking to transcend the body, but to express embodiment in a new way. Like Cixous, she does not signify a contained and stable body but a body that is moving, fluid, fragmentary and strange: 'the goal of H.D.'s manifesto is not to make the body [...] strong but to abandon the body in ecstasy to alterity'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ H.D., *Notes* 41-2.

¹¹⁰ H.D. may have been inspired by the connection between Dionysus, honey and wine in Euripides' *Bacchae*, whose choruses she translated. The Maenads' ecstasy is expressed in excessive, wild sweetness: 'One [...] dug her wand into the earth, and there / The god sent up a fountain of wine [...] While from the thyrsus a sweet ooze of honey dripped'; Euripides, *The Bacchae and Other Plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott (London: Penguin Books, 1973) 216.

¹¹¹ Kathleen Crown, 'H.D.'s Jellyfish Manifesto and the Visible Body of Modernism', *Sagetrieb* 14.1-2 (1995): 227.

The body holds a place of primary importance in H.D.'s writing, although often approached in oblique ways. Kathleen Crown argues that *Notes* presents a complex view of embodiment:

The *Notes*' modernist literary experimentation [...] acknowledges dualism while suggesting an alternate understanding of body and subjectivity as perpetually under construction, in process, and culturally permeable and vulnerable. The body made visible in *Notes* remains irreducibly material, other, and different; but it is never static, disavowed, or inert.¹¹²

By linking the body with images in the natural world that signify growth, transformation and decay, as she does throughout her poetry and prose, H.D. presents a body that is constantly opening and changing. These particular images – flowers, shells, pearls, chrysalis – embed the spiritual in the body and bodily experience, adding another dimension to the materiality of language in H.D.'s poetics. Throughout her writing, H.D. emphasises both the sensory content of visionary experiences and the sensory experiences that lead to visions. This returns us once more to the alchemical jewel, which not only links language to material object, but also connects the poetic image with the body. The jewel lives; it has a 'faint / heart-beat, pulse-beat'.¹¹³ Already the product of ritual and associated with divine names, here the jewel suggests that the sacred is located within the body.¹¹⁴ Language, spirituality and materiality are layered in the one image.

For H.D., corporeality is interwoven with eroticism and spirituality.¹¹⁵ Connor argues that *Notes* disrupts the distinction between body and spirit and thus makes a space for an ecstasy which is corporeal, spiritual and aesthetic.¹¹⁶ The sacred charge to the

¹¹² Ibid.: 221-20.

¹¹³ H.D., *Angels* 14:8-9.

¹¹⁴ I have previously explored issues of embodiment and the sacred in H.D.'s writing; Anderson, "Dance, Dance, Dance Ecstatic": H.D.'s Embodied Mysticism, 19-24, 37-38.

¹¹⁵ Perhaps the most explicitly erotic appearance of the image is in 'Hymen': 'There with his honey-seeking lips / The bee clings close and warmly sips, / [...] / then the plunderer slips / Between the purple flower-lips', H.D., *Collected Poems* 109.

¹¹⁶ Connor, 47-48.

bee/honey image is more evident in H.D.'s homage to Sappho in her version of 'Fragment 113':

not honey, not the deep
plunge of soft belly
and the dinging of the gold-edged
pollen-dusted feet
[...]
not honey, not the south,
not the tall stalk
of red twin-lilies
nor light branch of fruit tree
[...]
not iris – old desire – old passion –
old forgetfulness – old pain –
not this, nor any flower.¹¹⁷

The multiple references to bees, honey, flowers, pollen and fruit indicate an erotic abundance that persists despite the repeated disavowals, the 'voluptuous denials of voluptuousness'.¹¹⁸ Simultaneously, the repetition of 'not' suggests a tension between this soft, sticky sexuality and its renunciation in 'heat, more passionate / of bone and the white shell / and fiery tempered steel'.¹¹⁹

The movement encoded in H.D.'s early imagist poems expresses a multivalent desire, akin to Cixous's 'other bisexuality'. The movement between internal and external, seed and tree, lush garden and windy wilds in *Sea Garden* suggests a ritualised erotics:

From this oscillation, what emerges is a process that *defines* sexuality in H.D.'s work – the construction of a self that moves from one (gendered) positionality to another. [...] Ultimately, the in-between place that is created through this self in process is reflected in the name of the volume – *Sea Garden*, a name which evokes the liminal space between land and sea.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ H.D., *Collected Poems* 131.

¹¹⁸ Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 152.

¹¹⁹ H.D., *Collected Poems* 132.

¹²⁰ Connor, 50. Kathryn Simpson also reads H.D.'s early work as suggestive of mutable sexuality in her reading of pearls, jewels and seeds as signifiers of queer, woman-centred sexuality; Kathryn Simpson, 'Pearl-Diving: Inscriptions of Desire and Creativity in H.D. and Woolf', *Journal of Modern Literature* 27.4 (2004): 38-42.

Thus sacred sexuality is queerly performed *in between*. H.D.'s heterodox poetics instigate a process of queering spirituality and aesthetics as well as sexuality.¹²¹ This process continues in *Trilogy*, from the textual alchemy that produces the erotic word/jewel, to the abundant swirls of Mary Magdalene's Pre-Raphaelite hair, which mark her as a *femme fatale*,¹²² to the uncontained drifting of fragrance.

In the war-time texts, the experience of embodiment is frequently figured as traumatic.¹²³ As Amy Hollywood argues, attempts to transcend bodily trauma and loss lead to denial or repression and indicate a refusal to come to terms with mortality. She suggests that we need resources for 'thinking the body otherwise, as the site of possibility and limitation, pleasure and suffering, natality and death' and she reminds us that loss, as well as pleasure, is experienced in the body.¹²⁴ H.D.'s view of the body as mutable and multiple makes space for regeneration to be held alongside engagement with traumatic bodily experience. *Trilogy*, *The Gift* and *The Sword* all record bodily trauma and loss; from H.D.'s personal experiences of strain leading to physical and mental breakdown to losses recorded in her family history to the global wounds of atomic warfare. *The Gift* opens with the story of a young girl burning to death (one of H.D.'s great fears during the Blitz) while the first section of *Trilogy* compresses abjection with survival:

the bone frame was made for
no such shock knit within terror,
yet the skeleton stood up to it:

the flesh? it was melted away,
the heart burnt out, dead ember,

¹²¹ H.D.'s interest in boundary transgressions and the sacralising of spirituality is reflected in her interest in the Moravian mysticism which their detractors found 'perverse'; Chisholm, 160-162.

¹²² Laity, 179-81.

¹²³ *Notes* was written shortly after the First World War, a time of intense bodily and mental trauma for H.D., however, she does not address these experiences as directly in the manifesto as in the Second World War texts. After her psychoanalytic therapy in the 1930s H.D. returned to her First World War experiences more openly in the autobiographical novel *Bid Me to Live* (which she revised in the 1930s) as well as *The Sword*.

¹²⁴ Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) 186.

tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered,
yet the frame held.¹²⁵

The frame holds, survival is the central concern of H.D.'s Second World War texts, yet terror and dismemberment are never fully eradicated or forgotten. The irreducible presence of loss in H.D.'s writing correlates with the attention to the wound in Cixous's work. As an ongoing reminder of the material significance of loss, the wound provokes an engagement with history, while the orange indicates both the ecstatic plenitude of writing and the attention to the other which draws attention to both desire and trauma.

The complexity, ambiguity and dynamism of embodiment can be traced in the unfolding progression of another image, olfactory rather than visual or tactile. In *Trilogy*, pleasure and pain are held in the same resonant word: myrrh. The bitterness of the word, *marah*, which becomes the bitter jewel, is linked linguistically to myrrh, a substance associated with death and burial as well as incense and perfume.¹²⁶ Yet myrrh is also associated with the bee-line and honeycomb of resurrection: 'resurrection is a bee-line, / straight to [...] the honeycomb; / [...] fragrance / of myrrh and balm'.¹²⁷ To return once more to fragrance, this sensual, illusive element holds together bodily experiences of beauty and bitterness, birth and death. Through H.D.'s work we see 'the pleasures and pains of the (speaking) body'.¹²⁸ Presented as fragmentary or whole, the site of ecstasy, desire and passion, or disruption, loss and grief, for H.D. the body is expressive of the multiplicity of human experience.

¹²⁵ H.D., *Walls* 1:43-9. For further discussion of abject bodies in *Trilogy*, see Laity, 171-82.

¹²⁶ The etymology of 'myrrh' is unclear, but it is likely linked to the Hebrew 'mar', meaning bitter; 'Myrrh', *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2010, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com, 16 October, 2010.

¹²⁷ H.D., *Rod* 7:1-8.

¹²⁸ Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy* 13.

Conclusion

The movements of difference in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing illuminate the possibility for transformation within metaphoric language. From the oscillation and overlap of images, to the textual turns, gaps and breaks, from the ambiguity of bodily experience to the multiplicity of subject positions, Cixous and H.D. chart a continual unfolding of mystery, as the image both reveals and conceals the presence of the sacred within the text. The productive tension between materiality and alterity indicates a mysticism that refuses absolute distinctions: 'the passage of difference is also the path of the undecidable'.¹²⁹ Cixous's encounter with the orange that reveals the conjunction of fruit and bodies, and the shattered survivors of *Trilogy*, as well as the erotic and mystical movements of Mary Magdalene's hair, emphasise the insistence of the material within the most abstract of linguistic performances. If ritual highlights the performance of writing a material mysticism, then the path of the image through H.D.'s and Cixous's texts provides the detail of that mysticism.

The alchemical energy of their writing, the mobility of metaphors and word play further enable transformations of subjectivity. These in turn lead to new ways of apprehending and writing the world. The following chapter turns from explorations of writing as an activity and the objects within writing to the context of writing and how that context is engaged within text. Thus it considers the significance of place and movements between places in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing. Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor as productive of alternative ways of being in the world provides a starting point for my discussion of writing as flight and sanctuary as mobilised by Cixous and H.D. There we see the context for the images of orange and bee when we look at the places of the garden and the beehive and discover that these are locations for encounters with the sacred.

¹²⁹ Bray, 187.

CHAPTER FIVE – WRITING AS SANCTUARY

While Chapter Three analysed sacred activity or ritual, and Chapter Four addressed sacred objects or images, this chapter performs a shift in perspective by considering the context of these activities and objects, i.e. place or location. In so doing, it returns to the scene of war, recovery and creativity considered in Chapter Two. I have previously analysed transformation in Cixous and H.D. through narratives of recovery and community, the activity of ritual and the dynamism of images; I now consider the context for this imaginative, literary creativity. This chapter is situated in the interstice between theoretical concerns and material particulars.¹ It attends to place in H.D.'s and Cixous's writing through an analysis of two spatial metaphors: garden and flight. The metaphors map onto the larger concerns of place and movement. Garden suggests stable, particular locations, while flight indicates the movement in and between places. In tracing the contours of the garden and the trajectories of flight, the chapter moves from the imagined to the material and back again. Although gardens are settled, cultivated, grounded, while flight is mobile, unpredictable, and airborne, Cixous and H.D. frequently bring the two metaphors together in unusual conjunctions.

The third term that enables an exploration of the relationship between garden and flight is sanctuary. Sanctuary's definition and location is rendered ambiguous and subject to startling transformations in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing. I am concerned here with two

¹ Brooker and Thacker suggest that a 'historical' turn has followed the 'linguistic' turn in literary studies and that interest in historicised spatiality and geography has followed on from historical materialism. However, linguistic theoretical approaches are not necessarily separate from historical and geographic concerns; Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, 'Introduction: Locating the Modern', *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 1.

definitions of sanctuary: a holy place where the divine dwells, and a place of refuge.² Sanctuary is both the endpoint of flight and hidden within its trajectories; it is a goal and a way station. Moreover, it forms the connection ~~off~~ between garden and flight as the gardens themselves are sanctuaries. However, this identification is ambiguous; for H.D. and Cixous, gardens are sanctuaries, in that they are places of sacred encounter, but they are not always safe refuges. In considering the relationship between origins, flight and creativity, they configure writing itself as a sanctuary, thus bringing together imaginative concerns and material contexts. Michel de Certeau's writing on pilgrimage provides a useful model for imagining a sanctuary that encompasses both place and movement. De Certeau argues that in the modern period, the pilgrim undergoes 'perpetual departure' in a pilgrimage whose goal has been effaced.³ For de Certeau, the pathways of this pilgrimage may be traced in writing; however, in Cixous and H.D.'s work we see not merely the trace of a perpetual departure, but the sacred places themselves, displaced into writing. The dwelling place of the stranger, mystery, and all that escapes, writing becomes the sanctuary that is a place of healing, but one that is open to the movements of flight, theft and encounter.

~~At~~ Sometimes oppositional and at other times harmonic, the two metaphors of garden and flight form a complex dialectic in both Cixous's and H.D.'s work. Biblical texts posit the garden as the place of human origin (the Garden of Eden in Genesis) and divine encounter (God walks in the garden in the cool of the day; Mary Magdalene meets the risen Christ in the garden), while its loss has been seen as the original exile.⁴ While Cixous and H.D. draw upon these Biblical tropes in their writing, they deconstruct traditional

² The two definitions merge in the medieval practice of granting fugitives immunity from arrest within a church; 'Sanctuary', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed, 1989, Oxford University Press, Available: www.oed.com, 1 October, 2010.

³ de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* 299.

