

## H.D. by *Delia Alton* · H.D.

Dec. 12, 1949

*Madrigal*: this story of War I was roughed out, summer 1939, in Switzerland. I left the MS with books and other papers with Bryher, when I returned to England, soon after the outbreak of War II. It was returned to me last winter. In leafing over the un-corrected pages, I found an unexpected force and energy. I would re-assemble the romance.

I had been writing or trying to write this story, since 1921. I wrote in various styles, simply or elaborately, stream-of-consciousness or straight narrative. I re-wrote this story under various titles, in London and in Switzerland. But after I had corrected and typed out *Madrigal*, last winter, I was able conscientiously to destroy the earlier versions. I had expected at first sight of the torn and weathered MS, to destroy *Madrigal*. The last sections were carelessly assembled, so I finished the story after the "Greek" prelude when Julia writes to Rico.

On re-reading the typed MS, I realized that at last, the War I story had "written itself."

*Madrigal* is a story, a novel in historical time. It is the eternal story of the search. The mythical or religious love-story continues through all the writing. Margaret Fairwood in "Hesperia," a few years later "in time," finds herself in Egypt. She realized, on her return-trip from Assuan on the Nile boat *Rosetta*, that "Osiris is scattered not only along Nile river, but along all mud-banks and sand-banks from Liverpool to Tank-town, Montana." "Hesperia" follows the break with London that Julia Ashton makes in *Madrigal*.

In *Madrigal*, she perceives a compromise. She can live in the ordinary dimensions and at the same time, in the *gloire*. That is, outwardly she can carry on her ordinary life, yet realize her true fulfilment inwardly, in creative writing, "I will be living in these notes." In *Madrigal*, Julia Ashton finds a companion, creatively her equal or superior. But she sacrifices him or is sacrificed by him. In "Hesperia," there is no sacrifice, there is completion on the material and on the spiritual plane, at one and the same time. But the night-vision in the Amen-temple, described in "Hesperia," though it occurs in clock-time is yet conditional by no usual sequence of

events. "Hesperia" conforms to an exact formula or occasion, the opening of the Tomb.

The Margaret of the story, in Egypt on somewhat vaguely indicated secretarial duties, meets the Captain, in the blazing summer-sunlight of early February, at the Tomb entrance. He directs her and her companion to the Rest House. The Captain's own red-robed dragoman attends them. In Egypt and at that time, there is no "mystery" in this. This legendary figure from the Arabian Nights or from a Bethlehem Epiphany scene leads the way along a flinty rock-path across the desert. There are a number of red-tasselled donkeys and a few riding-horses tethered beyond the sand-carts. The Captain will take the long way round, with his horse. He will meet them at the Rest House.

They lunch at the Rest House with others who straggle in from the sand-carts; they explore the little temple of Hatshepsut after lunch. When Margaret and her companion return to the Luxor Hotel, they find the Captain on the hotel verandah, as if waiting for them.

This story was published in Paris in 1926, but I have no copy of it here. In any case, "Hesperia," though part of "Secret Name," is a story on its own, though "Secret Name" was written soon after the actual visit to Egypt, winter 1923, and "Hesperia" was only finally revised last winter.

These are two women, Julia Ashton and Margaret Fairwood. They are of course, they all are, the same woman. She knows, February 1923, on her return from the drowned Isis-temple at Philae, that "women are individually seeking, as one woman, fragments of the Eternal Lover." As the Eternal Lover has been scattered or disassociated, so she, in her search for him. In *Madrigal*, she seeks for him in contemporary time, among her own associates of England and America, in the years immediately preceding and in the actual years of War I.

She seeks him in fantasy, myth. She has found him, of course. But she can not yet correlate or relate the various entities that make up her own fragments, though in Egypt they were related for her; the formula was presented. It went round the clock. She meets the Captain at the Tomb, approximately at noon; at about mid-night of the same day, after her visit to the Amen-temple, she says good-night to him on the stairway of the Hotel Luxor.

She sees him briefly the next morning. She says good-bye. The formula

is established. She knows that to keep him, she must lose him. She does not know how she knows this. But the seal is set on her knowledge. She can not know that she knows this, until she has progressively retraced her steps, redeemed not so much the fragments of Osiris, as of his sister, twin or double, the drowned or submerged Isis.

This Isis takes many forms, as does Osiris.

She finds a formula for the Eternal Lover in *Pilate's Wife*. The scene of this story is the Jerusalem of the traditional rendering of the Gospels. After re-reading *Madrigal* and "Hesperia," the setting seems over-ornate and artificial. But the treasures of *Pilate's Wife*, Veronica's boudoir, suggest the various findings of the Tomb, and the painted ceiling recalls the miraculously preserved decorations of ancient Egypt. Even Veronica herself distantly resembles the well-known Nefertiti portrait.

Veronica speaks of love, this opiate. But we feel her emotions are in a sense, as unreal or as real in a super-sensuous dimension, as the exotic fragrance contained in her imported crystal phials and boxes. She appears at the end, to break her alabaster-box, but her conclusions do not wholly satisfy us. It is as if in a wave or pre-vision of the next war, or the suppressed memories of the last, we endeavoured to build a shell, almost a Tomb about her.

Veronica is hard, weary, but she will go on, though "she had found that her outer Kingdom and her inner sanctity, had some link missing."

It is, an "attempt at the re-adjustment of the dead and living." It is, "this new Mithraism, the religion of the cohorts." It is, "the world needed a new lover, exactly a new lover." It is, "what I want . . . and always wanted, was an answer."

There is the same sudden summer in late winter that we had in Egypt. Veronica's "enervation" reminds us of Margaret's mood, on the journey inward or downward on the Nile boat, *Rosetta*.

It is, "she had found the thing 'almost.' "

Almost, on re-reading *Pilate's Wife*, we find it for her. She speaks of a little Etruscan statue, a memory of her childhood, "she always knew it would speak." It does not speak, not actually in *Pilate's Wife*. But after our first, almost stupefying impression of "sheer exaltation of the intellect," vibrating through this reconstruction, we realize the search.

"She had had no answer," that is *Pilate's Wife*. Veronica remained, at the end, for all her apparent "exaltation," unsatisfied. But we, on re-reading

this, have had an answer.

“The Eagle and the legions” takes form or actually manifests, some ten years after the book’s final revision, in 1934. In 1944, we are in London. “What the message was or might be, she had no remotest inkling.” So Veronica, *Pilate’s Wife*. But the protagonist of the final version of the search, Delia Alton, in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, has had the message.

Dec. 14

*Pilate’s Wife* relates back to “Hipparchia,” the first of three long-short stories, assembled in *Palimpsest*, published by the Contact Press in Paris, in 1926.

“Hesperia” too, relates back to *Palimpsest*. As I have just said, “Hesperia” is the continuation or the conclusion of “Secret Name.” There were these two stories in the volume, “Hipparchia” and “Secret Name,” and a third, the middle-one, which I called “Murex.” “Murex” is a “modern story,” that is “modern” at the time of writing, in the London of the mid-twenties. At least, I think the story was called “Murex,” I wrote another of the then “period,” later on in the twenties, that I called “Narthex.” “Narthex” was published in a volume of collected stories, *American Caravan*, about 1928.

I can with an effort, recall *Palimpsest* and the later “Narthex.” But it is “Hesperia” that concerns me at the moment. The Egyptian sequence if anything, grows more vivid with the years, and it was only last winter that I assembled “Hesperia” from notes “left over” from the original story. These notes were re-written in the mid-twenties and again re-written in the mid-thirties, but it was only last winter in a final typed copy, that they “came true.”

In the light of “Hesperia,” I felt tempted to re-write “Secret Name,” as there must be a marked discrepancy in style between the story itself and its conclusion. There is almost a quarter of a century between the publication of “Secret Name” in Paris and my own satisfaction with the final version of “Hesperia,” here in Lausanne. It is true that I had roughed out the story, at the same time as I wrote “Secret Name,” soon after my return from the 1923 trip to Egypt. I could imagine the two stories brought together in one volume, if I revised “Secret Name,” so that its style and rhythm should harmonize or blend with “Hesperia.” But fortunately or unfortunately, I have no copy of “Secret Name,” and in any case, I know

that it is better to feel the relation of these stories to one another and to my life now and to my life at the time of writing, to remember, rather than to study, criticize and under-rate them, in their earlier versions.

I remember "Hipparchia," the first of the three *Palimpsest* stories, deals with a Greek girl in Rome, a stranger or half-stranger, like Veronica. [In] *Pilate's Wife*, Veronica is an Etruscan, "a little out of step with the procession she was, of necessity, part of."

*Hedylus* was published in 1928. I seem only to remember the different covers of the Houghton Mifflin and the Basil Blackwood editions. I saved copies of both, but they too, were stowed away in London at the time of the heavy bombing. I thought with trepidation, of possibly revising *Hedylus* as well as the still earlier *Palimpsest*, but it is better to remember and try to explain to myself why the thought of the first *Palimpsest* story, "Hipparchia," *Hedylus* and *Pilate's Wife* unnerves me. They are all set in antiquity, not strictly of the classic period but of the so-called dispersion.

