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“Companions of the Flame”: Concealment and Revelation in H.D.’s Trilogy

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“Companions of the Flame”: Concealment and Revelation in H.D.’s *Trilogy*

Integrated Article

by

Cameron Riddell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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Master of Arts, English Literature

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

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Abstract:

In part one I connect the theme of concealment, which manifests in animals and morphology, to the revelation of the “one-truth”, which I present, in part two, as a Midrash of the Book of Revelation in *Tribute to the Angels*. I argue that the “one-truth”, in H.D.’s cosmology, is conveyed by discussions of time, geometry, and genetic inheritance (of biology, theology, language), which synonymizes the Tree of the Sephiroth and the universal absolute from which all existence is derived. The Tree relates to the proto-mythology from which H.D.’s syncretisms derive and the proto-language from which the sources of her word-games derive. H.D.’s *Trilogy* is therefore a text of Hermeticism, a connection which is strengthened by the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, the poem’s primary agent. Hermes Trismegistus functions in the text as a trickster, who is equally concerned with concealment and revelation as the two necessary halves of the *hermeneutic circle* of secrecy that runs through the text.

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“Companions of the Flame”: Concealment and Revelation in H.D.’s *Trilogy*

To read H.D.’s *Trilogy* is to explore Hermeneutics¹ in a text whose poetic strategy is to actively obfuscate meaning. H.D. packages encryptions around a central revelation, which she discloses through codes, secrets, allusions, and deceits. Induced by the loneliness of wartime that left her in isolation, H.D. reduplicates her personal withdrawal in her poem in multivariate iterations. H.D.’s method of surviving World War II era Britain emerges from these iterations: the withdrawal into a shell in the face of a destructive environment allows both protection and an induced environment of solipsistic productivity. In the environment of enclosure by walls, either real or imaginary, the subject is impelled to create lest they stagnate. The creation is indebted to the conditions of enclosure, establishing a cyclic relationship between concealment and revelation that develops into the meta-narrative of *Trilogy*. In part one, I connect the thematic focus of concealment in *The Walls Do Not Fall* to the revelation of the “one-truth” (*TWDNF* 35.14), which I present, in part two, as a Midrash of the Book of Revelation in *Tribute to the Angels*. In part three, I offer a reading of the mechanics of the universe that H.D. creates in *The Flowering of the Rod* that is based on time, geometry, and genetic inheritance. The three

¹ Hermeneutics is “the interpretation of scriptural texts; such interpretation as a subject of study or analysis, esp. with regard to theory or methodology. Also: a particular system of interpretation for scriptural texts. Also: a particular system of interpretation or scheme of analysis for language or actions.” (*OED*). In this paper, I refer to hermeneutics as an approach to reading a text that attempts to undo the authorial effort of concealment in order to reveal a hidden truth.

sections offer interpretations that are interrelated and established through a *hermeneutic circle* of secrecy that runs through the text.

i. *Trilogy* and the Problems of Narrative

It is difficult to distill *Trilogy* to a narrative, as the text is as motivated by concealment as it is by revelation. It is self-consciously difficult to approach, slippery with denotative and connotative potential and imbued with the intoxicating presence of arcane puzzles². The plethora of allusions, references, and disparate functions of the text all contribute to nearly limitless appropriate hermeneutical approaches and, therefore, present a corresponding difficulty in reading and providing a totalizing reading of *Trilogy*. Due to the breadth of the concepts, characters, and locations, the text's points of interest are rich with potential for interpretive interpolation by the reader. This gives rise to the diversity in H.D. scholarship, which reads *Trilogy* as any number of things: an occultic text³, a psychoanalytic text⁴, or a spiritual Midrash, as examples. The theological systems of the source-texts that *Trilogy* makes allusion to are adopted in modified, revisionist forms; arcanity in general functions as a level of poetic encryption. In *Trilogy*, no object of interest is to be taken at face-value, and no object is above revisionism; objects must be read on multiple interpretive strata simultaneously. On one level, the text functions as a historical meditation about cultural change, aging, and

² My interpretations of these puzzles in *Trilogy* are especially indebted to the expositional commentaries by Barnestone, Gelpi, and Fritz.

³ "An "indecipherable palimpsest scribbled over" (T 42), *Trilogy* is the place to discard "sterile invention" (44) in order to "re-invoke, re-create" (63), to transcribe "the unwritten volume of the new" (103). Its traditions include those of Hermes Trismegistus, Christ, the medieval alchemists, and the secret palingenetic traditions of the "twice-born" (22) and "sacred processes of distillation" (133).

Transcription of old texts, adaptation, erasure, allusion, quotation, and remaking are the functions of an occultist who brings together "Fragments of a Faith Forgotten" (Tryphonopoulos XXVI).

⁴ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*

competition. On this level, H.D. focuses on the text as palimpsest. Separately, the text can be read as a didactic autobiographical text: “inheriting uncomfortable male-defined images of women and of history, H.D. responds with palimpsestic or encoded revisions of male myths. In the *Trilogy*, through recurrent references to secret languages, codes, dialects, hieroglyphs, foreign idioms, fossilized traces, mysterious signs, and indecipherable signets, H.D. illustrates how patriarchal culture can be subverted by the woman” (Gubar 298). Gubar’s reading, though excellent, threatens to distract the discussion of H.D.’s aptitude in myth-craft from the discussion of the didactic impulse in the text towards presenting an intellectual but strongly female poet. Accepting Gubar’s argument, I turn from the issues of H.D. as female-mythographer in order to focus more directly on H.D.’s mythography. The text can be read with a psychological mindset to correspond with H.D.’s usage of imagery and myth-making. On another level, the text is a theological exploration of syncretism which relates varied contemporary religions in order to theorize a single, unified proto-religion of distant antiquity. Finally, on the level of narrative and plot, the text can be read as a biblical Midrash⁵ which inserts a female mother-goddess into the masculinist Christ figure of the New Testament, producing an equally gendered or androgynous god of creation.

This paper will read *Trilogy* as a three-tiered discussion of the concealment and revelation of the secret in the text, which will move between the interpretive levels of history, psychology, religion, and narrative as situation demands. First, a reading of concealment and its relation to the idea of *the secret* will be presented, then the text will be analysed as Midrash of the Book of

⁵ “A Rabbinic homiletic commentary on a text from the Hebrew scriptures, characterized by non-literal interpretation and legendary illustration. Also: the mode of exegesis characteristic of such a commentary” (*OED*, Midrash). A Midrash is a critical interpretation of a text that is offered to explain or fill the gaps in the writings of an ancient scripture.

Revelation to demonstrate the revelation of *the secret*. In order to do so, *Trilogy* is read as a continuous narrative⁶. The narrative is explored laterally, via secretive allusions and associations, as well as linearly, through the retelling of a revisionist Christ story. With this in mind, I posit a reading of *Trilogy's* narrative as Midrash, which answers the text's call to interpolative hermeneutics. Finally, I will analyze the process by which things become *secrets* by interpreting the mechanics of *Trilogy's* universe which are described in visionary passages in *The Flowering of the Rod*.

ii. Concealment and Revelation

The circumstances of seclusion in wartime Britain profoundly influenced H.D.'s productivity. She understood that seclusion lead both to isolation and inspiration and treated her personal withdrawals as subject material to be explored by reiterations across *Trilogy* of a cyclical relationship between states of concealment and states of revelation, which are predicated on the extent to which a subject's environment exerts itself on the subject. *Trilogy's* many examples of concealment-revelation cycles are an acknowledgement of the debt the creation feels toward its creator. H.D. refigures the creator by splitting the Alpha from the Omega in Revelation's Lamb. Sometimes the creator-creation relationship is a terrible one: H.D. uses the isolation of war to produce poetry, and she maintains a fearful respect for her creation due to

⁶ *The Walls Do Not Fall* was published in 1944, *Tribute to the Angels* was published in 1945, and *The Flowering of the Rod* was published in 1946, so they could also be read as individual works (Hollenberg XVI).

the conditions of its birth. She makes a Miltonic allusion to Sin and Death⁷ to convey this fear: “what is this mother-father / to tear at our entrails?”⁸ (TTTA 9.7-8).

The process of encryption had contemporary relevance for H.D. and informed her use of a ubiquitous concealment-revelation theme in *Trilogy*⁹. *Trilogy* is a series of encryptions which are unlocked through systems of readings to address the text’s multiple encoded systems. H.D.’s experiences in war lead her to believe that individual humans lead cyclical, repetitive lives because they were conditioned to:

The repetitive thoughts and experiences in which she and her contemporaries had been caught were not the expressions of idiosyncratic neuroses, but rather the product of civilization and its discontents, to borrow the title from Freud’s speculative work on the implicit social contract that requires repression as the price of civilization. It was the repetitions of history—particularly its compulsion to cycles of violence—that initiated the repetitions of individuals (Friedman, *Penelope’s Web* 282).

The repetition of experience translates into a human data, giving birth to the conditions of encryption H.D. uses to cloak her poem. Reading systems are required to unpack H.D.’s encryptions: mythology, linguistic history, etymology, metaphor, allusion, symbolization and

⁷ *Paradise Lost*, Book II, Lines 781-3

⁸ Norman Holmes Pearson reads this passage as a reference to H.D.’s parents’ rejection of Ezra Pound as a candidate for marriage (TTF, Introduction X). Hollenberg interprets it to be “H.D.’s response to her trauma in pregnancy during the war, which she reinterpreted throughout her life, was a central motif in her self-representation and poetics” (Hollenberg 5). Kloepfer views it as an Eros for her mother (Kloepfer 203)

⁹ World War II was a behind-the-scenes game of cat-and-mouse between encryptions, codes, and their ciphers, and the text reflects this: *The Walls Do Not Fall* was written one year after the deciphering of Japanese codes pre-empted the strike on Pearl Harbour. The plans were detected and decoded, but not acted upon.

Midrash, all add interpretive distinction to readings of *Trilogy*. Where readings grant some readers access to meaning, they exclude others who lack the specific interpretive context. By encapsulating truths inside cryptic phrases that are broken only by specific decryption systems, the reader must have specific and diverse areas of expertise (or interest) to access everything. H.D. acts as both the agent of encryption and revelation when she binds meaning into symbol and then encrypts it; in this action she mirrors Hermes Trismegistus in *Trilogy*, who guides the alchemist to the correct synthesis of the “one-truth” or “true-state”.

iii. Apostrophe to the Reader

By stating that poetry can both create and break *the secret* by presenting it in an interpretive mode, H.D. conceives of rhetorical backlash from audiences who may think “poetry makes nothing happen” (Auden II.5), and dismisses such criticisms:

though [poetry is], you now tell us, trivial
 intellectual adornment;
 poets are useless,
 more than that,
 we, authentic relic,
 bearers of the secret wisdom ...
 are not only ‘non-utilitarian’,
 we are ‘pathetic’ ...
 yet the ancient rubrics reveal that
 we are back at the beginning: ...

and idols and their secret is stored
in man's very speech." (*TWDNF* 8.3-26)

Words, to H.D., are the sealed locations of *the secret*, and can divulge their contents to a discerning interpreter: "I know, I feel / the meaning that words hide; / they are anagrams, cryptograms, / little boxes, conditioned / to hatch butterflies" (*TWDNF* 39. 5-9). The burden of interpretation is therefore self-consciously placed on both the author and reader in *Trilogy*. The reader's task is to identify the instances of authorial concealment within the text in order to undo them, unlocking the revelatory organizing principle that was previously hidden: "where the writing process, and therefore the text, is posed as free association, the reader is propelled into a search for the organizing principle as the clue to the meaning of the text. That principle is posed as the repressed, as the representation of the truth of the subject" (Buck 121). H.D. initiates the discussion of how *Trilogy* should be read by speaking, in certain poems, of the relationship a reader has to a written text. She fabricates a ruthless dismissal of her own poetic method by an imaginary audience:

Depth of the sub-conscious spews forth
too many incongruous monsters

and fixed indigestible matter
such as shell, pearl; imagery

done to death; perilous ascent,
ridiculous descent; rhyme, jingle,

overworked assonance, nonsense,
juxtaposition of words for words' sake,

without meaning, undefined; imposition,
deception, indecisive weather-vane;

disagreeable, inconsequent syllables,
 too malleable, too brittle,
 over-sensitive, under-definitive,
 class of opposites, fight of emotion
 and sterile invention--
 you find all this? (*TWDNF* 32.1-16)

The tone is accusatory because H.D. posits this section of the poem as an examination of authorial intention. This passage, ostensibly phrased as a dismissal of poetry, actually has a didactic purpose in defending poetry. By cataloguing various avenues of interpretation under the guise of dismissing them, H.D. expounds the diversity of potential interpretations a single phrase can have. By expounding the various ways that interpretive strategies yield non-productive conclusions, the interpretive richness any symbol naturally has is explored concomitantly. She asks the rhetorical question:

this search for historical parallels,
 research into psychic affinities,
 has been done to death before,
 will be done again; ...

what new light can you possibly throw upon them?" (*TWDNF* 38.1-8)

This passage is an appeal to the reader, posited as an examination of the author, to interpret even the most familiar images with new attention and clarity in order to allow interpolation to exert its force:

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

each has its peculiar intricate map,
 threads weave over and under
 the jungle-growth
 of biological aptitudes,
 inherited tendencies,
 the intellectual effort
 of the whole race. (*TWDNF* 38.9-17)

The process of interpolating knowledge into the source-work of a text is thematically appropriate. The prophet Kaspar functions as the best example of a Hermeneutic agent in the text of *Trilogy*, as he is a trained cabalist with generations of experience in making spiritual connection with sacred texts. He traces his cabalistic knowledge back generationally to form a connection to older versions of truth as more pure versions:

It was discovery, discovery that exalted him
 for he knew the old tradition, the old, old legend,
 His father had had from his grandfather
 and his grandfather from his great-grandfather (and so / on),
 Was true; this was never spoken about, not even
 whispered in secret;
 the legend was contained in old signs and symbols,
 And only the most painful application could decipher / them,
 and only the very-few could even attempt to do this,
 After boy-hood and youth dedicated
 to the rigorous sessions of concentration

And study of the theme and law
of time-relation and retention of memory;

But in the end, Kaspar, too, received the title Magician
(it is translated in the Script, *Wise Man*). (TFOTR 29.3-17)

As he is specifically trained in ‘theme and law / of time-relation and retention of memory’, he is the perfect candidate to see the final revelatory image of the text, a perfectly clear spread of time before him to study.

iv. Hermes Trismegistus

Hermes Trismegistus is one of the most important characters of *Trilogy*, insofar as he guides Kaspar to this vision and presides over his studies as god of alchemy. His introductory passage explains how his diverse functions as man, prophet, and god are all invaluable to the concealment-revelation cycles of *Trilogy*:

Hermes Trismegistus
is patron of alchemists;

his province is thought,
inventive, artful and curious;

his metal is quicksilver,
his clients, orators, thieves and poets. (TTTA 1.1-6)

He appears as a syncretic god who presides over intellect, inquiry, thievery, perjury, and art. His task is to rework the wreckage of contemporary existence (here figured as shards of glass) into a form where its dangers are neutralized and its potential is ready to be harnessed (here, a gemstone). He is an alchemist tasked with the construction of an item which represents salvation; this item takes on multiple forms in *Trilogy*, including the philosopher’s stone (TTTA),

the pearl-of-great-price (*TWDNF*), and the jar of Myrrh (*TFOTR*). Hermes Trismegistus¹⁰ is the eponymous literary figure who has been attributed with scribing the Hermetica, which is a body of textual works that claimed to translate the word of God into human writings in distant antiquity. From this canon of works¹¹, the Hermetic tradition seeks to recover the divine truths that lurk inside the ancient words, insofar as the words represent the physical form of a universal truth. In this respect, the readers of Hermes Trismegistus' texts act as interpreters of prophecy, who attempt to disambiguate the finite series of words that they receive from divine conduits and rework them into meaningful guides for future action. Hermes Trismegistus also represents a syncretic god that combines the attributes of the Greek psychopompic messenger Hermes, the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth, Mercury, and the tripartite Christian God of the New Testament¹². H.D. utilizes Hermes Trismegistus in both of these capacities as he functions as the text's primary agential force: it is his action which gives rise, via alchemical processes, to the production of various artefacts which house the potential for magical activity. These artefacts come in different forms in different parts of the poem, but each is formed by an analogous process of binding magic into physical writing in a spiritual and alchemical process:

¹⁰ "The Magi considered astrology as supreme wisdom and the gate to the supernal world inhabited by planetary angels and other deities. Prophecy is revealed in the zodiac and horoscope. The ancient Egyptian scribe was familiar with the wisdom of the Magi revealed through Thoth, the scribe of the gods whose wisdom passed to Hermes Trismegistus, whose works are generally known as Hermetic" (Fritz 111).

¹¹ The Hermetica are written as dialogues between Hermes Trismegistus as teacher and a body of students. It is in this capacity as teacher-of-magic that Hermes Trismegistus appears in *Trilogy*.

¹² H.D. suggests the connection of 'Trismegistus', meaning thrice-great, to the Trinity: Father-Son-Holy Spirit. Trismegistus is the patron Saint of alchemists, and characterizes the Presence of the creative god as a ghost or spectre, a feature that will later be shared with Mary: "the Presence was spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray, / rare as radium, as healing; / my old self, wrapped round me, / was shroud" (*TWDNF* 13.1-5).

Hermes took his attribute
 as Leader-of-the-dead from Thoth
 And the T-cross becomes caduceus;
 the old-church makes its invocation
 To Saint Michael and Our Lady
 at the death-bed; Hermes Trismegistus
 Spears, with Saint Michael,
 the darkness of ignorance,
 Casts the Old Dragon
 into the abyss. (*TTTA* 33.1-10)

To the poet-at-war, writing is an act of alchemical concealment which hides an arcane relic of the past in a syncretic form: a concept in its multitudinous diversity reduced down to a single referent, which symbolically attacks the “Old Dragon¹³ [of ignorance]” by binding truth into a conspiratorially concealed package. H.D. observes syncretism in the mythologies of early Christianity, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and draws upon the richness of each diverse mythology simultaneously by invoking a syncretic form of their combined attributes. The syncretic form inherently transcends geography, time, language, and religion, because it is composed of intermingled aspects and attributes of each source. The syncretic Hermes Trismegistus, through linking the scribal attributes of Hermes and Thoth, links magic and writing. This linkage is further strengthened by the syncretic location of the Egyptianized heaven, which couples the

¹³ The Old Dragon is Satan in Revelation (who is himself possibly based on Python and Apollo from Greek myth), who is cast into the pit of fire and Brimstone after a 1000 year imprisonment and another failed rebellion.

psychopompic function of Hermes to the scribal function of Thoth's papyrus, which is used to allow writing to achieve a different type of immortality:

recover the secret of Isis,
 which is: there was One
 in the beginning, Creator,
 Fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever
 in the papyrus-swamp
 in the Judean meadow. (*TWDNF* 40.19-24)

The Egyptianized heaven combines the papyrus swamp with Eden and the Elysian meadow.

