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Towards a Modernist Hellenism: Ezra Pound, H.D., and the Translation of Greece

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Towards a Modernist Hellenism:
Ezra Pound, H.D., and the Translation of Greece

Aikaterini (Katerina) Stergiopoulou

A dissertation
presented to the faculty
of Princeton University
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Abstract

This dissertation revisits the literary relationship between Pound and H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) during and after the Imagist period, offering a new reading of the origins and development of modernist poetics through the prism of its relationship to Greece and to translation. I claim that the two writers' engagement with Greek antiquity should be seen not as a conservative or idealizing commitment to tradition, but rather as a circuitous turn towards creating a new English-language poetics fit to address the pressing cultural and political issues of their time. Building on scholarly work on Hellenism in the Romantic, Victorian, and fin-de-siècle periods, I examine how the legacy of Greece was taken up and transformed by two of the initiators of poetic modernism in English: Pound, the founder of Imagism, and H.D., its first practitioner. Focusing on their engagement with theories of the image and of rhythm and prosody in their critical writings and (in the case of H.D.) novels, I show how Pound and H.D formulate and negotiate poetry's position between prose, music, and the visual arts through their encounters with Greek, a process which culminates in their theatrical experiments with Greek tragedy in their later work.

The first chapter revisits Pound's articulation of Imagist poetics and his collaboration with Eliot in the 1910s through the prism of his ambivalent and self-contradictory use of Greek. The second chapter turns to H.D. during the same period; it tracks the development of her poetics as a poetics of translation and it claims that her engagement with Greece is more deeply textual, self-conscious, and historically aware than has been recognized. The third and fourth chapters juxtapose H.D.'s and Pound's particularly prosodic engagement with Greek tragedy: the third chapter focuses on H.D.'s rhetorical and actual engagement with Euripidean rhythm and meter, through which, I argue, she questions and measures out the relationship between "antiquity" and "modernity" as well as the possibility and value of writing poetry itself, while the fourth considers Pound's understudied and highly experimental version of Sophocles's *Elektra* (1949). Chapters Five and Six examine

H.D.'s and Pound's radical transformations of Euripides's *Ion* (1937) and Sophocles's *Women of Trachis* (1954) respectively, and demonstrate their significance in determining the direction of the two poets' subsequent poetic work. More specifically, I read H.D.'s *Ion* in the context of her analysis with Freud and argue that through it she works out an anti-Oedipal and anti-intellectual psychoanalytic theory of poetry that allows her to resume poetic writing during the Second World War; returning, then, to Pound's early work with Yeats on the Noh, I show that his *Women of Trachis* constitutes the realization of the long Imagist poem proclaimed in 1916.

This dissertation thus situates Pound and H.D.'s work both in a larger cultural, literary, and historical context, in which different definitions of Hellenism were in conflict, and in a modernist debate (involving, for example, T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Richard Aldington, W.C. Williams, Marianne Moore, and D.H. Lawrence) on the relevance of Greek poetics for poetry in English. It demonstrates that Pound and H.D. turn to Greek literature at crucial points in their careers and that it is through their translations from Greek that they first address both poetological questions, such as the form of new poetry in English, and sociopolitical ones, such as the relevance and role of poetry in times of war. Focusing on the ways in which Pound's and H.D.'s approach to Greek diverges from the dominant discourses of and on Hellenism current in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I make a claim for the existence of a politicized, modernist Hellenism, which is at once "free" and un-Greek by philological and institutional standards and profoundly textual. Moreover, by tracing the specter of Greece in the development of Anglo-American poetic modernism, I argue for the importance of the consideration of translation in any account of modernist poetics and at the same time highlight the extent to which these poets' work challenges and redefines familiar categories of thinking about translation.

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Introduction

When Ezra Pound first advertised Imagisme, the first poetic movement in English, following in the fashion of similarly named French artistic movements, he called it "*modern* stuff. . . . straight talk—straight as the Greek" (*L* 11).[1] My dissertation is about that conjunction of "modern(ist)" and "Greek," about what that "straight as the Greek" meant at that time for the nascent movement—and in particular, for its instigator Pound and its first practitioner H.D.—and about what happened to it, why it has been forgotten in the study of modernism. While the extent to which Hellenism is a measure for "modernity" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been studied, very little work has been done on its transformation in the twentieth century—the assumption is perhaps that it died. As Shanyn Fiske writes, "Having served as a symbolic marker of cultural stability throughout the preceding century, Greek, in its decline after the war, came to represent a privileged body of knowledge no longer consistent with the values of the age" (190). Bringing together writing on archaeological, theatrical, and poetic practices of the turn of the century and examining their traces in Pound and H.D.'s work, my dissertation tells that story: the story of Greek's initial involvement in the conception of modernism, and its evolution after the First and SecondWorld Wars. What happened to Greece in the twentieth century in the Anglo-American context?

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[1] I will be using the following abbreviations for Pound's writings:
ABCR . . . *ABC of Reading*
CWC. . . *The Chinese Written Character*
GB . . . *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*
GK . . . *Guide to Kulchur*
L . . . *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*
L/MA . . . *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson*
L/ACH . . . *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson*
L/DS . . . *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909–14*
LE . . . *Literary Essays*
PE . . . *Polite Essays*
P&T…*Poems and Translations*
SP . . . *Selected Prose*

I show that both poets turn to Greek literature at crucial points in their careers and that it is through their translations from Greek that they first address both poetological questions, such as the form of new poetry in English, and sociopolitical ones, such as the relevance and role of poetry in times of war. Focusing on their engagement with theories of the image and of rhythm and prosody in their critical writings and (in the case of H.D.) novels, I show how Pound and H.D formulate and negotiate poetry's position between prose, music, and the visual arts through their encounters with Greek, a process which culminates in their theatrical experiments with Greek tragedy in their later work. Though I read Pound and H.D. closely, I situate their work both in a larger cultural, literary, and historical context, in which different definitions of Hellenism were in conflict, and in a modernist debate (involving, for example, and at various points, Eliot, Williams, Moore, D.H. Lawrence, and Richard Aldington) on the relevance of Greek poetics for poetry in English. Exploring the ways in which Pound's and H.D.'s approach to or use of Greek might diverge from the dominant discourses of and on Hellenism current in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, I argue that the two poets' engagement with Greek antiquity should be seen not as a conservative or idealizing commitment to tradition (as it was seen by many of their contemporaries, including Moore and Williams), but rather as a circuitous turn towards creating a new English-language poetics fit to address the pressing cultural and political issues of their time. The use each poet makes of Greek texts is found to exceed Hellenizing or classicizing poetics and to thus establish a different, a "modernist" Hellenism.

Pound was perhaps the first poet to make translation so fundamental to his work, famously claiming that "A great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations; or

follows it" (*LE* 232). Upon seeing H.D.'s first poems, all translations from the Greek Anthology, he rushes them off to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry* magazine, presenting Greek not as simply one language from which a poet can learn, but as the ideal language, or rather the ideal poetry, the poetry which exemplifies best the tenets of his poetic revolution: imagiste poems are, he tells Monroe, "straight talk, straight as the Greek" (*L* 11). Having set up Greek "straight talk" as the template for the first two principles of Imagisme (direct treatment of the thing and verbal economy) in his 1912 letter to *Poetry*, Pound locates its third principle, which bears directly on metrical form ("to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome"), in Greek tragic choruses (*LE* 3). In 1913 he champions the tragedians and in particular Euripides as paradigms for free verse. In 1916 he suggests that a long Imagiste poem might be similar to a Noh play, which, in turn, bears resemblances to Greek tragedy (*P/T* 368, *GB* 94). In 1918 he stresses the benefits of writing in Greek (quantitative) meters for a poet writing in English. In 1921-22, in the very same letters that led to the production of *The Waste Land* in its final form, Pound and T.S. Eliot discuss translating Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. In 1923 Pound laments his failed attempt to do so.[2] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s he advises scholars and poets like W.H.D. Rouse and Mary Barnard on how to translate Greek texts. Finally, in 1949 Pound translates Sophokles's *Elektra*, but does not publish it, and then in 1954 he publishes his version of Sophokles's *Trachiniae* as a Noh play. Pound's persistent, though subtle, preoccupation with matters Greek (but non-Homeric), revealed in letters, essays and most crucially in his translations of Greek tragedy has been, however, completely sidelined by scholars of Pound's work in favor of his more visible engagement with Latin, Provençal, Italian, and Chinese poetry.[3] Besides a few short articles on his translation of the *Trachiniae* and a book

[2] The unpublished text was published by Donald Gallup in 1986.
[3] Peter Liebregts's short but illuminating articles are one exception.

in German by Christine Syros on his translation of the *Elektra*, no work has been done on this topic. My dissertation fills this gap. It traces Pound's ambiguous relationship to Greek texts and authors throughout his career culminating in his translations of Sophocles during his incarceration at St. Elizabeths. From the early mentions in his letters of his mistrust of Greek poetry and Greek tragedy in particular to his obsessive, but in the end suppressed, struggle with Sophokles's *Elektra* forty years later, Pound treats Greek as something that he cannot quite assimilate, that his poem(s) cannot quite digest—that he cannot quite translate, without, at least the mediating screen of Andreas Divus's Latin *Odyssey* in Canto 1 or of the conventions of the Noh (*Women of Trachis*), and for this reason he keeps returning to it.

H.D., in contrast, is preoccupied much more visibly than Pound with ancient Greece, its myth, rituals, and language, and its translation into English. In fact, the notion and process of translation is as central to her work as it is to Pound's, and it is formed through her engagement with Greece. For her too original poems and translations become intertwined, she too finds in translation the impetus for a long poem (*Hippolytus Temporizes*) and an epic of sorts (*Helen in Egypt*). Susan Stanford Friedman has argued that prose became "the discourse that freed H.D. to narrate her experience of modernity" because it was "personal, narrative, directly gendered, and historical" (*Penelope's Web* 64). I argue, by looking at H.D.'s first "imagiste" poems as the translations that they were, that they are not quite as disembodied and timeless as they might initially appear while her choruses from Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Aulis* are already doing the work that Friedman locates in H.D.'s later mythical dramatic monologues and in her novels; they already allow her to explore her ambivalence as a poet in a time of war. Moreover, her interwar Euripides versions, I show, are not simply tributes to classical Athens, or to Greece, or even ways to explore her own personal traumas in disguise, which is how they have mostly been read;

they are, rather, modes of interrogating Euripides specifically and Greece in general in terms of what they can offer to "modernity" and of what "modernity" can offer back. Throughout the dissertation I thus focus on what I see as a continued though oblique engagement through Greek tragedy with the, for H.D., interrelated questions of the nature and role of poetry, and of the relation between antiquity and modernity.

There are three general sets of questions at the heart of this project. First: How can poetry written in one language influence or contribute to the development of poetry written in another? More specifically, in the first half of the twentieth century, what can be accomplished for American poetry and for Pound and H.D. in particular by looking at foreign, "other" languages and literatures? What can American poetry gain in this way? How can "comparative literature" be practiced in a way beneficial to, or even constitutive of poetry? (A way that Pound repeatedly found lacking at the time[4] and sought to define through his method of "Luminous Detail"[5]). Second: What is the role of translation in this process and, more precisely, the practice of translation in this context? That is, this is not merely a matter of looking at how a poet might be influenced by the "foreign" poem, but at how she translates it, at the actual textual relation that she forges. For my two authors, the two are always conjoined—and this, I argue is what

[4] For instance, in a 1914 essay entitled "The Renaissance," Pound writes that "The value of a capital or metropolis is that if a man in a capital cribs, quotes or imitates, someone else immediately lets the cat out of the bag and says what he is cribbing, quoting or imitating" (*LE* 214). He then adds, "America has as yet no capital. The study of 'comparative literature' received that label about eighty years ago. It has existed for at least two thousand years"; true 'comparative literature' seems to be exemplified by the troubadours and their knowledge of "several jargons" and by Dante, but not by "'the classic education'" (214). In "How to Read" (1929), he insists that 'comparative literature' has not lived up to its potential: "'Comparative literature' sometimes figures in university curricula, but very few people know what they mean by the term, or approach it with a considered conscious method" (*Literary Essays* 16). In his essay on Cavalcanti (published in 1934, but composed in parts between 1910 and 1931), he repeats this claim and clarifies what he thinks ought to be the subject of comparative literature: "The study called 'comparative literature' was invented in Germany but has seldom if ever aspired to the study of 'comparative values in letters'" (*LE* 192).

[5] In the 1911–1912 series of essays published under the title "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" Pound proposes a "'New Method in Scholarship,'" which lies in precisely such a gathering not of limbs, but of "interpreting" "luminous" details (*SP* 22–23). See Chapter 1, pp. 64–65, below.

distinguishes their "Hellenism" from that of their contemporaries. Can we think of Pound's and H.D.'s translations without, on the one hand, dismissing them as incomplete or uneven, as some surveying them from a classicist point of view have done,[6] or, on the other, ignoring them (as has generally been done with Pound's *Elektra* and H.D.'s *Ion*)? Even Richard Aldington—H.D.'s husband, one of the initial Imagistes and himself a translator from Greek—says that "although translation is a perfectly honourable if underpaid occupation and has occupied the leisure of other men of genius, it can hardly be taken into account when estimating a poet's contribution to *original* poetry" (*Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot* 4). He, therefore, dismisses all of Pound's translations (the volume *Cathay*, his versions of Arnaut Daniel and Guido Cavalcanti) and feigns dissatisfaction in discovering upon closer examination that even Pound's shorter poems are mostly translations or adaptations and that he is "wholly parasitic" (7). Of course, there is a third way, the opposite of Aldington's: treating the translations as "original" poems and neatly fitting them into the canon of the poets' work, ignoring the fact that they are translations and that there is another text behind them. It is only recently that studies of Pound's translations as translations have appeared, while H.D.'s Greek originals continue to be neglected. Finally, the third question motivating this project concerns precisely Pound's and H.D.'s Hellenism. Why the turn to Greece in particular? Is William Carlos Williams right in asserting that "Hellenism, especially the modern sort, is too staid, too chilly, too little fecundative to impregnate my world" and, by implication, the world of American poetry (*Imaginations* 12)?[7] Is "Greece with its goats and its gourds / the nest of modified illusions" as Marianne Moore writes in "England" (*Poems* 141)?

[6] See, for instance, Carne-Ross (who is nonetheless sympathetic to the project), Douglas Bush (498–505), Lattimore, and Burian (who refers to the "glaring inconsistencies of tone" in Pound's *Women of Trachis* [275]).
[7] Williams would continue to believe this and resist Pound's urgings to engage with Greek throughout his life; that his resistance to Greece is a crucial aspect of his poetics is evidenced by the fact that he includes a letter exchange with Pound on Greek tragedy in Book 3 of *Paterson* (129, 140,182). He then ends Book 4 by repeating that the "Sea is not our home"—*sea* appears throughout the book also as *thalassa*—as Paterson comes out of the water, finds his dog waiting for him, and heads inland. Williams thus suggests that one ought not go overseas to find a home, that

Hellenisms

David Ferris has argued that the origin of Hellenism is the moment "at which history, culture, modernity, and the political life of a nation are first articulated in relation to each other" in German art historian J.J. Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764) (18). Winckelmann turns Greece into a "measure of the highest cultural achievement," setting it up as an unattainable ideal; at the same time, through his systematic treatment of its every aspect "as part of a total cultural representation," he establishes a total(izing) concept of culture "as a representation of the political existence of a nation" that "went by the name of Greece" (6,17). What "Greece" measures then is not the adherence to a particular artistic style or the resemblance to an actual, geographical place, but this coherence of art and nation in all of their manifestations. Greece thus conceived becomes the basis for self-identification and self-definition of modernity.

In his account of the history of (Greek) art Winckelmann distinguishes five stages: origin (*Anfang*), development (*Fortgang*), stasis (*Stand*), diminishment (*Abnahme*) and end (*Ende*) (199).[8] All but the last are associated with a particular style: the older, the high, the beautiful, and

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one, that an American is not a wanderer in the sea of the world, of the past, of books (the setting of Book 4 is a library) but instead ought to be rooted in particular locale. At the same time, he implies that that particular mode and kind of quotation is not our home: *Thalassa*, the word borrowed from Xenophon's historical Greek text, is not our home, Greece is not our home, the Greek language is not our home or model.

[8] At the end of his account of the "Wachstum und . . . Fall" of Greek art, Winckelmann notes that the "Schicksal" of art is the same in modern times as it was in ancient times, that there are, namely, four "Haupt-Veränderungen" (332). This is hardly surprising since Winckelmann appeals to a variety of, for him, universal models to illustrate that such stages exist in the case of Greek art: a natural model ("Es mußte also die Kunst, in welcher, wie in allen Wirkungen der Natur, kein fester Punkt zu denken ist, da sie nicht weiter hinaußging, zurückgehen" [325]), a cosmological/historical model ("Auf diesem Weg kann es geschehen sein, so wie die Dinge in der Welt vielmals im Zirkel gehen, und dahin zurückkehren, wo sie angefangen haben, daß die Künstler sich bemühten, den ältern Styl nachzuahmen" [327]) and, most importantly, an artistic model ("Denn so wie eine jede Handlung und Begebenheit fünf Theile und gleichsam Stufen hat . . . worin der Grund liegt von den fünf Auftritten oder Handlungen in theatralischen Stücken, eben so verhält es sich mit der Zeitfolge der Kunst" [299]). For an account of Winckelmann's use of the organization of tragedy as paradigmatic for the organization of history, see Ferris 44–51.

the superfluous/imitative.[9] According to this scheme, art arises out of necessity as a given nation discovers art's seed within itself, then develops into the grand and the beautiful, its highest point, and finally necessarily declines into the superfluous, "into the mechanical repetition of its formal properties" (Ferris 29). In that moment art no longer expresses the existence of the nation in which it originates, but merely imitates the earlier forms—especially those of the older style—that that expression had assumed. That is, for Winckelmann the end of art begins when art fails to represent something other than itself, when the subject, in addition to the medium, of art is mimesis. Hellas, then, would draw to its end when it becomes Hellenizing, which is to say that Hellas is inimitable even when it is doing the imitation itself.

As Ferris points out, in order to preserve the essence of art as an imitative medium for modernity—in order, that is, for modernity to have its own art—Winckelmann has to postulate not only that Greek art came to an end (otherwise our art would still be Greek art), but also that it "fail[ed] to bequeath what it is to be Greek," instead leaving us with the Grecian, the Hellenistic, what is like Greek—that is the essence of its inimitability (46). From the beginning then, there are two Hellenisms: the Alexandrian one, which lacks the knowledge that led to the previously achieved high and beautiful art and is thus condemned to fastidiously imitate its external trappings without being able to distinguish what is important from what is not,[10] and the one that would arise out of the laborious reacquisition of that knowledge and, conscious of its distance

[9] Winckelmann does not say anything more about the downfall of art since, he claims, art's end does not properly belong to it ("aber das Ende derselben außer den Gränzen derselben geht"), but rather must always be marked by history (299). In David Ferris's reading, the reason that Winckelmann provides for his claim that the end of art cannot represent history is problematic given that his work is staked on the premise that the "organization of an artwork is derived from history"; Ferris argues that it is necessary for Winckelmann to at this moment separate history from art, despite the fact that throughout his *History* he has conjoined them, so that history can be preserved as the ultimate source of art's significance (44).

[10] "Die Nachahmung beförderte den Mangel eigener Wissenschaft, wodurch die Zeichnung furchtsam wurde, und was der Wissenschaft abging, suchte man durch Fleiß zu erlegen, welcher sich nach und nach in Kleinigkeiten zeigte, die in den blühenden Zeiten der Kunst übergangen . . . sind," writes Winckelmann, and then claims that this excessive care led to the degeneration of art into the "effeminate" (326).

from Greece and of Greece's inimitability, would nonetheless attempt to imitate the essence and substance of the Hellenic—this is the Hellenism for which Winckelmann's work would provide the foundation. After Winckelmann, what is at stake is not Aeschylus's or Praxiteles's work in itself, but "a Greece that should be represented by their work," as Ferris writes, since Greece becomes "less a place than the interrelation of art, politics, and culture" (51).

Pound and H.D. both depart from the Winckelmannian model in important, but different ways. Though they both fall prey to Winckelmannian rhetoric—Pound always critical of an imitative Hellenism and increasingly attracted to totalizing cultural images, H.D. often laudatory of the "Athenian" ideal—they never admit the existence of a chasm between modernity and Greece, insisting that "all ages are contemporaneous" (Pound), palimpsestic (H.D.) (*SR* 8). Pound, as I will argue in my first chapter, though caught in the midst of contradictory positions, properly Hellenist and anti-Hellenist alike, often treats Greek as one potential tool in the modern poet's toolbox, placed along Provençal and Chinese. Even when after the First World War, he seeks to tie poetry to the polity, looking for cohesion between art and nation, he defines the national as comparative, language as inclusive and not exclusive. H.D., interested precisely in the second, "derivative" Hellenism, explicitly sets out to dismantle this totalization. Unlike Pound in his first canto, or even in his translations of Sophokles, it is not an earlier, archaic Greece that she evokes and whose affinity to modernity she seeks to bring out, but a later one, a Greece that is not an origin but exactly what Winckelmann called a "decline." Viewing Greece and Greeks as resolutely historical and not ahistorical ideals of perfection, H.D. shows that the daunting Greeks of the "first" Hellenism were already self-conscious and past-weary, engaged in such a process of self-recovery.

Historically speaking, of course, the question of Hellenism in English and specifically, the question of the relevance and use of Greek in English is not a new question. That the Homeric texts have been a testing ground and battleground for English (language and poetry), in which especially Pound but also H.D. are of course engaged, is attested to by George Steiner's collection *Homer in English*. "The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are perennially active in the pulse of the English languages, in the texts and contexts of Anglo-Saxon self-definition," Steiner writes in his preface; the translations and versions he puts together offer, he claims, "a concise chronicle of English," while "[t]he Homeric sequence is an inventory of metrical means" (xxxi-ii, xxi). Though I will be addressing the Homeric reception in modernism as it pertains especially to Pound's work and informs his views on metrics and translation, I am specifically interested in the less frequently examined reception of Greek tragedy. As Hugh Kenner remarks, tragedy, unlike the epics, "seems embedded as is no other ancient genre in a time, a place, and a culture. . . . There is no Sophocles we call our own" (522). That is, unlike in Germany, where in the period after Winckelmann's work appeared, there was an intense engagement with the medium of tragedy by poets and philosophers alike, there was relative paucity in such reflections on tragedy in England (with the exception, perhaps, of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and his *Hellas*) even if versions of especially Euripidean tragedies were popular on the London stage.[11] It is of particular relevance to my project that towards the end of the nineteenth century, there is renewed interest in the translation of Greek tragedy—and sometimes in its metrical translation[12]—but also in its performance. As Simon Goldhill and Yopie Prins among others

[11] For a study of Medea's evolution on the London stage in relation to rising culture of sensationalism, see Fiske 24–63.

[12] Though not nearly as famous as Browning, A. Mary F. Robinson translated *Hippolytus* in 1881, "trying to stretch English verse into longer lines on the model of Classical meters" and striking a "balance between literal and free translation, adapting Greek melody to English meter and English melody to Greek meter" (Prins, "Lady's Greek" 609). For other women translators of tragedy, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning, see also Prins, "Sexual Politics." See also my discussion of Arnold on pp. 15–16 below.

have shown, both translation and performance became fraught political, cultural, and ideological issues.

Eileen Gregory notes that there were "two distinct hellenisms operative in the nineteenth century": on the one hand, the "revolutionary political agenda of Shelley's "Hellas" (1822)" and on the other "the moral agenda of [Matthew] Arnold," the enthusiasm of romantic Hellenism and Victorian domestication of Greeks "according to the outlines of prevalent political positions" (39).[13] To these we might add the darker fin-de-siècle Hellenism of Swinburne; where Arnold or J.H. Newman hoped that the revival of Greek, which they thought possible, would lead to cultural regeneration, the Decadents, as Fiske writes, sought in the Greeks a means both for celebrating the irrevocable fallenness of their own world and for challenging mid-Victorian religious and moral sensibilities" (14). Kenneth Haynes, in contrast, distinguishes Hellenisms not on the basis of ideological or political valences, but on that of poetic technique (which is, nonetheless, never disassociated from the projection of a particular image of Greece):

> In England, even though an alternative to Apollonian Greece was not formulated conceptually, both styles, a smooth high style under the influence of Homer and Sophocles and a rough high style modeled especially on Aeschylus, were influential in poetry. (153)

Though the second style becomes more apparent towards the end of century in poets like Swinburne and Hopkins, there is not, for Haynes, a historical progression from one style to the other. Shelley's two dramas exemplify both: In *Hellas*, there is an emphasis on the harmony of the whole, not on excessive descriptive details, and on verbs, rather than Greek-inspired compound adjectives predominate—this is the precursor to Arnold's "sweetness and light." In

[13] On the centrality of Hellenism in Victorian politics, see Goldhill, *Victorian Culture* and *Who Needs Greek?*, especially Chapter 4.

contrast, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) is paratactic, agglutinative, full of compound adjectives and privative epithets.[14] This is the style, too, of Robert Browning's very literal *Agamemnon* (1877), the first translation of a tragedy to be done by a major poet.

In *Heretical Hellenism*, Shanyn Fiske tracks a fourth current in nineteenth-century England that runs counter to the mainstream Victorian humanist Hellenism of Arnold but also to its more decadent version in Swinburne—who, in any case, was part of the same circle of well-educated men, crafting his allusions "with the consciousness of exhibiting his scholarly prowess" (16). This "heretical Hellenism" refers to the engagement of women, and women writers in particular, with a Greece that was mediated by popular culture; the Greece that appeared in contentious discussions about the Homeric epic, sculpture, and tragedy in periodicals, pamphlets, novels, or on the London stage was fragmentary and one not associated with the close philological linguistic study of texts. It thus allowed, if not invited, more open and imaginative approaches.[15] This trend culminated in Jane Harrison, who though a scholar herself, devoted her career to expanding the study of Greece to include the study of art and religion and to focus on a time prior to the classical era. It is this other, "Dionysian" or primitive Greece that, bolstered by Nietzsche's work and its promulgation in England by scholars like Harrison, emerges on the

[14] See Haynes's analysis, 152–60.

[15] As Fiske carefully documents, in the nineteenth century women were exposed to the classics through a variety of popular sources, such as novels, periodicals, and archeological artifacts. For an account of the discourse of fragmentation through which Greek antiquity was introduced to lay readers during that period see in particular pp. 66–68. Even though such readers felt "deeply alienated from classical literature because of their lack of formal training," this sense of alienation made the classics particularly "alluring and . . . a powerful means of self-expression" and "engendered a way of knowing that differed productively from the classical inheritance of men, which was based on rigid grammatical training and extensive memorization" (8). (Of course there were also some women, like Mary F. Robinson, who did have the literary-linguistic expertise of their male counterparts and who could translate or work closely with original texts). This is true even for someone like Jane Harrison who felt peripheral in the academic world; in Fiske's reading, Harrison "sublimat[ed] her desire for scholarly legitimacy into a quest for the redemptive transformation of her field" through the supersession of the traditional linguistically-based study of classical texts (151). We see then that H.D., but also Pound as well, follows in the footsteps of the women writers that Fiske discusses (Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Jane Harrison) in terms of their attitude towards "proper" philological inquiries and their very personal and idiosyncratic engagement with Greece—especially given their own university "failures" (see Carr 42–75). On Jane Harrison, see also Beard.

English stage in the first decade of the twentieth century and begins to dominate modernist art as preclassical Greece "became one site for the modernist rebellion against the rationalist, bourgeois nineteenth century" (Gere 37).[16]

Simon Goldhill contrasts the "pervasive but carefully controlled classicism in public Edwardian culture," which came to the fore in the frequent productions of Gluck's operas, and the shock brought about in London by the performance of the Hofmannsthal and Strauss's opera version of Sophokles's *Elektra* in February 1910. Using costumes "based explicitly on the recent Mycenean excavations of Schliemann and of Evans at Knossos," Strauss and Hofmannsthal orientalized, psychologized, and modernized the intellectual investment in glorious Greece; as Goldhill notes, "[i]t was this radical and aggressive reconceptualization of a Greek model [against ideals of classicism] that made *Elektra* [particularly] threatening" to a bourgeois audience, but of course appealing to artists eager to part with that classical heritage (138, 137). A similar scandal followed the 1912 production of *Oedipus Rex*, translated by Gilbert Murray and directed by Max Reinhardt. The play had been performed for the first time, in Greek, at Cambridge in 1887,[17] then banned in 1905; Murray was granted a license to translate the play in 1910, but the public was still shocked by the world it depicted. The press and critics seemed assuaged once Murray explained that the play did not depict fifth-century Athens, but rather much earlier and darker (and therefore, justifiably non-classical) times.[18] As we will see in Chapter 1, T.E. Hulme, whom Pound credited with the invention of Imagisme, or at least of a "forgotten School of Images," also advocated a return to the pre-classical in the visual arts, equating it under the influence of Wilhelm Wörringer's work, with abstract, non-anthropocentric

[16] On Harrison's modernist influence, see Carpentier and Phillips.
[17] Pound himself was part of the chorus in a student production of *Iphigeneia in Tauris* performed in Greek at the University of Pennsylvania in 1903.
[18] See Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek?*, 173–74.

forms. This contrast, between an Apollonian and a Dionysian Hellenism became more pronounced in the interwar period and was translated, on the basis of recent archeological work, into a distinction between a Mycenean warrior society and an earlier Cretan matriarchy. Cathy Gere in her excellent study of archeology's influence on modernist thought and art, demonstrates that parallel to the deployment of archeology and mythology "in the service of fascism" and of war, "Europe's traumatic experience of modern warfare produced its false memory of a peaceful Cretan childhood" as poets and artists "mobilized mythical archaeology in the service of pacifism and feminism" (13).

Harrison used her study of archaic art, of a non-linguistic medium as the foundation for her institutional resistance by formulating a "science of not knowing Greek in reaction to institutionalized knowledge" (161). Pound and H.D. are both part of this lineage of outsiders, especially by virtue of their being American. The critic Douglas Bush makes this very clear in 1937 when he offers a scathing criticism of H.D. as a poet and translator, attributing the praise often accorded her by American writers to national pride: "There may have been a patriotic factor at work, since H.D. has shown Europeans than an American poet may be able to read Greek," he writes (502). Fiske, moreover, asserts that Greece held an appeal for women writers in the Victorian period "not because Greece offered a parallel to the Victorian world but because Greek study provided a means of questioning assumptions about gender, religion, and the boundaries of legitimate knowledge" (22). By championing her personal investment in Greece and the "malleability of the ancient world," H.D. is on the one hand very much tied to a project like Harrison's, which the latter believed was crucial for its survival; she would also try, much more than Pound, as we will see, to claim a science of not knowing Greek (Fiske 120). Both

Pound and H.D.'s interest in tragedy is, moreover, certainly influenced by Harrison's work on ritual.

Yet though they follow in the steps of a kind of "heretical Hellenism," that is interested in ritual and disdainful of "philology," drawn to the archaic rather than the classical, that performs or seeks out the relevance of Greece rather than taking it for granted, H.D. and Pound are also, I will argue, still attached to the words and the texts themselves and deeply engaged in linguistic and metrical inquiries—even if not those that are "philologically sanctioned."[19] In this attachment to "meter," though not in its idiosyncrasy, they are closer than we might think to Matthew Arnold. What is particularly interesting about Arnold's agenda is that he ties metrics to society, a move that, as I show in my first chapter, would be surprisingly echoed by Eliot and Pound fifty years later. In "The Modern Element in Literature" (1857), Arnold claims, following Winckelmann that ancient Greek poetry is "a literature commensurate with its epoch"; the question for him becomes then how English literature might achieve such a commensurability (31). The answer, as Yopie Prins convincingly shows, is through translation and, more precisely, through metrical translation; the debates around such translations were, says Prins, "closely linked to the formation of a national literary culture" ("Metrical Translation" 229).[20] In his 1860-61 lectures on translating Homer, Arnold seems to suggest that the measure required for poetry and culture to fit is the dactylic hexameter: "The hexameter, whether alone or with the pentameter, possesses a movement, an expression, which no metre hitherto in common use

[19] Though I may not always explicitly cite them in my metrical analyses in the chapters below, I have consulted and am indebted to the discussions of English metrics by Attridge (especially *The Rhythms of English Poetry*) and Hanson.

[20] Prins writes that "not since Elizabethan experiments in 'quantitative' verse had there been such extensive discussion" as in the Victorian era the possible conjunction of classical quantitative meters with English accentual meters (*Victorian Sappho* 146). Meredith Martin has illuminatingly traced the "prosody wars" developing around this in late Victorian England, arguing for the connection between discussions of meter and the formation of national culture—a connection which colors Pound and H.D.'s intense rhetorical and actual engagement with prosody even though especially H.D., as we will see in Chapter 5 below, reacts against it.

amongst us possesses, and which I am convinced English poetry, as our mental wants multiply, will not always be content to forego" (148). In his "Last Words" appended to the Homer lectures, he insists: "I believe that modern poetry is actually in want of such an instrument as the hexameter" (202). The hexameter then, as Yopie Prins explains, "exemplified [for Arnold] the civilizing measures of meter and a measured response to modern times" ("Metrical Translation" 250). Moreover, Arnold did not turn to English hexameters (and plead for their use in Homeric translations) in an attempt to classicize English through quantitative meter, to move poetry further from the vernacular, as the sixteenth-century experiments with quantitative meter did,[21] but in order to naturalize classical verse and bring it closer to the vernacular. At the same time, Prins notes, "while Arnold prescribed hexameters to hold off the barbarians at the gates, he also opened the gates to various metrical experiments that seemed 'barbarous' to the very readers whose Englishness he sought to cultivate" ("Metrical Translation" 230). That is, while Arnold insisted that English hexameters sound natural and be based on accent, others began translating and writing in hexameters that attempted to be quantitative. As George Saintsbury put it in his famous *History of English Prosody* a few decades later, "With the self-styled quantitative hexameter you must either have new pronunciation, or a mere ruinous and *arrhythmic* heap of words" (vol. 3, 400). In trying to find, or forge a new measure for a new era, the poet-translator faces the risk of losing oneself "in bodenlosen Sprachtiefen," as Benjamin puts it in "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," and as Pound will demonstrate in his translation of *Elektra* (21).

If the divide, then, in the Victorian period was between the rigorously textual and the freely creative, and if the two were interdependent, as that world drew to its end when the First World War forced a revaluation of an educational system that had focused on the humanities—

[21] See Attridge's *Well-Weighed Syllables*, and on the pursuit of linguistic estrangement in sixteenth-century poetry more generally, see Nicholson.

and Greek—rendering obsolete humanistic Hellenism, as well as the heresy it engendered,[22] might a claim be made for the appearance of a modernist Hellenism, which would be both "free," "un-Greek" by philological and institutional standards, and yet in its own way, deeply textual?

Modernisms

In recent work on modernism (what has been called the "new modernist studies"), there has been a shift in emphasis from the traditional emphasis on modernist "cosmopolitanism," which might highlight the international themes or the multilingualism of modernist literature (or the fact of its authors' mobility), onto "critical cosmopolitanism."[23] While the old cosmopolitanism might focus on the relationship between two already constituted and presumably stable national traditions or literatures, critical cosmopolitanism approaches national and linguistic identities as non-stable, studying patterns (and fictions) of affiliation and alienation. As Rebecca Walkowitz writes, writers

> generate cosmopolitan styles not simply because they *are* cosmopolitan but because, in the simplest terms, they imagine that conditions of national and transnational affiliation depend on narrative patterns of attentiveness, relevance, perception, and recognition. Moreover, they assert the often-invisible connections between personal and international experiences. (*Cosmopolitan Style* 6)

That is, critical cosmopolitan writers are syncretic but less than national; they bring "different" languages or cultures together, but without quite knowing, or pretending to know, what it is that they are mixing. In this exchange, both languages and traditions are altered. At the same time, scholars have studied modernist production in new contexts, exploring both the mode of

[22] For an account of the demise of Hellenism in England after the First World War, see Fiske 189–97.
[23] See, for example, Mao and Walkowitz.

circulation of modernist texts in a wider range of cultures and previously neglected sources for and rethinking "the distinction between Europe and its Others that has been central both to modernist art and to modernist scholarship" (Walkowitz, "One Language," 157). As will become clear in my discussion of H.D. in the following chapters, her work fits very neatly into this paradigm. Pound, with his insistence on identifying the worthy features, or worthy contributions of each culture and each literature, would seem to go against it despite his insistence on translation. At the same time, Pound's understanding of the "national" as "critical" and language as inclusive and not exclusive, his expansion of the languages, traditions, and kinds of materials that could be available to English poetry, and inclination to bring together elements not previously combined, while maintaining their difference, suggests that his work, sometimes despite his professed intentions, is a fruitful ground for such study.

In conjunction with a broader disciplinary turn towards Translation Studies, the study of modernist translation as a primary creative practice has also been expanded. Steven Yao's recent book *The Languages of Modernism* opens with an impressively long list of modernist authors who were also translators: just in the Anglo-American tradition, we have Eliot (who translated Perse's *Anabase*); H.D., Richard Aldington, Yeats, and Virginia Woolf who all translated from Ancient Greek but also from Latin (Aldington) and Russian (Woolf), Joyce (two plays by Gerhart Hauptmann), William Carlos Williams (Paz, Neruda among others), Marianne Moore (*The Fables of La Fontaine*), D.H. Lawrence (Giovanni Verga), Elizabeth Bishop (poems from Portuguese, French, and Spanish).[24] As Yao, argues, "translation represented for the Modernists much more than either just a minor mode of literary production or an exercise of apprenticeship.

[24] In the broader European context, we might also think of Ungaretti's numerous translations from a variety of languages (from Shakespeare and Blake to Gongorra and Brazilian poetry); Montale's versions of Pound, Eliot, and Yeats; Celan's deep engagement with the English and French poetic traditions; Rilke's translations from French; and the numerous translations of European poets undertaken by George Seferis.

. . . it constituted an integral part of the Modernist program of cultural renewal" (6). What modernist translation teaches us is that we ought not to adhere so rigidly to the very distinction between translation and original; the instances where the two are blurred in modernist texts are many and, in fact, this occurs exemplarily in Pound and H.D.'s work.

This study, by dwelling on Pound and H.D.'s engagement with Greek, would seem to diverge at least in this respect from the new paradigm. But even though I look at an old context, "Hellenism," I show, by emphasizing not just Pound and H.D.'s rhetorical engagement with the idea of Greece, but precisely their textual production and their forging of textual relations, that that context is not exactly what it has been thought to be, though in a different way for each of my authors. I focus on Pound and H.D. because their treatment of Greek and the role it plays in their work is different from any of that of their contemporaries and fits only uneasily into any of the previously identified and defined Hellenisms.

Yao argues that what is new about modernism's intense translational activity is that while before modernism translation was a means for "renewing and strategically deploying the authority" of the Greek and Roman classics, modernists expanded the cannon by looking to other traditions (Chinese, Japanese, Bengali) and by translating their contemporaries (10). At the same time, when they did translate from classical languages, Yao argues, modernists "valorize[ed] . . . their own ignorance" in a way that previous translators did not (12). When, for example, in 1915 the magazine *The Egoist* launched—largely at the instigation of Richard Aldington (who was one of its editors and a frequent contributor) and H.D—the "Poets' Translation Series," which would go on to publish short volumes of translations from Greek and Latin, the editors seemed to draw on the anti-philological strain of late Victorian Hellenism. They wrote:

> This literature has too long been the property of pedagogues, philologists, and professors. Its human qualities have been obscured by the wranglings of grammarians, who love it principally because to them it is so safe and so dead. . . . The translators will take no concern with glosses, notes, or any of the apparatus with which learning smothers beauty. . . . The first six pamphlets, when bound together, will form a small collection of unhackneyed poetry, too long buried under the dust of pedantic scholarship.

There are clearly strong echoes of Jane Harrison's work here. We see the typically modernist resistance to institutionalized forms of knowledge, as well as the belief in the livelihood of the past; hinted at is also the possibility of these not-dead posing a danger to the present by destabilizing its foundations.[25] Yet even in this passage there is no valorization of ignorance per se; rather, what is being proposed is an alternative mode of translation. It is this rhetoric of ignorance, which might be opposed or complicated by actual practice, that leads scholars astray, especially in the study of H.D.'s work, as they maintain the knowledge-versus-ignorance distinction that is supposedly being denied by modernist writers who claim that there can be more than one way of knowing, more than one way of translating.

In any case, according to T.S. Eliot's 1916 review of those first six volumes in the "Poets' Translation Series," the anti-philological effort seems not to have paid off. Only H.D.'s translations of the choruses in Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Aulis* are singled out as the work of a

[25] See Kolocotroni's "Still Life: Modernism's Turn to Greece" on precisely this modernist dialectic between life and death and on Greece's figurative status as a ghost. See also the section "Contracting Greek Tragedy" in Chapter 1 below, especially the discussion of *Agamemnon* and n. 75.
Ironically, of course, Nietzsche, who to some extent inspired this line of thinking (at least for Harrison) was himself a proud defender of philology (against poets like Goethe and Schiller who seemed to disdain it for reasons similar to those advanced by the editors of the *Egoist*'s "Poets' Translation Series"); see "Homer and Classical Philology."

true "poet" even if Eliot assiduously points our her various "errors" and failed "improvements."[26] Of Richard Aldington's translations of the Hellenistic poet Anyte of Tegea (on one of whose poems, H.D.'s famous "Hermes of the Ways" was based), Eliot says that it is "good, but hardly ever steps aside from the path of Mackail," the classicist editor of the Greek Anthology (102).[27] We have already seen Aldington's assessment of translation as a secondary pursuit; his Hellenism, too, is much more conventional than either Pound's or H.D.'s. His translations from the Greek Anthology are, indeed, very straightforward, as are his later tragedy translations. Aldington is attached—as his comments on translation also suggest—to moments of origination, of original greatness that cannot approached in a way that neither Pound nor H.D. are: Pound because he seeks to coordinate moments of greatness, none of which could be properly called "original," H.D. because she tends to see even moments of greatness as hidden moments of what, for example, Pound might call non-greatness. In Aldington's poems—and in his war poems especially—the mythic or Greek elements are not well integrated, in direct opposition to filthy modernity, and always figured as closely aligned with nature, the guarantors of a stabilizing, ideal harmony. For example, in "Eros and Psyche" he wonders what two ancient statues are doing "here in Camden Town / In the midst of all this clamour and filth?"; in the "Proem" to *Images of War* the speaker wishes to "gather something of repose, / Some intuition of the inalterable gods" in the midst of "this turmoil and passion, / This implacable contest, / This vast sea of effort"; "In the Trenches" appeals to Orion and the Pleiades and challenges the enemy to "crush the spring leaf with your armies"; in "Daughter of Zeus," the moon is "fairest . . . / Of the

[26] Of course, as Gregory notes, H.D.'s alterations and omissions aren't the result of her inability to translate certain lines, but rather occur "because she is crafting a single lyric piece with its own interpretative emphases" (184). For Pound's similar assessment of H.D.'s translation, see Chapter 1 below, pp. 67–69, and for my reading of the translation, see Chapter 2, 135ff, below.
[27] On the importance of Mackail and the Greek Anthology, see Chapter 1 below, pp. 35–37; on Anyte and H.D.'s poem, see Chapter 2, pp. 95–104.

maidens of Olympus," a "frail lily / Floating upon a calm pool— / Still a tall lady comforting our human despair." It is a similar spirit that Virginia Woolf expresses, after the First World War, in "On Not Knowing Greek" (1925), when she writes that "it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age" (59).[28]

Woolf's and Aldington's nostalgic, Winckelmanian Hellenisms depend on the notion of a chasm separating us moderns from Greece, "a chasm," as Woolf puts it, "which the vast tide of European chatter can never succeed in crossing" so that "the Greeks remain in a fastness of their own" (39). Similarly, though Eliot in his review conceded that despite her "monotonously short lines with excess of stops and defect of connectives," H.D. "often . . . does succeed in bringing something out of the Greek language to the English, in an immediate contact which gives life to both, the contact which makes it possible for the modern language perpetually to draw sustenance from the dead," he still claimed that there can be "no substitute, no *adequate* translation" (103; 102, italics in the original). Indeed, when asked by Pound to translate Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, he did not, letting its lines resonate instead in Greek in some of his poems.[29] Decades later, he returned to Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, using the *Eumenides*, the third play in the trilogy as the basis for his play *The Family Reunion* (1939), but in 1951 he would lament that the play's "deepest flaw" is "a failure of adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation" (38).[30] 1949's *The Cocktail Party*, inspired by Euripides's *Alcestis*, is even further from its antecedent, and, like the earlier play, does not engage linguistically with the Greek text.

[28] In the American context, we might think of Robinson Jeffers, another devoted reader and translator of Greek, who saw in Greece as the antithesis and antidote for modernity, though his ideas about what Greece was—bastion of or proof for his "inhumanism"—were actually more radical than, or even opposed to, either Aldington's or Woolf's. For an overview of Jeffers's engagement with Greek and an examination of his 1946 translation of *Medea*, see Richardson.
[29] See Chapter 1 below, pp. 71–73.
[30] See also Burian 257–58.

For Eliot, as his early review suggests, "Greek" is dead— a "monument" of tradition (and Pound would chastise him for this word choice), which may be altered by individual talent but never fully revived.[31]

At the same time, of course, Eliot's belief in the untranslatability of Greek reveals what Fiske and other critics have argued, namely that, in Rachel Blau DuPlessis's words, "To enter the classics is to confront the issue of cultural authority, for knowledge of Greek and Latin, formerly barred to women and certain males, was the sigil of knowledge and authority, the main portal of the liberal humanist hegemony" (*Career* 17). Eliot begins his review by lamenting the excess of "cheap" translations (and translations of Euripides no less) that can only result in "still greater neglect of Greek in our schools": "Why study Greek when an *adequate* translation can always be had, cheap and easy scholarship for the busy man?," he asks wryly (101). Woolf also insists on the untranslatability—indeed, on the unknowability of Greek: "It is useless, then," she claims, "to read Greek in translations. Translators can but offer us a vague equivalent; their language is necessarily full of echoes and associations" (56). In her novels, however, Woolf consistently presents the gender power structures that surround knowing Greek, as well as the male knower's—for instance, Eliot's above—refusal to translate, such that her belief in "On Not Knowing Greek" that Greek cannot be known at all becomes a "subtle sideswipe . . . puncturing the pretensions of generations of male scholars" (Kolocotroni, "Still Life" 9).[32] Moreover, what is specifically untranslatable for Woolf, as it would be for Pound and H.D.—indeed, as Kenneth Haynes has shown, this was almost a cliché—is the sound of Greek that manages to express a certain originality of emotion beyond the words, a "meaning" not exhausted by reference, "just

[31] In "Still Life" Vassiliki Kolocotroni intriguingly suggests that Eliot may have feared, dreaded its revival.
[32] On Woolf's engagement with Greek, see also Dalgarno; Kolocotroni, "Greek Lessons" and "Still Life" 9–10; Prins, "Ototoi"; and Lamos. Specifically, for an overview of the valences of knowing Greek in Woolf's novels, Dalgarno, "Virginia Woolf: Translation and Iterability," 147–48.

on the far side of language" (49). We may understand what Antigone, Ajax, and Elektra stand for in translation but they are also, she writes, "among the greatest bores and the most demoralising companions in the world." "But encounter them in Greek," she continues: "Even in Sophocles, whose reputation for restraint and mastery has filtered down to us from the scholars, they are decided, ruthless, direct. . . . A fragment of their speech broken off would, we feel, colour oceans and oceans of the respectable drama. Here we meet them before their emotions have been worn into uniformity" (45). As we will see in Chapter 2, H.D. in an unpublished essay that would have preceded Woolf's makes a very similar point; it is the sounds, the "metres" that make Euripides worth reading, and in Chapter 3 I will consider what these "metres" might be measuring. Like Woolf, too, H.D. is very aware of the ethics of appropriation, concerned, in Woolf's words, that when we read, translate, and think we understand Greek, we might "read into Greek poetry not what they have but what we lack" (55).

While Eliot and Woolf decided that Greek translation couldn't, shouldn't be done, except as the transposition of a conceit to a modern setting (Eliot's adaptations, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as a version of *Agamemnon*, a play for which she *had* produced an interlinear translation),[33] W.B. Yeats turned to Greek tragedy as a means of bolstering Irish national culture. In 1903, right after *Oedipus Rex* had been banned in England, Yeats asked Gilbert Murray to translate it with the intention of staging it in Dublin, so that "Ireland would liberate the classics from English tyranny," as Fiona Macintosh puts it (296). (Murray refused Yeats's offer though, as mentioned above, he did translate the play in 1910). He returned to Sophocles almost thirty years later, translating and producing in Ireland both *King Oedipus* (1928) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1934), still looking to tragedy "as a model for the formation of a national, Irish dramatic culture" (Yao

[33] We might think of Joyce's *Ulysses* in this way as well though Joyce was definitely actively engaged with the language of his original.

3). Yeats, however, compiled his translations on the basis of previous translations, again in this precluding any engagement with Greek as a language.

In contrast, what Pound and H.D. do, I will argue, is attempt to reconceptualize "knowledge," our understanding of the ways in which words mean and how they refer to the world; that discovery happens through translation conceived as a linguistic and not only as a cultural enterprise. Yao insists on the distinction between "an expressly generative and literary mode of writing" (modernist translation) and "a principally linguistic operation limited in scope to reproducing the 'meaning' of a foreign text" (previous translation practices) (13). What the following chapters show is that the greater innovation is in the conjunction of the two, which results in the exploration, and I think expansion, both of "meaning" and of what a "linguistic operation" might entail. It is this conjunction that allows us to distinguish between Pound and H.D.'s especially Greek translation work and that of other modernists. For Pound and H.D. especially "Greece" becomes not, or not only, the name for modernism's lost origin but a way to question the very idea of origins and originals, a way to investigate the notion of a "measure" partly through metrical engagement with Greek texts—"Greece" is not only an exemplary ever-present and ever-receding ghost,[34] but a collection of concrete sounds, words, meters whose availability to the modern poet is tested out.

Hellenist Modernisms?

What underlies the account of Greece offered by Winckelmann is his "unquestioned confidence" in the ability of narrative to supplement or even substitute for the visual as he builds up a history (and theory) of Greek art on the basis of very scant visual evidence; he does not

[34] See Kolocotroni, "Still Life: Modernism's Turn to Greece," who writes that "retrieving and contriving ancient plots confirms and undermines the presence of the past, making of it a rich because mined but ever-receding shore" (15).

foreground his role in giving the past a voice (Ferris 191). What is lost, then, after the inauguration of the "aesthetic" or Hellenist tradition is, as Ferris notes, "a prolonged engagement with the medium in which literature is written"; from that point on, literature is only seen as mediating something else, be that a "true," but ultimately idealized or fabricated image of Greece, or the ideological commitments of those who would fabricate such an image (65). H.D. and Pound (like Keats and Shelley in Ferris's account), emphasize instead the primacy of language in any reconstruction of the past and, as Pound's first canto makes clear, the vagaries and particularities of textuality and textual reception.

Greece for Pound and H.D. is a question. Pound often chooses to tackle and implicitly advocate for the use (and usefulness) of Greek through third languages and, in so doing, he reveals the necessity—and fruitfulness—of a mediated relation to Greek (which Eliot or Woolf might lament). He thus navigates a passage between Hellenism and anti-Hellenism, both of whose points of reference are established, as Ferris notes, on the basis of an absolute divorce of the present from a past seen as either inimitable or irrelevant. In the famous case of the first canto—a partial rendering of the *Odyssey*'s Book 11, which describes the trip to the underworld—what Pound puts into question is the sense of origin as unique. On the one hand, Pound maintains that this segment of the epic is the oldest (and therefore, at the origin of Western literary culture) but, on the other, that is not enough to recommend it, it is not enough to make one to bring it across—one must be able to place it in relation to other texts and in a cultural context of transmission, which Pound forges by translating it not directly from the Greek but from a sixteenth-century Latin translation by Andreas Divus, and into an Anglo-Saxon flavored idiom he had developed in the course of his translation of another text, namely "The Seafarer." Though throughout his career, Pound continues to view Greek poetics as a way of

opening up English, be it through free verse or quantitative meter—as a tool, that is, comparable to Provençal or medieval Italian—especially after the Second World War his engagement with Greek tragedy becomes tied, as his *Cantos* had been, to political tragedy; his increasing attachment to the figures of Agamemnon or Herakles betrays the desire and mourning for the strong leader embodied first in Malatesta and then Mussolini. Yet as invested as Pound becomes in the notion of coherence, the "unity of the whole," which he locates increasingly in Greek tragedy and which through tragedy he wishes to bring back into the *Cantos*,[35] even as he insists on central ideas and "key phrases" that his translations would hatch (to use H.D.'s metaphor), his pursuit of sounds and meters, patterns and rhythms, allows for other currents to set in, for dissonance and incoherence (and not only in his *Elektra*) that, for example, Eliot's careful adaptations do not allow.

H.D.'s Greece is a Greece in limbo, never ceasing to try and fail to define itself against its others. H.D. is concerned about the ethics of writing poetry and constantly questioning her own inclination to retreat and do so. This questioning is mapped onto an attraction and skepticism with respect to Greek antiquity. In deconstructing the primacy of the Greek (and showing it more nuanced, more foreign to itself, more unstable than previously considered), she also deconstructs a heightened, idealized view of art; she wants to convince herself of art's necessity in the world, rather than beginning from this as fact, as Pound does. Yet, as with Pound, I am not only interested in H.D.'s thematic engagement and reconfiguration of the Hellenic, which has been examined by other scholars—her use of Greece as a "heretical Hellenist" to question established

[35] Woolf also seemed to believe this, writing that "when we quote and extract we do the Greeks more damage than we do the English" since:

> A people who judged as much as the Athenians did by ear, sitting out-of-doors at the play or listening to argument in the market-place, were far less apt than we are to break off sentences and appreciate them apart from the context. . . . The writer had to think more of the whole and less of the detail. Naturally, living in the open, it was not the lip or the eye that struck them, but the carriage of the body and the proportions of its parts. (53–54)

ideas about gender, for example—but also in her linguistic and metrical engagement with Greek, as revealed primarily in her translations of Euripides. In *Bid Me to Live*, H.D. seems to be discussing her own "method" of translation and reveals an attention and attachment to the body of her original similar to Pound's, while sharing with him also the mistrust of scholarly, "philological" knowledge:

> She brooded over each word, as if to hatch it. Then she tried to forget each word, for "translations" enough existed and she was no scholar. She did not want to "know" Greek in that sense. . . . Anyone can translate the meaning of the word. She wanted the shape, the feel of it, the character of it, as if it had been freshly minted. (163)

In a marked departure from Pound's concerns about the continuity of lineages and the handing down of traditions, which surface intensely in the Pisan Cantos and which he channels into his Sophocles translations (see Chapters 4 and 6 below), H.D.'s metaphor is non-genealogical: hatching requires only the desire and attentiveness of the hatcher, rather than particular kinds of knowledge. Yet while DuPlessis is right in claiming that "H.D., quite able to negotiate in classical Greek, assumed its cultural authority in a critical way," calling her "the mystic against the scholars" risks overlooking her actual intense engagement with words, sounds, and languages, which is also evident in the quotation above (*Career* 17). Seeing her only as a mystic misses the "origin" of her mysticism, of her self-conception as prophet or priestess, namely her first self-conception as a translator, speaking words from elsewhere, displaying a consciousness that all words are words from elsewhere; we see this clearly in a text like "Murex" (1926) and also in *Ion*. It is precisely this aspect of her work as a translator that has gone unexplored. Beyond comments regarding her "visionary poetics" and her "occult" practice of translation, as

Eileen Gregory puts it, almost no attention has been paid to her particular words and word choices, to the kind of knowledge she exhibits beyond a general "grasp" of the effects Euripides intends (*H.D. and Hellenism* 142). Even Yao, who emphasizes the importance of specifically textual relations, barely looks at her originals in his chapter on H.D. In my dissertation I analyze closely the lexical and formal choices H.D. makes in all of her translations and versions of Euripides's plays, from her early translations of the choruses of *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, through her verse drama *Hippolytus Temporizes* to her only full translation of a tragedy, *Ion*. I trace H.D.'s linguistic archeology which may disdain accepted "facts" but is still deeply bound by something in the text even if that is not what others see or hear there. H.D., like Pound, guided by specific sounds, words, and meters, externalizes and presses, as it were, all that has been left unsaid, exposing the underside, the unconscious of Euripides's plays. At the same time, I show that her engagement with Greece is never "merely" poetical or prosodic or inward-looking but always tied to the thinking through of the social, always a way of testing the relevance and value of poetry.

Woolf claimed that "[c]hief among th[e] sources of glamour and perhaps misunderstanding" of Greek is "the language" (55). "We can never hope," she continues

> to get the whole fling of a sentence in Greek as we do in English. We cannot hear it, now dissonant, now harmonious, tossing sound from line to line across a page. We cannot pick up infallibly one by one all those minute signals by which a phrase is made to hint, to turn, to live. Nevertheless, it is the language that has us most in bondage; the desire for that which perpetually lures us back. (55)

Pound and H.D.'s wager, I argue, is that we could, or that at least we should risk trying.

My first two chapters examine Pound and H.D's work during the Imagiste period through the prism of its relation to Greece and its dependence on translation. Chapter One, "'The Some More Vital Equation': Writing the Image between Hellenism and Modernism," traces Pound's ambivalent and often self-contradictory use of Greek in the 1910s as he tries to articulate his poetics of the image. I examine his prose writings on prosody and the visual arts, his Imagist poems, and his attempts to translate Homer (in Canto 1) and Aeschylus, as well his dialogue with Eliot on *The Waste Land* and on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, concentrating on the particular problems the translation of tragedy poses. The second chapter, "'What Is Greece if You Draw Back?': Translating Hellenism into Modernism," reconstructs H.D.'s much more visible relation to Greece during the same period, showing that her poetics develops as a poetics of translation. It argues that her engagement with Greece is more deeply textual and self-conscious, even during this early period of her career, than has been recognized, and further suggests that H.D. negotiates her ambivalence about being a poet during a time of war through her early translations of Euripides.

My third and fourth chapters juxtapose H.D.'s and Pound's particularly prosodic engagement with Greek tragedy. Titled "'I Don't Want to Write It': Measuring Greece Between the Wars," the third chapter traces H.D.'s transformation of 1919's "Choruses from *Hippolytus*" into the 1927 drama *Hippolytus Temporizes*; it focuses on her rhetorical and actual engagement with Euripidean rhythm and meter, through which, it argues, she questions and measures out the relationship between "antiquity" and "modernity"—terms whose very validity she interrogates—as well as the possibility and value of writing poetry itself. The fourth chapter, "'And a Good Job'?: Elektrifying English at St. Elizabeths," focuses on an almost entirely ignored text in Pound's corpus, his translation of Sophocles's *Elektra* (1949). It reads this linguistic and metrical

experiment as Pound's attempt to continue the ghost theater of the Pisan Cantos while also devising a new prosody for his writing after the Second World War, returning to the prosodic experiments of his early years.

Chapters Five and Six examine H.D.'s and Pound's radical transformations of Euripides's *Ion* (1937) and Sophocles's *Women of Trachis* (1954) respectively, and argue for their significance in determining the direction of the two poets' subsequent "original" work. The fifth chapter, "The Intricate Plan: H.D.'s *Ion*," considers H.D.'s only complete tragedy translation and argues that H.D., staging a debate with Freud in the translation (who encouraged her to complete it), develops an alternative psychoanalytic theory of literature that allows her to finally justify both her mysticism and her turn to Greece, and to resume her poetic writing during the Second World War. The sixth and final chapter, "'From the dawn blaze to sunset': The Languages of the Image," claims that Pound's reconfiguration of Sophocles's *Trachiniae* as a Noh play is the realization of the dream of the long Imagist poem that coheres (first articulated in 1916), enabling Pound to return to the writing of *The Cantos*.

My dissertation thus outlines the continuing parallels in Pound and H.D.'s writing, thought to have diverged after 1914, and shows that Pound owes more to H.D.'s work than has been previously assumed. By tracing the specter of Greece in the development of Anglo-American poetic modernism, I argue for the importance of the consideration of translation in any account of modernist poetics and at the same time highlight the extent to which these poets' work challenges and redefines familiar categories of thinking about translation.

"'The Some More Vital Equation'":

Writing the Image between Hellenism and Modernism

In a 1942 text originally written in Italian, and later translated and published as "A Visiting Card," Ezra Pound writes,

> In the latter half of the nineteenth century technical and metrical development was centred in France. After 1917 it was continued in the English language. It was my intention that there should have been two classes of Imagists: Hellenists and modernists. Mercantilism intervened. The development continued. Practically no one has succeeded in producing satisfactory English translations from the Greek: only a few fragments have come through successfully. (*SP* 324)

This statement is remarkable for three reasons. First, Pound's prose on Imagisme[1] written in the teens contains no such statement of intention. While, as I will go on to show, the "Hellenist" class of Imagists was prominent—was in fact initially the only class—what Pound means by "modernist" is less clear. It is possible that he is referring to his own evolution out of Imagisme and into Vorticism, but grouping both movements under one name; Diana Collecott's detailed analysis of the debate between Hellenisms and anti-Hellenisms that "inflame[d] the pages of the *Egoist*" in 1914, when Richard Aldington was the magazine's editor, certainly points us in this direction (103 ff.).[2] However, as Helen Carr brings to our attention, Pound had already implicitly made use of a similar contrast earlier in his career, albeit in a different context. Carr traces *Spirit*

[1] I will be using the "French" spelling of Imagisme and Imagiste since that is consistent with Pound's practice at the time that he coined the term, as well as later on. That it appears as "Imagists" in the citation from "A Visiting Card" is, I believe, the translator's, rather than Pound's doing.

[2] Highlighting the contradictions present in Pound's own Hellenism circa 1914, Collecott notes that "Pound's championship of ["Hellenist"] poets such as Aldington, H.D. and F.S. Flint coincided with his blasting of Hellenism on behalf of artists such as Epstein, Gaudier and Lewis; this testifies to an awkward realignment of allegiances as Pound transferred his energies from Imagism to Vorticism" (118). In this reading then Pound's "and" in the "Visiting Card" seeks to erase the tension between his own two contradictory positions.

of Romance, Pound's chosen title for his series of lectures at the London Polytechnic that began in October 1909, to Oscar Wilde's lecture "The English Renaissance in Art." In this lecture, delivered in 1882 during his American lecture tour and received as his "full-length manifesto aestheticism," Wilde drew a distinction between "the Hellenic spirit" and "the spirit of Romance" (Carr 216). These are described as the twin sources of the English Renaissance, which for Wilde has taken place through pre-Raphaelite art.[3] Is Pound here repeating this gesture in this (retrospective) formulation of his own not English, but American renaissance through Imagisme, but crucially using it to expunge from his record his own romance medievalism and replace it by modernism[4]? Is he simply making Wilde, and himself, new?

What is even more striking, however, is the date Pound assigns to the beginning of "metrical and technical" experimentation in English: 1917—that is, after both Imagisme and Vorticism have wound down and at the exact time when Pound, together with T.S. Eliot, turned away from the particular "experimental" form that Imagisme had helped usher, *vers libre*, and began writing poems in quatrains, following the French model of Théophile Gautier.[5] 1917, then, is the moment at which "the development continued," though at the time it must have seemed to

[3] "It is really from the union of Hellenism, in its breadth, its sanity of purpose, its calm possession of beauty, with the adventive, the intensified individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit, that springs the art of the nineteenth century in England," Wilde writes (cited in Carr 216).

[4] Pound's early books of poetry were steeped in "medievalism" and pre-Raphaelite archaisms, which, as we will see, he would soon try to move away from. Much later he called his first book, *A Lume Spento*, "A collection of stale creampuffs," (*P&T* 1256). In contrast, as Carr notes, in 1909–10 Pound's interest in Hellenism was "fairly minimal" (216).

[5] As Pound recalled in 1932:

> At a particular date in a particular room, two authors, neither engaged in picking the other's pocket, decided that the dilutation [sic] of *vers libre*, Amygism, Lee Masterism, general floppiness had gone too far and that some counter-current must be set going. Parallel situation centuries ago in China. Remedy prescribed 'Émaux et Camées' (or the Bay State Hymn Book). Rhyme and regular strophes.
>
> Results: Poems in Mr Eliot's *second* volume … also H.S. Mauberley. Divergence later. (*Polite Essays* 14)

See also Eliot's essay "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," which was published in the *New Statesman* on March 3, 1917.

Pound's contemporaries that the development had halted or been reversed. It is also the date at which Pound begins serious work on *The Cantos*.

Finally, Pound jumps from what seems to be the subject at hand—the development of English verse, according to a Hellenic, a "modernist," or a French model— to something seemingly irrelevant: translations from Greek into English. Why and how are these two processes related? Is Pound implying that the "modernist" development continued, but that the "Hellenist" one has failed? Are the two separate or conjoined aspects of the evolution of poetry in English? Is the "Hellenist" class limited to translations? Or is there a larger claim being made about the relationship between translation—and translation from Greek par excellence—and "original" poetic writing or "technical and metrical development"? These are the questions that my first two chapters will attempt to answer in tracking Pound's conception of Imagisme, H.D.'s involvement in it, and both of their writing about, and translating from, Greek throughout the teens.

"Straight as the Greek"?: Imagiste Forms and Measures

1. Models

Imagisme, as Pound would eventually conceive it, was simply an effort "to keep language efficient," a sweep-up operation prescribed to cure English language and verse from excessive rhetoric, archaism and emotional slushiness—in short, from what Pound called the "corpse language" of the Victorians, and as he himself would later note, of his own early poems (*LE* 22; *Letters* 296). At its center was Pound's poetic art of phanopoeia, defined as a "casting of images upon the visual imagination" and characterized by "the greatest drive toward utter precision of the word" (*LE* 25). The image, as Pound understood it, is distinguished both from

ornament and symbol. Railing against ornamentation, which he thought of as unnecessary wordiness, Pound considered the image not as an ornament of speech, but as "itself the speech" (*GB* 88). He, moreover, differentiated the image from the symbolist's "symbols," claiming that the latter "have a fixed Value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7"; the Imagiste's images, in contrast, "have a variable significance, like the signs *a, b,* and *x* in algebra" (*GB* 84).

When, however, in the fall of 1912, he first explicitly advertised Imagisme to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry* magazine, Pound had not yet developed the theory of the image outlined above.[6] Instead he set up Greek not as simply one language from which a poet can learn, but as the ideal language, or rather the ideal poetry, the poetry which exemplified best the tenets of his poetic revolution, and thus he conjoined the two terms in the 1942 "A Visiting Card." The poems of he sent Monroe were, he claimed, "*modern* stuff . . . in the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic. . . . "Objective—no slither—direct. . . . No metaphors that won't permit examination. – It's straight talk—straight as the Greek" (*Letters* 11). The particular poems in question, however, the poems that arguably prompted the creation of Imagisme and demonstrated both the "Hellenic" and the "modernist" quality that Pound claimed he was looking for, were H.D.'s.—or rather were, precisely, not H.D.'s. "Hermes of the Ways," "Orchard," and "Epigram (*After the Greek*)," published in *Poetry* magazine's January 1913 issue in a separate section under the title "Verses, Translations, and Reflections from 'The Anthology'" were all versions of Greek epigrams H.D. had found in J.G. Mackail's 1911 edition of the Greek Anthology.[7] Certainly, Pound's much-quoted phrase, "straight as the Greek," did

[6] See James Longenbach, especially 31–55, and Daniel Tiffany, especially 37–64, for Pound's other "Theory of the Image," which preceded the development of Imagisme, and which Imagisme in fact sought to cover up. As Longenbach puts it, "The Imagist manifestos seem designed to counteract the dreamy symbolism of both Yeats's and (more to the point) Pound's early verse" (31).

[7] As Robert G. Babcock reports, it is unclear whose title this was. In Harriet Monroe's note on H.D. at the end of the volume, she indicated that they were not translations (202). See Babcock for an extended analysis of the importance

not simply suggest a generalized comparison to an abstract Greek model, but also must have referred to the particular texts that H.D.'s poems elaborated. Whether his assessment was accurate is an issue we will return to in the next chapter.

Though it is Pound's Chinese-themed poems in *Ripostes* (1912) and later in *Lustra* (1916) that are generally considered the models for Imagisme, it is in fact the case that the "original" prototype was the Greek epigram, as found in the Greek Anthology and as used by H.D. As J.G. Mackail writes in his introduction to the Anthology edition consulted by H.D. and by her husband Richard Aldington for their Imagiste poems, "the epigram in its first inception may be described as a very short poem summing up as though in a memorial inscription what it is desired to make permanently memorable in a single action or situation. It must have the compression and conciseness of a real inscription, and in proportion to the smallness of its bulk must be highly finished, evenly balanced, simple, and lucid" (4). As Robert G. Babcock also notes, these are essentially the same terms used by Pound to describe H.D.'s poems and to later prescribe exactly what an Imagiste poem ought to be. Mackail, however, adds something absent from Pound's initial formulations—something that Pound would take up only in his retrospective assessment of Imagisme in his memoir of the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska in 1916— though nonetheless very present in the poems, namely the relationship of poetry to memory and to the dead. Moreover, the Anthology, as Mackail shows, though he never puts it in quite these terms, reveals both a risk and a promise. On the one hand, it illustrates most vividly the "essential unity and continuous life of Greek literature . . . reaching from the period of the earliest certain historical records down to a time when modern poetry in the West of Europe has already established itself" (8). On the other hand, however, he claims that "it is difficult to be sure how

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the Greek Anthology as an ancient model and intertext for Imagisme, its practitioners (H.D., Pound and Richard Aldington), and its anthologies.

far the poetry was in any real sense native, and how far it is parallel to the Latin verses of Renaissance scholars. The vocabulary of these poets is practically the same as that of Callimachus; but the vocabulary of Callimachus too is practically the same as that of Simonides," such that by the medieval period, when additions to the Anthology were still being made, "the spoken language had now fallen so far apart from the literary idiom that only scholars were capable of writing in the old classical forms" (38). On the one hand, that is, the Anthology is evidence of the fact that "The Greek genius in its prime not only mastered the forms of poetry, but imposed them irreversibly on the Greek language" and so promises the ability of poetry to forge language and to thus continue living when its writers and even speakers have died; and on the other hand, the Anthology hides the danger of repetition, of deadening and embalming a living tradition. Though Mackail speaks of the "hardly less extraordinary ages that followed" the Athenian (and pre-Athenian) period, he constantly shows how they are, in fact, lesser (32). The attributes they lack are precisely those Imagisme advocates: "exquisite austerity," "clearness of outline," directness, while what they have is "an imaginative and florid passion," which, as Mackail claims, is akin to that of medieval poets (as is their treatment of love) (35). It is hard not to think that Pound is exorcizing his own medievalist past through his implicit evocation of Mackail's praise for the earlier part of the Greek anthology—and quite literally so: the first poem given the imagiste label was Pound's own very un-imagistic "Middle-Aged," published once in *Poetry* in October 1912 and not collected until 1949's edition of *Personae*.[8]

The tenets of this "new fashion in poetry," first published in *Poetry* magazine in March 1913, are well-known: immediacy or concreteness ("direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether

[8] Though "Middle-Aged" is not set in the medieval period and does not feature any of Pound's medieval personae, but instead the mummy of an Egyptian king, it is, as we will see, emblematic of Pound's self-assessment at that time. The poem's diction is stilted, convoluted and archaizing—very much in contrast with the Imagisme he would praise in H.D. only two months afterwards.

subjective or objective"), economy ("to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation") and the use of the line, not the stanza, as the unit of composition ("to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome") (*LE* 3). Having set up Greek "straight talk" as the template for the first two principles of Imagisme in his 1912 letter to Harriet Monroe, Pound locates its third principle not in the formally strict poems of the Greek Anthology, but in Greek tragic choruses. In 1913 he champions the tragedians and in particular Euripides as paradigms for free verse: "If the earnest upholder of conventional imbecility will turn at random to the works of Euripides . . . or to almost any notable Greek chorus, it is vaguely possible that the light of *vers libre* might spread some faint aurora upon his cerebral tissues" (*LE* 93).[9] The Greek Melic poets, he claims, "composed to the feel of the thing, to the cadence" and not according to a predetermined meter—"as have all good poets since" (93). H.D. publishes her partial Euripides translation, *Choruses from Iphigeneia*, in 1915, a year before her first poetry collection, *Sea Garden*, following or, perhaps along with Richard Aldington, originally inspiring Pound's assessment and evolving, simultaneously, as a lyric poet and a translator of Greek. Unlike H.D., however, Pound, as we will see, quickly distanced himself rhetorically from matters Greek—more vociferously from the "Hellenistic" Anthology, but also from Greek tragedy and, especially, from Euripides.

Even so, in 1918 Pound still puts Greek at the forefront, suggesting that "the desire for vers libre is due to the sense of quantity reasserting itself after years of starvation" (*LE* 12). Yet, as Pound asserts two years later in *The Dial*,

[9] It is quite possible that Pound owes this belief to Richard Aldington. As Helen Carr reports, Aldington in his early notebooks "can be seen to be working towards his later free verse, translating from a Greek chorus, line by line in simple rhythmic, but unrhymed phrases" (425). Though he never published these early chorus translations and his much later version of Euripides's *Alcestis* was in prose, they show, as Carr notes, that "he had been trying out forms of *vers libre* since the beginning of 1911, not as the result of any English or French influences," but, as he told Amy Lowell, "'partly because I was fatigued with rhyme and partly because of the interest I had in poetic experiment. I got the idea from the chorus in the Hippolytus of Euripides'" (cited in Carr 425). For a general discussion of meter in modern Anglo-American poetry, see Gross, Steele, and Wesling.

> the laws of Greek quantitative prosody do not correspond with an English reality. No one has succeeded in writing satisfactory English quantitative verse, according to these "rules," though, on the other hand, no English poet has seriously tried to write quantitative verse without by this effort improving his cadence.

The "English (metrical) reality" Pound speaks of is the product of a combination of Anglo-Saxon versification principles, which exclusively privilege stress, and Romance-language metrical models, which privilege syllable count and historically led to the introduction of a foot pattern in English. This reality thus seems to be more ambiguous, complex, and problematic than the Greek. That is, while in Greek the quantities of vowels were fixed and determinable, in English "quantity," often conflated with "weight," is much less easily (and less firmly) determined and less important metrically than stress, which is itself malleable.[10] The stress of each word (lexical stress) may be obligatory in English, but it is unpredictable (because of the blending of Romance and Germanic elements); furthermore, post-lexical stress, the stress that a word receives when put in a syntactical (and especially a metrical) pattern is modifiable. Recent metrical theorists have, therefore, moved away from classifying syllables simply as stressed or unstressed and towards identifying levels of stress.[11] If, as Kristin Hanson argues, metrics is a set of constraints poets adopt to do something difficult in their language and if it is precisely in that difficulty and tension that the interest lies, we might understand why Greek meter and prosody would seem to function for Pound as a limit-case, a necessarily doomed ("do not correspond with an English reality") but useful experiment. Pound in this article, then, suggests a rite of passage through the foreign, and especially the Greek, that is necessary for English poets—as though by becoming

[10] The lexical stress in English may be obligatory but it is unpredictable because of the blending of Romance and Germanic elements; furthermore, post-lexical stress, the stress that a word receives when put in a syntactical (and especially a metrical) pattern is modifiable.
[11] See, for example, Jespersen, Trager-Smith, and, more recently, Attridge (*Poetic Rhythm*) and Corn.

aware of what is impossible in English, they might also realize what is possible. This passage is necessary precisely in order to escape the obvious way of versifying in English, the iambic pentameter: "I STILL think the best MECHANISM for breaking up the stiffness, and literary idiom IS a different meter, the god damn iambic magnetizes certain verbal sequences," he writes to poet Mary Barnard in 1934 (Gordon 164). It becomes clearer, then, that for Pound the change in the meter is not simply a matter of form.

2. Con-texts

Pound, however, was not the first, or even among the first, to broach the question of a new form and measure for poetry written in English. Already in 1908, T.E. Hulme had insisted in a lecture at the Poets' Club on the need for *vers libre*: "What has found expression in painting as Impressionism will soon find expression in poetry in free verse" (cited Carr 159). Echoing Marinetti, he continued, "Personally I am of course in favour of the complete destruction of all verse more than twenty years old" (cited 159). In January 1908, F.S. Flint published his second poem "Palinode" in A.R. Orage's *The New Age*—he would soon become the magazine's editor—which began with the line "I have grown tired of the old measures in which I beat my song." Towards the end of that year, as Helen Carr reports, Flint would write, paraphrasing Nietzsche, that there is a "need for the revaluation of all poetical values" (cited Carr 156). Though Flint still used rhymed, stanzaic forms, Carr detects in his poetic and critical writing of the period the seed of the imagiste belief that each poem should find its own form, a belief, of course, that, as Carr also points out, is itself a continuation of Coleridge's poetic doctrine of organic form. Edward Storer's 1908 poetry collection *Mirrors of Illusion* was inspired by French *vers libre* and ended with an essay advocating free verse. Though Flint did not wholeheartedly

accept Storer's rhymeless poetry, he praised it for "aiming at a form of expression, like the Japanese; in which an image is a resonant heart of an exquisite moment" (cited Carr 189). By the spring of 1909, however, Flint would write in the preface to his collection *In the Net of the Stars*: "I have, as the mood dictated, filled a form or created one. I have used assonance for the charm of it, and not rhymed when there was no need to. In all, I have followed my ear and my heart, which may be false. I hope not" (cited Carr 197).

Pound, however, though belonging to Flint and Hulme's circle, was, as Carr highlights, almost never at the forefront of such discussions since they tended to be focused on "free" verse and contemporary French models rather than on the older ones that he was interested in at the time. In a nineteen-page letter to William Carlos Williams defending what seemed to his friend—and according to Helen Carr to many of his early reviewers[12]—as "poetic anarchy" in his writing, Pound writes, "Sometimes, I use rules of Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, & Greek metric that are not common in the english of Milton's or Miss Austin's day" (Oct 21, 1908; *Letters* 4). Moreover, in 1910–12 Pound turns away even from what was mistakenly considered the free verse directness of *Personae* and looks backwards more intently, trying to reproduce in English the formal complexities of the Provençal troubadours and Guido Cavalcanti. As Carr notes, his language becomes less direct, less spoken and more archaic as he turns to an earlier avant-garde than the one espoused by his contemporaries.

After the very negative reception of Pound's *Canzoni* and Ford Madox Ford's famous roll on the floor in the summer of 1911,[13] Pound turns to an even earlier model to find the clarity

[12] Ironically *Personae* was criticized in reviews by Edward Thomas and Rupert Brooke for being in *vers libre*, which was of course not Pound's intention. Helen Carr explains, "Pound uses a refrain, an envoi and the traditional imagery of a Provençal poem, but his shifting rhythms, irregular line lengths and paucity of rhyme convinced Brooke that this was modern experimentalism" (211).

[13] Pound recalls in 1939 that Ford "felt the errors of contemporary style to the point of rolling (physically, and if you look at it as mere superficial snob, ridiculously) on the floor of his temporary quarters in Giessen when my third volume displayed me trapped, fly-papered, gummed and strapped down in a jejune provincial effort to learn,

he was accused of lacking—an earlier model in English and in Greek. He translates the "Seafarer" and turns, apparently for the first time, to the Hellenic. The poem "Δώρια," sparser and shorter than any of his earlier poems, is, as Carr notes, triply resonant: its title, printed in Greek characters, echoes the name of his "lady" and future wife, Dorothy Shakespear, the word (and style) "Doric," and the town of Dorset, which he visited in the early fall of 1911 and in which he strongly felt a local sense of myth and history (much like H.D. would years later in Cornwall). Is it, then, this superimposition of elements, this early ideogram of emotion, technique and historical sense, that Pound instructs in the poem's first lines to "Be in [him] as the eternal moods /of the bleak wind and not / as transient things are" (*P/T* 241)? Perhaps spurred on by the recent publications of the newly discovered manuscripts of Sappho in Egypt[14], Pound claimed "Δώρια" was an experiment in quantitative Sapphics; the poem does alternate long and short syllables, but does not build up to a Sapphic stanza. As Helen Carr argues, Sappho's influence was "making his poetry sound more modern," but Pound himself would not have acknowledged it since "at the time he saw himself as returning once more to the past to learn from the masters of earlier years" (355). In 1912 he writes "Apparuit," his only poem composed successfully in stress-based Sapphics, that is, in trochees and dactyls, a meter used in translations from Greek but rarely in original poems, with Swinburne being the exception. "My one comfort is this sapphic [sic] affair," Pound writes to Dorothy Shakespear, and continues,

> Surely all systems of metric since have been a vulgarity & a barbarism, and their

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mehercule, the stilted language that then passed for 'good English' in the arthritic milieu that held control of the respected British critical circles. . . . And that roll saved me at least two years, perhaps more. It sent me back to my own proper effort, namely, toward using the living tongue (with younger men after me), though none of us had found a more natural language than Ford did" (*SP* 461–62). Pound of course neglects to mention the fact that there was a new contemporary style being formed and that the unnecessary (in Ford's opinion) complexity of his writing had causes other than Pound's trying to imitate Victorian English.

[14] Carr reminds us that some of the manuscripts were first published in England in 1909 (354). See *Victorian Sappho* on the centrality of Sappho in the Victorian imaginary and in Victorian poetics, which culminated in, as Yopie Prins writes, "the idealization of Sappho herself as the perfect fragment" (3). Such idealization of course, continued on in the early twentieth century as evidenced by Pound.

> beautiful results have been due to genius & accident & not to any virtue inherent in the 'system.' 'melos'/ "is compounded out of 3 things, speech music & rhythm." Montaigne—or rather Plato. And unless you write in quantity (by intent or accident) those three things mean mess (with little, very little love in it). (*L/DS* 63–64)

Pound's search for such a system in English had already begun with the intricate forms of Cavalcanti and Arnaut Daniel; but as he turns to the basis of the English language in Anglo-Saxon, studying it in the "Seafarer" original and writing in a version of it in his translation, he seems to begin to wonder whether there can be such a system discovered *in* the language itself—similar to what he saw as the inherently fixed Greek quantities—rather than imposed on it (according of course to rules that each language allows). Having tried the Romance and failed, as the overwhelmingly negative reviews for *Canzoni* and for its American version *Proenca*, as well as his foiled attempt to publish his Arnaut Daniel translation attest, he turns then to Wilde's Hellenic.

Yet Imagisme's purported move against the romantic and the Victorian was also a move against the kind of Hellenism each expressed—and even Hellenism par excellence. As Eileen Gregory notes, there were "two distinct hellenisms [sic] operative in the nineteenth century": on the one hand, the "revolutionary political agenda of Shelley's "Hellas" (1822)" and on the other "the moral agenda of [Matthew] Arnold"—that is, the enthusiasm of romantic Hellenism and the Victorian domestication of Greeks "according to the outlines of prevalent political positions" (39).[15] Despite his later assessment in "A Visiting Card" and even his letter to Harriet Monroe about H.D., already in 1912 Pound writes to Alice Corbin Henderson that Monroe was wrong in

[15] For an overview of the predominant strains of Hellenism, as well as of the debates surrounding Greek art and literature in Victorian England, see Fiske 1–23, and Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity*.

calling Imagistes "a group of ardent Hellenists": "The note in *Poetry* is very incorrect. Imagism is concerned only with *language* and *presentation*. Hellenism & vers libre have nothing to do with it . . . There is Imagism in all the *best* poetry of the past" (*L/ACH* 4).[16] If, however, as David Ferris has argued, "Greece is not simply a synonym for cultural and intellectual achievement," but rather "the name through which the theoretical and critical possibility of modernity is decided," Pound's resistance to the term "Hellenism" and thus to the particular relation to the past proposed by the most recent Hellenisms is hardly surprising, especially since it arises at the very moment when he is trying to articulate a new "possibility of modernity" in relation to the past (10).

