

Language Acquisition · *Rachel Blau DuPlessis*

. . . her wavering hieroglyph . . .

HER, p. 224

We suggest that naming, always originating in a place (the *chora*, space, “topic,” subject-predicate), is a *replacement* for what the speaker perceives as an archaic mother—a more or less victorious confrontation, never finished with her.

Julia Kristeva, “Place Names,”
Desire in Language, p. 291

This is the task of wildflower honey.
Quiet. Initiate of sound.
Poetry is about —
Is negated. All gestures of writing
Made suspect by writing.
Song leaf of pure and burnished gold
Porous at a random touch, plissé.

Began to forget “writing.”

The secrets of enclosure
Set drooping.

What is first? First is voicing? Was it when we called her Renata Tebaldi and moved the crib into her own room, separating her, because the concerts came too often through the night.

Or was first kitten, sheep, and animal heartless, heartbreaking bleats inside the dead of night. At first it sounds hopeless, then soon, when a response is patterned, it sounds perpetually enraged. Now is never good enough; satisfaction had already to have happened before.

Is first the chuckle, the chortle, the gurgle, that sounds like delight: that this is, that ‘I’ this.

Then there is sentence melody; they sing your language before any “language,” any “message,” any “content.”¹ And for the longest time, there is da da. For a long time there is ba ba (which some translate *baby* and others *bottle*). Sometimes a sound comes in floods, then ebbs, an “l” or an “f/v” which crests and then pulls back, some tide moving far away. There are a few other words like “d-g” or “gie” (the second half of *doggie*). With these few syllables, months and months pass in which they are content. And do not (some do not) say ma ma.

These patterns may have no signifying function, but they are socially assimilated in three ways: by translation (baba means bottle), by mimicry, face close to face, to create a dialogue of la la’s, and emotionally (this one will not say ma ma).

This babble, these baby melodies

“This *heterogeneousness*, detected genetically in the first echolalias of infants as rhythms and intonations anterior to the first phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, and sentences; this heterogeneousness, which is later reactivated as rhythms, intonations, glossalalias in psychotic discourse, serving as ultimate support of the speaking subject threatened by the collapse of the signifying function; this heterogeneousness to signification operates through, despite, and in excess of it and produces in poetic language ‘musical’ but also nonsense effects that destroy not only accepted beliefs and significations, but, in radical experiments, syntax itself. . . . We shall call this disposition *semiotic* (*le sémiotique*), meaning, according to the etymology of the Greek *sémeion* (*σημείον*), a distinctive mark, trace, index, the premonitory sign, the proof, engraved mark, imprint—in short, a *distinctiveness* admitting of an uncertain and indeterminate articulation because it does not yet refer (for young children) or no longer refers (in psychotic discourse) to a signified object for a thetic consciousness. . . . Plato’s *Timaeus* speaks of a *chora* (*χώρα*), receptacle (*ὑποδοχείον*), unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted to such an extent that it merits ‘not even the rank of syllable.’ . . . It goes without saying that, concerning a *signifying practice*, that is, a socially communicable discourse like poetic language, this semiotic heterogeneity posited by theory is insepar-

able from what I shall call, to distinguish it from the latter, the *symbolic* function of significance.”²

The inseparability of the two functions: that while it may sing melodies in all and nothing, we in English only hear its English. Translation and focused location occur to filter the heterogeneity through the meaning-melody we hear, in speaking English. Yet it will always sing more than we can hear.

The semiotic abounds with signs (“mark, trace, index, premonitory sign, proof engraved mark, imprint” “signet—as from sign, a mark, token, proof; signet—the privy seal, a seal; signet-ring—a ring with a signet or private seal. . .”³).

What is all of this, and why is it important? Kristeva’s location of two developmentally distinct registers of normal language, whose intensity and relationship are heightened in poetic language, offers a powerful picture through which certain elements of gender cruise.

2.

thay hey ho, aydee thay yo you

thay dg,

hyyyi, O, hi

This “master place” of analysis—how to be true to it and to me? What can it mean? Certainly the massive bilaterality of the system can both satisfy and distress. There are two sides, one sidelong, allusively called “maternally connoted”; the other comically, named in more absolute terms “the father.” Does this mean that the genders are divided into the one that speaks and the other that cannot be intelligible? At times (as in *About Chinese Women*) Kristeva has implied that the only way a woman makes sense is through identification with the father. This is not helpful. And it is a tautology. Makes sense is a way of speaking as sense is given: a way of speaking the dominant discourses.⁴

But the maternally connoted chora is not silent: there is babble and pulse, intonation, mark and sign. There is everything of language in it but specificity and form. It is the place that could be any language. (Greek, Egyptian) If this area represents the mother, it is a mother visualized as a font of linguality, as well as a mother (they say) repressed by virtue of the transfer of power and allegiance by means of oedipalization: the learning of gender asymmetry, inequalities, one's place in a gendered order.

The "symbolic order" is thus affiliated with the political and social power of dominant discourses. The "semiotic" with the marginal, and with subversion, critique, weakening of the permutations of dominance.⁵

One speaks, the other { speaks unheard, from margins
has spoken
will speak

Yet the inseparability of the two functions. When this theory does its dance of naming, we are called into chora, tempted into claiming its dramas. Language in its thickness, layered, can also peel back and become a map of levels, with space behind space.⁶

The interplay of these two sides in H.D. has a particular name: palimpsest. Meaning what it conventionally does in ancient scribal practice: an overwritten page, a script under which is shadowed another script, another text. As H.D. defines this as epigraph to her novel called by that very name: one text "erased" but "imperfectly" to make "room for another" writing. Thematically, morally, textually in H.D. the erasure of the signs (mark, trace, index, imprint) of the "mother"—the text made marginal, by the signs of the "father"—the text of dominance. But imperfect erasure. Can see both writings. Can see them as interactive. Could pick and valorize one (as opposed to the other); could say lower one is original, therefore right. Could say recent one by virtue of that place, closer to now, to our sense of progress towards us, is therefore right. Or, could as well place them together as the situation of writing. Could say, this palimpsest is the visual image of the situation of writing. Palimpsest is the feel of writing within the consciousness of the producer of poetic language.

So reading (whether choosing one side as the primary though almost eradicated source, or whether mingling both texts by reading all the layers of intercalations) is the key to H.D.'s relation to the "semiotic." And this — although reading or interpreting is, in Kristeva's terms, the precise component missing, absent from the semiotic. Reading would be, definitionally, a function of the "side" of the symbolic. The maternally-connoted side would produce only UNreadable marks.

The act of reading must be slid across to the mother.

3.

Kristeva visualizes all people who write as "filial." That is, they are the children of, a second generation with regard to a maternally-connoted semiotic and a father-filled symbolic order. Any person who writes (who uses poetic language) is *ipso facto*, in the system, a site of a synthetic act of access negotiating between the pre-Oedipal thesis and the Oedipal antithesis. All poetic writing is a negotiation, after the fact, after a necessary passage (called the "thetic stage") into signification.