The link between language and writing is made through Thoth, the first scribe (and creator of the Egyptian universe), who first recorded thought on papyrus and immortalized language. The power of language is its venerability and its shared origin with magic:

too old to be useful
 (whether in years or experience,
 we are the same lot)
 not old enough to be dead,
 we are the keepers of the secret,
 the carriers, the spinners
 of the rare intangible thread
 that binds all humanity
 to ancient wisdom,
 to antiquity. (*TWDNF* 15.1-10)

The intangible thread is the written form of Hermes Trismegistus's prophecy, which becomes the basis of the Hermetic-prophetic writings of the philosophy of Hermeticism. Inside H.D.'s theology, the creative Word exists as the distant point of past-perfection from which all creation is descended. Hermes Trismegistus guides us back to this point of past-perfection to unlock the transcendent meanings of words:

the original Ancient-of-days,
Hermes-thrice-great,

Let us entreat
that he, by his tau-cross,

Invoke the true-magic,
lead us back to the one-truth,

Let him (Wisdom),
in the light of what went before,

Illuminate what came after,
re-vivify the eternal verity,

Be ye wise

as asps, scorpions, *as serpents*. (TWDNF 35.9-20)

This quotation shows that the Word contains and conceals the "one-truth", which can be revealed by invoking the "true-magic" to "illuminate" the universe of post-creation. The universe of post-creation is, therefore, an inherently dark place which is symbolically removed from god in a spatial and spiritual sense; this is why an arcane process under the guidance of Hermes Trismegistus is required to bring us back into contact with the creative origin. Hermes Trismegistus, then, serves as the connection between the creative god and the contemporary

human; he is able to allow a connection to the “one-truth” by breaking the concealed Word open and allowing its magic to escape in a burst of magical understanding. This process is chemical and alchemical: the bursting forth of magic from the cracked secret is analogous to heat being released, as flames, from a chemical reaction or a burning building.

v. The Text as Palimpsest

Trilogy represents the conflict of Word and Sword as palimpsest¹⁴ to relate the act of overwriting a text to the process of destroying something as a requisite to enabling its re-creation. The landscape of *The Walls Do Not Fall* hinges on the tension between the city and the ruinous environment which seeks to destroy it. H.D. freely associates between landscapes in each episode because they are interesting not as specific and detailed concepts but as antagonistic relations to the subjective self. The landscape is attacked by bombers who drop physical explosives which destroy buildings, but also threaten (as figurative agents of destruction) to rewrite or excise extant writings: “over us, Apocryphal fire, / under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor” (*TWDNF* 1.37-38). By calling the fire “Apocryphal, this quotation connects the physical and the violent destruction of landscape to the act of destruction in writing, a relation that is symbolically reinforced and reiterated into a motif of *Trilogy*. Initially the juxtaposition of various landscapes (London, Karnak, Luxor, Pompeii) is triggered by the observation of a ruined building in London, and the comparison of cultures as they disintegrate evolves into the master-narrative of *The Walls Do Not Fall*. A comparable master-narrative¹⁵

¹⁴ From Greek *palimpsestos* for “scraped again” (*OED*).

¹⁵ Master-narrative refers to the overall story of *Trilogy*, which is told through the creation and examination of three prominent symbols: the withdrawal into the shell (*TWDNF*), the blooming of the dead tree (*TTTA*) and Kaspar’s vision of time (*TFOTR*).

can be derived from the observation of the half burnt-out tree in *Tribute to the Angels*, and again from the observation of the eternal flaw in the philosopher's stone in *The Flowering of the Rod*. *The Walls Do Not Fall* addresses the Battle of Britain and the heavily bombed conditions as if the bombings were the passive struggle of Britain's past endeavour (the material representation being London's buildings) against the invasion of a force so unequally potent that it is figured as the entirety of the environment focused narrowly on destruction. The building and the bombing are the first, and most contemporarily persuasive, renditions of the antagonistic self-other ontology which defines *Trilogy* as a text of secrets and exposure.

The sight of Britain's ruin evokes a dream-vision of an ancient tomb at Luxor, which sets the scene for *The Walls Do Not Fall*, introducing the ideas of encryption, the secret, and revelation all at once:

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:

ruin everywhere, yet as the fallen roof
leaves the sealed room
open to the air,

so, through our desolation,
thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
through gloom. (TWDNF 1.10-21)

The metaphor attaches an implicit secrecy to the opacity and self-containment of a building. The broken buildings of wartime Britain are no longer 'sealed rooms' and no longer have the ability to protect their secrets; in this respect, they are reminiscent of the open-air tombs of Egypt and the throngs of Egyptologists who visit them: "the past is literally blasted into consciousness with the Blitz in London,' H.D. said" (TTF V). The tomb at Luxor represents a duality of secrets: it was once sacred ground, entered only by the initiated or under ceremonial purposes; it is here reduced to a cracked-open husk. The tomb once served as the half-way house for a leader's corpse on its Pharaonic journey to the underworld; it was the crypt of a physical person which has Egyptian religious ideology encrypted into the materials of its physical presence. These encryptions come in the form of hieroglyphics and decorations, which still remain in symbolic form. The hieroglyphics are translatable, but the pictures are symbols which require interpretation. Both are cerebral inducements which lead to 'thoughts stir[ring], inspiration stalk[ing] us / through gloom'. In the Luxor episode, H.D. introduces secrecy and encryption through the presentation of encoded information, and hints toward the future-revelatory aspect of the hieroglyphics, as a translatable system for communication.

The bombed landscape that surrounds the bombed-out building that triggered the Luxor vision is metaphorically associated to the writing of a book, and the act of burning or destroying the book is called "the most perverse gestures" (*TWDNF* 9.6). The apocryphal fires of the bombers are related to the burning of books to couple the death of culture and the death of a culture's writings. Inversely, the life-cycles of cultures are preserved in their writings, and the rejuvenation—if not revival—of a culture is possible through the analysis of its written word. *Trilogy* is intently focused on the preservation of older cultures, for its analysis demands the

comparison of cultural similarities. The differences between cultures precipitate problems in the comparative method: even if the locations are combined to form a mid-way syncretic location, what language do the disparate elements synthesize into when they combine? H.D. associates these tensions with the palimpsest, a symbol with resonance in both linguistic and spatial dimensions. A palimpsest is a text that is physically overwritten at a later time (*Palimpsest 1*). The palimpsest tells two or more individual stories, but is located in one geometric space; the resulting text is unreadable without dissociating the individual texts. H.D. fears that German bombers will succeed in destroying Britain; as such they threaten the text of Britain's history with apocryphal attention. Germany asserts a layer of inscription, making Britain a palimpsest of cultures which threatens, eventually, to become a tabula rasa. The palimpsest tells two or more individual stories, but is located in one geometric space; the resulting text is unreadable without disassociating the individual texts. In *Trilogy*, the palimpsest is a productive foundation for systems of imagery that couple a cycle of concealment to a cycle of revelation, breaking open a symbolically obscured problem to provide a solution. The symbolically covered and obscured cities, then, become a geographical metaphor for concealed or hidden knowledge lurking within a text. Each has a concealing factor: the Bombers, the sand, the ash. Each has a revelatory factor: the citizens, the hieroglyphics, the architecture. Each is a written document detailing the life of a culture; each is an individual text in a palimpsest partially obscured by antagonistic overwriting.

The speaker asks why London was spared when nothing could be learned from Pompeii: "Pompeii has nothing to teach us, / we know crack of volcanic fissure, / slow flow of terrible lava / pressure on heart, lungs, the brain" (*TWDNF* 1.31-34). The dead city divulges only

archaeological facts. Pompeii was obliterated rather than erased; it is a ruined palimpsest with indissociable parts. The obscuring ash effectively imprisons it in time, even after excavation. It is not overwritten and obscured by new growth; rather, it lingers on, a symbol of mutually dependant destructive and preserving forces. However, if Pompeii was a city destroyed mindlessly by nature, London is the opposite: the militant aggression of bombing is an imperialistic act of forceful overwriting, where the substrate of London is overwritten by apocryphal, cleansing bombings. The levelled city is a blank slate to be re-inscribed with a new culture; the ruined city is more a palimpsest that has been obscured by new culture. The disputed city is analogous to two texts attempting to exist in the same time and space, mutually obfuscating both sets of writing.

vi. Heidegger and the Secret

H.D.'s experience of World War II cast the British resistance against the German bombers in Britain, inspiring the theme of warfare in the text. However, *Trilogy* is remarkably apolitical for having been produced in these conditions. Germany is not mentioned, there is no anti-German rhetoric, and H.D. does not moralize over the state of nations-at-war. The lack of explicit political discussion creates an interesting situation where the comparison of the theories of H.D. and Heidegger, contemporaries of World War II and on opposite sides of the war, is possible. Reading *Trilogy* as a creative meditation on concealment and revelation is eased by borrowing from and making reference to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Though they occupied antagonistic international positions, and though they did not read each others' works, H.D. and Heidegger produced similarities in their thoughts of secrecy. *Being and Time* presents a useful framework of ideas, terminology, and labels for the secret, which have analogous

iterations in *Trilogy*. A few of *Being and Time's* ideas--without the unnecessary attempt to force a totalizing allegiance between the philosophies of the two writers--will be used to explain H.D.'s impetus towards secrecy, insofar as H.D. and Heidegger seem to have convergent thoughts at a (more-or-less) contemporary time¹⁶. Particularly, the concept of *aletheia*¹⁷ is omnipresent in *The Walls Do Not Fall* as the symbolic link between an object's states of concealment and revelation, particularly in the context of the dangerous environment of war. Examining the symbol as a state of *aletheia* is particularly useful in reading the arcane rituals of Hermes Trismegistus' alchemy, and in interpreting the animals of *The Walls Do Not Fall*. Further, Heidegger's *Hermeneutic circle* provides groundwork for discussing the concept of cyclicity as it pertains to *Trilogy's* meta-narrative and for explaining the poetic strategies H.D. employs in the actual writing of the poem. *Aletheia* and the *Hermeneutic circle* will be introduced and then applied to *Trilogy* in order to demonstrate the convergence of thought between H.D. and Heidegger around the topic of secrecy.

Before a discussion of *aletheia* or the *Hermeneutic circle* can occur, H.D.'s conception of time must be discussed without reference to Heidegger, because it influences the way we read loss and memory inside of *Trilogy*. Critical to H.D.'s poem is her view of time as a cyclical process; many of the poems in *Trilogy* deal expressly with cyclical time. In the most telling of these cases, the 'Holy Ghost' is equated with 'the Dream', and figured as a mode of inspiration:

That way of inspiration is always open,

¹⁶ *The Walls Do Not Fall*—1944. *Being and Time*—1927.

¹⁷ *Aletheia* translates to unhiddenness and represents the revelatory aspect of a concealed fact.

And open to everyone;
 it acts as go-between, interpreter,

 It explains symbols of the past
 in to-day's imagery,

 It merges the distant future
 with the most distant antiquity,

 States economically
 in a simple dream-equation

 The most profound philosophy
 discloses the alchemist's secret. (*TWNDF* 20.5-16)

H.D.'s understanding of temporality is, therefore, not linear; she merges 'the distant future' with 'the distant past' in order to create a lateral spread. The events of the past, present, and future are conflated into a hybrid present that is accessible to those who know how, to those with 'the most profound philosophy / [to] disclose the alchemist's secret', which Kaspar is able to accomplish in the text. The alchemist refers to Hermes Trismegistus, who is able to imbue language with the power of magic to offer meaning independent of temporal context. It is in this sense—the ability to use language to transcend the one-way linearity of time—that I wish to confine 'the alchemist's secret' for the moment, for it describes the power of the process of syncretism: a single syncretic figure, invoked in a present-tense iteration, orients itself in many different eras simultaneously. The concept of cyclicity is inextricably linked to the text. H.D. invokes a cyclical model when she describes nearly every focal point of *Trilogy*: the lives of animals, the lives of gods, the water-cycle, and the movements of the stars are all instances in which cyclicity defines the universe of *Trilogy*. This meta-narrative shows the base-line

operation of H.D.'s universe as a cycle between states of creation, growth, decay, and destruction. She sees patterns in these cycles, though the perceiving subject has no conception of its existence as an exact analog of an existence that predated it. Effectively, the subject cannot see itself as a reduplication of a past subject because the subject perceives time as a linear, progressive process. H.D.'s Neoplatonic¹⁸ impulse is apparent when she defines an object's concreteness by its approximation to an abstraction in a 'dream parallel':

We are the keepers of the secret,
the carriers, the spinners

Of the rare intangible thread
that binds all humanity

To ancient wisdom,
to antiquity;

Our joy is unique to us,
grape knife, cup, wheat

Are symbols in eternity,
and every concrete object

Has abstract value, is timeless
in the dream parallel. (*TWDNF* 15.5-16)

Here, H.D. draws attention to two planes of existence: one is the concrete plane of the present tense, where objects are approximations of their ideal form in the second plane, where objects exist as abstractions of perfection. To H.D., this second plane of perfection is the lateral spread of time that is only viewable after following Hermes Trismegistus to the "one-truth". It is critical to H.D.'s Neoplatonism that there be a mechanism of forgetfulness to eradicate the vestiges of

¹⁸ H.D.'s Neoplatonism is apparent. Memory is figured here as something that is regained when a subject learns. H.D.'s universe features those who have forgotten, not those who are *tabula rasa*: "for they remember, they remember, as they sway / and hover, / what once was—they remember, they remember... for they fall exhausted, numb blind / but in certain ecstasy, / for theirs is the hunger / for Paradise (TFOTR 5.18-32).

awareness of that lateral state of perfection. I refer to this mechanism of forgetfulness as *Lethe*, a term that H.D. does not use in *Trilogy*. *Lethe*, which is the river of the Greek underworld that eradicates memories of a subject's past life before a new life, is the reason that the Hermetic wisdom of the past appears to the subjects of the present as 'the secret which binds all of humanity to ancient wisdom'. The two planes of existence do not duplicate Platonic strata; rather, H.D. sees the Dream-parallel as a connection to time in its lateral spread, and the actions of the here-and-now are the plane of time as it appears to the subject to be a linear progression. The connection of the two planes is the successful alchemy, where Hermes Trismegistus's teachings lead Kaspar to view the "one-truth" of all time spread before him:

and the circle went on widening

And would go on opening

he knew, to infinity;

But before he was lost,

out-of-time completely,

...

he, in that half-second, saw

the whole scope and plan

Of our and his civilization on this,

his and our earth, before Adam. (*TFOTR* 31.8-24)

The conceptual link between the unnamed but omnipresent impetus toward *Lethe* in *Trilogy* is a good transition to Heidegger's *aletheia*, which uses the prefix "a-" and the suffix "-ia" to modify the forgetfulness of *Lethe* to its oppositional state of unhiddenness. Heidegger offers a succinct theory on the economy of the secret that influences my reading of H.D.'s symbols as a

recurrent and ubiquitous concealment-revelation cycle. A summary of Heidegger's ideas surrounding the concealment and revelation of an object, which can be applied to H.D., is as follows:

Since what is hidden is hidden from someone, truth as the unhiddenness of "things" also entails their actual or potential presence to someone, someone with an understanding of them... While a remarkable achievement, the appreciation of truth as unhiddenness is, Heidegger insists, far from the end of the story. For, as its privative nature suggests, "un-hiddenness" (*a-letheia*) supposes a hiddenness. That hiddenness is not traceable simply to either the obstruction of some entities by others or the shortsightedness of some observers... Heidegger accordingly argues that the essence of truth is neither the correctness of assertions nor the unhiddenness of beings, but the truth of being, that is, the interplay of that hiddenness and unhiddenness, and, thereby, the correctness of assertions and thoughts about them (Dahlstrom 117).

What is hidden, to Heidegger, always has the potential to be revealed—but never fully, and what is revealed always maintains the possibility of remaining hidden to other perceiving entities. The truth of the object's being, therefore, is simultaneously of hidden and unhidden. To be more precise, "[Heidegger makes] the claim for truth as *aletheia*, as the *temporalized* bivalence of disclosure and closure, of unconcealment and concealment¹⁹" (Levine, 11). This bivalence, read as having one truth value of either true or false, allows an object to be either unconcealed or concealed at any given time, with the presented value, being non-permanent,

¹⁹ The quote ends ",or Ereignis and Enteignis". Ereignis is enowning: "Being needs man to hold sway; man's own is be-ing. Ereignis is the name of such co-belonging, trans-propriation", and Enteignis is "the irreducible disowning" (Raffoul 281). I do not dwell on these concepts in my reading of H.D..

able to change with time and the subject which perceives it. Objects, therefore, oscillate between hidden and unhidden depending on how they are perceived and who does the perceiving. The best depiction of an object's being is, therefore, as a secret, which cycles between states of hiddenness and unhiddenness.

