

# NOTES

## RECENT BOOKS ON H.D.

**H.D. and Freud: Bi-Sexuality and a Feminine Discourse.** By Claire Buck. Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. Using the tools of current theory and psychoanalysis, Claire Buck here places H.D.'s work importantly within the context of theory which describes the construction of the subject, and its sexual identification in relation to language. In doing so she re-examines H.D.'s own major concerns and offers many new theoretical and interpretative insights into the work of this major American poet.

**Richard Aldington and H.D.: The Early Years in Letters.** Edited with an Introduction by Caroline Zilboorg. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. cloth \$35. Richard Aldington's letters to H.D. during and following World War I chronicle the demise of their marriage as well as the development of their poetry during this time—years to which H.D. palimpsestically returned in prose and verse and on which Aldington drew in his later fiction and poetry.

## RECENT ESSAYS ON H.D.

Jane Augustine. "Modernist Moravianism: H.D.'s Unpublished Novel *The Mystery*." *Sagetrieb* 9.1-2 (Spring-Fall 1990): 65-78.

Maria Camboni. "H.D.: La città come palinsesto." *Rivista di Studi Anglo-Americani* 6 (1990): 397-406.

Gisela Ecker. "Die Glückselige Einheitlichkeit des Weibes' und 'Woman Is Perfect': Lou Andreas Salome und H.D. in der Schule bei Freud." *Femmes Frauen Women*. Ed. Françoise van Rossum-Guyon. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990.

Susan Edmunds. "'I Read the Writing When He Seized My Throat': Hysteria and Revolution in H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*." *Contemporary Literature* 32.4 (Winter 1991): 471-95.

Mary E. Finn. "The Need for a New Modernism: H.D. and Our Present Critical Fictions: A Review Essay." *South Atlantic Review* 56.1 (Jan. 1991): 93-98.

Miriam Fuchs. "H.D.'s *The Gift*: 'Hide-and Seek' with the 'Skeleton-Hand of Death.'" *Redefining Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction: An Essay Collection*. Ed. Janice Morgan, Colette T. Hall, and Carol L. Snyder. New York: Garland, 1991.

Albert Gelpi. "Two Ways of Spelling It Out: An Archetypal-Feminist Reading of H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Adrienne Rich's *Sources*." *Southern Review* 26.2 (Spring 1990): 266-84.

Cynthia Hogue. "(Re)Placing Woman: The Politics and Poetics of Gender in H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*." *American Poetry* 8.1 (Fall 1990): 87-99.

Cassandra Laity. "H.D. and A. C. Swinburne: Decadence and Sapphic Modernism." *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*. Ed. Karla Jay, Joanne Glasgow, and Catherine R. Stimpson. New York: New York UP, 1990.

Sarah Schuyler. "Double-Dealing Fictions." *Genders* 9 (1990): 75-92.

Cheryl Walker. "Women and Time: H.D. and the Greek Persona." A chapter in *Masks Outrageous and Austere: Culture, Psyche, and Persona in Modern Women Poets*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. 105-34.

Caroline Zilboorg. "Joint Venture: Richard Aldington, H.D., and the Poets' Translation Series." *Philological Quarterly* 70.1 (Winter 1991): 67-98.

#### RECENT DISSERTATIONS ON H.D.

[This list begins with dissertations completed in 1989 and 1990, supplementing the comprehensive listing in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990) 473-75. Reference is also given here to the publication of the abstract in *International Dissertation Abstracts*.]

Claire Buck. "Reading the Feminine Self: H.D./Freud/Psychoanalysis." University of Kent at Canterbury. *DA* 50.12 (June 1990): 3959-60A.

Laurie Case. "H.D. and Her Poetry: An Adult Developmental Approach to the Question of Women's Creative Productivity." The Wright Institute, 1990. *DA* 51.5 (Nov. 1990): 2603B.

Rosemary Cleary. "Haunting Households, Heidegger, and Holy Ghosts: A Psychology of the Family within the Economy of Culture." University of Dallas, 1990. *DA* 51.6 (Dec. 1990): 3112B.

