

Women, War, and Possible New Worlds: Utopia in H.D.'s Poetry

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Muna Abdulkadhim Nima Al-Abboodi
School of English
University of Leicester

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Abstract

Muna Abdulkadhim Al-Abboodi

This thesis examines H.D.'s treatment of utopia, offering a new perspective both on H.D. studies and studies of utopia, which typically focus on prose. The thesis traces the chronological development of H.D.'s utopian poetry, starting with her early years of experimental Imagism in 1914 and ending with her epics in 1960. My study aims to diversify existing critical approaches to H.D. which, according to many feminist critics, are limited in their treatment of her poetry. Susan Gubar states that the "critical establishment" reads H.D.'s poetry "only one way, from the monolithic perspective of the twentieth-century trinity of imagism, psychoanalysis, and modernism" (20). My work challenges established readings of H.D.'s poetry through a distinctly utopian vision. Likewise, this thesis diversifies studies of utopia, which typically focus on prose, by analysing poetry. I provide a new approach to H.D. by reading her poetry in relation to theories of utopia offered by Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman and Ernst Bloch. I argue that looking at utopia in H.D.'s work is fundamental to an understanding of her as a female poet who resists patriarchy. I contend that in her poetry H.D. creates a feminist utopia as an antidote to the dystopia of war. Her poems envision alternative spaces that counter the war-shattered world. In those "other spaces," to use Foucault's expression, H.D.'s women transcend the limits of their prescribed social role or tarnished historical reputation to become leaders, saviours, and world-shapers.

Dedication

To My World:

My mother and my father

To the innocent souls in my country

that were taken by wars

To Baghdad, the city that was once a utopia,

and now . . .

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List of Abbreviations

Apology of Socrates: *Apology*

Collected Poems: *CP*

Helen in Egypt: *HE*

Letters of D. H. Lawrence: *Letters*

The Flowering of the Rod: *Rod*

The Walls Do Not Fall: *Walls*

Tribute to the Angels: *Angels*

Tribute to Freud: *TF*

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Introduction

H.D., WAR AND UTOPIA

Two or three people, with healthy bodies and the right sort of receiving brains, could turn the whole tide of human thought, could direct lightning flashes of electric power to slash across and destroy the world of dead, murky thought.

Two or three people gathered together in the name of truth, beauty, over-mind consciousness could bring the whole force of this power back into the world. (H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision* 97)

These lines reflect the Anglo-American modernist poet H.D.'s belief in utopian thinking as the panacea for "the world of dead [and] murky thought." It is interesting that she believes that by deploying the accoutrements of modernity, the flashes of electric power, to bring about positive change. Linked to this faith in modern technology is a commitment to very classical ideas about truth, beauty, and the power of the human mind to reconstitute the world and to bring about a new state, a new order, a kind of utopia. In this thesis, I propose that H.D.'s utopia combines different elements that work well with a perception of utopia as indicating contradictory connotations. Utopia, as a place that denotes both a non-existent place and an ideal place, fuses the boundaries between the real and the unreal. It is a place of the imagination, a netherworld, an indeterminate space which promises a possibly better version of the world in which we live, therefore reliant for its existence upon that world it promises to exceed. As much of H.D.'s vision of utopia is driven by an interest promulgating gender equality, I will argue that her poetry blurs the binaries of gender divisions, and creates futuristic visions while concurrently exploring the past. Accordingly, I aim to make the case

for H.D.'s utopia as an ever-evolving and dynamic. I believe that throughout her career she envisioned and revised her utopia in unconventional ways. These ways, I argue, mark a departure from the standard static vision of utopia (as a fixed place that exists somewhere) and anticipates the "liquid" state of modernity, to borrow Zygmunt Bauman's words (*Liquid Times* 79).

This thesis focuses upon the utopian and visionary aspects of H.D.'s work and I hypothesise that her poetry often links the concept of utopia with war; the experience seems to be very much wrapped up with her very concept of utopia. The impact of military conflict on H.D.'s work is evident in her oft-repeated phrase "the war is over." It recurs throughout her work and in her letters (Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H.D.* 119, 132, 136), her novels *Paint It Today* (80) and *Kora and Ka with Mira-Mare* (41). Specifically, we see it in her poems *White Rose and the Red* (103), "R.A.F" (CP 490, 495), "Triplex" (CP 291), and *Helen in Egypt* (72, 99, 121, 217). This phrase reveals a constant struggle between the poet's hopes and fears. Paradoxically, because it signifies the end of war and its potential repetition, evoking the expression "over and over," which means "again and again."

During the First World War, H.D. emerged as a key modernist, a female poet who celebrated womanhood in her writing, often using and experimenting with the forms of the past to create the poetry of an emergent modernity. Like many of her contemporary modernists, she worried about a second war in the making after the first one, and she was especially concerned with women's status during war. H.D. wrote *Trilogy* (1946) in London during the Blitz and because of her "phobias about khaki, fear [of] the street and soldiers," she lost a child, changed countries, suffered post-war trauma and two nervous breakdowns (qtd. in Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* 189). H.D. was aware that the world she lived in was marked by uncertainty. As she wrote in her autobiography: "I knew that I, like most of the people I knew, in England, America and on the Continent of Europe, were drifting . . .

Where? I did not know but at least I accepted the fact that we were drifting” (*TF* 20). To halt this impression of “drifting” she created a body of literary work which she filled with strong female protagonists empowered to reconstruct the nightmarish world of war. Arguably, this reconstructed world, shaped and determined by women, reconstitutes a kind of utopia.

My central aim in this thesis is to examine how H.D. presents the roles of women in times of political wars. Linked to this aim are four objectives that expand and support my enquiry: I will explore the nature of H.D.’s utopia; I will ask what the role is that women play in the making of the poet’s utopia; and I will explore how H.D.’s work relates to other (modernist) representations of utopia. I will also examine the extent to which witnessing the Two World Wars affects H.D.’s poetic view of the present and the future. I argue, in relation to these objectives, that H.D. situates herself as a modernist writer whose vision of utopia is predicated by her views regarding women and war. I will chronologically map the development of H.D.’s vision of utopia, especially in relation to gender and war, choosing selective examples from her 49 years of writing poetry.

The chief contribution of my thesis to critical debates about H.D.’s work is that it offers a new textual reading of her poetry, looking at the poet through a philosophical lens. In its deployment of modernist theories of utopia, this study draws on changing landmarks in H.D.’s life and career, especially those related her to wartime experiences, to extrapolate the writer’s changing and diversifying forms/tropes of utopia throughout her works. H.D.’s work did not receive much critical attention until the 1960s when it was rediscovered by second-wave feminists. Susan Stanford Friedman is a pioneer in publishing H.D.’s letters and editing her novels, as well as writing critical analyses of H.D.’s work, including fiction and letters, psychoanalysis, feminist theories and cultural studies.¹ With regard to H.D.’s poetry,

¹ *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher, and Their Circle* (2001) includes first-time publications of the letters exchanged between H.D. and her lover, Bryher. For psychoanalysis, see *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (1981). For feminist theories and culturalism, consult *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998) and *Penelope’s Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.’s Fiction* (1990).

Adalaide Morris adopts a lexicological approach in *How to Live/What to Do: H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* (2003). H.D. has also been analysed by numerous scholars interested in postmodernism, feminism, trauma, war, mysticism, and religion.² Jeanne Heuving's *Modern and Contemporary Poetics: The Transmutation of Love and Avant-Garde Poetics* (2016) offers the most recent study of H.D.'s Imagist poetry. The work examines the altered roles of love, Eros, and sexuality in American avant-garde poetry, including that of H.D., Ezra Pound, Robert Duncan, Nathaniel Mackey, and Kathleen Fraser. Heuving investigates the relationship between the writers' love lives and their characters' love arguing that sexual love projects served to "libidinise" poetics. Matte Robinson's *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.'s Poetry and Prose* (2016) is another recent work that explores H.D.'s later works through occult signs and sources, focusing on the writer's esoteric materials and her own annotations in notebooks and manuscripts.

One study that identifies some of H.D.'s work as utopian is Suzanne Hobson's *Angels of Modernism: Religion, Culture, Aesthetics, 1910 -1960* (2011). In her chapter "The Necessary Angel of Earth': World War II and the Utopian Imagination," Hobson considers H.D.'s use of the image of angels in her poetry during the Second World War, situates her among other writers and identifies H.D.'s imagination as utopian. However, Hobson's main aim is to discuss how H.D.'s angels redefine the cultural contexts of modernism, with particular emphasis upon religion and mysticism. While Hobson's study concentrates on the importance of angelology in the twentieth-century culture, my work traces utopian elements throughout H.D.'s poetry in relation to women's roles in times of war.

² See also Elizabeth Willis's paper, "A Public History of the Dividing Line: H.D., the Bomb, and the Roots of the Postmodern" (2007) which traces references to postmodern themes in *Tribute to Freud and Helen in Egypt*, without adopting a consistent postmodernist ideological framework. Sarah Graham's "Falling Walls: Trauma and Testimony in H.D.'s *Trilogy*" (2007) tackles the impact of war and trauma on H.D.'s poetry, particularly on *Trilogy*. Elizabeth Anderson's study *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (2013) offers a comparative approach on mysticism between the texts of H.D. and Helen Cixous, focusing on H.D.'s work that was written from the 1940s onwards. In her introduction to *Within the Walls and What Do I Love?* (2014), Annette Debo offers a recent study of H.D.'s personal life and the social status of women during the Second World War.

In discussing utopian themes in H.D.'s poetic oeuvre, my thesis situates itself amongst the very few studies that examine the depiction of utopia in poetry, such as Nicholas M. Williams's *Ideology and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake* (2006) and Norman Finkelstein's *The Utopian Moment in Contemporary American Poetry* (1993).³ Williams focuses on the intellect and the corporeal being, comparing Blake's poetry to selected utopian texts of his contemporaries, among which only one female-authored text is examined. Finkelstein's study deals with selected male poets from the 1970s onwards. The book has scattered references to earlier poets, such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and their circle but there is no mention or discussion of female poets.

The focus on male writers in the field of utopian studies is also evident in topics on modernism and politics. For example, Leon Surette's *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (2011) discusses politics and literature in the works of three male poets: Pound, Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis. The book addresses events related to the outbreak of the First World War and Nazism, and refers to H.D. only in terms of her intimate relationships with male authors: her husband Aldington is said to have "married Pound's undergraduate sweetheart" (83). Nathan Waddell's *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900-1920* (2012) discusses the effect of the First World War on politically conscious male writers. In examining his selected texts, Waddell admits that he is not interested in discussing utopia in the way it has been traditionally conceived, as a haven or a response to social illnesses. Instead, he examines early modernist texts from the perspectives of perfectibility and meliorism, looking for utopian "freights" or implications in literary and non-literary modern textualities. In this way, he presents utopia as a mode for socio-political reform and as a critique of ideological and political deficiencies of the age.

³ There are few studies that relate the genre of poetry to theories of utopia, as the latter is usually associated with novels and philosophical studies, especially in the fields of Romanticism or postmodernism.

H.D.'s work has been overlooked by scholars who investigate utopianism. Lisa Simon argues that one reason for the critical neglect of H.D.'s early poems was sexism. While some of the works of H.D.'s contemporary male writers with similarly challenging styles, like Pound and Eliot, were considered milestones of literary history, H.D.'s early works were often dismissed for being difficult (33). On the other hand, Susan Gubar notices that H.D.'s later epics "have been almost completely ignored by a critical establishment that reads her verse couplets only one way, from the monolithic perspective of the twentieth-century trinity of imagism, psychoanalysis, and modernism" (201). By providing a new reading of H.D.'s poetry in the light of various philosophical studies of utopia, I hope to challenge such dismissive attitudes (as identified by Simon and Gubar) to H.D. that stress the obscurity of her work.

My new reading proposes that the gender anonymity of poetic speakers and the uncertainty of pronoun references in H.D.'s poetry speak to her version of utopia – because of the range of possibilities it offers for one's identity and the range of potential for reversing roles that it opens – which should be analysed through a philosophical lens. My work aims to challenge established readings of H.D.'s poetry and show that her work does not only lend itself to the imagistic, psychoanalytical, or modernist readings observed by Gubar (201), but also to the framework of utopia, which is central to H.D.'s otherwise obscure and "resistant" imagery.

Specifically, I argue that H.D. envisions women as heroines, not in the traditional romantic narrative of heroes and villains, but in a radical way of repositioning them from a position of liminality to centrality. H.D. wrote in her short story "Bunny" (written in 1941)⁴ that women "are pushing out the borders, they enter the inner rim, not in any 'feminine rights' manner, but in some heroic way . . . those pretty feet are pushing forward in a new

⁴ "Bunny" is one of fourteen short stories in *Within the Walls* (written in 1941 and published in 2014 by the University Press of Florida).

dance, a cosmic dance of heroism, such as the world has never seen nor dreamed of' (110). H.D. is interested in taking on traditionally male forms, such as the epic, and recalibrate them in terms of feminist utopianism. Especially in her epics, H.D. repositions the traditionally male-centred quest of the hero into a woman-centred quest. In my investigation of her poetry, I demonstrate how H.D. creates her own Golden Age, where she links the past with the present to suggest what the future should be like. My study maps H.D.'s recurrent attempts to create a safe haven for women in a world shattered by the horrific atrocities of two world wars.

As I move through the thesis, I will examine H.D.'s poetry in the light of the utopian theories of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017), and Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), among others, and in relation to the utopian philosophical and literary writings of Thomas More (1478-1535) and Plato (428/427BC or 424/423 BC-348/347 BC). This methodology is adopted to enrich the thesis with interdisciplinary comparisons across the fields of philosophy and literature, interpreting H.D.'s poetic imagery in terms of utopian frameworks of philosophy and various aesthetic theories. It is not my intention to evaluate H.D.'s work against the works of these exemplar utopianists, but rather to provide evidence that H.D.'s utopia is a female writer's response to the "inherited" notions of patriarchal utopias created by men.

I have three reasons for employing both classical and modernist male utopian writings in my comparisons. Firstly, the literary circles from which H.D. emerged, among which she lived and communicated, and about which she wrote, were male-oriented and male-dominated. So, reading her work against this background will reveal how H.D. establishes herself as a feminist writer. Secondly, I will challenge the notion that while the visions of male writers are considered reflections of their socio-political environment, women's visions

are more commonly considered domestic and personal.⁵ I wish to move away from such depictions of women's visions and consider how women's concerns expand beyond this expected framework.⁶ Thirdly, I will argue that H.D.'s writing encapsulates an awareness of utopian thinking that predates modernist thinking and postdates the age she lived in. As I will show later in Chapter One, the founders of the very notion of utopia, Plato and Aristophanes (445-380 BC), highlighted gender differences in their portrayals of utopia, thereby marginalising or even ostracising women completely. In response, feminist utopias – including H.D.'s – emerged to reposition women and underline their role in the making of new worlds. In my reference to the genre, I adopt Carol Pearson's definition of feminist utopias: "they usually begin by showing how women are profoundly alienated and limited by patriarchal society; they then go on to acquaint the reader with an alternative society in which women could feel at home and manifest their potential" (50). I will argue that H.D. shares this vision of women and artistically redefines their social roles to present "critiques of patriarchal society," showing women to be "victims of sexism" who "are motivated to seek creative means for alleviating the discomfort" (50, 52). In this way, feminist utopias, as Carol Pearson identifies them, "tend to emphasise the forces which most directly oppress women" because they "come out of women's experience, both negative and positive" (50, 52).

This thesis traces the chronological development of H.D.'s utopian poetry, starting with her early years of experimental Imagism in 1914 and ending with her epics in 1960. The

⁵ In *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers, 1913-1946* (2001), Georgina Taylor, in relation to H.D. and her male contemporaries, argues that the critical consensus differentiates between main interests of women's and men's literary works. She states that "prose and poetry by most women writers of this network at this time [H.D.'s time] more often begins and ends with the personal, not relating it directly either to wider social issues or to abstract generalizations; there is very little philosophizing about 'civilization,' class relations, or the state of society, but much reflection on the personal psyche and its intimate connections to friends or family" (93).

⁶ In many ways, H.D. anticipates the connection between women's personal experiences and wider political contexts of their age encapsulated in the phrase "the personal is political." This phrase was first used as a slogan in second-wave feminism in the late 1960s. Later, it was widely circulated by the publication of Carol Hanisch's essay entitled "The Personal is Political" in 1969.

work consists of four chapters. The first chapter will explore H.D.'s utopia alongside influential standard, as depicted by the likes of Aristophanes and Plato, and feminist utopian texts. This chapter will also situate H.D. as a predecessor to many feminist utopias which appeared from the 1970s onwards. Significantly, by comparing H.D.'s texts to earlier and later writings, I aim to highlight her contribution to both feminism and to utopian thinking. I will argue that though the poet shared the same fear of war and the desire for change with her contemporary writers and mentors, H.D. presented a different, more complex, view of utopia regarding women. At times, the poetic voice or speaker seems to long for the union between the male and female as a nostalgic attempt to go back to the pre-war times. At other times, she stresses women's roles as creators of her utopia. Because H.D. was, throughout her private and poetic lives, concerned with women's statuses and roles, I will focus on the roles of education and religion as part of social reform and as turning points that changed writers' perceptions of women's limited roles in nuclear families. Discussing H.D.'s prose within the critical context of war and women will also show how her utopian thinking was influenced by an interest in the occult as well as in the classical worlds of deities and antiquities.

The second chapter studies H.D.'s early poetry and analyses *Sea Garden* (1916) as an example of her work during the First World War. I will contribute to H.D.'s existing studies by linking her treatment of the garden as utopia with Bauman's ideas on the modern utopia and with Wassily Kandinsky's theory of contrastive colours. Drawing on these two theorists, I will argue that H.D.'s utopia, at this stage of her writing, is shaped by the contrastive forces of nature as well as an interest in androgyny and gender. The chapter further highlights the effects of H.D.'s Moravian background on her ideas concerning the roles that poets (all poets but especially female poets) play as creators of peace and holders of divine messages. These roles, which H.D. also assigns to her female protagonists, aim to counteract the dystopian effects of war and the totalitarian costs of the growing interests in machinery.

The third chapter is concerned with the middle period of H.D.'s career, which covers the Second World War, and during which her poetry was characterised by fear and disillusionment. I take *Trilogy* (1946) as a representative text, an epic written during the bombardment of London in the war. I offer an original reading of the text by examining it in the light of Foucault's conception of utopia/heterotopias. I will argue that H.D.'s text creates different spaces that fuse real with unreal worlds and past with present tenses to counterweigh the world of war. *Trilogy's* utopia of a new space also anticipates, according to astrological studies, the arrival of the new Age of Aquarius that would be a time of peace, cosmic order, and women's empowering. Because women feature prominently in *Trilogy* as saviours, in the figures of the goddess Aphrodite, the Virgin Mary, and the Lady with the Book of Life, H.D.'s concept of heroism will also be examined in comparison with that of Thomas Carlyle. This is to show how H.D. presents a different, new model of heroism.

Chapter Four explores *Helen in Egypt* (1961), published just one year before H.D.'s death, to exemplify the later period of her career. I will offer a new reading of *Helen in Egypt* that examines it through a utopian lens. Bloch's *Principle of Hope* (1954-59) underlies my argument concerning the employment of myth in creating utopia. The chapter discusses H.D.'s recreation of the myth of Helen to clear her name from the misogynistic historical records that have presented her as the cause of the Trojan War. On a textual level, Helen eventually achieves life in a utopian world, where she is presented as free from the guilt characteristic of earlier patriarchal representations of her, and also where she can enjoy her union with her loving mortal husband. I will argue that this is a realisation of H.D.'s vision of utopia as the liberation of women.

Theoretical Framework: An Outline

H.D.'s constantly evolving vision of utopia shares similarities and differences with historical and modernist approaches to utopia. In order to address these, the first chapter will offer an account of the predominant and traditional ideas about utopia as represented by Aristophanes's *The Assembly Women* (391 BC) and Plato's *The Republic* (380 BC). These works are often considered as sympathetic to the lives and portrayal of women. I refute such considerations as Aristophanes seems to mock women as disorganised and unmerciful in his play, while Plato portrays women as lower forms of humanity of diminished intellectual capabilities.⁷ These texts shaped, to a great extent, Western utopian thinking and they set the ground for many literary tropes that appeared long after. In response to the patriarchal treatment of women in these texts, other utopian writings appeared to revolt, protest or correct many aspects concerning women's positions in familial and public spheres. I will trace this change in the understanding of the very notion of utopia and explore H.D.'s interventions in the depiction of this idealised realm. As this thesis adopts a textual approach to H.D.'s writing, I am specifically interested in her texts, rather than her biographical details, and in the recurring theme of utopia in her literary texts. In my attempt to find commonalities and/or contradictions among these approaches, I will examine a wide range of texts including, but not restricted to, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or Education* (1762), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923), H.D.'s *Palimpsest* (1926), *Asphodel* (1992), and *Bid Me to Live* (1960), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975).

⁷ I question the idea that Aristophanes's *The Assembly Women* is considered as a major "feminist utopia" (Morris and Kross 101) and Plato's *The Republic* is thought of as part of a "feminist politics" (Canto 50). The other translations of the title of Aristophanes's play are known as *Assemblywomen*, *A Parliament of Women*, *Congresswomen* and *Women in Parliament*.

In the second chapter, I will draw on Zygmunt Bauman's discussions of modern utopia and Kandinsky's theory of colours. I use both philosophical and aesthetic approaches to link H.D.'s interests in art, contrastive colours, and the wildness of nature with her presentation of *Sea Garden* (1916) as an imaginary world that resembles an unconventional Garden of Eden that is full of flowers, plants, fruit, colours, and music, all set to celebrate women and life. I choose the word "unconventional" to describe H.D.'s utopia, because modernism, as Bauman perceives it, marked a shift from the *solid* phase of utopia as being static and untrodden, like the traditional Garden of Eden, to a *liquid* utopia that is temporal and in constant change (*Liquid Times* 79). Utilising Bauman's ideas on gardeners and gamekeepers, I will develop my reading of H.D. as a utopian thinker.

I draw on Kandinsky's discussion of the utopian ambivalence of the colour blue and its changing shades and compare it to the duality of the image of the sea, whose colour and nature suggest its utopian qualities and which H.D. refers to simultaneously as the nurturer and the destroyer of life. I argue that the poetic speaker immerses herself in nature in order to reach an ideal spiritual state. This period illustrates how H.D.'s women identify themselves with the wild forces of nature, showing their strength in a dangerous world and demonstrating their departure from male protection. I will show how, in order to counteract the bleak images of the First World War, H.D. colours her garden with shades of blue, white, and green.

Bauman's theoretical framework is consulted again in Chapter Three, but this time in relation to his two concepts of utopia fear and hope. I will link H.D.'s fear of the Second World War with the counterweighing hope that she presents in *Trilogy* (1946). Bauman argues that with the advance of modernity, for instance the rise of new technologies, the decline of industrialisation, the end of empire, and the shift in non-material religious cultures, the old notion of utopia as being "the world with no accidents" or the ideal place is no longer a desirable destination (*Liquid Times* 95). He believes that utopia should not be an idealised

world with immutable perfection; it should come with emotions of fear, frustration, “improvisation and experimentation” (95). In this sense, utopia is considered a better place rather than an ideal one. *Trilogy* will also be discussed in relation to Foucault’s ideas about utopia. Foucault posits that there are utopias, heterotopias, and the real world, and that they can be understood in relation to each other. Heterotopias are representations of “real places” which are, however, distinct from these real places because they are designed “to suspect, neutralize, or invert” the prearranged connections “that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (Foucault 24-25). In other words, heterotopias are real spaces that exist as “counter-sites” to utopias that are spaces “with no real place” (24).

The whole idea of heterotopia and utopia is based on otherness. Heterotopia exists to promote utopian thinking and make it possible to perceive an alternative unreal place. A mirror, Foucault thinks, is a real space (that exists in reality) and it represents heterotopia because it reflects the unreal images (utopian space) of people who face it. I link H.D.’s use of the image of the mirror in *Trilogy* with Foucault’s description to show how she employs it to reimagine powerful mythical women within the context of contemporary London.

In the next section, I will study H.D.’s strong characters against Carlyle’s concept of heroism, his twelve men spanning Odin to Napoleon, and including Shakespeare and Cromwell, which came to dominate late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas about heroism. This is to show how, despite the fact that both H.D. and Carlyle adopt the notion of the poet as a hero and a prophet, they apply it differently. While Carlyle focused on male heroism only and often war heroes such as Napoleon and Cromwell, H.D.’s concept of heroism emerges from the need to find women heroes in order to establish peace.

The philosophical framework of Chapter Four explores Bloch’s theory of hope in relation to the later period of H.D.’s career, represented by *Helen in Egypt* (1961). Bloch believes that hope is an essential element of utopian thinking; however, it always provokes

dissatisfaction once it is achieved. Bloch notes that the impatience with one's own society or surroundings in the present and the aspiration towards the future generate a desire to daydream. For Bloch, utopia is a projection that represents the "Not-Yet" (197). This process of the "Not-Yet-Conscious, can be contained in past, present and future" worlds (xxviii). However, Bloch asserts, the achievement of one's utopian dream, or the "Not-Yet" may result in frustration because what was perceived to be an unreachable destination is finally accomplished (186). I discuss Bloch's ideas in relation to H.D.'s revision of the myth of Helen of Troy in *Helen in Egypt*, where the poet makes an analogy between the ancient Trojan War and the modern wars she experiences. This is to show how resituating her female character at the centre of the myth emphasises H.D.'s belief that powerful women can be a panacea for wartime conflict.

As Friedman notes, H.D. challenges poetic conventions through her attempt to "feminize the epic" ("Gender and Genre Anxiety" 204) to restore "a [utopian] world view buried in and degraded by patriarchal tradition" ("Creating a Women's Mythology" 166). My thesis is significant because it argues that H.D.'s feminist utopia does not eliminate men, but deprives them of their destructive powers and relocates women from the periphery to the centre so that they may assume leadership roles. H.D. revises how war is conventionally understood. The way she questions heroism and conquest undermines the basis of all wars – the masculine urge for power.

An Evolving Vision of Utopia

This thesis explores the different modes, forms and motifs that encapsulate H.D.'s utopian thinking concerning women's status in times of war. I make the case that H.D.'s

unconventional, and sometimes radical, utopian vision sits at the intersection between modernist and traditional forms of utopia. Thus, in my opinion, any attempt to restrict H.D.'s utopianism to one theory or another, or even categorise its variations under a single definition, would mean the loss of much of its important contents. However, within the paradigm of this thesis, I have selected specific features through which one can identify utopian thinking in H.D.'s work. Before outlining these aspects in the poet's works, I must clarify that the difficulty in summarising what utopia means within a specific field or genre lies in the illusiveness of the term "utopia" itself. Critics have long been trying to provide a comprehensive definition of the term utopia. However, as Kenneth Roemer observes, "[o]ne of the most exciting and ludicrous characteristics of students of utopian literature is that they often don't know what they're talking about; or, to put it more gently, they find it difficult to define their topic" ("Utopian Studies" 319-20). Roemer seems to follow in the footsteps of Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel in their assertion that "those looking for a dictionary label or a pat phrase [for utopia] had better try elsewhere" (Manuel and Manuel 5). Their reason for not providing a definition for the word is that they consider utopia an "idea with historical meaning" and, since they draw on Nietzsche's teaching that "only that which has no history can be defined," Manuel and Manuel do not find it possible to confine the word to a single definition (5). However, despite their claim, in *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979), of the impossibility of defining utopia, Manuel and Manuel seem to shed light on "social transformation" and religious utopias only. Their focus on (exclusively-male) writers "who have renewed the myth of paradise in a secular translation" (7), also seem to dismiss other types of utopia that include fantasies and daydreaming.⁸ I have used Manuel and Manuel as an example to highlight two points: first, working by *one* categorising system or choosing to restrict the term "utopia" to a traditional definition, of a place that exists

⁸ Lyman Tower Sargent defines utopianism as "social dreaming," and Bloch identifies daydreaming as a utopian mode ("The Three Faces of Utopianism" 3-9; Bloch 21-41, 77-108).

somewhere, eliminates what I believe to be some important features of utopia. For example, in *Helen in Egypt*, without the protagonist's daydreaming, hallucinations and wishful thinking, the utopian world depicted in the text would not exist. My second reason for evoking the work of Manuel and Manuel is to show how the decision not to define the term "utopia" does not necessarily mean an inability to identify a utopian work through certain (common) features that vary across disciplines and genres.

Having said that, I now stress that my understanding of H.D.'s utopia is informed by ideas of utopia drawn from various theoretical perspectives. H.D. is more concerned with the process that leads to utopia, the changes that the characters experience during their attempts to reach their goals. She is equally interested in exploring elements of utopian thinking, such as wishful thinking, the promotion of hope, and the creation of new spaces. I follow Manuel and Manuel's lead in refusing to restrict the variables of utopian thought to a definition. However, it is useful to think of utopia as a place of contradictory elements. For instance, the word *utopia* was first coined by Thomas More (1478-1535), who used the Greek words *ouk* (which means "not" and was reduced to "u") and *topos* ("place"), to which he added the suffix *ia*, marking the word a place name. The coinage thus negates and affirms the existence of the place that the word *utopia* indicates (Vieira 4).⁹ These contrasting features indicate complexity and oscillation between the here/there and the now/then that make it difficult to confine the word to one definition or fixed set of principles or rules. I use this definition as my main guideline to identify H.D.'s utopia, especially her creation of a new dimension, or a "fourth-dimensional" as she calls it, which fuses time and spaces (*TF* 32). Moreover, the

⁹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides two different entries of the word "Utopia:" one "with capital initial" that means "any imaginary or mythical place (without implication of perfection), imagined as existing in some remote location on earth." The other definition is (with a small initial) and it means "an imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence in which everything is perfect, [especially] in respect of social structure, laws, and politics." The latter term can also refer to "a written work . . . about an ideal society, place, or state of existence." Notice that the first term – with the upper case *u* – dismisses the necessity of the "perfection" part that the second definition commands. In modernist utopian studies, utopia with the lower case is frequently used; accordingly I will follow this norm unless otherwise written in a quoted source "Utopianism."

utopian element of the existence or non-existence of a space or time creates a world of possibilities that makes utopia accessible even in a daydream, for example. This view modifies the common idea of utopia as a physical place in the distance that exists somewhere and towards which a journey should be made. Sargent states that the earliest characteristics of utopian representation are “golden ages, arcadias, earthly paradises, fortunate isles, [and] isles of the blest” (“The Three Faces of Utopianism” 10). In other words, utopia was envisioned as an existing place. I am arguing that besides her depiction of nature and modern or historical cities as physical utopias, H.D.’s utopian spaces may include visions or dreams.

As I hope to show in the following chapters, H.D.’s utopia is about finding alternative spaces that are more “hopeful” than her contemporary environment. These spaces may include physical places and/or abstract spaces such as modern and ancient cities or the natural world. They allow her to explore gender, spirituality, new religions, and re-imagined worlds. To return to the epigraph which opened this introduction, I believe that H.D., throughout her writing career, was committed to the pursuit of truth and beauty, committed to turning the tide of human thought to “destroy the world of dead, murky thought,” and committed to reimagining a world of vital, female power, a feminist utopia.

CHAPTER ONE

APPROACHES TO UTOPIA

This chapter tackles the main approaches that have shaped utopian thinking in general and in particular throughout the modern period, when H.D.'s writings emerged. It is crucial, at this stage of my work, to dedicate part of this chapter to the historical views on utopia because, as M.I. Finley emphasises, "any analysis of Utopian thinking which neglects social changes in the course of the history of either antiquity or modern times is likely at some point to go badly wrong." Since the phrase "social changes" bears various aspects and connotations, I will focus on the status of women and their education,¹ within the utopian framework, to examine how women's ideas and representations "grow out of the society to which they are a response" (6). As this chapter will show, education and religion significantly changed utopian thinking, both in terms of social reform and in altering perceptions of roles women could undertake both within the family and within society more widely.

It is also important for my theoretical framework to include both standard and feminist views on utopia, alongside H.D.'s views, to situate her utopian vision as a continuation of some of these views and or a response to others. Needless to say that the aim of this chapter is not to provide a survey of utopian literature across historical periods,² but to examine patterns and approaches through which one identifies utopian forms. Comparing H.D.'s work to a variety of important utopian works will enable me to articulate her contribution to both feminist studies and utopian studies and to situate her work as a kind of precursor to the works that came later. Angelika Bammer notes that "[f]rom the perspective of women's history . . . the history of utopia must be charted differently. For if utopias appear when people's consciousness of possibilities are changing, women's utopias appear when

¹ For a general overview on utopia and education, see David Halpin, *Hope and Education: The Role of the Utopian Imagination* (2003).

² For this purpose, W. H. G. Armytage's, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (1961) covers four centuries of utopian movements and visions. For more literary manifestations of utopian thoughts from ancient to modern times consult Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987).

women realize that times are changing, i.e. getting better for them” (21). Therefore, this chapter delineates the times when women were spectators in the making of utopias and the “better” times when women “realize that times are changing” for them. The chapter further examines how up to the beginning of the First World War, certain male poets saw war as a utopian project but later they looked at it as dystopian. H.D. imagines her utopia against the backdrop of the two world wars and their impact on the writer and her generation. She presents the urgent necessity of imagining a utopia to counteract the horrors of those wars.

I. Masculine Approaches

Old Forms of Utopia: Women in Traditional Utopian Literature

Although the word “utopia” dates back to More’s eponymous imagined world, critics state that More’s *Utopia* is a “re-interpretation” of Plato’s thoughts of the ideal state in *The Republic* (380 BC) (Hutton 195).³ However, scholars have made different attempts to trace back the earliest forms of utopia: *Works and Days* (approximately 700 BC), the Garden of Eden (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 1:26-31), the epic of Gilgamesh (c. 2150-1400 BC), and the Biblical book of Isaiah are a few examples.⁴ Utopian thinking is a concept which has existed, in various forms, since the dawn of civilisation out of humans’ questioning of their own existence, dissatisfaction with the surrounding environment, the urge to explore what was

³ Besides More’s book, *The Republic* is sourced in many other works like Cicero’s *De Republica* (54 BC) and St. Augustine’s *City of God* (426 AD). Plato is considered the founder of utopianism, who was and has been an inspiration for many writers after him, such as Goethe, Rousseau, Locke, Milton and Sartre – to mention a few (Chaurasia 29-31).

⁴ It is not clear to what date exactly that writings on imagined ideal societies have started. Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent emphasize that “the earliest utopian works are myths of a golden age or race in the past and earthly paradises like Eden” (6). Probably, in poetic forms, Hesiod (800 BC) was the first to envision an idealistic community. In his *Works and Days*, the “father” of Greek didactic poetry enlists Five Ages of man’s history, two of which – the Golden Age and the Heroic Age – flourished with peace, abundance and justice (Toohey 2; Evans 2, 40). Moreover, in his preface to *The Literary Utopias of Cultural Communities*, Peter Liebrechts identifies “the epic of Gilgamesh” and “the Biblical book of Isaiah” as the earliest forms of utopia (1).

beyond their immediate reach, and constant attempts to better themselves and their own societies.

The question that I raise here is as follows: since the overall vision of utopia is based on the equal capabilities of men and women as members of social communities to dream of something better, how could utopianism be gender-biased? Perhaps we can surmise that the earliest forms of utopia were patriarchal; they created blueprints for the ideology and the genre of utopia. In this section I explore, from a gendered perspective, the earliest Greek utopian writings, which are considered both the origins and benchmark of utopian literature. I follow Morag Buchan's lead in acknowledging the necessity to "identify the ways in which philosophy might be seen to be 'gendered' and to consider the implications this has had in the past, and continues to have for women's lives" (28). I examine these writings in terms of their presentation of the roles that women play in the making of utopia, tracing the patriarchal overarching scheme found in them. I will start with Aristophanes's presentation of women and politics in *The Assembly Women* (390 BC). Then, I will examine women's roles in Plato's *The Republic* (380 BC). My reason for these textual choices is that Aristophanes's work affected, to a great extent, Plato's view of women in the fifth chapter of his book on the ideal state.⁵

Aristophanes's *The Assembly Women* can be seen, at first glance, as a feminist utopia where women assume power and make their own laws. However, the turn of events and the chaos that women cause makes one question the adequacy and suitability of women to rule. In his play, Aristophanes's warning about democracy and women in leadership is clearly demonstrated to the Athenians. Women's ascent to power causes mayhem and malice when

⁵ In his comparison of Aristophanes's *The Assembly Women* and book 5 of Plato's *The Republic*, Robert Tordoff argues that "the close parallels between the two texts and other references to the theatre make it clear that Plato is thinking of the *The Assembly Women*" (244). He adds that "the possibility of Aristophanes's influence on *The Republic* must remain open" (244) and although no direct mention to either Aristophanes or his work are detected in Plato's book, there is "veiled allusion" to the work. Moreover, Josiah Ober provides a further parallel between democracy and women's roles in politics in *The Assembly Women* and *The Republic* (154-55).

in the final scene a young man is forced to the bedroom by three “old and ugly women” (Aristophanes 100). The women take over the parliament because they are dissatisfied with the malpractices of the Athenian law, dominated by men. In discussing the roles of women in the establishment of democracy in the play, Josiah Ober claims that Aristophanes demonstrates that “women are good managers of funds; they are able to keep secrets; they are honest with one another, requiring no witnesses when they control loans. They are not sycophants, not litigious, and not traitors to the demos” (138). Accordingly, Ober thinks that the women succeed in fooling their husbands and the other male members of parliament, and they manage to pass a decree which later proves to be “legally instituted and efficaciously performed” (152).

I disagree with Ober’s findings concerning Aristophanes’s presentation of women, and I will show how Aristophanes’s farce ridicules the equality of genders that democracy promises. Firstly, the title itself, *The Assembly Women*, would have been considered an oxymoron by the male Greek audience because they would never expect women to be “participating in politics and citizenship” (Dawson 37). Secondly, women are shown as people with less intelligence than their male counterparts. One of them reveals her concern that women are not able to talk properly in the meeting: “how could we, a group of women, with women’s brains make convincing speeches?” (Aristophanes 110). Praxagora, their female leader, replies: “we can make excellent speeches because we are women!” (110). What seems to be a feminist statement is immediately ridiculed by the heroine’s emphasis that women are “naturals” in “the art of . . . fucking and talking!” (115). The comment is made here to remind the audience (the majority of whom were men) of the biological differences between men and women, which are stressed to suggest that women are “natural”

at being talkative and lustful, while men are more reasonable and intellectual.⁶ Thirdly, Athenian women are presented as incompatible with politics because in fourth-century Athens women were not involved in political matters, did not have the right to vote, and their “natural” tasks were indoor activities, food, and sex (Judith Fletcher 132). Accordingly, the decree that these women issue, when they cross-dress to arrogate their husbands’ rights to vote, is about overturning the sexual roles of the two genders and public sharing of food. Old laws are abolished and the new decree allows any man to sleep with any woman they desire, on the condition of sleeping with two ugly women first. Because litigations are abolished, what represents “sexual pleasure for some” is a “sexual assault for others” (Judith Fletcher 135) and that creates a chaotic dystopian society where rape is common practice.

In discussing the presentation of women in Greek writing, Arlene W. Saxonhouse argues that women’s actual position in life was different from the way that they are portrayed in literature. She states that “the female as a concept was not kept indoors as easily as were the women who, most likely, were not allowed to attend the plays in which they were portrayed” (36). Saxonhouse explains why the Ancient Greek male writers ridiculed the idea of women in power instead of eschewing writing about women altogether. The Athenians dwelled on the subject of women in terms of sexuality and seduction and presented them as enemies of the public (Buchan 113-14). Thus, in imagining the utopian state, the thought of women’s leadership was uncommon until after Plato wrote his *The Republic*.

To return to Buchan’s statement that I mentioned earlier, so far I have identified the ways through which “philosophy might be seen to be ‘gendered’” (28). Now, to further understand “the implications this has had in the past,” I examine Plato as a representative of one of the most influential texts in utopian studies. This will help me prepare the ground, so

⁶This is also stressed when in the final scene of the play, two women drag the male characters to their bedrooms out of lust (Aristophanes 14). The weaker nature of women, though established in Greek times, was dominant in male utopian writings, as well as some women’s, until the seventeenth century as I show below.

to speak, for the later analysis of the emergence of women's utopian writings. Buchan argues that dealing with the female as a concept and a reality was a "dilemma" for Plato as, on the one hand, he had to include women to achieve the justice that he called for as a foundation for his republic. On the other hand, Plato also had to acknowledge the biological and social differences of women in his society. Nevertheless, "this very nature [of women] stands in direct contrast to the notion of the community founded on justice and the good" (Buchan 114). Before delving into the topic of Plato and women, I will briefly comment on how Plato envisioned the main societal divisions constituting the hierarchal system in *The Republic*. The book offers a manifesto for how the ideal society should be formed. Citizens in the visionary state are divided into three classes: the guardians, the auxiliaries, and the working class. Plato elevates those who excel at various branches of knowledge – especially philosophy – and perform their best in physical and spiritual education to be the Guardians or rulers of the state. The auxiliaries are those who represent the power that executes the orders of the rulers or enforces them (Lee 159). The working class includes the rest, about whom Plato "does not tell us a great deal" (37). The main aim of the state is to raise law-abiding citizens whose conduct is guided by their own moralities and their obedience to the government. In order to achieve this goal, it becomes necessary to do away with any distractions that might prevent citizens from performing their duties towards the state. But it seems that those distractions are related – in one way or another – to women. According to Buchan, for Plato "to eliminate, as far as possible, the female principle from *The Republic*, he must eliminate all things which define it and give it validity" (114). The concepts of the family, marriage and "the procreation of children" needed to be erased, physical pleasures and reproduction are to be controlled and monitored to breed a generation of more philosophers and thinkers and fewer workers (Lee 279). Children are to be raised in public nurseries and moved from their families so that they would be loyal to the state only.

While *The Republic* promotes the equality of men and women in gaining education and enrolling in physical training, it presents women as the naturally inferior sex. Plato categorises women with the “lowest . . . class” of people, such as children and servants, because they reveal “complex pleasure and desires and pains” that make them fallible and prone to distract the male leaders of the state (Lee 288). Revealing emotions makes women inferior to men and in need of constant monitoring; thus, in the ideal society women are not allowed to raise their own children because they will negatively affect their upbringing:

woman – left without chastening restraint – is not, as you might fancy, merely half the problem; nay, she is a two-fold and more than a two-fold problem, in proportion as her native disposition is inferior to man’s. (*The Collected Dialogues* 1356)

I take the excerpt above from *Laws* (348 BC), another work by Plato that I use to demonstrate the consistency within the majority of his work concerning the call for restraining and monitoring of women.⁷ Plato mistrusts the roles that women could play in his vision of the perfect society. Christine Garside Allen concludes that Plato was “thoroughly consistent in his theories on women,” and she narrows her study to the analogy between the *Laws* and *The Republic* (132-37). Moreover, in *Timaeus* (360 BC), Plato portrays women as second-rate citizens who exist below men in the natural hierarchy of beings: “of the men who came into the world, those who were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation” (*The Collected Dialogues* 1210). Drawing on Buchan’s comment on the incompatibility of women and a just and moral foundation of society which I quoted earlier (114), Allen’s aforementioned analogy, and A.E. Taylor’s statement that “the *Timaeus* unmistakably announces itself as in a way a

⁷ The *Laws* was the last of Plato’s works and the longest (Bobonich, Introduction 1), which means that his views on women and the state did not change until his death.

continuation of the *Republic*" (437), I conclude that although Plato was consistent in his views on women, his utopian presentations of them were not consistent.⁸ While he sustained his call for an equality-based utopia where "the girls must be trained exactly like the boys," Plato thought of women as inferior and, thus, unable to rule or lead despite his claiming otherwise (*The Collected Dialogues* 1376).

Though acknowledging that Plato's recognition of women "does not bear out his status as an enlightened proto-feminist," Thanassis Samaras, in defence, asserts that *The Republic* is "still an exceptionally feminist work within its historical context" (187). Samaras claims that Plato's ideas do not reflect a "philosophical contradiction" but a "personal prejudice" that was common among the other male writers of his period. Plato, Samaras adds, gave women an "equality of opportunities" to be guardians rather than "essential equality" to be in the same rank as human beings as men (10, 187). I do not see an "equality of opportunities" in Plato's denial of women's public life in utopia from the age of twenty to forty so that they stay home and raise children (Plato, *The Collected Dialogues* 700, 1360). These gap years would make it impossible for women to be leaders or guardians in the state because they would be confined to their homes, while men enrol in military education and public affairs. Moreover, Plato does not address the issue of whether it would not be too late for women to resume their studies or positions as guardians after the age of forty.

As the next section will show, although many writers followed the footsteps of Plato and Aristophanes in relegating women to the margins of utopian thinking, there were challenges to perceived notions of women as the weaker sex. Significantly, those attempts questioned the very principles upon which women's education were based and tried to reassign women duties other than those of motherhood and wifery. In short, the 'lower' status

⁸ This argument is applicable to at least these three main books by Plato, which dictate life and laws for futuristic societies.

of women in society was no longer based on biographical reasons, but attributed to the lower standard of education given to women to restrict their roles to the family sphere.

After *The Republic*: Utopia and Women's Education

Around the time when Thomas More wrote his *Utopia*, a concern with social reform started to increase. The Renaissance witnessed “a renewal of interest” in Plato’s *The Republic*, mainly for its ideals on education and the state (Houston 11, 26).⁹ However, in her account of this period, the feminist historian Joan Kelly asserts that “there was no ‘renaissance’ for women—at least, not during the Renaissance” (3). Kelly’s shocking statement finds purchase in utopian studies¹⁰ where Bammer sums up the role of women during the sixteenth century:

[The Renaissance] was not a period of empowerment or infinite possibilities. On the contrary, for women this period which in utopian history is often hailed as the Golden Age was a time of unprecedented repression. Universities barred their doors to women just as they were opening them to men; throughout Europe hundreds of thousands of women were persecuted and executed as witches. It was not a time in which visions of a better world for women were likely to be written or made public.

(20)

While utopias by men were prosperous in the sixteenth century, Bammer concludes, “it was not until late in the seventeenth century . . . that utopias by women began to appear” (21).

⁹ Not all of Plato’s ideas were of appeal to the Renaissance humanists; for example they were against his attack on poets in the ideal state. See James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 2 (1990), 39. The book also provides a commentary on the Renaissance reception to Plato. Chloe Houston’s *The Renaissance Utopia: Dialogue, Travel and the Ideal Society* contains a section on Plato’s influence in the sixteenth century (25-30).

¹⁰ On the topic of women and utopia in this period, see Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Realistic Utopias: The Imaginary Societies of the Renaissance 1516 – 1630* (1982).