⁴ Genesis 3:8; John 19:41-20:18; Didier Bertrand, 'Order and Chaos in Paradise: Colonial And "Postcolonial" Constructions of Religious Identity through the Robinson Crusoe Story', *Religion and Literature* 27.3 (1995): 31; Ian Buruma, 'Creativity in Exile', *New Republic* February 12, 2001: 34; James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 133.

understandings of origin and exile. As children of immigrants who lived most of their adult lives away from their place of birth, both H.D. and Cixous complicate understandings of 'home'.⁵ Places of past and present dwelling and the flights towards and away from them form a significant element of their creative projects. Their texts suggest a paradoxical understanding of creativity as rooted in the places of the past, yet coming to fruition through movements away from those places, along with inevitable imaginary returns. Both writers locate the source of their creativity in the place of their birth.⁶ Yet is it only through leaving these places that they come to writing.

This chapter considers both imagined spaces and material places, while continuing to assert that material places also function within the writer's imagination and that imagined spaces are inflected with traces of this materiality.⁷ The imagined (or metaphorical) and the material are continually co-implicated. This is particularly evident in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing, as both authors frequently move from descriptions or invocations of material, real world locations to imagined or interior (psychological) spaces, thus undermining distinctions between them. This reading emphasises that locations are present in literary

⁵ Although immigration was several generations removed from H.D.'s parents, part of her literary self-description involves constructing a genealogy that draws her closer to the early Moravian immigrants.

⁶ H.D. and Cixous situate the genesis of their creativity in their birthplaces in numerous texts. A non-exhaustive list would include: H.D., *Tribute*; H.D., *The Gift*; Cixous, *Coming to Writing*; Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints*; Cixous, *Stigmata*; Cixous, *Reveries of the Wild Woman: Primal Scenes*.

⁷ Scholars engaged in the spatial turn in cultural studies have defined the difference between space and place in different ways. In introducing his overview of different philosophical approaches to the terminology of space and place, Andrew Thacker argues that, generally, for geographical theorists space indicates a sense of movement, of history, of becoming, while *place* [...] implies] a static sense of location, of being, or of dwelling'; Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 13. This is evident in Michel de Certeau's formulation 'A place [...] implies an indication of stability. A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. [...] In short, *space is a practised place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers'; de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 117. Avril Maddrell offers a contrasting definition that focuses on meaning: 'while "space" refers to an area or physical container, space becomes place through interaction and signification'; Avril Maddrell, 'Memory, Mourning and Landscape in the Scottish Mountains: Discourses of Wilderness, Gender and Entitlement in Online and Media Debates on Mountainside Memorials', *Memory, Mourning and Landscape*, eds. Elizabeth Anderson, Avril Maddrell, Kate McLoughlin and Alana Vincent (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010) 124. My association of place with material locations and space with imagination and language is related to both of these definitions. As for many scholars, 'space' and 'place' in this chapter are used loosely, as the boundary between them is porous.

texts in highly mediated ways. Andrew Thacker emphasises the importance of bringing considerations of literary form to discussions of space in Modernist cultural practices. He argues that textual space and social space are co-implicated in literary production.⁸

In their avant-garde stylistics, both Cixous and H.D. represent space and movement in their writing. I have commented earlier that the connective stanza form of *Trilogy* reveals the influence of Hermeticism's analogical reasoning in H.D.'s work. I would now add that the chains of signifiers across *Trilogy*'s stanzas, yoked with the wide margins and spaces between the stanzas evident on the page, construct a space that is open but contains meaningful pathways. Turning to her prose, the dislocated but overlapping vignettes and illusive use of pronouns in *The Sword* suggest a fragmentation that echoes the fractured cities, landscapes and communities of the Second World War. Cixous's placement of concrete metaphors within more abstract theoretical writing and their subsequent permutations encode shifts of tone which in turn indicate a rapid back and forth movement. The expansiveness of her long sentences suggests the flight through space of her favoured image of the woman writer as bird. Bi-lingual productions such as Des Femmes' publication of *Vivre l'orange / To Live the Orange*, where French and English literally face each other, highlight the importance of multiple languages to her theorising about writing as relational.

In this chapter, I consider how the metaphors of garden and flight illuminate place and movement in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing. After outlining my theoretical approach to place and movement, I discuss gardens and then flight in specific texts by Cixous and H.D. Finally, I turn to the dynamics provoked by the third term of sanctuary and conclude by considering how the sacred movements of a pilgrimage without a goal yields a helpful model for understanding the significance of place for writing a material mysticism.

⁸ Thacker, 4.

Place and movement in cultural criticism

Recent decades have seen a turn to space as a key concept in critical theory, as well as the rise of interdisciplinary projects such as human geography (with its examination of the nexus of geography and sociology) and postcolonial studies (with its analysis of geopolitics). Such projects explore the convergence of place and culture and have fostered such concerns in other disciplines. Human geographers argue that 'place is best understood as a locus of meaning' and is thus a human construct as much as a natural one.⁹ This is relevant for wild, so-called, natural places as well as for the built environment. Simon Schama argues that there are few elements of the natural world that have not been significantly altered by human intervention (intentional or otherwise) and even wilderness areas, national parks, etc. are culturally implicated by their very designation: 'the very act of identifying (not to mention photographing) the place presupposes our presence, and along with us all the heavy cultural backpacks that we lug with us along the trail'.¹⁰

In Modernist studies, the growing interest in the material context of Modernism, along with the issues of the influence of imperialism on cultural production raised by postcolonial studies, has led to increasing attention to the locations and, as shall be discussed shortly, the movements of Modernism.¹¹ Modernist studies' attention to the global locations of Modernism suggests not a universalising 'international' discourse that suppresses the provincial for the sake of the cosmopolitan, but rather, attention to the

⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 28.

¹⁰ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995) 7.

¹¹ Critical studies of spatial Modernism include Elisabeth Bronfen, *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text*, trans. Victoria Applebe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds., *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Thacker. The ongoing interest in this area is indicated by the high number of papers dealing with various 'transnational' Modernisms at the Modernist Studies Association's Tenth annual conference in Montreal, November 2009 (If the academic predilection for temporality is expressed by the ubiquitous prefix, 'post', then the prefix of the turn towards the spatial is 'trans').

movements and particularities of diverse Modernisms, not transcending, but traversing locations.¹² In attending to particular places, the issues of movement and exchange are always already implicated. As Andrew Thacker argues, Modernist literature repeatedly invokes the porous boundaries between places (especially public and private),¹³ the multiplicity of types of places (psychic and material), geographical conflict (particularly in the context of imperialism and the relationship between European imperial centres and colonial locations) and the movement of subjects through and within space (urban space, for example, is frequently described as space to be experienced by moving through it).¹⁴ I will return to the question of movement shortly, but first I want to consider briefly the significance of space for theology.

The theoretical turn to spatial considerations is evident in theology's growing interest in sacred space. Religious scholars differ over whether to define sacred space as an 'irruption of the sacred into the world, breaking with the chaos of surrounding profane space' or an element in the human construction of meaningful space.¹⁵ Louis Jacobs notes that sacred spaces, or holy places, are a vexed issue within monotheism, as they raise thorny questions about the possibilities of God being more present in one place than another, or degrees of sanctity between places. He goes on to suggest two definitions of sacred space:

¹² Friedman, *Mappings* 109-114.

¹³ The disruption of the boundary between inner and outer, private and public is sometimes enacted in violent destruction, as in the acts of war which blow open buildings in 1940s London and sometimes in a more benign movement from household to street. Examples include Clarissa's movements through home and city in *Mrs Dalloway* and the porch as a place of community discourse and creativity that is vexed for black women in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Ibid. 128-29. Moreover, the danger of maintaining such boundaries too rigidly is amply shown in a text such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper*.

¹⁴ Thacker, 6-7. Urban perambulation may be found in Virginia Woolf's 'Street Haunting' and *Mrs Dalloway*, Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, to name just a few examples; see also, de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 91-110. The prototypical urban walker in Modernism is the flâneur, or 'impassive stroller' who epitomises the freedom to move about in public space 'consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze'; Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) 94. However, this is a problematic term for women, who have less freedom to loiter and wander unobserved; Pollock, 94-105.

¹⁵ Karen J. Wenell, *Jesus and Land: Sacred and Social Space in Second Temple Judaism* (London: T & T Clark, 2007) 4.

one is to see the divine as ‘especially manifested’ in a particular place, the other is to ‘see the holy place as hallowed by experience and association’.¹⁶ For the latter, the place is not inherently holy, but is considered sacred ‘due to the fact that it is believed to have been the scene of divine revelation or of sustained [...] worship’.¹⁷ Although Jacobs is concerned with the Jewish tradition, his definitions have relevance for other theologies as well. In terms of Christianity, the later definition is more attractive to Protestant theologians intent on locating sacred space within the worshipping community.¹⁸ On the other hand, Catholic theologians may be more inclined to consider places in the world, built and natural, as the scene of revelation. Thus Philip Sheldrake points to Duns Scotus’s theology of particularity as a helpful guide to considering the religious significance of sacred places: ‘for Scotus [...] God’s life is so fruitful that it constantly and inherently seeks expression in the particularities of the created order’.¹⁹ Some scholars interested in sacred space have turned their attention to the theological, social and aesthetic significance of European churches and cathedrals, while others have meditated on the sacredness of the (wild) landscape and its cultural representation.²⁰ Writers such as David Jasper, Belden C. Lane and Kathleen Norris have found harsh landscapes of desert, mountain and plains to reflect the radical otherness of God, while Rita Brock, Rebecca Parker and Terry Tempest Williams find the liminal zones of estuaries and marshes, with their rampant biodiversity, reflective of God’s extravagant creativity.²¹

¹⁶ Louis Jacobs, *Judaism and Theology: Essays on the Jewish Religion* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005) 51.

¹⁷ Ibid. 52.

¹⁸ See, for example, Susan White, ‘The Theology of Sacred Space’, *The Sense of the Sacramental Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, eds. David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1995).

¹⁹ Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity* (London: SCM Press, 2001) 23.

²⁰ David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 245–349; Bernard McGinn, ‘From Admirable Tabernacle to House of God: Some Theological Reflections on Medieval Architectural Integration’, *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, eds. Kathryn Brush, Peter Draper and Virginia Chieffo Raguin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

²¹ Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008) 411–420; David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Literature, Art, and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fiery Landscapes: Exploring*

Consideration of sacred space often turns to pilgrimage as a practice of traversing geographical places that allows an exploration of both space and movement in religious terms. As a historical practice and a theological metaphor, pilgrimage demonstrates the folding together of material culture and abstract discourse. Christian theologians frequently turn to pilgrimage as a means of expressing the importance of the material world held in tension with a continual displacement of identity for those whose lives are aimed towards an eschatological beyond, a kingdom not of this earth:

The old Irish life of Columba also suggests that the pilgrimage is of the essence of Christianity rather than merely an eccentric practice of some ascetics. [...] The pilgrim was a *hospes mundi*, a guest of the world. Columbanus preached the essential instability and transitory nature of earthly life.²²

Thus the pilgrim is both at home and not at home on the earth. The pilgrim moves, yet the pilgrimage is consummated by reaching a particular place, a shrine or other sacred place. Margaret Visser's treatment of the church Sant' Agnese fuori le Mura in Rome is notable because it treats the church not only as the endpoint of pilgrimage, but as the site of pilgrimage itself, as it focuses on the theological resonances of the pilgrim's journey through the space of the church.²³ Moreover, pilgrimage may be deployed as a spiritual metaphor in numerous ways. Philip Sheldrake argues that even mystics whose movements

Desert and Mountain Spirituality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001); Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 2001).

A significant cultural element of the deserts of the American West post-1945 is the legacy of the Manhattan Project in the deserts of New Mexico and Washington State. The presence of nuclear reactors in the desert is not mentioned by Jasper and Lane, but they form a crucial and disastrous element of Williams's experience of living in Utah as the toxic remains correlate with a high incidence of cancer in the surrounding states; Williams, 281-90.

²² Sheldrake, 116. This is not to suggest that this is the only understanding of pilgrimage. As a practice that occurs in a wide variety of religious, historical and geographic contexts, it is important to remember that pilgrimage is 'a realm of competing discourses'. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, 'Introduction', *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* eds. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 5.

²³ Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery and Meaning in an Ordinary Church* (London: Penguin, 2000).

may be severely circumscribed utilise themes of 'journeys and perpetual departures'.²⁴ Pilgrimages, or spiritual journeys, may be interior events.

Discussions of place soon become complicated by the insistence of movement. From the prevalence of boundary erosion between places in Modernist texts, to the significance of pilgrimage to constructions of sacred space, movement intrudes on the arena of place from a variety of directions. Postcolonial studies provide an insistent foregrounding of movement in attending to issues of contested territory, migration, displacement, exile and diaspora. Postcolonial scholars have complicated issues of place, emplacement and identity. James Clifford shifts the anthropological opposition between 'cosmopolitan (travellers)' and 'local (natives)' and argues for a comparative cultural studies approach that examines 'travelling-in-dwelling' and 'dwelling-in-travelling'.²⁵ He argues that for many common assumptions of culture:

Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes. But what would happen [...] if travel were untethered, seen as a complex and pervasive spectrum of human experiences? Practices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension.²⁶

Through this lens, Clifford sees 'heterogeneous modernity' where cultural centres and territories are sustained through contact with influences from elsewhere and continually traversed.²⁷ However, some scholars are wary of dismissing the space of 'home' too quickly

²⁴ Sheldrake, 142.

²⁵ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997) 36.

²⁶ Ibid. 3. Kwok Pui-lan argues that Clifford's emphasis on travel as a metaphor for diaspora can occlude the experience of women. She suggests an alternative metaphor, a storyteller who selects fragments to weave together. This image may lack the sense of dynamic movement through space of Clifford's, but Kwok describes the process of narrating as spatial in both form and context: 'I want to conjure a female diasporic subject as multiply located, always doubly displaced, and having to negotiate an ambivalent past, while holding on to the fragments of memories, cultures, and histories in order to dream of a different future. [...] A diasporic consciousness finds similarities and differences in both familiar territories and unexpected corners; one catches glimpses of oneself in a fleeting moment or in a fragment in someone else's story'; Kwok, 46, 50.

