Woman troubadour| H.D.'s version of love in the western world

Melissa Kwasny

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Kwasny, Melissa, "Woman troubadour| H.D.'s version of love in the western world" (1999). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 4110.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/4110

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety, provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in published works and reports.

** Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature **

Yes, I grant permission  
No, I do not grant permission  

Author's Signature  

Date 4-20-99

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with the author's explicit consent.
The Woman Troubadour: H.D.'s Version of Love in the Western World

by

Melissa Kwasny

B.A. The University of Montana, 1977
M.F.A. The University of Montana 1999

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Literature

The University of Montana

1999

Approved by:

Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School

Date
Vision, love: A woman poet, seeking to define these terms, will ineluctably encounter the weight of the myths and religious imagery of a patriarchal tradition that positions the speaking (and viewing) subject as masculine, and often—from the Medieval troubadours to the Modernists—the object of that speech (or gaze) as feminine. H.D.'s mythopoetic epic, Trilogy enacts a woman's quest for mystical verification of her own role as prophet and poet. In doing so, it, as well, radically revises traditional spiritual imagery, the "mundus imaginalis," which has been written, interpreted and painted by men.

It is through her hypnotic, chantlike repetition of sounds and images, in addition to the rhyming and slant rhyming and assonance of most passages—and through the subtle transformations that occur through repetition—that Trilogy enacts its search for truth. At the same time, the one-who-quests is dispersed through the many mythic and literal and other-species figures of the poem, and ultimately, through the figures of Kaspar and Mary Magdalen in The Flowering of the Rod.

In this paper, I trace how H.D.'s techniques—dispersal of voice, and the prefiguring and repetition and transfiguration of words and images—are ones that the poet uses to decipher her visionary apperceptions, and to lead her to her next ones. It is a strategy based on a growing awareness of the authority of oneself as seer, in a world that seems unwilling to grant that authority. I trace how this quest must therefore necessitate a battle with the forces which would undermine the self's quest for spiritual authority, forces whose most formidable weapons are their forms of representation, forms which define, and therefore obstruct the process toward revelation which leads to regeneration of the self. I trace how this process of testing, verification, and revelation leads to H.D.'s growing awareness of herself as one of a band—however hidden—of mystical adepts. This awareness, in turn, gives her the authority to re-vision that buried tradition using her own "personal approach to the external realities."
and these are the forces they had ranged against us,
and these are the forces we had ranged within us,
within us and against us, against us and within us.

- Adrienne Rich

"We must be 'in love' before we can understand the mysteries of
"We must be in sympathy of thought," she says. We must relate the self to
the other (self) in order to transcend, or enlarge it, in order to see with a larger
perspective. Vision, love: A woman poet, seeking to define these terms, will
inevitably encounter the weight of the myths and religious imagery of a
patriarchal tradition that positions the speaking (and viewing) subject as
masculine, and often—from the Medieval troubadours to the Modernists—
the object of that speech (or gaze) as feminine. H.D.'s mytho-poetic epic
poem, *Trilogy*, is an enactment of a woman's quest for mystical verification of
her own role as seer and poet. It is, as well, a radical revision of traditional
spiritual imagery or, to put it in Henry Corbin's language, the "mundus
imaginalis" (16), which has been largely written, interpreted and painted by
men.

H.D. experimented throughout her life with forms of esoteric wisdom:
the Tarot, astrology, the Kabbalah, Spiritualism. She experienced her first
visions—the famous visions on the wall at Corfu, Greece—in 1919, and afterwards, practiced forms of meditation, and what Adelaide Morris calls "phanopoeia," a poetic technique used to summon a being from another world (277). It is a term Ezra Pound set in motion, calling it "a casting of images upon the visual imagination," and characterizing it as one of three ways by which "language is charged or energized" (25). When Trilogy was written, H.D. was just finishing her work with Freud and beginning a serious study of the occult. She was, as Morris writes, searching for explanation and verification of the "figures entering the imagination from another dimension and carrying with them the mysterious radiance by which H.D. gratefully remapped our 'dead, old, thousand times explored old world'" (282).

Susan Friedman, in her book Psyche Reborn, outlines the psychoanalytic and mystical philosophies behind H.D.'s process of verification, a process which is first demonstrated in Trilogy, and will be used in the two later poems—Helen in Egypt and Hermetic Definition. H.D. worked extensively with Freud, beginning in 1933, and was involved with psychoanalysis for forty years. Through her sessions with Freud, H.D. came to see her visions as "hieroglyphics of the unconscious" (55), although Freud would never have agreed with her definition of the unconscious as the "Delphi of the Mind" ("About the greater transcendental issues we never argued. But there was an argument implicit in our very bones", H.D. writes in Tribute to Freud [16]). H.D. adopted the techniques of free association which Freud used in interpreting the imagery of dreams to decipher her visionary apperceptions. For the poet, it posited a way of moving past an initial image that is often filtered through the veils of culture and time. In her quest to trust her own process—a highly subjective process antithetical to Modernist male practice with its claims to objectivity and fear of solipsism—
H.D. used Freud's theories of the buried unconscious as a way of reading her visions as buried knowledge. Freud showed her "the relationship between the individual dream and the myth as the dream of the tribe" (11).

Friedman also shows how H.D.'s hermetic studies reinforced her confidence in her process, especially the hermetic belief in the doctrine of correspondence which "presumes a correspondence between the individual and the cosmos, personal and universal, inner and outer" (193). But, as in her work with Freud, H.D. needed to find her own way through a misogynist orthodoxy, even in the heretical texts. Reading about a Gnostic world that believed the Male Principle was the spark of the divine and "shrouded in the flesh of the female" (231), she had to develop a way to incorporate this information, but also argue with it. Her process is revisionist in that it is revelatory. Women's divinity is buried, just as the Gnostic experience was buried, just as much hermetic knowledge is buried (Is it a coincidence that the Gnostic Gospels were recovered in 1945, the year H.D. finished the Trilogy? H.D. would not think so.).

It is not strictly against the prophetic tradition that H.D. writes, but with a firm intuition of her place in it. As Friedman has pointed out, in both intention and method, H.D.'s process is assimilative, one "of weaving traditional and personal revelations into new patterns of unity" (226). Trilogy weaves worlds together, worlds as disparate as World War II London and pagan Egypt, the prophets of early Christianity and the Medieval troubadours of Languedoc, her own Moravian Church of Love and the Church of Love of Manichaeism, literal worlds and suprasensory ones, a symphonic play of voices across history and religions until, in the last book, The Flowering of the Rod, there is a conflation into two voices or figures, those of Mary Magdalen and Kaspar. Yet, the story of Mary Magdalen told in Trilogy is not
an orthodox one. "It is unseemly," the figure Kaspar says near the end of the poem, "that a woman appear at all."

Weave is not quite the right word, for to weave one must have the threads in one's hands. H.D.'s process has been described by others as a palimpsestic one, a process of erasure, rejection and redefinition of images, of sounding words and names and whole phrases until they begin to yield not their initial accepted meaning but a new resonance. It is through her hypnotic, chantlike repetition of these sounds and images, in addition to the rhyming and slant rhyming and assonance of most passages—and through the subtle transformations that occur through repetition—that Trilogy enacts its search for truth. For it is a quest for truth that describes the forward and backward movement of the poem, not only a quest for the polytruths that exist beyond the apparent chaos of World War II London, but also H.D.'s quest for personal authority.

The one-who-quests is dispersed through the many mythic and literal and other-species figures of the poem, and ultimately, through the figures of Kaspar and Mary Magdalen in The Flowering of the Rod. H.D.'s speaker does not separate herself from the poet, but rather presents a consciousness that can include a variety of voices within the definition of the "I," what Peter Nicholls describes as "a loosening of the self's boundaries" (265). For, unlike many of the Modernists, H.D. does not want to escape the self but to enlarge it. It is a Romantic intention certainly, but one also particular to H.D.'s experience. Carol Christ writes that Browning and other creators of persone are aware of how "the self circumscribes the world" (21). H.D.'s lyric of multiple and conflicting voices—voices she has internalized—illustrates how the world circumscribes the self, especially if the self is a woman.
It is not through memory, as Wordsworth would define it, that the self is transformed. H.D.'s memory is not personal or literally experiential. It is more akin to Jung's idea of the collective unconscious (although H.D. never read Jung) or Pound's "tale of the tribe," a memory that includes myth and esoteric knowledge. Her way to access this memory is, paradoxically, projective. There is the sense that it is only when she comes upon the complete image that she recognizes that she has been introduced to it all along in fragments, in allusions and associations. There is the feeling that she has been prepared for this Image or "vision." Like a painter who applies layer upon layer of each color until she finally sees the landscape revealed by the harmony and interaction of the separate colors, finally she sees the figure or word she was searching for without knowing it.