Even a century after More's *Utopia*, writings on ideal states were primarily concerned with *men's* rights of education.¹¹

In their presentation of the ideal state Enlightenment philosophers picked up on Plato's views about women as being "naturally weaker" than men (Nye 6). For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) believed that in a utopian society, "in which no one was to be a servant of anyone else or lesser than anyone else, women would not be counted" (Nye 8). In *Emile, or Education* (1762), a half-novel half-treatise that discusses the foundation of the perfect educational system of citizens to achieve utopia, Rousseau traces the upbringing of the fictitious character, Emile, from infancy to manhood. Like *The Republic*, *Emile* stresses the importance of education for both men and women to reach utopia. The book also shares *The Republic's* gender biased, non-equal rights to education (Rousseau 328). Rousseau claims that "little girls always dislike learning to read and write, but they are always ready to learn to sew" (332). The inevitability of teaching children what they *should like*, based on their sex rather than their individualistic choices or traits, forces women to learn "many things, but only such things as are suitable" (328). What determines the desirability of Sophie's perfect education, the imaginary would-be wife of Emile whose life is discussed in Book Five of the novel, is her readiness "for reproduction but not for public life" (Nye 6). In other words, the ideal education that would be given to women is meant to please their male counterparts.¹²

Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson confirm that "Rousseau's ideas on education were extremely popular among many upper-and middle-class families" in the

¹¹ J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516-1700* (1981) provides an account of the utopian forms appeared between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

¹² For a full account of Rousseau's works and their presentation of women in politics and social life consult Nicole Fermon, *Domesticating Passions: Rousseau, Women, and Nation* (1997). Fermon delineates an analogy between the death of the heroine in Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) and the disappearance of the legislator in *The Social Contract* (1762). The critic concludes that "Rousseau was following novelistic conventions, which often depict reconciliations between men and the classes they come to represent over the prone bodies of women" (51-52).

eighteenth-century (87). “These Families,” the critics add, “adopted many of the educational methods Rousseau advocated” and they even “named their children Emile or Sophie” (87). Nye argues that even when suffrage was granted, in the late nineteenth-century, and women thought that they “would be able to correct injustice to women,” “there was much in the theorising of the founding fathers of democratic theory that stood in contradiction to this feminist logic” (5). She mentions John Locke (1632 –1704) as an example of those early philosophers who, though they defended Eve against her “eternal inevitable” subjection, still “did not include women as participants in civil society” (6).¹³

Some women writers followed the mainstream of patriarchal influences. Madame de Staël¹⁴ (1766-1817), for example, was greatly inspired by Rousseau’s beliefs that sentimental femininity and patriarchal rationality create social order. In her *Letters on the works and character of J.J. Rousseau* (1788), de Staël criticises Rousseau’s views on women but strikingly admires his plans for education in *Emile* (Flower 483). In her later works, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne or Italy* (1807), de Staël shows a “not-so-veiled criticism of male-dominated society, featuring women who used their brains as well as their hearts” (Fuchs and Thompson 15). However, de Staël’s advocacy for women’s independence and equality did not escape the overarching scheme of preparing them to be “better wives and mothers” (15). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft (1758-97) shows a similar opinion to de Staël’s call for education as a means to empower motherhood. Wollstonecraft attributed the degradation of women’s status in society to the “inferior and limited education” that they received (Fuchs and Thompson 14). She believed that women’s inferiority was implied in their restriction to the private sphere of family and home. She was keen to restore women’s places as equals to men in the public sphere through higher and

¹³ Locke further emphasises the superiority of men over women when a disagreement happens in the family. In his *Two Treatises on government* (1689), Locke confirms that “the last Determination, i.e. the Rule, should . . . naturally fall to the man’s share . . . as the abler and stronger” (339).

¹⁴ Her full name was Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein.

physical education. However, Wollstonecraft linked the purpose of academic education with a higher purpose of enhancing women's abilities to raise children. She believed that a woman "needed an education . . . so she could better raise her children, especially sons, and become independent of her husband" (15). Despite her disagreement with Rousseau's limitation of the roles of wives and mothers, Wollstonecraft payed homage to his ideas on the primacy of nuclear family and consideration of motherhood as an "avenue to virtue" (15).

It is worth mentioning that this advocacy for education as a means to sustain and enhance family relations, especially as far as mothers, daughters, and wives are concerned, was a common idea among many women thinkers. Even a century later, in 1840, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter – appreciated Rousseau's addition to the value of education and the maintenance of family sphere. She stated: "Others may regard the work disparagingly; but every parent who in any degree superintends the education of his offspring – every mother who watches over the health and welfare of her babes – will readily acknowledge the deepest obligations to the author of 'Emile'" (163). Before examining the fundamental changes in utopian thinking towards the concept of the family, I must quote here Alessa Johns's summary of the relationship between the two. Johns states that "nearly all utopian writing concerns itself with questions of love, friendship, and marriage, since an ideal society no less than an actual one begins with and is made up of human relationships" ("Mary" 61). Of the three axes of human affiliations mentioned here, marriage was the most problematic especially for single women who resisted being defined through their marital or parental associations with men. Thus, women-only utopias came to accommodate those needs through the other two axes of relationships: love and friendship.¹⁵

In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Mary Astell (1666–1731) offered to "amend the present and improve the future age" through recreating a "paradise as . . . Mother

¹⁵ This is not the sole reason behind the urgency of feminist utopias, as I further explain in the next section. These utopias appeared to empower women through making fundamental changes in nuclear units, eliminating biological differences, and challenging patriarchal influences in both religious and utopian traditions.

Eve forfeited” (41, 44). The writer’s paradise was a women-only monastery, a suggestion that was admired and pursued by many of her contemporaries and successors.¹⁶ Astell was “the first formidable feminist theorist in England” who believed “in an immaterial intellect which had no gender but was an essential feature of all human nature” (Johns, “Mary” 61; Perry 22). Ruth Perry’s interpretation of the “no gender” intellect in Astell’s utopian imagination seems to neglect the fact that Astell chose a women-only community for her educated ideal society.¹⁷ Astell focused on women’s advanced education because she believed that it would “make of . . . [them] the absolute selves imagined and created by God” (Johns, “Mary” 63). In other words, the better the education is, the higher the connection with divinity and the fuller the servitude to God.

Women thinkers and utopianists, especially from the 19th century onwards, became disillusioned with the idea that education should either aim at the family or perform servitude to divinity. Therefore, they tried to establish that women’s education was necessary for the sole purpose of bettering themselves as human beings and not for the other, or higher, ends of becoming better wives, mothers, or monastic dwellers. As a result, heterodox and experimental versions of utopias appeared, or resurfaced, to meet feminist demands of non-monogamous partnerships, no-men’s lands, and sexual freedom.¹⁸ As I show next in the

¹⁶ Many fictitious and real proposals were influenced by Astell’s Protestant nunneries and/or women-only educational faculties. See Helena Whitford’s *Thoughts and Remarks on Establishing an Institution, for the Support and Education of Unportioned Respectable Females* (1809); Sarah Scott’s early feminist utopia *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762); and Samuel Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). In the same period, Elizabeth Montagu (1720–1800) formed, with other literary women, the Blue Stockings Society where bluestockings – intellectual and educated women – gather to discuss political and social issues. Later on, the women’s society was joined by men too including Edmund Burke and Samuel Johnson. For a full account on feminism and education during the 18th and early 19th centuries, consult Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos, *Early Feminists and the Education Debates: England, France, Germany 1760-1810* (2007). Reference to the bluestocking is on p. 235.

¹⁷ Hilda L. Smith offers a different approach to Astell’s utopia when she points out that “Astell’s love for her friend, her sex, her religion . . . explain her early feminist thoughts and plans” (14). The critic further asserts that some of Astell’s images were “not wholly spiritual” and they fused the emotional with the intellectual. Alessa Johns combines both arguments, Perry’s and Hilda Smith’s, in her analysis of Astell’s works (“Mary” 63-73).

¹⁸ I have carefully chosen the term “resurfaced” because the idea of a utopian female-only community dates back to the ancient Greek Mythology. The Amazons was a race of women warriors who could not become fully independent from men because they would still need them for procreation. In fiction, Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights* (1870) is considered the first feminist utopia (Morris and Kross 172).

section discussing feminist utopias, these works challenge the fixation of gender roles and heterosexual relations and, thus, mark a departure from traditional and Biblical presentations of utopia. Between the ebb and flow of utopian ideas and movements, and before discussing revolutionary feminist utopias that appeared after H.D.'s death, I will dedicate a section to H.D.'s interest in the classics. I am specifically concerned, within the realm of this thesis, with sources and influences that shaped her utopian thinking. Thus the next section will pave the way for the chapter's later discussion on H.D.'s prose within the critical context of war and women. It will also show how her utopian thinking was influenced by an interest in the occult as well as in the classical worlds of deities and antiquities.

II. H.D. and the Classics

H.D. had a good knowledge of the Classics; in 1912 she travelled to Greece with her lover, Frances Gregg (1885-1941), and she translated several plays from Latin to English.

References to Plato's verses were scattered in H.D.'s early works, such as *Collected Poems*, *Paint it Today* (written 1921, published 1992), *Notes on Thought and Vision* (written 1919, published 1982), and *Hedylus* (1928).¹⁹ However, H.D.'s version of "[m]odern life Plato" does not privilege, as Eileen Gregory rightly points out, the authoritarian Plato of the *Laws* and *The Republic*, but the "erotic Plato of the *Symposium*" (*H.D. and Hellenism* 264, 39). In other words, by the allusion to the Greek Plato H.D. challenges the male modernist

¹⁹ "Lais" (*CP* 147, 149-150); *Paint it Today* (12, passim); "The Wise Sappho," in *Notes on Thought and Vision* (68, 32-33); and *Hedylus* (12, passim). Eileen Gregory's *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* provides a detailed account of Hellenic threads in H.D.'s work within the context of twentieth-century translations of the Classics. References to Plato in H.D.'s writing are on pp. 110, 234, 243, 264.

preference for reason over desire. In some of her work, H.D. even replaces the figure of the Greek Plato with an Athenian Plato to convey “[a]ll Athens in its dying splendour. . . . All Athens in its brilliant decadence” (*Palimpsest* 168-69). I argue here, indebted to Eileen Gregory’s assessment of H.D.’s classicism, that H.D.’s approach to the Classics reflects utopian thinking on many levels. First, the poet “deviates from the classic line” of her male contemporaries through adopting a “romantic hellenism” that involves optimism and sympathy (*H.D. and Hellenism* 14, 39). The motif of hope, which H.D. draws from the “dying splendor” and “brilliant decadence” of Athens and Greece, is vital in promoting utopia to counteract the dystopia of wartime London. Moreover, Gregory attributes “H.D.’s marginal status in literary modernism” to the nature of modernist “hostilities” towards the romantic approach to classicism (15). This analysis echoes Cassandra Laity’s association of the “masculine” with modern classicism (2-4). While modernist male writers such as Ezra Pound, Irving Babbitt, T. E. Hulme, and T. S. Eliot employed “rigid” and “dry” images to promote anti-romantic literary classicism, H.D. (like Byron, Swinburne, and Shelley) preserved the “feminine” in images of “vague” and infinitude (E. Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 15-16; Laity 2-3).

On a second level, through this “resistance to and evasion of the perspective of modern classicism” which opposes the romanticism of nineteenth-century decadents, H.D. establishes herself as a visionary writer, following in the footsteps of Walter Pater’s literary approach to pagan mysteries. Like Pater, H.D. alludes to the sacred metaphors of “the Alexandrian *Hermetica*” to reveal a “poetic theology” of “God hidden within appearances” (E. Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 77). In other words, H.D.’s interplay of religious allusions, erotic forms and antiquities shape both her Hellenism, which “becomes associated with the language of the occult,” and her “art with the language of vision and clairvoyance” (75). In this way, the role of the poet is clear: the prophet who finds “intense idealization” where and

when “projections have their sharp edges” (114). For example, the poet’s allusion to the Classics fuses powers of the gods with those of spirit and body; a Platonic method that endorses the characters with gods’ gifts at certain, violent, costs, like causing “mania” (115). This “divine mania” as Gregory names it, or the prophetic utopian vision as I prefer to call it, licenses H.D. to interpret her psychic episodes or visions within the realms of syncretic or occult manifestations (114).²⁰ I conclude here, in regard to this point, that the utopian in H.D.’s writing sits at the intersection of self (the lyrical I, the poet, the prophet), gods’ “manias” (like Apollo, whom Plato assigns with the “mania of prophecy”), and the antithetical nature of those gods and their settings (the Greece of “precipitous danger” and the Athens of tranquility (114). H.D.’s utopia, as this thesis proceeds to show, is found in the dualistic forces of nature, and the compelling powers of the classical worlds of deities and antiquities.

On a third level, though Eileen Gregory does not articulate their utopian dimension, I find significant elements in the critic’s reasoning of H.D.’s, and other modernist writers’, return to classical texts in times of war. Gregory states that these texts bring about a “survival” and “transmission” that goes beyond time and place (38). She defines survival as “the literal preservation of texts within the recurrent catastrophes and collapses of cities and kingdoms, as well as, in a broader sense, the continuing vitality of ancient works as influences within subsequent generations” (38). While Gregory assesses the literal transmission of language that is kept at work through translation of the Classics, I focus on the transmission of utopian vision that enables the spiritual perpetuation of the author,

²⁰ In his introduction to H.D.’s novella *The Mystery*, Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos concludes: “I consider H.D. an ‘occult’ writer primarily because in her prose and poetry radical syncretism constitutes the very fabric of her thought” (xxiv). Timothy Materer defines this “conception of a secret, syncretic wisdom” as Hermeticism (89). A term that Elizabeth Anderson further elaborates on as “a philosophical tradition with its roots in the cultural milieu of Alexandrian Egypt, the contact zone of Greek and Egyptian culture” (74). Christian apologists brought this worldview to Europe mainly through translations of Greek and Arabic writings (75). Anderson states that H.D.’s Hermeticism “subsumes the other elements of her religious syncretism;” such as paganism, Moravian Christianity, and spiritualism (3).

through the text, into a more tranquil, and more preferable, environment than his/her bombarded modern city. The juxtaposition of different historical places and events creates room to relocate the horrid experiences of modern war within ancient cities to rewrite these stories. This palimpsest, the writing and rewriting of events to restage the historical with the real, is an important method in H.D.'s process of creating a utopian text (as I explain in detail in Chapter Four). Moreover, transmission paves for what is *beyond* to take place. This idea of the beyond – I carefully choose the word to refer to other spaces that transcend reality, borders, time, or even life – is always present in H.D.'s understanding of the utopian. In her writing, there is a consistent urge to go beyond the binary aspects of gender; beyond the norms of writing; beyond the body; and beyond spaces. In H.D.'s reception of the Classics, the fictional events transcend Victorian Hellenism to the “classical or preclassical Greece” and undergoes “a mystical transference with Egypt” (E. Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism* 43, 41). In this sense, “Greece carries not only the . . . aesthetic agendas, but also the sense of a continuous, though hidden, visionary tradition” (42). This reference to something “hidden” and mysterious alongside the poet's visionary powers links back to my previous point on the relation between occult configurations and divine transformations.

This great interest in the exploration of the “hidden” drove H.D. to pursue occultism and psychoanalysis throughout her life. The main difference between these two is that “while the occult located the center of significance in a universal spirit,” psychoanalysis “found the locus of meaning in the individual unconscious” (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 149). In a similar vein, Timothy Materer stresses the fact that H.D. draws “creatively” on both occultism and psychoanalysis – mainly Freudian and Jungian approaches – as an attempt to find a “universal language . . . [a] meeting in the universal understanding of the unconscious or the subconscious” (104; H.D., *TF* 71). This universality “would forgo barriers of time and space, and man, understanding man, [and thus,] would save mankind” (*TF* 71). The poet has a

divine mission, where she becomes a prophet, to save humanity through adopting universal codes of communication – through hieroglyphs, dreams, visions, images, wordplay, and so on.

In astrological terms, Suzanne Hobson argues that H.D.'s poetry "thinks cosmologically" (156). In other words, H.D.'s occultism (her interest in the Classics, magic, mythology, astrology, and angels) manifest itself as the poet's desire to replace the disoriented, and displaced, universe of war with a cosmological pattern "to respond to a conflict" (156). This is to create order within the universal cosmos or to make a "mystic geometry," to use Miranda Hickman's term. In her *Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats* (2005), Hickman identifies the importance of the early modernist writers' exploration of geometrical figures in their works as responses to "crises— both personal and public— during the years between the wars" (xv). Although the critic builds her study on H.D.'s work written between the 1930s and 40s,²¹ I find even earlier signs of this utopian thinking in H.D.'s novel *Asphodel* (written 1921–22, published 1992):

Not of the order of the music of the spheres and Plato actually getting the thing down, making the exact statement, the formula, giving them numbers and figures and *design* for the thing they knew already. Plato gave them a design. Clear thinking makes a pattern as regular and symmetrical as a plotted engineer's plan or marine architect's constructed boat prow. Thinking makes lines in the air. Plato's formula.

It appears that there is a world within a world. We all live in some world (or several) but Christ lived in all. (38)

²¹ Hickman's study examines how the poets H.D., Pound, and Yeats employed the language of Vorticism, a two-year old movement that appeared prior to the outbreak of the First World War in London and was initiated by Wyndham Lewis, in their late modernist works to conceptualise and articulate cultural and philosophical ideas through the use of geometrical patterns.

There are different aspects at work in this text. Plato is hailed for initiating the “formula” of cosmic order, probably a reference to his utopian ideas, and so is the Christ.²² Order is described in terms of “numbers and figures and *design*,” through which “H.D. employed verbal descriptions of geometric figures — ‘square and cube and rectangle’ — to imagine ideal bodily states conducive to artistic vision and transcendent awareness” (Hickman 2). I join both opinions – Hobson’s cosmological order and Hickman’s mystic geometry – to argue that H.D.’s wording of “sphere,” “the formula,” “design,” “regular patterns created by clear thinking, and “a world within a world” recreate the poet’s utopian cosmos within the disorganised warfare London. The fact that *Asphodel* copies a series of unfortunate events in H.D.’s life during the First World War – the loss of a child and the birth of an illegitimate one, frustration upon male dominance in literary worlds, unhappy marriage, conflict between heterosexual and lesbian desires, and war’s distortion of beauty – necessitates the poet’s search for a utopian world to counterpoint her own.

Another significant mention of utopia in H.D.’s text – examined thoroughly in the philosophical methodology of this thesis – is H.D.’s referral to the “several” worlds that asymmetrically co-exist within each other. These multiple spheres may refer to the palimpsest effect of writing and re-writing of the same story against different historical sceneries, as I examine *Helen in Egypt*. Or they may refer to real places (including ancient and modern cities) and unreal spaces, as I further explore in *Trilogy*.

In all cases, the main idea is to create utopia; to form a possibility where “Christ lived in all [worlds].” Here, the reference to Christ is of no less importance than Plato in the creation of the “formula” of order, which may also refer to H.D.’s “quest for the relevance of mythic patterns in all ages” (Quinn 55). The fusion of Greek paganism with Christianity

²² The phrase “Plato gave them a design” may refer to the early modernist poets, like Yeats and Pound, who “employed geometrical diagrams for philosophical explanation” (236). These writers are indebted to Plato’s *The Republic*, among other ancient Greek writings, which connected geometry to descriptions of the “eternally existent” ideal and “pure knowledge” (Plato, *The Collected Dialogues* 759; Hickman xiv).

entitles the poet to create a new universal Hermetic/Hellenistic/Christian framework as a basis for her works.

As the next section will show, the 19th century witnessed, with the advances in science, revolutionary feminist utopias which drew heavily on technology and machinery to replace men. The first feminist technological utopia, *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1889),²³ marked the “most extreme rejection of male leadership and the most thorough condemnation of patriarchal government of all feminist utopias written in the nineteenth-century” (Quissell 167). Men, the reader is told, have been depleted through war, but there was “no change” in the nuclear “family structure” (168). Women, on the contrary, are presented as the better sex with “progressive minds” for whom science was beneficial (Lane 8). From the 19th century onwards, feminists’ calls for equal rights to education were superseded by claims regarding the higher capabilities than men. In modern and post-modern feminist science-fiction utopias, men are often no longer needed for procreation because women are self-sufficient with the process of parthenogenesis.²⁴ I attempt to examine H.D.’s prose against such background, arguing that her understanding of utopia draws from different sources that enable her to present a unique vision of an alternative world. Looking backwards and forward, from where she stands, H.D. does not only combine different elements of utopia, but also, I argue, anticipates some of the feminist utopias that appeared later in the century.

²³ The book was first published in (1880-1881) anonymously as series in the *Cincinnati Commercial* newspaper.

²⁴ For an overview on the presentation of technology in utopia, see Howard P. Segal, *Future Imperfect: The Mixed Blessings of Technology in America* (1994). Feminist technological utopia is mentioned on pp.121-5.

III. Feminist Approaches

Women in Twentieth-Century Feminist Utopia: Demography of Religion and Family

In his *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987), Krishan Kumar notices that “there is in principal a fundamental contradiction between religion and utopia” (10). This is due to an “opposition of interest” between religion’s “other-worldly concern” and “utopia’s interest in . . . this world” (10). Some writers attempted to reconcile this contradiction through creating (in-between or all-encompassing) worlds that combine contradictory or anachronistic entities. H.D.’s work, for example, combines earthly and celestial paradises; life and afterlife; angels on earth; and eras of Christ, Plato, and ancient gods. However, Kumar argues that religion, especially the trope of paradise, “can work directly against utopian speculation and aspiration” (11). Finding a paradise on earth may still be considered contradictory to many ideas in Christianity, such as Christ’s announcement that “My kingdom is not of this world” (*Holy Bible*, John 18:36). Modernist writers, particularly, sought spiritual meaning in art instead of in religion to “preserve a sense of sacred power in the modern, disenchanted world” (Lewis, “Modernism and Religion” 180). With many writers’ declaration of the absence of God, the need for a “complex” theory of secularisation became a necessity in the twentieth century.²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that “After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too” (167). With specific reference to this passage, Pericles Lewis notes that the twentieth century witnessed repeated attempts to

²⁵ Some of the most influential books on secularism in the period were Sigmund Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Moses the Man and Monotheistic Religion* (1939); Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and *The Sociology of Religion* (1922), especially chapters 2 and 11; and Emile Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). For an account on secularisation and religion in modernism, see A. N. Wilson, *God’s Funeral: A Biography of Faith and Doubt in Western Civilization* (1999); and Gregory E. Erickson, *The Absence of God in Modernist Literature* (2007).

acknowledge or neglect this “shadow” in literature and social sciences (“Modernism and Religion” 181). In *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010), Lewis emphasises that to “invoke the sacred for a modern age” does not necessarily mean “that the only alternative to the monotheistic God is a secular worldview” nor that “the Modernists celebrated the putative secularization of modernity” (38; “Modernism and Religion” 181). This rather “complex” invoking of the “secular sacred,”²⁶ compelled many modernist utopian works, which allude to Biblical stories, to modify, alter, and/or combine these allusions with modern themes to “offer new accounts of the sacred for an age of continued religious crisis” (“Modernism and Religion” 181).

The contradiction between utopia and religion or the secular and the sacred, that Kumar highlights earlier (10), did not prevent him from claiming that utopia is the product of Christianity (424). The tropes of heaven, paradise, redemption, and life after death highly influenced the development of utopian thinking. As a result, the conflicting nature between religion and utopia suits, so to speak, the contradictory nature of the meaning of utopia itself: a place or no place, a destination here or there. In a similar vein, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent take this argument even further to suggest that Christianity “contains strong utopian currents that flow like a torrent into secular utopianism” (Claeys and Sargent 6). This possible alignment between religious ideas and modernist utopian aspirations is, more or less, in favour of the traditional (patriarchal) blueprints of utopia. For feminists, working with these Biblical “strong . . . currents” is somehow problematic because it means working with deep-rooted corollaries of patriarchy, such as the domination of the male (Adam) over the female (Eve).

²⁶ The “secular sacred,” as Lewis defines it, is “a way of seeing aspects of human experience itself [e.g. the supernatural or the occult] as set apart, venerable, [and] inviolable” to allow interpretations *beyond* the metaphorical (*Religious Experience* 30). See also pp. 9, 21, 25, 116.

Historically, many writers exploited the stories of Adam and Eve to force a patriarchal authority in the utopian mainstream. These writers employed Biblical verses to promote their preferable model of a perfect woman. In *Patriarcha, or The Natural Power of Kings* (1680), the English philosopher Robert Filmer (1588-1653) based his ideas of women's subjections on Biblical verses. He claims that God endorsed Adam with supreme dominion over Eve, her offspring, and the world.²⁷ Filmer's ideas were widespread among many historians (Weil 33). Even three centuries later, the historian Margaret Ezell thought that what made "patriarchalism . . . acceptable in theory" was that it "was so flexible in practice" (Weil 33). In *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (1987), Ezell suggests that Filmer empowered women, especially as mothers, "within the household." His ideal woman "was by no means an inferior, but a trusted second-in-command to her husband, credited with abilities and talents and expected to use them" (Weil 33).

Rachel Weil argues that some critics, like Carol Pateman, suggest that Filmer and the Patriarchalists further neglected the role of women in reproduction and obscured the need to "possess them through marriage" to claim an absolute fatherly authority on children (36). While Weil disregards Pateman's conclusion on the basis that Filmer "did not actually say" this in his writing and that his main concern was with the absolute dominion of men in familial relations regardless of children, I find Pateman's a reasonable analysis.²⁸ I agree with the critic because, looking backward (from H.D.'s time) at many women writers' utopias, the issue of female-only worlds with parthenogenic reproduction – mostly related to female economic independence – was a common trope among those imaginary worlds. Marriage was

²⁷ Filmer based the idea of Adam's authority over Eve on the Biblical verse: "thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 3:16). Furthermore, Adam's dominion over the world is drawn from the verse: "and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 1: 28). It seems that Filmer ignored that God addressed both Adam and Eve to rule the world and not Adam only: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion . . . upon the earth" (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 1: 28).

²⁸ The analysis can be found in Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract: Aspects of Patriarchal Liberalism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), p. 87.

presented as an obstacle in the road towards women's social and economic independence. Marie Howland's *Papa's Own Girl* (1874), for example, "depicts a single mother capably supporting herself and her daughter, but fails to show a married woman enjoying this independence" (Kessler, "Women" 118).²⁹ In *Herland* (1915), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's (1860 – 1935) novel, the child-rearing process is the responsibility of not only the biological mother, but the female community as a whole. Men, the reader is told, were eliminated by volcanic eruption two-thousand years ago. Those who remained were killed by their, otherwise, would-be oppressed young women on the island of *Herland*. With the absence of men, there was no war, and social order was restored in the island. The asexual reproduction in the novel redefines childrearing and motherhood to expose, as Denise D. Knight explains in the introduction to the novel, "the absurdities and limitations of patriarchal practices and institutions" (xii). Through diminishing, or crossing out, what Pateman describes as men's authorial claims in the family – fatherly and husbandry – motherhood is celebrated as the new era of women's independence. However, Gilman's view of women's empowerment as mothers only repositioned women's social subservience from (the traditional) man-oriented to (the new) "child-oriented" (Elbert 106). In other words, while Gilman exalts "the mother . . . [as] the most important factor" in "all that affects the health and happiness of the race," she considers motherhood as servitude to childhood ("The New Mothers" 285).³⁰ In this way, Gilman's woman is not completely emancipated from the overarching patriarchal system, as the latter has to perform the 'duty' of becoming a mother.

²⁹ Sylvia Strauss thinks that the novel's author, Marie Stevens Howland (1836 – 1921), was influenced by many utopian movements, such as "French Utopian Socialists," especially Charles Fourier's communism and "the Familistère that he had constructed in Guise, France" (73). Howland's work had also an impact on Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* in terms of articulating women's dreams as collective, though he did not give them much space for freedom (85, 74).

³⁰ Gilman considers motherhood as a high-standard service. She writes: "A new standard is rising – the woman's standard . . . motherhood as a social service instead of man-service" ("The New Mothers" 249). On Gilman's utopian thinking across her work, see Carol Farley Kessler, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Her Progress toward Utopia with Selected Writings* (1995).

Looking forward (after H.D.'s death) at feminist utopias, the theme of self-reproduction is also highlighted, with an emphasis on eliminating the male sex via different methods. Suzy McKee Charnas's *Walk to the End of the World* (1974) and *Motherlines* (1978) find a replacement of the male with the advanced technology that enables women to reproduce without the male seed. In Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), the female protagonist (Consuelo Ramos) was placed at a mental hospital because she killed the man who forced her niece to have abortion, despite the consequences of losing custody of her daughter. Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) utilises technology to enable women to procreate genetically through parthenogeny. Accordingly, women are capable of maintaining lesbian parenthood of children in the fictional world of *Whileaway*. What unites all the feminist utopias that I have surveyed – the predecessors and the successors of H.D. – is a strong sense of female community, a women companionship that substitutes, or even recovers previous (abusive) heterosexual relationships. It is in “nearly all feminist utopias,” as Karin Schönpflug rightly observes, that “the nuclear family is . . . completely impossible, and friendships and sexual partnerships are non-monogamous” (14). Two elements are highlighted here: a strong sense of women-based community, and the introduction of non-traditional families – that may contain multiple mothers, adopted children, homosexual parents, or/and hermaphrodite beings.³¹

³¹ See Kenneth M. Roemer's “Sex Roles, Utopia, and Change: The Family in Late Nineteenth Century Utopian Literature” (1972) and Rosie Harding's “Imagining a Different World: Reconsidering the Regulation of Family Lives” (2010). Although Harding's study is mainly concerned with Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Thomas Bezucha's film *Big Eden*, the writer provides an insightful analysis of feminist utopias and the radicalisation of family relations 457-59).

It is worth mentioning that not *all* feminists incline to substitute the traditional family with an unorthodox one. Some tend to associate themselves with secular communities that belong to public spheres to achieve “spiritual fulfilment.” For example, in 1883 Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and Olive Schreiner formed an organisation called “Fellowship of the New Life” which “practiced alternative personal relations, that, at a local level, were a proleptic form of the universal collective of the future” (Beaumont 222). In 1888, the organization advertised their goals as follows: “THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE NEW LIFE aims to secure the intimate association of Men and Women desirous of living and of commending to others an honest, healthy and completely human life. That is, it proposes to itself the task of working out the ideal of such a life, and determining the conditions of its realization; of attempting here and now to conform as thoroughly as possible to this ideal: and of rendering its full attainment desirable and possible to all” (qtd. in Beaumont 222).

In the rest of this section I examine H.D.'s utopia in the light of these two elements of feminist utopias. I find that the first aspect echoes H.D.'s emphasis on the power of the collective in her poetry: "we know no rule / of procedure, / we are voyagers, discoverers / of the not-known," (*TR* 59). In H.D.'s novels (the majority of which are autobiographical), the second element, of the unorthodox family, resembles her creation of the "family that seeks its own, brothers and sisters, lost people" (*Asphodel* 173). Examining one novel for each element will allow me not only to explore H.D.'s modes of utopia, but also to conclude that her presentation of women in these utopias serve as a precursor to many feminist utopias that came afterwards. H.D.'s biographical novels show how female characters go through the pains of heterosexual relations, only to discover that the journey of life is more hopeful with another woman – usually a lifelong companion or a confidante.

In *Palimpsest* (1926), for example, three different stories are plotted across the novel's three parts to emphasise the importance of women friendships in the lives of three different protagonists. The narrative is closely based on the writer's social circle of friends and lovers. In part I, the Greek heroine Hipparchia (H.D.) rejects the advances of the Roman officer, Marius (who is based on her husband Richard Aldington), after becoming unsatisfied with his love. She then discovers that she does not love Quintus Verrus (Cecil Gray), whom she goes on a moonlit excursion with. Although she saw Philip (the poet Ezra Pound) as "her highest idol," "she would still consider him as something outgrown, something she had stepped from" (82). Finally, the protagonist finds happiness with Julia Cornelia (Brhyer), the young woman who admires Hipparchia and learns her poetry by heart. After rejecting the men's wooing, Hipparchia decides to take the (utopian) journey and leaves with Julia and her father to Alexandria.³² The second part of the novel, "Murex," is set in "War and post-war

³² Richard Aldington (1892-1962) married H.D. in 1913. In 1919 they were separated and finally divorced in 1938. Cecil Gray (1895-1951) was the English father of Perdita, H.D.'s daughter. H.D. met Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972) in 1901 and later joined him in the Imagist movement (with her husband) in 1913, signing her poems in *Poetry Magazine* as "H.D., Imagiste" (Guest 64-65).

London (circa 1916-1926 A.D.).” The protagonist, Raymonde Ransome (H.D. herself, who also uses the pseudonym Ray Bart in the novel), emotionally connects and empathises with another woman’s pain. Raymonde, like H.D., suffered from the loss of a child and the treachery of her husband who was seduced by her friend Mavis Landour (Brigit Patmore). Raymonde lived in denial for many years until she met Ermentrude Solomon (Ermy). Both women’s lovers and husbands were approached by the same woman, Mavis.³³ Ray was enchanted by the young woman who made her face the pain that she denied for ten years and finally managed to overcome. In the third part of *Palimpsest*, “Secret Name,” Helen Fairwood, the research assistant to an Egyptologist, thinks of the ex-British army captain (Rafton) as an ordinary man and she seeks, instead, the confidence and friendship of an engaged younger woman during their expedition.

H.D.’s biography confirms that the novel analogises the writer’s frustrations during the First World War, after which “[e]verything’s altered horribly” (*Palimpsest* 165), and its distorting effects on art and beauty. In terms of relationships and love,

in each part [of *Palimpsest*] a woman who has been deserted or has declined a sexual relationship alleviates her own distress by identifying herself with the cares or concerns of a younger woman, or by coming under the wing of the latter, as H. D. had in fact come under that of Bryher, who redeemed her from sickness in 1919 and took her abroad. (Weatherhead 541)

Bryher (Pen name for Annie Winifred Ellerman 1894-1983) was the lover and life-time companion of H.D. Bryher admired H.D.’s work before knowing her gender, she saved H.D.’s life when she had influenza, supported her and her circle of friends’ artists financially, and adopted her daughter Perdita (Debo, *The American H.D.* 35-36). For more information on the relationship between the two and its influence on their career consult Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (1985) and Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* (2002).

³³ Brigit Patmore was H.D.’s “protector” and friend. She was a regular visitor to H.D.’s household until Brigit sacrificed her friendship with H.D. for Aldington when she seduced him.

Ermentrude (Oppie or Oppenheimer) later “became the well-known British novelist and biographer Doris Leslie” (Guest 171).

Significantly, sexuality is relatively under stressed when compared to spirituality. H.D.'s women do not fall easily into the categories of gender. Instead, they transcend their prescribed statuses, boundaries, and sexualities into "the supernatural, [turning] a matter of sexuality into a matter of soul" (Hobson 132). Women, in H.D.'s works, share an unnatural state of spiritual affiliations that equip them to overstep not only *beyond* but also *above* (i.e. the divine) social and sexual categorisations, forming a family-like community of "kindred spirits" (Hollenberg, *Art and Ardor* 140). Physical sex, specifically heterosexual sex, seems to obstruct the connection with the divine state of creativity (writing is the ideal) that the characters aspire to reach. For example, Hipparchia complains to Marius that "when one has slept perhaps on a rough estimate, one hundred and fifty times with one man, it is, can you not see, somewhat of a shock, at the end, to find it has not been a man at all, merely a rather bulbous vegetable" (*Palimpsest* 14). Although both Hipparchia and Marius share the sexual intercourse, only Marius is impaired as "merely a . . . bulbous vegetable" because Hipparchia is "no woman but a phantom" (26). Marius hates "her curious sublimating quality," of the *beyond* and *above* of his world, so he tries to subject her with sex (45). His mistress, Olivia, though a woman herself, also does not fit into Hipparchia's (utopian) world because she "was so simply, so whole-heartedly a woman" (24). Olivia is too passionate to be sublime and too simple to go *beyond* her gender roles. While Hipparchia's lack of passion, though frustrating to the male character, enables her to be elevated to "some supernatural spirit" (67). This point is best illustrated in a letter written by H.D. to Bryher when she wrote: "I have tried to be man or woman but I have to be both. But it will work out . . . in writing. Mstn. [H.D.'s private shorthand for "masturbation"] with me only breaks down the perfection, I have to be perfect, I get that in my writing" (qtd. in Guest 216). I will come back to the first line of the letter when I discuss family relations in *Asphodel* below. Here, I focus on the "intimacy without intercourse" (*Palimpsest* 74), which H.D./Hipparchia yearn for, and which

simultaneously echoes H.D.'s view of the writing as the ideal. Hipparchia's wondering of "who offers comradeship without passion?" and her choice of morbid isolation are finally put to an end when she meets the like-minded Julia, who gives her hope (67). To reach this utopian state of perfection, the writer, in H.D.'s view, must elevate from a sexual being into a spiritual one, to encompass both a man's and a woman's form (the hermaphrodite).

Palimpsest's multiple romantic bonds and sexual non-exclusivity are a clear demonstration of Schönpflug's utopian element of non-monogamous "friendships and sexual partnerships." In the rest of this section, I will examine Schönpflug's second element of feminist utopia the absence of nuclear family in relation to H.D.'s *Asphodel*. The novel radicalises nuclear family units through introducing characters of certain talents and qualities who form their own non-traditional (familial) groups. *Asphodel* extends the theme of friendship (found in *Palimpsest*, for example) into a larger context of unorthodox family relations, or in H.D.'s terms "a family that seeks its own" (173). The novel traces H.D.'s life from her travel to France and settlement in London with the Greggs (Frances and her mother Clara) until the birth of H.D.'s daughter in 1919. In commenting on the overarching family structure in the novel, Susan Stanford Friedman states:

Asphodel opens with the unit of a mother and two "daughters," Fayne and Hermione, whose sister-love Hermione tries unsuccessfully to perpetuate. *Asphodel* closes with the unit of two mothers and a daughter, Hermione and Beryl, whose commitment to the baby is their hold on life. But the narrative movement of both Part 1 and Part 2 centers on the intellectual, heterosexual stories of courtship, marriage, and motherhood. (*Penelope's Web* 191)

“Typically,” in feminist utopias, “women make issues of family, sexuality, and marriage more central than do men” (Kessler, “Women” 118). Therefore, “the [novel’s] narrative of lesbian love [is] posed as a viable alternative to heterosexual desire and marriage” (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 191). More specifically, family relations are treated within frames of lesbian compassion and love. Hermione (H.D.), Beryl (Bryher), Fayne Rabb (Frances Gregg), and Cyril Vane (Cecil Gray) relationships among each other are entangled in the “veil of Loves” at times, and referred to as that of “brothers and sisters” at others (136, 173). These “lost people” belong to a family that cannot be defined according to the traditional nuclear order. Cyril vane was Hermione’s husband and lover, but “it [his relationship with her] was so mixed, lover, husband” that when he left, she felt that “it was brotherly of him” (148). Hermione and Beryl are described as lovers in many occasions, and they both share the motherhood of Phoebe;³⁴ however, Hermione’s dismissal of Beryl’s suicidal thoughts was like, to quote Robert Spoo’s introduction to *Asphodel*, achieving “sisterhood . . . at the end of part 2” (xvi). Hermione is described as the “sister with every queen” because she defies gender categories: “Hermione was odd. She wasn’t in it, wasn’t out of it” (H.D., *Asphodel* 163, 130). This position allows her to criticise other human relations like the “Louise-Darrington alliance” (Hermione’s husband’s adulterous affair), because “we [the demi-gods/Hermione and Beryl] don’t fortunately want human lovers” (173, 38).

The heterosexual alliance (Louise-Darrington) is put in stark contrast with the lesbian one (Hermione-Beryl) to show, as Matthew Kibble puts it, the latter’s “higher order” (552). Hermione and Beryl are elevated to “demi-gods” because they have “aristocracy of the spirit,” which stands for sexual and aesthetic elitism that endorse them with visionary powers (*Asphodel* 44, 28). Those powers create a spiritual rebirth that has “the potential to regenerate

³⁴ Phoebe Fayne Darrington is Perdita Macpherson Schaffner (1919-2001), H.D.’s daughter by Cecil Gray. Bryher and her husband Kenneth Macpherson legally adopted Perdita in 1928 (Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* 575).

and re-aestheticize a culture that had been traumatized by war” (Kibble 549). Linking this utopian mission of the artist with H.D.’s letter to Bryher where she “tried to be man or woman but . . . have to be both,” suggests another immediate link between the “aristocracy of the spirit” and bisexuality (qtd. in Guest 216; H.D., *Asphodel* 28). The Hermione-Fayne identification with Joan of Arc, for example, proposes that “being a boy in a girl’s body is a coded reference to both same-sex desire and the capacity for visionary foresight (Hobson 122). However, these powers come with the cost of being “trapped” in a lack-of-definition sexuality that belongs to what Hobson calls an “exclusivity” of “divine mission” and what Kibble names “a rejection of conventional roles” (H.D., *Asphodel* 9, 158; Hobson 122; Kibble 552). H.D.’s “resentment of the war, which comes to represent all that has divided her from the artistic and sexual fulfilment that she had started to enjoy in the prewar,” parallels the novel’s narrative of overcoming the miseries of the First World War through the regenerative powers of art and beauty (Kibble 556).

As the next section on women and war shows, H.D. found herself in challenging times for the female poet. Losing faith in her medium, she “destroyed many of her wartime poems and turned instead to prose” to describe “the [war] experience that was smashing her life” (A. Smith 121). However, this rejection did not hinder her determination to continue writing about her experience with war and society. H.D.’s presentation of war is always related to her preoccupations with feminine identity being confined to prescribed gender roles and caught up in political wars. She warned against the outcomes of both wars, and she portrayed the modern world as a dystopian place of visual, physical, and psychological disturbances.

Critical Contexts: Women, War, and New Worlds in H.D.'s Time

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, many artists and middle-class intellectuals joined as ordinary soldiers to maintain the empire of Great Britain.³⁵ By the end of the war, Britain lost 743, 000 men (Gilbert 37). Those who survived the battlefield came back home shell-shocked, traumatised, and burdened with psychological alienation from their surroundings. Richard Aldington (1892-1962), a returning soldier himself and H.D.'s husband during the period, conveyed the soldiers' devastated feelings in his novel *Death of a Hero* (1929). He states that for the soldier, "the battle was a timeless confusion, a chaos of noise, fatigue, anxiety, and horror [t]he change in him was psychological" (10). Bleak images of mutilation and defragmentation were not restricted to human bodies and corpses. Many writers depicted these themes in relation to the city of London. In *Kangaroo* (1923), D. H. Lawrence wrote in his chapter "Nightmare" that "It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-1916 the spirit of the old London collapsed; the city, in some way perished . . . debasement began" (216). In poetry, writers started reflecting about their experiences of the horrors of the Western Front and their shocking verse changed the public perception of patriotism. The euphoric notion of war was not there anymore.³⁶ Andrew

³⁵ Heroism and martyrdom were strong trends to envision war as utopian. Some poets, like Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) and Patrick Shaw (1888-1917), idealised war, which was conceived of as the ultimate utopia they would long for to be remembered as heroes (Green 20). In his war anthology, *The Spirit of Man* (1915), the poet Robert Bridges (1844-1930) writes that "our beloved who fall in the fight . . . die nobly, as heroes and Saints die" (Preface). He attaches Biblical references to war and arranges his war poems under subheadings such as "Christian Virtue" and "The Happy Warrior" to ensure an "easy recruitment of the western and Christian canons" (Longley 57-58). Another example of the idealisation of war are Brooke's "1914" sonnets, especially "Peace" where he compares soldiers who die during duty to "swimmers" who "turn . . . into cleanness leaping" (4). War is seen here as an experience with purifying or cleansing effects, which requires a leap of faith for the bigger cause of heroism.

³⁶ Anglo-European political parties played an effective role in propagating the ideal of blind patriotism to encourage men to enlist willingly in order to defend their nations. Soon after he arrived at the Front in October 1914, Julian Grenfell (1888-1915) wrote, "I adore war. It is like a big picnic but without the objectivelessness of a picnic. I have never been more well or more happy" (qtd. in Hollander 191). War was presented to those who stayed home (women and the elderly) as the ideal that they missed out on. However, shortly after their enrolment, poets started to become disillusioned with the war upon witnessing its barbaric reality of death and

Motion explains that “towards the end of the First World War, amidst the squalor and tragedy of the Western Front, something fundamental changed . . . the patriotic imperative . . . our sense of ‘a war poet’ was transformed” (qtd. in Longley 57). It became a difficult task for some poets to counter what the state – with the help of other writers – had instilled in the public’s mind about rejoicing in war.³⁷

Against this backdrop of dystopian war, the utopian imagination of writers and artists became increasingly vivid. For many writers, extreme hope mixed with terrible despair. London became “a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors” (Lawrence, *Kangaroo* 216). One of these hopes was Lawrence’s community of Rananim, a title suggested by his friend S. S. Kotliansky or ‘Kot,’ which is based on the “assumption of goodness in members, instead of the assumption of badness” (*Letters* 2: 259).³⁸ In another letter to William Hopkin, Lawrence imagined Rananim to be a new generation of “about twenty souls” sailing “away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism” (*Letters* 2: 259). In order to stay “away from this world of war,” Lawrence’s utopia had to be somewhere other than the “dissolving” England (*Letters* 2: 47). Because “there is no future here [in England], only decomposition,” Lawrence imagined his colony to be in America, where he could find “hope

despair. “War poets” or “trench poets,” like Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), Ivor Gurney (1890-1937) and Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918) aimed to present war as the dystopia of their age.

³⁷ Some of these poets began to produce work that echoes the bitterness of war and its bestiality, focusing on the theme of dystopian worlds and hellish places, on tones of bereavement and sorrow, and on images of corpses and mutilations. Other poets used mockery and sarcasm to ridicule the government for its responsibility for people’s misconceptions. For example, in “Smile, Smile, Smile,” Owen tended to use bitterly ironic style in presenting the hysterical laugh of “half limbed” soldiers when they read the Westminster report that mentions the glory of war (Winter 249).

³⁸ D. H. Lawrence’s letter to S.S. Kotliansky was dated 3 January 1915. However, it is worth mentioning that the idea of utopia was fermenting in Lawrence’s mind even before the First World War. In 1910, he wrote: “with a view to advancing a more perfect social state and to out fitting ourselves to be perfect citizens-communists” (Armytage 386).

The word “Rananim” may refer to the first verse of Psalm 33: *Rananim Sadikhim Badanoi* [Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous] (Armytage 386-87). K. W. Gransden suggests another meaning to the word “Rananim” to “be connected with the word Ra’annanim meaning green, fresh, or flourishing, an adjective (qualifying, again, sadikhim, the righteous) found in the fourteenth verse of Psalm 92 (*Letters* 2: 252).

of a future” (*Letters* 2: 438).³⁹ D.H. Lawrence included H.D. personally in his own plans to form a utopian community overseas. In a letter to Catherine Carswell, dated 27 October 1917, he summed up his companions to be: “Frieda and I, and Eder and Mrs Eder, and William Henry and Gray, and probably Hilda Aldington and maybe Kot and Dorothy Yorke.”⁴⁰ Hobson finds a connection between this letter and Rico’s (Lawrence’s) invitation to Julia (H.D.) in *Bid Me to Live* (written 1933-1950, published 1960), asking her to “go away together where the angels come down to earth” (*Bid Me to Live* 57, 66, 86, 138, 169, 183; Hobson 137-39). Hobson states that Julia’s refusal of Rico’s offer was because “his hope was misplaced or invested in angelic dreams that turned out later . . . to be nothing of the sort” (136). Lawrence’s “impractical philosophy,” to use Waddell’s term, stressed the “man-is-man, woman-is-woman” gender binaries which “Julia would prefer to dispute from a position of freedom” (Waddell 198; McNeil xi). Julia conveys H.D.’s utopian philosophy of escaping fixed gender roles to register herself as a poet (creator) who can supersede social and sexual boundaries. In comparison, Julia’s description of Rico’s character as a lustful Satyr discloses his “male primacy” and confines him to “the patriarchal logic . . . of Man-Heroes and Man-Gods” (Hobson 138).⁴¹

Delineating the connection between the works of H.D., Lawrence, and Aldington, which discuss the period of the First World War, Peter E. Firchow states that “there is unquestionably a textual dialogue [more with Lawrence and less than with Aldington] going on in *Bid Me to Live*” (66). Firchow further suggests that

Ultimately . . . *Bid Me to Live* is heavily indebted to both *Aaron’s Rod* and *Death of a Hero*, just as the latter novel is heavily indebted to the former; and it suggests too that

³⁹ America was Lawrence’s last utopian destination. Before that, he also spoke of many other places; such as “Florida, Cornwall, French Polynesia, Russia, South America, Palestine, and, Africa” (Waddell 198).

