

# NOTES

## RECENT BOOKS ON H.D.

**Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction.** By Susan Stanford Friedman. Cambridge, New York, etc.: Cambridge UP, 1990. Cloth, \$39.50. [from the Preface] "*Penelope's Web* examines the weave of H.D.'s modernity as it is patterned by gender, genre, and history in the discourse of her prose. In recent years, H.D. has been read increasingly as a poet whose innovative lyrics and magisterial epics contribute significantly to the remapping of modernism, of women's place within its theory and practice, and of a women's poetic tradition. H.D., however, worked as hard and consistently at her prose as she did her poetry and produced an impressive oeuvre in a variety of genres—novels, novellas, short stories, essays, and memoirs. She saw only a fraction of this prose in print during her lifetime. . . . This prose, much of it now published, was essential to the development of her poetry. Moreover, many of the texts stand on their own as brilliantly innovative and deserve to be read in the context of the experimental writing of modernists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Dorothy Richardson. *Penelope's Web* offers such a reading, examining both the scope of H.D.'s prose oeuvre and its specific achievement in a number of texts."

**H.D.: The Poetics of Childbirth and Creativity.** By Donna Krolik Hollenberg. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991. cloth \$25. "In this study, Donna Krolik Hollenberg examines Hilda Doolittle's evolving literary response to her trauma in pregnancy during World War I, a period in her life in which birth and death intersected to an extraordinary degree. Hollenberg traces H.D.'s reaction to a number of personal tragedies during this period: a stillborn first child, the birth of a second child after a pregnancy during which H.D. nearly died of pneumonia, and the deaths, also during the pregnancy, of her brother and father. She shows the ways in which H.D. reinterpreted these events throughout her lifetime and their effects on her self-representation, her poetics, and her world-view."

## RECENT ESSAYS ON H.D.

Gary Burnett. "The Identity of 'H': Imagism and H.D.'s *Sea Garden*." *Sagetrieb* 8.3 (Winter 1989): 55-75.

Dianne Chisholm. "H.D.'s Autoheterography." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. 9.1 (Spring 1990): 79-106.

Gertrude Reif Hughes. "Making It Really New: Hilda Doolittle, Gwendolyn Brooks, and the Feminist Potential of Modern Poetry." *American Quarterly* 42 (September 1990): 375-402.

Eileen Gregory. "Angels and Apocalypse: H.D.'s *Tribute to the Angels*." In *A Gathering of Angels: A Publication of Papers Presented at the Conference A Gathering of Angels, February 24-26, 1989*. Ed. Robert Sardello. Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1990. 87-97.

Melita Schaum. "Lyric Resistance: Views of the Political in the Poetics of Wallace Stevens and

- H.D." *The Wallace Stevens Journal* 13.2 (Fall 1989): 191-205
- Dana Shugar. "Faustine Re-Membered: H.D.'s Use of Swinburne's Poetry in *Hermoine*." *Sagetrieb* 9.1-2 (Spring-Fall 1990): 79-94.
- Sabine Vanacker. "Stein, Richardson and H.D.: Women Modernists and Autobiography." *Bête Noir* 6 (Winter 1988): 111-23.
- Sarah E. Witte. "H.D.'s Rescension of the Egyptian Book of the Dead in *Palimpsest*." *Sagetrieb* 8.1-2 (Spring-Fall 1989): 121-47.
- Caroline Zilboorg. "Letters across the Abyss: The H.D.-Adrienne Monnier Correspondence." *Sagetrieb* 8.3 (Winter 1989): 115-34.
- Caroline Zilboorg. "Two Poems for H.D." *Journal of Modern Literature* 16.1 (Summer 1989): 174-77.

#### EDITING H.D.: A SPECIAL SESSION AT MLA 1990

The special session on H.D. at the 1990 Modern Language Association convention in Chicago, entitled "Editing H.D.: Female Texts and the Meaning of Silence," included three papers: Caroline Zilboorg's "H.D. and Richard Aldington: In and Out of Silence"; Donna Krolik Hollenberg and Louis H. Silverstein's "Another Life Relived: The Challenges of Editing the H.D.-Pearson Correspondence"; and Robert Spoo's "Gender Politics in Editing H.D."