H.D. is a radical visionary whose poetics are as processual as her visions are. In this paper, I would like to trace how the techniques mentioned above—the dispersal of voice, and the prefiguring and repetition and transfiguration of words and images—are ones that the poet uses to decipher her visionary apperceptions, and to lead her to her next ones. It is a strategy based on a growing awareness of the authority of oneself as seer, in a world that seems unwilling to grant that authority. I would like to trace how this quest therefore necessitates a battle with the forces which would undermine the self's quest for spiritual authority, forces whose most formidable weapons are their forms of representation, forms which define, and therefore obstruct the process toward revelation which leads to regeneration of the self. I would like to show how this process of testing, verification, and revelation leads to H.D.'s growing awareness of herself as one of a band—however hidden—of mystical adepts. This awareness, in turn, will give her the authority to re-vision that buried tradition using her own
"personal approach to the external realities." I would like to show how, in The Flowering of the Rod, H.D. has Mary Magdalen and Kaspar enact the same process in individualized, human terms.

****

"We had a few weekends and the short summer breaks but actually had scarcely missed less than a half dozen of the near-hundred continuous days and nights of bombing, not to mention the later, still terrific, but less sustained attacks," H.D. writes about the World War II years in which Trilogy was written (The Gift, 138). It was written, literally, under siege; H.D. was living in one of the most heavily bombed areas of London during the Blitz. The three books of Trilogy were not published together until 1973, but they appeared chronologically (The Walls Do Not Fall in 1944, Tribute to Angels in 1945, and The Flowering of the Rod in 1946) and H. D. considered them thematically sequential. In fact, the movement through the three books, as I have said, is crucial, a movement which consists of the presentation of voices and counter-voices, attempts at belief and inevitable doubt, argument and contradiction which gradually demand a deeper and deeper questioning. Before entering into a detailed discussion of each poem in the sequence, I would like to briefly map the larger movement of the entire poem.

The Walls Do Not Fall begins with an epigraph, "For Karnak 1923 / from London 1942," and descriptions of war-torn London: "the shrine lies open" (1). In this poem, H.D. sets up many of the dualities which it will be the poem's project to bridge: modern and ancient, pagan and Christian, internal and external, conscious and supraconscious. The "we" and the "they" are introduced. These voices will battle directly and indirectly in
various guises throughout the rest of the poem. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*,
the "we" are identified as initiates, carriers of a secret wisdom, and as writers.
There is the announcement of a spiritual awakening amid the destruction,
and the Quest is articulated as a search "for the true-rune, the right-spell" that
will guide the initiates through the chaos toward the desired new way of
being, or resurrection. "They" are the forces which will subvert that quest
through doubt, criticism, and skepticism, perhaps even war. The poem is also
a search for metaphors which will define this new self, so that the poem also
tracks the spiritual progress of the soul through images of what the soul "is." *The Walls Do Not Fall* is a declaration of allegiance to the occult and to this path.

*Tribute to Angels* begins with an invocation to Hermes, patron saint of
alchemists, and of course, the Hermetic tradition. It simultaneously states
and enacts the process by which self-transformation will occur. The poet is
left with fragments of a once-whole esoteric and magical tradition which
could guide her through "the twofold language of inner feeling and visionary
apperception" (Corbin, 78) toward knowledge of new spiritual life. The
problem is that the traditions have been hidden, lost, shattered, buried,
usurped. Venus has become venery. Mary has become mar, or bitter. The
Lady has become a painted representation: "Our Lady of the Pomegranate, /
Our Lady of the Chair." As one of the initiates, the speaker is directed by
Hermes to collect the fragments and see what new meaning they might
reveal. The poem practices the palimpsestic technique in which the atavistic
relationship of the Angels is demonstrated through a kind of free association
of sound. Osiris becomes O-Sire-is becomes Isis, the missing feminine. This
is the poem of visions, of phanopoeia, where the speaker calls one Angel only
to see him transformed into something else. In the end, the Lady herself
appears, prefigured in the alchemist's stone, in a bombed-out but flowering apple tree, and finally in a dream.

The last book in the trilogy is The Flowering of the Rod. By now, the soul has done battle with all the opposing forces and has left them below. She has oriented herself toward resurrection and she flies ("I am so happy,/ I am the first or the last / of a flock or a swarm"). The book begins with a trope of the migratory snow geese as a symbol of the quest for ecstasy which the poet and her fellow initiates are engaged in. Jesus is the first, but only as a model for self-regeneration rather than as a god of redemptive suffering. As soon as the poet flies, there is a dramatic switch to the narrative of Mary Magdalen and Kaspar, and in it, the tale of the jar of jars, the mystery foretold in The Walls Do Not Fall. Mary Magdalen comes to Kaspar for a jar of myrrh with which to anoint Jesus's feet, or perhaps to anoint his body for burial. (H.D. conflates Biblical stories as she conflates time and place.) It is the story of Kaspar's reluctance to give it to her or to acknowledge her spiritual power until his sudden realization of who she is and, consequently, his vision of the three feminine Daemons and, then, his transport beyond time and space to view the world before Adam and the male gods. It is the story of the jar which Kaspar gives to Mary at Christ's birth and the jar he gives to Mary Magdalen near Christ's death. It is a dramatic enactment of the process of spiritual resurrection which H.D. has been describing.

****

"For Karnak 1923 / from London 1942": The Walls Do Not Fall begins with a metaphor in its sense of metamorphosis, or bridging over. It is a geographical bridge we must cross as well as a temporal one. Later, we will
see that it is a cultural and religious one as well, an attempt to link the gods of pagan Egypt with the utter destruction of Christian London. But we do not know this yet. Later, there will be Isis, "Creator/Fosterer, Begetter." Later, Christ will become Hermes who is, in his Egyptian form, Thoth. Later, we will move backward in the forward motion of the poem. For now, there is:

An incident here and there,
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square (1).

There is an unnamed "here" (London?) and an unnamed "there" (Egypt?). There is an unnamed "your" and "my," perhaps an author speaking across time and distance to another. The words "here, there" are repeated four times in the first four tercets. The sounds repeat in a kind of auditory stitching, the rhymes of "there/square" occurring in the first and third line of the first stanza, then reappearing in the second stanza's second line, "hare". There is a tight weaving of internal rhyme as in "papyrus/lapis," and slant rhyme, as in "purpose/papyrus/prophesy," and the consonance and assonance of "there/your/colour/Luxor." It is impossible to say which word belongs to which, or where the rhyme "scheme" will stop. Together, the words begin to ring off each other, building the bridge between "here" and "there" by sound and repetition, and a gradual change from "there/here" to "where" which then begins its own sounding. It is a subtle shift, but an intentional one. "We" are no longer located in a here or there. We land in a "where" that will at last be described in terms of its effects on us: "slow flow of terrible lava, / pressure on heart, lungs, the brain about to burst its brittle case."

In between are images—of fallen roofs and sealed rooms, of tombs and temples—images so transparent, unlocalized that, occurring as they do
between the repetitions, they exist as images of both places. The images illuminate the present by their presentation in terms of the past. The poor utensils in the air raid shelters look like "rare objects in a museum." Suddenly, they are objects in the opened tomb. Our sympathy with Pompeii, or any other site of destruction, is achieved not through a convenient literary leap but through the dramatic encounter with the experience of others.

When an image seems as if it can be applied only to one location—as in "the flesh? it was melted away"—we have only to think of World War II and the ovens of Buchenwald—or perhaps, we might think later, of the burning of heretics—to be chilled by its relevancy.