Therefore Kristeva calls this a "'second degree thetic,' a resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language. This is precisely what artistic practices, and notably poetic language, demonstrate."⁷

No pure semiotic; (except in psychosis) no pure semiotic. Exile. That is, mediation. Access to this area is mediated. But what is it that — when re-entered — offers itself (in/as language, rhythm, space) as if it were unmediated? As if it were a return? What is IT writing? What are the historical tricks desire plays? Among them the denial of mediation. The filial-parental metaphor somewhat compromises (enriches) the theory of positions in relation to marginality and dominance.

4.

It is a peculiarity of Kristeva's analysis that she is so ungenerous, so unsuggestive on the subject of women writers. For if all who write are filial, they are for her, more specifically, the sons. In *Desire in Language* all examples of poetic stances and poetic careers engage only with male writers,

even though a most profound, elegant and boldest woman is herself writing. It is odd to read of things “maternally connoted” or to hear that we may “call the moment of rupture and negativity which conditions and underlies the novelty of any praxis ‘feminine,’” when this still leaves a little in the air what the specific relations of a woman writer to the semiotic register could be.⁸ What is the relation of the woman writer to chora, when she can be that “maternally connoted” area by being/having/wanting mother? Is the chora safe for women? Or do “women tend to move immediately to the other side—the side of symbolic power.”⁹

Then, what if the writer is not a “son” but a “daughter.” Even if one’s pre-Oedipal is the “same” no matter what gender, the fact that our return is mediated through gender must make (could make?) some marked difference in language.

Why (asks Kristeva) does Virginia Woolf “not dissect language as Joyce does”?¹⁰ A question which makes me immediately defensive can be translated into a series of other questions that makes this language a question. Why must Kristeva affirm that Woolf does not dissect language as Joyce does? Why does Virginia Woolf not choose to “dissect language as Joyce does”? Why must Joyce be the standard for such activities in language, Woolf not up to that norm? What is the precise level and kind of rupturing practices that must occur for it to be said that “language is dissected”? Would Stein’s be “too much”? What is the place of Woman, static, iconic Woman in Joyce’s writing practice? How might that Woman function by virtue of her iconic Otherness? What happens when the writer is Other in systems of discourse? How does Otherness own, write its Otherness when it is not only otherness? How can I (a woman) read my our their his her semiotic? What is a woman writer’s negotiation with the semiotic to produce poetic language?

For H.D., on the evidence of *Tribute to Freud*, the semiotic is safest when it can be interwoven with a symbolic (interpretive) function so fluid and polyvalent that it almost annexes itself to the semiotic; the semiotic is therefore safest, most satisfying when it is not glossalalia, not syntactic rupture, not invective/obscenity (Céline-Pound), but when it is expressed as signs.

5.

What is it I have also come here to tell you? That I wish they had met? That I wish they had read each other, visibly; some fantasy of intertextual appreciation or influence. But did not. Although H.D.'s daughter, Perdita Schaffner, says that H.D. read all of Woolf's books, we are left simply with a desire, and death. In 1941, Woolf committed suicide. H.D. wrote *The Gift* after, she wrote it also for Woolf. Woolf was her mother. She wrote it out of grief. I am making this up.

Amid the bombs, H.D. instructs May Sarton to write to Robert Herring to find out if H.D. herself or Elizabeth Bowen has been killed in an air raid, or "of any literary gossip or—I do not like to add, 'catastrophy', for we do not feel like that. But Virginia W. was a great shock to us all. I am glad you say it seemed 'unnecessary', as that [is] [H.D. wrote *it*] JUST how I felt and feel. The general attitude was 'poor thing—she went through such a lot—' but having been through so much, I myself, did feel stricken to think she got away like that, just when really everything is very exciting and one longs to be able to live to see all the things that will be bound to happen later. . . . [my ellipses] Times were NEVER so exciting—the last war was not. It is simply a sheer mathematical problem of HOW much can the human frame stand and endure—and we seem to get stronger, as far as nerves go, as we go on. . . . [my ellipses] Virginia's body was found—in that river as expected. There was inquest and letter left to her husband, she believed she was going mad again and could not face it. One heard 'poor Ophelia' . . . [H.D.'s ellipses] but, like you, I did not think it the right end somehow, no matter how poetical and traditional."¹¹

What could it mean that H.D. said (as far as anyone has yet discovered) nothing about Woolf but several saddened coolish distant evaluative comments upon her manner of death.

A desire and a set of connections palpable, opaque, readable, odd, nourishing: *The Gift*, with its concussion of paternal consciousness, its oblique moment of childhood sexual assault, near assault, its matrilineal desire for connection, for vision, for language. *Moments of Being*, with its blunt impacted hostility to paternal bullying, its explicit moment of childhood sex-

ual assault, its matrilineal desire for connection, for vision, for language. Autobiographies written under German bombing.

HER: its nursling woman artist, its “you are a poem though your poem’s naught” its determination to transcend, to encircle this power of judgment¹²

To the Lighthouse: its nursling woman artist, its “Women can’t paint, women can’t write” its desire to encircle this power of judgment

and maternal eros at the center of both works.

Bid Me to Live: a synchronic layering of motifs from its time of composition, after the Second World War, back through the First, with its hope that the world could, somehow, be different, a new valence, a new spiritual liberation

The Years: a diachronic spread from the 1880s to just before the Second World War, following a multitude of people but centering on those who will find that the hope for all is the formation of “new combination”—a spiritual and political understanding

Both feature the Zeppelin air raids over London in World War I as a prescient knowledge of terror to civilians to which the civilians had to respond

Both reinvent the essay, both, do you hear me, reinvent the essay, its epistemology, its tactics of language, its tremendous claims of authority and its subtle erosion of authority, its grave meditative sensation, like feeling the imprint of a “soul,” its ridiculous quirks and starts, exposed, caring and uncaring, jaunty. Its poetics of critique. Its poetics of palimpsest.¹³ And

the feeling of listening, the intensity with which they listen and leap, leap into themselves is met by, creates, the intensity of listening in the reader. Listening listing.

6.

I take the baby in my arms and sing to her a song my mother sang to me, the “Riddle Song.” I sing it over and over. (June 17, 1985, at 16 months) “How can there be a cherry that has no stone?” That day, the baby in my arms pipes up, repeats “nieuw” (a cross between *no*, repeated, and *new*) I sing “How can there be a chicken without a bone?” Silence from the little dark voice. “How can there be a ring that has no end?” “nieuw” She has done it again! “How can there be a baby with no cryin’?” The voice says “mee mee bay bee.”

7.