Patricia Cramer. "Matriarchal Myth-Making for a Post-Patriarchal Age: The Anti-War Writing of Virginia Woolf and Hilda Doolittle." University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989. *DA* 50.7 (Jan. 1990): 2060-61A.

Elizabeth Caroline Dodd. "Reticence and the Lyric: The Development of a Personal Classicism among Four Women Poets of the Twentieth Century." Indiana University, 1989. *DA* 50.12 (June 1990): 3945A.

Alice Kathleen Hagood Gambrell. "The Disquieting Muse: New World Women Artists and Modern Fictions of Alterity." University of Virginia, 1990. *DA* 51.11 (May 1991): 3738A.

Vicki Ann Graham. "The Aesthetics of Perfection: H.D., Moore, Bishop, and Plath." University of California at Berkeley, 1989. *DA* 51.8 (Feb. 1991): 2744A.

Margaret Atkins Quamme. "The Interaction of Lyric and Narrative in the Long Modern American Poem." Brown University, 1990. *DA* 51.11 (May 1991): 3746A.

Victoria Rosen. "H.D. and Adrienne Rich: Feminist Poetic Responses to War." Syracuse University, 1989. *DA* 51.6 (Dec. 1990): 2050A.

#### H.D. AND MORAVIAN TRADITION: A LETTER AND A RESPONSE

The following is a letter to the editor from Michael Boughn, in response to the two essays in the last issue of the *Newsletter* by Jane Augustine and Rev. Henry Williams. Following his letter is a reply by Jane Augustine.

*Michael Boughn*

I was very happy to see Jane Augustine's piece on *The Mystery* and Henry Williams piece on H.D.'s Moravian heritage, both of which address the vital center of H.D.'s thinking about the world. I found most of the writing fascinating and valuable. A couple of points, however, raised problems for me. At the top of the list is the notion that *The Mystery* is unreadable. I have heard this repeated a number of times from various sources and can't, for the life of me, figure out why H.D. scholars, in 1991, are promulgating this line. One would think that at the end of the twentieth century, a century which produced so many "unreadable" authors, including Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Dorothy Richardson, etc, we would have a slightly more sophisticated line on this question of so-called "readability."

Personally, I have read *The Mystery* several times and find it ever more fascinating. Harvey Brown took it as one of his main texts when he was dying. I suspect that, as usual, what is really at stake here is not the text itself but the conceptual frameworks the reader brings to it. Joyce was "unreadable" to someone locked into "realism" as a mode of thought. H.D. seems to be "readable" as long as she can be translated into currently trendy sociological modes of thought. She becomes "unreadable" when the writing moves so far outside the limits of the sociological that those locked into that mode no longer understand or find interesting what she is doing. It's like Pauline Kael trying to watch *Empire of the Sea*.

The notion that somehow the mystery can be "unveiled" indicates the problem here. The temple of Artemis at Sais contained, if memory serves me, an inscription that read something like "I am all that has been, is, and shall be and no man can lift my veil." The mystery that interested H.D. is certainly of that order, and it may be very well that the "unreadability" (for which read "difficulty") of the writing is manifestation of that fact, that we must learn to "read" the difficulty that the words embody.

Henry Williams' otherwise interesting rehearsal of Moravian history equally, it seems, wants to skip over the difficulties. When I was in Bethlehem several years ago, I visited the Moravian Museum and was guided by a delightful woman, full of fascinating stories of early Bethlehem. When we reached the chapel, she stood next to the Gutenberg Bible and told all of us in the tour how the Moravians really were not much different from the Lutherans. Meanwhile, behind her hanging in front of the seats in the chapel was John Valentine Haidt's painting "Christ Revealing His Wounds," about as Lutheran a painting as "Les Belles Dames d'Avignon." In the painting a hieratic Christ hangs in black space, the right hand raised in blessing, an enormous vaginal wound in his side, his face illuminated with a Buddha-like bliss. I have never seen any painting of Christ from any period or any church that comes close to the mystery of Haidt's painting. Interestingly enough, the painting was done during the Sifting Period (Haidt joined the Moravians in 1740; the Sifting Period extended from 1743-1750), precisely the period in Moravian history most interesting to H.D.