H. D. begins the poem with a voice that casually asserts our culpability. It is "your (and my)" town square. She speaks in a (variable) three stress line, a short line with no periods, no exclamations, no proclamations. In fact, full stops occur only at the end of sections. The voice feels intimate, the voice of a friend speaking to a friend, not a poet speaking to her public. But, on closer look, is it not the poet, but the citizens of Pompeii speaking to us? It is said, "the flesh? it was melted away." Is this a disembodied voice or an address across time? Or is the speaker in London addressing the citizens of some past disaster, including them in some larger "we"? There is the ambiguity of "we passed the flame," which has the double meaning of those who have survived the fire and those who are passing the flame of knowledge from generation to generation. The reader feels dislocated from both time and place, yet the speaker lets us know that this is natural at this stage of the process: "we know not nor are known."

Seldom is a pronoun located. In the second section, H.D. writes: "they were angry when we were so hungry / for the nourishment, God"; and we are immediately faced with a dilemma which is spiritual as well as syntactical. Is
God the addressee or a name synonymous with nourishment? The speaker seems to be speaking for us, including us, yet we have to wonder who "they" are. Are we suddenly "they," those who don't hunger, who don't believe? Are "they" the cause of the war, the enemy, the other? They say, "charms are not grace." So, are "we" pagans? H.D. lets the reader locate the pronouns, or more importantly, choose which pronoun—"they" or "we"—to identify with.

It is profitable to track the various incarnations of both voices as they become clearer in the poem's search or progress because articulating their identity is intrinsic to the poem's search. If "we know not nor are known" and the quest is for the authority of the spiritual self, the epistemological sites where "they" and "we" occur can be read as steps on the way. In The Walls Do Not Fall, "they" first appear in section two. "They" are angry, snatching off amulets, calling the pre-Christian goddess, Isis, a harlot. "They" accuse the "we" of heresy, of speaking in rhythm, "the devil's hymn." Whenever "they" begin to speak, they accuse or undermine, signaling that a departure from orthodoxy has occurred. "They" do not believe in the "we." They roll their eyes. They are cynical. Yet, the position of "they" changes. In section eight, "they" are addressed directly as a "you" who accuses poets of being useless. "What good are your scribblings," it will ask, in these times of war. Note that we have suddenly traveled back from the early years of Christianity to London and the struggle between Modernist poets and their readers. "They" have become worldly, participating and interested only in "present day endeavor," as opposed to the "we" who are lost in the ancient world, "wistful, ironical, willful."

The "we" meanwhile are struggling to defend themselves against their accusers. "We" are variously identified as the unorthodox, as believers,
as an "inner band of initiates," as "bearers of the secret wisdom," and as "companions of the flame." "We" are also writers, "scribes" searching for the "true-rune, the right spell." H.D.'s message is clear. Poets are the carriers of the ancient wisdom and that wisdom is heretical, dangerous, and will always attract a "they" to condemn it. It is helpful to look at Denis de Rougemont's book, *Love in the Western World*, to understand H.D.'s identification of poets as "bearers of the secret wisdom," an identification that is crucial both to the poem's progress and the poet's intention. H.D. read de Rougemont's book in French in 1939. She called it "her Bible." *Love in the Western World* analyzes the Medieval story of Tristan and Isolde to illustrate how our Western myth of passionate love is a secularization of the rites and beliefs of an evolving Manichaean tradition that had its roots in the mystery religions of the East. What was important in the book for H.D. was, I think, de Rougemont's claim that the troubadours of Provence were actually Cathars, a heretical sect of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who were soon to be victims of the Albigensian crusade (79).

De Rougemont tries to prove—through geographic and temporal proximity, as well as similarity in message—that the poetry of the troubadours of Languedoc was actually spreading a coded mystical/erotic doctrine and that many, if not all of the troubadours, were practicing Cathars or "believers." And what was that doctrine? It was the Gnostic belief in the inherent dualism of the world, of light and dark, of earth as evil and god as love, and the belief that one must, as an individual, search for reabsorption into the divine. They did not believe in earthly marriage, or the church, or in the physical incarnation of Christ, hence the fierce persecution. They believed in transcendence of matter through divine love. H.D., of course, understood the importance of the troubadours in the history of English literature. As de
Rougemont states, "The whole of European poetry has come out of courtly love and out of the Arthurian romances derived from this love" (151).

Poetry, therefore, comes out of heresy. If one believes de Rougemont, the troubadours were, literally, carriers of the ancient wisdom, wisdom that had spread from the East in the two centuries immediately preceding and following the emergence of Christianity. H.D. had more than her visions and her belief in love to feel part of this tradition. De Rougemont says, "The Church of Love was reproduced in countless sects more or less secret and more or less revolutionary and their close similarity of feature testifies to a common origin and to a tradition faithfully preserved" (175). He mentions H.D.'s childhood Moravian Brethren and their Church of Love as one of them. The Cathar "kiss of peace" and "feast of love" were traditions she had grown up with, ones she must have recognized in reading Love in the Western World. She must have felt herself in line as a troubadour and as a heretic. Or rather,—since, as Friedman states, "she does not believe in a linear, evolutionary view of history" (91)—she must have felt herself one of them.

To recognize oneself as part of a secret society, one that transcends time and place, is only the beginning of the journey, as H.D. knows. The Walls Do Not Fall depicts H.D.'s struggle with this initial re-orientation, a step fraught with decision, indecision, fear, and a battle with opposing forces. "They" are the Catholic Church. "They" are a voice looking over the shoulder of the authority of the self. "They" are the critics of Modernist poetry which is the "new heresy." As Friedman says, "the material condemnation of poetry parallels the orthodox condemnation of heterodox tradition as heresy" (222). As a student of mysticism, H. D. knew that the voices of the outer world must have a corresponding home in the inner. She identifies the "they" voice in
section twenty-nine as "the old-self, / still half at-home in the world." Susan Griffin, speaking of her own process in an essay entitled "Thoughts on Writing," identifies these two voices as the voice of poetry and the voice of despair: "despair toward language, the muse and the universe; and that of love of language, of faith in the universe to render meaning" (112). Griffin calls the voice of despair the voice of patriarchy, and sometimes the voice of science. It is a skeptical voice that seeks a proof and whose method "abolishes intuition." H.D.'s voice of despair doubts: "No comment can alter spiritual realities / (you say) or again, / what new light can you possibly / throw on them?" (38).

The quest is named and "we," reader/participants, as fellow travelers on the quest for transformation. It is important that we are implicated in it. For in H.D.'s system, the path of transformation is not a path open only to the poet who brings back the vision—as Dante does—but a path, as Alice Ostriker writes, "always open and open to everyone" (344). Inevitably, as soon as "we" become strong, a counter-truth asserts itself. "We" may be the "bearers of the secret wisdom," but "you" and "they" have voices equally strong, so strong that, as they converge, "we" begin mouthing their words as if we knew them by heart. In a deft manipulation of pronouns, "we are, you now tell us, trivial" (8). "We" and "you" are juxtaposed and transfigured just as "there" and "here" were in the first section. The "we" says, perhaps ironically, perhaps in defense, "you others/ our betters" (12), yet by now the terms have been so interwoven that, by sheer proximity and repetition, the voices become the voices of one, albeit a contradictory One. "We" may be initiates, Romantics, companions on the quest—by virtue of reading this poem?—but we are also people who doubt, whose "awareness leaves us defenseless" (29) when the flaming stones fall on the children. These issues are at war in us.
We would like to escape if we could. We would like to stay with the gods and "feed forever/on the amber honey-comb" (29). But the world calls us back.