⁴⁰ Lawrence to Catherine Carswell (27 October 1917), in *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* 3: 173.

⁴¹ See also Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 155-61.

the three novels can only be read and interpreted fully and satisfactorily when taken together as a kind of ‘trilogy.’ It suggests further that both Lawrence’s and Aldington’s novels are unsympathetic reactions to the growing independence (especially in sexual terms) of women in the first part of the century, and that H.D.’s novel is a reaction to that reaction. (72)

The “reaction” in H.D.’s novel, as Firchow names it, is presented, I argue, in Julia’s wondering “why should not she enter into the feelings of men?” (62). Julia’s “sexless, or all sex” realm of consciousness is put in stark contrast to Rico’s “false” “man-, . . . woman-theory” (62). His attempt to compel her to “Stick to the woman-consciousness” echoes the “intensely masculine” roles that Aldington confines to male troops.⁴² Claire M. Tylee attributes the alienation in the husband-wife (Aldington and H.D.) relationship – Elizabeth-George and Julia-Rafe in *Bid Me to Live* and *Death of a Hero*, respectively – to the “war ethos” that “has re-asserted gender values which are not only mutually exclusive, but mutually alienating” (241). Both writers (H.D. and Aldington) attributed the failure of their marriage to the shattering effects of the war. Against this backdrop, H.D. had a stillborn child and became emotionally distant towards her husband, and Aldington gave little support to his wife and had an affair (Tylee 233). To counteract the effects of war, H.D.’s search for a (male-female) union serves as a nostalgic attempt to go back to the pre-war times. As Kibble explains, “H. D.’s fictions are also an elegy for an alternative version of modernism the progress of which was halted by the arrival of war (558).

The aftermath of the First World War was characterised by political and social disturbances, and writers were afraid of another war. For H.D., the external war metamorphosed into an internal conflict within the self. There was a sense of loss of identity

⁴² In *Death of a Hero*, Aldington views the exclusively male status of the soldiers: “They had been where no woman and no half-man had ever been, could endure to be. They were Men” (253).

and a desire to escape the chaos of the world (G. Taylor 158). Many writers experienced emotional instability, severe anxiety, and nervous breakdowns, and some committed suicide.⁴³ H.D. herself experienced two mental breakdowns, one in 1937 and the other one a year before her death in 1961. She did not write much poetry in the decade between 1930 and 1940 compared to her early period. Janice S. Robinson attributes this waning in production to H.D.'s anticipation of a second war-in-the-making and, thus, the urgent need to prepare for it (303).

The Second World War "created a very different atmosphere" than the First because the "entire citizenry felt itself critical to the war effort" when the city of London was directly bombed by the German air raids (Debo, Introduction 16). "The civilians," as Bryher states, "have often had more experiences than the so-called soldiers" (qtd. in Debo, Introduction 16).⁴⁴ As an eyewitness, Bryher further explains in her letter how eight-year old children were involved in removing incendiary explosives from the streets and how Londoners "walked through bombs with their shopping baskets and clustered up by the guns in the park as if it were a ball game, to applaud" (qtd. in Debo, Introduction 16). During the Blitz, H.D. and Bryher often offered a spare room to visitors in their apartment at Lowndes Square in London (Debo, Introduction 21). Perdita, H.D.'s daughter, worked as a mobile canteen driver as part of her job for the WVS (Women's Voluntary Service). She chose this work after she had not been able to join ARP (Air Raid Protection), because there were too many volunteers. H.D. attributed Perdita's inability to join ARP to the latter's preference for men over women volunteers. H.D. explains how "it is shocking to realize that, had she [Perdita] been a boy, he would already be called up. Her friends are busy in the army or in fire-stations, the A.R.P. of course, is one of the main services of interest in London" (qtd. in Debo, Introduction 33).⁴⁵

⁴³ Examples include Louis Bogan's mental breakdowns in 1931 and 1933, and the suicides of Sarah Teasdale in 1933, Virginia Woolf in 1941, and Anna Wickham in 1947 (G. Taylor 158).

⁴⁴ Bryher's letter to Pearson, May 15, 1943.

⁴⁵ H.D. to Clifford Howard, November 5, 1939.

Although more women were involved in the Second World War, the tension between women and their sense of nationalism was still unresolved, and feminists continued to reject war as a male phenomenon that upheld patriarchy. In “Three Guineas,” Virginia Woolf satirises the “very good reasons” that make a woman “ask her brother to fight on her behalf to protect ‘our’ country” (350). In the essay, she describes war as “fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share” (350). She comments on how war, alongside heroism and patriotism, has served men’s superiority. “Our country,” she continues, “throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions” (305). Instead of promoting the idea of the collective, wars seem to enhance gender differences and individualism. In Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888), Dr. Leete – a character in the novel, which is set in the future year of 2000 – informs the protagonist that the nineteenth-century crisis of America was not because of the “extraordinary industrial system” of capitalism, but because of an epidemic of “excessive individualism” (45). This is evident in times of war and in critical situations that threaten the safety of the state, when men are expected to participate in saving their countries, while women are not expected to interfere. Phillip E. Wegner asserts that the “presence in the narrative of . . . cultural logic . . . accounts for the strong assertion in Bellamy’s utopia of the dichotomy between the worlds of men and women” (85). Wegner adds that “gender difference must be vigilantly reinforced in the twenty-first century precisely because these distinctions, as Dr. Leete himself points out, were increasingly contested in the transitional period of the late nineteenth century” (85). Gender differences are highlighted in utopian writings in the casting of male characters as personifications of the mind, or the voice of reason, while female characters are equated with the body. In Orwell’s dystopian *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), for example, female characters are portrayed as having no possessions but their bodies: Julia is “only a rebel from the waist downwards,” the female proles “had never learned to think” because she “had no mind, she

had only strong arms, a warm heart, and a fertile belly.” Similarly, the washerwoman has “no mind” (129, 181). Reason itself – another important term in defining gender relations, alongside philosophy, war, and utopia – is identified with the masculine.⁴⁶

H.D. presents a utopia that combines masculine and feminine elements and includes both men and women; if in H.D.’s work the male is the maker, the female acts as the changer of his creations; when he is the voice of reason, she is the voice of intuition or the psyche; and when he is the angel, she is the goddess. Sometimes, as the next chapter shows, H.D. uses indeterminate gender pronouns like “you,” “I,” and “we” to present a genderless utopia, one that exists in “Paradise / before Eve” and “earth, before Adam” – a suggestion that utopia (heaven) is gender-neutral (*TR* 155, 154). The variation of the images of utopia across H.D.’s works, however, means that “moving beyond gender, does not mean forgetting it,” to use Friedman’s words (*Mappings* 18). H.D.’s women are empowered; they experience alternating states of passion and emotional restraint, visions and dreams. H.D.’s utopia is always in the making because of its fluidity and changeability, which are evident in her re-visioning and rewriting of historical events and stories. There is a great deal of moving back and forth in history, but unlike Bellamy’s *Looking Backwards*, H.D. is more concerned with celebrating historical female figures than with criticising them. Cyclical motions are also evident in H.D.’s utopias: life and death, time and place, travel and immortality.

⁴⁶ Sarah Hutton emphasises the biased nature of philosophy in both “practice and conception . . . if not in essence.” She also argues that many feminists, like Genevieve Lloyd, Jean Grimshaw, and Susanne Bordo, have agreed that reason is thought of as masculine (196).

CHAPTER TWO

WHENEVER A WOMAN COMES, THERE COMES REVOLUTION:

CONFLICTING FORCES OF NATURE AND H.D.'S UTOPIANISM

The poetry that H.D. published in the early years of her career is revolutionary in its themes and images. It makes an analogy between the clash of dual forces of nature and women's protest against their surrounding injustices often represented by war and patriarchy. The first part of this chapter's title echoes Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) phrase that "wherever a man comes, there comes revolution" (75) to stress the revolutionary aspect of H.D.'s poetry, which is concerned with the empowerment of women. H.D.'s early work communicates her admiration of the natural world. She often portrays a wild nature which symbolises women's break from the confines of masculine culture. H.D. invokes a traditional association of women with nature (through images of fruit, flowers, and water), but adds untypical characteristics to it. Her presentation of women is more complex in the sense that they are also compared to harsh flowers, frosted fruit, and powerful waves of the sea to stress their resilience. Accordingly, I propose that at this stage of her writing, H.D. developed a utopian vision that linked the wild forces of nature with resilient women resistant to patriarchal traditions. This vision is addressed in the four sections of this chapter that focus on H.D.'s reference to the poet's utopian role, the garden as a constant place of change, the use of gender non-specific pronouns, and the promotion of utopia through the use of colour.

In her early, as well as late, poetry H.D. shows a tendency to describe dual or contradictory elements of nature.¹ These elements highlight her interest in a kind of struggle between the genders and in her vision of wild pastoral utopia. Drawing on this interest, I make a connection between how H.D. presents the utopian as having contrastive elements

¹ In section three below, I link the contrastive colours of utopia – according to Kandinsky's theory of colours – and H.D.'s recurrent mention of the sea image with its contrastive shades of blue.

and how socialists and early writers of utopia describe it in terms of its contradictory meanings. As I explained in Chapter One, the term *utopia* contains an antithesis, denoting both a non-existent place and an ideal place, and is commonly understood as a “particular quasi-human community where socio-political institutions, norms and individual relationships are organised according to a more perfect principle than in the author’s community” (Sargent, “The Three Faces of Utopianism” 6). Utopia thus entails an oscillation between the writers’ “real” environment and the “imaginary” one that they try to visualise for their readers. The imaginary world could be in the future or in the past, and it is called “the utopia of escape,” where the writer retreats to certain mythological or Biblical places or events to seek a safe haven or to create a peaceful moment of unlimited possibility (Sargent, *Utopianism* 8-16). I further demonstrate how H.D.’s search for the utopian in her poetry reveals a protest against war and gender inequalities and illustrates the developing consciousness of female experience in the social and cultural contexts of the two world wars.

In H.D.’s utopia, conflict in the military sense or between genders can be overcome by uniting battling forces. Sometimes, she uses pronouns with obscure referents to create an androgynous utopia. Other times, she fuses gender roles in her unified world to suggest, as Friedman notes, that “moving beyond gender does not mean forgetting it” (*Mappings* 18). Gender is still important in H.D.’s work because feminine issues resurface despite androgynous images. It is crucial to note that although many critical views of H.D.’s Imagist poetry have focused upon abstractions and forms like the soul, body, or landscapes, these studies still acknowledge the importance of gender issues in H.D.’s early poetry. Celena E. Kusch, for example, identifies the landscapes in *Sea Garden* (1916) with American local areas focusing mainly on geography and the culture of the early twentieth century. However, Kusch admits, though beyond the scope of her work, that “such poems [of *Sea Garden*] certainly address questions of gender and sexuality” (55). Dianne Chisholm attributes these

questions to the restrictions that women face in social and cultural spheres. Therefore, she reads H.D.'s early poetry as a "symptom of women's lack of authoritative position, of signification as women in the public, symbolic order" (87). Friedman identifies the use of imagery in *Sea Garden* as "an exteriorization of the poet's consciousness" that mediates between nature and culture (*Penelope's Web* 51). Though the emphasis of her discussion is laid on the poet's desire to escape to the sacred, Friedman argues that *Sea Garden* is "H.D.'s first solution to the problem not only of femininity, but also of masculinity – specifically, the war, as a reflection of patriarchal patriotism run riot" (60). H.D.'s celebration of the wildness of nature is, in fact, a celebration of unconventional femininity and beauty. The personal questions of identity are highly encoded within the collection's impersonal forms of Imagism for two purposes: one, to charge the poems with "a forbidden gendered rebellion and eroticism," and two, to explore problems of a women writer in a patriarchal society (56).

When H.D.'s early poetry was first published, many critics neglected it because it did not easily lend itself to analysis.² However, H.D.'s poetry possesses intellectual vibrancy that makes its obscurity tantalising. In 1925, H.D. published a poetry volume called *Collected Poems*, in which she rearranged her previous poems into two sections: *Sea Garden* and *Hymen* (1921). I argue that H.D.'s combination of specific poems in *Sea Garden* indicates their unity in terms of both time range and theme. The *Sea Garden* poems share the theme of celebrating dualistic forces of nature which, I will argue, signify H.D.'s vision of nature as a utopian place of constant change. Accordingly, I have chosen representative poems from *Sea Garden* to highlight protest as part of the process of change needed to create utopia. This protest is communicated through intense or seemingly unmediated creative visions and images of nature. The poems I explore in *Sea Garden* are "Sea Rose," "The Helmsman," "Sheltered Garden," "The Wind Sleepers," and "Evening." I aim to demonstrate that these

² In her attempt to analyse H.D.'s early poetry, Elizabeth Caroline Dodd argues that it "is difficult to tell whether the poem intends a reader to adopt a classical or a romantic assumption" (55). This perplexing effect is a characteristic of all of H.D.'s poetry.

poems are written in a spare style to reflect the intense focus on certain key subjects that occupied the poet's mind, such as war, women, and their relation to her utopian vision. In such a style, form and content resonate with each other. I will examine these poems, arguing that they challenge poetic and gender norms, despite their obscurity of terms and pronouns and abstract meanings.

I will explore, in the first section of this chapter, H.D.'s understanding of the role of the poet as the creator of utopia. H.D.'s Moravian background and her interest in art, the occult and the divine all shaped her poems' religio-aesthetic dimension that links creativity with divinity. Accordingly, I propose how the other-worldly elements in H.D.'s poetry shaped her understanding of utopia as a changeable world of possibilities. The second section examines how H.D.'s poetry appeared in the early twentieth century as a response to established social relations and gender expectations. In "Sea Rose" and "Sheltered Garden" H.D. reflects on women's resilience in relation to their difficult circumstances. I will explore H.D.'s utopian view, which identifies women's power with the wild forces of nature. Then, I link the poet's vision of the sheltered garden to Zygmunt Bauman's example of the garden as the utopia of modern times in H.D.'s poetry. The third section of this chapter tackles the ambiguity of gender references in "Helmsman" and "The Wind Sleeper" due to the use of non-indicative pronouns in the two poems. These poems – like all the other poems in my selection of H.D.'s early work – share the overarching theme of women's resistance to male domination, portrayed through dualistic forces of nature. H.D. represents the wild conflict between different elements of nature as the oppositional relationship between the sexes, after which women are empowered and utopia is conceived as a pre-social space or place prior to the construction and imposition of gender roles. In the fourth section, I draw a link between the contradictory meaning of the etymology of the word *utopia* – which denotes the existence and the nonexistence of a place – and H.D.'s dual presentation of colours in the image of the

sea as a nurturer and destroyer of life. I base my argument on Wassily Kandinsky's theory of colours in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), which links colours to utopian thinking.

I. The Role of the (Woman) Poet in the Making of Utopia

It is essential to acknowledge that H.D.'s literary heritage and her ideas on religion were highly influenced by her Moravian Church background, which, as Jane Augustine notes, she trusted, "had endowed her with supernormal visionary spiritual and creative powers" (Introduction xxvi). These mystic powers are explored in *The Mystery* (a novella written 1948–51 and published 2009) and *The Gift* (a memoir written between 1941-43 and first published in 1998). In both stories, H.D. traces the life of her ancestors from her mother's side focusing mainly on Count Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian Church, and his followers. In one of the stories in *The Gift*, H.D.'s grandmother "Mamalie" reveals to the young Hilda the "Secret" of the once agreed settlement between the Moravians and the Indians that was lost forever (*The Gift* 271-74). The Moravians, Barbara Guest explains, believed that this "Secret" – "gift," or "mystery" as the title of the two novels suggest – "was one of vision, of wisdom of the holy spirit, however it manifest itself," and it was transferred from one generation to the next (13). Elizabeth Anderson further describes this "gift" as H.D.'s ability to "fulfil the broken promise and lost dream through passing on the message of peace in her own writing" (9). The poet's role as the distributor/holder of the "message of peace," I believe, is part of H.D.'s utopian thinking. One of the main requirements of this mission, H.D. thinks, is to sustain a religio-aesthetic dimension that links creativity with the divine. To be able to further explain this point, I quote here how Frances Gregg, in her memoir *The Mystic Leeway* (1995), recalls that the young H.D. constantly regarded herself as "one, or another, useful god" (66). Through maintaining this prophet-poet paradigm (or the religio-aesthetic dimension, as I called it earlier), H.D. became this "useful god" whose

proclamation of the divine “opened up a new dimension of religious experience to H.D.: ecstasy” (Augustine, “Teaching H.D.” 65). This elevated joy of acquiring godly powers, as H.D. imagined herself to have, enabled her to reclaim not only her Moravian heritage, but also the “fertility religions of Egypt and the middle east” (“Teaching H.D.” 65). These Eastern religions “celebrated sexual union as a natural force” (65). Moreover, as part of the revival of her Moravian literary heritage, H.D. borrows the figure of the Christ, the saviour, “who is recognized by the Moravians as God, the fountainhead of all love” (Guest 9). When it comes to the presentation of women in her works, H.D. rewrites mythical and biblical stories to restore women’s places in these accounts, as I will show in the chapters on *Trilogy* (1946) and *Helen in Egypt* (1961). The reason for this revision, as Augustine explains, is that “the absence of powerful women in the Christian story,” “troubled” H.D. (“Teaching H.D.” 106). In *The Gift*, the young Hilda asks her uncle if “ladies can be just the same as men,” because she wonders whether or not her femaleness would affect her own ability to bear “the gift” (43). In response, H.D.’s uncle reassures her that “lots of ladies write very good books” (43). The “gift” here, then, stands for the poet’s artistic and literary aptitude to write “very good books.”

There is an “anxiety of authorship,” to use Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s terminology, which stems from the conflict between perceptions of women writers as being inferior to their male counterparts, and their constant attempts to unbind themselves from literary and ideological shackles (*The Madwoman in the Attic* 51). This anxiety of authorship is “not handed down from one woman to another but from the stern literary ‘fathers’ of patriarchy to all their ‘inferiorized’ female descendants” (51). It was difficult for H.D. to write about women in the well-known historical stories without the urge to defend women – or herself – from the “socially determined sense of her [or their] own biology” (51). Gilbert and Gubar state that while male authors face “anxiety about creativity,” when writing, female

writers experience an inherited “complex” and “fear” of assuming authority that is considered “inappropriate to [their] sex” (51). H.D. was caught up in this fear of challenging a male-dominated profession that is “endemic to literary subculture” (51). In another study, Gilbert and Gubar affirm that “H.D. was convinced that Freud was blind to [her] spiritual realities,” although she was greatly influenced by his opinions (*No Man’s Land* 169). These spiritual realities included the poet’s desire “to be the founder of a new religion,” and her belief in the idea of immortality (*TF* 37).³

Another example of H.D.’s challenge to patriarchal views and preconceptions is her emphasis on the utility of poetry in “new-world reconstruction,” which are set in opposition to Plato’s ideas on the triviality of the role of poets in the making of utopia (*CP* 522):

you now tell us, trivial
intellectual adornment;
poets are useless,

more than that,
we, authentic relic,

bearers of secret wisdom,
living remnant

³ During their sessions in 1933 and 1934, Freud diagnosed H.D. with megalomania, “a suppressed desire to be a prophetess” (*TF* 51). On her encounter with Freud as one of the “fathers” of civilisation, H.D. wrote: “I was a student, working under the direction of the greatest minds of this and of perhaps many succeeding generations. But the professor was not always right” (*TF* 16). Her statement is a good example of challenging male authority, because while she respects Freud and admits his greatness, she speaks her mind in defiance of his opinions. See also Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 17-154 and Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s Land* 169-170.

of the inner band
of the sanctuaries' initiate,

are not only 'non-utilitarian', we are 'pathetic':

this is the new heresy;
but if you do not even understand what words say,
how can you expect to pass judgment
on what words conceal? (TR 14)

These lines are written in defence of the importance of the poet's role in society and against accusations of inefficiency. H.D. defends poets against the "new heresy" that describes poetry as "useless" in its contribution to the nation's welfare. However, this view of poetry is not the outcome of the twentieth century, but originally dates back to the Ancient Greeks. Here I follow Jeannine Johnson's attribution of the origin of this belief in the non-utilitarian characteristic of poetry to Plato's thoughts in *The Republic*, in which he describes poets as "impractical" and "inefficient" (61). Johnson refers to the "you," whom the speaker addresses in the lines above, as "the 'enemy' of poetry that resides within" and "betray[s] the aesthetics" for the sake of materialist gain (62). She bases her analysis on H.D.'s contempt of the new world machinery which made her generation emotionless and cruel.

In her review of Yeats's *Responsibilities and Other Poems* (1914), H.D. wrote:

Our generation did not stand against the enemy – it was the enemy. . . . For it has merged into this struggle with its own much lauded guns and aeroplanes. . . . The guns they praised, the beauty of the machines they loved, are no more as a god set apart for

worship but a devil over whom neither they nor we have any more control.
("Responsibilities" 129)

Here, I see H.D.'s fear and hatred of the machinery of war as linked to the alarming effect of utopia in the modern times. Some utopian dreams, when turned into totalitarian implications or manifested into realities, lose their appeal. To further explain this, I highlight H.D.'s emphasis, above, on modern people becoming their own enemies in the light of Gilbert and Gubar's claim that "World War I virtually completed the Industrial Revolution's construction of anonymous dehumanized man" (*No Man's Land* 259). In other words, the First World War did not only lead to the alienation of the citizens, but also changed the expectations of the world they lived in. The modern individual, Gilbert and Gubar further argue, "saw that the desert between him and his so-called enemy was not just a metaphor for the technology of death and the death dealt by technology, it was also a symbol for the state, whose nihilistic machinery he was powerless to control or protest" (*No Man's Land* 259). This description echoes H.D.'s discontent with the lack of control that individuals face in the age of war and machinery and that would turn their utopias from "a god set apart for worship" into "a devil" ("Responsibilities" 129). Freedom of choice became an illusion, as Bauman explains, especially after the "impatience" of some governments to force their own impractical visions on individuals, focusing entirely on ends and eliminating those who did not share their goals. Therefore, some utopian visions were redirected through a self-critique that shifted it to a coercive totalitarian conformity that needed supervision and intervention to eradicate the unpredictable.

When the repressive side of utopianism overshadows its progressive side, then the role of the poet comes to suggest the love of art and its aesthetics as an antidote to the admiration of machinery and guns. I argue that both art and poetry play vital roles in H.D.'s

vision of the utopian world, and they are put in stark contrast with the dystopian image of war. H.D. attributes the bestiality of war that is inflicted upon her generation to an uncontrollable greed for power and money. She longs for the restoration of the nineteenth-century appreciation of the beauty of art (Collecott, ““Another Bloomsbury””). Friedman directs attention to H.D.’s possession of a copy of a *Hemispheres* special issue on magic and poetry (*Psyche Reborn* 320). In this issue, two articles discuss the magical effects of words. Joseph Blau emphasises the power of the “wonder-working words” that have to be concealed because they are so magical. Johannes Urzidil links magic to poetry, stating that “all artists are magicians, and the magic of all poetry resides in the Word” (qtd. in *Psyche Reborn* 223). H.D. thought the same about the magic of poetry and its strong influence on humanity, especially its power to heal. H.D. called for what is now known as “poetry therapy” in her propagation of hope amidst despair.⁴ Through poetry, H.D. wanted to inspire a new faith that would stimulate the power of change and endurance of wars and misery. H.D.’s emphasis on this supposed magical power of poetry seems to be different from a general understanding of poetry as a political tool. In my discussion of this point within the framework of utopian thinking, I argue that H.D.’s views on poetry echo those of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) where he describes the utopian function of poetry:

It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our

⁴ In his article “Finding the Words to Say It: The Healing Power of Poetry,” Robert Carroll shows, with examples, how today’s poetry has been used as an effective tool in therapy. He argues that poetry helps to console people after major disasters, like the tsunami 2004 and September 11.

minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso . . . [‘No one deserves the name of creator, save God and the poet’]. (59)

Poetry creates an alternative world that provokes the desire for change in the real world. The powers of creation through the imagination endow the poet with god-like or prophet-like qualities. Like Shelley, H.D. believes in the power of poetry to purify humans’ perceptions so that they can see the chaotic nature of reality (P.B. Shelley 59). H.D.’s allegiance to Shelley’s view ties in with her perception of war and machinery as being the source of humankind’s repression and alienation (“Responsibilities” 129). Although she criticises her generation for its blind pursuit of money and power, H.D. believes that poetry can revive peoples’ ability to value aesthetic pleasure which would, in turn, change the chaotic world they live in and the way they perceive it.

So far, I have explored H.D.’s perception of the role of the poet as the creator of utopia. This “gift” of divine and aesthetic powers that she believed she had inherited from her Moravian ancestors helped her to explore mystic and supernatural themes in her poetry. Moreover, H.D.’s “gift” helped her establish her identity as a creator of utopia in response to the specific historical period, the First World War, when the world was unravelling. Women poets, in particular, were relied upon to counteract the effects of war: “she was stronger than men, men, men-she was stronger than guns, guns, guns” (H.D., *Asphodel* 162). Women feature prominently in H.D.’s re-visioning of the past and they are placed at the core of her utopian visions. Perhaps, as Chisholm observes when discussing one of the poems of *Sea Garden*, this is “a lifelong struggle to materialize the vital desire to forge a definition and find a sign – however esoteric – with which to signify” themselves (87). Since I am going to discuss the poems of *Sea Garden* from a gender studies perspective, arguing that they come

out as a protest to conventional rules of beauty and love, it is important to discuss the socio-political roles of women in the times when the volume appeared. It is equally important to show how these women (writers) were perceived in H.D.'s times, on relation to the views of contemporary male writers. As it proceeds, the next section will also explore how war – as an idea and as a reality – reinforces gender differences rather than destabilising them.

II. H.D.'s Unconventional Women

In early 1912, H.D., her then husband Richard Aldington (1892-1962), and Ezra Pound formed a literary group called the Imagists. In 1913, Imagism became a movement, and Pound published "A Few Don'ts," a document was included in a larger group of essays and notes entitled "A Retrospect" (1918). Pound's notes set some rules inspired by Chinese and Japanese poetry, and they included three main principles agreed on by the three poets: "Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective, . . . an economy of words, and the sequence of the musical phrase (free verse)" (3). Pound's two-line poem "In a Station of the Metro" (1913) is perhaps the best example of this movement, because it follows closely the set rules of Imagism (Beach 26). The description of "[t]he apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough" reflects precision and clarity in conveying a "one-image poem" (qtd. in Beach 26). Pound justifies the scarcity of the wording because "it is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous work" ("A Retrospect" 4). H.D. composed her first book-length collection *Sea Garden* under the direct influence of Pound. The collection includes poems that were first published in 1915 in three different anthologies, entitled *Some Imagist Poets*, and published by Constable and Co. (Wheeler, "Both Flower and Flower Gatherer" 500). Lesley Wheeler observes that this publishing company was Amy Lowell's London Publisher and proposes that H.D.'s

“connection with Lowell may indicate resistance to Ezra Pound’s program for imagism” (500). I suggest two reasons for this resistance, artistic and gender. First, H.D. refused to be confined to the rules and regulations, so to speak, set by Pound as the initiator of Imagism. According to Sonja Samberger, H.D. “is far from imitating the model of a male Imagism” because she “is known to have practiced her own version of Imagism even before Pound propagated an official one, and her poetry combines ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ elements” (61). The second part of Samberger’s argument may refer to H.D.’s use of androgynous referents in her Imagist poetry. With regard to this point, particularly, is my second proposed reason for H.D.’s resistance to Pound: gender. In one of the most recent studies on H.D. and Pound, Jeanne Heuving argues that H.D. was radical in altering the “‘sex-gender’ system” of Pound’s Imagism which confines love poems to heterosexual relations (89). Instead, Heuving asserts, H.D. took poetic moments into a “far greater degree” than Pound did through the exploration of other possible relations, like androgynous and lesbian love lyrics (89). Moreover, H.D. opposed Pound’s anti-feminist views on women poets. This literary protest may not be directed at Pound personally, but also at the views of many male writers who shared his opinion publically.⁵

H.D. admired Pound and was influenced by his views on modern poetry. She kept the initials of the pen name he gave her, “H.D. Imagiste,” for the rest of her career. However, Pound’s “naming” of H.D. “was both a burden and a limitation” because she struggled to prove her own identity as a female poet not following in the footsteps of Pound’s Imagist doctrine (Zilboorg, “Imagism” 191). Many of H.D.’s male contemporary writers, whom she admired and was influenced by, ridiculed women’s literary productions and dismissed them

⁵ See Samberger 95-98.

Cynthia D. Kinnard’s *Antifeminism in American Thought: An Annotated Bibliography* (1986) investigates nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century antifeminism in 900 articles and 400 books and pamphlets. Significantly, she clarifies that antifeminism is not restricted to men, as almost one third of the articles she examines and half of the books in her bibliography were written by women.

as unimportant or unintelligent. As I show below, some of these male writers showed impatience towards the success of their women counterparts in literary productions. For example, although Amy Lowell supported the Imagists financially and produced the three anthologies of *Some Imagist Poets* in 1916, 1917, and 1918, Pound expressed his discontent with the tendency of Imagism being taken over by her through calling it “Amy-gism,” (Stock 164). Likewise, the poet and critic J.C. Ransom (1888-1974) rebuked women’s talents, claiming that a man distinguishes “himself from woman by intellect” (103). Literary women faced the dilemma of not being good enough or being too good for their own gender. Some of their male counterparts showed ambivalence between their opinions of women in reality and their presentations of female characters in fiction. While D.H. Lawrence, for example, offered powerful characters like Ursula and Anna in *Women in Love* (1920) and *The Rainbow* (1915) respectively, he also discriminates against women’s ability to write or join politics (Goodheart xiii). Lawrence states:

It is the tragedy of the modern woman. She becomes cocksure, she puts all her passion and energy and years of her life into some effort or assertion, without ever listening for the denial which she ought to take into account. She is cocksure, but she is a hen all the time. Frightened of her own henny self, she rushes to mad lengths about votes, or welfare, or sports, or business; she is marvellous, out-manning the man. (Lawrence, “Cocksure Women and Hensure Men” 228)

Lawrence uses the metaphor of “cocksure” to describe traits of confidence and strength and attaches them to men only. Lawrence compares women to hens, and uses an extended simile to state that: “[Women] find so often that instead of having laid an egg, they have laid a vote, or an empty ink bottle, or some other absolutely uncatchable object, which means nothing to

them” (228). “Cocksure” manhood, as Lawrence describes it, seems to be threatened by the success and confidence of the “modern woman.” The problem seems to be, as Samberger states, that “male modernists” cannot bear that “modernist women writers were *women*” (97; emphasis in original). There is fear that, due to war, women taking men’s roles in life is catastrophic and will lead to “tragedy” (Lawrence, “Cocksure Women and Hensure Men” 228). There is also a cynical reference to a woman’s “marvellous” achievements because she is doomed to be “frightened of her own henny self.”

Finding herself in an environment of strong rejection of her identity as a woman poet, H.D. found it important to reject these inherited misogynistic views on her gender. She considers Lawrence’s views on women “diabolical,” and in her novel *Bid Me to Live*, she “somehow minimize[s]” his over-emphasised image on the masculine hegemony, by referring to him as “the little man” (qtd. in J. Robinson 289).⁶ Accordingly, although H.D. admired and respected Lawrence, on both personal and professional levels, she still disdained his low opinion of women.⁷ Lisa Rado further confirms that H.D.’s “ambivalence toward her male mentors continues in ‘The Poet,’ where she simultaneously honors and objects to the ironical shell-like façade that shelters Lawrence from the transcendent ‘butterfly’ consciousness she persists in seeking” (55). In “The Poet,” (1935), H.D. commemorates Lawrence but, at the same time, she refutes his ideas of what women should be like:

you are over-temperate in all things;

(is inspiration to be tempered?)

⁶ In the 1920s, H.D. started to write three cycles of novels. One of them, *The Madrigal Cycle*, consisted of the following autobiographical novels: *HERmione* (1981), *Bid Me to Live*, *Paint It Today*, and *Asphodel* (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* xi, 138).

⁷ Lawrence was one of H.D.’s “male mentors.” In her unpublished journal “Compassionate Friendship” (1955), H.D. acknowledges the courtesy of seven men as being the “initiators” of her career, including “Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, John Cournos, D.H. Lawrence, Cecil Gray, Kenneth Macpherson, Walter Schmideberg, and Eric Heydt” (Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 3).

almost, as you pause,
in reply to some extravagance
on my part,
I believe that I have failed,
because I got out of the husk that was my husk,

and was butterfly; (*CP* 463)

In her imaginary dialogue with Lawrence, H.D. addresses their different approaches to writing poetry. There is a clear non-apologetic tone in H.D.'s reference to herself as an "extravagant" and "tempered" woman poet, to free herself from the expectations laid on her gender as "temperate." She is not afraid of breaking out of her own "husk," or what Lawrence refers to as "her own henny self" (Lawrence, "Cocksure Women and Hensure Men" 288). Noticeably, the line that indicates her transformation into "a butterfly" stands on its own, separated from the stanzas that precede and follow it, and this signifies how the female poet succeeds in liberating herself from male domination, although she has "failed" patriarchal expectations. H.D.'s choice of the word "husk" is a reminder of her early theme of the constant call to emancipate women from over-protection – in the analogy she makes between fruit and women.

Like other modernists, H.D. refashions the traditional subjects of poetry, such as fruit and flowers, to present her new vision of them. She uses images of fruit and flowers to communicate her admiration of a wild, untouched, and uncovered beauty. Her *Sea Garden* collection has numerous descriptions of different kinds of flowers that grow on shores or in gardens. H.D.'s interest in roses is explained by Diana Collecott as part of the "botanical precision of . . . pre-war Imagism" (*H.D. and Sapphic Modernism* 216). Imagists picked on

many elements of nature, like roses, fruit, and crops to describe their beauty. However, H.D. was only interested in the wild and aggressive elements of nature – like weather-beaten fruits, tossed flowers, and strong winds – because she was against human intervention in nature. Collecott also suggests that the roses H.D. mentions in her early writing are reflections of herself as a homosexual poet.⁸ Wheeler shares this opinion and refers to H.D. as a poet who connects “modern poetry and sexual freedom” through the signification of women’s reproductive anatomy as flowers (“Both Flower and Flower Gatherer” 501).⁹ I share Laity’s interpretation of H.D.’s appreciation of hardened flowers as a call to dismiss beauty without strength (45). H.D.’s utopian vision of beauty –where she celebrates the wild, the withered and the frosted – differs from a wide range of poems by women poets who describe the rose as a delicate object of beauty that is vulnerable and in need of protection.¹⁰ Flowers are used as metaphors for women as both are perceived to share the same qualities, such as beauty and vulnerability. However, H.D. uses the symbol of the flower to question the norms of femininity that are imposed upon women. “Sea Rose,” for example, is set on a shore where there is a lonely rose that seems, at first glance, to lack the appealing features a rose should have: it is “meagre,” “thin,” (5) and damaged, but the poet celebrates it because it stands fiercely against the sea and the sand:

single on a stem-

you are caught in the drift.

Stunted, with small leaf,

⁸ Collecott discusses the influence of the Greek poet Sappho on H.D. and how H.D. adopts Sappho’s style in equating/comparing roses with homosexual desires (*H.D. and Sapphic Modernism* 211-20).

⁹ Wheeler bases her argument on a letter that Aldington, H.D.’s husband, sent while he was at the Front during the First World War, in which he refers to his wife’s vagina as a flower (“Both Flower and Flower Gatherer” 501).

¹⁰ To mention a few, George Eliot’s “Roses,” Louisa May Alcott’s “The Rose Family – Songs,” Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “A dead Rose,” Mary Darby Robinson’s “Stanzas to the Rose,” Emily Dickinson’s “Nobody knows this little Rose,” and Willa Cather’s “London Roses.” I have excluded male poets for the sake of single-gender comparison – to show how H.D.’s poetry contributes to new ideas – and because I have already exemplified in this chapter some of the male-biased presentations of women.

you are flung on the sand,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind. (CP 5)

The speaker is addressing the flower directly. The ebb and flow of the shore hurls the rose and casts it mercilessly on the dry sand, but the rose maintains its resilience through surviving with a “hardened” leaf and an “acrid fragrance” (5). Both qualities reflect a defence mechanism that suggests that it is “harsh” (5) or, perhaps, suffering. To fully understand this hardship, one can delineate an analogy between the flower and the female that it represents. In this sense, the poem is considered a protest against the traditional and conventional conceptions of gender that relate the female sex to femininity. The passivity of the rose is evident in the use of the passive tense construction: “you are caught/ stunted/ flung/ lifted.” In *Stealing the Language* (1986), Alicia Suskin Ostriker argues that women poets use different strategies to overcome the established condescending public notions concerning their powerless feminine subjection: “The woman poet who writes problematically on religious, political or social issues is irrelevant, sententious, or silly. The feminist poet is strident . . . [and] the emotionally intense poet is neurotic” (6). No matter how talented a female writer may be, there are always some subsidiary gender-related reasons that detract from her talent. Women realise that “female” connotes passivity, domesticity, and inferiority, hence a woman’s poetry means inferior poetry.

Writing from a Freudian point of view, Joseph N. Riddel suggests that “the identity of the creative self as woman is threatened not only by the incompleteness of the female but by the insubstantiality of subjectivity which characterizes the feminine” (449). Those inherited notions of incompleteness and dependability threaten women’s creativity. In this sense, the

image of the leaf communicates suffering because it, or the person it represents, becomes hardened up to manage painful and difficult experiences. Likewise, if traditionally the rose represents an emblem of the subordinated woman, the battered and washed-up rose represents the new version of woman who is strong enough for self-protection and survival. This unusual way to present beauty reflects H.D.'s utopian vision that imagines a different gender order and challenges the traditional treatment of women.

To adopt Pound's definition of an image as the representation of "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" ("A Retrospect" 4), "Sea Rose" can be seen as an arena of emotional and intellectual fusion, or more precisely, a struggle. There is a clear struggle between the rose and the sea, on the one hand, and the rose and the land, on the other. Norman N. Holland interprets the sea as the mother, the land as the male (father or brother), and the rose as H.D. herself ("H.D. and the 'Blameless Physician'" 494). He attributes this struggle to H.D.'s dual attempt to blend with and break from her own mother, who favoured her sons and neglected her daughter. H.D. comments that "One can never get near enough, or if one gets near, it is because one has measles or scarlet fever. . . . She likes my brother better. If I stay with my brother, become part almost of my brother, perhaps I can get nearer to her" (qtd. in Holland, "H.D. and the 'Blameless Physician'" 492). It is clear that the special treatment provided for the brother created an emotional and physical gap between mother and daughter, making the daughter long to blend with her male sibling to approach the mother or to assume the mother's role (492). Thus, according to Holland, the male ruins the relationship between the mother and the daughter. However, I think, the value of the literary work is diminished when it is analysed according to biographical facts only, and thus seen as domestic struggle. To do the poem more justice, I will relate it to a wider social context where mothers and brothers play different roles in shaping a daughter's life: one the emblem of security, the other her rival for the mother's love and attention. Nevertheless, the

mother figure can also be, at times, a source of insecurity through her over-protective treatment. The duality of the mother is also a reminder of the duality of the sea; both have destructive and nurturing powers which are simultaneously at work. These dualistic elements work well with the established concept of utopia as having contradictory meanings. Being a term that denotes both a non-existent and an ideal place, utopia fuses the boundaries between the real and the unreal. This feature, I argue, allows H.D.'s poetry to blur the binaries of gender divisions while discussing gender and to create a futuristic vision while exploring the past.

H.D.'s utopia is an aesthetic reincarnation of the past into her present to form a new culture. Most of the landmarks and images of nature that H.D. presents in her work are drawn from Ancient Greece.¹¹ In his *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (1937), Douglas Bush criticises H.D. as “a poet of escape” whose “refuge is a dream-world of ideal beauty which she calls Greece” (505). He further explains that the poet’s “Greece” as she presents it in her works “has no connection with the Greece of historic actuality” (506). In response, Laity argues that the Victorian Hellenist “Greece,” which combines “light, whiteness” and “sculpture” to describe same-sex male passion, has a great similarity with H.D.’s “crystalline” Imagism (43).¹² H.D. describes her visit to the Louvre in 1936 “to see the lights and shadows on the marbles” and perceives them as “all very early H.D.” (qtd. in Laity 43).¹³ The poet’s evaluation of art and her comparison of her work with the contrasting shades of a statue’s “lights and shadows” allow her work to be understood on many levels and from different points of view, just the way that a work of art would be evaluated in a

¹¹ In 1912, H.D. visited Capri with Richard Aldington, and she considered this visit the “first introduction to Greece because of its . . . island status – an interesting and typical conflation of the literary and the geographical” (Tarlo 266).

¹² The term “crystalline” refers to “a discourse that privileges vision over action” in H.D.’s early poetry (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 52). However, as Friedman notes, H.D. attempted “to rewrite herself out of the word that immobilized her” through describing her Imagist poetry as one with “energy” (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 54).

¹³ Light and whiteness play important roles in creating a heaven-like image of utopia in H.D.’s poetry, as section three shows.

museum. In the same vein, H.D.'s poems reveal the values that she brings together from different historical periods – especially those of Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia – which she presents for the critical eye of the modern reader to appreciate. Friedman directs attention to a letter that H.D. wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson (printed in *The Oxford Anthology of American Literature* in 1938) in which she redefines the term “escapism.” H.D. calls her *Sea Garden* poems “an inner reign of defence, escape; these are the poems of escapism” (qtd. in *Penelope's Web* 60). H.D.'s poetry aims at counteracting the effect of war-charred real cities through creating imagined sheltered gardens and landscapes. These “reign of defence” serve as sacred spaces or sanctuaries “where the divine dwells” (Anderson 121). In other words, H.D.'s “poems of escapism” create a utopian space within the real world of war. They erode “the boundary between cultivation and wilderness,” and thus, through combining contradictory elements, not only serve as a rite of passage for mystic powers, but also testify that the divine can exist anywhere (Anderson 131, 132).¹⁴

Here, I draw a connection between H.D.'s presentation of her alternative utopian space as being ever-changing, wild, and contradictory and Bauman's concept of “liquid utopia.” Bauman states that “the idea that human beings can replace the world-that-is with another and different world, entirely of their making, was almost wholly absent from human thought before the advent of modern times” (*Liquid Times* 98). Modernism, as Bauman perceives it, marked a shift from the *solid* phase of utopia as being static and untrodden, like the Garden of Eden, to the *liquid* utopia that is temporal and in constant change (79). What I am arguing here is that in her presentation of the garden or sacred places as being changeable, trodden, and active, H.D. favours this kind of liquid utopia that is full of possibilities and

¹⁴ This argument works well with my earlier analysis of the role of the poet in creating utopia. The idea that H.D. inherited the ‘gift’ of spiritual powers from her Moravian ancestors, enabled the poet to explore occult and other-worldly elements in her poetry. Significantly, the outcome is a mystic world of possibilities: a utopia that is always changing. I further draw on H.D. as a “mystic” writer when I discuss “The Helmsman.”

stresses mobility. Furthermore, because human intervention in the creation of liquid utopia fosters “faith that what was desired could be done and will be done” (Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* 131), I further argue that H.D.’s utopia promotes hope, especially to contradict the real world of war.

My aforementioned argument on H.D.’s creation of human-influenced utopia seems contradictory with the theme of untouched nature in her poem “Sheltered Garden.” Before exploring this poem any further, it is important to clarify that H.D.’s garden as a place of rituals and interaction is different from her presentation of the garden as a metaphor for femininity. Whereas the former requires constant attendance and activity, the latter necessitates man’s non-interference and passivity. Like many of the poems in *Sea Garden*, “Sheltered Garden” focuses on this theme of oppressed femininity. Critical views on H.D.’s *Sea Garden* have shown that the collection marks a rejection of the “norms of Victorian femininity,” specifically in regard to conventional female beauty (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 220; Samberger 180). As I further develop below, H.D.’s admiration of the wild forces of nature marks a protest against oppressed femininity, which in turn externalises in the speaker’s suffocation in “Sheltered Garden”:

I have had enough.

I gasp for breath.

.....

Have you seen fruit under cover

that wanted light-

pears wadded in cloth,

protected from the frost, melons, almost ripe,

smothered in straw? (19)

Adjectives used to describe protection are placed alongside adjectives referring to suffocation on the same line – “under cover/wanted,” “wadded in cloth,” and “protected/smothered” – emphasising how excessive protection may lead to destruction (19). Wheeler argues that the title itself is “paradoxical” because it invokes the element of the containment of “conventional femininity,” which the poem is meant to protest (“Both Flower and Flower Gatherer” 505). This beauty without strength, according to Riddel, represents an experience of suffocation of the subconscious self by the speaker’s consciousness (454). In other words, the speaker’s suppressed desires are identified with the smothered fruits, provoking a feeling of suffocation. Accordingly, a state of restlessness is created because of the unexpressed desires being accumulated and causing a turmoil against the oppressor: the mind in this case. The suppression of women’s desires is likened to the covered and protected fruits in the sense that society expects women to be subordinate and weak and, accordingly, in need of protection. H.D. suggests that concealing the inner self, like covering the fruit to protect it from the external environment, means creating a division between beauty and its strength. The effect is a separation of the fruit from its natural environment, a matter that leads to its withering and death. Similarly, when it comes to women, protection on the basis of gender is not positive because it sometimes has the effect of creating a division in the self. In this way, the preservation of beauty and its protection may diminish and weaken it.

The speaker’s difficulty in breathing is the direct effect of being surrounded by oppressed beauty: “I have had enough— / border-pinks, clove-pinks, wax-lilies, / herbs, sweet-cress” (19). The garden looks to the viewer as a perfectly-shaped source of beauty but, for the speaker, it is merely the result of a distorting intervention in the course of natural growth. The call for the storm, at the end of the poem, to destroy the sheltered garden is a cry for change, a call of women to free their suppressed desires:

I want wind to break,
scatter these pink-stalks

.....

O to blot out this garden (20-21)

Drawing on my earlier analysis that the call to break out of the shackles of restriction by either the mother or male figures, “Sheltered Garden” and “Sea Rose” can be regarded as representations of the outcomes of maternal or patriarchal over-protective acts towards daughters, whose subjection and dependence cause the withering of their beauty and their potential. In this sense, the mother/father/brother personifications are considered as both a source of life and a source of pain. There is an agency and movement, conveyed in “Sea Rose,” between the lines that describe the rose (their flow is interrupted by commas to indicate short pauses), and those mentioning the land (usually ended by full stops). This interrupted continuity of form matches the poem’s push-pull effect, which results from energy and resilience against repression and suffocation. In this respect, form and content communicate a battle between the rose and the land: the female and male respectively.