What is it about the little glowy tip, the dome of light, the bee, the luminous globule that recurs and repeats what is it about the water, the beach, the jellyfish

Solid water up the beach, shimmering when all the waves were dark transparent jellies, bits of them, a little wobble and whoops, a touch. What has grazed me? Aurelia, the east coast jelly fish, cast up in broken bits upon my dotted shore.

The sea. The light. The core.

For Woolf, a splash of water, the breaking of light over the floor: “of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive.”¹⁴ It is the feeling “as I describe it sometimes to myself, of lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow.” The child reconstructed in the medium of the mother, looking out as if through an encasing fluid.

“My vision or state of transcendental imagination when I had felt myself surrounded, as it were, with the two halves of the bell-jar.” “When I told him of the Scilly Isles experience, the transcendental feeling of the two globes or the two transparent half-globes enclosing me, I said I supposed it was some form of prenatal fantasy. Freud said, ‘Yes, obviously; you have found the answer, good—good.’” (TTF, pp. 182, 168)

When Lily tries to encompass her love for Mrs. Ramsay, and feels she cannot: “How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another

thing about people, sealed as they were? Only like a bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air intangible to touch or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with their murmurs and their stirrings”¹⁵

The sound of bees, a collective pulse of life in “the shape of a dome.” In *The Gift* H.D. speaks of being the last bee in a domed hive of vision.¹⁶

In H.D., time and time again, a flame or light wobbles on water, a candle is lit, the media of light and water are readied, there is a dome, a multiplicity contained in a dome:

“The sky above her head seemed so thickly sown with innumerable stars that the whole was at once strange and at once hugely comforting. So many and so near, those stars seemed unfamiliar as if the whole of heaven was in some manner raining, dripping down soft and fragrant dust. The whole thing seemed like mist, like rain, to drift, to sift, to drown and smother like any silver twining London fog. Yet the very substance of that mist was vaguely warm, vaguely near. As if looking upward from the heart of that enormous flower, she perceived, above her head, the rayed-out centre of the flower, heavy with pollen, stable, yet sure with the slightest variation of wind or summer breeze to spill its just hovering, just clinging dust.”¹⁷

“I should make a picture that was globular; semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf—sounds indistinguishable from sights.”¹⁸

In this dome, this dome of babble and humming, of radiance, the access to outside is not clear, but also not necessary, seeming to be made of a space where the outside meets the inside, a meniscus of filling to the brim, yet beyond, unspilling, and still being held, complete: the perfect moment of undifferentiated envelopment, pre-natal/-oedipal? it seems necessary to say, “a more or less victorious confrontation, never finished with her.”

in the eager angel rain
a space of the gibbus moon's riant irregular shape
waxed wayward over the irises
a "sign"—suspicious word
a sign-suspicious word.
see bits travel and years later

artesian it spouts
lustru lustru lustru (try Esperanto?)

white flowers look like shadows
of their leaves
sea sheen, seen
seeing deeper by seeing white

seeing rains of seeded light
outside in
and inside out

milk page
(no) libation down
this is the task of wildflower

silence.

8.

HER (1927): its maternal power, its ambivalence to maternal power, daughter-mother who bears whom? "A tiny flame burst up; forest worshiper, fire worshiper (Hermione) enclosed as in a ball of glass, bent to revive life. Eugenia's face was pale, tipped at the chin edge by phosphorescent line as the light crept up, little live flame in the midst of water" (*HER*, p. 89). And in the storm, lightning: "chalk of brilliant sizzling white fire had written insoluble words across the densest blackness" (*HER*, p. 90).

To the Lighthouse (1927): its maternal power, its ambivalence to maternal power, daughter-mother who bears whom? An "insoluble language":

“tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored?” (TTL, p. 82)

How to remain connected within, immersed to the buzzing honey, the chant, the wordless pleasure, how to notate, the space in which one has being, how to tell the globes of spell, spell without spilling, spoiling, splaying

how to put rhythm, pulse, humming space into meaning, without violating the meanings of that space? “one with the object one”
“enclosed as in a ball of glass”

It is to have, to bring or to make some unreadable (ever readable, never terminable) mark.

“With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre.” (TTL, p. 319)

9.

There is in fact a plethora of incest in H.D. One of her tasks as a writer seems to have been to naturalize, normalize that “incest” and to overwrite the emotional taboo by measured, articulate, lyric considerations of desires within the family: the depiction of Bertie and Hermione in *HER*, the depiction of the brothers in *Tribute to Freud*, the relation to the father in *Tribute to Freud*, to the mother, the mother-daughter dyad in *Helen in Egypt*

“If it is true that the prohibition of incest constitutes, at the same time, language as communicative code and women as exchange objects in order for society to be established, *poetic language would be* for its questionable subject-in-process the *equivalent of incest*. . . .”¹⁹

What does it mean when you both be it (the woman/the mother) and want it (the mother/the woman)? The desire to be folded over onto her-

self (thus, for both H.D. and Woolf, the charge of narcissism). The desire to be both parts of the dyad at once (thus, for both Woolf and H.D., the charge of preciousness). What can lubricate this otherwise complete abrasion? What prevents a woman who writes from unreadable envelopment, unwritable envelopment?

Often, it is the sign of a reader. Often, it is a book, a reader. Someone must read or be reading. (Mrs. Ramsay is reading, and to James — yet — a tale about the boundless sea when Lily is at first inspired. Mr. Ramsay reads a book across the boundless sea, when Lily finishes.) The vision holds a book. It is an unwritten book. It is the perfect sign of exit from the engulfment of maternal incest from the perspective of a woman writer. It is a listening reader, the reader whose book is always waiting, the tolerant listener (and sometimes the demanding “Write, write, or die!”) It is the vision of a Mary with the empty (always to be filled, always fillable) book. Because interpretation is always interminable. Because writing IS reading. And there is a sacred triangle: writing (saying); listening (eliciting); reading (interpreting is another form of listening). “her wavering hieroglyph” “never finished with her”

10.

or sees an unreadable sign.

If a wall releases writing, pictures called “writing”
if a space brings up (as lighting the cyc, the backdrop, they pronounce it
“psyche”
as in “psyche it out” and it is short for cyclorama, a large curved screen or
curtain
used as a background in stage settings) writing
if a space is readied for the projection of necessities
if a space seems so possible

a hotel room, in a country called Hellas, that landscape of urgency, of
longing in a hotel room in the father-and-master country of our (Western)
civilization which H.D. entered only to wedge up, prying, a fulcrum,
what lever? to see the other side, Hellas, the mother, Helen the mother,
Greek myths first learned from a teacher astonishingly named “Miss

Helen" (TTF, p. 186)

This room H.D. bore 13 years later into Freud's room, his chambers, the room inside his room.