Rather than embrace an anti-Hellenism, however, which, as Ferris shows, would still stake its claim for modernity entirely on a critical relation to Greece, Pound, in the 1913 essay "The Tradition," begins to disentangle his new interest and comfort in "the sapphic affair" from the general praise (or disdain) of things Greek by specifying the exact contribution of Greek poetics to the English model he was trying to establish. The "straight talk" and clarity of "the Greek" he had spoken of in the letter to Monroe may be the mark of all good and, therefore, imagiste poetry of the past, and so of H.D.'s Greek prototypes; but Pound now claims that the conditions and forces shaping the English poetic tradition are traceable to the Greek Melic poets and to Provence. In these two periods, "the poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together, when each thing done by the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up within it" (*LE* 91). Pound then advocates for precisely that interrelation between poetry and music as a reflection of

[16] In the segment of his "Affirmations" article series that concerned Imagisme and that was published on January 28, 1915 in the *New Age*, Pound returns to this subject, reminding readers that he was the one to name the movement: "Imagisme has been taken by some to mean Hellenism; by others the word is used most carelessly, to designate any sort of poem in vers libre. Having omitted to copyright the word at its birth I cannot prevent its misuse. I can only say what I meant by the world when I made it" (*SP* 374).

a kind of universal harmony: "A return to origins invigorates because it is a return to nature and reason. The man who returns to origins does so because he wishes to behave in the eternally sensible manner. That is to say, naturally, reasonably, intuitively. . . . He wishes not pedagogy but harmony, the fitting thing" (92).[17] Linking a poetic institution to something like a moral order, Pound, ironically, comes close to Matthew Arnold; like Arnold, what he finds lacking here and what "a return to origins" ought to restore is the right measure, something that makes man and his world, man and nature, cohere. And yet in this case, unlike with Arnold, even assuming that one can return or revisit the original texts, there is no guarantee that one will be able to transpose or reproduce the "fitting thing" if it is indeed tied to a particular poetic institution which would require the close relation between verse and music. As Pound writes in "How to Read," "the *melopoeia* can be appreciated by a foreigner with a sensitive ear, even though he be ignorant of the language in which the poem is written"; it is, however, "practically impossible to transfer or translate it from one language to another, save perhaps by divine accident, and for half a line at a time" (*LE* 25). If, then, "in the languages known to [Pound], the maximum of **melopoeia** is reached in Greek," it would seem that an actual poetic Hellenism would be all but impossible (*ABCR* 29).[18]

Pound nonetheless tries to bridge the distance to Greece he has just postulated through a rhetorical and poetic gesture he would repeat throughout his life; he chooses to tackle and implicitly advocate for the use (and usefulness) of Greek through a third language and, in so

[17] On Pound and music, see Stauder and Shaffer.
[18] Yet, as Yopie Prins explains, the emphasis on the "incomparable melody" of Greek, and especially of the dactylic hexameter, was a common topos in nineteenth-century discussions on poetics, that Pound is thus replicating here: "because Homeric hexameter was no longer spoken it could be imagined by both of the Coleridges and their Victorian successors as more resonant, more melodious, and more flowing than their own spoken language. The "incomparable melody" of Greek could only be felt, and never fully heard or understood in English, let alone imitated" ("Metrical Translation…" 236). The fact that Pound, in the end, does try to imitate it, places him outside the more dominant strains of Hellenism, which turn Greece into an inimitable measure of the highest cultural achievement.

doing, he reveals the necessity—and fruitfulness—of a mediated relation to Greek. He thus navigates a passage between Hellenism and anti-Hellenism, both of whose points of reference are established, as Ferris notes, on the basis of an absolute divorce of the present from a past seen as either inimitable or irrelevant. In the early fall of 1912 Pound met through Yeats the Bengali poet Rabinadrath Tagore; in October—the same month that *Ripostes* was published with the tribute to Hulme as the originator of the "forgotten 'School of Images'" and that Pound sent H.D.'s poems to *Poetry*—Pound reports to Dorothy Shakespear that he spent the two previous evenings discussing "prosody" and "meetres [sic]" with Tagore (*L/DS* 162). It is very likely that the summary of that discussion was contained in the article Pound published on Tagore in March 1913 in the *Fortnightly Review*.[19] In the essay he proclaims Bengali "an ideal language for poets" because

> it is fluid, and the order is flexible, and all this makes for precision. Thus, you may invert in an inflected language, for this will not cause any confusion as to your meaning.
>
> It makes for precision, since you can have a specific word for everything. (124)

Pound's insistence on the fact that, according to Tagore, "there is scarcely a poem where you do not make some such word combination" (that would produce a "specific word for everything") reveals already a proto-ideogrammatic line of thinking (124). That is, he finds in Bengali grammar what he would soon discover in the Chinese character and elevate into a principle of poetic construction: the possibility of combining, of doing a montage of different parts, be they words, lines, or historical periods, and of thus allowing a composite, but completely new whole

[19] Pound had already published a shorter essay on Tagore in the December 1912 issue of *Poetry*, in which some of Tagore's poems had also appeared.

to emerge—a whole, moreover, that is not general, abstract, or vague, but precisely and visibly articulated and still more or other than the sum of its parts. Yet as Pound himself notes right before making the above claim, Bengali shares these two features that make for its precision, namely inflection and capacity for infinite word-combination, and, therefore, for neologisms with Greek.[20]

Indeed, the other aspect of Bengali, or at least of the way Tagore uses it, that makes an ideal language for poetry is precisely its Greco-Romance form. Pound praises, in the same spirit in which he praised H.D.'s poems to Harriet Monroe, "the occasional brilliant phrases, now like some pure Hellenic . . . now like the last sophistication of De Gourmont or Baudelaire" (125). Having placed the "'forms' of this poetry as they stand in the original Bengali" between the idiosyncratically vernacular Provençal and the learnedly or classicizingly vernacular odes of the Pléiade, he claims that the language arranged in these forms "sounds more like good Greek than any language I know of" (123). Like Provençal and Greek lyrics, Tagore's poems "are all songs to sing. The tunes and the words are knit together, are made together" (124).[21] The poems are as precise musically as they are semantically: praising, the "magic of association" inherent in the ragini of Indian music, Pound explains, "For certain of these scales are used only for song in the evening, or for song in the rainy season, or at sunrise, so that a Bengali hearing any opening bar knows at once the place and atmosphere of the poem" (124). This combination of the just note and the just word is what makes for the greatness of Tagore's poems for Pound—their "totalitarianism": the "correspondence of the *raga* with its own service . . . lends a curious ritualistic strength to the art. And no separate poem or song can seem a scrap or a disconnected

[20] As Haynes notes, this facility for forming compounds in Greek had been praised in English since the Renaissance by Puttenham and Sidney and becomes one of the primary "Grecisms" in English poetry (105ff.).
[21] Indeed, Pound begins his essay likening Tagore to a troubadour, claiming that "Bengal" as a "nation" and culture is similar to twelfth-century Provence and highlighting the fact that Tagore teaches his songs, words and music to jongleurs, in addition to singing them himself (123).

performance, but must seem a part of the whole order of song and life" (124).[22] He highlights, then, not only another aspect of these poems' precision but, more particularly, their close ties to their environment, to the world around them; these are not self-contained poems but ones pointing to and including a world and a context outside them.

Though without saying so, Pound essentially co-opts Tagore's poems for his own poetic "revolution," praising them through the same terms that he uses—or will eventually use—to articulate the aspirations not only of Imagisme, but of the whole of his poetic endeavors. Pound builds up Tagore's Bengali, which he does not understand and whose music he has experienced only separately from its signifying words. After all, as Pound notes yet again, it is only the lexical and imagistic precision that "remains" in the translations of these poems into English—that is, precisely the language that he would like English to become (125). At the same time, as we have seen, to Pound Tagore seems to represent "our new Greece"; he spends the long final portion of his article analyzing Tagore's metrical forms and comparing the Bengali poet to both Sappho (in terms of the formal structure of their poems, and their use of alternating hendecasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines) and to Theocritus (with whom Tagore shares a "curious music" and "classic composure") (125). Tagore's "Greece" is new on the one hand because Pound presents it as re-conceptualized through Provence[23], and on the other because it also represents for him (Pound) a supersession of the Western legacy of Greece, of the dominant kind

[22] Carr suggests that it is through his study of Provence that Pound developed an interest in ancient Greek rituals, tracing their survival in the Middle Ages. That is certainly the case and would prove a long-running obsession, to which we can trace the initial gesture of *The Cantos*. His eagerness in the case of Tagore to associate the ritualistic with the musical and, to some extent, with that aspect of poetic form which is "music," prosody, makes it clear that the link between ancient rituals and medieval Mayday ones was not simply based on or facilitated by cultural and ethnographic observations but was mediated by Pound's attention to the two greatest examples of *melopoeia*.
[23] In the December 1912 introduction to Tagore in *Poetry*, Pound had made this very clear: "If you refine the art of the troubadours, combine it with that of the Pleiade, and add to that the sound-unit principle of the most advanced artists in *vers libre*, you would get something like the system of Bengali verse. The sound of it when spoken is rather like good Greek, for Bengali is a daughter of Sanskrit, which is a kind of uncle or elder brother of the Homeric idiom" (92).

of Hellenism. That is, though Tagore is Hellenic in the linguistic and musical form of his poems, he is not so in their content, and especially in what concerns humans' place in the world: "There is in him the stillness of nature," Pound writes, and adds,

> He is at one with nature, and finds no contradictions. And this is sharp contrast with the Western mode, where man must be shown attempting to master nature if we are to have "great drama." It is in contrast to the Hellenic representation of man the sport of the gods, and both in the grip of destiny. (126)

In the world of 1912, "an age of steel and mechanics," Tagore's "pledge of a calm" is needed "overmuch" while the Greek "belief in proportion and balance" seems outdated (*Poetry* 94). Comparing the appearance of Tagore in London to the emergence of "the mysterious lost language, the Greek that was just being restored to Europe after centuries of deprivation" in Petrarch's time, he goes so far as to claim that "this beginning of our more intimate intercourse with Bengal is the opening of another period" similar to that inaugurated by the turn to Greek in the Renaissance (*Poetry* 93). Indeed, he sees Tagore, this new Greece he is supposed to represent, as refreshment from the tired humanism that the previous Greek refreshment had brought into being.[24] Pound thus appears to be both calling upon the authority of Greek to justify his interest in Tagore linguistically and formally and using Tagore to undercut that authority. And yet it is also clear that, through this comparison with the Bengali poet, he is trying to dissociate what he sees as the virtues of Greek as a poetic language from the use to which these have previously been put, or more accurately to dissociate Greek poetry, with its particular

[24] Pound quotes his own description of Renaissance humanism in another text ("Man is concerned with man and forgets the whole and the flowing. And we have in sequence, first the age of drama, and then the age of prose") and claims that this humanism has now "run its course" and so one is refreshed by the poetry of Tagore as "balance and corrective" (126). As Carr suggests, Pound's attack on humanism at that time is largely indebted to Hulme, according to whom the initial Renaissance humanism degenerated into the simple belief in Progress, which was now itself degenerating (635).

textual merits and difficulties, from the total cultural representation Greece stood for in the wake of Winckelmann, and so to claim a different, a more particular Greek legacy for his poetry and for Imagisme than the one that the West has claimed.[25] In that moment, like H.D., Pound privileges what came before and what came after classical Athens and most significantly, what found fertile ground in Italy: Homer and Theocritus informing different aspects of Virgil and Sappho influencing Catullus. In short, he praises what was both a pinnacle and a seed for future development. It is worth noting that what he seems to exclude from praise, Greek drama,[26] is, as he himself implies, precisely the poetic form most associated with Greece and the Greek mode of thought and the one considered to be encapsulating its greatness.[27] Moreover, by sidestepping drama, he deals another blow to the Renaissance, the period of the genre's greatest evolution, which also resulted in the establishment of the iambic pentameter as the "natural" meter for English verse.

Greek drama is, however, also the place where Greek poetry's link to ritual can more strongly be felt. In giving it up—"mistrusting" it, as he would later say—Pound also abandons what had seemed to him exceptionally important in a poetic work in the Tagore essay. The

[25] According to David Ferris Greece became a "measure of the highest cultural achievement" through Winckelmann's systematization of "the influence of Greece according to an aesthetic through which every aspect of a nation can be conceived as part of a total cultural representation" (16, 17). Ferris adds that "Greece assumes such a representation whenever it is evoked as the highest example of Western culture" (16).

[26] One might argue, as indeed T.S. Eliot did—and perhaps Pound agreed with him—that Greek tragedy was not pushed to greatness in its Roman reincarnation. Eliot, in his 1927 introduction to an edition of Elizabethan translations of Seneca, writes that "The theatre is a gift which has not been vouchsafed to every race, even of the highest culture. It has been given to the Hindus, the Japanese, the Greeks, the English, the French, and the Spanish, at moments. . . . It was not given to the Romans, or generously to their successors the Italians" (*Selected Essays* 55). See A.J. Boyle, esp. pp. 3–12 for the opposite opinion. Boyle nonetheless notes that Roman "dramatic forms were never the separate institutions they were in Greece" and that "What Roman audiences most wanted—at the theatre, amphitheatre or triumphal processions—was visual spectacle" (7).

[27] As David Ferris writes, tragedy is "the Greek genre that Western literary history has regarded as one of its highest achievements" (85). Ferris, moreover, notes that both Plato (in the *Laws*) and Aristotle (in the *Poetics*) treat tragedy as exemplary even though historically it was on its wane; Greece, that is, "is already part of the history that would exemplify Greece in the form of its tragedy" since Plato and Aristotle marks "this genre as the chosen medium through which Greece will relate to itself" (90). For an account of Winckelmann's reliance on tragedy as an exemplary aesthetic form that lends credence to his theory of art and, therefore, to the Hellenism that was its consequence, see Ferris 44–51 and 85–91. On Schelling's reliance on the same paradigm of Greek tragedy and his use of tragedy in the development of his agonistic concept of freedom, see Ferris 92–107.

initially Greek beginning of the Imagisme gives way as far as Pound is concerned to an Orientalization different from the one of the first poem to be called "imagiste," "Middle-Aged," and from Tagore, gives way, that is, to a Chinese development.[28] Pound may have acknowledged in the first published reference to Imagisme in the appendix to his October 1912 poetry collection *Ripostes* the indebtedness of his theory of the Image to T.E. Hulme, who as Helen Carr carefully documents,[29] had been writing and lecturing about it since 1908; but Pound eventually seems to sideline this "Hulme basis" for the sake of what he discovers in classical Chinese poetry.[30]

Yet Pound's turn away from Greek has itself, as Helen Carr shows, a "Hulme basis," though it was also part of a more general turn against classical and classicizing art, a turn towards the primitive and the oriental that Pound must have obviously been ambivalent about but whose rhetoric he nonetheless adopted. One might think, for example, of the so-called Cambridge Ritualists forming around Jane Harrison circa 1912; Harrison, by studying archaic Greek art and religion, had uncovered, in Shanyn Fiske's words, "a more complex and multifaceted view of the ancient world than that represented by the ideals of Victorian

[28] In a 1914 essay in the *Egoist* Pound refers to the present time as "a time when China has replaced Greece in the intellectual life of so many occidentals" (cited in Carr 645).

[29] Carr discusses, for example, Pound's borrowing of Hulme's vocabulary of hardness and masculinity; like Pound after him, Hulme identified the kind of poetry he wanted to sweep away with "effeminate wraiths" (163). Pound's emphasis on accuracy, precision, and directness also come at least partly from Hulme and, as we have seen, become central to his aesthetic vocabulary (389). Pound later claimed that Ford Madox Ford was more influential in the development both of Imagisme and of his own poetic career. Nevertheless, Helen Carr has shown that "[e]ven though [Pound] came to draw on the language of daily speech for some of his poetry [Ford's argument], he continued to follow the argument put forward by Hulme that ordinary language has to be transformed by art in order to convey 'the individuality and freshness of things'" (391). On Hulme's poetics and his relation to Imagisme ("his part in giving Pound and the other imagists a language in which to talk about poetry" [141]), see Carr's very helpful and exhaustive account, 133 ff. See particularly pp. 161ff. on the extent to which Pound owes to Hulme and to his interpretation of Bergson his articulation of the Image and of the importance of the juxtaposition of disparate images.

[30] In November 1917 Pound wrote to Margaret Anderson of the *Little Review* that the he "made the word on a Hulme basis" and according to a Flint model since he claims to have tried to find a name that "was not & never had been used in France" and that would "distinguish 'us' from any of the French groups catalogued by Flint" in Harold Monro's *Poetry Review* (*L/MA* 155). See also n. 34 below.

humanistic Hellenism" and thus initiated a "crusade for spiritual renewal in Greek scholarship by deliberately undermining the ideological, religious, and institutional foundations of classical tradition" (151).[31] At the same time Hulme, too, despite his earlier advocacy for Classicism and his heralding of a classical revival in a July 1911 lecture, went even further than Harrison and came to reject all art since the Renaissance, including its classical sources. Pound begins a 1914 article entitled "The New Sculpture" by echoing Hulme's condemnation of Greek sculpture on the basis of the latter's critique of representational art and "humanism."[32] Yet, as Carr also notes, he takes care to exclude Greek tragedy from Hulme's outright rejection of classical Greek culture. In tragedy, Pound claims, the Greeks at least recognize "chaos and death and the inexplicable forces of destiny and nothingness and beyond"—that is, what saves it is its intimation of a world outside of man's mastery and its ritualistic aspect, which makes itself felt despite its representation of an agonistic relation between individual and objective worlds. This remark follows the by then common view of the Dionysian aspect of tragedy, popularized through the work of Nietzsche, Walter Pater, and James Frazer; moreover, it strongly recalls an observation by Gilbert Murray in his 1897 *History of Ancient Greek Literature*. Apropos of *The Bacchae*, Murray asserted, "There are in the world things not of reason, but both below and above it. . . . These things are . . . 'Things which Are,' things utterly non-human and non-moral, which bring man bliss or tear his life to shreds without a break in their own serenity" (272). Moreover, Jane Harrison, citing this comment at the end of her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion,* held it up as "a sort of theological (mythological) Alpha and Omega" (cited in

[31] For an account of Jane Harrison's idiosyncratic and personal reconstruction of archaic Greek religion that formed itself against institutional and social categorizations and boundaries, see Fiske 160–81. On the Cambridge Ritualists, see Ackerman.

[32] Pound's article was actually a report on a recent event at the Quest Society, in which Hulme, Wyndham Lewis, and Pound himself had lectured. Basing his theories on those of Wilhelm Worringer, Hulme distinguished between "geometric" and "vital" art; representational, "natural" classical Greek art and modern art since the Renaissance would fall under the latter category, whereas the highly stylized and abstract Egyptian, Indian, and Byzantine art would fall under the former. On Hulme and Pound's indebtedness to him see Carr, especially 384–94 and 634ff.

Fiske 174). In the same February 16, 1914 issue of the *Egoist*, in which Pound's essay appears, Richard Aldington publishes an article on "Anti-Hellenism," in which he laments the "change in sensibility" welcomed by Hulme (and Pound), and deplores the demise, or at least the unfashionableness of Hellenism. The fact that Pound enters into this simplistic debate with Aldington, whose ideas about Greece were much more conventional than Pound's own, suggests that his thinking about Greek during that time is far from the linguistic and poetic, or more precisely melopoetic questions that interested him only two years before and that fell in line with his inquiries into Bengali or Provençal.[33] Pound's ambivalence about Greek and its usefulness, however, remains evident as he parrots two of the prevailing and to some extent opposing opinions of his time on the matter.

3. Ends

Though Imagisme was initially championed as a modern movement formed after the fashion of its trendy French counterparts,[34] it becomes by 1915 simply a modern discovery. Following his immersion in Ernest Fenollosa's notes on Chinese poetry and Japanese theater, Pound holds himself responsible not only for baptizing Imagisme's nascent practitioner, H.D., but for having finally named an age-old way of writing good poetry—something which he had

[33] Pound moves more and more explicitly away specifically from the kind of Hellenism that he saw Aldington and H.D. as espousing. Already in 1913, while spending time with the new couple and H.D.'s parents in Italy, he writes to Dorothy Shakespear that "H. & R. are submerged in a hellenism so polubendius and so stupid that I stop in the street about once in every 15 minutes to laugh at them" (*L/DS* 226). It is of course hard not to read his rancor as partly prompted by jealousy towards his former fiancée's new lover and a feeling of exclusion.

[34] "[W]e thought we had as much right to a group name, at least as much right, as a number of French 'schools' proclaimed by Mr Flint in . . . 1911," writes Pound in 1917 (*LE* 3). Helen Carr elaborates on the immense importance of Flint's August 1912—and not 1911— essay on the various French movements, published in the *Poetry Review* special issue on French poetry, and argues that it "had suggested to Pound an entirely new way of being a poet" as a leader of an avant-garde group, in addition to turning him into an advocate for new French poetry (480). See Carr 477ff.

already hinted at in the early letter to Alice Corbin Henderson.[35] For this reason, the image, unlike Imagisme,[36] remains a central part of Pound's poetics through the Vorticist years of 1914–16 to the much more intricate ideogrammatic method of *The Cantos*. Pound's re-translations from Chinese, either based on H.A. Giles's published translations (included in *A History of Chinese Literature)* or on Fenollosa's notes, become the quintessential and seemingly most representative Imagiste poems as one model, the Greek one, is exchanged for and supplanted by another: the Chinese. Since Fenollosa sees a homology between the structure of the Chinese language and nature—such that Chinese poetry would be by default mimetic or iconic, without even the recourse to the musical required by Tagore's Bengali— he offers Pound a different linguistic system, no longer an acoustic or musical one, but rather a visual one. It was perhaps more than welcome after his failure to publish his complete Arnaut Daniel translations[37] and the criticism of his Sapphics.[38]

If Pound's tripartite division of "great literature" into melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia is also explicitly a theory of translation,[39] Imagisme is situated not only between

[35] In the essay 'Imagisme and England,' published in February 1915, Pound stated that Imagiste poetry "is as old and as distinct" as lyric poetry "but until recently no one had named it. We now call it *Imagiste*, [but] it is not a new invention, it is a critical discrimination" (142). Richard Aldington, in the introduction to his *Collected Poems*, is also quick to dissociate himself from any claims to originality that one might attribute to his having taken part in what was called the "revolution of 1912'": The beginning of the 'new poetry' or of 'modernist poetry' or whatever you choose to call it is generally placed in that year, 1912. Let me say at once and firmly that I claim no share in whatever the so-called 'revolution of 1912'. It was a mere accident that what I was writing then chanced to meet with the approval of the verse revolutionaries, just as the publication of the poems in America was an accident. I am not ambitious to be known as the introducer or part introducer of some novelty in writing" (13).

[36] Imagisme was soon diluted into Imagism (without the "e") or Amygism, as Pound derisively renamed it when the American millionaire poet Amy Lowell supplanted him as the "leader" of the movement in 1914. It then quickly came to encompass almost any poem written in free verse that presented an image (in the conventional sense of the word).

[37] In early 1911 Pound began to translate the entire Arnaut Daniel corpus. By the end of that year he had started publishing his translations, with commentaries, in the periodical *The New Age* (ten translations were published overall), but a year later the publisher who was supposed to publish them in book form went bankrupt. Pound continued to try to publish them in the next years with American publishing houses, but had little luck; in fact one publisher held on to the manuscript for years, and Pound thought it lost.

[38] As Carr reports, Pound was criticized for his loose use of term (355).

[39] As Daniel Katz points out, immediately after establishing the categories, Pound moves on to assessing their translatability; see *LE* 23ff.

phanopoeia and melopoeia, but also between the translatable and the untranslatable. Unlike melopoeia, phanopoeia can be translated "almost, or wholly, intact"; moreover, "When it is good enough," Pound continues, "it is practically impossible for the translator to destroy it save by very crass bungling" (*LE* 25). Fenollosan Imagisme then promises a linguistic transparency, an ideal of translatability between world and language that the Imagiste poet, by capturing the moment "when a thing outward and objective [faces in the crowd, for instance] transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective [faces in the crowd becoming apparitions and then petals on a wet, black bough]," might approach—and then even further transmit by interlingual translation (*GB* 89). The image-poem thus becomes a kind of montaged photograph capturing the precise relation between inside and outside. Conversely, the image may also be produced when "emotion seizing up some external scene or action carries it intact to the mind; and that vortex purges it of all save the essential or dominant or dramatic qualities, and it emerges like the external original" (*SP* 375). Pound's frequent rhetoric of purging and cleanliness surfaces here under the guise of radical positivism, whereby "the external original" becomes more like itself through the poet's decontamination. This modified theory of mimesis is supposed to ensure the impersonality of the poem and help us distinguish Pound's previous emphasis on agency and emotion from the mushy subjectivism he was trying to avoid. But this theory of Imagisme, as expounded in *Gaudier-Brzeska*, is clearly also a theory of translation that describes the appropriation and re-articulation of an outward thing, the other text. Pound urges a re-conception of poetry as essentially translation, as evidenced not only by the fact that the first Imagiste poems, H.D.'s, were precisely that, but also by the examples that he offers in this text. Both "In the Station of the Metro" and "The Return" feature a kind of translation in the word's earlier sense: a transport of (a moment's) relics from the one resting place (the underground, lethe) to

another.[40] We may agree with Pound, then, when he writes to his wife-to-be Dorothy Shakespear in 1913 that, "Intellectual vision" (of the kind promoted by Imagisme, we may surmise) is the "surest cure for ghosts" (*L/DS* 276).[41]

The ghosts in this case—the language Pound is translating out of— are, as many scholars have argued, those of language itself, or at least of the kind of language that does not fit the Imagiste prescriptions—in short, the very language of Pound's own early poetry.[42] In the reassessment of Imagisme offered in *Gaudier-Brzeska* Pound writes, echoing the advice he once received from Ford Madox Ford, that "As a 'critical' movement, the 'Imagisme' of 1912 to '14 set out to bring poetry up to the level of prose" (*GB* 83).[43] For poetry to be as well-written as prose, it must, the implication is, not be like *Canzoni*; that is, it must not try to replicate another language's melopoeia. It must be like Tagore's English translations and retain only a relationship of memory to the "original." Yet this insistence on the art of phanopoeia threatens to eclipse the musical or even properly "poetic" aspects of the poem, as word is sacrificed to image. Moreover, the image may "itself [be] the speech," but it is a speech that aims "beyond formulated language" in the same way that unspoken but presented "relations are more real and more important than

[40] William Butler Yeats insightfully remarked apropos of "The Return," then, that it was "as if [Pound] were translating at sight from an unknown Greek masterpiece" (cited in Kenner 191).
[41] Indeed, if one reads the texts surrounding the production of Imagisme and even the first poem labeled Imagiste, Pound's "Middle-Aged," it becomes clear that the image, resisting the positivist conception of life and of the world that Imagisme's emphasis on hardness, directness and precision would commit it to, functions also as a tomb or crypt, containing or covering up the very decadent poetics Pound tries to eliminate through it and had himself espoused in his early poetry. Imagisme is thus also a personal surgical operation designed to keep Pound safely enclosed in his formalist linguistic bandages, uncontaminated by his obsessive "preoccupation with death and memory" (Tiffany 20).
[42] On this topic see Daniel Tiffany and James Longenbach, as previously cited.
[43] See for example Pound's essay "The Prose Tradition in Verse," where he writes "Mr Hueffer [Ford] is still underestimated for another reason also: namely, that we have not yet learned that prose is as precious and as much to be sought after as verse, even its shreds and patches" (*LE* 372). In one of a series of 1913 articles entitled "The Approach to Paris," Pound writes with respect to a poem by Charles Vildrac, whose poetic treatise *Notes sur la technique poétique*, co-written with Georges Duhamel, he has elsewhere cited as necessary reading, that "the point is that M. Vildrac has told a short story in verse with about one fifth of the words that a good writer of short stories would have needed for the narrative. He has conveyed his atmosphere, and his people, and the event. He has brought narrative verse into competition with narrative prose without giving us long stanzas of bombast" (*SP* 368).

the things which they relate," as Fenollosa writes (*GB* 88; *CWC* 22). The image for Pound may be more like an algebraic, rather than a symbolist sign, may, that is, not have a permanently fixed value, but it does have one—and one that is "permanent," or at least permanently relevant in each of its appearances. Of Dante's *Paradiso*, Pound writes: "The permanent part is Imagisme, the rest . . . are philology" (*GB* 86).

Pound's tirades against what he called philology date from his years in graduate school and his eventual abandonment of his doctoral thesis.[44] Already in the 1911–12 series of essays titled "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" published in the *New Age*, Pound proposes a "'New Method in Scholarship,'" which lies in precisely such a gathering not of limbs, but of "interpreting" "luminous" details (as opposed to a philological gathering of all details). "Any fact is, in a sense, 'significant,'" Pound writes; and yet, "certain facts give one a sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law" (*SP* 22). He is interested in this kind of fact because "A few dozen facts of this nature give us intelligence of a period—a kind of intelligence not to be gathered from a great array of facts of the other sort. These facts are hard to find. They are swift and easy of transmission. They govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit" (*SP* 22–23). What Fenollosa allows Pound to do is to reconceptualize the "luminous detail" into the image and turn the anti-philological "method of scholarship" into a method of poetic writing.

However, Imagisme too—if conceived on the basis of Fenollosa—is a kind of radical philology. The injunction for poetry would be to make a word's or image's etymology "visible," as it allegedly is in Chinese ideograms, and in this way make the word "from age to age" or from line to line richer and "almost consciously luminous," like the sun "with its corona and

[44] For Pound's critique of the American university system because of its excessive reliance on "philology" see his 1933 essay, "Abject and Utter Farce," and for some of his suggestions for improvement, the 1934 essay "The Teacher's Mission," both included in *Polite Essays*.

chromosphere" (*CWC* 25, 32). Such words must then "enwrap each other in their luminous envelopes until sentences become clear, continuous, light bands," until sentences cohere (*CWC* 32). If the poet's function is to construct and present the etymology of a word or image (or a series of words or images), then there is no room for anything that might not contribute to that—no room for anything but the *etymon*, which is not said but shows through the poem's parts.

Pound's understanding of the new mode of writing poetry therefore becomes an essentially reductive, or reducing one. We see this already in H.D.'s account of his slashing away at her "Hermes of the Ways."[45] Pound himself also mythologizes the birth of the Imagiste poem as a laborious process of slashing, or going against words, for the sake of finding the right or just ones, which themselves would have to disappear or recede as the image, or the word beyond formulated language, shines through. Pound's two-line "In a Station of the Metro," a poem thought to exemplify clearly the movement's imperatives ("The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough.") was in fact the result of a long, arduous and even violent process. The title provides some context for the otherwise cryptic poem, linking us to the autobiographical event that prompted its writing and, in addition, convincing us of its modernity: Pound was overwhelmed by "sudden emotion," coming out of the Paris subway in 1911. This indescribable "metro emotion" could only be rendered in verse two years later, after the form(ul)ation of Imagisme, as a "'one-image poem,' . . . a form of super-position [whereby] one idea [is] set on top of another" without explanation (*GB* 89). Typographically and prosodically arranging each idea in "Metro" according to its poetic "significance," Pound tries to achieve an

[45] In her memoir of Pound *End to Torment*, H.D. records the following scene: "'But Dryad,' (in the Museum tea room), 'this is poetry.' [Pound] slashed with a pencil. 'Cut this out, shorten this line. 'Hermes of the Ways' is a good title. I'll send this to Harriet Monroe of Poetry. Have you a copy? Yes? Then we can send this, or I'll type it when I get back. Will this do?' And he scrawled "H.D. Imagiste" at the bottom of the page" (18).

immediacy akin to that he admired in Chinese ideograms.[46] Each word-cluster is self-contained yet retains a sense of dynamism and vividness; at the same time, Pound brings out the verb-ness of nouns (and also of the things which they name), by using them to convey movement. In a manner reminiscent of Sergei Eisenstein's cinematographic montage techniques, these concrete word-images are then glued together to communicate an abstract but personal impression. Thus Pound, though recording an intense emotional experience, manages to attain maximum lyrical effect (and shock value) without resorting to rhetorical flourishes or becoming overly sentimental. There is, however, another side to this triumph of linguistic efficiency. Besides being what Hugh Kenner calls a "reduced, intensified" poetic equivalent of a real-life vision, "In a Station of the Metro" is also a distillation or even a mutilation of a thirty-line poem of "second intensity" that Pound spent a year condensing to its present fourteen (or twenty, if we include the title) words (Kenner 184; *GB* 89).

If the primal gesture of Imagisme is slashing—exemplified even by H.D.'s cutting out the last line of her "Epigram," as we will see— and its standard the condensed and 'natural' Chinese ideogram, how can one have a longer Imagiste poem? If, moreover, as Pound wrote around 1913, "It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; . . . that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art" and if it is, therefore, "better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works," how do we account for such a voluminous work as *The Cantos* (*LE*

[46] In a sense Pound tries to produce a photograph of perception. Pound had insisted on an irregular spacing of the words on the page so that, according to Hugh Kenner, the five distinct acts of perception recorded in the poem are distinguished:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals on a wet, black bough .

This kind of emphasis on the written word might be what Jacques Derrida has in mind when he commends Pound for forcing the closure of metaphysics through his "irreducibly graphic poetics," through his putting into question, that is, the primacy of the voice (*Of Grammatology* 92). At the same time, Pound's belief in the motivated nature of the Chinese ideogram, to which all poetry ought to aspire, places him right back in a pre-Saussurian, Cratylistic universe.

4)? Pound eventually suggests that for an Imagiste poem to "live" longer than a few lines— the average length of most at least technically "successful" Imagiste poems— it must be similar to the Japanese Noh plays.[47] The Noh shares with Imagisme a hygienic emphasis; according to Fenollosa, whose notes and translations of the Japanese plays Pound edited, the Noh "has been a purification of the Japanese soul for 400 years" and its art of dance is a form of "healing without medicine" (*P/T* 361). But what interests Pound the most is that "[i]n the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image," much like "the Greek plays are built up about a single moral conviction" (*GB* 94; *P/T* 368). The latent Noh image may be ready to be dis-covered, but for Pound it too only appears beyond formulated language: the words "are themselves but half shadows" and become intelligible "if, as a friend says, 'you read them all the time as though you were listening to music'" (*P/T* 336). I will discuss more closely Pound's involvement with the Noh and his versions of the Fenollosa Noh plays in my sixth chapter on Pound's *Women of Trachis*. What is important to note in our current discussion is that the word-musical element of the Noh, restoring the importance of melopoeia, brings it closer firstly to the troubadour poetry that Pound so admired (he writes that "the eighth-century Japanese court game and Noh precursor of "listening to incense," of creating a story, an image based on a smell, "was a refinement in barbarous times, comparable to the art of polyphonic rhyme" [*P/T* 336]), but also back to Greek, from a different angle: not that of structure or ritualistic function, but that of prosody. In turning to theatrical performance—and in particular to the Greek and Japanese theatrical traditions, with their very specific and localized cultural contexts—and tying ritual to prosody in his conception of a model for his long poem, Pound suggests already that beyond a matter of technique, his long

[47] As Ronald Bush notes, between September 1914 and April 1916, Pound suggested the connection between the long poem and the Noh on five separate occasions (104).

poem will be simultaneously elaborate and a site of cultural communion—a performance that despite its complexities will retain the sense of immediacy and directness, of orality even, whose importance Ford had taught Pound.

Contracting Greek Tragedy

1. Mistrust

A little over a year after the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska's death in the First World War, when Pound was assembling his manifesto cum tribute *Gaudier-Brzeska*, (not) translating the Homeric *Νέκυια* for his "poem of some length" and editing Fenollosa's Noh plays, he writes to Iris Barry:

> I am probably suspicious of Greek drama. People keep assuring me that it is excellent despite the fact that too many people have praised it. STILL there has been a lot of rhetoric spent on it. And I admit the opening of *Prometheus* (Aeschylus') is impressive. (Then the play goes to pot). Also I like the remarks about Xerxes making a mess of [illegible] in another Aeschylean play, forget the name. Some choruses annoy me. Moralizing nonentities making remarks on the pleasures of a chaste hymeneal relation, etc. etc. Statements to the effect that Prudence is always more discreet than rashness, and other such brilliant propositions.
>
> . . . Aristophanes parodies some of the tragic verse very nicely, at least I believe so. I am too damd ignorant to talk intelligently about the Greek drama. Still I mistrust it, *dona ferentes,* etc. (August 1916, *L* 94)

"Mistrust" is a strange word to use when discussing not people's responses to a play but the play itself. On the one hand, the play is thought to have no credibility with regards to representing whatever it seeks to represent, and also no credit— an archaic meaning of "trust" is "commercial credit"—no exchange value, no relevance to the contemporary market and so is, for all intents and purposes, dead. On the other hand, "mistrust" endows the mistrusted entity with a kind of living power to reciprocate— tru ist derives from an Old Norse word for "strong"— and implies that the skeptic fears what "it" might do if he were to approach "it."

The play whose name Pound has mysteriously forgotten is, of course, *Πέρσαι* (*Persians*)—not a very difficult name to remember if one has read the play at all.[48] The tragedy revolves around Xerxes and his father, Dareios, the most famous Persian kings; moreover, long sections throughout the play read like Book II of the *Iliad*, providing long lists of Persian warriors and kings, at first gone to war in Greece, and later dead. What Xerxes makes a mess of, and what Pound cannot write clearly, is a war. *Πέρσαι* is the quintessential war play: it documents the catastrophe imprudent Xerxes wrought on his country by going to war against the Greeks and ends in Persia's disintegration, with Xerxes and the chorus exchanging woeful screams and trying to ascertain what words or screams are appropriate to the mourning of such a devastating loss. In the play, however, the Persian wars also become a family drama. Xerxes (re)started the war against Greece because he was called a coward for not avenging his father, Dareios, who had also been defeated by the Greeks. The dead father here, proclaimed to be

[48] It is worth noting that these two plays were the ones to some extent reworked by Shelley, *The Persians* as a model and background for "Hellas," and *Prometheus Bound* as a pre-text for Shelley's (and Aeschylus's lost) *Prometheus Unbound*. On Shelley's own challenging of the dominant strain of Hellenism through these two texts by questioning the conjunction of history and the aesthetic that Hellenism depends on, see David Ferris, 108–57.

Another reason for Pound's focus on these particular plays might be that they are part of the so-called "Byzantine triad" for Aeschylus, something that Pound must have been aware of given his training as a medievalist; as Justina Gregory writes "In the thirteenth century a . . . winnowing took place to select titles for the school syllabus, resulting in the production of hundreds of copies of three chosen plays" from each tragedian's oeuvre (255). In the case of Aeschylus these plays were the *Persians, Seven against Thebes*, and *Prometheus Bound*.

"ἰσοδαίμων," equal to the gods (line 634), does return, appearing as a ghost to the despairing mother, but only to condemn his son for wrongly wanting to avenge him. Now, part of Xerxes's "mess" is that, in his attempt to reinstate the father, he ends up killing the sons, the young men of Asia, and thus, as he is often reminded in the course of the play, turns Asia into nothing. Dareios himself, called "θεομήστωρ" ("like the gods in counsel"), was, of course, in all his wars, never defeated so massively as his son, and his wars were never in vain (lines 654–55).

It is hard to point out with certainty the passage Pound is referring to in his letter since the whole play seems to be about the failures of Xerxes (and the piling up of evils—already we see Elektra's: "μή καί τι πρός κακοῖσι προσθήται κακόν"); but, given its rhythmicality, the incantatory repetition of the name and the rhyming "screams" or otherwise contentless words, the following passage may be the one Pound has in mind:

> νῦν γὰρ δὴ πρόπασα μὲν στένει γαῖ᾽
> Ἀσιὰς ἐκκενουμένα.
> Ξέρξης μὲν ἄγαγεν, ποποῖ,
> Ξέρξης δ᾽ ἀπώλεσεν, τοτοῖ,
> Ξέρξης δὲ πάντ᾽ ἐπέσπε *δυσφρόνως*
> βαρίδεσσι ποντίαις.
> τίπτε Δαρεῖος μὲν οὕ-
> τω τότ᾽ ἀβλαβὴς ἐπῆν
> τόξαρχος πολιήταις,
> Σουσίδαις φίλος ἄκτωρ; (my italics; lines 548–57)[49]

[49] This is Herbert Weir Smyth's translation: "For now in truth the whole land of Asia, decimated, moans: Xerxes led forth (woe!), Xerxes laid low (woe!), Xerxes disposed all things imprudently with his sea-going vessels. Why then was Darius in his time so unscathed by disaster, he who was ruler of archers, to the men of Susa a beloved leader?" I will be using this translation without comment for all the citations that follow.

Interestingly, soon afterwards Dareios himself echoes the chorus's "δυσφρόνως" here, specifically accusing Xerxes of being an impulsive youth ("φεῦ, μέγας τις ἦλθε δαίμων, ὥστε μὴ φρονεῖν καλῶς" (725); "Alas! Some mighty power came upon him so that he was not able to think clearly."), and viewing Xerxes's entire endeavor as a mental illness (or brake failure): " πῶς τάδ᾽ οὐ νόσος φρενῶν / εἶχε παῖδ᾽ ἐμόν;" (750–51) ("Must this not have been a disease of the soul that possessed my son?"). Primarily, however, Xerxes is faulted for failing to remember the message sent to him, to hear his father's voice: "Ξέρξης δ᾽ ἐμὸς παῖς ὢν νέος νέα φρονεῖ, / κοὐ μνημονεύει τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς" (782–83) ("Yet Xerxes my son, youth that he is, has the mind of youth and does not remember my injunctions."). In light of Pound's later personal investment in the tragedies of Sophokles and Aeschylus, as well as his developing obsession with paternal order, one has to wonder whether another kind of complex is at stake in Pound's own forgetfulness regarding *Πέρσαι*, whether, that is, Pound's refusal to deal with, or even remember this war play, has something to do with his own losses in the war and, more precisely, with the death of Gaudier.[50] Daniel Tiffany has argued that it was Pound who implicitly encouraged Gaudier to fight in the war, glorifying virility and violence with the rest of the Vorticists, and that as a result he felt personally responsible for his death—and for the subsequent loss to art that this death implied.[51] Are we, then, reading here, in the traumatic war gaps of Pound's letter, his own guilt for having sent Gaudier to the trenches so that he could prove his virility, as Tiffany would argue? The story of Xerxes and Dareios reverses this dynamic: the ghostly, but clear-headed father claims not to have wanted to send the son to war,

[50] Though Pound later rejected any suggestions between his "complex" of the Image and psychoanalytic theories of complexes—and was especially mocking of H.D.'s interest in psychoanalysis—H.D. and their common Philadelphia friend and sometime lover, Frances Gregg, both claim that it was Pound who introduced them to psychoanalysis.
[51] "One could even go so far," Tiffany claims, "as to say that Pound staged, telepathically, Gaudier's death" by reading to him, for instance, his most manly war poems in order to impress him (265). Though sometimes Tiffany does go too far in his reading of Pound and Gaudier's relationship, he does closely and often convincingly trace what he calls Pound's "telepathic command structure" that controlled Gaudier until his death on June 5, 1915, and shows the extent to which Pound also created Gaudier's premonition of death.

while the son has misheard his commands and sent to death all the hope of Asia, returning defeated and wretched. Though exonerating the father, this version of the father-son relationship turns the son into too pitiable a figure, an identification with which Pound, who had likened Gaudier to a "Greek god" and never stopped extolling his potential as an artist, would not have felt comfortable. [52] If a play can evoke all that, then it had better be mistrusted.

The opening of *Prometheus Bound* consists, perhaps not surprisingly, in another fatherly ἐπιστολή, issued once again by an all-powerful divine father to a weaker son, this time by Zeus to lame Hephaestus. The Κράτος, the holders of the power command:

> Χθονὸς μὲν ἐς τηλουρὸν ἥκομεν πέδον,
>
> Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβατον εἰς ἐρημίαν.
>
> Ἥφαιστε, σοὶ δὲ χρὴ μέλειν ἐπιστολὰς
>
> ἅς σοι πατὴρ ἐφεῖτο (lines 1–4)[53]

Despite the fact that Hephaestus is the wronged party from whom Prometheus stole the fire, it is Zeus rather than his son who avenges this theft, turning Hephaestus into an instrument of his will. That Hephaestus does not even want to carry out the punishment against Prometheus, whom he considers his kin, but does so because he cannot disobey his father, only highlights this imbalance of power. By the end of the play, Prometheus has earned for himself an even greater punishment by refusing to reveal to Zeus that, by mating with Thetis, he will produce a son capable of overthrowing him (what Hephaestus is not) as he had done to his father. In admiring the opening, Pound again seems to side with the fatherly might, raging against the one who

[52] Pound recalls in *Gaudier-Brzeska* that at their first meeting, Gaudier "disappeared like a Greek god in a vision" (*GB* 44). Tiffany notes that "Meeting Gaudier brought Pound face to face with his own mortality [though he was only a few years older], an experience that would inevitably produce ambivalent feelings" (266). In Tiffany's reading, Pound, viewing Gaudier as an image of his youth and as a rival, cultivated a repressed death wish that culminated in Gaudier's death (266).

[53] Weir-Smyth's translation: "To earth's remotest limit we come, to the Scythian land, an untrodden solitude. And now, Hephaestus, yours is the charge to observe the mandates laid upon you by the Father."

followed mother earth's advice and compulsively betrayed his kinsmen,[54] and denounces (or mistrusts) the future son's pot(ential).

Pound ends his very next letter to Iris Barry (August 29, 1916) with the following post-scriptum:

> Have looked at a bad trans. of Sophocles. Certainly the whole Oedipus story is a darn silly lot of buncombe—used as a peg for some very magnificent phrases. Superbly used.
>
> I believe language *has* improved; that Latin is better than Greek and French than Latin for everything save certain melodic effects—and we don't *know* that the Greeks didn't ruin their stuff by rocking-horse reading. Though I can't believe they did. At any rate, early Greek *can* be read with wonderful music. (*L* 95)

It is no surprise that Pound would find the play that unsettles familial relations "a darn silly lot of buncombe."[55] Indeed he responds to it by offering a familiar lineage of his own, one which is not tragically doomed but according to which each generation is better than the preceding one. He thus moves from disparaging one aspect of Greek culture—Greek drama—to limiting his earlier

[54] In the course of the play Prometheus is presented as the follower of Earth's, his mother's, injunction to be constructive, which leads him first to betray his sibling Titans to help Zeus overthrow his father and then to betray Zeus himself. Many years later, in *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound seems to forget his judgment here that "the play goes to pot" since he speaks of his "delight in the *Prometheus*" (92).

[55] Oedipus reappears as a "boye's bes' friend" in a 1935 letter to Eliot. On March 28, 1935 Pound complains to his formerly close friend about W.H.D. Rouse not following his (Pound's) advice in his translation of the *Odyssey*, and then adds the following odd poem:

> SONG FER THE MUSES' GARDEN
> Ez Po and Possum
> Have picked all the blossom,
> Let all the others
> Run back to their mothers
> Fer a boye's bes' friend iz hiz Oedipus,
> A boy's best friend is his Oedipus.

This song goes back to "Sage Homme," the satiric poem Pound wrote in December 1921 to commemorate his role in the delivery of *The Waste Land*. In that poem Pound casts himself as the surgeon performing the "Caesarean Operation" necessary to bring forth "the poems of Eliot / By the Uranian Muse begot" (*L* 169).

praise of Sophokles's language ("magnificent phrases") to only one of its aspects: musicality.[56] As soon as he proposes this genealogical hierarchy of languages, in which Greek would rank last, Pound himself points out its less than steady ground: Greek is the worst, "save certain melodic effects," which, presumably, remain to be improved upon, perhaps in a not so bad "trans. of Sophocles." Is that the challenge he sets for English, his own tongue that is left unmentioned here? As soon as we consider the pointed absence of English from this list—where does it rank?— we realize of course that the familial relation between French and Latin is different than that between Latin and Greek, making evolution or improvement in the former case easier to conceptualize, regardless of whether or not we agree with it. English would thus stand on the other side of Romance languages in the way that Greek does. Is it, then, the status of the unmentioned mother tongue that is at stake here, especially in relation to the repressed (or jokingly expressed) admiration of a melodic but dead language (Greek is superbly magnificent, but language has improved)?

In 1918 Pound nonetheless finds unsatisfactory even a translation he admits is good "enough to make anyone with an interest in Greek drama in English wish that more of it were available in this form" (225). The translation in question is H.D.'s "Choruses from *Iphigeneia in Aulis*" and Pound's review of it reveals more about his own ideas regarding Greek tragedy than about his subject's. After identifying the potential enemies of such a translation project (those who either out of ignorance or indifference "do not wish to be reminded of " the "'classics'" and the "professors who think the classics are their private ice-box, and who resent the intrusion of 'mere men of letters' thereinto"), he admits that,

[56] Of course in so doing Pound is far from unique; as Kenneth Haynes notes, "To praise Greek for its musical qualities had been commonplace since at least the eighteenth century" (130).

> H.D.'s "Choruses from Iphegenia [sic] in Aulis" are worth more praise than I have yet got round to giving them; all the more if one compare them with the signal botch which the usually very intelligent Robt. Browning made when he attempted the Agamemnon of Aeschylus; not that I am convinced one can approach the Greek drama via Euripides, or that the isolated choruses form a fair avenue of approach in themselves, or are likely to be of proportionate interest taken alone. (224)

Though Pound singles out H.D.'s effort as praiseworthy, he immediately qualifies his praise to suggest H.D.'s major faults of approach. Regardless of the merits of her English text, which Pound refuses to discuss in detail, simply commending and citing five strophes, H.D. is in the wrong from the outset because of her choice of materials: she has picked the wrong tragedian and by translating only choruses, she has given up on the sense of the whole.[57] "But," Pound continues, "if, via Homer and Aeschylus one have contracted an interest in the Atreidae, H.D.'s choruses should be a great relief from other windy and verbose translators" (224). Pound implies of course that Euripides's treatment of the Atreidae would fail to stir adequate interest, and that the only reason one might have for turning to the last tragedian would be not out of an interest in him but rather in particular characters and myths one has already encountered and become fascinated by elsewhere.

Pound's use of the verb "contract" to specify the mode of transmission of such interest, the mode of reception of the Atreidae, is, I believe, quite telling. Throughout his essays Pound resorts to the medical terminology of infection and inoculation when issuing his prescriptions for

[57] Eliot's assessment of H.D.'s translation in November 1916 is also damning with faint praise. He singles her out as the only "poet" translating in the *Egoist's* "Poets' Translation Series," conceding that "she has at least avoided the traditional jargon prescribed for translators" (102). Still, he pronounces her verse "a perversion" because it is too "abrupt," and points out where she departs from Euripides's "sense," claiming that one of her supposed "improvements" leads to an "obvious loss of dignity" (103).

how to write (the Imagiste "Don'ts," for example) or "how to read." For example, in that eponymous essay he speaks of "diseases in literature" and of "a good physician" who might recognize them, adding that "It is as important for the purpose of thought to keep language efficient as it is in surgery to keep tetanus bacilli out of one's bandages" (*LE* 24, 22). Referring to an interest in the Atreidae as something "contracted" is thus more than a simple turn of phrase since it immediately signals his ambivalence with respect to the value of Greek tragedy. Given his ironic treatment of the enemies of such a project of translation, however, it is clear that this turn to the Atreidae is not an altogether unwelcome contraction—but a contraction, an illness it remains nonetheless, as though once you begin to approach Agamemnon, you catch a disease that you cannot shake off. At the same time, such a contraction is also a contract—the verb "contract" is shared by both nouns. The Greek drama, the Atreidae impose, as it were, a formal obligation; once you begin with them, you "enter into a formal and legally binding agreement" and "become liable to pay (a debt)," to use two of the verb's definitions. If half of this short review seems focused on the dangerous or errant paths to which such a contract may lead—and has led: H.D. to Euripides and Robert Browning to a "signal botch"—it is only because Pound himself has contracted the disease.

2. 'Doing' the *Agamemnon*

In a lengthy essay published the following year on the early translators of Homer—an essay that T.S. Eliot holds up as a model for what needs to be done in order to make the "classics" relevant again—Aeschylus resurfaces, not in relation to one of the somewhat admired plays mentioned in the first letter to Iris Barry but to his *Agamemnon*, where Prometheus's secret becomes reality and the father is killed, though not by his son. Here Pound addresses

Agamemnon's other victim—or, as it will turn out, aggressor, namely Robert Browning. "A search for Aeschylus in English is deadly, accursed, mind-rending," Pound contends, and reproaches Browning for trying to get English syntax and grammar to function as they do in Greek, claiming that word order in Greek was often not dictated by the "matter," but rather by the "meter" and that, therefore, it should not be followed in an English translation (*LE* 268). In Greek as in Latin, free word order permits the "scrambling" of major constituents; the underlying syntactic structure of the sentence is reconstructed in the mind of the Greek reader or listener according to the clues inflection gives. So, for instance, inversions that would have been standard usage and gone unnoticed in an inflected language like Greek end up creating unwarranted confusion in English, which only admits free phrase order. In "doing" the *Agamemnon* so literally, Browning has "'done the *Agamemnon* in the eye,'" says Pound; the other casualty of Browning's "stilted unsayable jargon" is of course the "natural wording" of English (*LE* 270).[58] Pound's desires for Aeschylus in English, articulated in the negative, appear to fall in place with a "domesticating" or "free" translation strategy since Pound seems to advocate for faithfulness to what English will say and attention to the "matter" (rather than the form or meter) in Greek. Translation thus seems to acquire a corrective purpose of the Imagist variety; for instance, the "many adjectives" that have "only melodic value" in Greek and are, therefore, excessive, would have to be discarded (*LE* 273). What would have to be sacrificed, then, for the sake of the mother tongue, is precisely the *melopoeia* that Pound so admired and that, according to his letter to Iris Barry, made the plays worth reading.

[58] In the preface to his translation Browning himself admits that he has translated Aeschylus "in as Greek a fashion as the English will bear" (v). Yopie Prins has argued that "Browning initially aligns himself with Aeschylus in order to dramatize a vexed relationship with his reading public: the nineteenth-century reception of Aeschylus as sublimely obscure serves as analogy to the popular perception of Browning as obscure poet" ("'Violence Bridling Speech'…" 152). To this effect his translation demonstrates "a violent disjunction of text and voice that is present to some degree in all Browning's poetry" (ibid. 153).

Pound is not idly thinking about the *Agamemnon* and the possibility of translating it,in 1919. Before writing the essay cited above—and possibly as early as 1916—Pound had given the play to T.S. Eliot and asked him to translate it, recognizing his mastery of meter and voice modulation. Some time later he himself "took over" after Eliot "sat on it," though, despite the assertiveness of his statement, he too only "ha[d] a shot at the drama" and never published it (*Guide to Kulchur* 92).[59] Interestingly, the *Agamemnon*, either a manuscript of the translation or the book, is abortively passed back and forth between Pound and Eliot during the letter-exchange operation that produced *The Waste Land*.[60] In his well-known December 1921 letter to Eliot, Pound adds right after "Sage Homme," the satiric poem he wrote in celebration of his own maieutic skills, that "It is after all a grrrreat literary period. Thanks for the Aggymemnon" (*L* 170). To Eliot's response to his December letter ("I would have sent Aeschule before but have been in bed with flu, now out, but miserable. . . . Trying to read Aristophane"), Pound writes from Paris in January 1922: "Aeschylus [whose?] not so good as I had hoped, but haven't had time to improve him, yet" (171). And he will not have that time until more than ten years later, when in a 1934 letter, again to Eliot, he claims to be "exCAVating' the Aggymemnon fer to KOrekt it" and submit it for publication in the *Criterion*—again, he never does (cited in Gallup 117). Moreover, though according to Pound Eliot "sat on" the *Agamemnon* for years, Aeschylus's play still resonates in Eliot's poetry of that time. Agamemnon's dying line ("ὤμοι, πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγήν ἔσω," "Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow[61]" [line 1343])

[59] The dates for this exchange are unclear. Donald Gallup surmises that Pound gave Eliot the *Agamemnon* in 1916 and reclaimed it, as Pound writes in the *Dial* Letter, "at the end of three or four years" (cited in Gallup 117). Yet Pound himself later tells the story slightly differently. In *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) he writes: "I asked Eliot to have a shot at the *Agamemnon*. He didn't. Or rather he sat on it for eight months or some longer period. I then took over" (92). Eight months is almost nine; when Eliot could not deliver, sage homme Pound "took over" and yet, instead of producing results as his assertive statement would imply, he too only (had a) shot at the drama.

[60] For a psychoanalytic reading of the Pound-Eliot collaboration in the production of *The Waste Land* see Wayne Koestenbaum's *Double Talk*, 112–39.

[61] This is Herbert Weir Smyth's translation.

becomes the epigraph for Eliot's finished (off) Agamemnon, "Sweeney Among the Nightingales"—the poem that in his *Collected Poems* comes right before *The Waste Land*—while a line from Aeschylus's *Choephoroi* (*The Libation Bearers*) is used as an epigraph for the later and fragmentary *Sweeney Agonistes*, the poem that came out of Eliot's switch, reported in the January 1922 letter to Pound, from Aeschylus to Aristophanes.[62] Seventeen years later, Eliot would finally transform the final part of the Aeschylean trilogy, *The Eumenides*, into a play he called *The Family Reunion*. The shadow cast by quantitative meter and Greek tragedy thus seems to be at the heart—or birth, if *The Waste Land* can be said to mark such a moment[63]— of modernist American poetry, improving perhaps both poets' cadence even at the expense of the untranslated Greek text itself.[64]

In discussing the decline of rhyme in contemporary poetry in his essay "Reflections on *Vers Libre*"— written in 1917, a date that marks both Eliot and Pound's shift to more formal verse—Eliot insists that "the decay of intricate formal patterns has nothing to do with the advent of *vers libre*" (*Selected Prose* 36). Their flourishing, he asserts, does not depend on poetry but on the polity: "Only in a closely-knit and homogeneous society, where many men are at work on the same problems, such a society as those which produced the Greek chorus, the Elizabethan lyric, and the Troubadour canzone, will the development of such forms ever be carried to perfection," he writes (36). He thus ties metrics to society, giving poetic form a political, or at least social, extension, much like Pound had done with Tagore in 1913 and again with the Noh in 1916–17.

[62] It is worth noting, too, that Eliot considered the Sweeney poems "intensely serious" and "among the best that I have ever done" (*The Waste Land* xviii). Moreover, as Gross and McDowell point out, the rhythm that Eliot developed for these poems reappears in his second "Greek" play *The Cocktail Party*, based on Euripides's *Alcestis*, which also "elaborates the sin and atonement theme of 'Sweeney'" (181).
[63] To William Carlos Williams of course *The Waste Land* famously marked the death, or at least the retrogression of American poetry; in his *Autobiography* he calls the poem's appearance "the great catastrophe to our letters" (146). See especially 174–75.
[64] See Adams on the centrality of Greek metrics in Pound's early conception of *The Cantos*; see especially 63–66, for an illuminating analysis of the ambiguous metrics of Canto 1. For an overview of Pound's metrics, see Gross and McDowell 120–58.

Eliot then suggests that formal rhymed verse could still be of use to satirists; we recall of course that most of his *Poems 1920*, as well as his unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes*, are satirical poems, as is, to some extent Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." Yet in the aftermath of the First World War (and the dissolution of the London-based poetic 'movements' or circles), at a time when poetry and society seemed to Pound and Eliot to have suffered a blow, an attempt to foster both social and poetic cohesion (or, in the satirical mode, to denounce its absence) must have seemed appealing. Hence, then, the turn to Greek tragedy in an effort to restart the tradition or re-ground the revolution, and, for Pound at least, on different terms than those he had used in his Imagiste writings only five years before: no longer looking at Greek in search of an aesthetic of fragmentation (to be found in Sappho and the Greek Anthology), or a model for free verse (to be found in the Euripidean chorus), but rather for their very opposite, namely formal verse and a sense of unity.

Pound and Eliot's particular turn to the Aeschylus and the *Oresteia* makes sense in this context. On the one hand, as Eileen Gregory notes, in March of 1915 the flagship *Agamemnon* was part of the British fleet bound towards Ilion (Gallipoli); Agamemnon thus had a literal place in the war, which may have prompted the Mycenaean king's re-emergence in the modernist imaginary—and we will see in the next chapter H.D.'s semi-fictional depiction of this period (23).[65] On the other hand, Pound's interest in the Noh at that time—and the link he draws between classical Japanese theater and Greek tragedy—coupled with his continuing interest in Browning point to the possible aesthetic relevance not only of tragedy in general but of Aeschylus in particular. As Yopie Prins notes, in the nineteenth-century Aeschylus was viewed "as an obscure and therefore sublime poet"; for example in Germany he "becomes one of the

[65] Gere notes that, since the eastern front of the war on the Gallipoli Peninsula was right across the Dardanelles from Schliemann's Troy, "one writer after another, from the poet Rupert Brooke to Schliemann's biographer . . . recalled the Greek siege of Priam's city" (96).

prototypes of the Sturm-und-Drang poet, while in England he is romanticized by critics 'stressing the irrational, sublime, vatic elements in his poetry'" ("Violence…," 155). Even though Euripides was the most popular tragedian among eighteenth-century scholars—at a time when the main scholarly concern was the production of textbooks through which the Greek language could be taught and as a result the most attention was paid to philological, metrical and translational niceties—he was nonetheless the least favorite outside of scholarly circles, "among a general readership of 'educated men,'" as Shanyn Fiske explains (37). In Victorian England, Fiske continues, Euripides's plays were "generally looked upon with disfavor because they neither presented the serene repose of Arnold's Hellenic ideal nor fulfilled the technical criteria laid out by Aristotle and respected by Victorian readers" (37).[66]

Both Pound and Eliot fall prey to the nineteenth-century prejudice in favor of Aeschylus—or at least against Euripides. We have already seen Pound's misgivings regarding H.D.'s choice of tragedian, misgivings that are echoed even more forcefully by Eliot a few years later. In his essay on Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides (of which he famously said that Murray had "simply interposed between Euripides and ourselves a barrier more impenetrable than the Greek language"), he too praises H.D. for her renderings, but adds that she has done "no more than pick up some of the more romantic crumbs of Greek literature" and has not yet shown herself "competent to attack the *Agamemnon*" (*SP* 49, 50).[67] Browning himself, a translator of

[66] In general nineteenth-century poets and scholars focused on the other two tragedians; Arnold championed Sophokles, for example, and Swinburne Aeschylus. Even though Robert Browning and Walter Pater appreciated Euripides, he was, as Ann Michelini asserts, "disappointingly 'modern'" for critics looking to Greece for an exalted model, precisely because he was more involved in the controversies of his day (and in such critics' view, "the elevated nature of poetic discourse matches the elusive nature of its subjects") (50). For a comprehensive history of the trends and controversies in Euripidean interpretation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Michelini 3–51.

[67] Virginia Woolf was the modernist woman who did attack Aeschylus, whom she much admired: an interlinear version of the *Agamemnon* was found among her papers. See Dalgarno, "Virginia Woolf," according to whom Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* "rewrites *Agamemnon* in the language of post-war British society" (151).

both Aeschylus and Euripides, adopts two very different translation strategies for each tragedian; while his *Agamemnon* is, as Pound rightly notes and as Yopie Prins has extensively shown, "deliberately distorted" in its diction and therefore "too dense, and too strange for spoken English," his *Heracles*, completed only two years earlier, has language and rhythms that reflect real speech, as Peter Burian remarks (Prins, "Violence…," 164; Burian 273).[68] In the preface to his *Agamemnon* translation, Browning uses an ancient source to defend his claim that that play in particular is all but incomprehensible in its obscurity and that it, therefore, makes special demands on its translator—namely to "reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems"—while also provocatively citing Matthew Arnold's pronouncements on the supreme clarity of Greek poetry ("so simple and so well subordinated . . . not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!") as what such a translation would hope to illustrate (viii). While Browning was undoubtedly making light of Arnold's excessive commitment to the Greek "sweetness and light," Pound, equally undoubtedly, must have found Arnold's depiction of Greek exactitude appealing and judged Browning's translation by its standard. The obscurity and difficulty of the *Agamemnon* rendered this tragedy above all others particularly suitable for waging a battle for precision with the mother tongue, a battle that by now Pound believed, the Greek poet had also waged and succeeded in.

Indeed, it is in exactly these terms that Pound frames his brief comment on his own attempt to translate the *Agamemnon* in his March 1923 "Paris Letter" in the *Dial*. In contrast to his earlier, more reserved praise of the play and of Aeschylus in general, now Pound claims that "The Agamemnon [sic] drives one to admiration; it is a great work, it probably knocks the spots

[68] Prins illuminatingly reads Browning's translation in terms of an opposition between text and speech. She argues that his *Agamemnon* can be seen as "repeating the violent plot of the Oresteia both dramatically and rhetorically: it kills the father (Agamemnon, Aeschylus, the paternal text), but in doing so also takes revenge by killing the mother (Clytemnestra, the maternal voice)" ("'Violence Bridling Speech'…" 165).

off other Greek plays" (cited in Gallup 117).[69] Yet when he then juxtaposes his own failed translation of the *Agamemnon*, presumably undertaken and abandoned as recently as the previous year[70] (and published only posthumously), with Jean Cocteau's "heroic attempt" in translating Sophokles's *Antigone*, he reveals once again his ambivalence regarding the play, and Greek, and elaborates on the difficulty of translating it. On the one hand, he praises Cocteau probably due to the latter's radical condensation of Sophokles's play, but on the other he draws our attention precisely to the importance of the seemingly superfluous, of what Cocteau has, presumably, given up on:

> In the Agamemnon there is simply too much stuff that doesn't function; you put it in and the thing goes dead, you start omitting it, and the remains are insufficient. . . . Whether one can get through this pasteboard and glue, into "the some more vital equation," is a vastly other question. (cited in Gallup 117)

Pound sees the Greek as too much and too little, or too good and too faulty. There is too much language in the *Agamemnon* that does not communicate and so seems excessive—"philology" in the sense in which Pound uses the word with respect to Dante. Therefore, when translated, what in Greek served the "melodic value" when translated turns into ornamental and artificial, into a no longer vital excess of archaism that kills the translator's mother tongue. Yet the reproach against Browning may now be read in a different way: the "matter" his syntax obscures is not, or not only, the "sense" of the play, but its meter, that which in Greek the convoluted syntax and superfluous words serve—its meter and that which it is based on: Greek sounds and, specifically,

[69] See also Ronald Bush on the formative influence of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* on the genesis of *The Cantos*, with regards to Aeschylus's ability to mirror processes of consciousness, 180–82, and especially with regards to his conception of Helen, 296–300. Still, it seems to me that Bush overestimates the impact of Aeschylus on Pound's development of the ideogrammatic method, given that the tone of Pound's essay is rather negative and falls prey to all the clichés about the Greek tragedian.

[70] In January 1922 Pound writes to Eliot from Paris, "Aeschylus not so good as I had hoped, but haven't had time to improve him, yet" (*Letters* 171).

Greek vowels.[71]

What Pound omits in his translation of the play's opening is exactly the "melodic value," namely the choral lyric that follows the watchman's initial monologue. Even in that monologue, however, and in the dialogue between the chorus and Clytemnestra that he places after it, Pound's struggle is still with the "melodic value," namely with quantitative meter:

> I tried every possible dodge, making the watchman a negro, and giving him a *fihn Geoogiah voyce*; making the chorus talk cockney, et cetera. This is a usual form of evasion in modern drama. Ibsen makes his people provincial, Chekhov also, the Irish theatre talks dialect, to get a 'language.' (cited in Gallup 117)

The use of dialect may reinvigorate a stilted, overly literary mother tongue; but it is an evasion since, as Michael North convincingly argues, it stems from a conservative impulse to return to one's own "authentic" linguistic roots, rather than open up to otherness.[72] Yet the "*fihn Geoogiah voice*" signals not only Pound's attempt to embody his characters, to give them a contemporary relevance and voice, but also his attempt to reproduce the rich musicality of the Greek. I cite as an example of Pound's translation strategy the very beginning of the watchman's speech:

> Dey keep me up hyear lak a dawg
>
> teh bark at de con-sterlations,
>
> I'm a watchman, I am,
>
> That is to say: I was,
>
> Dey don' take much watchin' from the outside,

[71] Indeed, in the preface to his translation, Browning rejects "what Keats called 'vowelled Greek,'" claiming that he would expect that it be called "consonanted" (x). See also Yopie Prins's discussion of this passage in "'Violence Bridling Speech'…", 159 ff. As Prins highlights, Browning thinks of Greek not as mellifluous, but as an impediment to sound.

[72] For Eliot as well the problem of translating the ancient text becomes intertwined with the use of dialect in order to "get a language" in *Sweeney Agonistes*. See North 87–91.

But de ole lady has had *some* vacation…

Do I get paid for this job?

Yaas! Gawd, he goin' to pay for it;

You watch deh lights, on de islands, for

The GREAT men are a-comin' hoam, special

Despatches," (Gallup 118–19).

The transcription of a Southern/African-American pronunciation clearly serves as a visual or written means to clarify the lengths of vowels in the English monosyllables. We see that "to" has the lengthening aspirant attached to it; "dog" and "god" are done with two letters; the already long "they" and "here" become even more so; "old" becomes "ole"; the vowel of "yes" is doubled. The *g*'s disappear from the present participle to prolong the vowel sound over the relatively silent *n*; "dispatch" becomes "despatch," again to give more length to the *i*, and the length of *e* in "consterlation" is emphasized by the addition of a second consonant that is not *l* in addition to the already stressed and long *a*. Pound's *Agamemnon* is a disaster by his own admission precisely because such transcriptions will not work consistently, especially if they correspond to a particular dialect that belongs in a cultural and historical context that the translator does not want to place the play in.[73]

The fault with Pound's translation, at least in his mind, is that rather than (re)produce the "vital equation" —the quoted phrase comes from Pound's own vorticist manifesto in *Gaudier-Brzeska*, where he calls the image an "equation"— of the original, in which all the parts fall into place, he produces a text that fails to convey the unified image because it is composed of

[73] Of course Pound's letters, and to some extent the later *Cantos*, begin to follow this principle of phonetic spelling (and misspelling), according to which how each word is written each time depends on the particular way that Pound would pronounce it, the particular stress he wants to attribute to it, as well as the particular latent double meaning or pun he wants to uncover.

fragments of artificially glued together echoes of Greek that do not convey the "rush of the action," the urgency of Kassandra's constant shrieking (*GB* 92; *LE* 267).[74] "THE JOB of the writer of verse is to get the LIVE language AND the prosody simultaneously. Prosody : articulation of the total sound of a poem (not bits of certain shapes gummed together.)," Pound will write much later to Mary Barnard, trying to guide her in translating Sappho (Gordon 171). Cocteau may have gone beyond the "pasteboard and glue," and done so through a very demotic and radically condensed version of *Antigone*. He may have succeeded in bringing forth the play's image, encapsulated in a key phrase ("T'as inventé la justice") that, as Pound claims, "rings out in the Paris play house with all the force any man ever imagined inherent in greek [sic] originals"—very much unlike Browning who, as Yopie Prins shows, chose to translate Aeschylus "as part of a purely textual tradition no longer intended for performance," and was thus, for Pound, encumbered by unpronounceable language (*GK* 93; Prins, "Violence…," 158). Cocteau's *Antigone* may have been, as it were, Sophokles's *Antigone* as an Imagiste poem and so functioned as a model for Pound in his later Sophokles translations, as we will see. It is still nonetheless only an attempt, albeit a heroic one, because the French playwright has given up on the other side of the equation, the Greek prosody.

At the end of his *Dial* article, Pound again outlines his own version of Hellenism—albeit somewhat ambiguously—implicitly clarifying his praise for Cocteau as well:

[74] On the image as an equation see in particular *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 87–92. There Pound describes his experience of writing "In a Station of the Metro" as follows: ""I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation … not in speech, but in little splotches of colour" (87). He then compares art to analytical geometry in that both are concerned with and contain a particular kind of equation, namely one that "cause[s] form to come into being" (92). His example is the equation for the circle ($(x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2 = r^2$), which "is the circle" in the same way that "*sea, cliffs, night*" define a poem's mood (92). Later in the book, he describes a community of artists, which is "united" in "this unending adventure towards 'arrangement,' this search for the equations of eternity. A search which may end in results as diverse as the portrait of Miss Alexander . . ., or a formula like $(x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2 = r^2$, or Brzeska's last figure of a woman, or Lewis' "Timon" or even a handful of sapphics" (122).

> And (to perorate) the classics will live as long as people can take their symbols as equivalent of some current struggle which they are unable to treat more directly, or with greater exactness of balance despite the baggage, the dead weight of archaism, aesthetic faults, taboos. (cited in Gallup 117)

On the one hand, he seems to claim that a classic is only a classic retrospectively and does not remain so; as he will write in the *ABC of Reading*, "A classic is classic not because it conforms to certain structural rules, or fits certain definitions (of which its author had quite probably never heard)" (xi). It is a classic, therefore, for as long as it has a use, for as long as it can be embedded in a contemporary context, and judged to be worth living on.[75] Moreover, the particular case of translation seems to be now for Pound a second-rate enterprise; only if one cannot treat the current matter directly or imagistically does one turn to the classics and does so "despite the baggage, the dead weight of archaism, aesthetic faults," with which the "classic" texts themselves, not their contemporary translations, come.[76] His suggestion for translation then would be what he himself claimed to have done in his "Homage to Sextus Propertius": zooming in on and perhaps enhancing the Roman poet's anti-imperialistic stance to mirror his own hostility towards the British Empire, he recreated the ancient symbol by finding a signified that would fit the text's signifier.[77] On the other hand, however, this kind of pragmatic assessment of

[75] This dynamic view of the "classic" echoes Eliot's understanding of tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," where he claims an equally interactive relation between present and past works of art: "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it. . . . the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (*SP* 38). However, Pound is quick to add, in a later discussion on Eliot, that though he agrees with him, he objects to Eliot's calling the past works of art "monuments"; it is "much easier," he notes, to think of these works "as something living than as a series of cenotaphs. After all, Homer, Villon, Propertius, speak of the world as I know it" (*PE* 137).

[76] Already in "A Retrospect" (1917) Pound had formulated the same double-bind, writing that "No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention and cliché, and not from life, yet a man feeling the divorce of life and his art may naturally try to resurrect a forgotten mode if he finds in that mode some leaven, or if he thinks he sees in it some element lacking in contemporary art which might unite that art again to its sustenance, life" (*LE* 11).

[77] In fact Donald Davie has argued that Pound's claim for the superposition and doubling of himself and England onto Propertius and Rome was an afterthought, "a rationalization after the fact, a fiction uneasily promoted by

a text's value seems to contradict Pound's customary wholehearted praise of some parts of antiquity; that is, Pound also wants to claim for the texts he admires and chooses to translate a permanent validity. The passage from *ABC of Reading* that I quoted above continues with the following: "It is classic because of a certain eternal and irrepressible freshness" (xii).[78] Indeed, my last *Dial* citation would seem to undermine everything that has come before. Translating the classics (whether linguistically, culturally or individually) becomes again resuscitating something that is dead ("the classics will live as long as people…") even though Pound's previous comments would imply that these texts are already alive, and that the translator (with his proverbial stabs and kicks) somehow kills them ("you put it in and the thing goes dead"). In either case, Pound, having contracted the Atreidae, fails his side of the contract: the *Agamemnon* (and Agamemnon) will lie "dead by this hand" until the Pisan Cantos (Canto 82, line 27). I will be returning to Pound's *Agamemnon* and looking at his translation in detail in Chapter 4 below, where I will discuss Agamemnon's place in the Pisan Cantos, as well as in Pound's *Elektra*.

3. "Lie quiet," Aeschylus

By the time Pound refers to his translation attempt in his Paris Letter in the *Dial*, he has already come upon a new technique of poetic composition, has started working zealously on the Malatesta Cantos, and Mussolini, with whom the Renaissance condottiere is clearly identified, has already marched on Rome. Besides being a failure, only a "shot," it is possible that a Greek paternal archetype, a literary Agamemnon (or *Agamemnon*) was no longer necessary to breathe

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Pound to meet a parrot-cry for 'contemporary relevance'" (48). Davie convincingly shows how Pound's anti-imperialist critique is instead encoded in the texture and style of his language. See 58–61.

[78] This in essence what Canto 1 "proves": that Homer is still relevant and fresh in eighth-century England and China, and remains so in the early twentieth century. In a letter sent to W.H.D. Rouse on June 13, 1935, Pound writes: "the chief impression in reading Homer is freshness. Whether illusion or not, this is the classic quality: 3000 years old and still *fresh*. A translation that misses that is bad. Must get *new* combination of words" (*L* 275).

life into Pound's long poem. After all, Malatesta, after his defeat by Pope Pius II, was sent to Peloponnesus to help defend the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire, which he did for three years; thus the new hero of Pound's epic, a vanquished foreigner, fought to save the lands of the house of Atreus. Though it may seem to depart from it, Pound's eventual conception of his first Canto, his choice of Ur-texts and translation method, must be seen in the light of our earlier discussion of Pound and Greek. Like the Noh plays, James Longenbach argues, "each canto is organized around a place made sacred by myth and history"—in this case a textual place, whose topography the canto describes, both literally and linguistically (221). Retaining and developing further the 'ideogrammatic' method of Imagisme, *The Cantos* presents us with fragments, meant to be eventually combined, montaged together.[79] In *Guide to Kulchur* Pound writes under the heading ZWECK or the AIM that "the ideogrammatic method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register" (92). The "Zweck" would be then to turn the reader into a telegraph, to imprint on his mind the (de)composed image of the poet, who himself has received similar images from the "air." As Jean-Michel Rabaté points out, we encounter often, and more particularly in the Adams Cantos, a "superimposition of [Pound's] own reading-experience upon the multifarious experiences of John Adams" while in the dynastic cantos the "poetic art" tends to be reduced "to a montage of citations underwritten by a voice" (121, 106). Rabaté, turning to Benjamin's comment in his essay on Karl Kraus that "Ein Wort zitieren heisst, es beim Namen zu rufen," draws a connection between citation, name (*onoma*) and *nomos* (law) and claims that

[79] Pound is in this way adapting Fenollosa's interpretation of the Chinese written character; as the reader realizes the connection between the different parts of the ideogram, its overarching meaning emerges, while the details represent the "bridge whereby to cross from the minor truth of the seen to the major truth of the unseen" (*CWC* 22–23). See also Ursula Shioji for an excellent reading of the literary ideogram for death in Canto 74. Shioji argues that the passage from life to death is metonymically constructed as a "cinematic *montage* of images," and complemented a "*collage* of details which represent a metaphorical expansion of the concept of death" (240–41).

"naming people or places has . . . even a political responsibility. . . . To name is an action which remains present" ("Karl Kraus" 362; Rabaté 156). In *The Cantos*, then, the image, fragmented and scattered but appealing to totalization, to a seamless montage, should name, commemorate and bring forwards a new *nomos*.

The voice underwriting the citations, however, is not only Pound's. His *magnum opus* was after all saved and forced into shape by Sigismondo Malatesta, whose artistic leanings were coupled with a Nietzschean will to power and an ability to subject and fascinate the masses and who, though to some extent a Poundian alter ego, is of course later identified with Mussolini.[80] *Il Duce* embodied for Pound the ideals of the American Revolution better than his contemporary Americans and, most importantly, had "told his people that poetry is a necessity *to the state*" (*GK* 249). Mussolini can represent nationalism—American, not Italian—because nationalism is for Pound also an ideogram: "The distinction between nationalism and non-absorbency needs stressing. Our revolutionary culture was critical and not monolingual. A national culture can exist so long as it *chooses* between other cultures" ("National Culture: A Manifesto 1938," *SP* 161). A national culture, then, is a collage of other cultures, critical in the same way that Imagisme was a critical movement; distinguishing among the cultures "in the air" and through the luminous details registered, it constructs a nationalist image.

[80]This identification becomes explicit in Antonio Beltramelli's 1923 biographical portrait of Mussolini; Beltramelli was also the author of *Un Tempio d'Amore*, one of Pound's chief sources on Malatesta. As Lawrence Rainey points out, "Pound shared with Beltramelli the desire to evoke a new ethico-cultural order, and an aspiration to see this order embodied in (and through) a new type of man" (47). By 1932, Rainey adds, the identification between Mussolini and Malatesta "would strike Pound as the central axis for the shape of his magnum opus and his understanding of its place in the modern world" (74). At the same time, Rainey claims, "Pound was eager indeed to view the culture of Renaissance Rimini as the heir and renovator of a "secret" spiritual tradition stretching from ancient Greece to medieval Provence" (41). Pound's research in the Malatesta archives inspired him to introduce for the first time blocks of citations by historical/political figures in his long poem and forced him to reconsider and heavily revise the first cantos he had already written before his decision to include Malatesta.

It is such an image that inaugurates the journey of voices and languages that will be Pound's epic poem: the translation of the oldest Greek text, the Odyssey's Book Eleven,[81] into the oldest English form, Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse.[82] The revolution of verse, then, still emerges out of "archaism" or tradition—tradition coming from the Latin *tradere*, which also gives us treason (hence the cliché *traditore* - *traduttore*). Pound, according to Hugh Kenner, was interested in "the gestures of tongue and expulsions of breath that mimed, about A.D. 850, the emotions of exile" in English and in Chinese ("Blood for the Ghosts" 333). Like Odysseus offering blood to the dead to hear them speak, Pound offers the ghost of Homer an idiom and meter that he had developed in his translations of the Anglo-Saxon "Seafarer" and the Chinese "Exile's Letter" and that was thus especially prepared to make him speak and become intelligible.[83] For the "system" of Greek, then, he offers a "system" of English.

Canto 1, however, unlike its Ur-version and unlike Book Eleven, resists closure. In order to keep the poem going, Elpenor is not buried, the rest of the dead are not given the chance to tell their stories here, while Odysseus's encounter with his mother is cut out since Pound in the final version of the Canto does not translate Odysseus's embrace of Anticleia but only his shunning of her. Though he reorganizes the sequence of the original "Three Cantos" written in 1916 to have his long poem begin with a "translation" from Homer,[84] Pound, much like his Odysseus, who refuses his mother, avoids not only contemporary English, his own "mother," but also Homer's Greek. And he does so not simply by translating out of it—the "betrayal" of the original inherent

[81] According to Pound, Book Eleven was the oldest one in the *Odyssey* because in it archaic Greece, with its everyday rituals and magic, shows through. Bush notes that James Alexander Ker Thomson had claimed this in his 1914 book *Studies in the Odyssey* ("there is no part older than that"), but it is unclear if Pound had read it (cited in Bush 129).
[82] On Pound's particular metrical adjustments to Anglo-Saxon meter for his "Seafarer" see Apter 86–87. See also Stephen Adams, who argues for both an iambic pentameter basis for the first canto's meter, and additional Greek, though not strictly Homeric, echoes (63–66).
[83] See Kenner, "Blood for the Ghosts," 332–33.
[84] As Bush notes, what occurred between Oct 1917 and Jan 1918, when the three cantos were reordered, was that Pound received the opening of Joyce's *Ulysses* (194).

in every act of translation—but by not doing so. Pound opts instead for the medium, a screen provided by Renaissance scholar Andreas Divus's Latin crib ("even singable," Pound claims), and thus embeds the "oral" epic into a textual network of translation, transformation, and transmission, the kind of textual network that the poem, canto after canto, will exhibit and celebrate (*LE* 264). He thus makes clear that, as Liebregts puts it, "any translation is influenced by the heritage of interpretative perspectives foisted upon the original" ("Greek Translation" 138). At the same time, Pound also embeds his canto in a context of intense linguistic transformation—for it was only in Divus's time that the English stress system began to move away from its Germanic roots and to resemble that of Latin as new metrical forms were developed under the influence of Italian.[85] As a result, according to Kristin Hanson, poets started experimenting with quantitative verse at the time. Pound, then, through his choice of original, commemorates the historical moment in which Greek antiquity was reclaimed and preserved by the West (the beginning of Hulme's despised "humanism," and the infusion of life into European culture, similar to that which could occur with Tagore in 1913) and, thus, in a sense, reverses the development of Hellenism by emphasizing Greece as a "textual heritage" rather than as the "total cultural representation" it became in the eighteenth century in the wake of Winckelmann's work. At the same time he also explicitly sidesteps the Latin or Italian influence on English, kills it by translating it back into the sounds of the Anglo-Saxon and, again, reverses history as it were in order to stop the iambic pentameter. The movement out of the Homeric-turned-Anglo-Saxon world and sound is registered in three ways as Canto 1 draws to a close: thematically, through the eruption of Divus who is instructed to "Lie quiet"; linguistically, through the snippets of another Renaissance translation—this time of the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite—presented untranslated in Latin; and metrically, through the introduction of enjambment, strictly forbidden

[85] See Hanson, "Quantitative Meter…" 52ff.

in the Anglo-Saxon lines. Unlike its ur-version and unlike the Odyssey's eleventh book, Canto 1 resists closure and leaves Elpenor unburied, "so that:" (to quote the canto's last phrase) the poem continue—with Aphrodite "Bearing the golden bough of Argicida," the slayer of Argives, of Greeks, of this Homer—into Latium and into Pound's own half-Romance tradition, which the poet is now determined to reground. Thus Pound's seeming return to Greek, his apparent first attempt at translating from Greek is not one since the Greek remains untouched, untranslated in the background, translated out of Divus—its melopoeia still untranslatable unless mediated by a more familiar Romance overlay— and into an eighth-century CE Anglo-Chinese version of the Odyssean impulse.

Both the Hellenists and the anti-Hellenists depend, as Ferris shows, on the establishment of a firm and unbridgeable distance between the present, namely "modernity," and the past (and thus also presuppose the downfall of Greece): for the former, the past, the glory that was Greece is inimitable, and for the latter irrelevant or unworthy of imitation (53). Though as we have seen Pound wavers between these two positions, with his frequent musings on the "incomparable melody" of Greek on the one hand and his eagerness to disassociate himself from the prevailing Hellenisms (including what he calls "Munich-sham-Greek 'Hellas'") on the other, ultimately, his insistence on practicing "comparative literature," understood as "the study of 'comparative values in letters,'" leads him to place Greece and Greek on a spectrum of more or less available tools for American poetry (*L* 107; *LE* 192). During the teens and in the early twenties, he finds himself caught between the draw exerted by Greek similar to that exerted by, for example, Provençal, but that he somehow felt even less able to accommodate, and the rote repetition of various standard scholarly positions on Greek circulating at the time that comes as a result of his suspicion towards "Hellenism" as such. He emphasizes, contra Winckelmann, the primacy of

language in any reconstruction of the past and, as Canto 1 makes clear, the vagaries and particularities of textuality and textual reception. Having set up Greek metrics as both a model and a challenge for English-language poetry early on in his writing career, Pound treats Greek as something that he cannot quite assimilate, that his poem(s) cannot quite digest—that he cannot quite translate, without, at least the mediating screen of Andreas Divus's Latin *Odyssey* in Canto 1 or the conventions of the Noh (*Women of Trachis*) and, for this reason, rather than hail its inimitability, he keeps returning to it throughout his life.

"What Is Greece if You Draw Back?":

Translating Hellenism into Modernism

"Ezra may have 'invented' Imagism but, after all, you wrote the poems," writes Richard Aldington to H.D. in 1929 (17). On August 18, 1912, about a month before the invention of "H.D., *Imagiste*," Pound had sent Harriet Monroe another poem with the Imagiste tag, this time one of his own, "Middle-Aged." Labeling it "an over-elaborate post-Browning 'Imagiste' affair" in his accompanying letter, Pound marked at least his intention to move beyond his previous personae technique, but also recorded his hesitation about abandoning the intricacy and ornateness of much of his earlier poetry in favor of a still dubious (hence the quotation marks) 'Imagiste' technique. Though technically the first Imagiste poem— since this is the first recorded reference to Imagisme, prior even to the one in *Ripostes* attributing the origins of the movement to T.E. Hulme—"Middle-Aged" was not included in the *Des Imagistes* anthology Pound compiled in 1913 and was in fact not published anywhere besides *Poetry* until the 1949 edition of *Personae*. This is hardly surprising considering the poem's labyrinthine syntax, morbid theme and radical deviation from the precepts of clarity and directness that Imagisme was supposed to stand for. For these reasons, "Middle-Aged" has given leverage to critics like Cyrena Pondrom and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, who argue that Imagisme was far from a publicity stunt to promote H.D., but, on the contrary, became clearly formulated in Pound's mind only after reading H.D.'s poems.[1] Indeed, Helen Carr, in her very detailed "biography" of Imagisme and Imagistes *Verse*

[1] As Pondrom characteristically writes, "Between Pound's application of the word imagism to poems only distantly related to what became that movement's precepts and his enunciation of the characteristics of imagism came his reading of H.D.'s poems 'Priapus' and 'Hermes of the Ways'" (100). In contrast, Martin Kayman, prompted to some extent by Pound's own comments, reads the "movement" as Pound's publicity stunt, his attempt to get the attention of the public by creating the illusion of an authoritative collectivity whose values were actually those of Pound himself. Imagisme, according to this view, was produced on the level of the signifier and was initially nothing but a word entering the literary market, with a substantial group neither of people nor of poems corresponding to it. The Imagiste principles were, therefore, obviously prescriptive rather than descriptive of a new trend in poetry.

Revolutionaries, has most recently concluded on the basis of a very close analysis of his writings and preoccupations during that period that Pound, inspired by F.S. Flint's August 1912 article in the *Poetry Review* article on the French avant-gardes, invented the name first (and used it in the August 18 letter to Harriet Monroe), formulated the program when he saw H.D.'s poems, and then continually redefined the term "as he strove to analyse more exactly how he thought their verse worked" (492). What has gone mostly unnoticed is the degree to which H.D.'s poems, even the ones first submitted to *Poetry*, did not themselves correspond to or abide by the Imagiste precepts Pound would go on to formulate supposedly on their basis—or even the phrases of praise accorded them in the letter to Monroe.