In H.D.’s poetry, the ties of conventional beauty are replaced with a “flight” towards an imaginary space suggesting “both fleeing from oppression and flying in freedom” (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 55). Friedman uses the word “flight” to refer to the poet’s departure “from the stereotype of the poetess, the sentimental versifier of soft love and sweet sighs from whom women poets often felt they had to separate in order to establish their own poetic authority in the male-dominated world of letters” (58). Moreover, the word “flight” may also indicate movement. *Sea Garden* poems are charged with free movement of the wind, the preference for the wild side of nature, and the embrace of nature’s contrastive

forces.¹⁵ All this movement within poetry that should be written according to rules and regulations of Imagism suggests, I would argue, the resistance of a woman poet.¹⁶ As Louis L. Martz observes in the introduction to H.D.'s *Collected Poems 1912-1914*, H.D.'s early poetry does "not fit so limited a view of Imagism" (xii). Reading H.D.'s poetry only through the brief, static, and abstract lens of Imagist poetry neglects the other implied meanings that the poems are charged with, such as gender issues. As Friedman emphasises, elements of nature that seem "overtly genderless" are "covertly gendered" because, as I discuss in the next section, "the seeming absence of gender in *Sea Garden* is in fact its most prominent trace" (*Penelope's Web* 56). This statement, in fact, works well with my reading of "The Helmsman" as a political project, in one way or another, concerned with women's liberation.

III. Androgyny and Gender

Before examining the next two poems in *Sea Garden*, it is important to acknowledge, as I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, that these early poems are feminist in their engagement with gender. For H.D., utopia is a place of contradictory and dualistic elements. Therefore, despite their apparent androgynous referents, these poems reflect an implied treatment of masculine and feminine elements. These elements are sometimes presented in harmony with each other and, at others, they are placed against each other to communicate a conflict between the sexes. This push and pull relation of opposites is also conveyed through H.D.'s use of role-playing to create a genderless utopia, while simultaneously stressing gender differences. This contradiction is further communicated through H.D.'s use of anonymous speakers and addressees alongside images of the dualistic forces of nature. In this section, I will analyse two more poems from *Sea Garden*, "The Wind Sleepers" and "The Helmsman,"

¹⁵ See Anderson 140.

¹⁶ Friedman notices that H.D.'s oeuvre is highly influenced by "H.D.'s sense of herself as a woman writing about female confinement, specifically the woman writer's struggle against entrapment within male literary conventions" ("Gender and Genre Anxiety" 198).

that share similar treatments of gender and utopia. I discuss these two poems alongside one another to examine thematically similar passages. Both poems offer another kind of protest, in which the ambiguous use of pronouns prevents readers from knowing whom or what the speaker is addressing, or what the addressee's and the speaker's gender might be:

O be swift----

we have always known *you* wanted *us*.

.....

We worshipped inland—

we stepped past wood-flowers,

we forgot *your* tang,

we brushed wood-grass.

(“The Helmsman” 6; emphasis added)

It is obvious that the “we” pronoun stands for the passengers on a boat/ship, who address the helmsman, expressing their impatience to reach the wild forest represented by the “you” pronoun. “You”/“your” may refer to the helmsman, the forests, or the sea (5-6). Upon arrival on shore, the passengers rush into the wilderness, enjoying primitive nature and forgetting about the “tang” of the sea, where they come from. The motif of leaving the sea behind suggests a break from the connection with (or restrictions of) the mother represented by the sea.¹⁷

In her attempt to uncover the literary source of the poem, Eileen Gregory suggests that the figure of the helmsman might be borrowed from Plato’s *Symposium* or *Phaedrus*. In this case, the helmsman stands for “the erotic guide of the individual soul” which, once

¹⁷ See my earlier interpretation of the duality of the sea and its relation to the over-protective treatment of mothers in “Sea Rose.”

invited, enable “immediate daimonic possession” (*H.D. and Hellenism* 113, 135). According to this analysis, there is a kind of “pursuit” – suggested by “the operative/imperative voice of the choral ‘we’” –through which the voice of reason controls the soul (134-35). Erotic tonality is created through the playful tension between the pursuer and the pursued. In other words, there is a reciprocation between knowledge and desire: “we have always known you wanted us” (“The Helmsman” 6). In one of the most recent studies on H.D. Jeanne Heuving adopts Gregory’s analysis of the pursued/pursuer motif, but finds different aspects to the process of pursuit. Heuving states that “the tensions in traditional love poetry between an active lover and a passive beloved are transmuted in *Sea Garden* into poems that render love as an excess of mobility or stasis” (94). This “mobility” or “pursuit” might refer, in this case, to the tension created between homosexual love and heterosexual love, as Heuving clarifies:

The helmsman may well be a powerful male lover, but he may also be the power of passionate love. Or the helmsman might carry the fear of the power of passionate love for a same-sex lover in a patriarchal heterosexual culture. While the lesbian lovers, or any pair of lovers, can escape temporarily into a hidden bower, a sheltered garden, they must ultimately turn outward and into a sea of unpredictable and uncontrollable forces. (96)

The figure of the helmsman is intriguing. It oscillates between being a concept, like love or desire, to having a physical existence of a lover. However, thinking of H.D.’s utopia as an “unpredictable and uncontrollable” place of possibilities, justifies the poem’s openness to combine these interpretations. Furthermore, there is the use of obscure pronouns which do not only create a sense of vagueness, but also suggest a multiplicity of voices in the poem. As Adalaide Morris points out, the voice of “we” in the poem may stand for “a series of selves”

that question the poet's identity and desire explored in nature ("Reading H.D.'s 'Helios and Athens'" 155). Morris draws her analysis from the connection she makes between H.D.'s name, H.D.'s mother's name, and some of the titles of her poems. There is a "Hermetic Definition," Morris argues, between the poems that carry H.D.'s initial letter ("Helmsman, Huntress, Hippolytus, Hippolyta, Hermes, Hermione, Helios, Heliodora, and, throughout") and H.D.'s mother's name source: Helen "Helen of Sparta, Helen of Troy, and . . . Helen of Egypt." Each is an extended identification of the poet herself or "a momentary manifestation of the mystery of identity, a . . . cryptogram, little box of her signature" as "H.D. Imagiste" ("Reading H.D.'s 'Helios and Athens'" 155). Reading H.D.'s poetry as a materialisation of the poet's identity supports my argument, in this chapter and elsewhere, that identifies some of the voices in these poems with the voice of the poet.¹⁸

Here, I follow Friedman's lead in acknowledging that "*Sea Garden* is . . . an encoded text, in which the techniques of the impersonal Imagist both reveal and conceal a forbidden gendered rebellion and eroticism" (*Penelope's Web* 56). Therefore, I choose to read "The Helmsman" as a representation of both physical and mental journeys in time and towards change. Given H.D.'s typical preoccupations in her work, such as the roles of women as mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers, and writers and her concern with their subordinate position, I suggest that the utopian change that is promised by this journey is related to women's roles in society. The lyrical persona is eager to prompt a revolution against the socio-ideological status quo, namely the marginalisation of women, specifically as writers. From this perspective, I argue that the critical neglect that the poem received is anticipated by the content of the poem itself. Simon argues that, on the one hand, the reason H.D.'s early poems received little critical attention until the mid of the twentieth century was sexism.

¹⁸ In her biography of H.D., Guest notices that "the definition of self, the penetration into self, was H.D.'s preoccupation and obsession. Her prose writing is always autobiographical; so is much of her poetry" (xii).

While some of the works of her contemporary male writers, like Pound and Eliot, were considered milestones, H.D.'s early works were dismissed for being deliberately difficult, complicated and obscure (33).¹⁹ On the other hand, even the feminist critical eye disregarded some of the poems in the *Sea Garden* collection (like "The Helmsman"), because these critics preferred to focus on the poems that were more obviously about women. This ambiguity of the participants in the poetic dialogue "represents what has been historically lost, what literally cannot be named, defined, or charted. It [also] represents what is outside of the textual tradition . . . as well as the boundaries of gender" (Simon 33). "What has been historically lost" may refer to women's voices, the past itself, or the changing values of some disoriented societies.

It is important to discuss H.D.'s preoccupation with the outcomes of changing values that came as a direct result of the First World War. This war and its aftermath, as well as the Second World War, swept people away from their ordinary lives. In *Tribute to Freud* (1956),²⁰ H.D. longs for what she felt as the power to fight the current tide of apathy and disenchantment that she thought set everyone adrift. She writes: "I knew that I, like most of the people I knew, in England, America and on the Continent of Europe, were drifting . . . Where? I did not know but at least I accepted the fact that we were drifting" (20). It is unclear whether the drifting was that of ideas, habits, values, or even displacement. H.D. was concerned with the fact that the West was changing quickly that she felt helpless. There is a similar description of drifting in "The Wind Sleepers:"

¹⁹ Jeanne Heuving presents another reason for the dismissal, or even attack, of *Sea Garden*. She argues that it is excessively personal to the degree it imitates the poet's failed or lost relationships. She notes that although H.D. writes about these failed love relations, "for the most part *Sea Garden* explored the powers of love rather than mourning its loss" (90). As I claim in this thesis, H.D.'s work is utopian because it fosters faith and promotes hope instead of despair despite its engagement with the agonies of war.

²⁰ The book is an autobiography of H.D.'s psychoanalysis with Freud that comprises *The Writing on the Wall* (1944) and *Advent* (1948) and is a fitting finale of her original diary and notes from the psychoanalysis sessions (J. Robinson xxii).

Whiter
than the crust
left by the tide,
we are stung by the hurled sand
and the broken shells. (CP 15)

As I further explore in *Trilogy*, the term “broken shells” here may refer, as Annette Debo observes, to the “shelling in the First World War” (*The American H.D.* 110). Drifting with the tide may suggest a lack of resistance or action against the war. H.D. seems to disparage drifting because it disempowers people and deprives them of the right to make their own decisions. Furthermore, she perceived herself as a woman caught up in the gender conflicts that were reflected in the political wars she lived through. In 1916, the year when *Sea Garden* was published, H.D.’s husband enlisted in the army and she replaced him as assistant editor of the literary magazine the *Egoist*. As I have explained in Chapter One, the war and its aftermath forced many people, especially women, to face new responsibilities, which had an impact on their self-perception. Similarly, this (forceful) drifting is communicated through the experiences of the lyrical speakers, who “are stung by the hurled sand,” and the rose, that was “flung on the sand” (“The Wind Sleepers” 15; “Sea Rose” 5). The poet considers both “more precious” because they grow resilient towards their difficult situations (“Sea Rose” 5). “The Wind Sleepers” places an emphasis on waking up in the storm and marching towards a utopian place, leaving behind a disassembled altar of cremated souls of a spellbound nation:

Tear—
tear us an altar,
tug at the cliff-boulders,

pile them with the rough stones—
we no longer
sleep in the wind,
propitiate us. (15)

“We no longer sleep in the wind” stresses the need to wake up to do figurative battle, to move from the passivity of inaction into action and agency. The words “rough stones” symbolise strength and safety. The act of tearing the altar, a place of spirituality, to seek shelter indicates the existence of people without fear, because they would somehow be “protected.” The short metric foot suggests agency and movement, and the repetition of the “t” and “s” sounds, accompanied by the short rhythm, also suggests a military-like walk. It is a call to resist war and undertake, instead, moral and spiritual actions. Friedman argues that wars seem to never cease and the wasteland vision of the war’s aftermath has its deep impact upon the modern world and its spirit (*Penelope’s Web* 137). The tone of the poem is jarring: short lines and language related to crying and roaring, and images of breaking and deserting.

The call for human beings to make an impact on their world in “The Wind Sleepers” echoes “The Helmsman’s” theme of creating one’s own garden. In this respect, I suggest that both poems reflect Bauman’s concept of modern utopia as a place of constant change and exploration. “The Helmsman” pictures a place that is distant from the speaker. It is where

We forgot—we worshipped,
we parted green from green,
we sought further thickets,
we dipped our ankles
through leaf-mould and earth,

and wood and wood-bank enchanted us— (6)

It seems that the lyrical personae adore nature because it endures hardship. The use of anaphora – the repetition of the pronoun “we” in successive lines – creates a reminder for those who “forgot” the experience. Moreover, the anaphora and the enjambment – that runs across the paratactic lines without a terminated punctuation mark – emphasises the constant state of happiness that the speaker (and her companions) experience upon immersing themselves in nature. In other words, as Chris Beyers notes, the lines reveal that “there is only sequence” and “self-sufficiency” “in the stripped-down world of perception and emotion” (170).

As part of the creation of her poetic utopia, H.D. challenges the classical view of utopia as an untrodden sacred place. H.D. evokes worship through physical immersion in nature, a place that is representative of a spiritual ideal state. This is evident in the metaphorical act of ankle dipping in the bushes, expressions of enchantment, and the excitement of parting “green from green” (*CP* 6). Here, I will analyse H.D.’s treatment of nature according to Bauman’s concept of modern utopia. Bauman differentiates between the pre-modern and modern attitudes towards utopia through the metaphors of the gamekeeper and the gardener. The gamekeeper’s job is based on the assumption that there is a pre-established order of the state, and that he is assigned to protect and preserve its “natural balance” from “human interference” (*Liquid Times* 98). Meanwhile, the gardener thinks that his land has “no order” and hence requires his “constant attention and effort” to plant what he wants (99). In other words, the traditional blueprint of utopia is conceived as the divine place that should be untrodden and untouched, and in this sense it is more valued. In contrast, a modernist may tend to think of utopia as his own creation, thus the necessity to envision how it should be first, and then “forces his preconceived designs including uprooting and

destroying all other [unnecessary] plants” (99). In this way, the main difference between the pre-modern and the modern notions of utopia is that one is based on the world “that is” and the other on the world “that should be” (*Liquid Times* 95). In light of Bauman’s theory of utopia, I view H.D. as the “professional utopia maker” who, like Bauman’s gardener, designs her own “Sheltered Garden” to worship nature and immerse herself in its beauty (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 100). For example, the passengers in “The Helmsman” celebrate nature through breaking “hyssop and bramble” (13), enjoying that “each branch whipped back” (16). It is more of a secular ritual than a sacred one: a ritual where cataclysm is celebrated, and “coarse grass” and whipping branches are enjoyed.

Despite the fact that H.D.’s mystic images do not reflect tranquillity, they still evoke deep meditation. One can make an analogy between the passengers in the poem and the possible readers. Even when both (the passengers and the readers) run in haste through the wilderness/poems, thoughts still haunt them. These thoughts reflect what they have seen/read and what these images might represent to each of them (lines 35, 43). Because of both H.D.’s worship of nature and the concealment of her characters’ genders in *Sea Garden*, John Gould Fletcher describes H.D. as “mystic” (267). He advises the readers to be prepared to make mirrors of themselves “to reflect the light she has caught in her mirror” (267). I will use this quotation to show how H.D. uses obscurity as a strategy to prompt the reader to engage in creative thinking and critical analysis. Obscurity works as a mirror that reflects readers’ different interpretations – the obscurity returning the images which the readers wanted to see in the first place. For example, reading through the patriarchal lens might interpret the journey as that of life led by men– since the one who is responsible for the journey is a man (the helmsman). In this case, a man is required to lead the nation represented by the collective voice of “we.” In a similar vein, Heuving suggests that “the helmsman is presented as possessing greater power” than the “supernatural energies” the unidentified “we” seem to

have (96). Therefore, in terms of love, the poem may reflect the hardships of lesbian lovers in their attempts to evade heterosexual hierarchies. However, she notes that “while ‘The Helmsman’ attests to a powerful masculine presence, the poem immediately following, ‘the shrine,’ conveys a magisterial feminine presence” (Heuving 97). This means that either the collection aims at a balance in feminine and masculine elements (no overpowering) or it conveys a conflict between the sexes. This ambivalence is further communicated through the impact that the female lyrical personae make on the land, which represents the masculine principle, as discussed earlier in the chapter. From a feminist point of view, the journey’s progression towards change depends on the women’s voice that speaks on behalf of the nation represented by the plural personal pronoun “we,” and gives directions to the helmsman. The last stanza suggests that the journey that men lead stifles the nation’s progress because they lead societies towards war and destruction.

The female speaker challenges perceptions of women’s fragility and passivity by presenting them as acting upon nature. The *Sea Garden* poems emerged during the First World War when women felt ‘left out’ from the mainstream of public heroism. Although women had the opportunity to take on “men’s work” during the war, they “were recruited reluctantly and most of them were made redundant” after the war (Braybon 299). Gail Braybon states that the reason behind this sexism was that women’s “war work failed to shake ideas about their ‘true role,’” which was limited to “domestic responsibilities and . . . inherent industrial capabilities” (299). Braybon further calls historians’ views on the “fair” recognition of women’s roles during the First World War as “standard mythology” (192, 299), because sexism was still evident especially in the division between soldiers (men) and civilians (mostly women). For women, war created this impact, as Annie Winifred Bryher remembers in her memoir *The Days of Mars* (1972): “In spite of the bombing I found the Second World War so much easier to bear than the First. We were all ‘in it’ and there was not

the dreadful gap between soldiers and civilians that had caused so much stress in 1914” (27-28). The plural “we” here refers to the experience of both Bryher and H.D. during the London Blitz. Bryher reveals the discrimination that women had experienced during the First World War, which she represents as worse than the Blitz. War emphasises gender differences (men fight, women are to be protected; women are victims, men heroes; the nation is gendered feminine and embodied in mothers, sisters, wives; men are active, women passive). While these ideas about gender are recognisable in peacetime, war brings them to the foreground of the social imagination. Therefore, if one thinks about the *Sea Collection* poems as a “mirror” of H.D.’s feelings, one can assume that they offered H.D. what real life had not – a battlefield where women are enlisted and a platform where she speaks her mind. She uses her poetry to create a utopian world, in which women exercise agency, and thus overcome the frustration with her inability to influence events.

One can interpret the journey in “The Helmsman” as the journey of life where people are travellers in time and place: life is like a journey from cradle to grave, from past to present and then to future.²¹ It is like a circular movement that never seems to cease, for when some lives end, others begin. Mirroring this universal phenomenon, the poem identifies itself with life by ending with the exact same two lines that it starts with as an ideal distillation of the reincarnation belief: “O be swift– / we have always known you wanted us” (7, 5).²² The poem simultaneously establishes and questions the contrast between the cyclical and linear theories of time by delineating its own cyclical movement. In Western Europe, time is gendered as cyclical (female time) and linear (male time). Lisa Baraitser notes that “Feminine” time is associated with “natural cycles, gestation and biological rhythms,” and

²¹ “The Helmsman” can be regarded as an invocation of this very common literary trope – a major mythological and epic device.

²² The Ancient Greeks and Egyptians had a strong belief in reincarnation, which basically means the existence of a person's soul after death and its transmigration to another living thing. I base my analysis on the fact that H.D. read, translated, and wrote many works about Ancient Greece and Egypt, so her intensive readings on ancient-theories might have influenced the form of her poem.

“masculine” time is characterised by “relentless movement forward, the thrust of project, teleology, departure, progression and arrival” (64). Karen Davies argues that the masculine time prevails over the feminine one in public views because it is more self-centred than others-centred:

[M]en’s timetable tends to be chopped up into work time, and then the time after work which is figured as a ‘break’ from work. Women’s time, on the other hand, is more like a cat’s cradle with multiple points of intersection, and few lacunae, in that there are rarely allotted moments in which women can be idle, and taking “time out” becomes impossible, as it leads to a breakdown of the cradle’s structure. (qtd. in Baraitser 64)

There is a chain of expectations within which a woman’s life is formed due to her responsibilities towards “children, the sick and elderly people, none of whom . . . can wait” (64). Importantly, “The Helmsman” metaphorically constructs a feminine model of time through its cyclical movement and offers the capacity to be read backwards while still retaining its meaning:

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

and knotted roots and acorn-cups.
we tore our feet in half buried rocks
as each branch whipped back,
in our hair: we laughed
we caught flower and new bramble-fruit
we broke hyssop and bramble,
through oak and scrub-oak tangles,
We wandered from pine-hills (*CP* 6; lines 30-11)

I have reversed the lines to be read from line number thirty to line number eleven, and have displaced stanza five to present a more solid proof that the poem still maintains coherence and sustains meaning. However, the last stanza of the poem invites different interpretations, since it is the only stanza that has a direct mention of the boat/sea image:

But now, our boat climbs—hesitates—drops—
climbs—hesitates—crawls back—
climbs—hesitates—
O be swift—
we have always known you wanted us. (7)

Being read forward, the stanza ushers in the hope that accompanies the swiftness of the boat's movement after its hesitation to climb. However, when the stanza is reversed, it ends with the word "drops," which indicates the loss of that hope. From a feminist perspective, the stanza may be considered a challenge to the idea that the land with its stability is gendered masculine; whereas the tides/boats are perceived as feminine, hence a suggestion of

instability, intrigue, and unreliability. The suggestion that women are too fluid to be reliable is probably what holds back women's journeys in life, making them think that they can be neither steady nor stable and, in consequence, they are unable to be independent. Thus, the poem's imagery and form challenges these perceptions of women.

Although the driver of the boat is a man, the voice of a woman (or women) directs its movement. The woman asks the helmsman to speed up, and we do not hear his voice nor feel his presence except at the beginning of the journey and at its very end. The poem offers a way out of its loop through changing gender roles: the man embodies the cyclical movement of life because the helmsman starts the poem and ends it and although he steers the boat – which should make quite an impact on the journey – he is being directed by the female group of passengers. However, given that the use of dual and antithetic images is a dominant feature in H.D.'s early work, I suggest that the recurrent mention of obscure pronouns indicates an androgynous utopia, encompassing both men and women; they all are on the same boat of life and heading towards their dream place. Humans, regardless of their gender, become the “gardeners” of modern utopia – to use Bauman's terminology – in their constant attempts to create and recreate a better world. However, H.D. emphasises that reaching utopia is only possible with the social acknowledgment of women's roles as active participants, and not only passengers, in the journey of life. As a feminist, H.D.'s stanza hails women's struggle to be recognised socially, culturally and politically. In her study of the role of geometric forms in the development of Anglo-American modernism, Hickman reads “H.D. as both a feminist and a successful artist” (140). Also, Friedman argues that H.D.'s method of presenting complex female identity in her work “anticipates current debates in feminist literary theory” (*Penelope's Web* 79). The dashes in “The Helmsman” incite the reader to participate in this movement of women's liberation rather than merely observe it. We are left out of breath after

each dash, and the use of the dashes rather than commas creates awareness of the hardships that accompany women's claim for their rights.

It was difficult for H.D. to express her fears and thoughts and convey her artistic vision in public – hence she published her early work in later editions – mainly because her poetry dealt with “what literally cannot be named, defined, or charted” and “what is outside of the textual tradition” (Simon 33). H.D.'s poems challenge poetic and gender norms and draw the reader into women's experiences to make parallels between classical worlds and contemporary moments. Accordingly, in this (new) utopian space, the poet's decision to blur the gender identities of her characters in order not to be “named” or “defined,” perhaps serves as a method to eschew harsh criticism and rejection of her work. This is evident in H.D.'s later work, where the voices of the poet and her heroines are clear, signifying their authoritative and independent characters. As the next section will show, in her depiction of the garden, H.D. uses colours that promote hope and counterweigh the bleak image of cities distorted by war.

IV. Colours, Shades, and Borderlines of Utopia

In this section, I will provide a new analysis of H.D.'s poem, “Evening,” and of imagery from other poems in *Sea Garden*, in light of Kandinsky's theory of colours, which he discusses in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. I argue that H.D.'s early poetry presents a utopian imaginary world, which is full of plants, fruit, colours, and flowers, like the Garden of Eden, for the purpose of celebrating women and life. I think it is significant to show what H.D. thought of art and how she employs her artistic knowledge to create a utopia through colours that celebrate the physical as well as the spiritual aspects of human nature. I will analyse H.D.'s representation of art in her poetry to demonstrate how her vision as a woman writer differs

from that of the male writers who excluded forms of art from the original utopia. While Plato thought of art as an eroding force that “strengthens the weaker parts of the soul at the expense of the rational part” (Sheppard 152), H.D.’s utopia addresses the sensual and the sexual as parts of the journey towards the unknown. In my analysis of H.D.’s poems, I argue that form plays a vital role in changing the readers’ perception of the literary text because of the effect it creates. I will show how H.D. deploys lights, shades, and colours to denote the meaning of words, or metaphors. This creates a visual and sensual utopia in which gender differences are stark. I have included the words *shades* and *colours* in this section’s title because shadow, light, and the absence of colour (transparency) are also important motifs that carry different implications from the poet’s other colour images. The title also includes the word *borderlines* because H.D. finds herself between the dual natures of things, as Friedman explains:

H.D. repeatedly established dualisms that paralleled the fundamental polarity of male and female, masculine and feminine. . . . Her imagist poems are often linguistically and thematically structured on polarities such as land and sea, hard and soft, ripe and unripe, wild and sheltered, swift and slow, stunted and lush, torn and whole, pointed and round, positive and negative, salt and sweet, and so forth. (“Hilda Doolittle” 125)

H.D.’s construction of “polarities” in her images reveals a world of possibilities where she changes roles or shifts hegemonic discourse. For example, she presents the tossed rose on the shore as beautiful and “more precious” than spiced roses that are grown indoors (“Sea Rose” 5). H.D.’s utopian vision, however, is not a black and white one; rather, it has all the shades of grey in between, which allows the permeability of the borderline between antitheses. In other words, H.D. appreciates both the destructive and the nurturing powers of nature, women and men, life and death, and she does not remove entirely one of the opposite forces,

but instead redefines their meaning. In this way, her poems present the problems she finds in society and question them without providing definite or fixed answers. The multiple visions of her utopias, rather than creating a singular unified alternative version of reality (which is better than the current one, and might be considered “an answer”), instead pose new questions to suggest possibilities and alternatives based on one question: “what if?” What if we create an androgynous society where everyone is equal? What if women take the lead in the world to create peace instead of war? What if everything is possible and nothing is certain? What if death is not the end but the beginning to another life? I base my argument concerning H.D.’s lack of closure in her early poetry on the conclusion that Wheeler reaches: “if H.D. is calling to the gods throughout this book, what answers does she discover? For me, this is an open question, not fully resolvable, but it is at the heart of what *Sea Garden* means” (“Mapping *Sea Garden*” 47).

Sea Garden’s loose ends and shady borderlines of antitheses often leave readers bewildered and uncertain, an effect that, I argue, resembles to a great extent how Kandinsky describes the effect of paintings on viewers. In a metaphor that describes how art lovers may view a centrepiece, Kandinsky invites his readers to “imagine a building divided into many rooms” where every “wall of every room is covered with pictures of various sizes” (3). Those pictures “represent in colour bits of nature — animals in sunlight or shadow” with different shapes of humans and objects that vary between “flowers and apples” to “flying duck” and “naked women” (3). All this display is

carefully printed in a book — name of artist — name of picture. People with these books in their hands go from wall to wall, turning over pages, reading the names. Then they go away, neither richer nor poorer than when they came, and are absorbed at once in their business, which has nothing to do with art. Why did they come? In

each picture is a whole lifetime imprisoned, a whole lifetime of fears, doubts, hopes, and joys. (3)

It seems that Kandinsky is critical of viewers who do not immerse themselves in “each picture” and appreciate the “lifetime” of the other worlds that they could imagine there. Similar to Kandinsky’s description of art appreciation, H.D.’s *Sea Garden* can be viewed as a book that contains colourful images of lands and sea, and flowers and garlands, where each poem is filled with “a whole lifetime of fears, doubts, hopes, and joys.” Like the imaginary window that a painting would open to other worlds, poems create borderlines between reality and imagination that suggest alternatives to the poet’s reality. In H.D.’s early poetry, this imaginary world is a Garden of Eden that is full of flowers, plants, fruits, colours, and music, all set to celebrate women and life.

Viewing H.D. as an artist is not uncommon because she developed her artistic taste after being exposed to fine arts and music from an early age. Her biography reveals that she inherited “her mother’s . . . artistic and mystical” love of fine arts and musical instruments, (Zilboorg, “Doolittle, Hilda”). The poet’s first lover, Frances Gregg, with whom she travelled to Europe and visited various museums in 1911, was a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Zilboorg, *Richard Aldington and H.D.* 6). Moreover, H.D. was friends with many artists and among her circle of friends, “H.D. had known both Hunt and Ford and was impressed by their family connections with the Pre-Raphaelite circle.”²³ The English father of Perdita, H.D.’s daughter, Cecil Gray (1895-1951) was a composer and music critic and also a “member of H.D.’s London circle” (Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 13). One year before writing “Hymen,” H.D. finished a biographical novel that she called *Paint It Today*, a

²³ Isobel Violet Hunt (1862-1942) and Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939). Hollenberg states that H.D. “was to draw on Hunt’s *The Wife of Rossetti* (1932) for her own fictional portrait of Elizabeth Siddal in “White Rose and the Red” (*Between History and Poetry* 112).

title that reveals her strong attachment to art, to the extent that she calls her personality “my real artist personality” (qtd. in Hollenberg, *Art and Ardor* 148). Hollenberg writes that “clearly art was her life and her lifeline,” because H.D.’s craft as a poet and an artist are evident in her early collections (148).

Reflecting her interest in art, H.D. writes *Sea Garden* like a painter with a palette full of colours that reveal sceneries of vivid landscapes. I believe that H.D.’s use of colours enhances the ideas that her written words deliver and implies a systematic connection with her utopian vision. For example, in order to stress the everlasting beauty of her Edenic garden, H.D. chooses the following flower poems in her collection: “Sea Rose,” “Sea Iris,” “Sea Lily,” “Sea Poppies,” and “Sea Violet.” These flowers not only bloom throughout the season, but also as Debo observes “can survive on the edge between land and sea, in the danger this exposed position promises them” (*The American H.D.* 136). In terms of colour, these roses reflect that of the sea, and being placed near the blue sea (which is the most recurrent image in the collection) gives a further layer of meaning to the poems. According to Kandinsky, the colour blue signifies a deep and powerful tenor with an “inclination . . . to depth [that] is so strong that its inner appeal is stronger when its shade is deeper” (38). He then adds, “[b]lue is the typical heavenly colour. The ultimate feeling it creates is one of rest. When it sinks almost to black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human. When it rises towards white, a movement little suited to it, its appeal to men grows weaker and more distant” (38). What Kandinsky is distinguishing between here is light versus dark blue, and his praise seems to go to the dark, whereas the appeal of the blue is lost when it is light – it is the appeal that becomes distant (disappearing), representing some distant but yearned for ideal state. In other words, the colour blue symbolises hope, serenity, and utopia because of its qualities as a “distant” and a “typical heavenly colour.” Kandinsky’s description of the colour also illustrates how the deeper the shade is, the more powerful the effect. H.D.’s understanding of

the meaning of the colour blue is very similar to Kandinsky's description. She visualises colours "in relation to people," and for her, when she presents someone as blue, it means peace and tranquillity. In one of H.D.'s letters to her friend John Cournos (1881-1966),²⁴ she wrote, "I seem to see colours in relation to people already now. I see you as blue, blue . . . blue! Blue, blue and peace comes with you! I write you this – are you near? I am also blue?" (qtd. in Hollenberg, *Art and Ardor* 139). The letter is dated October 1916, when Cournos was in Russia and H.D. was in England, which indicates that her question of his nearness was rhetorical. The dash is used to emphasise this distance between the speaker and her friend through separating the pronouns that describe them. Attaching the colour blue to both herself and Cournos indicates H.D.'s awareness of the distance that the colour refers to (according to Kandinsky's theory). More important, both H.D.'s letter and *Sea Garden* were written in the same year, which indicates that her letters written in that period "show the same attention to nuances of feeling and the same intensity as her early poetry. They also provide the sources of important ideas in her work" (Hollenberg, *Art and Ardor* 127). One of these mutual effects of both texts is the association of the blue colour with peace: "blue and peace comes with you!" Notice that the verb used is third person singular, which means that the subject is one (blue is peace). It may refer to a prayer hoping for peaceful years that follow the years of the First World War. This is very likely, I propose, especially as the context of the letter was the poet's illness, because of which she asked her friend to pray for her, quoting a Biblical line about entering "the kingdom of heaven" (139). Moreover, being "blue" makes both friends "kindred spirits"²⁵ who are tender and benevolent (140).

²⁴ John Cournos was a translator and novelist. The letters were addressed to his real name Korshoon.

²⁵ In his novel *Oracle Night* (2005), Paul Auster shares H.D.'s utopian thinking, which links the colour blue with fiery and kind spirits. He describes The Blue Team in the novel as "a kind of secret society, a brotherhood of kindred souls" (44). Like H.D., he chooses the colour blue to identify his utopian society that "represented a human ideal, a tight-knit association of tolerant and sympathetic individuals, the dream of a perfect society" (45). See my demonstration of Paul Auster's statement below.

I propose that *Sea Garden* promotes an optimistic view of the poet towards her surroundings through the hopeful meanings that the colour imagery denotes, especially blue and white, which are similar to those referred to in H.D.'s letter. I will show how the colours blue and white symbolise H.D.'s longing for a peaceful environment to be created against the backdrop of the First World War in her early poetry. In *Sea Garden*, the colour blue is mentioned both directly and indirectly through images of seas, roses, beaches, ships, skies, the shore, drift, coast, stream, and jewellery. The word *blue* recurs seven times and so does the word *black*, an arrangement that reflects ambivalence, perhaps, between the forces that these two colours indicate. Kandisky states that "the relationship between black and blue" is "close . . . for blue can be so dark as to border on black. Besides this physical relationship, is also a spiritual one" (37). In his discussion of how these colours affect the perception of the gazer, Kandinsky considers the colour blue as elusive and changeable, which means that through the degree of its darkness or brightness, blue represents the borderline between the contrasting colours black and white (38).²⁶ The colour black is an indicator of "grief" because it shows that

something [is] burnt out, like the ashes of a funeral pyre, something motionless like a corpse. The silence of black is the silence of death. Outwardly black is the colour with least harmony of all, a kind of neutral background against which the minutest shades of other colours stand clearly forward. (39)

H.D.'s presentation of the colour black resembles Kandisky's explanation of its meanings. In *Sea Garden*, black reflects a pessimistic image of war, bombardment, and the advance of modern architecture. In "Storm," for example, the poet criticises war through displaying its

²⁶ On spiritual level, blue being in the middle area between these two extreme colours black and white means that it has dual meanings of sadness (when it becomes darker and closer to black) and hope (when its shade is brighter and closer to white).

destructive impact on nature. The lyrical persona seems to directly address the military aircrafts – “you burden the trees with black drops” – condemning their bombs, which “crash over the trees,” (*CP* 36). The “black drops” of war bring death not only to people but also to “the green” nature that is eventually “crushed” (36). In “Cities,” “the shadows / black on the pavement” illustrate the dullness of modern city life compared to pastoral living. In many cities where “a single house of the hundred / crowded into one garden-space,” the persona shows “disgust” of the monotonous and “hideous” “dark cells” that resemble a “street after street, / each patterned alike” (40-41). With every “created new cell,” people become “disfigured, [and] defaced, / with no trace of the beauty / men once held so light” (41). Darkness “takes the place / of our young future strength” to make them “useless” because they expect “the new beauty of cities” instead of seeking that beauty in nature (41). H.D. uses the colour black to condemn the dystopian effect on nature caused by both war machinery and architectural advances of the new world. However, as I proposed earlier in the section, the collection reveals an optimistic belief that “we [can] protect our strong race” because “*the city is peopled / with spirits, not ghosts*” (42; emphasis in original).²⁷ There is an emphasis on the spiritual power of the collective “we,” who are not dead yet, not “ghosts,” and can make a difference in the world. I think that italics give the lines an elevated perspective suggesting that they are uttered by a higher authority. This effect is strengthened by their location in the final page of *Sea Garden* and right before *The God* collection (1913-1917).

In order to counteract the pessimistic atmosphere created by the colour black in *Sea Garden*, the colour blue is used to generate an oscillation between the utopian imagery of optimism and the dystopian presentations of grief. The tension is perhaps best captured in the poem “Evening:”

²⁷ H.D.’s advocacy of the power of the human race as a community is evident throughout her poetry. For the discussion on unity as a prerequisite to utopian thinking, see Chapter Three.

The light passes
from ridge to ridge,
from flower to flower—
the hypaticas, wide-spread
under the light
grow faint—
the petals reach inward,
the blue tips bend

toward the bluer heart
and the flowers are lost.
The cornel-buds are still white,
but shadows dart
from the cornel-roots—
black creeps from root to root,
each leaf
cuts another leaf on the grass,
shadow seeks shadow,
then both leaf
and leaf-shadow are lost. (18-19)

The poem is placed in the middle of the collection, as part of the time-sequence poems “Mid-day,” “Evening,” and “Night” that are distributed across *Sea Garden* to suggest, I propose, a cyclical effect of the whole collection as compared to the linear passage of days.²⁸ “Evening”

²⁸ This is a reminder of my linkage between H.D.’s recurrent motifs of rebirth, regeneration, and re-creation, and the identification of women’s nature with cyclical discourses of life, according to Social Studies. See my analysis of “The Helmsman” above.

is the only poem in *Sea Garden* that has no addressee, because it is reflective. It describes the effect of sunset on the appearance of the colours of the garden flowers (Wheeler, “Mapping *Sea Garden*” 45). There is an interesting analogy that can be made between the poem and the flowers that it describes. The form of the poem (in this case the distribution of colours) is used to achieve the effect of this depiction. The description of the flower, like the poem itself, starts with the “light” that “passes” “the blue tips” to go down into “the bluer heart” and ends with the “black” “shadow” at the roots. In this image of the colour chase, the light seems to be lost to the shadow (hope to sadness) when “black creeps from root to root,” but the more intense blue suggested by the comparative form *bluer* that the core of the flower still possesses suggests an inspiration and a longing for another dawn to come. Being in the centre of the poem, between the two forces of the light and the shadow, blue acquires dual qualities that represent “emotional and moral” ones, as Paul Auster argues:

“ . . . But what does blue stand for?”

“I don’t know. Hope, maybe.”

“And sadness. As in, I’m feeling blue. Or, I’ve got the blues.”

(qtd. in Levitas, “Looking for the Blue” 292)

Auster, Kandinsky, and H.D. all reflect on the dual nature of the colour blue that, in turn, represents the duality of utopia itself. Based on Auster’s attribution of social qualities to the colour blue,²⁹ I conclude that H.D. anticipates his linking of blue to the social ideal, and I base my opinion on Wheeler’s statement that “*Sea Garden* is a text best approached not in shards but as a whole work” (“Mapping *Sea Garden*” 40). Through my examination of the

²⁹ In her article on “Looking for the Blue: The Necessity of Utopia,” Levitas states that “Paul Auster, indeed, translates blue from an abstract to a social quality” (293). She further examines the roots of utopian thinking in postmodern culture and political discourses, or what she calls “looking for the blue” and “looking for the green,” respectively (296).

text as a whole, I observe that H.D. links the abstract and the social throughout *Sea Garden*. The collection captures human fears and hopes to exemplify how the poet's "representation of polarity became the first step in a dialectical process moving toward synthesis" (Friedman, "Hilda Doolittle" 126). The unity of antitheses is present in the poet's examination of the dual connotations of colours, images of seas, mother figures, and the presentation of utopia.³⁰

Significantly, H.D.'s depiction of opposite forces in life does not necessitate a neutral examination of dual objects. For example, women's empowerment is evident in many poems across the collection and women's presence is advocated in the poems that capture gender struggle. Also, the collection lays an emphasis on progress as an optimistic viewpoint of the poet's belief in the power of change. Because "progress is the realisation of Utopias" (Wilde 27), this idea is reflected through the recurrent references to the colour "white," with words like "snow," "light," "bright," "bleach," and "ice." The colour white symbolises "joy and spotless purity" and it reflects "possibilities for the future (birth)" (Kandinsky 39).

Because *Sea Garden* is "far more pastoral than marine" (Wheeler, "Mapping *Sea Garden*" 47), green becomes the colour that is evoked the most through words like "leaf," "garden," "hills," "field," "trees," "grass," "thickets," "the wild," "seeds," "flowering," "roots," and "green." Kandinsky argues that when the eyes are tired, "the gazer turns away to seek relief in blue or green" (24), because the two colours bring about the effect of immediate comfort. However, green is a colour of "potential activity" (Kandinsky 39), a matter that seems to suggest humans' attempts to pursue the ideal. The worship of nature and the parting of "green from green" (*CP*, "The Helmsman" 7) are actions set to create utopia as pastoral. Just like a garden, such a utopia requires "constant attention and effort" (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 99). Friedman also argues that *Sea Garden* is "a sequence of modern pastorals set in a symbolic green world removed from conventional space and time" (*Penelope's Web* 51). I

³⁰ Wheeler provides a useful "mapping by addressee" where she outlines the divine and natural forces in each poem in *Sea Garden* ("Mapping *Sea Garden*" 45).

add that this ideal green world is unconventional because it is revealed at the very beginning of the collection, through the oxymoronic title itself that combines a “sea garden” or “blue and green” to indulge readers in the combination of both worlds of the marine and the pastoral.

In conclusion, *Sea Garden* is representative of the utopian mode of H.D.’s early poetry on three levels: socio-political, textual, and cultural. H.D.’s ambiguous use of pronouns, her wild gardens, the use of colours and figurative language, all contribute to dualisms and mixed gender-roles. In this space of constant change, H.D.’s utopia combines androgynous referents, masculine and feminine elements, and abstractions. I have exemplified this duality that appears in the forces of the sea and the mother figure – which are destructive and nurturing– and in the use of the colour blue (occupying a place in the colour spectrum between black and white). Gender issues and the oppositional relationship between men and women are also communicated through the dualistic use of obscure pronouns; and through the conflict of land and sea or flower and shore.

Women feature prominently in H.D.’s poetry. The themes of women’s efforts of self-defence, women’s struggle for recognition, and the struggle between the genders are key elements in all H.D.’s poetry, and they are developed and constantly recast throughout the different stages of her career. Some of the male writers, whom H.D. admired and looked up to, like Pound and Lawrence, criticised women’s writing as an unsatisfactory attempt to copy men’s writing. Accordingly, H.D.’s poetry protests against such a hostile environment and against the conventional images of beauty established through patriarchy.

H.D. emphasises the idea that “beauty without strength, chokes out life” (CP 20). Her utopian vision of beauty is a garden where flowers are tossed, meagre, and “most precious;” (5) and where rustic and frosted fruits, are “worth[ier]” than the “protected” ones (20).

Similarly, H.D.'s utopia envisions women as independent and strong, not in need of protection and not afraid of assuming different roles in their societies.

The colourful garden that H.D. portrays is of her own making. Linking H.D. to Bauman's theory of *liquid* utopia, I have shown how the poet's utopia is constantly changing. Bauman's metaphor of the utopianist as a gardener who plants and remove what he/she thinks suitable resonates with H.D.'s lyrical personae who break hyssops and part trees. The analogy that I draw between Bauman's theory and H.D.'s poetry supports my argument that the poet envisions her utopia as changeable and dynamic through the celebration of nature and interaction with it. In this belief, H.D. does not only depart from the conventional ideology of beauty, but also from the traditional blueprints of utopia set by Thomas More. Metaphorically, this non-static view of utopia also indicates the poet's call for people to change their circumstances because the process towards change itself is utopian. In other words, H.D.'s early poetry stresses the pursuit of change and focuses on achieving the goal of utopia.

From a cultural standpoint, H.D. employs her artistic abilities to convey a message of hope in her poetry. Although *Sea Garden* does not include direct mention of the First World War, the indirect references to bombardment and the bleak vision of what the modern society has turned into, all indicate the impact of war on her poetry. However, H.D. counteracts pain with the intensified use of colours that art theorists like Kandinsky categorise as hopeful. The colour white (symbol of birth and regeneration) features most frequently in the collection, and there are numerous references to the colour green (symbolising comfort and growth) and blue (suggesting optimism and utopia). The hostility of gender tensions and the ongoing political and military war of the real world are counteracted in H.D.'s early poetry by the belief in human capacity for change; the protest against injustices and misrepresentations of beauty; the call for women's rights; and the promotion of peace and love.

As I will show in the next chapter, the pastoral and marine imageries in H.D.'s early utopian vision are replaced by new images in *Trilogy*. H.D.'s middle period of writing became part of both contemporary and ancient journeys overland. This shift of focus is the result of the outbreak of the Second World War, after which H.D.'s presentation of utopia changed from descriptive into narrative. *Trilogy*, her first epic, examines similar themes to *Sea Garden*, such as the struggle between the genders and war; however, the link between gender and war is made more explicit, because the poet departs from the Imagist style and employs the epic form.

CHAPTER THREE

ON HEROINES AND HEROINE WORSHIP:

TRILOGY AS A JOURNEY FROM DYSTOPIA TO UTOPIA

In this chapter, I argue that *Trilogy* (1946) provides an example of H.D.'s utopian vision which suggests the empowerment of women helps the nation recover from the agonies of the Second World War.¹ I will show how *Trilogy* seeks to redress social injustices on a global scale through the presentation of alternative places that give women status and power that outranks men in different social and political situations. I have modified Thomas Carlyle's book title *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* to stress the importance of women's presence in *Trilogy* and emphasise their responsibility in the making of utopia. From this period of her writings on, I refer to H.D.'s female characters *heroines* mainly to stress how H.D., especially during and after the Second World War, redefines "what the culture should mean by heroism" (Ostriker, "What Do Women (Poets) Want?" 491). In her short story "Bunny" (written in 1941),² H.D. envisions a new age of powerful heroines in what Annette Debo calls "one of the most feminist statements in all of her texts" (Introduction 36). H.D. writes:

They [women] are pushing out the borders, they enter the inner rim, not in any "feminine rights" manner, but in some heroic way that has nothing to do with their blue pants, they take them pretty much for granted . . . [T]hey walk in and through the

¹ The version I consult is H.D. *Trilogy*. Cheshire: Carcanet, 1973. Print. Subsequent references to this poem are to this version – unless otherwise stated – and incorporated within the text as *TR*, followed by the page number(s), as follows (*TR* pp.).

² "Bunny" is one of fourteen short stories in *Within the Walls* (written in 1941 and published in 2014 by the University of Florida Press). I have quoted from this volume in my introduction to *Trilogy* because, according to Debo, *Within the Walls* "pre-visions and illuminates" *Trilogy* (Debo, Introduction 4).

flames, they have crossed the circle. Outside in life, every day, all day, in the black night, all night, those pretty feet are pushing forward in a new dance, a cosmic dance of heroism, such as the world has never seen nor dreamed of. ("Bunny" 110)

H.D.'s statement summarises the main theme of this chapter: the creation of a utopian "cosmic" world "of heroism" that centralises the culturally marginal. In her epics, H.D. repositions the traditional male-centred quest of the hero into a woman-centred one.³ Accordingly, the sections in this chapter trace the role of fear, hope, and heroism – as well as the use of metaphorical devices – in the creation of *Trilogy's* utopian imagery. Because I am concerned with the (chronological) order of the political events that accompanied writing the poem, the section on Bauman's ideas precedes the one on Thomas More and so forth. In the introductory section, I will discuss H.D.'s method of writing *Trilogy* as a palimpsest of recurrent events and incidents with reference to the general layout and the overall tonality of the three parts of the poem. The main reasons behind writing the poem are discussed in section two, with an emphasis on the relevance of the interplay of the element of fear and the search for utopia that underlies Zygmunt Bauman's ideologies of utopia. Section three, by contrast, focuses on the theme of hope in *Trilogy* in relation to more traditional blueprints of utopian thinking, especially Thomas More's doctrine of the journey towards utopia. In section four I deploy Michel Foucault's concept of utopia/heterotopia in my analysis of *Trilogy*, particularly with regard to its extensive use of the image of the mirror. My close reading of the poem is extended in the fifth section to uncover the link between H.D.'s presentation of the hero with that of Thomas Carlyle's Victorian heroism. I conclude by showing how H.D. demonstrates the need to find a hero in order to create utopia.