As *The Walls Do Not Fall* (and the war) progresses, the argument becomes more and more high-pitched. What good does this search for esoteric knowledge prove when the world appears to be coming to an end? Section twenty-nine is a low point for the "we" voice. The "we" begin to acknowledge the fears that are inherent to those with no image, no religion, no established body to manifest into: "illusion, reversion of old values, / oneness lost, madness" (31). The speaker begins to list an overwhelming catalogue of unstable qualities. In these last passages of the poem is a description of psychic peril, as well as a remarkably prophetic awareness of the literary dangers of Modernism: "intrusion of strained inappropriate allusion," "overworked assonance," "juxtaposition of words for words' sake" (32). The weight of the culture's voice against the individual's is staggering and the "we" voice staggers near the end of *The Walls Do Not Fall*:

```
but this, this, this
has been proved heretical,

too little: I know, I feel
the meaning that words hide (39).
```

I disagree with Barbara Guest's reading of these passages as H.D.'s comment on her own work or as criticism of the weaknesses of her own writing (270). H.D. could just as easily be speaking of her contemporaries—Joyce, Pound, or Eliot— or the way she would imagine they would respond to her work. (After all, there are more ways than one to be heretical, and challenging the male Modernist paradigm is one of them.) I think, however, she is primarily speaking of the dangers inherent in the new path, in being so psychologically open. On literary levels, on psychic levels, on the everyday level of World War II London, the attempt to move out of an old situation must
begin with danger. One must leave the safety of the known and pass through chaos, which is brilliantly catalogued here. After pages of disparaging description of a consciousness at a loss, someone asks, "you find all this?" and "we" realize that yes, this is what we have found, both within and without. Is "you" the "we" then, or the "they?" It is this kind of ambiguity that is central to the intimate, convincing voice of H.D. It is not an ironic voice because there is no distance between the voice that sees the self and the self that speaks. It is both skeptic and believer.

One of the fundamental doctrines of the Cathar heresy was that the soul is divine and imprisoned in matter. De Rougemont quotes from a Cathar hymn called "The Soul's Fate" (65):

I came out of light and the gods.
Here in exile am I from them kept apart.

H.D. writes early on, in section five:

When in the company of the gods,
I loved and was loved.

At the same time that the forces of "we" and "they" are battling, the "I" is on its own journey in the poem. Although the ultimate destination for initiates is the same, the journey of the "I" is individual. When the "voice of despair" asks what she has that is new to contribute, H.D. answers:

my mind (yours)
your way of thought (mine)

each has its peculiar intricate map (38),
and affirms the importance of the "personal approach / to the eternal realities" (38). The journey of the "I" is the individual soul's journey. It is, therefore, instructive to follow it through its conflicting impulses toward self-
defense or stasis on the one hand, and toward rebirth or metamorphosis on
the other.

The "I" first appears in the fourth section, but within a shell. This
seems, at first glance, an object lesson. The metaphor of the shell-fish, in true
Imagist fashion, is described vividly, starkly, and with adjectives that suggest
a human relation: "continuous, the sea-thrust/ is powerless against coral" (4).
The mollusk is described as a "master-mason,"—a role H.D. might aspire to—
someone whose home is "hewn from within." The mollusk is, however,
limited to the house it has built. (In Tribute to Freud, H.D. compares the
"very shell substance of my outer ear and the curled involuted or convoluted
shell skull, and inside, the skull, the curled, intricate hermit-like mollusc, the
brain-matter itself" [53].) There is an abrupt change in location of speaker
from outside to inside the subject: "I sense my own orbit." There is no simile.
Without the simile, we are left with "a space in which the reader might
construe relationship" (Nicholls 171), and also a means of transport outside
the moment and the self. Dramatically, "they," appear: a whale, the moon, a
war which can swallow the speaker. Then the "I" speaks to us: "Be firm in
your own small, static, limited orbit." We notice the adjectives: small, static,
limited. Is this the mollusk speaking, or the limited self? Does this self-
protective advice come from the poet or from the mollusk who lives life
afraid? Is the mollusk, then, the "they?" Perhaps the "they" that warns
inside the self? (Much later in her book, Hermetic Definition, in the ongoing
echolalia of H.D.'s imagery, she will say to the fearful tidal pool who
complains of the great tide enveloping it: "peace, shallow pool, be lost" [67].)

The soul begins casting about for forms to contain it. The form of the
shell-fish is safe, but does not allow for growth. It is a metaphor that the
speaker seems to discard in her choice of adjectives to describe it. The shell-
fish is the first in a series of possible figures for the self: a worm, which advocates persistence, the cocoon, and butterfly as symbols of metamorphic rebirth. Since H.D. has "come to" the subject of resurrection—in this very Modernist insistence on process, on form as proceeding—the figure of Christ inevitably appears, a figure which must be dealt with and surpassed in her search for self/world transformation. (Later, H.D. will begin the Flowering of the Rod with a disavowal of this image and the need to go past it: "do not think of His face/ or even His hands"). Now, by introducing Christ, she articulates the danger of another veil or image barring the truth of the true image: "The Christos-image /is most difficult to disentangle / from its art-craft junk-shop / paint-and-plaster medieval jumble / of pain-worship and death-symbol" (18). It is an explicit statement of poetic intention.

The idea of the soul leaving the divine at birth and spending its life on earth searching for its former connection is at the heart of mysticism. De Rougemont's argument against passionate love is that reunion is impossible, given the duality of heaven and earth, and therefore, a quest for reunion must lead to death. But, as many Gnostics believed, this union is of the spirit, not the flesh (and therefore Christ's resurrection was of the spirit, not the body). H.D., too, is not speaking of bodily resurrection. As she says in Notes on Thought and Vision, "My signposts are not yours, but if I blaze my own trail, it may help to give you confidence and urge you to get out of the murky, dead, old, thousand-times explored old world, the dead world of overworked emotions and thoughts" (24). Her view is of worlds that coexist multidimensionally, and with equal reality. "To get out of" any one of them is difficult and must mean death to the old self, a self H.D. describes throughout The Walls Do Not Fall as "old self" (29), "shroud" (13), "heart shell" (25), "old will, old volition, old habit" (14).
"My signposts are not yours," she writes. The idea of signpost is crucial to the progress of the poem and the spiritual progress of the poet. Under the shroud which the worm spins is the butterfly. Under the old self, there is a glimmering of the new. This glimmering is what leads the poet from image to image, dream to dream, word to word. It is first identified as male, a "new Master":

His, the track in the sand  
from the plum-tree in flower  
to a half-open hut-door  
(or track would have been  
but wind blows sand-prints from the sand,  
whether seen or unseen)  
His, the Genius in the jar  
which the Fisherman finds,  
He is Mage,  
bringing myrrh (5).

H.D. gives us only the mention of a scent and the sight of a mysterious figure moving out of the picture, his track erased. This is, of course, the first prefiguring of a story (the jar of jars) and a man who will later turn out to be Kaspar in The Walls Do Not Fall. Later, she will, in the guise of Mary Magdalen, follow this figure in his "half-open hut-door." But we do not know this yet, nor can we assume H.D. does. By prefiguring with just a gesture, just a phrase something that will assume monumental stature later, H.D. enacts the process of this quest.

"Every concrete object has abstract value" (15), the speaker of the poem claims. There are other images that will be presented in fuller detail and significance later: star, myrrh, jar, harlot. They are signs or stars twinkling; they are there to guide and to decipher. It is helpful to look at Henry Corbin's
Man of Light in Iranian Sufism to understand how H.D. might have conceived of this mystical reading of signs. Quoting the principles of one of the Sufi Masters, Corbin states that "the object of the search is divine Light and the seeker is himself a particle of this light, that our method is the method of alchemy; that like aspires to its like, that like can be seen and known only by its like" (139). Corbin speaks of a "resurrection body" hidden within each person, a "man of light" one recognizes as oneself the more one becomes like him through prayer and meditation (130). The worm that is not, in H.D.'s poem, so very far "up our individual grassblade / toward our individual star" (14), is searching for this "man of light." It will break out of its shroud, its old world, and become a butterfly. Words, too, conceal a truer, more divine self. They are, H.D. writes, "little boxes, conditioned to hatch butterflies" (39). The word has a "resurrection body" as well as the image. Words and bodies conceal as well as images do.

How does one uncover them? H.D.'s process, revealed in this poem, is two-fold—through sound and image—but both are linked through the dream logic of association. It is the Dream which "deftly stage-manages" the image. It is the Dream which gives access to the powers of the unconscious which will lead one by ear to the next word. H.D., of course, differentiates between dreams that are "personified messengers" and those that are trivial, but not between those waking or sleeping. In Tribute to Freud, she characterizes the dream as coming from "an unexplored depth in man's consciousness and that this depth ran like a great stream or ocean underground, and the vast depth. . . produced inspiration, madness, creative ideas or the dregs of the dreariest symptoms of mental unrest and disease" (53).