The *Hermeneutic circle* refers to a system of ideas to describe how the perception of a text is composed of the perception of each constitutive element and each element in reference to its position in the whole. The individual parts cannot be properly understood without contextualization, and the entirety cannot be properly understood without an in-depth study of each constitutive element. Therefore, the learning process inside of a text cycles between assessing the parts and the whole and allowing each element to inflect the interpretation of the further elements. Heidegger furthers this idea by maintaining that the perception of an individual is always in reference to the perception of the world:

With Heidegger, however, the *hermeneutic circle* refers to something completely different: the interplay between our self-understanding and our understanding the world. The *hermeneutic circle* is no longer perceived as a helpful philological tool, but entails an existential task with which each of us is confronted... Understanding, in Heidegger's account, is neither a method of reading nor the outcome of a willed and carefully conducted procedure of critical reflection. It is not something we consciously do or fail to do, but something we are. Understanding is a mode of being, and as such it is characteristic of human being, of *Dasein*. The pre-reflective way in which *Dasein* inhabits the world is itself of a hermeneutic nature. Our understanding of the world presupposes a kind of pragmatic know-how that is revealed through the way

in which we, without theoretical considerations, orient ourselves in the world. We open the door without objectifying or conceptually determining the nature of the door-handle or the doorframe. The world is familiar to us in a basic, intuitive way (Ramberg, *Hermeneutics*).

Heidegger stresses the innate comprehensibility of the world. The subject is inherently familiar with the way the world works on a background level, and therefore is not burdened with philosophically conceiving of how the 'door-handles' of metaphysics came to be objective realities. Rather, the subject is propelled between states of having and not having:

In so far as meaning gets its structure from a fore-having, a fore-sight and a fore-conception, and in so far as meaning is that in terms of which the intelligibility of something maintains itself, it follows that what is understood 'as' is not *discovered* to possess such a meaning but is always already understood in terms of just such a meaning structure. Hence, interpretation always moves in a circle. That which one seeks to understand has always already been understood in advance, though this understanding in advance may not have, and usually has not, been rendered thematic. So far from such a circle proving vicious (*circulus vitiosus*) and as such to be avoided, it is only in so far as interpretation gets into the hermeneutical circle in the right way that the understanding which is thereby developed can assume the form of a genuinely primordial kind of knowing (Macann 102).

Here, to derive meaning from something is to place it in relation to a future conception of itself, to have "fore-having, a fore-sight and a fore-conception". When the future conception of itself

is revealed, it will not be “discovered” to have a meaning, because the meaning is implied by the structure of the relation. Interpretation (which is the best we can do to conceive of anything—interpret it) is therefore a circle between seeking understanding and finding that understanding: “Interpretation makes things, objects, the fabric of the world, appear *as something*, as Heidegger puts it. Still, this *as* is only possible on the background of the world as a totality of practices and intersubjective encounters, of the world that is opened up by *Dasein's* being understandingly there” (Ramberg, *Hermeneutics*). A self-fulfilling prophecy, therefore, is less prophecy and more enacted agency, or the expectation of a result based on interpretation. H.D.’s cyclicity is convergent with Heidegger’s belief that the secret can yield its truth via an expression of violence; a wresting of the truth from the confines of the secret:

“Truth (uncoveredness) is something that must always first be wrested from entities. Entities get snatched out of their hiddenness. The factual uncoveredness of anything is always, as it were, a kind of robbery. Is it accidental that when the Greeks express themselves as to the essence of the truth, they use a privative expression—[*aletheia*?—(Greek for “truth”, translated as “not hidden”—from *Lethe*, the river of forgetfulness in the underworld)] (Heidegger 265).

This wresting of the truth from its covered state is a violent act. The act of wartime bombing is an example, particularly important to H.D., of this wresting of hiddenness away from an object. *The Walls Do Not Fall* is particularly convergent with *aletheia* as it offers a progression of animals who demonstrate, through their life-cycles, the concealment-revelation cycle in regards to a cycle between hiddenness and unhiddenness.

vii. *Aletheia* and Animals

The animal is associated with the secret and cyclicity throughout *The Walls Do Not Fall*. By viewing the animal as a symbol which has metaphorical power, H.D. joins a league of artistic and philosophical movements that either personify animals or animalize the non-animal in order to understand it better. H.D. identified with the modernists, in particular the Imagist movement²⁰: “The [high modernists] employed a number of experimental stylistic practices that, over the years, have become enshrined (and privileged) within the modernist canon: among these practices are aesthetic self-consciousness a focus on ‘the thing itself’ (the work of art) rather than that which the text seeks to represent; and the decentering of the unified human subject” (Connor 3). Nowhere is this tendency more obvious than in mythology or astrology, where theoretical unknowns such as space or time are personified or animalized to break their secrecy. H.D. mentions the constellations and their linkage to prophecy throughout the work, mentioning scorpion, Goat, Orion, Sirius, Bear, Leo (via the star Regulus (*TWDNF* 37)), Corvus (crow, via Algorab, 37), and Cygnus (swan, via Deneb, 37). The stars exist as physical secrets:

Or anywhere
 where stars blaze through clear air, ...
 where each, in its particular attribute,
 may be invoked ...
 which will reveal unquestionably,

²⁰ H.D. and Ezra Pound were at the heart of Imagism. H.D. signed early poems as “H.D., Imagiste” (Barnstone VII), and for a time was reduced simply to this title in critical opinion.

whatever healing or inspirational essence
is necessary for whatever particular ill

the inquiring soul is heir to, (*TWDNF* 24.1-13)

and the prophetic knowledge derived from them is not a discovery but a truth-by-naming, a nomenclatural, claimed truth. The invocation of stars demonstrates the difficulty in approaching the truth of a theoretical problem: though the naming process allows a concretization of concepts--via naming--the essential substance of the named object remains entirely unknowable. In this way, the naming and animalization of astrological and mythological entities creates both a secret and a process to gradually develop a necessarily incomplete truth. H.D.'s reliance on astrology and mythology in *Trilogy* precipitates a problem of 'knowing', which questions whether a secret can truly be broken by assigning it a name.

H.D. uses the figure of the animal to convey this sense of *the secret* in a materialized, concrete, imagistic form. By manifesting *the secret* in a tangible physical form, H.D. quantifies and draws the boundaries of subjectivity around it, suggesting that the representation of *the secret* as animal is knowable and is, therefore, already in an intermediate stage between the truth and the secret. The intermediate stage of each animal-metaphor—simultaneously knowing and not-knowing, understood and not-understood—shows that H.D. conceives of a way to understand the animal through metaphor, or perhaps to understand metaphor through the animal. Indeed, she discusses the nature of *the secret*, though she calls it 'the Dream', as a reality that threatens to both maintain itself perfectly as an opaque secret and to reveal its central truth: "it acts as go-between, interpreter, / states economically / in a simple dream-equation / the most profound philosophy" (*TWDNF* 20.8-15).

H.D. envisions *the secret* as an organic, enclosed, physical space; her animals make use of insulating shells that divide an internally continuous state from any environmental influence. The influence of H.D.'s position in World War II is reduplicated and reiterated from multiple perspectives. Alik Barnstone writes, as she contextualizes the scene of poetic creation, that "H.D. wrote *Trilogy* during World War II. She had not left London during the German bombing of the city. "The orgy of destructions... to be witnessed and lived through in London, the outer threat and the constant reminder of death drove me inward" (Pearson qtd. In Barnstone VIII). In H.D.'s personal experience, the experience of traumatic events forces a psychological withdrawal, which manifests in many images of the titular walls, enclosure, isolation, and entrapment. The retreat behind a defensive barrier is simultaneously an autobiographical description and a description, in psychoanalytic terminology, of defense mechanisms. H.D. autobiographically writes that in times of trauma, "there are various ways of trying to escape the inevitable. You can go round and round in circles like the ants under that log that Eric pried up for us. Or your psyche, your soul, can curl up and sleep like those white slugs²¹" (TTF 31). In order to escape the psychological attrition of wartime stress, H.D.'s 'psyche curled up and slept'. She preoccupied herself with the production of *The Walls Do Not Fall* during World War II, using the poetry as escape from the isolation of an environment constantly undergoing bombings. This personal withdrawal and social isolation becomes the autobiographical substance for a defining and ubiquitous attribute of the poem's animals, introspection:

²¹ Slugs, as they relate to the repeated image of the worm, are interesting because they anchor the poetic figure of the worm in autobiographical as well as allegorical spaces. This quote recounts a childhood experience, where H.D. and her brother found a massive quantity of bugs underneath a log that only he was strong enough to shift (TTF 30-1). Further, these worms are described in Ouroborean terms, going "round and round in circles".

we know each other
 by secret symbols,
 though, remote, speechless,
 we pass each other on the pavement
 ... even if we snarl a brief greeting
 or do not speak at all,
 we know our Name." (*TWDNF* 13.13-22)

The animals that H.D. identifies as creative entities (the shellfish, the caterpillar) are notable for their withdrawal into their shells before they are productive; their environments attempt to break their shells down. The shellfish, the worm, the serpent, the birds, and H.D. herself in wartime Britain, will all reiterate the same idea: the secret is held within and must be violently wrested out. The 'violent wresting' applies to multiple layers of the narrative. It represents the bombers, who destroy Britain to reveal its innards; the breaking of the animals' shells; the reading of poetic image and metaphor. Introspective withdrawal is the natural state of *the secret*; its death-state features broken walls and a re-emergence and transformation. The natural state of seclusion, prompted by external violence, is the ultimate source of the reiterated withdrawals that define *The Walls Do Not Fall's* master-metaphor: the requisite for a certain type of artistic expression is fear²², which prompts a "turning inward", then isolation, which offers no external influence, followed by creativity, which populates the empty inward space with creations that are later set free into the external world. She mentions analogous life-

²² In her analysis, the oceanic feeling that her poem strives to reproduce is seen to embody a deeper layer of feeling full of turbulence and destructiveness (Chrisholm 194). This oceanic feeling is mostly clearly conveyed by a prophet in *Trilogy* called Kaspar, when he sees all of time spread laterally before him as he gazes at an imperfection in the pearl-of-great-price (*TFOTR* 31).

cycles between species of animals, but each occurs in its own section of the poem. When she speaks of animals, she deals directly with that species as the focus of the poem: “H.D.’s writing was seen by many as the prototype for imagist verse, which aimed to strip away all but the barest essentials of language and to foreground within the poem ‘the thing itself’—the object to be represented (Connor 4). She sees *the animal* in triplicate potential: it can represent a degenerate state, a comparative state, or an ascendant state. She explicitly figures the degenerate form of war-time humanity as an animal state:

we have seen how the most amiable,
 under physical stress
 become wolves, jackals,
 mongrel curs;
 we know further that hunger
 may make hyenas out of the best of us. (TWNDF 34.1-6)

Here, she draws on the animals to convey wartime humanity as degenerate (under stress, become); of dubious parentage (mongrel); of questionable integrity (curs); and finally as viciously eager to begin war (the laughing hyena). Further, she states that all humanity is apt to degenerate in this manner (out of the best of us). Here, the animal is a natural state that lies dormant in humanity, which we degenerate towards during stress. However, H.D.’s use of shellfish, insect, serpent, and bird are not degenerations from a dormant state but leaps between consciousnesses, an attempt for a human experience to be translated into animal experience and vice versa in the real and the present. Finally, H.D. also implicitly states that the

animal aspect is a portion of the entity²³ which lies at the end-point of human progression. The animal appears in *The Walls Do Not Fall* as a series of metaphors that translate human and animal experience simultaneously into a micro-narrative of creation, which Albert Gelpi calls the parthenogenetic (unfertilized reproduction) self²⁴:

The enclosure is hermetic in a double sense: sealed and magical. The shell becomes an alchemical crucible within which you beget, self-out-of-self, / selfless, / that pearl-of-great-price" (p. 9). So in the course of the poem the hermetic crucible splits in birth, as "my heart-shell/breaks open" (p. 35) to deliver the pearl, the precious oils, the bird, the butterfly—all images of the parthenogenetic self. (Gelpi 177)

A parthenogenetic self is an interesting, if gender restricting, label for what is otherwise simply productivity based on introspection. The animals of *The Walls Do Not Fall* live in cycles; they conceal then reveal themselves as parts of their natural lifecycle. The shellfish opens its shell to feed before closing it again for protection from the ocean's vast weight. The worm eats its way through obstacles before withdrawing into an ostensibly final, catatonic state, which is broken by the eventual hatching of a butterfly. Through disambiguating the worm as a referent by associating the caterpillar with many other types of animals that can be called "worm", H.D. identifies with other animals with a less direct relationship to the concealment-revelation cycle: namely the lamb, the serpent, and various birds. These animals gradually lose their discrete

²³ In *Trilogy*, the Tree of the Sephiroth, which combines the attributes of humans, animals, and religious deities, is this endpoint. The Sephiroth is the entirety of creation after the origin, and is regarded as a figure from the past— (combining mythological locations and people, and ancient gods), the present— (animals, more contemporary gods), and future—(for messianic and revelatory qualities).

²⁴ Though Gelpi's reading of the parthenogenetic drive is good, his attribution of H.D.'s association of woman with creative generality and men with intensive restriction is problematic, and his connection of this generality to the traits of H.D.'s parents (Her mother was Moravian, an artist; her father an astronomer) (Gelpi 177) is presumptuous.

characteristics and bleed together into a fluid poetic metaphor that cross-pollinates between species, to signify a cycle between concealment and revelation in a living, organic context.

The carved sculpture of “the Luxor bee, chick and hare / [which] pursue unalterable purpose / in green, rose-red, lapis; / they continue to prophesy / from the stone papyrus” (*TWDNF* 1.5-9) introduces H.D.’s use of the animal as metaphor. These are the images of animals carved into stone (some into building stone, some into the stone of jewelry). In a symbolic sense, these animal representations are foundational: literally in the case of the inscribed blocks that are used in the buildings of Luxor and figuratively in the case of jewelry, which uses the basis of animal beauty to improve human aesthetics. The animals that H.D. uses are reduced to a state of less-than-real: they are not as much alive as they are preserved skeletal fragments of animals-that-once-were. She conjures images of the animal to use them as symbol and as metaphor; the individual animals themselves are irrelevant to her high-modernist meta-narrative of war’s cyclicity. The stripping away of the animal from the animal-image is made explicit:

pressure on heart, lungs, the brain
 about to burst its brittle case

 (what the skull can endure!): ...
 yet the skeleton stood up to it:

 the flesh? It melted away ...
 yet the frame held. (*TWDNF* 1.34-49)

What remains after the death of the animal is the animal-image, here manifested as the skeleton, that withstands the violence of death and erosion by time, retaining a symbolic

existence past death: “it is caduceus; among the dying / it bears healing: / or evoking the dead, / it brings life to the living” (*TWDNF* 3.5-8). The other animals H.D. mentions represent variations of the relationship of cyclic concealment and revelation to *the secret*. The animal presence is reduced to iterations of life-forms that embody a cycle between concealment and revelation. Five types of animals embody this cycle: the shellfish, the metamorphosing insect, the serpent, the birds, and finally, the lamb. The concept of *the secret* is passed, like a baton, between the animals of the poem, which become the agents which explore the nature of *the secret* and *the truth* opposition in *The Walls Do Not Fall*.

The shellfish, who is introduced as “master-mason planning / the stone marvel” (*TWDNF* 4.9-10), is the primary representation of the concealment-revelation cycle. The selection of the shellfish as the predominant symbol for enclosure is predicated on its clarity as a specimen of the ontological relation between the state of being internal and the state of being external. The shellfish offers an enclosed, hermetically sealed space in which the “amorphous hermit” (*TWDNF* 4.11) abides. H.D. precisely chooses language that shows the shellfish reacting to its environment rather than interacting with it: “like the plant / senses the finite, / it limits its orbit / of being” (*TWDNF* 4.12-15). The shellfish, lacking a brain and having only primitive ganglia, is nonetheless alive and reactive. It has a lack of agency, even over basic principles such as consumption of food: “it unlocks the portals / at stated intervals: / prompted by hunger / it opens to the tideflow” (*TWDNF* 4.17-20). The lack of agency plays an important role in the symbolism of the shellfish: here is the unconscious animal and the animal which is animated by reaction to stimuli independent of rational agency. This life-cycle will later be repeated by more

complex animals, linking the unconscious and the conscious minds in the process by showing that they motivate the organisms in ways which are different but parallel and simultaneous.

The shellfish's internality exists in a state of fearfulness toward coming into contact with externality: "my shell-jaws snap shut / at invasion of the limitless, / ocean-weight; infinite water / can not crack me" (*TWDNF* 4.24-27). The fearfulness demonstrates the dichotomy of known and unknown; the ocean-context scene of the shellfish's environment sustains a psychoanalytic analysis of the conscious and unconscious minds meeting in a brief communication. The ocean here deliberately invokes "the oceanic feeling²⁵", and H.D. uses it to orient the shellfish as a subject (pearl)-within-subject(shellfish): "Freud wrote that Romain Rolland's "oceanic feeling" was a vestige of infancy when the ego was unable to distinguish any object as separate from itself, when the whole universe—internal and external—seemed to be one. The religious experience of Oneness emerges out of the unconscious, re-creating the baby's subjective fusion with the mother" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 72). By using the shellfish lifecycle, an endless cycling between internality and externality, as the machinations of an animal to produce a pearl, H.D. allegorizes a life-cycle as a creative metaphor. She acknowledges that this particular metaphor of shellfish-artist has been done before:

depth of sub-conscious spews forth
 too many incongruent monsters
 and fixed indigestible matter
 such as shell, pearl; imagery

²⁵ Introduced in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud borrows Romain Rolland's 'oceanic feeling' to describe a religious oneness with the universe brought on by feelings of subjective insignificance: "It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded, something "oceanic"" (Freud 1).

done to death."²⁶ (*TWDNF* 32.1-5)

Her prominent display of the shellfish begs the state of concealment-revelation here to be compared to its portrayal in other iterations in the poem to find the secret meaning, or resonance, behind a familiar image²⁷. The shellfish opens its 'shell-jaws' to strain food; occasionally it ingests a grain of sand instead. As a piece of the external environment suddenly become internal, the sand is irritating in the close confines of the shell. Repeated attempts at digestion cover the grain of sand with increasingly rounded layers of mother-of-pearl, creating a pearl with time: "be firm in your own small, static, limited / orbit... / so that, living within, / you beget, self-out-of-self, / selfless / that pearl-of-great-price" (*TWDNF* 4.38-46). This pearl is ostensibly symbolizes the reward for H.D.'s own writing process, but it figures prominently and concretely later in the poem as a constitutive element of the philosopher's stone.