Perhaps dispersion is the key-word. We were dispersed and scattered after War I. The Greek, or the Greek and Roman scenes and sequences of these prose studies are related to the early poems. I grew tired of hearing these poems referred to, as crystalline. Was there no other way of criticizing, of assessing them? But perhaps I did not see, did not dare see any further than my critics. Perhaps my annoyance with them was annoyance with myself. For what is crystal or any gem but the concentrated essence of the rough matrix, or the energy, either of over-intense heat or over-intense cold that projects it? The poems as a whole, and the "Greek" stories I have mentioned, contain that essence or that symbol, symbol of concentration and of stubborn energy. The energy itself and the matrix itself have not yet been assessed.

It is difficult for a critic to do this, it is difficult for me to do this.

*Dec. 15*

Margaret in Egypt, the morning after the mysterious visit to the Great Temple at Karnak, realizes that in some way, the stranger whom she had met the previous day, in the Valley of the Kings, at the entrance of Tutankh-Amen's Tomb, had projected the vision or the "picture" of the Temple within the Temple. She afterwards found the site of the smaller Temple, marked on an ordinary guide-book map. The smaller Temple,

long, long vanished, was referred to as the Birth House. Perhaps Birth House could be translated, Lady Chapel.

The Lady Chapel or the Birth House was not there, when Margaret returned early the next morning, to photograph it.

What happened? How did it get there? Or how did she perceive it? Or how was it possible for her not to realize at the time of the projection of the vision or the "picture," that the small square Temple with its symmetrical flight of stone-steps was dream or hallucination?

Somehow, somehow, although she can not ask the Captain of the ordinary "daylight dimension" about this, she feels that he has had something, everything to do with it. But the Captain of the mysterious, empty night Amen-temple and the Captain "standing there beside her in the hall of the Luxor Hotel," the next morning, are or seem "separate entities, seen separately and distorted, like two images in a badly adjusted field-glass."

Actually, the images are not distorted, the Captain is not distorted nor is she. But the perfect Revelation must be related to time. The seal has been set on her knowledge. She knows it would be anti-climax to leave her associates and friends and ride away, as he (she believes half-mockingly) suggests, into the desert.

But no, he is not mocking. He is assuring her of her place in this world. But she knows that he knows that her place in this world, is in this world, not in a romantic escape to the Bedouin gypsies.

She has her two visions or her two fields of vision. She realizes these in two separate compartments of her mind or being. The fields of vision came together that February night, in 1923, in the Amen-temple.

They are there, the two streams or realms of knowledge or of consciousness. But her writing continues for the most part, the tradition of the crystalline legend, already forming about it, during the early years of War I.

It is not until September 1945 that the two fields of vision of consciousness, come finally together. There is the Valley of the Kings, there is the Valley of the Shadow. "We heard the roll of drums, the blare of silver trumpets. At last, I had a place in the vast pageant and a place that was near the altar."

Julia Ashton had her "frozen altars," as Rico called them, in *Madrigal*. Certainly, Margaret Fairwood is near the altar, at the opening of the Tomb and at the scene or "picture" of resurrection in the Amen-temple,

the night of the Valley of the Kings' day. But she has been, theoretically at least, alone. Her message is personal; the Messenger is in clock-time, though it is true, that he predicts out-of-time or eternity for her. This is the Valley of the Kings, in February 1923. The Valley of the Shadow is London and the senders of the messages that she received in 1945, are a group, a star-cluster or a star-nebula as Delia Alton describes them in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. The messages are from air-men, not so very recently lost in the Battle of Britain.

But in the Amen-temple, she is alone with the Captain. The message or the "picture" is presumably for herself alone. The message or the "picture" of *The Sword*, though sent as to one (the Air Marshal who directed the battle), is yet pertinent to the thousands, the millions who directly or indirectly were participants in the war. *The Sword* is the reward, the crown of her achievement, her achievement itself, the answer that *Pilate's Wife* had not had; though Veronica has intellectually followed the clues, her shrine, her altar or her Memorial Chapel is wrought of shell and alabaster; though fire might later burn there, her altars are, taken all in all, as Rico says of Julia in *Madrigal*, "frozen."

Delia Alton is not alone in Westminster Abbey, on the Battle of Britain Sunday, September 16, 1945, when she hears the roll of drums, the blare of silver trumpets. But she is alone with the Captain that February night in 1923, in the Temple at Karnak. Her two companions have wandered off for that brief interval. She will return with them, guided by the Captain, through what appears to be an un-ending midnight tunnel. Was that tunnel part too, of the "picture"?

But there are two others with her. It can not be quite a dream.

The Captain had been challenged at the entrance to the Temple. But a whispered Arabic word to the robed figure and they pass out of the circle of the night-watchman's brazier.

If we skip a few years (about twenty, to be exact), we are in London.

The actual fire has raged round the crystal. The crystalline poetry to be projected, must of necessity, have that fire in it. You will find fire in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels* and *The Flowering of the Rod*. There are certain unpublished poems, later to be considered; they are not all negligible. But the *Trilogy*, as we called the three volumes of poetry written during War II, seemed to project itself in time and out-of-time together. And with no effort. The poems were published by the Oxford University Press, 1944, 1945, 1946.

*The Walls Do Not Fall* was dedicated to:

Bryher  
*for Karnak* 1923  
*from London* 1942.

It was she who took me, February 1923, and my mother to Egypt. Neither Bryher nor my mother figure in the Egyptian story. But they form a background or a frame for *Palimpsest*, as they do later for *The Sword*.

*The Sword Went Out to Sea* is the final Chapter of the story of the search; its sub-title is *Synthesis of a Dream*.

It is the same dream.

In a small space, in a short time, the sky, that February night in the Temple, seemed to shower down its stars upon us. But the infinite is rendered finite by the four-square "picture" of the small inner Temple. So, twenty years later, the Cloud of Witnesses is presented in such a way, that a child could understand the message. The circle of the Zodiac is reduced to the size of a clock-dial, or to be exact, to a circumference of about three feet in diameter. This circumference would hold a large clock. But this clock is not fastened on the wall in a school-room or a railway-station; it is level with the ceiling, with the carpet.

It is the top of a tripod-table that has been left in Delia Alton's London apartment by a friend.

The table was left with her, as it had belonged to an old acquaintance who had recently died.

The table itself had originally been the property of the poet, William Morris.

We tell time with this clock, but it is not our time.

It is time-out-of-time, recorded by the ticking or the tapping of one of the three hands or rather by one of the three feet of the tripod.

Our left hand is on the table. Our right hand is scribbling in a notebook, a sort of rough shorthand of the messages.

As I have just said, the messages are from air-men, not so very recently lost in the Battle of Britain.

*Dec. 18*

What it is, is that she was not a God-less child. I mean, she was possessed in a serene, protected way, by his Idea. Or Him, the Idea. There is a



book (or a so far unpublished manuscript) called *The Gift*. This book was written in London, during the days of the bombardment. It is autobiographical, "almost." The author has the privilege of trimming or paring, of concentrating or expanding, where it will best suit his purpose or where his purpose will suit him—*suit* perhaps, in the old Victorian *Sartor Resartus* manner. The scene is the town of the author's birth, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. *The Gift* is dedicated to her mother:

To  
Helen  
who has  
*brought me home*  
for Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 1741  
from Chelsea, London 1941

*L'amitié passe même le tombeau.*

We worked on and off at *The Gift* during the first years of War II, and finally assembled it in 1943. It was in October 1943 that we (or the Delia Alton of *The Sword Went Out to Sea*) heard a certain retired Air Marshal lecture on spirit messages. *The Gift* is a story of *Death and Its Mystery* and we quote from this book of Camille Flammarion, on the title-page of the first section, "Dark Room."

*The Gift* is a family-portrait or a series of family-portraits, but more particularly of the Child's mother and the grandmother. In the fifth section, "The Secret," the grandmother tells the Child, in dream or half-trance, of a memory of her own grandmother's or a fear based on the community memory. The community had been settled by Count Zinzendorf. It was originally known as the *Jednota*, from the Bohemian word meaning association or society. The Latin *Unitas* was later substituted and the remnant of the old Bohemian Church became known as the *Unitas Fratrum*. This *Unitas Fratrum* was eventually called the Moravian Church.

Zinzendorf's father was an Austrian, exiled or self-exiled to Saxony, because of his Protestant affiliations.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania was named by Count Zinzendorf on Christmas-eve, 1741. It was one of a number of Moravian settlements, having to do with a mysterious *Plan* of "peace on earth." The Child, only half a

“Moravian” and mystified by inscriptions on some of the oldest tombstones, perceives a strange affinity in the tiny, dark creature who is her mother’s mother. Mamalie is not like anyone else. She is very old but she plays games with them and answers all their questions.

Through Mamalie, the Child traces back her connection with the *Jednota* in Europe and with the vanished tribes of the Six Nations in America, with whom Zinzendorf had made a curious, unprecedented treaty. In fantasy or dream, the grandmother tells the story of *Wunden Eiland*, an actual island which was later actually and symbolically washed away in the spring-floods.

On this island, certain of the community met delegates of the Six Nations, who planned together to save the country (and the world) from further blood-shed. Through the grandmother’s submerged consciousness, runs the fear and terror of the arrow that flieth, torture and death by burning.

This terror was in our conscious minds in London, while assembling *The Gift*.

There was a great deal more to be said than I could more than hint at, in the seven sections of the autobiographical fantasy. A friendly critic suggested a tightening-up of the last section, “Morning Star.” I could not rework the threads without spoiling the texture of the “picture.” So I added a story, the last of my *Jednota* narratives, “Death of Martin Presser.” This reconstruction of the actual period (1741) seemed to confirm my later findings (1941), and the motto on an old family-seal, *L’amitié passe même le tombeau*.