In another key moment of H.D.'s sorting (out) the lesbian/matrixsexual erotics of Hermione's identity, the heroine sits at the breakfast table with her mother, trying to recall to her mother the scene in the storm of a liquid intensity in which a flame of language is lit. She (semi-comically, the novel seems as myopic as Dorothy Richardson but it is also like *Pilgrimage* very, very funny) chooses to read to her mother from Swinburne's "Itylus," the poem which, throughout, indicates the passion of Hermione for Fayne (its "swallow" evokes Bryher as well). A specific event has provoked Her's quixotic attempt to unify by her qualified power the two forces which are most obdurately opposed in the novel: maternal and lesbian passion. The event? the flight of a bird. "Things out of the window, across the window seemed to be on the window, against the window, like writing on the wall. Things, a bird skimming across a window, were a sort of writing on a wall." (*HER*, p. 125) Here is an evocation, written by H.D. in 1927, of the "Corfu vision" of 1920 by its "title" which would not be used again until the Freud experience of 1933-34 (TTF, the "Advent" section, p. 169), and then not again until it was made the title of the Freud memoir in 1944, a title which indicates H.D.'s entitlement. "I see by that birdflight across an apparently black [blank?] surface, that curves of wings meant actual things to Greeks, not just vague symbols but actual hieroglyphics . . . hieroglyphs . . ." (*HER*, p. 125, ellipses in original, of course)

In *HER*, H.D. is clear about the sources of her writing in a reiterated, layered sense of otherness. H.D. postulated a realm of mystery, something beyond, something vitally generative for her writing, a kind of intensity, a sense of presence and power ("Words with Fayne in a room, in any room, became projections of things beyond one." *HER*, p. 146) A generative space sends forth signs, and these signs are called by a name which connotes an artfully deciphered writing, distant, mysterious, cryptic, strange, of a strange culture: the hieroglyphs of ancient

~~EGYPT~~ GREECE!

Of course, the hieroglyphs of Egypt, but here she says that the Greeks read hieroglyphs, as later she said, about the picture-writing on the wall that they are like “Greek vase silhouettes” (TTF, p. 169), as later she will have Helen become a hieroglyph that she is, that she reads, reading the maternal name/the self, reading Greece/Egypt, ciphering (encoding the mystery)/deciphering (decoding mystery), entering a boundless space of containment (contentment) as a reader (a writer), a hero/ine (a poet), a mother (a daughter), reading Greece (the father, the brother) as Egypt (the mother). To pick out the signs from this space “a distinctive mark, trace, index, the premonitory sigh, the proof, engraved mark, imprint— in short, a *distinctiveness* admitting of an uncertain and indeterminate articulation. . . .” Coming from the old country, one of those old countries, from the mother country.

the premonitory ~~sigh~~ sign

Awakened from illness/madness by the “talking cure,” Her walks into the snow, “leaving her wavering hieroglyph as upon white parchment.” (HER, p. 224) And doing so, she sees that the snowy embankment is a “roll from which more parchment [more space for writing] might be shaken.” Writing is listening into the list(en)ing space.

11.

Why hieroglyphs? Egyptian “sacred writing” subsumes three kinds of language function. Although popularly they are perceived simply as “picture writing” (ideograms, sense-signs, one picture for one word), in fact they are not only that. Some pictures are a word, or two or three pictures may make a word, or the denotative association may be called for: *sun* may mean *day*. But some of the pictographs are also alphabetic (phonograms, sound-signs). In fact, the Rosetta stone began to be successfully decoded only by a reading of proper names by means of alphabetic (not pictographic) assumptions. “Throughout the entire course of its history that hieroglyphic script remained a *picture-writing eked out by phonetic elements.*”²⁰ And finally, some of the pictographs are determinative—in a curious space (as far as I can figure it) between grammatical and semantic functions: they tell you how certain sound-signs are to be read. H.D. was familiar enough with this system to call the Niké pictograph, appearing at the end of her

Corfu vision, “the last concluding symbol—perhaps that ‘determinative’ that is used in the actual hieroglyph, the picture that contains the whole series of pictures in itself or helps clarify or explain them.” (TTF, p. 56) It is Bryher who sees this Niké-into-Helios image, who sees, therefore, the “determinative.”

To evoke hieroglyphs is to evoke:

a bright attractiveness of depiction. In bulk, hieroglyphs look like a little world. There are birds, people, feet, there is water, fish, pans, scales, hooks; there are snakes and loaves, twisted rope and baskets.

a metonymic world of association and juxtaposition, sign next to sign more available (by being pictures) than the alphabet for association, visualization. A world forever extensive by (our imposition of) metonymies, yet presumably readable. Thus a recurrent situation in H.D. (in *Palimpsest* as in *Helen in Egypt*): a woman is faced with some hieroglyphs and the question of reading them is fraught with anticipation and fear.

and three—or two plus—streams of reading—not only pictographic, but also alphabetic, and not only alphabetic, but of those certain signs are “determinative”—a plurality of readings, of reading tactics. Which H.D. would later, in *Trilogy*, bring across so as to treat English “hieroglyphically”: “Osiris,” “O-sire-is” and “zrr-hiss.”

To evoke hieroglyphs is to foreground reading that is part of writing, yet also to show a writing which has built inside it a plurality of reading.

If a woman reads as she has been read, she will be limited.

Reading the sign of the woman, reading signs generated around women, reading the presence of the sign, woman, in culture, means reading a situation of being read. A woman writer is never just written, she is read, as a woman. So, as a woman, she needs to originate her own reading. Her own methods.

12.

The chora safe for women. Why have I used the notion of safety except by the assumption that the habits of mind, emotion and gender position of the male subject offer some secondary protection to the descent, via language and form, to the position before meaning. While female habits of mind, emotion and gender position may look with vertigo upon the temptation to engulfment, and loss of ego. Or, with unassimilable desire.

H.D. makes the chora safe by concentration, within the semiotic, on those features most closely allied to the symbolic: (un)readable signs, with a further evocation of figures of the reader, the book, interpretation, reading—but only as the activities undertaken in the understanding that the signs remain mysteries, and wisdom is not in translation or identification but in the dark illumination of mystery, its layerings, its implications, the variety of its traces, its metamorphoses, using the sign as portal, as entrance to the area where not reading, but readings will forever gush. An activity of mind, a condition of desiring.

One is reminded of Virginia Woolf's pique, anger even, at interpretations of the mark at the end of *To the Lighthouse*.²¹

And so H.D. found a key medium when she found (re-founded) the essay (*The Gift, Tribute to Freud, Compassionate Friendship*), because she makes it the medium of endless interpretation, intellectually bold—bolder indeed than “The Cinema and the Classics” (1927) and thicker, richer than the very short and early “Notes on Thought and Vision” (1919). She makes it palimpsest, she makes it plenitude.

And when she writes out her vision of the picture writing in *Tribute to Freud*, notice that, while she evokes and engages with a rare suggestiveness and multiplicity, she leaves these signs ultimately unreadable, her tribute (or gift) to Freud being first the presence-to-be-reckoned-with of this particular permutation of consciousness—her visions, and second the affirmation of (un)readability—that is, the possibility of meditating upon, but never fixing or pinning any sign.