In the same January 1913 issue of *Poetry* that "H.D., *Imagiste*'s" poems first appeared, Pound wrote an editorial comment on the poetic *status rerum*. He begins his article by recognizing W.B. Yeats and Ford Madox Ford as the two opposite, but equally determining influences on young poets of the day—i.e., Pound himself—and then moves on to say a few words on the new school of the Imagistes. A school, he tells us, "exists when two or three young men agree, more or less, to call certain things good" and then proceeds to identify one such young man: "Among the very young men, there seems to be a gleam of hope in the work of Richard Aldington, but it is too early to make predictions" (126). H.D. seems to be written out of this story completely—even when, most obviously, she is the one writing the poems in this very issue of the magazine, her signature "H.D., *imagiste*" appearing just on the preceding page. The use of her initials rather than her name, for which Pound was responsible at least on this instance,[2] as well as Pound's presentation of the Imagistes as a group of men, would of course

[2] According to the conventional story of the birth of Imagisme—including H.D.'s own version in *End to Torment*—it is Pound who names her "H.D." by scrawling it onto her manuscript of "Hermes of the Ways." As Helen Carr reports, H.D. was surprised that Pound actually presented her as "H.D., Imagiste" and later asked Harriet Monroe to drop the "Imagiste" label. Though some critics have argued on the basis of a 1908 letter to William Carlos Williams

suggest to readers that H.D. was a man as well.[3] This omission is telling. H.D., though hailed as an Imagiste, was not writing cool and collected poetry—"harder, saner . . . as much like granite as it can be, . . . austere, direct, free from emotional slither"—of the kind that Pound increasingly wanted to promote through his prose (*LE* 12). Neither was her relation to Greece as straightforward as either Pound or Aldington may have imagined. In this chapter I will offer a new reading of H.D.'s first published poems by considering their Greek originals, texts that have so far been neglected in H.D. scholarship.[4] Looking at her poems as translations, and highlighting her intentional manipulation and alteration of the source texts, I will trace the complex relationship H.D. negotiates between Greek and English, and between Hellenism and modernism.

Chattering Greek(s): Hermes, Priapus, Homonoea

Early critics and many of her contemporaries, including Pound, considered and dismissed H.D. as a "Hellenist" in both of the senses the word had acquired[5]: a poet who, on the one hand, always strove for an unattainable and idealized Greece, choosing to populate her landscapes with its mythical characters[6] rather than live in her own time and, on the other hand, a poet who

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signed "H.D." that she had already decided to use her initials as her writing name, Carr claims that it is unlikely. Attributing the use of initials in the letter to customary shorthand practice, she contends that "It was more likely than in the first instance she welcomed the initials because she was always embarrassed by the name 'Doolittle,'" while after her marriage H.D. herself claimed that "the initials ensured that she and Aldington kept their poetic identities separate" (531). On the issue of H.D.'s relationship to her name see also DuPlessis 6–7.

[3] There was, however, at the very end of the volume, a biographical note for H.D., as well as for the other contributors, which specified that she was "an American lady resident abroad, whose identity is unknown to the editor" (135).

[4] Steven Yao, in his recent book on modernism and translation, also remarks on this fact; yet though he proceeds to give illuminating readings of Pound's Chinese-origin poems, looking at the Chinese originals, he does not do so for H.D. (90ff.)

[5] See my introduction above, especially 7–8.

[6] Of course, such a separation is false since Hellenism of this kind can only arise out of the consciousness of one's own time, and specifically of one's own modernity. As David Ferris notes, Hellenism is not single-sided; it is less an expression of Greece and, instead, "an articulation of modernity constituted by a limit Winckelmann locates in Greece" (105).

turned to the wrong Greece, to Euripides instead of Aeschylus, to the superfluousness of the Alexandrian downfall rather than to any of the earlier stages. For instance, Douglas Bush faults her in 1937 not only for her historical inaccuracy, but also for being blinded by a "soft romantic nostalgia"; moreover, unlike the Victorian Hellenists (Landor, Morris, Swinburne) she supposedly copies ("however altered and feminized"), who "testify their consciousness of the modern world, of a world outside themselves," H.D. is an escapist poet who never "doffs her antique and individual mask" (505, 506). Consistent with his implicit praise for the earlier part of the Greek Anthology, Pound scorns her "Alexandrine Greek bunk" and refers to her as the "refined, charming, and utterly narrow minded she-bard 'H.D.'" (*L* 157). In a letter to Richard Aldington about her poetry collection *Hymen*, T.S. Eliot proclaims that "the Hellenism lacks vitality," while in his famous essay on Gilbert Murray and Euripides he asserts that she has done "no more than pick up some of the more romantic crumbs of Greek literature" (*Letters* 488; *Selected Essays* 50). Not only is H.D. a Hellenist, these critics seem to say, but she even fails at being a proper Hellenist—or, as Bush puts it, "her self-conscious, even agonized, pursuit of elusive beauty is quite un-Greek" (505).

Writing from a more sympathetic perspective, Eileen Gregory has, in her rich study of H.D.'s engagement with Greece, identified two stages in H.D.'s Hellenism. The first, she claims, is a more properly philhellenist, Winckelmannian one that she shared with Aldington before the First World War, a legacy, according to Gregory, of late nineteenth-century British Romantic Hellenism.[7] After the war, however, H.D. became "increasingly self-conscious about the character and genealogy of her hellenism" and produces narratives, like the "Hipparchia" section of *Palimpsest* and *Hedylus*, in which "she stages herself as a displaced Hellenistic poet" and

[7] For an overview of H.D.'s early engagement with the Greek Anthology and its centrality in her relationship with Aldington, see Gregory's *H.D. and Hellenism*, 161–73. Unless otherwise noted, all of my citations from Gregory will refer to this book.

reflects upon her earlier engagement with Greek (Gregory 3). Yet, as I will go on to show, such reflection is already taking place in the linguistic texture of her very first poems published in *Poetry* in early 1913, which function like proto-palimpsests. H.D. is from the beginning critically engaged with Greece—and not simply as a way of cultivating her cultural authority by reclaiming Greece's "social, cultural, religious marginalities," as Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues— and insists on the productiveness of such a mimesis and endless, "superfluous," self-referentiality, without at the same time becoming an advocate of something like art for art's sake.[8] As Gregory notes, "Hellenism seems for [H.D.] always contextualized by war," both the two actual wars that she lived through and a war of Hellenisms (3). Gregory has claimed that the major difference between H.D.'s engagement with Greece and that of Pound and Eliot is that her male contemporaries were more interested in it for pedagogical reasons and were more keen on assuming roles of "textual guardianship" (43). After all, it is this second Hellenism, that of the "downfall," which is characterized by a much looser approach to the Greek texts, that finds such vocal critics in Pound and Eliot. Their Hellenism was classicist, Gregory claims; that is, they aimed to establish and preserve a particular style "as an indicator of historical meaning" (Ferris 54). Gregory is certainly right with respect to the relatively little interest H.D. shows in pedagogy when compared to Pound and Eliot; yet we have already seen the profoundly ambivalent attitude Pound had towards "classicism," which even Gregory acknowledges.

In an unpublished essay on Meleager written in 1920, H.D. praises the first-century BCE Greek poet for being both a fiery lyric poet and the first "editor" of an anthology, his so-called "Garland," which formed the basis for the Greek Anthology—an anthology, moreover, which she, in anthologizing and translating in turn, wants to revive. Unlike Pound, who scorns her

[8] For an account of H.D.'s struggle for cultural authority, as she begins to develop herself particularly as a female writer, but also as a "Hellenist" during the second decade of the twentieth century, see DuPlessis 1–30.

"Alexandrine Greek bunk," H.D. claims this Hellenistic anthology as "the beginning," arguing that "Meleager's Garland in no way hints of decadence, of the end of the period of Greek creative impulse, as commentators for so long would tell us" ("Garland" 8).[9] In a sense H.D. transposes even further back the impulse towards textual preservation that Pound locates in the early Renaissance and celebrates in his first canto even further back, but in so doing particularly emphasizes the anthologizer-poet's personal and idiosyncratic investment in the texts he selects. H.D. detects Meleager's strategy and conceit in the "Garland," namely his attempt to gather the best poets known to him and assign to each a flower, already in his early work, where "poem after poem holds a name of some of [his] friends, a jewel set here, set there" (3). Implying that Meleager through his later re-figuration of this early gesture urges us to remember each poet as we would a close friend, H.D. forges a link between the deeply personal and the cultural and historical by means of a formal or structural device. She finally praises Meleager not only as the first anthologist and as a formally ingenious poet but also as the one responsible for a third innovation: the inclusion of women in his anthology and, what is more, the decision to open the Garland's introductory poem with women poets.[10] The first of these is precisely the one that H.D. chooses to begin with in 1913: Anyte. What the Garland sets into motion for H.D. is poetic relation, textuality, the work of critical "translation" that she seeks to replicate in her very first appearance as a poet. In submitting—or allowing Pound to submit—a carefully selected series of

[9] H.D. does nonetheless concede that many of the later poems added to Meleager's original anthology, the poems of "the Empire, the 'decadence' in its accepted sense and the Byzantine and Christian Byzantine compilations," "are nothing more than the tedious epigrams and pompous artificialities of court-poets" (2). What the later anthologists seemed to lack was Meleager's discriminating—and poetic—spirit; like the modern-day philologists that H.D. and Pound often berate, they gathered all the facts instead of the luminous details.

[10] "Particularizing women not as equals but in some subtle way co-workers with men, struck a new note," H.D. writes ("Garland" 7). Pointing out that he selects different types of lilies for the women poets he includes, she adds that, "Meleager emphasizes the peculiarities of their creative spirit with these most symbolic and sacred of flowers" (7).

Anthology-based poems for publication,[11] she shows herself to be both a passionate lyric poet and a covert anthologizer at the same time as her poems are, at least initially, being touted as cutting-edge, American, "hard" poetry.

If the primal gesture of Imagism is slashing—exemplified by Pound's cutting away at his own and H.D.'s signature poems[12]— how do we account for the fact that H.D.'s poems, especially the ones "after the Greek," do not replicate the Greek sparseness, but rather expand on it? Though Pound applauds them for their brevity and "straight talk," they are all rather complicated, and unstraightforward elaborations of the original poems. Her "Hermes of the Ways" and "Orchard" (originally titled "Priapus Keeper-of-Orchards") are, as Robert Babcock notes, "examples of a common strategy in H.D.'s Greek lyrics, namely taking a Greek poem or fragment and providing a context for it by imbedding [sic] it in a more extensive composition" (208). What H.D. takes from her Greek originals is precisely an "image," which she uses as her pigment.[13] But the images that Pound selects, both for *Poetry* and for *Des Imagistes*, the first Imagiste anthology (and the only one assembled by Pound) are all gods or ghosts—and in fact, not the most "imagistic" of H.D.'s poems.[14] All, moreover, are either translations or elaborations

[11] Similarly, Eileen Gregory has argued in "Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H.D.'s *Sea Garden*" that *Sea Garden* is "a consciously crafted whole, with studied consistence in landscape, voice, and theme" as well as in structuring (137). In *H.D. and Hellenism* Gregory compares the volume's poems to fragments of choruses (123).

[12] I am referring to the following two famous stories regarding Imagism. First, in her memoir of Pound *End to Torment*, H.D. records the following scene: "'But Dryad,' (in the Museum tea room), 'this is poetry.' [Pound] slashed with a pencil. 'Cut this out, shorten this line. 'Hermes of the Ways' is a good title. I'll send this to Harriet Monroe of Poetry" (18). Then, Pound's two-line "In a Station of the Metro," a poem thought to clearly exemplify the Imagism's imperatives ("The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough.") was in fact the result of a long, arduous process. Besides being what Hugh Kenner calls a "reduced, intensified" poetic equivalent of a real-life vision, "In a Station of the Metro" is also a distillation or even a mutilation of a thirty-line poem of "second intensity" that Pound spent a year condensing to its present fourteen (or twenty, if we include the title) words (Kenner 184; *Gaudier-Brzeska* 89).

[13] The image as such is, according to Pound, the poet's "pigment," what enables the poet to write (*GB* 86).

[14] Brendan Jackson, as well as Robert Babcock have claimed that H.D.'s first poems are not "imagist" because they are not concise; as Eileen Gregory notes, however, conciseness does not have to be the only criterion for judging them, though it is an important one. For Gregory the poems are Imagist because H.D. uses the original images in the Greek to create a "visual, tactile space"—cosmogony trumps concision in this reading (169). Of course the very enterprise of trying to determine the degree to which these poems are "Imagist" is undermined by the fact that what Imagism is remains unclear since Pound's prescriptions actually belie his more mystical conception of the Image.

of poems in the Greek Anthology and thus set up H.D.'s particular way of being "after the Greek."[15] As Ferris argues with respect to Keats, H.D.'s poems, rather than espouse or promote a particular vision of Greece—and a particular attendant Hellenism—examine the possibility and nature of a relation to Greece. By turning to the time of "Greek" Hellenism already in these poems—as she will do more explicitly in her narratives in the twenties— she evokes an expanded Greece that is foreign to itself, influenced as much as it is influential.

H.D.'s source for the most famous Imagiste poem, "Hermes of the Ways," is an epigram by Anyte of Tegea, an Arcadian poet who flourished in the early third century BCE. H.D. borrows from Anyte's epigram the image of the triple crossroads and of the three landscape elements specified: the orchard, the grey sea-shore and the fountain of cold water. The closest she comes to a translation of Anyte's poem is in the fourth stanza of the poem's first part, where she gives us all of the elements of the Greek poem with the exception of the fountain:

Ἑρμᾶς τᾷδ' ἕστακα παρ' ὄρχατον ἠνεμόεντα

ἐν τριόδοις, πολιᾶς ἐγγύθεν ἀϊόνος,

Ἀνδράσι κεκμηῶσιν ἔχων ἄμπαυσιν ὁδοῖο·

Cassandra Laity uncovers and elaborates on all the ways in which H.D.'s Imagism does not only not follow the dictates laid out by Pound, but actually continues the tradition that Pound explicitly rejects, though he too once admired it, namely that of Victorian Hellenists like Pater and Swinburne. Laity, for example, sees in the "mangled, brittle, yet triumphant sea flowers that earned [H.D.] the reputation for a sculpted, crystalline (or "frozen" and perverse) Imagism" her "strongest debt to Decadent Aestheticism"; though H.D.'s sea flowers are "clean," Laity adds, they are still suggestive of erotic power, as they would be in Swinburne (48, 50). For Laity's discussion of *Sea Garden* in this respect, see pp. 42–51. What I am particularly interested in here is exploring the ways in which these poems were or were not "hellenist," or at least not simply so.

[15] The poems published in *Poetry* were "Hermes of the Ways" (based on an epigram by Anyte, 9.314 in the 1916 Loeb edition by Paton and 6.14 in Mackail, and on an anonymous epigram, 10.12 in Loeb, 5.5 in Mackail), "Priapus Keeper-of-Orchards" (modeled on an epigram by Zonas, 6.22 in the Loeb, 2.31 in Mackail), and "Epigram (After the Greek)" (anonymous epitaph for Claudia Homonoea, 3.46 Mackail and absent from the Loeb). The same three poems were used in *Des Imagistes* with the addition of another poem based on the Greek Anthology, "Hermonax" (6.223 in Loeb and 2.8 in Mackail, entitled "To Palaemon and Ino"), a poem "after Joannes Baptista Amaltheus," from Neo-Latin entitled "Acon" and finally, "Sitalkas," based on Theophrastus (*Concerning Weather Signs* [35–37]) and bearing as its title one of the rarer epithets of Apollo. For an illuminating reading of "Sitalkas" see Gregory, 137–38. Gregory, moreover, notes that H.D. picks dedicatory epigrams ("Hermes," "Priapus," and "Hermonax") because they are distant from "the overdetermined lyric speech of the late nineteenth century" and because they are contextless formally in English (unlike odes or elegies, for instance) (171). They are, as Gregory eloquently puts it, "contextless but distinct gestures of speech within estranged landscapes" (171).

ψυχρὸν δ'ἀχραὲς κράνα ὕδωρ προχέει.

Dubious,

facing three ways,

welcoming wayfarers,

he whom the sea-orchard

shelters from the west,

from the east

weathers sea-wind;

fronts the great dunes.[16] (*Collected Poems [CP]* 38)

Most of the rest of H.D.'s poem is an exploration of Anyte's first two lines: the image of Hermes in a landscape both pastoral and marine. Though in Greek the orchard is not specified as a "sea-orchard," but only as a windy one, H.D. realizes the contrast that is implied in the Greek and merges the two. H.D. does not, however, maintain the title ("The Orchard-Corner") assigned by Mackail to Anyte's poem; instead, she chooses to borrow that of another epigram by an unknown author. In the Greek poem that Mackail has titled "Hermes of the Ways" the landscape is even less specific: a shady juniper tree and a fountain under a rock. What might explain this title switch is that, unlike Anyte (and Richard Aldington who in his later translation of this epigram

[16] Mackail's translation of the epigram is as follows: "I, Hermes, stand here by the windy orchard in the cross-ways nigh the grey sea-shore, giving rest on the way to wearied men; and the fountain wells forth cold stainless water" (207).

This epigram was translated by Richard Aldington as well, as part of his translation of all of Anyte's epigrams published in 1921 in his collection of translations *Medallions in Clay*, but first published in the *Egoist* in 1915. Aldington's translation reads as follows:

I, Hermes, stand here at the cross-roads by the wind-beaten
orchard, near the hoary-grey coast;
And I keep a resting-place for weary men. And the cool
stainless spring gushes out. (*Medallions in Clay* 16)

Aldington keeps H.D.'s transposed title, "Hermes of the Ways," for his translation, which maintains both the line number and, roughly, the line length of the original epigram.

keeps H.D.'s title nonetheless), H.D.'s speaker does not assume the persona of Hermes; instead, in the first section of the poem Hermes is presented in the third person, as he is in the anonymous poem, while in the second section, it is he and not the weary traveler who is addressed. In fact H.D. makes no mention of the weary traveler to whom Hermes or this landscape might offer some much-needed respite. Though she writes that Hermes is "welcoming wayfarers," in the next few lines we learn that he himself is sheltered on the west by the sea-orchard. Rather than provide shelter, that is, Hermes himself is hidden and protected by (and from) a landscape that, as we see from what happens to the poem's speaker, is not a place of respite but one of exposure and violence. H.D. thus substitutes for the discursive appearance of a god his absence—and, if we take this poem as an index for her relationship to Greece and Hellenisms, for an image of Greece and Greek texts as—to borrow from Aldington's translation— "a stainless spring" that is "a resting-place for weary men," an uncertain foray into shifting ground.

Hermes nonetheless remains the poem's main image, its gathering force, as the poet intuits what the landscape hides:

> But more than the many-foamed ways
> of the sea,
> I know him
> of the triple path-ways,
> Hermes,
> who awaits. (*CP* 37)

Hermes, as the title indicates, is the focal point, yet he *is* not. As the first lines of the stanza that follows reveal, he is "dubious"—whether in essence or in his appearance at that moment remains dubious itself— and scattered ("facing three ways"), known then only in his unknowability.

Hermes is not portrayed here in his usual capacity as the Greek messenger god—a persona that might have been fitting for a poetic adaptation of an old epigram. Instead, his trait as a Greek god, his transitivity, is found localized, embodied in the transitional, ever-changing land- and sea-scape, while Hermes himself is presented as oddly stationary. As the one who waits for and welcomes wayfarers, Hermes's "activity" is a passivity, or at least a receptivity. By emphasizing that he is Hermes "of the triple pathways," H.D. does not only point to his literal position in the space of her poem, but also recalls the Greek Hermes's double, the neoplatonic Hermes Trismegistos, aligned with Thoth, the Egyptian god of writing, learning, and wisdom.[17] In the poem's first two publications (in *Poetry* and *Des Imagistes*), H.D. uses the archaic "Awaiteth" instead of "awaits," giving up the near-rhyme in order to echo sonically the god's other name and other provenance: Hermes, he of the "triple path-ways" who "Awaiteth," Thoth. Approaching Greece via a third-century Hellenistic poet, and broaching the other side of Alexandrian Hellenism, namely Egypt, H.D. signals already in this, her very first published poem, that her "Hellenism" would eschew the at the time more dominant (though becoming less so due to Jane Harrison's increasing influence) classical Hellenizing trends, for the sake of drawing out the link between Greece and the occult, Greece and ritualines[18] Rejecting a straight line from antiquity to the present, H.D., through her poem of double origins, and her god of double provenance, shows already her interest in anachronism, syncretism, rewritings.

In creating not a fragmented poem, but a whole out of two fragments sown together and using one to determine her reading of the other, H.D. anticipates Pound's later translation and composition method (in, for example, "Exile's Letter" or "Homage to Sextus Propertius"); it is

[17] As Gregory notes Walter Pater associates Hellenism with the hermetic tradition and sees the artist as a mage or alchemist, whose work is the "intuition of unseen correspondences" (78). For an account of Walter Pater's influence on H.D., see Gregory 76–84. On Hermes Trismegistos from ancient until modern times, see Florian Ebeling.
[18] In this respect she echoes Pound's similar interest, though for him the key to exploring this link is initially western (Provence) and later far-eastern (Japan), rather than near-eastern in source.

thus not surprising that Pound would have responded well to such a poem. Yet it is odd that one of the main features of a poem praised for its directness and precision would be its consistent resorting to periphrastic constructions. I cite here the poem's first three stanzas:

> The hard sand breaks,
> and the grains of it
> are clear as wine.
>
> Far off over the leagues of it,
> the wind,
> playing on the wide shore,
> piles little ridges,
> and the great waves
> break over it.
>
> But more than the many-foamed ways
> of the sea,
> I know him
> of the triple path-ways,
> Hermes,
> who awaits. (*CP* 37)

Phrases like "And the grains of it," "Far off over the leagues of it," "But the shadow of them" (used in the second part of the poem) would have been more direct and concise had H.D. opted for the possessive pronoun. Though "Hermes of the Ways" lacks the long clauses and ambiguous

syntax of the other first (and repudiated) Imagiste poem, Pound's "Middle-Aged," it clearly shares with it the decidedly uneconomic use of the preposition "of." Obviously H.D., like Pound in his final couplet (‘"The which, no cat has eyes enough /To see the brightness of.'"), uses this construction for the sake of establishing a kind of rhyme, either acoustic (the endings of the poem's first ten lines are as follows: [breaks] – of it – wine – of it – wind – shore – [ridges] – waves – over it – ways), or structural (she creates, for example, parallel constructions such as "But the shadow of them /Is not the shadow of the mast head /Nor of the torn sails"). Unlike in "Middle-Aged," which expounds the finally ambiguous (and elided) "it" in the poem's first line (‘'Tis but a vague, invarious delight"), H.D.'s neutral personal pronoun does have a clear antecedent, "the hard sand." Yet its echoing in prepositional constructions throughout the poem's first stanzas suggests the speaker's inability to define or pin down this element's essence. The repetition of "of" (and "it") thus presents us with the fragmentation and incompletion of what we thought had been defined as "hard sand." Upon looking at the poem more closely, then, we realize that it is structured around a circular repetition of clauses, seen most clearly in the middle stanza of its second section:

> The boughs of the trees
> are twisted
> by many bafflings;
> twisted are
> the small–leafed boughs. (*CP* 38)

This absence of verbal economy constitutes simultaneously an absence of transparency; every word or phrase needs to be qualified, further broken down, or elucidated—needs to be made

more precise. Paradoxically, that is, we find two of the Imagiste precepts in contradiction: the drive for directness and precision leads precisely to the absence of verbal economy.

Pound's much-praised compound words of Greek, German, and Bengali appear here in full force and, partly neologistically, in English, also in the service of precision ("many-foamed ways," "sea-orchard," "sea-wind," "salt-crusted grass," "sea-mist," "small-leafed boughs," "sea-grass," "shore-grass"), but what they designate is the imprecise, a landscape which is blurred and in-between and therefore resists description: indeed, "many-foamed." As H.D. circles around, revisits and revises her image—the landscape she imagines, as well as the image that is the Greek epigram(s)— her English poem stutters as the demand to render each emotion or motion with the right word is haunted by the inability to say anything at all. The second part of the poem offers us two such images of stifled, stunted or useless growth: the apples "hard, /too small, / too late ripened/ by a desperate sun" and the "The boughs of the trees / . . . twisted / by many bafflings." Is the speaker projecting her own sense of untimeliness and confusion onto the earthly landscape? Or is she perhaps uncovering their shared feature? Not only the speaker, but also the sun itself—often associated with Apollo, the god of poetry, in H.D.'s poems— is powerless, "desperate," and "struggles through sea-mist."

At the same time, however, this "excess" or repetition that is both grammatical and semantic (since unlike, for example, a particular meter being followed, the grammatical construction also has a particular meaning) is what holds the poem together. H.D.'s prosody is based on the rhythm established by syntactic and phrasal repetition and paraphrasis and is supplemented by those devices' sonic counterparts: assonance and alliteration. For example, in the lines "and the great waves / break over it," adjective, noun, and verb not only all contain the same phoneme, but they are also similar structurally, "break" following "great" (*b*/*g*+*r*) and

"over," "waves." Moreover, beginning with her third line, the last in her first stanza, H.D. sets up an alliteration of *w*: "wine" becomes "wind," then in the same second stanza "waves" turns into "ways," and "path-ways" (which also then rhymes with Hermes) and finally we get "awaits" in the course of the third. Anyte's epigram, though short, also makes use of a similar device, ending on an alliterative note, with three repetitions of "χ" coupled with "ρ" in her last line ("ψυχρὸν ἀχραὲς προχέει"), which echo back to the poem's crucial word "ὄρχατον" (orchard) in the first. The tightly knit sonic structuring of H.D.'s poem, in which one word blurs with or echoes another, will become a consistent strategy in her writing; it is here used to correspond sonically to the visual impression of the landscape on the speaker, offered through the numerous compound words. In the two lines discussed above, for example, but elsewhere in the poem as well, H.D. uses four consecutive stressed syllables, all of which demand equal stress precisely because of the pause offered by the line break between "waves" and "breaks," to perform on the level of sound what the poem describes: the inability to discriminate, one monosyllable from another, sea (wave) from land (sand).

The poem is written in the present tense, the eternal present perhaps; we seem to be following the speaker as she takes in the space in which she has found herself—and experiences it. By the end of the first section she has entered into a kind of conversation with the landscape:

> Wind rushes
> over the dunes,
> and the coarse, salt-crusted grass
> answers.
>
> Heu,

it whips round my ankles! (*CP* 38)

As the wind's rushing elicits the grass's "answer," so that "answer" ("it whips around my ankles!") in turn provokes another one, the exclamation "Heu," on the part of the speaker. The second section, still in the present tense, is nonetheless riddled with past participles ("shaded," "ripened," "twisted" twice, "leafed," "torn," even "desperate" etymologically), most of which, moreover, semantically record the irreversible passage of time. When we reach the final stanza, which, like the last stanza of the first section, begins with an exclamation, the speaker herself has experienced such a temporal transition, as though she has been exiled from this world:

Hermes, Hermes,
the great sea foamed,
gnashed its teeth about me:
but you have waited,
where sea-grass tangles with
shore-grass. (*CP* 39)

The poem's final action is narrated in the past tense ("foamed," "gnashed"), used for the first time, as we are transported to a new present of utterance. The speaker's cry for Hermes in the poem's last stanza is a response to the sea's speech, to its threat to consume, swallow the speaker. This distance, temporal and perhaps spatial, is what allows the speaker to address Hermes for the first time and to locate him in time and in relation to her speaking present; he no longer is "Hermes, / who awaits" in the eternal present, but rather is addressed as "Hermes, Hermes . . . you have waited"— the present perfect is employed here for the first time in the poem precisely to forge that relationship between past and present. The poem thus dramatizes in a sense the birth of the modern(ist) poet, whipped by the Greek landscape into a sense of her own

time (evidenced in the second part of the poem) and almost consumed by it before finding her own voice and her own mode of relating to it—which is Hermes, this personal Hermes of the ways, this poem.[19] Hermes of the triple-pathways, holding himself still between the gnashing sea and whipping grass (the "but" that introduces the last clause ("but you have waited") clearly signals that his standing is in opposition or resistance to the violence that has just been described), tangled between Greek and English—as though the poem, the speech can only emerge from such a tangling.

If in "Hermes of the Ways" H.D. uses Hermes to suggest that the origin of poetic speech might lie not in transit or action but in the "passivity" of waiting between extremes, and between times, while listening to the "speech" of both, then the following poem in the series, another address to a god—"Priapus, *Keeper-of-Orchards*"—also hides a surprising twist. It is easy to see why the Greek poem, with its imagistic detail and precise syntactic articulation, might have appealed to both H.D. and Pound.

Ἀρτιχανῆ ῥοιάν τε καὶ ἀρτίχνουν τόδε μῆλον
καὶ ῥυτιδόφλοιον σῦκον ἐπομφάλιον
Πορφύρεόν τε βότρυν μεθυπίδακα πυκνορρᾶγα
καὶ κάρυον χλωρῆς ἀρτίδορον λεπίδος
Ἀγροιώτῃ τῷδε μονοστόρθυγγι Πριήπῳ

[19] I am thinking here of Émile Benveniste's understanding of the function of personal pronouns. According to Benveniste the first- and second-person pronouns are radically different from the third since the reality to which they refer is solely a reality of discourse. "I" and "you" they have no value except in the unique instance in which they are produced; they are thus empty signs, not subsumable under a concept "I" or "you." In contrast, of course, the third person can refer to any subject, or even to none at all (in the so-called impersonal mode). At the same time, "I" and "you," though internally distinguished as the subjective and non-subjective person respectively, are co-dependent and reversible; that is, as Benveniste puts it, "Je n'emploie *je* qu'en m'adressant à quelqu'un qui sera dans mon allocution un *tu*. C'est cette condition de dialogue qui est constitutive de la *personne*" (260). Benveniste argues, moreover, that it is precisely this contrast that opens up the possibility of self-consciousness; no such relationship is, however, possible "entre l'une de ces deux personnes et « il », puisque « il » en soi ne désigne spécifiquement rien ni personne" (230). Finally, the French linguist also notes that it is "le parfait à la 1re personne" that functions as the "forme autobiographique par excellence." since "[L]e parfait établit un lien vivant entre l'événement passé et le présent où son évocation trouve place"(244).

θῆκεν ὁ καρποφύλαξ, δενδριακὴν θυσίην.[20]

The first four of the poem's six lines comprise a series of adjectives and nouns, listing the fruit being offered, that is, the direct object; the fifth is dedicated to their equally adjective-laden recipient Priapus, the god of fertility and protector of orchards, while in the sixth we finally get the verb and subject, plus an object complement. The first four lines, moreover, are internally structured by parallelism: the first line is split between two fruits that are "ἀρτι-" ("fresh-" in Mackail's translation)—even the second compounds of these compound adjectives differ only in their vowels ("ἀρτιχανῆ" and "ἀρτίχνουν")—while each of the following three lines is devoted to a different fruit, those in lines two and four qualified by two adjectives, the one in three (grape, perhaps significantly) by three. In the poem's mere six lines Zonas manages to use nine compound words, many of them *hapax legomena*. Upon seeing this Greek poem, we might say that H.D. looks for epigrams that lend themselves to "translation" or re-working into the kind of poetry she wants to write: epigrams, for example, whose formal structuring is not solely dependent on their meter. Yet the poem that H.D. produces on the basis of Zonas is a much more complex poem.

The Greek epigram's key word is the thrice-repeated "ἀρτι-." It is key because it determines the poet's conception of time. "Ἄρτι" is an adverb that can be used with present, past and future tenses to indicate something that has just now happened, is about to happen or is happening. In the poem it forms the first component of three compound words, "ἀρτιχανῆ," "ἀρτίχνουν," and "ἀρτίδορον," to suggest just completed natural processes. Mackail translates "ἀρτι" with "fresh"—"fresh-cloven," "fresh-downed," and "fresh-stripped"—to emphasize precisely the crispness, the high quality of the offered fruit. H.D. in contrast translates the word

[20] Mackail's translation: "This fresh-cloven pomegranate and fresh-downed quince, and the wrinkled navel-fig, and the purple grape-bunch spurting wine, thick-clustered, and the nut fresh-stripped of its green husk, to this rustic staked Priapus the keeper of the fruit dedicates, an offering from his orchard trees."

as "late" and "already"; rather than highlight the just-nowness, she highlights the pastness, creating the impression of fruit that is past its time, and its prime, an impression reinforced by her other lexical choices such as "fallen," "stripped," "broken," and "shrunken." This sense of lateness or delay is mirrored in the way that H.D. handles her Greek original: she does not even get to the "proper" translation of Zonas's epigram until her last stanza. All of the words cited above appear in that stanza; nevertheless, her decision on the meaning of "ἀρτι" silently guides the entire poem: already in the very second line a pear "fell."

But why this shift, semantic and performative, of the poem's emphasis? Why this three-stanza long introduction to the Greek epigram? First, it is worth noting that in "Priapus" H.D. inserts a first-person speaker, an "I," rather than take it out as she does in "Hermes"; in Greek, the speaker refers to himself in the third person, as "καρποφύλαξ," keeper of the fruit. It is this distraught first-person speaker's reception of the falling pear in H.D. that concludes with Zonas's poem:

> I saw the first pear
> as it fell—
> . . . . . .
> and I fell prostrate
> crying:
> you have flayed us
> with your blossoms,
> spare us the beauty
> of fruit-trees. (*CP* 28)

Contrasting herself with the "honey-seeking, golden-banded . . . yellow swarm" of bees that seem to respond instinctively to the just-fallen fruit, "The air thunder[ing] their song," the speaker seems unable to appreciate or use this gift: "I alone fell prostrate," she repeats. H.D.'s "I" does not try to propitiate the orchard god through a sacrificial offering of fruit in order to ensure, as presumably is the case in the Greek poem, that the orchard will produce more fruit in the future. On the contrary, she appeals to the god as "rough-hewn" and "unbeautiful," and offering him the overripe, unbeautiful fruit—the "fallen hazel-nuts," the "pomegranates already broken," the "shrunken figs"—begs him to "spare us the beauty / Of fruit-trees!" and thus "spare us from loveliness" (*CP* 27).

The fact that in the poem the "fruit" that falls and is "used" too late is, performatively, the actual translation of the Greek epigram coming at the very end, suggests that the entire poem may be a meditation on the poet's relation to antiquity. H.D. presents the Greek, her source and inspiration, only after a narrative context has been created for it, only after another, separate voice for it, a new "I" has been produced. She then introduces the epigram at the end, having first twisted it out of its presumably intended meaning, even reversing the order of the offered fruits in her translation stanza. Significantly, the context in which she places it in reflects, in this case, the violence inflicted by this excess of beauty ("Thou hast flayed us with thy blossoms"), the threat it poses to one's ability to sing (hence the contrast with the bees), or do anything other than "f[a]ll prostrate." As in her poem the speaker finally decides to use the fallen fruit as a sacrificial offering to stop its future production, so H.D. uses Zonas—but an interpreted, reversed, altered Zonas—to indicate to us what an alternative Hellenism might be: a Hellenism that would turn away from the perceived Greek loveliness as the poet herself distorts, or exceeds the imagistic loveliness of this very source poem in order to give herself a voice.

The place of "Hermes," or of the orchard devoid of loveliness, is thus one from which 'Ομόνοια (Homonoea, Homonoia) 'order, unity, same-mindedness' is lacking.[21] In the third poem of the series, the one that is more conventionally a translation and for this reason marked "(After the Greek)," H.D.'s speaker's wish in "Priapus" seems to have been granted: it is perhaps no accident it laments the death of a woman by that name.

Ἡ πολὺ Σειρήνων λιγυρωτέρη, ἡ παρὰ Βάκχῳ
καὶ θοίναις αὐτῆς χρυσοτέρη Κύπριδος,
Ἡ λαλίη φαιδρή τε χελιδονίς, ἔνθ' Ὁμόνοια
κεῖμαι, Ἀτιμήτῳ δάκρυα λειπομένη
Τῷ πέλον ἀσπασίη βαιῆς ἄπο· τὴν δὲ τοσαύτην
δαίμων ἀπροϊδὴς ἐσκέδασεν φιλίην.[22]

Epigram
(*After the Greek*)

The golden one is gone from the banquets;
She, beloved of Atimetus,
The swallow, the bright Homonoea:
Gone the dear chatterer;
Death succeeds Atimetus.

[21] On the concept of *Homonoia* in the fourth century BCE, as used by Alexander the Great to foster the unity of peoples and "harmonize mankind," see de Mauriac (107).
[22] Mackail's translation: "I Homonoea, who was far clearer-voiced than the Sirens, I who was more golden than the Cyprian herself at revellings and feasts, I the chattering bright swallow lie here, leaving tears to Atimetus, to whom I was dear from girlhood; but unforeseen fate scattered all that great affection."

Unlike "Hermes of the Ways," and "Priapus," this poem is both more bare than the original Greek, and more repetitive. As Robert G. Babcock also notes, it is the most successful of the three according to the Imagiste tenets: "the epitome of Imagist technique: an ancient model is stripped of excess verbiage and muddled abstractions" (210). It is also worth noting that it is the only one not to have been included in *Sea Garden*. H.D.'s translation indeed places less emphasis on Homonoea's different attributes, focusing instead through the proper name word-rhyme on the loss of the one presumably commissioning this epigraph, the fittingly named Atimetus, the one without τιμή, honor or praise. She thus undoes the convention of the funerary inscription: unlike in the Greek, here Homonoea does not speak from the dead on her tombstone—there is no I; rather, H.D. reveals what such epigraphs hide, namely the feeling of loss experienced by the actual person responsible for the inscription.

In contrast to the richness of description in the Greek, H.D.'s Homonoea seems, perhaps appropriately, absent from the poem. She is identified metaphorically (golden, swallow) and referred to Atimetus (and death) in the second and fifth lines, while her only actual quality to be remembered comes in the fourth line: her chattering (though here again she is "dear," implying a relationship to the speaker or writer of the poem). At the same time, her name's prominent vowel, the *o*, echoes throughout H.D.'s elliptical description ("golden," "beloved," "swallow"), as does in fact its central sound, "on": we find it three times in the first line ("golden one," "gone"), then in the name itself at the end of the third line, right in the middle of the poem, and again in "gone" in the fourth line. To the extent that we hear Homonoea, then, we hear her as "gone." This stands in direct contrast with the attribute H.D. chooses to focus on, which makes her absence more poignant. Homonoea alive is not an image of beauty, compared to and found more beautiful than Aphrodite (as in the Greek), which can be remembered after death, but is

turned into a chattering bird; her essence thus seems to be precisely the fleetingness of her speech and appearance.

In the same way that we have an echo of Homonoea, but no assertion of presence (as we do with the Greek "κεῖμαι" 'I lie'), so, in her "chattering," we have an echo of her language, and of H.D.'s originalines H.D. takes out the comparisons the Greek makes between Homonoea, the Sirens, and Aphrodite, but she maintains their grammatical sound since the comparative suffix "-ερη" survives in the "erer" of "chatterer." "Beloved" in turn echoes the phonemes of two Greek words, one which it translates in meaning (φιλίην) and one in whose position in the poem it stands (λειπομένη—Homonoea is said to leave tears to Atimetus); the *l* is shared by all three words, while the *v* is in place of *φ* and the *b* of *π* (the voiced in place of the voiceless fricative and plosive consonants respectively). "Succeeds," absent semantically from the Greek original, is clearly intended as a sound repetition of the equally central verb in the epigraph's last line, "ἐσκέδασεν" 'scatter, disperse'. H.D.'s poem, moreover, maintains the dyadic structure of the Greek in the sense that it alternates—instead of a hexameter line with a pentameter— iambic with trochaic openings if not lines (1 and 3 are iambic almost fully, while 2, 4, and 5 are trochaic); her first two lines, moreover, have four stresses, while the last three have three. H.D., then, seems to be placing the Greek language itself in Homonoea's place: echoing, but no longer chattering.

When H.D. republished this poem in *Des Imagistes* in 1914, she cut the last line perhaps for the sake of concision. In so doing, she eliminated the word-rhyme and, more crucially, she released Homonoea, who no longer appears circumscribed by death and Atimetus. The girl is still gone, only echoing; but that echoing, absent the statement of her death, does not make her departure seem irrevocable. It is such an echoing of Greek and Greece that H.D. will explore in

almost all of her texts, an echoing of the loss of *homonoea* or loveliness—a loss of order, a loss of cohesion, a loss of uniformity, of common mind or culture, that may not be as grave or as lamentable as either Pound, Eliot, or Aldington would seem to believe. And she does so by identifying, like Pound and Aldington, this *homonoea* with the Winckelmannian understanding of the Classical period—as well as perhaps with Alexander's push for homogenization and the spread of Hellenism in this empire—and exploring its breakdown already in Euripides, and its immediate and distant afterlives in the post-Alexandrian world and in her own time.

H.D. shared with Richard Aldington a more unambiguous love for the Greek world than Pound. Aldington was, however, much more conventional in his attitude, seeing the Greeks as "Apollonian, serene and harmonious" and treating the Greek past as a lost, happy origin that stood in stark contrast with contemporary civilization" (Carr 817). In contrast, H.D.'s Greeks are "full of passion, suffering, joy, desire, intoxication" (817). Helen Carr is right to claim that H.D.'s world is "no longer the Victorians' masculine citadel of Homeric heroes or Athenian repose," but it is not quite the case that the poet prefers an "earlier world" to that (495). H.D., like many of her contemporaries, is clearly interested in undermining the narrative of historical progress that would see Western art and Western rationalism, emerging from Classical Greece, as the pinnacle; first leading the charge in the early teens was, as we have seen in our discussion of Pound, T.E. Hulme. Indeed, as Carr writes, H.D.'s Greeks are "no longer the originators of Western rationalism, but represent what she sees as a non-Western intensity and passion," yet they nonetheless do not quite "belong to the archaic world that was also being evoked by Epstein in his statues" (495). That is, unlike Hulme, she is not willing to embrace abstraction, "Eastern" or "African" art, or whatever vorticist poetry might be wholesale. Her way of undermining this narrative is to show that the discovery of its insufficiency, its oldness or pastness is itself not new

since antiquity after antiquity was already happening in the fifth, fourth, and third centuries BCE. As we see already in her choice to begin her public engagement with Greece as a poet through the Greek Anthology, the Greeks in most of her poems, and especially in her novels, are the inheritors—perhaps the first inheritors— of that "Western rationalism." It is not so much, or at least not exclusively, an earlier Greece that she evokes—and what would be earlier than Pound's Homer?—but a later one, a Greece that is not an origin but precisely what Winckelmann called a "decline." Rather than reject or idealize a version of Greek *homonoea*, either in the form of Western rationalism or of Pound's calm, ordered and unified relationship of man to nature discovered in Tagore, she traces in very nuanced ways that complicated relationship between *homonoea* and the various, more or less, *atimetoi* who remember it, viewing the turn to the "Orient," that expansion of Greece, as something other than decadent dilution of classical principles or a prelude to Roman dominance.

Hatched by the Greek: Tragedy and War

Having appeared on the literary scene with translations, H.D. publicized in 1915, even before her own first book of poems had come out, her upcoming translation of Euripides's *Rhesos*—a project that she later abandoned. In November 1915, however, her *Choruses from Iphigeneia in Aulis* was published under the imprint of the Egoist Press. In January 1916 she announced her translation of Euripides's *Ion*, but again did not publish it until 1937, while in 1919 the choruses from Euripides's *Hippolytus* appeared. In 1927 she also published a freer adaptation of the latter play entitled *Hippolytus Temporizes*. Besides a few short unpublished essays that I will turn to later on, H.D., unlike Pound, did not write any critical prose elaborating on her views and opinions about matters Greek. She did, however, produce many semi-

autobiographical novels and novellas that center on her experiences in London in the formative years before, during, and after the First World War, years during which she began to develop her poetics. In texts like *Bid Me to Live* (1960) and *Palimpsest* (1926) H.D. meditates through her characters, in more or less veiled terms, on issues of poetics, translation, tradition, and Hellenism very similar to those that preoccupy Pound in his numerous essays and articles, while at the same time she paints a vivid picture of her cultural and artistic milieu. These prose texts thus allow us to track more closely the development of H.D.'s self-conception as a poet and translator of Greek. Moreover, they demonstrate, I will argue, that H.D.'s concern regarding the relevance of Greece in modern poetry becomes a synecdoche in her accounts of the war years for the relevance of poetry in a time of war, or in its aftermath.

Bid Me to Live was not written contemporaneously or even shortly after the events it recounts. Rather, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis remarks, it spans all four periods of H.D.'s poetic development and career: the events it portrays occurred during the Imagiste and post-Imagiste years, while the materials for it were assembled during the twenties when H.D. also wrote other similarly autobiographical novels; it was molded into shape after her analysis with Freud in 1939, and then finalized after her later psychoanalysis sessions in 1949. It was finally published in 1960. Doubtless hindsight has altered H.D.'s portrayal of events and shaped her musings. Yet insofar as this text does not purport to be an "accurate" autobiography and given that the focus of much of H.D.'s work is precisely the exploration of the boundary between the real and the unreal, and of the workings of memory, such distortions and anachronisms do not diminish, and may increase the valuable insight into H.D.'s understanding of her poetic vocation, as well as of her vision of Greece—as Eileen Gregory writes, H.D.'s narratives can be understood "as retrospective analysis of her hellenism" (139).

H.D. places us in a context where Greek antiquity and Greek tragedy in particular were at stake when she begins her semi-autobiographical *Bid Me to Live* in the following way:

> Oh, the times, of the customs! Oh, indeed, the times! The customs! Their own, specifically, but part and parcel of the cosmic, comic, crucifying times of history. Times liberated, set whirling out-moded romanticism; Punch and Judy danced with Jocasta and Philoctetes, while wrestlers, sprawling in an Uffizi or a Pitti, flung garish horizon-blue across gallant and idiotic Sir Philip Sidney-isms. It was a time of isms. And the Ballet.
>
> They did not march in classic precision, they were a mixed bag. (7)

In this opening she evokes the spirit of the age as one that mixed high and low, that disrespected the "venerable" past, the Uffizi and the Pitti museums in Florence, and equated Punch and Judy with Philoctetes and Jocasta. Her ironic tone, however, betrays the same suspicion that Pound had expressed to Iris Barry about Greek plays and their value, but also about the very -ism (and isms, per Flint's seminal article on the French avant-gardes) that brought her, as a poet, to the forefront. Though ostensibly concerned with the artistic revolution in the second decade of the twentieth century, H.D. in this opening passage intertwines art and war, mapping the time of the former onto that of the latter. War may be referred to only obliquely in the "crucifying times of history," but the "liberation" of verse or of the arts is itself a revolution, their own and of their own times, and therefore, to some extent violent; to highlight this, H.D. introduces the word "march" in the next paragraph to describe not military, but artistic activity. She mocks the artistic pretension of destruction and overcoming—the Futurist, and eventually Hulmean call to destroy museums— precisely on the basis of what is implied in her first few sentences: the "customs" in the times that seemed particular or unique, "their own," were in fact implicated in and complicit

with history's times but not in the way that these artists had envisioned.[23] That is, on the one hand Pound's sudden modernization, his launching of a movement and discovery of a publishing outlet may have helped him finally be part of "the times," but on the other "the times" were slowly imposing their own "customs" of another kind of war and obliteration. Given then that in this context it is Greek tragedy that is invoked first as a new plaything, even before the -isms, and that the plays H.D. names are *Philoctetes*, the play of war, and, indirectly, *Oedipus Rex*, the play of the excess of reason, might H.D. be implying that if the lessons of these plays had been heeded, rather than just touted, one might have foreseen the destruction that ensued?[24]

H.D. goes on by trying to define her generation's perceived relation to "the times," and to a world outside of their art—did they turn towards it or away from it, were they extroverts or introverts?

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[23] What H.D. suggests only implicitly here becomes more explicit in her unpublished review of Yeats's *Responsibilities*, where she claims that the modernist avant-gardes arose from and expressed the same impulses as those that brought about war:

> Though our generation, inasmuch as its cubes and angles seem a sort of incantation, a symbol for the forces that brought on this world calamity, seems hardly worthy to compare with the nineties in its hopeless stand against the evil of ugliness. Our generation did not stand against the enemy—it *was* the enemy.
>
> But I will not say that it is the enemy. . . . The guns they praised, the beauty of the machines they loved, are no more as a god set apart for worship but a devil over whom neither they nor we have any more control. . . . They called it to life but we are none the less responsible, we are all a part of this world calamity, we can not stand apart with Pharasaic [sic] gesture" (cited Burnett 9).

As Gary Burnett notes, the copy of the review in the Beinecke Library is with papers dating from 1919–20, so it may have been written later than the book it purports to review, which came out in 1914 (179). Helen Carr has dated it to 1916, the year when the extended version of Yeats' book was published. For an account of the review as an "indirect manifesto of [H.D.'s] own poetic mission, see Carr 847–849. Burnett draws our attention to the difference between H.D.'s reaction to war and Pound's: while Pound laments the death of artists in *Gaudier-Brzeska*, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," as well as in *The Cantos* (especially in Canto 16), H.D. "attacks the very foundation of what she sees as an irreducible conjunction between aesthetics and militarism" (10).

[24] Another kind of conscious alignment between tragedy and war was in fact offered by classicist and translator of Euripides Gilbert Murray, otherwise an avowed pacifist, in his article "How Can War Be Right?" where he defends his support of England entering World War I. "War is not all evil," Murray writes; "It is a true tragedy, which must have nobleness and triumph in it as well as disaster" (24). He argues that war elevates the common man into a hero because he discovers for the first time the happiness that lies in having a sense of duty, and concludes his essay by claiming that "This is the triumph which lies at the heart of the great tragedy" (27). This article led to the cooling of Murray's relations with Jane Harrison since, as Shanyn Fiske recounts, she sensed that Murray's admiration for Euripides had become an "enthusiasm for real suffering and conflict" (193).

> They escaped; the rowdy actual lost generation was not actually their generation. They had roots (being in their mid-twenties and their very early thirties) still with that past. . . . Were they extrovert? Introvert? They had no names for these things. True, the late war-intellectuals gabbed of Oedipus across tea-cups or Soho café tables; it was not Vimy or Loos they talked of. What was left of them was the war-generation, not the lost generation, but lost actually in fact, doomed by the stars in their courses, an actuality, holocaust to Mars, not blighted, not anemic, but wounded, but dying, but dead. (7-8)

In the first two pages on her novel then, H.D. seems to offer us two different models for the relations of art to the world. One is imitation: the alignment, albeit unconscious or unexpected, of one revolution and war with another. The other is complete separation, the real or feigned indifference of the "intellectuals" towards the reality of the war or of specific battles: "the late war-intellectuals gabbed of Oedipus across tea-cups or Soho café tables; it was not Vimy or Loos they talked of." Quite notably she defines each of these modes with respect to the reception of classical texts, and more precisely, of Greek tragedy. In both cases the intellectual's or poet's failure lies in his or her inability to realize their actual relevance at the start of the twentieth century and in a time of war.

Yet the picture H.D. is painting here is not so simple. The passage just cited seems to hinge on one word and its permutations in order to define that relation between "their generation" and "the times," to define the nature of their actuality, namely "actual(ly)." H.D. uses the word in such a way, however, that we cannot decide whether she means it actually or whether she is (actually) using it emphatically; we cannot tell, that is, when and if she is moving from a figure of speech to fact. "Their generation," she suggests, was not the "rowdy actual lost"

(she does not write "actually lost") one, not noisy, or "existing now," "current," to use two definitions of *actual*; despite their efforts to modernize and their whirling changes, she seems to say, they were not of the present. The men who died in the war were all younger and therefore, ironically, more at home in this pre-war revolutionary world than those who brought it about, in the arts at least. By the end of the passage, she blurs the distinction between figurative and literal even further, this time also with respect to the word "lost." The "actual lost generation" turns out not to have been actual at all, or at least not in actuality lost, but lost only euphemistically; they are what is called the "lost generation" (hence, "actual lost generation," as though the last two words were in quotation marks). It is now the older generation that is "lost actually in fact," lost precisely because they have survived the war—and the nature of this survival is what the novel will try to map out. And yet in this phrase that is meant to highlight a literal meaning of "lost," or at least an active one (lost as "unable to find one's way," rather than lost to those who are still here), we hit upon another stumbling block in "in fact": is the phrase used for emphasis, as a substitute for "actually" which has been used literally or is it too used literally? Indeed, this generation has been lost in the fact of war, the facts of the war, grappling with what the war has wrought. If then determining the relation between the poets and "actuality" is at stake here, but its articulation depends on the ultimately undecidable shift—though I have ventured an interpretation—between the literal and the figurative, the binary between "extroversion" and "introversion" begins to collapse.

What for the intellectuals—or perhaps for those judging them as intellectuals—was the stuff of tea-cups (the casual discussion of Oedipus, all that was in the first paragraph) was actually actual: the theoretical discussion, the literary revolution, were somehow involved in an actual revolution and a "holocaust to Mars," as she writes. H.D. makes their enmeshing audible,

linking all of these words through the "intellectuals'" consonants, *c-t-l*: intellectuals, tea-cups, café tables, actually, actuality, holocaust. When she then attempts to characterize her generation's current, actual state, she intensifies their plight: they are not simply blighted—made inactive, damaged like plants because something befell them—or anemic—scared bloodless, not courageous enough to fight in the war—but wounded, like those that did go to war, and again paradoxically both dying and dead. Dead, who, as H.D. will suggest, need to be "bid to live" by precisely the "out-moded" poem they had previously condemned, the poem that serves as the epigraph to her book and to which she owes her title, Robert Herrick's "To Anthea, Who May Command Him Any Thing."[25]

Lest we think, however, that H.D. is in the end urging us to return to the past and remember the "roots . . . with that past" given the fact of the destruction of the war, as soon as she has cited a few lines from Herrick's poem, she highlights again the inadequacy of this approach:

> But that was the catch, that was what was the matter. It would have been reasonably easy, if they had wholly believed in it, to play at seventeenth-century gallantry, or to play Electra and the dead. Death? It was not possible. . . . The ghost, whatever it was, was not dead. Ghosts don't, of course, die. That was it. (22)

The old texts viewed as such, as squarely in the past and dead, as a "place" to escape to or model to apply, long for or imitate, have nothing to offer. Moreover, what H.D.'s alter-ego narrator,

[25] As Eileen Gregory notes, this poem, as well as H.D.'s protagonist's name, Julia, come from Herrick's Anacreontic *Hesperides* (172). According to a common fiction surrounding the Greek Anthology, one repeated by Mackail and by H.D. in her essay on Meleager, that collection is the "source of a continuum of constantly imitated love poetry, prominently Anacreon, Asclepiades, and Meleager, passing into the mainstream of poetic discourse" (Gregory 172). As Hellenistic poets like Asclepiades and Meleager revived the Anacreontic tradition, so did the Cavalier poets Ben Jonson and Robert Herrick many centuries later.

Julia Ashton, comes to realize here is not simply that there is no play, myth for their generation, but rather, at once with respect to people and to texts, that something might come out of becoming attuned to the space between the living and the dead. What is supposed to be distinct, clear-cut (dead/alive, old/new, actually/actually) becomes less so, but at the same time the indistinct acquires a thing-ness. Shifting to speak of her relationship with her husband, the narrator continues the line of thought cited above thus: "It had been, even in the beginning, a sort of emanation. Something they had between them. . . . The thing between them, that they conjured up together, would be a flash-light through a wall" (22). The ghost itself then, the indistinctness, is not the revelation, but the illumination that allows something else to be glimpsed.

The two alternatives for the artist's (and her art's) relation to "the times" outlined and muddled in the novel's first pages are to some extent mapped onto the two men that Julia Ashton finds herself between in the novel: her estranged husband Rafe Ashton (a figure for Aldington), who though a soldier in the war, insists on compartmentalizing his everyday life and his intellectual one, and her almost lover Rico (a surrogate for D.H. Lawrence), who urges Julia to passionate action—both are critical of her poetic work, albeit for different reasons. Her release from her emotional and creative stalemate comes with the appearance of a third man, a musician by the name of Cyril Vane (standing in for Cecil Gray, eventually H.D.'s daughter's father); at the very same time, moreover, H.D. has Julia experience an intellectual breakthrough, in which Greek tragedy becomes precisely a "flash-light through a wall." Julia and Vane go to a London movie theater and after describing a scene in the film, in which a car swerves down a road, H.D. writes:

> It was danger without. Inside she was clear, the old Greek *katharsis* was at work here, as in the stone-ledged theatre benches of fifth-century Greece; so here, a

> thousand doomed, the dead were watching destruction, Oedipus or Orestes in a slim car, dashing to destruction. (123)

Transposing Greek tragedy onto the movie screen, the communal experience of the Athenian theater-going public onto that of the war-time London movie-watching public, Julia is finally able to articulate an identification that goes beyond the vapid references to Oedipus and that reveals the plays' direct bearing on the contemporary situation: Oedipus's destructive quest for absolute truth, Orestes's for absolute justice.[26] Not the film itself— or the tragic text itself—but the experience of watching it with others reveals to Julia the fundamentally public and in some sense ritual character of tragedy, as well as its potential, its exemplarity as a medium through and in which to grapple with the questions she has been asking throughout the novel: how does one connect the world of art and poetry to the "actual"? Is beauty possible in the aftermath of the war, in a world of dead, of ghosts? Is the past still available for poetry or is it immaterial in the midst of this destruction, of communal and personal trauma?

Julia discovers the intimation of an answer not in the male protagonist's dash to destruction, but rather in the actress that appears in the following scene; she sees in her, in the way she is shot and projected on the screen the presence of beauty despite or even in recognition of its ghostliness, its unreality, its dreamlike quality. The realization that she arrives at in the course of a long description of a scene unfolding in the movie is that a "screen-beauty" is still a beauty:

[26] As DuPlessis writes, echoing Walter Benjamin, "H.D. took cinema very seriously because the state in which one viewed it seemed to evoke a different from normal layer of consciousness. Because this layer was universal, cinema had a political potential for rescripting ideologies at a site beneath dominant narratives" (107). See also Connor, who argues that "H.D.'s formulation of cinematic spectatorship is founded on ideals of community and collectivity that are bound up with the notion of the spiritual, ideals which undercut the intellectual posturing adopted in her film writings." (29).

> She released from the screen the first (to Julia) intimation of screen-beauty. Screen? This was a veil, curiously embroidered, the veil before the temple. . . . There she was exactly incorporated, no screen-image. Here was Beauty, a ghost but Beauty. Beauty was not dead. It emerged unexpectedly in the midst of this frantic maelstrom. (125)

H.D.'s uses the word "screen" literally of course, but also in the psychoanalytic sense: a beauty that would screen or distract its viewers from something, though by screening it point to its importance. In film as a medium she sees embodied, incorporated "proof" that art can be something other than a distraction, can, or rather ought to exist in spite of its being somehow outside this world—or, as was the case with that pre-war/war world, too much like it.[27] We must not forget, however, that it is the recollection of the past in the form of Greek tragedy, a recollection—and identification— almost demanded by Julia's present surroundings, that alerts her to the potential "usefulness" of ghosts and leads to her epiphany regarding the continuing possibility of beauty—beauty that is not an ordered, unified loveliness, but tied to death and emerging in the midst of terror.

Julia's subsequent sojourn to Cornwall with Vane restores her sense of the past and history and therefore, also her "belief" in the future, giving her as Pound writes of his own experience on Salisbury Plain in late 1911, a "sense of narrative" (unpublished letter to F.S. Flint, cited in Carr 458).

> She had walked out of a dream, the fog and fever, the constant threat from the air, the constant reminder of death and suffering (those soldiers in blue hospital

[27] For an account of the image in relation to H.D.'s deep interest in and engagement with film, see Rachel Connor. Connor examines H.D.'s multi-faceted "involvement in avant garde film production during the 1920s . . . alongside her experience of the revelatory and her fascination with the occult, particularly with spiritualism" (1).

> uniform) into reality. This was realines She sat down on a rock. . . . She was Medea of some blessed incarnation, a witch with power. A wise-woman. She was seer, see-er. She was at home in this land of subtle psychic reverberations, as she was at home in a book.
>
> The very landscape was illustration in a book. The path she had just left, that twisted with apparent meaningless curves, was hieroglyph. It spelt something. Laid flat, unrolled, it would be a huge screen in a temple in Egypt. Then the path and the line of the cliff would be hieratic writing. She felt that every casual stone was laid here, there, for a reason. Phoenicians, Rico had written, made this track, and in making the track, they had trod into the soil more than the countless imprints of ancient sandals or thonged leather shoes. (146-47)

At first glance we might think that Julia too has become one of the "late war intellectuals" interested in Greek tragedy more than in the actual tragedy of the war; as with the film, she perceives the "unreal," Medea, as more real than her actual environment. Yet here too she actually begins to intuit a way to link one with the other, to read the ghosts. In her description of the countryside she suppresses the similes, almost as if she were writing an imagist poem; the landscape does not resemble or evoke an illustration in a book, it *is* one. A book because of the traces of history left on it, the landscape is there to be read; the literal marks, the Phoenician footprints turn the "actual," the "real" into literature. Rather than simply present a pastoral landscape or even claim to have re-discovered Greece in England and thus maintain the distinction between a dreadful present and an idyllic past, a violent city and a peaceful countryside, what Julia reads in Cornwall is the actuality of someone's having made a way in a seemingly inhospitable landscape, as well as the promise of rebirth after seeming obliteration:

"Her shoes were wet and heavy, caked with sandy earth. Real earth. Oh, the earth is real! Live things spring up here, even from the very dead old, old stones" (150).

That the traces are specifically Phoenician is also significant; it is a moment of rebirth for Julia because in discovering their survival she gets as close to the origin of "culture" (and of course the sense of its destruction) as she possibly could. Not only was the Phoenician alphabet the basis for the Greek, but, as French philologist Victor Bérard had argued not long before in two massive tomes that Joyce relied on for his *Ulysses*, the Phoenicians were the actual first authors of the *Odyssey*: "Le poète—Homère, si l'on veut,—était Grec ; le navigateur—Ulysse, pour lui donner un nom, — était Phénicien" (II 557). Bérard located the roots of unknown or odd Greek words (Aiaia, for example as the name of Circe's island) in the Phoenician language by reconstructing the processes of transcription, translation, and false etymology that led to their creation. Meticulously documenting patterns of onomastic exchange between Greeks and Phoenicians in his monumental effort to link linguistic formations to landscape and translation, he insisted that any Homeric name is rooted in a particular place and reveals not corruption or mispronunciation, but the productivity of "error" or of less-than-perfect transmissions, namely the mythopoetic potential of any common noun.[28] In so doing, Bérard outlined a process very similar to that which H.D. will show Julia as undertaking in these pages.

[28] Bérard claims that the *Odyssey* condenses and memorializes in its words, sometimes indirectly, a particular (non-Greek) mode of life. He concludes that the variables of sound and sense were negotiated between Phoenician and Greek in the following three ways: through transcription, whereby the imported sound was transliterated without attention paid to its meaning' through translation, whereby the foreign name is rejected but the idea is kept; or through something in between the first two options, whereby "il arrive par quelque calembour, à faire sortir un sens apparent de ce vocable incompris" (I 49). Bérard's example is *Oinotria*, the name of island of the Kyklopes. Oinotria, Bérard claims, comes from the Semitic *oin*, which in all Semitic languages means eye and by extension source or water hole (II 115). The second component, *otar* means encircle, while the noun *otar'a* means circle or crown. So, Oin-Otar'a, the source or eye of the circle gave the Greeks the name Oinotria, which they applied to that southwest coast of Italy; no longer understanding what the word meant, however, they resorted to a "calembour facile", namely *Oino-tria*, the country of *oinos*, wine (II 115). As for the mythopoetic potential of the name—and of geography—Bérard claims that in Kyklopia/Oinotria, the land of the round eyes, the "eyes" are part of the landscape; they are volcanic formations, craters or lakes (II 131). Though all the craters are similar, each seems to have arisen independently; correspondingly, argues Bérard, the Kyklopes all look they same, but form no

The Phoenicians allow Julia, the American expatriate, to draw a link between England, her Medea's landscape of exile, and Greece. Tracing their tracks and feeling that "every casual stone was laid . . . for a reason," she discovers in Cornwall a correspondence between the "writing" in the English landscape and Greek structures, lexical or architectural: "the first level of stones on the hill were oddly symmetrical . . . like stones of a Greek amphitheatre. It was Greek in its implication, but archaic Greek," she first writes (161). Having gained a sense of tragic performance from the perspective of its audience in the London theater, Julia now recovers its setting. Yet what is particularly Greek about this landscape is that there are no words to describe it in English: "The stones, the sun setting, rising, the ruin of the tin mine shaft, the trunk of the solid ivy, all these would have words to describe them exactly in that Greek dictionary spread open on the low chair at her elbow" (161). In effect then, the landscape reveals an unspoken demand for a Greek-based poetic writing made by her immediate present; as the Mediterranean locales navigated and named by the Phoenicians provoked, according to Bérard, the logopoetic and mythopoetic activity of the Greeks, so now this Phoenician/English landscape also gives rise to an impetus to translate or "invent," this time not into, but out of Greek. Like Pound, what H.D./Julia turns to Greek for is the sense of exactness for nuance, *le mot juste*: "The Greek words went with the texture of the stones here," she asserts (162). The Greek words are then what the landscape spells out, its text or texture, and therefore what it calls out for; it is for this reason that Medea is now no longer out of place.[29]

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community (II 135). The physical appearance of Homer's Kyklopes is thus an anthropomorphization of the landscape, while their manners are modeled on the "barbarian" reclusive indigenous mountain people who lived off their flocks, isolated amongst the craters and ignorant about the gods and customs of the "civilized world." In Bérard's own words: "[le poète] fit de l'œil Rond un *Kyklope* terrible: le volcan devint un lanceur de pierres et un broyeur d'hommes, à qui le poète prêta les mœurs et la férocité des bergers opiques" (II 178).

[29] There is a similar passage in H.D.'s re-telling of this story in the "Hipparchia" section of *Palimpsest*. After her protagonist Hipparchia has left Rome with Verrus—the Cecil Gray character—she too notes, "Euripidean choros seemed to fit simply her surroundings, part simply of the landscape as that gentle, subtle lap-lap of the almost

What links landscape to word, texture to text, in fact, is precisely their need for Medea, for a seer, who will be blind to the external or superficial (just an English landscape, just a Greek word) and alert to what it promises. As the stones reveal a hieroglyph of migration and translation, a hieroglyph of eradication and survival, and intimate the Greek words that would correspond to them, so now, "[t]he words themselves held inner words" (162). "If you look at the word long enough," Julia continues, "this peculiar twist, its magic angle, would lead somewhere, like that Phoenician track, trod by the old traders" (162). As she locates the Phoenician track again in the Greek word, H.D. may be signaling her awareness of Bérard's discoveries; more importantly, however, she indicates her belief that Greek is constituted by a foreignness, is itself always in some kind of relation, be it with the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, its own past, or the scholars and poets who have used and examined its words, much like English or any modern language would be. Julia then casts herself, as the translator of a chorus-sequence that "she had always, it seemed, been working on," in the role of the Phoenician merchant, "a trader in the gold, the old gold, the myrrh of the dead spirit. She was bargaining with each word" (161, 162). In a striking twist of the clichéd economic metaphor for translation the words are not her wares but her customers, who have to be convinced—by her offered rendering—to give up their gold. Her use of the word "trader" in this context, where she is instructing us to follow each word's twists and turns, cannot but be telling. According to the O.E.D. "trade" is etymologically related to "tread" and comes from the Middle Low German *trade*, which means "track." That is, a trader is literally what Julia describes here: one who walks and in walking leaves behind his tracks, or one who tracks the traces of others—tracks that then form the basis of a "trade" over time.

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tideless ocean that beat a measure so fine, so subtle, so etherealized that one could scarcely count it. Euripidean choros was perfected subtle breath of metre" (*Palimpsest* 39).

After Julia lays out her method of translation here, she surprisingly decides to give up on it—"It would take her forever to get what she wanted, to hew and chisel those lines"—and is instead inspired to write a somewhat aggressive letter to Rico, in which she articulates and defends her poetics (161). Yet this turn is actually not as unexpected as it seems; it is in fact implied in her "theory" of translation as hatching:

> She brooded over each word, as if to hatch it. Then she tried to forget each word, for "translations" enough existed and she was no scholar. She did not want to "know" Greek in that sense. She was like one blind, reading the texture of incised letters, rejoicing like one blind who knows an inner light, a reality that the outer eye cannot grasp. She was arrogant and she was intrinsically humble before this discovery. Her own.
>
> Anyone can translate the meaning of the word. She wanted the shape, the feel of it, the character of it, as if it had been freshly minted she felt that the old manner of approach was as toward hoarded treasure, but treasure that had passed through too many hands, had been too carefully assessed by grammarians. She wanted to coin new words.
>
> She pushed aside her typewriter and let her pencil and her notebook take her elsewhere. (163)

Turning away from philology proper like Pound, H.D. does not look for the meanings of words in order to exchange a Greek for an English one, but for the exactness of their sense, which for her means their hidden paths. H.D. answers Pound's emphasis on the musical aspect of Greek with a corresponding insistence on its texture; this allows her on the one hand to move more easily from world to word—the word is a thing in the same way that the thing or the landscape

is, or hides, a word—and on the other to justify her usually expansive mode of translation since tracking the hidden treasure of a single word might produce an entire poem. If, moreover, as she implied earlier, English is lacking in such textural words, they have to be invented, hatched.[30] We thus begin to understand how her Imagiste poems arise as translations, out of the Greek texts, and yet go beyond them in the direction towards which the original poems point. They cannot be called "free" translations or adaptations because they are, in this sense, as faithful as possible. It is realizing through the turns of the Greek words what English is missing that prompts her to finally define herself and her passionate engagement with Greece against her critics in general and one critic in particular, Rico. Her letter begins with her admission that Rico was "right about the frozen altars"—the usual charge of coldness leveled against H.D.'s poetry—but she also counters that "You can't light fire on an altar unless the altar is there" (163, 164). What she advocates for is equivocation: the necessary coexistence of "frozen altars" and fires, the interdependence of actual and actually, and the possibilities that lie in inhabiting the space between them.

The negotiation between the two alternatives for art's place in the world that H.D. outlines in her novel's first pages is staged, as we have seen, through the figures (and the texts) of Greek tragedy. Though at first she seems to use Greek tragedy incidentally in order to answer a larger question, she then shows why Greek tragedy is an exemplary site for such questioning, while at the same time trying to position herself outside of what she sees as facile debates about the relevance of Greece—the debates that Aldington may have been having with Pound, for instance, in the pages of the *Egoist*. *Bid Me to Live* essentially dramatizes H.D.'s/Julia's turn, on

[30] Yao argues that H.D. here "adumbrates a theory in which translation serves as a method for critiquing and engendering alternative to masculinist constructions of both knowledge and literary production" (9). While it is true that H.D. here suggests an alternative philology, the importance of her "hatching" metaphor would seem to lie in the fact that this activity is precisely not necessarily masculine or feminine.

the textual level, from the spirit of the times and the facetious invocation of Philoctetes and Oedipus either as a matter of fashion or of elitism, to a more serious engagement with Greek tragedy—also a turn from Sophocles to Euripides, rather than the other way around. Her slow awakening, element by element, to the ghostly presence of Greece in her English environment allows H.D.'s protagonist to articulate her poetics and convinces her to resume her writing. The novel thus also dramatizes Julia's own being bid to live by this discovery, bid to live as a poet during and after the war. A return to, or rather a passage through Greece, seems to be necessary in order to articulate what is, in theory, one's own; the Greek itself will not be erased or forgotten in the process, but rather, like Homonoea, will leave disconnected and fragmented linguistic and imagistic traces and echoes, just as the Phoenician language had left on the Greek.

"Cold splendor of song": Iphigeneia circa 1915

1. Unlettering Euripides

H.D. shared with Pound the belief in making new and, as we have seen, treated Greek texts as a "means to understand and explore the present, not an escape from it," as Helen Carr puts it (818). Nowhere is this more clear for H.D., as it would eventually be for Pound, than in her treatment of Greek tragedy. However, unlike Pound, whose probably superficial engagement with Euripides led him to proclaim the last tragedian—though as Sylvia Brown shows, not entirely incorrectly—the first writer of free verse, H.D. in her unpublished 1920 essay on Euripides compares the Athenian dramatist to a figure lodged in, if not towering over, the English poetic and dramatic tradition: Euripides, she writes, is "the so to speak, Shakespeare of Greece" (1). Convinced, again unlike the later, more skeptical Pound, of Greek tragedy's freshness, she then turns this into an argument for Euripides's, rather than Shakespeare's

relevance, albeit with some reservations: "The great Attic dramatist was caught in a mesh of political and social upheavalines Shakespeare lived, we are always led to imagine, a little out of the pulse and beat of events. . . . To draw an apt comparison, Euripides lived through almost a modern great-war period" (2). H.D. urges her imaginary reader not to "pigeon-hole the Attic poets and dramatists, put them B.C. this or that, forget them in our survey of modern life and literature," and notes Euripides's "modernity" in terms of the "outright anti-war and anti-social protest" expressed in his plays (3, 2). Though she traces a continuum— in fact, it turns out to be a circle—from the particular twentieth-century modernity of Euripides back to Shakespeare, back to the quattrocento romances that Shakespeare used, which in turn of course must return one to the "Attic dramatists," she seems to suggest that even if these earlier uses and assessments of the Greek texts may have become worn out, that is not true of the Greek texts themselves.

At the same time in a separate essay on Euripides's *Helen* H.D. claims that towards the end of the play the characters appear as "Clap-trap, dull, tinsel, ball-room Hellenes" (13). She views the interaction between Helen and Menelaus, their play-acting, with as much distance and sarcasm as that between her contemporaries, as depicted in her novels *HERmione*, and *Bid me to Live* for example. He is a "stage-husband" with a "paste-board sword" moving about "in the true comic-heroic manner" (13). We begin to see then clearly that H.D.'s "Hellenism" is not mere love of Greece, anything Greek or even Greece as such. She sees that already, in the golden period of Greece, tinsel Hellenes were possible—that it is not a latter-day phenomenon that ought to make us steer clear of "archaism." By the same token, if Greece in the fifth century could already be both great and tired, it does not have to be merely tired out, exhausted by the various Hellenisms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of course H.D.'s own "Hellenism" was at the time and even still is considered to be one of the same.

We have seen that, like Pound, H.D. is dismissive of traditional scholarly concerns in her approach to Greek—for this reason a scholar like Douglas Bush could claim, correctly, that "the Greece she dwells in has no real connection with the Greece of historic actuality," whatever such a Greece may be, and attack her for it (505). In this respect H.D. is the modernist inheritor of the tradition of nineteenth-century women writers whose "heretical Hellenism" Shanyn Fiske examines. In her Euripides essay, right before urging the reader of Euripides to, essentially, read the tragedian through the lens of his or her own "cultural" heritage,[31] H.D. writes "There are enormous volumes written on Euripides, on his plays, his political opinions, on the terse and all too spiteful jeering of the contemporary satarists [sic] on his life, his opinions, his literary innovation and his mother's parentage. Pages and pages and volumes that no one ever reads or wants to" (8). In the essay on *Helen*, she is no less dismissive of scholars, but more specific with respect to the alternative that she proposes and follows:

> I know that we need scholars to decipher and interpret the Greek, but we also need poets and mystics and children to re-discover this Hellenic world, to see <u>through</u> the words; the word being but the outline, the architectural structure of that door or window, through which we are all free, scholar and unlettered alike, to pass. We emerge from our restricted minds (with all due reverence to them, of course) into a free, large, clear, vibrant, limitless realm; sky and sea and distant islands, and a shore-line . . . and again Greece, Hellas, the thousand intimate little bays, the foaming straits (9).

[31] There are strong echoes of Jane Harrison in H.D.'s approach to the classics. Harrison, as Shanyn Fiske writes, insisted on the "personal investment that individuals have in their visions of the ancient world," and argued that "the only way to save classics from obsolescence was to harness it to the engine of individual passion and creativity" (150, 21). For an illuminating account of the development of Jane Harrison's ideas about Greece, her indebtedness to the nineteenth-century popular conception of Greece and her deliberate challenging of the conventions of humanistic Hellenism, see Fiske pp. 149–188. For a brief account of the affinities between Harrison and H.D., especially in their predilection for the archaic Greek world, see Carr pp. 494–5. On Harrison's view, shared by H.D., of the poem as enactment see Gregory pp. 121–125.

The "unlettered" or "illiterate" (as she elsewhere calls several of her characters) one is precisely one who chooses to believe something in the absence of written evidence. Greece is the name for the realm into which the Greek words lead us, but this Greece, H.D. writes later in the essay, is interesting insofar as it extends to Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Bosporus. It is the image of Greece as a minutely defined shoreline—both open, surrounded by sea, and full of closings, bays, traps, straits—that appeals to H.D. as a structural model, rather than as an actual historical place.[32] In this one could say she echoes the more mainstream Hellenisms descended from Winckelmann since she too would seem to erase the specificity of Greece not in order to conjoin the aesthetic and the historical into a totalizing cultural paradigm but to incorporate it into her own, in this case, artistic project.

H.D., however, in these Greek-themed unpublished essays and elsewhere, repeatedly emphasizes the material specificity of Greece, its physical shape, in a way that pulls her back from abstraction. In the Euripides essay she uses two metaphors: Greece as a plane leaf and as a rock. She thus suggests, on the one hand, that Greece might be somehow more commensurate or at peace with the natural world, nostalgically evoking a kind of lost origin and lending rhetorical credence to an extensive organic metaphor of cultural transmission that she develops later in the essay. Yet though Greece may be a leaf, blown to Italy to inseminate it and take root there, by also calling attention to its mineralness, H.D. draws out not its life-giving potential, but its "eternity," its deadness. She figures Greece as both eternally changing, being transformed and transforming other traditions, and as always already dead, a weight, full of jagged edges that is difficult, if not impossible to assume. This double nature of Greece is made clear in the 1916-17

[32] See also Gary Burnett, who contends that for H.D. "'Greece' no longer simply names a geographical and historical place, but a site of reading or play-acting, a spiritually conceived locale into which H.D. is able to set her own work" (60). See Gregory, 33–35, for a reading of H.D.'s poem "The Islands," in which "The islands stand for the magical power of the word within an eidetic mapping" (34).

poem "The Islands." The poem consists in the incantatory repetition of Greek island and city names in the form of a question addressed to the speaker by an unnamed "you" and repeated:

> What are the islands to me,
>
> what is Greece,
>
> what is Rhodes, Samos, Chios,
>
> what is Paros facing west,
>
> what is Crete? (*CP* 124)

And so it continues. The poem asks the question that perhaps H.D.'s readers might ask of her—why Greece, why Greek islands, why place her "modern" poems in those settings? After three sections of relentless questions, the speaker asks a similar question of Greeks and Tyrians in the fourth section, devotes the sixth to herself and her garden of broken wind-flowers, and places between them a discussion of beauty as something "set apart" from the islands but nonetheless shaping them ("Beauty is set apart / from the islands / and from Greece" [127]). In the poem's last section, instead of answering the question, she reframes it: it is not that the islands give her something that "you," modernity, England, mainland, do not (as was suggested in the poem's second section), but that the meaning of the islands depends on whether "you" too accompany her there—otherwise the islands are "terrible, torturous, isolated, / a barren rock":

> What are the islands to me
>
> if you hesitate,
>
> what is Greece if you draw back
>
> from the terror
>
> and cold splendour of song
>
> and its bleak sacrifice? (*CP* 127)

As the poem's middle sections demonstrate then, Greece is constituted by this interpersonal relationship between two parties (Tyrians, Greeks and the speaker; the speaker and "you") mediated by "the cold splendor of song." Beauty is not synonymous with Greece as Hellenism would have it, though it may be found there; the islands are nothing if not for the forces that shape them, natural and human; they are nothing if not what "trading" makes them; they are nothing if not for the rhetorical and poetic investments they inspire and allow. Yet the fact that this argument is made in a poem that stanza after stanza for over three pages describes each island and insistently repeats its name, the fact that the poem begins with the actual, the physical shape and material consistency of Greece, anchors H.D. and her metaphorizing onto an actual world, a rock, whose possibilities she reads as if it were a book, as we saw in *Bid Me to Live*.

H.D. understands the process of poetic composition—at least that of tragic poetic composition—as a process of translation. In the essay on *Helen*, she writes "The poet saw pictures from this beautiful eternal Homeric world. He also heard no doubt voices and songs. But there were times when he dreamed he could transmute those sounds, those pictures. . . . he dared to imagine that he could translate his world into this world" (11). H.D. reverses the expected directionality of this translation: the poet does not seek to bring the Homeric world, the world of his inspiration to his own world, to realize it for the present; rather he wants to transpose the present into that world, to translate or re-write, as it were, back into the original language. This process she describes here of course is very similar to what she herself does in her Greek Anthology poems, as well as in her later mythically-themed sequences: a kind of masking and refraction, a defamiliarization of the present through the past. The poet, H.D. continues in the "Helen" essay, speaking perhaps of herself as much as of Euripides, "succeeded (when he became most impassioned) by ceasing to become personalines He was content to use the old

symbols, the old ideas" (11).[33] What emerges, moreover, in this particular kind of translation that is tragedy is not words, though they may be exquisite, but "the rhythms, the metres," which were "most important" for the audience (11). A little earlier in the essay she had written, echoing her formulations in *Bid Me to Live*, that:

> the lines of this Greek poet (and all Greek poets if we have but the clue) are to-day as vivid and as fresh as they ever were, but vivid and fresh not as literature (though they are that too) but as portals, as windows, as port-holes I am tempted to say that look out from our ship, our world, our restricted lives, on to a sea that moves and changes and bears us up, and is friendly and vicious in turn. These words are to me portals, gates. (8-9)

H.D. does not argue for the relevance of these texts because in reading them, we will "expand our horizons" and explore our heritage; they are not useful or valuable in themselves as past artifacts. Rather, they themselves are not the goal (that would be perhaps seeing them as literature), but, as we have seen in *Bid*, they are flashlights, allowing us to see something else. So, if the, in the end, unimportant but exquisite words are portals, then what about the "metres"? What do they do? Are they the sea that does not usually hold our attention? Is H.D. suggesting that this "sea" only commands the poet's attention, perhaps then more than now, and that it is this fact that the words are portals to? Is this H.D. version of "the word beyond formulated language," as she tries to suggest the possibility in poetry of a link to something "inexpressible" or non-/not-yet verbal that captures and reflects the poet's idiosyncrasy in a way that words

[33] We might also think here of Eliot's idea of the "extinction of personality." In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot writes that "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" since the artist always surrenders himself as he is "to something which is more valuable," namely the creation of poetry (*Selected Essays* 40). Of course H.D.'s method of impersonality, based on the incessant reuse and rewriting of "old symbols" and "old ideas" to create a palimpsest of new and old, has quite a different emphasis and tone than Eliot's.

cannot— something that would be translated into words and yet not exhausted by them?[34] And is that something the "metres"? I will return to this question in the next chapter, where I will discuss H.D.'s meditations on "feet" in her 1920s texts *Hippolytus Temporizes* and *Palimpsest* as I try to disentangle the knots she ties linking meters, the unconscious, personhood and translation.

As Pound used the Noh play, and by extension Greek tragedy, as a model for the long poem because of its double promise of coherence despite multivocity and of cultural relevance— a fit template for the tale of the tribe— so H.D. uses Euripidean choruses as a testing ground for writing long poetic sequences. H.D.'s interest in the chorus, Eileen Gregory remarks, "is tied to her deliberate lyric experimentation, an effort to find polyphony in lyric voice and complexity in lyric temporality and spatiality" (124). Yet H.D., like Pound, was attracted to the ritual aspect of the chorus as well. In her essay "Helen in Egypt" she describes the chorus as "the beautiful hieratic semi-circle that custom (a survival of some old religious ceremony) still prescribed to the sophisticated fifth-century Athens" (10). As poetic expression, the chorus, maintained in tragedy "because of some old implanted law or superstition," still served to "symboliz[e] the goddess" and the chorus's "identity with the goddess" (10, 11). It is evident then that H.D. was interested almost exclusively in the tragic choruses not only because they were lyrics, but because no matter what was said in them, they pointed to, were constituted by this relationship to the divinity—this is perhaps what the words are "portals" to. Yet, despite her real and continuing attraction to aspects of Greek ritual, H.D. was more ambivalent toward ceremony than Pound; always alert to polyvalence, mirrorings, and layerings, she is often wary of what the words may

[34] She writes something similar with respect to Anacreon: his "Ionic columns" are a "gate," a "doorway" (5). His words say "the spring has come" (5), but if we curl our hands around the cup of this rose-blooms, "we see, or <u>feel</u> further, further than the perfection of his carvings, carvings made to endure, but like all static beauty, poignant [in pencil] in the hearts of those who over-love it." (6) That is, as with Euripides, there are the exquisite words, but then there is also something else to which they point, which is not, however, their meaning.

point to, of what the rhythms might conjure: not transcendence, not the gods, but deception. This ambivalence is revealed in her choice of texts and choral lyrics to translate—many are concerned precisely with the possibility of song, its nature and danger—and shows through, albeit indirectly, even in this essay on *Helen*. As soon as she has ascribed the high function to ceremony quoted above, she presents it as such, in the context of this particular play, in a less favorable light. The plot to free Helen from Egypt involves a performance of a Greek mourning ceremony—purportedly to lament Menelaus's death, though orchestrated by him—that is aimed at deceiving the young Egyptian king, who wants to be Helen's husband. "This love of ceremony [Helen's] interests him, appeals to him as fitting for the mate of an Egyptian prince," H.D. notes (17). Drawing a link between Greece and Egypt in this respect, she puts into question Greece's own attitude toward its ceremonies, as well as her own investment in and desire for a sense of divine presence. What does this trick ceremony say about ceremony in general, a ceremony like the one that every play commemorates—or rather, similarly to Helen and Menelaus's plot, repeats without content, in the absence of "real" belief—after all, the chorus survives, H.D. maintains because of "superstition"?

2. Straight through the Greek

Iphigeneia in Aulis is a play about the beginning of a war, rather than its end—it is the *Iliad*, rather than the *Odyssey*.[35] It is a play that illustrates the intermingling of public and private; it addresses the question of what it is worth to sacrifice for vengeance ostensibly as a public one, but as Euripides constantly shows us, the pressures to avenge oneself are not only social or "national" and so, noble, but rather often familial, personal, petty. If Euripides, writing this play

[35] A servant even refers to Achilles's rage in the play as something to be feared; it is, as in the *Iliad* brought about by a woman withheld from him by Agamemnon—in this case, Iphigeneia (lines 124–27).

in self-imposed exile in Macedonia, at a time when Athens itself had shown itself too bold and had been ravaged by war on multiple fronts, uses his mythical theme as a screen for a contemporary debate, so H.D. uses Euripides himself for that very reason. The movement the play portrays, or whose fulfillment it enables, the movement east in the twelfth or thirteenth century BCE is, moreover, one about to be repeated by Alexander, as H.D. knows—a prophetically timely play then, though it was apparently about another war (Trojan) and indirectly referred to a third (Peloponnesian, Sicilian expeditions). When H.D. translates it she adds on a fourth layer, another sailing east of the British warship *Agamemnon* towards Ilium.