We can follow the trail of associations from the worm to the butterfly to Sun to the dream of Ra, Osiris, and Amen whom H.D. realizes is Christ.
He makes her think of Sirius—both by sound association with Osiris and image-association with Christ's star. The star becomes a seed that falls inside the heart, breaking it open. It is the "man of light" inside the shell of the self. When the old self breaks, it is defenseless, open to a catalogue of fears ("oneness lost, madness"); it is "caught up by the tornado" and "deposited on no unpleasant ground." The chasm, schism, chaos has been bridged. In the end of the poem, both dream image and auditory image come together when H.D. invokes the star. She starts out tentatively: "Osiris equates O-sir-is or O-Sire-is" (40), and connects it to the star Sirius. H.D. chants:

Sirius:
what mystery is this?

you are drowned

in the river. (41)

She associates images: the seed, the star, snow. Earlier she has spoken of the mind's map as vein-paths on a leaf or how "every snow-flake/ has its particular star" (38). She is getting closer to the stars. She has admitted that she "will draw them nearer by prayer, spell, litany, incantation" (24). She continues:

O, Sire, is this the path?
over sedge, over dune-grass,
silently
sledge-runners pass. (42)

We are in the desert now, following the Mage. But as the words are repeated, we realize that the word "Isis" is contained in "Osiris." The more the words, "O, Sire, is this" are chanted, the more we hear how she has been buried in the name of the male god. To be imprisoned in forms has a particular ring for women.
In *Tribute to Angels*, the battle between the aforementioned forces continues, but it takes place not on the conscious level of ideas (whether within the poet or between the poet and her world), but in the realm of the angels. This realm is not imaginary, if imaginary means unreal. It is what Corbin calls the "mundas imaginalis," a concrete spiritual universe populated by "visionary Figures and Forms" (5). It is a realm H.D. has decided to enter at the end of the last poem when she says she "dared occult lore," and will begin to call the stars closer. *Tribute to Angels* begins with an invocation to Hermes Trismegistus, patron, she says, of alchemists, thieves and poets. He is also, though this is not mentioned, patron of magicians and occultists. H.D.'s association of poets with thieves and alchemists makes clear the intent of her project. She will enter the "tomb" of the ancients and steal what she can in order to transform it. That she is a thief indicates that what she finds there does not or no longer belongs to her:

```
take what the old-church
found in Mithra's tomb,
candle and script and bell,
take what the new church spat upon (1).
```

What the old church found in Mithra's tomb was the rites of a Persian mystery religion that would be appropriated by Christianity. Mithra's cave was seized by Christians in 376 A.D. The new-church plunders the old. That this is always the case is H.D.'s premise, for the process of *Trilogy* depends on her belief in the syncretic basis of all religions and cultures, as well as knowledge that this patterning and repatterning of the original is also a plundering or usurpation. As H.D. writes in the unedited version of *The Gift*: "Under every shrine to Zeus, to Jupiter, to Zeus-pater or Theus-pater or God-the-Father. . . there is an earlier altar. There is, beneath the caved
superstructure of every temple to God-the-Father, the dark cave or grotto or inner hall or cellar to mary, mere, mut, mutter, pray for us" (DeShazer, 161). The quest does not end at Mithra, but must travel deeper toward the mystery religions of feminine creative power and regeneration—toward the goddesses prior to their overthrow by the male gods.

This is what was "spat upon," what they "broke and shattered." The wisdom and power of the goddesses are the jewels—"opal, onyx, obsidian"—that are "scattered in the shards men tread on" (1). One of the jewels that is found will later be named Venus. Venus will be a step backward toward Isis, the "One / in the beginning," named in The Walls Do Not Fall. For now, H.D. names only the possibility of its existence. She has entered the *imaginatis mundi* in order to steal the shards. It is not, we shall see, a realm easy for a woman poet to be in, though Corbin claims it is a realm open to anyone who is "vouchsafed to the visionary apperception of the active Imagination" (42). It is the Imaginary realm of the troubadours and Sufi masters, both, as de Rougemont writes, "notoriously homosexual" (99), and the Cathars who were against marriage, and the celibate Gnostics. It is a realm where the feminine, in her incarnation as the troubadour's Lady of Thoughts, is, in de Rougemont's view, "no other than the spiritual and angelic part of man, his true self" (104).

H.D. wrote *Tribute to Freud* just two months before *Trilogy*. In it, she speaks of her Corfu vision of the tripod: "the Priestess or Pythoness of Delphi sat on the tripod while she pronounced her verse couplets, the famous Delphic utterances which it was said could be read two ways" (75). Except for section one and section forty-one in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Trilogy* is written in couplets, what H.D. will name in the poem her "broken hexameters." All three poems contain the curious voice shifts which can be read two ways, the
syntactical oppositions between I and you, we and they. In *Tribute to Angels*, there is also a "he." There is a speaker and a "he" that always "says." In section three, John, the prophet of Revelations, speaks—"I John saw. I testify."—and with the repetition of "said" and "saw," the "he" who always "says," is identified as a prophet. There is argument from the beginning:

> Your walls do not fall, he said
> because your walls are made of jasper,
> but not four-square, I thought (2).

The poet here indicates her intention to write a kind of counter-revelation. Over and over, the speaker sees, but before she can testify to her vision, the vision is interpreted for her. She resists. "He" speaks four times a word indicative of prophesy—"for the twelve foundations/ for the transparent glass"—however his "for" is countered with five "or's" within the same stanza and "but" is repeated twice. The first seven sections contain a string of negatives: not, no, Nay. They are words which will reappear consistently throughout the poem.

In order for the prophetess to speak ("I know, I feel/ the meaning that words hide") she must not let her own vision be usurped by another's. It is a battle of competing visions, and here, as in the world of ideas, she must battle her own impulse to let herself be defined. The poem is full of imperatives: "collect the fragments" (1), "polish the crucible" (8), "swiftly re-light the flame" (11), "name it," "invent it" (13). Who is speaking? At times, it appears to be Hermes, a voice H.D. identifies as "my patron" in section thirteen, a voice she trusts as her initiator. At times, it seems to be John of Patmos, or Gabriel, or the Lord. Whoever he is, he guides her, but he continually tells her what she sees. It is crucial that she refuse his representation. She attempts to speak,
Not in our time, O Lord (4)

and she is admonished in Christ's words to his disciples: "peace be still" (5).

She is asked to name the jewel she sees in the crucible and she refuses:

I said, I can not name it. (13)

She repeats it again, a further refusal, but one in which something new is articulated: a reason why, a will.

I do not want to name it...
I want to minimize thought,

concentrate on it
till I shrink
dematerialize
and am drawn into it. (14)

The central event in Tribute to the Angels is the appearance of the Lady who comes when the speaker is invoking Gabriel. There have been visionary "syntactical oppositions" like this one all along. The male angels who sit on the right hand of God have been whispering their names—Azrael, Gabriel, Raphael, Annael, Uriel—yet their whisperings only make the speaker think of the bell-notes of the campanili in Venice which, in turn, brings her back to Venus. (H.D. does not say directly that Isis was known—as the male gods were— as having seven emanations, or angels, but these will appear as the seven devils, or daemons cast out of Mary Magdalen in The Flowering of the Rod.) Over and over, the speaker's associations lead her away from the initial manifestation to a deeper, buried, and feminine truth.

"The divine Being has different places or abodes and they are the places of the Attributes. You distinguish them from one another by your own mystical experience for when you rise to this or that place, your tongue involuntarily utters the name of that place and its attribute," Corbin explains (71). It is how, in the mystic realm, verification is possible. For H.D., the
names of the angels, all ringing at once, are only a veil for "another, deep, unnamed, resurging bell" (41) that answers. She "had been thinking of Gabriel" (28) and the Lady came instead. How can this be if, as Corbin said, they are Figures of a concrete spiritual world? H.D. answers the question in the very beginning of Tribute to Angels:

for the vision as we see
or have seen or imagined it

or in the past invoked
or conjured up or had conjured

by another, was usurped (2).

Beyond every male manifestation of god is a buried feminine. In every figure is the struggle between male and female: "what is this mother-father/ to tear at our entrails," H.D. asks (9).

The Lady is prefigured first in the crucible. The speaker has supplied a word, "marah," to be melted down. It is the root of Mary who will appear as Mary, the Virgin and Mary Magdalen in The Flowering of the Rod. We watch the word change in H.D.'s hands from its meanings of "sea," "salt," "bitter" to "mer, mere, mater," or mother:

mer, mere, mere, mater, Maia, Mary

Star of the Sea,
Mother (8).

