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Partum Poetics: Pregnant Moderns and the Poetry of Origins

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# Partum Poetics: Pregnant Moderns and the Poetry of Origins

By

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B.A., Samford University, 2010

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in English
2019

Abstract

Partum Poetics: Pregnant Moderns and the Poetry of Origins
By Alyssa Duck

This dissertation reconsiders the problem of "origins" in Modernist poetry by examining metaphors of creation and procreation. While the Modernist "mythos" of creation privileges the textual "brainchildren" created by man over the bodies procreated by woman, Modern poetry cannot escape the metaphorical vehicle that carries Modern man's poetic "pregnancy." Chapter One traces poetic "pregnancy" in the work of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, and Sigmund Freud. These Moderns model the poetic parturition of Philip Sidney's "Astrophil and Stella," whose author, "great with child to speak," delivers his creative "brainchild" through the "Caesarian" of poetic apostrophe. Against a mythos of creation that obviates her body, we turn to consider the work of Mina Loy and H.D., two poets who center the origins of Modernism in the Modern woman's body. Woman's double parturition of children and "brainchildren" fulfils Pound's command to "Make It New" in a way that Pound could not, and Chapter Two considers Loy's argument that woman's propensity to both create and procreate marks both her creative primacy and her fundamental inequality with man. As Chapter Three expounds, Loy's conception of woman's doubled "genius" is centered in the cervix, and resists man's attempts to rarefy creation from the "cosmos of agony" of woman's body. H.D., too, narrates woman's creativity at the center of Modernism, and Chapter Four examines the symbolic equivalence between war-making and child-making among authors of the Great War. H.D. narrates woman at the nexus of myth and history, and as we see in Chapter Five, woman bears myth into being through both the womb and the "vision of the womb" that guides her pen. Loy and H.D. offer a heuristic of reading and living myth that centers woman's doubly creative body at the origin of poetry and of life—that historically specific woman performs the hard work of birthing poetry, people, and, in H.D.'s words, "herself in herself trying to be born" allows her to impose her own creative terms on myth's demands.

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# Acknowledgements

To my husband, Chad, for his patience, his love, and his quick wit.

To Cara, for the miles we walked working through the questions we still haven't answered.

To my family, for supporting me every day, and for indulging my pursuit of "absolutely unhatchable objects."

To my assiduous committee, who have made every argument stronger and more readable.

To Stevie Louise, for modeling persistence.

And, always, to my mother, who made it all possible.

Table of Contents

# Introduction

## Baring the Cervix and Bearing Modernity

> Some people think that women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is.
> —*New York Evening Sun*, February 13, 1917

Mina Loy, *Teasing a Butterfly*, ca. 1933

In 1933, ten years after the publication of her *Lunar Baedeker*, Mina Loy exhibited the painting *Teasing a Butterfly* at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York City. The painting, reproduced above, imagines the view of a butterfly plagued by children, whose clawed hands eagerly grasp from an opaque, clouded sky. Loy's painting recalls the celestial ceilings of Renaissance cupolas, which narrate to the faithful the myths of God and man. The most famous of these, of course, is Michaelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, which graces the ceiling of the Roman Sistine Chapel, and which imagines the biblical narrative in which God gives life to Adam, the first man. The fresco imagines God,

floating curiously in what one scholar has compared to a "uterine mantle,"[1] reaching from heaven to earth to animate the human race. In Adam's outstretched hand, we see what Loy would call in "Parturition" the

> Stir of incipient life
> Precipitating into me
> The contents of the universe[2]

The *Creation of Adam* narrates a birth—the first birth, we are told—in which, in the language of Genesis, "God created man in His own image."[3] Congregations of the faithful surely hear echoed in the fresco, as Loy "once heard in a church," the doxology of creation: "Man and woman God made them— / Thank God."[4] Loy's painting, too, recalls a scene of birth, the shadowed heads emerging eerily from a delicately censored celestial cervix. Indeed, the painting eerily resembles the "composite babies" Loy imagines in "Three Moments in Paris," whose "arms extended"

> Hang from the ceiling
> Beckoning
> Smiling
> In a profound silence[5]

Reading Loy's fresco as a scene of parturition, Heaven is a strange, dilating cervix, and the shaded shadows on the "babies" on the ceiling are the blood of parturitive mothers. Pinned, like the butterfly, in the "tease" of the babies' stare, the viewer is tempted to avert her eyes from the peculiar intimacy of this creation scene. Indeed, "in their shame / having surprised a gesture that is ultimately intimate," those who pass under the

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[1] Adrian Stokes, *Michaelangelo: A Study in the Nature of Art* (New York: Tavistock, 1955), 89.
[2] Mina Loy, "Parturition," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), ll. 94-96.
[3] Genesis 1:27 (New International Version).
[4] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 130-32.
[5] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* [III: Magasins du Louvre] ll. 6-10.

ceiling in Loy's poem seek any other object for their gaze, walking with "eyes averted" or "inextricably entangled with the pattern of the / carpet."[6] So, too, have scholars of Loy's work, who have widely identified Loy's work as "maternalist"[7] or "feminist"[8] without quite meeting the gaze of the babies on the ceiling. Indeed, Loy's demand that we meet the babies' gaze is neither comfortable nor fashionable, for it draws awkward attention to what she would call the "pet illusion"[9] that woman can, in one Loy critic's words, "transcend biological process and merge with cosmic becoming."[10] Yet in Loy's poems as in her painting, woman's body grounds the very possibility of "cosmic becoming"—the cervix is the very stuff of Heaven. In H.D.'s work, too, woman's body marks the nexus of Heaven and Earth and of Myth and History, for it is the "oyster" of her body that gestates, through woman's "vision of the womb," poetry's "pearl of great price."[11] H.D.'s poetic gesture toward the pantheon of myth does not, as some scholars have argued, seek mythic "surrogates"[12] for woman's historical specificity, nor does H.D. seek to "become a royal and mythic sign" to "make up" for woman's widely-penned deficiencies.[13] Instead, in H.D.'s work as in Loy's, woman embodies Modernist *poeisis*, engendering in her double creativity both the bodies and the poems that would shape the Modern era.

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[6] Ibid., ll. 34-35, 28, 31-32.
[7] See Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Seismic Orgasm: Sexual Intercourse and Narrative Meaning in Mina Loy," in *Mina Loy, Woman and Poet,* 54.
[8] See Paul Peppis, "Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology," *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 4 (2002): 564.
[9] Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* 153.
[10] Virginia Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 124.
[11] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982), 21, 50-51.
[12] Harold H. Watts, "H.D. and the Age of Myth," *The Sewanee Review* 56, no. 2 (1948): 295.
[13] Norman Holland, "H.D. and the 'Blameless Physician'," *Contemporary Literature* 10, no. 4 (1969): 501.