Adalaide Morris served as moderator and offered general remarks on "the perilous process" of editing H.D., citing as one example the many unacknowledged editing cuts which occurred in the New Directions edition of *The Gift*. Pointing out problems that all of H.D.'s editors need to confront (her eccentric orthography, the numerous versions of many of her manuscripts, the difficulty of keeping texts in print, and the complexity of distributing small press editions), Morris emphasized the absence of "well-documented support materials like the biographies and bibliographies which have eased the editing of other major modernists." Morris also stressed that H.D.'s editors have been fortunate on several counts: Pearson's interest and encouragement enabled H.D. to fill her "shelf" at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Louis H. Silverstein's excellent cataloging and the hard work of the Beinecke staff have made H.D.'s archives accessible to readers; and Perdita Schaffner's generosity in giving scholars permission to use H.D.'s manuscripts according to their best judgment has been invaluable.

Zilboorg's paper addressed the issues raised by her editing of Aldington's letters to H.D. between 1918 and 1920 (the book, *Richard Aldington and H.D.: The Early Years in Letters*, is forthcoming from Indiana UP in the fall of 1991). Initially Zilboorg had wanted to edit both sides of this correspondence, but despite generous permission from both Alister Kershaw and Perdita Schaffner, she was unable to do so: in late 1920 Aldington burned all of H.D.'s letters then in his possession as well as his letters to her before 1918. The resulting "silence" raised for Zilboorg the editorial issue of how to fill in the gaps, a particularly complex issue in the absence of documented biography. She decided to supply the context for these letters by relying almost

exclusively on unpublished material, particularly on letters from H.D. to others (at Yale, Southern Illinois University, and the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas). Thus her edition of these early letters involves the writing of biography. Additionally, Zilboorg pointed out that the early Aldington letters must work and be read against another silence: the omissions and distortions by others—participants in modernism such as Pound and Eliot and editors of other letters such as Paige and Valerie Eliot—regarding the important place of H.D. and Aldington in early literary modernism. Like H.D. (though of course for different reasons), Aldington is also a neglected and misrepresented modernist, and Zilboorg suggests that his early as well as later correspondence with H.D. must stand as a corrective to currently received impressions of his character and evaluations of his stature and influence. Most of Aldington's work is out of print or unavailable in this country, and even scholars working on H.D. seem generally unfamiliar with most of his poetry and with few of his prose works beyond *Death of a Hero*. This, then, is yet another silence in the context of which the early letters must be edited and read. Further, a reading of Aldington's work in the context of another's life and work if it is only that is an act which further silences in its refusal to acknowledge Aldington's independent significance. The early letters themselves raise the issue of silence also as a matter of discretion. H.D. may well have been hesitant about others' reading these intense and often very personal letters: while she preserved them for over forty years, she also indicated to Pearson when she sent them to him in the fifties that he might destroy them if he liked. Another silence in these early letters from Aldington to H.D., as well as in later ones, is caused by his increasing awareness of what he cannot share with her—not only his passion for Dorothy Yorke and then for other women, among them his second wife, but his direct experience of the trenches as well as information which in 1918 he had to omit because of the constraints of military censorship. Zilboorg finally argued that perhaps the most significant silence throughout the correspondence both before and after 1920 is the deep silence created by H.D.'s and Aldington's unvoiced acknowledgment of a mutual understanding and a shared past.

Robert Spoo, in his discussion of the editing of *Asphodel*, pointed out that this novel, like several other works by H.D., has a peculiarly disembodied status in that it has occasioned much critical exegesis but has remained unpublished since its completion in 1922. It is important that we now have the text, both for its intrinsic value and for the role it will play in helping us assess the critical accounts now existing. Less an early version of *Bid Me to Live* than a sequel to *Her* (though written before *Her*), *Asphodel* completes the Frances Gregg and Ezra Pound stories and takes us up to the birth of H.D.'s daughter and the meeting with Bryher. *Asphodel* is in part a paean to Bryher. The editing of *Asphodel* poses distinct challenges. Spoo discussed the question of copy-text and categories of "error," and situated his project within current editorial and critical theory (e.g., sociological theory, *écriture féminine*). His basic distinction between H.D.'s spelling and punctuation allows him to correct the former while leaving the latter virtually unaltered. By this means, he can offer a clear, accessible reading text which preserves H.D.'s special rhythms

and "voices." *Asphodel* will be published with an introduction by Duke UP. A substantial table of editorial changes will be published separately, possibly in the *H.D. Newsletter*.