In this first alchemical reaction, Mary is turned back into Isis, the original mother, the goddess from whom all becoming arose. (Isis was often called Stella Maris or Star of the Sea). The salt is transformed into a bitter jewel or a star. Through a chain of associations, the star appears in a field-furrow showing "splintered edge/as of a broken mirror," which reminds us of the shards of the old-church to be gathered, and prefigures the next association, Venus or the evening and morning stars.
As soon as Venus is recognized, there is an imperative spoken, we feel, by the poet and not by her patron:

O swiftly, re-light the flame
before the substance cool

for suddenly we saw your name
desecrated; (11)

The imperative is not to stop. To stop is to be frozen into an image, an "I." It is antithetical to the quest. Just as the Christ has been frozen into its "junk-store image," Venus has been frozen into "venereous, lascivious" (11), and desire seen to be a curse. H.D. begins erasing the palimpsest. When heated, the jewel takes on color, becomes green-white opalescent. (It is the jewel which will end up in the crown Kaspar sees in his vision.) The color is the same color of the flowering may-tree in springtime London, a tree charred presumably by the bombs, and which has managed to flower. It, like the jewel, is unnamable:

and an edge of the wall
uncovered and the naked ugliness

and then. . . music? (22)

She recognizes the image immediately for what it is:

We see her visible and actual,
beauty incarnate. (19)

The vision of the flowering tree leads her to reverie, to an understanding of the relation of "our life, this temporary eclipse/ to that other. . ." (24). With this realization, H.D. enters the mystic time of revelation, and that is when the Lady appears in her dream.

"When we are unable to define ourselves, we become a blind reflection of the sighted male," writes Elizabeth Hirsh in her essay, "Imaginary Images" (437). "In western theoretical tradition woman has always appeared as image, the reflection or re-presentation of man, the embodiment of his form or
intelligence" (432). It is when the Lady appears that the struggle between competing forms of representation becomes fiercest. Feminine spirituality, in Western terms, is signified by the Madonna. In a powerful strategy, H.D. announces her presence and then abandons her, spending two long sections describing her as the Renaissance painters saw her:

    Our Lady of the Goldfinch,
    Our Lady of the Candelabra (29).

The speaker's resistance to the received representations is matched with centuries of representations. The weight of orthodox religion and art are against her. It is an enchanting, seductive list (and these are seductive images), beautifully detailed:

    We see her hand in her lap
    smoothing the apple-green

    or the apple-russet silk;
    we see her hand at her throat

    fingering a talisman. (30)

She is beautiful, yet she is also decorative, an object in a painting. The details of her clothing take precedence over any description of her person. The passive verbs are telling. She is "bowed down/ with the weight of a domed crown." She is "trapped in a golden halo." She is "hung with pearls."

    If one is defined as the Other—as women frequently are—the Other, for women, must be the patriarchal world. The beauty and authenticity of these images cannot be denied. "The painters did very well by her," H.D. writes. But this is not her vision. This is not the Lady she saw. "But none of these, none of these/ suggest her as I saw her" (31). It is a dramatic moment, this refusal. But the Lady has come as H.D.'s own angel/messenger. She has come dressed in the robes of a savior: "her veils were white as snow" (32). She also comes as a poet, carrying an unwritten book. As Albert Gelpi says,
"The Lady is, then, the apotheosis of the Self" (185). She is not a troubadour speaking of the Lady or a Lady inspiring a troubadour, "She is H.D.'s archetype: the troubadour as woman, the woman as troubadour, the woman-troubadour herself."

As soon as the speaker sees her, the world-voice is ready to interpret for her what she sees. The Lady, it says, is the Virgin as the Church interprets her, as Eve purified:

  this is the new Eve, who comes
  clearly to return, to retrieve
  what she lost the race (36).

The speaker has her small capitulations. She tries to agree. Yes, "she looked beautiful, she looked lovely." Yes, "I see her as you project her," and "all you say, is implicit." Yes, "you have done very well by her," she says for a second time, but this time she follows it with a parenthesized resistance: "to repeat your own phrase" (37). It is at this point in the poem that the refusal to accept these representations begins in earnest. It takes the form of denial. The Lady wasn't "hieratic" or "frozen" (38). She is not "shut up in a cave/ like a sibyl" or "imprisoned in leaden bars/in a coloured window" (38). The word "not" is repeated eleven times and "no" four. She is everything not represented in the world: "not-fear," "not-war." She is a prophet, but not an oracle for a patriarchal god, trapped and suffering. She is no longer held captive like Eliot's sibyl who wants to die. Her creativity is not defined in relation to "a Bridegroom or Child" (39). She is a woman who creates outside the conventions of creativity prescribed for women: as mother or muse. Her words are her own. "Her attention is undivided." It is then that Psyche, the soul, bursts from her shroud.
The Flowering of the Rod is the flowering of the project, the unfolding from the tiniest intuitions ("this, this, this") and prefigurations (myrrh, Mage, star) to the grand vision. Here, Kaspar's vision can describe the dynamics of vision with which the poet has been engaged throughout the entire book:

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 center. (31)

The force of attraction, for Kaspar, as well as for H.D. is Mary Magdalen as initiator and figure for female transformation. She initiates the feminization of the masculine, the "the flowering of the rod." It is not that H.D. hasn't prepared us for the figures of Kaspar and Mary. As stated before, Mary appears in the crucible of Tribute to Angels where she is changed from something "bitter" to a jewel. Her incarnations, whether as Sophia, Aphrodite or Isis, have surfaced in both previous books, as well as their counterparts in imagery such as snow, star, grain, seed. Mary is in the desert mist of "white little flowers" (WDNT, 41). She is dressed in veils "white as snow" when she appears as the Lady (TTA, 32), or as the flowering may-tree or apple in "Love's sacred groves" (TTA, 18). There is the sense that she has been "drawn here," in the sense of a growing attraction. She is the reflection in the mirror, the female equivalent of Corbin's "man of light."

Kaspar and Mary Magdalen's dramatic, highly charged and erotic encounter—as vision and visionary—is a complex enactment of the processes at work throughout Trilogy. There will be the quest, the doubt, the struggle
with doubt, the refusal of old definition, the naming of oneself anew, and the flight or resurrection. There will be a battle between voices—the skeptic, the faithful, war and love, the same dualities—yet, here the battle is presented in individual human terms.

The poem begins with the familiar indeterminate place, time, or voice, and with our—also familiar—inclusion in the "we" of the speaker. The speaker entreats us as she has before: "do not think of His face / or even His hands" (1). By this time, "He" now stands for all male figures of resurrection: Hermes, Mercury, Thoth, Michael, Jesus, perhaps the Persian saviors Mithra and Mane. The "He" has expanded as well as the "we," who are not only readers, but initiates and fellow travelers on this quest. The speaker entreats us to keep moving, to not be stopped by an image that is not of our own salvation, to not think of death—but who is the speaker? Though much of this is familiar—the indeterminacy of speaker and addressee, the imperatives and the denials—the view is different here. The speaker is above the images of war which, in the beginning of Trilogy, she was so rooted in. "Leave the smoldering cities below," she says, and "do not look below." The "I" that appears in section two seems more confident, less questioning, more of a leader. Psyche, unbound by representation, has grown wings and is flying above the battle of opposing forces. Hers is now a truly prophetic voice, one that can see the futility of engaging in the argument: "if we start to argue, if we stand and stare, / we do not know where to go" (3). She speaks in parables, as Jesus did. Her parables are of the wild-geese.

This shift in perspective will reoccur in Kaspar's vision when he looks down into all of prehistory. The flying geese, too, will search below for their lost island, Atlantis. The initiates will circle "till they drop from the highest point in the spiral" (5). It is obvious, given the shifts in time and place, as
well as the identities of the flyers, that this flight occurs in a realm different from our three-dimensional one. Corbin says that the mystic's world is oriented to a vertical axis, of which the North Star is "the place of the Origin and of the Return, object of the Eternal Quest" (2). It is a geographical reality found inside the mystic, distinct from the material world. De Rougemont says, "Such is ecstasy, a flight inward from all created things" (46). H.D. says, "this reality / is infectious—ecstasy" (9).