Already, when she went to Freud, she had found to her intense disappointment that she could not use (“use”) any of her visions narratively, directly positioning them in a story, as she had tried to do with the Peter Rodeck material in the destroyed novel *Niké*.²²

(She decided now not to use them, but to let them use her.)

Because in *Tribute to Freud* (despite—no, because of the nuanced intelligence, the cultural range deployed and displayed, the fact that, with such a touch in writing for exfoliation and depiction—such a writer could have done anything), H.D. does not interpret those signs. That is, while she does make local identifications (Jacob’s ladder, Delphic tripod, s’s like question marks) the better for us to have evoked the resonance of the signs and their impact, H.D. does not narrate any story or prepare any statement that the images make, separately (as static pictures) or together (as cinematic sequence), although the latter portion of the vision even suggests that direction because it is filmic in conception. Nor does she narrate or interpret despite the presence of the “determinative”—which “contains” or “helps clarify or explain” a set of hieroglyphics. She only takes the time to reject one (“Freudian”) reading of one of the hieroglyphs in which Niké = Athene without spear = castrated woman.²³ She later says that Freud’s own theory was premised upon the non-allegorical reading of these materials. “There are all these shapes, lines, graphs, the *hieroglyph of the unconscious*, and the Professor had first opened the field to the study of this vast, unexplored region. He himself—at least to me personally—deplored the tendency to *fix* ideas too firmly to set symbols, or to weld them inexorably.” (TTF, p. 93)

She says, when Freud moves in onto her Niké, that in offering her his theory of castration, “She has lost her spear,” “he might have been talking Greek.” (TTF, p. 69) She would rather be talking Egyptian.

13.

What writes *Tribute to Freud*? H.D. said, “I wish to recall the impressions, or rather I wish the impressions to recall me.” (TTF, p. 14) This no longer sounds like a sentimental reversal, but a bi-directional bridging between symbolic and semiotic. A hushed incipience, (not) already filled. Not

notes, not chronology, not the invigilator but the HearD. The shift from active forming to hushed attention will recall the “me” that each memory could make. And H.D. does here seem to shift between the postulate of a stable ego which may be reformulated through the clarities of memory and the postulation of what Kristeva calls a “subject-in-process,” a selving (like a duckling) that can be provisionally postulated given this kind of statement, another selving, given another kind of statement, for H.D. enjoys fragmenting herself when and if she can do this by attending to myth (multi-cultural myths and stories) because these old images are a bottom. So if she loses her ego, her stable sense of self, she can still both gather together and disappear into a larger, more voluminous story, a story with many chapters, a story whose combinations will never conclude.

14.

Week of 1–6 July, 17 months. Words: mur mur mur (more); caow; mMMoo; DIRty; WWWride (ride); RRweh (wet); Bluhh (blueberries).

Record of 26 August, 18.5 months. Words: farm, boat, backhoe, blanket (bottue), cow, roll, milk, up, on, shut, open, I do, bye bye, seat, night, motor (mowë = motorcycle), fish, Nijmegen (= map), map, ice, frites, ride, go, out, cookie, ocean, bird, flower (foür; later flowie), apple (appy), hop in, hole, wash (vash), wipe (vipe), mommydaddy, no, uhhuh, move, more, chicken, eat, baba, carry, baby, help, poop, fountain, noo noo (noodles), ei (egg), watch (vatch), OK, key, animal (amal), bug, mouth, hair, eye, ring, table (tebby), write, book, dog, puppy, they speak about an explosion of language.

Sitting in a crummy hotel room, watching the light brown air flicker, watching a nothing a slash of molding, a nailhead hammered but still emerges, how the world is humanly held, a shell of wallboard over crumbling plaster, a room a room inside a room, a baby lying breathless to calm down, a tear, just one grief for two old men, one dead, the other—I had just kissed him. They are not careless

The dusk grows thicker.

I held her filling up with darkness.

What writes listens. Listening is one of the major social and intellectual skills necessary for signification. (When they sing to themselves the “language in the crib” is it for the pleasure of listening in the dark to their voice (pause) their voice and the difference it makes “shoes on shoes off pants on pants off” 21 months.)

Listening is not pre-signification, in the sense of lower than or prior to; it is the simultaneous *sine qua non*, that without which, there is no signification: no talk without pauses, no dialogue without silence, no translation without the white emptiness into which bubbles parallel statement.

Holding on: that in the semiotic realm are a plethora of “hieroglyphs,” of signs, of “signets”—jewels of the unnameable, that in the maternal (and sometimes elsewhere) is incipience and listening, a waiting

the passage between Mamalie and Hilda in *The Gift* in which Hilda feels she protects her grandmother by a benevolent, interested, receptive hush, protects Mamalie from waking up from her trance state; this is what allows information and a way of knowing to pass between the dyad

and thus for women (well, for a woman, for H.D. as a woman writing) the presentation of unreadable signs to herself, the lush evocation of a plurality of possible readings, the reader of hush, are the materials of primary creation.

“I hug a ~~soft~~ shabby doll to my heart, my Muse is an old doll.”²⁴

15.

In fact, after the elaborate, pensive and solemn accumulation of statement about the pictographs (TTF sections 28–41), which replicates, in the prose, the straining and pressure of the appearance of these signs, and which, as I have said, offers some local interpretation, some reading, as well as some set of questions which precisely alters the position of the self from side to side of an evoked story—“Am I looking at the Gorgon head . . . Or am I myself Perseus” (TTF, p. 52)—after the reader is awash with signs, H.D., as if it were the most natural thing to do now, simply offers more signs. “Confetti-like tokens” with “mottoes . . . short and bright

and to the point” supporting Hitler. (TTF, p. 58) “Other swastikas” . . . I followed them down Berggasse as if they had been chalked on the pavement especially for my benefit.” (TTF, p. 59) “Then there were rifles.” These were stacked neatly, looked like “an 1860 print”. . . “familiar pictures of our American Civil War.” (TTF, p. 59) When she astonishingly arrives for her session at the time of the attempted Nazi Putsch it is that day when she notices the waiting room with its “framed photographs,” the “diploma” from Clark University, the “bizarre print or engraving.” (TTF, p. 61) There is the sign of her coming, the sign of the gardenias she wanted to give, and the dream icon of the “snake on a brick” (TTF, p. 64) and the finding in reality of the dream icon in a little case of signet rings at the Louvre. (TTF, p. 65) Signs, readable, unreadable, a plethora of signs, and then, in climax, the hymn to signs, section 50, based, appropriately for issues of reading, interpreting, decoding — or not — on checking “up on the word ‘signet’ in my Chambers’ English Dictionary.” (TTF, p. 66) Upon which she discovers that her choice of name, her signature, is a “signet” proof of a royal manner, proof of (as Emily Dickinson might have said) an election: to the saturation in, the creation of, the abandonment to “sign again — a word, gesture, symbol, or mark, intended to signify something else.” (TTF, p. 66) And in this sign, “*in hoc signo*” . . . “*vinces*.” Now certainly there might be ways and ways of reading this (Christian ways, for example), but let us say this way: that the *vinces* is the victory, the Niké, and what Niké signals is then the plethora of signs, and the emotional investment in noticing them, and the intellectual and poetic energy invested in continuing them. Not in stopping, not in saying one thing, one true thing, but in the sheer continuance, the bubbling of sign after sign. Because the very dramatic structure of the writing on the wall section has meaning: its meaning is continuance — will there be energy enough, intensity enough, care and risk enough to continue to see what the signs themselves want: that “the writing continues to write itself or be written.” (TTF, p. 51)