If, in Michaelangelo's fresco, the outstretched hand of God enacts the moment at which the "finger of God's hand […] dost the tongue with power imbue,"[14] the poetics of Loy and H.D. imagine the doubly creative woman's body imbuing with power both her own poetic tongue and the tongues of the bodies she gestates. Loy and H.D. re-spell the story painted on the "starry ceiling" of the "mezzanino," in which man's pen and paintbrush has

> Vaulted an unimaginable family
> Bird-like abortions
> With human throats
> And Wisdom's eyes[15]

The "brood"[16] that man has painted on the ceiling is "unimaginable," of course, because it has not been bred at all—it marks, rather, man's failed attempt to double his creativity in the same manner as woman. Yet man's attempt to make word flesh in the penned "brainchild" only marks, as Loy writes of James Joyce, a "flash" of the "great reflector" that "introspect[s]" the womb.[17] In H.D.'s telling, likewise, the place of man in creation is to "kneel" before rather than to pen the sacred "mysteries" of creation, and to yield his claim to "poten[cy]" to woman's doubly creative "perfection."[18] Woman's unique power to script bodies out of word *and* out of flesh marks the point at which, as in Michaelangelo's fresco, the hand of Heaven meets the hand of Earth. The "*point de repère*" of Modernism is not, as T.S. Eliot argued, the era's "heap of broken images" that

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[14] The medieval hymn "Veni, Creator Spiritus" is widely considered an inspiration of Michaelangelo's fresco.
[15] Loy, *Love Songs*, in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* [IV] ll. 1-6.
[16] Ibid., ll. 18.
[17] Loy, "Joyce's Ulysses," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ll. 57-59.
[18] H.D., "The Master." In *Collected Poems 1912-1944* (New York: New Directions, 1957), ll. 8-13, 27.

is "usually and conveniently taken as [its] starting point," but is rather the double parturition of woman's body—the poems and people she bears.[19]

It is tempting to read her uniquely doubled creativity in the contemporary spirit of "empowerment."[20] Contemporary scholars have reparatively read Loy and H.D. in this spirit, emphasizing the poetic power of the woman who wields her creativity to shape literary history. Yet, in the poems of Loy and H.D., the woman artist knows, in a way that Eliot could not, the "cruel[ty]" of "breeding."[21] I cannot help but recognize a familiar landscape of malaise, and a familiar sense of exhaustion. Faced with Modern economies of myth and language that narrate her as "Mother" or as "Mistress,"[22] as either "Goddess" or "Coal Scuttle,"[23] woman knows the life of her body to be much more intimate and rich. Yet as she writes her narrative against the too-simple myths that have penned her in literature and history, she writes with the weight of millenia inscribed upon her body. In myth and Modern literature, she often does not survive this inscription. To my mind, the most heartbreaking image of this inscription, and the most haunting scene in Modern literature, is Thomas Hardy's narration of the "reaping machine" in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In Tess's narration, the harvesting "reaping machine," whose rhythms align the engine with the "rhythms of love making," is the

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[19] T.S. Eliot, "American Literature and the American Language," *The Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1 (1966): 18.
[20] Rochelle Rives, for instance, argues that Loy's work "consolidates a personality cultivated to empower its bearer," and that this personality, which Rives explicitly constructs, intentionally or not, in the language of birth, "transcends femininity and gender." See Rochelle Rives, "Modernist Prosopopeoia: Mina Loy, Gaudier-Brzeska and the Making of Face," *Journal of Modern Literature* 34, no. 4 (2011): 142. Likewise, readings of H.D.'s work often emphasize her power to "re-write" mythology without adequately considering the existential difficulty this entails.
[21] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), ll. 1.
[22] See Valentine de Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman (Response to F.T. Marinetti)," in *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 112.
[23] H.D., *Her* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 64.

objective correlative to woman's experience of her body.[24] Like the machine, which gradually closes its metal jaws around the fauna who have made the field their home, the sexual realities of her rape and failed maternity close tightly around Tess. From the moment of her inscription as "woman," the analogy suggests, Tess's body was destined to be sacrified to the machinery that demands a bodily harvest. When "Nature umpires," as Loy quips, the "game is never fair."[25] She is as fragile as a butterfly in the hands of a plague of generation. If her body escapes "annihilat[ion]"[26] by the reaping machine of procreativity, she may find herself "hammered" back into its jaws by man's pen.[27] Woman's pen may "free" her, as H.D. frees the "Lady" of her *Trilogy*, from being "shut up in a cave / like a Sibyl,"[28] yet she still finds the inscription of man's language on her body. Even as "Psyche, the butterfly" writes her body "out of the cocoon" of myth, myth's cocoon-marks are inscribed upon her body, and she carries its inheritance in her name.[29]

Crucially, in Hardy's novel, the only survivor of the reaping machine is not Tess, her rapist, or her daughter, but Hardy, who, by narrating Tess's "fate,"[30] escapes such a

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[24] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1891; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129. All citations refer to the Oxford edition.
[25] Mina Loy, "Summer Night in a Florentine Slum." Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[26] In the draft manuscript *Brontolvido*, Loy's character Sophia exclaims in frustration, "I'm a woman & you're the man who has annihilated me—my prurient womb!" Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[27] I refer here to Loy's story "The Stomach," in which a famous sculptor "hammer[s]" his Muse into a hip-thrusting pose in which, Loy writes, woman "entice[s] aesthetic culture into her womb to be reborn." Mina Loy, "The Stomach," in *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy,* ed. Sara Crangle (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), 106.
[28] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," in *H.D.: Collected Poems 1912-1944* (New York: New Directions, 1957), [38], 15-16.
[29] Ibid., ll. 19-20.
[30] Ibid.

fate himself. In Hardy's narrative, Tess is doubly sacrificed—first to the reaping machine, and then to Hardy's pen. In the work of Loy and H.D., the heroine's double sacrifice demands double creativity, as she both narrates her body and "translates" these phrases "into pain and blood."[31] This work is tiring, demanding, and difficult, yet it marks her best hope of survival, for, as evidenced in *Tess*, the one who holds the pen is most likely to survive the tale. This is why, in *Asphodel*, H.D. describes herself as a "sort of goddess in the machine, very much still in the machine," who, by "us[ing] the machine," grows "greater than the machine."[32] The machinery of Nature and of Myth are, for Loy and H.D., as impossible to transcend as the language that narrates them, for the language of woman's doubled creativity, as vital as it is exhausting, is the only language available. The narrative is neither as simple as celebration or annihilation, for woman's doubled creativity is, at once, as sublimely unjust as it is profoundly powerful. By grasping tight the pulls of the machinery to reinscribe through their bodies the "tome of the ancient wisdom" as the "unwritten volume of the new,"[33] Loy and H.D. generously bear their readers into a womanhood less scarred by man's pen.