Not only is *Iphigeneia in Aulis* a late play, it is Euripides's last and therefore, the last canonical tragedy. Unlike Pound, who places himself at the very origin of the tradition with the *Νέκυια*, H.D. places herself at the end, at least historically. Thematically, however, she stakes a claim for an even earlier beginning—and not by accident. If she highlights, and even augments Iphigeneia's sense of self-sacrifice and glory, as Eileen Gregory shows,[36] she does so precisely in order to place a young woman at the center of the Homeric world (and its tragic retellings), a young woman who would not be its guilty, motivating cause (Helen), but its heroic enabler. Without Iphigeneia and her sacrifice, there would not have been an *Iliad*, or an *Odyssey*, let alone an *Agamemnon*. *Iphigeneia in Aulis* would thus be the last play that nonetheless paradoxically restarts the tradition.

Among Euripides's formally freer (and later) plays, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, the last, is also the freest; classicist Sylvia Brown calls it "clearly the most eccentric of the late plays metrically" (*Metrical Studies in the Lyrics of Euripides' Late Plays* 286). In these late plays, Euripides uses

[36] H.D. manipulates lines in ways that "suggest her complicity with a patriarchal closure, her identification with Iphigeneia's final confirmation of Hellas and Nike, even when it means self-immolation and violence," Gregory writes (186). H.D. reinforces this shift by omitting some lines (1312–14), where Euripides's Iphigeneia blames Agamemnon, and altering others (1317–18), turning them into accusations of Clytemnestra.

"syllable-counting, word-break and accent" to compensate for the decreased importance of quantity in organizing his lines (Brown, "Metrical Innovations in Euripides' Later Plays" 209). In her extensive analysis of the play's metrical difficulties, Brown moves away from the conventional partitioning of Euripides's cola into known, named meters that then give the impression that the stanza is disorganized or taking too many licenses. Instead, she claims, Euripides organizes such apparent "licenses" in unexpected ways, such that "we can see a major metrical innovation at work, rather than an occasional 'license'" (231).[37] Unlike the poets in the Greek Anthology that H.D. had also been attracted to, who used strict—and often old, unchanged—forms, Euripides was a metrical innovator, who introduced other considerations into his metrical practice without abandoning the tradition altogether. Eileen Gregory is right to point out that Greek choruses in general might have seemed appealing to H.D. because their lines were shorter and their meters traditionally lyrical, but I would argue that H.D. first turns to Euripides and this play in particular because of its metrical freedom and because of the specific ways that the Greek poet compensated for the decreased importance of quantity—ways that were already hallmarks of H.D.'s own writing. Turning away from, or rather not relying completely on, quantity, Euripides structures his lyrics using theme and variation,[38] not allowing his meter to settle, for example, into a firm iambic or a firm trochaic swing (see the second strophic pair of the Parodos in *Iphigeneia*), and uses parallelism in the organization of his strophes (for instance in *IA* 164-70/185-89) (Brown 227-28). Inspired by—or inspiring—Pound's assessment of

[37] Unless otherwise noted, all of my citations from Brown will be from "Metrical Innovations in Euripides' Later Plays." For an exhaustive metrical analysis and commentary of *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, see Brown's *Metrical Studies in the Lyrics of Euripides' Late Plays*, 258–92.

[38] For an extensive analysis of Euripides's strategy of theme and variation in his use of the glyconic, see Brown pp. 214ff. Brown further asserts that this increased emphasis on rhythmic organization also implies the lessening of the importance of quantity; she provides examples where short syllables are used instead of long ones—at least that is, in her view, the best explanation for what is going on metrically—and concludes that "[t]he reliance on syllable-counting over quantity, then, occasionally does sustain the use of a short syllable in place of a long" (for examples see 218, 222).

Euripides as a writer of proto-free verse,[39] H.D., however, unlike Pound, having picked up the metres from the air—that "gentle, subtle lap-lap of the almost tideless ocean that beat a measure so fine, so subtle, so etherealized that one could scarcely count it"— does not then abandon Euripides in order to look for stricter forms and attempt to recover the sense of quantity for English, but remains attached to him for his very transgressiveness (*Palimpsest* 39).[40]

H.D. uses *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, I will argue, in order to obliquely address both a poetic and a political-ethical issue. On the one hand, it presents her with a way to write a longer poem that still coheres around an image—that of Iphigeneia, like Pound's Herakles in the *Trachiniae*, asserting or even exceeding paternal law and "seeing it clearly"—and on the other it allows her to explore through and throughout her translation the relationship of art to war, poetry to war, as she would articulate it around the same time in her unpublished essay on Yeats, as well as later on in *Bid Me to Live*.

H.D. treats her choros sequences as single stand-alone poetic sequences, as Eileen Gregory has also noted. She does not name the sections she is translating with their conventional Greek names (parodos, stasimon etc.), but instead numbers them. She also does not follow the responsive Greek strophic structure—in fact she actively erases it by also numbering serially the sub-sections within each section of her sequence. She then does not pattern her sub-sections so that they appear responsive, and even cuts up single Greek strophes into much shorter segments.

[39] In her discussion of the *Phoenician Women*, Brown seems to second Pound: "Euripides seems to be trying for an effect common in modern poetry, a dynamic tension between a line's ideal pattern (scansion) and the natural groupings of syllables and sense," she writes (232). "But," she adds, as Pound well knew, "where English poetry, for example, has a relatively small number of simple meters to be used, Greek lyrics allow an enormous number of alternatives for each line" (232).

[40] In this sense H.D. can once again be seen as continuing the nineteenth-century tradition of "heretical Hellenism." As Shanyn Fiske claims, it was precisely because Euripides was not favored and neglected by mainstream (and academic) Hellenism that he became "a particularly useful vehicle for the conveyance of controversial ideas in the latter half of the nineteenth century," as seen in new versions and theatrical performances, especially of *Medea* (38). Though H.D. does not translate *Medea* or use its characters in her poems, we have seen that is Medea she turns to in *Bid Me to Live* when she wants to assert her restored confidence in the relevance of Greece.

She, moreover, sometimes alters the Greek in the way that would work best for her new poem. For example, in the first stasimon she omits the first strophic pair, in which the chorus claims that only a passionless marriage can bring happiness and so flatly condemns Helen, praising the Greek leaders for going to war.[41] H.D. instead only uses this stasimon's epode, which follows the strophe and antistrophe, and translates it not as an address to Paris, as it is in the Greek, but as a third-person account. She thus more clearly presents this section as the back story (Paris's abduction of Helen) for the present situation of her speaker as narrated in section I of her translation (the Greek Parodos, in which the chorus arrive at Aulis), while the future will follow in section III. In this way she makes out of the fragments of a tragedy—fragments that she has created by abstracting the choruses, but also in the case of this particular tragedy, which probably remained unfinished at the time of Euripides's death, fragments of a non-existent whole— a whole, a lyric narrative that coheres. As they stand in H.D.'s version, the play's choral songs offer a timeline of war, of this particular war and its causes. Beginning with the present vision of the ships at Aulis in I (Parodos), we move back to Paris's abduction of Helen in II (a shorter first stasimon), then forward to the prophesied retrieval of Helen from Troy and the city's destruction in III (second stasimon). Section IV (the third stasimon) takes us even further back than II, before Paris's choice and reward, and back to the event that occasioned it: Peleus and Thetis's wedding and the beginning of discord. The section ends with a reference to Iphigeneia's current

[41] Similarly in the *Hippolytus* she does not translate the epode, the closing song of the parodos, in which the chorus makes various pronouncements on the nature of women that would doubtlessly have annoyed H.D. In David Kovacs's translation: "Women's nature is an uneasy harmony, and with it is wont to dwell the painful unhappy helplessness of birth pangs and their delirium." H.D. suppresses this comparison of Phaedra's current sickness with the pain and "delirium" of childbirth so as not to promulgate precisely this view of women as unharmonious, delirious by default. In this sense she too is "improving" on Euripides, as Pound had urged the future Aeschylus translator to do. She also skips the first strophic pair of the third stasimon, where in the strophe the chorus laments the instability that characterizes man's life, as well as the inscrutability of the gods, but in the antistrophe also wishes for internal mutability that would help man adapt to the his always-changing circumstances. Again, H.D., like Pound, probably finds such observations (or moralizations) about the nature of man irrelevant or untimely—and in any case, they would probably disrupt the lyric continuity she has been building in her "Fragment-text."

supposed "wedding" to Achilles and the contrast between the two. Finally, in V (the Apolelumena) Iphigeneia summarizes the whole story of Paris's judgment and the discord between the gods, which leads to her death. The "theme" that runs through these choruses and that H.D. calls attention to more than Euripides is the possibility of song or even speech in a time of war; what her chorus debates is the relation between war and speaking, as well as the role of the observer of the war. In effect we witness the emergence of an observer, Iphigeneia, and her transformation, more radical in H.D. than in Euripides, into actor. Given, however, that heroism is so undercut in the rest of the songs, we cannot quite feel triumphant about Iphigeneia's active sacrifice at the end despite H.D.'s highlighting of it.

H.D. begins her *Choruses* by demonstrating what she means by translating what the Greek words hide; in her version of the Parodos there is one word that will color the rest of her translation, the same word she uses to define Greece in the essay on *Helen*. This song narrates the chorus's journey to see the Greek army at Aulis, followed by the description of the ships and the various warriors (lines 164-303 in Greek). I will cite H.D.'s opening sub-section in its entirety since I will be discussing it in detail:

> I crossed sand-hills.
> I stand among the sea-drift before Aulis.
> I crossed Euripos' strait—
> Foam hissed after my boat.
>
> I left Chalkis,
> My city and the rock-ledges.
> Arethusa twists among the boulders,

Increases—cuts into the surf.

I come to see the battle-line

And the ships rowed here

By these spirits—

The Greeks are but half-man.

Golden Menelaus

And Agamemnon of proud birth

Direct the thousand ships.

They have cut pine-trees

For their oars.

They have gathered the ships for one purpose:

Helen shall return.

There are clumps of marsh-reed

And spear-grass about the strait.

Paris the herdsman passed through them

When he took Helen—Aphrodite's gift.

For he had judged the goddess

More beautiful than Hera.

Pallas was no longer radiant

As the three stood

Among the fresh-shallows of the strait. (*CP* 71-72).

In this first section the chorus use the word "στενοπόρθμων," which means "of or on a strait," to encapsulate their difficult journey to Aulis. H.D. uses the English word "strait" three times to designate three different locations situated between land and water: once where it is actually used in the Greek to describe the narrow sea-passage of Euripos ("I crossed Euripos' strait—"), once to designate the Eurotas river in Sparta, where Helen was stolen ("There are clumps of marsh-reed /And spear-grass about the strait."), and once at the conclusion of this section to describe the site of Paris's judgment on Mount Ida ("As the three stood / Among the fresh-shallows of the strait."). It is possible that H.D. confused the name of the earlier strait "Euripos," which the chorus had to cross to get to Aulis, with the Spartan river Eurotas, which remains unnamed in her translation, and that she then also unintentionally conflated Eurotas with Ida since the latter remains unnamed in the Greek. Yet H.D. has refused to orient us spatially, or at least geographically, from the very beginning. For example, when she writes in her second stanza "I left Chalkis, / My city and the rock-ledges. /Arethusa twists among the boulders, / Increases—cuts into the surf," she leads us to infer that Arethusa, its movement expressed in the present like that of the chorus in the section's preceding stanza ("I crossed sand-hills. /I stand among the sea-drift before Aulis."), is part of the chorus's immediate landscape when in fact it belongs to the Chalkis they have left behind. A simple "where" or "there" before the stanza's third line would have clarified this; the fact that H.D. withholds it suggests that she wants to convey an atmosphere, a precise feeling for the kind of space we are in (with its rocks, sand and sea-drift), but at the same time maintain a sense of geographical confusion or disorientation even as she provides us with place-names. It is thus highly likely that she would continue with this merging

of different water landscapes throughout the stanza. Indeed Eileen Gregory has claimed that H.D. here "deliberately superimpose[s] three [by my count actually four] different watery locations" and sees this as one of the "clearest distortions" in her translation (144). Arguing against an earlier critic's reading of this distortion, Gregory maintains that H.D. "manipulates the locations here not, as Bush suggests, out of 'an excessive fondness for unity of place'" but rather "to make this crucial mythical occurrence a part of the immediate landscape and the accessible past of chorus and audience" (145). When in the fifth stanza, she omits any overt reference to Sparta (as does the Greek, relying on Eurotas as a location marker), she nonetheless encodes its sounds in her interpolated description of it: "And *spear-grass* about the *strait*." At the same time by introducing "spears" she also incorporates a future moment in the landscape: Paris passed through spears when he took Helen, and will soon have to pass through them again. Even further, however, I would argue, H.D. does not choose "στενοπόρθμων" as the guiding word for her translation simply to suggest the simultaneous and almost physical presence of these past events in the mind of the chorus and audience. In doing so, she turns the literal description of a geographical space into a figurative description of past events, evoking the mental straits that Helen and Paris had found themselves in. By the same token, however, she externalizes, makes physical an interior, psychological landscape, assigning the literal image of the Euboean topography to the two crucial mythical moments. That in the later *Helen* essay H.D. would define the Greece we enter through the words as "the thousand intimate little bays, the foaming straits" suggests that her entire conception of Greece rests on this double reflection of external and internal, or physical and emotional, this knot between beauty, passion, and war that she draws out of Euripides's opening (9).

It is not just any landscape that H.D. chooses to so repeatedly evoke and link to the double origin of the Trojan War. The setting described by the chorus is, as many critics have noted, a paradigmatic H.D. landscape, between land and water. In the first six lines of the chorus Euripides uses a different compound word (preposition plus noun) to mean by-the-sea three times (παρακτίαν, ἐναλίας, ἀγχιάλων), refers once to a beach (ψάμαθον) and a marine passageway (στενοπόρθμων) and twice to water (χευμάτων, ὑδάτων). Though H.D.'s use of compound words like "sand-hills," "sea-drift," and "rock-ledges" to designate the compound Greek adjectives pushes English towards Greek in a way that would have pleased Pound, her words do not match up with their Greek counterparts in specific meaning.[42] The Greek words designate the border, or even simply the proximity, between beach and water without commenting on it; H.D., in contrast, reads that border as belonging to the landscape of her *Sea Garden*, that is, as a hard-edged, dry space, unwelcoming to chorus and Greek warriors alike—we may recall again the introduction of "spear-grass."[43]

The most striking difference, however, between H.D.'s text and the Greek lies in her heavy use of indicative active verbs: "I crossed," "I crossed," "I left," "I come," and so on. The long Greek strophe (lines 164-85), to which H.D.'s sub-section 1 corresponds, is structured around only five indicative verbs; H.D. creates one stanza per Greek verb (plus one, the second, where in Greek there are two active participles) though she does not try to follow the Greek

[42] In general H.D. is definitely very attentive to the Greek compound words, especially in this first section, where they abound. In her fifth sub-section she has "equal-oared" for precisely its Greek equivalent, "ἰσήρετμοι" (line 242), which is a Euripidean neologism; in the third "χρυσοδαιδάλτους" (line 220) becomes "clamped with gold," "λευκοστίκτῳ" (line 223) "Silver streaked," both translations repeating the consonants of the Greek, as well as its grammatical form (passive past participle) (*CP* 74, 73). Later on, in the second stasimon (H.D.'s III) the rare word "δοριπόνοις" (line 772) becomes "alert with spearshaft" (*CP* 77). H.D. frequently endows the often neologistic Greek compounds with a kind of new life in English, by translating them, if not through a single word, with an unusual expression that turns an adjective or participle into a verb: to return to her third subsection in section I, the description of Achilles and his horses, "πυρσότριχας" (line 228) becomes "Bronze flashed" while "ποικιλοδέρμονας" (line 229) is "Colour spread up from ankle and steel-hoof"; echoing the metallic aspect of the horses thus described, H.D. also has the Greek hero "set with brass," when in Greek he simply "σὺν ὅπλοισι" (line 230), with weapons (*CP* 73).

[43] See also Gregory, who similarly notes that H.D.'s recurrent liminal fascinations are inserted in this song, 144ff.

syntax within her stanzas and in fact, multiplies its verbs. Her eschewing of the Greek hypotactic structures results in multiple word repetitions that do not necessarily produce a rhythmic effect. Her fourth stanza, for example, with the repetition of the "they have" structure and of the word "ships," seems stiff, almost inflexible—which may, of course, be precisely H.D.'s point about Menelaus and Agamemnon, a point that Euripides has made in the opening scene of the play between Agamemnon and his servant but does not make here. Overall, for Euripides's endless relative sentences she substitutes short phrases, one per short line; for fluidity, a sense of hardness, dryness reflected in the jagged edges of her lines. She does so, I believe, not unwarrantedly, but on the basis of that crucial word "στενοπόρθμων." Reading through the Greek word, she allows it to color her entire presentation of the landscape—her thematic, lexical, and syntactical choices, as we have seen—and discovers in Euripides's suggestion of difficult passage her own *Sea Garden*.

Yet having begun by placing her speaker in the space of her own Imagiste poems, H.D. then literally gestures beyond them. What this chorus encounters, what her chorus poem encounters next is war in the guise of an almost Homeric list of ships and warriors. H.D. stages this encounter between poem and war, which renders the poem's speaker, until now uneasily navigating this natural and mythical landscape, speechless. H.D. begins her sub-section 4 with what seems to be a deliberate mistranslation: "If a god should stand here / He could not speak / At the sight of ships / Circled with ships," H.D. writes, when the Greek calls this vision a "θέαν ἀθέσφατον," literally, an unspeakable sight (line 232), with no mentions of the gods (*CP* 73). At first glance we may think that H.D. reads "θέαν" not only as vision ("sight"), but also as "θεάν," goddess, thus bringing out of the Greek word its homograph. We ought, however, to pay attention to the word that follows because it is that word's meaning that H.D. transforms.

Reading into the repetition of the "θε" in the next word, "ἀθέσφατον," she interprets the "unspeakable" as what cannot be spoken of even by the gods; she thus adds onto the Greek word for speech present in this privative adjective that of divinity, binding one to the other in a way that she will continue to do throughout her translation. When she then translates something closer to what Euripides's chorus is actually saying ("This beauty is too much / For any woman."), she has already qualified this feminine "failure" or weakness: if a god could not speak, how can the chorus, or at least Euripides (*CP* 74)? She has also brought together the terms whose relationship her Choros sequence will examine: beauty, song, war. Though the following sections of the chorus would seem to refute the proposition above since they comprise an extensive description of the ships and warriors, H.D. concludes her Parodos by returning to the impossibility of (re)counting: "You could never count the Greek sails / Nor the flat keels of the foreign boats" (in Greek, both the number (ἀριθμὸν) and sight of the ships are "ἀθέσφατον") (*CP* 76).

Taking her cue from the chorus's final comment on all of the ships, H.D. detaches her last sub-section from Ajax and his fleet, to whom it mostly refers in the Greek, and instead generalizes it, transferring the sentiments expressed there to all the ships. Her "people of ships" could indicate the people just mentioned, Ajax's, but the next line's reference to the "Greek sails" suggests she is indeed talking about the entirety of the Greek fleet and making pronouncements about its destiny. The Euripidean chorus's statement about the superiority of Ajax's fleet becomes for H.D. a statement of awesomeness of this vision, echoing the previously mentioned impossibility of talking about this sight, the sight of war and its preparation, the impossibility of putting it into logos, and measuring it up:

Αἴας δ᾽ ὁ Σαλαμῖνος ἔντροφος

δεξιὸν κέρας † πρὸς τὸ λαιὸν ξυνᾶγε †,

τῶν ἆσσον ὥρμει πλάταισιν

ἐσχάταισι συμπλέκων

δώδεκ᾽ εὐστροφωτάταισι ναυσίν. ὡς

ἄιον καὶ ναυβάταν

εἰδόμαν λεών:

ᾧ τις εἰ προσαρμόσει

βαρβάρους βάριδας,

νόστον οὐκ ἀποίσεται,

ἐνθάδ᾽ οἷον εἰδόμαν

νάιον πόρευμα,

τὰ δὲ κατ᾽ οἴκους κλύουσα συγκλήτου

μνήμην σῴζομαι στρατεύματος. (lines 290-303)[44]

I have heard all this.

I have looked too

Upon this people of ships.

You could never count the Greek sails

Nor the flat keels of the foreign boats.

[44] E.P. Coleridge's 1891 translation: "Lastly, Aias, reared in Salamis, was joining his right wing to the left of those near whom he was posed, closing the line with his outermost ships, twelve barques obedient to the helm, as I heard and then saw the crews; the one who brings his barbaric boats to grapple Aias shall obtain no safe return. There I saw the naval armament, but some things I heard at home about the gathered army, of which I still have a recollection."

I will be using this translation for all later passages, unless otherwise noted.

I have heard—

I myself have seen the floating ships

And nothing will ever be the same—

The shouts,

The harrowing voices within the house

I stand apart with an army:

My mind is graven with ships. (*CP* 76)

At the same time, though H.D. extends the chorus's admiration of the superiority of Ajax's ships to all the Greek ships, she undermines the implications of that greatness. While the Greek says "ᾧ τις εἰ προσαρμόσει /βαρβάρους βάριδας,/νόστον οὐκ ἀποίσεται" ("the one who brings his barbaric boats to grapple Aias shall obtain no safe return"), H.D. undoes the opposition: both the Greek ships and those of their enemies are beyond measure. A statement of certain victory—in Greek limited to Ajax and his "εὐστροφωτάταισι ναυσίν," his most well-turning ships—is transformed into a battle of equals, the only certainty being that of radical change for both sides. Loosely translating Euripides's line "νόστον οὐκ ἀποίσεται" by "nothing will ever be the same," H.D. generalizes the impossibility of *nostos*—there can be no return from war for anyone, Greek or barbarian, victor or loser, something the Greek chorus does not seem to know. To make this point even more forcefully H.D. then turns the rather neutral statement with which the Euripidean Parodos ends into a premonition of doom. Rather than translate "ἐνθάδ' οἶον εἰδόμαν /νάιον πόρευμα, /τὰ δὲ κατ' οἴκους κλύουσα συγκλήτου /μνήμην σῴζομαι στρατεύματος." ("There I saw the naval armament, but some things I heard at home about the gathered army, of which I still have a recollection"), she teases out the lines' implication. What cannot be, or in any

case is not, spoken but only remembered becomes for H.D. evidence of trauma, as she instills in her chorus a prophetic—as far as the play is concerned—knowledge of the future; they speak of the shouts and harrowing voices with a sense of certainty that can only be retrospective. Reading the emphatic Greek alliteration in "τὰ δὲ κατ᾽ οἴκους κλύουσα συγκλήτου" as evidence for the kind of sounds the chorus has heard, H.D. translates accordingly.

In order to better understand these lines in H.D.'s text, we must look back to her description of the ships. H.D. follows the Greek chorus in a lengthy description of each army's ships and their "σῆματα," but consistently erases mentions of the engraved figures of the protector gods, making it seem as though it is actually Athena or Cadmus standing at the prow. Though in Greek as well the description of each fleet ends with its characteristic stamp, the mark of its god, H.D. heightens this effect, making each description culminate in the appearance of a god, as if he or she were not, in this particular case, a human artifact. She thus makes each "σῆμα," each god and progenitor of the people, whose ships his or her form adorns, come alive.[45] For example, she, perhaps intentionally, misreads the verb "ἔστασαν," used of the Nereids on Achilles's ships; while the verb, a pluperfect form of "ἵστημι," means "set," H.D. reads it as "στάζω" 'shed, drip'. As a result, rather than present the ships as marked by the "σῆμα" of sea nymphs set in gold, she conjures a different image of a single "goddess"—presumably Thetis, differentiated from the other Nereids, who appear here as "sea-spirits"— "shedding gold" and thus producing herself the sea-spirits "cut in tiers of gold." Later on, Cadmus, translated by H.D. as "earth-god" perhaps to correspond to Thetis's sea-goddesses, "stood at the prow" of the Boetian ships.

[45] This is similar to what she does with Eurotas in her first section, where, as Eileen Gregory notes, she "render[s] the simple 'reedy Eurotas' with a visual scene" (144).

Similarly, rather than being an "εὔσημόν φάσμα" (line 251), an auspicious image for seamen that has been set ("θετόν") on the Athenian ships' prow, Pallas Athene "keeps them" as a "great spirit"; her role, that is, is again made active:

> Then the son of Theseus
> Led out sixty ships,
> Prow to prow from Attic.
> A great spirit keeps them—
> Pallas, graved above each ship.
>
> 6
>
> Wings beat her
> And horses, iron of hoof:
> The phantom and chariot
> Appear to men slashed with waves. (*CP* 73)

Though H.D. writes that Athene's image is "graved" on the ship, her use of this archaic word, rather than the more standard "engraved," emphasizes the "graving" function of such images, suggesting that any, at least pictorial, depiction of the gods serves to contain and entomb them, to place them definitively in the past. To highlight this, she devotes a separate stanza to the description of Athene as an active goddess, who cannot be encapsulated by such images—as if each image were a grave that, upon prodding, would unfold into a scene. While in Greek it is fairly clear that the image of Athena in a winged carriage drawn by horses that is engraved on the ship is a "lucky sight for mariners" in E.P. Coleridge's translation, H.D. translates "φάσμα" separately from "εὔσημόν." It appears at the end of her second stanza, not as vision, image,

appearance, or even omen, but indeed as "phantom." The translation is correct of course, and since the English word has its roots in the Greek, they also sound similar. H.D., however, seems to dissociate this phantom and the chariot that bears it from the image on the ship—Athene is no longer a sign, but a ghostly agent arising from the graved image and appearing of her own free will to "men slashed with waves." [ION] The fact that this stanza is not only separate, but included under the next chorus sub-section, when in Greek its "meaning" is in the same strophe, mirrors precisely this activity and uncontainedness that H.D. wants to assign to the goddess—and so to suggest that language, rather than painting or sculpture, is a more apt medium for the gods. To return then to the chorus's concluding remarks in the Parodos, we might read now the statement that their "mind is graven with ships" as reflecting back or rather reversing this graving: as gods and forebears were "graven" on each ship's prow, so will this expedition become emblematic, its heroes turned into myths. Indeed, we may recall, the flagship of the British fleet twenty-five centuries later was called *Agamemnon*. In accentuating this process of entombing inherent in every act of memorialization, H.D. highlights not only the potential of song in recording the unspeakable image, the "ἀθέσφατον," but also its potential complicity in the very act of war, in en-graving those of whom it speaks.

In the second stasimon, H.D.'s section III, we seem to hear—at least in H.D.'s version—precisely from "The harrowing voices within the house" as Euripides's chorus imagines here the future exploits of the Greek army and the eventual downfall of Troy. This stasimon has a curious structure in Greek: the epode is unusually long, twice as long in fact as the strophe and antistrophe together. Since it opens in the same way as the previous strophic pair metrically (with a glyconic and a pherecratean, lines 773-74) and since in its middle, there is another similar "opening" at the beginning of a period (lines 784-85), one would expect it to be a second

strophic pair. Instead the strophe simply continues. Thematically too it is easy to see how the epode could be divided into a strophe about the general destruction of Troy and an antistrophe expressing the chorus's hope that they will not share the fate of the Phrygian women. Why is there then no responsion in Euripides? Is it that the unity of all these voices in foreseeing destruction has a more powerful effect? Or does Euripides intentionally introduce a tension between form and content by suggesting that there can be no response to this, no two sides in war, even as his chorus claims precisely that there are two sides and that one will lose? Such a distinction between sides is further blurred when the Greek women ventriloquize the foreign women's sorrow, "quoting" their laments to come after the sacking of Troy. Having mentioned Cassandra in the strophe, they try in this epode to be anti-Cassandras, to wish away the misery they cannot help but dread. Yet precisely in hoping not to ever be put in the place of the Trojan women, they become them in sung prophetic imitation—prophetic not only of the Trojan women's plight, as they think, but also of the Greek women in Euripides's own time.

H.D. in her translation replicates this structure by dividing her third section into two parts, one for the strophic pair and one for the long epode. Though they are not separated into stanzas of equal length, the strophe and antistrophe both have eleven lines, as in the Greek, distributed in stanzas of four and seven lines and two, four, and five lines respectively. The epode begins with a long stanza of ten lines, so that we might imagine, as in Euripides, that it is almost like one of the previous sections. H.D. has her chorus occupy the position of the Trojan women from the beginning even if they only speak as them at the end; she writes that the Greek force will "come to Simois—/ The strait," not "arrive" there (as in the Greek), implying that the speaker is already by that river. Obviously H.D. also has her previous chorus section in mind, which records Paris's "coming" to two fated watery places, the Eurotas river and Mount Ida.

This is the third point in the chain of events, the third coming, this time not by Paris but for him. It is worth noting that we have our fourth "strait" here, again corresponding to no word in the Greek, used to designate the Trojan river Simois. While this account of the invasion of Troy is set in the future, Kassandra intrudes in the present: "They will enter Troy. /. . . / Kassandra shakes out her hair—." This temporal distinction is present in Euripides as well, but there it is introduced by "ἀκούω" (line 758) ((from what) I hear). In H.D.'s text then the chorus is already (with) Kassandra, seeing the destruction of Troy.

It is perhaps for this reason that H.D seems intent on presenting a more violent picture of the battles, extending Euripides's description of the weapons and compounding his images of force. The gathered Greek army ("ἄγυρις Ἑλλάνων στρατιᾶς" [line 753]) becomes "The crowd of the Greek force," their arms and ships ("ἀνά τε ναυσὶν καὶ σὺν ὅπλοις" [line 754]) "stacked arms and with troop-ships" (*CP* 77). Her heightening of violence is directional; as in the rest of her translation, here too H.D. exhibits no sympathy or alliance with the Greeks, displacing even the pretense to a national cause for war (which Euripides himself puts into question of course) and implicitly arguing, here and elsewhere, against the notion of a just war, highlighting instead the loss inflicted. For example, rather than have the Greeks simply arrive at Troy, she adds a line to declare "They will enter Troy" (77). Moreover, though the Greek identifies the ground of Troy as Phoebian, H.D. transfers that adjective to Troy's "porticoes" ("The sun-god built the porticoes."), thus implying that by "entering" the city they are breaking into a god's territory (77). Rather than then introduce the Trojans waiting for the Greeks at the city walls, ready to defend their land ("στάσονται δ' ἐπὶ περγάμων /Τροίας ἀμφί τε τείχη /Τρῶες" [lines762-64]), she places the Greeks already "stand[ing] on Pergamos" and "crowd[ing]about the walls," as if there is barely a resistance from the other side (77). In the one instance where she suppresses a violent

image present in the Greek, the ghastly murder of Paris at the hands of Menelaus (κυκλώσας . . . / λαιμοτόμου κεφαλᾶς / σπάσας (lines 775-77); "dragging Paris's head backward to cut his throat"), she does so precisely to erase the purportedly just act of revenge. She turns this specific "crime" into a generalized and therefore all the more powerful "bright stain," presumably of blood, on the "stone-battlements" of "ancient Troy" (it is worth noting that "ancient" is H.D.'s addition; in Greek it is simply Pergamos) (78). When she finally writes that Troy is "given up to its fate" she eschews the factual (though still terrible) description in the Greek, "πέρσας κατάκρας πόλιν" (line 778), "sacking the city from roof to base," and in so doing she further removes traces of glory from the Greeks who are sacking it; it is not, she seems to be saying, that they are such great warriors, but rather that that was the city's fate (78). In this way, however, H.D. removes the tension that Euripides develops here between the chorus's excitement for battle and admiration of the Greek army and the suppressed fear for their own future.

Euripides's chorus identifies the lamenting words to be spoken by the Phrygian women as mythoi: "στήσουσι παρ' ἱστοῖς/μυθεῦσαι τάδ' ἐς ἀλλήλας" (lines 789-90) ("as at their looms they converse"). Given that the word was commonly used to simply mean "speech," this lexical choice would hardly be noteworthy if the word did not poignantly return in its meaning of fable at the end of their ventriloquized song. Blaming Helen for their fate, the chorus doubts her parentage and wonders whether the report of her half-divinity is "ἔτυμος" (line 794), true, or "ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν /μῦθοι τάδ' ἐς ἀνθρώπους/ ἤνεγκαν παρὰ καιρὸν ἄλλως" (lines 797-800), an untimely rumor, a poet's invention (in Coleridge's translation: "whether, in the tables of the poets, fables have carried these tales to men's ears idly, out of season"—note that Coleridge has translated "μῦθοι" twice, as both "fables" and "tales" to render both of the word's meanings). The question that they pose about Helen could then be transposed onto them, the Euboean

women, imagining and repeating in advance the laments of their "enemies"—is this too an irrelevant story made up by the Muses?, Euripides seems to ask. The women speaking it might think so in that they do not believe it applies to them. Yet ironically, there is indeed no "truth" in this poet's song: the lament this chorus wishes away is in fact part of Greek women's experience at the time of Euripides's writing. How close then is myth to myth?

While Euripides's chorus hopes they will not have to experience a plight like the one they imagine the Trojan women will speak of, H.D.'s chorus makes experience and telling inseparable: "May no child of mine, /Nor any child of any child /Ever fashion such a tale /As the Phrygians shall murmur," she translates (*CP* 77). By using the vocabulary of conscious (artistic) creation here, H.D. seems to dispense with Euripides's purported distinction between fact and fiction, or rather to simply answer his question. Every telling is a fashioned tale, in which there is no room for "truth." Moreover, in Greek the comment on the truth of legends written "ἐν δέλτοις Πιερίσιν," on the Muses' tablets, seems incidental; the chorus blames Helen for their fate, calls her the offspring of the swan and then proceeds to qualify that designation. H.D., however, devotes a separate stanza to it, expanding it significantly and interposing between the two terms of the disjunctive statement (if…even if) a reminder of the women's lament.

> "Helen has brought this.
> They will tarnish our bright hair.
> They will take us as captives
> For Helen—born of Zeus
> When he sought Leda with bird-wing
> And touched her with bird-throat—
> If men speak truth.

"But still we lament our state,

The desert of our wide courts.

Even if there is no truth

In the legends cut on ivory

Nor in the poets

Nor the songs." (*CP* 77)

H.D. distinguishes between the legends and the poets' songs in a way that the Greek does not, but only to designate the latter too as potential sources of untruth that might nonetheless be appealed to or used in the justification of a war. What in Greek then is a gesture towards a factual statement about Helen (is Helen the offspring of Zeus or not) becomes here almost irrelevant in the face of human lament and desertion. Whatever the cause or justification of war may be, wherever or however it may be expressed, the result will be the same, the only tales to be fashioned variations of this one. The role thus claimed for the poet, here in the guise of these Greek women pretending to be their Phrygian counterparts, seems to be not the accurate recording of the past, or even of the present, but the prescient, if not prophetic, fashioning of the future that can nonetheless only be expressed allegorically—that is, when speaking through another. We witness then the permeability between mythos and mythos as the speech of the Phrygian women is, since it is hypothetical and imagined, mythical for the Greek women, who nonetheless speak it, and who will, as another poet, H.D., has intimated in her Parodos ending, "actually" speak it.

While the voices imagined in the second stasimon are, as we saw, those "voices in the house" that echo at the end of the Parodos in H.D.'s version, the first and third stasima, on the

other hand, address divine speaking/singing, precisely the other kind of "myth." H.D. emphasizes this alternation in her translation as her sections II and IV attempt to address the question of the "reality" or "truthfulness" of myth that the Euripidean chorus has just posed here. In these two sections H.D. highlights, if not exaggerates, the complicity of song in war. Going against the Greek in the first stasimon, she places Paris's musical abilities, his *Phrygian* music— that is, music played on the flute, wilder than the music for the lyre— at the start of war. H.D. presents Paris as a pied piper; rather than have him imitate Olympian pipes as in the Greek ("βάρβαρα συρίζων, Φρυγίων /αὐλῶν Ὀλύμπου καλάμοις /μιμήματα πνείων," lines 576-78; "piping in foreign strain and breathing on your reeds an echo of the Phrygian airs Olympus played"), H.D.'s Paris ambiguously "caught all Olympus / In his bent reeds" (*CP* 76). Does this mean, as indeed the Greek does, that he captures the spirit or essence of Olympus in his own strange music? Or does H.D. mean to say that he literally captured the Olympian gods by means of it? After all, we soon hear about the three sparring goddesses finding him on Ida.

This is made even clearer in the third stasimon. The strophe of the stasimon goes further back in time, before Paris's choice, to Thetis and Peleus's wedding. The Greek begins with an inquiry about a wedding hymn ("What wedding-hymn was that which…"); it then specifies the day on which the wedding occurred by describing the various aspects of the feast, one of which involves the Muses. H.D., however, has the Muses govern the action completely:

τίν᾽ ἄρ᾽ Ὑμέναιος διὰ λωτοῦ Λίβυος
μετά τε φιλοχόρου κιθάρας
συρίγγων θ᾽ ὑπὸ καλαμοεσ-
σᾶν ἔστασεν ἰαχάν,
ὅτ᾽ ἀνὰ Πήλιον αἱ καλλιπλόκαμοι

δαιτὶ θεῶν ἔνι Πιερίδες

χρυσεοσάνδαλον ἴχνος

ἐν γᾷ κρούουσαι

Πηλέως ἐς γάμον ἦλθον,

μελῳδοῖς Θέτιν ἀχήμασι τόν τ᾽ Αἰακίδαν,

Κενταύρων ἐν ὄρεσι κλέουσαι

Πηλιάδα καθ᾽ ὕλαν.

. . . . . .

παρὰ δὲ λευκοφαῆ ψάμαθον

εἱλισσόμεναι κύκλια

πεντήκοντα κόραι γάμους

Νηρέως ἐχόρευσαν. (lines 1037-58)[46]

By burnished-head,

Pierides sought the bride:

They touched the flute-stops

And the lyre-strings for the dance,

They made the syrinx-notes

Shrill through the reed-stalk.

[46] Coleridge's translation: "What wedding-hymn was that which raised its strains to the sound of Libyan flutes, to the music of the dancer's lyre, and the note of the pipe of reeds? It was on the day Pieria's lovely-haired choir came over the slopes of Pelion to the wedding of Peleus, beating the ground with print of golden sandals at the banquet of the gods, and hymning in dulcet strains the praise of Thetis and the son of Aeacus, over the Centaurs' hill, down woods of Pelion. . . . while, along the gleaming sand, the fifty daughters of Nereus graced the marriage with their dancing, circling in a mazy ring."

They cut gold sandal-prints

Across Pelion

Toward the gods' feast.

They called Pelios

From steep centaur-paths,

And Thetis

Among forest trees:

They chanted at the feast

. . . . . .

While fifty sea-spirits

Moved and paused

To mark the beat

Of chanted words

Where light flashed

Below them on the sand. (*CP* 78)

Skipping to the fifth line of the Greek strophe, H.D. introduces the Muses immediately by redundantly translating the Greek epithet "καλλιπλόκαμοι" with "Burnished head / by burnished head." Of course the Muses' heads are "burnished" in the figurative sense of being perfected, perfectly coiffed, as the Greek states. At the same time the literal meaning of the word points us in a different direction, that of polishing metals, and by extension not to hair, but to helmets.

H.D. encourages such confusion by then calling them "Pierides[47]"; this toponym would be immediately recognizable to the Greek audience, but perhaps less so to an English-speaking one that might instead take the "Pierides" to be an Akhaian tribe, like those listed in the Parodos, on the hunt for Helen ("Pierides sought the bride," H.D. ambiguously writes). Rather than translate the place name into the more familiar name, she paratactically identifies their many activities (playing music on flute, lyre and syrinx, chanting, dancing, calling and bringing together bride, groom and guests), thus reorganizing and tightening the Greek strophe into a single performance by the Muses—a performance, moreover, that seems not only to accompany the wedding, but to make it possible. She also ends with an image absent in its specificity from the Greek when she writes that the Nereids, the name this time translated into "as sea-spirits," "Moved and paused / To mark the beat / Of chanted words"—in Euripides, in contrast, they danced "εἱλισσόμεναι κύκλια" ("circling in a mazy ring," line 1055). Unlike Euripides, H.D. makes explicit that this is a song by repeating that the Muses chanted "words" to a beat; by further specifying that the Nereids danced to these chanted words, she unequivocally conjures up an image of the tragic chorus.

When in the antistrophe the centaur Chiron predicts that Thetis will "beget . . . the great light," he is said in Greek to be inspired by Apollo, or, more precisely, that to be a seer knowledgeable in Phoebus's "muse," namely prophecy: "μάντις ὁ φοιβάδα μοῦσαν / εἰδὼς" (lines 1064-65). H.D. reads this "muse" in accordance with the Muses she has just presented, writing that Chiron speaks his prophecy "Inspired by the rites of song":

> And Chiron,
>
> Inspired by the rites of song,

[47] They usually appear under this name in the Greek; they do both in this stasimon and in the previous one, where H.D. leaves them unnamed in her translation.

Cried with a loud voice:

"From Thessaly,
The great light
Whom Thetis will beget,"
(He spoke his name)
"Will come with the Myrmidons
. . . . . .
To scatter fire
Over Priam's beautiful land."

Therefore the spirits blessed
The fair-fathered,
The Nereid,
And chanted at Pelios' feast. (*CP* 79)

Reading the connective conjunction "τότε" that follows Chiron's prediction (line 1076) as expressing consequence ("Therefore") rather than subsequence— the most probable reading, though as with the English "then" the line between the two can be blurry—H.D. implies that the chanting spirits (that is, the Muses, when in Greek it is "δαίμονες," mostly likely the gods in general) bless Thetis for this reason, so that she, the "fair-fathered" may mother a worthy son. H.D. thus presents this double blessing in song as sanctioning the war to come, justifying it for the sake of a splendid fire: so that this light, Achilles, can shine, fire will have to come about. She, I think, intentionally turns Priam's land from "κλεινὰν" (line 1069), famous, into a

"beautiful land" in order to underline precisely what is at stake: for the beautiful, destructive fire of Achilles, another kind of beauty is sacrificed. We recall here again the feelings H.D. would express later in *Bid Me to Live* and elsewhere about the complicity of certain kinds of new poetry—avant-garde, Vorticism, even her own aesthetic of harshness and hardness—with "the times" and thus, the war. She thus implicitly indicts both this kind of "spiritual" involvement and at the same time, from the other end, the purist viewpoint that art ought to be kept separate, distanced from war, cannot have anything to do with it, by showing through her women-focused sections, that art, song is what must—untruthfully, subjectively, and perhaps unbeautifully—record it nonetheless.

Achilles will "scatter fire" in Troy, in H.D.'s version, but his first "victim" will appear already in the next stanza, in the stasimon's epode: Iphigeneia, whose hair "is scattered light" (*CP* 79). Yet when at the end of the play Iphigeneia in her Kommos "accepts" her sacrifice, she does not do so by accepting it as a sacrifice; rather, she presents herself not as victim, but as aggressor, giving directions, commanding the girls to sing, the Greeks to stand silent, Agamemnon to assist her—and especially so in H.D.'s rendering. H.D. adds in more imperatives than there are in the Greek precisely to suggest that Iphigeneia is in command, not only of the girls or of the ceremony, but of the entire Greek army. Rejecting the image, presented by the chorus earlier, of a heifer headed to the slaughter, Iphigeneia becomes the one demanding the slaughter and dictating its terms and proceedings. Though in Greek she asks to be led to the altar ("ἄγετέ με," line 1475), H.D.'s Iphigeneia proclaims her own free will ("I come—I free Hellas"), and asks to be acclaimed not as the one ensuring the continuation of the Greeks' journey, but as the one actually destroying Phrygia and Troy.[48] She asks the girls to sing "Without change of

[48] In Greek it is an adjective, "ἑλέπτολιν" (line 1477) (destroyer of cities), that Iphigeneia uses for herself; though forceful, it seems a little less vehement than H.D.'s "Hail me now. / I destroy Phrygia and all Troy" (*CP* 82). This is

note, / My death-paeon and Artemis-chant," while Euripides's "ὑμεῖς δ' ἐπευφημήσατ', ὦ νεάνιδες, /παιᾶνα τὴμῇ συμφορᾷ Διὸς κόρην /Ἄρτεμιν" (lines 1467-69) might be more literally rendered as a request to sing in the paean for Artemis also Iphigeneia's own misfortune, to weave one into the other (*CP* 82). The first line in H.D.'s version is her own addition; while in Greek the paean is clearly for Artemis, H.D. implies that it is, paradoxically given what a paean is, for Iphigeneia who demands to be glorified and praised if not as a goddess, then at least as a hero. H.D. thus fashions her as a counter-Achilles—the one who makes the prophesied heroic Achilles possible. Though Eileen Gregory is right to say that Iphigeneia here dismisses the mother for the sake of father and embraces the war—and that H.D. takes special care to highlight this— this scene does not have to be seen as H.D.'s final word. What Gregory calls the "heroic axis" is quite clearly and consistently undercut throughout the choros sequence; that is, H.D. shows herself to be aware of the dangers of her own mythologizing, her own historic or mythical revisionism that would turn Iphigeneia into a hero-goddess. The play may end with this glorified image and its attendant song, but we have already heard the future, what such song may cover over or ignore.

As Iphigeneia begins to accept her fate earlier in this monody, she says the following in H.D.'s translation:

> And each man is marked for toil,
> Much labour is his fate,
> Nor is there any new hurt
> That may be added to the race. (*CP* 82)

---

the adjective associated with Helen in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* that makes its appearance for Pound's second and fourth cantos.

That is, Iphigeneia seems to see her sacrifice in a larger context of mortal toil, erasing the specificity of her own situation; her hurt is not new, this must have happened before. Yet these last two lines that say so *are* new. The Greek simply says what H.D.'s first two lines translate, though it pleonastically repeats the word "πολύμοχθον" (line 1329), full of labor, applying it both to "γένος," the race, and to "ἀμερίων," mortals. That no new hurt may be added, that all has already been done and suffered, is H.D.'s own addition and, I believe, reflects her belief in the importance of her translation and the relevance of these plays during the First World War. At the same time it betrays a telling contradiction: the very phrase that essentially tells us that the Greek plays already contain everything, that Iphigeneia's particular suffering is not new, is itself added and so suggests that indeed, even if that is the case, something is always altered, added in the transfer, which points to the present, actual moment in which the re-writing occurs.

Sylvia Brown has argued that Euripides was "not only expanding the limits of his inherited metrics, he was doing it in such a way as to consume his heritage"; the "sensitive innovations of a great artist" were at the same time "the seeds of destruction for a very fragile system" (234). We see this clearly in the play's conclusion, where Euripides isolates most clearly—and twice—a single singing voice, thus moving away from the origins of tragedy. Quite unconventionally, that is, the play ends with two monodies by Iphigeneia, both in unusually many meters, followed by an almost certainly interpolated choral section. Might it not be intentional that, as Brown notes, the chorus seems a little superfluous in this play[49]? And to some extent it is true—they do

[49] Brown actually tries to refute the common charge leveled against Euripides, namely that he has no use for the chorus and simply gives them meaningless songs; for instance, Eileen Gregory argues that H.D. might have preferred Euripides over the other tragedians precisely because his choruses seem "more detachable from their dramatic contexts" (140). Brown, however, argues that such a view is too simplistic and that the dramatic function of the women in this play is to provide a backdrop of appropriate feminine behavior for Iphigeneia, who initially blends in with them when sentimentally lamenting her fate, but then transcends these emotions in accepting her sacrifice (*Metrical Studies…* 297).

tell and re-tell, as does Iphigeneia, pieces of the same story of origin over and over again. Is it symptomatic or significant that *Iphigeneia in Aulis* would be the play in which Euripides would experiment so much with the meter and form of tragedy? Can this only be attributed to the fact that this play was his last and so represents the latest stage of his poetic development? Or was there something about this particular play that called for such irregularities? Could it be that Euripides is metrically performing the play's dismissal, or at least questioning of song as something that is given to man by the gods in a pattern they must conform to? Is that why H.D. chooses to translate this play in 1915? It is perhaps not surprising that Eliot and Pound would have been ambivalent in praising H.D.'s translation.

Before the constant re-tellings of the London war-years in her 1920s (and later) prose then, H.D. first begins to explore the question of war and its consequences, the relation of Beauty, loveliness to war through a translation—through this encounter with Euripides. She stages a confrontation between a reduced Imagisme, thought of simplistically as static, "crystalline," unworldly and so on, with the "world"; it is a confrontation between the "lofty" world of the spirit and of song, as portrayed in the Muses stasimon, to which of course H.D. was heavily drawn, and a "real" world impinging upon it—a real world and a real war, moreover, that it seems to have brought about. In this sense then, maintaining the distinctions between "real" and "ideal" becomes pointless as they show themselves to be completely intertwined. She already responds in her text to the possible reaction of a critic, namely that in turning to Euripides, she is looking away from her own time, by using the *Iphigeneia* choruses to encode both the promise and the danger of song, of poetry in a time of war.

"I Don't Want to Write It":

Measuring Greece between the Wars

> *The stanzas and lines run on and into the infinite—realized by rock and shale and snow and wind and foam and storm. I was realizing a self, a super-ego, if you will, that was an octave above my ordinary self—and fighting to realize it. Once the poem was created, this world was created, I had to come back, to return to the ordinary things. I am tremendously touched by the play and admire it, technique and subject matter. But how did I write it?*
> (H.D., comments on *Hippolytus Temporizes*, 1955)

Susan Stanford Friedman has argued that "the impersonal discourse of H.D. *Imagiste* was not suited" to writing about traumatic events of war. Instead it was prose that became "the discourse that freed H.D. to narrate her experience of modernity" because it was "personal, narrative, directly gendered, and historical" (*Penelope's Web* 64).[1] In large part Friedman is correct in her assessment: the bulk of H.D.'s production, published and unpublished, in the interwar period is in the form of novels and novellas, some set in the Hellenistic world, and all semi-autobiographical. Yet as we have seen already in the previous chapter, H.D.'s first "imagiste" poems are not quite as disembodied and timeless as they might initially appear, while her *Iphigeneia* choruses are already doing the work that Friedman locates in H.D.'s later mythical dramatic monologues and in her novels; they already allow her to explore her ambivalence as a poet in a time of war, her internal and external turmoil. In her continued engagement with Greek tragedy throughout the 1920s and 30s, I will argue in this chapter and in

[1] Friedman examines the two distinct ways in which H.D. first tried to change her poetry from its earlier Imagistic style before turning to prose, in part under the influence of D.H. Lawrence (as we have seen it in *Bid*) and due to her experiences during the war: first, through some confessional poems that she suppressed and published only later with some alterations as meditations on Sappho fragments, and second, through "explicitly gendered poems anchored specifically in classical space and mythic time" (*Penelope's Web* 64). In the latter, argues Friedman, "the spare line and sharp image of her imagist craft now serves a larger story" so that "superimposed on imagist 'presentation' is a revisionist examination of cultural 'representation,' particularly male representations of Woman embedded in mythic texts" (65).

Chapter Five, H.D. attempts to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory aspects of Imagisme: the surface insistence on clarity and precision, on "intellectual vision," and the underlying belief, shared by Pound and H.D., though to some extent suppressed by both, in "ghost vision."

H.D.'s 1920s prose texts obsessively retrace constellations of the "Athenian" and the "Asiatic" in ways that undercut the stereotypical views of their rigid separation and, in the end, privilege neither one. The distinction is, schematically, between a drive for purity, accompanied by an emphasis on the intellect and an attachment to the very concept of "distinction" on the one hand (Athenian), and passion, sensuousness, and a desire for merging and self-obliteration on the other. This distinction can be mapped onto that between H.D.'s own poetry and prose as conventionally seen: the former ostensibly impersonal, intent on discrimination and clear lines, and the latter labyrinthine, repetitive, blurry. H.D. borrows not only the distinction itself but also many of the associations for each pole from Walter Pater, who speaks of their final "harmoniz[ation]" in Greek sculpture, referring to "that Asiatic ποικιλία, that spirit of minute and curious loveliness" "throwing itself forth in endless play of undirected imagination" which always accompanies the "ideal or abstract element in Greek art . . . a tendency to the realization of a certain inward, abstract, intellectual ideal" that is "an enemy everywhere to *variegation*" (252, 222, 252, 253, Pater's italics). [2] Yet instead of the "new cohering force" identified Pater in Greek civilization that unites elements "traceable elsewhere by antiquarians who care to trace them," H.D.'s stories present the struggle between these elements, their coming undone (215). This is true even when the settings are modern as in "Murex" (1920s London, but the protagonist is constantly described as "drifting") or "Secret Name" (1920s Cairo, but the American protagonist identifies herself as "Athenian"). In H.D.'s Hellenistic novels, in particular, her

[2] See *Greek Studies* 215ff. Pater maps the Hellenic/Athenian-Asiatic opposition onto the art-historical Dorian-Ionian distinction and further translates it into two opposing tendencies: the centripetal and the centrifugal respectively (252).

protagonists are, quite literally, the exiled children of Athens, bearing the names of their Athenian mothers (Hipparchia's mother is Hipparchia, Hedylus's Hedyle) but living elsewhere; each novel depicts their ambivalent relationship with that heritage and its various antitheses (Roman militarism, Eastern decadence, Alexandrian scholasticism), while at the same time offering us a view of the tragedies that H.D. herself had already translated or was in the process of translating from the perspective of characters closer to them in time.[3] These characters regard with some skepticism the classical Athenian period, its myths and art, both drawn to and constrained by it; for them, Athenian perfection is already a topos against which they are trying to define themselves and which they are sometimes trying to undo.

While Susan Stanford Friedman is right that in a lot of H.D.'s work "Greek times, places, and names serve as palimpsestic analogues to the modern world and the people in her circle," these novels simultaneously explore different relations to Greece (66). For instance, while clearly modeled on H.D.'s marriage to Aldington, the affair between the Roman general Marius and Hipparchia, a Greek transplant in imperial Rome (the date is "*circa* 75 B.C.") is repeatedly figured as one between empires, cities, geographies, and texts, thus inviting us to submit it to further metaphorization, even if it never allows us to pick one metaphor over another. Yet the contrast between Rome and Greece is not something that only we as readers are privy to, but roles and positions the characters themselves are consciously taking on as they negotiate their relationship in these terms, and, very frequently, through poems. After an argument about the Roman conquest of Greece, we are invited to read into the descriptions of their bodies lying on the bed an evocation of their origins (Greece in the "small, slight" body of Hipparchia, Rome in

[3] This is especially prominent in *Hedylus*, which is essentially a reversal of Euripides's *Ion* in terms of plot: we begin with the Athenian mother and son united and living with a surrogate father and end with the son breaking with his mother and possibly following his newly-revealed spiritual father, who is (mis)identified by both mother and son as Apollo (63–102, 131). In the narrative itself Hedylus identifies, somewhat facetiously, with Hippolytus while his mother plays the role both of Phaedra and Artemis (32–35). See also Milicia 577–78.

the "muscular" Marius), but at the same time are made aware that this is what they themselves are doing, even if the narrative does not spell it out in that moment (29). When Hipparchia evokes a poem by Antipater about the destruction of Corinth—a poem whose lines become a motif for the novella—Marius argues that Rome "builds rock upon the ruins of a decadent civilization" (4). She responds by offering one of the story's predominant metaphors for their personal relationship, and for that between Greece and Rome by comparing Rome's conquests to grapes that are

> shaken from the parent, broken, sometimes ruthless from the firm vine. Cast ruthless in one basket. Carried and flung indiscriminate, fine white by heady ruby of the vine into one huge vessel of destruction. Romans are wine pressers. . . . Rome battering upon Grecian citadels leaves foot mark of red, stain of its wine-treaders. . . . I mean you kill us, cut our city and our state to pieces**.** Do you kill the wine when you press heavy on the grape-bunch? (4)

Hipparchia's question, which Marius does not understand, is about survival and metamorphosis—translation in a sense: Is wine, a product wrought by violence, an appropriate metaphor for the remains of the kind of destruction she is describing? That is, can these remains too survive, as we might say grapes do in wine, and even be more potent, have a different kind of effect, now that they have been ruined, scattered, or blended? Can destruction in the end be a positive transformation, producing something that might be more intoxicating than its originals?

Towards the story's end we realize that this imagery comes from a poem by Moero, a third-century poet born in Byzantium, that Hipparchia is translating. It seems to me that the choice of poet is significant. According to Smith's biographical dictionary, Moero was the wife of Andromachus Philologus and the mother of Homerus of Byzantium. Of her poetry very little

survives: a passage from her poem "Μνημοσύνη" quoted by Athenaeus and the epigram in the Greek Anthology that Hipparchia translates (II.20 in Mackail, who translates it under the title "To Aphrodite of the Golden House"). Moero, that is, had "symbolic" names associated with her. The poet who wrote of memory is also the one who gave birth to a son whose name is synonymous with the birth of poetry, and that out of a marriage with "philology"—there is what H.D. often calls a formula, in fact H.D.'s own formula in this case: memory plus love of words equals poetry. That Moero was born in Byzantium, a city unimportant in her own time and in Hipparchia's, but one in which the Roman Empire would eventually become Greek again, is of course also very telling in the context of this particular story.

Moero's poem recapitulates many of the story's color and nature motifs (golden, purple, grape-red, honey-grace, flower, leaf) and in Hipparchia's initial version emphasizes the desolation of the grape unprotected by its "mother-stalk." In the context of the novella's repeated wine-presser analogy, this short grape poem becomes a synecdoche for Greece and it is now Hipparchia herself, translating it "into the heavier language" that becomes the wine presser. This suspicion is confirmed when she cites her final version of the translation as her "triumph": "Hipparchia I have triumphed. I found it on the way home. It was written in authentic metre in the air above me" (78-79). This is of course a great pun since *triumph* historically refers to the processional entry of a victorious general in Rome, and etymologically to a hymn to Dionysus, god of wine, precisely the things that Hipparchia has been ambivalent about. The meter she finds is, indeed, the meter in H.D.'s air, an English meter: from the first to the second version, she radically condenses the description of the grape, which produces four lines of perfect iambic tetrameter. Given the context of the rest of the story, however, as well as Hipparchia's refusal to translate Sappho because it would be "complete desecration," this translator's success is not to

be viewed without reservations (73). Hipparchia, moreover, subsequently falls gravely ill, becomes delirious, and is convinced that a young female visitor is Moero herself; the reward for triumphant translation, or wine-pressing, may seem to be materialization, resurrection of a ghost, but it is also a plunge into insanity.

In the previous chapter I cited H.D.'s comment that tragic writing was, with respect to content, a translation of old symbols and ideas. What thus emerged in this particular kind of translation, H.D. implied, was not words, though they were exquisite, but "the rhythms, the metres," which were "most important" for the audience. I hypothesized that she may have been identifying with "metres" the possibility in poetry of a link to something "inexpressible" or non-/not-yet verbal that captures and reflects the poet's writing voice in a way that words cannot—something that would be translated into words and yet not exhausted by them. This issue is also broached in her 1920s prose, including "Hipparchia," which is pervaded by mentions, though no explicit, straightforward discussions, of "metres" and "feet." H.D. seems to use the word "metres" not as a synecdoche for verse but for poetry; the poems her protagonists are seen composing in "Hipparchia," "Murex," and *Hedylus* are not in easily identifiable, conventional measures. If then there is no identifiable measure, if the "metres" are "irregular," as they so often are in H.D., can they still be called "metres"? What are they measuring?

H.D.'s interwar Euripides versions, I will argue in this chapter and in Chapter 5, are not simply tributes to classical Athens, or to Greece, or even ways to explore her own personal traumas in disguise; they are, rather, modes of interrogating Euripides specifically and Greece in general in terms of what they can offer to "modernity" and of what "modernity" can offer back. I put the word "modernity" in quotation marks because as we have already begun to see neither this term nor its customary complement "antiquity" are stable in H.D, and they explicitly become

even less so in her 1920s novels. The question that preoccupies H.D. in her versions of Euripides's *Hippolytus* and *Ion* is whether keeping the clarity of thought and image—which she often identifies with the "Athenian"—one can retain something of the mystery, and obscurity, and in some sense, danger, of the god, of divine apparition. Tracing H.D.'s transformation of 1919's "Choruses from *Hippolytus*" into the 1927 drama *Hippolytus Temporizes*, I will specifically focus in this chapter on her rhetorical and actual, practical engagement with Euripidean rhythm, through which, I will argue, she questions and measures out the possibility and value of writing poetry.

Meter Madness: H.D.'s Hippolytus Choruses

1. Erotic Rhythms

Where *Iphigeneia* ends is where *Hippolytus* begins. In this second translation of Euripidean choruses, published in 1919, H.D. explores the origins of what may have seemed an ideal of heroism in the earlier (though of course chronologically later for Euripides) play. In her opening section she creates an exactly parallel situation with the end of *Iphigeneia*: a group of Therapontes, the equivalent to Iphigeneia's maidens, pray to Artemis, after which Hippolytus himself does so.[4] All of the play's choral songs have to do with Eros, which is essentially what *Iphigeneia* does not address since its marriage plot is a ploy and turns into a war plot. We have a different kind of war here, an internal one, though also a civil war of sorts since Phaedra, as a Cretan princess, is clearly marked as an outsider in the Greek/Athenian world in which she lives. And yet as Iphigeneia in the conclusion of the play at least appears to be a uniter of all Greece in

[4] The *Hippolytus* is an exceptional play in that it has two choruses, one male accompanying Hippolytus and one female for Phaedra, highlighting in this way the utter separation between the two characters. I will be discussing the play's opening in H.D.'s version on pp. 210–12 below, in the context of *Hippolytus Temporizes*.

war, so Eros does not bind people together but creates strife in *Hippolytus*; love and war, union and disunion, rather than being opposed or contrasted, are intertwined. In *Hippolytus* we see Eros in action as what puts both humans and song out of measure and so see how this Eros might have led to that war; we are in a sense in the "emotional" prehistory of the *Iphigeneia*. The drama's choral songs explore the destructiveness of desire and its pervasiveness—what cannot be cleared away by rhetoric like that of Hippolytus or of Pound and H.D., imagistes; this, as we will see in the second part of this chapter, is developed by H.D. even further in *Hippolytus Temporizes*.

H.D.'s treatment of the drama negotiates the terms of two triangulated oppositions (onto which further oppositions are mapped). The first is between what Freud would call the life or sexual drive, Eros, and the death drive—Eros, the force that seeks to "combine organic substances into ever larger unities" and to thus complicate and preserve life, and the death drive, "the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 51; *The Ego and the Id* 38).[5] The triangulation here is the split within Eros that H.D. is interested in exploring, the (self-) destructiveness of desire, its link to madness, as possibly something other than the expression of the death drive. I will return to this below since though the seeds for these questions are present in the *Hippolytus* choruses, they are raised more explicitly in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, owing presumably to the publication and circulation of Freud's own work.

The second opposition is the one I broached above with respect to meter, namely one between two understandings of rhythm. The linguist Emile Benveniste reminds us that in most of its ancient occurrences—which he meticulously traces—the Greek word ῥυθμός does not mean

[5] H.D. is already very interested in psychoanalysis by 1919, writing in that year what she viewed as her own contribution to psychoanalytic theory, the only posthumously published "Notes on Thought and Vision." She showed the text to Havelock Ellis shortly after writing it, and his discouragement led her to put it away. Between H.D.'s two texts, Freud published *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923), in which the concept of the death drive is, respectively, proposed and refined.

what we currently understand by *rhythm* and, despite its provenance from the verb ῥέω 'to flow', neither does it designate the flow of water. Noting that, in any case, those two senses are contradictory, Benveniste argues that the Greeks did not perceive a similarity between what they wanted to call rhythm and the movement of water, but instead used a word associated with liquidity to designate "la forme dans l'instant qu'elle est assumée par ce qui n'a pas consistance organique" (333). Up until the Attic period, the constant and sole meaning of ῥυθμός was "forme distinctive, l'arrangement caractéristique des parties dans un tout" (330). More specifically, ῥυθμός was not a fixed or realized form, not a σχῆμα, but a form always subject to change, "la forme improvisée, momentanée, modifiable," a form that was in accordance with the Heraclitean philosophical principle and worldview of "τα πάντα ῥει" (333). By applying the word ῥυθμός to the movements of the human body in dance, Plato was the first to associate it with something fixed, rational, regular; as Benveniste puts it, "cette 'forme' est désormais déterminée par une 'mesure' et assujettie à un ordre" and ῥυθμός begins to designate a "séquence ordonnée de mouvements lents et rapides, de même que l' « harmonie » résulte de l'alternance de l'aigu et du grave" [in the voice] (334). The word, that is, underwent a double displacement: from the domain of the inorganic to that of the human, and from that of space to that of time: from the contingent arrangement of constituent parts to the intentionally organized repetitive alternation of distinct, and presumably opposed, elements. While I doubt that H.D. had reached Benveniste's particular philological conclusion, it is not unlikely that she would have encountered rhythm in its other, first sense. Certainly her characters' repeated evocation of "meters in the air" is consonant with the idea that a rhythm might be a temporary form that one can only grasp at before it vanishes into a new shape. The one rhythm would reveal an intricate plan, deliberately put in place by humans, or by artists, and its goal would be to master, to control a set of natural

givens or constraints; the other might be—and that is how Maurice Blanchot conceives it, building on Benveniste's insights—precisely its disruption, the accidental emergence of unplanned form that reverses or puts into question the edifice built.[6] The one would name the (imposed) order or disorder of things—the alternation of order and disorder—and the other would surpass such measuring, already gone by the time we have perceived it. The triangulation I referred to above would be in this case between an understanding of rhythm that involves the opposition and alternation of accord and discord, and one that is not defined with respect to concordance, to rhythm as conventionally conceived (or to its breaking), that cannot link up into any pattern that we might call discordant.

These two questions come together in *Hippolytus*, a play primarily concerned with the actions and effects of Eros, actions and effects which it depicts through references to rhythm and song and through a "symbolic" or performative use of meter specifically and sound generally. Noting first that "ancient thought is imbued with the notion of an incommensurability" between the ways of the gods and our ways, Anne Carson argues in her reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* that Socrates, by turning the human word *eros* into *pteros* in the language of the gods in a spurious Homeric quotation and having that word disrupt the line's dactylic hexameter, suggests that,

> Pteros disrupts our metrics in just the way that Eros deforms out lives. . . . [W]hen Eros flashes into your life he brings his own standard of beauty and simply cancels out 'all those properties and decorums whose beauty you once cherished' ([*Phaedrus*] 252a) . . . . Plato's bit of botched epic verse epitomizes out human transaction with Eros. Its terms are wrenching. We may profit enlargement of

[6] Blanchot's writing on the question of rhythm and its interruptions is also heavily indebted to Friedrich Hölderlin's concept of the caesura as a "gegenrhythmische Unterbrechung," which he developed in relation to and in the process of translating Sophokles; see Hölderlin's prefaces to both his *Ödipus* and *Antigonä* (155). It would be worth thinking about the relationship between Hölderlin's "rhythm" and "caesura" and the treatment of rhythm and arrhythmia by H.D. that will be outlined below, but it falls outside the province of this study.

meaning, by admitting Eros in his true godly form as Pteros, but only at the cost of the formal beauty of our line of verse." (162, 163)

Unlike in the *Iphigeneia,* H.D. translates *Hippolytus* less imagistically, with less of a focus on phanopoeia, and more aurally, melopoetically.[7] I will show that she intensifies and expands Euripides's strategies of registering Eros as metrical disruption while also extending his reach. With the *Hippolytus* choruses H.D. addresses directly the tension she develops between the two paired stasima/sections of *Iphigeneia* about the nature of song: song as aligned with gods or mortals (especially women), song as deceit or as a measure of truth. In this partial version of Euripides, and especially in her later adaptation of the play, it is the measuring of the distance between life and death, between mortals and immortals—which, as I will argue, also stands in for the distance between modernity and Greece—through "song" that is brought, performatively and thematically, to the forefront, and that is revealed as a newly-defined erotic space.

2. "Wild Words, Mad Speech"

Before we hear of Eros in Euripides's play, we witness his effects, first learning of Phaedra's affliction through the chorus and then seeing her ourselves. H.D.'s second section, her translation of the play's Parodos, opens with the chorus referring Oceanus, the river encircling the world. H.D. naturalizes the myth, turning Oceanus into the sea, while his waters dripping off a cliff become a pool left by the sea at high tide. A description of women washing clothes by the river follows:

At high-tide,

the sea—they say—

[7] Her almost-contemporaneous fragmentary translation of *Ion*'s opening, which I will be discussing in Chapter 5, resembles her *Hippolytus* in this respect.

left a deep pool
below the rock-shelf:
in that clear place
where the women dip
their water-jars,
my friend steeped her veils
and spread the scarlet stuff
across the hit ridge
of sun-baked rocks:
she first brought word
of my mistress (85-86)

In the first stanza of H.D.'s translation we have lines that end with two stresses, all of which describe nature. This is interrupted by four consecutive lines with cretic endings (unstressed syllable preceded and followed by stressed syllables), in which the activities of the women at the pool are described. Then we go back to the spondaic ending until we get to the stanza's last line which ends with "mistress." Because of the preceding pattern we are almost forced to stress the word's second syllable, "stress," as if it too were a compound word. In this way, Phaedra is placed between the human—more precisely, the feminine—world and the more "permanent" or forceful powers shaping the landscape, the very powers that in the first section of the translation Hippolytus has aligned himself with. The two other seeming deviations from this pattern again confirm its existence, namely the alliance of one kind of measure with the natural world, and another with the human. First, in the alliterative second line "the sea—they say—," where it is ambiguous whether "they" should be stressed since it rhymes with "say," this ambiguity may be

read as men's attempt not to accommodate themselves to nature but to comprehend it and thus resist its force. And second, in the penultimate line, where the final stress is again ambiguous, it seems most likely that we are back to the cretic/iambic movement as the speaker turns back to the women: "she first brought word." This movement mirrors what is going on in the Greek metrically; there too there is a shift to a different set of meters for the "woman" lines. To the extent that Euripides is using his meter performatively, H.D. follows him by resorting to strategies that would work for English.

In the rest of the Parodos the chorus describes Phaedra's suffering and attempts to determine its cause, first in the divine realm as either the result of possession ("you are possessed / by Pan, by Hecate") or sin ("have you sinned / . . . / against Artemis?"), and then in the human (her husband's possible infidelities, "sad news from Crete"). Throughout, we have fairly regular stress alternation in H.D., approximating an iambic pattern and almost no clustering of stresses. Only when Artemis, in contrast to the other gods, is described in her natural surroundings at the end of H.D.'s third stanza do we return to the spondaic endings, with "huntress," like "mistress" earlier, acting as an intermediate word:

> Have you offered
> no sacrificial cakes
> to the huntress?
> For she walks above earth,
> along the sea-coast,
> and across the salt trail
> of the sea-drift. (86-87)

There is, thus, a clear aural opposition set up in H.D., not between human and divine, as Anne Carson suggested or as we might be led to think by the content of this second strophic pair (which might then lead us to project that opposition onto the first strophic pair), but between human and natural, and by extension, between Phaedra and the realm of Artemis specifically.

H.D.'s third section translates an exchange between Phaedra and her nurse, which contrasts the nurse's sympathetic pragmatism and Phaedra's "mad" wish for nature. This segment of the Greek play, including the nurse's opening long speech, which H.D. skips, as well as her dialogue with Phaedra and some short speeches by Phaedra are in anapestic dimeters, rather than in tragedy's customary iambic trimeter. However, beginning with Phaedra's second speech, her anapests exhibit, as David Kovacs notes, "the Doric alpha associated with lyric delivery, though metrically they are no different from the Nurse's non-lyric anapests" (143). Moreover, Kovacs writes, "lyric delivery is often associated with delirium . . . and although Phaedra's lines are spoken, the Doric vocalism may help to suggest an abnormal state of mind" (143). When then H.D. translates this half-lyric exchange, she too shifts her translation's rhythm. The anapests have at least four long syllables (since they are dimeters and one metron is two anapestic feet) and usually more. H.D.'s lines for Phaedra, though not for the nurse, are also longer: in her first and third speeches almost exclusively with four stresses, a pattern otherwise absent in H.D.'s translation. What the nurse and Phaedra share instead in the opening of the dialogue is alliteration, even of the same letter, *h*:

PHAEDRA. Lift my **h**ead, **h**elp me up,
I am *b*ruised, *b*one and flesh;
chafe my white **h**ands, my servants:
this weight about my fore**h**ead?

Ah, my veil—loose it—

spread my **h**air across my *b*reast.

TROPHOS. There, do not start,

child, not toss about;

only *c*alm and **h**igh pride

*c*an **h**elp your **h**urt:

fate tries all alike. (87)

Such alliteration is also present in H.D.'s version of the Parodos above, and will continue throughout the rest of her translation; thus we may assume that here it is a mark of "sanity," of regularity or normalcy, a sense of attunement. For it is at this point that Phaedra's lyric anapests begin in the Greek and after an initial alliterative line, H.D.'s Phaedra disperses, and then drops the alliterations completely, while the nurse picks up on Phaedra's dropped *w* alliteration here and continues the earlier *h* alliteration:

PHAEDRA. Ai, ai! to **d**rink **d**eep

of *s*pring *w*ater

from its *w*hite *s*ource;

ai, ai! for rest—black poplars—

thick grass—sleep.

TROPHOS. *W*hat is this you ask,

*w*ild *w*ords, mad speech—

hide your **h**urt, my **h**eart,

hide your **h**urt

before these servants. (87-88)

H.D.'s strategy for marking Phaedra's lyric anapests also entails moving away both from her initial "tetrameters," or at least from their stress alternation—presumably she is still somewhat "sane" when she asks for her clothes and headdress to be loosened. Once this change is effected externally, it is also completed internally as Phaedra's speech becomes more and more fragmented. Indeed, the extra line H.D. creates in Phaedra's first speech ("Ah, my veil—loose it—"), which breaks her instructions across the line break and even within the line through the dashes, suggests as much. In her second speech Phaedra is shown giving in to this kind of fragmented speaking as her every (monosyllabic) word turns also into a stressed word—even her cry, only present in the beginning of the speech in Euripides, is repeated. We have an intimation of this crowding of stressed syllables again already in the first speech, where there tend to be two consecutive ones in the middle of Phaedra's line, in contrast with the nurse's more spaced-out stresses. When the nurse then refers to Phaedra's speaking, she does so precisely by having four consecutive monosyllabic (and, in theory, stressed) words: "wild words, mad speech."

In her third speech, Phaedra returns to the longer lines used in the first; as in the second, though, the stresses range from two (in the first line, for example) to four stresses per line, but there is progressively less of a concentration than in the second speech as she seems to move into more regular anapests in the second half:

> Take me to the mountains!
> O for woods, pine tracts,
> where hounds athirst for death,
> leap on the bright stags!
> God, how I would shout to the beasts
> with my gold hair torn loose;

I would shake the Thessalian dart,

I would hurl the barbed arrow from my grasp. (88)

While previously her desire broke societal norms, here Phaedra expresses a more dangerous wish: she wants to transform herself into Artemis—from mistress to huntress—in order to be more attractive to Hippolytus. H.D. expresses this crossing of the boundary between mortal and immortal, which she will explore at length in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, through many metrical shifts. From the loosely iambic, mostly stress-based and faintly alliterative first line, most similar to the lines H.D. uses throughout her translation (**T**áke **m**e **t**ó/**t**o the **m**oúntains!); to the crowding of four stresses in five words in the second, which we might also read as a trochee followed by three stressed syllables, a pattern if not typical, at least not unusual in Greek meter (Ó for woóds, píne trácts); to the perfectly iambic third line (where hoúnds athírst for deáth);[8] to the perfectly dactylic fourth line with a spondaic ending, again something very common in Greek dactyls (leáp on the bríght stágs); to the fifth line, which begins spondaically (thus, if read with the preceding line, creating another string of four stresses) and continues anapestically such that the initial spondee can be taken as an anapest with substitution (Gód, hów I would shoút to the beásts); to the two concluding almost perfect anapestic trimeter lines (I would sháke the Thessálian dárt / I would húrl the barbed árrow from my grásp), H.D. would seem to deem madness this metrical undecidability, this mimicking of Greek meters. If H.D. is indeed depicting Phaedra's mental unraveling as a descent into Greek—until finally her Phaedra and Euripides's coincide in the anapest—she mirrors in this way the fact that Phaedra's madness is marked in the Greek through the Doric alpha, that is, through a linguistic device. It is not that she makes no sense (indeed, she does) or that she breaks the meter (she does not) but rather that there

[8] This line, moreover, replicates almost exactly the sounds of the Greek "θηροφόνοι" 'killers of prey/wild beasts' (line 216): *th-r-f*.

is something foreign felt in her native speech—just as there is in H.D.'s English speech (with the metrical shifts and spondees). In this way, we might add, Artemis is specifically figured as Greece itself, something that H.D. will more explicitly do in *Hippolytus Temporizes*.

In her last speech, addressed to Artemis, Phaedra again speaks almost entirely in (stressed) monosyllables, this time ending most of her lines with the double stress we know from the Parodos—what I called the "nature" spondee.

> Ártemis of the sált beách
> ánd of the seá-coást,
> místress of the ráce-coúrse,
> tródden of swíft feét,
> Ó for your flát sánds
> where Í might moúnt
> with goád and whíp
> the hórses of Énetás. (88)

As in the Parodos, here too we sense a shift as soon as Phaedra moves away from the description of the goddess to what she herself asks of her; from three stresses distributed to the beginning (one) and end (two) of each line, we move to two stresses alternating iambically. Already through the anapestic rhythm of the previous speech Phaedra has been moving away from fragmented, stress-crowded lines as H.D. suggests her slow return from "madness," which follows in the untranslated remainder of the scene in Euripides, where Phaedra comes out of her lyric anapests and into regular anapests like the nurse's. The story, then, that the meters have told us so far is similar to Hipparchia's story: as Phaedra's erotic desire for Hippolytus becomes a desire to transform herself into Artemis and thus encodes the desire for a translation of Greece,

the "price" is madness, envisioned here not only as Carson's ruin of "the formal beauty of our line of verse" but as a pounding repetition that obliterates difference. Whether this is the necessary discord of Eros or the arrhythmia induced by his absence is what *Hippolytus Temporizes*—where Artemis is a more explicit dramatization of the death drive, the striving for the inorganic—will seek to determine.

3. Darts and Wings of Discord

Anne Carson has beautifully summarized the remarkably consistent negative depiction of Eros and his effects in ancient Greek poetry:

> The poets represent eros as an invasion, an illness, an insanity, a wild animal, a natural disaster. His action is to melt, break down, bite into, burn, devour, wear away, whirl around, sting, pierce, wound, poison, suffocate, drag off or grind the lover to a powder. Eros employs nets, arrows, fire, hammers, hurricanes, fevers, boxing gloves or bits and bridles in making his assault. . . . He lights on you from somewhere outside yourself and, as soon as he does, you are taken over, changed radically. You cannot resist the change or control it or come to terms with it. It is in general a change for the worse, at best a mixed blessing. (148)

Euripides in his *Hippolytus* forms no exception to this "standard attitude and conviction" (148). His first stasimon, H.D.'s fourth section, describes in the first strophic pair the effects of Eros (strophe a, split by H.D. into two stanzas), his complete power over humans even compared to other gods (antistrophe a), and gives examples of such power in the second: Herakles's rape of Iole (strophe b) and Zeus's of Semele (antistrophe b). H.D. intensifies even Euripides's description, preparing her treatment of the Hippolytus myth in *Hippolytus Temporizes*. In the

second strophe she presents Iole (unnamed, as in the Greek) as Artemis/Hippolytus (that girl, / chaste— / a wild colt, / mateless, uncaught") who is forcefully corrupted, transformed into a "bacchante" by Herakles with Aphrodite's permission.[9] In H.D.'s version of the second antistrophe, we learn that Aphrodite is even responsible for Bacchus himself, having contributed to the necessity of Bacchus's double birth. In Euripides, Aphrodite gives Semele as bride to "thunder" and so in a sense betrays her, leaves her to be killed by Zeus; H.D., however, turns Aphrodite into Zeus, making her (rather than Zeus's own appearance as god) directly responsible for Semele's death, almost in defiance of Zeus:

> you can tell how Kupris strikes:
> for with thunder-bolt,
> alight at both points,
> she slew the mother of Bacchus,
> child of Zeus! (90)

Eros thus sets both gods' and men's affairs out of joint, and in fact this out-of-jointedness is what binds them, according to this version of the stasimon. H.D. will further explore this theme in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, excluding only one god, Artemis, from Eros's thrall.

Let us, however, look more closely at how Eros is introduced in the first strophe. H.D. omits the Greek chorus's double invocation of "Eros," choosing to address him once as "Spirit" in her first line and name him only at the end of her strophe.[10]

> O Spirit,
> spark by spark,

[9] Similarly, when H.D. later compares Aphrodite to a "bee in flight," inciting "all to evil" (90), she echoes the bee mentioned "swirl[ing] across" Hippolytus's wild garden in the play's opening, intimating that even in his chaste abode, in his supposedly pure adoration of Artemis, discord has already introduced its darts.
[10] In Greek the word "Eros" does reappear in the last line, but is the first and not the last word.

you instill fire

through the sight:

to hearts you attack

you grant rare happiness!

Do not front me with grief,

yourself discord manifest!

For neither lightning-shaft

nor yet stars shot

from a distant place

can equal the love-dart,

sped from your hands,

child of God, Eros. (88-89)[11]

Taking her cue from a single Greek word, ἄρρυθμος, which regardless of meaning, echoes the word *Eros*, H.D. inextricably links Eros to sound, establishing him as a sound effect. First, she builds up to the revelation of Eros's name through sound. Registering the effect of the "Eros" repetition in the Greek, as well as that of the *r*/*s* sounds, which then echo in "πυρὸς" 'fire' and "ἄστρων" 'stars' (line 530), H.D. varies "spirit" into "spark," thus linking it up with "fire" in English as well. The sound of "spark" echoes throughout this first translated strophe, first in "att-

[11] In Greek:

Ἔρως Ἔρως, ὁ κατ᾽ ὀμμάτων
στάζων πόθον, εἰσάγων γλυκεῖαν
ψυχᾷ χάριν οὓς ἐπιστρατεύσῃ,
μή μοί ποτε σὺν κακῷ φανείης
μηδ᾽ ἄρρυθμος ἔλθοις.
οὔτε γὰρ πυρὸς οὔτ᾽ ἄστρων ὑπέρτερον βέλος,
οἷον τὸ τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας ἵησιν ἐκ χερῶν
Ἔρως ὁ Διὸς παῖς. (525–32)

ack," and then in "sh-aft" and "d-art," before its *r* gets lodged in its rightful place: the name "Eros," in which these two stanzas culminate. Rather than name Eros like the Greek, H.D. reveals him, remotivating his name; after essentially inverting it in her first line (**O S**p**ir**it), she describes Eros's actions, then his function, and then particular examples of his effects before finally naming him.

The Greek chorus ask Eros not to come ἄρρυθμος (line 529), translated by Kovacs positively (and redundantly) as "nor ever come but in due measure and harmony." The primary meaning of this relatively infrequent word is given in Liddell-Scott—the standard dictionary that Benveniste specifically names as neglecting the original meaning of ῥυθμός—as "unrhythmical" and by extension, "ungraceful"; as an example of its metaphorical usage, Liddell-Scott cites this *Hippolytus* passage and translates it as "in undue measure." We have already seen that this is precisely how Eros comes and, in fact, the chorus's wish is belied by their very language: though this stasimon begins with four identical lines (anacrustic glyconics), it has a greater assortment of meters than, for example, the next stasimon, as the glyconics are followed by logaoedic, pherecratean, iambic, and anapestic metra. Fittingly, the song in H.D.'s version does not have a consistent measure either as it sonically tracks Eros's activities. The first stanza has two stresses per line until the line where Eros's "discord" is mentioned that has, appropriately, four (it is worth noting too that the line preceding it consists of two anapests, unlike anything before it); this oscillation, mostly between two and three stresses though sometimes jumping up to four and down to one, and between a stress-based and a stress-syllable based meter continues in the next stanza cited above, as well as in the rest of the stasimon.

H.D.'s chorus seems to keep Euripides's apparently musical term ἄρρυθμος when it pleads with Eros to "not front me with grief, / yourself discord manifest!". But this is an odd

translation. First, it interprets the privative *a* in Greek as *dis*(cord). Arrhythmia as the absence of rhythm would be even more negative; discord retains some reference to concord, some sense of measure, suggesting that if one note were changed, harmony might ensue. At the same time, by choosing "cord" rather than "measure" to render this mention of ῥυθμός, H.D. repeats the etymological history of the Greek word since, after all, "concord" initially had nothing to do with music, referring instead to the unity of hearts (*corda* in Latin, καρδίαι in Greek). In so doing, she reveals the absurdity of the chorus's wish since, almost by definition, Eros brings about the disunion of hearts, or of one heart with itself. As Anne Carson, writes, "The Greek word *eros* denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for that which is missing'"; since, then, "[i]t is by definition impossible for [the lover] to have what he wants if, as soon as it is had, it is no longer wanting," the erotic story must always be a triangulated one, "in which lover, beloved and the difference between them interact" (10, 169). This third component, whether it is represented as a rival or some other kind of obstacle, "plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros" (16). The chorus seem to realize this, too, and know, thus, that their previous plea was futile since in the next stanza—and I think H.D. splits the strophe for this reason—they go on to claim that Eros always comes in excess of, or eluding what we could conceivably know or measure; he is an "ὑπέρτερον βέλος" (line 530), a shaft or arrow that exceeds the power of stars or fire. H.D.'s line "[Do not] yourself discord manifest" is ambiguous enough, moreover, that it might also suggest that what Eros does is not produce discord but reveal that it is already there. Eros would, then, draw attention to the fact that one does not need to be struck by him, Eros capitalized, to live in such a triangulated world, but that eros, the distance that name or force stands for and seeks to both overcome and maintain, is already there.[12]

[12] See also Anne Carson, who locates the "erotic ruse" at the basis of thinking: "In any act of thinking, the mind

By avoiding the terms *rhythm* and *measure*, H.D. also moves the concept of ῥυθμός (negated in Euripides) away from the realm of meter, with which our *rhythm* is more closely tied, towards that of rhyme, loosely conceived as the repetition of sound, where the notion of accord or discord seems more readily applicable. We have already seen that Phaedra's attunement to her everyday, human, world is registered through alliteration, while her attraction to Artemis specifically was marked through metrical inconsistency and through the absence of the stress alternation thought to be so crucial for English verse. While the absence of rhythm would suggest that the repetition and alternation of discrete units is not proceeding in accordance with an identifiable or intended set pattern—either lacking in repetition or having it in excess, thus being "monotonous"— the absence of accord from rhymes is, to some extent, always a given. Rhyme manifests discord with its accord since it is only a part (of a syllable, a word, a line) that is repeated and matches up; even in the case of word rhymes, the lines which these words conclude are not identical.[13] Its "identification" thus necessitates a constant simultaneous progressive and regressive movement that allows one to discern a pattern that might or might not be strictly repetitive or "rhythmical"; a pattern that is, in theory, always subject to change with the addition of a new sound element that allows what has preceded to be arranged in a different

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must reach across this space between known and unknown, linking one to the other but also keeping visible their difference. It is an erotic space. . . . When the mind reaches out to know, the space of desire opens and a necessary fiction transpires" (171).