[The paper by Hollenberg and Silverstein is published in this issue.—E.G.]

#### A CALL FOR PAPERS: MODERNIST WOMEN WRITERS

*West Coast Line* will be running an ongoing series of essays on modernist women writers. We have in mind one or two essays per issue on writers such as Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy, H.D., Gertrude Stein, Mary Butts, Jeans Rhys, Marianne Moore, Shiela Watson, Zora Neale Hurston, or Laura Riding. Inquiries and submissions may be directed to Miriam Nichols, Series Editor, *West Coast Line*, c/o Department of English, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., V5A 1S6.

#### H.D.: THE PLAY

One of our contributors, Giles Goodland, has written a play on H.D.'s life (entitled "H.D."), which was performed at the Burton-Taylor Theatre in Oxford, 10-14 April 1991, by the Not Exclusively Women's Theatre Group.

#### THE H.D. FELLOWSHIP AT YALE

The first H.D. Fellowship at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, for 1990-1991, was held by Caroline Zilboorg, who was exploring the topic of "Personal Experience in H.D.'s Writing." She was in residence at Yale during May of this year, delivering a formal paper to students and faculty at Yale entitled "Girls Are Cheap: A Contextual Reading of H.D.'s 'Heliodora.'" The H.D. Fellow for the academic year 1991-1992 will be Donna Krolik Hollenberg, who will be pursuing research, in collaboration with Louis H. Silverstein, on an edition of the H.D.-Pearson correspondence. H.D. scholars interested in applying for this fellowship or other related awards from the Beinecke should write for information to this address: Director, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 1603A Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-1603. The deadline for applications is in January.

#### REVIEW: H.D. AND ORPHEUS/EURYDIKE

A review of Klaus Theweleit, *Orpheus (und) Eurydike*, Volume 1 of *Buch der Könige*, 4 volumes (Basel, Frankfurt a. M.: Stroemfeld/ Roter Stern, 1988. By Helen Sword.

In *Buch der Könige (The Book of Kings)*, a massive multi-volume undertaking that makes his previous tour-de-force *Male Fantasies* look like a masterpiece of rigorous editing in comparison, renegade cultural historian Klaus Theweleit takes on one of Western culture's most wide-ranging and enduring myths, namely that of Orpheus, the archetypal poet/priest whose failure to rescue Eurydice from Hell mirrors, or so Theweleit argues, the real-life subjection of women by male artists and intellectuals. Three future volumes, Theweleit informs us, will consider Gottfried Benn, Sigmund Freud, and Louis-Ferdinand Céline, respectively, as paradigmatic Orpheus figures;

meanwhile Volume I, *Orpheus (und) Eurydike*, offers a wide-ranging (1,222-page) introduction to Orpheus' fate in the literature and popular culture of the twentieth century and indeed of all Western civilization. Exploring the Orphic dimensions, whether overt or covert, of a variety of literary and non-literary texts, Theweleit discusses not only such German-speaking luminaries as Benn, Kafka, Rilke, and Brecht but also works by a startling array of other creative figures, ranging from Ovid, Dante, and Monteverde to Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock, Busby Berkeley, and the Kinks.

The central focus of *Orpheus (und) Eurydike*—insofar as any book so sprawling and amorphous can be said to have a center at all—is on the ways in which male artists throughout history have, in effect, built their artistic successes upon the deaths of women, not only by manipulating, objectivizing, and thus essentially annihilating “the female” through their art but also by commodifying real-life women, cold-bloodedly sacrificing wives, lovers, daughters, and female colleagues to the contingencies of male artistic production. Yet Theweleit is careful to include in *Orpheus (und) Eurydike* the voices of several women as well, with important sections devoted to the German poet Else Lasker-Schüler, whose brief but intensive literary and sexual liaison with Gottfried Benn he reads in terms of its Orphic dynamics, and to H.D., whose 1917 poem “Eurydice” clearly reveals the extent to which Ezra Pound's erstwhile fiancée, Richard Aldington's wife, and D.H. Lawrence's self-professed soul-mate was aware of her own potential role as her male peers' sacrificial Eurydice.