*Dec. 24*

From the actual family of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the scientific “Pastor,” the part-German or Slavonic grandfather (as well as the scientific father who is yet in a way, “from outside”), from a legend of a new way of life, a Brotherhood, dedicated to peace and universal understanding, it is not really such a far cry to Vienna and to Sigmund Freud.

Count Zinzendorf was an Austrian, we were called Moravians, Professor Freud was an Austrian, born as it happened in Moravia.

There is a legend of a Wandering Jew, of a Hidden Church, of an unrecognized Divinity or of a reviled Humanity . . . these are vague, too facile generalizations. But Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the childhood, the

search recovers its individual direction when we find ourselves, in 1933 and 1934, a student or analysand of the Professor.

Sigmund Freud is known generally as the Professor; my father was referred to constantly as the Professor; that is an obvious association. It is the grandfather really, who comes nearer to Vienna, an educationalist, a direct descendant of the Brotherhood.

My tribute to Sigmund Freud was written in London, September-November 1944. It was published in serial form in *Life and Letters*, London, 1945, 1946. I called the essay "Writing on the Wall," and dedicated it to:

Sigmund Freud  
blameless physician.

In the very superficial account that I give of some of our sessions at *Berggasse*, in Vienna, I touch on the family-scene, as presented in *The Gift*. I also outline rather starkly, an occult or supernatural experience that I had had in Greece, when Bryher took me there after War I. The title of my essay is taken from that experience, the projection of a series of picture-symbols on the wall of the hotel bed-room, just as we were about to leave Corfu.

The "Writing" or picture-writing was in part, the theme of a novel that I could never finish. This novel purported to deal with that first Greek adventure, spring 1920.

It was not until 1947 that I wrote *Finis* to that story. I found the title for it, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, from a poem of William Morris. But this final version (or Chapter, as I call it) did not deal directly with the 1920 Greek trip. It had for inspiration the tripod-table of William Morris and the messages that I received from it, from RAF pilots in 1945, in London.

*Dec. 29*

*The Sword* traces my intellectual and emotional life to its conclusion or rather to its fulfilment. *The Sword* is the crown of all my effort, the final version or rather the new version of the Greek novel that I had written, revised, discarded and re-written, ever since the time of the actual experience in the spring of 1920.

The Greek story is condensed in one of the incidents of Delia Alton's "past." The Julia Ashton and the Margaret Fairwood of *Madrigal* and

“Hesperia” meet in the characterization of Delia. But Delia, unlike Julia and Margaret, is complete in her two dimensions. I feel complete with her. Delia Alton tells the story and Delia Alton signs the book.

As I actually assembled the final version of *Madrigal* more than a year after I had finished *The Sword*, I feel that the War I novel should be a companion or an introduction to the War II novel. So I sign *Madrigal*, Delia Alton.

In the meantime, there is *White Rose and the Red*. This was written just after *The Sword* and again is a companion to it. The *Rose* stands as it were on the right hand of *The Sword*, *Madrigal* on the left. And Delia Alton, though she writes this time, of a London, just a hundred years removed from the scene of *The Sword*, and though she herself does not appear recognizably as an earlier Julia Ashton, yet she herself is of necessity the more deeply involved. For the *Rose* is a tribute to that most lovable of English poets, William Morris, and it was his very table that brought the messages.

Certain of my older friends of the War I period had known William Morris personally. Chief of these now in importance, is the lonely, harassed late Violet Hunt. She, so full of gossip and a most notorious wit, had never hinted or breathed a word of that sad story of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, that most fervid bond between William Morris and Rossetti that was so tragically broken. Violet spoke to me almost exclusively of Elizabeth Siddall, and it was I myself, I am touched to remember, who suggested to her that she call her volume, then almost ready for the press, not *Elizabeth Siddall*, as she had first intended, but *The Wife of Rossetti*.

*Dec. 30*

“Writing on the Wall” is a tribute to Sigmund Freud. As I have already said, in it I record an experience that I could never adequately describe in the many versions of the Greek novel. I have in “Advent” (an unpublished section of the “Writing,” later assembled from the old note-books), a further account of the trip out from the Port of London to the Piraeus, early February 1920. That story would never “come true” in the many versions of the finally discarded novel, but the Greek story lives adequately for me in the two sections of the Sigmund Freud papers. I touch on this Greek scene again in *The Sword*; superficially, I relate it to the Karnak incident. The Greek contact is as it were the corner-stone of three others, that

seemed (though four-square in intent) to have become “broken walls,” until the messages, the table and the meeting with the Lord Howell of the narrative, renewed or redeemed the pattern.

*The Sword* gives us in the second square (of four squares), four friendships: Peter van Eck of the condensed Greek adventure, a young American poet of Delia’s Philadelphia school-days, her husband Geoffrey Alton, and a certain young scholar who was actually an analysand or student of the Professor during my first sessions in Vienna. The names are altered, of course, and Vienna becomes Dresden in *The Sword*. But the ingredients or the “contents of the test-tube” or the crucible are the same.

The “Writing” continues but the mysterious or mystical symbol-writing on the wall of the hotel bed-room, in the Ionian island of Corfu, spring 1920, is now (in 1945) in Delia Alton’s apartment off Hyde Park in London, the ABC of a child’s alphabet-chart. It is the tapping of one of the three feet of the tripod-table that had been brought me, during the war, after the sale of Violet Hunt’s effects, soon after her death.

The table, as I say, had belonged to William Morris.

In the satisfaction of the achievement, the actual writing of *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, I can afford to go back and survey the earlier published and unpublished manuscripts. *The Sword* has as sub-title, *Synthesis of a Dream*, and I am now endeavouring to synthesize all the recorded experiences of my emotional and intellectual life, as I did the actual synthesis of the final version or Chapter of my life-story, as I relate it in *The Sword*.

Certainly *The Gift*, the story of the Child, synthesizes or harmonizes with the Sigmund Freud notes. I assembled *The Gift* during the early war-years, but without the analysis and the illuminating doctrine or philosophy of Sigmund Freud, I would hardly have found the clue or the bridge between the child-life, the memories of the peaceful Bethlehem, and the orgy of destruction, later to be witnessed and lived through in London. That outer threat and constant reminder of death, drove me inward, almost forced me to compensate, by memories of another world, an actual world where there had been security and comfort. But this was no mechanical intellectual trick of mind or memory, the Child actually returns to that world, she lives actually in those reconstructed scenes, or she watches them like a moving-picture.

*The Gift* was assembled before the Sigmund Freud “Writing,” and during those years, I returned again to poetry. But *The Walls Do Not Fall* is,

in a sense, like certain passages of *The Gift*, runic, divinatory. This is not the “crystalline” poetry that my early critics would insist on. It is no pillar of salt nor yet of hewn rock-crystal. It is the pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by day. It is divinatory, I say, for it seems to indicate, even to predict that Cloud of Witnesses, the starry cloud or star-nebula, as I later call the group of young RAF pilots; John, Lad, Larry, Ralph and Charles tap out their messages, with (as one of them spelt clearly on the table) o-t-h-e-r-s m-a-n-y.

*Jan. 2, 1950*

A labour of love (though hardly a labour) was the assembling of the story of Elizabeth Siddall, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. I call this narrative *White Rose and the Red* and it is an attempt to re-create the atmosphere of the London of the mid-years of the last century, and the group of writers and painters of which my own acquaintances and friends of *Madrigal* were, in a sense, the inheritors.

That inheritance was of necessity, imperfect. But the perfect inheritance came to me actually and symbolically, with the tripod-table and the messages from the “warriors of the Viking ship,” as described in *The Sword*.

I do not of course, know the actual history of the simple round-table that had come from Violet Hunt. But I was anxious to find out. I could not, by that time, approach any of my older friends and acquaintances of the War I period, who might possibly have given me some clue. For they were dead. But death, it was proved, was no barrier to friendship and perhaps the old family motto that I had already presented in *The Gift*, was the actual clue and a more inspiring explanation than I could ever have obtained from historical data or chance gossip. In the inner literary circle (as I have already remarked, in the case of Violet Hunt) there was no gossip about William Morris, only the staunchest loyalty. But reminiscence, even of most tender regard, is not the same as actual contact. *L'amitié passe même le tombeau.*

My imagination would reveal the history of the table. I had only, as in the recording of *The Gift*, to sit back as it were, and watch the moving-picture. I watched and recorded, for by that time, winter 1947 and summer 1948, in Lausanne and Lugano, I had leisure, health and if I may say so, a practised stylus, pen or pencil. I had only to let it take its own line, as

a skilled musician may sit before his instrument and improvise. It was, in no sense, so-called “automatic writing,” but the technical reward of more than thirty years of actual practice. I mean, practice in the *art* of writing, for I had been “writing” perhaps, ever since that historic occasion when I printed from my first reader, the illuminating legend, the open sesame, the key to the Kingdom, THE CAT IS ON THE MAT.

The “Writing” as recorded in the Freud papers, was as I have said, picture-writing, a series of clearly translatable symbolic drawings or symbols, cast as if by dim sunlight on the wall. The “Writing” of the William Morris table is not symbolic and it need not be translated. It is, I repeat, as simple as a child’s Alphabet chart. It is a child’s Alphabet chart.