## The Modernist Mythos

> In the beginning was the Word.
> Superfetation of τὸ ἕν,
> And at the mensual turn of time.
> Produced enervate Origen.
> —T.S. Eliot, "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service"

> When a man says, "I too am woman," he is sure of himself.
> —Alice Jardine, *Gynesis*

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[31] See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; New York: Viking, 2010), 532. All citations refer to the Viking edition.
[32] H.D., *Asphodel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 166.
[33] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," [38] ll. 9-12.

"Woman?" Simone de Beauvoir opens her 1949 manifesto on *The Second Sex* with this disyllabic query. "Very simple, say those who like simple answers: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female: The word is enough to define her."[34] Mythic systems, Beauvoir argues, often confine woman not only to her procreative organ, but, further, to the words that denote her procreativity. The word, as man has penned it, is as inextricable as it is epistemologically distinct from the reality of woman as "first mover," for in his myth, in the beginning was the Word, not the Womb.[35] As Laura Riding Jackson argues in *The Word Woman*, the words man pens to describe "woman" are both etymologically and epistemologically grounded in man, and in woman's capacity to procreate more men—the word "woman" deriving from the Anglo-Saxon "wifmon," or man's wife, and the word "feminine" deriving from the Latin *femina*, for "*fecundus,* fertile."[36] Women are distinct from the word "woman," Riding Jackson argues, for while the word "woman" is "included in the word 'man'," and while "its meanings do no more than supplement and liberalize the meanings of 'man',"[37] the reality of woman is, of course, more complex, and the reality of woman, as Beauvoir notes, "translates these phrases into pain and blood."[38] Indeed, as Alice Jardine has argued, the "feminine" has, since the beginning of the 20th century, "become—to use an old expression of Roland Barthes—a 'metaphor without brakes'," despite that "the repeated and infinitely expanded 'feminine' in these theoretical systems often has very little, if anything, to do with women."[39] The disjuncture between women and the word

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[34] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 21.
[35] See John 1:1 (New International Version).
[36] Laura Riding Jackson, *The Word Woman and Other Related Writings* (New York: Persea Books, 1993), 17.
[37] Ibid., 20.
[38] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 532.
[39] Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 34–5.

"woman" is a crucial distinction to carry into our consideration of the Modern mythos built on the symbol of "woman." The Modernist mythos of creativity labors to harness the procreative prowess embodied in the word "woman" to establish an aesthetic and epistemological system that pens the primacy of man's creation over woman's.

The Modernist mythos crucially differentiates artistic creation from the human procreation it plagiarizes. Riding Jackson succinctly argues that, across literary history, "independence from woman has been the object of all the so-called 'creative' activity of man: The very notion of 'creation' implies the disappearance of the separate phenomenon 'woman' in male activity."[40] Indeed, despite that, in the words of one male critic of Riding, "the womb has always been a storehouse of metaphorical possibilities,"[41] literary history has a long tradition of polarizing the gestation of texts and the gestation of children as mutually exclusive phenomena. In his *Mythologies,* Barthes offers a succinct, if biting, summary of this polarization: "Make no mistake," he writes, "women are on earth to give children to men; let them write as much as they like, let them decorate their condition, but above all, let them not depart from it: Let their Biblical fate not be disturbed by the promotion which is conceded to them, and let them pay by the tribute of their motherhood."[42] Procreation is, in this mythos, the

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[40] Jackson, *The Word Woman,* 57. Laura Riding Jackson is widely considered to be the "Muse" of Robert Graves's mythological treatise *The White Goddess.* In *The Word Woman*, Riding Jackson writes of Graves: "Until our association began, the subject *woman* did not exist for him. Nor had he any instinctive feelings on the subject… [it] was a subject for professional literary treatment" (10). In fact, she argues, "everything he has put forth in this guise of male pioneer in new thinking on Woman and Women is derived appropriatively from my thinking as he had direct personal contact with it, and from the varied manifestations of my experiences of feeling and thought on the subject to be found in my writings, poetic and general" (10). The figure of the "Muse," Jackson suggests, is a clever front for man's plagiarism of woman's ideas.

[41] Robert Erickson, *Mother Midnight: Birth, Sex, and Fate in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 16.

[42] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1957; New York: Vintage, 2009), 50. All citations refer to the Vintage edition. Barthes continues his critique of this

domain of the woman, and creation the domain of the man, and woman's doubling of these domains leads only, as T.E. Hulme complained, to the dilution of the "virile thought" of male poetic work.[43] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted that Modernist texts widely narrate an existential anxiety about woman's capacity to double creation and procreation, which, they argue, male Modernists feared would lead to women's "double parturition"[44] of both babies and texts. Gilbert and Gubar note Modernism's images of "male impotence" and "female potency," [45] and correlate these images with the era's rise of the "lady poet."[46] As Henry Miller declared of Rebecca West, "the loss of sex polarity is part and parcel of the larger disintegration, the reflex of the soul's death, and coincident with the disappearance of great men, great causes, great wars."[47] Miller felt the ground shake under the myths on which his authorship—and his "causes"—had been grounded, and sensed that this shift was bound up with the *nouvelle femme*'s "double parturition." In this dissertation, I have chosen to consider the Modernist approach to the question of generation as a "mythos" both in light of Modernism's deep investment in mythic symbols and to highlight Modernism's complex relationship to its origins. Scholars have widely noted that, while Modernism sought to make radically "new" the myths it inherited, Modernism's "body of interconnected myths and stories" structurally reflects that of the mythic structures it

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cultural "mythology" by assuring the imagined male reader, "Let women acquire self-confidence: they can very well have access, like men, to the superior status of creation. But let men be quickly reassured: women will not be taken from them for all that, they will remain no less available for motherhood by nature" (50).

[43] T.E. Hulme, "Lecture on Modern Poetry,"in *Selected Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 154.