²⁷ Clifford, 3.

(and indeed, in coining the phrase ‘dwelling-in-travelling’, Clifford is not so much dismissing ‘home’ as relocating it within a framework of movement).²⁸

Postcolonial theologians such as Wonhee Anne Joh have emphasised roots *and* routes, arguing that the two terms complicate and illuminate each other, and suggesting their relevance for new theological endeavours:

We might return to our origins, but the origins are forever changed and changing while we also change. [...] It is from these experiences of fragmentation [...] that I have come to realize that “home” and “elsewhere” are neither fixed, monolithic, nor unproblematic categories. As Sang Hyun Lee, a Korean American theologian, observes, this sense of homelessness might in turn be interpreted as a “sacred journey.” This metaphor of “journey” embodies both the remembering of our past roots and the forging of new routes.²⁹

In Joh’s formulation, ‘home’ becomes a place that is also a factor of movement, an interior space that participates in the sacred journey that is open to both past and future and their continually evolving relationship. In becoming part of a sacred journey, ‘home’ may be figured as a sanctuary-that-moves, an imagined space that yields healing and shelters new, creative gestures in its interaction with ‘elsewhere’. As Kwok Pui-lan argues, attention to routes can provide a corrective to nostalgic desires for return to a pure origin, a desire to reconstruct a lost wholeness that may itself flatten and distort difference: ‘While such a desire may have the positive effect of resisting the fragmented and disjointed experience imposed by colonialism, it may also lead to the danger of reification of the past and the collapse of differences from within’.³⁰ This emphasis on difference has implications for identities constructed in the interstice between roots and routes. Joh draws upon Stuart Hall and Jacques Derrida to develop a dynamic concept of identity:

²⁸ For further discussion of the importance of home and belonging, see Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1998) 1-7, 37-46; hooks, 1-24.

²⁹ Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006) 9.

³⁰ Kwok, 39.

The 'trace' of our 'origins' assumes *the supplement* necessary for living on the boundary, in the interstitial space, where sense of wandering and lostness prevail, but more importantly, where tantalizing memories of 'the trace' work effectively to fuel the vision needed to *move into* flourishing and sustaining life in between. Identity then is under continuous erasure even as it is reconstructed and reappropriated with close attunement to the 'trace' that works as an enlivening supplement.³¹

The illusiveness of identities constructed from fragments and traces, within the contact zone, is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of mestiza consciousness.³² Joh is not advocating a teleological wandering oriented towards a return to origins, but a revisioning of the possibilities for living 'in between' in ways that are oriented towards flourishing. It is this kind of interstitial flourishing and sustaining life-in-movement that I explore in relation to Cixous's and H.D.'s work.

Before turning to the specifics of their work, I wish to add a brief note on terminology. In her discussion of diasporic imagination, Kwok Pui-lan indicates the wide relevance of such discourse:

Today, the term 'diaspora' shares a broader semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, migrant worker, exile community, and ethnic and racial minorities. Diasporic discourse is currently appropriated by people who may not have experienced forced dispersion, who do not share the longing for a return to the homeland, or who may shuttle between the homeland and the host land in continuous commute. It connotes at once the experience of decentred and yet multiple-centred, displaced and yet constantly relocated, peoples who crisscross many borders.³³

This appropriation may appear quite problematic when one considers H.D.'s and Cixous's economic, educational and racial privilege (and the impact of this privilege on their ability to choose their modes of movement). Despite the depth of the semantic field indicated here, I am wary of using the terminology of exile or migrancy in this study. This chapter is

³¹ Joh, 4.

³² Anzaldúa describes mestiza consciousness as an awareness rooted in 'the Borderlands' where races and cultures meet and intermingle; this may provoke perplexity, restlessness and insecurity and 'tolerance for ambiguity' is essential; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987) 99-101.

³³ Kwok, 45.

primarily interested in writing that positions movement positively as a space of potential flourishing. This is not to suggest that issues of territory and migration are not difficult, traumatic and un-chosen for many people. However, I will primarily consider Cixous and H.D. in the context of expatriation or nomadism. Rosi Braidotti distinguishes nomadism from migrancy and exile, suggesting that nomads generally enjoy greater freedom of movement and choice.³⁴ However, the experience of expatriation is often fraught with complex psychological legacies:

Expatriation, like love, is not only a condition that devastates and reconfigures the self; it is, like love, a trope, a figure with which we try to explain, to narrate profound psychological disruptions in terms of very measurable entities: a person, a place, an event, a moment, etc.³⁵

Cixous most explicitly articulates expatriation, the experience of being foreign, in amorous terms, while psychological disruptions and physical dislocation are brought together in numerous texts by H.D.

Fragrant dust: gardens in Oran

'In Oran, I had a very strong feeling of paradise, even while it was the war and my family was hit from all sides: by the concentration camps in the North, by Vichy in Algeria'.³⁶ These two images, paradise and unjust exdusion or destruction, are at the heart of Cixous's writing. The garden is an important trope in Cixous's work, allowing diverse explorations into Algeria, family, knowledge, sensuality, creativity. In speaking of her childhood in Algeria, Cixous invokes the garden, the Biblical image for paradise, yet this does not

³⁴ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 22-23. This is, of course, also problematic with respect to traditional (tribal) nomadism. Braidotti is constructing a contemporary theoretical (even utopian) concept which draws tropes from traditional nomadism (such as distinct patters of movement), but is distinct from it.

³⁵ André Aciman, *False Papers: Essays on Exile and Memory* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000) 137.

³⁶ Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints* 196.

encode nostalgia for an imagined, lost, perfect childhood.³⁷ Her writing explores the complications, difficulties and losses of growing up Jewish in a French colony during the 1940s and the Algerian struggle for independence: ‘North Africa was an arid and perfumed theatre, salt, jasmine, orange blossoms, where violent plays were staged. The scene was always war’.³⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, Cixous does not consider the garden to be a site of pre-lapsarian perfection and innocence; rather, she chooses the inside of the fruit, to taste and to know. Moreover, the garden becomes the scene for an expulsion that occurs through the anti-Semitic politics of the Vichy government: ‘The first garden out of which I was expelled was the “Cerde Militaire” in Oran. In 1940 we were thrown out as Jews’.³⁹ Cixous describes her experiences in this garden as a painful initiation to the dynamics of exclusion:

My father was a military officer during the war (temporarily, because he was a doctor), so suddenly we were admitted to the only garden in Oran (Oran is a very desert city), that of the Officers’ Club. But the place was a hotbed of anti-Semitism. I was three years old, I hadn’t the slightest idea that I was Jewish. The other children started attacking me, and I didn’t even know what it was to be Jewish, Catholic and so on.⁴⁰

The garden is, of course, already marked by class and colonialism; it is because he is an officer in the French military (briefly) that Georges Cixous and his family are admitted there in the first place. However, Cixous also claims that the political markers of nationalism, colonialism and anti-Semitism are insufficient to contain the burgeoning growth of the garden. She opposes the regimen of the formal garden with a wildly exuberant creativity: ‘I skirted the walls of their French parks with my abundance, my

³⁷ For a history of the understanding of the Garden of Eden in the Christian West, see Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, trans. Matthew O’Connell (New York: Continuum, 1995). For an analysis of the medieval maps that locate Eden on earth, see Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (London: The British Library, 2006).

³⁸ Cixous, *Stigmata* 208.

³⁹ Ibid. 213.

⁴⁰ Cixous qtd. in Suleiman, ‘Writing Past the Wall: Or the Passion According to H.C.’ xviii-xix.

drunken lands, my wild orchards'.⁴¹ The wild orchard suggests the paradox of the garden, a space that is both wild and cultivated, the interstice of nature and culture that suggests that neither exists without the other.

In *To Live the Orange*, Cixous presents us with an abstract, imagined garden, one that is located both within the heart and between persons:

when we have not yet lost the gardens of Encounters [...] we conjure them up, stone after stone, each mountain, each orange, each stone of plant each fruit of sky each, and brooding before the heap of stars, planted before the flower of each face,⁴² we open ourselves up to things, we anticipate them, with words gathered on the carpet of the garden, with bouquets of words whose names we don't know, we do all that we can so that they will feel called upon, we water them with our regards [...] the seedings of earth and one by one, touched, they come towards us, and in their way of entering the garden by way of the breast, and of bearing themselves very gentle, very strong to encounter the heart, without detour, and of being there at the bottom of the garden in front of the heart, we sense that they are women, that we love [...]. To know them is to live. To learn everything by the light of things [...] letting roses grow in the garden of one's heart [...] understanding that space is the élan, in the breast the slow spaces of thoughts in full sunshine, [...] being garden and vigil, ground and roots, and thus waiting for everything, being the anticipation of each thing, the repose of the stone, the restiveness of the crocus on the eve of the first of march [...] we hear others living, everything calls and vibrates [...] telling us their names, giving us their names to say, to not forget. [...] But too often we forget. [...] Our tongues are deserted. We live there no more. We forget ourselves. And all of the gardens become phantoms.⁴³

As I have previously indicated, Cixous argues that attending to the memory of atrocities is a necessary task for the writer. Yet her writing is far from bleak – she holds the responsibility of remembering alongside her delight in the presence of others. For Cixous, the sweetness of fruit and the fragrance of flowers suggest an openness to the other that is not innocent. In this long description of the 'garden of Encounters', Cixous uses concrete, precise images – stones, flowers, sky, crocuses on the eve of the first of March – in a

⁴¹ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 46. This imagery is reminiscent of the dangerous 'Outside' in H.D.'s *Notes* explored in the previous chapter.

⁴² H.D. also compares a flower to a woman's face in *Trilogy*, when she suggests that the Lady has 'a face like a Christmas rose'; H.D., *Angels* 43:22.

⁴³ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 70-74.

surrealist style. Stars are piled up like fruit stones, flowers are placed in the sky like stars and this strange vigil by the roots of trees becomes a metaphor for encounters with other women. These images are names, people and the markers of the intimacies of human communion experienced within the body, felt, touched and tasted. Moreover, the flowers, stones and oranges are also names, thus language and the sensual materiality of human encounter are brought together. Forgetting others is figured as a failure of imagination; others and the flowers and fruits of the garden go together. To forget entails a loss of creativity.

The aridity of the Algerian landscape is not something Cixous welcomes. She uses it as a metaphor for writer's block, 'dry silence', while the return of creativity is marked as succulent fruit: 'She [Clarice Lispector, as encountered through her writing] put the orange back into the deserted hands of my writing, and with her orange-colored accents she rubbed the eyes of my writing which were arid and covered with white films'.⁴⁴ However, the dry soil itself, the dust, functions alongside the fruits and flowers of the garden as a source of pleasure and delight. Cixous reverses the expected evaluation of dust. As she said in the interview quoted at the beginning of this thesis, she considers the grain of dust to be a diamond, infinitely precious and beautiful: 'I believe that the stone is a diamond [...]. What interests me is precisely to enable the celebration of the grain of dust'.⁴⁵

The idea of 'native earth' is undermined in Cixous's writing. She loves the dust of Oran, not because she belongs there, but because she does not, because she is foreign. It is not her own and she loves it not as a birthright, but as a passion:

In the smiling and happy little girl I was, I hid (from others and from myself) a secret, restless, dandestine little girl, who knew well that in truth she had been born elsewhere. [...] [T]he physical feeling of being a frail mushroom, a spore hatched over night, who only holds to the earth with

⁴⁴ Ibid. 12, 14.

⁴⁵ Cixous, *White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text and Politics* 19.

hasty and frail roots. Another feeling in the shadows: the unshakeable certainty that 'the Arabs' were the true offspring of this dusty and perfumed soil. But when I walked barefoot with my brother on the hot trails of Oran, I felt the sole of my body caressed by the welcoming palms of the country's ancient dead, and the toment of my soul was assuaged.⁴⁶

Here the dust itself participates in paradise, holding perfume as would flowers. In this essay, dust is an image that holds together life and death, foreignness and belonging. It is death, rather than birth that ties her to the land:

I left my father there to mix his dust with that dust, a tribute paid to a borrowed land.
To leave behind the grave of one's father: through dust I acquire a sort of invisible belonging to a land to which I am bound by my atoms without nationality. Because of the phantom of my father I cannot be patriated anywhere.⁴⁷

Not only does her father's death confer belonging – albeit a precarious, 'sort of invisible belonging' – but it predudes subsequent possibilities for belonging anywhere else. Her father's dust mixes with Algeria's 'ancient dead' and therefore participates in the welcoming gesture towards the barefoot little girl from elsewhere who will always both belong and not belong to Oran.

H.D.'s garden in the city

Before the fruit comes the blossom, and it is the blossom that is important to H.D. In considering the significance of gardens in H.D.'s poetry, the most obvious point of entry is her first collection, *Sea Garden*, published in 1916. The poems of *Sea Garden* do not overtly address their historical context, the First World War, but, as Friedman points out, their implicit argument that 'poetry fostered faith' as the basis for post-war regeneration would be rendered explicit in *The Walls Do Not Fall*. Moreover, conflict and struggle pervade the

⁴⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 205.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 206.

volume; '[n]ever directly *about* it, *Sea Garden* is nonetheless *of* the Great War'.⁴⁸ Although my focus here is on H.D.'s Second World War writing, I will consider *Sea Garden* briefly before turning to the gardens in *Trilogy*.