Why was she so interested in the Sifting Period, which the Rev. Williams skips over so

lightly? What is the connection between the ecstatic/erotic outburst of that period and both *The Mystery* and Mamalie's secret (another *Mystery*) in *The Gift*? How does this all tie in to the great Gnostic War which underlies the War trilogy and H.D.'s sense of the transmission of an outlaw knowledge that has escaped destruction by both Judeo-Christian monotheism and the dictatorship of the sociological? What is at stake?

Anyway, these are a couple of the issues that came to mind after reading the last issue.

*Jane Augustine*

I'm delighted that Michael Boughn is passionately interested in the questions I'm investigating concerning H.D.'s thought-world, her relationship to the Sifting Period, Mamalie's secret in *The Gift*, and her understanding of herself as an initiate into an extremely ancient spiritual tradition. Some results of my work appear in my annotated edition of *The Mystery* (Ph.D. dissertation, 1988) and in an essay published in *Sagetrieb* last year (see "Recent Essays on H.D."). The investigation is continuing through my preparation of the full text of *The Gift*.

When I wrote that "it cannot be argued that *The Mystery* is a readable novel," I meant "readable" not in an interpretative sense but in the technical, almost mechanical sense. The surface of the text presents formidable obstacles, such as delayed exposition, which combine with obscure Moravian references to interfere with comprehension temporarily, at least—a rather different order of difficulty, I believe, from that presented by Stein, Joyce, or H.D.'s earlier modernist texts. These technical problems are analyzed in the introduction to my edition of the novel. "Unveiling" the wordings of *The Mystery* I feel brings the reader closer to engagement with the true mysteries of the mind and eternity which are H.D.'s perennial concern.

#### H.D. IN CORNWALL, SUMMER 1991

This report is contributed by Roz Carroll.

The second "H.D. Reading Party," organized by Diana Collecott and Harriet Tarlo, took place from 29th June to 5th July in Cornwall. Fundamental to the ethos of the week was the coming together of a group of fourteen women, drawn by their interest in H.D., to talk theoretically, practically, personally, academically, emotionally, humorously, to read papers, to read poetry, to take walks, to swim in the sea, to cook together, eat, drink, laugh, sing, and sleep.

Women's knowledge and means of self-representation was at stake both in the form and content of discussion: from the rigorous debate on our theoretical assumptions as feminists, steered by Trudi Tate, to Roz Carroll's emphasis on acknowledging the subjective process through which we arrive at our interpretations of H.D.'s texts, and from the practical task of constructing a rainbow from materials gathered in the "real" world for Julia Bell's Color Workshop, to the close reading and technical challenges in looking at archival material presented by Harriet Tarlo, to the incantatory performance of Julie Robertson's madrigal of herself, Eileen Gregory, and H.D.

The wrestle with essentialism and idealism—seen on the one hand as empowering to us as

women, on the other, as dangerous and indulgent—was a charged and pivotal theme. Roz Carroll's paper on trance argued that H.D.'s "gift" is the capacity to know, intuit, at a gut/belly/womb level, and that this skill derives from the experience of infant-mother symbiosis. Following on from that, Kathy Hopewell's paper on the Kristevan semiotic posed challenging questions as to what it was possible to represent of women's experience in language. The next day Liz York explored the politics of "Validating the Lesbian Body," stressing the need to point up sexual specificity and reorganize the categories which identify the lesbian in language. Faith Pullin's presentation of Dorothy Richardson's polemic in *Pilgrimage* and Trudi Tate's analysis of the issues currently engaging feminists provided the co-ordinates to frame this passionate debate. The topic was taken beyond H.D., beyond feminist literature, to the boundaries of the personal and political, to our role as critics, as professionals, and as individuals in a world where we seek radical change.