[44] I borrow this phrase from the above passage above in Barthes' *Mythologies,* 51.

[45] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 36.

[46] This is Hemingway's term. See his delightfully condescending poem, "The Lady Poets (With Foot Notes)," in *The Collected Poems* (New York: Haskell House, 1972).

[47] Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land,* 43.

re-spelled.[48] As Michael Bell has argued, mythic systems rely on the willingness of artists and readers to both recognize that their worldview is largely symbolic and narrative, and to impose symbol and narrative "as conviction" on historical reality.[49] The mythos relies, in other words, on a suspension of belief that allows us to live a narrative that is both "supremely significant" and "a falsehood."[50] Critical consideration of myth forces us to meditate carefully on the gap between the foundational mythic "falsehood" and our correlative historical reality, and to consider what it means to live and to write in this gap. That myths marked by "elusive meaning" are inseperable from the historical realities they narrate is, Bell argues, "an important truth value peculiar to modernity," and we will hold this gap in mind as we consider the "elusive meaning" of the Modern *nouvelle femme*.[51]

We must also consider Modernism's anxiety about man's doubling of creation and procreation. The hierarchization of creation over procreation is endemic, as feminist anthropologist Marta Weigle has argued, to man-penned mythic systems. Weigle notes that mythic systems propose a "cosmogonical" rather than "parturitive" approach to the origin of man, and that, among creation myths, "procreation is relegated to elemental or physical or biological status, while creation—viewed as spiritual or metaphysical or symbolic—becomes the valued paradigm."[52] The "fundamental premise" of mythology, Weigle argues, is that "procreation is the antithesis of creation; to be procreant is not to be creative; and parturition is not symbolically equivalent to

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[48] Oxford English Dictionary, "Mythos."
[49] Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism, and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 3.
[52] Marta Weigle, "Creation and Procreation, Cosmogony and Childbirth: Reflections on Ex Nihilo, Earth Diver, and Emergence Mythology," *The Journal of American Folklore* 100, no. 398 (1987): 427.

cosmogony."[53] The "generating gods" or "*logoi*" of creativity and rhetoric are, Weigle notes, traditionally allied with the male, the cosmogonic, and the creative rather than with the female, the parturitive, and the procreative,[54] and the *logoi* are etymologically kin to the creative projections of the Word or *logos*. The *logoi* lie also at the heart of creative ontogenesis, for conception in cosmogonic myths closely mirrors that of Aristotle's scientific fable, in which the male creative principle "plants" life inside woman's body.[55] Myth conceives creation, Weigle argues, in the "general metaphor" of "projection," and creation myths often center male heroes who "*project, penetrate, erect,* and *ejaculate*" being into chaos or void.[56] Indeed, in myth, while to be parturitive is not to be cosmogenetic, to be cosmogenetic is to *incite* and to *encompass* parturition, and this ontogenic role is the domain of man. Man's cosmogenetic doubling of creation and procreation, and his refusal of this doubling to woman, is, Weigle suggests, the condition of possibility of myth. That the *logoi* claim both creative and procreative generation necessitates that women "do not have 'projects' in the same way men have 'babies'."[57]

Through our readings of Modernist authors, we will consider what Barbara Johnson has called the "competition" between the "bearing of children and the writing of poems"[58] in its Modernist context. The symbolic adaptation of procreation to the narrative aims of man's pen is, of course, nothing new. Sir Philip Sidney's "Astrophil and Stella," for instance, describes the male poet as "great with child to speak," but, as

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Marta Weigle, *Creation and Procreation: Feminist Reflections on Mythologies of Cosmogony and Parturition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 77.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 8.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Barbara Johnson, "Animation, Apostrophe, Abortion," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 196.

Johnson notes, the poem does away with both child and mother, for the poet's labor pains are "smoothed away with a midwifely apostrophe ('Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart, and write!') and by a sort of poetic Caesarian section," by which "out springs the poem we have, in fact, already finished reading."[59] Indeed, man's poetic "pregnancy" necessitates that woman not textually *create* but textually *embody* Modernism, and, as we will see in Chapter One, this necesitates, too, the textual sacrifice of woman's body. Man's generation of the word "woman" necessitates her sacrifice to the textual schism, fracture, violence, and destabilization that make Modernist myth "New."[60] Woman must embody, as Hardy writes of Tess, "actualized poetry," and must "liv[e] what paper-poets write."[61] She must, as Richard Ellman says of Joyce's Molly, paraphrase and reverse for Modern man Mephistopholes's line from Goethe's *Faust*: Rather than "the spirit that always denies," Ellman argues, Modern woman is "flesh that always affirms."[62]

Insofar as the Modern men presented here script and sacrifice woman as generative symbol, they participate in what Nancy Chodorow has termed the "reproduction of mothering."[63] This project modifies Chodorow's apt phrase to cast Modern poetry as not only the reproduction of mothering, but the reproduction of generativity more generally, and will consider the Modernist reproduction of generativity as a curious inverse of the literary tradition's endowment of women writers with a "paper penis," considering instead how the reproduction of generativity

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[59] Ibid. 197.
[60] See Ezra Pound, *Make It New* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).
[61] Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 235.
[62] Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 158.
[63] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7.

endows Modern man with a sort of "paper" womb.[64] Man considers his "paper" womb to be infinitely superior to the wombs of women, for, as Stephen Dedalus opines in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, "In woman's womb word is made flesh, but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away."[65] Man's paper "womb" offers, by contrast to woman's "flesh," a superior "postcreation."[66] The Modernist generation of bodies into "actualized poetry" structures the Modernist mythos, in which the possibility of artistic creation proves symbolically inextricable from the possibility of human procreation. While our consideration of Mina Loy and H.D. will emphasize the important but easily overlooked fact that the production of a poem is not the production of a baby, Chapter One will emphasize the structural parallels between creation and procreation among canonical Modernists from Yeats to Freud, and will argue, along with Johnson, that the right to "play" maternity constitutes "the condition of possibility for male privilege itself."[67]

Exercising this privilege, men populated the canon of Modernist literature with narratives of femininity, pregnancy, parturition, and motherhood in which, although they purport to pen her, Modern woman is unlikely to recognize herself. The first chapter of this dissertation traces the mythic Mater from the poets W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, to novelist D.H. Lawrence, to psychoanalytic philosopher Sigmund Freud. These Modernist thinkers' profoundly gynecological approach to creativity underpins an aesthetic mythos in which man's creation subsumes woman's