The title of H.D.'s initial collection is the first indication that H.D.'s gardens are not traditional. *Sea Garden* emphasises the liminal space where two differing environments meet: the boundary (which both separates and connects) between sea and shore. The poems play on the ambiguity of this unusual terrain. However, as Eileen Gregory points out, taken together the poems construct a particular landscape: 'desolate sandy beach strewn with broken shells, large promontories and rocky headlands; inland, a barren stretch of sparse but hardy vegetation beyond the beach, and low wooded hills nearby; deeper inland, the marshes and places of luxuriant or cultivated growth'.⁴⁹ *Sea Garden* erodes the boundary between cultivation and wilderness. The volume celebrates the orchard's pear tree, but also the wild poppy, 'fruit upon the sand', whose 'stalk has caught root / among wet pebbles / and drift flung by the sea'.⁵⁰ The sea garden is a space of contradiction – wilderness and cultivation, briny salt and sweet honey, flowers that are stony and brittle – in which the predominant characteristic is the wind.

Gregory argues that the island spaces of *Sea Garden* are influenced by Sappho's Lesbos, a sacred space consecrated to and by Aphrodite: 'The rich and dense fragrance of frankincense mingles with the delicate odors of flowers, and the murmur of cold water through graceful trees blends with the exquisite shadowing of roses. [...] Moreover, the "sacred grove" is the poem itself'.⁵¹ The poems may be read as ritual incantations: 'The

⁴⁸ Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 60-62.

⁴⁹ Eileen Gregory, 'Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H. D.'s *Sea Garden*', *Contemporary Literature* 27.4 (1986): 536.

⁵⁰ H.D., *Collected Poems* 21.

⁵¹ Gregory, 'Sappho and H. D.'s *Sea Garden*': 531.

poems in *Sea Garden* are thrown out as bridges to the sacred'.⁵² In Morris's reading, writing is envisioned as a movement through space. Through this process the divine is invited into a particular place. This understanding of the construction of sacred space within poetry is dynamic, hence the significance of the ever-moving wind in *Sea Garden*.

In her essay, 'Wise Sappho', H.D. brings together wind and myrrh's fragrance to indicate a sensual wisdom at the meeting point of East and West: 'Wisdom [...] she stood in the heavy Graeco-Asiatic sunlight, the wind from Asia, heavy with ardent myrrh and Persian spices, was yet tempered with a Western gale [...] its salt sting'.⁵³ As in Cixous's garden writing, the senses, particularly smell, are central to *Sea Garden*. Fragrance indicates the inescapable materiality of places; the use of sensual and material images in evoking imagined or textual spaces establishes their interconnection with material places. Diana Collecott details the way H.D.'s engagement with the sensuality of Sappho and other Greek poets and her emphasis on their diversity of location and religion establishes an aesthetic that is 'centrifugal rather than centripetal, Asiatic rather than Attic [...] colourful, variegated'.⁵⁴ Thus fragrance also becomes a mode of challenging the racist and sexist modes of Hellenism that 'identified civilisation as *Attic* and barbarism as *Asiatic*' in its concern with aesthetic (and racial) purity.⁵⁵

Fragrance also marks sacred space.⁵⁶ In *Sea Garden*, the garden is the place of divine, rather than romantic encounter, even if this encounter is erotically charged. *Sea Garden* as a whole presents a landscape that is the space of ritual and the poems suggest a ritual intent

⁵² Morris, *H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* 98.

⁵³ H.D., *Notes* 63.

⁵⁴ Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism* 115.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 114-116. Collecott argues that in attempting to covertly inscribe a homoerotic aesthetic that idealised the nude male body as pure and perfect, against contemporary associations of homosexuality as unpure and unwholesome. Walter Pater, among others, displaces the female body and inscribes racist tropes of an ideal, white Greece. For further discussion on racism within nineteenth and early twentieth-century Classicism (in which the Greeks are reconstructed as Aryans), see Gere, 40-42, 112-16.

⁵⁶ Reading *Sea Garden*, with its debt to Sappho, alongside *Triblogy* indicates that fragrance can be read as a marker for the syncretism of Paganism and Christianity.

of initiation into its mysteries.⁵⁷ The final poem in the volume, 'Cities', suggests a return from this marginal space to an urban centre. This city is a crowded, wasted place, not unlike the city in Eliot's *The Wasteland*, lacking beauty and honey's sweetness. Gregory argues that the placement of the poem at the end of the volume indicates the urgency of the sea garden's rites: 'The city *necessitates* the sea garden [...] a place distinct from, yet within, the city – like old cells of honey in a new hive – where beauty is remembered'.⁵⁸

Trilogy is another text in which we find gardens within the city, although here the distinction between urban and green space is more complex. In H.D.'s writing of the 1940s, the particularity and historicity of places is foregrounded. This is not the London of Clarissa Dalloway's or Miriam Henderson's distracted perambulations, but the war-time city of dangerous instability where the very atmosphere is treacherous: '*we walk continually / [...] / then step swiftly aside, / for even the air / is independable, [sic] / [...] / and the ether / is heavier than the floor*'.⁵⁹ The first volume of *Trilogy*, *The Walls Do Not Fall*, is bracketed by evocations of the bombed city. It opens: 'An incident here and there, / and rails gone (for guns) / from your (and my) old town square / [...] / ruin everywhere', and closes:

Still the walls do not fall,
I do not know why;
there is zrr-hiss,
lightening in a not-known
unregistered dimension
[...]
dust and power fill our lungs
our bodies blunder.⁶⁰

This volume is circular but it does not quite end up where it started – even though the war still goes on, a journey has been initiated that will lead away from the war-torn city: '*we are*

⁵⁷ Gregory, 'Sappho and H. D.'s Sea Garden': 538.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 550.

⁵⁹ H.D., *Walls* 43:12-22.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 1:1-16, 43:1-8.

voyagers, discoverers / of the not-knownn, / [...] / possibly we will reach haven, / heaven.⁶¹ The form of *Walls* suggest a spiral, a shape that appears again in the circling geese and opening flower of the final volume, *The Flowering of the Rod*, and will be crucial in H.D.'s post-war text, *The Snord*. It functions as a geometric, spatial version of H.D.'s palimpsest, which has been more often read in the context of time and history.

H.D. employs the space of the garden in the city to explore survival, regeneration and vision. The liminal, sacred space between sea and land of *Sea Garden* reappears in *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

let us go down to the sea,

gather dry sea-weed,
heap drift-wood,

let us light a new fire
and in the fragrance

of burnt salt and sea-incense
chant new paeans to the new Sun

of regeneration.⁶²

Here we do not have a garden as such, although 'fragrance' is reminiscent of one. In the second volume of *Trilogy*, *Tribute to the Angels*, a garden square, dearly located in London, becomes a sacred space. This is not a private suburban garden, but an urban space shared with numerous others.⁶³ The poet has a vision of a charred tree, 'burnt and stricken to the heart', that is also in flower.⁶⁴ The burnt yet blossoming tree is an image of redemption,

⁶¹ Ibid. 43:27-32.

⁶² Ibid. 17:8-15.

⁶³ Todd Longstaffe-Gowan notes that the London garden squares, developed between 1630 and 1680 (when the first garden square was laid out as a pleasure ground planted with ornamental flowers, shrubs and trees), were understood as public spaces, more visible than private gardens; Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden: 1740-1840* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 183. For a discussion of suburban gardens as a private space for women who had difficulty finding privacy within the home, see Wendy Gan, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁶⁴ H.D., *Angels* 19:13.

divinity and vision. H.D. brings together destruction and renewal and declares that divinity may be found in multiple places, not only in the blossom, but also in the charred remains. This is a vision in which the poet draws in her companions using the choric first person plural:

We are part of it;
we admit the transubstantiation,

not God merely in bread
but God in the other-half of the tree

that looked dead –
[...]
yet it was vision,
it was a sign,

it was *the Angel which redeemed me*,
it was the Holy Ghost –

a half-burnt-out apple-tree
blossoming;

this is the flowering of the rood,
this is the flowering of the wood

where Annael, we pause to give
thanks that we rise again from death and live.⁶⁵

H.D. references the Christian Eucharist, but also extends sacramentality to include the ordinary transformations of a tree in spring, thus bringing together Christian and Pagan imagery. She locates redemption with the angels, the Holy Ghost and the burnt yet blossoming tree, suggesting that redemption is to be found in divine presence. Yet for all its divinity, H.D. resists reading this vision as transcendent. She emphasises the mundane, everyday aspect of this vision: ‘it was an ordinary tree / in an old garden-square’ and later, ‘it was an old tree / such as we see everywhere’.⁶⁶ The boundary between private and public, already represented by the urban garden square surrounded by houses, becomes

⁶⁵ Ibid. 23:1-18.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 20:13-14, 22:11-12.

further destabilised as the square may be surrounded by crumbling buildings and rubble: 'anywhere here – and some barrel staves / and some bricks / and an edge of the wall / uncovered'.⁶⁷ Here divinity is hidden within the material.

In *Tribute to the Angels*, H.D. describes a transfigured city. The destruction of buildings allows the boundary between garden and city to be more readily transgressed. In the found spaces of destroyed buildings, plants grow. Thus we have an unusual construction of a garden that is more like the partially wild, partially cultivated space of *Sea Garden*, this time within the city:

the levelled wall
is purple as with purple spread
upon an altar,

this is the flowering of the rood,
this is the flowering of the reed,

where Uriel, we pause to give
thanks that we rise again from death and live.⁶⁸

Unexpected flowers transform a fallen wall into an altar, a place of thanksgiving. Here, as elsewhere, H.D. emphasises the necessity of hope.

We have seen how gardens – both the material gardens of Oran and London and the metaphorical, textual gardens of *Sea Garden* and *To Live the Orange* – are complicated places in Cixous's and H.D.'s writing. They are versions of the Garden of Eden that are locations for delight or exdusion, or spaces for ritual. In *Trilogy*, H.D. revises the description of the city from *Sea Garden*. As squares open, the garden permeates the city, transforming its entirety into a sacred place:

For Uriel, no temple
but everywhere,

⁶⁷ Ibid. 22:13-16.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 7:6-12.

the outer precincts and the square
are fragrant
[...]
for Uriel, no temple
but Love's sacred groves,

withered in Thebes and Tyre,
flower elsewhere.⁶⁹

In this image of the city as a place of worship H.D. layers the Paganism of *Sea Garden's* homage to Sappho and Aphrodite, ('Love's sacred groves'), with the Christian understanding of the sanctuary as the place for the celebration of the Eucharist. In *The Gift* and *The Sword*, she provides a similar syncretism, suggesting that particular places are palimpsests of traditions:

Mary, Maia, Miriam, Mut, Madre, Mère, Mother, pray for us, dark Mary, Mary, mère, mer, [...] this is Mary, Mai, Mut, Mutter. This is Gaia, this is the beginning. This is the end. Under every shrine to Zeus [...] or God-the-father [...] there is an earlier altar. There is, beneath the carved superstructure of every temple to God-the-father, the dark cave or grotto or inner hall or cella to Mary, mère, Mut, Mutter, pray for us.⁷⁰

This litany of names anticipates the more explicit alchemical process enacted by language in *Tribute to the Angels*. In both texts 'mère, Mother, Mary' enact a ritual that not only evokes the feminine divine, but also suggests that the ritual use of language is crucial to sanctifying space. I will return to the connections between language and sacred places, but first I wish to turn to the metaphor that complicates notions of place and emplacement: movement,

⁶⁹ Ibid. 18:1-10.

⁷⁰ H.D., *The Gift* 113-14. In both *Trilogy* and *The Gift*, H.D. references the chthonic matriarchal cults that some anthropologists (including Jane Harrison) believe to have preceded patriarchal religion. Here, she connects the Virgin Mary (the reiterated 'pray for us' echoes the end of the 'Hail Mary' prayer: 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death') with ancient goddesses. H.D. indicates a womb-like space in her invocation of 'Mother' and 'the dark cave', yet this is not a regression to a pre-linguistic, undifferentiated state. By exhorting prayer at an altar in an inner hall, she establishes ritual as a nexus of bodily experience, emotional life and culture. She simultaneously claims a place for female spirituality in patriarchal religion, replacing Zeus with Gaia. The association of Gaia with the beginning is very close to Jane Harrison's phrase 'Gaia the Earth was first', which is further evidence that H.D. was familiar with Harrison's work; Harrison, *Prolegomena* 261. For my initial discussion of the likelihood of H.D.'s having read Jane Harrison, see Chapter One, 26n73. For a brief history of the 'Hail Mary', see Angelus A. De Marco. 'Hail Mary'. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Eds. Thomas Carson and Joann Cerrito. 2nd ed. Detroit and New York: Gale, 2003. 616-17. Vol. 6. 15 vols.

or, more specifically, flight – the metaphor that denotes a way of being in space that disrupts settled or rooted self-understanding.

Cixous's Algeriance

As we have seen in her writing on the gardens of Oran, Cixous's understanding of her own emplacement is always complicated by a sense of her foreignness. This informs her approach to identity, language and writing more broadly. Language is intimately related to nationality and forms a complex constellation in Cixous's texts. Her attitude towards French nationality is different from her attitude to the French language: one she resists, the other she courts. For Cixous, being within French (the language), but not-French (the nationality) is a complex but compelling play of identity markers that provides a passport to literature.

Cixous follows Virginia Woolf's outsider when she declares: 'From 1955 on, I adopted an imaginary nationality which is literary nationality'.⁷¹ The famous declaration, from a member of the fictional Society of Outsiders, 'as a woman I have no country' has been both celebrated and criticised by subsequent feminist thinkers.⁷² Adrienne Rich has critiqued the statement for its false universalism, but Susan Stanford Friedman argues that Rich misreads Woolf.⁷³ Friedman contends that Woolf's manifesto is carefully situated within a critique of militarism and nationalism, and 'thus [it] implicitly advocates a transnational oppositional identity that replaces patriotism'.⁷⁴ Moreover, Woolf's texts can be read as 'ethnographies of travelling'.⁷⁵ Likewise, Cixous's claim to literary nationality does not indicate a refusal to engage with the politics of national identity (her criticism of

⁷¹ Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints* 204.