[13] The very definition of meter rests on recurrence and, more precisely, on the tightening in the recurrence of elements that occur naturally in language. As Paul Kiparsky and Kristin Hanson explain, meter "is defined by the regular recurrence of just those linguistic equivalences which measure intervals and distinguish prominence in the rhythmic structure of language," that is, which play role in grammar ("Prosimetrum" 32). That is, meter "imposes on language a set of constraints which require the regular recurrence of some subset of these prosodic constituents [e.g., mora, syllable, or foot] and prominence categories [e.g., stress, weight, or strength], beyond what arises naturally in the surface forms of the language, and across all the language of a poetic text rather than only within words, thus heightening the rhythm of the language" ("Prosimetrum" 25). In contrast, rhyme and alliteration—which Hanson and Kiparsky see as merely "add[ing] complexity to verse forms involving other structural constraints"—require equivalences in kind (that is, in a portion of syllable structure) and to become principles of verse structure, the interval between them must be measured by another element since, unlike prominence which is defined by a given language, the "intervals at which [rhyme and alliteration] recur are not naturally regular in language" (32–33). H.D. , in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, will have eros determine the intervals and liberate rhyme from meter.

constellation. Eros would involve the revelation, the manifestation of a pattern always disrupted, or about to be, and starting anew, a pattern that we don't know how to read until it is no longer there. Through "discord," then, H.D. offers an alternative reading of the Euripidean turn of phrase, pushing *rhythm* back towards its original sense by preferring over the implied repetition of structure the imprecise repetition of sound; this is something that she will explore and exploit more fully in *Hippolytus Temporizes*. As a result, however, she also leaves the notion of arrhythmia out of the picture; it too will return, in the form of Artemis, in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, where it will suggest a formlessness, a lack of separating "edges" to use Carson's term, that might be equivalent to death, and of which we have had a presentiment here is the monotonous double stresses of nature.

The chorus begin the second stasimon, H.D.'s Section V, by elaborating on their earlier plea for escape from Eros's discord: they specifically repurpose the vocabulary of darting and flight used earlier to describe his actions. The previous section in H.D. ends with the image of a "bee in flight" and this one begins with the chorus's wish for wings:

> O for wings,
> swift, a bird,
> set of God
> among the bird-flocks!
> I would dart
> from some Adriatic precipice,
> across its wave-shallows and crests,
> to Eradanus' river-source;
> to the place

where his daughters weep,

thrice-hurt for Phaeton's sake,

tears of amber and gold which dart

their fire through the purple surface. (90)

To draw the connection between the two stasima even more clearly (of course in Euripides an entire scene has intervened), H.D. does not translate the first line of the Greek, which evokes a cavernous and mountainous landscape ("the secret clefts of the mountains," as Kovacs translates it), where the chorus would like to be. She instead conveys the vertiginousness of the landscape by translating the later "ἀκτή" not as "coast" but as "precipice," and, when referring to the "wave," by using the word "crest" that can indicate the top of either a wave or a hill. Moreover, by using the word "dart" twice in this strophe—a word so associated with Eros in the previous stasimon—H.D. binds the two even more strongly than the Greek allows, at least linguistically. The first time she resorts to "dart" may be because it sounds like the Greek "ἀρθείην" 'rise or lift up' (line 735); the second it translates "σταλάσσουσ'" 'dripping' (738), but may have been chosen because it sounds like the noun this participle controls, "δακρύων" 'tears' (740).[14] What the chorus want to see in their different avian darting—even if their bird would have to be "set of God" like Eros (who was "God's son" earlier)—is the transformation of Eros's discord, of his burning love-dart (Phaethon's death by thunderbolt) and the sorrow it causes, into beauty, into something light-giving.

H.D.'s second stanza makes this even clearer:

[14] Behind these strange lines is the legend that, as Kovacs informs us, "Phaethon's sisters, in grief for his fall, were changed into amber-dropping trees." The word by Euripides to describe this is an hapax legomenon, "ἠλεκτροφαεῖς" (line 741), meaning "amber-gleaming." The movement H.D. presents is quite different from what the Greek describes, where tears simply drip, rather than dart fire, from the girls' eyes into the waves (the "purple surface" in H.D., to echo "πορφύρεον" 'purple' (738), but also for the sake of initial rhyme, pur-sur, no doubt). It seems that the daughters in H.D. may be mourning Phaethon, but not necessarily as sisters—at least that is what the words "dart" and "fire" tell us—as if they too are relics of a passion that did not end well.

I would seek
the song-haunted Hesperides
and the apple-trees
set above the sand-drift:
there the god
of the purple marsh
lets no ships pass;
he marks the sky-space
which Atlas keeps—
that holy place
where streams,
fragrant as honey,
pass to the couches spread
in the palace of Zeus:
there the earth-spirit,
source of bliss,
grants the gods happiness. (90-91)

The chorus seek refuge in the garden of the Hesperides, essentially the gods' paradise; they are, of course, misguided since according to their own words throughout the play, gods are no more exempt from the destructive power of Eros than men. Yet it is crucial that the antidote, or hoped-for alternative to the discord of Eros, are the "song-haunted Hesperides" (in Greek they are called "singers," line 743). The implication is that here, where the darting of Eros has been left behind or transformed, regular song and rhythm are possible, if not actual—the absence of Eros

is, as his presence was earlier, translated into poetic or musical terms. Again, as we might expect, the very sonic form of the strophes offers confirmation: this first optative strophic pair—the pair of harmony— is relatively homogeneous metrically in Greek, while the second, which returns to Phaedra's suffering is again a medley of meters, marking discord. Yet as in the previous stasimon, there is no consistent stress pattern in H.D.'s translation; in each of her stanzas H.D. makes use of one-, two-, three- and four-stress lines; two consecutive stresses appear quite frequently in all positions in the line. What tightens this song, and in particular its first two stanzas, is once again the very strong sound-patterning, here amplified by what almost becomes a regular rhyme scheme in the Hesperides stanza/antistrophe, as well as alliterations and assonances that serve to tie important words together.[15] The second strophic pair, in contrast, loses almost all of this intricate patterning; we seem to be back in the human domain.

Let us, for brevity's sake, look only at the ends of lines. In the antistrophe we begin with "seek," which assonates with "Hesperides," which then properly rhymes with "trees" on the next line; this sound is picked up six lines down in "keeps" and repeated two lines after with "streams," then "honey." In-between we have "drift" and "god," which both end with coronal plosives (*t* is unvoiced, *d* voiced); then "purple marsh" and "ships pass" which almost rhyme, and, if the word pairs are taken as "compounds," share many of the same consonants between them; then, before the return of the long *e*, we have "space," which after the *e* perfectly rhymes with "place." "Honey" is followed by the "spread"–"spirit" pair, another voiced-unvoiced couple, but this time the words are even closer sonically, sharing the rest of their consonants and more related vowels (*e* and *i* closer than *i* and *o*). The stanza concludes with a triplet of *s* slant rhymes (that echo the "pass"–"marsh" pair): "Zeus"–"bliss"–"happiness." So, if we allow for all

[15] H.D. also tries to replicate (harmonize with?) Euripides's particular sounds here. Like the Greek, she often begins her lines with two unstressed syllables and inserts (and sometimes ends with) choriambs.

these multiple relationships the scheme that emerges is: aa!a!bbccd!ad!aabcbcc, with the exclamation marks denoting the "true" rhymes.

Now, H.D.'s first stanza, her rendering of the strophe, is dominated by *s* endings, perhaps to emulate the whizzing and whirring of the birds: the *z* of "wings" turning first into the soft *s* of "swift" and "set" in the beginnings of the lines that follow it, before moving to the end of the line with "flocks," "precipice," "source," "place," "surface." It is not insignificant that it is *s* (voiced and unvoiced) that provides the full rhyme sounds in the next stanza to remind us that we are still in this optative domain of birds and flight. The *s* is less strongly felt in the second strophic pair, echoing in the strophe in "mistress," "unhappiness," "palace" and "Athens"—words that specifically contrast that world of the Hesperides—and culminating in "auspice," a bird word,[16] that translates the equally sibilant Greek "δύσορνις." Their wish not granted, the chorus are now merely looking at birds and reading them—as they had read Eros before—as "evil" (91). In the second antistrophe, the *s* is almost abandoned, appearing only in "mistress" for a second time and, crucially, in "Kupris," who is once again revealed, sonically if not verbally, as the source of the auspice and of the real "bird" or dart flying. The absence of discord then is found to be an illusion, yet another of Eros's ruses.[17] H.D. thus uses English to produce effects that highlight a reading definitely allowed by the Greek (hence all of the bird words in strophe b, which H.D. does not translate precisely because she aurally produces their effect) but enclosed in that central contradictory bird word, waiting to be interpreted—waiting, like the words Julia pores over in *Bid Me to Live*, to be hatched. The mention of the couch of Zeus, it should be noted, is in all likelihood a reference to his first meeting with Hera that was supposed to have taken place in this

[16] "Auspice" is derived from the Latin "auspex," which in turn is made up of avis 'bird' and specere 'to look'.
[17] See Anne Carson for the strong association of Eros with wings—" an instrument of damage and a symbol of irresistible power"—in ancient Greek poetry, especially pp. 49, 155–56, and for her illuminating discussion of Plato's reimagining of this topos in the *Phaedrus*, 157–63.

garden, so that already we have a subtle introduction of passion—and strife—in the very place where peace ought to rule.

In H.D.'s last section (VII), the fourth stasimon, the chorus once again extol the power of Kupris despite the tragedy it has caused (which here remain unmentioned—we thus never hear of Hippolytus's and Phaedra's fates in H.D.'s sequence). The potentially violent force of Eros, presented now as an enticing being, "χρυσοφαής" 'gold-gleaming' (1275) and "ποικιλόπτερος" 'one with wings of changeful hue' (1270), that swiftly surrounds the men and gods he attacks (the verb is "ἐφορμάσῃ" 'arouse against or rush upon, attack') is acknowledged as supreme. H.D. translates "ἐφορμάσῃ" with the usual "dart," this time referring not to arrows, but to Eros's "gold wings," and thus explicitly unites the images of the first and second stasima. Eros's activity is here extended to all living things and H.D. almost makes Eros synonymous with Helios; in the Greek, Eros affects all that the sun does, which H.D. heightens by using the same word, "light," for both, referring to Eros's "wings' swift / interplay of light" (her unusual translation of "ποικιλόπτερος") and to Helios as being "fiery with light" (93). H.D then closes her translation by calling Kupris "alone" the "creator of all life"—a characterization added on to Euripides's statement that she "reign[s] absolute"—thus making explicit the identification of Eros with the Freudian life force (93). There is no reason H.D. should have ended with this stasimon. She could have included Hippolytus's dying song, as she did with Iphigeneia, or the chorus's final anapests. That she does not gives us a clue as to where she will take this next, in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, where the god present opposite Artemis is not Aphrodite, but Apollo, Helios. The comparison with Helios, so consistently identified with song in H.D.'s writings, together with the concluding emphasis on the beauty of Eros, as well as his creative, rather than simply destructive potential—creative precisely in the midst of the discord he manifests—is the first articulation of

a struggle that H.D. will return to again and again in her novels of the 1920s: the painful persistence in writing, and translating, poetry despite great external and internal strife, despite traumas, cultural and personal, brought on by the war and an inner resistance to an art that sometimes seemed illusory and treacherous, or too closely tied to the world that World War had erased. It is this struggle that will find its clearest expression and seeming resolution almost twenty years later, in H.D.'s translation of Euripides's *Ion*.

Song-Haunted Hippolytus

1. Keeping the Print

Hippolytus Temporizes, published in 1927, does not claim to be a translation, but rather a version, following perhaps in the tradition of nineteenth-century Greek-inspired dramas by Shelley and Swinburne. H.D.'s own poems of the 1920s, especially in 1924's *Heliodora*—for example, her four meditations on Sappho fragments, "Heliodora," "Lais," and "Nossis"—follow a similar path, taking inspiration from Greek materials, but not presenting translations. H.D. prefaces her *Hippolytus* with the customary note providing the summary or, as she calls it, the "Argument" of the tragedy as one already known, "the familiar story of Theseus of Athens," and thus in a sense dispenses with it—the plot, as in H.D.'s understanding of tragedy, a translation of old symbols and ideas, a familiar story that she does not need to retell it "accurately." She situates herself in time with respect to the play: after noting that Hippolytus "inflames" Phaedra, she writes, "How Hippolytus returns the affection so secretly and tragically bestowed has become a legend, the prototype of unrequited passion for many centuries" (7). Though each of her introductory paragraphs insists in this way on the traditional weight of this play, at the very end she hints at what she has added to it: "The boy, as tradition has always maintained, in a

frenzied drive along an infuriated seacoast, is broken and mercilessly battered by the waves. The consequence of his death to two of the Olympians is here set forth in the final act of this tragedy, HIPPOLYTUS TEMPORIZES" (7). In her play H.D. continues to explore the same issues as in her choruses from *Hippolytus*, but she externalizes and presses, as it were, all that was there left unsaid, exposing the underside, the unconscious of Euripides's play, while also debating the larger significance of its questions. It is a translation in the vein of H.D.'s conception of tragedies themselves as translations—a translation that allows for the emergence of Euripides's "metres" beyond his words and plot and that is guided by the thought of arrhythmia that H.D. herself had not quite addressed in her earlier version.

Yet H.D. begins her *Hippolytus Temporizes* not with the play, or with its "Argument," but with a poem of the same title; in 1950 H.D. wrote that it was this poem, published in 1921, that inspired the play (*H.D. by Delia Alton* 221).[18] "Hippolytus Temporizes" is dated and "located": "Isles of Greece, Spring 1920"—this is the present out of which the "tradition" and "legend" mentioned in the "Argument" that follows are interpreted, according to which they are temporized. The poem, however, has no direct reference to Hippolytus or to particular goddesses, so only its title directs us to its relation to the myth. As will become clear though, the poem develops themes already broached in the *Hippolytus* choruses translation and acts as a reading guide for the play.

The curious feature of this poem is that each of its four stanzas consists of a first line that is followed by between eight and eleven lines all placed in parentheses. All first lines begin the same way, with "I worship," those of first and last stanzas being identical ("I worship the

[18] It is worth noting that H.D. had also written three other poems on the Hippolytus theme, dramatic monologues focusing on Hippolyta, Hippolytus's Amazon mother, and Phaedra; two were published in journals in 1920 and all three in book form, in *Hymen*, in 1921. Lyon discusses the *Hippolytus* choruses translation, 58–65, noting differences (mostly in terms of plot and presentation emphases) from *Hippolytus Temporizes*, and the other poems related to Hippolytus, 65–80, putting together the narrative and characters of the poems, choruses, and final play.

greatest first"), while that of the second differs in word order ("I worship first the great") and that of the third introduces new elements ("I worship the feet, flawless"). A contrast is set up between the chaste declaration of worship in each stanza's beginning, suggesting that the poem is addressed to a goddess, and the very sensual descriptions of the female body that follow in the parentheses; the first stanza focuses on the woman's flesh and her body as a whole, the second on the eyes, the third on feet, and the fourth on the effects the previous three have on the speaker. Primed by Euripides's play, where Artemis and Aphrodite are sharply distinguished rhetorically, but blurred imagistically, and by her own translation which shows Eros always lurking even in the purest places, H.D. here uncovers the eroticism hidden, sublimated we might say, in every supposedly innocent declaration of devotion.[19] This is what her play repeatedly shows and why it culminates in a night of passion between Phaedra and a deceived Hippolytus who takes her for Artemis—this is her major departure from the customary myth, which she nonetheless does not even mention in her "Argument," seeing it presumably as only the realization of a fantasy harbored already by Euripidean Hippolytus. The sexual and autobiographical aspects of her treatment of the Hippolytus myth have been discussed elsewhere, so I will not be dealing with them here.[20] I instead want to focus on what I see as a continued though oblique engagement through Greek tragedy with the, for H.D., interrelated questions of the nature and role of poetry, and of the relation between antiquity and modernity. It is not an accident that in the "Argument" H.D. singles out as her contribution to the development of the myth not the scandalous fulfillment of the main characters' passions, but her third act, the scene between the gods (who in

[19] See Lyon for a neat attempt to sort out who the female figure is (Artemis or Phaedra) by tracing each of the poem's images to H.D.'s other poems on this topic, as well as to the later play; he concludes that even with such scrutiny, the poem remains ambiguous and, as might be expected, the two female types are confused. Without the play, he writes, we could only say that "Hippolytus turns aside from his chastity and has a passionate sexual experience with a woman of puzzlingly ambiguous identity—who could be Artemis herself, who could be Phaedra, who could be still a third figure, with some attributes of both Artemis and Phaedra" (77).
[20] See Gregory, Laity (90–106), and Lyon.

Greek tragedies are almost never allowed to converse, acting instead as bookmarks for the plays).

The poem's first stanza contains three images of one material covering another but, as the central metaphor of the sandy beach shows, allowing the one covered to show through underneath, or even shape, its cover:

> I worship the greatest first—
> (it were sweet the couch,
> the brighter ripple of cloth
> over the dipped fleece;
> the thought: her bones
> under the flesh are white
> as sand which along a beach
> covers but keeps the print
> of the crescent shapes beneath:
> I thought:
> between cloth and fleece,
> so her body lies.) (3)

The image H.D. starts with, though, is that of the couch, made of fleece and covered by cloth: the speaker literally sees one texture, that of fleece, giving shape, form, to the one which covers it. From this the speaker jumps not to a simple description of a body presumably lying on the couch—that fact is never established—but to an analogy for the relation between the woman's bones and flesh, which is then further compared to the way the underlying harder material of the beach shapes the sand that sits on top. Yet this second analogy is introduced in such a manner

("her bones . . . are white as sand") that it seems it should be applied the other way around: that is, that the bones are the sand and the flesh the crescent shapes, which of course makes no sense. By presenting it in this complicated way and forcing us to read the supposedly illuminating analogy backwards (and to then try to disentangle it), H.D. also forces us to experience what she is talking about: in reading the covering, the sand, we literally see, read the bones, the composite "structure" (or super-structure since this is two analogies in one) rather than the parts. By stanza's end what had been an analogy turns out to have been epiphany: suddenly between the fleece-cloth composite, the bone-flesh composite, her body, appears—maybe. Whether it does depends on how we read "so": is it that her body, that which is defined by the interplay of bone and flesh, "lies," *is* as the space between cloth and fleece (an analogy again), or is the "so" redundant, the sentence simply saying that her body lies between cloth and fleece? Presence or absence? And, since this analogy literally offers us a visual representation of how the whole poem works (beneath every declarative sentence, a parenthesis): beneath every devout proclamation, a memory or repressed fantasy of a sexual encounter?

I called the beach analogy the central one because it is the first to clarify the exact surface-underlayer relation as that of an underlying, harder structure that remains visible and shapes a more fluid and perhaps transient cover. It thus specifies that relation, it seems to me, as one of a palimpsest: something that retains or preserves an earlier structure under a newer one, the result of a double process of preservation and erasure. The palimpsest becomes of course a very important metaphor for H.D. in the 1920s; in 1926 she publishes three novellas, the first being "Hipparchia," in a single volume by that name.[21] It is, then, no accident that the word used

[21] For a discussion of the notion of "palimpsest" in H.D. see Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 29ff., who speaks of H.D.'s "palimpsest of disaster" involving "the interconnected shock waves brought on by war, death, and betrayal in love" (29).

in this poem is "print" since it takes us directly into the realm of writing and text. This "transport" is reinforced by the fact that the other analogy involves cloth (though the mention of cloth on its own might have seemed insufficient) and if we draw the line from one image to the other, it is the cloth onto which the "shapes beneath"—in this case, the fleece—are printed. H.D. opens *Palimpsest* with the following definition of the word: "παλίμψηστος: a palimpsest, i.e., a parchment from which one writing has been erased to make room for another." The striking difference between the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definitions and H.D.'s, the new consideration she introduces, is the idea of "making room"; rather than presenting a fact or situation of forceful erasure, of "conquest" or destruction, she suggests a gentler, more symbiotic relationship between the two writings. She does not say that the other, newer writing will be written, will take place, but shows the erasure of the old as the condition of possibility of the new, without emphasizing the mixed product that will be the result of this process: a making room without guarantee of the success of future writing. By making this poem the frontispiece of her adaptation, H.D. no doubt ties it to her particular perspective on the Euripidean play as she further explores the blurring of the distinction between desire and chastity, Aphrodite and Artemis. But she also puts the very question of textual relation at the center; the poem is not only the germ of the play thematically but a kind of translator's manifesto. And the palimpsestic relation H.D. argues for here is, as this first convoluted stanza shows, not a simple one, not a matter of erasing the top layer and finding the one below, or even of being able to accurately trace the contours of the latter through the former, but rather a groping of one's way through a maze of analogies, mirrorings, and echoes. If, that is, her central (textual) metaphor in this first stanza works by reversal and complication, if that is how we experience what H.D. is talking about in this first stanza, won't her play too also in some sense reverse the terms of its Greek

original, not to cover it up or to obscure it but precisely to make it more visible? Will it not be a translation, an adaptation that is neither free nor not-free?

Though the analogies of the first stanza do not explicitly reappear in the rest of the poem, they leave their mark. The word "beneath" appears in all but one stanza, for a total of four times. Now, the poem has an iambic rhythm, usually with three stresses per line; sometimes when there is a line with two stresses, there is also a line with four to compensate. "Beneath" after its first appearance is used in constructions that disrupt the iambic flow; that is, H.D. places words that begin with stressed syllables next to it, creating a spondee in the middle of the line, as though "beneath" awakens some other rhythm. As soon as it is uttered, something unexpected or previously hidden makes itself heard: the possibility of two stressed syllables placed next to each other that sounds so forced in English, the clustering of stresses that in H.D.'s *Hippolytus* choruses marked in Phaedra the arrhythmia possibly induced by Eros.

"Rhythm" too appears in this poem, in the most irregular stanza, the third. Stanza three not only has a completely different opening and a parenthesis that begins on the third rather than the second line, it also keeps the trimeter intact in only four of its ten lines (1, 5, 6, 8) while there are three lines with two stresses (2, 9, 10) and, correspondingly, three with four (3, 4, 7):

> I worship the feet, flawless,
> that haunt the hills—
> (ah, sweet, dare I think
> beneath fetter of golden clasp,
> of the rhythm, the fall and rise
> of yours, carven, slight
> beneath straps of gold that keep

their slender beauty caught,

like wings and bodies

of trapped birds.)

We also have here the first line in the poem with a feminine ending ("flawless"), as well as more instances of consecutive stresses albeit usually separated by a comma ("ah, sweet, dare," "of yours, carven"), though twice—and I think tellingly—not: "beneath fetter" and "beneath straps." Quite appropriately in the oppositional terms of this poem, and of the play as a whole, it is in a stanza specifically about constraint that the rhythmical-metrical constraint according to which the poem has functioned so far is broken; as the speaker envisions caught, trapped Artemis's footsteps at the origin of rhythm (an image that the drama will continually return to), connecting metrical with actual feet, arrhythmia makes itself felt.

2. The "Thread-bare Plot"

Hippolytus Temporizes has been treated as an adaptation, not a palimpsest: H.D. takes the myth of Hippolytus from Euripides and changes it to some extent to fit her own life.[22] At every turn, however, as I show in what follows, she specifically refers to and overwrites or reverses Euripides's *text*, consistently borrowing images and sounds from the Greek choruses. This is especially true in her depiction of Phaedra and Eros, which is perhaps not surprising given that these were the thematic focus of her earlier translations. But she also thematically and performatively brings the question of poetry and its possibility to the foreground as she had already begun to do, taking her cue from Euripides, in the choruses.

[22] For this autobiographical reading and for a comparison with *Bid Me to Live*, see Lyon.

For instance, Artemis's chorus of virgin maidens, who died before being struck by love, describe "love" exactly as the Greek had Eros, though from the opposite perspective:

> Never to us apart
> did love thwart
> body and soul and mind
> with poisonous dart,
> searing our happiness,
> marring content,
> tearing the heart. (121)

Deceitful, poisonous love breaks one up into parts, whereas the maidens retain their ghostly wholeness, and their purity—they are all of one part in their death. Indeed, when Helios interrupts them, he seems to refer to a preservation of a kind of pious rhythm, suggesting that they are the equivalent of the song-haunted Hesperides.

> True,
> you are right,
> there is an ecstasy
> in hope,
> in these still forms,
> in this stern dance,
> in pious feet. (123)

That these maidens in their few appearances are truly a chorus, standing out even in a play of richly-patterned sound because of the consistency of their rhythm and rhyming only reinforces this suspicion. Their lines are generally of uniform length with only two primary stresses, usually

placed at the beginning and end; as the play progresses, their stanzas increasingly rhyme more and more, sometimes using slant rhymes, or the same rhyme sound throughout (as is the case in the stanza just cited).

But, as in the Euripidean Hesperides stasimon, and especially in H.D.'s translation, the promise of the Hesperides was sonically undermined from within, here too the maidens' song has a counterpart in yet another prominent figure of the Euripidean choruses, who is here ambiguously realized. H.D. introduces the character of a shipwrecked Cyprian boy that unwittingly plays the part of Eros, acting as an intermediary between Hippolytus and Phaedra, whom he takes for Artemis; his confusion partly stems from the fact that he does not see a difference between Artemis and his local goddess, the always-unnamed Aphrodite.[23] The boy's speeches are all songs, frequently in three-line stanzas with very clear rhyme schemes (pp. 59-60, 66-67, 69-70)—again something absent from the rest of the play despite its heavy use of rhymes. Phaedra first identifies him as Eros through his singing ("The very song / the boy has sung to us—/ is he not Eros?" [65]), and then encourages him to snare Hippolytus by it: "touch his soul with singing, / sing—" (69). One of the songs he sings, moreover, is an echo of the one Hippolytus sings to Artemis in the opening of Euripides's play (line 73ff.; see my discussion on pp. 210-12 below). Through this re-purposing of the song H.D. starkly shows the all-pervasiveness of Eros, leaving no doubt that Hippolytus's desire for Artemis is erotic and so, to some extent, exonerating Phaedra for her impersonation of the goddess.[24]

[23] Lyon points out that James G. Frazer assimilates Artemis to the fertility goddess Astarte and so "Frazer, like the boy from Cyprus in H.D.'s play, identifies Aphrodite and Artemis"; the boy's view made clear in his sixth song, which was, however, not included in play though it had been written for it (37).

[24] Another alignment of Phaedra with Artemis through a re-purposing of Euripidean lines can be found in the third act, when Helios concludes a long speech to Artemis with the question "what is it?" (107), which he follows up with speculations about what may be bothering Artemis, about "what altar / lacks its altar-cake" (108). He thus recalls the Greek chorus in the Parodos that speculate, with a similar series of questions, about what is torturing Phaedra.

There are also echoes of the Greek when Phaedra describes her old self while she was still on Crete. Yet while in Euripides she reflects on the heavy weight of that self and wants be rid of it, in H.D. she already has:

> αἴρετέ μου δέμας, ὀρθοῦτε κάρα:
> λέλυμαι μελέων σύνδεσμα φίλων.
> λάβετ᾽ εὐπήχεις χεῖρας, πρόπολοι.
> βαρύ μοι κεφαλῆς ἐπίκρανον ἔχειν:
> ἄφελ᾽, ἀμπέτασον βόστρυχον ὤμοις. (198-202)[25]
>
> once I might have been
> proud with gold head-dress
> like a flame-lit flower
> or candle set in some bright altar-niche;
> now I am stricken
> like a flame-struck bough. (52)

As we have seen, in Euripides Phaedra wishes she could sleep outside, have her hair loose and so on (lines 207-211, 215-222, 227-231); what she wishes for there—that is, the entirety of her Doric alpha section of "madness"—appears here in H.D. as orders already given and, crucially, followed through. That is, H.D. has Phaedra's nurse, Myrrhina, report all the preparations that have been undertaken for Phaedra to sleep outdoors (with Theseus's permission even) as though she has already said it. And indeed, she has said it, not only in Euripides, but in H.D.'s Euripides; to reinforce this sense of dialogue with the earlier text(s), H.D. hews to Euripides very closely, but as description, not expression of mad wish. When Myrrhina says that Theseus allowed

[25] I have already cited H.D.'s translation above.

Phaedra to "sleep by the cold water here," we hear "πῶς ἂν δροσερᾶς ἀπὸ κρηνῖδος / καθαρῶν ὑδάτων" (208-9); when she mentions that Phaedra will sleep "in a tent built up of cedar-wood, / hung over and around with canopies," we hear Euripides's Phaedra saying, "ὑπό τ' αἰγείροις ἔν τε κομήτῃ / λειμῶνι κλιθεῖσ' ἀναπαυσαίμαν" (210-11); when Myrrhina asks her, "What madness prompted / these strange fantasies?" she is speaking the same lines as Euripides's nurse: "μανίας ἔποχον ῥίπτουσα λόγον" (214). What in Euripides was madness has here become fact, and this helps us situate where H.D. stands with respect to her original: we do not see a sick and weak Phaedra here, as we do in Euripides's play, but rather one as strong and as intent on pursuing what she wants as Hippolytus.[26] As H.D.'s Phaedra realizes Euripidean Phaedra's wishes, she utters what the other Phaedra did not dare say explicitly though she described it in her "mad speech," where she yearned to hunt and ride horses like Artemis (line 216ff.). Here she boldly impersonates the goddess, claiming to the Cyprian boy/Eros that she has been "too long the mistress / of the stream and forest" (63), and urging him to recognize "that I am Artemis" (64). Yet though she is able to fool both the boy and eventually Hippolytus, when Phaedra supplements her instructions for her tent at seaboard, H.D. gives us an ornate elaboration on Euripidean Phaedra's wishes that is precisely "eastern" and non-Artemisian, thus highlighting the interchangeability or, rather, interpenetration between the two terms of the opposition (Athenian vs. Cretan, Western vs. Eastern, Artemis vs. Aphrodite, Hippolytus vs. Phaedra) that all of the plays' characters, with the exception of the boy, more or less adhere to.[27]

[26] Another example of such a reversal: Phaedra prays to Aphrodite without naming her (53), but H.D. uses a speech that Euripides's nurse makes describing Aphrodite to Phaedra (lines 447ff.), in which she tries to comfort her about falling in love. The roles are reversed here and it is Phaedra that very consciously and defiantly speaks of Aphrodite in praise.

[27] Even Phaedra who bemoans the Athenian world of distinctions (distinct deities with distinct rituals) employs another version of this opposition to distinguish Athens and Crete (49).

For a fascinating account of the role of Crete and Knossos in H.D.'s imaginary and writings during and after the Second World War, see Gere 177–94.

But that, as I intimated earlier, is not, I believe, the focus of *Hippolytus Temporizes*. Hippolytus himself seems to refer to it as a ”thread-bare plot / of love and mischief” upon emerging from Phaedra’s tent after their passionate night together. No longer seeing her as Artemis, he rebuffs her in typical Hippolytian fashion, but seems tired of the very gesture:

> Away,
> and tempt me not,
> for I am tired
> of all this old and worn-out play,
> this thread-bare plot
> of love and mischief. (79)

Of course what we know and Hippolytus does not and what, thus, makes this play different from its older iterations (Euripides, Racine, H.D.’s own translation), is that Phaedra has actually succeeded in tempting Hippolytus. But we are also about to move to the third act, where something other than passion and its fulfillment are at stake.

3. “Feet, Flawless”?

In the beginning of Euripides’s play, the male chorus and Hippolytus address Artemis, and the youth asks her to receive a wreath of flowers he has made for her. In H.D.’s translation of this segment (the first section of the “Choruses”), however, Artemis is greeted twice, once by the chorus and once by Hippolytus; the difference between those two addresses is small, but significant. The chorus name her in the midst of epithets, so that by the time we get to “we greet you” in their song’s sixth line, the list of attributes and names has seemed more like an invocation of the goddess than a greeting; when the greeting comes, it is addressed to “mistress.”

Daemon initiate, spirit
of the god-race, Artemis,
Latona's daughter,
child of Zeus,
of all maids loveliest,
we greet you, mistress:
you dwell in your father's house,
the gold-wrought porches of Zeus,
apart in the depth of space. (85)

Artemis is, moreover, placed at a distance from the chorus since H.D. rearranges the text in a way that gives more prominence to the "ουρανός," the sky or space where Artemis dwells, by placing it at the end of the stanza and qualifying it with descriptors not present in the Greek (for example "depth"). That is, the chorus greet and address her, but she is not with them, she lives in her father's house. In direct contrast, H.D. has Hippolytus repeat the chorus's preceding formulation "of all maids loveliest," but he follows it up with "*I* greet *you*, *Artemis*" (my italics, 85). Moreover, he pronounces a judgment on her loveliness not only above all maids, which can encompass mortal women, but "loveliest upon Olympus," exhibiting precisely the familiarity with her dwelling place that the chorus lacked. It is worth noting, too, that all editions attribute these two lines to the chorus and not to Hippolytus, so this differentiation between the two parties in their relation to Artemis seems to be an intentional misreading of the Greek text on the part of H.D. She also does not translate "εὐσεβοῦς" 'worshipful', 'pious' (line 83) to qualify Hippolytus's hand when he offers Artemis a garland. She replaces it instead with the word "spirit," which she had used of Artemis earlier on. While there is nothing unusual about

Hippolytus referring to his hand as "pious," it is decidedly different when he asks Artemis to see his hands as though they were those of a spirit, as though they belonged to someone of the god-race. The repetition of the word in the first and last lines of this section brings Artemis and Hippolytus together and performs the meaning of the last three lines of Hippolytus's speech, which H.D. does not translate: "I alone of mortals have this privilege: I spend my days with you and speak with you, I hear your voice but never see your face. May I end my life just as I have begun it!" (Kovacs 131). She instead replicates the familiarity that Hippolytus narrates in his mode of address.[28]

It is, however, this conversation between Hippolytus and Artemis that we get in the first act of *Hippolytus Temporizes*; H.D. is interested in what that might look like and how it could be possible. This question is one that Euripides's version provocatively opens up, but does not really explore until Artemis appears at the end, when she gives a long speech and briefly interacts with the dying Hippolytus (lines 1389-1406). This link between god and human is what all of the Greek tragedies point towards, at least in H.D.'s view of the chorus, what they depend on, but do not explicitly address; H.D. takes up this remainder, the parentheses beneath the Greek "argument."

Artemis opens the H.D.'s play with a speech that is in many respects the opposite of Aphrodite's angry prologue in Euripides. She appears not to demand the respect due her, but to hide from it:

> I heard the intolerable rhythm
>
> and sound of prayer,

[28] It is worth noting, too, that when later in the play H.D. echoes Euripidean Hippolytus's opening song, she does not have Hippolytus himself speak it, but rather the Cyprian boy who may be a personification of Eros. The song is precisely a construction of a wreath of sorts, an offering for the queen he is looking for on Hippolytus's behalf; he, of course, ends up finding Phaedra instead.

so I have hidden

where no mortals are,

no sycophant of priest

to mar my ease (8)

Artemis clearly sees no middle ground, no reconciliation possible between mortals and immortals. As in the "Hippolytus Temporizes" poem, the goddess is chased by honor and praise:

someone will come

after I shun this place

and set a circle,

blunt end up,

of stone,

flattened and hewn,

and pile an altar,

but I shall have gone further. (8)

Even those, then, who try the hardest to honor her are bound to fail precisely because in their efforts to praise, they interrupt, disturb divine time ("mar my ease") and because their praise always implicitly (or even explicitly) demands something in return. The rhetoric of hunted versus hunter dominates both Hippolytus's and Artemis's speeches throughout the play, such that H.D. presents us with a chase in which Artemis is not the goddess of the hunt but chased herself, made one with her animals. She is said to "hide," while Hippolytus claims to have found "trace of [her] in the mountain," and declares that the "snare / set for a wild bird / showed who had been there"—that is, that it had almost caught another kind of bird but one whose task it was to make traps fail: "the trap was sprung and the wild bird was free" (10).

Artemis in fact sets up an opposition between the divine and the immortal: the god is one who still maintains a relation to man (and who, as the *Hippolytus* choruses told us, is not immune to Eros), while what Artemis wants is to lose it:

> at just that moment
> as I loose my shape,
> become immortal, evanescent,
> essence of wood-things
> and no more a goddess,
> at just that moment
> when I would attain immortal sustenance
> and gain my rest,
> some prayer arises dimming tree and forest
> and I must answer those who pray the goddess,
> a goddess rise and help
> or slay
> or heal or bless;
> I must retain the god-like attribute
> when such as you appeal;
> ah, you, you most,
> you trap, you trick, you take— (17-18)

H.D. thus reverses the man-god relation as we are accustomed to thinking about it: not men, the playthings of the gods, but god burdened, tricked, trapped by men, more bound by obligation than the men praying to her: "you trick, / you trap, Hippolytus, / a goddess in your snare,"

Artemis keeps repeating (18). Ironically, then, H.D. embodies a goddess, adopts her perspective, in order to present the goddess as one who wants to abandon not only such anthropomorphism, but all ties to the human. Like Aphrodite in Euripides's prologue in this respect, Artemis too is looking for the destruction of the human element:

> I will engage in thought and plot with earth
> how we may best efface
> . . . . . .
> (as islands are sunk
> in overwhelming seas),
> all Grecian cities
> with the wild arbutus
> and the luminous trees. (9)

As H.D.'s earlier translation of the choruses have already told us, Artemis's measure is that of nature.

The human element is repeatedly identified by Artemis by one feature: sound and more specifically, the sound and rhythm of prayer. The man this goddess wants to efface, drown out, and overwhelm with "earth," the man who populates the cities she wants destroyed, is not an unfaithful or an arrogant man, but precisely the faithful man, the priest—and also a musical man. Hippolytus's search for Artemis consists, much like the initial poem, in an incantation. He repeats her name and begins his stanzas with a single word that echoes three or four additional times in separate lines: wild, Artemis, wild, there, there. Sound is, moreover, continually metaphorized as a cutting instrument; it becomes substantial, as, for example, Hippolytus figures Artemis's name as a knife and arrow, tearing both through the air and his heart:

I have cajoled,

implored,

seared the bright air

with your bright name

that like an arrow tears

my heart

to speak it;

I have imperiled,

shamed the very stars

with brighter shaft,

with more imperious flame

of blinding light and fervour,

Artemis— (11)

It is not Artemis herself, but her name, or rather his speaking of her name that is the shaft and flame. In yet another quasi-reversal of Euripides, H.D. borrows here the language of her own translation of *Hippolytus*'s first stasimon discussed above, where it is Eros's "love-dart" and not Artemis's name that exceeds the stars ("For neither lightning-shaft / nor yet stars shot / from a distant place / can equal the love-dart" [*CP* 89]), as though this Hippolytus is consciously writing over the other play's chorus and intertextually asserting his goddess as having priority over Eros (blind perhaps to his own erotic investment in her). As that description arose from the designation of Eros as "ἄρρυθμος," so here the cutting associated with Artemis's name is transferred onto Hippolytus's song itself:

I have inflamed and torn the dispassionate air

with sound of flute

and note of song

and metre— (12)

From the outset, then, human song is linked to excess and violence.

In a perhaps oblique reference back to the decorated ships in *Iphigeneia*, visual art again is said to be impossible to capture the gods—even Hippolytus admits that the statues of Artemis he erects are "lesser":

Witness each copse and glen,

where every time I found you,

I set up

a lesser goddess,

silver-cold

and wrought

by the most exquisite craftsmen— (14)

The hope left open in H.D.'s translation of that play's choruses regarding the potential of song in capturing the gods is re-articulated by Hippolytus here. He imitates bird sounds to try to get closer to Artemis and has "implored" many creatures "for some prayer, / some charm, / some peril to entrap your feet" (10). Even before he states his intention to lure her by "hiss[ing] / like a wood-creature," Artemis has identified his speech as "wood-speech," suggesting he has been quite successful in his imitation of the linnet song ("bird-notes"). His is a siren song of sorts—Artemis herself calls it "madness"—a "peril," an intrigue used for capturing an unwilling victim, for forcing it to come out of hiding, a charm that can work even on a god.[29] We recall here

[29] See also Plato's *Phaedrus* and Anne Carson's discussion of exactly this controlling attitude of the lover, "an attitude whose most striking feature is its determination to freeze the beloved in time" which she compares to a

Iphigeneia's first stasimon, where Paris "[catches] all Olympus / In his bent reeds" (*CP* 76) as H.D. contra Euripides places Paris's music at the start of the Trojan War. Yet the terms become clearer than they were in Paris's "catching": even capturing gods in music would be precisely that: capture, imprisonment, entrapment, containment, not simply imitation. Artemis resists exactly this:

> Alas,
>
> alas,
>
> alas,
>
> I would escape,
>
> myself escape from all men's songs
>
> and praying. (17)

When she defiantly tells Apollo later that she does not love Hippolytus, it is to his song that she has recourse:

> no song of his
>
> lured me
>
> with poignant note;
>
> no shrill song-note
>
> of mine responded to his piercing flute;
>
> no,
>
> I was mute. (119)

---

controlling attitude "available to the reader or writer, who sees in written texts the means to fix words permanently outside the stream of time" (130).

It is the absence of responsion in song, of the attempt towards harmony (bound to fail, of course) that is supposed to prove that "Love has not stayed my wild feet" (118). We recall that in the opening poem's third stanza, love wanted to precisely bind the beloved's feet.

And yet Artemis is not mute. Her telling Hippolytus in Act One that, "No craftsman may imprison / my swift feet—," initiates one of the play's central conversations. Hippolytus, "as a wood-lover," seeks "the very pulse and passion of [her] feet" (14), to find a rhythm that will correspond to or contain them. He insists:

> Nay, wild and sweet,
> but song may yet entrap you,
> fire and rhythm
> may yet contain the ecstasy
> and the heat
> cold like white lightning— (14)

He proves himself right: While Artemis in the beginning of the play commented on him inaudibly and invisibly, speaking mostly in single lines as he called for her with longer speeches, she now enters into a stichomythia of matched couplets with him. Intertwining rhymes, and even identical rhymes, between the two speakers also become more pronounced as H.D. entraps metered tragic dialogue in her unmetered but sonically rich lines, mirroring Hippolytus's snaring of Artemis. Rhyme is what measures their accord or discord:

> *Artemis* You waste your life
> in shadowing Artemis.
>
> *Hippolytus* Can any waste his life

in fervid worship?

Artemis What of the city,

the demands of kingship?

Hippolytus My city is the forest,

I, its high priest—

Artemis There is a goddess

and a priest who frowns—

Hippolytus You have no rival

in the windless towns—

Artemis The streets are fervid,

the town squares are rife—

Hippolytus With what, O mistress,

that concerns our life?

Artemis The streets are rabid

with small talk and dire—

Hippolytus What talk, O queen,
intolerate, white like fire?

Artemis I stand intolerate with disgust,
not hate—

Hippolytus What tale has reached you,
of what wicked thing?

Artemis A tale of Athens' queen,
of Athens' king—

Hippolytus Alas, my dotard sire,
my captured father—

Artemis Beware the capturer
who may snare another— (15-16)

It is Artemis, who introduces the first rhyme, "life," which Hippolytus repeats, and then Artemis rhymes "kingship" with his "worship"; in the next couplet his lines end with consonance (forest / priest), to which she responds with a consonance of her own (goddess / frowns). As soon as he begins the rhymes again with "towns," she returns to her own initial rhyme sound with "rife," a sonic choice which mirrors her resistance to his propositions and her insistence on placing only him in the human world, in the city. He persists by double-rhyming, both giving back "life" and

returning to her earlier "goddess" with "mistress"; she however, continues to rhyme with herself ("rabid" for "fervid") though he interrupts her second line "with small talk and dire—" to rhyme it with "fire." Angered, she returns to his earlier boastful consonance of "forest"/"priest" with the telling "disgust" (15). She once again comes closer to him in sound as well as in subject matter when she agrees to answer his question about the tales she has heard about his father: in one couplet she both repeats his "queen," and rhymes "king" with his "thing," to which he responds by again rhyming with her earlier "dire," this time with "sire." Instead of pulling away now, she rhymes doubly with his "father" (capturer / another), and they both continue the "er/air/are" rhymes for the next two pages in their longer speeches. Their relationship, her moving towards and away from him, is thus reflected through the rhymes used; as they come closer together, moreover, they both begin to interrupt one another's lines, the dashes uniting rather than separating them, so that there is indeed a rapprochement by song, or at least by rhyme, despite Artemis's protestations.[30]

Artemis's resistance to song has to do with what H.D. learned from Euripides's choruses: the realm of song, of (unconscious) sound patterning is that of Eros. Despite all of Hippolytus's and Artemis's surface assertions of purity, even despite their sometimes less ambiguous rhetoric (for instance, Hippolytus, says: "Hot on the trail, / hot, hot, in my desire / to trace you in the forest" [20]), it is in a different way that Eros's all-powerfulness makes itself felt here. When Artemis finally asks Hippolytus to leave her, he tells her she is "everywhere," and she responds that she is not "where the Cyprian / weaves her perilous snare" (22). He then protests that

[30]On sound and "auditory troping" in relation to gender in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, see Laity, 97–106, where she also discusses H.D.'s indebtedness to Swinburne in this respect. Laity argues that what she calls "transgressive *sound*" works to dispel the "set measure" of a conventional romance narrative (97) and that thematic references to rhythm, as well as H.D.'s stylistic manipulations of repetition, dissonance, and alliteration "compose a maternal-erotic narrative as musical score in which voices appear to trace on another without regard for the stable positions of 'I' and 'you'" (98).

Artemis's woods are no place to speak of the Cyprian Aphrodite, and she retorts with a summary of all the Euripidean choruses: "Her name is everywhere, / her ways are dire" (22). And indeed, if we look—or rather listen—closely, her name *is* everywhere: the words "Aphrodite," "Eros," and even "Phaedra" are never spoken in this exchange, but their sounds are omnipresent in internal or final rhymes even where what they represent is being denied. In the following page and a half of couplet dialogue, almost all of their second lines rhyme in *er* (either –ver or –ther: lover – forever – another – together – mother – mother – father) and even in the lines just cited, it is the same *er* rhyme that is transformed by Artemis from "everywhere" into "snare."

Earlier, when Hippolytus wants to "share [her] solitude," she tells him he cannot:

> Share, share the mind
> with fierce companion mind,
> poetic frenzy with another blind
> with rapturous fire
> of the enchanter's harp,
> share, share the mind
> or love with any lover,
> but beware:
> the rapture of my loneliest crags
> none share— (21)

Even as Artemis tries to distinguish herself from lovers—and poets—we note that her defiance is framed by a single sound: the *-are/er* [e(ə)r] rhyme that moves from the beginning of the line at first, to the middle, and finally to the end where it becomes a proper rhyme: share – enchanter – share – lover – beware – share. When Artemis tries to place Hippolytus in the domain of the city

(and of the "old, worn-out play" with Phaedra) as he tries to recall her to realm of forest, it is through *e(ə)r* rhyme sounds that their battle is fought:

Hippolytus There is a lure more potent
than mere prayer—

Artemis What lure, what lure, Hippolytus—
but beware—

Hippolytus The lure of frenzied feet,
of webbed gold hair—

Artemis I am not woman
nor of womankind—

Hippolytus To such, O mistress,
I am blind, blind, blind—

Artemis What of this rumour
that provokes the streets—

Hippolytus Rumour of bees, of wasps,
of unclean tame beasts—

Artemis Rumour of bees and wasps
and of dishonour—

Hippolytus O queen, O mistress,
speak not of that fever—

Artemis Yea, I am told charms call you
to her favour—

Hippolytus Not I—not I—I am no wanton's
lover— (19)

Artemis introduces words/sounds that she rhymes herself (rumour – dishonor – favour) to ruin their forest-based rhyme communion. Hippolytus amends them, trying to return to the earlier "prayer – beware – hair" sequence through his "fever" for her "dishonor," which she then turns into "favour," but he insists with "lover." Artemis returns to his -*er* when he proclaims he is no mortal and she tells him he is "Boastful and hot as ever" (20). Phaedra is not named here except as a "wanton," but the slant rhymes in *d* and –(*v)er* all echo her name (as well as that of Aphrodite). Towards the end of the act when Hippolytus has softened her resistance with mentions of his Amazon mother Hippolyta, Artemis says she cannot "cherish" him because "the gods, / Zeus, Pallas and Another" will be "wroth with me" (30). Aphrodite, presumably the "Another" Artemis refers to, continues to remain unnamed but this instance of not-naming confirms our suspicion that it is indeed her name—and that of Phaedra—that echoes in all the -*e(ə)r* (fer, ver, ther, der, are) rhymes. Rhyme thus becomes tied to erotic desire: always

articulated even if unconsciously, and sharing its movement: A mobile, ever-variable pattern that is predicated on distance, on the repetition never being exact, on the sounds never fully coinciding; that thus captures without fixing, without capturing anything other than the attempt to capture; that transmits something without even knowing quite what that is.

But there is also a distinction drawn between kinds of song: the one just discussed, which appears, as it were, unconsciously, unintentionally, a Freudian slip of sorts, building up and dissolving, half-articulating what both characters want to suppress, and the other that is sounded when Artemis vanishes and Hyperides, Hippolytus's servant appears. Hyperides asks for music to be played for Hippolytus; H.D. notes, "The musicians form in usual, conventional dance form. They chant or sing as if before some imaginary altar" (39). Hippolytus vehemently objects:

> O tear the strings,
> have done with mockery
> of set and stated time
> of word and metre;
> have done with all that tune,
> throw the lyre down;
> what word, what word
> can tell the sudden rhythm
> of her white feet
> that even as a bird wing
> fled? (39-40)

What William Wenthe has called H.D.'s "metrical palimpsest" is in full evidence here: we see an alternation of iambic dimeter and trimeter lines which, if put together, would form perfect iambic

pentameters. The underlying structure of the iambic pentameter is thus felt even though it has been broken up, overwritten by H.D.'s new measures. But a second erasure also takes place here as even the metrical palimpsest breaks down: already the line "throw the lyre down," in which an inversion has to be admitted (thrów the lýre down), strains against the two-stress reading imposed on it by the pairing with the clearly three-stress line above it, given the three long vowels and the almost-assonance between "throw" and "down." In the stanza's last three lines, right after the mention of the "sudden rhythm" of Artemis's feet, any stress-syllable reading of the lines encounters the resistance of the final spondees ("whíte féet," "bírd wíng," followed by "fléd"). This is what I called the "nature stress" from H.D.'s translation of Euripides's Parodos and first stasimon. We begin to hear, then, the kind of song that, as Hippolytus told Artemis earlier, "may yet" capture her, suggesting, we now understand, that the usual kind of song could not.

Hyperides challenges Hippolytus, asking him (again in an erased, broken up, iambic pentameter):

> Whát is sóng then,
> but meásure tó beat oút
> the túne
> for feét to móve by? (40)

He thus subordinates language to dance, essentially offering one of the interpretations of the existence of the tragic chorus, and pointing to Platonic origin of our "rhythm," according to Benveniste. Hippolytus acknowledges, in iambics, that such a form may have been useful—and one may wonder here if this is another metapoetic reference to the tragic iambic trimeter that is also in heavy use in this metrical palimpsest, albeit in modified form:

the fórm is wéll enoúgh,

we pátterned thát

on the iámbics broúght

but láte,

by wáy of Cós

to Átticá (40, my notation)

But the form proves inadequate: only good "to fráme a slíght sóng" that is "státely and stíll," or a song that "béats out to móduláte the dáncing feét [finally a full iambic pentameter line] / of coúntry chóristérs" (40). Is this H.D.'s double argument for, on the one hand, "free verse," and on the other, for the supersession of "strict," metrical translations of tragedy by something else, namely by what she is doing here?

Hippolytus continues his response to Hyperides with a song manifesto, where he suggests that the feet he has so focused on must be exceeded, that to capture feet, one needs more than feet, more than what Hyperides tells him is well-patterned iambic form.

Feet, feet, feet, feet,

what of the head, the heart,

the frenzy that swims up

like sudden tide

of full storm-sea

at sun-down? (40-41)

Again we hear him progress from metrical palimpsest to stress clusters while maintaining a strong rhythm, as the four beats of the first line are disseminated into two-line pairs, first into lines with two and two, and then with three and one. Hyperides continues to try to restore him to

measure, literally and rhythmically, giving a version of Artemis's earlier response in broken up iambic pentameter: "You cánnot cátch the seá / withín a sóng" (41). Instead, however, of advocating for freedom or passion in song, for "free verse," Hippolytus does not exactly refute Hyperides/Artemis. He may make the ambition for song greater, but he still presents it, as he did to Artemis, as a violation, an imposition, a "setting" and constraint, whose ultimate goal, it is now revealed, is a kind of curing of arrhythmia, human terror:

> Whát is sóng fór,
> what úse is sóng at áll,
> if it cánnot impríson áll the seá,
> if it cánnot beát dówn
> in ávaláncheof férvour éven the wínd,
> if it cánnot drówn oút
> our húman térror? (41, my notation)

Blanchot speaks of *rhythm* as having become, in its current sense, a figure and image for the mastery, measurement, and "configuration" of the unknown; the sea or river are said to move "rhythmically" (and our "rhythmical" song would only be an rendition of that rhythm) as we impose on nature a regularity and measurability and immediately forget that we didn't find it there (*Ecriture du Désastre* 173). Motivated by the "human terror," which Artemis's total indifference to humans represents, even Hippolytus's "freer" song, seeks to bind it and cover it over. As Hippolytus here rhythmically alternates iambic lines and lines with spondaic endings, this alternation traces and circumscribes his attempts to move from what has been metrically figured as the realm of the human to that of Artemis/nature, and betrays the still, "set," measurable and measuring nature of his song.

Hyperides dismisses his words as a "peevish fit" and asks Hippolytus to "come back . . . to the temple and the altar" where "song has been set / by your great ancestors / . . . / by the priest that sings" (41). Leaving aside for a moment Hippolytus's exchange with Artemis, the tension here is between patterned iambics, "meter" as it is conventionally understood, on the one hand, and what Hippolytus seeks, which is only a meter, a measure of another kind; the former is aligned with particular places of worship and a line of tradition, whereas the latter seeks the indeterminacy and fleetingness of nature but only to institute there new altars and new priests, to constrain it by consistently rendering its force with, for example, a final spondee. Hyperides brings in his "set song" to charm and trap Hippolytus, luring him away from the woods, just as Hippolytus had intended to do with his "excessive" song for Artemis. Desire for measure not set by the metronome but, for example, by Artemis's feet, or by the "sequence of the musical phrase" per the tenets of Imagisme, still shares the dangers associated with song in the *Iphigeneia*, in some of H.D.'s 1920s novels, and of course here: deceit, illusion, justification for or forgetting of violence, of war, the dead, of what may not be susceptible to rhythm.[31]

[31] Yet another instance of the treacherous song in this play is when Artemis's maiden chorus, with their pure feet, convince Helios to let go of Hippolytus against his will and let him die. It is also through their song that they lure Hippolytus's soul away from his body (123). Phaedra's nurse, too, rhymes heavily when she tries to comfort her, offering her a false promise of relief (50–51). Where, moreover, Euripides's nurse tells Phaedra, "And if you are ill with it, use some good measures to subdue it. There are incantations, and words that charm [εἰσὶν δ' ἐπῳδαὶ καὶ λόγοι θελκτήριοι]," in H.D.'s play Myrrhina offers those words, peaceful images of Crete meant to soothe Phaedra:

> O lady,
> think,
> pause,
> pray
> and conjure up
> with deep emotion
> and with holiest thought,
> that shell of marble,
> delicate temple wall;
> breathe in your heart
> the holiest scent of orange
> that blows at noon
> through those cool corridors,
> some breath of citron
> wafted over-seas,

The play has been read—as I have been arguing, wrongly—as H.D.'s manifesto for free verse. If it manifests anything, it is that verse is, as Eliot had said, never free;[32] that what verse is bound to and perhaps reveals is not what the its speaker or writer may seek or want to reveal: in this case, in Hippolytus's differently-measured overtures to Artemis and in her responses, Eros, never explicitly said, but never not-said. Through her sound patterns H.D. turns the Euripidean suggestion of Eros's discord into the motor of her entire play, which becomes an exposition of the rhythms of Eros and the nature of song.[33]

4. Helios, or the Nullity of Flowers

The exchange between Artemis and Hippolytus, however, works on yet another level: it is not only a narrative palimpsest, rewriting and reversing the Euripidean story without ever becoming truly unfaithful to it, and it is not only a poetological, metrical inquiry on a Euripidean basis that returns H.D. to a familiar contemporary debate regarding free verse. It is also historical. Primed as we are by the introductory poem, we cannot help but read Artemis here

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imagine we were back again in Crete. (59)

We thus see here the "μηχανὰς," the contrivances women invent ("εἰ μὴ γυναῖκες μηχανὰς εὑρήσομεν," line 481) to cure themselves of love, the attractive words, which are once again, sublimation or distraction, displacement of erotic love onto a similarly eroticized attraction to temples, as H.D. exposes the engines of repression of female sexuality implicit in the Euripidean passage.

[32] See "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," where Eliot claims that the "division between Conservative Verse and *vers libre* does not exist, for there is only good verse, bad verse, and chaos" (36). Interestingly Eliot in this essay also cites, anonymously, H.D.'s "Hermes of the Ways" as a poem that has "escape[d] from rhyme" (though not from meter) and compares it to an unrhymed poem by Arnold to argue that "a hasty observer would hardly realize that the first [H.D.'s] is by a contemporary, and the second by Matthew Arnold" (35). H.D., then, might seem to support Eliot's point but also undermines it by asserting that rhyme, not meter is what is binding. In 1942's "The Music of Poetry," Eliot would famously write that "No verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job" (31).

[33] We might again think of Blanchot here, who writes even if "effets de non-arbitraire (anagramme, rythme, rime intérieur, jeu magique de lettres)" are intentionally written into a text, they remain figures of a disorientation that "font du langage le plus « raisonnable » un processus contaminé, riche de ce qu'il ne peut pas dire, impropre à ce qu'il dit"; they form, or rather reveal a rhyming language that is not based on the difference of one sign from another but on their in-distinction (*Ecriture du Désastre* 207).

allegorically, or at least in a larger sense: Artemis as the ever-escaping, or ever-receding, ideal of Greece, either "natural" archaic Greece, in which an organic relation of man to nature prevailed, or warrior, beautiful-youth Greece. Hippolytus's address to her as "Wondrous, / O fair, / like some tall supple sapling / or some rare / young warrior / with his glittering arms and spear" (13) suggests as much; we recall too Phaedra's descent into Greek meters in H.D.'s "Choruses" exactly when she wished to resemble Artemis. In Artemis H.D. embodies the ever-sought-after and intruded-upon Greek antiquity, which just will not be left alone. In his search in the woods for evidence of Artemis's now-past presence, questioning animals and plants in the hope that they might reveal her trajectory, detecting on the ground "the shape and pattern / of your feet" (12), Hippolytus turns into a budding archaeologist:

> I ask
> of every stone upturned,
> of the moss print,
> of scattered shells
> and broken acorn cups,
> of every grass blade trodden
> and the earth
> sprinkled with unaccustomed silver drift
> of sand
> and delicate seed-pearls
> from the east,
> Artemis,
> Artemis,

Artemis,

has she passed? (14-15)

He is looking for traces of Artemis just as the moderns are digging up and reading into or from the earth traces of antiquity and contemplating its burning legacy on modernity[34] : "the arrows of your hair / that flame and burn / as if some travelling meteor / had dropped its mantle / where the laurels burn" (13)—the planetary metaphor here recalls of course Keats's famous sonnet on Chapman's Homer.[35] Within this Greek tragedy H.D. inserts a gap in time between two of its main characters, as she will later do through the commentary in her *Ion*; in this way, in an in all appearances classical or classicizing text, a drama belonging to a particular place (Troezen) but to no particular time, H.D. inserts the question of modernity (as she did in her "Argument," or in the few apparently metapoetic comments I have noted, about, for example, the datedness of the chorus and the tired state of the plots) and turns one of the ancient characters into us. Through Artemis, then, H.D. gives voice to persecuted Greece, talking back to all those—including H.D.—who invoke her and might wish to plunder her, turn her, supposedly dispassionately, into their object of desire. It's as if Artemis is Moero revived, come to answer the question Hipparchia poses by translating her poem: Do you kill the wine when you press heavy on the grape-bunch? When Hippolytus compares the statues to songs, is he not also asking this question: If classicizing art has failed, found wanting (as the artistic revolutions of the early twentieth century had proven), could there still be "classicizing" poetry? And what would that be? Not poetry bound by set meters, the English iambic pentameter, or the Greek iambic trimeter, H.D. seems to say, but also, necessarily, not something entirely different.

[34] On the important role that archeology in general, and the excavation of Knossos in particular, played in the formation of the modernist imaginary, see Cathy Gere's illuminating *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, which also includes a section on H.D. focusing on her writings during and after the Second World War (177–94).
[35] Keats writes that upon hearing Chapman's words, he felt "like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken." For a reading of this poem in relation to modernity and its Hellenisms, see Ferris 70–78.

It is this question that is obliquely addressed in the third act, H.D.'s major addition to the Euripidean play. In the exchange between Artemis and Helios (as H.D. refers to Apollo in almost all of her writings) she pits against each other what since Nietzsche was supposed to be one side of the coin, the Apollonian, thus inserting a fissure into the identical (the twin), while Dionysian elements are present in both.[36] The fight is no longer between chastity or purity and passion—if it was ever in this play—between Artemis and the always unnamed Aphrodite, but desire for life (and light) and drive towards death. These are the terms that the conflict is translated into in this act, these H.D.'s preferred nuances. Artemis, like Dionysus, is a destructive, death-force that seeks to return all to nature; we recall that in her initial speech—and it is the same speech that closes the play as well—she is plotting "with earth" the destruction of "Grecian cities" in favor of "the wild arbutus / and the luminous trees" (9). The realm of Artemis, though that of nature, is nonetheless presented as the realm of the dead insofar as it is that of the non-human, and non-humanist.[37] In contrast, the Cyprian boy praises Helios as the all-seeing, ever-present god, presenting him as the closest of all gods to mortals:

> none, none may pray too late,
> for he even at the last
> remains, when all the gods are silent
> and forsake
> altar and worshippers (113).

Implicitly contrasted with Artemis and her disinterest in human affairs, Helios does not want to be solely an "immortal."

[36] See *Birth of Tragedy*, especially sections 1–4.
[37] This Artemisian dehumanization becomes a theme in H.D.'s *Palimpsest*, where her main characters repeatedly struggle with their desire to achieve it, and returns in connection with the Athenian civilization in the *Ion* translation.

Act Three opens with Helios lamenting Hippolytus's dying, and calling on Artemis to intervene. Unlike Hippolytus, who in an abbreviated replica of their earlier stichomythia in Act One now acknowledges the power of Eros only implied then, Artemis continues to refuse it and does not condone his change of heart, his temporization. She proclaims her powerlessness against death and calls on her ghostly maidens to lure Hippolytus's soul away with song, while Helios, echoing the ending of H.D.'s "Choruses" translation, acquiesces to Eros's superiority (though, like Artemis, disapproving of the deceit that led to Phaedra's successful seduction of Hippolytus) and asks for his help to revive the youth (129-30). While the gods argue about Hippolytus's physical survival, they also differ on the survival of his memory. The roles are thus reversed: now it is no longer Hippolytus trying to determine how best to capture Artemis—through an altar, a statue, or a song—but the gods trying to decide exactly that question for Hippolytus—and, if Hippolytus is us, perhaps H.D.'s pre-war generation fumbling towards a relation to antiquity, they are also debating what will best capture, or reflect, the "dying . . . dead" modern world (*Bid* 8). Does his (our) blind devotion to something other than the mundane world (even as he himself, in the end, is blind to exactly what that is, illusory arrhythmia or pervading rhythm) lead to life or death—and to what kind of afterlife?

The issue of Hippolytus's afterlife is broached in Euripides as well, though in a section that H.D. surprisingly chooses not to translate: the chorus's final anapests. They conclude the play with almost a metapoetic comment: "τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ἀξιοπενθεῖς /φῆμαι μᾶλλον κατέχουσιν" ("For tales of the great, when they spread abroad, surpass the common lot in evoking grief"; lines 1465-66). Evoking the emotive power of tales of grief, they seem to guarantee Hippolytus's future fame. Artemis in her preceding epilogue has also said the same (lines 1425-30). Yet here it is Helios who claims that Hippolytus will be remembered and live on

in song ("He has his home forever, / in white song—" [115]), while Artemis contests it, not wanting his passion, for her an evil act, to be memorialized or covered up by beauty and forgiven:

Artemis Song, song, song, song it is
that shatters all—

Helios Song, song, song baffles
the fears of death—

Artemis Then is all, all forgiven
in song's name—

Helios All, all lost beauty
shelters in its fane— (115-16)

Helios here echoes Hippolytus's own claims about song ("drown[s] out / our human terror") as having restorative potential despite its complicity with violence and deceit, its necessarily discordant and constraining nature. In contrast, Artemis, having first compared Hippolytus to a "parched hyacinth" (124), and then described, though without naming him, Hyacinth's death and subsequent transformation and survival (127), asks Helios to make Hippolytus "stand by each harbor" as

a symbol of my love,
an emissary
of faith

and friendship

between god and man. (128)

Artemis wants Hippolytus turned into a statue that she could finally accept as a "friend" now that he will have become completely inhuman. Yet as Marvin E. Lyon notes, Helios seems to have regretted the Hyacinth transformation for that very reason and upon hearing him mentioned tries to revive Hippolytus with renewed fervor:

ah piteous lad,

I will spare you that grandeur

of the hills,

that purity

and nullity of flowers,

arise and stand. (128)

In this he begins to resemble Phaedra as well, who in her first speech had lamented that in Greece we must "encounter / with each separate flower, / some god, some goddess" (49); it is thus no surprise that he immediately addresses "love" as "god's most passionate flame" and "power / beyond man's thought / or gods' imagining" (129). In the end, Artemis seems to win the argument: Hippolytus dies, Helios retreats in defeat, and she returns to her opening song, maintaining her separation from both mortals and all other gods, and plotting the destruction of the Greek cities—which, from H.D.'s twentieth-century viewpoint, she accomplished.

H.D. rehearses similar questions here as in the *Iphigeneia* translations: Does song mean death? Is the quest for absolute beauty, for something untainted, for the god, death? Yes, the play answers. Disavowal of the everyday world means death for Hippolytus even if his actions betray that disavowal; the fervid pursuit of Artemis's measure leads Hippolytus the poet to (become) a

dead song, a frozen altar (as Rico tells Julia in *Bid*), a statue. What can poetry do? The play argues that like eros, as eros, it deceives, lulls into forgetfulness, seeks to catch and charm, victimize the thing it praises; in pursuing a relation with Artemis, with Greece, the poet deadens herself and fails to capture the livelihood, the motion, the feet that first attracted her—or at least, that is this particular poet's fear at a time when her initially highly-praised poetry, becomes increasingly looked down upon.

But to the extent that Hippolytus is conveyed and remembered here, in this play, it is in the way Helios advocates. As the "Hippolytus Temporizes" poem praises constraint but momentarily breaks from it, so the play ends with death, and the banishment of sound, having concluded that song cannot but betray what inspires it, but it has shown us that transient moment of rhythm's setup and dissolution, has shown us rhythm as a constant, mobile interruption that arises as if accidentally, without drawing attention to itself. Song may be thematized in all its failings but it is left untouched when it works to bring together Artemis and Hippolytus or even Hippolytus and Phaedra, even if, or precisely because in both cases it is contrary to their stated desires—revelatory and revealed discord, rhythm naming the moment of reversal and not of coherence, as Pound might have it, of the impossibility of meaning, appearing (in the form of rhyme) at the precise moment when the speaker does not know what s/he is saying. Revelatory discord similar to the one striking Euripides's chorus in H.D.'s version when they wish to escape from Eros but already caught in his ruse. Revelatory discord, similar to the one practiced by *Hippolytus Temporizes*, which articulates itself as an overwriting of Euripides and nonetheless depends on it—and its sounds—for its effects as it expands, probes, questions specific images, lines, or characters as possibly deceitful, constraining, or inadequate, as possibly not providing

enough of an argument for life, or for their survival. It is this argument that H.D. finds, or more precisely, uncovers in Euripides's *Ion* eight years later.

"And a Good Job"?:

Elektrifying English at St. Elizabeths[1]

Ἠλέκτρα, ἤλεκτρον, elektron, amber. The Greek word for amber that gave Elektra her name and gave us the word for electricity. The ancient Greeks knew already that this fossilized resin, a substance with no fixed color or consistency, became charged with static electricity when rubbed and thus it was considered a charm, a talisman, a fetish. The resin was produced by trees now extinct, so the very word ἤλεκτρον (or Ἠλέκτρα) implies something lost that we can no longer get to, but whose effects or fossilized products or preserved condensed corpse-essences are still here; in this process of de- or re-composition, moreover, the resin has incorporated (thus preserved or killed) foreign bodies, parts of plants or trapped insects. Amber then, ἤλεκτρον, Ἠλέκτρα is the urn, containing material ashes, a kind of condensed body, but no "life." This undead body, however, gave life. Because amber is found chiefly in the southern shores of the Baltic sea, amber trade made the latter into a second Mediterranean and, together with copper trade, led to the development of the first European road system during the Copper Age. Undead amber then inaugurated a new era and contributed both to the growth of a civilization and to the establishment of a communication network. Ἤλεκτρον, Ἠλέκτρα is the foreign body coming to and being quickly incorporated by the Mediterranean, while at the same time functions as an agent of doubling, creating another Mediterranean in the north.[2]

Friedrich Schleiermacher argues that the translator may either bring the reader closer to the author or the author closer to the reader; if the two methods are mixed, however, the translator will have failed both the reader and the author since, Schleiermacher claims, a man

[1] A version of this chapter is forthcoming in the *Journal of Modern Literature* 38.1 (Fall 2014). It had been presented earlier in the Princeton Comparative Literature Graduate Colloquium (2009) and the NYU Graduate Student Conference (2010).

[2] I am speaking paronomastically rather than etymologically here. According to Gilbert Murray, *Electra* in Doric form means "unmated" (153).

must belong to, be loyal to one language, as he does to one land, "or else drift disoriented in an unlovely in-between realm" ("er schwebt haltungslos in unerfreulicher Mitte" [237]). Yet Ezra Pound in his translation of Sophokles's *Elektra*, undertaken in 1949 but published only posthumously, refuses to make the choice outlined by Schleiermacher and settle the dispute between his source- and target-languages. Instead, Pound seems intent on following, or rather forging, an in-between way of translation: he wants to remain faithful to the sound and rhythm of the Greek text, but also to the phonology of contemporary spoken English. Having set up Greek metrics as both a model and a challenge for English-language poetry early on in his writing career, Pound treats Greek as something that he cannot quite assimilate, that his poem(s) cannot quite digest—that he cannot quite translate, without, at least the mediating screen of Andreas Divus's Latin *Odyssey* in Canto 1 or of the conventions of the Noh in *Women of Trachis*, and for this reason he keeps returning to it throughout his life. It is the unfolding of this disagreement between two languages—at work perhaps in every translation, but forcefully and performatively brought to the surface in Pound's *Elektra*—that I will be discussing in this chapter.

Like Joyce and Beckett, Pound, in self-imposed exile for most of his life, had been re-negotiating his relationship to the mother tongue and to the fatherland throughout his career, though his dealings with languages often approach a strangeness more similar to that exhibited by that "étudiant des langues schizophrénique," Louis Wolfson, than to his Irish contemporaries. In 1949, confined in the St. Elizabeths psychiatric hospital, Pound has been officially accused of betraying that fatherland (though he argued for his patriotism by claiming that Mussolini translated the ideas of the American Revolution better than the Americans themselves) and pleaded insanity. Pound's "Elizabethan" period, as it is often called, is, like that known by England, one of translation. For ten years after writing the Pisan Cantos in 1945 Pound translates

incessantly from Chinese and classical Greek, the East and the West, while Hugh Kenner edits and publishes a large volume of his translations until that point. Pound's turn or return to the haunted site of Greek tragedy in particular is also commercially conceived: part of a large-scale project for a "revival" of the classical languages, as proposed in a 1949 memorandum entitled "Hellenists" and in a 1953 "Manifesto."[3] This never-realized project would involve a complete series of translations that would be published in cheap, bilingual editions.[4] What is at stake for Pound, however, is not only the degree to which "Hellenism" can be revived, but also whether it can revive us: what better way to electrify, to "'[re]charge' language with meaning" after the war than a translation of Sophokles's *Elektra* (*LE* 23)?[5] Despite his having praised Euripides's choruses for their technique as perfect examples of free verse in 1913, Greek tragedians, unlike Homer and Sappho, are usually not included in Pound's famous lists of authors one must read. In what follows, I will show that rather than a sudden turn to tragedy late in his career, his translation of *Elektra*—undertaken in 1949 but published only posthumously—is the culmination of a lifelong, though ambivalent, engagement with the form. Moving from his early writing on Greek metrics and his attempt to translate Aeschylus through the references to the Aeschylean *Agamemnon* in the Pisan Cantos to 1949's *Elektra*, I will argue that tragedy becomes for Pound the cipher for a linguistic measure that would restore political measure.

[3] A typescript of "Hellenists" is found among Pound's papers in the Beinecke Library, while the "Manifesto" is in the collection of Pound's correspondence in the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana–Bloomington.
[4] There are a number of letters at the Lilly library archive that detail Pound's efforts to arrange, through Eliot, "certain urgent jobs, such as reprint, cheap reprint, of most essential vols. of Loeb's Classical Library" (handwritten note by Dorothy Pound; May 7, 1947).
[5] I am referring to Pound's definition of the "art of writing" as "the art of 'charging' language with meaning" (*LE* 29; see also *The Spirit of Romance*, esp. 92–93). In the same essay, Pound appeals to translation as a mode of charging, or electrifying, one language by means of another: "No one language is complete. A master may be continually expanding his own tongue, rendering it fit to bear some charge hitherto borne only by some other alien tongue" (*LE* 36).

"Dead by This Hand"

Though Pound seemingly abandoned the issue of quantitative meter in the 1920s, he continued to advise translators in the 1930s, including W.H.D. Rouse on his *Odyssey* and Mary Barnard on her Sappho, and in 1934 told Eliot he was "exCAVating' the Aggymemnon fer to KOrekt it" and submit it for publication in the *Criterion* (which again, he never did) (cited Gallup 117). In the 1940s it is precisely the *Agamemnon*'s untranslatable words that come to haunt the Pisan Cantos (where they appear in Greek, Latin, and English) and help conjoin more explicitly Pound's longstanding concern as a poet-translator with Greek poetics, and especially tragedy, and his relatively more recent political investments. By aligning Agamemnon with Mussolini, the Pisan Cantos allow us first to discern the relation between the translation project that will follow, Sophokles's *Elektra*, and the poetic-political project Pound is mourning, and second to read the *Elektra* as the degree zero for Pound's return to writing after the war.

What comes through in the Pisan Cantos references to Aeschylus's play is exactly what Pound thought central in the *Agamemnon* in the early essay on the translators of Homer and what Browning (and presumably eventually Pound himself) failed to get at: "the whole rush of the action, the whole wildness of Kassandra's [sic] continual shrieking, the flash of the beacon fires burning unstinted wood" (*LE* 267). Canto 77 starts with references to Cocteau (the hero, the translator who succeeded) and ends with Cassandra ("the wind mad as Cassandra / Who was as sane as the lot of 'em," 77.315-16), whose shrieks are the life that Pound's dead translation cannot get to as the beginning of the following canto makes clear:

> Cassandra, your eyes are like tigers,
>
> with no word written in them
>
> You also have I carried to nowhere

To an ill house and there is

no end to the journey. (78.6-10)

But it is in Canto 82 that this wordless "carrying to nowhere" is more explicitly explored. The canto opens, like the *Agamemnon*, with a (dog) vision from a distance ("When with his hunting dog I see a cloud"), and continues with an apocryphal story about Swinburne, fished out of a river possibly reciting Aeschylus:

When the French fishermen hauled him out he

Recited 'em

Might have been Aeschylus

Till they got into Le Portel, or wherever

In the original

"On the Atreides' roof"

"like a dog…and a good job

ΕΜΟΣ ΠΟΣΙΣ…ΧΕΡΟΣ

Hac dextera mortus

Dead by this hand (82.15-27)

The *Agamemnon* watchman's "lak a dawg" is here spelled out properly—resignedly perhaps, as Pound suggests through the ellipses his *Agamemnon*'s disintegration or incompletion, his own inability to move past the play's opening and reach "the good job," namely, the play's culmination in Agamemnon's murder by Klytemnestra's, except in fragments scattered in his texts, including this one.[6] The words in Greek that follow are Klytemnestra's:

[6] For instance, in his essay on the translators of Homer, he quotes this passage from the *Agamemnon*, deeming Browning's version unreadable since it doesn't have the "same drive" as the Greek—i.e. the same desire to kill the

οὗτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς
πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, τῆσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς
ἔργον, δικαίας τέκτονος. τάδ᾽ ὧδ᾽ ἔχει. (lines 1404-1406; my emphasis)

here is Agamemnon, my husband, now dead, the work of this right hand, a just workman. So stands the case. (trans. Weir-Smyth, modified)

Pound inserts another set of ellipses, this time between Klytemnestra's cited Greek words (my husband . . . of/by the hand), in order to leave out her deictic identification of her hand as "right" and of her husband as "dead." The words suppressed in Greek are nonetheless remembered in Latin and English in the two lines that follow. The two translations offered, however, are not identical: the Latin, like the original Greek, identifies the murdering hand as the "right" one, while the English does not. This is not surprising: after all, the Latin "dextera" sounds more like the Greek "δεξιᾶς" than "right" would, and crucially, again like the Greek, does not confuse direction (right versus left) with justness. At the same time, the omission of "right" in English and of the full Greek distich also suppresses Klytemnestra's conviction that her act was more than "a good job," that it was the work not just of her *right* (δεξιᾶς) hand, but of a *just* (δικαίας) hand. In Greek, the alliteration of *δ* (νεκρός **δ**έ τῆσ**δ**ε **δ**εξιᾶς χερός / ἔργον **δ**ικαίας τέκτονος, τά**δ**᾽ ὧ**δ**᾽ ἔχει) works to identify "δεξιᾶς" with "δικαίας," right with just. Pound may replicate this evaded Greek alliteration interlingually through "dextera" and "dead" (also through "dog" and "good"), but in this way he replaces the just act with its result, the dead body that, moreover, here remains unnamed. Unlike the Greek "hand," which is multiply translated, the reference to Agamemnon that identifies him (ΕΜΟΣ ΠΟΣΙΣ, my husband) is untranslated, thus allowing him

father? (*LE* 270). In 1934, prompted perhaps by his retyping of the "Opening," Pound appends a note to the essay, saying he would translate it as "I did it. That's how it is."—no explanations or excuses are necessary (*LE* 270).

to blur into the other defeated general, with whose (tragic?) murder the Pisan Cantos begin: "The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders / Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed, / Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano* / by the heels at Milano / That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock" (74.1-6). Pound is rehearsing here on a very small scale the two sometimes contradictory modes of approach that will characterize his translation of *Elektra*: extreme attention to the sounds and metrical movements of his Greek original, which is often rendered multilingually, coupled with selective translation that highlights some aspects of the play while obscuring others.

At the same time, we also see here Pound's personal investment in this translation project. That the ambiguous English deictic in the final, English version of the Greek quotation ("Dead by this hand") might refer, in the context of the poem, to both the speaker's (Klytemnestra's) hand and to the poet's writing hand suggests a potential identification of Pound, who "carried" Cassandra and *Agamemnon* "to nowhere," with the murdering spouse and mother. In fact, Pound's anxiety about carrying on a (Greek) poetic legacy has already been registered in the canto, right before the haunting paternal murder just discussed. The canto opens with a German greeting ("Grüß Gott," 82.2), a variation of which was addressed to Pound as father by his daughter and her caretaker in Canto 78, where it led to an indirect injunction to transfer forward, like Aeneas, the ancestral or paternal legacy, to remember the young Pound's London years. Following the greeting in Canto 82, a chain of paternity or influence is established, as Pound depicts the figurative passing of the torch—of the Greek torch—from Landor to Swinburne to Watts-Dunton to Elkin Mathews, but not to Pound:

> Swinburne my only miss
> and I didn't know he'd been to see Landor

……..

and when old Mathews went he saw the three teacups

two for Watts Dunton . . .,

So old Elkin had only one glory

He did carry Algernon's suit case *once* (82.7-13)

Walter Savage Landor was the author of *Imaginary Conversations* with Greeks and Romans and of a poetry collections titled *Hellenics*, whom young Swinburne visited in the last year of his life; Swinburne, also heavily engaged with Greek antiquity and especially Greek metrics, was taken care of in his old age by Theodore Watts-Dunton, when Elkin Mathews, Pound's future publisher, visited them. Pound arrived in London in 1908, one year before Swinburne's death, but unlike Swinburne, failed to meet the master ("my only miss")—a missed connection similar to that between Pound and Aeschylus. Instead Pound found Elkin Mathews, who became his publisher and whose death in 1921 was one of Pound's early (financial) traumas, to some extent overcome, at least psychologically through the writing of the Malatesta Cantos.[7] Of course, for the poet in Pisa in 1945, the validity of the Malatesta-Mussolini identification as "the central axis for the shape of his magnum opus," to use Lawrence Rainey's phrase, has been disrupted (74). Pound's subsequent turn to the *Agamemnon* in the canto encodes this poetic-political disruption in terms of translation. If EP failed to record, to bring to life and then memorialize Agamemnon, will he able to do so for Mussolini, or will he too be "dead by this hand"?

The *Agamemnon* thus becomes shorthand and allegory for two injustices: the political one that befell a great leader at the hands of those supposedly closest to him, and the poetic one performed by the poet-translator who could not appropriately convey the former. Fittingly, it is Malatesta's court poet, Basinio, who enters the poem next: unlike Pound with the *Agamemnon*

[7] See Rainey 47–50.

and its untranslatable music, Basinio successfully recorded his master's love for Isotta using "greek moulds in the margin" (82.32) to keep the Greek melodic sense alive. When then Pound returns to the *Agamemnon*'s opening, which describes the chain of lights that transmitted to Greece news of Troy's fall—designated by Pound in his abandoned translation as a "TELegraph" (for Klytemnestra's "τηλέπομπον," line 285; Gallup 119)—he seems to set a challenge for himself to finish transmitting what he could not more than twenty years before: "The news was quicker in Troy's time / a match on Cnidos, a glow worm on Mitylene" (82.91-92). Keeping in mind that one of Pound's earliest and favorite metaphors for the poet is the telegraph,[8] while one of his earliest metaphors for poetic writing is the gathering and presentation of "luminous details"[9] that "govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit," we see that Pound inserts into the Greek play—and inserts the Greek play itself right in the middle of—his now increasing postwar concerns about the transmission of a paideuma, and about poetic writing as such, conceptualized, as always with Pound, through translation (*Selected Prose* 23). Pound's attempt to translate, a few years later, Sophokles's appropriately-named *Elektra* is intended as a remedy for these concerns, which, as I will show, would work by addressing the two injustices I referred to above: it is as much about the actual revival of the melopoetic Greek as it is about that of Agamemnon who gets his revenge against Klytemnestra's (un)just hand, and thus about Pound's own ability to continue to transmit, and literally translate dead voices in his "tale of the tribe."

[8] In the *Spirit of Romance*, for example, he writes, "Man is—the sensitive part of him—a mechanism, for the purposes of our further discussion, a mechanism rather like an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc. . . . In the telegraph we have a charged surface attracting to it, or registering movements in the invisible ether" (92–93). See also Tiffany, 179–196, who speaks of translation specifically as "telegraphic" and claims that Pound "repeatedly emphasizes the mediumistic and telegraphic properties of translation" (188).

[9] See "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" (written in 1911–1912), where the "method of the Luminous Detail" is initially introduced as a "method in scholarship" but its poetic implications become immediately clear (*Selected Prose* 21).

Elektric Evasions?

Elektra is a play of mourning; its central character, Agamemnon's daughter, spends most of it loudly deploring her fate and madly plotting revenge. Every character instructs her at some point in the play to stop speaking, and most also accuse her of insanity, facts that probably resonated for the poet shut away in St. Elizabeths. She herself views her "yammering" (Pound's translation) as her only possible action while she waits for her brother, Orestes—whom she helped send away right after their mother, Klytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, killed their father—to return, avenge Agamemnon's murder by killing both its perpetrators, and restore the rule of law in Mycenae. Elektra's problem is that she cannot forget: she cannot let go of the memory of her father's murder, obsessively returning to it multiple times in the play and leading the chorus to do so as well. Even when she finds out that Orestes—who, she had just been told, was dead—is alive and well, standing next to her and ready for revenge, Elektra's thoughts quickly turn to the possibility of Agamemnon's ghostly return (lines 1316-17**)**. Unlike Aeschylus's recuperative *Oresteia*, in which Orestes is plagued by the Furies but eventually acquitted of matricide, Sophokles's tragedy ends, so to speak, in medias res: Orestes first kills Klytemnestra off-stage, her dying screams echoing those of Agamemnon in Aeschylus's play, and then leads Aegisthus inside the palace to kill him in the exact place where he had killed Agamemnon. This second murder we do not see; resolution is deferred and the play's concluding emphasis on the repetitive nature of these murders suggests that a new cycle of blood may be just beginning.

The ground for Pound's idiosyncratic translation of Sophokles's play was prepared by his "Elizabethan" translations from Confucius; as Richard Sieburth notes, they mark an important shift from his earlier approach to Chinese. While Pound had until then been exclusively focused

on the visual aspects of Chinese writing, he now begins to transliterate the sounds, tones, and vowels of the ideograms into Roman characters. His ear, claims Sieburth, becomes "similarly attuned to the sheer materiality and physicality of Greek sound"; he composes *Elektra* with a metronome (5). Though Pound did not want to sound like the very literal Browning, neither did he want to sound like Eliot, who in the meantime had done versions of Aeschylus's *Eumenides* in *The Family Reunion* (1939) and Euripides's *Alcestis* in his *Cocktail Party* (1949); Carey Perloff reports Pound's dislike of the last translation since "[t]here was no reason, Pound said, for ancient Greek to sound like rarified British English" (xii). Pound was initially drawn to *Elektra* when invited by classicist Rudd Fleming—who also helped him with the translation—to translate Orestes's tutor's false, but extremely detailed and vivid, narration of Orestes's death.[10] This dissembling narrative—marked in Greek as different from that of the other characters and the tutor himself when not disguised—seemed to Pound to call for precisely an evasion of the kind performed on *Agamemnon* and thus to justify the results of his earlier method as both contemporary and faithful to Greek. So, Pound channels the voice of his own tutor, William Butler Yeats, and translates this speech with an Irish accent.[11] In the course of the translation, this "evasion" will be supplemented by others, using different languages and different linguistic registers as he turns this play of familial war—waged by the daughter (Elektra) against the mother (Klytemnestra) in the name of the father (Agamemnon)—into a play of linguistic conflict: from Orestes's tutor's Irish brogue, Scots and Cockney and Black American dialects to archaic English lyricism, phrases in Latin and German, echoes from Confucius, and stage directions that allude to a Noh play or to an Indian war dance.