I know that this is a somewhat tendentious, limited reading. But satisfying to the degree that the H.D. of the essay is, among other things, the H.D. of continuations, of readings, of bright hieroglyphs forever read, forever unreadable: “her wavering hieroglyph” “the *hieroglyph of the unconscious*”

It is the H.D. who, even when an interpretation “might have led us too far afield in a discussion or reconstruction of cause and effect, which might indeed have included priceless treasures, gems, and jewels, among the so-called findings of the unconscious mind revealed by the dream-content or associated thought and memory” might, even thus, “have side-tracked the issue in hand,” still even then continues. (TTF, p. 88)

16.

There are certainly, as in any important writing, several agendas. *Tribute to Freud* is also a pallinode, a defense of the one unassimilable symptom: the writing on the wall. She begins her defense in the very first words, the very first section—its circumstantiality, its facticity: dates, addresses, setting, datebook arrangements. She passes to other “characters” and their place in the world. Then, the maneuver which Freud sanctions, there is the possibility of their place in interior dramas or fantasies. Although H.D. denies that van der Leeuw figured in this way, she obediently elaborates a fictive set of associations, invented on the spot, reveries which she could have had. The strategy of H.D.’s pallinode (one with which we are already familiar in her, in other women writers)—aggressive humility—is to claim that she would not, on her own, without the Professor’s covering sanction, have initiated these intricate associations, even though she had been writing novels for five, for eight, for ten, for twelve years which incorporated, and then became based upon densities, palimpsests of associations rebarbaratively articulated.

(Rebarbarative does not appear to be a word. At least the only word right now near it in the small Webster’s is rebarbative which does not mean mercilessly repetitive but rather repellent, unattractive, forbidding, grim.)

The relationship between analyst and analysand then presented as an exchange of gifts amounts to H.D.’s choreography of gesture and response precisely about the question of reading: whether, by implication or by direct evidence, the recipient has received the intended message in all its meanings.²⁵ The question of encoding and decoding is of course part of the analytic agenda: factual gestures, real exchanges, are raised to a second level. Not only do they exist, but they exist to be read, to be sewn, sown into a dramatic ongoing elaboration of readings.

Then she passes to her own dreams and memories, especially of her family. These too are sanctioned by the Freudian system. Notice how slowly, with how measured, how careful a footstep, she moves on into the one kind of thing (gesture? sign? unconscious event? dream? reverie? memory? gift?), the experiences so far unanalyzed (untapped) by the Professor. "For things had happened in my life, pictures, 'real dreams,' actual psychic or occult experiences that were superficially, at least, outside the province of established psychoanalysis." (TTF, p. 39) Her ambition? to bring them into the province of established psychoanalysis.

She will bring this gift to the father (the Vater, as the singing soul says at the end); he in exchange will give her (back) her (himself as) (herself as) mother. Mutter.

17.

Dependency? Independence? The yammerer yanks away: No No No No No. (24 mo.) Power-who-is-thwarted holds on (too) hard. They tug. The one unconscious or unheeding of consequences, one way. The blank to cause and effect, the other pulls, or really just stands fast. Larger, the mother. Weightier. Smaller, but cyclonic, the twister.

So the smaller sprains her ~~wrist~~. Her wrist.

The I stretches through the tendons
indeed in this language acquisition "I"
goes in two differing directions,
I is un other
I is amother
she is I she sees me as the I-No, the "I know"; the "no no"
I am the no-I she says NO; that's her I (she is me?)
when she speaks NO speaks
She is the No of the pair
I am the weeping angry she
("I sprained her wrist!")
My I goes backwards, I want no I
Her I goes forwards, she wants her I

I is not her, her is not I, she is me, I am not me,
I did not want to hurt her, I hurt her, she hurt her

our language acquisition is splitting us (is splitting me)
I want to go back, to go forward
she seems to want to go forward, by beginning to know there is a back.

18.

“‘Why did you think you had to tell me? . . . But you felt you wanted to tell your mother.’

All this seemed almost too simple at the time. My mother was dead; things had happened before her death, ordinary as well as incredible things, that I hadn’t told her.” (TTF, p. 30)²⁶

19.


There are so many places to go. There is “‘In analysis, the person is dead after the analysis is over.’” and H.D. asked “‘Which person?’” (TTF, p. 141) There is H.D.’s desire to establish (as a fact?) the immortality of the soul and therefore to establish (as a possibility?) the “theoretical” potential for cross . . . for cross what? There is probably a term for it. I mean the actual communication between the dead and the living, the living and the dead (although in Western culture, from the epic trip to the Underworld on, isn’t it true that only the dead speak?) *The Gift* is dedicated to Helen. Her mother. With the epigraph “L’amitié passe même le tombeau.”

Writing, anyway, is speaking to the dead. As Alice Walker said. Because they have the most time. To listen.²⁷

20.

H.D. wanted to tell their source her hieroglyphs. Missing it, never to close the circle, was writing. (What writes? what writes? is it this distance, the ever more necessary distance even within the dyad, at its core, that one is not the other?)

back to it, back to the same
local clover, white clover, perk pink hard
a silent sort
a signal tone
humming its way up through single patch of ground
into a sinking patch of time.

Mother, language has appeared to me. Mother, signs appear to me, im-
pishly, upon a wall.  I sit (Isis) and watch.

21.

iris paper
crisis paper
rice paper
rise poplar
isis papyrus
I-I bye-bye

22.

mee mee bay bee
ai that I that speaks, she speaks
ahh that I spoken
spoken about
“quoth I, me, she who speaks in my place

Bev

the I that listens, listeth
(the song asked “how can there be a baby”) and the baby said
there is a baby
I am a baby
I am that baby
remember! the baby
no metaphor that baby
the literal baby
(sing it sister)
is me herein
mee
don't speak of me, and speak of me
I speak (of) myself her-in
mee mee
glad tidings!
hmmmmmmmm

23.