H.D. places the shellfish in the ocean, just as she places the subject inside of itself-namely in its own subconsciousness. This is a biographical choice that strengthens H.D.'s insertion of herself-as-artist into the text under the guise of animals:

If I could visualise or describe that over-mind in my own case, I should say this: it seems to me that a cap [of consciousness] is over my head, affecting a little my eyes.

Sometimes when I am in that state of consciousness, things about me appear slightly blurred as if seen under water... That over-mind seems a cap, like water, transparent, fluid yet with definite body, contained in a definite space. It is a closed sea-plant, jelly-

²⁶ The metaphor of mollusk-as-artist also appears in Marianne Moore's *The Paper Nautilus*, where the pearl is similarly figured as the accidental reward of a withdrawal process.

²⁷ Eventually, the alchemist-magi that functions as the speaker of the poem hears the entire history of the world when listening to a sea shell, implied to be the same as the shell in *TWDNF*, giving him a messianic view of time as a lateral construct (*TFOTR* 33).

fish or anemone. Into that over-mind, thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water.” (*Notes on Thought and Vision* 18-9)

H.D. configures the natural state of her own psyche as an oceanic space, where the clarity of the water surrounding the node of subjectivity, here a cap of consciousness, can be calm or turbulent and threatening. She explains the threatening environment of the withdrawn self in a psychoanalytic space:

[the elixir of life] is yours if you surrender
sterile logic, trivial reason;

so mind dispersed, dared occult lore,
found secret doors unlocked,

floundered, was lost in sea-depth,
sub-conscious ocean where Fish

move two-ways, devour. (*TWDNF* 30.13-20)

The connection with the sub-conscious space has constraints, and H.D. rapidly loses contact even under the best preparatory conditions:

when identity in the depth,
would merge with the best,

octopus or shark rise
from the sea-floor:

illusion, reversion of old values,
oneness lost, madness. (*TWDNF* 30.21-26)

The shark and octopus are vaguely threatening images, to a shellfish at least, and they represent the appearance of concrete, conscious thoughts that threaten the connection with the sub-conscious. As the images concretize, the “oneness” and unity of the connection

between the conscious and the subconscious is lost²⁸. The octopus is also a threatening image because, when harmed, it ejects ink that obscures the environment: “the octopus-darkness / is powerless against [the moon’s] cold immortality” (*TWDNF* 4.32-34), which echoes the escapism offered by using ink as a writing implement: “your stylus is dipped in corrosive sublimate, / how can you scratch out / indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure?” (*TWDNF* 2.25-28).

The speaker also identifies with the plight of ‘the worm’ as it transforms into a butterfly. The worm’s life-cycle inherits the concealment-revelation narrative of the shellfish and functions to bring it to a more consciously motivated state. The insect is a clear agent, with desires as well as reactionary responses. The grassy meadow is the location of the context scene, where the worm travels up a blade of grass, eating as he goes, before entering a cocooned, withdrawn state:

yet the ancient rubrics reveal that
we are back at the beginning:

you have a long way to go,
walk carefully, speak politely

to those who have done their worm-cycle,
for gods have been smashed before.” (*TWDNF* 8.19-24)

H.D. introduces the worm with an attitude of diminutization and derision, but also with reverence—as it represents the decomposition even of gods. Its label as ‘worm’ is non-committal, non-specific, ambiguous and fluid because worm can be morphologically linked to

²⁸ H.D. figures this conversation between unconscious and conscious spaces as the origin of thought: “you would have remained / unmanifest in the dim dimension / where thought dwells, and beyond thought and idea, / their begetter, / Dream, / Vision” (*TWDNF* 11.4-10). She also sees this connection in dream sequences [11],[16], and in explaining the expression of certain innate properties (like the migration instincts of bees (*TFOTR* 7) and geese (*TFOTR* 3)).

the serpent or the dragon. The worm is initially used to reduce the speaker to a weakly dependant state of conscious life before granting it freedom: the caterpillar about to become a butterfly.

The worm is more conscious than the shellfish; it observes and reacts to its environment based on thought and impulse, not merely by reactionary conditioning. This consciousness is the worm's only virtue: "In me (the worm) clearly / is no righteousness, but this-- / persistence" (*TWDNF* 6.13). The worm is conscious of goals, obstacles, and desires, and can conceive of both the difficulty of its task and trajectories by which its trip can be made. In this respect it is dissimilar to the shellfish, which was purely reactionary and at the mercy of its environment. However, it is similar to the shellfish in that it undergoes an analogous concealment-revelation transformation when it metamorphoses into a butterfly. The worm, like the shellfish, is both threatened and nourished by its environment:

I profit
by every calamity;

I eat my way out of it;
gorged on vine-leaf and mulberry,
parasite, I find nourishment: ...

I am yet unrepentant,

for I know how the Lord God
is about to manifest, when I,

the industrious worm,
spin my own shroud. (*TWDNF* 6.23-36)

The worm's withdrawal into its "shroud" is "industrious" rather than cowardly, and it is done with foresight of the revelation of its final form. Therefore the concealment-revelation cycle

exemplified by the shellfish also applies to the insect: it is born as a caterpillar, eats to satiation, then finds a place to construct a chrysalis. Inside the chrysalis is the space of the worm's secret: it is enclosed, perfectly isolated from the environment, and no longer attractive to predators. The worm is biologically reconstituted in this enclosed space, just as it is ontologically reconstituted into a radically different self. The shroud, like the shellfish's shell, cannot remain intact forever. When it breaks, it does so because the creature inside has begun to require external sustenance. The post-shroud insect feels persecuted by its attachment to its old self, and is transformed by abandoning its husk and drying out in the sun: "my old self, wrapped round me, / was shroud ... / peril, strangely encountered, strangely endured, / marks us" (*TWDNF* 13.4-12). When it hatches from its shroud-shell, it is referred to as "the latter-day twice-born / ... dragging the forlorn / husk of self after us, / ... we pull at this dead shell, / struggle but we must wait / till the new Sun dries off / the old-body humours" (*TWDNF* 14.1-10). The dual reference of "twice-born" and the personified "Sun" (wordplay referring to the Son of God) draws attention back to the worm's virtue through persistence, even in the face of death. The worm is an allegory of Christ, though his tale has individualised importance as well; each worm has its own path even while operating under a pattern: "and anyhow, / we have not crawled so very far / up our individual grass-blade / toward our individual star" (*TWDNF* 14.29-32). The metamorphosis of the worm sustains readings of the worm as individual "in me (the worm)"; as poet; as the precursor to insects distinct from the butterfly; and finally to the serpent or dragon. The meadow context scene (*TWDNF* 14) describes the worm as an individualized creation story. Alternatively, H.D. sees the worm as a moniker for the poet whose equally introspective job forces a creative truth into a state of contrived secrecy: "I know, I feel

/ the meaning that words hide; / they are anagrams, cryptograms, / little boxes, conditioned / to hatch butterflies..." (TWDNF 39.5-9). Here, the breaking of a word's secrecy by interpreting its poetic meaning releases *the secret*, which is manifested by hatching butterflies. The poet's role of introspection and secrecy is again addressed in examples of animals, similar to the creation of the pearl in the shellfish sections. The nominal connection between the caterpillar, the earthworm, and the serpent provokes discussion of the symbol which represents them concurrently: the worm of cyclicity, Ouroboros. The figure of the serpent which eats its own tail is an ancient symbol of cyclicity, and the constant mentions of the worm in *Trilogy* lend credence to a hermeneutic that assumes a cyclical viewpoint of time. The Ouroborean connection is introduced by mention of the Oracle at Delphi²⁹, a priestly tradition that commemorates Apollo's slaying of the dragon *Python*^{30 31} with a yearly prophetic ritual. When H.D. says "so, through our desolation, / thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us / through gloom: ... / the Pythian pronounces—we pass on" (TWDNF, [1.19-27]), she prophesizes that war is eternal, recurrent, and cyclical. The alliance H.D. proclaims here with prophecy links the events of the present to causative agents in the past, which thereby forecasts similar events into the future. The figure of the Oracle at Delphi returns in the last book of *Trilogy*, where she observes the present day destruction of London and projects the destruction of cities into the future:

²⁹ H.D. viewed Delphi as the crystallization of human creativity, inspiration, and magic: "with Freud, H.D. developed her own theory that the unconscious is the Delphi of the mind, the wellspring of art and religion" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 70).

³⁰ An analogous battle takes place between Zeus and Typhos (a monstrous serpent-dragon), which is the culmination of the Titanomachia. H.D. makes reference to this event: "so many stood and watched /.../ the battle of the Titans, / saw Zeus' thunderbolts in action / and how from giant hands, / the lightning shattered earth / and splintered sky" (TTTA 6.5-12).

³¹ From the greek *pythein* for rot (OED). Python lends his name to a modern day class of serpents.

It is no madness to say
 you will fall, you great cities,
 (now the cities lie broken);
 it is not tragedy, prophecy
 from a frozen Priestess,
 a lonely Pythoness." (*TFOTR* 10.1-6)

The two mentions of the priestess, one looking back in time and one looking forward, show the recycled events of a cyclic history.

The birds offer a threat to the animals of *Trilogy*, even in their enclosed states. The worm's progress is measured initially by its ability to evade predation by birds: "In me (the worm) / ... [is] persistence; I escaped spider-snare, / bird-claw, scavenger bird-beak" (*TWDNF* 14.21-28). The bird-as-bomber develops into an implied master-metaphor for a psychopompic agent of both death and creation. The worm sees the threat of the bird as omnipotent if not omnipresent: "O, do not look up / into the air, / you who are occupied / in the bewildering... / you will be, not so much frightened / as paralysed with inaction" (*TWDNF* 14.21-28). Further, H.D. speaks to the terror of having a bomber fly overhead³²:

strange texture, a wing covered us,
 and though there was whirr and roar in the high air,
 there was a Voice louder,
 though its speech was lower
 than a whisper. (*TWDNF* 12.12-16)

³² Poem [12] of *TWDNF* orients the speaker as H.D. herself in London during the bombings. The reading of bomber-as-bird is speculative but seemingly appropriate.

The duality of voices here suggests the powerful voice of the threatening bomber being overpowered by a nearly inaudible call, recalling the persistence of the worm which directs it onward in the face of calamity.

The bird is also figured as a reiteration of the concealment and the revelation cycle. The phoenix presents the bird-as-threat and the bird-as-bomber, combining aspects of fire³³ and flight. The phoenix, also called the bennu-bird (*TWDNF* 25), lives an immortal, self-perpetuating life-cycle that features an immolation and rebirth ritual that H.D. likens to a firebombed city. When the bombers pass over, the city is covered in “apocryphal fire” (*TWDNF* 1.37). This fire is both the burning of a sacrifice:

though long ago, the phoenix,
your bennu bird

dropped a grain,
as of scalding wax;

there was fragrance, burnt incense, (*TWDNF* 25.6-9)

and the burning of a mutually destructive and creative fire that destroys in order to make space for something new. Interestingly, the bennu-bird ‘drops a grain’, whose presence ignites the fire and begins the creative cycle in a destructive act; this occurrence recalls the grain of sand which irritates the shellfish into productivity. The bird, with its threatening presence, symbolizes the violent action the environment can exert on the subject. The bird is why the poet, the worm, and even the shellfish withdraw to their cocooned, introspective, creative

³³ Fire is a prominent image in *Trilogy*. The syncretic god that becomes an important narrative element is partially comprised of Amun-Ra, the Egyptian god of the Sun, and a burning Christ. H.D. and her companions are established as “companions / of the flame” (*TWDNF* 13.25-26]) with respect to their spirituality in the midst of war. Further, the bombings are likened to “Apocryphal fire” (*TWDNF* 1.37).

state; they only re-emerge, to instant vulnerability, when the autonomous situation becomes unsustainable. Though the birds catalyze creativity, they also mete out destruction in a messianic, punitive manner. It is unsurprising that H.D. conceived of flight as having the potentiality for either good or evil, as she morally inflects the process of flight (either as redemptive or destructive) by describing the avian with certain characteristics:

My bat-like thought wings would beat painfully in the sudden searchlight. Or reversely, other wings (gull or skylark) that seemed about to take me right out of the lower levels of the commonplace would find themselves beating in the confined space of a wicker cage, or useless under the mesh of a bird net. (TTF 30)

H.D.'s own flight (here as metaphor for thinking) is monstrous and batlike, though she conceives birdlike thoughts which have benevolent potential.

The animal of perhaps the greatest significance to the narrative of *Trilogy* is the lamb. H.D. uses the lamb as a significant donor of attributes to the syncretic 'god of creation'. The lamb is described as a physical animal, as well as the Christ of Revelation: "now my right hand, / now my left hand / clutch your curled fleece; take me home, take me home, / ... / yet I am a spark / struck by your hook from a rock: / Amen, you are so warm, / hide me in your fleece" (*TWDNF* 22.1-11). The proclamation "I am the alpha and the omega" (Revelation 22:13) is the source of H.D.'s "I am the first or the last / of a flock or a swarm" (*TFOTR* 8.2-3), where the apocalyptic messiah is iterated in his pastoral flock image. The lamb appears peaceful in his Alpha iteration, where he represents birth. In his Omega iteration he manifests as Aries the Ram: "till the Lord Amen, / paw-er of the ground, / bearer of the curled horns, / bellows from the horizon: / here

am I, Amen-Ra, / Amen, Aries, the Ram / ... here am I, Amen-Ra whispers, / Amen, Aries, the Ram, / be cocoon, smothered in wool, / be Lamb, mothered again” (TWDNF 21.3-16). This is a reinterpretation of Beginning and End as Birth and War, respectively. The Lamb becomes the Ram very quickly, but just as quickly is defused back into the Lamb. The Ram, despite its self-aggrandizement and posturing, changes from “bellowing [here am I] from the horizon” (TWDNF 21.6-7) to “here am I, Amen-Ra whispers, Amen, Aries, the Ram” (TWDNF 21.7-8). The cycle of bellowing and whispering mimics the cyclicity of war and peace, and the ram is destroyed and reconstituted cyclically: “time, time for you to being a new spiral, / see—I toss you into the star-whirlpool” (TWDNF 21.9-10).

Trilogy examines the relation between the encryption of the written word, “but if you do not even understand what words say, / how can you expect to pass judgement / on what words conceal? / yet the ancient rubrics reveal that / we are back at the beginning” (TWDNF 8.16-20), to hide *the secret*, and the deciphering of that same word for a momentary and ephemeral glimpse of *the truth* lurking within it. She offers a way to access *the secret*, but only through acts of violence that destroy the secrecy of the protected truth in order to expose it. War forces the loss of secrecy and exposure of truth, “this is the age of the new dimension, / dare, seek, seek further, dare more, / here is the alchemist’s key, / it unlocks secret doors, /.../ the elixir of life, the philosopher’s stone / is yours if you surrender / sterile logic, trivial reason” (TWDNF 30.7-15), but only briefly. *The truth* is ephemeral, and as it is experienced it disappears back into *the secret*: “Wistfulness, exaltation, / a pure core of burning cerebration, / jottings on a margin, / indecipherable palimpsest scribbled over / with too many contradictory emotions /.../ illusion, reversion of old values, / oneness lost, madness” (TWDNF 31.1-28). The tension

between the responsibility of the poet to convey *the truth* and the impossibility of the selfsame task leads H.D. to incorporate the concealment-revelation cycle in each symbol across *Trilogy*.

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Part II. Revelation

i. Midrash and Syncretism

Midrash is a story told to explain a scriptural story in greater detail and clarity, which serves to disambiguate the complex theological systems in the source text. *Trilogy* presents itself as a narrative written for the purpose of inserting a feminine moiety into the Jesus narrative of the previously masculine Christian religion. This requires calling on all masculine and all feminine traditions of religion to syncretize on an equal basis into the final book of *Trilogy*, which focuses on the Christian stories of Christ's life and his role in the Book of Revelation. A Midrashic text is a connection between the social and cultural consciousness and subconsciousness of the text itself: H.D. believes it is possible to communicate with theology through a text if you know what to look for. First, a documentation of the syncretisms of Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, and finally British locations will serve to revisit and to explain the physical location of the New Jerusalem. Then, the syncretisms of various mythological father-gods will be explored and documented in order to synthesize H.D.'s father-god as the Omega half of Christ in Revelation. Next, the syncretisms of various mythological mother-goddesses will be explored and documented in order to synthesize H.D.'s mother-goddess as the Alpha half of Christ in Revelation. The two halves of Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, find a symbolic

joining in the two halves of the burnt but living tree in *The Tribute to the Angels*. Finally, an exploration of two syncretic prophets, one male and based on Kaspar, one female and based on Mary Magdalene, will tell a Midrashic story of the Nativity, the Transfiguration, and will find integration and closure in Revelation. H.D. explains the quest of *Trilogy* to be the experience of the Book of Revelation, finding the New Jerusalem through the trial of war. She states this in sister poems [2],[3] in the final third of *Trilogy, The Flowering of the Rod*:

I go where I love and where I am loved
into the snow;

I go to the things I love
with no thought of duty or pity;

I go where I belong, inexorably (*TFOTR* 2.1-5)

...

Who still (they say) hover
over the lost island, Atlantis;
seeking what we once knew,
we know ultimately we will find
happiness; to-day shalt though be
with me in Paradise (*TFOTR* 3.22-26)

Although the narrative of Revelation is largely adapted, modifications and departures establish the tale as a revisionist Midrash. The perfect binary of male/female that occurs in Revelation's marriage of the Lamb and the New Jerusalem occurs, but only as the penultimate climax. In *Trilogy*, the two entities are then fused into a final androgyne, as if the simultaneous analog-narratives of male and female combination are alchemical processes that yield a singular and

unified product. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Hebrew histories are syncretized into the environment where rituals of productivity produce various alchemist's stones. In *A Tribute to Angels*, the alchemist's stones are used to describe the New Jerusalem, and the most important alchemist's stone (Mary's myrrh) finds its way to the nativity. *The Flowering of the Rod* is the syncretism of the people, mythologies, and events of the first two books of *Trilogy*, interpreted and recast as a Midrash of the Christian resurrection story. The discussion will navigate ancient texts, historical episodes, and will be focused on literary Arcanum, but the final product seeks to use *Trilogy* to speak timelessly about the nature of secrecy and revelation in terms that maintain contemporary freshness.