A number of presentations looked under and into the "shadow" area of the psyche trawled by H.D., and evoked in the line from *Helen in Egypt*, "a woman's wiles are like a net." Jeanne Houghton's paper focused on *Sea Garden*, its powerful undercurrents and the theme of survival in a hostile environment, concluding with the quotation from Virginia Woolf, "who shall measure the hate and violence of the poet's heart when caught in a woman's body?" This connected well with Harriet Tarlo's discussion of *Helen in Egypt*, where the figure of Clytemnestra, so central to H.D.'s initial project, was repressed and subdued in re-drafting the poem. We weighed the function and meaning of the sister, so ambivalently presented as other, as double, as one with Helen herself. Harriet talked about the interchanges between Pearson and H.D., and other biographical data, which had an effect on the writing. This generated debate on process itself—H.D.'s creative process, and our process in reading. Julie Robertson's paper, on a subsequent evening, was an example of criticism-in-process. Aptly titled "Circling," it orbited around the "missing center of indeterminate meaning" and the boundaries of the self: "self-lost, self-absorbed, unbounded self." Throughout the week there was an emphasis by some of the group on psychoanalytic interpretation, including the work of the (until recently) neglected psychoanalyst and theorist Melanie Klein, who explored violence, destructiveness, and splitting as characteristic of the infant mind.

One of the highlights of the week was the artist Julia Ball's Color Workshop. Using prisms against pieces of paper variously composed of black and white shapes, we explored the boundary between light and dark and the production of color as a result of complementarity. Julia touched upon the spiritual significance of color and its connection with the Yogic energy centers or chakras, an esoteric system with which H.D. was familiar. Then the group went outside to comb the fields and beaches for a spectrum of colors of the rainbow. In the evening we read "Hymen," with a heightened awareness of H.D.'s vivid and precise transformation of color.

On the final day the focus was turned outward again, toward the future, as Pat Moyer talked about mainstreaming H.D. into the syllabus. She noted the ways in which women are excluded, or have been included as tragic suicidal figures of mainly biographical interest. The culminating paper was given by Diana Collecott, whose spirit had brought the H.D. week into being. She spoke



of the secret cultural traditions or gifts kept hidden—prophecy, vision, and the realm beyond the immediate. Her discussion of the deleted passages of *The Gift* brought the week full circle back to the theme of the lost, suppressed, and the politics of process, context, and construction.

#### H.D. READING PARTY, SUMMER 1992

You are invited to join the third H.D. Reading Party, which will take place from 4 to 9 July 1992, in Trevone on the North Cornish coast. Trevone, where Dorothy Richardson lived and wrote, is midway between two castles on this glittering shore: Tinagel, of Arthurian legend, and Bosigran, where H.D. and Bryher met in 1916. We shall gather in a large Victorian house at the sea's edge, with a sheltered garden and wonderful views. Accommodation is limited to 8 women sharing rooms in the house and up to 8 in the guest houses close by. Our theme this year will be "TRIPTYCH," with a special focus on H.D.'s *Trilogy*. Presentations are invited on any aspect of *Trilogy*, its relationship with other works (by H.D. or by others), or on the significance of threeness in H.D.'s writing. Possible areas for exploration are biographical, historical and literary contexts, gender, imagery, numerology, poetics, prosody, spirituality. If you are interested in participating, we should like to hear from you as soon as possible and, at the very latest, by 1 March 1992. For more information contact Diana Collecott or Harriet Tarlo / H.D. Reading Party / School of English / University of Durham / DH1 3JT. Tel: 091-374-2730; Fax: 091-374-3740.

#### H.D. IN ITALY

This report is contributed by Raffaella Baccolini.

On October 18, 1990 a "Giornata di studio" (seminar) on H.D. took place in Italy. The seminar, entitled "H.(ilda) D.(oolittle) e il suo mondo" (H.D. and Her World), was organized by Prof. Marina Camboni of the University of Palermo and was held at the Department of Literature and Philosophy in Palermo. The seminar was divided into two sections: the first one focused primarily on H.D.'s relation to other writers of the period and her position in the Modernist tradition; the second section dealt with H.D. and explored some of her works.