³ Susan Stanford Friedman writes that "it is extraordinary that she [H.D.] ultimately managed to defy the dominant tradition entirely by creating woman heroes whose search for meaning bears so little resemblance to the stereotyped female figures in the quest poetry written by men" (*Psyche Reborn* 11).

I. *Trilogy*: Structure and Poetics

Trilogy offers a feminist utopia that celebrates female figures who are presented in mythical and religious texts as femmes fatale. These texts either portray women as the cause of the male hero's downfall (Eve and Aphrodite), or restrict their roles to serving and nurturing his existence (Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary). In Biblical texts, Eve is presented as the cause of Adam's fall, Mary Magdalene as the prostitute who repents to Christ through weeping with deep remorse and wiping his feet, and the Virgin Mary is the mother of Christ. In Greek mythology, Aphrodite is formed from the blood of the castrated Uranus and thus becomes the symbol of male destruction (Belis 306). I will explore how H.D. recreates these women and presents them in *Trilogy* as angelic saviours who restore order in the diabolic material world.

Trilogy was written over a period of two years (1942-1944) and was originally published in three separate volumes: *The Walls Do Not Fall* (1944), *Tribute to the Angels* (1945), and *The Flowering of the Rod* (1946). Each part of the poem consists of forty-three sections, which are all divided into two-line stanzas, except for the first section of *Walls*, which is made of three-line stanzas. Elizabeth Anderson argues that despite the poem's length, this division makes it closer to an extended lyric than an epic, a characteristic that renders the poem "an example of H.D.'s challenge to genre conventions" (8). H.D.'s use of genre relates to other formal challenges that she poses in other works, such as the ambivalent representation of nature and the insertion of indefinite pronouns and gender indeterminate in *Sea Garden*; the interplay of prose and poetry in *Helen in Egypt*; and the creation of androgynous utopia in some parts of *Trilogy*.

Trilogy marks a clear departure from Imagist doctrine, because it provides a shift away from the "direct treatment of the thing [image]" and the economy of the words used to

describe it – which is evident in the majority of H.D.’s early works – and towards a focus on thematic meaning conveyed by an accumulation of words describing didactic morality (Flint 199). There is no scarcity of words in *Trilogy*’s one hundred and seventy pages, with many allusions to Biblical and historical sources that give the poem an authoritative voice. Furthermore, the ambiguity of *Sea Garden* is counteracted by a clear and direct account of war in *Trilogy*. There is no significant interest in nature, but rather a heavy emphasis on the powers of the gods and mankind to endure, survive, be reborn, and rule. *Trilogy*’s main theme is, as Anderson observes, the “quest for spiritual and cultural renewal for a world shattered by war” (8), and by injustices – especially towards women – in an attempt to create a better alternative.

The titles of the three parts of the poem reflect their topics: *The Walls Do Not Fall* is concerned with resilience and endurance as the speaker wanders in the city of London during the Second World War and describes the apocalyptic images of fire and heat that shatter people and objects. The account of misery and hunger and the discussion of values which appear to be outdated in the current situation are accompanied by hellish realistic images that describe a wasteland-like city devoid of colour (3). Sounds like “zrr-hiss” and repeated alliterations of the *r* consonant in the syllable *Ra* attribute an animalistic characteristic (hissing and roaring) to the war (58, 25, 30). In addition, these alliterations forge a machine-like sound which, aided by the fast-paced rhythm, evokes the image of a chase, in which the unescapable war haunts human beings “to another cellar, to another sliced wall” (4):

over us, Apocryphal fire,
under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor,
slope of a pavement

where men roll, drunk
with a new bewilderment,
sorcery, bedevilment: (4)

The use of commas slows down the tempo within the lines, suggesting the hindrances to the crowd's escape. Likewise, when commas impound the words within the line, they suggest the imprisonment of society under the war, which is presented in gothic horror terms as casting a spell on people, leaving them disoriented, "drunk," and bewitched.

The hellish earth of *Walls* becomes a brighter place in *Tribute to the Angels*, where angels are called upon to participate in the making of utopia alongside the human race. Female figures are borrowed from historical and biblical backgrounds to represent role models and leaders who can guide the destabilised nation. The tone is brighter and more hopeful than that of *Walls*, and the colourless or grey images of London are contrasted in this part by the recurring references to the colour white and to lights that accompany the account of the heroic female figures. *Angels* celebrates the marriage of the old with the new in terms of religion, history, and values:

take what the old-church
found . . . ,

.....
take what the new-church spat upon

.....
collect the fragments of the splintered glass

and of your fire and breath,

melt down and integrate,

re-invoke, re-create

opal, onyx, obsidian,

now scattered in the shards

men tread upon. (63)

The speaker assumes an authority to invent a new religion that does not follow in the footsteps of the old or the new churches. S/he calls the new religion “spiritual realism” (*Walls* 48), within which she “synthesizes the three disciplines of religion, art, and medicine, figuring herself as the Priestess and as the scribe” (Barnstone, Introduction xiii). The triumph of spiritual reality occurs when the “[r]ational thought precedes the material, and Dream or Vision precede the intellect,” and this prevalence is essential, as Friedman suggests, for H.D.’s creating of her own “Platonic world view that sees the mental as prior to the physical” (*Psyche Reborn* 107). In other words, *Trilogy* suggests that the power of the sword – that stands for violence and war – is defeated by the immortality that the poet can achieve through the power of words. Poetry, I argue, provides an outlet for H.D. to attenuate the bleak realities of her age through her own visions of how the world should be. Within the realm of her poetic diction, H.D. presents a utopian alternative, in which gods, angels, and humans live in harmony, war is trivialised compared to “Birth, to Change, to Death” (67), and women are immortalised as spiritual leaders and prophets.

The final part of the poem, *The Flowering of the Rod*, is set in an imaginary place somewhere between “Paradise / before Eve” and “earth, before Adam” (155, 154). The references to Eve and Adam are significant in gender terms because they reflect a genderless heaven. The rod in the title is the symbol of authority that Mary retrieves alongside “the bundle of Myrrh” (172). *The Flowering of the Rod* appears to be a feminist revision of the Bible’s story of Mary of Magdalene and Kaspar, the Arab sage (Barnstone, Readers’ Notes 196-97). In H.D.’s version, Mary is more knowledgeable and more capable of assuming authority than Kaspar, who is left astonished by Mary’s feminine charms and powers. Similar to *Angels*, there are numerous references to light and the colour white to suggest the heavenly phenomena that accompany Mary’s appearance. There is also an extensive use of Biblical quotations that are juxtaposed with H.D.’s lines to stress the anachronistic alignment of characters and objects as well as the manifestation of figures belonging to the spiritual plane in reality – for example, angels in London and the Virgin Mary in the time of the Second World War. This technique gives H.D. an authoritative voice when she positions herself as a prophet who foresees, but can also alter, events.

II. On the Playground of Fear

After the end of the First World War, the menace of an anticipated second war haunted Europe. When these fears became a reality, it caused spiritual devastation and moral crises. However, as I argue in this section, fear could be a strong element in motivating people to think utopian. I explore how the escalated horrors of the Second World War shaped H.D.’s concept of utopia during this period of writing. H.D. did not write much poetry in the decade between 1930 and 1940 compared to that of her early period. The poet went through “a severe writer’s block,” as Nancy Kuhl puts it. Janice S. Robinson attributes this waning in production to H.D.’s anticipation of a second war in the making and, thus, her urgent need to

prepare for it (303). Part of the process of preparation was the poet's psychoanalytical sessions with Freud in Vienna, where she became his analysand in the early-Nazi years between 1933 and 1934. Those sessions gave H.D. mental and spiritual support and were very influential in shaping her later work; the professor, as H.D. names him in *Tribute to Freud*, considered her a student rather than a patient (Holland, "H.D.'s Analysis with Freud").⁴ In this section, I will discuss the traces of fear and anticipation that lurk, so to speak, in H.D.'s artistic visions in the poems from the middle period of her career and serve as an early model for *Trilogy*. These early signs of the preoccupations of *Trilogy* have not been discussed in relation to utopian studies. My discussion will interweave my own close reading of H.D.'s poetry with Bauman's conception of the relationship between fear and utopia. This approach is useful because it shows how H.D.'s utopian imagination is affected by her fear of war and how she turned its negative effect, in her writing, to a hopeful vision of a better future.

Bauman argues that unknown or "unannounced" misfortunes and hardships strike people with fear and hopelessness. Not being able to interfere in or avoid the unfortunate course of events and "the suddenness of the blows, their irregularity, their nasty ability to appear from anywhere and at any moment, make them unpredictable, and us defenceless" ("Living in Utopia" 1). The "blows" of the war and its aftermath, the fear of another "unannounced" one, and the "defenceless" feelings that people were left with caused traumatic experiences.⁵ H.D. sought tranquillity and healing in Greece because of the fears

⁴ During her sessions with Freud, H.D. learned a great deal about psychoanalysis and how to emotionally discharge and vent the thoughts of her inner self into her work. She writes: "I wanted to dig down and dig out, root out my personal weeds, strengthen my purpose, reaffirm my beliefs, canalize my energies, and I seized on the unexpected chance of working with Professor Freud himself" (*TF* 138). Friedman argues that H.D. did not see herself as merely a patient, but considered herself Freud's student, who was being trained to "give informal sessions, especially to 'war-shattered' people." However, H.D. and Freud were aware that this did not make her an analyst, but rather a "reborn" writer (*Psyche Reborn* 282).

⁵ On the implications of trauma in H.D.'s life on *Trilogy*, see Sarah Graham, "Falling Walls: Trauma and Testimony in H.D.'s *Trilogy*" (2012) and Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, "Validating Female War Experience through Literary Witnessing: The Poetics of the Poet-Prophet and the Politics of Trauma and Healing in H.D.'s *Trilogy*" (2011).

and horrors she had suffered in the First World War. There, she experienced overpowering visions of “writing on the wall,” which she later discussed with Freud in her sessions. These “writing on the wall” visions represented an “externalization or projection of a fear that the losses she had suffered in World War I would be re-experienced in an even more catastrophic war” (J. Robinson 303). Robinson stresses the prophetic impact of those visions on *Trilogy* while Anderson argues that H.D.’s visions greatly influenced the poet’s later prose work (2).

In his attempt to find the link between fear and utopia, Bauman claims that Thomas More’s sixteen-century notion of utopia as an ideal and “fear-free” world with no calamities or tribulations has changed over time (“Living in Utopia” 2-7). With the advent of modernity, Bauman adds, people realised their ability to “replace the world-that-is with another and different world, entirely of their own making” (2). In other words, the pre-modern notion of a “predictable world” of utopia that is unchangeable, unchallenged, and “with no accidents” was no longer compatible with the rapid change, “improvisation and experimentation,” as well as with the increasing difficulties of modern life, which is full of “risks and errors” (1-2).

Considering Bauman’s words in relation to H.D.’s actions, we can see how concerned she was with the political scene that was fermenting even after the First World War came to an end. She sent daily letters to Bryher during her sessions with Freud, revealing her concerns over the “Jewish immigration, which Freud helped to coordinate and Bryher helped to pay for” (J. Robinson 303).⁶ In 1939, Freud died. In the forties, Bryher barely managed to escape the Nazi radar while she was traveling from Switzerland back to London. Even after her lover’s return, H.D.’s fears multiplied, as she believed that Bryher would commit suicide.⁷ Despite staying at home most of the time, H.D. never left the political scene. She was “antifascist, antitotalitarian, and anti-Hitler” (J. Robinson 304). She even broke the bond with

⁶ H.D. sent letters every day all the time she was away as a way of expressing her thoughts and fears; sometimes she wrote to Bryher twice a day (Holland “H.D.’s analysis with Freud”).

⁷ In a letter dated 26 Sept. 1946, H.D. wrote to Holland that Bryher “tried it [suicide], Spring 1920 in Zermatt, where I was completely cut off and helpless with a stranger . . . I was always afraid she would make away with herself, during the blitz” (qtd. in Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 58).

her friend and one time fiancé Ezra Pound for his pro-fascist sympathies. Borrowing Bauman's concept of modern utopia, I assert that H.D.'s utopian thinking is modernist because she turns her fears of war into productive humanitarian activities helping herself and others, as an attempt to make a statement against tyranny and injustice. The rapid changes that surrounded the poet did not leave her paralysed, but, on the contrary, gave her an orientation towards the future as a defence mechanism that enabled her to hold onto her ideals.

A discussion of the symbolic walls in H.D.'s visions will exemplify my contention that the visions themselves are most significant for the resilience that they represent. This resilience is not unfamiliar, especially if it is linked to the theme of the resilient garden that I have already discussed in the previous chapter. In her description of the "writing-on-the-wall," H.D. states:

The actuality of the present, its bearing on the past, their bearing on the future. Past, present, future, these three – but there is another time-element, popularly called the fourth-dimensional. (*TF* 32)

During her stay at a Corfu hotel, H.D. experienced a "sort of dream or projected picture or vision as a sort of half-way state between ordinary dream and . . . vision" (*TF* 61). H.D. saw on the wall dim shapes and shadows, wings, a lady coming down the stairs towards a river, a featureless soldier, and "colourless transfers or 'calcomanias'" (*TF* 66, 77). Through the combination of these images on the wall, H.D. creates another dimension, outside the actual walls, in which the poet can manifest her thoughts and concerns. This other dimension, where different periods of time collapse, is a utopian space that celebrates the union of male and female deities of "pre-dynastic Egypt" with Biblical figures like Moses and Jesus, and angels

all come to rescue the poet's war-torn present and show how to create a better future (*TF* 66). In this way, the "fourth-dimensional" represents H.D.'s utopian space, which links great moments in history or myth and projects them onto the future. For example, in *Trilogy*, the ancient city of Luxor becomes part of contemporary London, where Tutankhamun makes an appearance. War-torn London is lit up by the lights that accompany the descent of the angels and Aphrodite. At times, this other dimension is created within real and tangible places, like the room within the "4 sides" (walls) of Freud's office, which represents an outer space – compared to the inward world of feeling – for the poet's channelling of emotions (*TF* 32). At other times, the utopian space is unmanageable and unrealistic, created in the poet's head and translated into her work. In either case, H.D. employed her creativity to protest against the overwhelming situations she had to endure. This "fourth tense" added to the past, present and the future is a "fourth-dimensional" of timeless "windows," so to speak, which collapses different times.

In *Trilogy*, doors and walls add to the element of the supernatural by connecting different epochs, places, and characters, as well as orders of reality. The "half-open . . . door" enables the speaker to explore life "in the company of the gods" (*TR* 10) and the "doorless" frame of the burned tree leads to an extraordinary moment of experiencing life "like a ghost:"

Invisible, indivisible Spirit,

how is it you come so near,

how is it that we dare

approach the high-altar?

we crossed the charred portico,

passed through a frame--doorless--

entered a shrine; like a ghost,

we entered a house through a wall;

then still not knowing

whether (like the wall)

we were there or not-there,

we saw the tree flowering;

it was an ordinary tree

in an old garden-square. (TR 83)

There is a sense of mobility – conveyed through words like “crossed,” “passed,” and “entered” – in particular moving through doors and being caught between places that are “there or not-there.” There is also a merger between different distances and spaces that belong to the worlds of both the living and the dead. However, H.D.’s visions might also have had a literal meaning, as during the Blitz people were able to enter the houses through their demolished walls and the citizens of London are represented as leading a ghost-like experience, where they “crossed” the world of “Spirit” through the horrors of death. The invisibility of the citizens of London and the demolished borders of their places suggest a violation of privacy that is evident throughout the poem. War creates a new kind of space where the living walk like “ghosts” and dead trees still flower. I observe that section twenty in *Angels* is placed almost exactly in the middle of the book of *Trilogy* – it is on page eighty-

three and the book is one hundred and seventy two pages long in the edition I am using. This placement connects the experience of the “ordinary” square in London, that is mentioned at the first page of the poem, which is part of a familiar mundane reality, with the extraordinary heaven under the reign of Mary at the last page. *Angels* becomes the invisible door to a space that links the real London in *Walls* with the utopian account of it in *Rod*. Moreover, Hobson argues that the constant appearance and disappearance of angels in *Angels* create a “maze of angelological signs” that carry secret or occult tradition hidden between the lines of the official text. Upon discovering these signs, “the occult seeker” (represented by the lyrical “I” or the “we”) is “rewarded with a message of peace” (162). In occult terms, H.D. reads tradition against the grain by exploring signs that events might have turned out differently. For example, the appearance of the Lady in *Angels* anticipates the arrival of a new age of knowledge instead of the age of power, as I shall explain below.

H.D.’s creation of a fourth space or dimension is a direct response to the overwhelming moments in her life, most of all war. Her writings translate a feeling that the world needs transformation, repair, or healing, and this sense of the recognition of wrongness, Bauman argues, represents one of the two main features of the modernist utopian thinking:

To be born, [the] utopian dream needed two conditions. First, an overwhelming (even if diffuse and inarticulate) feeling that the world was not functioning properly and had to be attended to and overhauled to set it right. Second, the confidence in human potency to rise to the task, belief that “we, humans, can do it” – being armed as we are with reason able to spy out what is wrong with the world and find out with what to replace its diseased parts, and with the strength to graft such designs on human reality: in short, the potency to force the world into a shape better fit to the

satisfaction of human needs whatever those needs already are or yet may become.

(“Living in Utopia” 3-4)

I propose Bauman’s ideas on modern utopian thinking are especially relevant to H.D.’s conceptualisation of perfection. I have already shown, above, how the first requirement of utopia, “the overwhelming feeling” that the world is dysfunctional is manifested in H.D.’s writing. Now, I will trace Bauman’s second requirement, “confidence,” in H.D.’s poem “May 1943.” The poem discusses the menace of the Second World War and its impact on civilians in London during the Blitz. In the first section of the poem, the persona takes the reader to a tranquil scene in Kensington on a normal day at “exactly noon; May 14,” where the trees are blossoming (*CP* 493). The reader is informed that the speaker is H.D. herself, who is about to share one of the real events to which she attaches symbolic meanings of “exact perfection” that she has experienced at the age of fifty-six:

the wall-door under the chestnut-tree
that I nor anyone else ever saw open,
opens and lets out a carpenter:
he has his chisel,
I have my pencil: (*CP* 493)

The “wall-door” here has a similar function to that of the previous vision: it is a medium through which unfamiliar dimensions or spaces are created; it is a symbol of resilience and resistance against the current status quo. However, the symbolic wall, in this image, indicates that the poet presents herself as a seer, to whom spiritual realities reveal themselves – suggesting her privileged or “chosen” status. The pencil here is very powerful in comparison

to the chisel because the craftsman “mends the broken-window frame of the orangery, / I [the poet] mend a break in time” (CP 493). These two lines mark the end of the first section of the poem, so that the reader is left to think about the importance of the poet’s role in a time of crisis.⁸ This confidence that H.D. clearly expresses in her role as a “fixer” of time or a healer of society meets the second requirement of the utopian dream according to Bauman. The poet’s power to heal becomes clearer as the poem proceeds:

*The damage to this room is part of the
destruction caused by German incendiary bombs
dropped on Kensington Palace, 14 October, 1940; (CP 494)*

Notice the synchronicity of the time of writing the poem with that of writing *Trilogy*. The date in the title “May 1943” points towards the period between writing the first part of the poem, *The Walls do not Fall* (written in 1942), and the second, *Tribute to the Angels* (written 1944). The poem falls perfectly after *Walls*, as it perpetuates the hope promoted by *Walls* amidst despair and promises the new era of healing, an idea which is further developed in *Angels*. The air of desperation created through “the damage,” “the destruction” and the “incendiary bombs” is immediately counteracted by the next lines: “but enemy action has not driven away / the happy ghosts / somehow it has brought them Back;” (CP 495). Similar to the wandering ghosts in *Trilogy*, the poet creates a fourth dimension to look at the victims of the war: not for any other reason, but because the issue of perpetrators in war is very complex, and in war literature they get various representations, occasionally being seen as brothers or as victims themselves. The reader is reminded that “this is not a poem” but rather an instruction to “remember” that “the war is over” (CP 495). However, the rhetoric

⁸ This is evidence that the idea of the poet as a hero – who can help nations at times of crises – has already been fermenting in other works of the poet, leading to *Trilogy*. Section five below further explores heroism in *Trilogy*.

emphasis that the war has ended is counteracted by the possibilities that the ellipses suggest: “I say the war is over [. . .] / the war is over [. . .]” (*CP* 495). The affirmation here creates a prophetic dimension that forces the war to come to an end (it did after two years) and ushers in a hope to endure the Blitz. The phrase “the war is over” might be interpreted as hopeful, insofar as it was once possible to say that (at the end of the First World War) and so it may be possible again. However, when the poem was written, war was not over and this – alongside the image of ghosts being brought back by war – evokes the notion of possible return. War comes again, ghosts come back, and the past invades the present. In this context, the phrase “the war is over” might be an allusion to the cycle of war: something that is “over” is finished, but “over and over” means repeatedly.

This hope manifests itself in the resilience of Goldie, an ambulance driver who “was one of us” (*CP* 498). The poet recalls news of Goldie’s death that appeared “below the newspaper photograph” in “a line and a half” (*CP* 498). Despite her physical death, Goldie is immortalised in those who stood up against the terrors of war and who are thus identified as “one with Goldie” (*CP* 498). Perhaps what made the story of Goldie’s death memorable to the poet is the girl’s brave decision to remain in her position despite the repeated attempts of the fireman to displace her. I propose that the firm decision to stay and face death makes Goldie with a synecdoche figure for those people (including the poet) who chose not to leave London during the Blitz:

rats leave the sinking ship

but we

we . . .

didn’t leave,

so the ship

didn't sink, (*CP* 499)

While Goldie stands for all those who chose not to leave but to face death, the metaphor of the sinking ship is clearly a reference to London in times of war. The second image in the stanza reverses the meaning of the first image through correlating the sinking of the ship to the people's departure. The declaration that cowards – suggested by the word “rats” – leave at times of danger is counteracted by the bravery of the citizens of London that empowered them to stay and save their city. I believe that the chiasmus is used here to stress this collective power of the nation and its ability to weather any foreign danger that may occur. The poem does not only present an account of the menaces of war and its aftermath, but also promises a perennial survival and recovery through collective work. The imagined world of this poem complies with the utopian doctrine for two reasons: first, the call for unity and the politics of collectiveness have been an identifying mark in most utopian work. Second, the citizens' realisation that the survival of their city depends on them equips them with nationalist confidence that “we, humans, can do it,” to use Bauman's words (“Living in Utopia” 4). This confidence is generated by the poet's confidence that:

no one will tell you;
only I, one of you,
one of them,
know the rune,
only I can play the tune,
make the song,
tell the story
of Goldie: (*CP* 498)

The speaker leads the reader towards the utopian vision because she is the keeper of the “rune:” she has the ability to show the moral behind Goldie’s death by retelling her story. This technique of rewriting a pre-known story and reconsidering its meaning alongside the reference to the poet as the keeper of the secret of the rune recurs in *Trilogy* as a symbol of preserving authority and power.

H.D.’s traumatised fear of war and the emotional and psychological scars that she was left with until her death were manifested in an active search for hope within her dystopian reality.⁹ Moreover, despite the scarcity of her literary productivity in poetry in the interwar years, H.D. was an activist, taking political stands and engaging with humanitarian activities (Debo, Introduction 21). *Trilogy* was written as an immediate response to the Second World War; nevertheless, the poem carries hope throughout, as will be discussed in the next section.

III. The Journey towards Hope

After my discussion of *Trilogy* in relation to the modern school of utopian thinking in the previous section, I analyse here the theme of hope in *Trilogy* with a main focus on More’s blueprint for the utopian journey. I adopt this strategy in order to show how the poem also comes close to the classical definition of utopia.

I have established, so far, that the term *utopia* is difficult to confine to a single definition or set of principles. Drawing on Levitas, this is mainly because people’s aspirations and expectations are either “realistic or unrealistic,” a matter that makes the utopia they

⁹ In an account of H.D.’s life, Caroline Zilboorg states that H.D. was “always introspective and sensitive” and that made her see “the Second World War as a recapitulation of the first, and its conclusion left her feeling disoriented and dislocated. She experienced a serious mental breakdown in 1946 and returned to Switzerland, to a sanatorium in Zürich, where she remained until her recovery late in the year” (“Doolittle, Hilda”). Zilboorg adds that H.D. was constantly admitted to clinics until her death of a cerebral haemorrhage in 1961.

imagine “historically variable” (Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* 8-9). Also, expectations vary (even if they are all realistic) between individuals and according to the common public attitudes at a given time. These non-fixed views on utopian studies make it “difficult [for scholars] to define their topic” (Roemer, “Utopian Studies” 320). However, More’s set basic guidelines for the main principles of how a utopian work should be structured. The main utopian narrative:

normally pictures the *journey* (by sea, land or air) of a man or woman to an unknown place (an island, a country or a continent); once there, the utopian *traveller* is usually offered a guided tour of the society, and given an explanation of its social, political, economic and religious organization (Vieira 7, emphasis added)

To follow More’s utopian doctrine, it is important to note some key features that help identify the traditional utopian narrative. The work describes a journey to an imaginary or “unknown place” that could exist in the past, present, or future. There should also be a traveller who sets off in search of this remote place that promises, to some extent, better alternatives than the original environment of the traveller. As Vieira observes, “[t]his journey typically implies the return of the utopian traveller to his or her own country, in order to be able to take back the message that there are alternative and better ways of organizing society” (7).

I plan to show how *Trilogy* harbours a utopian vision using the aforementioned criteria. Before discussing the epic as representative of H.D.’s mid-career, I would like to draw attention to the theme of journeying, which exists in H.D.’s earlier period of writing too, where the journey is mostly by sea. What has changed in H.D.’s vision of utopia is that she focuses on presenting heroes who would fulfil that utopia. In her early work, H.D. was very much interested in cataclysm, the power of the sea to heal and nurture, and her

personae's interaction with it. Later on in her work, H.D. shifts her focus to the presentation of figures who travel through time and place to achieve utopia.

At the beginning of *Trilogy*, the reader is invited to wander through the destruction caused by the aerial bombardment on the city of London during the Second World War. The utopian journey starts (on land) and the poem moves back and forth in history, drawing analogies between the remains of the Egyptian city of Luxor and those of London:

An incident *here* and *there*

.....

There, as *here*, ruin opens

The tomb, the temple; enter,

There, as *here*, there are no doors:

.....

The rain falls, *here*, *there*

.....

Ruin everywhere.

(*TR* 3, emphasis added)

There is an oscillation between, as Sasha Colby puts it, “two moments . . . two monuments:” that of Luxor – where the poet and her lover witnessed the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922 – and of the contemporary city of London, where they were living during the Second World War (136). Both cities seem desolate and ruined: in one, “rails” are “gone (for guns),” while the other’s tomb lies “open to the air” (*TR* 3) leaving the cities with no life, “no colour[s],” but merely “falling roof[s]” (3). Since “guns” invoke violence and “tomb” invokes death, the words stress the connection between the two cities as well. Despite the visual

imagery of despair, the analogy is highlighted to convey hope rather than a reminder of the ruins themselves. There are indeed “ruin[s] everywhere,” but there is also a vision of the future that “through our desolation, / thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us through gloom” (3). From the beginning of the poem, the journey to ancient history promises to bring us back with a hopeful “inspiration” about how we should deal with current problems, which is one of the features of utopian literature (as mentioned above). I have italicised the repeated use of “here” and “there” in the poem to highlight H.D.’s attempt to draw the readers’ attention to the importance of the analogy she makes between places that exist in different epochs. The commas used between the “here” and “there” above reinforce the temptation of readers to move between places with short stops to ponder their whereabouts. The now and then/here and there strategies are incorporated to push/pull readers back and forth – here and now – serving as a catalyst for H.D.’s utopian vision. Utopia lies somewhere in between the then/there and it is the nexus of time and place in another space that H.D. calls “the fourth-dimensional” (*TF* 32).

The three parts of *Trilogy* are connected to places. *Walls* starts with “for Karnak 1923 / from London 1942” and ends with “possibly we will reach haven, / heaven.” (1, 59); *Angels* ends with “London / May 17-31, 1944” (110); and *Rod* ends with “London / December 18-31, 1944” (172). Sarah Graham points out that inclusion of the time and place of composition stems from the poet’s desire to show the reader that she remained in London despite the horrors of the Second World War. The extremely short period of composing such a long work reflects an immediate response and “intense labour” that – besides the here and now – do not represent the poet’s experience of war anymore, but the “war itself” (“We Have a Secret” 161-62). The reader is invited to feel, see, and sense the intensity of the situation, called to revisit the desolate city created by the “Evil” that “was active in the land,” while “Good was

impoverished and sad;” (*TR* 5). The personification of “Evil” and “Good” pictures the realistic effect of the war machinery on the citizens of London. The poem continues:

shivering overtakes us,
trembling at a known street-corner,
we know not nor are known;
. . . we pass on
to another cellar, to another sliced wall (*TR* 4)

The misery and frustration that the inhabitants are left with – because of the agony of war – are counteracted by the “sliced wall” motif. Similar to the image of frames with no doors, the sliced wall suggests a disorientation and violation of spaces caused by the bombardment of the city. Moreover, the sliced wall creates a visionary effect of looking inside that wall and through it, and seeing “another cellar.” This creates multiple spaces within one space – that of the wall – and through which one can “pass on” to another place. Ironically, “pass on” could also mean “to die” or “to share.” The various possible meanings of the phrase may reflect the ambivalent effect of war that turns the living into wandering ghosts. However, to share the experience with other fellow citizens suggests hope that the power of the collective can stop the suffering and make a difference.

The instillation of hope amidst despair was a main technique used in late-nineteenth-century American utopian writings and was revived later in the mid-seventies of the twentieth century. The search for utopia basically involved “combinations of tumultuous signs of despair and exciting signs of hope;” the former, a simulation of the perplexities of reality, the latter, to “make the journey to utopia seem plausible” (Roemer, “Utopia”). As an American

writer, H.D. seems to have borrowed the aforementioned combination from the earlier utopian writings to create a utopia of her own.¹⁰

I will trace the development of the element of utopian hope within *Trilogy* by showing how *Walls* and *Angels* transfigure despair into hope, especially at the end of each part. *Walls*, for instance, opens with the globalised graveyard image that encompasses London, Luxor, and Pompeii and then transforms itself into a hellish enigma: “over us, Apocryphal fire, / under us, the earth sway,” (4), and its physical impact, “the flesh . . . melted away, / the heart burnt out,” and the “muscles shattered” (4). What seems to be an inescapable hell is immediately eased by the next lines: “yet the frame held: / we passed the flame” (4). Yet, the readers and the speaker are left at the end of the section wondering “what saved us? What for?” (5). Could it be the search for “the true-rune, the right-spell, / [to] recover old values” (5), “recover[ing] . . . /the rod of power” (7) or realising that “*Amen* is our Christos” (27)? The unanswered questions conceal riddles for readers to decipher in order to achieve their state of happiness, whether in London during war,

Or anywhere

.....

where each, with its particular attribute,

may be invoked

with accurate charm, spell, prayer,

¹⁰ Although H.D. left the United States in 1911 to settle in London, she did not cut her ties with the literary scene in America. Her close friend and publisher Norman Holmes Pearson (1909-1975) “provided a restorative connection with her American home. He sent news of the activities of her writer friends, reminded her of their common colonial heritage. . . . Also, he kept her connected with the American literary tradition by sending new editions of books by canonized American writers and copies of his own essays, to which she sometimes responded with comments that linked her own writing to that of her American forbears” (Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 68-69). Moreover, the letters exchanged between H.D. and Pearson reveal her passionate reading in American history and the War of Independence. For further information on this topic, see Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 40.

which will reveal unquestionably,

whatever healing or inspirational essence

is necessary for whatever particular ill

the inquiring soul is heir to: (*TR* 33)

Here, the extent of misery permeates time as well as place; yet, it is counteracted by hope and healing: the process indicates different methods for different problems. And since I argued earlier that the invocation of hope and healing is a quest for utopia, I conclude that the poem does not offer one utopian vision for all people, but rather multiple utopias for the different ailments in societies. The persona provides “no rules,” guidelines, or “procedure” to follow in order to find utopia:

we know no rule

of procedure,

we are voyagers, discoverers

of the not-known,

the unrecorded;

we have no map;

possibly we will reach haven,

heaven. (*TR* 59)

I notice the use of enjambment here: the lines are very short; the idea is never completed in one line, so the reader is pushed to keep reading, in haste and unremittingly, aided by the absence of caesura and the scarcity of words in each line. The metric foot is slightly longer in

the third and seventh lines that are slowed down by polysyllabic words. Lines one, two, four, and six all have four syllables; line five has five syllables; line eight has just two. Lines three and seven are the longest because they lay an emphasis on the travellers and their collective attempt to find what represents for them “haven” or “heaven.” The lines slow down the pace of reading to invite readers to ponder the possibility of finding one’s utopia. Reaching “haven” or “heaven” remains a possibility and is not as much stressed as the journey itself.

In a letter to her friend Norman Holmes Pearson, H.D. describes how she felt while writing *Trilogy*: “I purposely tried to keep the link, but carry on from the black tunnel of darkness or ‘initiation,’ at least toward the tunnel entrance. I really DID feel that a new heaven and a new earth were about to materialize” (Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 44).¹¹ There is a clear emphasis on the joy of the utopian journey, which is suggested by the words “purposely,” “really,” and “DID.” Placing this affirmation – of the excitement that the journey entails – in stark contrast with the uncertainty of finding one’s haven does not necessarily negate the possibility of the latter. H.D.’s verse does not merely translate a personal approach of the writer towards her own objectives nor reflect “personal approach / to the eternal realities” (*Walls* 52). The poet rather materialises the hope that she felt in the process of renewal to find somewhere “new” within her “spiritual reality,” as Friedman calls it, as a replacement of the chaotic “material reality” that surrounded her (*Psyche Reborn* 108). Accordingly, I argue that this call for a new order (spiritual or material) amidst the anarchies of war seeks to engage readers in various ways. First, there is an intense use of collective voices of “we” and “us” in the poem. Second, readers are invited by signs, riddles, and spells to decipher where real history is fused with imaginary mythmaking so that they can “*rise again from death and live*” (*Angels* 70, 87, 110). Significantly, these are the final lines in the

¹¹ Notice that the thrill of the process of writing itself is a revelation to the poet, and hence the Biblical quotation: “a new heaven and a new earth,” (*Holy Bible* Apoc. 21.1 and Isa. 65.17). H.D. considers writing as a sacred process through which she – as a poet/prophet – communicates the visions that she experiences in reality into words.

poem's second part, *Angels*, after which *The Flowering of the Rod* immediately follows – that brings about hope and prosperity – and for this reason I propose that the act of deciphering H.D.'s poetry creates the possibility of rebirth/utopia. This utopia is understood in H.D.'s recurrent use of the mirror image that reflects part of the poem's process to promote hope, and its narrative opens a window to reflect alternative worlds to the poet's reality.

IV. Foucault's Heterotopia I

In this section, I will suggest a new reading of *Trilogy* in the light of Foucault's ideas on utopia and heterotopia. The section starts by establishing Foucault's vision of utopia and heterotopia and the differences that he draws between the two terms. My argument, as the section progresses, is mainly concerned with the significance of the mirror that Foucault presents as an example of creating alternative spaces that are approximate to other, existing ones. I will show how H.D. uses mirror-like images to create her proposed alternative better world, highlighting the importance of women's roles in the process of change.

In one of his lectures on spaces and utopias, Foucault defines utopias as "sites with no real place," since they offer "society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down" (24). Despite their imaginary qualities, those utopias maintain a parallel with and relation to other "real space[s] of society" (24). The question that arises here is, if utopias are unreal places, then why are they not all other spaces – everywhere that is not utopian? And how can they be identified as different from the other spaces? Foucault suggests that there are utopias, heterotopias, and the real world, and that they can be understood in relation to each other. He refers to the "other" places that he presents as "heterotopias," a term that he borrows from the study of anatomy. Heterotopias were originally used to describe "parts of the body that are either out of place, missing, extra, or, like tumours, alien" (Hetherington 42). However, Foucault employs the term to describe "counter-sites" that exist "outside of all

spaces;” they maintain a nearness to the imagined utopia in order to make the comprehension of utopia possible (24). Heterotopias, according to the Foucauldian theory, are “real place[s]” – that represent “other” spaces – designed “to suspect, neutralize, or invert” the prearranged connections “that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (24-25). In other words, heterotopias incorporate proximity to utopias to create a “shock” effect that causes the mind to “link” and “contradict” both the real and the unreal spaces in the same time (24). Kevin Hetherington provides a further explanation of this point, arguing that heterotopias change the way we perceive the order of places and produce a “shock effect that derives from their different mode of ordering” (42). This unusual ordering is created when places that are unlikely to be perceived together are juxtaposed, and this placement, in turn, causes the shock effect when it becomes difficult for the mind to determine the difference between “here” and “there.” Despite the possibility of locating these unusual places in reality, they still occupy a space that exists “outside of all places,” because they are “different” from real sites (Foucault 24). The prison, for example, represents a heterotopia of “deviation,” because it is located close to society, albeit entry to it is restricted only to individuals who do not abide by the law of their societies (25).

Foucault introduces a set of principles to identify heterotopias. One principle is that heterotopias exist in “varied forms” which make it almost impossible to determine a fixed “universal form” for them (24). The reason for this diversity is that the advance in time changes the role that heterotopias play throughout historical periods. Cemeteries, for example, have been moved from locations inside the cities and next to churches – thus acquiring holy and immortal functions – to outside the city borders. This started at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the belief that death was a contagious disease; accordingly, the cemetery became “the other city” outside the real city (25). Moreover, time is a criterion that determines the function of heterotopia. The cemetery “begins with this

strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance” (26). In this respect, the cemetery becomes a place that is characterised by heterochrony, which combines the mortality of the body with the immortality of the soul, according to some beliefs, as well as perhaps the ordinary mundane time of those who visit it. Heterotopias may also represent “indefinitely accumulating time,” where information is accessed “in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time” (Foucault 26). This overlap in time can be seen in museums and libraries where information is obtained from different epochs in transcribed, visual, or audio forms in a set of time different from that of the occurrence of the events described.

Similarly, heterotopia can create the illusion of a different set of places at the same time or at different times, like theatre, which may feature multiple settings and sceneries. Theatres are places where the audience is present in the real now and here, and the actors – with the stage scenery – are meant to be present in the imaginary then and there. The actors and the audience exist in one place, the theatre, but are located in different times determined by stage directions (Foucault 25).

The mirror makes another example of creating the illusion of locating different spaces at the same time and within the same space. The mirror is an object produces reflections that seem to appear at a simultaneous time and within the same space as the real objects in front of the mirror. Through creating these unreal images – the images which our own mind creates through the signals it collects from the senses, and this would make them harder to distinguish from the mirror images, – the mirror functions as “a placeless place,” in other words a kind of utopia, since it represents an alternative to real images (24). Foucault gives the example of his looking at himself in the mirror as a “mixed, joint experience” (24). This “joint experience” is the result of the illusory space contravening the real space: a moment

that occurs when Foucault looks at his reflection. When the person stares back at his own “gaze” in the mirror, a utopian “moment” is created that seems “absolutely real” (24). The mirror confuses the mind, for a few moments, into believing that a person exists in two different places: the here and now – in front of the mirror – and the (there and then) represented by his reflected image “inside” the mirror. The reason that the object of the mirror is considered heterotopic is because it does exist in the reality where the person stands. This real existence generates a real space that perplexes the mind into the possibility of the existence of the unreal space of his reflection in the mirror.

There is the real space of H.D. and her readers as opposed to the unreal space of *Trilogy* as a whole; inside the latter space, there are multiple spaces of real and unreal events, places and epochs. *Trilogy*’s oscillation between different times and places, between “here” and “there,” and H.D.’s use of mirrors and reflective surfaces can be read in relation to the Foucauldian theory of heterotopia. I have discussed earlier how H.D. uses the terms of “now” and “then” to convey her theme of hope. In the following paragraphs I will demonstrate that this oscillation can be interpreted in terms of heterotopia. *Walls* introduces the reader to the cities of Luxor and London, where the ruins of the former are identified with those of the latter:

there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there, as here, there are no doors:
the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain falls, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures: (*TR* 3)

The graveyard-like scenery of tombs, temples, and ruins creates the effect of the Foucauldian cemetery where other spaces, of ancient Egypt, are fused with the current space of the London ruins. The image of the cemetery-like London suggests the increasing number of fatalities caused by war. Moreover, the historical connection that links London with Luxor stresses the immortality of the souls of the dead and their ability to transcend time and place. In other words, the displacement of ancient Luxor within the present-day London represents the cemetery of heterotopias, which invites the reader to perceive the dead described in the poem as immortal entities. So, London-cum-Luxor is heterotopic to wartime London.

Employing Foucault's ideas, I argue that the poem juxtaposes heterotopia and utopia in the majority of its images. *Trilogy's* sections portray a variety of settings, which have the combined characteristics of cities such as London, Luxor, Pompeii, Jerusalem, and Thebes. These multi-setting sceneries allow a universal dimension that makes the experiences, in the poem, appear realistic. In this sense, the unrealistic utopian sections that describe the journey to heaven, angels on earth, and the supernatural powers of men and gods all become plausible and attainable, because the reader identifies them with the real scenes that intricately precede or follow them. For example, the lines mentioned above are followed by these lines:

so, through our desolation,
thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
through gloom:
unaware, Spirit announces the Presence;
shivering overtakes us,
as of old, Samuel:
.....
the Pythian pronounces – we pass on (TR 3)

The heterotopia of the cemetery and the bleak description of the cities function as a precursor to the appearance of the higher power or the Spirit that comes as the last hope for salvation. Amidst its “desolation,” the crowd is invited to believe in utopia and hope that the war will come to an end. The citizens in the poem, and with them the audience, are invited to believe in the supernatural powers of the female goddess that will deliver the nation from its curse. The poet may identify the goddess with the Oracle of Delphi, Pythia, who is mentioned in the Book of Samuel: “[f]ind me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her” (*Holy Bible*, Sam. 28.7).

Poetic devices are used to emphasise the appearance of the priestess and to usher in the realisation of utopia by amplifying the shock effect that heterotopia creates. According to Foucault’s principle of the “mixed joint experience” of the real and the unreal, the shock effect results from the appearance of the imaginary gods and angels in the real contemporary London. The new London becomes the place that contrasts the war-torn one, because it exists “outside of all places,” and shapes a “different,” preferable order where peace prevails (Foucault 24). There is a heavy use of alliteration of the *s* sound in “inspiration stalks us” and “Spirit announces the Presence” (*TR* 3). Capitalisation is used to add emphasis to important words that describe the goddess, such as “Spirit” and “Presence,” and the word “Pythian” that refers to the oracle is homographic with “Python,” the serpent. In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. stresses the importance of the serpent and the letter “s” as symbols of the salvation that she experienced in the form of visions during her stay in Greece in the twenties. She states that according to Biblical stories, the serpent brings “thorns and thistles” to the condemned earth after deceiving Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit:

I called them [visions], the series of the imperfect, reversed S of the scroll-pattern of the writing-on-the-wall. . . . There was the S as serpent, companion to the thistle, the symbol that suggests waste places and the desert; but we have been told that *the desert shall blossom as the rose*, and it was in the desert that Moses raised the standard. (TF 163)

But now I think this inverted S-pattern may have represented a series of question marks, the questions that have been asked through all the ages, that the ages will go on asking. (TF 55)

The first paragraph indicates that *Trilogy* can be interpreted as an extended version of those earlier “real” dreams of the “Egyptian princess” that H.D. experienced in Greece (TF 163). This is mainly because the poem lays emphasis on the prophetic role of the priestess Pythia as the saviour who raises “the standard” for the deserted London to make it “blossom,” mirroring Moses’s gesture in the barren Egypt. The second paragraph associates the “s” shape with man’s quest for knowledge throughout the ages. This association can also be regarded as the poet’s attempt to add an element of mystery to her words.

Aliki Barnstone points out that in Gnostic belief the serpent represents sacredness, because it led Eve to knowledge, while Eve is considered a saviour because she passed on this knowledge to humanity through the fruit of the Tree (Readers’ Notes 191). In this sense, the link between the letter “s” and the goddess of H.D.’s poem invests her with the qualities of the omnipresent and the all-knowing, and gives her the power to decipher the riddle of humanity’s existence and answer its prayers for salvation. The representation of women as saviours of the world links the three parts of *Trilogy*: the princess in *Walls*, the Lady of the book in *Angels* and Mary in *Rod*. In this sense, *Trilogy* unfolds an

accurate charm, spell, prayer,
which will reveal
whatever healing or inspirational essence
is necessary for whatever particular ill.” (33)

Thus, the poem itself claims a capacity to create utopia.

Foucault argues that “heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (26). He gives the example of the museum or the prison, where entry is only allowed through permission. I argue that a similar strategy can be detected in *Trilogy*, where walls and doors determine the opening and closing of literary settings and historical epochs. I will show how H.D. uses the same examples of the museum and the prison to create her heterotopia. *Walls*, for example, introduces the spell motif that coaxes the reader into deciphering “the meaning that words hide,” for they become “anagrams, cryptograms, little boxes, conditioned” to open the poem to interpretations (53). The use of dashes alongside references to doors and walls plays an important role in defining the “conditioned” sentences which describe movement or confinement. For example, when the goddess Pythia makes an appearance, the crowd move:

the Pythian pronounces—we pass on
to another cellar, to another sliced wall
where poor utensils show
like rare objects in a museum; (4)

The presence of the Pythian oracle allows the movement of the crowd “to another cellar, to another sliced wall,” which opens London to the historical Luxor. The signs of destruction

that the crowd witness in the prison-like London – conveyed through the image of confinement within cellars – are compared to browsing “rare objects in a museum.” There are two heterotopic signs in this image: London being presented as both a prison and a museum. When London becomes a place where borders are demolished and privacy is violated, doors and sliced walls create another space that is outside the real space. This unreal space enables the citizens to move back and forth in history, functioning as a heterotopic “place of all times that is itself outside of time” (Foucault 26). Not only has the image of London city become that place, but also the poem as a whole. *Trilogy*, with its accumulation of and oscillation between different places and different times, becomes similar to a museum with an access to the history of “Paradise / before Eve” and “earth, before Adam” (155,154). Similarly, London becomes open to Luxor when “there as here, there are no doors;” “sealed roofs” become “open to the air” and “the shrine lies open” (*TR* 3). This idea of openness tempts the reader to believe in the power of the “Dream” that “is always open / and open to everyone;” (*TR* 29). Open doors allow the fusion of the state of dream with that of reality: “then we saw where the door was, / there was no door” (89). After the speaker and her friends hear a knock on the door (while there is no door), the Lady with the Book of Life appears “actually, at the turn of the stairs” (89). The stress on the actuality of the presence of the Lady contradicts the speaker’s affirmation that “this was a dream of course” (89). Since those doors lead to an unreal world, they represent heterotopic gates that “link” and “contradict” reality (Foucault 25). The shock that results from the juxtaposition of these contradictions leads to the belief that this utopian dream of the Lady’s coming to the rescue is real. Before entering those doors/no doors, the crowd lives the reality of the horrors of war, and after entering people are compelled to believe in the utopian dream that they are not actually there, so there is no suffering.