The Midrashic stories, though they depart from the original scriptural writings by interpreting, interpolating, and retelling them, are not secular; Midrash maintains the theology of the source materials and seeks to explain or expound it. H.D.'s *Trilogy* can be productively read as a Midrash of various ancient scriptures and their associated mythological systems, all of which are pulled into the setting of World War II era London in order to revisit the old scriptures with fresh, contemporary settings. By pulling the events and people of ancient scriptures into the present and conflating times and locations, a cyclical view of time and human endeavour is developed as a narrative assumption in the poem. I show that *Trilogy* can be read as a Midrash of Revelation that describes H.D.'s revision of the marriage of the Lamb (as a father god) to the New Jerusalem (as a mother god). Both the Lamb and the New Jerusalem of H.D.'s poem are revisionary figures who have absorbed the mythos of other ancient cultures to be synthesized into syncretic amalgams. As such, their presence in *Trilogy* is

slightly different from their presence in Revelation, as H.D.'s syncretisms serve to reconcile different but related mythologies into the framework of Revelation.

Portions of *Trilogy* serve as a guide toward reading the text as a Midrash. Again, in the passage where H.D. apostrophizes the reader (*TWDNF* 38), she directs the reader to compare the similarities and differences in intentions of author and reader. This directs a reading process which has the potential to benefit the literary canon by reinterpreting ancient texts through Midrashic exploration:

This search for historical parallels,
 research into psychic affinities,
 has been done to death before,
 will be done again;
 no comment can alter spiritual realities
 (you say) or again
 what new light can you possibly throw upon them?
 my mind (yours)
 your way of thought (mine),
 each has its particular intricate map,
 threads weave over and under
 the jungle-growth
 of biological aptitudes,
 inherited tendencies,
 the intellectual effort of the whole race (*TWDNF* 38.1-17)

This quotation, which was earlier used to defend literary secrecy, can also be seen to offer the Midrashic mindset as a flipside for potential productivity. It ultimately establishes a text as a document that is both secretive and revelatory, both dead (static and frozen in time) and alive (begging for reinterpretation). The mention of historical parallels, which H.D. orients in the ruins of ancient Luxor and contemporary Britain, is a productive idea that allows discussion of events of the past-present-future to occur in simultaneity for ease of comparison. Historical parallels allow the reader to interpolate the similarities of the present into discussions of past or, inversely, to pull the past into the present. By seeing the past as a fluid, continuous presence that can be pulled into the present in order to demonstrate an idea, H.D. supports a Midrashic approach to her poetry. The product of this Midrashic approach is to provide the reader with a “particular intricate map”, coded and informed by the “jungle-growth of biological aptitudes and inherited tendencies” and conditioned by their environment, which will ultimately contradict, or offer salvation from, H.D.’s claim that

we are voyagers, discoverers of the not-known,
 the unrecorded;
 we have no map;
 possibly we will reach haven,
 heaven. (*TWDNF* 43.27-32)

The map whose absence is lamented so heavily at the end of the first section of *Trilogy* is the map that is formed by combining individual experience with social and historical relevance—the interpolation of subjective experience into the interpretation of an ancient text by route of Midrash. H.D. simultaneously acknowledges the hopeless wandering of the individual through

a discrete life, and the highly ordered place of that same individual in the human collective consciousness. The writing of a text like *Trilogy*, then, is “the intellectual effort / of the whole race” (*TWDNF* 38.16-17) which constitutes its referential substrates. These substrates are the ancient texts that H.D. refers to in order to orient the text in the past, the present, and the future simultaneously.

When H.D. asks “what new light can you possibly / throw upon them?” (*TWDNF* 38.7-8), she challenges the reader to unpack the clichéd or tired images that appear in the poem with the deliberate effort of placing them in a greater context, or revitalizing their poetic resonances to break cliché. To dwell on cliché is appropriate, because H.D. does, too: “this search... has been done to death before, / will done again” (*TWDNF* 38.1-4), where she acknowledges the human drive to revisit the past and its imagery in order to solve the problems of the present. In an archeological sense, which is appropriate due to the discussion of Egypt’s open-air tombs at Luxor (*TWDNF*, [1], 1), this encourages the interpretation of *Trilogy* with constant reference to the older texts from which it is derived. *Trilogy*, which uses these ancient texts, becomes a Midrashic experiment that makes references to ancient literature in order to manipulate the narratives of the sources.

ii. The *Word* and the *Sword*

Early in *Trilogy*, H.D. introduces the *Word* and the *Sword* as binarized but related forces which help to introduce her Midrash of Revelation. The *Word* and *Sword* are not

etymologically³⁴ linked, though they are both descended from the Proto-Germanic language group and, therefore, are related by family. Beyond the simple morphological relation between the words, they are also related as a physical family:

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. (TWDNF 10.11-16)

In the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament, the birthright of the eldest son (appropriate, as H.D. refers to them as brothers) carries powerful inheritance and responsibility. The family's wealth is passed into the care of the eldest son, guaranteeing a future for the family name. By stressing that birthright determines fate, H.D. confirms the Hebrew tradition of favoritism toward the first and eldest son, who receives a doubled share of the inheritance, leaving the remainder to be split amongst the younger siblings. In the Old Testament birthright is fought over in many cases (famously by Jacob and Esau³⁵). The treatment of inheritance between brothers here sets the stage for a Midrashic exploration of Hebrew birthrights as they appear in Genesis. In general terms, the relation between brothers largely validates the Hebrew tradition where the eldest brother is rewarded: in *Trilogy*, the elder Word triumphs over the younger

³⁴ Old English word "speech, talk, utterance, sentence, statement, news, report, word," from Proto-Germanic *wurdan (etymonline.com); Old High German sweran "to hurt," from *swertha-, literally "the cutting weapon" (*OED*)

³⁵ Essau trades his birthright for a bowl of stew when he is famished and Jacob eagerly makes the trade, swindling his older brother out of his larger inheritance.

Sword, despite the Sword's apparent strength—manifested through the state of war—at the time of writing. The Sword is not merely younger; it is also dependent upon and indebted to the Word for its very existence:

Without thought, invention,
you would not have been, O Sword,

Without idea and the Word's mediation,
you would have remained

Unmanifest in the dim dimension
where thought dwells. (*TWDNF 11.1-6*)

This quotation establishes the Word as the creative force behind the Sword. The Sword cannot exist without the word, both literally—in that extracting 'word' from 'sword' leaves a meaningless 's'³⁶—and figuratively in that the word (as physical representation of an abstract thought) was a necessary precursor to the production of a concrete, tangible item. H.D.'s reasoning here draws upon Neoplatonic systems of thought, where the tangible materials of an object are coupled to a platonic idea-ideal of the object. Here, the Sword is the personification of ideological conflicts, which lead to physical conflicts. This personification is given its tangible shape and reality by the strength of the *Word*, without which it would remain "unmanifest in the dim dimension [of thought]", an abstract, murky territory of thought-without-form in its perfect platonic sense. The *Sword* then functions as the conflict between two or more systems

³⁶ This morphological remnant could be associated with the serpent, which H.D. figures as the wisdom born of injury.

of *Word-at-conflict*, precipitating the linguistic conflict which H.D. previously evolved into a palimpsest.

The *Word* and the *Sword* are not H.D.'s invention; her use and comparison of the two borrows from the two halves of Christ in the Book of Revelation. As such, when H.D. sets the Word and Sword in opposition to each other, she develops a Midrashic story which explains how the Alpha and Omega halves of Christ tie the creative acts of Genesis and John 1:1 to the destruction of Revelation. In Revelation, the Lamb addresses John of Patmos, through a "great voice, as of a trumpet" (Revelation, 1.1, 10), "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches" (Revelation, 1.1, 11). The two halves of Christ, here Alpha and Omega, refer to his creative and destructive states: his first iteration (as creator, in Genesis), and his last iteration (as destroyer, in Revelation). The first, the Alpha, recalls "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John, 1:1). Here, the Word represents God's first act of creation which orders the chaos of non-being into tangible forms of being. It is the true act of creation which embodies Christ as God in a single material body, where otherwise "you would have remained / unmanifest in the dim dimension / where thought dwells" (TWDNF 11.2-6). The dim dimension is the chaos of pre-creation, and the thought that dwells in it is the essence of the bodiless creative God. The last, the Omega, recalls "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Revelation, 1:16). Here, Christ appears as Omega, the destroyer with a double-edged sword protruding from his mouth. The placement of the sword in the mouth is

telling, as it symbolically occupies the territory of the tongue. The Omega has symbolically substituted the tongue—the vital communicative organ—for the double-edged sword of violence. The violence of Revelation is well indicated by this substitution of sword-for-tongue; however, as H.D. reminds us, “your Triumph, however exultant, / must one day be over” (*TWDNF* 10.13-14).

The power of the Word is therefore inexorably linked to the power of the Sword; they are the two halves of a single omniscient entity. As such, they are locked in a constant zero-sum struggle for expression as they guide the hand of Revelation’s Christ. There are many instances of violence toward the word, which expound their binarized relationship:

though our books are a floor
of smouldering ash under our feet;

Though the burning of books remains
the most perverse gesture...

Yet give us, they still cry,
give us books,

Folio, manuscript, old parchment
will do for cartridge cases;

Irony is bitter truth
wrapped up in a little joke,

And Hatshepsut’s name is still circled
with what they call the *cartouche*. (*TWDNF* 9.3-16)

This quotation further expounds the zero-sum relationship of the Word and Sword, where they exist not only as binarized concepts, but concepts actively at odds with each other. She also uses a word’s etymology to influence the interpretation of associations: the shared etymology

of cartouche and cartridge³⁷ reinforces the connection of Word and Sword. The use of inscribed paper in the manufacture of cartridge cases is a clear incorporation of the Word (writing) into the Sword (bomb cases). The cartouche is a formal border written around the name of royalty in Egyptian hieroglyphics; as such, it is a pictogram of concealment because it forms a wall around the name, sealing it off from the rest of the world. It subordinates the name to the role, placing the nomenclatural importance on the station or office that the individual occupies, more than the individual herself. The perversity of the act is a symbolic perversity, which seeks to de-scribe or unmake the lessons of the past. As writing and reading are direct connections with the past, the burning of a book is the symbolic destruction of the past, and an effacement of the god-prophet Hermes Trismegistus.

HD sees warfare as the inevitable culmination of tensions between the Word and the Sword. The desire to overwrite history, to inscribe the new over the old, is the urge to let violence overpower reason. As Alike Barnstone writes in her introduction to *Trilogy*,

[H.D.] brings together the old and the new, the scientific and the pragmatic, and the esoteric and mystical. The differences between peoples—especially their religious differences—ignite war. *Trilogy* shows that differences are also similarities or affinities that, with enlightenment, can ignite love rather than war, creation rather than destruction—and resurrection out of Apocalypse. (Intro IX)

³⁷ “H.D. manages to take some small comfort in the bitter joke wrapped up in the pun “cartouche”: for her contemporaries, it might mean a gun cartridge with a paper case, but she knows that it once signified the oblong figure in an Egyptian monument enclosing a sovereign’s name” (Gubar 304-5).

The view that differences can ignite war is omnipresent in *Trilogy*, and the addition of differences in language leading to war should also be added as addendum to Barnestone's argument. The lack of communication between different linguistic groups leads to a segmented rather than unified human existence, with factions vying against each other to preserve cultural uniqueness (predicated on linguistic uniqueness) and strive against homogeneity. As such, the burning of books is an effacement of linguistic uniqueness, and the symbolic destruction of the magic that words conceal. Barnestone's claim that these differences also can ignite love is over-emphasized, especially when H.D. states that she has found, over love a new master:

Never was my mind stirred
to such rapture,

my heart moved
to such pleasure,

as now, to discover
over love, a new Master...

He is Mage,
bringing myrrh. (*TWDNF* 5.3-18)

Insofar as Love is required for rebuilding the New Jerusalem out of the ruins of war, her statement works. However, in *Trilogy*, there is an over-arching consciousness that demands a cyclic nature between war and rebuilding. It is erroneous to weigh Love as the more important half of the cycle—both halves are equally necessary.

iii. Withdrawal and Alchemy

As Barnestone suggests, the segmentation of the Word into non-communicative language groupings forecasts and causes conflict between the segmented groups. The Sword and Word are ultimately locked in a mutually destructive and regenerative combat. This conflict is the Ouroborean³⁸ worm-cycle of rebirth which is a prominently featured archetype in the poem. War is a necessary evil, but it is ultimately subservient to the older Word; a new fertile creative impulse emerges from the ashes of war. For H.D., this creative impulse led to an introspective explosion, where self-deprecating rages against the immediate utility of writing:

Poets are useless,
 More than that,
 we, authentic relic,
 Bearers of the secret wisdom,
 living remnant
 Of the inner band
 of the sanctuaries' initiate,
 Are not only 'non-utilitarian',
 we are 'pathetic' (*TWDNF* 8.5-14)

are coupled to placid reminders of its immortal utility:

so what good are your scribblings?
 this—we take them with us
 Beyond death; Mercury, Hermes, Thoth
 invented the script, letters, palette;
 The indicated flute or lyre-notes
 on papyrus or parchment

³⁸ H.D. did not see Jung, and there is no real indication that she read him either, despite the fact that she lived quite close to him in Vienna during her sessions with Freud. The Ouroborean linkage is thematically appropriate, however, as the myth of the world-serpent is ancient and cross-cultural, and she uses the Worm as a symbol of regeneration through destruction, the same conception as Ouroboros as self-devourer.

Are magic, indelibly stamped. (*TWDNF* 10.3-9)

The Word is, therefore, simultaneously creative, immortalizing, and profoundly misunderstood. The inability for many perceivers to unpack the magic in the Word indicates the power behind the arcane preparations of the binding process more so than it indicates a problem with the actual attentions of the readership. H.D. addresses this inability to understand the power of the word when she writes

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?
 Yet the ancient rubrics reveal that
 we are back at the beginning. (*TWDNF* 8.15-20)

The interpretation of these writings in code, with the deliberate idea of concealment and obstructed meanings that must be unpacked, is identified here as the way to recover the true-path back to Wisdom. These examples of words that hide interpretive richness draw on associative values that are inherently intertwined with syncretism: the combination of individual pieces leads to the potential for dramatic revision of meaning. This new approach to manipulated language has a magical aspect to it, showing how the “secret doors [are] unlocked” in the “sub-conscious ocean where Fish / move two-ways, devour” (*TWDNF* 30.19-20). The fish that devour are the easiest and most obvious associations, and the fish that are devoured are the hidden meanings and associations that lend the concept its richness. The fish that moves two ways evokes the Janus-faced god “but gods always face two-ways, / so let us

search the old highways, / for the true-rune, the right-spell, / recover old values" (*TWDNF* 2.13-16). Here, the fish that face two ways are words that combine an archaic definition with contemporary relevance, escaping the one-way linearity of time. They, like Janus, face forwards and backwards, able to see the revealed and the hidden, the past and future simultaneously. Some words open their shells and allow the environment in, becoming agitated enough by the intrusion to produce a pearl; some words spin an introspective cocoon and later emerge as remade butterflies. The conspiratorially concealed word, when unpacked, hatches a syncretic butterfly of new meaning that combines constitutive elements of all its sources. The justification for concealed meanings appeals to the ancient process of writing that pre-dates even the pantheon of gods that are not associated with the original acts of universal creation:

yet the ancient rubrics reveal that
 we are back at the beginning:
 you have a long way to go,
 walk carefully, speak politely
 to those who have done their worm-cycle,
 for gods have been smashed before
 and idols and their secret is stored
 in man's very speech. (*TWDNF* 8.19-26)

Language is alive and has a longer lifespan than a mortal; in H.D.'s view it is the true immortal, having witnessed and survived the death of entire pantheons of gods. H.D. uses words with concealed elements to smash and reorganize the gods to her purposes (linking the shared ancestry of divinities, magic, and writing), just as the war raging about her tried to smash and

reform the contemporary world. The wordplay of *Trilogy* becomes an omnipresence of alchemical manipulation: H.D. as author transmutes various textual and cultural inspirations into syncretic wholes, providing general guidance in which directions to look to parse them back out, but not doing the work for the reader. H.D.'s actions in the text are like that of her prophet Hermes Trismegistus; she writes her alchemical knowledge in *Trilogy's* cryptic text, just as he does in his cryptic *Hermetica*, and passes the text on to the readers of the poem who act as acolytes of her syncretic vision. The poet who transcends time acts as ancient rune-maker, binding magic in morphemes in the tradition of Thoth and Hermes: "enigmas, / rubrics promise as before, / protection for the scribe; / he takes precedence of the priest, / stands second only to the Pharaoh" (*TWDNF* 8.29-32).

The poet who conflates present and past links the word with time-transcending symbolism, evoking the runic properties of ancient words that shared their origin in magic and language. The runic potential of crafted language entombs a magic property in words that is accessible with an acute understanding of the poet's deliberate concealment. The recombination or juxtaposition of words radically changes their extrapolative meaning by infusing each with an aspect of the other. The new word becomes both reflective and self-reflexive, 'magically' evoking a new identity that is more than the sum-total of the individual components. This new meaning may not be obviously present in the component parts; a degree of interpretive license, creativity, and education are required, and the material of *Trilogy* welcomes subjective readings. Inside the concealed word lies:

[an] age of new dimension...
 the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone
 is yours if you surrender
 sterile logic, trivial reason;
 so mind dispersed, dared occult lore,
 found secret doors unlocked. (TWDNF 30.7-17)

This quotation amounts to a direct challenge to the reader of *Trilogy*: alchemical and Hermetic lores can be uncovered by comparing syncretic analogs of related mythologies. When one revisits an ancient text with this mindset, the resulting interpretation is Midrashic, seeking to explain the story of the text with interpolated cross-reference.

iv. Syncretizing the Mother

The creator has different nomenclature in different parts of the Bible. In Genesis, the act of creation goes as follows: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the water. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light" (Genesis 1:1). In the Gospel of John, the act of creation is as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Finally, in Revelation, the previously discussed "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8) is the account of creation. These are three accounts of the act of creation that use three different names for the agent of creation: God in Genesis, the Word in John, and the Alpha in Revelation. H.D. offers her own agent of creation; a revisionary female mother-goddess that re-genders Revelation's

Alpha to provide a female counterpart to the male Omega. H.D.'s revisionist Alpha is not a single character or entity, but a syncretic amalgam of various mother-goddesses from Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, and Roman mythologies. The syncretisms are noted where H.D. refers to a person, event, or location as "the first" or "the creator".