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[64] See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 883.
[65] James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: B.W. Huebsch, 1916; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 185.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Barbara Johnson, "Gender and Poetry," in *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race, and Gender* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 127.

procreation—and in which, by consequence, man's poetic pregnancy is both possible and necessary. I am neither interested in what Eve Sedgwick has called "paranoid reading,"[68] nor in what Aldous Huxley diagnosed in the case of D.H. Lawrence as "destructive hagiography."[69] Neither will we attempt to dislodge these canonical Modernist thinkers from their creative genius. Yet we will refuse, as Elizabeth Grosz urges, to hierarchize the philosophical and the physical body.[70] As Michael Bell argues of mythic systems, the import of Modernism's creation myth lies "not in the proposition itself, but in how it is lived, individually and collectively."[71] As she appears through Modern man's pen, woman marks his creative ability to pin/pen her generativity in the male womb of the word "woman," for, as Jackson argues, "the meanings attributed to 'woman' represent merely what man would like 'woman' to mean."[72] We might dismiss the woman penned by man, as Louis MacNeice dismissed Yeats's Cathleen Ni Houlihan, as "both a bore and a bitch,"[73] but we cannot ignore her. That man must engage her in a battle for the soul of creation is, from Homer to Freud, the great premise of myth.

From the pregnant pens of Yeats and Freud we will turn to Mina Loy and H.D., who carry, as H.D. writes of the "Lady" of her *Trilogy*, not man's "tome of ancient wisdom," but the "unwritten volume of the new."[74] Their book, "our book," narrates,

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[68] Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
[69] Quoted in Judith Ruderman, *D.H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 5.
[70] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994),
[71] Bell, *Literature, Modernism, and Myth*, 1.
[72] Jackson, *The Word Woman*, 37.
[73] Quoted in Patrick J. Keane, *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland, and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 3.
[74] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," [38] ll. 10, 12.

too, the "body of interconnected myths and stories"[75] inherited by the Moderns, but in the hands of these two women, Modern myth takes a new shape—"its pages will reveal / a tale […] different yet the same as before."[76] Indeed, woman's "double parturition" allows her to fulfil Pound's command to "Make It New" in a way that Pound could not, narrating Modernist bodies through both her pen and her body. In Chapter Two, we will trace Loy's approach to the Modernist "riddle" of woman, considering the panache with which she both embodied and resisted the trope of the *nouvelle femme* narrated in her *New York Evening Sun* profile.[77] While scholars have often characterized Loy's work as a poetics of "maternalis[m]"[78] or "free love,"[79] Loy's approach to love and motherhood merits more careful consideration. As we consider Loy's troubled alliances with both Futurism and Feminism, we will appraise the "sham camellia" of mythic narration behind which, Loy argues, lurk the "elements unconditionally primeval" of woman's sexual inequality.[80] Loy argues that "Nature" has "endowed" woman with the "complete […] faculties" to both create and procreate,[81] and that woman's creative primacy marks her vital dissimilitude with man. In her "Feminist Manifesto," Loy demands that woman embrace rather than deny her primal inequality, and urges woman to

> Be **Brave** & deny at the outset—
> that pathetic clap-trap war cry **Woman is the equal of man**—
> for
> She is **NOT!**[82]

[75] Oxford English Dictionary, "Mythos."
[76] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," [39], ll. 20-21, 23.
[77] "Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned," *New York Evening Sun*, 13 February 1917.
[78] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Seismic Orgasm," 60.
[79] Paul Peppis, "Rewriting Sex," 570.
[80] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 88, 96.
[81] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.
[82] Ibid., 153.

Yet woman's creative primacy marks also her "annihilation" [83] into "superior Inferiority,"[84] and Loy's poetics of creative inequity resists the narratives of unalloyed empowerment penned by both the *Freewoman* of her era and the literary critics of ours. The myth, history, and literature penned by man has not penned woman's body, Loy argues, in its full creative vitality, but has penned her in the language of "the Master,"[85] who falsifies her as either a "Sweet heart" or an "Eternal Mother" who "devours her literary kittens——invariably."[86] Loy's poetics re-spells woman's body as the center of creation, and narrates the torturous triumph of her creative primacy stripped of the "glitter" with which man seduces woman to abdicate her doubly parturitive power.[87]

This power allows woman to live and to write the phrase, as Loy opens her poem "Parturition," "I am the Centre."[88] Yet, as the next lines clarify, woman's embodied narrative power is the power to declare herself the "Centre / of a circle / of pain."[89] In Chapter Three, we will consider Loy's vision of woman at the center of creation in both its triumph and its agony, and will read Loy's "Parturition" and *Love Songs* as Modernist heroic epics of both the Word and the flesh. Against the "brainchildren" produced by Joyce and the biblical Logos, Loy positions the birthing woman's cervix as no less than "contraction / To the pin-point nucleus of being."[90] Against these

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[83] Loy, *Brontolovido.* Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[84] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 39.
[85] Loy, "The Stomach," 105.
[86] Loy, "Conversion," in *Stories and Essays,* 227-28.
[87] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, in *Stories and Essays*, 215.
[88] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 1.
[89] Ibid., ll. 1-3.
[90] Ibid., ll. 9-10.

"brainchildren," too, and against critics eager to offer woman "artistic transcendence," [91] Loy's conception of genius does not transcend the pain and gore of childbirth, but is inextricable from the "cosmos of agony" of woman's body.[92] Nor does Loy's conception of love "transcend" the body, for Loy's *Love Songs,* too, foreground the "erotic garbage" with which woman, in myth as in the bedroom, is faced. [93] If man is a failed artist who paints "Bird-like abortions / With human throats / And wisdom's eyes," [94] Nature is an "irate pornographist"[95] who does not blanch at the "disheartening odor" of the body's creativity.[96] Loy, too, is a bit of a pornographist, and if she is "irate," it may be that her body's creative labor spells her speech as the "gurgling of a crucified wild beast."[97] Yet Loy asserts her own pornography against the "pornographic literature" [98] of men, which narrates woman as a silent Sphinx, a riddle, or a "slimy serpent of sex."[99] At the heart of man's narration of woman, Loy argues, is the "lack" in his "colossal intellect" of woman's creative primacy.[100] Against the riddles that man poses in her name, Loy bares her body as the origin of life—and bears into being, too, a poetics centered on the body of the mother.