The speaker leads "us" on an ecstatic journey inward, presumably getting closer and closer to the place of origin, to Corbin's "man of light" or the divinity within us:

I go where I love and where I am loved into the snow; (2)

In section three, the snow goose is introduced and with it, the possibility that it might be the speaker of these lines. There is not only the piling up of possible referents for the "I," but an echoing of previous imagery: the rain in the furrow that reflected the evening and morning stars in Tribute to Angels is, here, where the "I" goes:

where I belong, inexorably, as the rain that has lain long in the furrow. (2)

From the association of images in Tribute to Angels, we know that the star will lead to a vision of Venus who will, in turn, lead to Isis. When it appears again here, we know the direction of the quest.

The trope of the geese serves H.D. on multiple levels. The geese are migratory and thus, cyclical. It is often said that birds navigate by the stars. It is often said that their routes are programmed genetically. H.D.'s geese begin as ordinary geese on their way to Florida and then are associated with the migratory flocks who are still ("they say") circling Atlantis. Yet, they are
circling the sunken Atlantis, the idea of Atlantis, not any place they know physically. These are modern birds who would not know of the lost island except through genetics, a collective unconscious, or vision, just as H.D.—baptized Moravian, mystic, poet, born in a town named Bethlehem—would know it.

There are no more syntactical oppositions of pronouns. Instead, what might be called "syntactical synonyms" of pronouns occur in passages like this:

so we must be drawn or we must fly
like the snow-geese of the Arctic Circle,

to the Carolina's or to Florida
or like those migratory flocks

who still (they say) hover
over the lost island, Atlantis,

seeking what we once knew, (3)

Although grammatically coherent, the "we" in the last line comes as a surprise, separated from the "we" that must fly by the extended simile. The battle between conflicting voices presented in the previous books is transfigured as a single voice dispersed across many figures. There is the swirl of the migrating birds and there is the consciousness which swirls. It "lands" on the ground, watching the geese from below as "they fall exhausted, numb, blind/ but in certain ecstasy" (5). It is inside the snow goose, saying, "I would rather beat in the wind" (6). And within any one of these figures, there is room for the "we," the other geese, or other initiates. In this kind of transference, War is replaced by Love, a mystic correspondence as Corbin would define it: "mutual attraction and recognition of like by like. It is the basis of a commuicatis idiomatum between the divine and human" (71).

The more one recognizes the divine, the more the divine recognizes the self.
"We begin with sympathy of thought," H.D. wrote. "One must be in love to understand the mysteries of vision."

In section eight, the geese and speaker fly in an ecstatic and prophetic series of pronouncements which invert the doomsday rhetoric of the Book of Revelations: "I am so happy, / I am the first or the last/ of a flock or a swarm." The speaker is free of time and place, and free to define herself not by name but by action. "I am" is repeated six times. It is free to prophesy, free of doubt. Jesus may be the "heavenly pointer" or North Star as it is called, but he is not the goal. He is merely "a sense of direction." Once the goose flies, Mary Magdalen appears, first witness, according to the Gospels of Mark and John, to Christ's resurrection. Thus begins the narrative which will continue uninterrupted for the remaining two-thirds of The Flowering of the Rod, the story of the "jar of jars."

The switch to narrative is worth investigating since ninety-seven of the one-hundred and twenty-nine sections of Trilogy have been written as an ongoing polyphony of voices, whether conflicting or sympathetic, whether in the self or between the self and the world. From section twelve on, the voices are, as it were, embodied. The voice of doubt and the voice of faith become, respectively, the two figures of Kaspar and Mary Magdalen. The "I" whose boundaries have progressively enlarged across history and place, is now buried in the duality of the story's two main characters. The move to narrative is, of course, H.D.'s literal revision of the most recent of resurrection stories. She has told us that Christ's story is the one "most difficult to disentangle" from its Catholic tradition of "pain-worship and death-symbol" (TTA, 38). The new story of resurrection that H.D. offers is a tale of self-transformation and recreation which has ancient and syncretic roots. It is the "unwritten book of the new" (38) which the Lady carried in
Tribute to Angels, the ecstatic side of the Christ story as tale of self-transformation and recreation which has ancient and syncretic roots.

But the decision to write this "book of the new" in conventional narrative is also crucial to the premise of H.D.'s quest. The story of the jar of jars is the story of the individual quest within the context of the larger Quest. It is the vision within the vision, the "I" within the "we." The move into narrative is an embodiment of the tribal dream. It allows individualized action. Helen in Egypt, the long poem H.D. wrote after Trilogy, is also divided into three parts, each of which describes a stage in Helen's consciousness. H.D. writes, in the third section, that Helen, having realized "all myth, the one reality," is now concerned with "the human content of the drama." Helen says, "I am awake. I see things clearly." H.D. comments: "No longer the dream" (265).

Kaspar embodies the voice of the skeptic or critic we have become familiar with. He cannot see Mary Magdalen except in the terms in which the world has represented women. She is "un-maidenly," "not-pretty," "unseemly." She does not act like a lady. Her hair is down. She is not idealized as Christianity has idealized the female figure of the Madonna. We watch him defend himself against her just as the mollusk in its shell protected itself from the ocean waves in The Walls Do Not Fall. He tells himself she is "not a beautiful woman really" (13). He reminds himself in detail how carefully his myrrh jars are sealed with "charms wrought upon them," so that she could not possibly know of them. Yet Kaspar is not wholly unsympathetic, just as the voices of the previous critics were not wholly antagonistic. He is a wise man, a magician. He is an Arab familiar with the ancient mystery religions that moved from East to West in the Hellenistic period. He has worshipped the goddesses and knows them as "daemons," not as devils. He is, like H.D., of an intelligence that is searching for connections.
He is just trapped in his "murky, dead, old, thousand-times explored, old world."

Kaspar is also the questing voice of H.D.'s initial speaker who advised us, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, to "dare, seek, seek further, dare more" (30). Here, he is described in the same terms: "it was discovery, discovery that exalted him" (29). Kaspar is fraught with the same uncertainties, the same defenses. He, like H.D., is caught in a world that will deny what he is witness to. He is trained, as she has trained herself, in the old mysteries. It is his job, as hers, to "decipher them" (29). He is also, like H.D., an initiate, only his initiator is not the male Hermes or Thoth or Christ, but Mary Magdalen. It is a curious inversion of roles. On the one hand, the visionary encounter between Kaspar and Mary could be described as a "traditional" gender encounter. Mary is the object of Kaspar's vision, described in erotic terms. He mentions her scarf slipping to the floor, her eyes, and most importantly, her hair which is "unmaidenly," whose shine reminds him of water seen by a "parched, dying man, lost in the desert" (17). It is a very conventional trope for desire. Mary becomes, in this encounter, Kaspar's muse, the Lady of the troubadors, Dante's Beatrice. She is the "occasion" of his vision. Yet, we must remember that Mary is not merely passive Muse, but initiator who brings Kaspar to his vision of the buried mysteries of the feminine.

According to the Gospel of Mark, there were two Marys at the crucifixion, Mary Magdalen and Mary, the mother of James. After the Christ's death, they came to anoint his body with sweet spices. Jesus appeared first to Magdalen after the resurrection: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils" (16:17). According to Elaine Pagels, the Gospel of Mary—found in 1945 with the first Gnostic Gospels at Nag Hammadi—
"depicts Mary Magdalen (never recognized as an apostle by the orthodox) as the one favored with visions and insight that far surpass Peter's. The 'Dialogue of the Savior' praises her not only as a visionary, but as the apostle who excels all the rest. She is the 'woman who knew the All'" (22). She was the "apostle for the apostles" (49).

H.D. must have known of Mary's role as mystic (Corbin says the Sufis regarded Mary Magdalen as the "typification of the mystic soul" whose goal was the birth of a new self who would be one's "spiritual child" [71]), as well as her position as Christ's most beloved and initiate. Just as Kaspar's gaze is turned toward Mary, Jesus was the object of Mary's gaze. His resurrection is witnessed by her just as Mary's transformation into the myrrh she is seeking is witnessed by Kaspar. The vision of Christ's rebirth is what makes possible her own. One is always the dreamer or the dreamed, the initiate or the initiator, witness or resurrection, lover or beloved, in an on-going spiral of regeneration. In the first eleven sections of the The Flowering of the Rod, Christ's resurrection is described in images of geese and flight and love. It is what happens before Mary and Kaspar's story begins. Perhaps it is Mary's vision.