H.D. explicitly addresses the problem of syncretising the Alpha-half of Christ with lesser gods when she tells a Midrashic story centered on the first of the Ten Commandments that Moses delivered to the tribes of Israel in Exodus:

Thou shalt have none other gods but me;
 not on the sea
 Shall we entreat Triton or Dolphin,
 not [on the land or in the sky]
 Shall we cry
 for help—or shall we? (*TWDNF* 37.1-14)

This quotation denounces Jove's jealous doctrine of protective monotheism and substitutes H.D.'s polytheistic syncretism. She invokes the Decalogue ironically by disobeying the first commandment and referring to Love as the creator:

let us, therefore (though we do not forget
 Love, the Creator,
 Her chariot and white doves),
 entreat Hest,
 Aset, Isis, the great enchantress,
 in her attribute of Serqet,
 The original great-mother. (*TWDNF* 34.7-13)

The goddess Love refers to the Greek Aphrodite, who was born out of sea-form when Cronus castrated Oranos³⁹ and hurled the excision into the sea. This myth appropriately addresses H.D.'s method of re-gendering the god of creation, as the tyrannical male god is becomes the female god, symbolically removing the 'sting' of subordination (Serqet's attribute is the power to heal the sting of the serpent). H.D. orders the entreatment of Hest, Aset, Isis and Serqet in conjunction with the mention of Love⁴⁰. H.D. also draws Venus (*TTTA 10*), as the Roman iteration of Aphrodite and Astarte, into the syncretism in order to make morphological relations which will be later discussed. Hest, likely H.D.'s truncation of the Greek Hestia⁴¹, is a virginal goddess of the hearth that contrasts to Aphrodite's sexuality.

The Creator-Goddess trope is developed by constant referrals to female mythological characters, which create order out of chaos. Like Aphrodite, who was born out of an act of violence, the Egyptian mother-goddess Isis is responsible for re-ordering and reincarnating the chaotic state of Osiris' butchered body. Isis was born to the sky goddess Nut and the earth god Geb, notably and interestingly in the exact same conditions as the first events of creation in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty" (Genesis 1:1). H.D. refers to Isis' secret:

recover the secret of Isis,
which is: there was One

³⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*. The most popular version of Aphrodite's birth myth.

⁴⁰ Aset, also referred to as Astarte, "was a Phoenician goddess of fertility, corresponding to earlier Babylonian Ishtar and later Greek Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. In Assyrian-Babylonian art she caresses a child whom she holds in her left hand" (Barnestone, Readers' Notes 174).

⁴¹ Hestia is another goddess created by Cronus, though this time through union with Rhea.

In the beginning, Creator,
Fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever

In the papyrus-swamp
in the Judean meadow. (*TWDNF* 40.19-24)

Isis' secret is her synonymy to the Alpha, the beginning, the original act of creation, to which Osiris, her husband, is largely credited⁴². Albert Gelpi reads the blurred lines between Osiris and Isis as a deep thematic link between the two that suggests co-definition or redundancy: "The play on "O-sir-is or O-Sire-is" fuses the names of Osiris and his sister-wife Isis in a cyclic pattern of death and rebirth which constitutes the recurrent manifestation of "the One in the beginning"" (Gelpi 182). The child of Isis and Osiris is Horus, the falcon-headed god of the Sun, War, and protection. Horus serves as the source-myth that was adopted and adapted, over time, into the Christian figure of Jesus. Horus, and therefore Jesus, serves as both the blood-connection and the symbolic connection between the mother-goddess of creation and the father-god of destruction.

The creative Goddess of Love is intimately associated with the sea. H.D. draws this association from mythological synchronicities, as described above, but also from astrological cross-references which are predicated on the life and death cycles of the Sun (which will later be associated with the father-god):

Venus, Aphrodite, Astarte,
Star of the east,
star of the west,

⁴² "Isis gathered the fourteen pieces, sewed them together, and then [Osiris] was resurrected into life. Osiris was seen as the culmination of the creative forces of nature and eternal life and therefore the world father, father of past aeons" (Barnestone, *Readers' Notes* 178).

Phosphorus at sun-rise,
Hesperus at sun-set. (TTA 10.10-14)

It is notable here that the visibility of the mother goddess is controlled by the position of the Sun. She is most visible when the sun is setting, and is called "Hesperus" instead of "Venus". The connection between the visibility of the mother-goddess and the retreat below the horizon of the Sun is further reiterated by a passage in which H.D. makes morphological manipulations to relate the sea to Venus to Mary:

now polish the crucible
and set the jet of flame

Under, till marah-mar
are melted, fuse and join

And change and alter,
mer, mere, mere, mater, maia, mary

Star of the Sea,
Mother. (TTA 8.1-14)

In this quotation, the morphological relations between "mer, mere, mere, mater, maia, mary"⁴³ allow them to act as substrates in an alchemical reaction at the hands of Hermes Trismegistus. They are placed inside a crucible, a container for chemical reactions, and reacted so as to combine their essences into a single syncretic product. The syncretic product is a failed experiment, yielding a "bitter, bitter jewel / in the heart of the bowl" with an "unsatisfied

⁴³ Fritz analyzes this syncretism: "lyric 8, a sentence of fourteen short lines, brings together the associations of the name Mary. The Hebrew "mar," meaning brine, and "mor," meaning "bitter," are associated with "marah" (bitterness) and the Latin "mare" (sea) and "mater" mother. The bitterness of the sea is equated with the archetypal symbol of the seas as mother, derived from the sea-mother goddess" (Fritz 103).

duality" (*TTTA* 9.1-2). The alchemical process is restarted before it is complete, because the name Venus is corrupted with Venerly:

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

 For suddenly we saw your name
 desecrated; knaves and fools

 Have done you impious wrong,
 Venus, for venerly stands for impurity

 and Venus as desire
 is venereous, lascivious" (*TTTA* 11.1-8)

The resulting Jewel is corrupt: it contains 'venerly' in the place of 'Venus', creating a gem that evokes the Whore of Babylon rather than Woman Clothed in the Sun⁴⁴. The Whore of Babylon appears as the seducer of Revelation, who accrues a false-following of misguided believers that accuse the Mother-goddess of perversion:

nor listen if they shout out,
 your beauty, Isis, Aset or Astarte,

 is a harlot; you are retrogressive,
 zealot, hankering after old flesh-pots;

 Your heart, moreover,
 is a dead canker (*TWDFN* 2.17-22)

The heart, which is a dead canker, becomes the embodiment of the dying god about to be reincarnated into its powerful, virile form. This synthesis, yielding only the corrupted Venerly, is

⁴⁴ Revelation 12.1 "a great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars".

quickly alchemized again to produce a new jewel. The resulting jewel, which represents the syncretism of the various mother goddesses mentioned before, is unknown and unnamed. Hermes Trismegistus, the guiding alchemical authority, suggests that the unknowability of the alchemized stone is a testament to its creative potential: he instructs her to observe it and name it:

It lives, it breathes,
 it gives off—fragrance?
 I do not know what it gives,
 a vibration that we can not name
 For there is no name for it;
 my patron said, “name it”;
 I said I can not name it,
 there is no name;
 He said,
 “invent it”. (*TTTA 13.7-16*)

Here, the alchemical meets the Adamic as a newly synthesized syncretic amalgam of mother-goddesses is given a new name and a discrete identity. The fragrance which is given off is the indicator that the amalgam’s name will be Mary, with the same fragrance as myrrh⁴⁵. Mary becomes synonymous with myrrh, as she is syncretized with the balm:

I do not want to name it,
 I want to watch its faint

⁴⁵ Myrrh was used in Egyptian embalming rituals, was a gift to Jesus by the Magi (Matthew 2:11), and is mixed with frankincense in churches.

Heart-beat, pulse-beat
 as it quivers, I do not want
 To talk about it,
 I want to minimize thought,
 Concentrate on it
 till I shrink,
 Dematerialize
 and am drawn into it. (*TTTA* 14.7-16)

This quotation demonstrates the ability to which interpolation into a symbol can change its very nature. Mary fixates so utterly upon the jar of myrrh that she ‘dematerializes’ and ‘is drawn into it’. Her dematerialization lends the figure of the syncretic prophet a spectrality or impermanence of physical presence. Mary⁴⁶ is said to be

The first to receive [his] promise was a thief;
 The first actually to witness His life-after-death,
 was an unbalanced, neurotic woman,
 Who was naturally reviled for having left home
 and not caring for house-work... (*TFOTR* 12.6-9)

Mary is described with the attributes of Hermes Trismegistus, notably thievery, trickery, and an analogous connection to another plane of existence. This connection is perceived to be mental, as an ‘unbalanced, neurotic woman’ who is a patient of illness. However, the connection is also bizarrely spatial:

⁴⁶ H.D. is also being, to some degree, autobiographical here. To “Dematerialize / and am drawn into it” could be read as an infusion of H.D. into Mary, which is certainly congruent with the pathologized nature of her bisexuality and her contemporary perception as a sexual abnormality.

She knew how to detach herself,
another unforgivable sin,

And when the stones were hurled,
she simply wasn't there;

She wasn't there and then she appeared,
not a beautiful woman really—would you say? (*TFOTR* 13.21-26)

Mary is a spectre between the here and there, making her an inherently secretive figure. She is not knowable because she exists between planes rather than in one⁴⁷. She appears initially as a threatening presence to Kaspar, who represents an entire tradition of cabalism that seeks to reintegrate the self into the text of a holy scripture in the manner that the essence of myrrh enters Mary. Mary and myrrh are so co-dependent that she does not disentangle sensory information regarding herself and the myrrh she carries, and she begins to conceive of herself as Mary and myrrh together, Mary-myrrh:

Though the jars were sealed,
the fragrance got out somehow,

And the rumour was bruited about...
some said, this distillation, this attar

Lasted literally forever, had so lasted...

There were unguent jars, certainly;
but who would open them?

No one dismantled the tombs,
that would be wickedness—but this he knew...

⁴⁷ Mary, insofar as she channels both Thoth and the bearer of the Book of Life, and is present at the death of Christ, is a psychopompic figure whose function is to shift between life and death, carrying souls to be judged.

It was never written, not even in symbols, for this
 they knew-
 no secret was safe with a woman. (*TFOTR* 14.6-27)

This quotation relates the opening of jars of unguent to the breaking of the seven seals on the Book of Life in Revelation. What ostensibly appears as Mary's ability to 'break' the seal on the jar of myrrh is actually her own scent merging with the myrrh as their discrete existences coalesce into one syncretic form. In her ability to symbolically break the seal of the jar, Mary threatens Kaspar by unwittingly being the agent by which the Book of Life becomes unsealed and readable. The final line of the quotation, "no secret was safe with a woman" is of primary importance to my reading of *Trilogy* as the insertion of a female moiety into the masculinized tradition of Christ as Lamb. The woman, as she functions as the representation of the Word, is figured as the agent who can break the secret, unlocking its encryptions and illuminating its contents.

Mary-Myrrh now figures as a prominent agent in the syncretic figure of the mother-goddess which acts as the Alpha half of the Lamb. H.D. makes a connection with the mother-goddess, which she refers to as "The Lady", while in a dream (*TTTA* 26). Mary, the mother of Christ, and Mary Magdalene become the syncretic prophets of the product of the syncretism of the mother-goddess⁴⁸. The Lady of the Snow serves to describe the Mother Mary in the manner that the Lamb is described in Revelation, clothed in white:

⁴⁸ She is referred to as "Maria von dem Schnee", which translates to "Our Lady of the Snow" (*TTTA* 31.11)

but the Lamb was not with her⁴⁹,
 either as Bridegroom or Child;
 her attention is undivided,
 we are her bridegroom and lamb;
 her book is our book; written
 or unwritten, its pages will reveal
 a tale of a fisherman,
 a tale of a jar or jars,
 the same—different—the same attributes,
 different yet the same as before. (TTA 39.15-24)

The speaker sees a dream-vision of the Lady which she finds impossible to describe. The lady appears as a spectre of dream and illusion: “when the Lady knocked; / ... (this was a dream of course), / and she was standing there, / actually, at the turn of the stair. / ... One of us said, how odd, / she is actually standing there, / I wonder what brought her?” (TTA 25.6-14, 26.1-3). H.D. can interact with the lady only peripherally, through a dream lens instead of during waking hours. She asked for Gabriel in his capacity as annunciator⁵⁰, and instead received a vision of the Lady: “I had thought / to address him as I had the others, / Uriel, Annael; / how could I imagine / the Lady herself would come instead?” (TTA 28.12-16). Mary, through her

⁴⁹ The absence of the Child and golden girdle is conspicuous: “Her veils were *white as snow*, / *So as no fuller on earth / can white them*; I can say / She looked beautiful, she looked lovely, / she was *clothed with a garment / Down to the foot*, but it was not / *girt about with a golden girdle*” (TTA 32.2-8). It serves both to disambiguate the mother-goddess from the infant father-god, and to reiterate the predominance of white as the color of power, not gold: “and the point in the spectrum / where all lights become one, / is white and white is not no-colour... but all-colour” (TTA 43.1-5).

⁵⁰Fritz reads Gabriel’s function here as twofold: first he acts as the angel of birth, and second he acts as the agent of divine warfare, as ruling prince of the first heaven (Fritz 123). The Lady answers the call instead of Gabriel, which infuses her with his aspect of birth and strengthens her connection to Mother-Mary.

association with myrrh and appearance only in liminal states, is strengthened as a spectral figure who absorbs the attributes of Hermes and Thoth, insofar as they preside over the judgement of the dead [34]. The lady adopts the roles of leader of the dead [33] and weigher of the souls of the dead [34], and functions as the psychopompic herald between life and death. She carries the book of Life, combining the book in which positively judged souls' names are listed in Revelation, to the image of Beatrice as Dante's guide through purgatory: "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" (*TTTA* 38.9-12). She is Sophia⁵¹, the female spectre of the Holy Ghost, representing wisdom. She has the book of life which contains the names of those who are redeemed, except her book is not the mythologized version. She is the opposite of the omega, but she is not a virginal and flawless caricature:

But nearer than Guardian Angel
or good Daemon,

she is the counter-coin-side
of primitive terror;

she is not-fear, she is not-war,
but she is no symbolic figure

of peace... (*TTTA* 39.1-7)

Though defined against the Omega, she is not a reflection of perfection in a different gender; she is "conjuring in the alchemist's bowl not only the maternal aspect of the mother as Mary but her sexual nature as Venus" (Kloepfer 199). She is a sexualized, virile figure who maintains the traits of Venus without becoming the Whore of Babylon, just as Kaspar is connected to the

⁵¹ The wisdom that pre-existed creation.

syncretic fertility god rather than the jealous Jove. In fact, the original attempts to synthesize the mother goddess are failed syntheses, which yield a dysfunctional product that is likened to the Whore of Babylon:

I am that myrrh-tree of the gentiles,
the heathen; there are idolaters,

Even in Phrygia and Cappadocia,
who kneel before mutilated images

And burn incense to the Mother of Mutilations,
to Attis-Adonis-Tammuz⁵² and his mother who was
myrrh... (*TFOTR* 16.11-17)

The Whore of Babylon is burnt and consumed in the re-firing of the philosopher's stone, reduplicating the violence of Revelation and precipitating the discussion of the Father-god.

v. Syncretising the Father

H.D. uses the Lamb as a significant donor of attributes to the syncretic 'god of destruction'.

The Lamb is described as a physical animal, as well as the metaphorical reading of the Christ of Revelation:

now my right hand,
now my left hand

clutch your curled fleece; take me home, take me home,
... yet I am a spark

⁵² Attis was a Phrygian vegetation god, Adonis was a greek Vegetation god, and Tammuz was a Babylonian god of agriculture and flocks (Barnestone, Readers' Notes 196-7).

struck by your hook from a rock:

Amen, you are so warm,

hide me in your fleece. (*TWDNF* 22.1-11)

The proclamation “I am the alpha and the omega” (Revelation 22:13) is the source of H.D.’s “I am the first or the last / of a flock or a swarm” (*TFOTR* 8.2-3), where the apocalyptic messiah is iterated in his pastoral flock image. The Lamb appears peaceful in his Alpha iteration, where he represents birth. In his Omega iteration he manifests as Aries the Ram:

till the Lord Amen,

paw-er of the ground,

bearer of the curled horns,

bellows from the horizon:

here am I, Amen-Ra,

Amen, Aries, the Ram

... here am I, Amen-Ra whispers,

Amen, Aries, the Ram,

be cocoon, smothered in wool,

be Lamb, mothered again. (*TWDNF* 21.3-16)

This is a reinterpretation of Beginning and End as Birth and War, respectively. The Lamb becomes the Ram very quickly, but just as quickly is defused back into the Lamb. The Ram, despite its self-aggrandizement and posturing, changes from ‘bellowing [here am I] from the horizon’ to ‘here am I, Amen-Ra whispers, Amen, Aries, the Ram’. The cycle of bellowing and whispering mimics the cyclicity of war and peace.