So it seemed to me that I and the senders of the messages had returned to childhood. I had said in *The Sword*, that at the memorial service on Battle of Britain Sunday, September 16, 1945, they were dead and I was a middle-aged tired woman. That was because Air Marshal Lord Howell (of the story) had on September 3, 1945, the anniversary of the declaration of War II, repudiated or seemed to repudiate the messages that the table or the RAF had tapped out for him. But they were not dead, they returned whenever I laid my hands upon the table. Nor was I a middle-aged tired woman, I was a girl or a child again.

*Jan. 4*

But perhaps returning to childhood memories as in *The Gift* and the Freud “Writing,” is a step toward age, that is with identification with those we have loved in childhood. Then, they seemed very old. *White Rose and the Red* is, I repeat, a labour of love, and the love of the child fulfilled or re-incarnated in the grown, the middle-aged or the “very old” woman, can again be re-incarnated. I do not actually mean that I and my group of *Madrigal* were living in the days of our grandfathers, that is in the mid-years of the last century. But something of my early search, my first expression or urge toward expression in art, finds a parallel in the life of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddall. So, as a very subtle emotional exercise, I go over and over the ground, find relationships or parallels between my own emotional starvation and hers, between a swift flowering soon to be cut down, in her case, by death, in mine, by a complete break after War I, with the group of artists described in *Madrigal*.

But the artists of the *Rose* though they have other names, seem near, fa-

miliar, *familiars* almost. I have known them somewhere, perhaps because of my early devotion to their legend. I know more about them or sometimes seem to know more about the Rossetti-Morris circle than I do of my own contemporaries. But no—I do not wish it to be thought that I am dealing with a vague, mystical commonplace when I speak of “re-incarnation.” It is the sense of continuity that inspires me, the feeling of intimate communion or communication that renewed my faith at the end of the war-years. Although I gave up the “work,” as we called the psychic communication, before I left England in the spring of 1946, I must follow up and record if possible, the history of the tripod-table from which I received the messages from the RAF in the London of War II.

The table, as I keep repeating, belonged to William Morris. To find out where and how he found the table, we must go back to his life at Oxford and his first meeting with Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

My story of the tripod-table in *White Rose and the Red*, is of course purely imaginary. But the romance, as I perceive it, is founded on historical facts.

We have the names of the eight original members of the *Order of Sir Galahad*, founded at Oxford by William Morris. But in our romance, this circle dwindled down or crystallized out to two of the original group. William Morris and Godfrey Lushington continue the “work” alone. The character of Godfrey Lushington as I present it, in *White Rose and the Red*, is purely imaginary. In the story, it is he who introduces Morris to the tripod-table.

Godfrey Lushington in our reconstruction, makes a quixotic gesture and is lost in the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

Elizabeth Siddall has found her swift flowering in the adoration of Rossetti and the other artists of the period. But she is not satisfied. Inspired by William Morris’s introduction of Malory, she dreams of a silver Knight. That is, she has an actual dream of a soldier Saint or Crusader, at the time of Godfrey’s death in India. The shock of the belated news of the Mutiny settles her indecision. She had not met Godfrey, but as a friend and confidante of Morris, she had hoped to do so. She marries Gabriel Rossetti.

It is the same table. It is the same story. But unlike *The Wife of Rossetti*, the Delia Alton of *The Sword* finds her Knight or Crusader.

After Godfrey’s death, Morris leaves the table with Rossetti’s wife. She has heard of the group in Florence, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the



Hawthornes and their "messages." She is alone, after her acceptance of Rossetti's infidelity. But though seated at the table, she communes, as it were, with her Knight, whom in some ways, she identifies with the Nelson of her father's war, she receives no "messages."

Delia Alton of *The Sword* inherits the tripod-table. The sequence, as I say, is purely imaginary, but as the Child inherits *The Gift* in the story of that name, so Delia Alton inherits *The Sword*.

Elizabeth Siddall is confused by the extravagances of Gabriel and certain of his followers. But she is, as far as may be, centralized and balanced by the friendship of William Morris. When that intimacy goes, as it must inevitably do with his marriage to Jane Burden, and when Gabriel has proved openly unfaithful, she concentrates or tries to concentrate on the idea or the ideal. But the soldier or the Knight, as I say, is killed in the Mutiny, before she meets him.

There is war, the Crimea, echoes of "dad's war," Nelson and Wellington. There is the Indian Mutiny. But her personal war-terrors are intensified because of a nightmare obsession with an actual murder that took place in her neighbourhood when she was a child.

The grandmother's submerged terror in *The Gift* is not unlike that of Elizabeth Siddall, but the Indian Mutiny, the last of the series of Elizabeth's war-shocks, is presented in *The Gift* as actual memories (although of the preceding century) of an American "Indian Mutiny." The grandmother in *The Gift* and Elizabeth in the *Rose* are contemporaries in time.

Oddly, as things happen, "The Secret," the key-chapter of *The Gift*, deals with the family history of the Seidels. The grandmother's first husband was a connection of a certain Henri, Chevalier de Seidel, who had been at the Russian court. Though the name is commonly accepted as German, *seidel*, a cup or mug is originally a *fremdword* according to Grimm's dictionary, as from the Latin *situlus* or *situla*. *Situlus* is a small pail, measure, hence cup—a box or ballot-box. Was it a mere accident that drew me to Elizabeth Siddall? My grandmother's first married name was Elizabeth Seidel.

Gabriel Rossetti makes much of the aristocratic genealogy of his fiancée, though sadly come down in the world. The Siddalls live on the wrong side of the river. Elizabeth is a shop-girl. Gabriel insists on the Latin or Norman derivation of the name, Suddal, Sudal or Suddel.

Jan. 7

We outline in *The Sword*, a series of *Märchen* or fairy-tales. The Delia of the story conjures up for us, Crete, Athens, Delphi, Elizabethan England, Venice, Rome and Normandy in the various scenes or settings of "Summerdream," the second half of the romance. Elizabeth Siddall, Liz as Gabriel calls her or *Lis*, as Morris names her in his fantasy, repeats the device. I use the word "device" in its special heraldic sense. She imagines or "sees" herself in Provence at the time of the persecutions of the Church by Simon de Montfort. This is the Church of Love and in *By Avon River*, we endeavour to show how the Church or the School of Love as introduced into Plantagenet England by Eleanor of Aquitaine, was the source of a later flowering. William Shakespeare and his contemporaries and successors repeat as well, the pattern of the Church of Love, as set forth in Florence and Verona, in the *Commedia* of Dante.

*By Avon River* was written September 19–November 1, 1946 at Küssnacht, near Zürich. It was dedicated to Bryher who had helped get me out of London and established me in the beautiful Manor House, *Seehof*, on the edge of the lake. *By Avon River* was published by Macmillan, New York, 1949.

*White Rose and the Red*, the Morris-Rossetti story, was begun soon after I finished *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (*Synthesis of a Dream*). The *Rose* too, is the synthesis of a dream. But the dream in both books is founded on actual events. The dream, it is true, presents the sequence of events in its own way, "and it is the dream," Rose Beauvais says in the Normandy section of *The Sword*, "that is so—curious." The dream is the creative imagination, the actual personal dream of the narrator, or the still more curious, astonishing or miraculous dream of those "in that sleep of Death," to whom we wonder with Hamlet, "what dreams may come."

It is for that reason that I call Book I of *The Sword*, "Wintersleep." Book I is concerned chiefly with the "messages" from the young pilots.

Perhaps the most curious thing about this transcendental dream is that it appears so natural. It seemed to Delia Alton in 1945, as she sat with one hand resting on the William Morris table, the other holding the pencil ready to jot down the messages, that this communication or communion was more natural, more normal than the series of extraordinary events that had recently taken place in the external world. In retrospect, when she writes the story, before Christmas 1946 and in the summer of 1947, it

seems that the voices and the presences (“they spoke, they laughed, they crowded around the table”) had “proved more enduring than all the high explosives and the sirens.”

I said in *The Sword* that possibly at one time, the Lord Howell of the story, true to the Homeric tradition, had listened to the siren-voices. Perhaps Delia Alton too, might have been tempted to dream in that lotus-land, if she had come upon the psychic-research work or the “work,” as they came to call it, earlier. Fortunately, neither I nor the heroine of the story, had had any but the most superficial contact with clairvoyants and mediums. In fact, the young Eurasian of *The Sword* who gives the first messages, is the first actual medium either I or she had contacted.

It is only later, summer 1948, in assembling the Rossetti story, that I realized something of the implications of the Dante circles. Realized them, that is, as a personal experience. I re-read Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s translation of the *Vita* and the poems of *Dante and His Circle*. I had as well, the Italian text and French and English renderings of the *Commedia*. Now at last, I felt that I had found the clue, not only to Dante and his School of Love, but to the whole subject of psychic communication.

But my findings were not to be presented as intellectual discoveries. No. The story of William Morris and Rossetti tells, among other things, of their own spiritual research and psychic investigation. There is the William Morris table from which I received the messages in London. Where did he find the table? How did he receive his messages? And when? These are some of the questions that I asked and tried to answer.

The “work” begins with the group of eight, the original *Order of Sir Galahad*. But the messages or the communications do not satisfy Godfrey Lushington who (in the story) had been introduced to the *télégraph de Dieu* by an outside character whom we call Roland de Fontenelle. De Fontenelle urges Godfrey to give up communication after the third member of their “circle,” Godfrey’s brother, Vernon, leaves them. But Godfrey can not give up the “work” entirely, until he has found the true inheritor. So Godfrey’s table eventually goes to “William the Englishman” and so by way of Violet Hunt, to us.