⁷² Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1966) 109.

⁷³ Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986) 210-214. Rich conflates Woolf as narrator with her fictional speaker.

⁷⁴ Friedman, *Mappings* 118.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 120.

French colonialism in North Africa is evidence of this engagement) but a choice to attend to the implications for personal belonging within literature and the traces of nationality, ethnicity and other differences that are evident within the literary realm. This may be seen in her literary criticism, where her work crosses numerous national lines (she considers literature from Ireland, France, Germany, Russia and Brazil), and in the fictional text, *Manna: for the Mandelstams for the Mandelas*, which ventures from Russia to South Africa in its exploration of the terrains of an exile that is not an ecstatic flight but one that is fraught with pain and loss.

Cixous's analysis of her family's journeys and national identity indicates the complexity and confusion generated by national boundaries:

To be French, and not a single French person on the genealogical tree admittedly it is a fine mirade but it dings to the tree like a leaf menaced by the wind. [...] The paradox of this passport: having it always dosed me in a double-bind. On one hand 'I am French' is a lie or a legal fiction. On the other to say 'I am not French' is a breach of courtesy. And of the gratitude due for hospitality. The stormy, intermittent hospitality of the State and the Nation. But the infinite hospitality of the language.⁷⁶

Her sense of 'luck' is such that she recognises the value of the ability to move across boundaries granted by the possession of a French passport: 'I rejoiced in French passporosity'.⁷⁷ It was the possession of a French passport (due to the shifting French and German national boundary before and after the First World War) that enabled her grandmother and mother to emigrate to Algeria before the Second World War.⁷⁸ While Cixous acknowledges the privileges that come with her French passport, situating herself as a guest of both nation and language, she emphasises that the delights of being French stem

⁷⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 206-07.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 207.

⁷⁸ Much of Cixous's extended family remained in Europe and many of her relatives perished in the Holocaust; Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints* 188-94.

from France's position as a coastal nation which is constantly traversed by foreigners. Its boundaries are porous.

For Cixous, writing is always caught up with movement: 'Jouneys, traversals, are the very stuff of all her writing'.⁷⁹ She is concerned with the speed of writing, detailing her efforts as a writer to catch a glimpse of language as it rushes past, but without holding it fast. Writing is also a message from elsewhere – 'A poem merely passes, coming from elsewhere then moving on. Signifying to us, in passing, at its passage, this elsewhere'.⁸⁰ The image of writing as messenger correlates with H.D.'s attention to Hermes, the messenger god. However, Cixous also suggests that movement and place are co-implicated. The mysterious elsewhere of writing's origin is a place that is not specific, but that indicates continual *displacement*. 'Elsewhere' is a term that resonates across Cixous's texts, as we have seen in her writing on the dust of Oran. It is an/other space that serves to destabilise her belonging in Algeria, mirroring her own sense of herself as other:

My way of thinking was born with the thought that I could have been born elsewhere, in one of the twenty countries where a living fragment of my maternal family had landed after it blew up on the Nazi minefield. [...] The strange molecule detached from the black skies of the north had landed in Africa.⁸¹

The sense of the precariousness of history's interaction with geography marks much of Cixous's work. Her family is described as merely a fragment, haunted by those who were lost in the concentration camps, whose roots will always be fragile. Lynn Penrod argues that 'the very concept of exile "from" is one, which, in Cixous's case, would be difficult to argue. Yet it is perhaps the very concept of "exile" in the fullest sense of its ambiguity and complexity that serves as the basic creative motor behind all her writing'.⁸² While I am still

⁷⁹ Conley, 58.

⁸⁰ Cixous, *Firstdays* 6.

⁸¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 204.

⁸² Lynn Penrod, 'Algeriance, Exile and Hélène Cixous', *College Literature* 30.1 (2003): 136.

uncomfortable with using the word exile in relation to Cixous's work (she refuses it herself), Penrod's argument is compelling. We have seen how even in enigmatic texts like *To Live the Orange*, Oran is present not only in the locution 'Oran-je' (orange/Oran-I), but also in the play of aridity and sweetness within the text.⁸³ Cixous's relationship with (the memory of) places (Oran and Algiers), and movement from them, is clearly generative, whether termed exile, expatriation or nomadism. Cixous's departure from Algeria is both literal and metaphorical, a departure that marks the impossibility of her belonging to Algeria:

When I was three, the age of decisive experiences and of analysis, I knew that I was destined to leave. [...] That destination, destinality, decision, was so strong that I have been able to say: when I was three I left. It was pure departure. [...] I was in deferment and flight. [...] My own maternal family, the German one, had already detached itself from its earth (Strasbourg, Budapest, Osnabrück, Bratislava, etc.). The possibility of living without taking root was familiar to me. I never call that exile. Some people react to expulsion with the need to belong. For me, as for my mother, the world sufficed. [...] (In the family mode of dwelling there remained a nomad's simplicity: never any furniture. Always the backpack). I did not lose Algeria, because I never had it, and I never was it. I suffered that it was lost for itself, separated from itself by colonialization. If ever I identified it was with its rage at being wounded, amputated, humiliated. I always lived Algeria with impatience, as being bound to return to its own.⁸⁴

Cixous lists the Eastern and Central European cities of her maternal family but never indicates that returning to Europe involves homecoming; rather, it is 'deferment and flight'. However, she also refuses to consider the loss of Algeria as an action that places her in exile because Algeria always already belonged to others. Thus she dares a rootless belonging, a nomadic mode of living: 'always the backpack'.

It is movement, departure, always-already departing that Cixous identifies with the process of writing:

⁸³ Cixous, *To Live the Orange* 30-32.

⁸⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 223-224.

I went towards France, without having had the idea of arriving there. Once in France I was not there. I saw that I would never arrive in France. [...] [T]he chance of my genealogy and history arranged things in such a way that I would *stay passing*; in an ordinary way for me I am always passing by, in *passance*. I like the progressive form and the words that end in *-ance*. [...] To depart (so as) not to arrive from Algeria is also, incalculably, a way of not having broken with Algeria. [...] I want *arrivance*, movement, unfinished in my life. It is also out of departing that I write.⁸⁵

She coins the term ‘Algeriance’ to signify this perpetual departure, the process of leaving that carries Algeria with her.⁸⁶ She undermines any stable definition of origin or emplacement; immigration is impossible and origin itself is located in movement. These movements are correlated with language and the formalities of grammar in Cixous’s texts, ‘the progressive form’, but she also correlates them with the activity of writing itself: ‘To fly/steal is woman’s gesture, to steal into language to make it fly’.⁸⁷

H.D.’s expatriatism: spirals and bee-lines

As Bryony Randall has pointed out, few critics have devoted attention to the permutations of H.D.’s national identity when considering her writing.⁸⁸ In the 1940s and 1950s, indications of H.D.’s (inter)nationalism reveal a complex, even contradictory, picture. She was committed to remaining in London during the war, despite being urged by many friends to return to the United States. After the war, however, she returned to Switzerland and never lived in England again. She wrote her most English book, *By Avon River* (a poetic tribute to Shakespeare and series of essays on English Renaissance poetry), in this period

⁸⁵ Ibid. 226-27.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 204, 230.

⁸⁷ Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* 96.

⁸⁸ Bryony Randall, “‘Funny, but No Hybrid’: H.D., Tea and Expatriate Identity”, *Symbiosis* 13.2 (2009): 191-92. H.D. began her expatriate nomadism in 1911 when she left the United States bound for Europe. In 1913 she married the Englishman, Richard Aldington and thus, according to the law of the time, became a British citizen. The marriage broke up during the First World War, but the couple did not divorce until 1938. In 1959 Norman Holmes Pearson helped her arrange an American passport. Her daughter was then living in the United States and H.D. travelled there several times in the 1950s; Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984) 56, 241; Hollenberg, ed., 233, 235-36.

but the volume was begun as preparation for a series of lectures she planned to give in the United States as part of an attempt to heighten American sympathy for the British struggle against Hitler. Her prose from this period – *Tribute to Freud*, *The Gift*, *The Sword*, and *The Mystery* – is concerned with forging connections between Pennsylvania and Europe. These details suggest the complexity of emplacement for expatriates. As her commitment to Europe remained, her self-awareness as American grew. Although passionately committed to England in the 1940s, H.D., like Virginia Woolf, eschewed nationalism.⁸⁹ I would suggest that this is one reason for the alternative histories in her writing of this period.

Susan Stanford Friedman coins the term ‘expatriatism’ to ‘suggest more than the fact of expatriation in the commitment to and necessity of a self-imposed exile in the lives of H.D. and many other modernists’.⁹⁰ Friedman argues that for writers like H.D., expatriatism is not necessarily primarily about crossing national boundaries, but is ‘above all a flight from [...] the norms of Victorian femininity that dashed with the demands of creativity’. She compares H.D.’s transatlantic flight to Virginia Woolf’s flight across London to Bloomsbury and Emily Dickinson’s commitment to a life of seduction.⁹¹ Friedman stresses the double meaning of flight, ‘both fleeing from oppression and flying in freedom’, and argues that the early poems of *Sea Garden* are poems of flight in that they celebrate a space of imaginative freedom in which H.D. evades the expectations of conventional femininity.⁹²

What is most significant for my purposes is the qualities of commitment and choice in the construction of expatriatism, although, as Friedman suggests, choice is a fraught

⁸⁹ In 1933, she wrote: ‘I still “see red” when people get foolishly patriotic, in the wrong way. I mean, all sorts of people, English and French and German and American equally. The thing is to keep out of War, but I have been flung into constant cycles of war-scares and war-talk and I hate it all’; H.D. ‘Letter to Viola Jordan, 9 January, 1933’. *Viola Jordan Baxter Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

⁹⁰ Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 394.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 220.

⁹² *Ibid.* 55–56.

term that easily elides the psychological and social pressures that may be at play in the attempt of women writers to find their literary voices (here the double meaning of flight is most helpful). Nevertheless, H.D. clearly did choose, in some way, to leave the United States as a young woman and to live the rest of her life in Europe. Her movements more closely approximate Braidotti's notion of nomadism than does Cixous's headlong, singular, ongoing flight.

H.D.'s routes across Europe and North Africa suggest a commitment to being 'elsewhere' rather than a sense of simply exchanging one passport for another. She lived in (or frequently visited) London, Cornwall, Switzerland, Berlin, Vienna, Lugano, while trips to the Solly and Greek islands and Egypt provided significant emotional, spiritual experiences that would preoccupy her for years. Friedman argues that H.D.'s travels across Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s (her most peripatetic period) align a 'geographical homelessness' with 'spiritual exile' and were largely undertaken in search of healing.⁹³ Randall argues that H.D.'s expatriatism emerges through an ambivalent relationship to national identity that can be traced in her early autobiographical novels.⁹⁴

H.D.'s nomadic wandering became more circumscribed in the late 1930s and thereafter, when she settled into a routine of movement between domiciles in London and Switzerland before the war, and Switzerland and Italy after the war. She may have experienced a certain spiritual grounding after her previous 'geographical homelessness', but her expatriatism remained a significant force in her writing life. I have considered the significance of specific places and imagined spaces to H.D.'s Second World War writing, places located in the material places of bombed London or dreamscapes, or language itself. I would argue that, as with Cixous, H.D.'s own expatriatism is explored through the tropes

⁹³ Ibid. 221.

⁹⁴ Bryony Randall, "Funny, but No Hybrid": H.D., Tea and Expatriate Identity, *Symbiosis* 13.2 (1009): 191.

of movement in her writing. As the wind is a signifier of incessant movement within *Sea Garden*, so movement is a crucial element of her later work.

In *By Avon River* (1949), H.D. turns from the myth and ritual that informed *Trilogy* to the scene of history, while in *The Snord*, she brings the two together. In Chapter Three, I considered the place of ritual in *The Snord*, with its alignment with the drama of play and procession. I would also argue that the stories of different epochs – mapped onto Delia's personal history, dreams and spiritualist visions – bring the scene of history and the space of ritual together. In *The Snord*, H.D. relocates *Trilogy*'s search for heaven to a preoccupation with the ground, sanctuaries and sacred remnants under the earth. Yet the flight that is represented in *Trilogy*'s circling geese is not absent from *The Snord*, but displaced onto a spiritual quest that is concerned with drawing together mythic and historical geographies. In her post-war work of the late 1940s, H.D. is concerned with piecing together sacred remnants to create something new, and thus healing her own physical, psychic and spiritual wounds. She considers physical displacement to allow for temporal explorations – 'Geographic boundaries were bombed away, so perhaps were the boundaries of time' – thus providing a justification for the temporal shifts that follow.⁹⁵ H.D. uses the trope of movement to layer time and place. Of special significance to this discussion, is the use of spatial metaphors to figure the compression of time and place. Moreover, these metaphors are also aligned with the sacred, referencing the places of sanctuary and the movements of ritual: 'But in fifth-century Athens, the actual straight line was curved, in the foundation of the most famous temple of antiquity and of all time'.⁹⁶

The curved line, the spiral or the zigzag (a line bent back on itself) are interrelated figures that draw together space and time in *Trilogy* and *The Snord*. While these shapes are

⁹⁵ H.D., *The Snord* 64.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 95.

somewhat different, although all share the feature of openness, H.D. tends to use them in similar ways across numerous texts, in particular, to indicate movement. The zigzag, what H.D. would call a 'Z-line' or 'bee-line', is like the spiral in that it knits diverse places together.⁹⁷ The spiral or the zigzag suggests the possibility of movement that is somewhat cyclical, allowing for numerous departures and returns, yet not entirely static. The spiral's openness signals both change and a re-appropriation of the past. The spiral, or Z-line, indicates renewal, thus it is appropriate that H.D. unites this geometric image with the image of the bee. In *The Sword*, the zigzag is explicitly tied to particular places, one that maps geography onto a historical palimpsest:

We followed the Z or the bee-line in its zig-zag track or path across time. Time was conveniently pleated and the pleats lay flat under the chart or map that took us from London or Lausanne, to Lugano, to Knossos, to Athens, to Delphi . . . back to London, to Venice. . . . There are to-and-fro journeys and return flights, but this briefly is our path or our zig-zag in space.⁹⁸

Here Delia's textual wandering aligns closely with H.D.'s own material, intellectual and spiritual travels (Knossos and Delphi were significant places for H.D. but she never visited them).