[10] The letters between Fleming and Pound in the Lilly library archive offer a day-to-day account of their work on the translation, and their experiments with the metronome.
[11] The *i*'s become *oi*'s; the *r*'s are doubled; an *a* is added in front of verbs and all final *g*'s are elided. "Me" replaces "my" and *d*'s are in the place of *th*'s ("wid" for "with").

Yet the strangest aspect of Pound's translation's insistent multivocalism—and arguably its greatest form of evasion—is its equally insistent bilingualism. Quite astonishingly, the poet seemingly annoyed with the excessiveness of Aeschylian language, finds himself producing a text that on the surface is even more excessive: a third of the play appears twice, in its original Greek and in Pound's English version.[12] That is, most of the choral songs and some of Elektra's monologues are left as such in Pound's transliterated (and capitalized) Greek; often they are also partially translated or paraphrased. The idea or ideal of translation as an equal sign or a straightforward economy, in which one word replaces another, is certainly challenged here. Given, however, that Pound wants to preserve the colloquial, "real-life" quality of the Greek that had been covered over by tortuous syntax and grandiloquence in translation but also not to lose its insistent rhythmic pulse, Pound's bilingual strategy seems to be a very good solution, as Carey Perloff points out; the passages and dialogues in slangy English take care of the former, while the juxtaposition with the original Greek maintains the latter, the music (xvi). And yet especially Pound's choruses work (or fail to work) in more complicated ways than those implied by Perloff; "sound" and "meaning," we have already began to see, are not as neatly split up for Pound.

The reason Pound includes so much Greek in his *Elektra* is structural and determined, if not demanded, by this particular play. For one, Pound probably thought that he was replicating Sophokles's own writing strategy. F.R. Earp, in a book much admired by Pound titled *The Style of Sophokles*, traces the development of the tragedian's style from complex, elaborate Aeschylean language in his early plays towards simplicity, directness, and a cultivated

[12] Ironically, even when he had little good to say about Greek tragedy early in his career, Pound had admired Sophokles for his "economy" (*LE* 36). See also the poem *Ité* in *Lustra*, which praises the "hard, Sophoclean light" (*P/T* 275)

artlessness in the late ones.[13] *Elektra*, though a late play, surprisingly contains a "curious mixture of elements" characteristic of Sophokles's early and late plays both (135). In the dialogue these appear in different scenes (the Tutor's speech mentioned above would be an example of the early style) but in the lyrics, claims Earp, the two styles are "present at once" (157). In replicating Sophokles's mixture of styles, however, Pound intensifies it: on the one hand, he uses jarringly colloquial English that goes against our expectations of "dignity" for Greek tragedy (with lines like "Sez he will an' he don't" [line 369], "Slobber over 'em" [455], "you're blotto delirious" [979], or "And nobody aint allowed to warn you/ without your puttin up a squawk about slandering mama" [683-84]), and on the other, by putting in the place of the "archaic" not only English archaisms—of which there are plenty—but a most unfamiliar (to an American audience) incantatory Greek. Pound thus translates Sophokles's doubleness doubly himself as his language obsessively memorializes two kinds of past (that of English, and that of its original, Greek), in addition to recording its present. Earp interprets Sophokles's archaisms as a distancing strategy: as the poet's desire to remind his audience not to judge the play's championing of matricide by the Athenian "code of morals" since it takes place in the Homeric age (158). Given that Pound's express intention is to make Greek and Greek tragedy "live" again, Pound actually reverses what Earp reads as Sophokles's distancing gesture and uses the conflicting idioms to bring the two (or three) times together and show the bearing of one on the other(s). Pound had written to Katue Kitasono in 1940 that "[English] has taken in lashin's of Greek, swallowed mediaeval French, while keeping its Anglo-Saxon basis. It then petrified in the tight little island"; he now seems intent on reversing this petrification and proving that indeed the living language—the living

[13] On June 21, 1949, Pound began a letter to H.D. asking her "Why hasn't anyone writ a word of sense re/ Σοφοκλες" (H.D. Papers, Box 14, Folder 484). He may have stumbled upon Earp early in 1954; presumably in response to his questions about him, classicist Edith Hamilton writes to Pound on February 6, 1954, that she knows of Earp, but not of his *Style of Sophokles* (Pound Papers, Box 20, Folder 903). "The venerable Earp" and his book are then mentioned in a card to H.D. dated April 10, 1956 (H.D. Papers, Box 14, Folder 488).

American language he is experiencing for the first time in thirty years—is "throughout all history and despite all academies" inclusive and not exclusive (*Letters* 347). Pound turns Elektra's inability, or refusal to forget into a prominent structural/stylistic feature of the play in its entirety, thus interpreting—and repeating—Sophokles's own decision to use this mixed style as an inability, a refusal of *his* language to forget Aeschylus, epic, and his own earlier mode of writing

As I will show in the sections that follow, rather than incorporate Sophokles's text into his translation solely out of a sense of resignation, Pound allows the Greek to interact with or even amplify his English, whether or not he can or does translate it. The Greek may, on the one hand, serve as the never-to-be-approached ideal of sonic and rhythmic perfection but, on the other, it is also quite consciously used as a tool for the English, rather than separated from it. At the same time, the Greek serves as an important measure and testing ground for English, allowing Pound to pursue sometimes barely perceptible phonological inquiries that test out his language against the Greek. What Pound does translate then, even if the transfer is almost never complete (and is it ever?), what he struggles with, the specific problems he faces and the choices he makes tell us something about the nature of English and "English reality"—a necessary inquiry for Pound at the time, when faced, on the one hand, with that spoken American reality for the first time in decades, and on the other, with the collapse (and need for revival) of his poetic project. For this reason, the translation has two ambitions, one poetic and one political: Just as he did with the fragments of the *Agamemnon* in the Pisan Cantos, Pound pries open the Greek, first to see what it is made of sonically—which allows him to measure his own language both against Greek and against itself—and second, to reveal what it does not explicitly say (or suppress what it does) and on which its value depends, namely its ability to transmit the dead king's ghostly presence.

Measuring Mourning

The play opens with Orestes, his friend Pylades, and his old tutor arriving in Mycenae and outlining their plan for revenge. When Elektra bursts onto the stage with a scream, they go into hiding. Elektra's opening song follows, at a moment when it is customary in tragedy for the chorus to appear; in Pound's version, we hear in it our first, unexpected burst of Greek:

> OO PHAOS HAGNON
>
> Holy light
>
> Earth, air about us,
>
> THRENOON OODAS
>
> POLLAS D'ANTEREIS AESTHOU
>
> tearing my heart out
>
> when black night is over
>
> all night already horrible
>
> been with me
>
> my father weeping
>
> there in that wretched house
>
> weeping his doom
>
> Not killed abroad in the war
>
> but by mother and her bed-boy Aegisthus.
>
> split his head with an axe as
>
> a woodcutter splits a billet of oak,
>
> and that killed him
>
> and nobody else in this house seems to mind.

Well, I'm not going to forget it

and the stars can shine on it, all of them

tears of hate

all flaming rips of the stars

tide

destiny

and the day can look on it

I wont stand it and just keep quiet

ALL' OU MEN DE

LAEXOO THRENOON (lines 89-116)[14]

We are thus introduced to Elektra screaming, unable to let go, holding on to her father's dead body. Pound makes this clearer than Sophokles: while the Greek Elektra weeps *for* her father and recalls Agamemnon's own narration of his death in the *Odyssey* (probably familiar to the play's original audience), Pound, withholding the clarifying "for" and inverting the customary verb-object word order in his tenth line, conjures a weeping Agamemnon instead ("my father weeping"). *He* has "been with [his daughter]" all night and then, "weeping his doom," forces a change in her song, as if emerging from her torn, bleeding chest in the same way that he spoke through the blood offered by Odysseus. From Elektra's opening plaintive, song-like rhythm, we move to a markedly aggressive (and prosaic) tone: "not killed abroad in the war / but by mother and her bed-boy Aegisthus . . ." In presenting thus Elektra's plight, Pound makes clear how it

[14] Pound used Sir Richard Jebb's edition of Sophokles for his translation; despite its authoritative status, Jebb's *Electra* is often thought to be wrong in its metrical analyses by later metricists (Pohlsander, for instance). Since Pound translated with the additional help of classicist Rudd Fleming, I presume he was somewhat familiar with later criticisms of Jebb.

maps onto his own: in English, Agamemnon's emergence parallels that of Greek, as Pound cannot let go either of Agamemnon nor of Sophokles's Greek.

In general, Elektra's exclamations, whether lexical as here ("PHAOS HAGNON," "holy light") or not ("OO" above, or "OTOTOTOTOI" [line 1465]), are faithfully transcribed. Moreover, when Pound inserts single Greek lines into his English, they often perform a similarly expressionistic function: they declare or immediately follow the determination to continue speaking, crying, cursing, asking for justice. In this opening speech, for example, two lines of Greek ("ALL' OU MEN DE / LAEXOO THRENOON," "but I won't stop crying") follow Pound's Elektra's claim that "I wont stand it and just keep quiet"—and again we see that what this Elektra is struggling to suppress becomes at once her anger at her father's unjust death and, literally, her Greek. Later on in the same song, Elektra twice asks the Furies to "hear me," immediately after which Pound inserts seven lines of Greek. In the choral song which follows Elektra's here (the "parodos"), Pound's English is preceded and followed by the line "EI MOI THEMIS TAD' AUDAN," "if justice has told me so" (translated by a very sound-conscious Pound as "if my deem is heard in dooming" [lines 147, 155-56]). In the second stasimon, the chorus asks that "a sound be borne under earth / to the sons of Atreus" (lines 1210-11); what materializes immediately after is the longest section of transliterated Greek in the play. The Greek is thus consistently used expressionistically to represent speech, especially mad or "primitive" speech in the form of curses or voices from the underground. In a fitting analogy to the process of translation, moreover, the voice that is in these cases explicitly allowed to come forward—and that, we may assume, is otherwise repressed—is precisely a Greek voice, the voice of the original.

At the same time, the particular lines allowed to stand in Greek are also lines that would be difficult to translate if one seeks to transfer sound and meter in addition to meaning. With the exception of her opening cry, the lines that Pound leaves in Greek in Elektra's speech are made up exclusively of long vowels—they are called *paroemiacs* in Greek and represent a meter used in this form for laments. This is not accidental: the very lines in which Elektra speaks of her lament are themselves scream-like. That again would seem to explain Pound's inclusion of them as something that English with its reliance on, on the one hand, stress rather than length or quantity and, on the other, the alternation of stresses, cannot approximate. I will set aside this opening song for the moment to look at one of the few songs that Pound offers completely in English in order to shed light on his apparently preferred method of translation.

Pound's strategy initially seems to be to translate the play's choral songs into their English metrical equivalents when he can, and transcribe the Greek when he cannot—a strategy, then, that is similar to that used in Canto 1, where for the oldest Greek meter (the dactylic hexameter), he substituted the oldest English one (Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse). He does this most obviously in what he titles "Elektra's Keening," Elektra's dirge upon receiving from a disguised Orestes and Tutor an urn supposedly containing Orestes's ashes. Elektra's speech is in tragedy's standard meter for dialogue, the iambic trimeter, though it contains elements usually found in choral songs. Pound translates it in a version of the Anglo-Saxon tetrameter: two hemistichs of the familiar four-beat verse, the line break marking the caesura, while the sounds that end one line often begin the next:

> All that is left me
> my hope was Orestes
> dust is returned me

in my hands nothing, dust that is all of him,

flower that went forth

would I had died then

ere stealing thee from the slaughter

died both together

lain with our father

Far from thy homeland

died far in exile

no hand was near thee

to soothe thy passing,

corpse unanointed

fire consumed thee (1306-20)

. . . . . .

Dead Agamemnon, dead now my brother

I am dead also, the great wind in passing

bears us together.

Mirth for our foemen. (1334-37)

The hemistichs sometimes alliterate and when not, slant rhymes or assonances are present instead (for example, in the line cited "nothing" and "him"); as above, the longer lines in the song are tetrameters in themselves and always have a clearly marked caesura: "in my hands nothing, dust that is all of him." Besides the two beats per line, another indication that the line

break is a caesura is that often the sounds that end one line begin the next, as they would in an Anglo-Saxon tetrameter: for instance, “me-my/in my” or “Orestes/dust.” A few lines are marked as “spoken” because they have three stresses (bitch, mother, laughing) and as soon as the singing begins again, we go back to the two-stress half-lines (“thou the avenger, no more avenging”). Pound's establishment of equivalence between the standard Anglo-Saxon meter and Elektra's iambic trimeter, the standard meter used in tragic dialogue, seems ingenious: each meter has a duple structure (a foot in the trimeter is made of two iambs) and a strong caesura; in this case, moreover, each of Sophokles’s line begins with a spondee (an acceptable substitution for the iamb but used with unexpected frequency here to slow down the meter), mirrored by Pound's tendency to begin his lines with a stress. Thirty years after the first canto, then, Pound returns to Greek mourning rituals, translating into an Anglo-Saxon base not the standard Greek epic meter but the tragic meter. Here too the meter is accompanied by archaisms—morphological and syntactical more than lexical this time, to indicate perhaps the lesser distance: “would I had died then / ere stealing thee from the slaughter” (lines 1312-13), “no hand was near thee / to soothe thy passing, / corpse unanointed” (1318-20), “dred road thou goest” (1357), “death endeth pain” (1369). This translation strategy, moreover, fits in with Earp’s reading of Sophokles’s mixed diction; this passage is one he highlights.

But Pound’s translation is more complex than it seems. Though there is no Greek here, Pound follows the particular movements of his original very closely. With its recurring voiced-voiceless *d*/*t* slant rhymes, additionally associated with *th*, Pound’s Keening brings to our ears the sounds of prominent words that recur in the Greek: “thanatos” ‘death’ and “spodos,” ‘ash’.[15]

[15] In fact throughout the song, he is very faithful to the consonantal sounds of the Greek; besides the *t*/*d*/*th*, we also have, among others,`` “avail not” (line 1347) as a translation for the Greek “anoofele,” with *f*/*v*, *n*, l, a possibly long *o* in “not,” and *ai* for the long eta at the end of the Greek word; “ashes” (line 1346) and “shadows” (line 1347) for

These sounds are clustered in a distich that translates Elektra's address to the urn towards the end of her song. In these two lines she switches from the iambic meter to the "paroemiac," here, as in her opening song, composed of all spondees, an extraordinary sequence of seven long vowels generally used in laments. Pound, too, in his translation of this distich uses exclusively long or heavy syllables:

> thy death, my dying
>
> dred road thou goest (1356-57)

Of course we cannot say these double spondees in a way that reveals the "equal" quantities; in a marked departure from the regularity of Greek vowel lengths, the relative weight or stress we will assign is in this case not determined by anything. Do we privilege internal rhyme in *thy* and *my*, the assonance between *road* and *goest*, or the alliteration of *death* and *dying* and then *dred*? Does the fact that the lines in the Keening tend to have a falling rhythm compel us to stress *thy* even if it seems to be a less important word than *death*?

Furthermore, though the sense of a strong pure stress-based meter prevails throughout the Keening, most of Pound's lines do also scan accentually: they consist of a dactyl and a trochee (in the third stanza only trochees), a stripped down Sapphic line,[16] which he had first used in his early poem "The Return" and which became, according to D.S. Carne-Ross, one of his "metrical signatures" (221): "Áll that is léft me / (my) hópe was Oréstes / dúst is retúrned me / ín my hands nóthing, dúst that is áll of him/ flówer that wént fórth."[17] That is, Pound here dramatizes the tension between quantity, stress, and syllable-timing by creating lines that can also be scanned

---

"spodon" kai "skian"; and "naught" (line 1365) for "naio," thus concluding the "not" and "nothing" that has been ringing in our ears from the beginning.

[16] The last, shorter line of the Sapphic stanza, made up of a foot named *adonic*.

[17] Pound thought of "The Return" as another experiment in Sapphics (Carr 435). See Adams, who shows that "the fragments that inform the rhythm of 'The Return' are based on the sapphic stanza" that exists, in Donald Davie's words, as "a sort of phantasmal presence" (cited Adams 106). See also Carne-Ross's detailed metrical analysis, 220–23.

accentual-syllabically and by putting in long vowels only to overshadow them with his rhythmic phonological pattern. His Keening contains its Greek original: the Greek sounds, a Greek meter (though not the one used here), but like the urn at the center of the scene, it does so only deceptively, hiding as much as it reveals. This writing/mourning is false move: the object of Elektra's mourning, she will soon find out, is not in the urn, where she thinks it is, but alive next to her. Similarly, the Greek, like Orestes, is not really there, not yet dead, ready to be put in an urn, fit only for haunting, for "phantasmal presence." It is no longer a matter of raising the dead, as with the first canto's Anglo-Saxon, but of showing, as is the case with Orestes, that they have not died. That the futile Keening would then appear to be the most straightforwardly "successful" and powerfully translated—if we adhere to a more conventional notion of translation—section of Pound's play is thus not surprising for Pound's translation overall is not content with "envelop[ing] its content like a royal robe with ample folds," as Walter Benjamin puts it, but is intent on clinging to and revealing the body of its original (be it Greek or Agamemnon) (258).[18]

Pound, then, does not use the Greek only as a token of foreignness that, appearing transcribed and untranslated, allows him to represent a primal, unassimilable force; nor does he provide it to signal its untranslatability, the impossibility of a Greek-English exchange, only to put it aside whenever the right equivalent is found. Even when his English seems complete without the Greek sounds and words as in the Keening, it still bears their hallmarks. I want to return now to Elektra's opening song in order to argue for a more complex interaction between Greek and English than that presented in my initial "expressionistic" reading—and a more visible one than that in the Keening since there some of the Greek is preserved.

[18] Tellingly, the only other equally successfully translated passage might be the Tutor's false, but extremely detailed and vivid narration of Orestes's death during an athletic competition.

The "clinging" I referred to above is already evident in our first introduction to Elektra; it is what I call Pound's measuring. In the opening song, as in the Keening, when Pound transcribes the Greek lines composed entirely of long syllables (the paroemiacs), he does not give up on the English and tries to make his first two English lines quantitatively spondaic; in the second, moreover, he attempts a stress-based spondee ("Earth, air") using a comma as an unrealized unstressed syllable. As the Greek moves towards the second paroemiac in the "antistrophe" of Elektra's song—and Pound again provides the second line in that measure, cut up into two lines: "ALL' OU MEN DE / LAEXOO THRENOON"—he tries to approach it by using long syllables (in "tears," "hate," "flaming," "tide," "destiny," "day"), which culminate in the line immediately preceding it: "**I wont** [printed without the apostrophe, it approximates the actual word wont, whose "o" can be either long or short] **stand** it **and just keep qui**et" (my emphasis). The slant rhyme of *nt*/*nd* in the first half pick up on and lead into the Greek in "MEN" and "THRENOON," while the *d* anticipates the next snippet of Greek in "DOOM AIDOU." At the same time, this line and the ones preceding it (starting with "Well, I'm not going to…") may be structurally similar (divided in two parts and stresses) to the ones before them in the strophe and may be trying to approach the Greek spondee, yet they are not characterized by any metrical regularity, perhaps intentionally—to convey the impossibility to "poeticize" the murder and approximate through forceful statements the weight of the Greek spondee. Unlike in Greek, however, this is not the deciding factor for English prosody. We do not pronounce each syllable identically because stress takes over: another example is his third English line ("tearing my heart out"), where again all syllables but "ing" are long, it is "tearing" and "heart," the line's central words (containing, moreover, the same "ear" kernel), that become prominent.

Elektra's song, in Pound's version, is in fact centered on the single Greek word whose sound "tearing" and "heart" echo, a rarely encountered one otherwise in Greek: "ANT*ER*EIS" 'set over against, opposite' (my emphasis). Elektra is beating her chest, tEring her heart out (in the Greek she is even bleeding), and at the same time she is also the only one tIEring for Agamemnon's death and so is set up against the "nobody else in this house seems to mind" (106). "ANTEREIS" is, moreover, almost an anagram of "Atreides" 'son of Atreus,' a frequent epithet for Agamemnon, while "AESTHOU" 'felt', which follows it, is aligned already in this passage with "Aegisthus," whose name is placed right below it a few lines afterwards. "ANTEREIS" and "AESTHOU," with their long vowels and diphthongs, not only condense in sonic form the play's main opposition between Agamemnon and Aegisthus, but also provide the key for this song's phonetic and phonological inquiries, setting up English multitude against Greek stability. As the sounds put forth in Greek in these two lines travel and resonate through the passage in English, we cannot help but notice that they resonate a little bit differently each time. Just in the two English lines preceding and following the Greek we have the clearly long "air" versus "earth," where the resolved diphthong in itself is short/simple, but here because it is followed by more than one consonant could be considered long/heavy; in the next line there is "tearing," which, as noted above, also requires us to decide between te(ə)r and ti(ə)r, versus "heart"; then "been," versus "weeping"; then "already," "wretched," "head," "brother," "father," "murder." This resounding sonic backbone of the text could be a performance of the different ways "e(a)r" and *e* can be pronounced in English, of the multitude of quantitative and accentual measurings that might correspond to a single Greek vowel—would they always receive the same value?

Setting English opposite Greek, however, does not only lead to disjunction. Pound's version is alliterative and simultaneously alliterative with the Greek and the visual arrangement helps us see it. In these first lines, but also elsewhere, Pound encourages us to bring the Greek and English together to create an aural interlinguistic whole incorporating the transcribed Greek line into whatever metrical or rhythmical pattern he is setting up in English: here, a stress- and quantity-based fourteener (four lines of Common Meter written as two), made up of three English stresses and four long vowels in the first line and seven long vowels/diphthongs in the second:

Eárth, aír aboút us / THRĒNOON OODĀS
PŌLLĀS D'ANTĒREIS AESTHOU

Pound suppresses a Greek half-line ("pollas men") in order to create the impression that it is his English line "Earth, air about us" that introduces the us/as rhyme working through the Greek and English, as well as all the *th* and *er* sounds that reverberate here and throughout the song. He sets up the repetition of the soft *th* and of the *d* (only in Greek) as the "[Ear]th-air" in the English becomes first "THRE[NOON]" and then "D'ANTER[EIS]" in Greek. Because the English words come first, we hear the English guiding the sounds of the Greek, instead of the other way around. Similarly, though the first "POLLAS" in the Greek is not transcribed, its sonic absence is filled in by the English "us." The rhyme serves another function: because "us" resonates in the Greek, we feel compelled to stress it even though pronouns are usually unstressed, thus making Pound's first line fully spondaic (with the exception of the *a* in "about"). Thus Pound puts the Greek to work; it may be emblematic of something English couldn't do but it is not allowed to simply stand there in the midst of his text.

This is the case not only when the Greek is integrated into Pound's primarily English lines, but also when Greek strophes are transposed in their entirety. For example, in the Parodos, which comes right after Elektra's entrance song (and which, in terms of customary tragic structure, should have preceded it), Pound's chorus, in order to reinvigorate the text after the exhaustion of Elektra's monody, enters in Greek:

OO PAI PAI DUSTANOTATAS
ELEKTRA MATROS TIN' AEI
TAKEIS OOD' AKORESTON OIMOOGAN
TON PALAI EK DOLERAS ATHEOOTATA
MATROS HALONTA' APATAIS AGAMEMNONA
KAKAI TE CHEIRI PRODOTON HOOS HO TADE
POROON
OLOITE' EI MOI THEMIS TAD' AUDAN

Poor Elektra
you had a curse for a mother
and are withered with weeping,
Agamemnon was tricked and murdered.
That was a long time ago,
but a dirty hand did it, maternal,
and to breed their destruction
if my deem is heard in dooming.

EI MOI THEMIS TAD'AUDAN (141-156)

The shadow of the Greek here does not undermine Pound's English, but amplifies it. His strong alliterative stresses are the best way to slow down the meter and produce a pounding effect, equivalent to that produced by the Greek spondees, while he also does not give up on long vowels (hence, weeping, dirty, breed, destruction, deem, dooming). Pound suggests that he wants us to relate the end of the Greek with the end of his English (or else to surround his English with a protective layer of Greek, the ghost of an ur-mother tongue, a father tongue perhaps). The line "EI MOI THEMIS TAD'AUDAN," which Pound's English line translates, literally mean "if justice has told me so." "EI MOI" becomes "if my"; "themis," justice, finds an equivalent in "deem is"; the palindromic "tad'audan" recalls the deem-doom play; and finally the *au* of "audan" is weakly echoed in-between the two *d*'s of "heard" and "dooming." Pound's English stanza builds up to this linguistic coincidence (from the *th* of "themis" in "mother" and "withered" to the *d*'s and *t*'s "tricked," "murdered," "dirty," "maternal," "did it," "breed," "destruction"), but it is a Greek word that has given rise to it: PRODOTON 'treacherous' in the Greek strophe's penultimate line. While Sophokles's Klytemnestra has deviously delivered/betrayed Agamemnon to evil hands (πρόδοτον, 126), Pound rushes to transform them into her own: "a dirty hand did it, maternal." Keeping the Greek word's consonants, its sound, he nonetheless turns betrayal into uncleanliness. As the Greek *d* words—"dustanotatas" 'most miserable', "doleras" 'evil' and "prodoton"—conclude in "audan," audibly demanding to be echoed or heard in song, the repeated line of Greek itself places an injunction: that justice be heard, that language not betray this just paternal (and Greek) dooming against the dirty maternal hand. Pound's deem must be heard and identified as that of the father and of the original, but it can only be heard through the resources of English exemplified here.

We see this very clearly in the next choral song, the first stasimon. For Sophokles's mostly iambic meter[19] in its strophe and antistrophe, Pound uses three-beat lines, framed by sequences of four-beat lines, that become tightened through rhyme and a more strongly iambic pattern in the antistrophe:

You can say that I never guess right
a fool born without second sight,
that my head was never screwed tight
But if Justice don't win just this once
I'm a dunce
and before a great time has gone by
My heart's risin now
and my dreams are breathin deep
with a free and airy sound:
the greek king won't forget you
but he'll be comin yet
and the double headed axe
be paying back the smacks
and the bloody blood be flowin' once again.

And Vengeance will come out
from her hiding bush no doubt
she will with brazen tread

[19] The meter in the strophe (lines 472–484) and antistrophe (lines 489–501 is logaoedic (dactyls and trochees) and trochaic, according to Jebb, while Pohlsander claims it is clearly iambo-choriambic, but admits the colometry is difficult (Jebb lxxxi ff.; Pohlsander 53).

to their adulterous bed

to wipe out all the stain

as they wrestle there unwed;

ever with lock and sign . . . . (535-55)

Pound does not include any Greek. This song-like triple rhythm, coupled with alliterations, assonances, and rhymes, aligns these stanzas with popular song—and appropriately so, since the chorus is speaking about prophetic dreams and oracles. Moreover, Pound's frequent double offbeats between beats and his use of consecutive stresses ("You can say that I never guéss ríght," "withoút sécond" in the opening of the strophe) that demand to be pronounced as such correspond to Sophokles's tendency to substitute a spondee (long-long) for an iamb (short-long), which makes his iambic foot a little longer than itself, essentially replacing with a triple measure.

This close alignment between Greek and English seems to break down, however, once the chorus come to the concluding portion of the stasimon (the "epode"), which does not correspond metrically to the preceding English strophic pair. This particular epode is metrically unusual since most of its lines end gravely and forcefully with a sequence of three long syllables (a foot called *molossus*), while Jebb notes extraordinarily long syllables within the lines, with one long vowel standing in for an entire trochee.[20] Given that in theory such sequences would be hard to replicate in a language like English that needs to alternate stresses, again it makes sense that Pound would provide this epode in transcribed Greek. But this particular Greek stanza bears similarities to his preceding English ones: the lines are of roughly equal length (which was not the case with the longer lines of the strophe and antistrophe), and abound, as presented through Pound's transcription, in slant rhymes, internal rhymes, and alliterations:

[20] The epode (lines 507–513) is also considered trochaic by Jebb and purely iambic by Pohlsander, who, however, notes that there is rarely an iamb without resolution or syncopation (Pohlsander 55).

OO PELOPOS HA PROSTHEN

POLUPONOS HIPPEIA

HOOS EMOLES AIANES

TADE GA

EUTE GAR HO PONTISTHEIS

MURTILOS EKOIMATHE

PANCHRUSEOON DIPHROON

DUSTANOIS AIKIAIS

PRORRIDZOS EKRIPHTHEIS

OU TI POO

ELEIPEN EK TOUD' OIKOI

POLUPONOS AIKIA (lines 570-81)

Instead of aiming for a replication of the vowels, as he did with the "Geoohgiah voice," Pound makes Greek come to English without leaving its own sonic body, by putting on display sonic features that might otherwise go unnoticed given the swing of the Greek meter. We see, for example, (what in English would be) an off-rhyme between "PROSTHEN" and ""AIANES" or between "PONTISTHEIS" and "EKOIMATHE."

In his "spoken" translation of the epode that follows, Pound tries to recreate the molossi quantitatively in his English, through both long/complex vowels and consonantal clusters.

For Myrtil's curse

when he was drowned after that crooked horse-race

chucked out of his gilded car into the sea

and the curse has continued

on the house of Pelops

rotting the earth. (lines 583-88)

Pound's lines here could also be read as ending with three long syllables in the first stanza, and with one/two in the first and third lines of the second stanza; the second line of the first stanza, moreover, could be construed as having five of them.[21] But this regularity of length is not what we hear here. If these lines are successful for our ears, it is probably because the letters of "curse," much like the letters of "PELOPOS" in Greek, travel through the passage in "race," "sea," "continued," "Pelops," "earth." Both together suggest the inescapability of Pelops's curse, which is precisely what the entire song is about. The Greek may place a demand on the English, to which it cannot correspond fully, but the English stress-based meter in Pound's translated strophic pair both illuminates sonic patterns in the transcribed Greek thought to be unimportant metrically and appears to dictate its progress. Arguing for the interdependence of the two languages, Pound's *Elektra* performs the linguistic interaction and exchange that might precede the monolingual smoothness of any given translation, thus laying bare the very process of translating.

[21] Pound tries to recreate the molossi quantitatively in his English, through both long/complex vowels and consonantal clusters. I read the first line as four long syllables, the *i* in "Myrtil" lengthened because closed by the possessive and the hard *c* of curse following. Moving on, the nonlexical monosyllables that take up considerable space in these lines ("when, he, was, and, that, of, his, into, the, has, on") are all ambiguous according to Hanson ("Quantitative Meter…" 60; on the vagaries of monosyllables in discussions of English prosody and poetic technique, see also Haynes 65–73); "crook[ed]," "horse," "race," "out," "sea," the "nue" of continue and house are all long; "chuck[ed]," "gild[ed]" and "[Pe]lops" are short but could be made long because of the two consonants; finally, "car" "rot" and "earth" can be plausibly taken to be heavy since they are stressed and closed.

Just Returns

After the Keening, the transcribed Greek almost disappears from Pound's play. To some extent, this is inevitable: only one choral song proper follows, and Elektra's speeches are shorter as the play turns from words to action. But what the absence of Greek allows Pound to do is to essentially rewrite the play's conclusion, thus replacing the undead language with the undead king. In the last stasimon, sung by the chorus as Elektra and Orestes enter the palace to kill Klytemnestra, Pound condenses its two strophes into one and despite noting in the margins "DAMN/ Rhythm a twister,"[22] he decides to leave out the Greek.

Mars breathing blood

Hounds that miss never their prey

Miss never their spring, under the roof,

Seeking the doers of ill, all ill, by stealth, by guile,

Mars breatheth blood,

Dogs that never miss their prey,

The palace roof,

Nor yet under-long to wait for the proof, of my presage.

Will, heart, and all. (1625-33)

On the one hand, Pound may have omitted the Greek because, as a stress-syllable scansion of his lines shows, he follows the Greek meter and its changes very closely. Moreover, the intricate interlacing of metrical sequences in the Greek and the stealthy attack it narrates—that is, the song's formal and narrative retreating-advancing movement—is made clear to the eye and the

[22] What Pound's comment is referring to, I think, is a diagram of the stasimon's metrical structure provided by Jebb. Giving an unnecessarily complicated scansion, Jebb claims that this song is noteworthy for its mixture of metrical elements; metrical sequences are combined, split up, and then recombined; this for Jebb is a mark of Sophokles's increased innovativeness and stylistic freedom in his later plays.

ear in English through Pound's lineation and manipulation of beats per line (2-3-4-6-2-4-2-6-3). This serpentine movement is also reflected on the level of the words, as, for instance, the order of "miss" and "never" is reversed, or the consonants of "prey" split up into "palace roof," reuniting in "proof" and then more fully, accompanied by their vowel, in "presage." On the other hand, the Greek not translated or transliterated by Pound in this condensed song heralds Orestes, not Mars or hounds, as the agent of the murder to come.[23] Pound's omission pushes the son out of the picture in order to allow for the father's triumphant return a few scenes later, a return that is already hinted at here. Through his doubling of the hounds/dogs—in Greek they only appear once—tied both times to the "palace roof," Pound refers back to his older Aeschylian "dawg" (hence perhaps "breatheth"[24]) on the same roof and his incomplete stab (his own "presage") at giving voice to the king's murder that is about to be echoed and reversed now. What was then "lak a dawg," "κυνός δίκην" (*Agamemnon*, line 3), will now finally come to its own and to English as the dog's justice (δίκη).[25] Pound's added reference to dogs here thus heralds once again, as in that Aeschylian opening, Agamemnon's (second) coming.

In the scene of Klytemnestra's murder that follows, Sophokles clearly echoes Agamemnon's murder in Aeschylus, both through exact verbal repetition and through sonic echoes of words not exactly repeated.

> ΑΓ: Ὤμοι πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγήν ἔσω.
>
> [Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow!]
>
> . . . . . .

[23] By not translating these few lines, Pound also suppresses a very bizarre usage of the word "blood," which would usually interest him. The "αἷμα" is not only in Mars's breath, but held, newly-sharpened ("νεακόνητον"), as if it were a weapon, in Orestes's hand ("νεακόνητον αἷμα χειροῖν ἔχων" [1394]).
[24] "Breatheth" quite economically also sounds almost exactly like the Greek "'Ιδεθ'" (1384), "look!" the word that opens this passage, as the chorus urges us to look at Ares breathing blood—can the breath of the Greek give life to the English? Or can the English finally bring Agamemnon back into life, when even the Greek fails and is thus not given here?
[25] *Δίκη* means both "custom, habit, or way" and "justice."

ΑΓ: Ὤμοι μάλ᾽ αὖθις, δευτέραν πεπληγμένος.

[And once again, alas! I am struck by a second blow.]

(*Agamemnon,* 1343, 1345; my emphasis)

ΚΛ: Ὤμοι πέπληγμαι.

ΗΛ: Παῖσον, εἰ σθένεις, διπλῆν.

ΚΛ: Ὤμοι μαλ΄αὖθις. (*Elektra*, 1415-17; my emphasis)

KL: That's done it.

EL: Hit her again.

KL: Twice, twice

always twice. (Pound's *Elektra*, 1663-66)

Sophokles's Elektra, haunted by the sound of her father's dying words that her mother doesn't utter, "πληγήν ἔσω" (literally, "wound inside"), echoes it by telling Orestes "Παῖσον" [hit] and then adding, since Orestes has already struck, "διπλῆν" [doubly, a second time], filling in the missing letters of "πληγήν." Pound also hears Agamemnon's voice here, repeatedly noting it in his manuscripts' margins, and does so more than Sophokles: he actually translates Agamemnon's and not Klytemnestra's dying cry. Sophoclean Klytemnestra's last words are simply "once again" (and thus repeat again only the first part of Agamemnon's cry, "Ὤμοι μαλ΄αὖθις"). It is Agamemnon whose words of doubling are also double, like Pound's: literally "once again, twice struck." With his "Twice, twice, / always twice," Pound makes evident what the Greek only half reveals, namely Agamemnon's presence in this scene. Adding on a third "twice," moreover, he marks his own iteration of the words, third after Aeschylus and Sophokles, while also expressing

his linguistic predicament in this play, a third of which appears twice, in both Poundian Greek and in a bifurcated (archaic and slangy) English.

This is also Pound's third attempt—now finally successful—to resurrect, if not the *Agamemnon*, at least Agamemnon. In preparation for the king's return, Pound does not translate Elektra's "εἰ σθένεις" (if you can, if you are strong enough); the omission may be for the sake of concision, but at the same time it prefigures what an attentive Pound reader would already know was happening, namely the revelation of Agamemnon's undead body as the perpetrator of the murder. Of course there can be no doubt that *he* is strong enough to kill Klytemnestra. Indeed, Poundian Klytemnestra's first cry, "That's done it," is the reverse of what Pound had Aeschylian Klytemnestra say of her husband's murder in 1934: "I did it. That's how it is" (*LE* 270). Immediately following this scene, Pound translates the chorus's word *πάρεισιν* 'are present' into stage directions for Agamemnon's ghost, "ITS hands dripping RED blood [sic]" (*Elektra* 102). It is finally reaching, repeating, and ultimately inverting Klytemnestra's "good job" that allows for Agamemnon's powerful return, which proves that "They live [*not* live again] who lie under ground" and that their "blood," their living force, "overfloods their slayers" (lines 1671-73), as the chorus immediately tell us:

> In the end, weight unto weight
> Fate works out to its end
> They live who lie under ground
> The blood of the dead, long dead
> Overfloods their slayers.
> The dead hand drips Mars
> And the slain,

I can't blame 'em. (1669-75)

Τελοῦσ' ἀραί· ζῶσιν οἱ γᾶς ὑπαί κείμενοι·
παλίρρυτον γάρ ἅιμ' ὑπεξαιροῦσι τῶν
κτανόντων οἱ πάλαι θανόντες.
Καί μήν πάρεισιν οἵδε΄φοινία δέ χείρ
στάζει θυηλῆς Ἄρεος, οὐδ' ἔχω ψέγειν. (1419-23)

The "dead hand," a misreading of "φοινία δέ χείρ" [bloody or blood-red hand]—*φοινία* as the name of a color is itself a poetic or synecdochic misreading of "φονικός" [murderous]—is of course Agamemnon's; it drips Mars since Mars had breathed blood into it. It also curiously drips "the slain" (unless we read the chorus addressing the slain and saying they cannot blame them), Agamemnon having thus presumably incorporated, eaten up Klytemnestra. Yet, though the Greek would justify such a reading,[26] Pound's translation does not. Instead of "the long dead" stealing blood from the murdered and so living, which is what the Greek says, Pound's dead give more blood to the formerly living, now murdered. If they have blood to give, they were not dead at all. If "they live who lie under ground," their blood killing their slayers, then why is their hand still dead, instead of murderous or blood-red? To separate the "dead" from Orestes might be one reason, but Pound has already eliminated the reference to Orestes in this passage (plus, as a later scene with Aegisthus makes clear, Orestes also is one of those lying under ground, who ends up living). Could it be that it is also Klytemnestra's now dead hand that subversively and perhaps inadvertently enters Pound's text and prompts the appearance of the awkwardly undigested and unincorporated linguistic block, "and the slain" in the next line? The word Pound translates as "the slain" is "θυηλῆς," used rarely in Greek and in fact only this one time by Sophokles. It

[26] Jebb translates the last two lines thus: "The red hand drips with sacrifice to Ares, and I cannot blame the deed."

indicates the part of a victim offered in a burnt sacrifice, or in this case, the blood offered to or slain by Ares.[27] The sacrifice recalls Iphigeneia, hence the possible justification of Klytemnestra's own crime, while the burning evokes Orestes's fake ashes, thus his *δόλος* that links his actions to those of his mother. "Θυηλῆς" of course almost sounds like "θήλυς" [female], a pun Sophokles doubtlessly intended and that Pound at this crucial moment of return may have tried to suppress.[28]

When at the end of the play, we hear bilingually that Agamemnon's seed, the "SPERM' ATREOOS'" is "τελεωθέν" (delivered, made complete, but also ended) "with a rush," Pound specifies in his stage directions that the "big double doors are open so the WHOLE auditorium can see Klut's bier and the lifting of the cloth," while Orestes takes Aegisthus inside through another door (103).

> O SPERM' ATREOOS
>
> Atreides, Atreides
>
> come thru the dark.
>
> (speaks)
>
> my god, it's come with a rush (1793-97)

Adding the light imagery and the repetition of the name, and translating the Greek *ὁρμῇ* with "rush," Pound closes the play by returning us to heralding of the king's arrival in the majestic beginning of the *Agamemnon*, its "rush of the action . . . continual shrieking . . . flash of the beacon fires" (*LE* 267). Out of the darkness of the murdering, unjust maternal body, or of a static, rotting mother tongue, a transcribed Greek that, crucially, in this case can be read also as

[27] Pound's notes in the typed manuscript, cited by Richard Reid, show that he toyed with the idea of translating "θυηλῆς" as victim.
[28] After all, when Elektra asks if "the bitch is dead," all Orestes can say, "sobered tone," is that she "wont have any more trouble with mother" (1681–83); unlike Elektra, he knows that the dead don't die.

English, has finally transmitted the light of the paternal name and lineage—note that Agamemnon is identified by his patronymic—promising the continuance of its seed.

Yet there is an other side to this triumphant-seeming ending: Klut's dead (?) body is given almost equal prominence to that accorded to Agamemnon's (?) hand earlier and takes on Agamemnon's vampiric role, also "πάρεισιν," being there to watch or haunt her son's actions. One may wonder if that multitude of seeds ("SPERM' ATREOOS' / Atreides, Atreides") doesn't find its way, "thru the dark," "come with a rush" and finally "Delivered, Delivered" into Klut's body, lying on its bier, ready to once again bear (the two words are etymologically related) a new crop or cycle of ills. Sophokles had used a verb derived from "ὁρμῇ," namely "ὠρμάθη" earlier in the play to designate what Aegisthus's and Klytemnestra's axe did to Agamemnon's body: "Ὅτε οἱ παγχάλκων ανταία / γενύων ὠρμάθη πλαγά" (195-96), while Pound's fully spondaic translation is "when the brass axe hit him" (line 264). It is worth looking at that passage in this context:

> A twisty idea
> And a letch that killed him,
> One vehemence led to another
> Procreating the form
> Whether god or man did it. (lines 266-70)

> Δόλος ἦν ὁ φράσας, ἔρος ὁ κτείνας
> δεινάν δεινῶς προφυτεύσαντες
> μορφάν, εἴτ' οὖν θεός εἴτε βροτῶν
> ἦν ὁ ταῦτα πράσσων. (197-200)

The "vehemences" or "δεινάν" that the Chorus is referring too are unclear, as is the subject of "προφυτεύσαντες." Agamemnon's murder has just been described; are the "δεινάν" the combination of trickiness (δόλος) and lechery (ἔρος) that led to Agamemnon's murder or is the Chorus prophetically (Greek "προφυτεύσαντες," literally "planting in advance" sounds almost exactly like "προφητεύσαντες," prophesying) seeing Orestes' return and a proliferation of evils—or vehemence—in it? Are they referring to the current "δεινάν" that Elektra is steeped in, following the "δεινόν" of the murder or, alternatively, to Agamemnon's own "δεινάν" (Iphigeneia's sacrifice among them) that prompted the murder? Or is it a general judgment of or comment on the bloody cycle of the house?

Pound later insisted on the play's key phrase being "Οὐ ταῦτα πρός κακοῖσι δειλίαν ἔχει" (line 351), "need we add cowardice to all this filth/ills?," a line uttered by Elektra to her sister (Pound line 401, but also *P/T*).[29] Klytemnestra's betrayal of her husband becomes in Pound's translation of the play a matter of uncleanliness, her "right hand" a "dirty hand." Nicknamed the "usuress"—as a translation of the Greek τεκούσα 'mother', which gives us τόκος 'child' but also 'monetary interest'—Klytemnestra is held responsible for an uncontrolled proliferation of evil ("procreating the form") that her children supposedly bring to an end by the conclusion of the play.[30] Rather than "filth," or "ills," or "evil," however, Pound in this instance uses the surprising "vehemence" as a translation for "δεινάν." The OED helpfully notes that the Latin ancestor of "vehement" had more negative overtones, meaning "impetuous" or "violent," and that moreover, it may have been derived "from an unrecorded adjective meaning 'deprived of mind,' influenced by *vehere*, carry." This evil (of) having one's mind carried away does not only refer to Elektra or

[29] Jebb: "Does this not add cowardice to our miseries?" Mary de Rachewiltz, Pound's daughter, closes her memoir of her father by remembering his quoting that line to her late in his life; she translates it as "Shall we to all our ills add cowardice?" (306).
[30] For a very different modernist take on Klytemnestra, see Woolf's "On Not Knowing Greek" and *A Room of One's Own*, where she and Antigone become women who "burnt like beacons."

Pound, but also, I think, prefigures the ending Pound will envision for the play even though it will not be verbally referred except this once (and indirectly). Next to Orestes's response to Elektra that all is well in the house "if that oracle was on the square" (1680), Pound, Richard Reid tells us, had noted in his fair copy, "got to emphasize the Tragic. The *El* beginning of worry & later madness. Contrast of O. & E. from now on" (103). Orestes, prompted by Elektra (who, as soon as Klytemnestra dies, wishes Aegisthus were also dead), is ready to go blindly through the motions of another murder, repeat Agamemnon's murder again ("You'll die / where you killed my father," 1775-76) even though he, having been educated by Agamemnon's undead body, knows

That the

DEAD

don't

DIE

It is to exclude Klytemnestra from this immortality, however, that Pound has stage directions at the end of the play for the presentation of her passive "bier," a visible reminder (as opposed to Orestes's invisible ashes in the urn) of the violence done to her and of the fact that justice has been served, the paternal deem heard and then seen in the dooming of the dirty, maternal hand.

If what Pound dramatizes in his *Elektra* is Agamemnon's return and revenge on Klytemnestra, he is also, I have been suggesting, dramatizing Sophoclean Greek taking its revenge on his maternal English; like Agamemnon, it is ever-present when, given that this is a "translation," it ought to have been erased, overcome, killed off. These two goals, however, seem

to clash: triumphantly reviving Agamemnon and thus exiting the moral murkiness of Sophokles's play requires an at least apparent unfaithfulness to the play's words and sounds, while adhering as closely as Pound does to words and sounds elsewhere risks losing the "rush of the action" and producing a multiplicity of languages and styles that exceeds that of Sophokles. And yet in the end, though insisting that the "DEAD/ dont/ DIE [sic]," as Pound's Orestes tells Aegisthus (lines 1754-56), and that the "dead" kill the treacherous living, Pound's text paradoxically has to hide or forget its "dead," the Greek original it otherwise flaunts, in the moments leading up to Klytemnestra's murder —to kill it in order to prove its continuing life by injecting the seed of Atreus into a renewed English tradition.

Even so, however, the problem with this translation—or rather, what must have seemed a problem to Pound, causing him to abandon the project—is that in being attentive to every metrical and rhythmical movement of the Greek, whether or not he also provides it, he creates or uncovers the disagreement of one language (English) with or within itself, with its own sounds, words, registers, and poetic resources, and thus releases into it an otherness that to speakers of English almost seems like nonsense. "The task of the translator," writes Walter Benjamin, "consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original" (258). Even when he makes the Greek appear secondary to his English, or at least equally primary, Pound does not reproduce its "echo," its ghost, but the language itself, with the exception of the Keening. Pound treats the Greek as if every word were a holy word, its sense inseparable from its form, and thus risks falling in what Benjamin called, apropos of Friedrich Hölderlin's Sophokles translations, the "bottomless depths of language" (82). The "gates of a language" may be "expanded and modified," but they may then "slam shut and enclose the translator with silence," says Benjamin; in Pound's terms, living language may

be made to be inclusive but, to quote from a later canto (116), he "cannot make it cohere" as a single play (81). This fragmentation or incoherence of Pound's text may be appropriate for screaming Elektra and is certainly to some extent present in the Greek. However, the Greek is pulled back from it because a certain metrical and formal regularity still prevails and makes itself felt (as Anne Carson notes, even Elektra's screams can be scanned)—the very regularity that attracted Pound and Eliot to tragedy in 1917. In clinging to its body as closely as possible, Pound is motivated by this promise of a measured language of known and relatively fixed values that can be combined in infinite ways and still lead to a recognizable pattern; a language that can be unpredictable and thus "free" or alive,[31] which is underlain by a core of certainty, that of quantity; a language in which everything has its place and final measuring. Pound's *Elektra* would thus also enact the ritual killing of a coherent English so that it may live again, as indeed it does, not only in the cantos that followed, but also in Pound's next translation from Sophokles, *The Women of Trachis*, whose choruses Pound thought of as his crowning achievement in musical form.[32]

The Women of Trachis, a translation containing almost no Greek that was published as well as performed, culminates precisely in a declaration of coherence, suggesting thus that Pound's experiments with quantitative meter in *Elektra* did improve his cadence after all. Though he dies unjustly on the pyre, his body decomposing already by the poison he has accidentally ingested, the hero of that play, Herakles, unlike Agamemnon, dies triumphant: close to his moment of death, he at last understands a paternal injunction ("I heard it and wrote it down / under my Father's tree": "This is the great rule: Filial Obedience") and cries, in Pound's translation: "what / SPLENDOUR, / IT ALL COHERES" ("Ταῦτ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ

[31] See Budelmann, who argues that the unpredictability and complexity (but not confusion) of Sophokles's sentences make his plays and characters feel particularly alive (17, 29, 59, 92).
[32] See "The Art of Poetry" 25.

συμβαίνει" [line 1174]) (*P/T* 1108). And yet for the sake of this totalized image—Herakles no longer in his "mask of agony," but in that of "solar serenity"—a crucial word designating the paternal tree has to remain untranslated: πολυγλώσσου, many-tongued, multilingual ("πρὸς τῆς πατρῴας καὶ πολυγλώσσου δρυός" [lines 1167-68]). Though he initially translates it, Pound does not admit this word into his text after he has hit upon the translation of Herakles's dying cry, as if it is this multiplicity of languages that threatens coherence. The word resurfaces in Canto 95, both in Greek and in Pound's translation—obviously he did not think it unimportant—in a moment when he seeks to circumscribe the meaning of *polis*: "There were many sounds in that oak-wood" (664). Many sounds, of which Pound in his *Women of Trachis*, chose to hear only one: the illuminating transmission of paternal law, the "body of light come forth / from the body of fire" as he puts it in Canto 91, while on just the preceding page, Elektra, her name written in Greek letters, is "bowed still with the wrongs of Aegisthus" (630, 629). Unlike those of Orestes in the *Elektra*, Herakles's splendid ashes ("spodoi")[33] are real, cohere, and leave no room for deception or for mourning. The non-coherence of *Elektra*—and, some might say, the later *Cantos*—is what happens when the other sounds, and specifically the Greek sounds, or tongues, *glossai*, are heard.

[33] I owe this association between "splendor" and the Greek "spodos" to Richard Sieburth. Though "spodos" does not appear in the *Trachiniae*, it is encountered often in the *Elektra*, so Pound was certainly familiar with it.

The Intricate Plan: H.D.'s *Ion*

> *Le poète doit ainsi résister à l'aspiration des dieux qui disparaissent et l'attirent vers eux dans leur disparition . . . ; il doit résister à la pure et simple subsistance sur la terre, celle que les poètes ne fondent pas ; il doit accomplir le double renversement, se charger du poids de la double infidélité et maintenir ainsi distinctes les deux sphères, en vivant purement la séparation, en étant la vie pire de la séparation même, car ce lieu vide et pur qui distingue les sphères, c'est là le sacré, l'intimité de la déchirure qu'est le sacré.*
> (Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace Littéraire*)

"Who Fished the Murex Up?": Apollo's Formula ca. 1927

In *Bid Me to Live* we saw Julia's re-awakening as a translator first and a poet later through her newfound ability to map the materiality of Greece onto an English landscape, through a sense of fit between "Euripidean choros" and Cornwall air. H.D. had already told the story of that period in her life in two of the three novellas that make up her 1926 volume *Palimpsest*.[1] "Hipparchia," the volume's first novella, set in "War Rome (*circa* 75 B.C.)," is so close to the part of the story told in *Bid* that it often seems to be simply its transposition to a different time. "Murex," subtitled "War and Postwar London (*circa* A.D. 1916-1926)," is set in its aftermath, in the first moments of revisiting that painful period (which, if we were to think biographically, must have already happened in order for something like "Hipparchia" to be written). Both texts, like *Bid*, conclude with scenes of fervid writing or, more precisely, translating. Hipparchia, having abandoned both her lovers, returns to an anthological project she had once undertaken with her now-dead brother ("Her work was a correlation of gods, temples,

[1] Friedman calls *Palimpsest* "an interlocking triptych" since the characters correspond both across the novellas and to people in H.D.'s life (*Penelope's Web* 72).

flowers, poets" [71]), which at the present moment revolves around the translation of Moero's grape poem—a poem that recapitulates the relation between Greece and Rome that the entire novella has been trying to map. "Murex" devotes its second part to the distillation and composition of a poem out of Raymonde Ransome's suppressed memories, which were brought to the surface by the unwelcome visit of a Hermes-like figure aptly named Ermy. I will focus on "Murex" here since, though less explicitly concerned with Greece, it more clearly presents the issues that H.D. raises in her translations of Euripides, and will help us move from the *Hippolytus* myth—*Palimpsest* as a whole was composed at the same time as *Hippolytus Temporizes*—to *Ion*.

"Murex" takes its title and epigraph from Robert Browning's poem "Popularity," published in *Men and Women* in 1855; it is a poem about an unknown yet great poet, no doubt an expression of Browning's own disappointment at his lack of recognition. The poem suggests a parallel for the poet's difficult but unrecognized labor in the fisherman who knows how to extract the precious purple dye from the murex. Everyone who stands around the fisherman knows what may come from sea mollusks ("Who has not heard how Tyrian shells / Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes / Whereof one drop worked miracles" [263]) and is willing to rhapsodize about it, as well as cite famous instances of its appearance and use ("And each bystander of them all / Could criticize, and quote tradition / How depths of blue sublimed some pall" [263]), but when faced with the actual catch, they can only exclaim, "Mere conchs! Not fit for warp or woof!" (264). Yet, Browning tells us,

> Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
> And clarify—refine to proof
> The liquor filtered by degrees,

While the world stands aloof. (264)

The poet is presented by analogy as a distiller—not an alchemist, as Pound would have it in the eponymous poem, that is, not as one who transforms an ordinary substance into an extraordinary one—but rather as one who sees hidden potential, who discloses what is hiding. The genius (or rather, cunning) of the poet lies in perseverance, in knowing something great is hidden in an unbecoming shell (literally) and trying every way possible to get to it; others will then recognize its value and try to imitate him. The question in the poem's penultimate line, "Who fished the murex up," that H.D. borrows for her story's epigraph refers both to the fisherman, who first catches the murex, but also to his (or the other's/the cunning one's) action of fishing the murex up—in the word's second meaning of purple dye—from the murex as shellfish. That is, the question becomes also one of double meanings—who created this second, "poetic/literary" sense for this word?[2] The poet is one with cunning enough to discern two (two meanings, two elements) where there seems to only be one, "mere conchs."[3]

"Murex" is likewise a story about fishing memories out of oblivion, and a poem—and poet—out of memory. It opens with Raymonde Ransome, pen-name Ray Bart,[4] a poet who no

[2] The *OED* defines the word as follows:

> 1. Any of various predatory gastropod molluscs of the genus *Murex* or the family Muricidae, found in tropical and temperate seas, which are distinguished by spiny shells and from some of which the crimson dye called Tyrian purple was formerly obtained.
> 2. Chiefly *poet.* and *literary*. The deep crimson dye obtained from shellfish of the family *Muricidae* and much valued as a symbol of royal or imperial rank; the colour of this dye. Also called *Tyrian purple*.

[3] Already, I think, we are expected to hear in this mention of "murex" a reference back to Hipparchia, whose Tyrian purple robes are repeatedly emphasized until she decides to give them up together with both of her lovers (the story's Rafe Ashton/Aldington and Cyril Vane/Cecil Gray figures).

[4] The gendering of the names here, as elsewhere in H.D., is particularly interesting. Raymonde is obviously a woman, while the name "Ray Bart" most likely masculine. Freddie, Raymonde's husband, calls her "Ray Bart" and pronounces it, she claims, "'Raybart'" "as if it were Norbert or Robert" (149). Raymonde, in contrast, though visualizing Ray Bart in warrior attire (helmet, spear), often uses the feminine pronoun: "Ray Bart insisted with her eternal silver helmet" (149). It is hard not to read a translingual pun in these names as well, to hear H.D. playing with female-male stereotypes: Ray-monde as the Ray of the world, the Ray who "lives," the person, and Ray-Bart, the Ray with the beard, the male one, the "writer." Even for Freddie, who seems to be supportive of her writing, the poet can only be a man; so despite needing his encouragement to write, Raymonde also has to write against him, against that view. See also Friedman on H.D.'s naming practices in general (*Penelope's Web* 78–79).

longer writes living in what she calls the "drug and anodyne of London" (118). Raymonde receives a visit from an acquaintance by the telling name of "Ermentrude," who seems intent on reminding her what she has sought to forget. Ermentrude, her name suggesting the merging of the messenger God Hermes with the Germanic "trut" 'beloved, dear', has been sent, it seems initially, from one of Raymonde's friends to procure a letter of introduction to Raymonde's acquaintances in Florence. In fact she has been "sent" by Martin, Ermy's former lover, who knows Raymonde's poetry, and, it turns out, it is not Raymonde that has to secure Ermy a safe passage (to Italy or to an acceptance of her fate) but Ermy who, reversing the role of the psychopomp, will guide Raymonde back to living, and to writing poetry.

"Let well enough alone. The past was the past," Raymonde initially insists to Ermy (101). A conventional reading of the story's subtitle, "1916-1926," would make precisely this point: the past is the past, 1916 absolutely separate and different from 1926. The timeline offered might lead us to think that this story will be a straightforward narration or history of events in London between the two dates, a story beginning in 1916 and ending in 1926. As we read on, we realize that the dash between the two dates does not separate a beginning- and end-point but indicates a duration, a link, a merging. We never see 1916 or the years between 1916 and 1926 as such. We are firmly rooted in 1926. But we feel their effects as our story's protagonist desperately tries to erase them from her personal history. The year 1926 is the palimpsest of 1916: 1916 forgotten, written over, and yet still somehow remaining and directing the responses and trains of thought of a person who has almost entirely suppressed it. Raymonde throughout their conversation tries to deny Ermy the possibility of moving on, of living without repeating, of having an emotion that would not be rooted in the memory, or the intentional forgetting, of the war. What Ermy shows Raymonde instead is the possibility of change, of remembering but not reliving the past. 1916 is

still happening in 1926 even though by all accounts (according to regular time-keeping) it has gone by—in fact, we might say that for Raymonde it is first happening in 1926. Its effects are first felt now, first experienced through a kind of *Nachträglichkeit*: "Raymonde's only just accredited past suffering now came clearly to her" (137). What the conversation with Ermy allows her to access is not only the war trauma but also what had preceded it. This is what she calls the "other London behind London": an idyllic London before the war that remains untouched and that would be tainted were the war drama allowed to come through, to be experienced (125). Until that point,

> the background of her past that she looked at through the veil of her self-obliteration, of her loyalties, was soft and dim and she saw things through a veil, distant, remote, removed. . . . So sure was that world, so distant yet so clear, so definite, so precise that no casual treachery could blight it. . . . The actual centre of that world, like the pearl the sea-fish throws out, like the star ejected from the nebula, was small and precise. It became through years more precise as if with the years Raymonde had attained another gift of defined and clarid perspective. (124-25)

Because maintaining that ideal time, that past is so important to her, Raymonde presents herself as distanced and uncaring with regards to the war or to Ermy's and her own love-triangle "tragedies"; were these painful experiences allowed to break through, they would destroy the crystallized purity that she had been cultivating. For this reason, this idyllic world could not be properly revisited and was projected to the "distant past." What had been inaccessible to Raymonde before Ermy's visit was her adulterous husband Freddie, who had enlisted in the war, and their prior happy and unhappy life as poets together; an image of it was maintained but

closed off because to remember it in its details and its everydayness would be to remember its destruction.

The story proceeds by a series of repetitive patterns or identifications between characters and of characters, especially Ermy, with mythical figures (she becomes Hermes, Thoth, Queen Nefertiti, Ophelia). This is mirrored on the microscopic, lexical level of the text through the heavy use of repeated motifs punctuating the flow of the prose and acquiring new valences each time they appear. The most persistent is the word "feet" usually repeated five times in a row. For most of the first part of the novella, these "feet" seem to refer alternately to the feet of soldiers Raymonde once heard outside her window—possibly after the stillbirth of her child—and to the feet of the young women she hears now. Is this repetition conducive to forgetting or is it its puncturing? On the motif's first appearance it seems to be the former as "feet," consistent with the opiate qualities of London, lull Raymonde into forgetfulness:

> Her every heart and pulse-beat prompted her though she said she had forgotten. She wasn't listening. She wasn't waiting. She had utterly forgotten. There was a sound of feet. There were feet, feet, feet, feet passing up Sloane Street on the way to Victoria. London had forgotten. She came to London to forget—feet, feet, feet, feet. . . . London blurred her over, permeated her and she (with London) had forgotten—feet—feet—feet—feet—feet—Feet were passing on the way to Victoria Station. Feet were passing on the way to Victoria. Carry on. Carry on. Carry on. She had forgotten. Feet, feet, feet, feet. (98-99)

The sound of feet outside, of a city in motion, seems to reinforce Raymonde's depiction of London as a city without outlines—an endless humming, as footsteps belonging to no one in particular merge, pointing to people "carrying on," not pausing to make poignant decisions or to

remember the war. By paragraph's end, however, the "feet" structure is transformed into a "think" one, suggesting that the repetition may also hinder what it seems to be accomplishing:

> Why should this Ermentrude from far and far, by the very suggestion of her superficial, trivial tragedy force her out of her delicious blurred state, to think, think, think, think? . . . Raymonde wasn't going to face the matter. If Mavis wanted the young man and if Mavis got the young man—All's fair in love and—feet, feet, feet, feet. They had all forgotten. (99)

Filling in the fragmented cliché "All's fair in love and war," "feet" function as a synecdoche for the latter and are now not what aids forgetting, a hint of life going on, but what is forgotten. Later on the entire clause "There were feet, feet, feet" is repeated four times in a single paragraph as what London had forgotten. "Feet" thus stand both for repression (obliterating the past) and for the thing repressed (the past of obliteration); in both cases, they are on the side of obliteration of the individual and death, a deadly—we might say Artemisian—rhythm: "feet, feet, feet, feet stood the other side of a chasm across which (she had only to let go) she herself could cross and join them," to join the "shrines, finality, obliteration" one found "among the dead" (115).[5]

William Wenthe has argued for this text's centrality in H.D.'s articulation of a link between prosody and the unconscious for exactly this reason: the feet, usually repeated five times, are both a nod to prosody in general and the iambic pentameter in particular—though, I would add, they are structurally more akin to rhymes—and to the war trauma Raymonde is

[5] On the alignment between poetic and military rhythms, see Martin, who discusses, especially in her fourth and fifth chapters, the "militaristic" that had taken hold of England in the early twentieth century and to which modernists generally reacted. For an earlier example of a very similar alignment—between, in this case, eloquence, and "the exercise of an idiodyncratic and autocratic poetic will"—see Nicholson, Chapter 5 (157). See especially her discussion of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (142–57), where she convincingly demonstrates that abuse or violence becomes a counterpart of eloquence as "the march of Tamburlaine's conquering feet across the territories of Asia and Arica sustains the rhythm of Marlowe's own feet" (155).

trying to suppress. It is Ermy that allows Raymonde to explicitly move from one to the other, or at least to "consciously" connect the two. When Raymonde "gets" Freddie back, her memory centers around a conversation with him about war and poetry. Calling her Ray, he tells her "there ain't no damned poets" because "these very neat trenches with all modern conveniences are not con-*doo*cive to poetry" (135). She asks him about whether there can or will be a rebirth of poetry after the war, bringing up comparable periods (fifth-century Greece, France after 1870)—something that H.D. will return to in the *Ion*—but he responds, "There ain't . . . going to be no—afterwards" (135). Despite calling her optimistic, however, he ends up claiming that there will be at least one poet, "Ray Bart" (135). What is returned to her through Ermy, then, is Freddie's belief that she can be a poet after the war. Yet in a reversal of her position at the time, she now continues to resist it:

> Feet, feet, feet, feet. No, Freddie, no Freddie not metres. Not poems. Not that kind of feet. Not trochaic, iambic or whatever, not verse, free or otherwise. I am listening to something. To feet, feet, feet, but not that kind, not your kind Freddie. No not iambic feet, not beat and throb of metre, no Freddie. I don't want to write it. (145-46)

Throughout the novella blurry London has been associated with Raymonde's refusal to draw a "line"; she resists being a Raymonde who makes "distinctions," distinctions between right and wrong, between pre-war, war-time, and post-war London, between images of Freddie, or of Freddie's mistress and her own friend Mavis. It is also a refusal of the poetic line that would write of or over her experiences, thus forcing her to take a stance towards them, and to accept that she, despite being a poet and as a poet, has been changed. This becomes quite explicit when she starts writing: "A line came on and on, and in the now renewed porcelain white electric glare

she tried (in spite of writing pad almost visibly palpitating with expectancy on the little table—she had pushed aside the tea-things) to fend it off"—as indeed she does in this very sentence, interrupting even the mention of the line with several parenthetical remarks (147). When the "feet" motif is for the first time explicitly addressed, its second sense teased out, in the passage above, Freddie is surprisingly not aligned with the "feet" of death but with those of poetry; his erasure of the war allows Raymonde to finally draw a line between feet and feet. Yet what are the feet she is listening to? Is she referring to the "feet" of war that make her doubt the use of poetry, or at least of a kind of poetry?[6] Or to an altogether different, third measure?

Paradoxically, it is at that very moment that she begins writing the poem whose composition will take up the second part of "Murex"; it is worth noting, too, as Wenthe does, that in these last mentions of "feet" before the poetic composition begins, they are no longer five, but three or four—precisely the usual number of beats in H.D.'s lines. H.D. thus sets up a tension between conscious desire or intention ("I don't want to write it") and "metres," which will persist throughout the rest of the text—a tension that, as we have already seen, she was concurrently putting to work in *Hippolytus Temporizes*. That the poem is, on the surface, about Ermy is not insignificant as a symbol of poetic rebirth—a poem of Ermy to echo H.D.'s first poem of Hermes. But Raymonde also seems to imply that the reason she starts writing about Ermy, whom she did not "particularly like," was that she allows her to formulate "a line I have always looked for":

> Why wasn't it Mavis she was writing of? Why wasn't it Freddie? It was Ermy
>
> *set with dull gold and amber*
>
> *and with fair—*

[6] Earlier in the story Raymonde notes, "Maybe Ray Bart the poet was a flaming white sword of the spirit. But who wants white sword nowadays and who wants spirit? Feet, feet, feet, feet, feet. There was enough of the ghost world all about them. There was enough white marble and clear-cut effigies" (128).

> fair, yes fair, they were dark but they were fair—Tyrian blue hyacinths—ah she had it—she now had it—she had always known it—now she had it, actually Freddie, a line I have always looked for—
>
> *as one set with dull gold and amber and with fair*
>
> *Tyrian blue hyacinths against hyacinth hair.* (147)

The line of course echoes Poe's "To Helen," the poem that famously speaks of "the glory that was Greece." Immediately Raymonde hears Freddie tell her so: "O plagarissimo. However will they miss it, 'thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face'?" (151). That is, the line to which this ostensibly new poem owes its being, is a combination of a "plagiarism" from Poe and a color-theme from Browning ("Tyrian shells / Enclosed the blue"). A few pages later, Raymonde comments twice that her poem "sounded like a new transcription from Khayyám"; her rebirth as a poet comes then first as an echo of two nineteenth-century poets—fittingly, for this American writer in England,[7] a British and an American one—and then as a translation from an original she had only known (and cites) in Edward FitzGerald's translation. Much like "Hermes of the Ways," the new poem borrows its images and sounds from elsewhere.

Poetry-writing is depicted as far from a glamorous occupation; we already see that in the presentation of Ray Bart as Raymonde's enemy, following her and forcing her to "lose" ("It was Ray Bart who always checkmated her" [127]). H.D. goes to great lengths to make us feel its difficulty, and discard the mantle of inspired poetess, of "H.D., *imagiste*" who might have become a "lightning-rod for all the metres" (146). Writing is presented as a struggle not simply

[7] Raymonde too identifies herself as such. More specifically, she is reminded of her Americanness, her foreignness in England through the identification with Ermy, a Jew: "But for all her vision, her actual and defined knowledge that Ermy wasn't just this Jewess Ermy she was shocked, recalled, recalled to her own age, her own race, her own dissimilarity" (126–27).

between a worldly Raymonde and a hyper-intellectual Ray Bart, but between what either one of them would want to say—or ought to—and what the poem actually says:

> Yet even as Raymonde argued in her determined logic and in her set determination to see both sides and to see clearly, the rhyme from outside broke across her set determination to be fair to Mavis. . . . Something, some other metre, was about to tick, tick like some insistent metronome in the air above her; to tick-tick, penetrating even that very protective silver surface that was the helmet of Ray Bart resting where Raymonde would have worn small fragrant non-committal and eternal field flowers. (148)

Raymonde does not want to see herself as wronged or blame her husband's lover and her own friend Mavis for her treachery, but in writing of Ermy the rhyme compels her to describe Ermy's "face" as the "ruin of her grace" (146). Later on she "strike[s]" at Mavis with the phrase "invidious lies" though again she does not want to (150). Her "metre" is not something we already know how to measure—though here the lines are clearly iambic, they are grouped and cut in a different metrical arrangement each time they appear—but what dictates the direction of her writing. Mavis's lies are then likened to the lies that

> even they might boast of
> who debate
> before the storm and sea wind
> and the great
> bellowing of rent sails
> and the inviolate host
> who, sent for Beauty,

died before Troy gate. (150)

It is through Poe (whose address "To Helen" prompts Raymonde's address to Ermy) and rhyming that Greece enters into the poem allowing Raymonde to turn the current war into the Trojan war. When Raymonde re-copies this part of the poem, she divides it into quatrains (Browning's, FitzGerald's); in the quatrain that precedes the eight lines above, the poem's speaker identifies with the liar and we see clearly that it is the rhyme (wise-she is-lies) that prompts this train of thought:

see, see, see,
I will be wise, be subtle,
not more pure than she is,
with invidious lies

that even they might boast of etc. (152)

This beginning of the poem thus expresses the speaker's potential complicity not only with Mavis—the position that Ermy put her in by suggesting that she seduce Martin, Mavis's current lover—but with the rhetoricians debating and selling the war, her complicity in writing this poem and turning the "feet, feet, feet" of destruction into something else. Though she speaks of freeing herself "of all my old compunction" and loving "her treachery," what comes through is precisely the compunction about writing this poem and presenting this ruined beauty, anxious that she might be again, after the fact, trying if not to sell the war as a quest for beauty, to at least put a beautiful face on the war.

We thus see Raymonde try to remain faithful to two different kinds of truth, both of which make themselves felt in the poem: the representation of what she thinks or feels about the

matter (Mavis' guilt for example, or her fear about the extent to which she, the poet, is like Mavis, lying about beauty where there is none), and what the "metre" or, more accurately, the rhyme compel her to say. In the end, as in the dialogue between Artemis and Hippolytus in *Hippolytus Temporizes*, what is spoken in the poem is found to exceed or override what is thought by the poet. That does not entail a capitulation to "mere" metre, but a capitulation to a different kind of (non-)measuring, namely to the "inviolable law" of Apollo:

> There was the oracle—there was the answer. Raymonde had "put it up" to the oracle. Song had answered her. Let it stand. Helios the law given. Song within song. . . . This was the absolute answer, that "hour" rhymed with "flower." There was no law beyond this. (165)

Further invoking Apollo, Helios, as "a god of auguries, of the future," H.D. ends the novella with a plea for magic as a justification for poetry: "Laws of song that initiated one into laws of magic," explaining that "Art was magic but it had lost. Must get back into art the magic it had had in Egypt, Greece even" (162, 155). She thus links song not only to the present world and the past, but through Helios also to the future: her appeal to magic expresses, one the one hand, a need to believe in the "effectiveness" of poetry in the world, in its ability to escape the charges of deceit and illusion although what it brings about is the violence that even she sees lying within it (as *Hippolytus Temporizes* makes clear), and on the other, a belief that no matter what poetry does, it cannot be explained away, or reasonably argued for and justified precisely because its value lies letting in unexpected and unexplainable, "magical" disruptions. It is this faith in poetry as magic that her *Ion* will explicitly put forward.

As in "Hipparchia," H.D. uses the relationship between past and present, "antiquity" and "modernity" as a governing metaphor for the relation not between two people this time, but

between Raymonde and her own past. "The past of somewhere about 1917," because so forgotten, because of interposed "layer and layer of pain, of odd obliteration," is to Raymonde antiquity, "further than an Egyptian's coffin" (108-9). But her even earlier past, the "pearl" that she has distilled is the "antiquity behind antiquity" and has been ejected from time completely. Much like the poet's creativity, this antiquity is figured as something unchanging behind an "eternally erratic cinematograph present" (parts of which may be more or less antique depending on how forgotten they are) (164). It is also identified with the murex as H.D. turns what seems to be—but cannot be since this antiquity is not in time—a temporal relation into a spatial, palimpsestic one:

> Antiquity showed through the semi-transparence of shallow modernity like blue flame through the texture of some jelly-fish-like deep-sea creature. Modernity was unfamiliar and semi-transparent and it obscured antiquity while it let a little show through, falsified by the nervous movement of its transparent surface. Falsified by the nervous erratic jerks of its deep-sea members. Modernity was the unfamiliar, always baffling substance. (158)

We must thus be careful not to identify this timeless, eternal antiquity with "classical antiquity." H.D./Raymonde suggests as much when she links it to her own personal preserved time of happiness and creativity pre-1916. But when, toward the story's end, she then transposes this distinction onto the Platonic allegory of the cave, she more clearly shows that it is not a matter of pitting current twentieth-century "modern" life against pure Greece:

> Modern life Plato said (circa 500 B.C.) was like that. All Athens in its dying splendour had nothing to offer that was not simply a shadow seen from a dark cave. All Athens in its brilliant decadence. How much less had life now to offer.

> Antiquity behind antiquity had glowed like jacinth, like blue stone. The static antiquity behind the comparatively modern antiquity of Plato. The antiquity of 1917 (like Plato's transient Athenian antiquity) shone as shadow now she had made her great discovery. . . . Antiquity of modern times, the antiquity of 1917 circa was a shadow. Freddie a shadow. Like shadows seen from a darkened cave. (168-69)

This antiquity is then explicitly identified with "immutable laws," but having taken over the Platonic metaphor, H.D. subverts it since the laws she refers to are Apollo's laws mandating belief in magic and poetry. What the "glowing jacinth" is, as the poem that is being composed during these meditations shows, is not truth but poetry—and a poetry that is not "original," or even "inspired," but always in semi-concealed relation to some other past, and always with obscure, magical origins. H.D.'s eternal antiquity is "song" and its law, Apollo's law, is, as she later writes, hospitality: an injunction that Raymonde implicitly translates into the hosting of other voices, living or dead, poetic or not, in the body of her poems. The poem thus becomes not simply a translation, but a transmission of things its writer may not (want to) know; it is fitting that H.D. would afterwards choose Euripides's *Ion* to continue to explore both the question of inspiration and that of the relationship between antiquity and modernity. Though in "Murex" we have the first glimpse of a rhetorical win for Apollo, H.D. will not stop debating the question of violence, staging a confrontation between death drives and life drives. The question is where does poetry belong—if is compulsively "metrical," how can it escape belonging to the former?

When a line is drawn between feet and feet, murex and murex, antiquity and antiquity, the "opposites" emerge, but that does not mean that the line cannot be fumbled, negotiated, or crossed, that the two need to be kept separate. That is what the second part of the novella shows.

We see fragments of lines emerge in Raymonde's familiar trains of thought, and observe what happens with the murex: how the war feet that have been haunting her are transformed into other feet and under what pressures. As she writes her poem, she explicitly talks about turning the images, or superimposed impressions, of Mavis, Freddie, and herself awoken by Ermy into a film roll, making clear that what was missing was their unfolding, their movement through time, the taking into account change wrought by time (158). The argument that is made, finally, is that for the connection between feet and feet, for the necessity of paying attention to the cinematograph's shadows, its rhythm of light and dark, in order to glimpse the changing, surprising, discordant "antiquity" within it that is only now coming to be—in this particular configuration of Raymonde's poem—for the first time.

In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. often returns to Freud's insight regarding the homology between the history of the individual and the history of the race: "he had brought the past into the present," she writes, "with his *the childhood of the individual is the childhood of the race*—or is it the other way round?—*the childhood of the race is the childhood of the individual* (*Tribute* 12, H.D.'s italics).[8] At the same time, though always acknowledging the limitations of such representation, Freud uses "real" external antiquity (for example, Rome in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 16-18) to help us understand his mapping of the mind. H.D. takes Freud's insight and reverses the process, and in so doing destabilize even Freud's own certain rhetorical possession of "antiquity" (see my discussion of the Athene statue on pp. 341-42 below). By internalizing or psychologizing the antiquity/modernity distinction, explicitly in "Murex" and, as we will see, implicitly in the *Ion*, H.D. models for us approaches or relations to the "external" modernity/antiquity. She explores the extent that any given "now" ("modern" taken

[8] See also Freud's somewhat odd suggestion in *The Ego and the Id* that the id contains previous egos that may be resurrected (35).

etymologically to mean 'just now') is directed, jostled, lit by the "then" in a visceral, immediate though not necessarily detectable way, proposing that both are underwritten by an "eternal" truth, which is their reciprocal ever-changing configuration regardless of what one intends it to be.

Hatching Ion: Apollo's Formula, 1937

1. On Oracles and Ironies

Many critics have written, at least in passing, of H.D.'s 1930s writing block, prompted by her fear of another war, which she sought to overcome through psychoanalysis, at first in London and later, over the course of two years, in Vienna with Freud himself.[9] Her letters with Freud frequently refer to it,[10] while in her published diary of her sessions she records dreaming of completed books she had not yet written (*Tribute to Freud* 187). As we have seen, it is through her engagement with Greek tragedy in particular that her anxiety about the link between poetry and war, song and violence is negotiated. It is no different in the case of the *Ion*, except that here, contrary to her customary deliberate ambivalence—or ambiguity—she takes a leap of faith; she offers a definitive reading of the whole play as a foundational play not just for Athens, but for her "modernity" and for her as a poet. DuPlessis and Friedman write that "during the war which confirmed H.D.'s forebodings about the crucial necessity of forging a spiritual vision, H.D.

[9] See DuPlessis, Friedman (*Psyche Reborn* 7, 31ff.), Gregory, and Wenthe. In *Psyche Reborn* Friedman argues for the importance of H.D.'s experience with Freud (and "her exploration of esoteric tradition") in shaping her later work in the forties and fifties; the beginning of that process, however, the restarting of her poetic project, of her writing as such, was with the translation of Euripides's *Ion*, which Friedman does not look at in detail. According to Friedman it is the violence of war that jolts her: "Forced by the crucible of war to find a poetic voice and vision that confronted historical reality, H.D. began once again to write with the rapid intensity of inspiration. The Second World War functioned for her much as the First World War had for writers like Pound" (7). In *Penelope's Web*, however, Friedman acknowledges the *Ion*'s importance, 293ff.

[10] For example, on July 20, 1933, Freud writes to her: "I confidently expected to hear from you that you are writing, but such matter should never be forced. I trust I shall hear so later on"; and on March 5, 1934: "I am sorry to hear you do not yet work but according to your own account the forces are seething" (*Tribute* 191, 192). See also H.D.'s letters to Bryher on February 10, 1934, and Wednesday (probably August) 1935.

achieves the fruition of her poet-priestess identity in *Trilogy*, the great poem of the war years"; as I will show, she had already done so in *Ion* (427). It is the *Ion*, begun in 1918 and finally completed in 1935 (though published in 1937), that breaks the block and sets the foundation for her later writing, as the Greek Anthology translations had before the First World War.[11]

Euripides's *Ion* is, like his *Alcestis* and *Helen*, a tragedy with a happy ending, and so very much unlike the tragedies that H.D. had previously worked on, *Iphigeneia in Aulis* and *Hippolytus*. It dramatizes the reunion of Ion, a young priest at Delphi who was mysteriously brought there as an infant, with his mother Kreousa, the autochthonous queen of Athens who many years before had been raped by Apollo and, having been abandoned by him, decided to expose their child. Unable now to conceive and anxious about the future of her Athenian lineage, Kreousa goes to Delphi with her husband, the non-Athenian Xouthos, to seek the advice of the oracle—and this is where the play begins. After a series of misunderstandings that cause Kreousa and Ion to plot each other's murders, the play concludes with an extended recognition scene. First, the Pythia appears with Ion's baby basket, which is promptly recognized by Kreousa. Ion, though glad to have found his mother, remains skeptical of Kreousa's account of her rape until he is convinced of his divine origins by the dea ex machina Athena who then provides a long prophecy of Athens's future glories (past glories for Euripides and his audience, of course) and leads them back to Athens. Like *Iphigeneia*, then, the *Ion* is a foundational tragedy: not for the tragic genre or for the mythical history of the Trojan War (and thus the epic), but for Athenian culture and, by extension, Greek culture, both insofar as the latter is most frequently associated with Athens, and since Ion, as the play itself tells us, would be the founder of the Ionian civilization.

[11] Gregory also discusses the *Ion* as "a kind of writing cure," though her argument is different from mine since she emphasizes the play's victorious voice at the expense of the others (*Hellenism* 205–6).

The story and genealogy that Euripides presents in his play, however, wholly bears his stamp and is not found anywhere else.[12] Jane Harrison refers to the play's myth as a "transparent piece of political genealogy-making," aimed at legitimizing Ion:

> The simple fact that the eponymous Ion was son of a local hero Xuthus, and had his dwelling . . . at Potamoi . . . was repellent to Athenian pride. . . . If he would come into Attic genealogy, he must be affiliated to an Athenian king's daughter. Poor Xuthus, as actual father, had to be suppressed altogether, though he was allowed to adopt Apollo's child. The child, if he was to be a power at Athens, must be the son of a god, no matter by what disreputable fraud. (lxxx-lxxxi)

Legitimating Ion as one of Athens's founding figures and tying him, through Kreousa, to legendary founders Erektheus and Kekrops, allows Euripides to authenticate Athens's claims to autochthony and highlight the extent of its influence and degree of its significance for the rest of the Hellenic world. He thus flatters its citizens' pride, and at the same time, especially through Athena's final speech on Athenian triumphs, boosts the city's morale in the midst of the Peloponnesian War.

Embedded in this triumphant story, however, is a critique that, depending on how far we see it as extending, may undermine what seems to be the play's most explicit goal. It lies in the very obviousness or, to use Harrison's words, transparency of Euripides's motive and the

[12] Wilamowitz in his introduction to the play traces different genealogies for Ion and the Ionians from Hesiod on, but notes that there is no historical trace or mention of the particular story that Euripides tells in his play (10–11). Sophocles had also written an *Ion* and a *Kreousa*—and it is unclear if both of the names refer to the same play—before Euripides but there is no clear evidence that Kreousa had anything to do with the Ion fable (11).

For an overview of critical readings of the *Ion*, and further bibliography, see Pedrick 29–30. For a reading of *Ion* in terms of the tragedy's establishment of a voice of authority (which only comes with the deus ex machina at end) that authenticates Athens's claims to autochthony, see Pedrick 79–103. See also Olga Taxidou's study of Euripidean plays, which argues that Euripides "sets up a critical, combative relationship with the city-state, rather than an organic one" (12). Finally, in her comparative study of Euripides's *Ion* and Freud's case history of the Wolfman, Victoria Pedrick emphasizes the importance of decision in the child's, Ion's, act of choosing his identity and origins, arguing that "Ion's tale as an abandoned child in effect inverts the primal scene's staging of the oedipal and thus interrogates identity from a perspective that opposes the master narrative of psychoanalysis" (3).

"disreputable fraud" that brings it about. In the introduction to his 1890 edition of *Ion*, the famous classicist A.W. Verrall writes a funny, almost convincing second epilogue to the play, in which an imaginary Athenian objects to the resolution of the tragedy, pointing out its various inconsistencies and contradictions. The most obvious one is that the oracle tells Xouthos, Kreousa's husband, that the person he sees upon exiting the temple will be his son; he of course sees Ion, who according to the play is not actually his son—so claims Kreousa, based on the baby basket, and dea ex machina confirms it. The fact that this means that the oracle has lied is then not given much consideration. For Verrall, this is precisely the thrust of Euripides's critique. He argues that we have to set aside the play's prologue by Hermes and Athena's long speech at the end where the poet makes the most concessions to faith in miracles and gods; this faith, he maintains, is blatantly contradicted by the actual plot that turns against such beliefs. Verrall offers an alternative, "simpler," textually-supported interpretation, in which the priests and Pythia appear as master-manipulators of Ion and Kreousa, even if they fail to convince Ion until the appearance of the deus ex machina who, in this reading, is a double ruse: not simply arising through the playwright's machinations but actually set up by the treacherous priests within the play to avert violence in the temple.[13] Verrall—whose most famous book, published only a few

[13] Verrall maintains that the story is as follows: Euripides wants to show that Xouthos had a son by a Delphian girl (maybe Pythia), which he admits (line 545); he then married Kreousa, who before the marriage was raped by someone, had a child, and abandoned it, telling herself that the unknown man who raped her was a god. Xouthos tells her they should go to Delphi; there the oracle tells him that whoever he first encounters will be his son. As the Pythia knows, he could only encounter Ion when exiting the temple because he is the only one there. Kreousa attempts to murder Ion, thinking he will usurp her place in Athens, but when she fails, she flees to the altar persecuted by him. Now this is embarrassing for the priestess since a murder on the holy site must be avoided, so she produces Ion's supposed baby basket and it is pure accident that Kreousa recognizes the contents, as Ion himself notes (line 1426); she is so convinced by the presence of her gold bracelet in the basket that she is not troubled by the fact that the olive branch in the basket is still fresh (she takes it as a sign from Apollo). She is then happy that Apollo's fatherhood is proven, but Verrall claims that the priests inside have overheard Kreousa's song/confession of what happened to her, and it is on the basis of this that they play the deux-ex-machina trick on her—of course Euripides never says so. This reading, though clever and proceeding from a real tension in Euripides, is dismissed already by Wilamowitz in his introduction to the play. The German scholar suggests that Verrall makes far too many unsupported assumptions about Euripides's hidden intentions to advocate for his thesis, especially regarding the Pythia's and priests' deceit.

years after his *Ion* edition, is *Euripides the Rationalist*—claims that this final scene was intentionally as wooden and sloppy as it admittedly is and that it was placed there as part of Euripides's and his Athenian contemporaries' crusade against oracles.[14]

It is in the context of these readings that H.D. explicitly situates her translation. In her commentary to the play's second section she explicitly goes against an unnamed critic, who is surely Verrall[15]:

> A great English critic has used this play to point out forcibly the irony and rationalism in the mind of the poet. We do not, however, altogether accept his estimates. . . . In spite of the so-called rationalists, and the much
> -quoted critic with his "irony is lurking at every corner," I prefer to believe that the poet speaks through his boy-priest, Ion, with his own vibrant superabundance of ecstasy before a miracle; the sun rises. (156)

H.D. struggles against a reading such as Verrall's; what is at stake for her in this possible loss of faith in divine inspiration is the loss of faith in artistic inspiration as well. From the very beginning H.D. tells us that "Greek drama was religious in intention, directly allied to the temple

[14] Euripides is very explicit on this point in two other plays that H.D. was familiar with, *Helen* (lines 744–57, where the Messenger claims that "ἀλλά τοι τὰ μάντεων / ἐσεῖδον ὡς φαῦλ' ἐστὶ καὶ ψευδῶν πλέα / . . . / εὔηθες δέ τοι τὸ καὶ δοκεῖν ὄρνιθας ὠφελεῖν βροτούς" 'Now indeed I see how worthless the seers' doings are, and how full of falsehood. . . . even to think that birds can help mankind is certainly foolish' [Coleridge]) and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (where, for example, Orestes claims that "ἡμᾶς δ' ὁ Φοῖβος μάντις ὢν ἐψεύσατο:/ τέχνην δὲ θέμενος ὡς προσώταθ' Ἑλλάδος/ ἀπήλασ', αἰδοῖ τῶν πάρος μαντευμάτων" 'Phoebus, though a prophet, has deceived me; creating his plot, he drove me far away from Hellas, ashamed of his earlier prophecies,' lines 711–13, though, in the end, as in the *Ion* the god seems to be vindicated). In fact, in her unpublished memoir *Compassionate Friendship*, written in 1955, she singles out these two plays as "oracle plays," which she must for this reason translate: "My mind is drawn toward the Greek plays that I want to translate, the two other oracle plays" (121). Wilamowitz, with whom H.D. seems to have been familiar since she refers to him as "the great Wilamowitz" ("God or Hero" 6), takes a more moderate approach, arguing for a disharmony in the poet, an "innere Widerspruch" that becomes clear in his work, noting however that despite their great or even divine names his characters are human and not heroes, while his gods are not true gods ("Menschen sind sie doch, keine Heroen, und die Götter sind keine wahren Götter mehr. Erst wenn wir das durchfühlen, fühlen wir mit dem Dichter") (17). On the always precarious status of oracles, see Michael Wood's illuminating study.