The seminar was chaired by Maria Camboni, who introduced the first speaker, Mary de Rachewiltz. She gave a touching account of the relationship and reciprocal influence of the two American poets, H.D. and Pound. The papers which followed focused on "American Hai-ku" (Barbara Lanati, Univ. of Turin), "H.D. and Dorothy Richardson" (Silvana Sciarrino, Univ. of Palermo), and "H.D. and Greek Lyricists" (Salvatore Nicosia, Univ. of Palermo). Lanati's talk concentrated on the period of Imagism, and the relationship between H.D., Pound, and Amy Lowell. Lanati compared the Hai-ku technique to the innovative method used by H.D. in her dramatic monologues. Sciarrino's paper, on the other hand, explored the relationship between H.D., Richardson, and other women writers and editors of the time and pointed to the importance of women for the shaping of Modernism. Nicosia concentrated on H.D.'s "translations" of the Greek lyricists. These are free translations, where one image, in particular, has caught the

attention of the American poet, who then translates the rest of the lyric. Nicosia rightly identified as one of H.D.'s sources the collection edited by J. W. Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* (London, Longmans, Green, 1911) (cf. HDN 3.2: 21).

The seminar continued with the second section, whose speakers were Marina Sbisà (Univ. of Trieste), "Levels and Directions of the Subject in *Trilogy*," who gave a linguistic analysis of the subject in *Trilogy*; Patrizia Lendinara (Univ. of Palermo) on "H.D.'s Linguistic Imaginary"; and Raffaella Baccolini (Univ. of Bologna) on H.D., Dante, and Pound; and two Palermo students, Cinzia Leone and Alessandra Benanti, who had just completed their theses on *Trilogy* and *Helen in Egypt* respectively. Sbisà's analysis pointed to the plurality of the subject of enunciation in H.D.'s text: at first apologetic, then assertive, and finally commentative. Lendinara, on the other hand, focused on H.D.'s language, which is often an alchemical one, and on her etymological method which is close to that of ancient etymology (i.e., associative). Baccolini's paper, "'Words were her plague and words were her redemption': H.D., Pound, Dante, and the Language of Tradition," explored H.D.'s ambivalent and ambiguous relationship with tradition, in particular with that of the love lyric. The re-vision of Dante's and Pound's lyrics and their use of language allows H.D.'s woman poet to reclaim language and her position as subject. The last two papers, Leone's "The Figure of the Lady in *Trilogy*" and Benanti's "H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*: the Rewrite of a Myth," explored the different myths and traditions which form H.D.'s female characters. As far as *Trilogy* is concerned, Leone's analysis concentrated on the different sources for the figure of the Lady: the troubadour tradition, the esoteric tradition, and the Catholic Mary. Benanti's paper started with a discussion of Homer's Helen, but also included an analysis of Helen Dendritis and fertility rites as well as the legend of Tristan and Isolde.

The seminar was the first of its kind to be held in Italy. Although the distant location did not favor participation from all over the country, the event was of fundamental importance for the development of H.D. scholarship in Italy. The papers are forthcoming in a volume, edited by Marina Camboni, published by Sciascia in Palermo.

#### **RICHARD ALDINGTON: A CONFERENCE AND A CALL FOR PAPERS**

An International Conference on Richard Aldington, celebrating the centennial of his birth, will be held July 5-8 in Montpellier, France. Those desiring to deliver papers, propose panels or other activities, or attend this exciting event should contact: Professor Caroline Zilboorg, Department of English, Lake Erie College, Painesville, Ohio 44077, U.S.A. Deadline for submission of 2-page proposals for papers or panels is February 1, 1992. Telephone: (216) 352-3361 or 354-5447. The conference will be held at the Université Paul Valéry, a division of the University of Montpellier. Accommodation may be arranged through the Office du Tourisme de la Région de Montpellier, 78, avenue du Pirée, 34000 Montpellier. Registration fee: 500 French francs, to be paid to M. Blayac, Richard Aldington Conference, Crédit Commercial de France, 7, Place du Marché aux Fleurs, 34000 Montpellier, France.