A translation that folds, that enfolds on-self back into the semiotic. H.D.'s "writing on the wall" in her writing as she writes it, as she narrates it, as she interprets it (to release it quickly back to (un)readability) opens a vast space of endless reading. A vast space endlessly accreting. With connected signs and stories, a vast space of the unreadable, which is slightly, glancingly, read before it is back, it goes back, it ebbs back into continuous signing, the never to be fully explained. Never to be fully articulated surplus. The meaning of essay is the forever surplus signings (sighings) of ruminative pleasure and pain, of seeing the unreadable, of reading, only to have more unreadable bubble. There is no final reading the (un)readable. A perpetual (the essay) and enacted resistance to thetic meaning even in the creation of meaning; the encirclement of meaning

and to mark this process, the sign of a reader; to anchor the question, the presence of a (an ironized) master of reading (a certain Freud in *Tribute to Freud*, Kaspar the Mage in *Trilogy*, Durand as writer/judge in "Hermetic Definition" and as well St. John Perse therein, Amen as an early "read" meaning in *Helen in Egypt*). The presence of an empty book, a blank page. The blank page is (like a) gushing spring. The mother in *Trilogy* who does not carry a child/"tome"/tomb, but a "blank" and "unwritten" book.

24.

"I cannot realize it, but it goes on." Not a citation from the Corfu vision, but from Kristeva on the maternal. Becoming a mother has, the process of gestation (outside in and inside out) has so far been accounted for in only two discourses, says Kristeva. Science. And Christian theology (*cum art*). H.D., did she want to invent a third (singlehandedly, as usual, and therefore she had to encrust herself with the bestudded, bestudied armor of myth)? To invent a way of bringing access to the maternal (the baby) body into . . . she said . . .²⁸

the writing on the wall is gestation, is being both mother and child.

25.

In a long excursus fictionalizing an account of, offering some interior monologue about early Freud discoveries (section 59 and its surround-

ings), H.D. insists that Freud was both scientific (methodological) and intuitive. H.D. insists that Freud modified the Socratic (false dialogic) method: so that, instead of being “egged on” to definition and elucidation by a probing, articulate sword fighter: teacher-mentor, instead “the question must be propounded by the protagonist himself, he must dig it out from its buried hiding-place, he himself must find the question before it could be answered.” (TTF, p. 84)

First, the protagonist must change the pronouns.

Then she must find her question. What is the question? Is it what is the meaning of this writing? Is it what are the meanings of these signs? Is it what is the meaning of the Niké which is the “determinative”? Is it what are the meanings of my hallucinatory experiences? Is it (how) should I read these signs? Is it what does my desire for union with the maternal body, with the baby body, necessitate for me as a woman writer? What writes, when the writer is a woman?

milk page
no libation down, the page is wet but
a cakey ground
restrains
an unusual train (of)

thought awakened
high engines passing and only tunnels of access.

26.

I have tried only to discuss the section “Writing on the Wall” — the “written” text — in an unsystematic way, although I have cited from “Advent.” Each text in itself deserves a complete (what a word, here) and polyphonic commentary which it has gotten only to a certain degree. This commentary needs to take into account the status of the one text as being, H.D. says, “written” (and it was also published, or, as she says, it “appeared”), and “written in London in the autumn of 1944, with no reference to the Vienna notebooks of spring 1933,” which were, of course, the source of “Advent.” “Advent” is different. It was “taken direct from the old notebooks of 1933”: this says to me that the writing, the physical flow

of words upon the page as they had come were mainly retained in that order. But H.D. then says that “Advent” was “not assembled until December 1948, Lausanne.” (TTF, xiv) Probably a cutting and possibly (but not likely) a rejuxtaposing process was engaged. The text of “Advent” is dated by day, and within each day, by hour (thus prefiguring in this tactic both “Sagesse” and *End to Torment*). It is not likely that H.D. would have violated that organizing principle unless a sentence or two extraneous to a certain date/time but pertinent to, illuminating of, really belonging to another date/time had surfaced and become obtrusive. In that rare case (because the very accidents and conjunctions of this text offer an endless field for speculation, not least to their author), it is plausible that H.D.’s “reassembling” would have moved such material. But basically “Advent” wants to present the raw materials of association in an enlivening, startling, silly and even frightening matter.

H.D. describes “Advent” as “the continuation of ‘Writing on the Wall,’ or its prelude.” (TTF, xiv) These two terms, both alluding to narrative formation, are of exceeding interest. First, the terms allude to very different points or positions in narrative—pre-beginning and after-ending—yet here suggest some equivalence. Both imply that the “finished” status of the Freud memoir (which “appeared in *Life & Letters Today*”) has not been self-ruptured (“now” is when this doubled version of *Tribute to Freud* was first allowed by H.D.—1956). That self-rupture is an act which, not to be tedious, could be assimilated to the strategies of “writing beyond the ending”: here as a kind of self-critique, the rewriting by breaking the sequence, postulating (as “prelude” and/or as “continuation”) another sequence. One might say that “Advent” was placed with “Writing on the Wall” to make sure it is remembered that what is learned from the careful (non)reading offered in the Freud memoir is precisely the necessity of continuance. Certainly if “Advent” continued (was the sequel to) “Writing on the Wall”—as it was chronologically, the one finished in 1944, the other in 1948—the climactic status of the triumphant and sentimental ending in the Goethe poem might be seriously undercut. (In that poem it is hard—wilful—to read mother for father, to say that the presence of Mignon the baby is the desire for the baby; so it can be known as a paean to the master.) If “Advent” offered a prelude to the other work—as it did in terms of writing process, of language acquisition—it becomes the space of

heterogeneousness which can never be fully explored or explained, whose fits and starts never fused with the lyrical and argumentative cunning of "Writing on the Wall"; the presence of "Advent" making us see signs bubbling up.²⁹ Together, the two statements published under the title *Tribute to Freud*, with their slight changes of the nuances of certain incidents, the differences in emphasis, the alternative trajectories of development, the presence of more dreams in one, of more characters in one than the other, the wayward fragmentary shifts as opposed to (as related to) the pulsing elegance of hypotactic sentences, make the most astonishing and vital palimpsest H.D. ever produced in a career of intense concentration on that word about writing, that "form": the overwriting of one erased writing by another writing: semi (un)readable signs.³⁰

The idea of inscribing, reinscribing, rescribing, new scribbling, is a tribute to Stein (there is no repetition, there is only insistence) as well as to Freud. ("I said that I wished I had asked an artist friend to sketch the series [of pictographs, the "writing on the wall"] for me, so that I could have shown it to him direct. He said that would have been no use. 'There would be value in the pictures only if you yourself drew them.'" TTF. p. 173) Not about revelation, but about representation. As much as H.D. believed in, fostered in herself the idea of revelation in order for her *to* represent.³¹