[15] Gilbert Murray's assessment of the play was quite similar as well, claiming that Euripides's irony is sharpest "against the gods and against Athens," the "whole structure of Greek ritual and mythology" (124).

ceremonies" and that "religion and art still [in Euripides's time] go hand in hand" (151, 150). All of H.D.'s gods here are explained in terms of some artistic inclination, thus setting up a particular, anti-Verrallian view of the play. Presenting Hermes, she writes: "He is the god of writing, of writers, of orators, of the spoken word. . . . He speaks for his brother, master-musician and prophet, Helios, Phoibos, Apollo, Loxias, king of Delphi" (151). She does so not for the sake of retrieving the older stages of Greek civilization and the importance of ritual then, as Jane Harrison or Pound might have done, but in order to maintain the underlying importance of mystery even in the golden age of rationalism and poetic mistrust. For H.D.'s contemporaries, Euripides's early-twentieth-century readers, the divine names and the use of myth are just masks, meant to expose the deceit of oracles, to inspire patriotism, or to present human psychology; what allows us as modern readers to move from the surface of the play to the underlying "intention" is Euripides's well-known skepticism, or irony. We hold on to some of his inconsistencies, or point to his very human portrayals of great heroic characters, and thus seeing the human behind the legendary hero, we may conclude, like Wilamowitz, that the myth is just a myth, just a convention that Euripides had to use.[16] H.D. wants to reverse this movement and take Euripides literally, believe that he means what he writes, what he presents even if he presents it skeptically; granting that he does so, that there is an underlying layer of skepticism behind the surface lyricism and the surface plot, she maintains that the lyricism, the surface, is what is yet hidden even deeper, underneath that underlayer of skepticism. She thus complicates an easy manifest-latent content dichotomy; the manifest in this case is the latent, but not the latent that everyone sees. If Euripides presents a façade of antiquity through which his modernity shines through, H.D. would, in a sense, want to get at the antiquity behind antiquity that shapes

[16] "Ihm war der Mythos Mythos, eine unvermeidliche Einkleidung für die menschlichen Taten und Leiden und Gefühle die das Drama erfüllen," writes Wilamowitz in his introduction to the play (17).

both, but as the palimpsestic "Hippolytus Temporizes" poem tells us, not in ways that we can clearly and decisively discern and sort out.

As Euripides invents a new legacy for his Ion and for Athens, so does H.D.[17] This play, too, reverses the terms of its Greek original, not to cover it up or to obscure it but to make it more visible. Seeking to repurpose the Euripidean chorus, turning it into the play's unconscious, she substitutes its function with a chorus of her own: an extensive running commentary. In her "Translator's Note" H.D. writes that each of the nineteen sections into which she has divided the play "for convenience" is preceded by "explanatory notes" that are "merely the translator's personal interpretation; the play may be read straight through with no reference, whatever, to them" (149). In fact, these prose interludes are not only found at the heading of sections but also within them—and this is especially true in the opening four—making them hard to skip. Even when they are limited to the beginning of particular sections, they are sometimes multiple pages in length. Moreover, in her analysis of the play, Eileen Gregory has identified three commentator voices (an aesthete dilettante, a less self-conscious interpreter, and a heroic apologist) that are in dialogue with "the lyricist" translator, which suggests that a singular "personal interpretation" is not to be found in the notes.[18] Gregory focuses her reading of the play on H.D.'s prose sections and treats the work as an essay, in the mold of H.D.'s 1920s essays on Euripides—one of which was already on *Ion*, and included a translation of its opening, again squeezed between sections of commentary. Though she reads the commentary illuminatingly, underlining its importance, this

[17] One recalls too, in this context, Shelley's preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, where he justifies his "licence" in his treatment of the Prometheus myth (his decision not to frame his story on Aeschylus's "model," according to which Prometheus and Jupiter finally reconcile, and thus not to "attemp[t] to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus") by arguing that the Greek tragedians themselves did not feel "bound to adhere to the common interpretation [of any portion of their national history or mythology] or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors" (206).
[18] Gregory's voices: a "superior 'expert' who is going to get this thing across to a modern audience," who is "something of an aesthete dilettante," and whose presence is felt primarily in the opening sections (208); a "less self-conscious reader/interpreter, attempting to comprehend Euripides' text, to imagine the characters," who grows in command after Kreousa's entrance (209); and finally, "the voice of the heroic apologist, who sees this play, and her own gesture of rewriting it, as a multiple sign of victory" (209).

approach leads her to, to some extent, ignore the translation itself. Writing that "it is as much like an extended 'choros sequence' as the writer can make it," Gregory compares it to H.D.'s earlier chorus sequences in terms of her excision of materials (209). She thus sides with other critics (among them, Richmond Lattimore and D.S. Carne-Ross) who have called the translation "lyric" and does not discuss *Euripides' Ion* as a whole hybrid text even though she points out that it is one (209). In the final section of this chapter, I will argue that the interjected prose is an essential and inextricable part of this intentionally multi-generic translation: it is the twentieth-century chorus.[19]

One way to gauge H.D.'s intentions for the lyric translation itself is to compare her final, 1937 version to the few opening sections that she had translated around 1920 and embedded in an essay she did not publish.[20] The differences between the two versions, both in emphasis and technique, are telling: in 1937 she translates with an eye on revealing what she believes is hidden under Euripidean irony or rationalism, and replaces description by urgent invocation. At first what she seems to admire in this play, and it is plainly evident in the earlier commentary, is the poet's phanopoetic powers:

> We see with the eyes of the young actor, not the row of priests and officials, not the circle above them; writer, statesman, sculptor . . . the whole body of aristocratic Athens . . . nor yet the mass of bourgeois . . . crowding tier on tier above them. But with the eyes of a young priest and with the eyes of a poet we see Parnassus, the mountain that has stood for just a second before actual dawn, black against the silver-grey of the false-dawn, in just that second become two

[19] On H.D. as poet compared to H.D. as prose-writer, and on H.D.'s other hybrid texts, see Friedman, *Penelope*, 355ff.
[20] The essay and translations are printed in the *Hippolytus Temporizes/Ion* volume; my references are to that edition rather than the manuscript.

> peaks, jagged, in exquisite outline, until every detail becomes suddenly visible, and through the twin-peaks there pours a fire, pours and swirls upward, and the whole sky above is mad with the riot (266).

Yet, as becomes immediately clear, this visual revelation is only possible through the sound of Euripides's words: "the sound, the subtly accented rhythm, above all the swift bright flow, the movement of the whole, acts upon us . . . as music, but is as far above ordinary music . . . as music is above common speech" (265). Claiming that "there is no adequate translation for the Greek words and there never will be," she calls what she offers "the mere skeleton" (265). If we compare the final version with the mere skeletons she provided in the earlier text, we see that the latter are much more literal and thus read more experimental syntactically. They include, for example, the Greek-derived compound adjectives that we have seen in her *Iphigeneia* and the *Hippolytus*—a feature absent in the 1937 text.[21] The opening of Ion's monologue ca. 1920:

> Helios' chariot
> four-abreast,
> fagot-torch,
> sets fire to earth;
> out of the ether,
> stars flee from this star
> into the holy night (265)

And the same opening fifteen years later:

> O, my Lord,
> O, my kind of the chariot,

[21] Compounds found in other passages of the early version and absent from the later one: fagot-torch (265), sun-disc (265), pool-depth (266), temple-gifts (267), bird-flocks (267), dawn-hint (268), fire-wings (268), flower-slopes (268), roof-peak (270), twin-wrought temple-fronts (271), fire-shaft (273).

O, four steeds,

O, bright wheel,

O, fair crest

of Parnassus you just touch:

(O, frail stars,

fall,

fall back from his luminous onslaught) (156)

The change of priorities between the two versions is palpable: in 1937 H.D. understands this opening as Ion's acclamation of the god, rather than as vivid description, and she consequently begins her first three stanzas with "O, my Lord," having Ion greet Apollo in praise.[22] The poet's phanopoetic powers seem to have increased since H.D.'s 1920 reading, as the rhythms make not only a beautiful landscape materialize on the Greek stage, but now the god himself. Rather than effect the overcoming of the mysterious, the archaic, which is what this play has been thought to depict, and what according to Nietzsche Euripides accomplished once and for all,[23] H.D. chooses this play to reverse the movement and reveal what the play tries to suppress. She rewrites it as a whole so that what Euripides literally, if intentionally unconvincingly, proclaims at its close (that all was part of a divine plan) becomes convincing.

It is precisely through this dialectic that she connects Euripides's play to her present, thus arguing for the timeliness, if not the necessity of her translation:

[22] As noted above, the Greek is closer to the first version: the stars "flee," leave (φεύγει), there is a fire (πυρὶ, line 84) and an emphasis on shining brightness (λαμπρὰ [82], λάμπει [83], καταλαμπόμεναι [87]).
[23] See *Birth of Tragedy*, especially sections 10-12, where Nietzsche contends that Euripides began "the tremendous struggle against the art of Aeschylus and Sophocles—not with polemical essays, but as a dramatic poet who opposed *his* conception of tragedy to the traditional one" (81). Nietzsche refers to Euripides's "rationalistic method" (84), claims that "Euripides as a poet is essentially an echo of his own conscious knowledge" (85) and, calling him the "poet of aesthetic Socratism" he argues that "[l]ike Plato" he "undertook to show the world the reverse of the "unintelligent" poet" (86).

> At this moment, in the heart-beat of world-progress, in the mind of every well-informed Greek—and who of that shift, analytical, self-critical, experimental race of the city of Athens, at any rate, was not well-informed?—there was a pause (psychic, intellectual), such a phase as we are today experiencing; scientific discovery had just opened up world-vistas, at the same time the very zeal of practical knowledge, geometry, astronomy, geography, was forcing the high-strung intellect on a beat further beyond the intellect. As today, when time values and numerical values are shifting, due to the very excess of our logical deductions, so here. (156)

In her version, H.D. displays the relationship between the play and its own time as other than the one most commonly assumed; at the same time, as she has done throughout her work, she wants to do the same for the relationship between the play and "our" time. Throughout her commentary she both uses, seemingly straightforwardly, the modernity versus antiquity distinction—to call various aspects of Euripides's play "ultra-modern," for example—and seems very eager to collapse it, to juxtapose to this linear notion of time a palimpsestic one, one of simultaneity, as if she and Euripides were at the same time contemplating, motivated by the same question, that of art's relationship to time as such. Her *Ion* and Euripides's *Ion* are or arise out of a pause, a caesura in fifth-century, twentieth-century world progress, a caesura necessitated, or accelerated perhaps by each era's recent wars.[24] And that caesura is not brought forth by words, however beautiful, or by arguments, however forceful, but precisely by an epiphany like that of Athene at the end of the play (as presented by H.D.) that is literally ex machina, out of the machine, the

[24] We might think of Hölderlin here too, who claimed to be doing something very similar in his *Antigone* translation, arguing for a connection of his time and that of Sophocles, though he saw them in a complicated opposition (see, for example, the "Anmerkungen" for the translation, especially pp. 214–18, and his famous December 1801 letter to Böhlendorff); H.D. sees them as parallel and her work is to make clear what Euripides did not.

world's machine, and by a declaration of faith in what is not understood, but is, as it were, a rumbling, rhythm-giving undercurrent to our machinic, mechanized world of reason. We are again in the province of the two rhythms eloquently evoked by Blanchot (see pp. 176-77 above): one based on repetition (or its absence), on regularity that might allows us to discern and master "une totalité déjà ordonnée," and one which is not "selon la nature, selon le langage ou même selon « l'art » où il semble prédominer" but which the first rhythm covers over (*Ecriture du Désastre* 173).

H.D.'s resistance to Verrall's reading, it should be noted, is also one to Freud. As DuPlessis and Friedman argue, "H.D. was disturbed that . . . [Freud's] rationalist perspective blinded him to the spiritual realities she found embedded in dreams, religious vision, occult traditions, and art" and wanted him to acknowledge the "religious" task of the poet to understand these spiritual realities instead of seeing her adherence to them as a symptom (418).[25] While H.D. "found in Freud's science of the psyche a way to fuse religion, art, and medicine, he tried to separate the artist from the mystic" by insisting that she is only a poet (426). Her attempt, then, to bring poetry and mysticism together in the *Ion*, nudging art away from artifice and away from Freud's conception of sublimation, is also the continuation of her dialogue with her erstwhile analyst—to whom she sent the translation upon its completion and who, as we will see, seems to have misunderstood it.[26]

In what follows I will argue that there are two interrelated objectives at work in H.D.'s translation of the play. She first seeks to uncover the underside of Euripides's play to show that in an age of brutal wars, intellectualism, and mistrust of spiritualism and art, art was not only possible but in fact the very motor of the intellectualism and guarantor of the survival of war

[25] See *Tribute to Freud* 44–51. See also H.D.'s poem about Freud, "The Master," and Friedman and DuPlessis's excellent reading of it.
[26] On the *Ion* as a response to Freud, see also Gregory, *Hellenism*, 206–7.

traumas. In addition to this seemingly historical argument that might also be applied to her own time, she also dramatizes through Kreousa's plot the process through which this might happen, proposing this reconfigured tragedy as a psychic and poetic origin story that counters the Freudian Oedipal narrative. It is this semi-articulated originary myth of inspiration, more than the relatively vague historical connections she draws, that allows her to make the *Ion* temporally relevant and to bring the two times together. By erasing Euripides's "modern" skepticism, she suppresses her own, and turns this play into the germ of her war-time long poems known as *Trilogy*. She presents the same complex, the same intertwining of eros, violence, and poetry we have seen in her previous translations, but she is determined, as in *Trilogy*, to have it work out positively, to find a seed of hope.

I will begin by outlining the ways in which H.D. manipulates, or, to use her metaphor from *Bid Me to Live*, "hatches" Euripides's text according to a key she finds in the Euripidean stasima. First, I will examine the stasima themselves, then trace her presentation of Kreousa as the play's central character and as the poet's stand-in, arguing that it undercuts and refines the lyri narrative she takes so many pains to construct in order to re-create precisely that struggle or challenge between faith and its absence. I will conclude by looking at H.D.'s commentary as such and the function it fulfills in this hybrid work. Taking a role similar to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy, the commentary shows where the victorious story might pull apart at the seams and paradoxically presents something like the inadequacy of poetry.

2. On Flowers and Origins

As her *Hippolytus* began where her *Iphigeneia* ended, so H.D.'s *Ion* begins where her *Hippolytus Temporizes* did: even the god of song, the god most friendly to humans has violated

one, Ion's mother, Kreousa. The play explores the other side of Artemis's abandonment: now humanity is contemplating abandonment of the gods. In her last interruption to the text of Hermes's prologue, H.D. presents a question presumably in the Athenian theatergoers' mind, and quite possibly in that of her readers as well:

> and still, we ask ourselves what can this all signify; is this a worthy theme for great religious drama, the betrayal and desertion, by one of its most luminous figures, of a woman and her first child? (154).

Though this is not Euripides's last play, it may as well be; it is indicative, H.D. implies, of the decline of Athenian tragedy precisely because it challenges that very luminous figure. The answer, as far as Euripides's twentieth-century critics were concerned, is simple: superimposed on the melodramatic plot is the story of Athens's past greatness, which it legitimates and in which it inspires faith. At the same time, the plot itself (the god's callous behavior, the lies of the oracle, Athena's less than graceful appearance, the various inconsistencies) offers by virtue of its "badness" advice for moving forward: no more blind faith in gods and oracles. H.D., however, does not give an answer. Instead, as she had suggested in her early comments on tragedy, it is the meters, or rhythms, that, regardless of plot or words, capture the audience; thus, "before the thought actually has time to crystallize," she continues, "the silver rhythms of this subtle defendant, God's messenger, silence us" (154). Once again, Hermes (Ermy) seduces unwilling participants into poetry.

What follows is the passage with which she, the translator, has taken the most liberties in this prologue and probably in the whole play: three eleven-line stanzas with a refrain opening line—"Not meaningless, as you might think, / are the god's plans"—that is more or less invented and whose repetition brings to mind the "Hippolytus Temporizes" poem (154-55). H.D.'s

commentary actually breaks up the single statement in the Greek, whose putative translation this opening couplet is: "Λοξίας δὲ τὴν τύχην / ἐς τοῦτ᾽ ἐλαύνει, κοὐ λέληθεν, ὡς δοκεῖ" (Loxias is driving fortune on to this point, nor is he forgetful, as he seems [lines 67-68]). That is, she ends her second section of the prologue with "Loxias arranges this," inserts her final commentary, and continues with the couplet cited above, which then leads into what looks like an independent poem. H.D. herself thus becomes the "subtle defendant" and messenger of the play she is translating, putting her best self forward, rhyming and half-rhyming to preserve an echo of the rhythm, which she claims, justifies the existence of all the plays and, we will soon realize, of this play in particular. It is poetry that act as a guarantee in the absence of obvious or transparent "god's plans." H.D. performs this: Loxias's arrangement—a musical word not chosen by accident—may always be interrupted, erased even (in this case by a questioning prose that seems unable or unwilling to understand it), but will persevere in this form.

This seemingly independent poem, the last section of the prologue, sums up in its three stanzas what will happen in the play and hints at the future legacy of Ion before finally turning to the present as Hermes sees Ion appear on stage and names him. But whereas in Greek Hermes boasts that he is first to call the youth by the name Ion "which he is about to have" (οὗ μέλλει τυχεῖν [line 80]), H.D. exaggerates the importance of Ion, his name, and his fame, twenty-five hundred years after Euripides: "a name, famous hereafter, / among men, among gods, among Greeks" (155). She, moreover, has Apollo himself speak through Hermes. It is he who names Ion first even though at section's end Hermes will claim this privilege: "this is his wish," H.D.'s Hermes says, "and thus the god speaks, my son shall be called Ion, by the men of Greece" (154).[27] Is then the particular identity of the child in question the reason why we care for this

[27] In contrast, in Greek Hermes says "Ἴωνα δ᾽ αὐτόν, . . . , / ὄνομα κεκλῆσθαι θήσεται καθ᾽ Ἑλλάδα" (He will cause him . . . to be called by the name of Ion throughout Greece" [lines 74–75]).

romance gone bad? Again, H.D.'s contemporaries would nod in agreement—Ion, the mythical progenitor of the Ionians, and Ion, the character who, as Verrall shows, remains the most skeptical about his divine origins—and in this case, H.D. seems to concur, heightening Euripides's emphasis.

In her prefatory translator's note H.D. has explained the name's importance:

> It is significant that the word ION has a double meaning. It may be translated by the Latin UNUS, meaning one, or first, and is also the Greek word for violet, the sacred flower of Athens. (149)

What H.D. neglects to tells us here—and in fact neglects to translate later—is that the play itself gives another etymology for the name: "one who goes," ἴων as the masculine active present participle of the verb ἰέναι 'to go'. This act of naming is at the heart of the play's deception: the oracle tells Xouthos that the first person he sees going by when he exits the temple will be his son, and Xouthos of course sees Ion, who is, according to what the play seems to want to argue, *not* his son.[28] At the end of Xouthos's and Ion's ensuing (false) recognition scene, the father exhorts the son to come with him to Athens in secret and names him "Ion" in honor of the oracle (lines 661-63). H.D. omits this entirely.[29] Doubtless it would be difficult to transfer this instance of linguistic play and etymological naming into another language, but H.D. could have at least mentioned it in one of her many notes, especially in the initial translator's note where she specifically discusses the question of Ion's name. That she does not suggests, on the one hand, her resistance to the custom of paternal naming repeatedly portrayed in the play: we are

[28] Alternatively, in Verrall's reading the oracle is telling the truth—indeed, Ion is Xouthos's long-lost son and not Apollo's—but there is no sense of mystery: the priests and the Pythia already know that this is the case and clothe the answer in deliberate but unnecessary ambiguity, while ensuring that Xouthos can only encounter Ion on his way out.

[29] When Kreousa's old tutor later asks the chorus what Xouthos's son's name is they respond "he is called Ion, / first-met"; H.D. cannot escape the given etymology, but she still manages to turn it into one of her own, namely the "one," and therefore first. In Greek the explanation of the name is "πρῶτος ἤντησεν πατρί" (line 802).

reminded time and again that Ion has been nameless because he has no father and even at the end Kreousa tells him that Apollo gave him to Xouthos because as son of the god he would still be nameless.[30] On the other hand, it reveals her desire to preserve not only the legitimacy of Ion and the Ionic tradition as divinely-originated, but of the oracle itself, which is what Euripides questions by subversively suggesting that Ion and the Ionic are based on the god's ambiguous at best,[31] false at worst oracle.

Now, what of H.D.'s chosen definitions? Gregory calls them "imagined"—and certainly they are if we go by the play's own statements (208). Liddell-Scott has the sense offered by Euripides immediately after the meaning *Ἴων* now primarily holds, namely 'Ionian'. Yet the other senses given are indeed those preferred by H.D.: an epic form of *εἷς* 'one' and the genitive plural of the neuter noun *ἴον* 'violet'—for this meaning, moreover, Liddell-Scott notes that it can synechdochically mean any flower. This transformation of Ion into a flower leaves no question about the stakes of the translation: the emergence and survival (or not) of a poet, and of poetry, conceived by H.D. already in the 1910s anthologically, as a series of personal, if formal, relations between remembering poets. Through her chosen etymology H.D. thus tells a different story of origins, turning *Ion* into the play "of violets" and placing Ion at the origin of anthologies as the single violet out of which all other flowers sprung, the symbol, or metaphorical origin of the greatest cultural period spreading from Athens to the east first and to the west later. By getting to the origin of Greece, the single flower found there—and found not easily or simply—she reaches her own origins as poet and anthologist, and thus can begin work on resolving her writing block. This strategy follows Freudian principles, perhaps, but H.D. applies them in

[30] The lines read "τοῦ θεοῦ δὲ λεγόμενος, /οὐκ ἔσχες ἄν ποτ᾽ οὔτε παγκλήρους δόμους / οὔτ᾽ ὄνομα πατρός"; "but if you were said to be his, you could not ever have a wealthy home or a father's name" (1541–43). Wilamowitz too speaks of Xouthos exercising his "Vaterrecht" here (116).
[31] This is Kreousa's later reading of the confusing oracle in response to Ion's questioning (lines 1534ff.). H.D. omits this passage as well.

reverse. Where Freud tied her obsession with Greece (Hellas) to her mother's name (Helen),[32] H.D. asserts that her return to writing must involve a different kind of exploration: of poetic mythology as personal mythology, rather than the other way around.

That Ion's name would appear in this first section after an outburst of lyricism that is almost an original poem (and echoes another semi-original poem) is only fitting. From the very beginning, H.D. superimposes onto the play—though never explicitly—her own personal trajectory as a poet-anthologist, her qualms and moments of illumination, and even dramatizes primarily through the relationship between Kreousa and her tutor, a psychoanalytic session. On a less personal level, however, H.D. also mirrors Euripides's gesture, superimposing from the very beginning onto the melodramatic plot the history not of Athens but of Western culture, and more particularly poetry, while also reversing him to argue for the necessity of maintaining a link to inspiration, broadly conceived. She uses Euripides's origin play to rewrite—not to recapitulate—the origins of Western culture and re-root them in poetry and mysticism rather than rationalism.

3. "What the Torch-Flame Saw": Realizing Ion's Choruses

H.D.'s numerous slight changes that tilt the play towards her reading, towards being her *Euripides' Ion*, rather than Euripides's *Ion*, occur in two directions. First, in particular in the choral sections, the praise of the gods as well as the description of mysteries are expanded and emphasized, becoming more effusive and more lyrical, while Christian overtones are added in her descriptions to convey a syncretic sense of timelessness. Second, everywhere in the play the doubting of gods by mortals becomes less harsh (especially in the case of Ion), or more personal (in the case of Kreousa) and thus less absolute.

[32] See *Tribute* 44, 49.

I will start with a few examples of the latter before moving to a lengthier discussion of the former. Upon hearing Kreousa's story about her "friend" (in reality her own story transposed), Ion begins to waver in his faith. In the first section of his tripartite speech he defiantly exclaims that "Erektheus's daughter [i.e. Kreousa] / means nothing / to me" (185); in the second, he begins to doubt the god, concluding with a short stanza on what is "right." Finally, in the third, he implores Apollo to "say / you are blameless" and repeatedly asks the god whether he could "betray her / and leave / and your own child / to die" before in the end emphatically rejecting the possibility of divine betrayal ("no, / no, / no, / you are our Lord, / our virtue") (186). While H.D. makes Ion sound like he is in denial—he does not want to admit that Apollo may have done wrong—in the Greek he wants to know "τί πάσχει" (line 437), what the matter is, not that Apollo is blameless. After reiterating what Apollo did according to Kreousa, Ion urges him not to do such things but to pursue "ἀρετή" 'virtue,' and then takes it upon himself to chastise all the gods for their failings. H.D. skips these eight lines entirely (as she acknowledges in her introductory note). Similarly, at play's end, H.D. condenses Athene's description of Apollo's, to a large extent failed, machinations regarding the timing of the various revelations. Rather than show his inability to get what he wants even though he is a god, H.D.'s Athene presents human will interfering with Apollo's plans in a positive way:

> but fearing
> (once found out)
> that your mother
>
> might slay you,
> or your slay your mother,

he sent me (258)

The last phrase in Greek is "μηχαναῖς ἐρρύσατο" (line 1565), in Verrall's translation "he saved by artifice." This artifice that is so important in Verrall's reading of the play H.D. completely suppresses, choosing not to identify either god with the artificial or with mean plotting. Ion's three-line response to Athene when she confirms Kreousa's reading of Apollo's well-meaning scheme is translated into ten lines, with H.D. overstating Pallas's effect and erasing the seed of doubt haunting the Euripidean text:

Pallas,

great daughter of Zeus,

how could one question

you?

how could one doubt

your speech?

what was impossible before,

is clear;

I am the son of Loxias (259)

In Greek Ion does not jump from impossibility to truth, but is rather quite reserved. What he says literally is:

We will not receive your words in unbelief.

I am persuaded [or: I submit, πείθομαι] that I am of Loxias and of her.

Even before this I was not unbelieving.

The first and last line in this passage end symmetrically in "οὐκ ἀπιστίᾳ" and "οὐκ ἄπιστον" (lines 1696, 1698), suggesting that Athene's appearance has not changed very much. Euripides's

Ion expresses a more roundabout denial of rejection instead of H.D.'s glorious affirmation.[33] The defense of Helios is, we might add, not one of one god over others; as H.D. suggests in *Tribute to Freud*, he is, by means of sound, identified with (or allows the slippage to) "Hellas": "Delphi and the shrine of Helios (Hellas, Helen)" (49). Through *Ion* and through this faith in Helios, she continues the argument about the relevance—and the possible uses—of Greece and Greek in the twentieth century.

But H.D. makes her Euripides-as-mystic argument most explicitly in the play's choral sections. It is there that her crucial—and intentional—misreadings occur since it is there that, in her view, Euripides gets carried away, there where she is most able to read between, or under, his lines. The Parodos, especially in H.D.'s version, establishes the admiration of Apollo and Delphi as a place of art as the chorus marvel at carvings decorating the temple. H.D. insists that it is Euripides himself speaking in this song, describing the artwork from first-hand experience and recollecting the strong impressions it left on his youthful painterly eye.[34] In the same commentary section where she disputes Verrall's reading, she asks of the tragedian, whom she imagines exiled in Macedonia, "As a student, a thinker, a philosopher, an Athenian, a Greek . . . , does this 'old man' throw his psyche back into the first lyrical intensities of youth?" (156). She thus conjures Euripides as a remembering poet too, who puts in words glorious art he once saw and, fearing perhaps for its disappearance which he himself may have helped bring about, wants to preserve it through his chorus.

[33] Verrall argues, with textual support, that scholars are wrong to give some of Kreousa's lines in her subsequent dialogue with Athene to Ion and claims it is crucial that he say nothing after this equivocal acceptance of Apollo's paternity. H.D. does not follow him in this but neither does she follow Wilamowitz/Murray's assignment of parts, choosing instead Paley's.

[34] Though H.D. now asserts that the poet "is no doubt actually describing art treasures of Delphi itself" (166), in her earlier unpublished commentary on the play, she was not so sure of this (272).

The second and third stasima consist of angry laments followed by descriptions of processions. In both instances H.D.'s translates with an eye not to the blame assigned to the gods in the laments but to the praise implied (though not stated) in the processions. In the first case, H.D.'s section X, the chorus bemoan the Xouthos-Ion alliance, debating whether to tell Kreousa, and then describe in the epode the father and son's ascent of Parnassus, where a feast will be held in honor of their reunion. The epode's "few words," H.D. writes in the commentary preceding the translation, "inflame our imagination," and she proceeds to tell us exactly how. She describes what "we see" though none of it is said in the actual epode: "a mighty procession, sacrificers, other priestly attendants, a whole company of servants, carpenters, musicians, wine-servants. . . . the sacrificial rams or bulls, strung, unquestionably, with coloured wool fillets and decorative garlands" (200). The "unquestionable" presence of garlands, so central in H.D.'s anthological imaginary, alerts us immediately to the knot she is tying between such mystical processions and poetry—and poetry as incantation. Though she stays relatively close to the Euripidean text, H.D. replaces address with presence, general description with actual event: where Euripides's women invoke Parnassus and in the process also describe the mountain and the mysteries that take place there, H.D. materializes the description by emphasizing Xouthos's and Ion's path through the crags, which in Greek is only a single line at the end of the preceding antistrophe. If we see them, moreover, then we also must see Bakkhos and the Bacchantes too:

> They are thére
> they are thére
> on the heíght;
> alreády they reách the péak
> and the crág

of the róck, Parnássus;

they are thére,

alóft,

in the high aír,

where wíld Bákkhos

cárries the tórch,

where Bácchantes

dánce in the níght (202; my notation)[35]

After a strophic pair that conveys metrically and syntactically the chorus's agitated state,[36] in H.D.'s translation given through short single-stress lines, this epode exhibits evidence of the metrical palimpsest, with fairly regular stress alternation on the level of the line, and foot/meter alternation on the level of the stanza: we go, for example, from three anapests (in three-word, one-stress lines), to an iambic trimeter line, then back to an anapestic line, then a longer line combining anapest and iamb and so on. Note also the frequent assonances and rhymes. It is again "the silver rhythms" that "silence us," convincing us not to doubt what the words tell us.

H.D.'s epode prepares us for her translation of the third stasimon in section XII, which she changes more significantly. Here the chorus have just heard about Kreousa's rape by Apollo, her subsequent exposure of her child, her fears about Ion usurping her throne, and her plot to murder him. They repeat some of this before describing in the second strophe the procession of

[35] The first half of Euripides's epode:

ἰὼ δειράδες Παρνασοῦ πέτρας
ἔχουσαι σκόπελον οὐράνιόν θ᾽ ἕδραν,
ἵνα Βάκχιος ἀμφιπύρους ἀνέχων πεύκας
λαιψηρὰ πηδᾷ νυκτιπόλοις ἅμα σὺν Βάκχαις,
μή ποτ᾽ εἰς ἐμὰν πόλιν ἵκοιθ᾽ ὁ παῖς, (lines 714–19).

In Potter's translation: "O ridge of Parnassus, holding the high rock and seat of heaven, where Bacchus with flaming torches leaps lightly with the bacchantes that roam by night."

[36] See Wilamowitz.

the Eleusinian mysteries that Ion may witness if he goes to Athens. H.D. does not translate the second antistrophe. Thus the second, in H.D. responsion-less, strophe, which is only slightly longer than the first strophe, recalls the earlier epode formally as well as in terms of content: where Ion's and Xouthos's procession to Parnassus was described there, here we have an imaginary religious procession that Ion may see in Athens though he is not supposed to. This "stasimon" thus matches the previous one perfectly, giving a sense of symmetry and coherence to H.D.'s text that Euripides's text lacks. There is also a progression: while before we had to imagine the details of the procession, here, says H.D. (though without explicitly drawing the connection),

> the poet himself forgets this threnody in his sheer delight of words; they again seduce him, as it were, in spite of himself—or in spite of these doleful hours—into a by-play of vibrant images, dance, sea-floor, stars, a gold crown, a Virgin.
>
> This poet's golden images seep up, inevitably; they are like treasures seen far, far down under black, sweeping storm-waves. (222)

That is, for H.D. Euripides's description of the Eleusinian procession is evidence of Apollo's spell on the tragedian despite the latter's intention of criticizing the oracle—Verrall calls this passage "a delicate satire on the prejudices of . . . local religion"—evidence of Euripides's unconscious desire to not let go of the mystical despite his ironies (88).[37] The antistrophe H.D. skips is telling: the chorus demand there that new songs be written in which men are faulted for their unfaithfulness and unjustness as a counterpart to all the songs that turn against women for

[37] Since at this point in the story Ion is supposed to have been conceived by Xouthos and a Delphian maiden during the celebration of Bacchus at Delphi, Verrall claims that "the most truly offensive point in the origin of Ion, regarded religiously, would be the profanation of a religious mystery, that of the Theban Bacchus. The Eleusinian rite, which his presence is supposed to outrage, was also a torch-festival, and was celebrated to Iacchus, held commonly to be *the same god under another name* (note πολύυμνον). Though less orgiastic than that of Bromius, it was by no means decent . . . and probably not much less dangerous" (88).

these qualities. Wilamowitz notes the irony of this being said while Kreousa is plotting murder and reminds us that a similar situation occurs in *Medea*; he argues that Euripides must have counted on the audience perceiving this so that despite its tenor, the song ends up being again against women. Rather than being yet another song about them, moreover, it performs, puts on display the very stupidity or two-facedness whose constant presence in songs it seems to decry. H.D. refuses to fall into this trap, and ends her section with the seduction not of the female chorus but of the male poet. It is he and not his chorus, she suggests, who says the opposite of what he intends to say.

The translation of the second strophe itself is not straightforward either as H.D. turns a political/religious infraction that will take place if Ion goes to Athens into a personal one. She distorts the strophe to suggest that the chorus are still accusing Apollo of acting against Kreousa, when in fact in Greek this strophe is about Dionysus, though he is not explicitly named,[38] and the chorus's shame if Ion, slave-born and a foreigner (as the previous strophic pair has made clear), is allowed to participate in the festival of the Boedromion in Athens.

> Too much is said of this god,
>
> too much is sung,
>
> too much of the sacred spring;
>
> what of deeds in the night?
>
> will that boy ever know?
>
> will he see what the torch-flame saw? (224)[39]

[38] Dionysus is the "πολύυμνος θεὸς," according to Wilamowitz and even according to the word's dictionary entry in Liddell-Scott, which cites this passage.

[39] In Greek:

> αἰσχύνομαι τὸν πολύ-
> μνον θεόν, εἰ παρὰ καλλιχόροισι παγαῖς
> λαμπάδα θεωρὸν εἰκάδων
> ὄψεται ἐννύχιος ἄυπνος ὤν (lines 1074–77)

H.D.'s vague opening and accusatory tone, combined with the reference to "deeds in the night," lead us to believe that it is Apollo the chorus are inveighing against, just as Kreousa had been in the preceding scene. H.D. leaves out local religious customs and introduces what she sees as the play's central opposition, namely that between what is sung of the god and the "deeds in the night." The question thus centers on whether Ion's (our, H.D.'s) adoration of gods, his focus on "the sacred spring," which is essentially unjust ("too much"), blinds him from seeing the harm. Their accusations of the god and the poet's accusations (whether explicit as H.D. makes them or implicit as explained by Verrall) are nonetheless belied by the enthralled depiction of a dancing ritual that follows—a ritual that Ion, or the rationalist poet, ought not observe:

> will he watch the stars on high,
>
> the moon and the moon-dance?
>
> will he wonder?
>
> will he witness
>
> the sea-dance,
>
> fifty Neriads,
>
> in and out
>
> of the sea-wave,
>
> on the sea-floor? (224)[40]

And in Potter's translation: "I am ashamed before the god of many hymns, if he, the sleepless night watcher, shall see the torch procession on the twentieth day, beside the springs with lovely dances."

[40] In Greek:

> καὶ Διὸς ἀστερωπὸς
> ἀνεχόρευσεν αἰθήρ,
> χορεύει δὲ σελάνα
> καὶ πεντήκοντα κόραι
> Νηρέος, αἱ κατὰ πόντον
> ἀενάων τε ποταμῶν
> δίνας (lines 1078–84)

The monotonous accusations above here give way to rhythm as the lines now alternate between an alliterating trochaic meter (a full tetrameter with an inversion in the opening line) and what I termed the "nature stress" in the *Hippolytus* choruses, here in a configuration called, fittingly, ionic (short short long long). H.D. thus exposes a progression in the play's choral songs that runs counter to Verrall's "Euripides the rationalist": from the recollection of youthful admiration of Delphic art to the (silent) injunction to imagine the Delphic mysteries on Parnassus, which H.D. realizes, to the actual enthralled description of such mysteries, albeit under the form of a proscription.

4. On Inspiration: Kreousa between Helios and Athene

i) "Traitor within the Light"

While H.D.'s Euripidean chorus enacts the fascination with mystical rhythm that readings of the play (even Euripides's own) have tended to suppress, her treatment of Kreousa functions as its counterbalance, presenting the questioning of such enchantment. In her earlier essay on *Ion* H.D. had claimed that "the whole character of the play alters after [Kreousa's] coming" because she challenges—"shadows," as H.D. put it—"our" and Ion's faith in Apollo (276). H.D.'s version of the play charts, especially through the commentary, Kreousa's progression from repressed woman to powerful goddess, from one kind of "abstraction" to another through a passage into humanity. H.D.'s Kreousa first appears as inorganic matter—while the chorus have "humanity," she has "the inhumanity of a meteor, sunk under the sea"—that crystallizes into a statue: her robes "seem to fall in folds that are cut of pure stone, lapis. She has always been standing there. She seems, simply, a temple property that we have, so far, neglected" (171). Ion

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And in Potter's translation: "when the starry sky of Zeus also joins in the dance, and the moon dances, and the fifty daughters of Nereus, in the sea and the swirls of ever-flowing rivers."

looks at her accordingly: admiring her "rare beauty" and "grace," he asks "O, goddess, / what rain / mars that marble, / your face?" (171). This is notable especially in comparison to the Greek and to H.D.'s original translation of the passage, where the emphasis is not on Kreousa's aesthetic but her "generational" properties. Ion marvels at her "γενναιότης" (line 237) and her being "εὐγενής" (lines 240, 243), her noble bearing and gentle breeding; "O noble of birth . . . you were sprung of a great people," H.D.'s earlier Ion exclaims (275). Before her stichomythia with Ion, in which she first tells her story as that of a friend, H.D. tells us that "A woman is about to step out of stone, in the manner of a later Rodin" (172). Echoing Wilamowitz's comments on Euripides's depiction of legendary heroes that somehow feel human, she draws an explicit line from ancient Athens to modernism:

> And today, we may again wonder at this method and manner of portraiture, for the abstract welded with human implication, is in its way, ultra-modern.
>
> A woman is about to break out of an abstraction and the effect is terrible. We wish she would go back to our preconceived ideas of what classic characterization should be. (172)

The play chronicles this double breakout: both of a woman "out of an abstraction" and of the "ultra-modern" out of the classic.

In Section XI, which H.D. calls "perhaps the most notable section of the drama," Kreousa's transformation is effected: inflamed by her betrayal by both husband and god, she sheds her cold mask, breaks down, reflectively revisits her trauma with the help of her father's tutor, and finally consciously suppresses it, sublimating her betrayal into a call to action (201). At the core of this section is Kreousa's anti-hymn to Apollo. Though she "yearns in neurotic abandon for a child she has lost," she still "retains a perfectly abstract sense of justice, of

judgment toward the highest aesthetic religious symbol of the then known world," H.D. writes, adding that Kreousa, whose "personality [and] unity was violated by this god, by inspiration," may have "accepted her defeat" but "has retained her integrity" (203). In Greek her song is the inverse of Ion's in the beginning of the play: both anapestic, addressed to the god, but here instead of praising him as Ion did, Kreousa brazenly curses him. As H.D. does with Ion's initial song, she also turns this one into something slightly different, with many more repetitions than in Greek. After a long first section, in which Kreousa addresses her soul and calls upon Zeus and Athene as her witnesses, H.D. organizes the song strophically, adding addresses to "eyes," "heart," and "terror" at the opening of each of her stanzas that mirror the Greek's initial address to "ψυχά" (line 859). Kreousa specifically speaks to Apollo as the god of inspiration in Greek and in English (though H.D. takes special pains to emphasize it), and recounts both their meeting and his abandonment. It is here that we hear for the third time the story of her seduction, finally more fully and from her own perspective. What Euripides brings into relief here, and H.D. further highlights, is the seductiveness of Apollo despite the violence done to Kreousa at the moment of her rape, which explains, psychologically speaking, her hatred of him for her subsequent abandonment. Before addressing Apollo directly as she does in Greek, she urges her heart and eyes to speak, as she had her soul earlier:

> O, eyes,
>
> eyes weep,
>
> O, heart,
>
> O, my heart
>
> cry out
>
> against him of the seven-strung lyre,

against him of the singing voice;

yes,

to you, you, you

I shout,

harmony, rhythm, delight

of the Muses,

you I accuse;

you, born of Leto,

you bright

traitor within the light (210)

ὦ τᾶς ἐπταφθόγγου μέλπων

κιθάρας ἐνοπάν, ἅτ᾽ ἀγραύλοις

κέρασιν ἐν ἀψύχοις ἀχεῖ

μουσᾶν ὕμνους εὐαχήτους,

σοὶ μομφάν, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ,

πρὸς τάνδ᾽ αὐγὰν αὐδάσω. (lines 881-86)[41]

It is clear again that Apollo is the god of musical or poetic inspiration in particular, and H.D. emphasizes it through repetition. This time she has a strong basis in the Greek: between Kreousa's opening vocative "ὦ" and her second at the end of her main clause when she finally names Apollo there are four lines of relative clauses describing him in these terms—and these precede her presentation of his physical beauty in the lines that will follow. H.D. leaves her last

[41] In Potter's translation: "O you, who cause a voice to sing from your seven-stringed lyre, a voice that lets lovely-sounding hymns peal forth in the rustic lifeless horn, son of Leto, I will blame you before this light."

line ambiguous; while in Greek Kreousa vows to bring forth her accusations in the light of day (i.e. not in secrecy), H.D. suggests that Apollo's treachery was especially brutal because of its promise, because he is "in the light," whether the light of day or the metaphorical light of art and music.[42]

H.D.'s rhythmical structuring is, once again, telling. The stanza is pervaded by initial and final rhymes: H.D.'s repetitive additions (absent from the Greek) of "eyes," "against," "you," and "yes" in the openings of her lines and the "heart," "out – shout," and finally, "delight – bright – light" rhymes at the ends. Together, these two series highlight the problem at hand: that the god of harmony produces no harmony but the discord implied in the failed middle rhyme between "Muses" and accuse"—and yet that Kreousa has recourse to his very "harmony" while trying to denounce him. As soon as Apollo's "harmony" is described, in the sixth and seventh line cited above, H.D.'s lines become suddenly longer and clearly iambic: the first is an iambic pentameter catalectic, while the second an iambic tetrameter (though if read together with the following line, "yes," it too turns into an iambic pentameter catalectic). The last line too is an iambic trimeter with an inversion. Throughout this song, in fact, the few longer, and especially four-stress, lines have stress alternation (either iambic or anapestic) and are all associated with music or the abandonment of Ion:

whére is hé whom yoú begót (211)

bút that gód will nót relént,

[42] Throughout the play H.D. takes any mention of the sun to be a reference to Apollo and simply transcribes the Greek word, capitalizing it (Helios), while also adding or repeating references to light. For example, upon recognition of her son, H.D.'s Kreousa pointedly says, "son, / O, light, / more lovely than Helios," comparing him to his father (249), while in Greek the connection is not quite so explicit ("ὦ τέκνον, ὦ φῶς μητρὶ κρεῖσσον ἡλίου," line 1439). She then exclaims that "the earth-born race/ again sees light; / O light, / Helios—" (249) when in Greek there is an opposition: "ὅ τε γηγενέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτα δέρκεται, / ἀελίου δ' ἀναβλέπει λαμπάσιν" (lines 1466–67). Kreousa says that their earth-born house will no longer see the night, but the light of the sun, while H.D. turns it into a repetition and has her Kreousa end on this note right before Ion interrupts her to ask about his father.

who thoúght of thé harp-nóte (or the hárp-nóte)
whíle his chíld was dóne to deáth
by hóvering eágles or háwks (211)

I léft him thére on the rócks (212)

yoú, I accúse
who plúck from the soúlless fráme of the hárp,
the soúl of the hárp. (213)

It is worth noting too in this context that the seven lines describing Kreousa and Apollo's encounter are consistently trimeters, mostly iambic with a few anapests; only when Kreousa begins to describe her resistance to Apollo does H.D. turn back to her customary very short, often single-stress, lines. The transition is effected through an ambiguous three-stress line:

why díd you séek me oút,
brílliant, with góld haír? víbrant
you seízed my wrísts [the two stresses here compensating for the four above]
while the flówers féll from my láp
the góld and the pále-gold crócus,
while yoú fulfílled your wísh;
whát did (or: what díd) it hélp, my shoút
of móther,
móther?
no hélp

cáme to mé

in the rócks (210-11)

The three-stress lines return at the end of the stanza in very different form: "O, white hands caught," "O, gold flowers lost" (211). We see here that clustering of stresses familiar from Phaedra's mad speech—not coincidentally, the two are in the same meter in Greek. The seduction and its aftermath are, thus, represented here metrically as well, suggesting, once again, the inescapability of Eros and the interconnectedness of meters and violence.

The Greek concludes with Kreousa's bold cursing of Apollo and with the statement that Delos, his birthplace, hates him. H.D. turns this into an injunction to hate him, an injunction extended to the laurel and palm-branches that sheltered him at his birth. She compounds the "blasphemy" in Euripides's text since her Kreousa more explicitly compares the circumstances of Apollo's birth to those of her son by speaking the additional first three lines below before calling upon Delos:

I left him there on the rocks,

alone

in a lonely place,

be witness,

O, Delos,

and hate,

hate him, O, you laurel-branch,

hate,

hate him

you palm-branch,

caught

with the leaves of the laurel to bless

that other so-holy birth,

yours,

Leto's child

with Zeus (212)

H.D., moreover, adds an entire final stanza after this curse; it again begins with an address, first to her eyes and heart, and then to Apollo. On the one hand, this structure is motivated by desire for internal consistency in the song and on the other, it adds a level of personalization, of intensity of emotion that may not come out as strongly in Greek. This invented stanza functions as an epode or coda to Kreousa's song; it is essentially a medley of words from her earlier stanzas, with heavy emphasis on the third, which contained her first accusation of the god of inspiration. H.D. actually goes back to the Greek to translate an image she had not translated there:

heart,

heart weep,

soul,

O, my soul,

cry out

harmony, rhythm, delight

of the Muses,

you, I accuse

who pluck from the soulless frame of the harp,

> the soul of the harp. (212-13)

Here she brings forth a connection—present in the Greek but not so explicitly made—between Kreousa's initial apostrophe to her soul ("ψυχά," line 859) and her designation of the "horn" (H.D.'s "harp") as "soulless" ("ἀψύχοις," line 883). She implies thus that Apollo played Kreousa like one of his instruments—and "pluck" is a stronger word than Euripides's "ἀχεῖ" 'sound'—tearing her soul away from her body (and creating that "other life" H.D. refers to earlier as what Kreousa holds back from Xouthos) and yet not sheltering what came of their communion, the product, Ion. This is mirrored, too, in the shift in address from the soul to Apollo within this stanza but also in the earlier ones: the shift makes it at first glance unclear if she is still addressing herself (soul, heart, eyes) or the other, so that for a moment the two merge—or reveal the fact that they have, or had, been merged. Quickly, though, we see their separation: the god was in her but is now out and accused.

In this way H.D.'s version of the play becomes again less about the family romance and more about art and the poet's vocation. It is crucial too that it is here, before this scene, that she chooses to make explicit the religious syncretism she has been hinting at since the beginning, with her Kreousa/Virgin Mother, Apollo/Lord, Ion/Christ characterizations:

> How can we believe that 500 B.C. and A.D. 500 (or our own problematical present) are separated by an insurmountable chasm? The schism of before and after Christ, vanishes. The new modernity can not parody the wisdom of all-time with its before and after. (203)

H.D. essentially lays out her cards here. This is what is at stake, then and now: whether inspiration is defeat and how to deal with it; whether one ought to remain faithful to it even when

it seems to have run dry, abandoned one and one's child to die; how to negotiate or overcome that loss.[43]

ii) "Repeat, Repeat This"

The answer, at least in *Euripides' Ion*, comes through the intervention of Kreousa's tutor. H.D.'s treatment of the tutor allows her to write a condensed psychoanalytic session into or over the play. In the opening of this section H.D. surprisingly calls him "one of those arch-types of classic art, a Job in dignity, antiquity itself, Saturn hobbling with a long staff; half-blind wisdom doomed to outlive its generation"; to emphasize his age she even names the character not "tutor" but "very old man" (203).[44] This is an odd description, for this admittedly at first glance Tiresias-like figure is far removed from the Sophoclean prophet and the instigator of the kinds of plots H.D. tends to dismiss. The figure she abstracts from the Euripidean play, however, bears a lot of similarities, as Eileen Gregory has noted, to H.D.'s portrayal of Freud in *Tribute to Freud*, especially in terms of their portrayal in relation to time, or as "the abstraction of Time" (*Ion* 203; Gregory, *Hellenism* 215).[45]

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[43] Again we might look back to her previous Euripides translations on the relation between violence and song, but also at her 1920s narratives, where inspiration is clearly depicted as violation (Ray Bart's helmet in "Murex," for example, or the presentation of Philip in "Hipparchia").

[44] This is a translation of the Greek "πρέσβυς" 'old man', which suggests, as Verrall tells us, a revered old man, an old man commanding respect.

[45] H.D. perhaps takes her idea of this old man as a personification of Time from his final speech, where in her version he asks:

> O, old, old feet,
> you are strong;
> what is age?
> I shall strike again
> a blow,
> at those who have wronged
> my lords;
> I was old in my time
> and wise;
> but now,
> now
> now

H.D. explicitly presents Kreousa's anti-hymn as her getting "rid of" her secret, offering five lines—the last her own addition—for two lines of Euripides:

οὐκέτι κρύψω λέχος, ὡς στέρνων

ἀπονησαμένη ῥάων ἔσομαι. (lines 875-76)[46]

I have hidden too long

this truth,

I must lighten my heart

of this secret;

I must be rid of it. (210)

What H.D. calls Kreousa's neuroticism comes through in the song since her Kreousa returns on four separate occasions (versus two in the Greek) to the abandonment of her son, and graphically imagines his death, which she reads as Apollo's abandonment. H.D. writes that "At the moment of her entrance, [Kreousa] still believes in the justice of the old ideal"—that gods ought not to behave as Apollo did— and this is what the song expresses. Euripides juxtaposes Kreousa's intentions with the tutor's desire for vengeance that eventually tempts her. But H.D. silently cuts an entire fifty-line speech by the tutor, in which he recapitulates Xouthos's indignities against Kreousa, and, rhetorically turning Ion into a despot in Kreousa's house, primes her for revenge.[47] On the one hand, this is precisely the "curious rather crude plot and counter-plot" that H.D. has

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I am young. (220–21)

In Greek there is no question about time or age; he simply asks his feet to do the work of youth. Wilamowitz sees this speech as well as part of his being πανοῦργος 'ready to do anything, wicked, knavish'. H.D. also leaves out his "moralizing" conclusion here about there being no law against killing enemies acting badly, a conclusion which we see contradicted two sections later in the chorus's final song.

[46] Potter's very literal translation: "I will no longer conceal this bed, so that I may cast off this load from my breast and be at ease."

[47] He also gets the story wrong, claiming that Xouthos must have been unfaithful to Kreousa because of her infertility and that he intentionally gave Ion away so that he could reclaim him now with the god's blessing. Like the chorus earlier, he is suspicious of the oracle though in the end argues that it was Xouthos who lied, not the god.

little patience for, and she thus skips straight to Kreousa's much-expanded aria against Apollo (276). On the other, however, not having the tutor hatch the murderous plan at all allows H.D. to highlight Kreousa's own psychological transformation and the, in a sense, therapeutic necessity of her decision. H.D.'s tutor acts as a compassionate and supportive surrogate father figure (similar to Theseus in *Helen in Egypt*):

> I am done,
>
> I am drowned;
>
> O, my daughter,
>
> evil follows
>
> evil; disaster,
>
> disaster (213)

Seeking to "grieve / with your grief," he asks Kreousa after her song to clarify and yet again "repeat/ repeat this—" (214). He thus guides her towards a less lyrically and emotionally explosive articulation of her Apollonian trauma—expressed in dialogical prose rather than anti-hymn—which then leads to (though H.D. does not explicitly say this) its repetition. As Kreousa then killed a child by exposure in order to save her city from shame, so now she concocts a plot to kill a slightly older child, Ion, by poison in order to save her city from falling into the wrong hands. She plans to use the gift of ancestral legend (two drops of poison, one meant to do good, the other evil bequeathed to her family by Athene) to counteract what she perceives as present disaster and in so doing she retreats back into the marble. This decision, in H.D.'s reading all her own though made with the tutor's input as guide and enabler but not mastermind, turns her into a goddess:

> Kreousa, the woman, has failed, now let Kreousa, the queen speak. . . . Kreousa, the queen, stands shoulder to shoulder with the sword-bearer of the Acropolis. She, too, holds a weapon; she, too, strikes infallibly at the enemy of her city. Kreousa, standing shoulder to shoulder with Pallas Athené, becomes Kreousa the goddess. The price? Kreousa, the woman. (215)

What H.D. portrays here is not Kreousa's suppression of her trauma, but its embrace; given what has occurred, she feels she has no choice but to repeat it taking full responsibility, knowing full well its consequences. When Athene finally appears in H.D. and repeats Kreousa's own justifications for Apollo's actions to Ion,[48] their identification is sealed.

This identification with Athene, another Artemisian figure, is the anchor of the *Ion's* victory narrative. H.D. has already placed this goddess at the center of tragedy. Speaking of a messenger, she writes that he

> infallibly . . . plucks up threads that have already been woven and re-woven, finds loose ends, unravels here and there and re-weaves, till there can be no possible loose-stitch, no blur in the out-line, no rough seam, no hint of clumsy handiwork. Indeed, the Attic drama was fitly presided over, by that patron alike of all subtle spinners and thinkers, Pallas Athené. (224)

Athene, though in many respects similar to Artemis (armed, seemingly non-erotic), allows H.D. to move from destruction to integration, from arrhythmia to an accord that does not deny discord. This is what she promises. When Athena appears and asks Ion and Kreousa not to flee at her presence—a line repeated three times in H.D.'s text—since "in me / you flee no enemy," H.D.'s commentary argues that,

[48] Of course she does this in the Greek as well, but given that H.D. has cut most of Athene's speech, it stands out here.

> this most beautiful abstraction of antiquity and of all time, pleas for the great force of the under-mind or the unconscious that so often, on the point of blazing upward into the glory of inspirational creative thought, flares, by a sudden law of compensation, down, making for tragedy, disharmony, disruption, disintegration, but in the end, O, in the end, if we have patience to wait, she says, if we have penetration and faith and the desire actually to follow all those hidden subterranean forces, how great is our reward. (254)

Having placed Athene as weaver at the center of tragedy, and not Apollo or Dionysus or Artemis,[49] she now identifies the particular quality that makes her suitable for it: in the endless reweaving that she represents, she embodies the patience, or fortitude to stay with Apollo's flare despite the potential of destruction. We must, H.D. seems to say, follow and not doubt our odd impulses or visions even if they seem deceitful or condoning violence—we must, and she has, producing exactly this version of Euripides's *Ion*. In Euripides, Athene commends Kreousa for changing her mind and praising, rather than blaming Apollo.[50] H.D. has her generalize:

> the gods' pace moves slow,
> do they forget?
> no;
> blessed be the man
> who waits
> (nor doubts)
> for the end
> of the intricate

[49] They are explicitly denied in the story of the Athenian devote she provides a later in the commentary.
[50] She tellingly does this in H.D. by suddenly seeing "light" "brea[k]"; in Euripides she says that the temple doors and the oracle have gone from being "δυσμενῆ" 'evil' to being "ευωποὶ" 'friendly, kindly' (259; lines 1611–12).

plan (260)

This passage is only two lines in Greek, the last four lines in the English being H.D.'s addition:

ᾔνεσ᾽ οὕνεκ᾽ εὐλογεῖς θεὸν μεταβαλοῦσ᾽: ἀεὶ γὰρ οὖν

χρόνια μὲν τὰ τῶν θεῶν πως, ἐς τέλος δ᾽ οὐκ ἀσθενῆ (lines 1614-15)[51]

According to the commentary that has preceded the section, the intricate plan becomes that of the unconscious, which must be heeded. H.D. has Athena say that mortals often act in ignorance of a larger plan that will benefit them—and does her best to suppress the elements of this particular plan that do not quite work out, as well as the elements of doubt—and she then transposes this perhaps now antiquated ancient Greek belief in the gods or fates onto the unconscious, as something working "for us" that we nonetheless know very little of, and often try to thwart. Athene does what Apollo cannot: she completes, concludes, explains, silences; she reveals order in the disordered (or perhaps imposes it).

In this, Athene is also not very far from H.D.'s portrayal of Freud in *Tribute to Freud* (see especially 71-73). Having "proclaimed the Herculean power of Eros," she writes, Freud "would stand guardian, he would turn the whole stream of consciousness back into useful, into *irrigation* channels, so that none of this power be wasted" (103). She is referring to Freud's concept of sublimation as a socially acceptable release for excess sexual energy, the channeling of the libido into (seemingly) non-sexual activities, the prime example of which would be art. Sublimation undermines "pure" pleasure, offering sanitized pleasure to both artist and reader. Though Freud claimed that "[n]o substitutive or reactive formations and no sublimations will suffice to remove the repressed instinct's persisting tension," H.D.'s commentary presents Ionian art as accomplishing even more than that (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 51). H.D. omits

[51] "I am glad that you have changed your mind and praise the god; for always the gifts [literally: the things] of the gods are somehow slow, but at the end they are not weak" (Potter's translation modified).

Athene's lengthy predictions about the great future of Athens and the Ionic race when she appears towards the end of the play, but offers a substitute in her four-page commentary.[52] Seeming to speak for the goddess, giving us a supplement to—or a modern reading of—the Ionic legacy Euripides's Athene expounds, the commentator writes:

> For this new culture was content, as no culture had been before, or has since been, frankly and with one and but one supreme quality, perfection. . . . The human mind dehumanized itself, in much the same way (if we may imagine group-consciousness so at work) in which shell-fish may work outward to patterns of exquisite variety and unity. The conscious mind of man had achieved kinship with unconscious forces of most subtle definition. Columns wrought with delicate fluting, whorls of capitals, folds of marble garment, the heel of an athlete or the curls of a god or hero, the head-band of a high-priest or a goddess. . . . A scattered handful of these creatures or creations is enough to mark, for all time, that high-water mark of human achievement, the welding of strength and delicacy, the valiant yet totally unselfconscious withdrawal of the personality of the artist, who traced on marble, for all time, that thing never to be repeated, . . . that thing and that thing alone that we mean when we say Ionian. (254-55)

We are encouraged to read classical perfection now—perhaps in idealizing, Winckelmannian terms—as emerging out of the unconscious, as a kind of in-spiration from within: an abstract, impersonal force creating very human artifacts.[53] This would be evident in the Euripidean play

[52] On this speech see Verrall 126–27, who notes that "Euripides merely uses the names, with romantic additions of his own fancy to convey in mythical form a suggestion of the imperial maritime greatness of Athens in his own time" (126). See also Jane Harrison and Margaret Verrall, "The Mythology of Athenian Local Cults," lxxx–lxxxii.
[53] Curiously, Virginia Woolf also calls Greek "the impersonal literature" to suggest its sudden but perfect emergence: "There are no schools; no forerunners; no heirs. We cannot trace a gradual process working in many men imperfectly until it expresses itself adequately at last in one" (57).

itself, its choral songs shading the skepticism of its plots. Despite the Freudian rhetoric, moreover, the understanding of art as a good-enough substitution for something more desirable is absent.

That it is Athene, the weaver, under whose aegis this occurred in classical Athens and who makes the coherence of the threads clear in the play, is not unimportant. In a much-discussed exchange that H.D. portrays in *Tribute*, Freud shows her a small bronze statue—"his favorite"—of Athena, commenting that "'She is perfect . . . *only she has lost her spear*'" (69, H.D.'s italics).[54] Though she claims to have said nothing to Freud—" I stood looking at Pallas Athené, she whose winged attribute was Niké, Victory, or she stood wingless, Niké A-pteros in the old days . . . for Victory could never, would never fly away from Athens"— she interprets the statement as an implicit challenge and exhaustively reads it in her text (69). "He was speaking in a double sense," she writes, presenting the statue as "a perfect symbol, made in man's image (in woman's, as it happened), to be venerated as a projection of abstract thought, Pallas Athené, born without human or even without divine mother, sprung full-armed from the head of her father, our-father, Zeus, Theus, or God" and showing it off, "a prize, a find of the best period of Greek art," as an art-collector (70). A third sense, of course, in which he would have been speaking, is in relation to his analysand, who may be perfect, but has lost her writing spear, and who may not find it unless she accepts that writing is that kind of irrigation, a replacement or substitution for another missing spear she cannot have. Athene may be sword-bearing in H.D.'s play, but she is perfect regardless—rhetorically, not a perfect art object to be possessed, but the very engine of artistic perfection—and she is definitively a woman (that is what the Kreousa

[54] On this scene in *Tribute* and H.D.'s various responses to it, see Friedman and DuPlessis, 421–23, and Kolocotroni, "Still Lifes," 13–15. Gere, 160–76, also traces illuminatingly Freud and H.D.'s exchange over their shared passion for myth and archeology.

identification serves to underline) supplanting, overachieving Freud's goal. Moreover, in H.D.'s reading, in H.D.'s recasting of *Ion*, it is Kreousa who is implicitly aligned with what the commentator identifies as "Ionian" and not Ion; we actually hear very little about Ion's future in Athens or about his descendants since those are exactly the sections that H.D. skips. The dehumanization outlined above—or rather, this movement in and out of the human, and of abstraction—we have seen most clearly in H.D.'s characterizations of Kreousa: at first a statue, then a woman emerging and reaching a high point of emotional turmoil, and finally, transformed through the human suffering into a goddess. Many critics have written about H.D.'s imaginative shift from portrayals of crystalline youths in her early and middle period to those of mother-goddesses;[55] it is this play that enables that shift since under the name of Ion, it is Kreousa who is celebrated, Kreousa who exhibits that "welding of strength and delicacy" that H.D. so insists on as the mark of the Ionian.

iii) "How Will We Approach It?"

When H.D. sent Freud her translation upon its publication, he responded, on February 16, 1937, that he was "Deeply moved by the play (which I had not known before) and no less by your comments, especially those referring to the end, where you extol the victory of reason over passions" (*Tribute* 194). He is referring, I believe, to this passage in particular:

> Let not our hearts break before the beauty of Pallas Athené [and here we are reminded of Kreousa's broken heart earlier, in her song against Apollo]. No; she makes all things possible for us. The human mind today pleads for all; nothing is misplaced that in the end may be illuminated by the inner fire of abstract understanding; hate, love, degradation, humiliation, all, all may be examined,

[55] For example, see Friedman, *Penelope* 313, and Gregory, *Hellenism* 208.

> given due proportion and dismissed finally, in the light of the mind's vision. Today, again at a turning-point in the history of the world, the mind stands, to plead, to condone, to explain, to clarify, to illuminate. (255)

Is Freud right? Is this the "lesson" that H.D. wants us to take away from this play, this the link to "modernity"? Should we trust the commentator when she says that Athene leaves no loose threads? When H.D.'s Athene first appears, she ambiguously declares that she has come "to reveal / mystery," not necessarily to shed light onto it; in Euripides, in contrast, she refers more explicitly to her intention to resolve this affair and make known Apollo's predictions for Ion's future (which are precisely what H.D. suppresses).[56] Even in the passage just cited, our reward for following the subterranean forces, our abstract understanding, is curiously identified with "the light of the mind's vision," not with reasoning. And what of the shell comparison, to which the commentator returns, describing the classical works of art, "no matter how dissimilar," as having "yet one fundamental inner force that framed them, projected them, as (we repeat) a certain genus of deep-sea fish may project its shell" (255)? Artistic production is figured as an almost automatic process without any sense of particularly human, or rationally-arrived-at achievement—a whole culture somehow fishing the murex up as H.D. turns Athenian hyperintellectualism into the imprint of the creative unconscious.

As Eileen Gregory notes, H.D. consistently inserts historical information about the time of the play's performance, not only to impart to her readers facts that the original audience would have known but also to implicitly draw a connection between Athens at a moment of rebuilding itself after violent wars and her own time. She reminds us, for example, that as the Athenian

[56] The Greek refers more explicitly to her intention to resolve this affair and make known the god's predictions for Ion's future, which are precisely what H.D. suppresses: "ἀλλ' ὡς περαίνω πρᾶγμα, καὶ χρησμοὺς θεοῦ, / ἐφ' οἷσιν ἔζευξ' ἅρματ', εἰσακούσατον" (lines 1569–70); "But, to bring the matter to an end, hear the oracles of the god, for which I yoked my chariot."

chorus women marvel at Apollo's Delphic temple and its artworks, their own famous temple is still in the process of construction: "These visitors are intensely interested in the temple. It will be remembered that, in Athens, the Parthenon, on the site of the old shrine but lately destroyed by the Persians, has actually been in a state of construction" (166). That is, she paints a picture of an Athens that has survived—or rather, that is in the process of surviving a loss at the time of Euripides and responding to it by rebuilding itself through art. Indeed, in the very long commentary that precedes the play's final section, it is through a story about survival that she connects *Ion* to us. "Today, again at a turning-point in the history of the world," she writes,

> in the name of our magnificent heritage of that Hellenic past, each of us is responsible to that abstract reality; silver and unattainable yet always present, that spirit again stands holding the balance between the past and the future. What now will we make of it? How will we approach it? (255)

The oblique answer lies in the seemingly unrelated story that follows, a story that supplements and counters the familiar legend of the contest between Athene and Poseidon at the city's founding and her gift of the olive tree. She returns to the historical contest with the Persians that left all signs of art and life that H.D. has just praised shattered ("a weathered Hermes, a Victory, a stone owl, a plaque, inscribed with legal matter, dating from the days of Solon" [255]). The way to approach fifth-century Athenian greatness is by beginning with an Athens ruined, not yet a pinnacle, an Athens that looks back to its own mythical past in order to rebuild itself, with Athens as a "lost city" in the start of the fifth century—by beginning with a great Acropolis destroyed (256).

"How will we approach it?," the commentator asks a second time, and answers, "Not merely through subtle and exquisite preoccupations with shells of its luminous housing; no"

(255). No, because what revives Athens, allowing it to produce the exquisite Ionian shells, is something un-Athenian. H.D. offers a story taken probably from Pausanias, one of her favorite authors and the subject of some of her unpublished Greek-themed essays, that will reappear in different guises in her long war-time poems *Tribute to the Angels* and *The Flowering of the Rod*.[57] "Tradition has it that one devote scrambled back," she writes, unwittingly rejecting the deep-seated belief according to which the death of the olive tree planted by Athena on the Acropolis meant the death of Athens (256). He thus defied also the "injunction of his goddess," "Of nothing, too much" since by going back, he sought "of one thing too much," of "the beauty of pure thought," of Athene, of Athens; of course what leads him to defy her is not pure thought, but "love for our lost city" (256). At the beginning, then, of Athens's most famed greatness would be this act of defiance, of rebellion against the very goddess that is being held onto, something that exceeds this beauty of pure thought, of moderation, of coherence, that is fated to reinstate it. Such an act of desperation and defiance is necessary for the realization of another "intricate plan." When the unnamed Athenian with the ash-black face "reached out his frozen hand" towards the olive tree stump, he was surprised to discover close to it "a frail silver shoot," similar to the one ever-regenerating in Ion's baby basket that seals the mother and son recognition: "incredibly frail, incredibly silver, it reached toward the light. Pallas Athené, then, was not dead. Her spirit spoke quietly, a very simple message" (257). Instead of dying, as H.D. led us to believe, this devote manages to deliver to his people the "so simple, so spiritual message, that told his companions of that hope (from which sprang a later Parthenon). Our old

[57] We see precisely this "too much" of the sole Athenian who returned, be the turning point in Trilogy—not an olive tree, but an apple tree; apple trees, as H.D. knows from the Hippolytus chorus as well, are the trees (though with golden apples) guarded by the Hesperides in the classical version of paradise—also the place of origin of the Greek gods (where Hera and Zeus met).

tree is not dead. The Persian has not killed it" (257).[58] H.D. concludes this excursus, this parable for "how to approach it"—that was the initial question after all—by bearing the message that on all her visits to Athens, she too found that olive branch: "numerically 1920, 1922 and again (each time, spring) 1932, we touched the stem of a frail sapling, an olive-tree , growing against the egg-shell marble walls of the Erechtheum" (257). The surviving olive twig serves as evidence of the "reality" or ever-presence of myth, of the link between words and things; it attests to the possibility that poetry, Euripides, even Pausanias, may lead us not into deception (as Verrall strongly argues with respect to the preposterousness of the still fresh olive twig in the basket), but point to ways of survival—or to the fact that survival, rebirth, regeneration is possible.

H.D. seemed to claim above that the acknowledged greatness of Greece ought not to provoke numb admiration or dejection, but function as a call to action, a call to remember the "Hellenic past." Yet despite the idealizing Winckelmannian trappings of her rhetoric, she redefines the term so that the "Hellenic past" is not Freud's perfect reason, nor that balance between conscious and unconscious forces so praised by the commentator, but the disruption, the dis-cord struck to give rise to it. We saw that there is nothing triumphant about this remembering. It happens "somehow"; we do not know how the messenger "g[o]t back to his people" or what he said "when he finally overtook them, perhaps on the old, sacred Eleusinian highway" (257). Despite the Athenian's explicit denial of the god of light in the opening of H.D.'s parable, it is an aesthetic-erotic desire that prompts his return, as H.D. replaces or unites (as promised by the end of *Hippolytus Temporizes*) Eros and Apollo. She turns the latter into an omnipresent force that is nonetheless impossible to pin down and have speak directly, and that is

[58] Cf. Pausanias 1.27.2: "About the olive they have nothing to say except that it was testimony the goddess produced when she contended for their land. Legend also says that when the Persians fired Athens the olive was burnt down, but on the very day it was burnt it grew again to the height of two cubits." In 1.27.6 he also refers to "rather black" old figures of Athena on the Acropolis that "were caught by the flames when the Athenians had gone on board their ships and the King captured the city emptied of its able-bodied inhabitants."

not altogether benevolent. His trace is felt even when he is explicitly denied—as Eros was in the Euripidean *Hippolytus* stasima and in H.D.'s play, and as the "mystery," here identified almost exclusively with Apollo (also frequently referred to simply as the "Voice"[59]) does in *Ion*'s stasima. Similarly, though it is Athene who is glorified at the end, it is only because in H.D. especially she is presented, literally, in the light of her brother: H.D. interprets the word "ἀντήλιος" 'opposite the sun, i.e. looking east' (Liddell-Scott even give this passage as an example), used by Ion to describe Athene's appearance, as expressing his confusion of "this emanation of pure-spirit with that other, his spirit-father, her actual brother of Olympos" (254).[60] She expands Ion's sighting of Athena from four into seventeen lines, having him first compare her face to that of Helios (as per her commentary) and then launch into three repetitive, laudatory stanzas that magnify the degree of his enchantment. In this way H.D. sets the precedent for her suggestion in her commentary that the love of Athens led the devote to break the injunction: it is only through Apollo that what Athene promises and stands for becomes visible.

With this in mind, we can return to the Kreousa story, to look behind her devotion to her city as well. Even after the comparison to Athene, Kreousa's power actually only appears not

[59] For instance, in his opening song Ion refers to "the magic oracular / Voice / from the altar"—this is absent from her initial translation of the song (157). Kreousa says she "cannot accept / the Daemon, / but I accept / the Voice," dissociating the anthropomorphic god and his reprehensible actions from the singing power of the oracle, though the commentary later says that Xouthos "has been given a son by this Voice, that betrayed her in her girlhood," suggesting that the two may not be separable (184, 214). In H.D.'s translation of the first stasimon in section VII, the chorus ask Athena and Artemis to "pray to the Voice, / pray to the tripod" (188; there is nothing equivalent in the Greek). In section VI, Ion asks of Kreousa if she "would she consult / the Voice / for herself / or another?" (185), where the Greek has "μαντεύεται" (line 431); later the old man asks the chorus "what did it say, / the Voice" (207; in Greek he asks about the "χρησμὸς" on line 785). Finally when Ion asks the Pythia why she decided to keep and to now show the basket she found him in, exposing this old secret, she answers "the Voice spoke to my spirit" (241), when in Greek it is Loxias (line 1347).

[60] "τίς οἴκων θυοδόκων ὑπερτελὴς /ἀντήλιον πρόσωπον ἐκφαίνει θεῶν;" (lines 1549–50). The literal translation of the lines offered by Crooke is "Who of the gods, coming into view from the house receiving incense, shows a countenance opposite the sun?" (73n7). According to Paley, "The transverse rays of the rising sun (the Attic stage facing N.N.W.) imparted brightness to the countenance of the statues or persons of the gods, as seen by the audience in the theatre" (cited in Crooke 73n7). I think that H.D. mistranslates intentionally since in the commentary, shortly after mentioning Ion's confusion, she visualizes Pallas accurately "fully armed, in a silver that looks gold in the beams, as we may now picture them, of the actual sun" (254).

once she has denied, risen above her passions, but accepted this risk, decided as H.D. puts it, that as "Kreousa of Athens, virgin and queen" she would not "at last analysis, have chosen a lesser lover than the lord of light" (235). After her plot to kill Ion fails, Kreousa remains defiant; sentenced to death by stoning, with local priests and Ion out to catch her, she finds refuge in Apollo's temple and claims, in more senses than one, that she belongs to the god. That is, this finally full repetition of her primal scene, so to speak, has led her to a proud acceptance of her betrayal and continued declaration of her loyalty. We see, H.D. writes, that "the spark lit by her lordly lover had never really gone out" (235). Kreousa clings to laurel-branches and claims the god for herself here against Ion, his priest; the reason would seem to be that her right to be protected as a suppliant is stronger than his legal right to capture his would-be murderer. In Greek Kreousa forbids Ion to kill her "on behalf of myself and the god, at whose altar I stand" (lines 1282-83). H.D., however, exposes a different subtext and implies that it is not the religious power of the altar but her stronger connection with Apollo in particular that gives Kreousa confidence: "I am safe with the god," she claims right after Ion confronts and threatens her (236). When Ion asks her "what is the god to you?"—literally, "What is there in common between Phoebus and you?" (line 1284)—she responds "my body is his, by right" (236), as H.D. heightens the suggestion present in the Greek ("ἱερὸν τὸ σῶμα τῷ θεῷ δίδωμ᾽ ἔχειν," literally, "I give my body as sacred to the god to keep," line 1285) that she is referring not so much to her current location but to the earlier affair. In this moment H.D. also qualifies her insistence on modernity—and the modern, or modernist, trend against classicism and towards primitivism—by pushing back against the idea that Kreousa is a savage, frenzied woman who acts simply out of jealousy: "Kreousa retains, at the last her unquestionable authority" (215).[61] Indeed, by consciously returning to Apollo, her author-ity is precisely what Kreousa/H.D. reasserts.

[61] It is hard not to think about H.D. comments to Bryher a few years earlier on a production of Strauss's *Elektra* that

In *L'Espace Littéraire* Maurice Blanchot reads inspiration as the fusion of inspiration proper and its lack, calling it a "force créatrice et aridité intimement confondues"; more specifically, he claims that inspiration can only be powerful when the person receiving it has become weak or empty, and no longer relies on the world, its resources, or herself, no longer seems to rest on the first rhythm, with its alternation of day and night, life and death, no longer has any power (233, 240). He identifies the leap ("le saut") as the form or movement of inspiration, elucidating it through the Orpheus myth, and tying it to desire: "Regarder Eurydice, sans souci du chant, dans l'impatience et l'imprudence du désir qui oublie la loi, c'est cela même, *l'inspiration*" (228). Though Orpheus knows that to complete his song Eurydice has to be kept at a distance, that, as Anne Carson might say, erotic writing depends on maintaining the gap, he gazes back and seeks to obliterate it, thus losing Eurydice, himself, and the song. That loss of self and of the world, that jump taken without certainty of success, that plunge towards what is unknown (and unknowable) but desired is the risk to which one needs to submit; that is, Orpheus's "impatience" is not an accident, a fault, Blanchot claims, but necessary for the production of the work: "Le regard d'Orphée est le don ultime d'Orphée à l'œuvre, don où il la refuse, où il la sacrifie en se portant, par le mouvement démesuré du désir, vers l'origine, et où il se porte, à son insu, vers l'œuvre encore, vers l'origine de l'œuvre" (230). Even so, this inspiration spells the ruin of Orpheus does not promise "en compensation, la réussite de l'œuvre, pas plus qu'elle n'affirme dans l'œuvre le triomphe idéal d'Orphée ni la survie d'Eurydice"

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she had seen in Vienna in 1933 during her sessions with Freud. In a letter on May 24, 1933, she wrote to Bryher: "I was terribly over-come. . . . I was terribly upset. . . . It was something that has almost changed my life." (cited in notes to *CP* 621). The poem "Orestes Theme," originally published in *Life and Letters Today* 17 in the winter of 1937, may be based on that production. Simon Goldhill examines at length the stir caused in London when that opera was first produced there as precisely a modern, not classical staging of the myth. Strauss and Hofmannsthal orientalized, psychologized and modernized the intellectual investment in glorious Greece and, as Goldhill notes, "[i]t was this radical and aggressive reconceptualization of a Greek model [against ideals of classicism] that made *Elektra* threatening" to a bourgeois audience, but of course appealing to artists eager to part with that classical heritage (137). This, then, is one more measure of H.D.'s distance from the primitivism that seemed to seemed to supplant classicism in the minds of many of her contemporaries.

(229). It is this risk that H.D.'s Kreousa submits to at the climax of the *Ion*; the risk of a de-personalizing inspiration that would again, for a moment, thrust her outside her world and her rhythm, making another rhythm felt over which she has no power; the risk of an inspiration, of which, as Blanchot writes, there can be no presentiment except for that of failure and no experience except that of violence. Poetry would thus not arise through Freudian sublimation but from its opposite: the desire to face one's desires head-on.[62]

5. On Wheezing in Translation

In 1938, a year after the *Ion's* publication, Pound wrote that "H.D. in her *Ion* has tried various wheezes"; even though "[s]he has certainly pared down as much as the Genevan pacifist [Gilbert Murray] has upholstered and straw-filled," this "opposite system doesn't work either" (*GK* 93). Though he doesn't elaborate on what the "wheezes" are, what the noisy tricks that H.D. relies on to, still inadequately, bring this play across, the translation, as we have seen, is remarkable in three ways: first, the emotional intensity of the choral sections has been heightened; second, the dialogue has indeed been pared down; and third, more radically, the translation is accompanied by an extensive running commentary. In Pound's reading, H.D. resorts to these ruses in order to make the play "live" for a twentieth-century audience but, unlike Cocteau's radical condensation of *Antigone*, to which he compares the *Ion*, the final result does not justify these departures. Pound, whose own attempts to translate the *Agamemnon* and the *Elektra* focus so exclusively on the plays' linguistic aspects and on their immediacy, on what can be articulated and seen at once, without remainder, might be understandably condescending. In

[62] In this reading of sublimation H.D. would, thus, be closer to Jacques Lacan who claimed that sublimation "raises an object to the dignity of the Thing"; in this way, one experiences a kind of intensity Freud would not have imagined possible in sublimation (see 114ff.). The pleasure of writing for Lacan would thus not have anything to do with sublimation strictly defined or with compensation for the absence of the object.

his view, the cuts and expansions, and especially the prose interludes would be a kind of surrender: the translator does not let the play speak on its own, does not let its language perform and display its modern relevance, but rather wheezes it out herself, her voice drowning out that of the text. But what Pound misses is that these "departures" do not simply constitute H.D.'s hopeless additions, as we have seen already with the stasima. Similarly, the greatest of these "infelicities," the commentary, is demanded by the Euripidean play, fulfilling the function of the chorus now that the stasima have been repurposed.

Before the Parodos (H.D.'s third section), that is, before Euripides's chorus makes its first appearance, H.D. returns to the question of its function, broached already in her "Translator's Note":

> The choros is, as it were, an outside voice, punctuating and stressing moods. It is the play's collective conscience. However, from time to time, speakers of strophe or antistrophe merge, informally, with the actors, or serve to bring contrasting moods. (166)

This statement applies equally to the commentary—a multiplicity of voices that shade for us the translator's choices and highlight moods as though the play itself now needs a new kind of formal chorus to come across, that will help us visualize it, underline its relevance, or read into the characters' states of mind from yet another perspective. In Section X the commentator prefaces the chorus's second stasimon by doing exactly what she reads them as doing: "They breathe bitter and fiery words as if to prophesy the unconscious reaction of their queen. They feel as one, as proud, deserted woman might feel" (200). Indeed, such an identification with Kreousa is present at other points of the commentary as well. For example, in the comments to Section

XII, the third stasimon, the commentator sets the mood for what the chorus and Kreousa—whom we have not seen since before Xouthos received the oracle—will say:

> No such things we can imagine them thinking, ever happen in our holy city. There, intellect, justice, integrity rule, and gods and men step forth to prescribed formula. This sun-god had mixed the vibrations, has committed that most dire of spiritual sins, he has played fast and loose with the dimension of time and space. (222)

This is not commentary, strictly speaking, but a kind of prophesy, a pre-emptive strike as the commentator herself plays "fast and loose with the dimension of time and space"; while Apollo does so by raping and abandoning Kreousa, H.D., we might say, does it by taking hold of this text, of these women and putting herself in their place.

More crucially, however, the chorus are the play's timekeepers. H.D. assigns to them—presumably inspired by Verrall—the function of the modern "curtain;" she sees them, that is, as a means of changing scenes and indicating the passage of time between them.[63] But, contra Verrall, who reads the chorus as a necessary inconvenience that helps overcome one obstacle (the absence of a curtain) but creates many others, she views the "unity of time" that, according to Verrall, the use of the chorus necessitates, not as constricting but as freeing and "modern."[64] In the heading to Section VI the commentator tells us that "Greek unity gives us freedom, it

[63] See his edition of *Ion*, xlviii–xlix.

[64] Verrall speaks of the chorus's "mechanical function as a break," and discusses the effect that their use "had in limiting the means of the dramatist, and specially in limiting the extent of supposed time which the action of the play from first to last could conveniently cover" (xlix). He seeks to dispel the notion that the "unity of time" was a necessary prerequisite for Greek tragedy, claiming that it arose from a Renaissance misunderstanding of Aristotle (liii–lvi), and argues instead that unity of time was a "choice of evils" (lii). Since the chorus's presence interferes with the "more or less natural action of the stage-play," it would strain credulity if long time intervals were allowed; as Verrall explains "offences" would "arise out of the personal identity of the chorus and the identity of the place, desirable in Greek theatres from the simplicity of their scenery" (li). One solution thus was to make both the supposed action and the intervals of the drama shorter, which we see in most, but not all the surviving Greek plays (xlix). For example, Aeschylus's *Eumenides* and *Prometheus Bound*, which do not conform to this model, only prove Verrall's suspicion since in the former the chorus are gods and the latter is to some extent out of time (li).

expands and contracts at will, it is time-in-time and time-out-of-time together, it predicts modern time-estimates" (185). What it does, then, is allow a depth of time in addition to the measured-out length of time; it introduces a fissure in the present moment, discord in the play's linear accord, and thus establishes a kind of indeterminate rhythm. H.D.'s own contraction and expansion of Euripides would, then, seem to be dictated by the play itself, which lingers on the description of paintings, or of a dance, while quickly dispensing with the problematic nature of the false oracle. Later on, she elaborates on the role of the chorus in this:

> the choros is the march-past of hours, their time-values are ultra-modern, accordion-pleated, as it were. They may minimize the passage of time, or in a few stark words, they may convey an impression of hours lapsed. (222)

Similarly, the commentary, for example in the Parodos section (III), moves from the fifth century and a reading of the Euripidean chorus marveling at Apollo's temple to the present within four lines. The multiple voices of the commentary, which are not clearly distinguished in character and which, therefore, (contrary to Gregory's suggestion of a progression) do overlap in the unfolding of the text, weave the palimpsest of the *Ion*'s times, exposing and concealing threads of response and relation both to such "foundational" texts and to the notion of foundation. By aligning with the chorus, H.D. suggests that the "outsiders" are already inside the play; that the play does not exist unless it is being shaped by such voices, by such wheezing.