It is for reasons far more complex than traditional gender dynamics that H.D. casts the visionary encounter in male and female terms. As Friedman writes, "H.D.'s structure is often a pattern of relations rather than a static type of Platonic idea" (110). Her intention throughout the poem has been to transcend duality, "this mother-father [that] tear[s] at our entrails." Gender is our most ancient system of signifying opposition. Yet, Mary and Kaspar recognize each other, as it was written earlier that initiates would do: "we know each other / by secret symbols, / though remote, speechless / we pass each other on the pavement" (TWDNF, 11). When Mary first
approaches Kaspar in his "little booth of a house," she says: "I have heard of you" (15), although he does not recognize her until later. D.H. Lawrence, speaking of her poem "Eurydice," once told H.D. "stick to the woman speaking. How can you know what Orpheus feels? It's your part to be a woman, the woman vibration. Eurydice should be enough" (qtd. in Duplessis, "Romantic Thralldom," 409). If only it were that simple.

In The Flowering of the Rod, as in the Bible, there are many Marys and their stories are conflated. The scene in the house of Simon, the leper, is, in Mark, the story of an unnamed woman with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard which she pours over Jesus' head (14:3). According to The Gospel of Luke, an unnamed sinner brought an alabaster box of ointment to the Pharisee's house and began to wash his feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head and anoint them (7:37). There is also Mary, the sister of Martha who sat at His feet while her sister grumbled and served.

What Elizabeth Hirsh says of the Helens in Helen in Egypt could as easily be applied to the Mary's: "H.D. multiplies Helens, images, variant myths and narratives, superimposing these in such a way that there can no longer be any question of which represents 'the original' or authoritative one" (441).

H.D. "inhabits" the figure of Mary Magdalen as she does the figure of Kaspar. Like the poem's speaker, Mary is confronted with conventional views of women which exist to block her spiritual journey. We watch her navigate them as if they were a field of land-mines. Kaspar disapproves of her methods. Simon names her "Siren," "fatal," "a mermaid." Judas calls her gift of myrrh "Extravagant" (21). On every side are the traps of those who would define her as mother, seductress, whore. Yet curiously, there is no hint of her internal struggle, as there is with Kaspar. "She knew how to
"detach herself" (13), Kaspar says. She has the confidence of the poem's speaker at the end of Tribute to Angels who testifies: "we are satisfied, we are happy, / we begin again; / I John saw " (43).

"Passion," de Rougemont writes, "requires that the self shall become greater than all things, as solitary and powerful as god" (260). It is when Mary begins to testify to her vision that she reinvents herself:

I am Mary, she said, of Magdala,
I am Mary, a great tower (16).

As she weaves her own story—the buried divinity of her name and history—she gathers strength and passion:

I am Mary, the incense-flower of the incense-tree,
myself worshipping, weeping, shall be changed to myrrh (19).

She becomes multiple and mythic. She becomes, through her speech, myrrh—the ancient fragrance distilled—which she has been seeking from Kaspar. When she realizes it, she realizes she has been searching in the wrong direction, and says, "Sir, / I have no need, not of bread nor of wine, / nor of anything that you can offer me" (19).

It is a moment of double vision, what Corbin calls the moment when "each of the two simultaneously assumes the position of the I and the self—image and mirror" (17). How necessary is Kaspar to Mary's transformation? How necessary is Mary's presence at Christ's? How important is the visionary to the vision? Kaspar is granted his vision when Mary's scarf drops to the floor. This is the meaning of prophesy and revelation as H.D. sees it. The goddess has been unveiled. Kaspar's "man of light" is a woman. Something that was lost has been found—a part of himself, a part of the mysteries. Mary's hair reminds him of "moonlight on a lost river"(17). Kaspar is granted his vision when he stoops to pick up her scarf, when he bows to her.
He sees a light that begins as a speck or a seed and turns into a jewel in one of
the crowns of three goddesses. The mystery of life blooms in front of him.
Like the geese flying about Atlantis, he sees the past and present circling
below him, and in that spiraling vision, he hears a spell: the naming of two
women—Eve and Lilith—and an unnamed one even more ancient. They are
the previously unnamed goddesses (Isis, Astarte, Cyprus have been named in
section twenty-five), three of the "daemons" cast out of Mary Magdalen. It is
clear that the term "cast out" means manifested, or brought into the world,
that the term "forgiven" can be seen as giving up all claim to punishment.
The daemons had entered Mary Magdalen "to pay homage" (26) as if to a
savior, as Kaspar had to the Christ-child at birth and as he does now to Mary.
Kaspar fails to recognize the Mary who comes to him for myrrh as the same
woman who, at Simon's, was kissing the feet of Jesus. He "did not at first
know her" (27). Yet, the Mary he fails to recognize is more than the one or
two Marys depicted. It is as if the names of the goddesses might be renamed
with one name: "Venus / in a star" (25), or Mary. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis
writes in her book, H.D. The Career of that Struggle, the encounter makes
"Kaspar the intitiate and Mary the priestess" (96).

What happens to the scribe after the vision? Whenever Kaspar sees
another woman, her head is veiled "and veiled it almost always would be"
(39). He is left staring at the door that blocks vision, at every mark and scratch
as if they were "a mariner's map," which is, of course, a map of the sea, of
marah, mer. He is one of the geese that will be circling. He is back at the
beginning, yet he is different. Repeatedly, he says, "I am Kaspar, for he had to
hold on to something" (39). He is no longer his old self. Like H.D.'s early
speaker, he had initial moments where he doubted his vision—"it is
unseemly that a woman / appeared disordered, disheveled" (34)—but his
"last inner defense/ of a citadel" is now lost. "She" is with him. He is much more than he has supposed.

The last story is the revelation of the "jar of jars," which is that there are two, one for death and one for birth, or perhaps, in H.D.'s conflation of time and images, they are the same. The poem travels backward in time, but forward in the narrative. Kaspar is left with his vision and Mary Magdalen, as we know her, has disappeared. (The same inversion of time happens in H.D.'s poem, Helen in Egypt, where, from the other side of time—death? memory?—Helen sees the most recent events of the battle as close and looks back into the distant past.) Kaspar presents Mary with a jar to anoint Christ's body and, at the end of the poem, Kaspar visits Mary in the town of Bethlehem. She is, presumably, the Madonna, a different Mary. Yet, there is no child in her arms, just as there was no child in H.D.'s figure of the Lady. In Mary's arms is a bundle of myrrh. Since we have been told that Mary has become myrrh, we can only surmise that this is a figure of Mary creating herself. She is not a mother, nor is she Jesus' lover. Is the trinity subsumed into this one figure? H.D. was familiar with the idea because, in Notes on Thought and Vision, she states that "Christ and his father, or as the Eleusian mystics would have said, his mother, were one" (52). Who is this child or no-child? The Lady in Tribute to Angels also carried no child. What she carried was "the unwritten book of the new." Mary's story in The Flowering of the Rod is this new book. It is witnessed by Kaspar but it is told by the speaker of the poem, the scribe who is both priestess and initiate, Kaspar and Mary. It is the story of the self giving birth to a new self, one in which "Mary's vision" is again strong. As Corbin writes, "the Bearer of the Child is simultaneously the Child who is Born and vice versa" (17). The Flowering of the Rod is this
spiritual child, the record of the process of H.D.'s self-regeneration, her self-incarnation into the cycles of prophesy.

In the crucible of the mind ("the echo of an echo in a shell" [33]), H.D. has unburied a radically transformative vision of the mystery of resurrection, one that is deeply buried and, even today, one that is heretical. The encounter between Mary Magdalene and Kaspar is erotic, and produces a child at the end as if in any conventional "romance." Yet, this is an epic beyond convention: there is no child. The woman creates herself. The "masculine" and "feminine" are both figures for the poet. She is both muse and scribe. Adrienne Rich, in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken," defined this kind of revision: "Revision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: It is an act of survival" (35). It is even more so for the woman poet/visionary/prophet, or for the seer who believes in love. As Rich says, "The word love is itself in need of revision" (47). It is as if the sibyl called the voice of god her own.
Works Cited:


DeShazer, Mary. "A Primary Intensity Between Women." King 160-169.