Like Loy, H.D. narrates the epic creativity of woman's body, and centers the mythic "mysteries" of creation in woman's doubly parturitive generation.[101] Like Loy,

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[91] Janet Lyon, "Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses: The Space of Possibility in the Florence Writings," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet,* ed. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Chicago: National Poetry Foundation, 1998), 387.
[92] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 6.
[93] Ibid., ll. 3-4.
[94] Loy, *Love Songs,* in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ll. 39-50.
[95] Ibid., ll. 297.
[96] Ibid., ll. 109.
[97] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 47.
[98] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," in *Stories and Essays,* 253.
[99] See, respectively, Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," "Pazzarella," and "Conversion."
[100] Loy, "Pazzarella," in *Stories and Essays,* 89.
[101] See H.D., "The Master," in *Collected Poems,* [XI] ll. 8-13.

who saw in the language of Futurism and Feminism a tool to "clear" the "fallow-lands of mental spatiality […] MAKING place for whatever you are brave enough, beautiful / enough to draw out of the realized self,"[102] H.D. saw in the language of myth a narrative she felt called to re-birth through her doubly creative body. Yet unlike Loy, who, as Harriet Monroe lamented, made "gay little satiric *moues*"[103] at the language she borrowed, H.D. saw in the language of myth the inscription of history's palimpsest on her body. H.D.'s masterful re-spelling of mythic and literary tradition, which she deemed "Penelope's web,"[104] weaves a poetic identity between writerly subject and mythic object, between the machinery of myth and her historical specificity, the web of "a sort of goddess in the machine, very much still in the machine" who, by "us[ing] the machine," grows "greater than the machine."[105] Yet in H.D.'s work as in Loy's, the body's generation demands the reaping machine's tribute, and woman pays with her body for the power of her pen. In Chapter Four, we will consider woman's bodily tribute to the mythic narrative of War in H.D.'s *Madrigal* novels, and will examine the symbolic equivalence between war-making and child-making among narrators of the first World War. The poets of the Great War, along with the scholars who write them, often narrate the explosive cultural and literary developments of Modernism in terms of the unique "creative activities of wartime,"[106] and some Great War authors, such as D.H. Lawrence, considered War a chance to birth, through War's creative violence, a "new

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[102] Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 152.
[103] Quoted in Roger Conover, "Introduction," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* xxix.
[104] H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 1956), 153.
[105] H.D., *Asphodel*, 166.
[106] Marina Mackay, "The Lunacy of Men, the Idiocy of Women: Woolf, West, and War." *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 124.

Man."[107] Many authors of the Great War, such as H.D.'s husband Richard Aldington, wrote woman's body out of war-time violence by committing man to the battlefield and woman to the bedroom: "There was the deep primitive psychological instinct—men to kill and be killed; women to produce more men to continue the process."[108] Yet the demands of War leave woman's body "cut in half (all wives are now),"[109] and the woman on the Home Front is as "shot to bits" as the soldier on the battlefield—"they all were."[110] The creative violence of War is inextricable in H.D.'s Madrigal novels from the creative violence of her body, and in *Asphodel* and *Bid Me to Live,* she narrates the stillbirth of her first child and the birth of her daughter Perdita to the rhythm of the air raid during which she gives birth. Both narratives of violence were "carved in [the] temple wall," as H.D. writes in *Asphodel,* of history's palimpsest, and H.D. iterates the ancient mythic narratives of War and Birth through the historical specificity of her body.[111]

Her position at the nexus of myth and history puts woman in the awkward position of being, at once, "too metaphysical. Not metaphysical enough."[112] In Chapter Five, we will consider H.D.'s troubled intimacy with the myths to which she is "called" by the narration of history's palimpsest and of the men who pen her. The protagonist of H.D.'s novel *Her* grapples with the existential dilemma of being, at once, the object and the author of poetry. Hermione's crisis of identity marks the failure of poets she loves to adequately pen her complex relationship with myth and language—the relationship,

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[107] Quoted in Judith Puchner Breen, "D.H. Lawrence, World War I, and the Battle Between the Sexes: A Reading of 'The Blind Man' and 'Tickets, Please'." *Women's Studies* 13 (1986): 63–74.
[108] Richard Aldington, *The Death of a Hero* (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1929), 11.
[109] H.D., *Bid Me to Live (A Madrigal)* (London: Black Swan, 1983), 26.
[110] Ibid., 41.
[111] H.D., *Asphodel,* 90.
[112] Ibid., 76.

that is, between the "Her" that Hermione pens and the mythic "HER" of Ezra Pound's *Hilda's Book.*[113] Against the narrative of woman penned by Pound and Aldington, which casts her as either "a Greek goddess or a coal scuttle,"[114] H.D. narrates woman as neither simply as "in the world" as the "coal scuttle" nor as "out of the world" as the "goddess," but rather lives, as Pound's "or" prohibits, both at once.[115] The "goddess" penned in *Hilda's Book* is defined, Hermione finds, by lack, as a friend lets slip in his narration of Calypso: "A goddess [is] a—god—less, a God—less."[116] While, in H.D.'s narration, the silent "l" in man's spelling of the "goddess" marks his refusal to see woman as the nexus of history *and* myth, in H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, the silent "l" marks woman's lack of a phallic "spear."[117] Against man's misspelling of the goddess, H.D. offers a vision of woman's "perfection"[118] that demands neither Athena's missing "spear" nor the Muse's golden-haired silence. Rather, H.D.'s vision of woman's "perfection" emphasizes the parthenogenetic quality of woman's creativity, which "needs no man."[119] Against Freud's spearless Athena and Pound's Oread, H.D. narrates woman through the hieroglyph of the flower, whose self-pollinating bulb and stamen cover the earth in her creation. H.D. respells the goddess as Rhodocleia, a "perfect" vision of woman, as "this flower / that in itself had power over the whole earth."[120] Woman's "vision of the womb," as H.D. writes in her *Notes on Thought and Vision*,

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[113] Ezra Pound, "Shadow," in *Hilda's Book,* ll. 26.
[114] H.D., *Her* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 64.
[115] Ibid.
[116] H.D., *Asphodel,* 26.
[117] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 69.
[118] In *Tribute to Freud,* H.D. narrates a scene in which Freud presents her with his favorite figurine, a miniature Athena, who Freud notes "is perfect […] only she has lost her spear" (69). In "The Master," H.D. re-spells Freud's dictum that "woman is perfect" ([IV] ll. 26) as the flowering Rhodocleia, "herself perfect" ([V] ll. 44).
[119] H.D., "The Master," [V] ll. 39.
[120] Ibid., ll. 38-39.