The next syncretism is composed of Ra, Osiris and *Amen*, who is himself composed of Amun (the sun) and the Christian phrase *Amen*. This is a syncretism of death and rebirth, consisting of gods that were killed and segmented after their deaths to make their reconstitution impossible. It symbolically occurs in a liminal and transient location-between-locations, “a spacious, bare meeting-house” (*TWDNF* 16.2). The gravity of their attributes, regality, death, light, reincarnation, and segmentation, explain why their reconstitution (then combination) is powerfully threatening. The syncretism is so complete that the individual aspects are indistinguishably fluid in the reincarnating god’s eyes: “for the eyes... were all one texture, / as if without pupil, dark / yet very clear with amber / shining... / coals for the world’s burning” (*TWDNF* 16.16-22, 17.1). The coals are not a harvestable resource, rather, they are the fuel of the apocryphal fire of war. This amalgamated god is ostensibly Osiris, a dead and subdivided god who has a hidden potential to burst into the full light of the solar deity Amen-Ra. The god is strung up on the cross amongst myriad cheap replications, to be punished for human sins. The coals of his eyes light up, and the god immolates on the cross in one of *Trilogy*’s most disturbing passages: “I assure you that the eyes / of Velasquez’s crucified / now look straight at you, / and they are amber and they are fire” (*TWDNF* 19.9-12). The crucified god’s immolation creates the apocryphal fire that is unleashed on the world in the form of war. The god’s death is a crucial part of his lifecycle, an attribute in common with each component god. Osiris’ name parsing evokes his potential for reassembly and reincarnation at the hands of his wife Isis: “for example: / Osiris equates O-sir-is or O-Sire-is; / Osiris, the star Sirius” (*TWDNF* 40.1-4). The death and segmentation of Osiris is related to the morphological and literal reassembly of his name and body, respectively. Each of the aspects of the syncretic god is affiliated with

destructive rebirth: the reincarnation of Osiris requires bodily and nominal reassembly; *Amen* evokes the rebirth of Jesus Christ; Ra, the solar deity, is reborn every day. Violent reincarnation is the convergent feature of the three gods, and their syncretic form is also reborn, containing the conflagrated remains of the individual gods. Having succumbed to the apocryphal fire in order to be reborn, the amalgamated god is able to overpower the rampaging god of war. Aries, the Ram, is tamed, when his fires consume all their fuel and burn low: “here am I, Amen-Ra whispers, / Amen, Aries, the Ram, / be cocoon, smothered in wool, / be Lamb, mothered again” (*TWDNF* 21.7-16). The war burns itself out, and the ram is reborn as the Lamb. The phrasing is notable: the rampaging war god is encouraged to withdraw and cocoon, like the writer must as a physical defense mechanism, and like the written word must to conceal meaning. The god of war joins the parallel rebirths of the sun god, the writer, the insect and the word. The war god is violent and dangerous, but also necessary and productive; his rage creates the apocryphal cleansing that is necessary for rebirth. The importance of regenerative fire is conveyed by attaching this apocryphal cleansing connotation to it. The fires of war that lead to the immolation and rebirth of gods also redefine the lives of mortals that survive it in London:

even if we snarl a brief greeting
 or do not speak at all,
 we know our Name,
 we are nameless initiates,
 born of one mother,
 companions
 of the flame. (*TWDNF* 13.20-26)

The apocryphal fire of war unites those who survive it, as if they were baptized and cleansed by the trauma of war. The emergent Londoners are likened to re-birthed insects, eager to remove the shells they hid in for defense: “we pull at this dead shell, / struggle but we must wait / till the new Sun dries off / the old-body humours” (*TWDNF* 14.7-10). The re-born insect must drag its old husk along until it has dried out in the aftermath of the fire, showing that even the destructive act is, in multiple ways, necessary for new life. The reincarnated god arises not in the familiar form of Christ, but in the coal-eyed syncretic form Amen-Ra, who will force by war the lessons Christ taught by peace: “let us not teach / what we have learned badly / and not profited by; / let us not concoct / healing potions for the dead” (*TWDNF* 33.5-9). Amen-ra combines the attributes of both the sacrificial gods and the reincarnated gods. He is symbolized by the re-born Sun, a play on the solar deity and the Son of God, who is responsible for unleashing the apocryphal fire and burning out with it. He asks to be reassembled from his disintegrated form, which requires immortal digestion for re-incorporation into the godly syncretistic form: “let your teeth devour me, / let me be warm in your belly, / the sun-disk, / the re-born Sun” (*TWDNF* 22.13-16). The crucified god asks to be taken home to the Egyptianized heaven, to the ancestral home of writing and magic: “take me home / where canals / flow / between iris-banks... / where the grasshopper says / *Amen, Amen, Amen*” (*TWDNF* 23.1-10). The Egyptianized heaven has its Christian component reasserted at the end, where the grasshopper says “*Amen*”. The god’s rebirth in the Egyptianized heaven is paralleled to the insect’s rebirth as a grasshopper that speaks its own new name.

The gods rely on the apocryphal fire for their own rebirth. The destruction implicit in the cycle is no less important by virtue of its unpleasantness: this relationship is expounded by

combining the familiar mythology of the phoenix with the bennu bird of Egyptian myth. The bennu bird inspires creation by causing aggravating pain: it drops the irritating grain of war into the shell of the artist-shellfish: “dropped a grain, / as of scalding wax” and offered “fragrance, burnt incense / myrtle, aloes, cedar” (*TWDNF* 25.8-10). The offerings are things from the external world, and remind the withdrawn artist of the war raging outside. The bennu bird’s grain, previously thought to be small and insignificant, becomes so irritating over time that it forces the production of a pearl. A similar comparison is drawn with another grain in the heart of the tree of Life, which strangles on the choking effect of war: “O heart, small urn / of porphyry, agate or cornelian, / how imperceptibly the grain fell / between a heart-beat of pleasure / and a heart-beat of pain” (*TWDNF* 28.1-5). The creatively inspiring influence, then, straddles pleasure and pain and finds its way into even the most stringently enforced introversions. The phoenix adds another element to the syncretic form of Amen-ra and to the figure of the poet, now simultaneously composed of the shellfish, the insect, and the bennu bird.

vi. The Burnt Tree: Father and Mother Together

The Burnt Tree is a prophetic vision of salvation that H.D. encounters in a shelled courtyard. It is a symbol of division inside a greater unification, as it is half burnt and dead, and half alive and blooming. The Father is responsible for the killing—he functions as Aries, War, the Sword, the burnt half. The Mother is infused with the judgement of the dead—she forgives, and flowers bloom from the live half. The Alpha and Omega halves of Christ are reconstituted in the burnt tree to recreate the creative god:

Reveal the regrettable chasm,
 bridge that before-and-after schism,...

 recover the secret of Isis,
 which is: there was One

 in the beginning, Creator,
 fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever

 in the papyrus-swamp
 in the Judean meadow (*TWDNF* 40.13-26).

In this quote, the two halves of Christ, the before-and-after schism, find resolution and jointure, just as the divided views of Egyptianized heaven and the Judean heaven are joined. The burnt-tree is the summation of all divided things in *Trilogy*: it is both totalizing metaphor of the cyclicity of the text and also between the concealment and revelation cycles of the text. The living half of the tree represents the Alpha, the burnt side represents the conflagratory Omega.

The burnt tree is connected to the serpent via the Caduceus. The serpent represents this nature of dualities by resisting a single ontological category; in *Trilogy*, it is difficult to say what the serpent 'looks like'. It is referred to as 'serpent' and as 'asp', which despite perhaps indicating an added element of toxicity to the asp, serves largely to obscure its discrete categorization as a single entity. The asp, offering both a cure and a disease through the forbidden fruit of knowledge, recalls the statue of the Brass Serpent of Moses⁵³, which is able to cure the snake venom of any serpent bite by mere touch. The statue, being in the form of a

⁵³ Book of Numbers, 21:9.

giant serpent, represents both toxin and cure simultaneously⁵⁴. H.D. draws upon the restorative power of the Brass Serpent of the Old Testament when describing the garments the gods wear: “Gods, goddesses / wear the winged head-dress / of horns, as the butterfly / antennae, / or the erect king-cobra crest / to show how the worm turns” (*TWDNF* 7.1-6), where the headdress of the gods likens the worm-become-butterfly to the serpent. Both the butterfly and the asp are referred to in the final line, in which the archetypal Ouroboros’ turning is metonymic of universal cyclicity. The process of “how the worm turns” here refers to both the metamorphosis of a past-self into a future-self via a cyclical consumption of the self. The turning Ouroborean worm is further represented by the Caduceus which combines two intertwined serpents. The Caduceus represents the oppositional ontologies of the constitutive serpents: the open mouths of the serpents suggest a mutual consumption, yet their union represents healing⁵⁵, and the burnt tree rewrites the crucifixion to allow life.

vii. Midrash of Revelation

⁵⁴ Pharmakon, for writing as poison. “Derrida (after Plato) calls the pharmakon of writing, the condensation of compound, irreducible meaning in pictoideographic symbols: that is, it performs a radical analysis of the idealized (phonological) components of a language” (Derrida qtd. In Chrisholm 170), “this pharmakon... this charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be—alternately or simultaneously—beneficent or maleficent (Derrida qtd. In Chrisholm 170). Thoth also writes by using a snake: “Thoth is the universal scribe: ‘I am the scribe of the Divine Book / which says what has been and effects what is yet to be’. In the coffin texts, the utterance comes from the mouth of the serpent who transmits the Word to the Divine Book carried by Thoth” (Fritz 106).

⁵⁵ H.D.’s Caduceus borrows its physical description from the Sceptre of Asklepios “who was called the blameless physician. He was the son of the sun, Phoebos Apollo... This half-man, half-god went a little too far when he began actually to raise the dead” (TTF 100). H.D. borrows his scepter: “Let us, however, recover the Sceptre /.../ it is Caduceus” (*TWDNF* 3.1-5). The Sceptre of Asklepios features two opposed serpents coiled around each other. H.D.’s Caduceus takes the form of a half-burnt tree, whose halves (one burnt, one live and flowering) evoke the coiled serpents: “it was the Angel which redeemed me, / it was the Holy Ghost-- / a half-burnt-out apple-tree / blossoming” (*TTTA* 23.11-14).

The Walls Do Not Fall is an exploration of the destruction of cities, and *Tribute to the Angels* is a reconstruction of them as a Midrash of Revelation. The amalgam of God's seven primary angels, each of which is incorporated as a candle (representing a church of Revelation), a gemstone, and a moral role, creates the city of God. The seven angels are made into the New Jerusalem in a physical sense: the creation of the city in the chemical reaction is the last of their mention. The city is therefore a tribute to the Angels who physically became its foundation. The Angels of *Trilogy* are largely H.D.'s adoptions, rather than scriptural figures⁵⁶. H.D. quotes from John of Patmos when she voices the speech of the angels:

*I John saw. I testify;
if any man shall add
God shall add unto him the plagues,
but he that sat upon the throne said,
I make all things new,
said He of the seven stars,
He of the seventy-times-seven
passionate, bitter wrongs,
He of the seventy-times-seven
bitter, unending wars. (TTTA 3.1-8)*

⁵⁶ H.D.'s angelology draws upon several sources and the angels have multiple functions. First, they are the angels who surround the throne of the Ancient of Days in Daniel's vision... Second, they are the angels who guard God's throne in John's vision in the Book of Revelation... Drawing on canonical and noncanonical texts, H.D. names the seven angels who reign in her poem: Azrael, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriel, Annael, Michael, and Zadkiel" (Fritz 118-9).

The book of Revelation is filled with commands regarding the nature of communication, which seek to control the dissemination of divine truth into greater humanity. This quotation brings up one such passage from Revelation, where John of Patmos ensures the purity of his text by threatening those who would seek to emend it with plagues from God. H.D. modifies the original intention of the speech by suggesting that the phrase *"I make all things new"* can be reinterpreted as a phrase that allows ongoing, perpetual creation, rather than a single, discrete destruction-creation event. The speech can ultimately defend a cyclical model of creations, rather than the rigid number of them (two, in the theological texts H.D. is working with: the original creation, then the judgement). H.D. invokes John of Patmos' claim of a single, divinely ordained experience of religious truth and modifies it to allow for subsequent actions of creation—to further the comparison, she seeks to allow modifications of John of Patmos' text without incurring punishment. The figure on the throne actually demands modification in his address⁵⁷. The figure upon the throne is "He of the seven stars", "of the seventy-times-seven passionate bitter wrongs", and "of the seventy-times-seven bitter, unending wars", which negatively inflects the presentation of the enthroned Lamb by reminding one of the context of cruelty in which the new state of Revelation comes into being. The immediate context of the speech, in Revelation, is that Lamb has remade the world into the New Jerusalem, having destroyed the old version utterly⁵⁸. The lamb instructs John of Patmos to "write this, for these

⁵⁷ Marina Sbisa confirms this problem: "the argumentative aspect of TTTA is apparent in some problematic and polemic sections. In TA:3 the author makes Revelation play against itself by recombining two quotations from it through the use of a "but," which evokes a remarkable argumentative potential... what is at stake is whether H.D.'s own re-elaboration of St. John's vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem in TA:2 violates a divine prohibition" (Sbisa 89).

⁵⁸ "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake

words are trustworthy and true". Then he said to me, "it is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21.5-6). In Revelation, the Lamb scribes the history of a creative act through the use of John of Patmos as conduit. The Lamb scribes himself into existence—inscribing existence onto himself—with a creation fable that is bound inextricably into the physical words of the story. This instance is an excellent microcosm of the function of the Word and Sword in Revelation's theology. The Word is said to predate the Sword, and yet the creation story of the "second things" comes after the destruction of the "first things"⁵⁹. The Word can only have primacy, then, by allowing the Sword to exterminate itself, to write itself out of existence. This is the Sword's final trajectory: to destroy the conditions of the old to allow a creative renewal.

John of Patmos is witness to the descent of the New Jerusalem out of the clouds: "and I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21.2). In *Trilogy*, the New Jerusalem materializes as a gemstone that was crafted in the heat and pressure of the collapse of the old world:

Take what the new-church spat upon
 And broke and shattered;
 collect the fragments of splintered glass
 And of your fire and breath,
 melt down and integrate,

of fire" (Revelation 21. 13-4). The killing of Death is coupled to Death's symbolic banishment: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more" (Revelation 21.3-5)

⁵⁹ "First things" refers to the first universe of Revelation 21.4, and "second things" refers to the universe of the New Jerusalem, after the destruction of the "first things".

Re-invoke, re-create
opal, onyx, obsidian,

Now scattered in the shards men tread upon. (*TTTA* 1.12-20)

These shards of glass have their threatening sharpness nullified in the melting, and they are remade into a new, threatless substance: “Your walls do not fall, he said, / because your walls are made of jasper; ... / For the *twelve foundations*, / for the *transparent glass*, / For *no need of the sun / nor moon to shine* (*TTTA* 2.1-10). H.D.’s new church is procedurally constructed in the Midrash of Revelation, from the mathematical-scriptural blueprints described in the scriptures of Revelation to the melting of glass and constitution of blocks. She reassembles a new church of ideas out of the myriad “art-craft junk-shop / paint-and-plaster medieval jumble[s]” (*TWDNF* 18.3-4) of the old world, all prompted by the image of the blooming but burnt tree.

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Part III. The One-Truth

The Midrash of Revelation explains the primary allusive basis of *Trilogy*, but it has difficulty accounting for its only partial adoption of the narrative. This problem is born out of the difficulty of interpreting how the book of Revelation⁶⁰, as source text, orients itself in time. When read on different allegorical levels, the events of Revelation occur in different temporalities. Revelation can be read as a narrative of the past, a historical attack against the Whore of Babylon who symbolizes the Holy Roman Empire; it can be read as a narrative of the present, which describes an impending apocalyptic event; it can be read as an eschatological

⁶⁰ I say Revelation here because it is the book of H.D.’s Midrash targets, but it is thematically important to the poem that every book meets the criteria that I describe here—it is the ‘magic’ of the process of writing that allows a book—any book—to break time’s one-way linearity.

narrative, a single event of the future in which the world comes to an end. Revelation can be productively read as an event of the past, present, or future. It is perhaps most productive to read it as a text that is inevitably past-present-future simultaneously, approaching it as a text that has attached itself to time and is therefore independent of it. This allows for the events of Revelation to have contemporary interaction and interpretation in every generation of readers.

i. Mathematics

It is abundantly clear that the reading of Revelation does not bring the reader to the “one-truth” that was promised, by Hermes Trismegistus, to those who would “unlock sterile reason”. H.D. reaches past theology to a wider associative web in her attempt to constitute the one-truth. As with her other referents (the Father and Mother, Mary, Hermes Trismegistus) in the poem, this associative web constitutes a syncretism of diverse concepts into a single whole. Theology and mythology are two pillars of this final syncretism, mathematics is another. The jewel that is created is attributed the relative dimensions and materials of the New Jerusalem. Conceiving of the New Jerusalem as a jewel is a way for H.D. to give closure to the constant presence of mathematics, especially conceptions of Euclidean spaces and perfection, with the ghosts of numerology and astrology that haunt *Trilogy*. The conditions in which Kaspar and Mary meet, at the climax of the Midrashic experiment of *Trilogy*, are precisely calculated and defined in astrological terms:

Simon did not know but Balthasar
 or Melchior could have told him,
 Or better still, Gaspar or Kaspar,
 who, they say, brought the Myrrh;

Simon wished to avoid a scene
 but Kaspar knew the scene was unavoidable
 And already written in a star
 or a configuration of stars
 That rarely happens, perhaps once
 in a little over two thousand years. (*TFOTR* 24.1-10)

To H.D., the matter of ontological importance is to decide on how the secrecy of an object or instance is broken, both in a pragmatic sense and in abstract sense. The Word is a label associated with a referent, a signifier for something that is signified. It is a nomenclatural truth that aides in conceiving of an object in a way that is communicable. The Word conveys an interpretation of connotation and denotation, but it does not actually describe the innate “thingness” of the thing itself, but rather formalises a convention of meaning:

Only through assertion is the synthesizing activity of understanding and interpretation brought to language. In disclosing the as-structure of a thing, the hammer as a hammer, interpretation discloses its meaning. Assertion, then, pins this meaning down linguistically. The linguistic identification of a thing is, in other words, not original but is predicated on the world-disclosive synthesis of understanding and interpretation. This also applies with regard to the truth-value of the assertion. (Ramberg *Hermeneutics*)

Likewise, the mathematical systems that she favours in the poems correspond to systems and inter-relations rather than precise, discrete quanta of data. *Trilogy* shares Revelation’s preoccupation with the number 7, which is notable by association to holiness, rather than an intrinsic applicability or use. Mathematics also allows the characterisation of Kaspar as cabalist.