The 'bee-line' returns us to *Trilogy*, where the spiral is a recurring image for transformation. The extended metaphor of the chrysalis in *Walls* is linked to the spiral; H.D. describes withdrawal into cocoon or shell as the 'time for you to begin a new spiral'.⁹⁹ The zig-zag as visionary space is indicated in a more mundane image, 'the turn of the stair' where the initiates pass each other and the Lady appears.¹⁰⁰ The space of vision as a space of renewal is indicated in *The Flowering of the Rod*:

⁹⁷ Ibid. 214.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ H.D., *Walls* 219.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 13:17; H.D., *Angels* 15:14.

Yet resurrection is a sense of direction,
resurrection is a bee-line,

straight to the horde and plunder,
the treasure, the store-room,

the honeycomb;
resurrection is remuneration,

food, shelter, fragrance
of myrrh and balm.¹⁰¹

Here the bee-line becomes a flight to the sanctuary (figured elsewhere as a bee-hive), the place of refuge and ritual. The bee and the fragrance of myrrh evoke the garden that is also a ritual space. Thus the spiral/bee-line indicates movement *and* place: the turn of the stair, a spiralled shell, circling geese, a route across a fractured world. The places described in *The Sword* are conflict zones, and, although they are damaged, they are also the locations of spiritual power and vision. The bee-line sutures the splits but does not erase them.

Writing as sanctuary: sacred places

As we have seen, place and movement in H.D.'s and Cixous's texts form an intimate dialectic; each complicates and provokes the other, but they are thus brought into close proximity. Flight forms a crucial aspect of H.D. and Cixous's spatial poetics while gardens are portrayed as the source and provocation for flights that enact a nomadism that carries with it the fragrance from dust, fruit and blossom. The nexus of place and movement, garden and flight, can be seen in H.D. and Cixous's deployment of sanctuary. If gardens are sanctuaries in as much as they are locations of ritual and divine encounter, sanctuary is also the final point of flight, its goal. However, as we have seen, H.D. and Cixous destabilise notions of origin and goal and this deconstructive practice is evident in their deployment of sanctuary as a third term that acts as a nexus of place and movement.

¹⁰¹ H.D., *Rod* 7:1-8.

In deploying the bee-line as an image for sacred movement and the bee-hive as a place of refuge, H.D. constructs an idiosyncratic notion of modern pilgrimage. Lodged both in language and under the earth, sanctuary is both material and imagined, located both without and within. It is both a shelter and inspiration for creative practice and nurtures the transformations enabled by imagination. In *The Sword*, H.D. draws together literal churches and more abstract, visionary space when she describes a dream space which is a refuge and place of healing:

The bee-hive was at the very centre of the earth. [...] It was as big as Brunelleschi's dome, opposite the Baptistery in Florence. The light in the room was given out by the stones. All the stones were radium. [...] I was supposed to stay there till I got well. [...] I didn't stay long in the bee-hive. I got well there.¹⁰²

Here, the bee of resurrection is alluded to in an imagined space that is holy and healing. This vision of a sanctuary that is fragile, yet enduring as a sacred place underground, links Delia's survival with the larger issues of post-war social and environmental recovery. Delia sees the devastation of the earth (both the bombed cities of Europe and the devastation of Japan wrought by the atomic bombs) as linked to a new consciousness which alters her previous vision. The optimism of *Gift* and *Trilogy* gives way to a more wary and tentative hope that recognises the bleakness of the post-war world and the challenges and real failures of any movement towards renewal. Her creative, spiritual practice is figured as hard work embedded in the beleaguered earth:

I had felt the scar. The earth was furrowed with the irrational assaults that man had made upon her. She was always mother-earth. I felt that man was actually assaulting woman. I happened to be a woman. [...] I have left the young men, the heroes who stemmed the tide, who broke the Steel Wall. They belong to the world of beauty. But I lived to see beauty die. I have accepted that fact. There is still something left, but it lives under the

¹⁰² H.D., *The Sword* 53.

ground. It does not live in heaven. If we want to contact spiritual entities, we must drag them up from the earth.¹⁰³

In this strikingly gendered passage, Delia links her own rejection by Lord Howell (and by extension the estrangement of lovers throughout history) with the larger destruction of war. In setting up this gendered dynamic, she chooses to align herself not with the RAF pilots, the heroes of war, but with the landscape itself. As such she becomes a witness to the devastation of life and land. Far from a traditional pastoral alignment of passive women with passive earth, this text calls for action beyond the silent witness of the destroyed cities. Delia is determined to be an active agent in nurturing the spiritual remnant. *Sword* is not just an expression of grief (although it is that) but also a constructive response, ‘dragging up’ what is living from the ground.

In *The Gift*, H.D. presents a more complex version of the bee-hive as sanctuary. Here she explores a connection between a physical, historical place and an imagined space located in language:

It seems as if something had come over me like the branches of a tree or the folds of a tent when she says *Wunden Eiland*. She says *Eiland* which must be island and the *Wunden*, I suppose, is wonder or wonderful. I do not even want her to tell me, but I want her to go on talking because if she stops, the word will stop. The word is like a bee-hive, but there are no bees in it now. I am the last bee in the bee-hive, this is the game I play. The other bees have gone, that is why it is so quiet. Can one bee keep a bee-hive alive, I mean, can one person who knows that *Wunden Eiland* is a bee-hive, keep *Wunden Eiland* for the other bees, when they come back?¹⁰⁴

The sound of the spoken words forms the sanctuary here. It is not a permanent place, but an imagined space located in the sound of Hilda’s grandmother’s voice speaking words in a language that Hilda does not know (German). The images used to describe this curious sensation suggest both rootedness (the sheltering branches of a tree) and nomadism (the shelter of a tent). H.D.’s word play links the Moravian tradition of wounds devotion with

¹⁰³ Ibid. 54.

¹⁰⁴ H.D., *The Gift* 154-55.

Hilda's developing imagination and vision; she thinks that '*Wundun*' means wonderful because of its sound, but in fact the word means wounds. Hilda's sense of responsibility for keeping the bee-hive alive foreshadows *The Sward's* insistence on a sacred remnant that lingers in the bee-hive. This is a sanctuary that must be maintained. Rather than the space providing a shelter, as we see in *The Sward*, this space itself must be nurtured. By placing a child in the role of witness and caretaker, *The Gift* indicates an orientation to the future and a disruption of generational hierarchies.

The wounded island is, of course, also Britain. In *Trilogy* and *The Gift*, H.D. extends the provisional sanctuary from London to the island and ultimately the entirety of the earth. At the end of *The Gift*, when she has her audition of the litany of wounds, H.D. recognises a broader understanding of sanctuary: 'Our earth is a wounded island as we swing around the sun'.¹⁰⁵ The Moravian devotion to Christ's wounds is reconfigured as attention to a war-torn world that remains a sacred place and site of healing, but must also be healed in return. It is this difficult task of healing that H.D. addresses in *The Sward*.

Writing and the sanctuary that moves

In locating sanctuary in a language that escapes mastery, insisting on its foreignness to the speaker or auditor, these texts suggest that sanctuaries are as much a matter of routes as roots. The sanctuary-that-moves finds expression in the Jewish tabernacle, the repository of the Torah that travels with the people. In considering the relationship between settled location and movement with Judaism, Alana Vincent emphasises that not only was the Torah given to a wandering people, but that when King David suggested building the temple, the prophet Nathan has a vision in which 'the resistance of God to a fixed

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 223.

dwelling-place' is made dear.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, '*mishkan* [the Hebrew word for Tabernacle] shares the same root as *shekinah*, the presence-of-God-dwelling-amongst-Israel'.¹⁰⁷ This suggests to me that as the tabernacle is the shelter for the Torah and related to an understanding of God as dwelling-with, so God can be understood to reside within the language of Torah.

The relationship between sanctuary and language is also explored in Cixous's work. She presents a slippery construction of this relationship, a mobius strip that folds and unfolds into its own double:

But god, I say, is the phantom of writing, it is her pretext and her promise. God is the name of all that has not yet been said. Without the word *Dieu* to shelter the infinite multiplicity of all that could be said the world would be reduced to its shell and I to my skin.¹⁰⁸

The idea of sanctuary as located in language is initially reversed; here, the divine is a refuge for writing, for a language that is open to the future. However, God is also the other of writing, 'her pretext and her promise', the alterity within words and metaphors, 'what has not yet been said'. In this formulation, writing becomes God's shelter and dwelling place.

In all the attention to Cixous's call to 'write the body', there has been little attention given to Cixous's construction of the body as a sacred text. In 'Coming to Writing' she describes her body itself as a book:

I am already text. History, love, violence, time, work, desire inscribe it in my body. [...] Vision: my breast as the Tabernacle. Open. My lungs like the scrolls of the Torah. But a Torah without end whose scrolls are imprinted and unfurled throughout time.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Alana M. Vincent, 'Seder and Imagined Landscapes', *Memory, Mourning and Landscape*, eds. Elizabeth Anderson, Avril Maddrell, Kate McLoughlin and Alana M. Vincent (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010) 150. See 2 Samuel 7:5-7. Karen J. Wenell makes a similar point about the tabernacle's portability and origin in the wilderness; Wenell, 25-26.

¹⁰⁷ Vincent, 150. Further discussion of the significance of *shekinah* for Jewish Feminist Theology is found in Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz*.

¹⁰⁸ Cixous, *Stigmata* 200.

¹⁰⁹ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 52.

The tabernacle is open, therefore, the reader is put in the position of the high priest entering the holy of holies. This 'Torah without end' resembles the 'hidden Torah' of Jewish mysticism that existed before the creation of the world and is identified with divine wisdom.¹¹⁰ Cixous's declaration that her breast is an open tabernacle and her lungs, Torah, indicates that the divine dwells within bodily movement and is as close as breath. The word for breath and spirit is the same in Hebrew: *ruach*. In the beginning of Genesis, it is the *ruach* of God that hovers over the face of the deep and the *ruach* that God breathes into the day to give it life.¹¹¹ Thus in aligning her lungs with Torah, Cixous draws a connection between her own breathing and the divine spirit that speaks and breathes creation into being. Here, writing, materiality and divine movement are always already co-implicated.

We have seen how language becomes a sanctuary for both H.D. and Cixous and how particular words become a refuge that shelters creative activity and imagination. These refuges are not closed spaces, but are open to the movements of writing towards the future. Language is often figured as a (fragile) home by writing on exile.¹¹² In Cixous's work, difference in language becomes the means of mapping the complexity of her family's movements across Europe and North Africa. Literary exiles or expatriates often figure their relationship to language in fraught terms – alienation from the 'mother tongue', or from their adopted languages, or both.¹¹³ However, as I noted in the previous chapter, Cixous understands her relationship to language differently; she repeatedly returns to the

¹¹⁰ Handelman, 37-38; Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990) 34.

¹¹¹ I am grateful to my colleague, Alana Vincent, for reminding me of the connection between breath and spirit in the opening chapters of Genesis.

¹¹² Borrowed languages may also become homes: 'Kafka did not often write about the country in which he was born, but he did write about the language – that is, the homeland – which he came to inhabit'; Norman Manea, 'Nomadic Language', *The Writer Uprooted: Contemporary Jewish Exile Literature*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) 1.

¹¹³ For further engagement with the fraught issue of language, writing and exile, see Geoffrey Hartman, 'A Displaced Scholar's Tale: The Jewish Factor', *Ibid.* 135-137; Manea, 1-26; Maeera Y. Shreiber, 'The End of Exile: Jewish Identity and Its Diasporic Poetics', *PMLA* 113.2 (1998): 277-84; Susan Rabin Sulciman, *Budapest Diary: In Search of the Motherbook* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) 171.

numerous languages of her childhood as indicative of a lack of a singular mother tongue. This becomes a trope for her belief that she does not belong to, or 'have', a point of origin. But Cixous constructs this lack as plenitude – her lack of a singular origin yields a multiplicity of points of contact:

We played at languages in our house, my parents passed with pleasure and deftness from one language to the other, the two of them, one from French the other from German, jumping through Spanish and English, one with a bit of Arabic and the other with a bit of Hebrew. When I was ten years old my father gave me at the same time an Arabic teacher and a Hebrew teacher.¹¹⁴

In 'Coming to Writing', Cixous locates the source of her writing practice in this experience of hearing multiple languages within an intimate environment.