I had seen the series of pictures, the picture-writing or hieroglyphs cast on the wall of my bed-room in the hotel *Angleterre et Belle Venise*, in the Ionian island of Corfu, in the spring of 1920. But that was, as I say in the Freud “Writing,” a sort of “freak thought” that had got out of hand. I

had had no experience of the kind before; I have had none since. But the telegraph or the messages conveyed by the tapping of one of the tripod-feet upon the carpet of my flat in Lowndes Square in London, was sustained, logical. It could be renewed at any moment, given time and opportunity. It seemed in the end, as natural as receiving a letter or a telegram. Or it was more like a telephone, the speaker or speakers were connected by some chord, some spiritual device that was to me no more mysterious than the working of a telephone. I don't know how a telephone does work, nor wireless nor radio. I didn't know how this worked, the point was, it went on working.

*Jan. 9*

Bryher has suggested that I have a selection of unpublished poems set up. I choose three sequences that differ entirely from the recognized H.D. of the "early poems" as well as from the three sets of poems written during War II, the *Trilogy*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1944, 1945, 1946. The poems I have just selected were written at about the same time, but they did not belong to the sequence. I have dated them 1941, 1943, 1944. I would like to sign them Delia Alton but that must be left to the discretion of the publisher. For these are not fundamentally "H.D. poems," they seem to belong to the rhythm and vibration of the experience recorded in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.

This seems a digression from the matter in hand, but I promised myself the satisfaction of re-reading and re-assembling my so far uncollected Collected Works. The second poem sequence of the unpublished pages that I have just chosen, is called "R.A.F." This is a narrative poem. It tells of a meeting in a train returning from Cornwall to London.

He said, I'm just out of hospital,  
but I'm still flying.

The woman, the narrator, seated opposite this young pilot in the crowded train, suggests that he "drop in one day." He does "drop in" some months later,

to explain  
why he had not come sooner.

This was an actual experience:

he stands by my desk  
in the dark.

He did not stay very long and he did not speak.  
I call this selection of poems, *What Do I Love?*

Another apparent digression, another “mystery.” I had a vague feeling of un-ease and uncertainty about writing of the actual death of the wife of Rossetti. Norman Pearson, whom I saw last summer in Lugano, suggested that the story be intensified at the end, “it trailed off.” I had originally intended to finish the romance with the section before the present last one. I did not want to deal with the much debated, depressing details of Elizabeth Siddall Rossetti’s actual end, possibly by suicide. I had so identified myself with the story that I could not, for some strange reason, let her die.

The story would end with her death and I did not want to end the story. But unexpectedly, I begin to live or to “see” another story. It is placed in time, at the end of the eighteenth century. It fulfills a latent ambition to “make use” of notes that I had taken before and after assembling *The Gift*. I had become very devoted to the Zinzendorf legend and suddenly one of his grand-daughters, another Elizabeth, steps as it were, out of history to take the place of the (as yet) vaguely questing Elizabeth Siddall Rossetti of my *White Rose and the Red*. I am delighted with my idea, as much in-love with my new story as I was in-love with the *Rose*. I have a title for the new story. It is called *The Mystery*.

But I am anxious to finish or conclude the preceding romance, so following the suggestion of Norman Pearson, I add the final *Rose* chapter and *L’Envoi* at the grave.

I now dedicate the story:

To  
Norman Holmes Pearson  
in gratitude for his suggestion  
of continuing the story of the  
*Order of Sir Galahad*.

The vital centre “mystery” of this sequence of novels, is actually the first one that I finished, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. In this mystery-story, the name Hal is shouted by a group of young warriors on what we called the Viking Ship. It is Hal who has gathered them together. “Why, they have such vitality,” said the young Eurasian who was then presiding at what he called our “home circle.” He went on describing the ship and then concluded, “They are going off. They are going after treasure.”

The Vikings go off, the original four members of the “home circle” are separated for various reasons, but the Vikings re-appear when Delia Alton is at last alone in her flat, with the little table.

Later, when my first friendly critic looked over the typed pages of the first half of *The Sword*, he wrote me of Hallblithe. The Vikings had shouted what the medium thought was Halbritt; Gareth, Delia’s close friend and companion during the war-years, had said it was Hal Brith. But the friendly critic wrote, “Do you remember the hero of William Morris’s *The Glittering Plain* is called Hallblithe?”

I did not remember but I found the book afterwards. The first printed Kelmscott book of William Morris is *The Glittering Plain*.

So William Morris renews the Brotherhood or the *Order of Sir Galahad* in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.

The vitality, the intensity of this story is almost overwhelming to me, at times. It is as if I alone were a receiving-station that is intended to be completed by another. How the Air Marshal repudiates the messages is set forth in *The Sword*. Why he repudiates them, we do not yet know.

But for me, I have delivered their message or their messages, if not to the Air Marshal direct, at least to the few friends who have read the romance. I trust in time, this Mystery may be published. “It was a mystery-play, it would explain everything.”

*Madrigal*, the War I novel, precedes this in time, by just those “years between,” that quarter of a century. As I have already said, *Madrigal* was roughed out in 1939 and left in Switzerland when I returned to the London of War II. But without the answer, the certainty of the War II experience, the War I novel would probably still remain unassembled. It was not until I had recorded the War II Mystery in *The Sword* and traced the history of the table back into the mid-years of the last century, with *White Rose and the Red*, that the War I novel appeared to me authentically part of the sequence.

And now to my last romance which I know is written though I have not yet transcribed it. Elizabeth de Watteville, grand-daughter of Count Zinzendorf, meets her “mystery” in Bohemia. Elizabeth de Watteville and her cousin Henri, the young Count Dohna, make their pilgrimage to the winter-city of Prague, towards the end of the eighteenth century.

They are collecting evidence of their grandfather’s spiritual inheritance. Zinzendorf had re-established a branch of the dispersed or “lost” Church of Bohemia. This Church, to my mind, shows marked traces of the still earlier dis-established or “lost” Church of Provence, the Church of Love that we touch on, in *By Avon River*. The fascinating subject of the Hidden Church, the Church within the Church is touched on in “The Secret,” the section of *The Gift* that reveals the child’s affinity and actual connection with the old *Jednota* of Bohemia, or the *Unitas Fratrum* as re-established by Zinzendorf, across the frontier in Saxony.

The child’s birth-place, as we have pointed out, was Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, so named by Zinzendorf, Christmas-eve, 1741. In *The Gift*, we re-trace the path taken by the child, through her mother as a girl and her grandmother (“before she married Papalie”), as Elizabeth Seidel.

The Elizabeth de Watteville of *The Mystery*, again re-traces the path, through her mother, Benigna von Zinzendorf, and her grandmother, Erdmuth Dorothea de Reuss.

We have not finished *The Mystery*. That is, we have not yet written it down.

But it is in part the same mystery that is presented in the “Advent” section of the Freud “Writing.” It is a mystery not uncommon to folk and fairy-tales, the mystery of the appearance of a stranger or a near-stranger; at a time and in a place where he could not possibly have been. Such things have happened. Some instances of this kind have been recorded by Camille Flammarion, in *Death and Its Mystery*.

I quote Flammarion in *The Gift* and refer to him in *The Sword*.

This mystery was experienced by me but I could not record it. “It could happen at any time, with anybody, but unless you were aware of its happening, it wasn’t the Visitor.” So St. Germain, in his role of Brother Antonius, muses in the great Cathedral, while waiting for the porter to return and “re-light what’s left to Wenceslas.”

The porter has just approached Brother Anton, as he calls him, “Would it be taking liberties, do you think, sacristy not having come back yet, to

put a taper to the lamp before Our Lady, and re-light what's left to Wenceslas?"

*Jan. 21*

We are *Within the Walls*, but only just. This is a series of sketches, written *in situ* as it were, 1940, 1941. I place "Before the Battle," the earliest sketch, dated summer 1940, at the end of *Within the Walls*, as the dream of the mother in the old grave-yard at Bethlehem not only pre-visions *The Gift*, the child memoirs, begun about this time, but also acts as an introduction to the selection of poems *What Do I Love* which it now seems to me should be included in this volume.

The poems are dated 1941, 1943, 1944. The 1941 poem, "R.A.F.," describing the meeting with the young pilot in the train returning to London from Cornwall, did take place in historical sequence, the autumn following the spring story, "The Ghost." "The Ghost" is the last in the sequence, in time. It is dated spring 1941, though I actually conclude *Within the Walls* with the first sketch in time, "Before the Battle." The actual dates of the Battle of Britain were later given, 10th July–31st October, 1940.

The sketches "come alive," they are actually happening, and the dreams "dream true."

I cannot say as much for the series of short and long-short stories that I also assembled last winter from a confused collection of roughly typed MSS. I sorted out the papers, arranged and re-assembled, but with the exception of "Hesperia," of which I have already written, I was not overhappy at reviewing that past, though "AEgina," an anecdote, rather than a story, brought back the memories of a cruise among the islands, spring 1932, and "The Guardians," introduced again by a dream of the mother, re-asserted my faith in an almost vanished mother-symbol, an old Scotch Nannie, who when I stayed with friends in the country, regaled me with endless reminiscences of "the children." I wrote this story, September 1945.