Focusing on H.D.'s account in *End to Torment* of her youthful relationship with Ezra Pound, Theweleit demonstrates in the closing chapter of his book not only how H.D. resisted Pound's attempts to make her into one of the subjected or rejected women on whom he would build his art—others, such as Dorothy Shakespear Pound and the sculptor Sheri Martinelli (“Undine”), were not, Theweleit indicates, so lucky—but also how, as a powerful poet in her own right, she would refuse to imitate Orpheus/Pound's vampiric productive mode. Quoting from her poem “Ariadne” (CP 330-35), in which Theseus' abandoned bride declares her desire to weave a tapestry so “clear” and “fair” in its images that all men who see it will stop and gaze in wonder, Theweleit notes: “[H.D.] wanted to make men from poems, not poems in the form a woman, made from a woman's body. To help Theseus out. For that she needed no ‘dead man’” (1114).

Though sensitive in its reading of *End to Torment* and perceptive in its conclusions about H.D.'s Eurydicean powers of aesthetic resistance, Theweleit's discussion offers, generally speaking, little new insight into or startling analysis of H.D.'s work; in fact the author's unconventional, sometimes infuriating interpretative mode, which relies primarily upon impressionistic, fragmentary meditations on primary texts, is in many ways so similar to H.D.'s own “palimpsestic” style that it seems more to replicate her textual strategies than to unravel them. Yet Theweleit's chapter on H.D. is noteworthy, indeed remarkable, both for the extraordinary reverence with which he clearly regards her writing—in one footnote, for instance, he calls *Tribute to Freud*, which he will discuss in his forthcoming volume on Freud, “one of the most enigmatic and beautiful books that

I know" (1098)—and indeed for the very fact that he is familiar with her work at all. Although several of her major texts have been translated into German, H.D. has remained until recently virtually unknown in German academic and literary circles. Thus, despite minor factual inaccuracies—Theweleit describes Pennsylvania as being in New England, calls D.H. Lawrence's wife Frieda the sister of Baron von Richthofen (the "Red Baron") when she was in fact his cousin, and confuses the dates of some of H.D.'s early encounters with Pound—H.D.'s prominent position in this major work by an important German author both confirms and is sure to contribute to her growing international reputation.

Although it seems unlikely, both because of its length and because it deals largely with German-speaking writers, that it will be translated into English in the near future, *Orpheus (und) Eurydike* merits perusal not only by those H.D. scholars who read German but by those who do not as well. Packed with hundreds of illustrations supplementing, often with no captions or commentary, Theweleit's arguments about how patriarchal artistic production persistently reenacts Orphic strategies of female containment, the book is stimulating and thought-provoking even when considered merely as an imagistic sourcebook. The section on H.D. and Pound alone, for instance, includes not only a number of standard photos familiar to students of both poets (a youthful H.D. on horseback; the Flower Observatory where Professor Doolittle worked; the Doolittle home in Pennsylvania; the Swiss clinic where H.D. composed *End to Torment*; Ezra Pound sporting a variety of goatees) and also an eclectic, often baffling, always fascinating array of other illustrations: the frontispiece of a tenth-century psalter showing Orpheus charming the beasts; an 1872 painting by John Gast depicting the laying of telegraph lines across the American West; a frame from *Batman* in which Bruce Wayne's mansion can be seen to bear a striking resemblance to the Doolittle homestead; an excerpt from *Maus*, Art Spiegelman's 1986 cartoon account of a Jewish family's grim post-Holocaust existence; a Delacroix interior; a 1948 sculpture of Orpheus by Ossip Zadkine; a photo of Tara from *Gone with the Wind*; a view of an Aztec temple; and, last but not least, depictions of three encounters between sub- or superhuman men and mermaids (namely an illustration from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, a still of Boris Karlov clutching an aquatic beauty in the movie *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, and a comic strip frame showing "the farewell kiss between a SUPERHUMAN and a MERMAID!"). Elsewhere in the volume can be found, frequently in bizarre juxtapositions, everything from Chagall paintings and Dürer etchings to stills of Jimmy Stewart in *Vertigo*, drawings of Babar the elephant, and campy 1960s photographs with titles like "The Static Electric Affect of Minnie Mouse on Mickey Mouse Balloons." Though ultimately no more optimistic in its conclusions about ancient and modern sexual politics than *Male Fantasies*, Theweleit's sprawling, highly unsettling catalogue of misogynist iconography and Fascist mythmaking, *Orpheus (und) Eurydike* offers a similarly intense and equally intriguing look at the dark but often ticklish underbelly of Western art and popular culture.