marks her creative vitality at the nexus of myth and history, and woman's visionary womb allows her to birth myth into historical specificity as the "unwritten volume of the new."[121] The bodies she bears into history, like the "Lady" of her "Tribute to the Angels," bear the marks of mythic language, for woman's double parturition, in H.D. as in Loy, is as terrible as it is triumphant. Yet the inheritance offered by the bodies borne by H.D., as by Loy, is a mythic language re-spelled through woman's body—the inheritance these women offer our turn of the palimpsest is that not only of Athena, but of Rhodocleia. We inherit from them a new heuristic of reading and living myth, in which woman, knowing the myths to which she is called, and seeing that "none of these / suggest [woman] as I saw her,"[122] may choose to re-inscribe her body in a language that bars her inscription. This work, as we shall see, is terribly triumphant, and offers no simple answers to the questions it evokes. Faced with such terrible triumph, H.D. calls us to make a crucial decision—"to accept or reject this questionable gift—this thistle."[123]

[121] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," [38] ll. 12.
[122] Ibid., [31] ll. 1.
[123] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision*, 39.

# Part I

## The "Birth" of Modern Man

Whether she be the subject of praise or censure, woman is now, as always, man's most interesting topic.

—Margaret Wynne Nevinson

# Chapter One

## Poetry, Pregnancy, and the "Birth" of Modernism

### W.B. Yeats and the Modernist "Mythical Method"

> I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's;
> I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.
> —William Blake, *Jerusalem*

> All thought becomes an image and the soul
> Becomes a body: that body and that soul
> Too perfect at the full to lie in a cradle…
> —W.B. Yeats, *A Vision*

It seems poetically just to orient an aesthetic feat attributed to Yeats—the "birth of Modernism"—in terms of Modernism's other births. W.B. Yeats, a founding Modernist poet, was also a founding "father" of what T.S. Eliot would call the Modernist "mythical method," an approach to symbol and history that served, Eliot argued, as "a step toward making the modern world possible for art."[1] The intricate and fecund mythos Yeats proposed makes legible the Modernist preoccupation with creation, procreation, and generative bodies. We begin with Yeats not only because of his paternal role in the Modernist "mythical method," but also because his work is often both lauded and contested as, in one critic's words, "fascinated by women."[2] Unlike later generations of Modernist writers, who would respond to the Mater with Joyce's "*non serviam*,"[3] Yeats conceived his poetic enterprise as an alliance with woman's body, in the form of the *daimon* or Muse. Although "woman"-coded images abound in Yeats's

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[1] T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth." *The Dial* 5, vol. 75 (1923): 480.
[2] Joseph M. Hasset, *W.B. Yeats and the Muses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2.
[3] James Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: B.W. Huebsch, 1916; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 100. Citations refer to the Oxford edition.

mythos, this poetic partnership proves ambivalent at best for women, whose symbolic "fascination" in the Yeatsian woman is best understood in the word's original sense of bewitchment that "deprive[s] of the power to escape or resist."[4] A mythos built with symbols—and Yeats's mythos is, he emphasizes, fundamentally "symbolical"[5]—risks, as Laura Riding Jackson noted, obfuscating the symbolized in the symbolic gesture.[6] For Yeats, and for the Modernist movement he founded, the risk of obfuscating woman in the procreative symbol—in the *word* "woman"—is not only calculated, but is indeed the *point de repère* of the "mythical method."[7] Man's business of creation, as Blake knew, is existentially compromised by the system it plagiarizes, and the only solution to his creative quagmire is to harness competing systems in the creation of his own. Refusing to be "enslav'd" by the creative system of that most "other" of men—women—the mythical method founded by Yeats, and pursued by the Moderns, functionally "fascinate[d]" woman's procreative power in its aesthetic systematization of generativity.

Yeats conceived the mythical method in response to the aesthetic crisis posed by the reality of generation. Recounting a youthful crisis of faith in his *Autobiography*, Yeats recalls the moment at which he "got a decisive argument for belief":

> A cow was about to calve, and I went to the field where the cow was with some farm-hands who carried a lantern, and next day I heard the cow had calved in the early morning. I asked everybody how calves were born, and because nobody would tell me, made up my mind that nobody knew. They were the gift of God, that much was certain, but it was plain that nobody had ever dared to see them come, and children must come in the same way. I made up my mind that when I was a man, I would wait up till calf or child had come. I was certain

[4] Oxford English Dictionary, "Fascinate."
[5] W.B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry," in *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 153.
[6] Laura Riding Jackson, *The Word Woman and Other Related Writings* (New York: Persea Books, 1993).
[7] T.S. Eliot, "American Literature and the American Language," in *The Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1 (1966): 18.

> there would be a cloud and a burst of light and God would bring the calf in the cloud out of the light.[8]

The generative event *should*, in the mind of young Yeats, have resembled God's mystic revelation to Moses in a cloud of light.[9] Indeed, much as the glory of God was hidden from Moses in that scene of revelation, the realities of birth were hidden from the young boy, and it is unsurprising that in consequence he postulated generation in biblio-mythic terms. Yeats informs us, however, that soon after this episode, he experienced an epistemological crisis when another young boy explained the "mechanism of sex," and when the boy's "description, as if he were telling of any other fact of physical life, made [Yeats] miserable for weeks."[10] Curiously, Yeats does not specify whether the "decisive moment" at which he conceived his mythic system was the moment at which he realized his own ignorance of procreation, or the moment at which he realized the female-bodily banality of making life. In any case, Yeats makes clear that his "belief" in mythic systems is rooted in his disappointment and disturbance that the coming of calves and children—which really *ought* to have been done by a deity—is performed by human women, banally and with grotesque agony. The work of myth, Yeats's account suggests, is to shroud not only that which we do not know, but also that which we refuse to know, and which we wish were different. The work of myth is, in other words, to shroud in mystery the physical realties that we would rather be metaphysical.