In my examination of the use of doors in *Trilogy* so far, I have shown that they have a similar effect of conflating the real with the unreal. However, in *Rod* doors are used to emphasise the power that Mary Magdalene has over Kaspar. H.D. makes plausible her altered version of the Biblical story of Mary and Kaspar by inviting the reader to witness their fight over the opening and closing of the door. The reader witnesses Mary's full control over the door and Kaspar's failure to escape her presence:

She said, I have heard of you;
he bowed ironically and ironically murmured,
I have not had the pleasure,
his eyes now fixed on the half-open door;
she understood; this was his second rebuff
but deliberately, she shut the door;
she stood with her back against it;
.....
It was hardly decent of her to stand there,
unveiled, in the house of a stranger. (TR 134)

The "half-open door" does not only represent for Kaspar an opportunity to escape Mary's presence, but also, thus, potentially a way to gain control of the situation. Mary's full control of the opening and closing of the door in Kaspar's house suggests her violation of his own space and her challenge of his authority. Since Mary stands for women's power, the lines give an insight into women's resilience in the presence of male authority. Mary only decides to "unfasten the door" after she makes Kaspar, the "unquestionably / master of caravans," "[stoop] to the floor" to give her back her fallen scarf (138, 137). Unlike her representation in

the Bible, H.D.'s Mary Magdalene is not apologetic about her "hardly decent" qualities (134). She makes a strong and confident appearance when "it was unseemly that a woman / appear disordered, dishevelled;" (137).

In relation to doors, dashes are another orthographic sign which plays a significant role in conveying the movement of people. When the princess appears, for example, the crowd is reluctant to move due to its imprisonment prior to her arrival: "the Pythian pronounces—we pass on." Similarly, in *Angels* the use of dashes suggests slow movement or confinement when the "[i]nvisible, indivisible Spirit" empowers the crowd to be "like a ghost" that enters "a house through a wall" (83). When the crowd "passed through a frame—doorless—," dashes visualise the frame that has no door and create the effect of confining an illusory space that leads to extraordinary experiences (*TR* 83). Once the people enter this frame, they realise that they are "there or not-there"; they are able to see "an ordinary tree" "flowering" (83). This is the same tree that has been "burnt and stricken to the heart" during the Blitz (82). Graham argues that the flowering tree signifies "survival and rebirth, even when death seems to dominate everything" ("We Have a Secret" 188). Moreover, in the lines "nay—*peace be still*— / lovest thou not Azrael," dashes create a sense of the speaker's desire to hold on to peace and prevent the angel of death from violating it (*TR* 67). However, since dashes suggest movement and/or pauses, they suggest here that peace cannot be attained despite the speaker's frustration and negation, because wars bring about more and more deaths. This sense of the fear of loss, and hence the need to confine or restrict it through the use of dashes, is also evident in *Rod*. Whenever the word "fragrance" is used, a dash precedes it except when the reader is informed that the fragrance in Mary's hand has spread out. Since the fragrance is out, the use of a dash is not needed to hold it.

In *Trilogy*, H.D.'s simultaneous use of the here and there help to create a heterotopic dream-like reality or a reality-like dream. Another poem by H.D. called "Dream" (n.d.) is a

particularly salient example of this poetic approach. In this poem, H.D. picks on this oscillation between the mental and the physical as one between dream and reality:

“It didn’t come, it was there.”

“Where?”

“In my eyes,

Here.”

“You made it up,

You were awake.”

“No, asleep, it was a picture— ” (*CP* 345)

There are two voices engaged in the conversation here: one of an adult that stresses the dream-like reality through his/her authoritative, sceptic questions and negations, and another voice, that of a child who is trying to describe his/her reality-like dream. The adult’s assertion that the child was awake falsifies the child’s description of what he/she saw and vice versa. The child’s affirmation “no, no it [the picture] was real” and his/her description of it as “a kitten and his cat” attaches plausibility to the story. The binary division between what is real and what is not creates an effect that is similar to the Foucauldian mirror. In other words, the fluctuations between “here” and “there” fuse the physical with the mental, which, in turn, makes their perception entirely subjective. However, both the adult and the child’s perceptions are valid, even though they contradict each other.

V. Foucault’s Heterotopia II

In the second part of the section, I will apply the Foucauldian example of the mirror to H.D.’s *Trilogy* to bring forward some important key points that illuminate H.D.’s utopianism. The

word “mirror” is mentioned seven times in the poem.¹² Six times out of the seven, surfaces like “the light on [Mary’s hair]” (*TR* 148), “polished surface or plain” (164), and water (126, 73) are used to create reflections “as in a mirror” (149, 150, 165, 166). The only time a real mirror is used is when “we saw her [the Lady] stare past a mirror / through an open window” (95). This lays emphasis on the Lady’s character in comparison to the other characters, like Kaspar’s, as being the sole authority that looks at a real mirror. Mirror reflections are crucial for strengthening the roles of H.D.’s female characters, as mirrors open a window into history to create a space through which those females are summoned to the reader’s present. I will situate my analysis in relation to Foucault’s heterotopia of the mirror, starting with an account of Aphrodite and the Lady of the Book in *Angels*. The argument will be followed by tracing the significance of Mary’s effect on Kaspar in *Rod*.

In *Angels*, Aphrodite is summoned to enter the world of the speaker through the medium of reflecting surfaces:

the rain-water
 showed splintered edge
 as of a broken mirror,
 and in the glass
 as in a polished spear,
 glowed the star Hesperus,

¹² In her writings, H.D. attaches supernatural elements to the number seven “without fear of being snubbed or thought ridiculous or superstitious,” as she admits in *Tribute to Freud* (62). H.D. attributes the mutual seven in her forty-seven years and in Freud’s seventy-seven to strong “occult power and mystery” (62). For this reason, H.D. frequently uses the number seven when she gives an account of her visions and dreams. When H.D. describes her post First World War vision in Greek, she suspects that the number of the steps of the ladder over which the symbolic female angel “Victory” descends to be “symbolic” seven (80). Moreover, to stress her authoritative voice, H.D. replaces the names of the seven male angels who were cast out of Mary in the Bible with female characters. These women combine the mythical Lilith with Eve and the poet herself. For a detailed account of the relationship between H.D.’s spiritualism and the connotations of number seven in both *Trilogy* and the Bible consult Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 221.

white, far and luminous,
incandescent and near,
Venus, Aphrodite, Astarte,
star of the east,
star of the west,
Phosphorus at sun-rise,
Hesperus at sun-set (73)

The speaker sees Aphrodite's image "as of a broken mirror" on the water drops and the glass. Other reflective surfaces, like "edges" and "polished spears," are also incorporated to create multiple distances and a discourse which purposely confuse the real with the unreal. There is a strong emphasis on the creation of different spaces and different reflections aided by words related to the effects of light: "glowed," "polished," "white," "luminous," "incandescent," "star," "phosphorus," and "sun." Bright lights are used to celebrate the appearance of the goddess Aphrodite who is called forth to "re-light the flame" (*TR* 74, 75) of the dark present.

According to Foucault, mirrors present a point of convergence where a utopia and a heterotopia can overlap. This overlapping is the direct result of the simultaneity of the physical and the mental that are mixed – in terms of place and space – between the "here" and "there" (24). Similarly, H.D.'s recurrent use of shining and reflective surfaces creates an overlap between the discourse of the lyrical speaker/narrator and that of Aphrodite. When different times and distances are fused, the result is the possibility of summoning Aphrodite to save contemporary London. The reader is encouraged to believe in the plausibility of the speaker's utopian dream – that Aphrodite, the saviour goddess, is about to descend. The mirror-like reflective surfaces in the poem work as a gate through which mythic figures

incarnate and interweave with reality, to make them as plausible to the reader as possible. But why are these gods in particular needed?

“Venus, Aphrodite, Astarte” are all different names for the same deity, the goddess of love and beauty, who is also condemned for being lustful and seductive in some historical contexts. In Ancient Greece, for example, Aphrodite stands for the destruction of the male because her creation resulted from the blood of a castrated male god (Belis 306). The Roman Venus was the guardian “of all persuasive seductions, between gods and mortals, and between men and women” (“Venus”). And while the Phoenician Astarte was called “the queen of heaven” and “the mother of the gods” (Leeming 35), her Sumerian name, Ishtar, associates her with prostitution because of her scandalous sexual practices in her brothel-like temple (Day 15-17).¹³ Under her Babylonian name, Semiramis, or “the whore of Babylon,” she was condemned for having too many lovers (Abrams 153). She was accused of legislating incest in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (95-96), and scorned, in all her names, for the sovereignty of her lust over her reason:

empress over many languages
So broken was she to the vice of lust that in her
Laws she made licit whatever pleased, to lift from herself the
blame she had
incurred
She is Semiramis. (89)

The final declaration of her name charges her with all the above accusations. I think that the reason H.D. mentions different names of the goddess across different cultures is to show the

¹³ This characteristic also links her to Mary Magdalene, as I show later in the section.

universal abuse of the female character. Whether Greek, Sumerian, or Phoenician, those figures were aggrieved in history, which has done them the “impious wrong” of accusing them of being impure and “lascivious” (*TR* 74). I argue that this universality represents a central theme in *Trilogy*. Aphrodite is presented with different names; Mary is associated with features of the three Marys in the Bible; and the Lady with the Book of Life represents all women.

Critics have pointed out that *Trilogy* anticipates the arrival of the Age of Aquarius: a women’s age in which intuition would be privileged over knowledge and love over war. In *Majic Ring* (written 1943–44, published 2009), H.D. claims that “The New Age of Aquarius would bring about a time of peace, being the “House of Friends” (12).¹⁴ According to astrological studies, every age is marked by the sun’s reversed movement on the wheel of the zodiac that happens every aeon (roughly two thousand years). In this way, every age reverses direction from the monthly progression of the signs. For example, the age of Aries precedes Pisces and Pisces will be followed by Aquarius. The incarnation of Jesus marked the age of Pisces. Accordingly, H.D. anticipates the incarnation of a new “Master” who would bring a cosmic order with the dispensation of the new age of Aquarius (Acheson “H.D. and the Age of Aquarius” 134; H.D.’s *Majic Ring* 26). In *Majic Ring*, H.D. attributes the war and struggles of her period to the Zodiac “House of Enemies” or Piscean Age:

¹⁴ Occult studies on H.D. states that the “Delia Alton” prose work of the late 1940s (*Majic Ring*, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, *White Rose and the Red*, and *The Mystery*) reads as a commentary to *Trilogy*. However, *Majic Ring* does not only stand “as a prose companion-piece to *Trilogy*,” but also to *The Sword Went out to Sea* (Sword 354).

For the astrological and occult text sources that influenced *Trilogy* see Susan Acheson’s “Conceived at the Grave’s Edge: The Esoteric Eschatology of H.D.’s *Trilogy*” (1998).

November 10, 1943, is roughly, very roughly, 50 B.C. or 50 BEFORE the new dispensation, which we are told is the Aquarian Age, the sign of the Angel or angelos, the messenger. And we are not told to look for a new Master but the same Master is to “come in clouds;” even as he last disappeared. But in another House, the House of Friends instead of the House of Enemies or the House of Secret Enemies, Pisces, the Fishes of our present age. (11–12)

Hobson argues that the beginning of the twentieth century marked the new dispensation of the Aquarian age “which astrologers associated with woman and with a mystical form of knowledge which, in H.D.’s view, would bring an end to the intellectual certainties of the past” (163). Women feature prominently in *Trilogy* as saviours, like the Lady with the Book of Life, whose appearance ushers in a new era of peace and prosperity.

In order to prepare for this new age, H.D. must first defend her universal heroes against accusations, which she describes as words “full . . . of poison” (*TR* 74). The reader senses the strong presence of Aphrodite, whom the poet has already invoked through the reflection on water. Poetry brings the goddess into the real world by aligning her with the speaker. Heterotopia is created when Aphrodite is situated in a place “incandescent and near” to the real place where the speaker stands (73). The present tense of the speaker brings back fame to Aphrodite with a “holy name;” Astarte shines “light at dusk” and performs a “prayer at dawn;” and Venus is considered to be the “holiest” name (75). The poet consistently calls upon them to “return;” “forget” their own world and indulge in “re-light[ing] the flame / before the substance cool[s]” (75). There is a noticeable insistence on the deities crossing the convergence point where reality and the imagination meet to make the real world a better place. I think that the female goddesses’ descent to the real world is a manifestation of the poet’s vindication of them. My argument is supported by H.D.’s constant use of bright light,

which is linked to the colour white, accompanied by the reflective image of the gods to stress their purity. Furthermore, the colour white is usually associated with innocence and perfection and its connotations in the Bible are with divinity and sublimity (Portal and Inman 19). Thus, whiteness bestows divine features on those gods, making them similar to Biblical figures. To summarise the function of this image, H.D.'s use of reflection, recollection, and lights create a heterotopic space that is parallel to the poet's present real world, yet its approximated nearness is felt and seen to fuse it with reality. This fusion creates a cinematic effect that accompanies the female gods' descent into reality for different reasons: first, to regain those gods' distorted purity and clear their names, so to speak, of the wrongs that history and myth have done them. Second, those goddesses become role models to be cherished and "venerate[d]" by associating their names with angelic attributes and holy names (*TR* 75). Third, those different names of divinities are picked from different parts of the world (Phoenicia, Greece, Rome) to become examples of the injustices inflicted upon women everywhere. The speaker's consistent call for Aphrodite to "swiftly, re-light the flame" (74) is, in my opinion, a plea for womanhood to escape being overshadowed (the injustices they suffer in a male-dominated world) and assume their roles in leading the nation. Perhaps, only then, utopia can be achieved.

What supports the idea of the need for women leaders to achieve an ideal society is the warning that ships would be wrecked if they do not follow Astarte:

Astarte, hull and spar
of wrecked ships lost your star,
.....
return, O holiest one,
Venus whose name is kin (75)

It is worth mentioning that it is Hesperus, the young male god, who represents the evening star that guides the ship's movement on the sea and this star is ruled by Venus, the planet ("Hesperus"). H.D. has re-written the myth to emphasise the role of the female deity. The poem entails the voice of a woman warning against male authorities. Robin Miskolcze points out that "shipwreck narratives celebrated the ways in which individuals could contribute to the nation's exceptional nature" where "'women and children first' was a generic model intended to set a national standard" (60-61). In this sense, H.D.'s poem can be seen as a prophetic warning that neglecting the female voice of reason will lead to shipwreck and destruction. This also evokes H.D.'s earlier *Sea Garden* and her symbolic warning that over-protection of fruits leads to their decay. The fruit or flower represents women in those early poems and the decay of the vegetation parallels the spiritual or actual death of women.

H.D.'s calling upon Aphrodite's name in three different civilisations (Greek, Roman, and Phoenician) creates a refrain that bestows on her a universal function as representative of women in all cultures. Those women were made outcasts; they were incriminated for being lustful and vicious. And like the Christ figure, even when they were (morally) crucified, they still promise redemption and salvation to the world. H.D. used the mirror image to reassert those women's reputation as sacred, divine, and powerful leaders. So here, the "mirror image" implies the reversal of the women's stories – retold with new outcomes.

H.D. introduces the mysterious character of the Lady as one of these leaders who stress that the creation of a feminist utopia is vital for humanity's survival. Based on astrological textbooks, Hobson reads the arrival of the Lady alongside "the speaker's prayer to the angel of the annunciation and, more importantly, with the transition to a new age of Aquarian or 'womanly' knowledge" (164). Pushing this a little further, I would like to suggest that because the Lady ushers in the arrival of the new age of women's empowerment,

the identity of the Lady has to represent *all* women. To stress my point, I quote a letter that H.D. sent to Norman Holmes Pearson in which she describes the identity of her Lady: “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” (N. Pearson x). The Lady could also be associated with the princess of Egypt whom H.D. saw in her vision in Greece, as the poet provides similar qualities to both “Our Lady” and “our Princess,” including the staring at water and the descending down the stairs (*TR* 95, 89, *TF* 61- 62). Moreover, the Biblical allusions that are attached to the Lady’s description, such as the lamb, the pomegranate, and the child suggest she could be the Virgin Mary (*TR* 104, 81, 93, 97).¹⁵ H.D. attaches these various traits to the figure of the Lady to stress her universal connotation of women in general: “she is Our Lady universally” (103). I have noticed that both words “Our Lady” are capitalised every time they are mentioned in the poem, suggesting that not only the Lady’s figure is universal, but also “us,” women or the crowd too (*TR* 93, 96, 98, 102). Our Lady is a very common way of referring to the Virgin Mary in the Catholic Church, and “Our Lady of . . .” with a place name or an attribute is often used as the name of a cathedral, or an important statue, or to refer to the Virgin Mary’s appearances in a certain place. Another reading might suggest that capitals refer to one specific figure, the phrase serving as a personal name. This is not contradictory in H.D.’s poem, because the character of the Lady is one, but she also combines all the other different characters in the poem. However, being presented with no name, I would still argue that “Our Lady” is a personification of women empowered to make a change in the world, including the poet herself. Moreover, the connection that H.D. makes in her letter to Pearson between Venus and the Lady links up the identities of the female heroes in the sections of *Trilogy*.

¹⁵ For further connections between the lady and Virgin Mary, see Barnstone, Readers’ Notes 189.

This resemblance suggests a thematic universality in H.D.'s work, highlighting women's heroism in male-dominated societies.

Interestingly, two Foucauldian heterotopic elements are invoked in relation to the Lady: "we saw her [the Lady] stare past a mirror / through an open window" (TR 95). These elements call up the heterotopias of the mirror and that of the museum. While it was the reader/speaker who looked at Aphrodite's reflection, here it is the lady who "stare[s] past" the mirror at the readers. The conjunction of the mirror and the window can be read as the meeting of the heterotopia (mirror) and the utopia (the window to another place). The "open window" signifies openness to another world, probably the Lady's, hence the use of past tense. The description of the Lady's image is very similar to the display of a portrait in a museum, where viewers have access to historical paintings. The Lady (who represents different women from different periods) incorporates a visual heterotopic form of information that Foucault describes as "indefinitely accumulating time" (26). Like the Foucauldian mirror, *Trilogy*, as a text, is reflexive in the sense that it links both real and imaginary worlds. The poem's element of storytelling incorporates an interaction between the reader and the female characters. For example, when readers see "her stare past a mirror," the Lady, in turn, "looked so kindly at us" (TR 100). The image suggested here is of a mirror reflecting the parallel worlds of the heroine on the one side, and the readers on the other. To adopt Foucault's terms here, the mirror creates a heterotopic space where the real world of the readers is counterweighed by the utopian world of the ancient heroine. This augments the shock element, which helps people become aware of the dystopian world they live in and change their current circumstances to make a better future. Barnstone argues that *Trilogy* "is not a closed text, written for itself, but one that opens up the Book of Life, and shows the reader the blank pages on which she or he can write 'the new'" (xvii). From this perspective,

I argue that H.D.'s text is didactic in its conveying of moral lessons, and it is also reflective in the sense that it invites and tempts the reader "to recreate" its words.

I also argue that *Trilogy* mirrors a feminist utopia where men's powers are either fused with or overshadowed by women's powers. The image of the Lady brings to memory the cult of "Bona Dea" (162). This cult consists of the bonding of women only through the worship of the Roman goddess, while men are barred from the cult or enslaved (Brouwer 100, 255). It is Aphrodite who saves the nation, the Lady who connects the real world with the utopian one, and Mary who links heaven to earth. Throughout the poem, these heroines become the lyrical traveller's/ readers' guide towards utopia. Male figures are only presented as powerful when compared to the more powerful female characters who have the upper hand in assuming authority throughout the poem.

Alongside the mirror, H.D. uses rhetoric and irony to represent her lady to the real world. In giving an account of the female hero, H.D. changes her story-telling mode to a conversational dialogue that confuses the pronouns used to determine whom the speaker is addressing:

This is a symbol of beauty (you continue),

she is Our Lady universally,

I see her as you project her,

.....

you have done very well by her

(to repeat your own phrase),

you have carved her tall and unmistakable,

a hieratic figure, the veiled Goddess, (102)

The speaker mentions the qualities of the Lady on behalf of the persona (who created her). The speaker suddenly changes the conversational discourse from being directed to her audience to address it to the creator of the Lady. In this case, the readers become witnesses to the confrontation of the speaker and the persona/creator. Johnson assumes that the “second-person figure” in *Angels* is a man, who responds to the poem and “credits poetry enough to read it and think about it” (73). She also argues that H.D.’s reply to him (the reader) weakens “his skills of interpretation” because “she vaguely praises him; then with a flourish of humor, she goes on to correct him” (74). I disagree with Johnson’s claim that H.D. is addressing the reader, although I agree with her on identifying his gender. Since the majority of the lines in the epic tackle the revision of stories taken from the Bible (especially Mary’s), it seems more accurate to assume that the addressee is the male creator or the male writer who originally composed these stories. The role of the creator is passive as his words are only conveyed through the mouth of the speaker, who communicates the creator’s joyful pride in the Lady as his creation – this is a Pygmalion motif as well. However, in the next lines, the speaker’s tone changes from what seemed to be praise of the creator’s masterpiece (the Lady) to mockery:

O yes--you understand, I say,
this is all most satisfactory,
but she wasn't hieratic, she wasn't frozen,
she wasn't very tall;
.....
she carries a book but it is not
the tome of the ancient wisdom,
the pages, I imagine, are the blank pages
of the unwritten volume of the new;

all you say, is implicit,
all that and much more;
.....in a coloured window (103)

The mockery is not directed at the Lady herself, but at her creator. The speaker attempts to dismantle the perfection in the qualities that constitutes the creator's pride in his masterpiece. The speaker's tone changes from echoing the addressee's words in describing the Lady in the previous lines, to the authoritative statement of personal opinion through "I say" and "I imagine." In presenting her own version of the Lady, the speaker highlights the Lady's anti-stereotypical qualities: not being "most satisfactory" because she "wasn't hieratic"; "she wasn't frozen," and "she wasn't very tall."¹⁶ Research has been conducted on the connection between the character of the Lady and H.D.'s conception of the power of the subconscious or the psyche. Friedman's study offers insight into the identification of the Lady with the subconscious (*Psyche Reborn* 9-10, 211-29). My interest lies in the Lady being a metaphor for women as heroines.

H.D.'s unique utopia aims at an androgynous unity of men and women to produce a new generation of extraordinary women who are prepared to be heroes. In the majority of her work, H.D.'s utopia is not portrayed as a new world, but rather a mixture of the past with the present, the old with the new, the perfect with the imperfect. However, there is a constant emphasis on the constitution of the new: it is stressed, for example, that the Lady's Book of "blank pages" is "not the tome of the ancient wisdom" but "the unwritten volume of the new" (Introduction *Angels* 103). Accordingly, H.D.'s mixing of old and new creates something new or revolutionary. The empty pages could also be interpreted as giving the Lady the freedom to write her own story and self.

¹⁶ This is another link to H.D.'s early work through which she stresses finding beauty in the imperfection of distorted and frozen fruits.

The strong persuasive tone throughout the description of the Lady, “but none of these, none of these / suggest her as I saw her,” echoes the rhetoric of the Ancient Greeks. In *Rhetoric* (fourth century B.C.), Aristotle explains that “the orator projects in the course of his oration an ethos, that is, a personal character which itself functions as a means of persuasion” (Abrams 217). I suggest that H.D.’s female heroes play the part of orators, especially the character of the speaker who plays the main role in defending the Lady’s emancipation from the restrictions of her original creator. The character of Mary also falls into that category of tempting the reader to believe her mission of being the saviour of humanity. Furthermore, the changing of the tense to the past in the lines above gives a testimony that the speaker was actually there to create the Lady. It also gives credence to the poet as being omnipresent. Arthur Versluis argues that this uncertainty of tenses and places and of “not knowing whether we were there or not-there” allows the poet an experience of “self-transcendence” (108). This experience transforms the war encounter into “one of divine revelation,” where angels and gods are present to rescue people on earth (109). The supernatural presence of angels, gods, and female heroes make these people “satisfied” and “happy” to “begin again” their journey in life (*TR* 109). This is evident in the poet’s description of the Lady: “she was one of us, with us” and her present is necessary to be the “counter-coin-side / of [the] primitive terror” of war (*TR* 107, 104). The lines that describe the Lady emphasise her role or capacity to counteract war; readers are told that the Lady “is not-fear, she is not-war,” but a saviour that will change the existing concept of “Justice with eyes / blindfolded . . .” (104). H.D. alludes to the descriptions of Christ in the Bible and links them to the Lady to invest her with religious authority (Barnstone, *Readers’ Notes* 189). The Lady becomes the saviour who “must have been pleased with us, / for she looked so kindly at us” (*TR* 100).

In *Rod*, the example of the mirror image is set to grant Mary authority over Kaspar. The Arab sage or “the Magian / . . . *Wise Man*” is known to be the “master of caravans,” who

“had known splendour such as few have known,” (151, 149). However, Kaspar’s knowledge is questioned after his encounter with Mary, when he “saw as in a mirror” “light” reflecting from Mary’s hair “like moonlight on a lost river” (149, 148). The phrase “saw as in a mirror” is repeated and emphasised throughout *Rod* to describe the transcendental knowledge that Mary granted Kaspar (149-50, 165-66).¹⁷ Despite knowing “more about precious stones than any other,” Kaspar could not fathom what he experienced upon meeting Mary; he “was lost, / out-of-time completely” (149, 153). Like the Lady with the Book of Life, and as a continuation of women’s journey of inspiration, Mary represents “the whole secret of the mystery” of the tree of life:

the speck, fleck, grain or seed
opened like a flower.
And the flower, thus contained
in the infinitely tiny grain or seed,
opened petal by petal, a circle,
and each petal was separate
yet still held, as it were,
by some force of attraction
to its dynamic centre;
and the circle went on widening
and would go on opening
he knew, to infinity; (*TR* 152-153)

¹⁷ Mary has the ability to translate hieroglyphic signs and unravel the mysteries of the universe (164). Moreover, despite Kaspar’s “innate capacity for transcribing and translating,” Mary makes him realise in a “second or a second and a half” the depth of history (165). She gives him immediate knowledge that enables him to see and realise things that are beyond his perception and because of that “his heart was filled . . . with . . . exalted . . . ecstasy” (149).

To his astonishment, Kaspar's knowledge of this immortal representation of life is deduced from Mary's light. He sees life as an everlasting beauty of flowering and continuity that is comprehended through the reflection of light from a woman's hair. I argue that the "dynamic centre" of the rose that holds tight the separate petals is suggestive of women's healing powers and ability to bring together the torn world. H.D. conceives women to hold a power that makes gratitude the world towards them. Mary's characteristic as "an unpredictable woman" draws Kaspar closer to her: her light gives him "discovery that exalted him;" her presence confuses him, and despite his possession of the "very costly" "alabaster jar" of ointment, "the most beautiful fragrance" still comes out from the "bundle of myrrh" that "she held in her arms" (159, 151, 159, 172). In the Bible, the person who is holding the bundle of myrrh is the Virgin Mary not Mary Magdalene who inspires Kaspar and the bundle is the Christ-child. H.D. fuses the two Marys and presents a Mary who has the bundle, but "the Child was not with her" (97). This proves two points that I have already discussed in this chapter: firstly, that the emphasis is laid on the female (Mary) who is presented with the attributes of Christ to make her a divine figure who brings salvation; secondly, the fact that the verse on the absence of the child is mentioned in relation to the description of the Lady proves the common qualities of H.D.'s heroines. In other words, although the heroines have different names, they share the same qualities as one woman and this stresses women's heroic universality: the female hero exists anywhere and anytime.

From a Foucauldian point of view, the reflection cast by Mary's hair creates another space (a heterotopia) that is outside of her and Kaspar's space. The multiple layers of distance that H.D. creates in this case are quite complicated in terms of perception. There is the real space of the writer and her readers, as opposed to the unreal space of *Trilogy* as a whole; inside the latter space, there are multiple spaces of real and unreal events, places and epochs. Inside that space of heterogeneous reality, there is the story of Mary and Kaspar, which is

recreated by the poet to be perceived in the sense of religious reality in comparison with the story of John's Revelation. Accordingly, *Trilogy* creates spaces and places that are "outside of all places" (Foucault 24). Mary's reflection makes Kaspar and/or the reader see the "placeless place" of utopia that the poet envisages, where the newly "his and our civilization" are formed on "his and our earth, before Adam" (*TR* 154). Kaspar witnesses the "circles and circles of islands / about the lost centre-island, Atlantis" that form "paradise / before Eve," where "the ships and the sea-roads [are] crossing" (153, 155).¹⁸ I argue that this vision can be interpreted as the contradiction between the male perception and the female reality. Kaspar's shock in perceiving Mary's knowledge results from his underestimation of her character as a woman, thinking it "was hardly decent of her to stand there, / unveiled, in the house of a stranger" (134). Men seem to perceive women's appearance rather than their wisdom or ideas; Kaspar's main concern was not what Mary wanted to say but in covering her every time her scarf falls, lest it would show her "un-maidenly" hair (134). What the man rejects and fears is what brings him enlightenment. He resists a challenge to his perception from a woman; however, it is her hair that gives him more knowledge and liberates him from the limitations of his imagination.¹⁹ For H.D., women possess the ability of "transcribing and translating" the other spaces of "spiritual-optical illusion" of the "deep deep well" that resembles "the depth of pre-history" (156). In the final section of *Rod*, readers are reminded that women are the holders of "the bundle of myrrh" and, thus, should not be secluded from the process of change (172). Women hold myrrh, which is both precious and bitter in taste, simultaneously secular and sacred. Myrrh was used in ancient Egypt as incense, it was as precious as gold, and it acquired a connotation of sacredness because it was brought as a gift for Jesus by the magi. The fact that the poem ends with the Lady holding myrrh tells the

¹⁸ This idea of the circulation and never-ending life is evident in H.D.'s early work, and it is related to women as their lives are perceived to be cyclical.

¹⁹ Again, the motif of uncovering the hair is a reminder of H.D.'s repeated notion of uncovered beauty that I have discussed in the previous chapter.

reader something about the journey itself. The journey starts with the horrid scenes of death and war in London and Luxor and ends in the utopian place where Mary exists as the saviour of humanity.

VI. On Ladies and Lady Worship: The Alchemy of Heroism

In this section, I argue that *Trilogy* can be read as a political statement about gender injustices. What marks a development in the poet's utopian thinking in this period of her work is the presentation of different platforms for women's voices to be heard. In *Sea Garden*, for example, the speaker – whose gender is unclear in many poems – experiences an identity crisis when being smothered by patriarchal protection. Likewise, the gender issues that the collection raises provoke the speaker's defensive tone, which pleads for the freedom of women from male authority. The collection, in general, is more concerned with the conflict between gendered identities than with the outbreak of the First World War. In contrast to her approach in her early poetry, H.D.'s *Trilogy* marks a distinctive change in the way women are presented. In the process of remaking myths, H.D. does not only recreate her heroes – whom she borrows from Biblical, historical, and mythical sources – but also assigns them the task of saving the world. Unlike H.D.'s earlier work, the women in *Trilogy* are miracle-makers and supernatural characters who are fully capable of bringing about significant changes. The voice of the female "I" is the strongest voice that echoes through the different characters that appear and reappear across the three parts of *Trilogy*; whether it is the Priestess of Python, Mary Magdalene, or the Lady of the book they are all identified with one woman, arguably the poet herself. In this section, I will weave my argument about H.D.'s heroism with threads from the Carlylean concept of the hero to show that H.D. departs from the predominant nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century conceptions of the hero who is

presented as a masculine saviour. My study is the first to link Carlyle's concept of the hero to H.D.'s, and I argue that she revises the then dominant late-nineteenth century notion of the poet as a male hero.

I assert that H.D.'s utopian heroes have qualities similar to those that define the hero according to Carlyle. In his book, *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), Carlyle selects twelve men to represent the ultimate hero character from the dawn of history to his present. Those men, whom Carlyle chose according to their great influence on humanity, were prophets, poets, kings, men of letters and priests (from Odeon to Napoleon). On describing the qualities of his ideal hero, Carlyle notes: "At all moments the Flame-image glares in upon him; undeniable, there, there!—I wish you to take this as my primary definition of a Great Man. A little man may have this, it is competent to all men that God has made: but a Great Man cannot be without it" (55). According to Carlyle, the "Flame-image" is a prerequisite to identifying the hero that the nation should follow as its leader. Without this "flame," a man cannot be influential enough to lead. In describing the qualities of the hero as a prophet, Carlyle attributes this "flame" to the hero's ability to change, motivate, and inspire the nation. The leader who is recognised as the bearer of the flame becomes capable of leading the nation and passes the flame on to "the rest of men" who would be waiting "like fuel, and then they too would flame" (90).

I have examined H.D.'s use of the flame metaphor and found that it is similar to Carlyle's, albeit with some contrasts. Aphrodite is called upon to become the leader of the nation and "re-light the flame" (*TR*, 74, 75). In light of Carlyle's definition of the hero as the carrier of the flame, I argue that H.D. uses the flame as a symbol of the authority that she entrusts to the ancient goddess to lead the nation. Similar to the Carlylean hero, Aphrodite is assigned to "change, motivate, and inspire" the nation after her descent (Carlyle 90), and she too would "pass . . . the flame" to the modern world that lacks it (*TR* 4). In describing the

agonies of war in London, the speaker wonders “what saved us?” immediately after stating that they “passed the flame” (4). Passing the flame from one person to another or one generation to the next suggests continuity in terms of hope and resilience. However, the poem suggests a dual effect of the flame image because the phrase “we passed the flame” can be interpreted in terms of enduring the agonies of the war (4). The flame, in this case, represents more generally the hardships that the city undergoes during the war as well as, literally, the actual flames of bombardment. Nevertheless, both interpretations highlight an immortality of the soul because when the body frets, the soul “pass[es]” into another world – or another shape when incarnated – similar to the phoenix that is reborn from the ashes of its flame. More important, flame imagery highlights the sense in which the poem can be seen as a palimpsest whose layers are the poet’s re-writing of the historical and Biblical stories to make her own new version. In order to make her own religion, H.D. uses the flame to “melt down and integrate” “what the old-church found” with “what the new-church spat upon” (63). This fusion is carried on to “re-invoke, re-create” what the poet calls “a suppressed desire to be a Prophetess” and what Freud interprets as her “hidden desire to ‘found a new religion’” (*TF* 39; *TR* 63). H.D., as a prophet, foresees a possible existence of a new religion and announces its arrival, bringing it into being through the poem. In this sense, the idea of a “new religion” necessitates the assignment of a prophet figure to spread its principles, and Mary is chosen for this purpose. I argue that the faith in the powers of Mary is a faith in the possible existence of a new religion, since they both originate from the flame:

the jet of flame
under, till marah-mar
are melted, fuse and join
and change and alter,

mer, mere, mère, mater, Maia, Mary,
Star of the Sea (*TR* 71)

Like the new religion, the “new” Mary is created from the alchemical fusion of two contrasting elements, “nature’s womb and tomb,” represented by the destructive and nurturing duality of the sea (Gelpi 328). Mary Ann Gillies and Aurelea Denise Mahood argue that the new Mary is sacred because she epitomises the “maternal force essential to human creation,” as she brings about life and rebirth (176). Furthermore, Mary stands for everything that represents fertility, healing, and empowerment; she is the sea, the mother, she is the result of “the mother-father” fusion that bestows on her an “unsatisfied duality / which you can not satisfy” (*TR* 72).²⁰ The identity of Mary is not clear, as “there are Marys a-plenty” (135). I think that this verse suggests that there are a number of women named Mary in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that H.D.’s Mary combines many of their traits, but also that the name can be taken to represent powerful – or potentially powerful – women more generally. Throughout the poem, H.D. constantly changes the qualities that she assigns to Mary’s character to stress her universality. At times, the character states clearly that she’s “Mary . . . of Magdala” (*TR* 135), at others she is described in a similar manner to Mary the mother of Jesus, and she is also Venus, the “Star of the Sea” (*TR* 71, 148).²¹ The capital “s” in the previous line also suggests that Mary is the princess of Python, Eve with her knowledge, and the Lady with the Book.

H.D.’s use of italics in the poem is the key to understanding the link between the characters and the lyric “I.” H.D. uses italics when she quotes Biblical texts, when she

²⁰ The idea of the mother is identified with the image of the sea as being the nurturer and the destroyer of life. This theme is described in detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

²¹ Barnstone adds that the name of Mary could also refer to the Mary of “Bethany . . . the sister of Martha and Lazarus,” but I do not think that these are as significant to *Trilogy* as the other two name indications. Moreover, Barnstone explains the etymology of the name Mary and its origins (Readers’ Notes 196).

delivers poetic discourses in the third person, and when she reveals the identities of her characters. For example, when Kaspar introduces himself, his name is italicised:

he said *I am Kaspar*,

.....

I am Kaspar, he said when a slender girl

holding a jar, asked deferentially

.....

I am Kaspar; if her head were veiled . . . (*Rod* 163)

Even when the poet does not use “he said” in reference to the character, “*I am Kaspar*” is still italicised to clearly differentiate his speech from the speaker’s. In contrast to Kaspar, when Mary introduces herself her statement is not italicised:

I am Mary, she said, of a tower-town,

.....

I am Mary, she said, of Magdala,

I am Mary, a great tower;

through my will and my power,

Mary shall be myrrh (135)

Although the phrase “she said” suggests that the speaker and Mary are two different characters, I argue that they are one and I base this argument on H.D.’s use of italicisation. Whenever the poet wants to differentiate her “I” from the character she is presenting, she

italicises the latter and vice versa. When the poet identifies the lyric “I” with Mary, she does not use italics. With this device, the poet does not only present herself as the creator of Mary, but also identifies the creator’s voice with the voice of this strong character. In a counter argument, Friedman compares Kaspar’s inability to differentiate “whether it was a sort of spiritual-optical illusion,” or “whether he looked down” to “the depth of pre-history” to H.D.’s Corfu vision (*Psyche Reborn* 78). H.D. was not sure whether she saw a dream, a reality, or supernormal consciousness, nonetheless; that vision had a prophetic impact on her later writings. Similarly, Friedman states, Kaspar’s vision “transferred the arrogant ‘merchant’ into the Mage worthy to bring an alabaster jar of myrrh to the Christ child” (78).

I think that both opinions, Friedman’s and mine, are suggestive of the different interpretations that *Trilogy* may carry. Having said that, it is crucial, for my analysis, to acknowledge that the voice of the poetic speaker may be registered as that of androgyny. In this case, male and female elements are seen at play to formulate the union of the hero/heroine (Kaspar and Mary). There is another voice that encompasses male powers and announces himself as “Amen,” the father of fathers and the strongest male authority in the poem:

here am I, Amen-Ra,
Amen, Aries, the Ram;

 here am I, Amen-Ra whispers,
Amen, Aries, the Ram, (*TR* 30)

There is an interplay between the strong lyrical “I” of the speaker and that of Lord Amen that is inferred through the italicised the word “Amen” only in the eighth and fourteenth lines,

whereas the words “Aries” and “the Ram” are not italicised. Based on my previous proposal that italicisation is meant for the reader to identify the main character from the other names in the storyline, I argue that these lines reveal the interplay of two characters: that of Lord Amen on one hand, and that of the poetic speaker/creator who externalises herself in Amen’s character, on the other. This externalisation creates a unity between the poet and Amen that entitles the poetic speaker to claim the authority that Amen used to possess. Moreover, this unity between the poet and Lord Amen is introduced in *Walls* to foreshadow the fusion that the poet describes in *Angels* between the mother and the father.²²

There is another reason for creating unity between the poet and Amen. When describing his character, H.D. identifies the Egyptian god with Jesus: “*Amen* is our Christos” (27). Barnstone argues that “as in many prayers to Christ that end forever and ever, Amen, she [H.D.] puns on amen (from Hebrew amen), by capitalising amen, thereby turning a Christian prayer into the regeneration of Egyptian Amon-ra” (Readers’ Notes 180). I think that this is significant because the unity between Amen and the Christ creates a unified Egyptian myth and Christian prayer, which in turn forms a universal religion. Bearing in mind that Amen is the god of the cosmos and Christ is the saviour of the world, when H.D. compares herself directly to Amen and indirectly to Christ, she is presenting herself as a dual hero/heroine in *Trilogy*. The poetic persona who stands for H.D. in the poem becomes the saviour of the nation and the creator of order and this, I argue, reflects her vision of a utopian universe.

In contrast to Barnstone’s sourcing of Amen as an Egyptian and/or a Hebrew god, Matte Robinson states that “Amen should not be equated with the Egyptian god (though there

²² The poet’s embodiment of the father-mother relationship is evident in the majority of H.D.’s work. In my previous chapter, I state that *Sea Garden* marks H.D.’s attempt to blend with her own mother and brother. *Trilogy*; however, is more concerned with the collective voice of the nation than with expressing personal feelings. The poet in *Trilogy* is more interested in describing events in relation to the characters of her own creation than in narrating her connection to nature that dominates her earlier poetry. Unlike H.D.’s early poetry, there is no sense of bitterness in the fusion between the male and the female, but rather contentment as women dominate over men in the possession of authority.

are connections), nor should he be conceived as a merely abstract kabbalistic principle” (56). For an occult seeker, Amen represents the Master-figure that was incarnated in the age of Aries (before the Piscean age) and whose name is reserved throughout ages to be re-incarnated again with the new age. In *Majic Ring*, H.D. explains the reason she used the name “Amen:” “I wanted a name that would fulfil – that would fit many incarnations” (33). Matte Robinson further explains that “H.D. genuinely adds” the idea that this incarnation may dispense in goddesses who are also “preserved for recovery at a later aeon” (43). In this way, the new Master being a goddess emphasises the coming of the Aquarian age of womanly power.

For H.D., order is established when unity is achieved, whether in religion, culture, or even in the fight between the sexes over power. To create this unity, H.D. relies also on phonetic similarities – like Mary and myrrh, and Amen-Ra being a mixture of the Egyptian Amon-Ra, and the zodiac sign. When the “I” of the poet resembles Mary and Christ, on one hand, and Amen, on the other, it suggests that she surpasses time and place to become immortal. This idea of the poet as a universal hero that belongs to all generations echoes Carlyle’s description of the poet as a hero:

The Poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age as the oldest may produce; — and will produce, always when Nature pleases. Let Nature send a Hero-soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into a Poet. (93)

H.D.’s lyric voice in *Trilogy* becomes that of the hero “whom all ages possess” and her call for the new-born doctrine that links the old teachings of the church with the new resembles Carlyle’s description of the hero as a timeless figure. H.D.’s statement “I am Mary” and “I

am Amen” suggests that the prophet is born in all ages that combine “the newest” with “the oldest” (Carlyle 93). Moreover, calling Mary/the poet “Star of the Sea, / Mother” suggests the link between Mary and Mother Nature, represented by the sea: an idea that is similar to Carlyle’s notion of the hero being chosen by Nature (*TR* 71). Similar to the Carlylean vision of heroism, the utopian *Trilogy* heralds not individualism, but community where “we know each other / by secret symbols” (*TR* 20) and we become “nameless initiates, / born of one Mother, / companions / of the flame” (*TR* 20). In her textual analysis of the deictic terms in *Trilogy*, Marina Sbisa notes that there is a shift of focus from “dialogue, intersubjective confrontation, and reference to a community” in the first and second parts of the poem. This shift is “to forms in which the authorial subject firmly expresses what she wants to express, either directly or through the staging of subordinated enunciators” (97). Sbisa attributes this change through the parts – from the collective plural of the “we” to the singular first-person deixis “I” – to the poet’s attempt to legitimise her authoritative voice, “her poetic competence with regard to the sacred, and her mastery of words” (97). I add that the poet chooses the character of Mary to speak through, because H.D. identifies with Mary as a strong, unapologetic woman leader who is capable of saving the world and leading the nation.

Both Carlyle and H.D. believe that poets and prophets are “fundamentally . . . the same; that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls ‘the open secret’” (Carlyle 95). Carlyle defines the open secret as the “divine mystery, which lies everywhere in all Beings” and H.D.’s indelible presence in “I know, I feel / the meaning that words hide” echoes the same idea (Carlyle 95; *TR* 53). She claims the prophecy that “*before Abraham was I am*” and her ability to “correlate faith with faith” and “recover the secret of Isis” (*TR* 54). The stress on the idea of openness via the use of walls and doors and the belief that beauty should not be covered, the stress on the mystery of the

soul are all examples of H.D.'s belief in Carlyle's description of the divine mystery that is "open to all, seen by almost none!" (Carlyle 95).

Despite the similarities that I have pointed out above, H.D. presents a major departure from Carlyle's representation of the hero as a masculine figure. When Carlyle presents his heroes as Odin, the Prophet Muhammad, Shakespeare, Dante, Luther, Johnson, Rousseau, Burns, Cromwell, and Napoleon, H.D. depicts hers as the princess of the Python, Mary, the Lady of the book and the poet herself. Thais Morgan argues that Carlyle defies the Victorian notion that links women to spiritual guidance and men to action, by assigning the role of spiritual enlightenment to his male heroes (113). For Carlyle, women have no role whatsoever in the process of making history, for this is the responsibility of heroes only, who are conditioned to be the embodiment of "masculinity, morality, and leadership" (113). Contrary to this notion of the hero as a male figure, H.D. presents her women as the leaders of the nation and from this I argue that *Trilogy* offers a study of women's fight for power and their efforts to regain what they have historically lost. As *Trilogy* progresses, the female hero becomes more powerful in each part leading to the ultimate hero represented by Mary with whom the poet identifies. H.D. does not ban male heroes from making an appearance in the poem, but they are only there to encounter loss of control or power or to merge with the female hero, who is more powerful. In *Walls*, the princess of Python is summoned to help free the imprisoned crowd, and she creates a "shivering" effect of horror similar to that of "Old Samuel." In *Angels*, Aphrodite needs the speaker to call for her to light the flame and defend herself against accusations. Similarly, the Lady, who is stronger than those prior to her, needs to be created by the speaker. The Lady casts seven angels out of the seven demons, she is capable of bringing life back to the dead tree and she brings the Book of Life to humanity. Mary, on the other hand, overpowers Kaspar over the handle of the door, is

careless and indifferent in the presence of the male merchandise and, most crucially, proves Kaspar to be lacking divine knowledge compared to hers.

H.D. stresses the importance of the hero. Keith Lowe comments that during the Second World War and its aftermath, Britain – among all European countries – was the country that most needed to rebuild the confidence of its people and distract them from the hardships of war. The British were not only “obliged to nurse their own damaged infrastructure and virtually bankrupt economy, but they were also expected to shoulder the burden of policing the rest of Europe, as well as their collapsing empire in Africa and the Far East” (61). As a result, and to “make sense of what they had just experienced,” the British needed new types of stories that were mainly concerned with “extreme heroism” (Lowe 61-62). In these stories, the heroes’ virtues are unquestioned due to their patriotic actions and determination to achieve their goals (62).

While most of the heroes presented in these stories are men, H.D. felt the need to represent an unquestioned female right to participate in Britain’s recovery. She saw the “flame” in those Carlyle dismissed from his selection of heroes: women. Unlike Carlyle, who detached himself from his heroes, H.D. created and recreated them and identified herself with her characters. Moreover, while Carlyle’s vision of the hero was purely masculine, H.D.’s did not exclude male heroes from her presentation, but merged their powers those of their female counterparts.