When he observes a vision of the Alpha that is induced by moonlight on Mary's hair, he attempts to quantify and describe what he sees through approximation to mathematical laws:

They were blue yet verging on purple,
 yet very blue; if asked to describe them,
 You would say they were blue stones
 of a curious square cut and set so that the light
 Broke as if from within; the reflecting inner facets
 seemed to cast incalculable angles of light,
 This blue shot with violet;
 how convey what he felt? (*TFOTR* 28.28-35)

Kaspar's failure at describing the gemstone indicates the failure of mathematics, even when held with H.D.'s high regard, to calculate or quantify the act of creation. And yet in H.D.'s universe mathematics are ubiquitous and taken as universal law. She proves this by drawing attention to the mathematical structure of acts of nature in astronomy or the geometry in natural objects. Mathematics, however, is not solely capable of describing the vision Kaspar sees in poems [30-2] when a fleck of light in Mary's pearl catches his eye. Kaspar sees all of time spread in arrays of expanding circles:

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. (*TFOTR* 31.5-10)

The centre of the circle is a vision of the origin, a tiny point from which all of creation was expelled: “and though it was all on a very grand scale, / yet it was small and intimate / Paradise / before Eve...” (*TFOTR* 32.9-15). Time accompanies this vision as a raging torrent of water, which evokes the shellfish mentioned earlier who is able, in withdrawal, to remain productive despite the dangerous environment. Kaspar withdraws into the vision, “and he saw it all as if enlarged under a sun-glass; / he saw it all in minute detail” (*TFOTR* 32.1-2). The juxtaposition of Kaspar-and-Pearl with the shellfish is made explicit when Kaspar

heard, as it were, the echo
of an echo in a shell,

words neither sung nor chanted
but stressed rhythmically;

the echoed syllables of this spell
conformed to the sound

of no word he had ever heard spoken”. (*TFOTR* 33.1-7)

Kaspar’s vision allows him access to Hermes Trismegistus’ promised “one-truth” when he is impelled to pronounce words that are unfamiliar to him but are ordered into syllables, ‘conformed to the sound’ and rhythm of poetry. The poetry of the unknowable vision translates itself into Words, as the first extension past direct communion with the “one-truth”. The one-truth, as discussed earlier, is a point of past-perfection that unlocks the transcendent meanings of words⁶¹. Kaspar’s vision of the whirlpool of time is a critical moment in the poem’s search for

⁶¹ I make reference to the passage quoted earlier in Hermes Trismegistus: “the original Ancient-of-days,/ Hermes-thrice-great,/ Let us entreat / that he, by his tau-cross, / Invoke the true-magic, / lead us back to the one-truth, / Let him (Wisdom), / in the light of what went before, / Illuminate what came after, / re-vivify the eternal verity, / *Be ye wise / as asps, scorpions, as serpents* (*TWDNF* 35.10-20).

narrative tangibility. It is the scene where H.D. describes her conception of the universe by spatially arranging a vision of time around geometry, and figuring the passage of time as waves moving outward from a single origin, rather than linear slices which pile up on each other. She strengthens the connection of waves and time by mentioning the rushing water sounds which accompany the vision, and relating the expanding ripple of time to an echo, which is a wave which has begun to return to its origin. By figuring time as an outward expulsion which is coupled to a returning echo, H.D. conceives of a way of ordering her universe as a geometric structure that operates as a cycle between expansion-contraction, concealment-revelation, secrecy-illumination, without requiring a precise understanding or explanation of how those cycles were created or induced. They simply occur and are observable through mathematics:

No one will ever know

Whether it was a sort of spiritual optical-illusion,
or whether he looked down the deep deep-well

Of the so-far unknown
depth of pre-history;

No one would ever know
if it could be proved mathematically

By demonstrated lines,
as an angle of light

Reflected from a strand of a woman's hair,
reflected again or refracted

A certain other angle--
or perhaps it was a matter of vibration

That matched or caught an allied
 or exactly opposite vibration
 And created a sort of vacuum,
 or rather a *point* in time—(TFOT 40.1-28)

H.D.'s descriptions of mathematics, here, amount to varied causal loops in which the inversion, repetition, or reduplication of an impulse becomes or begets its own reaction. Each ray of light is accompanied by a reflected or refracted ray; each vibration is coupled to an anti-vibration. Everything is a reduplication of a past event or a reactionary response, and nothing is new in an original sense:

A good deal of H.D.'s reading and poetic scholarship... goes towards the establishment of a secret understanding of the truth really concealed in an occulted substratum of human and cultural experience. For example, her truth of the mother, once emergent, is both different—culturally unacknowledged—and yet the same: forgotten, buried but never original (new) or invented. It is only original by being origins. Despite her gender critique and her narrative and linguistic innovations, H.D. felt that the new did not really exist (Duplessis 28).

The coupled but opposed impulses and reactions create a negative space, a “sort of vacuum, / or rather a *point* in time”, a true stillness⁶² that Kaspar sees as the origin in his vision. Yet this vision is ephemeral, and fades quickly, leaving only a reminder of discomfort and forgetfulness:

⁶² This true stillness is a revelatory moment to H.D.: It is a true ‘point’, rather than a vector, in time, which is how Kaspar can see all of time spread in front of him—he is set outside of time by occupying a discrete, static, slice of it.

Then as he dropped his arm
 in the second half-second,
 His mind prompted him,
 even as if his mind
 Must sharply differentiate,
 clearly define the boundaries of beauty
 ...Though himself,
 He-himself was not there;
 and his mind framed the thought,...

*It is unseemly that a woman
 appear disordered, dishevelled,*

*It is unseemly that a woman
 appear at all. (TFOTR 34.1-20)*

The vision of Lilith at the origin of human history upset Kaspar, forcing a reworking of his conception of the universe. Kaspar learned of Adam and Eve in his education, yet the vision he is shown is a different story:

*Lilith born before Eve
 and one born before Lilith,
 and Eve; we three are forgiven,
 we are three of the seven
 daemons cast out of her. (TFOTR 33.21-25)*

Eve, Sophia, and Lilith are figured as demons that are cast out of Mary. Kaspar responds to the vision of demons being cast out of a female by casting Mary away from himself, his reeling mind thinking only that she looks 'dishevelled'. The vision, therefore, has dubious actual effect on Kaspar's perception. After banishing her, the scent of myrrh combines the Mary who accepted the myrrh at the nativity with the Mary who sought myrrh for the crucifixion: "we do

not know whether or not / he himself followed her / with the alabaster jar; all we know is, / the myrrh or the *spikenard, very costly, was Kaspar's*" (TFOTR 35.7-10). When he arrives at the nativity, he places the Myrrh "a little apart from the rest, / to show by inference / its unimportance in comparison" (TFOTR 42.44-46), but as he only pays attention to the gifts of Melchior and Balthasar, he fails to notice that the entire stable smells of the myrrh, despite the seal on the jar remaining unbroken. Mary's (it is not exclusively Mother-Mary or Mary Magdalene, but both) speech draws together a final syncretism of the poem's arcana, referring to the caduceus, burnt-but-flowering-tree, the Lamb, and the tree of the Sephiroth all at once, by referring to the bundle of myrrh as "all flowering":

She said, Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance,
as of all flowering things together;

But Kaspar knew the seal of the jar was unbroken.
he did not know whether she knew

The fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh
she held in her arms. (TFOTR 43.3-8)

ii. The Tree of the Sephiroth

The return to the one-truth remains the narrative goal of the poem, and yet it is a never fully realized goal. The One-Truth in *Trilogy* remains shrouded in secrecy except for few moments where it is revealed in an ephemeral burst. Heidegger sees the breaking of the secret to be a violent act. H.D. also sees instances of the broken secret being violent, but she offers a revelatory and redemptive action in each instance of violence; she accepts Heidegger but modifies him. H.D. sees the Book of Revelation as the eschatological exploration of this idea in

the bible, and borrows it to relate World War II to the sections of Revelation that deal with warfare and the destruction of cities, before offering the New Jerusalem as the corresponding revelatory city. By borrowing the set and narrative of Revelation, but infusing it with syncretic amalgamations, synthetic beings, and systems of code, H.D. constructs *Trilogy* as an encrypted, Midrashic code which hints toward a proto-myth from which all the referential mythological systems are descended from. By drawing comparisons between systems of contemporary mythology, H.D. attempts to reconstruct the proto-myths, by directing the reader's attention to striking similarities in mythical systems that show an inherited nature and a genetic dependence on more ancient myths.

Trilogy can be experienced as the inverted family tree, figured as the tree of life and knowledge simultaneously, which points the reader backward rather than forward as they attempt to discern a glimpse of the true "kernels" of knowledge, theology, and spirituality. *Trilogy* is a reinterpretation and a revisionist Midrash of Revelation that says the state of perfection is a past state, a contemporary state, and a future one: perfection lies in the cyclic repetition of time between events of catastrophic importance, which occur every two thousand years (*TFOTR* 24.10). The preceding revisionist Midrash shows how the narrative of H.D.'s *Trilogy* seeks to rebuild a proto-language of Western mythologies that H.D. figures as the "one-truth", the knowledge of self-creation which is critical to the philosophy of self-determination. H.D.'s theology here then is essentially the adoption of a spiritual-scientific method, in which a genetic approach is used toward the study of the composition of myths:

the richness and complexity of the new poetry in *Trilogy* result, first, from a nexus of symbols which reflect the poet's war experiences; and second, from the poet's mythmaking

consciousness. The myriad symbols—drawn from Scripture, the Cabala, and Egyptian mythology—constitute the tropes of the quest of *Trilogy*. H.D.'s use of Egyptian mythology, with its bearing on mystery, the Word, and the Cabala, enables her to weave these crosscurrents into unified vision (Fritz 96-7).

H.D. uses a scientific gaze, specifically the genetic and ancestral attachment of a current day myth to an ancient, unknown proto-myth, when she taxonomically syncretizes various myths into single, amalgamated figures. These are basic principles of Hermeticism:

Simultaneously her growing interest in the Egyptian mysteries drew her by the 1940s to their formulation in Rosicrucianism. Again as with Pound, various elements—Greek and Egyptian, Jewish and Christian—intermingled in her mind as they had for centuries in the ancient world. In the process, as her close friend Norman Holmes Pearson put it, “like many Freudians, she became quasi-Jungian and could bring the cabala, astrology, magic, Christianity, classical and Egyptian mythology, and personal experience into a joint sense of Ancient Wisdom (Gelpi 175).

Hermeticism, as described here, is the belief in myth as the present-day fragments of perfect forms that have been corrupted through selection in each generation: Jesus and Horus share many similar traits, as do Aries and Amun-Ra. H.D. hypothesizes a single origin from which western mythologies are equally distant. It is at this origin point where she directs her theological gaze, and she expands a spiritual and religious literature around the origin of creation. This accounts for the symbolic focus on trees: both the tree of life and knowledge are

well represented in the gaze of the genetic critic as a manifestation of the Tree of the Sephiroth:

He was the first that flew
(the heavenly pointer)

But not content to leave
the scattered flock,

He journeys back and forth
between the poles of heaven and earth forever;

He was the first to wing
from that sad Tree,

But having flown, the Tree of Life
bears rose from thorn...

He was the first to say,
not to the chosen few,

His faithful friends,
the wise and the good,

But to an outcast and a vagabond,
to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. (TFOTR 11.1-18)

Both trees are also intertwined in the caduceus and the half-burnt tree. The burnt tree represents the unification of the concealment-revelation cycle, the syncretism of the Alpha and Omega of the Midrash, and the theorization of the universe as the tree of the Sephiroth, or the tree of life. The flowering requires the sacrifice of the Father-god: "The flowering of the rood, the symbolic cross, alludes to Christ's resurrection prophesied by Isaiah: "and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1)" (Fritz 124), but it also requires the creativity of the mother-goddess. H.D.'s universe can be interpreted, through Hermeticism and with the procedural gaze of a geneticist, to note where

the myths of the mythological systems H.D. compares are all descended from. The Revelation narrative is forms a hermetic Midrash that explains the state of perfection at the end of Revelation as a state we're descended from, a state we're experiencing, and a state we're building towards—a cycle between *lethe* and *aletheia* into infinite perpetuity.

iii. The Trickster

Let us return to Hermes Trismegistus in his capacity as patron saint of thieves and tricksters:

steal then, O orator,
plunder, O poet,

Take what the old-church
found in Mithra's tomb,

Candle and script and bell,
take what the new-church spat upon

And broke and shattered. (*TTTA* 1.7-13)

The concealment-revelation cycle that proved ubiquitous to *Trilogy's* narrative in part one, if motivated by trickery, casts the nature of the “one-truth” in a different light. If Hermes Trismegistus is figured as a master and tutor, then the “one-truth” is attainable only through divine guidance and, therefore, the encryption of meaning into poetry represents the inherent impossibility (for an unaided reader) of breaking the threshold of the “one-truth”. Put simply, if Hermes Trismegistus' guidance is required to arrive back at the one-truth, the one-truth is a denial of a limitless human aptitude. The requirement of a divine guiding presence (which H.D. finds is absent at worst and ephemerally present at best) dooms the one-truth to unattainability and therefore non-existence. However, if Hermes Trismegistus figures in the text

as a trickster, by denying access to the one-truth he represents it by exclusion, and therefore creates it. The one-truth is the dangled carrot that is accessible but coated in choices and situations of trickery. In a counter-intuitive manner, this allows trickery to represent what truthfulness could not, in a theological sense: the one-truth is present in any encrypted form, but it is at competition with any number of untrue forms. The trickster encryptor disguises the truth amidst a plethora of nearly identical, but subtly erroneous versions. A navigation backwards through these encryptions could yield a reconstruction of the proto-idea with features predicated on the background of the interpretive agent. By providing a reading of *Trilogy*, a reader casts the syncretic figures which appear in it with a reconstruction of their identities, drawing notice of similarities and differences between one figure and its analogs. Each syncretic figure is a non-stable entity whose identity fluctuates based on the capacity in which it is presented, and what the reader knows of its background. Hermes Trismegistus appearing in the context of creation will stress the aspects he shares with Thoth, who is a god of creation, whereas Hermes Trismegistus appearing in the context of theft will stress the aspect he shares with Hermes, of being a trickster. To compose the syncretic figure, the creator groups the individual constituents by their adherence to a dominant trait. It is by expressing this dominant trait that they contribute to the syncretic figure, but they also bring along traits by association. Though Hermes and Thoth share traits, namely scribing, wisdom, binding magic into words, there are others in which their functions are different: Hermes is a psychopomp and Thoth is a creator. The lines around syncretic figures are therefore inherently fuzzy and imprecise, and its identity has a large degree of uncertainty. The anatomizing of syncretic gods is a difficult problem when considering the potential diversity of features a blurred combination

god can have. Even when it is given a name it remains an obscured and secretive entity: it can be referred to but never fully conceived of. The syncretic god is therefore a representation of a proto-god from which current iterations of mythological analogs are descended from. H.D. knows that she cannot construct the proto-god in true form, and yet, when encouraged by Hermes Trismegistus, attempts to describe, understand, and quantify the essentially unknowable:

it gives off—fragrance?

I do not know what it gives,
a vibration that we cannot name

For there is no name for it;
my patron said, “name it”;

I said, I can not name it,
there is no name;

he said,
“invent it”. (*TTTA* 13.8-16)

The reconstruction of the proto-idea, which is a congruent idea with the “one-truth” offered by Hermes Trismegistus, is accomplished only by its representation as a symbol. The symbol can have a name invented for it even if it does not already have a name: by this process a thing can be named before it is known; referred to before it is constituted. An identity for the ancient source of H.D.’s theology can be made by constructing it as a proto-religion and then naming it; it now can be referred to but it remains no closer to being knowable. Therefore, the text of *Trilogy* asserts a belief in an ancient proto-truth which has been disseminated into

contemporary culture's vast array of mythological categories, which exists simultaneously as a "one-truth" and an unknowable artefact.

The psychopompic aspect of the trickster, especially in relation to his role as encryptor, casts his benevolence into doubt. In order to be lead back to the one truth, we must "let him (Wisdom), / in the light of what went before, / illuminate what came after, / re-vivify the eternal verity, / be ye wise / as asps, scorpions, as serpents" (TWDNF 35.15-20). The serpent's involvement in the cycle between 'what went before' and 'what came after', evokes Ouroboros; his involvement in Wisdom evokes Satan in the garden of Eden. He offers knowledge and understanding, only to yank it away after brief exposure, replacing it with a profound forgetfulness. The Trickster taunts cabalists, theologians, mathematicians, and scholars alike. His province is the obfuscation of truth, the packaging of knowledge into objects that must be destroyed to be viewed, and coupling the unhiddenness of an object to its descent back into forgotten oblivion. To unlock a vision of one-truth, to see time's spread like Kaspar did, is to descend momentarily into madness and see creation as a point in time from which waves are emitted and echoes return, and events are reduplicated as they are unmade and remade. This vision of madness is a simultaneous understanding of each individual moment of existence, coupled to an overall understanding of the mechanism of its operation as a wave, and Kaspar occupies all positions in the *Hermeneutic circle* simultaneously. He sees a clear vision of the mechanism by which H.D.'s universe operates, which requires a multi-layered syncretic model of gods to re-create the origin, the conditions of the proto-mythology that all modern day mythological analogues (which become the substrates for syncretism) are destined

from. While Kaspar finds a sudden *aletheia* in the prophetic vision, the Trickster god ensures that *Lethe* is ready to re-obscure the path to the one-truth.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Work Experience

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Education

- 2014-8** PhD – Western University
2013,14 MA – Western University
2012,3 Complete BA – The University of Western Ontario, Honors Spec English, Dean's list
2010 BA – The University of Western Ontario, begin English program
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Graduate Course Work

- 2013,4** MA – Graduate thesis: “Companions of the Flame”: Concealment and Revelation in Hilda Doolittle’s *Trilogy*. Graduate French Reading.
2014 MA – Melancholy and the Archive, American Animal Studies. Teaching assistant for American Literature Survey.
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Works in Progress

- 2014** “Companions of the Flame”: Concealment and Revelation in Hilda Doolittle’s *Trilogy*
2014 ‘Kafka’s Gatekeeper and the End of the World’
2013 The Animals of H.D.’s “The Walls Do Not Fall”

Teaching Experience

- 2013-4** Teaching assistant for American Literature survey. 6 Lecture hours over the year; lessons on Whitman, Eliot and Ginsberg. Responsible for essay and exam marking.

Academic Honours and Awards

- 2013-4 Western Graduate Research Scholarship
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Poetry Publications

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