"Hesperia" is the first in time, in the series. I have already touched on Egypt, the historic opening of the Tomb, February 1923. The first rough notes were dated 1924, though as they were "left over" from "Secret Name" in *Palimpsest*, published as I have said, in 1926 in Paris, they must have been written soon after the return to Switzerland, spring 1923. But



again, "Hesperia" was not finally shaped until last winter, that is, it was only last winter that it "came true."

"Hesperia," then, is the first and the last of the stories. But how arrange them? There is "The Moment" that I had first expected to use as the title of the whole, its theme and opening. But perhaps it is almost impossible for me to assess "The Moment," as the Elaine of the story, my "oldest" friend (though we had met rarely of late years) was, with her daughter and mother, killed in an air-raid early in the war.

*Jan. 22*

But I have re-read "The Moment" and it must serve as title to this collection of stories. As I say, they are not condensed in one period as are the war-sketches and dreams of *Within the Walls*. These stories seem hardly to relate to one another and I must jump from one psychological dilemma to another, across the years. There is no jump and only one dilemma in *Within the Walls*. It is the actuality or the imminent possibility of death from the high explosives.

That death came to the Elaine of "The Moment."

I mention her briefly in the Freud "Writing," in connection with a seal-ring that I identified in the Louvre, when I first visited it with Frances and her mother, summer 1911. I had dreamed of this thistle and serpent motive in America, shortly before taking my first trip "abroad." In the dream, the design is carved on a rough block of stone, I called it an altar. I could find no replica of this design and I never saw it anywhere but in the Louvre. "Under the glass, set in a row with other seal-rings, was a little grey-agate oval." On this agate is carved the serpent and the "exquisitely chased stalk, with the spiney double-leaf and the flower-head, our thistle."

Now I find "The Moment" "exquisitely chased" and I dedicate it to that design.

In that sense, the stories are all dedicated. They have that in common. Though they range in time of writing, from 1926 to 1945, or if we count the first and final version of "Hesperia," from 1923 to 1948, they are individually separate, dedicatory Chapels or Chapters (as I use the word in speaking of *The Sword*). They are Chapter-houses, adjoining some vast Cathedral.

Yes, they are that. The Cathedral is the Dream, the *Synthesis of a Dream*. I have already compared the Dream to a Cathedral, in the "Advent" of the

Freud "Writing." The Dream is there in the "Writing" but it is only centralized or stabilized with the conclusion of *The Sword Went Out to Sea*. *The Sword* is reality or truth, established in that *Synthesis of a Dream*. Having found the answer, having centralized myself or been centralized by the miracle of the tripod-table, I can afford to go back, even to those years of apparently sterile waiting. For they were not really sterile and the answer, when it came, surpassed in magnificence and simplicity, any dream I had had or any dream that I could have had, during those years of waiting.

There is too, a genuine psychic-current running through these stories that serves eventually to relate them to the final dynamic centre, the tripod-table of the poet, William Morris.

The three women in "The Moment" are caught in a circle; opposites attract and the solution or the answer when it comes, is poignant and tragic, though related, as it were, only to those three. It is a personal answer, it has answered the demand, the heart-ache of one person, the message is given by one person to one person. But in the Moment of the final Chapter or of the great Cathedral itself, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, the answer is given by many to the whole world.

"Jubilee" and "The Last Time" have this in common with "The Moment." They are small, set pieces like chamber-music, the players are few. In fact, in "The Moment" there is a trio, three women. One man and one woman in "Jubilee" and "The Last Time," play with variations, the same duet.

"Jubilee" is more important. It tells of a meeting. After fifteen years, the two who had separated, one gathers in romantic surroundings, now meet in London. The surroundings are not un-romantic, there is the same parchment lamp-shade, the same dim shadows as in "The Moment." The same interior decorum is lighted or translated into romance by the bibelots on the occasional-table, the cigarette-box, the seven-branched candlestick, the treasured print, brought back years ago from Italy, now curled at the edges, and the tumbler with the Carlo Crivelli handful of small flowers. The flowers in "The Moment" are starry anemones that edge a shallow bowl. The chairs have been re-arranged, the coffee-tray is a tea-tray but it is in substance, the same interior and the same story.

The three women of "The Moment" resolve a problem, temporarily at least. The one woman and the one man in "Jubilee" resolve it in a different

way. The Moment of their first meeting, the Moment of the woman's strange aberration on a ship sailing from the Port of London to the Piraeus, spring 1920, is not (fifteen years later) this moment. Actually, the realized Moment is described in the Freud "Writing," in the so-far unpublished prelude or post-lude that I call "Advent."

But the moment in "Jubilee" in 1935 in London, is not the Moment. Nor is the moment in "The Last Time," a slighter story but a duet on the same theme.

There is that, at least, about these stories. They are clearing the ground. There is something that the author must get clear. She would in "The Last Time," delay a parting which to her, from the beginning, is inevitable. This story was written spring 1936, and we are here as in "Jubilee," in that maligned decade. She would drift with the others, she would play with the others. "But I am not so easily allowed to let go, who lift balances (invisible) beside me, from the table, to weigh his soul."

She weighs her own soul and finds it un-related to the life around her. "For sometimes, in a crowded room, we feel not so much alone as simply non-existent."

We find this "non-existent" motive in "Hesperia" and "AEgina." But the experience of the Moment, in both cases, though it offers escape, seems to bring its instantaneous message. Once "out," where are you? Will you come back? Will you stay "out"? And once "out," in any case, there is awkward dilemma. The spirit caught back into the old mysteries of Egypt and Greece, might be perfected, but on the other hand, it might, after the initial ecstasy of freedom, wander in some vague Limbo. There is no time to answer these questions, nor to so exactly formulate them on the Nile boat *Rosetta*, returning from Assuan, nor watching from the precarious ledge of a Greek island, the launch assembling the passengers, after their visit to the temple of Hygenea.

The "AEgina" story is slight, it is as it were, an after-thought, almost a grace-note to the overpowering final chord of "Hesperia." But grace-note is too slight a simile. "AEgina" is a prose-lyric, displaced, not lost, or a chorus out of another play.

It is all a play. It is, this collection of Moments in *The Moment*, really a series of lyrics, or if we may return to Dante, of Cantos. We may return to Dante. In our way, in our day, we endeavoured to relate experiences, out of time, to time. But the collection was not finally related to time until I

had written *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.

That was, as I have said repeatedly, written in Lausanne and Lugano, after I left London, spring 1946. There is the triangle. London certainly supplied the *Inferno* of my *Commedia*.

We find the answer, the fulfilment in Lausanne and Lugano. *White Rose and the Red* follows *The Sword*, and *Madrigal* is here presented. *The Mystery* does not so much re-state the romance, as re-establish it actually, in a vast Cathedral. The Cathedral is implicit in the *Rose*, the *Unknown Church* of William Morris.

It is pre-visionsed in *Madrigal*, it is realized in *The Sword*.

Jan. 25

“The Moment” is a trio, “Jubilee” and “The Last Time” are duets. They are, as I say, chamber-music and the texture of the stories is close-woven and unique. I don’t quite know what I mean by unique, except that the theme or the themes are applicable to an only, a sole situation or to a separate person or a small group of people.

But the décor, the ensemble of “Hesperia,” as of “AEGina,” requires a crowd. The uniqueness is reserved for one person, as separated from the crowd, but the crowd or the crowd-scene is necessary. It is there in the motley assembly about the Tomb, though Margaret alone in the Amen-temple, is quite alone; it is no duet. For though there are two people, it is almost a union of two, which become one in the presence of the Infinite. In “AEGina,” the one is quite alone, the experience is shared by none and visibly prompted by none. “I was fully expressed. If I paused one second, I would get out.”

So Margaret on the return-trip of the Nile boat *Rosetta*, is fully expressed. She, too, is alone. “All she saw was one star, luminous in the east.” But the star was revealed by an outside presence, an invisible agent had drawn aside the curtains of her state-room, but in no vague or shadowy manner. The curtain-rings rattled on the curtain-pole, there was no wind. It was supernaturally quiet. She saw the star, was paralyzed or illuminated by the spears of light. The curtains were drawn back.

But who drew the curtains? Who in the Amen-temple, projected the “picture” of the little Birth House? Who or what on the island of Aegina prompted her to wander from the others, till on the shell-like island-edge, “I knew that I had gone.”

“They” were outside. “They” were felt, perceived. But they were anonymous, as the Captain at the Tomb, or invisible like the hand that drew aside the curtain, on the Nile boat *Rosetta*. One lived in the memory of the Moment but one could not command it. One could, however, in proof of gratitude, record it.

I have arranged the stories now, in this order:

“The Moment”	1926
“Jubilee”	1935
“The Last Time”	1936
“Hesperia”	1924 (1948)
“AEgina”	1933
“The Guardians”	1945

“The Guardians” is an ordinary story of an ordinary English family. But in the insecure security of a war-time country England, there is the old Sibyl, Nannie, who is watching.

Nannie is the Granny of the child fantasy, *The Gift*.

*Jan. 28*

The poems “left over” for consideration are even more difficult to assess. We might call this collection *A Dead Priestess Speaks*, from the first poem of the series.

I was not pure,  
nor brought  
purity to cope  
with the world’s lost hope,  
nor was I insolent.

So she goes on. Her inner life runs counter to her outer, where

I smiled,  
I waited,  
I was circumspect.