The question was in finding (what writes when the writer is a woman) the exact proportion and shiftings of reading and not-yet and yes, interpreting which would continue to generate writing precisely because such a proportion (a high degree of allegiance to the semiotic, to unreadable sign) also evoked listening, not speaking (not formulating the question but allowing the writing, the writer to "ask the question," language acquisition, language a question)

Forever read, forever beyond reading. Listening, listing, listeth, listed.

with a debt to the presence and work of
Beverly Dahlen, work called *A Reading*

Swarthmore, PA—Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Summer 1985–November 1985

NOTES

1. "It is frequently noted in observations on the linguistic development of the child that intonation or sentence melody is one of the earliest linguistic features acquired by a child." This necessitates "a discussion of prosody which follows. Under prosody, we include intonation, pauses and stress." Ruth Hirsch Weir, *Language in the Crib* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), p. 28.
2. Julia Kristeva, "From One Identity to An Other," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 133–34.
3. H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (containing "Writing on the Wall" and "Advent") (Boston: David R. Godine, 1974 [1956]), p. 66. Henceforth TTF, in text.
4. Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (New York: Urizen Books, 1977), pp. 29–30.
5. This "relational definition" emphasizes that Kristeva offers "a theory of marginality, subversion, and dissidence" which intersects with notions of the female, seen "in terms of positionality rather than of essences." Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 166, 164, 166.
6. In "Stabat Mater" (1977) Kristeva offers, by parallel intertexts, each marginal, each central, a way of structurally representing the relationship of analysis and speculation. Recently translated in *Poetics Today*, 6, 1–2 (1985): 133–52.
7. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 50.
8. Kristeva, "From 'Oscillation du "pouvoir" au "refus,"'" *New French Feminisms*, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 167.
9. Kristeva, *New French Feminisms*, p. 166.
10. Kristeva, *Ibid.*
11. H.D., Letter to May Sarton, May 6, [1941]. Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. A look at the index to *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* also tells us what we could suspect: Woolf did not read H.D. (Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* [Princeton University Press, 1983]). And the only "Aldington" who appears quite briefly in Woolf's world in the early 1920s is Richard. Interestingly, Aldington's brief appearance leads Woolf to some dour comments about "young men" who make their way in the world and to an annunciation of her feminist project. "All young men do it. No young women; or in women it is trounced; in men forgiven. It's these reflections I want to enmesh, in writing; or these are among them." (Entry of 21 December 1924), *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume II, 1920–1924*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 326.
12. H.D., *HERmione* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1981 [1927]), p. 212. Given the title *Her* by H.D., which shall be used here. Henceforth HER, in text.

13. For a brief exploration of the essay's anti-Cartesian poetics of critique, see DuPlessis, *H.D.: The Career of that Struggle* (Brighton: Harvester and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 84–86.
14. Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jean Schulkind (Sussex: The University Press, 1976), p. 65.
15. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967 [1927]), p. 83. Henceforth TTL, in text.
16. H.D., *The Gift* [abridged by Griselda Ohanessian] (New York: New Directions, 1982), p. 83.
17. H.D., *Palimpsest* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968 [1926]), p. 211.
18. Woolf, *Moments of Being*, p. 66.
19. Kristeva, "From One Identity to An Other," *Desire in Language*, p. 136. Theoretically, if one has access to the presymbolic mother, this "incest" would be true for both male writers and female writers. Kristeva's examples again come exclusively from male writers: de Sade, Artaud, Joyce, Céline. So again gender questions are aroused: since when a woman writes, a person constituted and represented as an "exchange object" who is, at the same time, the potential object of the presymbolic longings of others and who is constituted to be that, must "appropriate to itself this archaic, instinctual, maternal territory."
20. Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 8.
21. As reported in Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, Volume II (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), p. 129.
22. Adalaide Morris, "The Concept of Projection: H.D.'s Visionary Powers," *Contemporary Literature* 25, 4 (1984): 411–436, also discusses the "Writing on the Wall" in conjunction with other, repeated events of vision and projection which defined H.D.'s work.
23. For an elaboration of this moment in the analysis see DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman, "'Woman is Perfect': H.D.'s Debate with Freud," *Feminist Studies* 7, 3 (Fall 1981): 417–430.
24. H.D., *Compassionate Friendship* (1955), Unpublished Typescript, Collection of American Literature, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, p. 62.
25. See the excellent work by Adalaide Morris, analyzing the gift-exchange as a primary structure of H.D.'s psychic life, with readings in biography, in history of ideas, in the religious culture from which H.D. sprung. "A Relay of Power and of Peace: H.D. and the Spirit of the Gift," *Contemporary Literature* 27, 4 (1986): 493–524.
26. In point of fact, the brilliance of the analysis leaves a shiver, as well as the brilliance of the rendering. The confrontation "I am an old man — you do not think it worth your while to

love me ” is followed by a blankness “I simply felt nothing at all. I said nothing.” (TTF, p. 16) Compare Woolf, *Moments of Being*: “I remember very clearly how even as I was taken to the bedside I noticed that one nurse was sobbing, and a desire to laugh came over me, and I said to myself as I have often done at moments of crisis since, ‘I feel nothing whatever.’ Then I stooped and kissed my mother’s face. It was still warm. She [had] only died a moment before. Then we went upstairs into the day nursery.” (*Moments of Being*, p. 92) H.D. traces out her resistance (“but why take up time going into all that, anyway?” TTF, p. 17) precisely around the issue of an association with a warm stove in Freud’s room, reminding her of “a book that my mother had liked.” “I could not remember a single incident of the book and would not take the time to go through all the intricacies of explaining to the Professor . . . ,” etc. The release, the success of the analysis, suggests part of the poetics of the essay: exactly to “take up time going into all that.” The poetics of continuance. Of association. Of flooding text. (The text floods into the “notes.”) H.D.’s mother had died in 1927; *HER* took the first measure; her grief, it seems clear, repressed, at her mother’s death is obliquely fixed, in *Tribute to Freud*, as one of the reasons for seeking this analysis.

27. Alice Walker. It is appropriate that I cannot locate this statement.

28. Kristeva, “Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini,” in *Desire in Language*, p. 237.

29. I have interpreted all this as if the main relationship explored (by one light) were not H.D.-Freud but rather H.D.-writing (her writing, her “writing on the wall,” and so on). For this to have had any possibility of being written depends upon the major elucidation by Susan Friedman of the feminist and cultural meanings of the H.D.-Freud encounter, a work presupposed in the study made here. See *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

30. This idea of the palimpsest of *Tribute to Freud* and of the plenitude of the sign was written without consulting Deborah Kelly Kloepfer’s essay “Fishing the Murex Up: Sense and Resonance in H.D.’s *Palimpsest*,” but it should probably not be read without an acknowledgement to that work. *Contemporary Literature* 27, 4 (1986): 533–73.

31. Gertrude Stein on repetition and insistence occurs for a few pages of “Portraits and Repetition,” in *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985 [1935]), pp. 166–169.