Blessing my writing stems from two languages, at least. In my tongue the "foreign" languages are my sources, my agitations. "Foreign": the music in me from elsewhere; precious warning: don't forget that all is not here, rejoice in being only a partide, a seed of chance, there is no center of the world, arise, behold the innumerable, listen to the untranslatable. [...] Languages pass into my tongue, understand one another, call to one another, touch and alter one another, tenderly, timidly, sensually; blend their personal pronouns together, in the effervescence of differences.¹¹⁵

Here writing is the nexus of linguistic and geographic differences and movements. Space and language come together in writing. The 'elsewhere' that continues to re-appear in Cixous's writing is the site of creative sound that cannot be contained, while the 'untranslatable' that must be heard is reminiscent of H.D.'s *Wunden Eiland*. Here languages are personified and the sensuality of the writer's experience of speaking and hearing languages is projected onto the languages themselves, who grow and change in their interactions across difference.

¹¹⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 225.

¹¹⁵ Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 21.

Conclusion: nomadic pilgrimage

The idea of a sanctuary that moves, the sanctuary of the bee-line, suggests not only the Jewish tabernacle, but also the sacred excursion of pilgrimage. Delia compares the geographical and historical layering of *The Sword* to a pilgrimage: 'I had visualised the pilgrimage or so-called path as winding up a mountain, spiral fashion'.¹¹⁶ Here the spiral is again given a sacred inflection.¹¹⁷ In considering the relevance of mysticism for the modern age, Michel de Certeau develops the idea of pilgrimage without a goal:

[I]t seems that what for the most part still remains, in contemporary culture, is the movement of perpetual departure. [...] Unmoored from the "origin" of which Hadewijch spoke, the traveller no longer has foundation nor goal. Given over to a nameless desire, he [sic] is the drunken boat. Henceforth this desire can no longer speak to someone. [...] It goes on walking, then, trading itself out in silence, in writing.¹¹⁸

This nomadic pilgrimage of perpetual departure echoes Cixous's continual departure and non-arrival. As we have seen with the gardens of Oran and London, *To Live the Orange*, *Sea Garden* and *Trilogy*, the traveller's foundation may be one she constructs in writing. In naming their desires, Cixous and H.D. suggest that nomadic pilgrimage may not so much lack a goal, as resituate it, locating it in both the hands that write and the ground beneath the pilgrim's feet. Nomadism and expatriatism do not enact aimless wandering, but rather, in their commitment to being elsewhere, follow purposeful creative trajectories.

De Certeau argues that in modernity the sacred is displaced from divine revelation to language: 'We find [...] a progression from a cosmos of divine messages (or "mysteries") to be understood, to itinerant practices which trace in language the indeterminate path of a

¹¹⁶ H.D., *The Sword* 215.

¹¹⁷ A further connection between spirals and pilgrimage can be seen in the medieval labyrinths laid in cathedral floors. Their path functions as a spiral, circling into and out from the centre; walking them was meant to enact a contained form of pilgrimage; see Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place* 227.

¹¹⁸ De Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* 299.

mode of writing'.¹¹⁹ H.D. complicates this model of progression because she does not abandon her commitment to apprehending mysteries, her Hermeticism, but places the unfolding of divine messages within an itinerant writing. Cixous's formulation of God as the 'pretext' and 'promise' for writing, paired with her claim that the woman writer is a thief, a bird, a fly-by-night,¹²⁰ indicates a sacred space that is by definition open, and that moves with the trajectories of a writing that can never be captured or contained. Thus divinity itself is place, a refuge for writing for language open to the future. Writing becomes both God's dwelling place and an activity shaped within sacred space. The dialectic of garden and flight, approached through the metaphor of the sanctuary that moves, yields a creative practice that offers a way of being in the world that traverses material places (while continuing to attend to them), seeking divine encounter in myriad forms and gestures.

This chapter has approached the themes of the thesis from a different angle to those addressed in previous chapters. In inverting the perspective, shifting the focus from writing to context, and then turning back to writing, I have explored how context not only forms the crucial ground for writing a material mysticism but also is taken up within that project to signify such mysticism. Even in their most abstract modes of dreaming of healing or theorising the activity of writing, H.D. and Cixous emphasise the significance of the material context to this abstraction, while the most mundane material elements – dust, apple blossom, wind, a passport – carry traces of the sacred.

¹¹⁹ De Certeau locates this shift in the mysticism of the early modern period; Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) 81.

¹²⁰ Cixous, *Stigmata* 200; Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 356-57.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an exploration of the conversational mode of reading modelled by Cixous, which I used to bring Cixous's and H.D.'s texts into dialogue. A crucial point of contact between H.D. and Cixous was their exploration of the sacred in relationship to creativity and materiality. I situated the project in the context of critical studies of H.D. as a visionary poet, while her religious sensibilities were foregrounded through an exploration of the religious syncretism of her writing from the Second World War. This chapter introduced my thesis that Cixous and H.D. write a material mysticism through their engagement with alterity, the sacred and the materiality of writing as a creative practice.

Chapter Two, 'Cloud of Witnesses' examined the ways in which the voices of the dead function in the prose works *The Gift* and *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. In these texts, H.D. draws upon the resources of spiritualism and Moravian history in crafting a creative response to the traumas of war. The chapter engaged with trauma theory's elaboration of testimony and witness as a way of speaking the unspeakable, of giving voice to trauma (testimony) and of providing the support and receptivity to allow testimony to emerge (witness). In attending to the voices of the dead as constitutive of a mystical communion, H.D. and Cixous take the primarily psychoanalytic discussions of trauma theory into new territory.

The third chapter, 'Writing as Ritual', explored the complexities of H.D.'s religious syncretism through the lens of ritual. It used performance approaches to ritual to consider the productive meaning-making dynamic of Greek drama and ceremonial processions in

The Sword, Moravian litany in *The Gift* and Hermetic alchemical ritual in *Trilogy*. This led to a discussion of H.D.'s and Cixous's emphasis on writing itself as a ritual, a performative, material practice that invokes the sacred and participates in transformation.

In Chapter Four, 'Image and Difference,' I turned from the performativity of writing as ritual to the activity of particular images in Cixous's and H.D.'s texts. This chapter used Paul Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor as mobilised by the internal dynamic of sameness and difference to examine the ways in which Cixous and H.D. deploy the images of the orange and the bee. The proliferation of these images across Cixous's and H.D.'s writing allow creative explorations of how spirituality and creativity inhere in encounters with others and embodiment.

Chapter Five, 'Writing as Sanctuary: Garden and Flight', considered the spatial context of Cixous's and H.D.'s attention to writing as a mode of creative transformation. I explored two spatial metaphors in Cixous and H.D.; the garden, with the associations of particular places, and flight, as the movement between places. For Cixous and H.D., both garden and flight are constructed as sanctuaries. These sanctuaries are places of healing that are open to encounters with alterity.

Reading Cixous and H.D. together highlights the way they both attend to materiality, the sacred and writing as a creative practice. Cixous and H.D.'s apprehension of the sacred is mystical in its search to move beyond the knowable, to trace the space of alterity in their writing. Their attention to materiality, to the domestic and the mundane, does not imply a domesticated God; rather, in their texts, the domestic and the mundane are made strange and divinity dwells within in this alterity.¹ The context of the Second World War, and Cixous's and H.D.'s creative responses to it, have been important for this

¹ In her analysis of the work of Elizabeth Smart, Heather Walton coins the term 'domestic sublime' to describe a feminine religious writing in which ordinary objects are 'transform[ed] [...] into strange and holy shapes'; Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* 180.

thesis. I now turn to an analysis of a poem of H.D.'s from 1943, which allows further exploration H.D.'s religious and creative sensibilities during wartime.

Ancient Wisdom

In 1943, Edith and Osbert Sitwell organised a gala poetry reading in London to promote the arts during war time.² H.D. read a poem proclaiming the endurance of Ancient Wisdom, personified as a woman dressed in a blue cloak.³ 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' anticipates many of the themes and images of *Trilogy*. Like *Trilogy*, this poem is deeply syncretist, drawing upon Jewish, Christian and pagan motifs. Ancient Wisdom herself correlates with the Lady of *Trilogy*, who is related to 'Holy Wisdom / *Santa Sophia*' as well as the 'veiled Goddess' (Isis) and the Bona Dea (Roman goddess of healing and fertility).⁴ The blue that characterises Ancient Wisdom in H.D.'s poem also suggests the Virgin Mary, whose colour is blue, while the 'snow on your [Wisdom's] sleeve and hood' correlates with Our Lady of the Snow, who is invoked in *Tribute to the Angels*.⁵ Ancient Wisdom personifies the Hermetic ancient wisdom of *The Walls Do Not Fall* while also demonstrating openness to the future in the guise of the Lady with her blank book.⁶

² T. S. Eliot read a section of *The Wasteland* which concludes, 'London Bridge is falling down'; Bryher, *The Days of Mars: A Memoir 1940-1946* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1972) 84.

³ The first three (of four) sections appeared as 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks to the Mountain' in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 8 May, 1943; Louis L. Martz, 'Notes', *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983) 621.

⁴ H.D., *Angels* 36:1-2, 37:12, 38:8. H.D. alludes to the Lady's syncretist connections to the Byzantine figure of Holy Wisdom and pagan goddess in a letter to Norman Pearson: 'I distinctly link the LADY up with Venus-Annael, with the Moon, with the pre-Christian Roman Bona Dea, with the Byzantine Greek church Santa Sophia and the SS of the Sanctus Spiritus'; Hollenberg, ed., 45. H.D. would have seen the Byzantine church, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (as Istanbul was then called) when she travelled there with Bryher in the 1920s; [Bryher(?)] 'Autobiographical Notes: Bryher's Note-Book, 1922'. *H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT; Guest, 156. The authorship of 'Bryher's note-book' is unclear: the page is typed, including the title, but it is held with other autobiographical papers in the H.D. Papers, so it may have been written, or typed, by H.D., or jointly composed. The notes themselves are quite brief.

⁵ H.D., *Collected Poems* 482; H.D., *Angels* 31:12. Mary is also linked with pagan goddesses in the alchemical ritual in which 'marah' becomes 'mater, Maïa, Mary / Star of the Sea'; H.D., *Angels* 8:3, 12-13.

⁶ H.D., *Walls* 15:9; H.D., *Angels* 38:9-12.

While H.D.'s religious syncretism leads to idiosyncratic, Hermetic interpretations of Moravian Christianity and spiritualism, she does not move entirely outside tradition. Her work, particularly from the 1940s, can be read in the Wisdom tradition. The clues provided by the intertextual connections between 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' and *Trilogy* provide an initial answer to the question of Ancient Wisdom's identity. Additional sources may be found in the biblical Wisdom traditions as well as Hermeticism's interest in ancient wisdom.⁷ In the book of Proverbs, Wisdom (Hokmah in Hebrew, Sophia in Greek) is personified as a woman who participates in creation, calls for justice and unites domestic and public spheres:

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
[...]
Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;
[...]
I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
[...]
when he [the Lord] marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker.⁸

In Proverbs, Wisdom takes on actions elsewhere associated with God.⁹ Silvia Schroer argues that 'Personified Wisdom is a figure who creates connections and connectedness. She joins transcendence to the female, God to human experience, theology to everyday

⁷ For an introduction and overview of biblical Wisdom literature, see Alastair Hunter, *Wisdom Literature* (London: SCM Press, 2006).

⁸ Proverbs 8:1-30. Later in Proverbs, Wisdom is figured as a host, who builds her house, lays her table and invites others to dine; Proverbs 9:1-5.

⁹ Claudia V. Camp, 'Woman Wisdom and the Strange Woman: Where Is Power to Be Found?' *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, eds. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 87.

reality, the woman teacher to the teaching, the creatrix to the principle of creation'.¹⁰ This activity of creating connections is reminiscent of Hermeticism's view of the universe as a web of connections and H.D.'s stylistic emphasis on connectedness and unfolding analogies. A similar correlation to Hermeticism's view of the divine as ceaselessly unfolding within the world may be found in the work of Russian Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov, who describes Sophia, Holy Wisdom, as God's creative activity.¹¹

However, the emphasis on connectedness should not occlude the presence of difference in discourse on Wisdom. In Proverbs, the figure of Wisdom, the wise (and good) woman, is contrasted with the 'strange' or 'foreign' (and transgressive) woman; who is portrayed as dangerous and threatening in her otherness: 'You will be saved from the loose woman / from the adulteress with her smooth words / who forsakes the partner of her youth / and forgets her sacred covenant'.¹² However, Claudia Camp points out that although Wisdom and the Strange Woman appear to be contrasted, in fact, some of their descriptions are the same: both are found 'in the street' and 'in the marketplace', encounters with them involve 'embracing' and 'grasping', both invite followers to their homes and offer food and drink.¹³ Furthermore, both the Strange Woman and Wisdom are connected to YHWH. His deeds are described as 'strange' and his work is 'alien', the same words Proverbs uses for the Strange Woman. Similarly, both Wisdom and YHWH give strength and reward the faithful with 'beautiful' or 'glorious' crowns.¹⁴ Thus the divine is

¹⁰ Silvia Schroer, *Wisdom Has Built Her House: Studies on the Figure of Sophia in the Bible*, trans. Linda M. Maloney and William McDonough (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000) 37. For further feminist analysis of Biblical Wisdom literature, see Athalya Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine, eds., *Wisdom and Psalms: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

¹¹ Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God*, trans. Xenia Braikévitch, O. Felding Clarke and Patrick Thompson, Rev ed. (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993) 31.

¹² Proverbs 2:16-17. Camp notes that the Hebrew words that are usually translated into English as 'loose woman / adulteress' more literally mean 'stranger' or 'foreigner'. However, the correlation between foreignness and religious and sexual infidelity is a frequent trope in the Biblical literature; Camp, 92-93.

¹³ Ibid. 94.