She reads her own pattern, she divines her future. But that future will

be out of the (then) life-pattern. This poem was written in the mid-thirties, in what I have just referred to as the maligned decade.

She weighs her own soul, as in "The Last Time" she weighs the soul of another.

She does not find it wanting,

I, being dead.

She can not really resolve her problem, the world problem, nor is her heart in it:

No one could write,  
after his *wine-dark sea*,  
an epitaph of glory and of spears.

She brushes aside honours, will not discuss

the fire, the shout, the glory of the war.

But they suspected her when she

answered circumspectly;

they will not allow her to fall out of step with events, but

nominated for the Herald's place  
one  
Delia of Miletus.

Even when in an ecstasy, she wanders off into the wilds, associates herself with the boar, the wild-goat, the bird

tasting leaf and root,

even when she returns, dishevelled (we may gather) like a Maenad and

the last archon saw  
me reach the door, at dawn,

even though she feels

he might have said,  
Delia of Miletus is a whore,  
she wanders in the open street at night,

even so, an honourable place is assigned to her. The archon, the representative of the social order,

paused, he stood aside.

Very well, the informed, the intelligent may recognize her, but what of the rabble? She waits

for the crowd to mutter filth  
and stone me from the altar.

But contrary to the usual convention of the poet or the artist at odds with humanity, in this case, the crowd appears easily swayed by the pronouncement of the archon: Delia the priestess, has discovered in her questionable night adventures, new herbs, new berries

that will stay  
the after-ravages of the plague  
they brought here from Abydos.

The after-ravages of the plague? Or the pre-ravages of the plague? We have recorded in the Freud "Writing" of 1944, our feeling and our attitude toward war, toward a war to come, all too clearly apprehended in the Vienna of 1933 and 1934. The poem therefore, swings between wars. Delia is dead. Delia

died at mid-day, sleeping.

She dies at mid-day or she dies mid-way between War I and War II. But there is in life, as in death, resurrection. She could not know in 1933, 1934 that resurrection could occur in life, as in death. That is, she

could not know it as an actual personal experience though she could sense it in a dream or she could resurrect her past adventures, as when in her Freud "Writing," she described the shadow or light-symbols, the hieroglyphs cast on the wall of the hotel bed-room in Corfu. She could assemble as in "Advent," her memories of adventure on a boat sailing from the Port of London to the Port of Athens, February 1920. She could dimly apprehend that greater adventure in the 1923 Egypt of the Tomb. She could assess these adventures, but only in an un-related manner. She had not (nearing 50) any fantasy idea or aspiration toward further romance. For romance is resurrection in this life.

It may seem a sentimental word to use. But romance suggests something other than a girl's day-dream or a middle-aged woman's renunciation. Romance is Romany, a gypsy, also "the gypsy language, the speech of Roma."

What is this speech or language?

It means everything to her, she must not let go her hold on romance or on writing.

But she has confessed,

no one could write.

She can not write as she would, but she will go on writing.

We are through with experimenting. We are in the mid-thirties, not the mid-twenties.

But there must be a new means of expression, of self-expression, of world-expression.

She has not found it but she goes on assembling her small treasures. This is done feverishly, through a sort of compulsion, you might say. It is necessary to tidy-up, to clear the decks. We are not in the mid-twenties, we are in the mid-thirties. The storm is coming.

She does not succeed in her ambition of having things ship-shape. She writes and re-writes various "novels," that only "came true" in the late forties. We have written of these novels, the *how* of the writing is almost as important to us now, as the writing itself. When, where and how were these things written? That seems a more adequate autobiographical directive than the when, where and how did the events described happen, or when, where and how was the dream dreamed. The when, where and



how, however, did not “come true.” Neither was the growing bulk of untidy script shaped sufficiently to be stowed away (published) within proper book-covers. It was left to simmer, to ferment.

It was only when I had assembled the harvest of the vintage-years, 1943–1945, in the “Synthesis of a Dream” that I could truly and conscientiously destroy or enjoy the others.

*The Sword Went Out to Sea* was finished July 17, 1947. I label it, I treasure it. A few have tasted it. *White Rose and the Red* is finished summer 1948. Excellent! *Madrigal*, left simmering or fermenting, is run through a vintner’s sieve, the dregs are thrown out. Really, this is not bad. We began on that vineyard in 1921. It was stony. We grubbed up dead roots, trimmed and pruned. But the grapes were sour. We went on. It was a pity to let that field (1914–1918) lie utterly fallow. We returned to it, from time to time. At last, winter 1949, we taste the 1939 gathering. Impossible but true. The War I novel has been fermenting away during War II. This is intoxicating, the red grapes of—

War? Love?

*Jan. 30*

The *Priestess* poems have neither the drive and originality of the “early H.D.” nor the authenticity of the later *Trilogy*. The “*Electra-Orestes*,” however, has a vivid integrity, with its motive or leit-motif,

to love, one must slay,

and its answering refrain,

to love one must be slain.

“Calypso” is a charming duet. There is music, regret, over-tones, ornament. But it is whispered dream, nostalgic rather than passionate. Regret? We were approached about this time to undertake some chorus translations of Euripides, in collaboration with a prose-translator. We had finally shaped the *Ion*. It was published by Chatto and Windus, 1937, after the 1931 *Red Roses for Bronze*. I have copies of neither of these books here with me. I remember a certain satisfaction with the Euripides’ *Ion*, as I had had the copy on hand a long time; I had actually started it during War I.

But I did not feel that my way or my path lay now in this intellectual pursuit. I should like to have done more of the Greek and to have re-set these *Priestess* poems but we are as I have just said, in that transition period. I feel it better not to re-work the *Priestess* poems, they stand for that time and having progressed to the *Trilogy*, I can read them now, with a certain detachment. Certainly, the costume, colour and rhythm of the “*Electra-Orestes*” is striking and authentic.

“In Our Town” is a genre-piece, a dramatic monologue. It stands on its own; though not “early H.D.,” it might be an early Browning or a sketchy William Morris. There are outstanding lines as there are in the other *Priestess* poems, and a startling prophecy:

she sings of a blue prow  
of a far land:  
she sings of a sword so white,  
so luminous that its own light  
alone must slay;  
she sings of a sword, a sword, a sword . . .

There is prophecy too, in “Delphi.” The poet seeks the answer:

I went far  
to old pilgrim-sites.

I wandered alone;  
I said,  
on the height, I will find him.

But he was not found, not actually, though he was apprehended. He was not found in loneliness nor in the dance, in retreat nor in indifference. He is unpredictable:

when my days are lonely,  
he shuns me,  
when busy,  
he crowds through the throng  
of my friends and my guests.

He (song) can not be cajoled, bribed, threatened:

his tune is his own;  
in his, not in your time,  
ecstasy will betray you.

But ultimately, ecstasy does not betray,

I came back:  
he opened my door.

So the door was opened, the gate was un-barred, the way led toward unexpected vistas and in an unprecedented manner. Prophecy is fulfilled. The Delphic tripod is no sinister property of an alien, dangerous cult. It is the homely and home-y old-oak table of that most sane and most lovable of poets, William Morris.

“Dodona” is a companion-piece to “Delphi.” Both have luminous lines, both fall, as it were, between two stools. They are neither the “early H.D.” nor the H.D. of the later *Trilogy*. These poems could be splintered into fragments that might glow with the old crystalline transparency:

burn myrtle and grass  
    . . .  
millet in a basket  
    . . .  
Hyades brought tears,  
Pleiades, misadventure  
    . . .  
    more fragrant  
than rose,  
than pomegranate.

They are torn from the old Alexandrine palimpsest. But I leave these and other fragments embedded in the commonplace of that transition period.

So with *Sigil*, a series numbered VIII–XIX, “left over” from *Red Roses for Bronze*, the 1931 volume. I cannot now discard them, having kept them so long. Lines now and again, suggest the *Trilogy* content and technique:

wine, bread, grape and sweet  
honey

. . .

the underside's bright amber,  
your eyes

. . .

in coral, yourself,  
in conch-shell, myself

and so on. Perhaps *Sigil XVII* relates back to the death-love motive of the *Priestess*. *Sigil XVII* ends,

take me,  
O ultimate breath,  
O master-lyrist,  
beat my wild heart to death.

In the *Priestess*, we have,

I died at mid-day sleeping;

they did not see the reach of purple wing  
that lifted me out of my little room,  
they did not see the drift of purple fire  
that turned the spring-fire  
into winter-gloom;

they could not see that Spirit  
in the day,  
that turned the day to ashes . . .

*Jan. 31*

We have *Priest*. This actually is a lyric rendering of the story "Jubilee." It is a chorus sequence. It reads smoothly and there is a sure touch and at times, an almost flawless technique. But the poem shows the same psychological fault or flaw as the story, "The Last Time." The poet is "not so much alone as simply non-existent."

That is, she has transferred her human contact or emotion to

a song,  
a scimitar.

It is

the love  
that is burnt through  
and burnt out  
and burnt away.

It is not possible to compromise with

rapture  
like fire  
that is and is not  
that sort of thing  
you would mistake,  
in your innate stupidity,  
for desire.

The poet is reduced to quicksilver, radium; she is protected with  
greaves and

a breast-plate  
difficult to bear.

The poet here is

reflector of beauty.

It is a mirror-poem, a moon-poem and it reflects a certain austerity, a  
certain will, a certain determination,

and I,  
I will not die.