Like meter, the Euripidean chorus, in H.D.'s reading, *Euripides' Ion*'s commentary, effectively controls time; at the same time, it shows where it fails to be controlled, where it escapes into the immeasurable, the moments when inspiration is lost and with it the poet-translator, and the poet for whom she speaks. One of the questions that this version of the play repeatedly addresses—and does so primarily through Gregory's aesthete voice, which is thus not

so easily dismissible—is poetry's relation to the world, words' actuality or effectiveness. What can words make us see? Are "stark words" really enough? The commentary keeps returning to questions of staging and visualization, (e.g., on pages 159, 165, 166, 190, 192), which, on the surface, seem to be historical performance questions, or philological questions, questions about intention: How was this play put on in the fifth century? How did Euripides want it? If we do not know, what can the translator possibly do? Questions, that is, that to some degree are answered or evaded in every introduction to a translation of a classical play.[65] However, I think that here what we are asked to think about is not only how this play was staged two thousand years ago and how we should go about it now, but, more specifically, what the particular words tell us, what they effect, where they take us. Can we, to paraphrase Woolf, "hope to get the whole fling of a sentence in Greek" *or* in English (55)?

In the commentary to Section IX, in which Xouthos exits from the temple having received the oracle, the commentator continues a train of thought begun before he entered:

> If one departs from strict ritual, entrance, exit, the upraised palms of prayer, the mystic circle of dance, the stately entrance, at most, of a few priests in the background, one's imagination takes one, perhaps, too far. How far? (192)

The commentator seems to answer her own question, when she imagines music breaking across, "a clash as of muffled cymbals from within the temple, as the great doors sewing back and the king, a god-like figure, straight from the inner sanctuary, with the light of a god and the message on his face, steps forth" (192). But she continues her meditation on "stage directions," or rather, their absence. When Xouthos exits the temple "the words of the poet [specifically, the chorus]" simply say "he is here" (192). "What does that signify?," the commentator wonders and offers us a variety of options: Is it a "conventional remark," an answer to a question, or an exclamation?

[65] See, for instance, Wilamowitz and Verrall.

She herself has already decided in favor of the latter: "as the king, born of a son of a son of Zeus, stands in royal robes, his most beautiful ornaments, but lately put on to honour this god, this king of prophecy and music, Apollo. The light of music, song, rejoicing shines from his face" (192). At moments like these, the commentator, H.D. perhaps, uncovers her own process of reconstruction, her choice depicting one among many. How much can language tell us? How much can survive in language—Greek or not—in a poem, in a play? And at the same time, the perhaps more mundane psychological question arises that seeks to reconcile the distant god-like element with the human: What does a person in that situation do? As always, there are numerous options and this time one is not privileged over the others: "Does Xouthos walk slowly down the great steps? Does he stand and look at the boy, for a long time, before he speaks, or does his voice resound instantly, like a trumpet, from the door-way?" (192) Can the words he utters help us decide? How much of a person can words capture?

Section VIII consists of an even shorter speech by Ion, asking the chorus what the oracle has told Xouthos. "We do not know," H.D. tells us, what Ion has been doing while the chorus sang in the previous section. She nonetheless proceeds to precisely list the possibilities: sitting thoughtfully, wandering about, "erect in some rapt pose," "or whether he walked away with the last tragic questioning about the purpose of his divinity" (190). She offers us two different readings or visualizations of this moment—one classical, one romantic—and in this case it is hard to determine her preference. H.D. claims to have decided on her sections on the basis of characters' entrances and exits, but in the process of thinking about this speech, she implies that even that principle of organization is faulty: we do not know in this case if Ion has entered or if he has been on stage all along. If we do not even know that this is an entrance, why does it warrant a special section? It is merely four lines in the Greek by Ion, followed by three from the

chorus before the entrance of Xouthos. H.D. appears to have singled out this speech as a "section" only as a pretext for the lengthy introductory comment on stage directions. We are compelled to consider Ion as a person and his comings and goings through the commentary rather than his speech. As a chorus might, the commentary pursues the line of questioning that he himself chooses not to when he tells Kreousa not to bring up what he wants to forget, namely his own status as a foundling (p. 179 in H.D., line 361 in Euripides). This makes us read Ion's very plain words that follow the commentator's introduction entirely differently:

> and
>
> what does the tripod sing?
>
> what hope
>
> has your king? (191)

When Ion asks the chorus about Xouthos's results here, is he suppressing his own desire to question the tripod about his parentage, or is he curious because he trusts the oracle less now, knowing what he knows about Apollo? Throughout the translation, even in light of the intricate plan that is revealed, H.D. points to the many times when it is not, to the many unknowns, the action of the mind's vision and voice's mysterious speech, which puts her own apparent certainty by the end—and it is only apparent, as we have already seen—in a different light.

H.D.'s pared-down translation of the play's dialogue further suggests that the survival of the drama and the possibility of a relation to antiquity are not taken for granted, but are, like Kreousa's inspiration, a risk. The commentator compares Kreousa's and Ion's manner in their first stichomythia to "that of skilled weavers, throwing and returning the shuttle of contrasting threads" as they respond to teach other in "perfectly matched statements" and produce a "sustained narrative" (174). Though the commentator-translator seems wistful at not being able

to capture this, the choice of "broken, exclamatory or evocative *vers-libre*," which she admits is "the exact antithesis of the original," is telling in the context of her general reversal of the play (174). Each of H.D.'s lines is framed by dashes, which may convey a sense of continuity, as if one character is filling in the other's lines or words, but inevitably also convey a sense of interruption. In a similarly fast-paced dialogue between Xouthos and Ion, in which Xouthos claims him as his son, H.D. seems to present the unraveling of drama, rather than the drama:

Xouthos My own—my beloved—

Ion —own? beloved?

Xouthos —your hand—your face—

Ion —madness—

Xouthos O, I would only touch—

Ion —not this—the priest's head-dress—

Xouthos I find you—

Ion —and this arrow—

Xouthos —and you, me—

Ion —my quiver—my bow—

Xouthos —you attack your own father—

Ion —never—father—

Xouthos —it's true—

Ion —how? (193)

Giving us just the barest bits and pieces that suffice to evoke a psychological reality, it is left up to the imagination to fill in the "action," to see the scene and contribute to it. Being presented with the ancient text even in this translation as a column to be reconstructed, put together again,

we are thus, literally, forced to build modernity, ourselves, upon the remains of antiquity.[66] To use her metaphor from *Bid Me To Live*, she has made this particular trade with the words here; others may have been possible.

Near the beginning of the play, H.D.'s commentary interrupts two highly lyrical passages of Ion's opening speech, the praise of Apollo and his address to the birds, in which he resists Apollo's law, to preemptively offer us a history of Delphi as a place: "Long after the actual daemon was canonically ejected from his immemorial home, a Presence still haunted those weathered stones and spiritually impermeated rocks" to such an extent that it was hard to destroy completely despite the fervor of "fanatic monks" even though in the end only bits and pieces were left "to crumble in frost and sun" (161, 162). She presents this story of destruction before the play has properly started, but after Ion has praised the temple so that we are not allowed to think of Greece or of Delphi atemporally. When the Athenian chorus enters in the next section, spending the Parodos admiring the temple art, we cannot but hear their praise in this light. In undertaking this translation, she aligns herself, as she did in the *Hippolytus Temporizes*, with the archaeologists who managed to reconstruct—importantly for this play—"the ancient treasure-house of the Athenians" at Delphi such that now "sharp Ionic columns start up, shafts of unblemished marble point the way to a return" (162). If they have brought out a sense of Ion standing, column-like, at Delphi, then might she not give him voice? She has already described Ion in these terms, mindful again of the precarity of interpretation: "He may stand," she writes, "in hieratic posture, scarcely moving, uttering frigid remote syllables like a marble statue" (159). This excursus, however, is not entirely unprompted by the text, and again, it is H.D.'s earlier

[66] In contrast, Gregory claims that in her treatment of the stichomythia in the *Ion* H.D. "collapses discrete voices—and the sometimes ironic interplay between them—into an associational single voice" (*Hellenism* 210). Though this is true to some extent, I think that this is done less for the sake of a uniform lyricism and more as an index of the provisionality of our relation to (internal or external) antiquity.

version that offers us a clue. There H.D. ends Ion's laurel song in praise of Apollo with the lines "Helios, may I never cease / this service but for gracious death."[67] She then asks "What is this note of death?" and speculates it has something to do with "the mysteries of the inner worship" (269). In her new version she cuts the couplet completely and instead has her commentary supply the form that that death took for Delphi. Wilamowitz claimed that just by virtue of bringing this up, Ion betrays his desire to stop being a slave. H.D. instead explains what has caused Ion to stop his service and how "he" has nonetheless resumed it. Not as "symptom" but as "inspiration," "the writing continues to write itself or be written" (*Tribute* 51).[68]

[67] In Greek: "λατρεύων μὴ παυσαίμαν, / ἢ παυσαίμαν ἀγαθᾷ μοίρᾳ"; "May I never cease to serve Phoebus in this manner; or, if I do, may it be with good fortune" (lines 153–54).
[68] In *Tribute*, H.D. writes, making an apparent concession to Freud, "symptom or inspiration," but, as I have shown, her *Ion* is an argument for the latter.

"From the Dawn Blaze to Sunset":

The Languages of the Image

Bending in white, even order,
So glorious was King Wan,
Coherent, splendid and reverent
In his comings to rest, in his bournes.
(Ezra Pound, *The Great Digest*)

"The rest is perforce impressions and opinion, mine and those of Mr. Bennington's camera. And Mr. Bennington's camera has the better of me, for it gives the subject as if ready to move and to speak, whereas I can give but diminished memories of past speech and action" (*GB* 38). The man fighting with the camera is Ezra Pound, the 'subject' the dead sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska—fleeting now that he is dead, but also fleeing since his and Pound's first meeting when he "disappeared like a Greek god in a vision" (*GB* 44). Does Pound believe what he seems to be saying in this statement, namely that a photograph "gives" better than writing? Is reality or the subject for Pound always fleeing the recording eye/I? And why is it Greece, a *Greek* god that becomes synonymous with such elusiveness? In this chapter I trace the development of Pound's photo-graphy and its relation to Greece, beginning with the fiery chambers of his early poetry and culminating in the blazingly coherent splendour of his Noh "version" of Sophokles' *Women of Trachis*. Exploring the electrical currents his (writing) camera registering and those it is evading, I will argue that Pound's reconfiguration of Sophocles's *Trachiniae* as a Noh play is the realization of the dream of the long Imagist poem that coheres (first articulated in 1916), enabling Pound to return to the writing of *The Cantos*.

Current I: Imaging the Limbs of Osiris

Pound's tentative experiments with photography would seem to disprove the implications of the citation I began with. Assisted by the photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn, Pound invents the "vortescope, a simple device which frees the camera from reality and lets one take Picasso direct from nature" (letter to John Quinn, cited in Tiffany 31). Photography's presumed mimeticism, its ability to "give" better, is thus immediately discredited as uninteresting, but only for the sake of a deeper realism, as Pound desires an imprint of nature as vortex, as cubism. Pound mistrusts conventional photography, disbelieving its claim that to represent what is in front of the camera—especially when the subject is himself. As Daniel Tiffany asserts, though Pound considered all photographs of himself unreliable, he preferred the most mediated over the more "realistic" ones; a vortograph or a photograph of the bust Gaudier-Brzeska had made of him represented him better, he thought, than either a standard photographic portrait or a photograph of a painted portrait (34). What interests Pound in photography, we might surmise, is its ability to show what could not be seen, images "bordering the visible"; fascinated by the negative and revelatory images of X-rays, he often signed his name as X-Ra (*LE* 154; Tiffany 278). In the contest with Mr. Bennington's camera, Pound claims that "[t]o give the man as I knew him" (and not as a ghost), there is "no method wherein I can be more faithful than to give the facts of that acquaintance, in their order, as nearly as I can remember them" (*GB* 44). However, rather than arranging his narrative and his documents in a chronological order, as we might expect, Pound produces, in Marjorie Perloff's words, "an 'incoherent' portrait of the artist" as an "assemblage of fragments that we must piece together" as we would a Cubist or Futurist portrait (49). Gaudier emerges more like himself because Pound develops him using his sculptural principles.

It is also the poet's business, however, to deal in images since the image is, according to Pound, the poet's "pigment," what enables the poet to write (*GB* 86). Yet as we have seen in the first chapter, contrary to what the word suggests, the Poundian image is not necessarily visual, nor empirical at all, but instead, photographic. As critics have noted, all of Pound's formulas for or definitions of the Image are resistant to vision: it is an algebraic equation, "an intellectual and emotional complex at an instant of time" (*LE* 4), or "a radiant node or cluster," a "VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" (*GB* 92). Divorced from rigorous empiricism, "[a]n *image*, in our sense, is real because we know it directly" either through conception or perception. The reality discovered as image, however, is not static or single, but the precise instant of transformation. Pound then is attempting to deal with a problem identified by the philosopher, and indirect precursors of Imagisme, Henri Bergson: how to perceive and record change, how to produce a photograph(y) of change—a photograph of the appearing or disappearing of a god.[1] If, as Pound writes apropos of his famous "In A Station of The Metro," the image is the moment "when a thing outward and objective [faces in the crowd, for instance] transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective [faces in the crowd becoming apparitions and then petals on a wet, black bough]," that image is also a montaged photograph, if not a movie still (*GB* 89).

To develop the image as a photographic collage/montage, the re-membering poet gathering the limbs of Osiris must also turn himself into a selective camera, into a simultaneously passive and active recording and transmitting machine: "Man is—the sensitive

[1] We mustn't forget that Pound claims a precedent for Imagisme in the "forgotten School of Images" of T.E. Hulme, the major proponent of Henri Bergson's philosophy in England in the years before the First World War. Pound's ideas about the role of memory in the construction of the image may owe something to Bergson's belief that perception demands an effort of memory, without which, it is "blind," it disappears. See also Bergson on the fugitivity of the image (92–93).

part of him—a mechanism, for the purposes of our further discussion, a mechanism rather like an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc." (*SR* 92). For Pound "the best of knowledge is 'in the air', or if not the best, at least the leaven"; the "more poetic" minds are then able to register it and "affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed of the earth" (*SP* 23; *SR* 93). In fact, according to Pound, "[t]he best artist is the man whose machinery can stand the highest voltage [emotion restrained and channeled into writing]. The better the machinery, the more precise, the stronger, the more exact will be the record of the voltage and of the various currents which have passed through it"; what the mysterious "currents" that are distinct from the emotion that goes into creating the Image, we do not know (*SP* 376). An appropriate parallel for such sensitive and translational poetic minds is the "wireless telegraph receiver" since "[i]n the telegraph we have a charged surface . . . attracting to it, or registering movements in the invisible ether" (*SR* 93). Though invisible, these registered movements, which Pound also calls luminous, "interpreting details," "govern knowledge as a switchboard governs an electric circuit" (*SP* 23). They are the invisible light that allows us to see (technologically).

The imagiste machine-man then cannot describe in the conventional sense, but instead does exactly what Pound did in producing the 'movement': (s)he names and by naming brings a new (old) world, or a new (old) reality to light. Nothing is new, but it is made new; the "real" is not there, but is revived. Though Pound claims that "[t]he artist seeks out the luminous detail and presents it" without commenting, Jean-Michel Rabaté clarifies that "presenting" does not mean "render[ing] the illusion of a scene taking place," "'reproduc[ing] reality,' as in a mirror-image" (*SP* 23; Rabaté 174). In citing a reality-to-be-discovered, Pound produces not reference, as Rabaté puts it, but a *referance* verging on reverence (175). The splendors of paradise may be ineffable, Pound had written in 1912, but "by naming over all the most beautiful things we know

we may draw back upon the mind some vestige of the heavenly splendor" (*SR* 96). This naming over is exactly what Pound then enacts in his pre-Imagiste 1912 poem "The Alchemist." Subtitled "Chant for the Transmutation of Metals," the poem is an incantatory recitation of the names of mythical and literary female figures that the poet-alchemist conjures "Out of Erebus" to help him transform the base material of words into the gold standard of poetry (*P/T* 566). As the poem's two refrains, "Remember this fire" and "Quiet this metal," tell us, however, the transmutation into gold involves first recording or remembering one's engagement with the past while burning (through) it, and then silencing its voice. In the poem "Histrion" after all the "flame" represents to the "Masters of the Soul" (in Pound's case Villon and Dante) who "for a space" "live on" in the rest of us, while we "cease . . . from all being for the time" (*P/T* 80). In a purgatorial swerve of Bloomian askesis,[2] the poet would have to bring down the revered gold of the father(s) to the status of a base metal in order to transmute it into his own gold instead of miming its perfection. Or, in the language of Imagisme, the imagiste poet would have to purge through fire his/her received idiom and "the external original" even as he is reproducing it.

The image, we recall, is also, according to another definition, "the word beyond formulated language" (*GB* 88). Though Pound does want to "give people new eyes," Imagisme does not simply call for a defamiliarization of everyday language, similar to that advocated by the Russian formalists, but for an impossibility: for language to say what cannot be said, to visualize or ex-pli-cate an invisible image (*GB* 85).[3] Such a deployment of language against itself is exemplified in Pound's composition, or rather reduction, of the formerly thirty-line long "In a Station of the Metro" (see pp. 59-60 above).

[2] In his seminal work *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom defines askesis as a "movement of self-purgation" in which the poet "yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor" (15).
[3] As Joseph Riddel puts it, "Visualization, the exteriorization of force into form, is not simply a movement from invisible to visible, but is ex-pli-cative, an unfolding" (199).

Current II: God-Dancing the Image

I have already outlined in the first chapter the connection between Pound's imagiste theories and the Noh ("[i]n the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image" (*GB* 94). It is, like Imagisme, "photographic" in its relation to reality, "an art of splendid posture, of dancing and chanting, and of acting that is not mimetic" (*P/T* 336). The best Noh plays are also, however, "ghost-plays"— though Pound chooses to dismiss this fact for the sake of the "poetry"[4]— that stage a return of a wronged or unquiet spirit to the world. In *Tamura*, a play dealing with purification that is perhaps "a ceremonial play for the Temple founded by Tamura, or even less exactly a ghost play," the Boy (who is Tamura in disguise) says: "If you want to discover my name, you must . . . see to what I return" (*P/T* 379, 381). When the wandering priest does service beneath the full moon and Tamura appears—in the Noh spirits always appear in their true guise at night— it is because "That is a very blessed scripture. Just because you have droned it over, I am able to come here and speak with the traveller. This is the blessing of Kwannon" (*P/T* 381). Clearly Pound, whose "pleasurable work" in this volume has been to "arrang[e] beauty into the words" transcribed by Fenollosa, seems to also have arranged for our transport to his alchemical setting of Provence and its heavenly splendour. To Pound's surprising surprise, by merely naming the ghosts of the separated lovers,[5] the waki in *Kayoi Komachi* challenges them to reproduce for him in the form of a dance a condensed image of their story, as if to prove that their names are right,

[4] In a note to the play *Suma Genji*, whose "suspense" is that of "waiting for a supernatural manifestation—which comes," Pound writes that "If the Japanese authors had not combined the psychology of such matters with what is to me a very fine sort of poetry, I would not bother about it" (*P/T* 359)

[5] Pound comments: "This apparently trivial speech of the WAKI's arrests them. It is most interesting in view of the "new" doctrine of the suggestibility or hypnotizability of ghosts. The WAKI says merely: Are you Ono no Komachi? And you, Shosho? Did you court her a hundred nights? Can you show this?" (*P/T* 351)

which eventually leads to their reconciliation. Shosho, dropping his ghostly "idée fixe,"[6] namely his resistance to Buddhism that kept the lovers apart, appears "in a garment with many folds" and "presumably a light shows in his spirit" (*P/T* 353). A moving composite photograph brings forth (presumably) the holy light.

The "Unifying Images" that Pound singles out in the Noh are, however, not the ghost visions; in fact as Ursula Shioji points out, they are "not conspicuously positioned or emphasized" (248). That is why Pound claims that "[o]ne must build out of their indefiniteness a definite image" (*P/T* 368). The image turns out to be, once again, not static and one-dimensional, not simply there to be recorded, but a montage. In *Sotoba Komachi*, the play preceding *Kayoi Komachi*, the ghost of Komachi appears as an old woman, symbolized and doubled by the *sotoba*, the stump on which she sits. She is a "ruin" though she was a "bright flower" and like her, the *sotoba*, though it used to be a "carved wooden devotional stick, or shrine" no longer has letters on it that would betray its identity and holy function (*P/T* 345-46). The image, then, connects illegibility to an unappeased ghost since the cause of Komachi's demise is the ignored Shosho whose "ghost is about me, driving me on with the madness" (*P/T* 346). As the next play tells us, recovering the name of the Buddha is enough to redress all.

The latent Noh image may wait to be uncovered, but it too only appears beyond formulated language according to Pound. The words "are themselves but half shadows" and become intelligible "if, as a friend says, 'you read them all the time as though you were listening to music'" (*P/T* 336). The word-musical element of the Noh brings it closer firstly to the

[6] In his introduction to the play, Pound had noted that "[t]he crux of the play is that Shosho would not accept Buddhism, and thus his spirit and Ono's are kept apart. There is nothing like a ghost for holding to an idée fixe" (*P/T* 349). Pound's insistent (and usually facetious) recurrence to the language of psychoanalysis—as evidenced also by his definition of the image as a "complex"— or to situations where such a language appears useful, belies of course the Imagiste predilection for "intellectual vision," and poetry that is "harder and saner" and "as much like granite as it can be" (*LE* 12).

troubadour poetry that Pound so admired—and whose photographic qualities we have already seen—but also to Greek. On the one hand, the eighth-century Japanese court game and Noh precursor of "listening to incense," of creating a story, an image based on a smell, "was a refinement in barbarous times, comparable to the art of polyphonic rhyme," while on the other, "in the languages known to me . . . the maximum of **melopoeia** is reached in Greek"(*P/T* 336; *ABCR* 29). Pound time and again warns us not to think of the Noh plays as incomplete though they might seem that way; what we are missing is the music and dance—the image— that the words both create and accompany.[7] What we are missing, because we are not listening to it in Japanese and watching it performed, is in fact the god. Fenollosa points out that the Japanese Noh, like the ancient Greek theater, originated in the religious rites and dances performed during Shinto god and Dionysian festivals respectively; he notes, nonetheless, that in the Greek plays "the chorus danced, and the god was represented by an altar" while "[i]n Japan the god danced alone" (*P/T* 393). The God-dance "perpetuated the memory" of the initial apparition of the spirit in a particular place. Unlike H.D., who in her *Ion* materializes only one god, leaving the other, Apollo, to echo ambiguously throughout her text "represented" by his rhythms, Pound in his *Women of Trachis* dramatizes his initial Noh apparition; unlike H.D., who shows her origin and original, the source of her inspiration to be always at a distance, always just beyond grasp, Pound seeks to set his origins straight (for "if the root be in confusion, nothing will be well governed," according to one his favorite Confucian precepts), attempting to re-found his long poem on the brilliant coherent image of Herakles—an image that establishes the chain of paternity and of paternal law that Pound's *Elektra* did not (*P/T* 619).

[7] "When a text seems to 'go off into nothing' at the end, the reader must remember that the vagueness or paleness of words is made good by the emotion of the final dance," Pound writes and claims that therein lies the "Unity of the Image" (*P/T* 360).

Current III: Electrifying Herakles

After Pound is forced to return to the U.S. in 1945, having composed the Pisan Cantos—a kind of *Trauerarbeit* for Mussolini and for his own poem, whose fate had become so tied to Mussolini—he does not publish any poetry of his own until 1955, but instead only translates, dividing his time between East and West, Confucius and Greek tragedy. Partly inspired by reading his version of the Fenollosa Noh plays for the new edition of *Translations* in 1953, and by the fact that his *Cathay* had been translated into Modern Greek by Zesimos Lorentzatos in 1950, Pound decides to translate Sophokles's *Trachiniae* as a Noh play.[8] The noted classicist D.S. Carne-Ross allows that Pound's version is "of the greatest interest" as a "workshop study of the formal and stylistic problems Greek tragedy poses for translation," but maintains that its "vagaries" are "for the most part unilluminating, since they are not governed by any clear grasp of the statement the play is making" (253).[9] This may be true; that is, Pound may not have been interested in the statement that the play has been thought to make. But, much like H.D.'s *Ion* hatches a different line of reading out of Euripides's play, so Pound hatches not simply a Noh play out of this Greek tragedy, but one whose unfolding is dictated by Confucian precepts: sincerity (defined as "the precise definition of the word") leading to coherence ("the proper man's words must cohere to things, correspond to them (exactly) and no more fuss about it"), filial piety ("Filial piety is shown in the rectitude and precision wherewith one executes the will and completes the work of one's forebears") which also implies being an "unwobbling pivot" ("the man of breed, in whom speaks the voice of his forebears, harmonizes these energies with

[8] See Reck 145–55.
[9] In contrast, Hugh Kenner argues that in Pound's *Trachiniae* "The inter lexicographic reverence that normally kills Greek plays in English does not touch these pages thanks to that governing vision. Vision controls the details like a magnetic field, turning, for instance, *lampra* into "splendour" and supplying, out of hints in the Greek words, the "blazing pyre" on which dawn consumes night" (*Pound Era* 526).

no loss of his own direction; he stands firm in the middle of what whirls without leaning on anything either to one side or the other") (*P/T* 615, 712, 645, 638).

If light is born of resistance and if in Pound's reading of Provencal poetry, that resistance was equivalent to the living conditions in Provence, then *Women of Trachis*, as a product of double resistance ought to give double the light. Pound's own restrained living condition in St. Elizabeths, coupled with his problematic relationship with the mother tongue, in whose bosom Pound had not found himself for many years, had already caused the electric circuit to falter (*SR* 97). As we saw in Chapter 4, Sophokles's *Elektra*, attempted in 1949, was shoved into a drawer for unknown reasons; partly responsible, we might surmise, was the Greek melopoeia. Moved to translation as an allegorical discourse in which to continue the mourning of the Pisan Cantos, Pound simultaneously refuses to translate, so that mourning the betrayed dead father becomes, on the linguistic level, the equivalent of burying the mother (tongue). Though the play ends with the promise of the end of the curse of the Atreidae and with the triumph of Agamemnon's "σπέρμα," Pound has "CLUT's" bloody bier appear in the back of the stage, to suggest that the τεκοῦσα/τοκοῦσα Klytemnestra might still give birth to more ills. Pound's non-monolingual nationalism was perhaps too multilingual or not diacritic enough; the play's closing image contradicts what Pound thought was its key phrase ("Must we add cowardice to all this filth/ills") and expresses the translator's concern about the force and the stroke of his translation and his work overall.

The Women of Trachis is for Pound the way out and towards a successful translation of "electricity"—a translation that would translate precisely the mutation of something dead into energy. Unlike the multilingual jumble of *Elektra*, Greek in the *Women of Trachis* is wielded with control, setting the tone when it appears, and balanced by the Confucian values that Pound

sees as underwriting the play (a single line of Italian and another of French are slipped in for good measure). Sophokles's *Trachiniae*, claims Pound in his introductory note to the play, is "nearest the original form of the God-dance"; hence his decision to turn Fenollosa's genealogical simile into a metaphor, a Greek-Japanese ideogram of (commemorated) divine appearance (*P/T* 1066). The Unifying Image is fire; as Pound writes in Canto 87, the play is "shaped from φλογιζόμενον" (591). The play is framed and given an overarching form by two flashes of light: a pyre in the opening chorus and the pyre on which Herakles is burned at the end. Both refer to, for Pound, the intellectual pyre of what he called this play's "key phrase": "Ταῦτ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει" (line 1174), "What splendour it all coheres" (*P/T* 1107). The way to write, to produce the image seems to be again by not writing, by going against "formulated language"—as in the case of *Elektra*, the way to translate was by not translating. It is to the registration, transmission, and manifestation of such an electrified shade that Pound's poetic resources through *Women of Trachis* will be devoted. In the moment of Herakles's transformation into a god, all the strands of Pound's thinking come together: the paternal metals, the critical nationalist image, the citation of the law, writing leading to light, writing of and by light. The photograph of Pound's corpus have been finally developed.

The first Noh transformation in the play is the elevation of the characters into types, into the allegorical embodiments of natural forces. Daianeira becomes "The Day's Air" aka "Daysair" and is further characterized as the daughter of Oineus, wine; Herakles is the "Solar vitality" and is given a surname, Zeuson, while Iole, the mistress, is "Tomorrow"—only the son Hyllos is not given a new name, suggesting perhaps that he is the only one with whom one (we, Pound) could identify. In this way, Pound manages to prefigure the play and its ending even for us, who unlike the Greek audience of Sophokles as well as the Japanese audience of the Noh, are

not in the know.[10] As the day's air slowly turns into the night's air, so the solar vitality is perceived as decreasing, though it is known to be ever-present to a transglobal eye. The play, like almost all tragedies, takes place in twenty-four hours and this particular play, especially in Pound's version, emphasizes it; so Pound for instance, adds a character of darkness, to balance the two elements of day, between whose flashes of light the play unfolds. The persona of Akheloös, the river who appears in Daysair's first speech and in a later chorus song, doubtlessly contributes to the play's Noh atmosphere; he is called "a river, symbol of the power of damp and darkness, triform as water, cloud and rain" (*P/T* 1066). We thus have on stage not only water, air, and fire, but also the three elements always symbolically present on the Noh stage as "real little pine trees": earth (Akheloös), man (Daysair), and god (Herakles), to which Pound adds time (Tomorrow) (*P/T* 367).

At the same time this name list is Pound's first step towards a Confucian rectification of names, towards sincerity as "clear definitions" (*P/T* 651). Akheloös, for example, though named does not appear; rather, as we will see, appears in his difficulty to appear and is thus made to embody his obscurity. He exists not for the spectator, but for the reader. Pound's list of *personae dramatis* provides us not only with Noh-like characters, but also with a different way to read names, with a manual perhaps of name-reading. If we ask ourselves why it is necessary for Pound to add Herakles's patronym, we will see in it not only an anagram of what the Greek name might have been (the genitive of Ζεύς is Ζηνός especially when used by poets), but also that in "Zeuson," father and son share the umbilical *s*, the son is part of Zeus. Nonetheless, Herakles bears the name of his sworn enemy who unknowingly nursed him: the name and glory (κλέος) of Hera. In the way Pound presents him, however, we have Hera-Zeus, as though

[1010] Fenollosa and Pound repeatedly draw this particular connection between Greek and Japanese theater: "The art of allusion, or this love of allusion in art, is at the root of the Noh. These plays . . . were made only . . . for those trained to catch the allusion." (*P/T* 336).

Herakles is the origin and focal point of the twelve gods, standing in for all of them.[11] Similar to H.D.'s heightening of the praise of the gods, especially Apollo, and diminishing of Euripides's doubts, Pound here slowly builds up to the image of divine revelation through a manipulation of the son and father names, Pound. When the Chorus narrates Herakles's fight with Akheloös for Daysair, Pound writes "HE is God's Son" (*P/T* 1084), while the Greek only refers to him as a son of Zeus ("παῖς Διός" [line 513]). Later, when Daysair sends the messenger Likhas off to Herakles, the chorus looking forward to his return, exclaims: "Comes now the God, Alkmene's son" (*P/T* 1089). In Greek he is not the God, but simply the son of Zeus and Alkmene ("Ὁ γὰρ Διός, Ἀλκμήνας κόρος" [line 644]).[12] In the retained name Hyllos, then, we may come to see or rather hear an abridged, lesser version of his father. Finally, we might also wonder why Pound suppressed the etymological meaning of *Deianeira*, namely "killer-of-men," which, for the Greek audience would have been another allusion to be caught, referring to her impending accidental murder of Herakles. But if, in Pound's reading, what she kills is not a man but a god and, as such, she doesn't even quite kill him, such a name would be not only imprecise, but inaccurate.

I want to go through several key passages that show the development of the Heraklean photograph, that bring light and writing together and culminate in Herakles's divine revelation. Though it is the night during which the Noh spirits and gods always appear that has given birth

[11] As Felix Budelmann points out, Zeus has many personae in the *Trachiniae*; he hides behind "daimon" and is usually addressed in one of his special functions, so much so that it would be difficult for the spectators to know that it is a single god that is always evoked even though he has many defining characteristics (158). Nonetheless, in this way, Zeus is made more specific and easier to grasp, is brought closer (158). Only Herakles addresses Zeus as Zeus, as a totality, not a single quality that would help get his wish fulfilled. His first words are, after all "o Zeu" (line 983); we cannot tell which persona he might be addressing. When he calls Zeus a healer (lines 1000–3), moreover, he does so much less explicitly than other characters. It is thus implied that he may know more about Zeus.

[12] The Christian overtones are of course hard to avoid; this may be part of the play's "modernization," of Pound's efforts to make the play relevant. At the same time, like that of Malatesta when building his supposedly Christian *tempio*, Pound's "pagan" agenda remains clear.

to this play, Pound writes over this origin in order to assert the possibility of their appearance in the light, as we see in the first choral song (and the first flash):

> PHOEBUS, Phoebus, ere thou slay
> and lay flaked Night upon her blazing pyre,
> Say, ere the last star-shimmer is run:
> Where lies Alkmene's son, apart from me?
> Aye, thou art keen, as is the lightning blaze,
> Land ways, sea ways,
> in these some slit hath he
> found to escape thy scrutiny? (*P/T* 1070)

In Pound, it is the sun/Phoebus ("Ἅλιον" [line 96]) who slays the night; in Greek, it is the night that gives birth to the flaming ("φλογιζόμενον") sun and then lulls him to sleep. "Τίκτει" (line 95) is a verb Pound intentionally avoids, as he does in the *Elektra*, since it is the origin of "τόκος" '(financial) interest'. Moreover, in Greek the sun is not personified/deified to the same degree as in Pound; though it is called upon twice, it is not given a name. Pound transforms the sun into a divine warrior, taking his cue from the passive participle "ἐναριζομένα," which in Greek characterizes the night as a slain foe, stripped of her arms (line 94). By presenting Phoebus as being on the attack, ready to come and strip or flake the night—the Noh night?— of her "star-shimmer" (which reads like an anagram of "ἐναριζομένα"), Pound adds a temporal element and a sense of urgency to a Greek choral song that seems to merely state universal facts (the night, dying, gives birth to the sun, but then also puts him to sleep). In this way he forcefully sets into motion his reading of the play, suggesting that a process is about to begin. It will end

essentially when Herakles becomes Phoebus, when he comes to visibly embody the solar vitality that is here associated with Apollo.

Pound, moreover, gives up on the triply brilliant phrase "λαμπρᾷ στεροπᾷ φλεγέθων" (line 99) to bring in another god, namely Zeus, the father whom "Alkmene's son" will eventually come to resemble. Had he translated the Greek half-line literally as "shining/ blazing with the bright flash (of lightning)," the image would have clearly been that of the sun. Had he translated "λαμπρᾷ" as "splendid," he would have created an internal subject rhyme with the play's triumphant final image, but he would not have set up a correspondence between Herakles and Zeus; he would not have given us a lens through which to view that final image. Pound wants to inscribe in this first flash the future development of the photograph. Though "keen" now—in the word's original sense of 'brave, bold'— Herakles will become a lightning blaze: a burnt hero, but also a hero-turned-god. We might even discern the same development already figured between the two pyres in this very chorus. Though in Greek both images of fire refer to the sun, in Pound we move from the pyre on which the body of the vanquished night is burned ("her blazing pyre") to the intellectual lightning pyre of the all-seeing sun. In keeping with his emphasis on evidence (to which I will return below, p. 397ff.) throughout the play, Pound describes the sun not as having the best sight ("κρατιστεὺων κατ' ὄμμα" [line 101]), but as scrutinizing. The question raised is whether there might be a place, a slit (not there in Sophokles) that cannot be seen by sun, something that the detecting intellect cannot read. Pound wants to answer in the negative.

When then the messenger announces Herakles's impending return, the dominant images from the first choral song resurface: "You'll soon see him, the man you want, / crowned with Victory. He's looking splendid" (*P/T* 1072). Though Pound usually condenses the Greek, here he

pleonastically adds on the messenger's last sentence, slowly developing the ideogram of the (intellectually) bright and burning warrior meant to be looked at. Daysair asks the chorus to "[t]une up" because she "[n]ever thought [she] would see it"— though of course she has seen nothing yet—and the second choral song begins:

APOLLO

and Artemis, analolu

Artemis,

Analolu,

Sun-bright Apollo, Saviour Apollo

analolu,

Artemis,

Sylvan Artemis,

Swift-arrowed Artemis, analolu

By the hearth-stone

brides to be

Shout in male company:

APOLLO EUPHARETRON.

Sylvan Artemis,

torch-lit Artemis

With thy Ortygian girls,

Analolu

Artemis,

Io Zagreus,

Join now, join with us

when the great stag is slain,

Lord of hearts, Artemis,

Ivied Zagreus,

Analolu,

Dancing maid and man,

Lady or Bacchanal

dancing toe to toe

By night

By light shall show

analolu

Paian. (*P/T* 1073)

This is the most striking and unusual of Pound's choruses in the play since it is spaced out like a canto; the Greek words intervene, but again as they do in the *Cantos*, rather than in *Elektra*. At the same time, it resembles not only the litany of names in "Alchemist" but also the exorcism we find in the Noh play "Awoi No Uye," where the embodied evil spirit of a wife's jealousy is vanquished by incomprehensible "scripture."[13] Immediately we are asked to find or choose a way to read, perhaps as though we were listening to music. Can we hear "pain" or "Pan" in "Paian"? What do we do with "Io Zagreus" in this multilingual text? Is it the Italian "I," which

[13]"Awoi No Uye" is a confusing play, left in fragments by Fenollosa and reassembled by Pound. A jealous wife on her deathbed is represented by a red folded kimono while her personified jealousy initially takes on the persona of one of her rivals and then of an evil spirit, a hannya, its own demonic form. When the apparition—still in its beautiful version— calls herself Princess Rokujo, Pound adds a footnote, claiming that "As in Western folk-lore, demons often appear in some splendid disguise" (*P/T* 445)! The play's dance takes place when the Hannya and the exorcist have a face-off, each calling on opposing spirits. The chorus intervenes with a long list of what could be names ("Fudo Miowo / Namaku Samanda Basarada!/ Senda Makaroshana/ Sowataya/ Wun tarata Kamman,/ Choga Sessha Tokudai Chiye/ Chiga Shinja Sokushin Jobutsu"), to which the Hannya responds "O terrible names of the spirits. This is my last time. I cannot return here again" (*P/T* 449). The chorus concludes the play with the following comment: "By hearing the scripture the evil spirit is melted. Bosatsu came hither" (*P/T* 449).

would imply that Zagreus is appearing or that the chorus is identifying with him? Is it a cry? What is "analolu"?

Seemingly continuing its previous song, the chorus begins with an adulation of Phoebus-turned-Apollo in his sun-brightness. Pound, however, is also marking time; Apollo has now come, the time of "ere" has passed, as even the last few lines might suggest, where "light" not only supplements but also corrects "night." Though Apollo and Artemis are the presumed addressees of this paean (as the gods of the sun and the moon respectively), they are only named once in the Greek; Apollo's sun-god qualities are, moreover, not mentioned. It is instead Artemis who is said to be "ἀμφίπυρον" (line 214), with fire at each end, holding a torch in each hand, "torch-lit" in Pound—torch-lit by the sun about to kill her perhaps. A crucial subtext for this choral song that also provides us with a guide for reading it is Pound's fourth canto. The first canto to be completed, it was also the first canto to cohere, to produce an Image through the newly-discovered ideogrammatic method, or, as the canto puts it, the "method" of "ply over ply" (15).[14] As the chorus tunes itself up and expresses Daysair's joy (soon to disappear), so Pound revives and commemorates his own "joy" (by now disappeared); he brings in a snapshot of what he too had expected to come, splendid. The Image in Canto 4 is metamorphosis, the liminal moment of dawning, of things, cities coming into being—metamorphosis, built out of the themes of cannibalism and love intertwined. The canto's mode is repetition, reflected on every level: semantically, in each myth of cannibalism it presents; intertextually, as an Ovid tale is shown to turn into an event in a troubadour *vida*; and formally, in almost every line, including one whose themes are echoed here: "Bathing the body of nymphs, of nymphs, and Diana, / Nymphs, white-

[14] On the importance of Canto 4 and its transitional nature, see Bush 197–205. See also Froula's extended study of Canto 4; she notes that the earliest draft of the canto was typed on the versos of announcements of Japanese dancer Itô's program of dancing of October 28 and December 2 and 9, 1915. This early version of the canto includes many references to Japanese subjects (73ff.).

gathered about her, and the air, air, / Shaking, air alight with the goddess" (14). The question then becomes whether the repetition is foregrounded in order to show how one can and will eventually break out of it, or whether one is stuck in an obsessive-compulsive pattern.

The stuttered word in our choral song, besides the divine names, is of course "analolu," a variation of the word with which the Greek begins: "Ἀνολολύξεται" (line 205). Pound does not translate it, partly because what it means is what he performs: crying aloud with joy.[15] Its presence, together with the other Greek we are given, "EUPHARETRON" (literally, 'with good arrows'), replicates the sonic key of the Greek text: *l* and *r* are also echoed in "English" in Apollo and Artemis, aurally suggesting Herakles perhaps. Pound thus (re)produces the existence of Greek sound patterns by lexical repetition; in fact, his lexical choices throughout the play tend to be motivated by this kind of photographic desire, according to which the Greek would leave an imprint, an x-ray of its consonantal backbone, in his English text.[16] Pound's frequent archaisms also serve the same purpose. Though clearly at odds with his declared intention to make his translations sound as if actual people were speaking them, it nonetheless accomplishes two other purposes. Firstly, it instates a distance, which is necessary for the rigorously non-mimetic Noh, and secondly, it allows Pound to create long vowels (in words like "art," "ere," "thou," "thy," "hath," and even "keen" in the first choral song, or "thy," "maid," and "lord" here) and mirror their preponderance (and importance) in the Greek. He photographs then and stays

[15] Pound might also be fragmenting, stuttering and slightly altering this word here (instead of "anololu" he cuts it to "analolu") because it is particularly charged. It reappears in noun form in the very beginning of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (line 27) to signify the messenger's cry intended to rouse Klytemnestra as soon as he has seen the light, the "λαμπάδα" that announces Agamemnon's imminent return; Pound, keeping the sound, translates it as "hullabaloo" (Gallup 119). Moreover, though the verb is **"**usually expressive of joy or hope, in prayer or sacrifice" according to Sir Richard Jebb, it "denotes a cry of horror" in Sophokles's *Elektra*. It is the verb used by the tutor for the crowd's response the moment when Orestes supposedly falls off his chariot and dies (line 750). "Ἀνολολύζω" seems to be the deceptive word par excellence; joyous when tragedy is about to follow the hero's return, and horrified at the hero's fake non-return.

[16] We saw earlier, for instance, the conversion of "ἐναριζομένα" into "star-shimmer. Later on, when Hyllos is describing Herakles'w sacrifices to Zeus and mentions that he is "going on to kill the whole hundred, hecatomb" (*P/T* 1093), his use of the word "he**ca**t**om**b" is pleonastic; it isn't there, however, merely to give us an echo of the Greek "hundred" "ἑκατὸν," but also to x-ray "βοσ**κή**ματα" (line 762), animals.

with the negative, as his meter suggests; though the Greek is almost entirely iambic, Pound's lines shift between iambs and trochees, with the latter predominating.

It is this kind of translation, translation as x-ray, that then brings Zagreus into the picture. Quite significantly in the context of this choral song, but also of Canto 4, Zagreus was the son of Zeus by Persephone; though Zeus had given him his lightning bolts, Zagreus was eventually slain and dismembered by the Titans. His immortal heart nevertheless survived and he was eventually reborn, either directly borne by Zeus or through Semele, as Iacchus/Dionysus. Though the word "βακχίαν" (line 220) appears in Greek (and Pound translates it by "Bacchanals"), Zagreus is not mentioned. Towards the end of this chorus, however, we have the lines: "Ἰὼ ἰὼ Παιάν· ἴδ' , ὦ φίλα γύναι. / τάδ' ἀντίπρῳρα δή σοι / βλέπειν πάρεστ' ἐναργῆ" (222-24). If we read as though we were listening to music, Pound's "io" is presumably the Greek exclamation "ἰὼ" and his "Za**gr**eus" must be the Greek "ἐνα**ργ**ῆ," which means, "visible, palpable, in bodily form." What assumes bodily form in Pound though, what materializes is the very sound of the word, as "Zagreus" here forges a link between this translation, the Noh God-dance, the first successful canto, and the myth of Osiris, whose limbs or luminous details Pound was gathering forty years before. The hope is that out of dismemberment may come regeneration, coherence, not in the form of Bacchus in this case, but in the form of another son of Zeus; that repetition and repeated invocation is not a pointless pleasure in speaking nor a compulsion to stutter, but is intended to actually bring about the transmutation of word (ἐναργῆ) into god. A hope that Zagreus will appear and say "Io" not at night, but in the light, and that Greek tragedy will return to its origin in Dionysian dance; that "the proper man's words" will "cohere to things, correspond to them (exactly) and no more fuss about it" (*P/T* 712).

Before we can get the complete, layered, citational image of Herakles, however, his fortune is heralded; almost all the elements of his dying are "seen" or cited, brought to the fore in Hyllos's speech to Daysair and the chorus. Hyllos details the transformation of the sacrificial fire lit by Herakles at Zeus's altar into the fire lighting Herakles from the inside, so that when we do get the image and Herakles's words, it will be like we have seen it before. Directly quoting the paternal injunction, in Sophokles and in Pound, Hyllos transmits his father's desire to not be seen by any mortal, to be placed in a dark room of sorts, where he can die, even as Hyllos's vivid description hints towards the eventual development of the photograph:

> Made the prayer, but
>
> as the flame went up from the Holy Orgy
>
> bloody and from the fat oak logs,
>
> sweat broke from his skin,
>
> the shirt stuck to him, like it was glued,
>
> shrinking in on all of his joints
>
> as if made by someone who knew how to do it.
>
> Gnawing into his bones, it seemed to be
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Then with his eyes screwed up from the smoke
>
> that came out of him
>
> and tears running down, he caught sight of me
>
> and called for me:
>
> "Don't try to keep out of this,
>
> even if you have to die with me.

Get me out of here

to somewhere, anywhere, where no one can see me.

Get me out of here, quick.

I don't want to die here."

That's what he told me. (*P/T* 1093-94)

Pound is obviously amused by the solemn, dutiful orgies ("σεμνῶν ὀργίων" [line 765])—the phrase might already be a problem in the Greek since "ὄργια" were usually associated with Dionysus. For this reason Pound decides to keep the Greek word, with all of its English connotations, instead of translating it with the more appropriate "rites." By linking this scene to a Dionysian revel, he also links it to the "analolu" chorus, and prepares us for the appearance of the God (and the God-dance). Moreover, by separating the adjective "bloody" from the noun it modifies, "flame" ("φλὸξ αἱματηρὰ" [line 766]), and grammatically (through parallel structure) associating the latter with the adjectivally used "oak," the tree on which the Zeus's oracle had been written, Pound already gives us the ending. He had after all strategically translated Hyllos's reference a few lines before to the "θανὰσιμον πέπλον" (line 758) as "marvellous peplon"; what was deadly in Greek becomes something one looks and wonders at, a marvel, a splendor. When Hyllos accuses Daysair of having killed "the best man on earth"—echoing her own conviction that he was the best man ever born[17]—he tells her that "what you see henceforth will be of a different kind" (*P/T* 1094). Pound highlights what will be seen from now on, not the fact that she will never see such a man again, which is what the Greek says ("πάντων ἄριστων ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ

[17] When Daysair exclaims, "in terror I should have to live on/ robbed of the best man ever born." (1071), Pound for the first time subdues the godly Heraklean light. In Greek Deianeira had been afraid of being "πάντων ἀρίστου φωτὸς ἐστερημένην" (line 177). Perhaps the light goes off in this case, for another man or ghost to enter; in an early draft of Canto 4 Pound had written of Gaudier-Brzeska:

Or the best man killed in France
Struck by a Prussian bullet at St. Vaast
With just enough cut stone left here behind him. (cited in Longenbach 131)

χθονὶ / κτείνασ' , ὁποῖον ἄνδρα οὐκ ὄψει ποτέ" [811-22]). He is, thus, also telling us that when Herakles is seen again (actually for the first time in the play), he will already be a different sort of image, an image not of a man, but of a god. The Greek god will no longer be represented by an altar, as Fenollosa had claimed and as Zeus is in Sophokles, but will finally "dance alone."

In order to make sure that this fact has gotten to a part of our minds that will register, Pound makes Aphrodite materialize after the end of the choral song that follows and that laments that Herakles "burnt out" (*P/T* 1096). Asserting that "Ne'er had bright Herakles in his shining / Need of pity till now/ whom fell disease burns out," the chorus accuses Aphrodite of standing by while Herakles took a new bride (earlier she had been the one who awarded Daysair to Herakles after his fight with Akheloös): "Attest / That / Kypris stood by and never said a word, / Who now flares here the contriver / manifest. . . / and indifferent." (*P/T* 1096). Pound picks up on the Greek alliteration of *φ* and replicates it ("Ἁ δ' ἀμφίπολος Κύπρις ἄναυδος φανερὰ / τῶνδ' ἐφάνη πράκτωρ" [lines 860-61]); by additionally emphasizing the "φανερὰ-ἐφάνη" pleonasm in "flares" and "manifest," he links fire with divine appearance and thus casts in new light the earlier lament for Herakles (only in Pound is he bright and burning). At that moment, "The dea ex machina, hidden behind a grey gauze in her niche, is lit up strongly so that the gauze is transparent. The apparition is fairly sudden, the fade-out slightly slower: the audience is almost in doubt that she has appeared" (*P/T* 1096). As Olga Taxidou points out, the theatrical convention of the deus ex machina was introduced by Euripides, to show the separation, the end of the "organic relationship" between gods and humans (134). Pound, on the contrary, inserts Aphrodite here—as Kypris, as a local deity— to suggest both the possibility of transition from the divine to the human world and the magical power of names; by naming over the most

beautiful thing (Aphrodite), the chorus has brought to earth a vestige of the heavenly splendor.[18] That she appears only briefly corresponds not only to the Greek chorus's speech about her "bi-polarity" ("ἀμφίπολος" [line 860]), but also to Pound's view about paradise: "Le Paradis n'est past artificiel / but spezzato apparently / it exists only in fragments" (Canto 74, 458).[19]

After the chorus has learned of and briefly mourned Daysair's suicide ("TORN between griefs, which grief shall I lament,/ which first? Which last, in heavy argument?/ One wretchedness to me in double load"), they turn their attention to the death coming "by the road" (*P/T* 1100).

(sung) Str. 2

THAT WIND might bear away my grief and me,
Sprung from the hearth-stone, let it bear me away.
God's Son is dead,
that was so brave and strong,
And I am craven to behold such death
Swift on the eye,
Pain hard to uproot,
and this is so vast.
A splendour of ruin.

[18] Upon looking at Pound's notes for the translation at the Beinecke (cat. no. 140.6184), one sees that he struggled with translating the line referring to Aphrodite's appearance; it seems likely that he decided to reproduce the aural/musical quality of the Greek in his lines and its clarity (φανερὰ … ἐφάνη) through the actual manifestation of the goddess.

[19] The rest of this line, much like the "apparently" of the previous line, of course undercuts the seriousness of Pound's pronouncement as it reinforces imagistically: "it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage, / the smell of mint, for example."

Ant. 2

THAT NOW is here.

As Progne shrill upon the weeping air,

'tis no great sound.

. . . . . .

The great weight silent

for no man can say

If sleep but feign

or Death reign instantly. (*P/T* 1100-1)

What Pound names a "splendour of ruin" is the body of Herakles pronounced dead twice in the strophe and turned into a great silent weight in the antistrophe. That the chorus would then also wonder whether he is asleep or dead makes little sense unless we displace the emphasis onto "no man" and "feign" (both absent in Greek) and "instantly" (simply "νιν" 'now' in Greek [line 969]). The question (and unreadability) for mortals specifically would thus lie in diagnosing dead Herakles's condition: has he died immediately, in a flash, or is his death like sleep? That is, is he, having died, still feigning sleep, and so can be expected to re-awake, not alive, but from the dead? The Christian overtones of Pound's line "God's Son is dead" (in Greek "τὸν Διῖον ἄλκιμον γόνον" [line 956]) certainly point us toward a resurrection of what is now a "ruin." It is worth noting, moreover, that in the Greek strophe, Herakles does not die at all; it is the chorus that metaphorically dies of horror at the thought of having to behold Herakles's agony ("μὴ ταρβαλέα θάνοιμι" [line 957]). He is, furthermore, not referred to as a weight, though he is described as heavy, "βαρεῖαν" (line 966), for the men carrying him. What in Greek is paradoxically rumored

to be an unspeakable wonder ("λέγουσιν/ ἄσπετόν τι θαῦμα" [lines 960-61]),[20] namely Herakles's suffering, is transformed by Pound into a montaged x-ray of "λέγουσιν" and "ἄσπετόν," that is, into the very speakable and soon to be speaking "splendour" of (temporary) ruin.

Finally, "THAT NOW is here"; the flaming splendor that the chorus had been surreptitiously announcing, comes to the stage already "in the mask of divine agony" according to Pound (*P/T* 1101). The fact that Herakles appears masked the whole time he is on stage would immediately announce to the Noh initiate that he is a god, since in Noh the god always wears a mask (*P/T* 392). Not so surprisingly, Pound cuts off an intervening character and his short dialogue with Hyllos for dramatic effect; more surprisingly, however, he also cuts the beginning of Herakles's speech, which opens with an invocation of Zeus, followed by Herakles's complaints about his fate. Instead, Pound's Herakles begins with an invocation to the place where Zeus's altar was and, speaking to "God a'mighty" derogatorily, echoes the Noh:

> Holy Kanea, where they build holy altars,
> done yourself proud, you have,
> nice return for a sacrifice
> messing me up.
> I could have done without these advantages
> And the spectacle of madness in flower,
> incurable, oh yes.
> Get someone to make a song for it,
> Or some chiropractor to cure it.

[20] Jebb explains that though "θαῦμα" (marvel, wonder or whatever one regards with wonder) has been "suspected," it is often said of people (or at least of the Cyclops) and is in this case, much more forceful than the word we might expect, namely "θέαμα," sight.

A dirty pest,

take God a'mighty to cure it and

I'd be surprised to see Him coming this far . . . (*P/T* 1101)

While in Greek the address is eventually aimed at Zeus, who is named, Pound intentionally does not make it clear that Kanea should indicate Zeus; the repetition of "holy," moreover, suggests a holiness of place (or place spirit) separate from that of the altar. Though the place name has reappeared in other adjectival variants in connection with the altar of Zeus, Pound following the Greek suffix changes spelled it "Kaenean" (1074) and "Kenaion" (1092). In these variations he at least preserves the length of the Greek *η* in "Κήναιον"; in "Kanea," however, the *e/ae* becomes an *a* perhaps in order to make the word echo the name of the Japanese goddess Kwannon. In "Tamura," we recall, Kwannon had been the one to allow and bless the appearance of the spirit through the "droning over" of Scripture; she also makes frequent appearances in the Pisan Cantos.[21] The goddess of ghostly returns then takes the blame for Zeus who as "God a'mighty" does not right the wrong that neither poet nor chiropractor (Pound's ingenious x-ray for "χειροτέχνης / ἰατορίας" [lines 1000-1]) alone could fix. Herakles is left to achieve "splendour" alone, without aid because for Pound the "miracle" involves erring; it is not simply that one is given a complete text to read from the start, but that one has to make the fragments cohere.[22] In fact, there is a new "θαῦμα" (line 1003) here, which Pound leaves untranslated. Sophokles's Herakles claims that the coming of Zeus would be a miracle, but Pound, not wanting to associate

[21] See, for example, Cantos 74, 77, and 81.
[22] We can even think of Heidegger here as Jean-Michel Rabaté has done, and say, "He who thinks greatly must err greatly" (5).

"θαῦμα" or splendor with Zeus, completely trivializes the line, as he had done earlier when the key word "λαμπρὰ" referred to Iole.[23]

As soon as Hyllos tells his father the truth about the poisoned chiton, Herakles begins to sound like the Apollo chorus in Greek, crying: "Ἰοὺ ἰοὺ δύστηνος, οἴχομαι τάλας· / ὄλωλ' ὄλωλα, φέγγος οὐκέτ' ἔστι μοι" (lines 1143-44). Pound instead puts Herakles in the dark room, from which he emerges perfectly lucid and intellectually firm:

> Misery. I'm going out
> and my light's gone.
> The black out!
> I understand perfectly well
> where things have got to . . . Go, son,
> call all my seed and their kindred (*P/T* 1107)

Pound's ellipses may signify a gap in Herakles statement (as though he was about to make a statement about the future and say "got to go," but then "go" got absorbed into the next sentence and he makes one about the present), but they also substitute for an omission from Sophokles. According to Jebb, Herakles has at this point realized the divine origin of his suffering and finally knows for sure that his end has come; so he tells Hyllos that he no longer has a father ("πατὴρ γὰρ οὐκετ' ἔστι σοι" [line 1146]). But in Pound he is already dead, already becoming a god, already in the mask of *divine* agony, and so cannot die. He calls his seed, but not his kindred, not his but his seed's "ὁμαιμόνων" (line 1147) to be witnesses; he has descendants, but no blood-relations any longer.

[23] The messenger says of Iole "Ἥ κάρτα λαμπρὰ καὶ κατ' ὄνομα καὶ φύσιν, / πατρὸς μὲν οὖσα γένεσιν Εὐρύτου ποτὲ / Ἰόλη 'καλεῖτο" (lines 379–81). Pound cannot apply this theme word to her and so translates: "She's somebody, all right, all right. / Name's Iole, and 'Rytus her father" (*P/T* 1078).

As occurs in the Noh spirit dances, the past needs to be summed up, reenacted for the unsuspecting wandering priest, who will from that point on remember and continue to tell the story. So Herakles asks Hyllos to:

> Listen first, and show what you're made of,
> my stock. My father told me long ago
> that no living man should kill me,
> but that someone from hell would,
> and that brute of a Centaur has done it.
> The dead beast kills the living me
> and that fits another odd forecast
> breathed out at the Selloi's oak—
> . . . . . .
> I heard it and wrote it down
> under my Father's tree.
> Time lives, and it's going on now.
> I am released from trouble.
> I thought it meant life in comfort.
> It doesn't.
> It means that I die.
> For amid the dead there is no work in service.
> Come at it that way, my boy, what
>
> SPLENDOUR,

IT ALL COHERES.

[*He turns his face from the audience, then sits erect,*
facing them without the mask of agony; the revealed make-up is that of solar serenity. The hair golden and as electrified as possible.]

But you must help me
and don't make me lose my temper,
don't dither, and don't ask me why.
This is the great rule: Filial Obedience. (*P/T* 1107-8)

In Richard Sieburth's reading, Herakles has realized that his castration is "merely a fulfillment of the (Lacanian) loi du père" and this "act of writing, of translating, of remembering provides the healing pharmakon that now allows Herakles to accept his fate with equanimity" (11-12, emphasis in the original). Obedience to paternal law would then be the "single moral conviction" around which *The Trachiniae* is built. While this is undoubtedly true, *The Women of Trachis* is in addition a Noh play and therefore, must, and is, as we have seen, be built around an Image. The typographically distinct key phrase, its long/heavy syllables photographing the Greek,[24] functions as the caption of the photograph whose description follows. Finally the electrical circuit has been set right and electrified Herakles can now receive messages from the "air" and transmit them; he starts up his own machinery, withstands the highest voltage and records, with

[24] The Greek "Ταῦτ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει" (line 1174) consists only of long syllables, with the single exception of "ἐ" in "ἐπειδὴ." Pound replicates their force not only through his capitalization, but also through his use of long/heavy syllables in his key words "splendour" and "coheres," while metrically "it" and "all" could go either way.

reserve, precision, and harshness, the currents that are passing through him. Retelling the story, dancing the story, makes the erased scripture on the holy *sotoba*, the wooden (oak?) stump, become intelligible, readable, visible; droning over the scripture turns what might have been "ἄσπετόν," unspeakable, into splendour, and reveals not the altar we see in Greek tragedies, but the god dancing alone.[25] This is not a return, moreover, like the one in *Tamura*, or in Pound's *Elektra*, where we see Agamemnon's hand appear, bloody and ready to kill Klytemnestra; Herakles is exposed in this guise for the first time, he is made new.[26] Already photographed in his absence by the light-sensitive poetry of the chorus, Herakles develops out of the dark pangs of divine agony (during which he blindly accused everyone for his misfortune), through the binding memory of the Father's tree (which allows him to "quiet (and fix) this metal," and then shed the negative mask), into solar serenity— but serenity not only as peacefulness, but also in its etymological sense of clarity, brightness. The "body of light" has indeed "come forth / from the body of fire" as Pound puts it in Canto 91; unlike those of Orestes in the *Elektra*, the splendid ashes ("spodoi")[27] are real, cohere, and leave no room for mourning. In the *Women of Trachis* Pound has realized and literalized through Herakles one of the underlying injunctions of Imagisme as photography, articulated by Fenollosa: to make a word's 'etymology' "visible," as it allegedly is in Chinese ideograms, and in this way make the word "from age to age" or from line to line richer and "almost consciously luminous," like the sun "with its corona and chromosphere" (*CWC* 25, 32). Such words must then "enwrap each other in their luminous

[25] As Mastronarde points out, there is a contrast at the end of the play between "an audience's traditional knowledge of Heracles' apotheosis and the lack of an explicit pointer in the play to this compensation." In some sense, this is what Pound sets out to correct through the Noh.
[26] As Hugh Kenner notes, when Pound returns to this moment in Canto 87, his English and Greek are accompanied by the "Make it New" ideogram and the ideogram of the sun (*Cantos* 571; Kenner 526).
[27] I owe this association between "splendor" and the Greek "spodos" to Richard Sieburth. Though "spodos" does not appear in the *Trachiniae*, it is encountered often in the *Elektra*, so Pound was certainly familiar with it.

envelopes until sentences become clear, continuous, light bands," until sentences cohere (*CWC* 32).

Remembering the paternal legacy, purged through the fire of error sent by the father/Master of the Soul in order to find his own language, the God's son is alchemically transformed and revealed to be a divine father himself. Coherence of past and present is not enough, however; someone must "copy this palimpsest" and carry the message registered into the future (Canto 96, 817).[28] Herakles continues with an injunction, as though the successful image is always an injunction. Hyllos must carry the weight of his name and resolve the family crisis—that is, marry the substitute mother and kill the father. Zeus has proved through the fact that his writing came true that he is Herakles's father,[29] and now Hyllos must prove that he is his son, that the paternal lineage will continue. Even before realizing the paternal law, Herakles had asked Hyllus to "start showing whose son you are. I.e. mine," by renouncing his mother and—in an echo of Pound's rhetoric around Klytemnestra—getting "that producer out of her house" (1103-4). The final paternity test is whether this son will kill his father, as he Herakles has displaced his own (the altar):

> And put me onto the pyre.
> Don't blubber. Show that you are my son
> or you'll have my ghost heavy on you
> from below there,
> forever.

[28] This would again be consistent with the Confucian statement (in Pound's version) that "Things have roots and branches; affairs have scopes and beginnings. To know what precedes and what follows, is nearly as good as having a head and feet" (*P/T* 618).
[29] In the play's rumor-ridden universe, Herakles even doubts his paternal origin: "and my mother was a notable woman /and my father in heaven, Zeus, mid the stars./ That's what they say." (*P/T* 1105). The problem at that point and now is precisely how to turn paternity from a rumor to truth, how to confirm it.

. . . . . .

Got your orders. Do ‘em,

or change your name.

(*P/T* 1109, 1110)

Hyllos is asked to be brave like Herakles and to substitute for Herakles, to take his place and continue his name and his “νόμος” (Pound’s “rule”; line 1177)—to remember this fire and quiet its metal. That the key phrase is supplemented by a footnote, another caption for its Image suggests to its readers what the “νόμος” that Pound is trying to enact is:

> This is the phrase, for which the play exists, as in the *Elektra:* “Need we add cowardice to all the rest of these ills” or the “T’as inventé la justice” in Cocteau’s *Antigone*. And, later: “Tutto quello che è accaduto doveva accadere. *(P/T* 1108)

Pound traces a (national?) lineage for this translation—the intellectual paternity of Cocteau as reviver of Greek tragedy, the error of Elektra’s incoherent mourning—and concludes with an impersonal voice, as impersonal as that of the divine Herakles, but belonging, allegedly, to Mussolini, who is supposed to have written this statement in reference to his ouster from office in a 1944 memoir: “What has been, should have,” Pound translates it in Canto 87, right after the following lines: “Δηάνειρα, λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει / From the dawn blaze to sunset” (591-92). No longer grieving for the father, Pound burns/buries him in and through the *Women of Trachis* and moves on with his law.

Current IV: Citing the Son

The long "poem" which coheres, the perfectly constructed Image, the Noh fantasy that has been with Pound for forty years, the legitimation of the ghostly fathers that haunt him more than ever after the war, come, walk together—συμ-βαίνουν— in this luminous detail of the *Trachiniae* that also happens (συμβαίνει) to be actually incandescent. The photograph of Herakles's electrified and convulsing body that is simultaneously dead and alive, citational (Mussolini, Gaudier-Brzeska,[30] Zeus) and uniquely present, functions then also as the most "faithful" photograph of Ezra Pound's body of work. By using and arranging "the names of objects and properties," he has finally gotten the better of Mr. Bennington's camera (*GB* 121). He has produced a Kracauerian "Monogramm" (since "Das letzte Bild eines Menschen ist seine eigentliche Geschichte"), condensing two radically heterogeneous elements (man-god) in the moment of transformation (25). But, as all critics who refer to this play forget, seduced perhaps, like Pound himself, by its glorious climax, the play does not end with the God-dance or with the law of Filial Obedience. If the image of fire, with its many imagiste and pre-imagiste echoes, becomes the Image by beginning and closing the play, and presumably assuring its unity and totality, we should also "see" the closing fire that Hyllos is supposed to light. It is, however, the play's other strand and other half— the one that negotiates photographic corollaries, such as the meaning of evidence, of reading and witnessing—that becomes tied to handling the circulation or the legacy of the Heraklean photograph and culminates in a sort of trial, which, citing Tomorrow, undermines the overall triumphant tone.

As soon as Hyllos says he will obey his father, Herakles asks him to swear and "Repeat: 'By the head of Zeus,' / you will do what I tell you to"; Hyllos does so and suddenly we are

[30] Pound's "electrified" arguments with Gaudier not only led him to think of this "Greek God in a vision" as "the best man killed in France," but also almost placed him in a Noh play: Gaudier "had made a particular pilgrimage to a certain tree. . . . (This might be out of a Japanese "Noh" play, but it isn't.)" (*GB* 46, 76).

transported into an American courtroom: "I swear, so help me God" (*P/T* 1109). Herakles adds "'And God damn all perjurers,'" which Hyllos repeats (*P/T* 1109). When Hyllos finds out what exactly he has to do in order to live up to the father's name, he attributes the injunction to his "delirium" and imagines himself in a transcendental court of justice, having to defend his actions: "Good lord, you want me to be a murderer / and a parricide? . . . Have you got to teach me crime?" (*P/T* 1110-12). Herakles responds, "It is no crime ("δυσσέβεια", line 1246) to gladden a father's heart," and Hyllus, a coward still, asks "If you order me to, is that legal ("πανδίκως,", line 1247) / Perfectly all right?" (*P/T* 1112). When Herakles "call[s] the gods to witness," Hyllos is finally convinced: "If it's set before the gods / that way, I can't be blamed for obeying you" (*P/T* 1112). The new paternal injunction bears on something to be done, not written; the "deep-rooted oaks" are supposed to be "lopped off" and burnt by Hyllos, they do not speak to him. In the end, however, Herakles acquiesces and excuses him from having to light the fire, showing essentially what Hyllos's name had been telling us from the beginning: that the son is (always?) a lesser version of the father, even if Herakles has here been allowed to become the father/god. The new paternal injunction may benefit both the father and the community, but to the extent that it leads to a new tomorrow—and not to a repetition of the same cycle— it leads worstward, to borrow a word from Samuel Beckett.

Worstward—Pound even rearranges the final scene to convey this new direction. In his last speech in Sophokles, Herakles seems to address his soul, asking it to lead and be strong. Pound lets Herakles speak these lines, but presents them as though they were all addressed to Hyllos, who is still telling Herakles "You're the driver" (*P/T* 1112). He instructs others to hoist Herakles onto the pyre and interprets the coherent Heraklean photograph as "the gods' great unreason," revealing that he has in fact seen and understood nothing: "sons to honour their

fathers, / and of what is to come, nothing is seen. Gods!/ Our present miseries, their shame" (*P/T* 1113). He fails to do what was asked and to read or record the Image that was in front of him. Pound has him end the play, instead of the chorus; declaring that "And all of this is from Zeus," Hyllos may display the paternal lineage, but it is as a degenerating one. Rather than the glorious realization of an oracle, which happens for the most part through the "poetry," the choruses—and Pound considered them his crowning achievement in form[31]— we have a court drama of betrayal, the realization that the father must be killed, that there is Tomorrow and that it is worse. There is no one there to write it down or to sing, as Pound suggests by abolishing the chorus, the women in the play's name; perhaps there is no need for it since the image has surpassed its words, gone "beyond formulated language." And yet the legacy of the image is lost and the words continue—even those of the chorus, whose last line was not a song, but part of the stichomythia with Herakles ten pages before the end of the play, and equally condemning: "Poor Greece, you can see troubles coming / if you let such a man down" (*P/T* 1105). The implication is that Hyllos as Greece, as the human character not worthy of a Noh name, has let "such a man," the solar vitality, down.

Current V: πολυγλώσσου

The words continue into the next cantos that Pound would begin to compose after this translation and, as we saw, it is the "producer" Δηιάνειρα who accompanies Mussolini. The work also continues since for the sake of the totalized image—Herakles no longer in his "mask of

[31] In a 1962 interview, when asked about his interest in form, Pound responds: "In English the music is of a limited nature. You've got Chaucer's French perfection, you've got Shakespeare's Italian perfection, you've got Campion and Lawes. I don't think I got around to this kind of form until I got to the choruses in the *Trachiniae*. I don't know that I got to anything at all, really, but I thought it was an extension of the gamut. It may be a delusion" ("The Art of Poetry" 25).

agony," but in that of "solar serenity"—a crucial word designating the paternal tree has to remain untranslated: πολυγλώσσου, many-tongued, multilingual ("πρὸς τῆς πατρῴας καὶ πολυγλώσσου δρυός" [lines 1167-68]). It is worth noting that in an early version of the translation this was not the case. In an undated typescript, the word is translated, but is then left out of the setting copy[32]:

> mid the leaves of my father's oak tree
> I heard it , with many toungues [sic],
> and I wrote down the words, of my doom
> now come upon me

In this version of the text, he has also not yet come upon his translation for "λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει," trying out various versions, the final of which is: "what splendour, my boy / Dont [sic] you see how it all works out." In the rough drafts of the typed manuscript (housed at Princeton), Pound leaves a blank before oak tree, as well as after (wrote it) "down." It is not clear if the blanks are for words he has not yet translated or just pauses. In the typed version of this section, Pound is seen writing and crossing out multiple times various translations for "tree" and adding and deleting other words in that speech, but "πολυγλώσσου" is conspicuously absent. Though he initially translates it, then, Pound does not admit this word into his text after he has hit upon the translation of Herakles's dying cry, as if it is this multiplicity of languages that threatens coherence. The word resurfaces in Canto 95, both in Greek and in Pound's translation—obviously he did not think it unimportant—in a moment when he seeks to circumscribe the meaning of *polis*. He writes "πολύγλωσσος" as though it too is etymologically related to πόλις and πολεύω ("meaning to plough") before translating it: "There were many sounds in that oak-

[32] I am referring to the undated typescript of the second part of the play that is in the Beinecke (cat. no140.6184). In contrast, in the typescript of the setting copy of the text (also in the Beinecke) the translation of the word has been excluded and the play's key line, "IT ALL COHERES," with the Noh stage directions is included. There are some loose sheets, where Pound is seen trying to work out a translation for "Ταῦτ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει," but he does not hit upon the final version of the text in any of them.

wood" (664). What are, then, the other sounds he did not choose to form his "national" axis or ideogram? And why is it Daysair, Δηάνειρα, and not Herakles who appears next to the key phrase in Canto 87?

That an oracle came true would have been no surprise for Sophokles's audience; that is perhaps why what Pound emphasizes to such a degree is not especially marked in the original, as Stanislav Jankowski also points out (xx). Jebb, Pound's textual source, translates the key phrase simply as "Those words are clearly finding their fulfillment." The Poundian Herakles's intense intellectual light is nonetheless justified by the many sounds or voices vanquished by it; the play until this moment has been full of rumors, false evidence, misreadings, tellings and retellings, many expressed as binaries,[33] and all of dubious accuracy and coherence. From the very first line the play reveals to us its rumorological, citational structure for it begins not with the Phoebus-dawn chorus, but with Daysair quoting: "'No man knows his luck 'til he's dead.' / They've been saying that for a long time" (*P/T* 1067)—in Greek Deianeira only speaks of an ancient "λόγος" (line 1).[34] Tradition seems disproved; she (wrongly) closes her ears. What she does not know is revealed—to us, but not to her— in another piece of received wisdom Daysair recalls: "'Don't get sun-burnt.' / 'Don't get wet in the rain. Keep out of draughts,' / that's a girl's life till she's married." (*P/T* 1071). The Greek (lines 145-46), says exactly the opposite (namely that in youth, one doesn't care about such things), and we do not get the sense of (or even a reference to) other

[33] The absolutely binary prophecy presented by Daysair in the beginning of the play and finally cleared up at the end of the play (he will die or he will live: "You know he left some sort of forecast /having to do with that country?/ . . . / That it would be the end of him, / or that when he got / through with the job, he would live happy ever after " (*P/T* 1069)) is mirrored by the proliferating binary statements made by the characters, especially in Pound's version. For example, he has Daysair say in response to Hyllos, "Heard what? /That [Herakles]'s sitting around/ somewhere or other." (*P/T* 1068). Hyllos then responds with one of his characteristic hedges: "they *say* he's in Euboea, / besieging Eurytusville/ or on the way to it." (*P/T* 1069). Later on, the Messenger says of the Official, or at least name-bearing, messenger, Likhas, that "That fellow was lying, one time or the other, / one heck of a messenger!" while of course it is he who bears the title and is not delivering a firm message (*P/T* 1078).

[34] Daysair then refutes this cited *logos*, by explaining to us that she has known her life was miserable and her luck "soggy" from the start—"soggy" in Pound, I think, because of Akheloös appearance in this speech (in Greek it was "unhappy and heavy," "δυστυχῆ τε καὶ βαρύν" (line 5).

voices or *λόγοι*. Pound intentionally translates the Greek "θεοῦ" (line 145) as "sun," not only to once again suggest that Herakles is a god or even God, but also to bring together the Noh elements: the sun Daysair eventually will get metaphorically burned by, the water element she was saved from (Akheloös), and the draught (air) that she is. The future the past and the present are united in a memory of past speech; the image cites and disqualifies an older injunction, which will be nonetheless realized in the future (that's a girl's life *when* she is married!).

Daysair also presents an ambiguous (if banal) binary prophecy in the beginning of the play: "You know [Herakles] left some sort of forecast / having to do with that country?/ . . . / That it would be the end of him, / or that when he got / through with the job, he would live happy ever after" (*P/T* 1069). By the end of the play in Pound's version, neither option has exactly come to pass. Daysair's binary is echoed in proliferating binary statements of lesser importance made by other characters—all in scenes without Herakles—especially in Pound's version. For example, he has Daysair say in response to Hyllos, "Heard what? /That [Herakles]'s sitting around/ somewhere or other" (*P/T* 1068). Hyllos then responds with one of his characteristic hedges: "they *say* he's in Euboea, / besieging Eurytusville/ or on the way to it." (*P/T* 1069). Later on, the Messenger says of the official, or at least name-bearing, messenger, Likhas, that "That fellow was lying, one time or the other, / one heck of a messenger!" while of course it is he who now bears the title and is not delivering a firm message (*P/T* 1078). When Daysair asks the formerly lying messenger Likhas to "remember a messenger's first job is / to do what he's told, not more, not less, / but just what he is told," he responds equivocally, "Properly trained in Hermes' messenger-service, Ma'am" (*P/T* 1087-88).

After a string of false messages that have put into question the very task of the messenger—and perhaps by extension that of translator as well—the chorus comments on

Daysair's decision to use the alleged love-potion, putting her again in the position of the (bad) listener:

> Tis dipped, aye in the unguent
> drenched through it, in every fold.
> Told, told
> in all as she had been told. (*P/T* 1088-89)

Pound is here trying to reproduce the Greek rhythm through his word repetitions, as he often does. He nonetheless adds in this way an emphasis on telling that is not there in the Greek. When Daysair realizes what she has done and returns from the house "in the tragic mask," she continues in the same vein: "he [the centaur] told me—and I can remember it / as if it were engraved on a brass plate—/ and I did just what he told me" (*P/T* 1089-90). She remembers what was not written and seemed univocal, while of course no one had paid attention to the prophecy that was written on the oak wood and seemed (but was not) ambiguous; the word used in Greek for both pieces of writing is the same: "δέλτον" (lines 157 and 683). It is this scene of wrong listening—of listening to the unnatural beast and not to the supernatural god— that Herakles's later successful reading corrects and overwrites. It is these ghosts—ghosts of ambiguous or imprecise words, ghosts of beasts, ghosts of other languages—that his intellectual vision vanquishes.

At the same time, the "fold" identified with "told" in the chorus's speech cannot but remind us of Pound's "ply over ply"; folded in and by what was told, Daysair's woven "peplon" comes into its name, into its text-uality, assuming a relation not with carefully constructed

language, but with a false *logos*, a *logos* lacking *sinceritas*.[35] Woven and clamped on, inflaming him from the inside out, it is the poisoned chiton that kills (and saves) Herakles, but a chiton ("marvelous" he calls it, not "deadly," we recall) in some sense figured by Pound as his *Cantos*.[36] Co-hering, sticking to Herakles's body, the textual folds of the peplon-poem become indissociable from their subject; the "god in a vision" literally is the poem. But this is only possible after "that producer" Daysair is out of the house because in Pound she had been allowing another current to pass through unaltered.

In the first half of the play, Pound silently gestures to another woman who helped engender this, his play, another wife, or rather, another wife's ghost. "All sunk into the river of three currents," sent there by "the great, false bird called "Taking-care," the wife in "Kinuta," a Noh play that had beauty arranged into its words by Pound forty years before, has the chorus on her side: "Who will call him a true man—the wandering husband—when even the plants know their season, the feathered and furred have their hearts?" (*P/T* 424, 425). These are precisely the images that Pound's Daysair starts with, for Akheloös as a "three-twisted river" and for her husband who "never gets sight of his children, / like a farmer who sows a crop and doesn't/ look at it again till harvest" (*P/T* 1067). "We do not escape from the wheel," the Noh chorus continues

[35] In Canto 99, which begins with "Splendor" and "silk chords of sunlight" (714–15), Pound writes "To see the light pour / that is, toward sinceritas" (714). A few pages later he ties this light and sincerity to other Trachinian themes "Let the laws be made clear / Illumine the words of procedure, / Peace comes of good manners" (718).

[36] Almost in the persona of Malatesta, whom he quotes in Italian, Herakles screams:

> And now Miss Oineus
> with her pretty little shifty eyes
> *m'la calata*,
> has done to beat all the furies,
> got me into a snarl, clamped this net on to me
> and she wove it.
> It sticks to my sides and
> Has gnawed through to my furtherest in'nards.
> And now it's stopped the green blood,
> got into the lungs and dries up the tubes along with them,
> tears up all the rest of me.
> Holds me down, like in fetters. I can't explain it. (*P/T* 1103)

(*P/T* 425), while Daysair says about the doubtful fate of Herakles, "It's on the turn of the wheel" (*P/T* 1070). Pound amplifies the citationality associated with Daysair, by adding another layer of quotation, by borrowing her words from the play's other, "eastern" origin.

From the end of "Kinuta" Pound's *Women of Trachis* is born, but with one important difference: the husband who has been "loitering on in the capital entangled in many litigations" is, unlike the equally litigating Herakles, "unknown and of no repute" (*P/T* 418). The wife, nameless— a good wife like Daysair and not like the murdering το/εκοῦσα Klytemnestra— also begins by lamenting her sorrow, speaking, as the chorus does for Daysair, about birds, winds, waves, and rain. Compare the following two passages:

> Sorrow!— .Sorrow is in the twigs of the duck's nest
> And in the pillow of the fishes,
> At being held apart in the waves . . .
> My tears are a rain in the silence. (*P/T* 419)

> DAYSAIR is left alone,
> so sorry a bird, . . .
> NORTH WIND or South, so bloweth tireless
> wave over wave to flood. (*P/T* 1070)

Abandoned by her husband, following the words or the tale of yet another wife and beating a silkboard every night "for that far-murmuring cloth could move his sleep—that is the tale—though he were leagues away," hoping "with such that I might ease my heart," this wife eventually gives up and dies (*P/T* 420). The cloth, she thinks, has failed her, as it will also fail Daysair; both cloths, moreover, turn into flame. As Daysair realizes what she has done when she

sees the cotton swab light up and disappear, exclaiming to the chorus: "perfectly inexplicable, I found it all flaming / there in the sunlight. It had got warm / and just crumbled away, like sawdust / where somebody had been sawing a board" ((*P/T* 1090)), so the Japanese chorus says of the wife: "Her tears are shed on the silk-board, / Tears fall and turn into flame" (*P/T* 424). As Daysair "feared great ills to come, / New haste in mating threatening her home, / Who hark'd to reason in a foreign voice/ Entangling her in ravage out of choice" (*P/T* 1095), so the wife's heart, which "sink[s] so deep in desires," is "entangled in the threads," the threads of hearsay perhaps (*P/T* 424). Finally, as Daysair's "Tears green the cheek with bright dews / pouring down" (*P/T* 1096), so the wife becomes a "flower-heart of the grass is blown on by a wind-like madness, until at last she is but emptiness" (*P/T* 423).

In the end, however, it is the ghost of the wife and not the living husband who is consumed by flame; it is she who could not escape from the "flaming of Karma" (*P/T* 425), who "has but kindling flame to light her track. . ." (*P/T* 424) and who finally receives the law:

> She recites the Flower of Law; the ghost is received into Butsu; the road has become enlightened. Her constant beating of silk has opened the flower, even so lightly she has entered the seed-pod of Butsu. (*P/T* 425).

Is it this particular Noh play then that Pound is rewriting as *The Women of Trachis*? Must this wife be read into Herakles as much as she is read into Daysair? Is a woman or a woman's image generating the arch-father after all, or is it to suppress her image that he is generated, brought forth to substitute for her ghost and institute a male lineage? So that a god will appear and not a woman's spirit? Indeed, in *The Women of Trachis*, Herakles arises out of the ashes or the body of his wife; in the ancient Greek performances, the two characters were played by the same actor. He appears after she has died, much like the husband in "Kinuta," but then usurps the function of

the wife's spirit in the Japanese play. "Kinuta" is the negative from which the photograph of Herakles is developed. As Daysair has woven his folds and prepared his coherence, this "Eastern" producer has called him and called him into being right before her death (and the appearance of her ghost), forty years in advance:

> A time that brings awe to the heart, a sound of beaten cloths . . . crying in the storm, a sad sound of the crickets, make one sound in the falling dew, a whispering lamentation, *hera, hera,* a sound in the cloth of beauty. (my emphasis; *P/T* 423)

When Daysair "de-part[s]", as Pound has it,[37] and parts herself in two, the "sick," purely citational poetic part is excised, while the other, the imagistic presentation of the moment of transformation, of translation from wife to husband, from Noh to Sophokles, from hero to god is set into motion; the "death-rattle," the chiton "eating through" Herakles slowly turns into the (monolingual) father's tree, "gnawing again" but also "budding, blossoming" (*P/T* 1104). Being (b)eaten by "silk," Herakles recites the oak's law, emitting a sound, a cry cohering in the cloth and the law of splendour. Pound had written in 1916 that Dante's "Paradiso" "is the most wonderful *image*," but had clarified that "[b]y that I do not mean that it is a perseveringly imagistic performance. The permanent part is Imagisme, the rest . . . are philology" (*GB* 86). Is it

[37] Daysair's fate is to be cut up, de-parted in Pound, though only hurt, abused in Greek. Hyllos tells the chorus:

> fine mother she is, let her de-part.
>
> in peace . . . (*P/T* 1095)

There is nothing in the Greek context, I think, that would justify this word-parting (Ἀλλ' ἐρπέτω χαίρουσα (line 819)) besides perhaps the fact that Hyllos is parting from her as a mother. Daysair will nonetheless part herself. When the nurse tells the chorus how she died, she says "Did it herself, / ripped herself open" (*P/T* 1098), while in Greek it is "Αὐτὴν διηίστωσεν" (line 881), which means that "she killed herself," but also includes the preposition *δια*, suggesting "divide." She rips herself open, brings inside out, while Herakles's outside corrodes the inside. Later, when Herakles asks Hyllus to denounce his mother, he does so in similar terms:

> Boy, you start showing whose son you are. I.e. mine,
> . . . . . .
> and hand her over to me. We'll see whether
> you feel worse watching me rot or
> seeing her cut up and brought to justice. (*P/T* 1103–4)

this philology that departs with Daysair, this love of *logos* expressed in the proliferation of imprecise speech and misreadings that may have obscured the image[38]? Is Pound still or again performing the purifying rituals of Imagisme, trying to shape up his poem and extract the voices— the tongues of the Pisan Cantos or *Elektra*'s babel— that do not stick with, do not adequately "give" the desired body in its moment of transformation? If so, for the Image to be, there could not have been many sounds or tongues in that oak wood.

The poem, *The Cantos* continues because the other tongues of the peplon-tree-poem cannot be contained or totalized since, as we saw with "Kinuta" writing Sophokles before (Pound read) Sophokles, "Nor began nor ends anything" (Canto 114, p. 813). It goes on, worstward, because "I am not a demigod, / I cannot make it cohere" as Pound in one of the "Drafts and Fragments" (Canto 116, p. 816). It continues, however, also because, unlike Hyllos, it insists on following the image Pound named Herakles, on trying to reproduce that photograph though the "original" has been burnt: "i.e. it coheres all right / even if my notes do not cohere . . . A little light, like a rushlight / to lead back to splendour" (Canto 116, p. 817).

[38] This "opposition" continues to be seen in the Cantos. For instance, in Canto 85, the first of the post-Pisans, Pound gives us a (coherent?) list of words ("the sheltered grass hopes, chueh, cohere.") but insists, "(No, that is *not* philological)" (564).

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