¹⁴ Ibid. 103-04.

another locus of connection between wisdom and otherness. Camp goes on to argue that the Strange Woman is inseparable from Wisdom and is herself a prophetic reminder of the significance of difference within Wisdom.¹⁵ Difference, as we saw in Chapter Four, is crucial to creativity. In her writing on encounters with the other, Cixous explores a similar dynamic of connectedness and difference, suggesting that the way through this paradox is openness towards alterity, so that difference is not annihilated, nor are connections severed.

Hokmah shares many qualities with the Egyptian Ma'at (goddess of truth who also represents world order, plenitude and justice) and Isis (in late antiquity Isis assumed many of Ma'at's attributes, including presiding over world order, justice and healing).¹⁶ Moreover, Hellenist thinkers such as Philo and the Gnostics frequently merged Isis and Sophia.¹⁷ In Hellenic Egypt, Isis becomes closely associated with Hermes/Thoth and thus is associated with Hermeticism.¹⁸ Isis is credited with inventing written language, alongside Hermes, while Hokmah is associated with sacred language (Torah is 'the earthly manifestation of Wisdom'), and Sophia, with the Word (Logos) of John's Gospel.¹⁹ This association of Wisdom with sacred language and textuality resonates with H.D.'s association of goddesses

¹⁵ Ibid. 107-09.

¹⁶ Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 3, 73, 240; Hunter, 99-101; Schroer, 17, 105; Seligman, 42; R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 106-107. Hokmah is also associated with another middle-eastern goddess, the Ugaritic Asherah, 'She who treads on the sea'; Hunter, 102.

¹⁷ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994) 136; Witt, 194.

Paganism in our Christianity (a book H.D. owned and marked; her copy is held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library) argues that Isis and Mary were united, both referred to as Queen of Heaven and the object of women's devotion; Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928) 126-27. Witt makes a similar argument about the many points of congruence between devotion to Mary (particularly in Coptic, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions) and the older veneration of Isis; Witt, 272-274.

¹⁸ Witt, 108.

¹⁹ Ibid; Camp, 96-97; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005) 128; Fiorenza, 138, 148-49. Ruether also points out that the early Christian understanding of Jesus as embodiment of Wisdom draws upon the milieu of later Jewish wisdom writing, which combined 'apocalyptic messianism and Wisdom literature'; Ruether, 128.

and words in the alchemical ritual and the Lady who carries a book. Surprisingly, rather than seeking knowledge in the mythology of the past (which has nourished the spiritual journey of *Trilogy*), she dares that the Lady's book is *not* 'the tome of the ancient wisdom' as we might expect from a Hermeticist. Instead, the Lady's book holds 'the blank pages / of the unwritten volume of the new'.²⁰ Here H.D. extends the role of Wisdom to the contemporary poet and reader. Ancient Wisdom speaks with many voices; she is Hokmah, Sophia, Isis, Mary, Ma'at and *Trilogy's* Lady; she is Hebrew, Greek and Egyptian; she is ancient and contemporary. She is a figure who embodies H.D.'s syncretism.

In H.D.'s lyric poem, 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks', the blue-dad Wisdom stands on a mountain, above a river, watching the turning seasons and witnessing the desolation of war-torn cities; the ancient cities of Nineveh and Tyre are named, while the contemporary London scene is implied. H.D. asserts the endurance of Wisdom as a consolation:

she knew our fear,
and yet she did not falter
nor cast herself in anguish by the river:

but she stood,
the sun on her hair
or the snow on her blue hood:

winter and summer,
summer and winter
. . . again . . . again . . .

never forgetting
but remembering
our peculiar desolation.²¹

Wisdom is a steadfast witness through the turning seasons; she is able to remember individual suffering but not be overcome by it.

²⁰ H.D., *Angels* 38: 10-12.

²¹ H.D., *Collected Poems* 483-84.

Beyond the consolation of her presence and the promise of her endurance, Wisdom's message is appropriate for its setting in the Sitwells' gala; moreover, it anticipates a central concern of *Trilogy*. In *Walls*, H.D. takes up the question of the validity of poetry in wartime (and by extension, creative work more broadly).²² In 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks', H.D.'s aesthetic manifesto is more direct than the slowly unfolding argument of *Trilogy*. The poet suggests that all would be lost if Wisdom did not 'stand waiting / not forgetting / [...] / if you had not said over and over, / [...] / repeatedly, this prayer'.²³ She claims that beauty endures despite destruction:

remember these (you said)
 who when the earth-quake shook their city,
 when angry blast and fire

 broke open their frail door,
 did not forget
 beauty.²⁴

The command to remember beauty (and to remember those who have held to it in previous times of destruction and loss) is here given the weight of a sacred charge. It is not goodness or duty that saves, but beauty. The devotion to beauty marks H.D.'s work from her early days of *Sea Garden* with its sacred, wild gardens and *Notes on Thought and Vision* with its extended meditation on aesthetics and creativity. However, in her work from the 1940s the nexus of aesthetics, the sacred and creative practice finds its richest expression. Divinity is to be found within beauty, and beauty itself appears in the most surprising of places – even in a pile of rubble in bombed out London square.

The context for Wisdom's repeated prayer is the coming of spring. She repeats the words as the snow melts and flows down the mountain, where she watches it 'become /

²² H.D., *Walls* 8.

²³ H.D., *Collected Poems* 482.

²⁴ Ibid.

blossom of apple, quince and the wild-pear'.²⁵ Here H.D. links Wisdom's call to remember beauty with trees in blossom, just as the Lady in *Trilogy* is associated with the half-burnt, half-blossoming apple tree, and, in Proverbs, Hokmah is 'a tree of life to those who lay hold of her'.²⁶ H.D. aligns beauty with life, suggesting the divine life breathing through the world of Hermeticism. Beauty contributes to the endurance and renewal of the desolate community and thus is a creative, as well as aesthetic, quality.

The poem doses with Wisdom speaking words of comfort, assuring the desolate of her enduring presence: 'O do not weep, she says, / for ages past I was / and I endure'.²⁷

Her devotees are both vanquished and yet still responsive:

your ashes,
sainted ones,
your chastened hearts,
your empty frames,
your very bones,
still serve
to praise my name.²⁸

Here H.D. suggests a mingling of sacred and profane, bodily reality and transcendence. Anguish, loss and death are not vanquished, yet while they remain Wisdom also endures and witnesses the renewal that may take place within destruction. For H.D., saints are those who have cleaved to Wisdom and her call to attend to beauty. In 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' – as in the primary texts of this thesis; *The Gift*, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, and *Trilogy* – we see the richness of H.D.'s visionary, religious imagination and the imagery she uses to deploy it. In presenting 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' at the Sitwells' gala, H.D. aligns the poem with the creative arts and asserts their importance for the public sphere. While the significance of poetry is implied within the poem, material mysticism is more explicit in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ H.D., *Angels* 19:12-14, 36:1-7. Proverbs 3:18.

²⁷ H.D., *Collected Poems* 484.

²⁸ Ibid.

Wisdom's evocation of the returning spring, the snow turned to blossom and the witness to Wisdom that resides within the physical remains of destruction.

Feminist revisioning, imagination and Modernism

Wisdom embodies creative activity – presiding over the creation and ongoing working of the world, acting as witness, prophesying beauty, revealing difference. 'Ancient Wisdom Speaks' performs a revisioning of the Wisdom tradition by emphasising the connections between pagan, Jewish and Christian traditions as well as providing a strong and beautiful feminine divine figure. In her seminal essay, 'When We Dead Awaken', Adrienne Rich defines 're-vision' as 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction'. She argues that it is a crucial activity; 'for women [it is] more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival'.²⁹ H.D.'s work, then, provides a creative resource for the feminist project of excavating a useable tradition. In writing themselves in religious and literary traditions, feminists have relied on the imagination to enable a revisioning practice that transforms the old into new modes and models, both within and beyond historic traditions.³⁰

Alicia Ostriker reads H.D. in the tradition of feminist revisioning while also considering her a visionary poet. Within this critical tradition, both Ostriker and Eileen Gregory situate H.D. as inheritor of the Romantic tradition of the visionary imagination. Ostriker claims that visionary poets such as H.D. write early poems that 'celebrate an imagined world' while their later work engages with 'time, loss and reconstruction. The goal

²⁹ Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 35.

³⁰ Feminist theologians have addressed the significance of language for this creative project, however, feminist theology would benefit from greater engagement with the literary resources of writers like H.D.; Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993) 3-12; McFague, 29-40.

is wholeness, to be won from fragmentation'.³¹ The imagined landscapes of *Sea Garden* are dear examples of the former, while *Trilogy's* concern with the regeneration after war's destruction is evidence of the latter. Ostriker offers a reading strategy for approaching H.D., in which the reader is also figured as a wild, unorthodox visionary: 'How do we read the late H.D.? With the wind in our hair, a gleam in our eyes, and a sense of headlong forward motion'.³² In her feminist revisions, H.D. engages with this tradition, shaping it to her own ends and developing her own vehicles for expression.

The presence of this wild, strange and divine imagination, which has been explored in this thesis through the analysis of Hermeticism in H.D.'s work and its correlation with the writing practice of both H.D. and Cixous, has an established tradition within Romanticism. In the Romantic worldview, the creative, or productive, imagination – with perhaps its most extreme exponent in Blake – shapes the world, and places the poet in the role of prophet and priest.³³ For Blake, imagination is the basis of all art and vision; it is the gift or even the divine person of the Holy Ghost.³⁴ Blake's imagination involves an opening of world boundaries.³⁵ Peter Otto draws upon Blake's conflation of the divine and the imagination to argue that Blake understands imagination as that which disrupts boundaries and thus creates openness to the other:

[T]he major prophecies are an attempt to describe the way in which the created world [...] can open itself to others. [...] [T]he Imagination is first glimpsed not in the fabrication of a world, but at the point at which our worlds are cast off.³⁶

³¹ Ostriker, *Writing Like a Woman* 9-10.

³² Ibid. 29.

³³ James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981) 238; David Jasper, *Cockridge as Poet and Religious Thinker* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1985) 10-11.

³⁴ S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965) 195.

³⁵ Peter Otto, *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction: Los, Eternity, and the Productions of Time in the Later Poetry of William Blake* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 8.

³⁶ Ibid. 12, 14.

In this vision of creativity and imagination, the shaping of the world leads to crossing boundaries between worlds and moving towards the limits of the possible. Worlds are cast off as alterity calls the poet towards transformation.

This reading leads me to consider the issue of imagination in Modernist writing. The resources of a sacred alterity are not reserved for the Romantic poets alone. Modernist studies tends to leave questions of imagination and the sacred to Romanticists, however, there is a stream of Romanticism within Modernism.³⁷ Moreover, Paul Ricoeur's work on imagination as that which enables the apprehension (or completion) of metaphor and as generative of possible worlds indicates that imagination may be a crucial category for Modernism. Its experimentation, avant-garde aesthetics and interest in new creative forms could be read as gestures towards possible worlds and new ways of being in the world.

Critical engagements with H.D. and Cixous that focus on the nexus of the religious, the visionary and the creative, such as this thesis, suggest that there is further work to be done in Modernist studies on the role of the religious imagination in particular. The religious concerns of writers like T.S. Eliot and W. H. Auden have long been a staple of literary criticism, however, this field of criticism has not engaged with the expansive, heterodox vision of the sacred of Blake and H.D. Recent work such as Pericles Lewis's *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* provides welcome explorations in the area of Modernism and religion.³⁸ However, Lewis is primarily engaged with the boundary between mainstream religions and secularism while the questions raised by H.D. and Cixous lead in a different direction.

³⁷ Eileen Gregory aligns H.D.'s work (and that of Richard Aldington) with the Romantic Hellenism of Pater, Wilde and Swinburne, thus complicating the usual distinction (advanced by writers such as T. E. Hulme) between Romanticism and Modernist Classicism; Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 1-4, 11-28, 75-84; T. E. Hulme, 'From "Romanticism and Classicism"', *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, eds. Jane Goldman, Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) 178-85.

³⁸ Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See also, Mark Gaipa, 'An Agnostic's Daughter's Apology: Materialism, Spiritualism and Ancestry in Woolf's *to the Lighthouse*', *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.2 (2003) 1-41.

H.D. and Cixous's engagement with the intersection between difference, creative practice and materiality raises the question of where the traces of sacred alterity and material mysticism are to be found in other Modernist texts. Writers such as Rosamond Lehmann, Rebecca West, Mary Butts and Dorothy Richardson occupy an uneasy place in the Modernist canon. Likewise, their writing includes marginal religious discourses like those explored in H.D.'s work. I suggest that these authors, among others, provide scope for creative interventions by literary critics and feminist theologians alike. Feminist scholars interested in constructing new and creative ways forward for theology would find a rich resource in the experimental, heterodox visions of Modernist writers, while literary criticism has much to gain from attending to the religious imagination in Modernist texts and its interaction with aesthetic, ethical and political concerns.

Attention to the avant-garde stylistics of H.D. and Cixous enables an exploration of poetic form and spirituality, and of creative, playful engagements with language and divine difference. As we have seen, God as a sanctuary for the not-yet written opens up a creative space for imagining difference. This space of imagining is hospitable to interdisciplinary projects such as this one. In attending to writing as a spiritual practice, the reading practice developed over the course of this thesis allows what is mysterious within language to emerge. Likewise, the material mysticism elaborated here suggests that mystery inheres in materiality and divinity emerges from, and exceeds, the diversity of the material world: from a beeswax candle to an orange; from stone hieroglyphics to a medium's table; from expansive journeys across continents and oceans, to the minute movements of breath. In bringing together the familiar and the strange, indeed, in making the familiar strange and the strange, familiar, H.D. and Cixous's writing crafts a hospitable place in which we might encounter alterity, both within and outwith ourselves. In gesturing to the unknown and the elsewhere, this writing invites us to imagine differently.

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