The poet is

stubborn as the crescent-moon  
at dawn  
or evening,  
set like a knife  
to separate night from day.

She separates herself from herself. She speaks of that Lover

whose kiss  
stings and kills.

It is the Eternal Lover of “Hesperia” and the *Dead Priestess Speaks*.

We call the last poem-sequence of this series *The Master*. It is not as we said of Veronica in *Pilate’s Wife*, the alabaster-box. There is, as in *Pilate’s Wife*, the attempt to bring a new tribute to the conventional figure of the Saviour. But the Eternal Lover is more forcibly suggested by the description of the anonymous Captain, who appears so unexpectedly at the Tomb entrance in Egypt, or by that Cloud of Witnesses, the star-cloud, the star-cluster in the Great Nebula of that final synthesis, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*.

The nine poem-sequences or choruses of which I have just written, belong in technique and emotional content, exactly to this transitional period. So I leave them. They are hardly a bridge, they are threads in a tapestry. Somewhere, they fill in or fill out a shadow. Somewhere, they lead, each taken separately, to the final pattern.

Somehow, their aspect and intention can not be wholly disregarded.

*May 16, 1950*

I have before me three paper-backed volumes, beautifully

Printed  
by  
Imprimerie Darantière  
At Dijon France  
M. CM. XXXIV.

That is, two of them were printed, M. CM. XXXIV, the third is given as M. CM. XXXV.

The first, *The Usual Star*, contains two stories, "The Usual Star," London 1928, and "Two Americans," Vaud 1930.

The second, *Kora and Ka*, also contains two stories, "Kora and Ka," Vaud 1930, and "Mira-Mare," Vaud 1930.

The third booklet is actually one sequence, *Nights*. But *Nights* falls into two sections, as the "Prologue" is written or spoken by one John Helforth. John Helforth is one of the two characters of "Kora and Ka," and I sign *Nights*, John Helforth, though the other two booklets are "by H.D." *Nights* itself was written late summer 1931, though the "Prologue" was not assembled until the summer of 1934.

Bryher brought me these books from the store that was left in London. She brought *Palimpsest* as well. I was not happy at the thought of reviewing these volumes, but I have been re-living these stories and especially the "Hipparchia," "Murex" and "Secret Name" of *Palimpsest*, and I find in spite of, or perhaps because of startling discrepancies in the matter and the manner of their presentation, strange treasures, dredged from my own sea-depth.

I regret that the proofs of *Palimpsest* were so carelessly revised. It was my own fault. The book was printed, 1926, by

Contact Editions  
29, Quai d'Anjou, Isle Saint-Louis  
Paris.

The writing is weedy and involved, with many baffling parentheses. It is sometimes difficult to disentangle the central theme from the turnings and involutions. I have indicated in this copy that Bryher brought me, various spelling and punctuation corrections to be made, in case there is ever a re-print of *Palimpsest*. The last of the three stories, "Secret Name," was continued, as I have said, in the "Hesperia" that was only finally assembled winter 1948. "Secret Name" and "Hesperia" do not always synchronize, the time-elements do not exactly correspond and the Margaret Fairwood of "Hesperia" is Helen Fairwood (I think the Helen is only twice mentioned) in "Secret Name." I had been working, at about that time, on a translation of Euripides' *Helen in Egypt*, which I never finally as-

sembled, moreover my mother, Helen, was actually there with Bryher and myself, at the time. The Helen in any revised printing should be Margaret, throughout.

The most fascinating story of the meeting of the mysterious Captain at the tomb-entrance, is presented in "Secret Name," at times superficially, and the impression of the meeting is sometimes marred in the earlier version, by suggestion of a trivial affair. There is nothing trivial. But at the time of the first writing, I had to "dress up" the characters, had to "act out" a pseudo-mundane situation in the face of the giant stars or "the purple bougainvillaea that hung background for the cat-Sekmet."

However, "perfectly, chemically the thing worked."

### *May 30*

Raymonde of the London 1926 "Murex" story, continues in name and character on into "The Usual Star" of 1928 London. The same Raymonde is found with the Daniel of "The Usual Star" and with Gareth in "Narthex." "Narthex" was published in the *Second American Caravan*, New York, 1928. The time of the actual story is spring 1927; as I remember, we were in Venice on May Day. (Narthex, by the way, is the "wand carried by initiates . . . original plant-stalk by means of which Prometheus brought fire from heaven.")

The names and characters of these long-short stories and of some of the unpublished ones, overlap, or the names change though the "characters" are the same, as for instance the Katherine of "The Usual Star," who is the Elaine of "The Moment." We start off the more or less contemporary time-sequence with Raymonde in the 1926 London of "Murex" (Who fished the murex up?). However, in actual time, "Murex" follows "Secret Name," though "Secret Name" by its very nature and content is difficult to place "in time." I keep on repeating these titles and these dates as they re-map or re-trace the labyrinth or spiral of my creative fantasy, in clock-time and in dream-time. Clock-time and dream-time came together in a miraculous manner, as I have already said, in "Secret Name" which I continued or concluded with "Hesperia." But it took me, as I keep repeating, 1945 minus 1923, or 1948 (when I finally assembled "Hesperia") minus 1923 years to "catch up." It took 25 years for the Egyptian experience to crystallize out to my present satisfaction. "Hesperia" is a star, a gem; it is the morning and evening star, and that Star actually did manifest. It mani-



fested, it is true, as a star-cluster, constellation or star-nebula as I stated in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, but it is the same Star. It is, as in *The Gift*, the symbolic star carefully set aside for the topmost branch of the fragrant balsam, our own Tree. It is the Star of Bethlehem.

#### June 4

It may seem and it does seem that we “dressed up” our characters, the central Raymonde of “Murex,” the Margaret of “Hesperia,” or the half-materialized Helen of the earlier “Secret Name.” But we are, as I have said, in the labyrinth and no formalized (however intricate) static labyrinth. It does not stay, with all its meanderings, on one plane and time goes slowly, goes swiftly; our dream-time is relative but we have yet no formula for this relativity. Our “system” revolves like the clock-hand but the hours or the years of those clock-numbers are uneven or un-numbered. That is the reason that I repeat these dates, these times and places.

I am trying to pin down my map, to plot the course of my journey, to circumscribe my own world or simply to put a frame around my clock-face. I repeat these dates, these names and titles for they are important to me, in this PLOT. The unanswered questions or the seemingly vague questing is the preliminary to the answered question, to the quest. The dates become important in relation to the last date or dates, the July 10–October 30, 1940 of the Battle of Britain, followed by my own 1945 integration or fulfilment. It was in the summer of 1945 that I received the messages of the RAF, tapped out by the little tripod-table of the poet, William Morris.

In contrast to the later *Sword* and *Rose, By Avon River* and the yet unfinished *Mystery*, these romances of the late twenties and early thirties, seem, as I have said, “dressed up.” But why not dress up? We are not Margaret, we are not Julia Ashton of the *War I Madrigal*. We are not one or any of those whose lovely names startle and enchant me, as I read them now as if for the first time, in my own prose and poetry, Hipparchia, Heliadora, Hedyle. We are not Hedyle, the stylized exiled Athenian hetaera, nor the exquisite child of Hedyle, Hedylyus who gives his name to that book. We are not the *Sword* Rose de Beauvais of Normandy and Brittany at the time of England’s conquest, nor the earlier Stella, meeting at Villa Trevi above Rome, an earlier conqueror. We are not Raymonde of the first “contemporary” “Murex” nor yet the later Raymonde of “Narthex,” who seated

with her two friends at the little Florian table, is fully conscious of the *processus* of the Wheel, as tourists from the *Nord Stirn* or from Valparaiso, from mid-west American and the north of England, swarm across St. Mark's Square, and the old crone with her dipped or dyed carnations, returns, this time, to their little table, counter-clock-wise.

*June 5*

We have *Hippolytus Temporizes*, published by Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1927. This play was inspired by the poem of that name that I had written in the Isles of Greece, 1920. It is a long poem, this three-act play, consistent with the early H.D. crystalline tradition. This and *Hedylus*, the Greek novel (also set up by Houghton Mifflin, 1928, from the Basil Blackwell, Oxford sheets) have for theme and centre, the portrait or projection of the intellectualized, crystalline youth, whose prototype is again found or first found in the actual Greek drama. They reflect the original Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the *Ion*. My translation of the *Ion* was brought out by Houghton Mifflin in 1937, from the Chatto and Windus London sheets.

All three of these studies are in a sense, the projection of the jewel or the crystallization of the jewel or jewels in the matrix. I have said that it would be difficult for a critic to assess the matrix—difficult for myself to assess it. But it is not so difficult if we visualize or imagine the two streams of consciousness, running along together (the time-element and the dream or ideal element) but in separate channels. The streams, as I have already noted, came together in the end, in the War II and post-War II novels that I sign Delia Alton.

These earlier volumes have been collected for me fairly recently by Bryher, some were brought out from London; we found copies of others where I had stored them in her villa, at La Tour. Only recently the lost key to that cupboard turned up. The books had been put away when I left Switzerland, in the autumn of 1939.

Nor had I returned to them nor reviewed them in the war and post-war period. Only now that I feel so sustained by the *Sword and Rose*, can I re-live these stories. Indeed, I have been happy too, finding unexpected phrase and paragraph which merge or weave into the texture or spirit of the final novels. It is all a search, as I said earlier in these pages.

“This Isis takes many forms as does Osiris.”