The poet remains the ultimate hero who tries to create utopia by changing the disordered and dishevelled world:

forever; remember, O Sword,
you are the younger brother, the latter-born,
your Triumph, however exultant,

must one day be over,
in the beginning
was the Word. (*TR* 17)

The power of the sword – that stands for violence and war – is challenged by that of the word. H.D. believes that writing can change people's perception of war. *Trilogy* offers hope and redemption: stories of villains turning into angels, flowering of dead trees, and immortal souls, all giving cosmic harmony to the universe. Readers are presented with the idea of the sword being the younger brother of the word, so the mistakes that the former makes can be forgiven. This gives a sense of belonging or relations of opposites in the universe. *Trilogy* serves as a microcosmic guide to show how the world should be living in harmony and justice and with the knowledge that “seeking what we once knew, / we know ultimately we will find” (*TR* 117). H.D.'s attempt to change perceptions calls to mind Bauman's metaphor of the gardener as the modern utopian; both envision how to make an impact on the garden/life to change it to the way it should be rather than contemplating the way that it is.²³

In conclusion, H.D. relies on anaphora as her method of creating harmony in the poem itself. Anaphora is attached to the description of the Lady and Mary as a way to communicate a ballad-like effect that hails that hero:

Our Lady of the Goldfinch,

Our Lady of the Candelabra,

²³ In relation to this idea of harmonising the world, I notice that H.D. dedicated the first part of *Trilogy* to her lover, Bryher, and the second part she intended to dedicate it to Edith Sitwell, but changed her mind to include Osbert Sitwell instead. I think that since both persons were homosexuals, like the poet herself, *Trilogy* might be seen as a political statement in defence of homosexuality. The emphasis laid throughout the poem on the notion that “we will go to heaven, haven,” the poet's attempt to create her own religion of the old and the new, and the phrase that “we are all born of the same mother” are evidence for my argument. The idea of queer utopia in relation to sexual politics is a recognised concept that has been discussed recently (see Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* [2009]), but not in relation to H.D. A future project might explore this idea of the queer utopianism and the part played by the aforementioned figures.

Our Lady of the Pomegranate,
 Our Lady of the Chair;
 I am Mary, she said, of a tower-town,

 I am Mary, she said, of Magdala,
 I am Mary, a great tower;

 I am Mary--O, there are Marys a-plenty (*TR* 93, 135).

The repetition of the phrases “our Lady” and “I am Mary” lays emphasis on both women, the Lady and Mary, and creates a sonic effect that catches the ear and remains in the memory. Repetition also creates a cyclical effect that echoes the cyclical interpretation of women’s movement which I discussed in the previous chapter. Harmony is further expressed through the analogy that H.D. makes between the poet as the hero with Amen and with Christ. The utopia that she creates is that of order and peace attained through society’s empowerment of its women to assume roles of leadership. H.D. changes the prevailing notion of the hero as male and identifies herself with her heroines as the ultimate heroine and prophetess. In this chapter, I have offered a new perspective on H.D. through which her work can be read as a rewriting of Carlyle’s conception of who can be a poet, while agreeing that a poet can be a “hero.” H.D.’s female characters share universal qualities that qualify them to rule anywhere and everywhere. I have also shown how the fear of war could not hinder the poet’s creativity and her constant efforts to envision a better environment to live in. On the contrary, fear, as Bauman suggests, was her motivating force in seeking utopia and dreaming of better futures. After fear comes hope, and this is evident in *Trilogy*’s journey from the hellish London of ruins to the peaceful heaven of Mary and the world of angels. Hope is also conveyed through

the significant shift from the burnt tree of life to a flowering tree; through the Book of Life with the new pages that suggest new beginnings; and through London being visited by angels and saviours to reconstruct it.

Her idea of a possible new religion is also significant in suggesting a new kind of hope through which women's abilities are perceived differently. My reading of Foucault's concept of heterotopia helps to demonstrate how H.D. builds her utopian world through the collective power of women. They are drawn from different distances and spaces in time and brought to create a new world within the real world of the poet.

After the Second World War H.D. and Bryher no longer lived together, but they remained in contact. She moved to Switzerland and started writing her second epic *Helen in Egypt*, which is discussed in the next chapter. Although the poem was not written under the direct influence of war, like *Trilogy*, its main theme carries H.D.'s recurrent concerns about the establishment of women's identities in male-dominated worlds of war and death.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE UTOPIAN RECONCILIATION OF OPPOSITES IN *HELEN IN EGYPT*

This chapter examines the final stage of H.D.'s career which includes her writing after the Second World War. *Helen in Egypt* (1961) is representative of this period as H.D.'s last poem, published in the year of her death.¹ Critics have approached this long poem from different perspectives, focusing mainly on gender, language, and psychoanalysis.² Friedman connects *Helen in Egypt* with Freudian theories, arguing that though H.D. was very much influenced by Freud, she managed to create her own "women's mythology."³ In *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis, & Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems* (1994), Susan Edmunds uses Eisenstein's account of intellectual cinema and Freud's theories on hysteria to explore how Helen attempts to recover a lost tradition of familial peace by reconstructing ancient myths.⁴ Later in the chapter, I will explore this motif of reconstruction as part of the palimpsestic attempt to recover the effects of war and as a modernist "restorative urge" as Leo Mellor calls it, to transform the decayed or the damaged (136).

In this chapter, I will offer a new reading of *Helen in Egypt* where I examine Blochian concepts of hope and time to establish how H.D.'s work exemplifies his philosophical ideas on utopia. I argue that *Helen in Egypt* marks a change in the presentation of the female in the

¹ The version I consult is H.D. *Helen in Egypt*. New York: New Direction, 1974. Print. Subsequent references to this poem are to this version and incorporated within the text as *HE*, followed by the page number(s), as follows (*HE* pp.).

² On psychoanalysis and revisionist mythology in *Helen in Egypt* consult Rachel Connor, *H.D. and the Image* (2004), 70-90. On the connection between modern wars, virtual realities, and language see Morris 56-88. On romance, cinema, and family relations consult Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985), 76-83.

³ See Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 55-60 on psychoanalysis; and "Creating a Women's Mythology" 163-197 on mythmaking and gender.

⁴ The argument on *Helen in Egypt* is on pp. 95- 148.

writer's vision of utopia, along with a development in her literary style during this period. I contend that this work constructs a utopian vision because on a textual level, Helen eventually achieves life in a utopian world, where she is presented as free from the guilt characteristic of earlier patriarchal representations, and also where she can enjoy her union with her loving mortal husband. This is a realisation of H.D.'s vision of utopia the liberation of women who change the world of wars into that of peace. Accordingly, I see H.D.'s utopia to be embodied in the palimpsest, which creates a new space for re-writing myth without eradicating the original version.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the historical background of the poem and highlights the role that translation plays in reshaping the myth. I explore how H.D. departs from the classics in her presentation of Helen as the victim rather than the cause of the Trojan War. Section two offers a new reading of H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* in the light of Bloch's theory of hope, which he relates to the myth of Helen. His *Principle of Hope* underlies my argument concerning the employment of myth in creating utopia. However, while Bloch relates the theory of hope to the ancient myth of Helen, I apply it to H.D.'s contemporary reality, where the fictional heroine stands for the poet's utopian vision of women. Bloch's theory of utopia is further discussed in the second part of section two, which examines the fusion of the mythical with the real. I apply Bloch's fusion of the past, present, and future to H.D.'s vision of "timeless-time" (HE 14). I also discuss how the events in the poem resonate with the poet's reality through the interplay of the mythical and modern Helens, who experience ancient and contemporary wars respectively. This is important because it shows how H.D. never ceased to think of the reality that she lived in as dystopian – even twenty years after the end of the Second World War. Section three presents a discussion of H.D.'s palimpsestic methodology as a poetic strategy for restaging the historical events in

Helen in Egypt. The palimpsestic method emphasises the changeability of events. H.D.'s version adds dynamism to the Helen myth.

Both Bloch and H.D. choose the story of Helen of Troy to demonstrate a utopian vision of the future, but why Helen? In her autobiography, H.D. mentions the name of Helen while expressing her overwhelming happiness that she “had reached the high-water mark of achievement” as a female poet who had been accepted by Freud as his analysand (*TF* 64). She reports that she is “at home” when she recalls Poe’s poem “Helen” and artistically associates it with her mother’s name, which was also Helen. For H.D., Helen is also the other name of Greece: “I was physically in Greece, in Hellas (Helen),” so by coming home she does not mean America or the UK, but she “[has] come home to the glory that was Greece” (*TF* 65). Since Helen is another name for Greece, situating the character of Helen in Egypt unites the two worlds of Egypt and Greece. As I have discussed in the previous chapter on *Trilogy*, H.D. effaces borderlines between places to create a unity of place. This unity creates a new universal space that counteracts the divisive effect of war. More significantly, *Trilogy*’s thematic universality highlights female heroism in patriarchal societies. Bloch also uses the myth of Helen to universalise the principle of hope as part of his utopian thinking. He believes that “Helen [is seen] in every woman” because “from the utopian standpoint,” her story represents the archetype of beauty that departs from “the archaic” (160). Bloch examines the myth of Helen in terms of “glancing forwards not backwards” towards Menelaus’s wishful dreams to win her back. Bloch shares with H.D. her identification of Helen with the modern woman, for he believes that “[t]he myth itself is one of the most true-to-life, even most important, which is to be found on the utopia-reality road” (184). Bloch observes that the behaviours of the characters in the story of Helen, their desire, and their wishful thinking can also be found in real life events. Importantly, while both writers approach the myth of Helen to promote utopian thinking, they focus on different characters.

Bloch portrays the reaction of Menelaus towards the two Helens: the real and the imaginary; H.D. concentrates on Helen's perception of her own double identities. H.D.'s woman-centred treatment of Helen is examined to support the argument of this thesis that the poet provides feminist versions of utopia that envision women's empowerment in male-dominated societies.

H.D.'s renewed conception of utopia does not depart from her earlier works in the focus on women's struggles to create a better world as an alternative to their war-shattered realities. *Helen in Egypt* also carries on H.D.'s interest in powerful mythical women and their representation as omnipotent and all-knowing. However, the presentation of utopia in *Helen in Egypt* offers a more complex study of the female psyche, by portraying Helen's painful flashbacks of her past. Psyche here means the "occult," or the voice of intuition.⁵ Throughout the poem, the "masculine" force is represented as the "iron-ring" that causes calamities and chaos in the mortal world (*HE* 55). This power is challenged by the more potent feminine divinity of immortality that "re-assembled [the world] in different order" (*HE* 289). In this sense, divinity is presented as the maternal, rather than the paternal, and it spreads love that teaches Achilles to forget the "lure of war" and follow "the laws and the arts of peace" (*HE* 286). The inharmonious relationship between the sexes that the readers witness in the earlier works is still evident in *Helen in Egypt*, but the ending is more harmonious as it promises a heterosexual romantic relationship between Helen and Achilles. Significantly, H.D. presents the transformation of Helen's thoughts and actions, from being a woman susceptible to feelings of guilt and shame – she perceives herself as the cause of the war – to a strong heroine who changes her destiny and reconciles different identities, including the sinner and the saint. In this chapter, I view *Helen in Egypt* as a utopian text through analysing it in the

⁵ Originally, Psyche is a character in the Greek and Roman myths which Freud employed later keeping the name capitalised. Susan Stanford Friedman borrows this concept from Freud because she attaches it to psychoanalytical studies. She argues that *Helen in Egypt* "epitomizes the impact of Freud's ideas on [H.D.'s] development of aesthetic form" (*Psyche Reborn* 59). The discussion of Freudian theories in relation to the poem can be found in *Psyche Reborn* 62-103.

light of Blochean utopian modes, such as daydreaming, hope, the “not-yet” element, and time-fusion.

I. A Note on the Text

Helen in Egypt is the longest of H.D.’s poems and the most complex in terms of its language and presentation of the psychological struggle of the heroine, conveyed through her multiple voices. The poem is divided into three parts: “Pallinode,” “Leuké,” and “Eidolon,” with each part set in a different location as events oscillate between Egypt and Troy. However, the places are sometimes portrayed as uncertain and surreal because the focus is laid on the theme of a woman’s quest. This strategy makes it difficult to determine where the events occur: whether they happen in Helen’s real world or whether they are part of her daydreaming (Quinn 133). Each of the three parts of the poem is further divided into books – seven in the first two parts and six in “Eidolon,” – and each book is composed of eight sections, except “Eidolon,” which has an added six-stanza subsection also entitled “Eidolon.” The sections are marked by italicized captions of prose followed by three-line stanzas of free verse.⁶ According to Quinn, these captions serve as dramatic directions and monologues that channel two voices: “the dramatic monologue by Helen of Troy” and the voice of H.D., the commentator, who “anticipates the reader’s questions and directs his responses” (Quinn 131).

The poem is considered an epic because of its length of 4047 lines, spread over 304 pages, and because of its discussion of classic deities and supernatural heroes. Helen is the main heroine of the story, who is depicted as having an identity crisis, triggered by her meetings with Achilles, her lover, who H.D. substitutes for Paris in the original story. H.D.’s

⁶ After the completion of *Helen in Egypt*, Norman Holmes Pearson advised H.D. to add prose captions as introductory lines to the lyrics. She replied to him that the prose incorporation was due to an “autonomous aesthetic decision” (Barbour 470). Scholars have different opinions on the function of these captions. Some, like Susan Barbour, stress their focus on orality and hybrid textuality. Others, such as Friedman and DuPlessis, emphasise the use of ideological binaries in them in order to decode gender problems.

original contribution to the plot is her replacement of Paris with Achilles. Helen's effect on Achilles is crucial to the poem's meaning and part of its utopian vision: Helen's encounter with Achilles is innovative in endowing Helen with healing powers, which turn Achilles's enmity into love. Helen's powers also humanise the immortal Achilles with whom she has a son. My discussion of this poem will prove the existing analysis on the underlying relationship between form and content. I argue that the poem's combination of prose and poetry echoes the social conflict between men and women and the multiple voices of Helen's identity.

"Pallinode," meaning an "apology" or "defence," refers to H.D.'s translation of Stesichorus's version of the myth that rehabilitates Helen's reputation against the accusations of infidelity. According to Stesichorus, "*Helen was never in Troy. She had been transposed or translated from Greece into Egypt. Helen of Troy was a phantom, substituted for the real Helen, by jealous deities. The Greeks and the Trojans alike fought for an illusion*" (HE 2). The epic opens with Helen's monologue, which describes the ancient gods and her father Zeus. She is reflecting upon her past at the temple of Amen in Egypt, and the reader is informed that she has never left Egypt and never been to Troy. Helen's meditation brings up events from her past, the reality of which she is uncertain (like the Trojan War) and tragedies whose reasons she is trying to fathom (her nephew's sacrifice and her sister's death). She is blamed for the war, her niece Iphigenia has been abducted and sacrificed by the Greeks, and Helen's sister Clytemnestra (Iphigenia's mother) has been killed by her son to avenge Clytemnestra's infidelity. Helen tries to decode the symbols at the temple, which H.D. refers to as the "timeless-time or hieroglyph[s]" (HE 13). The hieroglyph is a recurrent symbol throughout the epic, and it refers to the knowledge that Helen aspires to gain through her psyche or intuition (13-17, 20, 23, 82, 105, 107, 166, 261, 263, 271, 297).

Helen hopes that this new transcendental knowledge, also called the “Absolute” in the following parts, could answer her questions about the past, help her overcome the guilt related to the war, and encourage her to look forward to the future. Helen wishes to counter the traditional “Hellenic thought” of the “war-Lords of Greece,” because “[*they*] *did not understand what she herself can only dimly apprehend. She may perceive the truth, but how explain it?*” (37, 19, 5). She refers to the war as the plan made by the gods to reunite her with Achilles. In this part, Helen meditates in solitude, except in one section when she spiritually encounters Achilles, who shares the Greeks’ creed of “cursing Helen through eternity” (5). This part stresses the necessity of love to bring an end to war and creation instead of destruction. The part also includes the changeability of events between the temporal and the eternal, which are replayed through Helen’s daydreaming (32).

The second part, “Leuké,” is named after an island in the Black Sea. It is the place where “*Achilles is said to have married Helen who bore him a son*” (109). Here the perspective shifts from the heroine’s daydreaming to the real world outside the temple. However, there is no dividing line between the real and the unreal in the representation of events. The commentator states that the meeting of Achilles and Helen is postponed until Helen knows “*who caused the war*” (111). Helen reviews those who are blamed for the war, like herself, Paris, and Achilles’s mother Thetis. Eris, the jealous goddess whom Achilles’s mother did not invite to her wedding party, is most often blamed for causing the war to punish Thetis. The scene then changes to the conversation between Helen and Paris, who confirms that he had witnessed her death but believes in her resurrection and pleads for her love. However, she rejects his advances, and he fails to cast Achilles from Helen’s mind. The most important part in “Leuké” is Helen’s encounter with Theseus – the god who stole Helen from Sparta when she was a child and with whom she had fallen in love as a father figure. It is not clear whether this meeting takes place in Athens or in Leuké. Helen suddenly appears

in front of Theseus to seek his advice about the uncertainty of her life. He gives her a spiritual insight into what seems to be the philosophy of the epic: the generation of love from war and of life from death. He also confirms that only transcendental experience will make her strong. It is noticeable that the tension in Helen's life starts when she decides to leave her solitude in Egypt and interact with her reality. However, according to Quinn "seeing Achilles as her divine lover helps her to come to peace with two great anxieties: her involvement with war and her relationship with Paris" (Quinn 140). She now believes that death and war or life and love or any "*two opposites (the slayer and the slain) merge into one, and that One, the Absolute*" (HE 178).⁷ There is also a stress on the harmony between the temporal and the eternal that is related to those antitheses.

"Eidolon," the third part of the epic, refers to the apparition of Achilles's mother, Thetis, the goddess of sea and love. Vincent Quinn argues that "Thetis symbolizes the theme of the poem – the metamorphosis resulting from submitting oneself unreservedly to love" (140). She brings Helen back to Egypt according to Achilles's wish and reunites the two lovers. She combines the earthly and spiritual forces of gods and humans by changing the course of events and fusing "the dart of Love" with "the dart of Death" (HE 303). For Thetis, "the secret is no secret," because she knows the Absolute (HE 303). Upon Helen's request and after giving up on being her lover, Paris agrees to become Achilles's son if Helen becomes his mother. At this point, Helen receives the knowledge of the Hieroglyph, or the "timeless-time," and this helps her experience "the fullness of her new state of consciousness" (Quinn 141). This knowledge will enable Helen to assume various female roles (Hecuba and Jocasta on the one hand, and Thetis and Isis on the other). This ability, in turn, as Susan Edmunds argues and as I further explain in the section on palimpsest, creates a

⁷ In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. defines the term "*Absolute*" as "the sea of super-human perfection" (128). I think the poet might have borrowed the term from Plato's *The Republic* (*The Collected Dialogues* 721, 762).

balance between “the oedipal family and the divine Egyptian family, upon whose” the reconstruction of the story will rely (107).

Now Helen thinks of Troy again and sees “the past / in the new light of a new day” (HE 226). Her new knowledge helps her understand that the war was a drama written by the god Apollo to make poets write about it. In this sense, the Trojan War is seen as an illusion because it never happened. Helen is situated on the shore in Egypt and she finally encounters the long-awaited Achilles. Achilles blames Helen for the war that had separated him from his mother and tries to strangle her. Helen, in turn, cries for Thetis to save her. Thetis rescues Helen and the former reveals to Achilles that she had planned the war to reunite the two lovers. There is no closure to the epic as the theme of “the infinite loneliness / when one is never alone” recurs even after the reunion of the two lovers (HE 304).

Helen in Egypt has received much attention from critics for being “the major work of a modernist poet at the height of her powers” (Barbour 466). H.D.’s *Helen in Egypt* is considered a milestone in the poet’s career and she referred to it as her “Cantos” (Friedman, “Creating a Women’s Mythology” 164).⁸ Moreover, in a special interview about H.D. eight years after her death, Norman Holmes Pearson compared *Helen in Egypt* to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and W.B. Yeats’s poetry (Debo, *The American H.D.* x). The reason for the poem’s critical acclaim is “because it not only presses the Modernist epic in a new direction but also anticipates feminist modes of critique that emerged nearly 20 years after its publication” (Clippinger 289). Barbara Guest, Susan Howe, Rosemarie Waldrop, and Rachel Blau Duplessis, among other contemporary poets, have followed H.D.’s attempt to “[bridge]

⁸ This epithet was an allusion to Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and it was first suggested by Pearson in a letter dated 12 February 1953 in response to H.D.’s earlier letter revealing her excitement when writing *Helen in Egypt*. After reading the first eight sections of her draft, Pearson shared her exhilaration, as he “regarded *Helen in Egypt* as the culmination of her career, comparable in scope and excellence to the poetic achievement of any of her contemporaries” (Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 121). For the letters exchanged between Pearson and H.D. on this topic, consult Hollenberg, *Between History and Poetry* 136, 161, 178.

modern and postmodern poetry, practice and theory” (289).⁹ H.D.’s feminisation of the epic, to use Friedman’s phrase, promotes a modernist revision of Helen’s story as a counter to the traditional patriarchal presentation of the myth.¹⁰ Lord Byron, for example, calls Helen the “Greek Eve” for being the symbol of a destructive beauty who brings about the “fall” of Troy’s towers (14, 72). She is identified as the early source of evil, often associated with Pandora and Aphrodite for alluring and enslaving men through her sexual beauty. In Euripides’s plays, Helen is the devious “evil wife,” and in Homer’s *Iliad* she calls herself “bitch-faced” and “evil-plotting” (qtd. in Thornton 84). Other texts present Helen as “the memorial of disasters,” “the greatest evil,” and the “source of myriad calamities,” condemning her character for throwing men into a world of chaos (Thornton 83, 84). Although there are different stories of Helen’s origin, all seem to attribute her existence to violence: they either relate her character to divine power (in some versions, she is half-mortal and half-divine, the daughter of Zeus and Leda; in others, she is the daughter of the sea with its dual nature of nurturing and destroying), or they represent her birth as shameful, because she is conceived of Zeus’s rape of Nemesis, the goddess of revenge (84). Thus, according to various classical sources, Helen’s sexual appeal is associated with violence, chaos, and manipulation.¹¹ Craig S. Barnes argues that the Greek social norms that allow Menelaus to have other mistresses besides his wife, Helen, are the same ones that condemn his wife’s “decision to move around from man to man,” because her infidelity “would destabilise the whole of the patriarchal system” (83). Barnes adds that the main theme of the Greek myth is

⁹ Commenting on H.D.’s influence on mid-twentieth century poets, Friedman and DuPlessis argue that “while the academic community moved H.D. to the periphery of modernism, some of the innovative poets of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, and Allen Ginsberg, continued to read and deeply admire H.D.’s work” (xiii). Jo Gill offers an examination of H.D.’s thematic influence on other poets, such as Marianne Moore, Anne Sexton, Diane di Prima, Carol Anne Duffy, Adrienne Rich, and Denise Levertov (78-89). Furthermore, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar notice H.D.’s direct influence on Monique Wittig, who “makes the circle an emblem of her Amazon utopia” (*The Madwoman in the Attic* 217). In the Conclusion, I draw attention to the importance of the theme of circularity and regeneration in H.D.’s work.

¹⁰ I discuss Friedman’s phrase in more detail in my examination of the structure of *Helen* below.

¹¹ For a detailed account of the misogynistic Western view on the myth of Helen, consult Robert Emmet Meagher’s *Helen: Myth, Legend, and the Culture of Misogyny* (1995).

not only about Helen's beauty or her husband's grief over losing her, but it is equally concerned with "controlling" Helen. This is because "some scholars think" that Helen was a "priestess of the moon goddess, Menelaos's [*sic*] connection to the divine. As such, she was the basis of his claim to the throne" (83-84).

Against this backdrop of misogynistic representations of Helen, H.D. provides a revision of the story where the heroine is absolved of blame. H.D. uses two methods to make her version reasonable: the palimpsest, which I will discuss later in the chapter, and the manipulation of different source texts.¹² Quinn considers *Helen in Egypt* the continuation of extended themes of alienation and identity in two poems of the *Sea Garden* collection: "Egypt" and "Helen" (46). In a comment on the source of H.D.'s myth, Eileen Gregory notes that "*Helen in Egypt* takes not primarily Homer but several Euripidean texts as an allusive field, not only the *Helen* but almost all the other plays treating the matter of Troy – *Andromache*, *Trojan Women*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Hecuba*, *Electra* and *Orestes*" ("H.D. and Translation" 147). The "allusive field," that Gregory refers to, helps create a utopian image of the innocent Helen as opposed to the way in which Homer and many other writers present her as a destructive sexual object. In my opinion, the reason that H.D. alludes to a variety of Euripidean texts is to draw on different versions of the myth to create different roles for her new heroine to play. It is not a simple task to change the historical perception of Helen's character from the femme fatale who caused the outbreak of the Trojan War to the contemplative figure of the peace-maker who saves the world in time of crisis. Because the "[feminist] influence on translation and translation studies is most readily visible in the revision of traditional rhetoric," H.D. chose the story of Helen as a mode of "rewriting in the feminine" to recover the "writing 'lost' in patriarchy" (Wallmach 14-15; Karpinski 398). In this respect, I see H.D. as the harbinger of "feminist translation," which

¹² I employ the term "manipulation" as it is commonly used in theories on manipulation and translation in translation studies. See Aiga Dukāte, *Translation, Manipulation, and Interpreting* (2009).

appeared in 1970s as part of the women's movement that took the responsibility of "sanitizing" sexist . . . representations" of gendered writings (398). H.D. politicises *Helen in Egypt*, re-constructing the heroine's image to demonstrate that women should be presented as contemplative subjects in their own rights and associated with reason and intuition rather than as mere sexual bodies.

Being a female writer affects H.D.'s practice as a translator. Steven G. Yao believes that H.D.'s translation "not merely [serves] as a procedural artefact of her interest in Classics . . . but rather as a critically important compositional process and conceptual strategy in her effort to establish herself as a woman poet within the evolving masculinist literary culture of Modernism" (98-99). Yao's statement reveals H.D.'s consciousness of gender when she examines source texts. Her reaction is evident in the ways in which she alters the historical discourses of her heroines. Moreover, H.D.'s work links those angry or aggrieved female figures – like Aphrodite, Ishtar, Isis, Helen, and Mary – with the mission and the struggles of modern women writers so that the author can "establish herself" within the "masculinist literary culture" (Yao 98). A case in point is *Helen in Egypt*, which exposes different phases of womanhood, both biological and cultural. Helen is the archetypal mother, lover, daughter, wife, and sister. She experiences the turmoil of failures and achievements and the pain of struggle to create inner peace despite the external war that she faces. Helen is the fictional portrayal of a woman who oscillates between weakness and strength, submissiveness and immodesty, and her decision to change or accept her reality. In H.D.'s version, Helen starts her journey as a passive woman who is in desperate need of directions and answers, burdened with the inherited guilt heaped upon her by the male gods, and feeling uncertain of her destiny. With the progress of events, she learns that she is part of a drama written by Thetis and Apollo and she is empowered to change the other characters. Helen changes Achilles's hatred into love, convinces Paris to become her son, and, most importantly, although she

cannot change her destiny, she perceives the idea of fate differently (*HE* 222-23). She becomes indifferent to what the gods have written for her because even after her death, she is certain of the fulfilment of her wishes. H.D. seems to redefine the concept of destiny here by suggesting that biology – being male or female – does not have to mean a certain destiny.

H.D. identifies Helen with women's quests to find their lost identities in a patrilineal world. As Yeo observes, the journey that Helen experiences aims "to reconfigure the largely masculine classical tradition to meet and authorize her particular needs" (Yao 101). Those needs show that although "[t]he War is over and done / for us [women] in the precinct; / the war she endured was different" (H.D. *HE* 99). Notice that the word "war" in the third line is not capitalised, because it does not refer to the Trojan War, but perhaps to a different struggle, a personal fight that Helen experiences as a woman in search of her identity within the masculine doctrines of her time. This tension between the experience of war for others and for Helen is reflected through Achilles's attempt to strangle her upon their first encounter. He blames her for the outbreak of War and determines to kill her in vengeance for his dead warriors. Helen cries out to Thetis, Achilles's mother, to save her life. Thetis rescues her, but "*Helen seems concerned . . . with the problem of why he had . . . attacked her. There seems this latent hostility; with her love, there is fear, yet there is strength, too, and defiance not only of Achilles, but of the whole powerful war-faction*" (*HE* 18). What is stressed here is not only the physical conflict between Achilles and Helen, but her resilient attitude, despite her fear "while his fingers tightened their grip" around her neck (*HE* 40). H.D.'s utopian vision is emphasised through the triumph of Helen's love over Achilles's hatred and his "*whole powerful war-faction.*" Achilles's life-long experience in battlefields where "there was never a braver, / a better among the heroes" (*HE* 287) has not prepared him not to be "afraid of the dead," while Helen has the power to defeat death and summon the gods.

Another important concern of *Helen in Egypt*, apart from the rehabilitation of Helen from misogynistic accounts of her, is to establish women as an antidote to wars. Women are portrayed as counteracting their bleak surroundings by spreading love and compassion. Gender awareness is again stressed through the unity of leadership. When Achilles and Paris fight side by side, they bring about “death of brother by brother, / blight, ruin, plague, famine” (217), whereas when Thetis saves Helen, they both harmonise “the infinite rhythm of the heart and of heaven” and replace “the dart of Death” with “the dart of Love” (303). Friedman suggests that the structure of the poem serves this ongoing conflict between the sexes. She argues that *Helen in Egypt* “feminise[s] the epic” through the interplay between the prose captions and the verses. H.D. transcends the epic and lyric genres by creating a tension between the lyric (usually related to the female) and the epic narrative that is affiliated with the male (“Gender and Genre Anxiety” 204). H.D. modifies the conventional form of the male epic to challenge gender distinctions by combining it with the lyric, which, “as a discourse of subjectivity, . . . is said to ‘resist’ narrative” (204). Friedman comments that “where Pound’s myth-making called for ‘a rectification’ of the language, H.D.’s focused on the ‘rectification’ of the traditions themselves” (“Creating a Women’s Mythology” 185). By changing the literary form of the epic through the inclusion of lyrical verses, H.D. challenges gender codes as a means for, as Friedman observes, the “restoration of a [utopian] world view buried in and degraded by patriarchal tradition” (“Creating a Women’s Mythology” 166).

Robert O’Brien Hokanson provides a different opinion on the poem’s form when he argues that “*Helen in Egypt* refuses to promulgate a definitive ideological statement of its own – either in its form or content” (334). H.D. combines different types of writing throughout the poem, making it difficult to categorise or associate it with any specific mode or ethos. While in the poem Helen sets out to make sense of the War, her identity, and the

world she lives in, definite answers are not always given to her. Moreover, in some places, the poem neither revises, nor replaces male ideology, but rather presents the problem of gender conflicts as they are. Hokanson observes:

In the end most of all, the content and form of H.D.'s epic come together in an escape from final definition. Through its portrayal of Helen and its formal indeterminacy, *Helen in Egypt* demonstrates its sensitivity to the problematic aspects of narrative and its commitment to modernist self-reflexiveness and detachment. Faced with the tangle of morals and motives inherent in narrative, the poem walks a line between literary forms. It plays off lyric against epic and poetry against prose while maintaining an awareness of its own status as a fictional construct. The poem thus distances itself from both thematic and formal definition or conclusion, suspending its affirmations and assertions in a larger context of questioning and qualification. (Hokanson 344)

The "modernist" element that H.D. includes by relocating Helen from Troy to Egypt reveals that the "distancing" effect comes for the reader from the unexpected quality of this relocation. This technique allows H.D. to query other accepted ideas about Helen, such as her culpability for the war, and to build on that a revision of women's role in war more generally. In some places in the epic, the war is caused by the interference of gods, or by the opposition of natural forces, such as death and life. The war is given multiple ontological statuses of dream, fiction, and reality. Sometimes it happens, at other times it does not. The oscillation of events between the real and the unreal promotes the idea that the war's significance (and perhaps its history, too) is open to interpretation and revision. H.D. counteracts the masculine urge to create war with its "unreality" (*HE* 30). In this respect, I disagree with Hokanson's claim that the poem resists a firm ideological position because the poem clearly states that the

“war-Lords of Greece” are Achilles, Paris, and Theseus (*HE* 20, 110). This is a declaration that “‘war’ was not Helen’s, but her Lord Agamemnon and Achilles have the iron-ring of the war or the death-cult in common” (43). H.D. masculinises war and death on the one hand, and, on the other hand, presents women, who bring love and immortality, as the antidote to the dystopia of war.

II. *Helen in Egypt* and Ernst Bloch’s Theories of Utopia

Frustration upon Achieving the Utopian Dream

Ernst Bloch’s ideas of utopia, and in particular his treatment of Helen’s character in *The Principle of Hope*, will serve as my theoretical background for providing a new reading of H.D.’s *Helen in Egypt* as a utopian text. In the first volume of his three-volume study, Bloch comments on the importance of the archetype for understanding utopian dreams. He also discusses hope as part of utopian thinking and the association between wish-fulfilment and disappointment. In the first part of the section, I set up the Blochian elements of utopia that will form the philosophical approach of this chapter: hope, frustration upon the realisation of the ‘not-yet,’ and the fusion of time. I study the first two elements in relation to H.D.’s *Helen in Egypt* to examine her recreation of the myth within the framework of utopia. In the second part of this section, I will explore forward dreaming (dreaming of the future) that transcends time and space in relation to *Helen in Egypt*’s focus on the hieroglyph or “timeless-time” (*HE* 14).

Before discussing Bloch’s theory, I will draw attention to the parallels between the lives and ideas of H.D. and Bloch. Although there is no written biographical evidence that the two writers met or read each other’s works, I propose that H.D. might have read Bloch’s book on utopia. I base my opinion on the following facts: although translated into English in 1986, Bloch’s three volumes of *The Principle of Hope* were originally published in German

in the years 1954, 1955, and 1959 respectively (Plaice et al. xxv).¹³ This means that the books were published in Germany in H.D.'s lifetime. The year 1955 is of a specific importance (when two of Bloch's volumes were already out) because H.D. was in Zurich to voice-record the majority of *Helen in Egypt* (Debo, *The American H.D.* 55). Significantly, H.D. was fluent in German, which is evident from her reading of Freud's work in the original in 1909 (McCabe 133). Whether H.D. read Bloch's book on utopia or not, both writers allude to the myth of Helen in relation to hope during the 1950s, after living through the same horrors of the two world wars.¹⁴ These facts bring the two writers into close quarters to be explored in terms of utopian studies, especially as they both draw on Euripides's version of Helen, not Homer's.¹⁵ It is significant to note that both writers share ideas on utopia because, as Alice Reeve-Tucker and Nathan Waddell observe, "the twentieth century was a century of utopianism," whose beliefs were shared by many writers. Tucker and Waddell offer three reasons for their statement. First, the twentieth century marked the appearance of the most prominent utopian and dystopian literary works, which added new perspectives to the genre, such as H.G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986). Second, the century paved the way for new utopian theories, which were reformulated and developed later in the century and extended into the twenty-first century by theorists such as Ruth Levitas, Fredric Jameson, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Darko Suvin, among others. Third, writers were forced to incorporate "different textual strategies" as

¹³ The volumes were written between 1938-47.

¹⁴ Both writers also suffered from Nazi persecution. Bloch escaped from Europe in 1937, and H.D., with the help of Freud and Bryher, arranged the transfer of her Jewish friends to Vienna (Plaice et al. xxi; J. Robinson 303).

¹⁵ In order not to divert from the main topic of this chapter, I tackle both writers in terms of their treatment of the character of Helen. However, I have also noticed, beyond the scope of this work, the role of Bloch and H.D. as expatriates and how that might affect their vision of the utopian. Interestingly, both H.D. and Bloch visited America, Germany, Vienna, and Switzerland but they did not cross paths. H.D. went back to the U.S. twice; once to visit her grandchildren in 1956, and another time to receive a prize in 1960. Bloch fled the Nazi regime in 1938 to the U.S., and returned to settle in Germany in 1949 (Debo, *The American H.D.* 107; *TF* 3, 13; Plaice et al. xxi).

responses to dictatorships and the tyranny of Nazism, the Soviet Union's Communism, and Maoism (Reeve-Tucker and Waddell 5).

I suggest that there is a fourth factor that is crucial to the development of utopian thinking in the twentieth century: the emergence of feminism.¹⁶ Darby Lewes states that in the late nineteenth century, writings that belong to a “dialectical and ambiguous genre of lost outsiders in disorienting worlds mirrored women's own situation” (13), because women “were legally without status, politically voiceless and domestically subordinated” (Johns, “Feminism” 175). The rise of feminism in the twentieth century made a great impact on reshaping the utopian writings of that period insofar as it empowered women writers to demand equality and express their political, social, and economic opinions to a larger audience. The utopian genre was appropriated by women writers of that period because as Anne Mellor suggests, “those seeking a viable model of a non-sexist society must . . . look to the future; their model must be constructed first as a utopia” (243). I will discuss this key utopian element of “looking to the future,” which in H.D.'s version of *Helen* has its equivalent in the protagonist's dreaming and which can be linked to Bloch's principle of hope.

The Principle of Hope expounds the idea that “the Not-Yet-Conscious in man belongs completely to the Not-Yet-Become, Not-Yet-Brought-Out, [or] Manifested-Out in the world” (13). Bloch believes that abstract utopias or the “Not-Yet-Conscious” could be “Manifested-Out in the world” as concrete realities. What he calls “concrete utopias” challenge the pre-existing ideas of utopia as being a state of the ideal (197). Concrete utopias refer to “a growing together of tendencies and latencies within the relationship between material reality and human intervention which are always full with potential but which cannot be realised

¹⁶ I provide a different view from Sally Kitch's belief that utopian thinking restricts feminist writing: “without utopianism feminism can more readily recognize contingent truths, inevitable conflicts, and complex motivations and loyalties, as it addresses the problems it can name. Realistic feminist thought can embrace the serendipity and vagaries of human life, identity, relationships, and institutions” (12).

because the material conditions for their realisation is not yet complete” (P. Thompson). The “Not-Yet-Conscious” can be “contained in past, present and future” worlds, meaning that the utopian moment can be realised by not only forward dreaming, but also thinking of the past and the present (Plaice et al. xxviii). Accordingly, Bloch describes the past as the “most immediate nearness” to both the present and the future, and thus the “Not-Yet” concept constantly recasts the past as the not-yet-finished (12). Hence, revisiting the past, “to be discovered and inherited by each succeeding age,” through the analysis of myths, folklores, and archetypes feeds into utopian thinking (Plaice et al. xxi). Since myths represent “pre-figurative images of the next stage of society,” it is essential to incorporate the material of the past in H.D.’s revisionary poetry and in what Bloch terms “re-function” (xxi, xxvii). Bloch identifies two elements of utopian thinking: hope and the fusion of different time periods. I will discuss each of these alongside H.D.’s presentation of Helen. The element of hope is the driving force of the “Not-Yet” because it represents an ontological projection towards the future. Since hope is an abstract term, it pertains to a wide range of texts and disciplines that all share the “hope” element. Those texts belong to various disciplines, such as geography, technology, arts, social systems, media, historical books, films, psychology, philosophy, science, medicine, and architecture. Bloch believes that the dissatisfaction with one’s own society or surroundings in the present and one’s aspirations towards the future provoke the desire to daydream. From this point of view, “utopia is . . . seen as a matter of attitude” (Vieira 6). Bloch stresses the importance of utopia as a dream of a better alternative to reality. Cosmic reformulation and change is constant and as people live in their present, “what has been” will never be enough. The possibility of realising utopian visions in the future lies in the driving force of the not-yet (Vieira 23).

Ironically, when this wish for the utopian is achieved, frustration occurs. To illustrate this theory, Bloch chooses the myth of the double Helen to explore daydreaming as a mode of

the utopian. He describes the difference between the Trojan and the Egyptian Helens from the perspective of Menelaus. The story, as Euripides presents it, entails Menelaus's return to Egypt after the ten-year war in Troy. He manages to bring back with him Helen, his wife, who has eloped with Paris. Upon his arrival on the shore near his castle, Menelaus is welcomed by the faithful Helen, his wife who has never left Egypt. To his astonishment, there are two versions of Helen: one behind him on the ship and one in front of him. He finds out that the Helen on the ship is a mirage which disappears into thin air and the real Helen is the one on the shore. Bloch describes how Menelaus perceives the difference between the treacherous and the faithful wife as an oscillation between dream and reality:

Quite apart from the cocottish glamour of the Trojan Helen, the Egyptian one does not have the utopian glamour of the Trojan one in her favour, she did not go along with the longing of the voyage, the adventures of the campaign, the wishful image of conquest; consequently the Egyptian *reality as such appears to be of lesser dimensions*. At least *the destruction of the imagination by realization (even if by its own realization which fulfils it)* creates deficiency symptoms in the latter case. (Bloch 186, emphasis added)

Bloch attributes Menelaus's reaction of despair and disappointment – after he sees in the Egyptian Helen the incarnation of his ten-year dream – to the “destruction of [his] imagination” by the fulfilment of his own wishes. He screams at the real Helen: “I trust the weight of sufferings endured more than I trust you!” (qtd. in Bloch 185). When the “not-yet” is reached, Menelaus becomes dissatisfied with his previous utopian thinking of the Egyptian Helen and wants “the utopian glamour of the Trojan one” instead (Bloch 186). Bloch uses this example to prove that dreaming or hoping is a constant ‘not-yet’ process that is perceived

to be unreachable; hence its accomplishment comes with frustration because “reality as such appears to be of lesser dimensions” (186).

I offer a utopian reading of H.D.’s *Helen in Egypt* in the light of Bloch’s principle of hope. In Bloch’s version, Menelaus’s disappointment is resulted from the achievement of his long-awaited dream represented by the “real” Helen. Similarly, in H.D.’s poem, Helen’s frustration comes from the realisation that her fate *can* be changed. According to Bloch’s theories on utopia, realising the “not-yet” creates a sense of disappointment that the dream can be fulfilled. Helen’s dreaming and solitude are her means to heal her soul from the troubled memories of the past. She hopes that her detachment from the world will help her find an explanation for the events of the War, her abduction, her niece’s rape and her sister’s murder. Most importantly, Helen’s dreaming in the temple of Amen is full of utopian hope that she can convince others that she was not the cause of the War. However, Helen becomes frustrated upon her realisation that all the agonies and miseries she has been through have been written by the gods Apollo and Thetis. Helen recognises that her feeling of guilt is useless because her life is not real; it is a drama of predetermined and fictional misfortunes:

So it was nothing, nothing at all,
the loss, the gain; it was nothing,
the victory, the shouting

and Hector slain; it was nothing,
the days of waiting were over;
perhaps his death was bitter, (*HE* 255)

Helen repeats “it was nothing” three times to emphasise that all her painful moments have been in vain. The internal rhyme, gain/slain, also emphasises loss. The verses reflect a melancholic tone that echoes Menelaus’s disappointment at recognising the real Helen. Similarly, Helen achieves her long-awaited dream to be vindicated of the accusation of causing the war – because the war has not been real. However, her reaction diminishes the happiness she should feel as “the days of waiting were over” (*HE* 255). Similar to Menelaus’s perception of the Trojan Helen in Bloch’s example, Helen’s suffering is more meaningful to her than the reality she discovers. Accordingly, Helen’s achievement of the utopian dream is frustrating to her because “those instants which satisfy the most intense wishes are always . . . in their very essence disappointing” (Jameson 137).

Another example of disappointment that taints the realisation of the utopian dream is Helen’s overcoming of Achilles’s powers by making him mortal. She laments the situation of women who aim for victory over their circumstances:

How could any woman hope
to achieve Victory
. . . name them,
.....

did any of them matter?
did they count at all,
or were they mere members of a chorus

in a drama that had but one other player?
in any case, the struggle was over,

as I stood at the stair-head

there was no problem any more,

I did not care who won, who lost,

Achilles was dead; (*HE* 241)

While Bloch concentrates on the presentation of the male character in the Trojan myth (Menelaus), H.D. shifts the focus to Helen's reaction to the events. H.D.'s version of the epic empowers women through several plot elements: Thetis saves Helen from her son and writes the story of the war; Helen changes Achilles's destiny and Paris's role from lover to son; Aphrodite takes Helen away from her solitude in Egypt to Leuké to meet her lover. Helen's name is associated with other female gods, like "*Isis (Aphrodite, Thetis)*" whom H.D. identifies as "*the Egyptian name of the Greek Aphrodite*" (*HE* 30, 15). This universal name of H.D.'s heroines represents the hieroglyph or the "*life-symbol*" in the poem, which empowers women over the masculine "death-symbol" of war (13, 14). This stress on women's supremacy in the epic is dissonant with Helen's rhetoric contemplation, "did any of them matter? / did they count at all," especially after she realises the achievement of her dream of becoming a powerful woman through transforming Achilles into a mortal (*HE* 241). Moreover, Helen's scene of standing (noted above) on the top of the stairs is significant for revealing her new status. Earlier in the poem, Paris watches Helen "limp and turn / at the stair-head and half turn back" (123). I propose that here Helen's limping and turning back suggests her insecure social position as a female being gazed at (or looked after) by the male hero. Paris's watching over Helen's steps undermines her attempt to climb the stairs. In his *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger describes how culture shapes gender politics through gazing:

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relations of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (47)

Women's visions of themselves mirror how men see them. Women are exploited under the male gaze because they are looked at as objects through this prism of patriarchal control. Berger's analysis is applicable to Paris's steady look at Helen as she is climbing the stairs, especially when the speaker refers to Helen's decision to "half turn back" (*HE* 123). Helen's half turning back and half climbing suggests a woman's struggle between conformity to patriarchal norms, on the one hand, and her indifference towards the male gaze on the other. At the end of the epic, after Helen's spiritual and intellectual journey, the death of Achilles marks the death of patriarchal protection which prevents Helen from climbing and standing "at the stair-head" (*HE* 241).

The image of climbing the stairs, I would argue, can also be interpreted in the light of Bloch's theory of hope as the ontological force of utopian thinking. Standing at the stair-head signifies women's dream to free themselves from the shackles of patriarchy, so to speak, and assume leadership roles. Helen's utopian dream that the struggle would be over also suggests a new hierarchical position of women, which Helen has achieved after the death of Achilles.¹⁷ Although "there was no problem any more" for Helen, "who won, who lost" the war is less important than whether she "wins" – that is, achieves her dream. Her triumphant position at

¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that the reference to the stair-head links well to H.D.'s vision of "writing on the wall" that she experienced in Corfu in 1920. In this vision, H.D. saw a lady whom she calls the "Princess" or "the Pharaoh's daughter" coming down the stairs (*TF* 61). Also, in my chapter on *Trilogy*, the lady with the book of life appeared "actually, at the turn of the stairs" (*TR* 25: 14). This link between H.D.'s works and her visions highlight the universal qualities of her heroines. I again highlight the significance of this commonality in the conclusion of the thesis.

the top of the stairs suggests that she has won; however, she is frustrated upon the realisation of her utopian dream.

Fredric Jameson offers a reply to Bloch's question of whether hope can ever be thwarted:

hope is *always* thwarted, the future is always something *other* than what we sought to find there, something ontologically excessive and necessarily unexpected. Thus the negative is reabsorbed back into the positive, not as facile consolation, but as kind of *via crucis* [Stations of the Cross] of hope itself, an enlargement of our anticipations to include and find satisfaction in their own negations as well. (137, emphasis in original)

Utopia is something that is always the object of pursuit, the object of desire. Hope, as part of utopian thinking, exists in the future of the "Not-Yet." Accordingly, while Bloch stresses the disappointment of the fulfilment of hope, Jameson mentions that hope is always thwarted because the reality is always different from what has been hoped. When Menelaus sees his long-awaited virtuous Helen in Egypt, he refuses to believe that his dream has been fulfilled: "I trust the weight of sufferings endured more than I trust you!" (qtd. in Bloch 185). The pain he has experienced feels more real than the pleasure of reunion.

Quinn refers to another frustration that the reader of *Helen in Egypt* experiences. He argues that the text has multidimensional effects on different kinds of readers:

Even a transcendentalist may be unable to appreciate the difference between timeless-time, ecstasy, semi-trance, dream, waking dream, and daydream. Similarly, a Hellenist who welcomes a variation upon the usual account of the Trojan War may be

disappointed by the implication that the entire conflict was a fantasy planned to accomplish the union of two phantom lovers. (145)

Quinn criticises the “airy mystery” that H.D. creates between the reader and the text because “transcendental intuitions are ineffable” (132). Therefore, H.D.’s “efforts to describe them overtax the strength of words which makes it a difficult task for the reader to understand” (132). However, the effect that the epic creates is what a reader interested in transcendentalism would hope for; “to stir transcendental intuitions” (133). In order to achieve this effect, the poem offers an open ending and many of its three-hundred direct questions are left unanswered. This tantalising effect makes it “difficult to respond to H.D.’s allusions because the territory to which they refer is uncertain” (Quinn 133). Questions like: “how are Helen in Egypt / and Helen upon the ramparts, / together yet separate?” are left for readers to apprehend, although “*They did not understand what she herself can only dimly apprehend. She may perceive the truth, but how explain it?*” (HE 5). Although readers might hope that the poem will have a transcendental effect, “unfortunately, . . . [they are] apt to be confused by her [H.D.’s] effort to adumbrate the sublime. The absence of fixed narrative and dramatic details may simply be baffling” (Quinn 133). In other words, Quinn notices that readers who are interested in transcendentalism may be disappointed upon the fulfilment of their expectations of the text of *Helen in Egypt* when they read it: “*One greater than Helen must answer, though perhaps we do not wholly understand the significance of the Message*” (HE 303).

“Timeless-Time:” Helen Breaks the Circle of Patriarchy

The second element of utopia that Bloch discusses is the fusion of time. Because utopia is the “Not-Yet,” it emphasises the imperfection of the here and now. Time is seen through the

utopian lens as “contained in past, present and future” (Plaice et al. xxviii). In this sense, utopia is beyond the linear progress of time, and can occur anytime and anywhere. Bloch describes utopia as a convergence between “What Has Been” and “What Has Become” (8). This merger of events that happens outside of time leads to the further overlap between the real and the unreal, when daydreams manifest themselves as real experiences. To exemplify this theory, I draw a parallel between Bloch’s fusion of time and H.D.’s reference to “timeless-time” (*HE* 13, 14). In the beginning of the epic, Helen is presented in Amen’s temple as a perplexed heroine who tries to understand the reasons behind the occurrence of painful events from her past. Because of her confusion, she is unable to solve the mystery of the hieroglyph, which seems to exist in a different time than hers. H.D.’s description of events “that had not happened / had happened long ago” echoes Bloch’s account of utopia as “What Has Been” and “What Has Become” (*HE* 55; Bloch 8). Both representations fuse history to describe the utopian by blurring the boundaries between times and undermining the grammatical meanings of tenses, as Bloch writes:

The rigid divisions between future and past thus themselves collapse, unbecome *future becomes visible in the past*, avenged and inherited, mediated and fulfilled past in the future. *Past that is grasped in isolation* and clung to in this way is a mere commodity category. . . . But true action in the present itself occurs solely in the totality of this process which *is unclosed both backwards and forwards*, materialistic dialectics becomes the instrument to control this process, *the instrument of the mediated*, controlled Novum. (8-9, emphasis added)

In order to fulfil her utopian dream in the future, Helen has to reflect on the events in her past “*in isolation*.” She mediates her reunion with Achilles and envisions their future meeting that

happens in the past. However, I think that H.D.'s adaptation of the "unclosed . . . backwards and forwards" narrative does not aim merely to enable the romance between the characters, but to envision a utopian world of changing centres of authority. Helen's empowerment, which is affirmed at the end of the epic (future), is mediated as a state of mind during her isolation in Egypt at the very beginning of the poem (past) (*HE* 2). In her vision, Helen relates the fusion of time to the need to change heroic aspects: "*Time values have altered, present is past, past is future. The whole heroic sequence is over, forgotten, re-lived, forgotten again*" (*HE* 57). The word "*sequence*" is symbolic of hierarchy, perhaps the patriarchal version of heroism, because it may suggest repetition or the cyclical effect of heroic action, which is repeated throughout history. A sequence of events could also refer to the projection forward and may not always lead back to the start. The juxtaposition of cyclicity and linearity references questions the theory of gendered time through the fusion of progression and repetition.¹⁸ Notably the tense changes between the past and the present: "*is over, forgotten, re-lived, forgotten again*" and that implies the repetition and translates the struggle between the utopian dream and reality. This is the passive voice of the present simple tense – it somehow presents the event in its completion: it is forgotten, but it also can refer to the process of forgetting. Importantly, the words "*re-lived*" and "*again*" suggest repetitiveness. Accordingly, the use of the present seems to be more like the historical present tense, used instead of the past. So it seems to signify both a state of forgottenness and a habitual action of forgetting. I draw an emphatic analogy between the two sentences: "*The whole heroic sequence is over*" and "The War is over and done / for us [women] in the precinct; / the war she endured was different" (*HE* 99). Heroism, seen as a male ideology, is compared to war, as if the experience of war is created by the call for heroic actions. In all of H.D.'s works, women are portrayed fighting wars and reshaping new meanings of heroism in

¹⁸ I discuss this theory in relation to H.D.'s earlier poetry in Chapter Two.

various historical circumstances. However, the tension created between an event being “over” and “forgotten” and then being “re-lived” again indicates a continuous process of opposition to the inherited concept of heroism that causes war. It also suggests a cycle of both violence and the opposition to violence, because heroism demands that once war has terminated, another war will happen:¹⁹

The Command or the adamant rule of the inner circle of the warrior caste was “bequest from the past.” Equally, each group or circle had its responsibility to the future. Had Achilles broken the connection of “the present to aeons to come”? Was this the punishment for his “game of prophecy”? Has he “lost in a game of chance”? (HE 61)

War is presented as a circle of commands that is maintained through patriarchy: “The Command was bequest from the past, / from father to son,” (HE 61). The hierarchy of warriors is brought from the “past to the present” and then carried on into the future (61). Achilles proves to be different from the other fighters, because he is the only one who breaks this circle when he shows remorse: “*Now Achilles himself admits defeat!*” (HE 59). Could this be the reason why Helen falls in love with him? The epic does not answer this question, but it shows his limited powers compared to Helen’s. Achilles is punished because he tries to master prophesying, a privilege that only Helen is entitled to, as she possesses “intuitive or emotional knowledge” (HE 13). More importantly, from the very start of the poem, Helen is empowered with the knowledge of the hieroglyph, and later on she learns the “*difficult task of translating a symbol in time, into timeless-time*” (HE 13). This means that Helen has the ability to create or envision utopia because she masters the fusion of time (timeless-time),

¹⁹ I say “continuous” because “the war is over” could also mean over and over which means repeated.

which is an element of the utopian – according to Blochian theory. Her vision of the unity of all time periods counters the linear model of male time that ensures that war is endlessly repeated in past, present and future, without escape from the pattern. The reference to the circle of patriarchy might also refer to women's oppression that is practiced through the ages from the past to the present, because of Helen's statement that "the Command was my father, my brother, / my lover, my God;" (61). Helen breaks through the circle of male authority and immediately after mentioning that the old heroism is over, H.D. concludes that Helen wins over Achilles in the present because now "She is stronger than Fate" (HE 61).

Helen's decision to transform her destiny from a woman subject to patriarchal control to someone who sets an example of resilience for other women echoes Bloch's assertion that in creating utopia "we freely determine ourselves in and through our actions and so are not merely . . . deterministic products of our past" (Gunn 94-95). The intense struggle between male and female dominion is conveyed through the motif of the veil – in this example, the symbol of authority – because of which Helen breaks the spell of patriarchy and "enter[s] into a circle / of new enchantment;" (HE 139). The "will of Helena" makes the veil fly with "no pulse in the air," and she manages "to enchant" Achilles and "draw him nearer" (HE 139). The veil has various connotations. It is always associated with the dream through the recurrent question: "*the dream? The veil?*" (HE 45, 85, 88, 107). The veil marks the transition between reality and dream overtime. Whenever Helen encounters a change in the course of her journey, the same question is asked again: was it "the dream? The veil?" The word "dream" precedes the word "veil" to stress the heroine's dreamlike state of mind – she is both the dreamer and the dream, the one who envisions utopia and who constitutes utopia itself. However, the only time that the question is reversed is when the emphasis is laid on a man's attempt to control Helen: "*Again the veil motif, Paris calls it a scarf. Achilles had used both words for the 'transparent folds . . . in the beginning.' The veil? the dream?*" (138). "*The*

veil” here comes first in the question and is emphasised as being a tool for both male lovers to direct Helen, especially Paris who wants to convince her that Achilles “*was never your lover*” (138).

Commenting on the importance of the veil image in H.D.’s poetry, Graham refers to both its “literal and metaphorical” implications, related to the “ways in which heteropatriarchy silences female desire” (“*Hymen and Trilogy*” 115). Both Achilles and Paris try to “impersonate” Helen with their views; however, she decides to “walk / barefoot toward the door;” to discover “*all claim to the world and her past affiliations with it*” (HE 146). Helen’s decision to tear her sandal and walk barefoot signifies H.D.’s recurrent theme of uncovering women’s beauty (123).²⁰ More importantly, since the sandal functions as a recognition mark, by which Paris and other male characters “*would know . . . her [Helen] anywhere,*” taking the sandal off means liberation from male gaze and from male possession.

The only time in the poem when Helen declares that “there is no veil between us” is when she hears the whispers of the female chorus in the temple of Egypt (2). Significantly, H.D.’s use of the “fluttering veil” oscillates between significations of male and female hegemony, and is occasionally related to violent images in scenes depicting sexual violence. For example, whenever there is a mention of the “veil,” it is accompanied by phallic images such as “pillars” (2, 46); “stick” (16); “his fingers closed on my throat,” “holocaust” (38); “war” (43, 44); “burnt out,” “anger” (45); “darts,” “death,” “light-house” (46); “sacrifice” (72); “stem,” (85); “murder” (88); “memory of battle” (110); “portal” (125); “fallen pilaster” (123, 127); and “prow” (145). I argue that H.D.’s representation of the veil motif challenges gender roles in its uncovering of the connection between war and violence on one hand, and the phallic image that stands for masculinity on the other. My argument is supported by three examples. First, most of the words that are related to the veil can be interpreted as phallic

²⁰ Especially in her early work, H.D. calls for uncovering the beauty of women’s bodies and not protecting them, because this leads to their suffocation.

images, such as portal, pilaster and the like.²¹ Second, H.D. confines the creation of war to male characters and presents wars as masculine productions (20, 43, 10). Third, given that the veil represents concealment or protection – and is portrayed as having extraordinary powers – Helen’s control of the force of the veil reverses the common image of phallic penetration: Achilles cannot comprehend “*The veil? the dream?*” and Helen can (138).

The scene of Helen’s climbing the stairs could be interpreted as a revision of a Freudian image. Freud argues that “steep inclines, ladders and stairs, and going up or down them, are symbolic representations of the sexual act” (115). Thinking of H.D. in relation to Freud’s theories is not inappropriate given she was his analysand for three years and regarded him as a father-figure. However, H.D. reshaped many Freudian ideas in her poetry, especially those related to gender, to suit her feminist agenda. Friedman points out that

H.D.’s mythological masks do not reflect her envy of the phallic self so much as they reflect the paucity of tradition. As analysand, she had to revise tradition to become a hero on her own terms. In a twentieth-century context, she would do as Perseus once did: slay the dragon within herself, the monster spawned by the fragmented modern world. (*Psyche Reborn* 25)

While Friedman adopts a biographical approach to H.D.’s work, I lay more emphasis on its textual tendencies, paying attention to the poet’s utopian vision of the world as presented through the eyes of her characters. Acknowledging the opinions of both Freud and Friedman, I propose that the message that H.D. delivers through Helen’s climbing of the stairs barefoot and then standing at its head is that women should not be ashamed or afraid of their sexuality.

²¹ My analogy between the vertical and the phallic is supported by the Freudian theory of “iconicity,” or the “similarity of shape or form” that lists words like “upright poles, sticks, knives . . . [as] phallic symbols,” because of their resemblance to an erected male genital organ (Petocz 51). Sidney J. Baker also adds other words, such as “pole,” “tale,” and “wedge” to the list of symbols (177). I notice that ontology or verticality is what makes these shapes resemble erection of the male genital, and hence their classification in one group.

H.D.'s choice of the myth of Helen as the subject of her poem serves to rehabilitate the heroine against the historical accusations of her sexuality as a source of shame and a cause of men's downfall. In contrast to earlier male-authored representations of the character, H.D.'s Helen breaks her sandal – as a sign of liberation – and walks barefoot up the stairs (which may also represent the phallic because going upwards reflects a vertical move) despite Paris's fixed gaze on her. Secondly, Helen is the only character in the poem who could go up and down the stairs – a sign of her sexual freedom in Freudian terms – whereas, when “Paris crawled to the marble ledge, / . . . the stairs were blasted away” (*HE* 85, 129). Paris “had followed” Helen “down the stairs” but when he tries to climb up, he is reduced to crawling. This failure by the male emphasises Helen's sexual power. In this context, I also argue that the fixed gaze that Paris keeps on Helen when she climbs the stairs reveals an envious desire to be like her. The woman becomes the utopia that a man aspires to reach, and the sexual tension is further conveyed through the “fight on the stairs” (157). Paris tries to convince Helen that he witnessed her death in Troy on the stairs – to incriminate her with the guilt of the War – but she dismisses his testimony and confirms that she has never been to Troy (141, 144). In order to achieve the Blochean element of utopia concerning the fusion of time, H.D. uses the palimpsest method to mix spaces and rewrite the story of Helen. This additional utopian element is implicit in the creation of an alternative space.

III. The Palimpsest

The character of Helen has been presented widely in Western history, art, and culture as the destructive femme fatale whose sexual beauty is condemned for causing the outbreak of the ten-year Trojan War. In order to rewrite Helen's story from a feminist perspective, H.D. uses the palimpsestic technique. The literal Greek meaning of the word *palimpsest* is “scraped

again” and in English the phrasal verb, “to make into a palimpsest” means “to write again on (parchment, etc.) after the original writing has been effaced [or] to overwrite (an earlier text)” (“Palimpsest, v.”). H.D. uses the palimpsest to reflect her “concept of ‘superposition,’ the layering of similar events throughout time” (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 29). Friedman concentrates on this method’s relation to the “personal history” of the poet’s “own life,” and points out that the palimpsest is used in H.D.’s “*Palimpsest, Trilogy*, and a number of journals” (29). I add *Helen in Egypt* to Friedman’s list of H.D.’s texts and concentrate on the poem’s concerns with public gender issues rather than with the personal life of the poet. In this section, I will show how H.D. uses the palimpsest to redress women’s position in society on two levels: the textual retelling of the story of Helen and the Trojan War and the semiotic reliving of the poet’s experiences during the Second World War. This collision of mythical with real worlds further demonstrates that my reading of H.D.’s poem in the light of Bloch’s theory of time fusion confirms its utopian element.

In her attempt to change the historical account of Helen, H.D. portrays the character’s quest for her own identity by situating her within multiple social positions. In this context, H.D. creates nine versions of Helen:

Helen, daughter of Zeus and child of worldly Sparta; Helen, the kidnapped child-bride of Theseus; Helen, the wife and mother in Sparta; Helen Dendritis in springtime love with Paris in Troy; Helen alone, in the timeless dimension of sacred Egypt; Helen, the older (perhaps even dead) lover of Achilles; Helen as Persephone, bride of death; Helen, seeking the healing of self-acceptance with Theseus; Helen of Leuke, alone, yet also together with Achilles and the child Euphorion.” (Friedman, “Creating a Women’s Mythology” 181).

The different versions of the heroine represent the different roles that women play in their societies. These roles overlap to include the mother, the daughter, the child, the abused, the independent, and so on. On social and psychological levels, the poem marks the development of Helen's position, which changes from being an insecure woman, desperate for love and in need of guidance by the male characters Achilles and Theseus, to becoming a woman whose confidence and determination change her own destiny and that of those surrounding her. The utopian journey that Helen undertakes qualifies her to participate in the reconstruction of the narrative: "She and we need peace and time to reconstruct the legend" (*HE* 11). Before further commenting on Helen's role in changing her own destiny, I highlight the heroine's role in revising familial relations as part of H.D.'s palimpsestic method to reconstruct myths. The character of Helen, as Edmunds argues, works as a "powerful agent" who brings about peace through reconciling nuclear family relations (100). This is done by shifting the focus in the narrative from the Greek legend of Oedipus to the Egyptian myth of Isis. Both stories include the murder of the heroines' husbands by a family member. Upon losing their husbands, both Jocasta (in the Greek myth) and Isis (in the Egyptian legend) develop strong bonds with their sons Oedipus and Horus, respectively. The alliance between Jocasta and Oedipus was based on vengeance, incest, and guilt because the latter killed his own father, Laius. Whereas the bond between Isis and Horus was built upon love and reparation because Osiris, Horus's father, was killed by his own brother and not by his son (124). After questioning "how to reconcile Trojan and Greek?" (*HE* 157), *Helen in Egypt* works as a "project of social reconstruction in a return to the model of familial peace offered by the ancient Egyptian myth of Isis (Edmunds 97). By identifying herself with Isis, Helen manages to reconcile the hostility between her two lovers, Achilles and Paris, through reconstituting "the oedipal Paris . . . as a Horus who comes not to destroy but to restore the life of his new father, Achilles" (Edmunds 125; *HE* 184 -85). Significantly, by empowering Helen to

substitute the “memories of a traumatic Greek past” with a “redemptive past in Egypt,” H.D. also redirects the focus from the father-son relation found in these legends to a mother-son emphasis (Edmunds 99).²²

Helen’s role in rewriting her destiny is manifested through the use of form and content that play crucial parts in rebuilding the story by combining different modes of writing. These styles of writing convey both linear and cyclical stories; the fusion of tenses with events where Helen “remembered again assembled /and re-assembled in different order” her own experiences, blurring reality with imagination (*HE* 289); and simultaneous cross-referencing of historical and mythical allusions. The confusion created by the poem, O’Brien asserts, is part of Helen’s quest to find her identity, which in turn “questions the possibility of telling a ‘true’ story, even if it is one that attempts to redress the wrongs of the patriarchal story” (335). Carolyn Heilbrun notices that the task that is assigned to fictional heroines to discover their identities is even more difficult than that laid on real women, because in reality an accomplished woman is “male-identified,” while a failed one takes “her identity from her man” (103). On the other hand, “within the world of fiction,” women’s “search for identity has been even less successful . . . than outside it” (72).

It appears that H.D. challenges this stereotyping of the heroine’s quest for her identity, which is evident in Helen’s successful attempts to find her own voice through the world of hatred, despair, and war inflicted upon her by her male counterparts. The poem’s journey towards utopia celebrates the prevalence of feminine love and compassion over masculine physical strength. Love is hailed as a prerequisite to peace-making, yet this idea is challenged throughout the poem through the constant attempts of male figures to dominate female ones by violence. In this respect, the poem “explores the female subjects’ early encounters with images of violence and death, images in which the female body is simultaneously an explicit

²² Susan Edmunds differentiates between H.D.’s interest in Egypt’s “redemptive past” and the poet’s lack of interest in Egypt’s contemporary present with its political movements of reform (95-178).

target of menace and an object of the specular gaze” (Gallagher 105). For example, the following image conveys a violent scene where the male character attempts to take over Helen’s body by physical force:

up a ladder or wooden stair,
I only know that I slipped
.....
I only know that I lay
on the salt grass and my hands
tore at the bitter stems
that cut me like adders' tongues;
it was dark, I had not the power
to leap from the platform or wharf; (267).

Violence is conveyed through images of physical disturbance; such as the striking description of cutting tongues, falling off the ladder without remembering how, being weak and vulnerable, and lying down with torn flesh. My previous observation concerning the symbolic ladder and its connection with the phallic image links with Helen’s struggle to clutch to the stairs and her falling off them, a matter that also suggests, in turn, reading the lines above in the light of a gender struggle and women’s failed attempts to share leadership in a male-dominated society. It is uncertain who causes Helen’s distress in these lines, as there are different references to male characters in the lines that precede and follow the stanza. The lines that precede this image describe how Helen goes in search of the “Master Mariner,”

whom she cannot find and comes across “the Master of Argo” instead (266-67).²³ It is also possible that the strong tides of the “Simois river,” the *Iliad*’s Trojan river, cause Helen’s fall, or it could be because of Achilles, who is mentioned in the lines that immediately follow. Harriet Tarlo relates this uncertain story-telling and “broken . . . narrative” to an ambiguous death-like experience where Helen is caught between water and earth (90).

I notice that the deliberate vagueness in revealing the identity of the culprit who is responsible for inflicting pain on Helen aims to incriminate all the male characters related to the scene of cruelty. This could be H.D.’s way of showing that it “is male violence, connected with the desire to ‘master’ others that is antithetical to a feminist utopian vision” (C. Pearson 51). In the creation of a feminist utopia, Carol Pearson adds, “men are not eliminated,” but the “sex-role patterns are” (51). In other words, without “sex-role differences, there is no model for a relationship in which one person ‘masters,’ dominates, or controls another” (51). In this respect, I argue that *Helen in Egypt* exemplifies a typical feminist utopia²⁴ where the narrative stresses the male-identified word *master* to signify how Helen’s defeat of “physical death” also means the weakening of the powers that the “Master Mariner” and “the Master of Argo” possess (*HE* 268, 266-67). Another significant example of gender role-reversal is the way Helen is presented as a knowledgeable and patient woman with a “high degree of emotional detachment” and not the stereotypical “hysteric woman unable to control or contain her emotions” (Cole 46). Conversely, it is Achilles who is reintroduced as ill-

²³ In Homer’s version of the Trojan War, the “Master of Marine” was the epithet of Odysseus. Diane P. Thompson states that “like Achilles, Odysseus had a bad reputation in Athenian Greece, because he was seen as crafty, devious, and a liar (whereas Homer represented him as a master mariner, brilliantly ingenious and an inspired story-teller)” (50). I propose that H.D. challenges Homer’s presentation of the male hero by reassigning his role of “inspired story-teller” to Helen, who is able to “reconstruct the legend” (*HE* 11). As part of the palimpsest process, H.D. makes Theseus “Master of Argo” (*HE* 256), a role which in Homer’s *Iliad* belongs to Hercules (D. Thompson 133).

²⁴ My argument is valid only in this context, because H.D.’s utopian presentations of women constantly change in her work, and this supports my views on H.D. in relation to Bauman’s idea of the utopianist as a gardener (see Chapter Two). At times, gender roles and models of domination are eliminated in utopia, and at others the distinction between masculine and feminine approaches (love versus physical strength) is highlighted.

tempered, “hysteric,” “enchanted,” and “most of all prone to jumping to conclusions” (46).

Moreover, the incident with Achilles’s heels because of which he is weakened is overshadowed by Helen’s broken sandal, which empowers her to climb the stairs barefoot.

I notice an important resemblance between H.D.’s narrative of violence and Sara Maitland’s short story “Cassandra” (1993), where she describes how Apollo “runs his hard cutting tongue right across the centre of her [Cassandra’s] crown, and she feels the sharp blade cut into her cranium, and into the depths of her brain, a single even slicing and there is intolerable pain, intolerable confusion. Her mind is severed. She is severed. There is a gap between her seeing and her saying” (Maitland 61). Cassandra, the Trojan princess, refuses to love the heroes of war and thus, her attempts to condemn war are silenced. Like Cassandra’s submission to Apollo’s “hard cutting tongue,” Helen’s attack is described through a simile of “cut[ting]” “adders’ tongues.” I think that both heroines, Cassandra and Helen, exemplify women’s suffering at times of war and represent images of the resilient woman who protests against recurrent attempts by men to silence their voices. “Silence, and silencing,” Elaine Showalter argues, “are so central to discussions of women’s participation in literary culture” mainly because, according to the models of culture, women are categorised under the “muted” group, while men are classified as “the dominant” one (199). The word *muted* “suggests problems both of language and of power,” because women “must speak through” “the language of the dominant order,” which is established by men, for their voices to be heard (200). In response, the voices of women writers are communicated through what critics call “female space” or “wild zone,” which transcends the language barrier to convey experimental and revolutionary experiences. In this respect, one “of the great advantages of the women’s culture model is that it shows how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity as well as a negative source of powerlessness; it can generate its own experiences and symbols which are not simply the obverse of the male tradition” (204).

I examine the motif of silence in *Helen in Egypt* in the light of both Showalter's and Carol Pearson's aforementioned studies on feminist utopias to establish how H.D. changes sex-roles in the poem as a prerequisite, according to Pearson, to establishing her feminist utopia (51). As a feminist, H.D. does not yield to what Showalter identifies as the "norm" of silencing the female voice. Instead, she attaches the quality of silence to the male characters. When Paris remembers "the shout, then breathless silence / after the gate [of Troy] fell," he identifies the "immanent" silence that came along with his memory of Helen, which suggests men's thinking of women as silent. However, Helen immediately breaks the silence: Paris "heard the very stuff rip / as she tore loose and ran;" (H.D., *HE* 124). Moreover, Paris's association of Helen with the falling of Troy confirms that he sees her as a fallen woman or as defeated in their gender conflict. This interpretation is evident in H.D.'s linkage of Helen's escape with the broken sandal with her climbing the stairs. Paris begs his wife to heal him from the love of Helen, but the rhetorical question "who will forget Helen? / not Paris" declares his defeat by her (125). In another example of a sex-role change in the text, "Theseus' servants bore . . . [Helen's] couch, / silently," and "softly" under the commands of Thetis in order not to disturb Helen's "sleeping, [after being] exhausted / with the fight" (211).

Showalter points out that in many feminist utopias, women writers assign their female protagonists with "expressions which can be deciphered" only by them (200). I find Helen, with her ability to read the signs of the hieroglyph, resembles these heroines. Moreover, Helen is the only character who experiences death and does not die, the one who is strong enough to admit her sexual misdemeanours and her weakness and the one desperately searching for love and for answers to war, yet who is independent enough to take the journey alone. I further maintain that H.D.'s feminist utopia "generate[s] its own experiences and symbols" (Showalter 204) by combining different versions of the same story, according to

which the heroine's journey consists in dwelling on her faulty past, in healing herself from the scars of patriarchy – or of making “the effort to perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure,” to use Showalter's words (200) – and then in moving forward as an empowered supernatural woman, who is not to be silenced anymore.

So far, I have discussed how the palimpsest method demonstrates Helen's symbolic search for identity in the experiences of literal and metaphorical wars, because it offers layers of different experiences, times, and events. The palimpsest is also a method of rewriting the history of war and replacing the progress of historical events with visions or stories of the triumph of love and peace. In her obituary for H.D. in 1961, the poet Marianne Moore stated that “H.D. contrived in the short line to magnetize the reader by what was not said” (P. Willis 558). “What was not said” in H.D.'s last major poem is her recurrent allusion to war through the narrative of the mythical *Helen in Egypt*. Readers are invited to decipher the link made between words that refer to real incidents and fictional events. In other words, as Horace Gregory writes in his introduction to the poem, “without mentioning parallels between them, the situations in *Helen in Egypt* contain timeless references to our own times. It is as though the poem were infused with the action and memory of an ancient past that exist within the mutations of the present tense” (x). H.D.'s depiction of the ancient past to parallel her present times echoes what Leo Mellor observes to be modernism's “restorative urge” to transform the decayed or the damaged (136). The ruins of the past and the bombsites of war, Mellor continues, share an openness of an “incomplete or decayed structure that offers an implicit dialogue with the past through its very continued existence” (3). In this way, the “destruction of war” creates a desire for change, “an opportunity to see anew,” and a space for transformation (136, 13, 76). Similarly, H.D.'s oscillation between the ruins of the ancient and the bombsites of the new creates a hopeful desire for change and an opportunity to envision utopia.

Adelaide Morris points out that *Helen in Egypt* contains “charged terms” (*How to Live* 74) that mirror the horrors of the real world through the use of modern artillery vocabularies, such as “holocaust,” (H.D., *HE* 5, 38, 229) and recurrent references to the “flash of . . . metal” (*HE* 294). Morris attributes the “*flash in the heaven at noon that blinds the sun*” (*HE* 100, 102, 161) to “the flash of the hydrogen bombs detonated by the United States on 1 November 1952 at the Eniwetok” (Morris, *How to Live* 74). The word “flash” she notes also refers to “the flash of the atomic bombs dropped by the Allies on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945” (74). It is important to notice that H.D. began writing *Helen* in 1952, before the shock of the first hydrogen bomb and finished the text in 1954, immediately after the second one (74). The word “shell” is another example that refers to the wars of the modern world:

whiter than the white drift of sand
that lies like ground shells,
dust of shells---
---dust of skulls, I say;
what beauty, what rapture, what danger,
too great a suspense to endure, (H.D., *HE* 162)

The word “shell” bears many interpretations, as critics have noticed. It may refer to “shelling in the First World War,” the experience of which H.D. communicated through her poetry in order to defend “herself against charges that she did not really live in the world” (Debo, *The American H.D.* 110). The word “shell” also means sea shells, which “are mythical symbols of regeneration” “with their cyclical lines and spirals” (Cole 47). The use of “shell” can be interpreted as antanaclasis – repetition of a single word, but with different meanings. One of

its meanings identifies it with masculine war or death, and the other with feminine peace or birth. There is the “dust of shells” that brings about “the dust of skulls” to suggest the forces of death in comparison to the opposing effect of the “delicate sea-shell” that Helen must “return to . . . [in order to seek protection as from a] mother,” (*HE* 115, 171). I also interpret the shell motif in the light of the recurrent theme of nature in H.D.’s early work, where she criticises the protection of natural fruits and flowers as symbolising the stifling effect of the sheltering of women from involvement in social life. “Shell” also means the hard protective outer case of things, so, in continuation of the imagery of *Sea Garden*, it may be interpreted as the patriarchal over-protection of women, which leads to the latter’s suffocation. In this respect, the image of shelling refers both to the literal war of the contemporary world and the war between genders. War, in both cases, is counteracted by returning to the shell, the shelter, the mother as the only protection that does not lead to death (*HE* 171). It seems that by using the palimpsestic method, H.D. aims to show both worlds, the utopian and the dystopian, juxtaposed in the same narrative. She does not eliminate what actually happened in reality, nor does she completely replace it with her own utopian vision of peace. Rather, H.D. intensifies her vision by presenting the polarity of the two forces of evil and good and implies her opinion in their portrayal. The colour white, for example, which represents peace and rebirth,²⁵ suggests the potential of reversing the effect of deadly shelling through promoting hope in re-creation and life after death, the recurrent theme of *Helen in Egypt*.

To conclude, in this chapter I have established that *Helen in Egypt* can be considered a utopian text by examining it in the light of Bloch’s *Principle of Hope*. I have traced the two elements of Bloch’s concept of utopia in H.D.’s text, which is representative of the final period of her career, and I have demonstrated how *Helen in Egypt* refers to a historical period beyond its own mythical time and promotes hope for a better future. Contributing to the

²⁵ See Kandinsky’s theory of colours explained in Chapter Two of this thesis.

cyclical effects of H.D.'s works, *Helen in Egypt* focuses on the themes of rebirth and life after death by which it counteracts the immediate and recurrent effect of war and counterbalances it with eternal peace and love. In this way H.D.'s poem shows that although the poet did not have control over the threat of future war that continued after the wars ended, she still envisioned a war-free future of her own making as an alternative to her unjust reality. Through her use of palimpsests, H.D. revises how war is conventionally understood. The way she questions heroism and conquest undermines the basis of all wars – the masculine urge for power. Contrary to the majority of critics and writers who give a morally scathing account of Helen, H.D. presents her as an intellectual woman who is on a quest to find answers about her past. Her journey offers her the possibility of questioning the reality of war and reveals that it is not a necessity or natural, but a construction, a symptom of patriarchy. Most importantly, Helen liberates herself from the guilt, fear, and domestication imposed on her by her male counterparts. Helen does not wield power in the same way as Achilles, and Paris. She does not take revenge for being strangled by Achilles, manipulated by Paris, and kidnapped by Theseus. On the contrary, she yearns to meet her beloved Achilles, makes Paris her son, and asks Theseus for guidance. The utopian message being communicated here is of love and compassion spread by women as opposed to men's creation of wars.

CONCLUSION

I have examined H.D.'s utopian thought, which focuses on repositioning women's roles in times of both literal and metaphorical wars, in the light of the social, philosophical, and aesthetic studies of Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman, Wassily Kandinsky, and Ernst Bloch. Discussing H.D.'s poetic oeuvre chronologically has enabled me to trace how her thoughts on utopia develop across her career. The works I have examined reflect the poet's response to, or protest against, injustices such as patriarchal oppression and the two world wars. H.D.'s forty-nine years of literary production were very much devoted to and reflect her feminist approach to writing, the outbreak and aftermaths of WWI and WWII, the misogynistic attitudes of some of her male contemporaries, and her life as an expatriate – especially periods spent in Greece and Egypt. The analyses in my various chapters have engaged with the objectives that I mentioned in the Introduction and have illuminated key ideas which I argue run throughout H.D.'s poetry. These points will be addressed one last time here to allow me to draw conclusions on their variance across H.D.'s early, middle, and late career. I have shown that H.D.'s work should be situated in the centre of modernist representations of utopia because her writing lends itself to interpretation from the point of view of important modernist philosophical and social utopian studies. H.D.'s writing is innovative because, although it shares elements of both old and modern utopian “blueprints,” it does not completely conform to them.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, H.D.'s utopia borrows both traditional and experimental elements from a variety of writers, both men and women. H.D.'s conception of utopia changes and develops over time. In some places, it seems to represent a physical space to which we can travel or the same space existing on another temporal plane (for instance, *Sea Garden*). Elsewhere, her utopia seems to be embodied in text – or in an alternative

textual tradition (for instance, *Helen in Egypt*). Sometimes it appears to be an anticipated world in which women's knowledge and abilities are highlighted (as in *Trilogy*). Other times utopia seems to involve the evocation of an androgynous and harmonious world (as we see in *Sea Garden*). In short, H.D.'s utopia is about finding alternative spaces that are more "hopeful" than the characters' current environment. These spaces may include physical places and/or abstract spaces, such as modern and ancient cities, or the natural world. In each case, they offer a reimagined reality for her female protagonists.

This thesis has identified several crucial themes which link H.D.'s work to influential theoretical and literary models of utopia. These themes include the contrastive forces of nature, cyclical sense of time, and the fusion of the past and the present to reconstitute, specifically in her poetry, women's roles in wartime and to emancipate them from the perceived shackles of patriarchal traditions. To summarise the development of H.D.'s utopianism in relation to gender, I have found that in her early poetry, H.D. subverts gender roles altogether; in *Trilogy* she reverses them (gives male roles to female characters); and ultimately, in *Helen in Egypt*, she reverses the power between them, ascribing more power to feminine values than masculine ones (which may be argued to fail in subverting structures of power because it essentialises male and female characteristics).

The notion of contrastive forces, or mutually interdependent oppositions, is evident in all H.D.'s poetry and creates various utopian images applicable to ideas about gender and oppositional forces of nature. Her vision of utopia is one that reconfigures traditional gender roles through fusing gender binaries. H.D.'s utopia counters hegemony with androgyny, begets love out of war, life out of death, and invokes figures from the past to govern the present. I believe that the most important feature of H.D.'s writing is the opposition between the realities of gender relations "the world of dead, murky thought," and the ideal of gender equality, a world directed by "flashes of electric power."

In my chronological exploration of H.D.'s work, I examined her use of antitheses in relation to utopia. I found that in *Sea Garden*, the pastoral utopia contains an ambivalent use of the colour blue, which represents both utopia and dystopia. It is also used to refer to hope and optimism as well as frustration and pessimism. There is also the sea image that resembles both the nurturer of life and its destroyer. Duality is further emphasised in *Sea Garden* through the potential ambiguity of the gender referents of certain pronouns like "we," "I" and "you," for instance. The utopian vision presented in *Trilogy* continues this use of antithetical terms because it is created somewhere between the heterotopic Luxor and the dystopia of London during the Blitz. This utopia is referred to as a heaven on earth that is full of angels but not devoid of the new world's machinery; H.D.'s utopia has the characteristics of both Luxor and London. The image of fire is a complex dual metaphor both for positive qualities of leadership and as a force propelling nations towards destruction. There is also the empowerment of the word over the sword and their description as "brothers" to create a harmonious utopian cosmos. In *Helen in Egypt*, utopia becomes an ethereal state between dream and reality. It is somewhere or nowhere (a place or no place, as Thomas More puts it) where death and life fuse as both end and beginning. Time similarly combines past and present, rejecting linearity. With *Helen in Egypt*, I have shown how H.D.'s poetry exemplifies Bloch's emphasis on the dynamic quality of time as a prerequisite element in creating utopia.

In her early poetry, H.D.'s utopia seems to be androgynous, constructed through obscure pronouns and unidentified lyrical speakers; however women-centred themes can still be detected. As Susan Stanford Friedman observes, H.D.'s "moving *beyond* gender does not mean forgetting it," because gender conflict remains a main concern that underlies H.D.'s poetry (*Mappings* 18). Her work clearly portrays the struggle for power between male and female characters. In this thesis, I have demonstrated how this multi-faceted theme is

communicated through more directed and extended metaphors and more complex forms, from lyric to epic as the poet's career advances. Despite stating the powers of both her male and female characters in her writing, H.D.'s choice of diction, literary devices, and the recalibration of the female protagonists' power and roles suggest the attenuation of masculine influence. In this sense, H.D. changes established gender-roles to eradicate patriarchal hegemony. For example, when compared to Helen, Achilles is presented as ill-tempered and with a tendency to kill, while she is presented as a poised and thoughtful woman in search of peace of mind as well as peace in the world. Similarly, the speaker in *Helen in Egypt* asserts that no one "will forget the veil," associated with women, found on a "fallen pilaster," which represents men (124). These metaphors are immediately followed by the account of Helen's ascending the stairs, another vertical image symbolic of masculinity or power. In *Trilogy*, the knowledgeable Kaspar is confused at Mary's arrival because she outwits him. He is awed by her presence, and "he stoop[s]" to catch her "scarf" (152). The verb used, *stoop* – synonymous with *kneel*, meaning to bend one's head or body forwards and onwards – signifies his deprivation of power in her presence. This image is representative of the general theme of women's power.

H.D. centres her writing on imagined models for women in wartime, and she traces their development through the hardships they face during the search for their identities. Helen and Mary both accept contrary aspects of their identities (the sinner and the saint), and this acceptance symbolically releases these characters from historical misrepresentations and repositions them at the centre of the story. On the other hand, these mythical characters are exemplars of women freeing themselves from the imposed patriarchal shackles of history. As Rohrich and Baruch argue, this is a main element in feminist utopian literature:

Men seem to want to recover an imaginary perfection through rules and restrictions. Women want to eliminate those restrictions, having been in the prison of gender for so long. For men, utopia is the ideal state; for most women, utopia is statelessness and the overcoming of hierarchy and the traditional splits between human beings and nature. (xii)

Despite the oppression they face, H.D.'s women "did not vanish in fire, / nor fade into the air," (*Helen in Egypt* 138). She celebrates their resilience through metaphors of hardy roses that survive against the strong waves on sea shores, of shrivelled fruit that are frozen but untouched by human interference, through women being connected with forces of nature, through their surviving wars, and through their making changes in their environment. Helen, Mary, Aphrodite, and Astarte all share common utopian goals through which they present antidotes to the effect of masculine wars or prove that wars never happened in the first place, thereby neutralising their effect. These women spread love and hope through reshaping the traditional views of life and death.

Another theme that I have traced throughout H.D.'s poetry which is essential to understanding her utopian vision is her recurrent emphasis on the power of rebirth and regeneration to overcome dystopian realities. In *Sea Garden*, H.D.'s utopia proves to have a "liquid," rather than a "solid" quality, to use Bauman's terms (*Liquid Times* 98). H.D. envisions utopia as changing constantly and always being recast in different forms. Furthermore, an unusual garden of raw or "distorted" beauty, which is portrayed through descriptions of washed-up flowers and frosted fruits, evokes Bauman's metaphor of the utopianist as a gardener. Like a gardener of sorts, H.D. is very much concerned with weeding out symbols of traditional perfection from her utopia, such as home-grown flowers

surrounded by borders and covered fruits. For her, utopia is the outcome of a human interaction with the natural world, and beauty is associated with strength and imperfection.

Because H.D.'s utopia is constantly changing, her poetry in the middle period of her career shifts the focus to reforming social relations and reconstructing what she saw the Second World War to be ruining. The mysterious Lady with the Book of Life that has empty pages to be filled and the half-burned tree that can still flower both symbolise a belief in the possibility of change. They are harbingers of a new era of regeneration. H.D.'s utopia is communicative in the way that it involves readers in the process of change. Implicitly, readers are invited to write in the empty book of life their own experiences and thoughts of how to reform their societies. *Trilogy* creates a heterotopic space where the reader is introduced to a futuristic era of women's reign through an emphasis on the power of the female deities of the past. Her women's ability to create better alternatives to their realities is buttressed by the call for a social unity and their power to bring people together. I have explained how H.D.'s fear of endless wars was a major motive behind her search for utopia and how this idea corresponds with the outbreak of both world wars. The theme of war is carried on in *Helen in Egypt* through the emphasis on gender wars, rather than the Trojan War. Women's forces of rebirth and regeneration neutralise the deadly effects of masculine dominion. H.D. celebrates women's cyclicity/nature/power of life/motherhood, the same features which patriarchy has deployed to essentialise women, limiting them to biological absolutes. With regard to the notion of the cyclicity of women's lives and bodies, for instance, when Helen embraces death she does so as a beginning to another life through reincarnation. This idea of regeneration promotes hope amidst despair and also associates women with the cyclical forces of nature in a positive sense.

H.D.'s utopian journeys are loaded with references to the cyclical aspects of time, which is often identified with women's bodies (through reproductive cycles) and which

metaphorically connects the feminine to rebirth. Over the course of her poetry, time is configured in three different types of journeys, sea, land, and dream. The marine journey in *Sea Garden* is conveyed through the fast-paced rhythmical verses of the lyrics, in some of which lines could be reversed without a noticeable change in their general meanings. The cyclical journey by land in H.D.'s middle period is characterised by the poet's evoking the place "London" at the beginning and at the end of the poem. In her later poetry, whose themes reflect on and extend from the poet's previous work, the spatial journey between dream and reality ends with the heroine's death-like experience in which she is promised eternal happiness. The common formal features throughout all three phases suggest the cyclical quality of utopia includes the lack of closure, uninterrupted short lines followed by the use of more commas than full stops, and the palimpsest. H.D.'s method of rewriting historical and mythical events is part of the pattern of utopian thought that recurs in her poetry. It aims to change the world by revising the stories of women in the past.

During the course of examining H.D.'s poetry, I have found that although her utopia promotes feminist ideas, it is not entirely a typical feminist utopia. Ruby Rohrlich's and Elaine Baruch's study of utopian tendencies aptly distinguishes between what male and female focus upon in their utopian visions: "Though utopias are often projected onto the future, some are set in the past. Men generally return to a mythical past of some dreamlike arcadia. In contrast, women's utopian quest is often an attempt to recover a real past. What we now call utopia was once our reality" (xii-xiii). The originality in H.D.'s quest for utopia is that it exists somewhere between these two approaches. She draws from real incidents in her present and from mythical stories from the past as part of the dualistic nature of her utopia. This approach is best represented in Helen, who lives between different states of mind, the dream and reality – the dream of the past, the reality of the present, and the vision of an imagined future. For this reason, I chose to examine her in the light of Bloch's

depiction of the utopian as fusion of distances and spaces. Part of my goal was to prove H.D.'s value as a utopian thinker and redeem her as a writer by opposing criticism like this:

The limitation of H.D.'s poetry, early and late, arises from her habit of making premature equations. Her mind was infatuated with coincidences, loose etymologies, conjunctions that seemed to connect anything with anything She ransacked the cultures of Greece, Rome and Egypt for identifications. Mary Magdalene was equated with "Attis-Adonis-Tammuz and his mother who was myrrh," Myrrha, in Ovid's "Metamorphoses," who turned into a myrrh tree. And so on. She resorted to landscapes, dreams and mythologies, the most concessive courts to which a poet can appeal against the abrasions of personal and social life. (Donoghue, "Her Deepest Passion Was D.H. Lawrence")

Donoghue fails to recognise H.D.'s juxtaposition of the Biblical, the political, and the mythical as a process of rewriting history in her poetry. Her tendency "to connect anything with anything" is part of her emphasis on cyclical time that constitutes an ever-changing and regenerating utopia and not a naïve or desperate attempt to glue together the parts of her work. By looking back into history, H.D. was not being escapist; she brought the past forward to remind the reader of better times against which she measures the war-torn present. H.D. refers to myths, and myths are often seen as synonymous with the Golden Age – in comparison to which any profane human reality, regardless of the specific circumstances, seems degraded.

There are other areas that connect to H.D.'s utopianism, such as queer utopianism and art and music. I have only briefly mentioned them in relation to my work (Chapters Two and Three) but I see them as a potential area of further research. H.D.'s work would lend itself to

being studied in relation to philosophical theories. There is plenty of unresearched material from her published and archival work, which needs to be understood within the framework of philosophy. While critics agree on the tantalising effect of H.D.'s early poetry, I have shown how the other two periods of her career are equally complex. In this conclusion, I share the opinion of critics like Esther Gonzalez, who describes *Trilogy* as a "philosophically complex and difficult text," because it combines "religion, art and medicine" (214). Jeffry Twitchel describes the three parts of *Helen in Egypt* as "increasingly difficult to keep in focus" because of their "accumulated complexity" (476). Susan Stanford Friedman vividly describes her experience in teaching H.D.'s poetry. She says that "students are afraid of H.D.'s real 'poetry anxiety.' They think they won't be able to understand it because it has so many allusions" ("H. D.: Hilda Doolittle"). I argue against a whole strand of H.D. criticism which fails to understand that "it is defending a difficult case" ("H. D.: Hilda Doolittle"), and this "case" in my thesis is the creation of utopia within a perceived dystopian reality of gender and political wars.

In metaphorical terms, H.D. identifies the poetic speaker as a kind of prophet who sees into the future and constructs her female characters as heroines throughout her poetry. H.D. contributes to the concept of utopia by assigning herself, as poetic creator, a social function that allows her to perform similar roles to those she gives her characters. The lyrical image of the poet is symbolically compared to the resilient weather-beaten flower that stands alone on the shore. Throughout H.D.'s poetry, the poetic speaker is recast as the omnipresent and all-encompassing. Some of her female characters have a similar function as well, like the Lady who fills in the blank pages of the Book of Life to rewrite the history of war into that of peace. Mary in all her names (the Virgin and the sinner) revels in her ambiguous identity. Aphrodite, Ishtar, Isis, and Pythia deliver the world from the forces of evils. The new Helen is unwilling to be defined or controlled by male heroes.

H.D.'s utopia is an evolving vision – changing as she herself developed and altered her literary and her world views throughout her writing life. She truly believed in the possibility of a brave, new world wherein women would be the agents of great change, pioneering the road towards peace and reconciliation on both global and personal scales. She believed in the power of art to “turn the whole tide of human thought,” to pave the way to her utopia. She believed in the power of art to change the lived realities of the twentieth-century.

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