It is no accident that Yeats conceived his mythos in the language of his disappointment in the realities of human generation: That it is banal and material, that it is physically repulsive, and that it is performed by women. Myth can transcend the

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[8] W.B. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats: Consisting of Reveries over Childhood and Youth, the Trembling of the Veil, and Dramatis Personae* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 16.
[9] Exodus 33 (New International Version).
[10] Yeats, *Autobiography,* 16.

aesthetic and epistemological problems posed by the reality of our origins: Both inspired and populated by the metaphysical and the superlative, myth has the power to re-spell human repulsion in the beauty of poetic language. Myth grants man the power to *create,* and narrates this power over and above woman's power to *procreate*. The mythos of creation cannot, however, escape the shadow of procreation any more than its authors can escape the shadow of their births, for myth's existence relies on its incarnation, however symbolic, in matter, and the necessity of incarnation leads myth to language that reveals its plagiarism of the procreative model. Indeed, as Blake helpfully reminds us, the business of creation must refuse enslavement to other systems, however dependent one's system may be, and the Modernist mythos solves the epistemological question of its origins with a Cartesian strategy: Mind over matter. In other words, what we "loathe in ourselves or our world," Yeats writes, we must "but turn to intellect" to channel creative vision.[11] Consider, for instance, two parallel poems from Yeats's canon: "The Dolls," from his 1914 *Responsibilities,* and "Tom at Cruachan," from his 1933 *The Winding Stair and Other Poems.* In the opening lines of "The Dolls," the titular protagonist remarks in disgust that the doll-maker's human progeny in the cradle is "an insult to us."[12] Unlike the doll who, immune to human decay, is "kept for show," the human baby in the cradle promises both mortality and "bawl[ing]," and leads the dolls to cry in indignation, "The man and the woman bring / Hither, to our disgrace, / A noisy and filthy thing."[13] Lest we attribute blame for the infant's production to both the doll-maker and his wife, the doll-maker's wife is swift to formally apologize for her

[11] Yeats, *Autobiography,* 157.
[12] Yeats, "The Dolls," in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Scribner, 1983), ll. 3.
[13] Ibid., ll. 5, 10-12.

procreation: "My dear, my dear, O dear, / It was an accident."[14] The hierarchy of generation in this poem is clear: The doll-maker's creation is meticulous and immortal; the mother's procreation merits shame. Yeats's later poem "Tom at Cruachan" solves the doll-maker's dilemma by doing away with the mother in the panacea of "rhyme."[15] In her place, the artist substitutes two suitably fecund abstractions to populate the gestative scene: "The stallion Eternity / Mounted the Mare of Time, / 'Gat the foal of the world."[16] The creative scene depicted here is, of course, mythic rather than material insofar as it narrates a profoundly unique act carried out by symbolic, metaphysical actors. Nor should we ignore that the creation scene is powerfully aesthetic, for its beauty distinguishes creation from the "nois[e]" and "filt[h]" of procreation. Finally, we should note that, in this scene, the creative act is performed *not* by the symbolic Mare, but by the paternal Stallion, who secures the scene's two active verbs, both "mount[ing]" Time and, then, "beget[ting]" the world. The two gestation scenes presented in these poems organize a clear hierarchy between the human and the mythic—it is better to "beget" than to give birth; it is better to sing an epic than to murmur an apology. Yeats clarifies in his *Autobiography* that he "did not care for mere reality and believed that creation should be deliberate,"[17] an epistemological strategy that subordinates the slime of procreation—the disappointingly ungodly cow, the woman in labor—to the creative strategy evidenced in Yeats's assertion "I wished for a world."[18] The mythos of *creation*, in other words, must dictate the terms of *procreation* to

[14] Ibid., ll. 19-20.
[15] Yeats, "Tom at Cruachan," in *Collected Poems*, ll. 2.
[16] Ibid., ll. 4-6.
[17] Yeats, *Autobiography*, 55.
[18] Ibid., 77.

refuse enslavement by it. It must be deemed better to be prone to poetry than to pregnancy.

Of course, one "mythical method" of establishing this hierarchy is the "fascination" of woman's body, especially in its generative capacity, in the poetic symbol. Yeats is widely considered the Modernist poet *par excellence* of the mythic symbol,[19] and Yeats himself argued that the symbol is no less than "the greatest of all powers."[20] Yeats is careful to distinguish his symbolic system from what he calls "metaphorical writing," because, unlike the symbol, which is "the most perfect of all," the metaphor is "not profound enough to be moving," as it lacks the profundity of total transformation.[21] The symbol, by contrast, yields those who wield it surprising corporeal power. "When your words are not well chosen," Yeats writes in "The Symbolism of Poetry," "you cannot *give a body* to something that moves beyond the senses, unless your words are as subtle, as complex, as full as mysterious life, as the body of a flower or of a woman."[22] When his words *are* well chosen, this passage suggests, symbols give the poet the woman's mysterious capacity to *give bodies*. The passage also suggests that symbolic gestation gives bodies superior to those given by flowers and women, for symbols, unlike human bodies, have the capacity to "mov[e] beyond the senses."[23] As David Perkins has argued, for Yeats, the symbol "summon[s] a reality beneath or beyond mortal life,"[24] for, as Yeats continues, the symbolic "beryl

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[19] See, for example, Helen Vendler, *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 18. See also Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Mask* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).
[20] Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry," 153.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., emphasis mine.
[23] Ibid.
[24] David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 49.

stone" that was "enchanted by our fathers" does not "mirror our own excited faces," but unfolds its *own* creative meaning.[25] While procreation only gives body to unoriginal reflection, the poet's gestation is *truly* creative in that it gives body to meaning beyond the limits of the human body. Despite that symbols are, for this reason, "unanalyzable," the symbols that populate Yeats's canon are, as David Perkins argues, "more precise than anyone can say."[26] How, indeed, can a body gestated by woman speak with precision a symbol gestated by myth? The precision of the symbol is foregrounded in Yeats's note in the dedication of the first edition of *A Vision* that, in myth as in poetry, "we are dealing always with a particular man."[27] In our consideration of woman's body as symbol, let us bracket for a moment the subtle complexity of Yeats's work to take this assertion at face value, for he says here that the symbol of woman's body is always about, and addressed to, "a particular man." Indeed, elsewhere in *A Vision,* Yeats clarifies that his mythos was written "very much for young men between twenty and thirty."[28] Yeats also tellingly clarifies that it is "that we may believe that all men possess the super-natural faculties" of poetry's "giving of bodies" that he would "restore to the philosopher his mythology."[29]

Indeed, woman's place in Yeats's mythos seems neither that of reader nor writer. Rather, her body is the mythic conduit through which the poet channels revelation. In this way, woman's body is crucially related to the figure of the *daimon*, or the Muse. While we will not here do justice, as others have, to the rich complexity of Yeats's mythic system, it is important to consider the place of woman's body in this system, for

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[25] Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry," 163.
[26] Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 49.
[27] Quoted in Vendler, *Yeats's Vision,* 9.
[28] Quoted in Ibid., 19.
[29] Ibid., 252.

its mythic methodology informs that of the Modernist era. The *daimon* is, as Helen Vendler argues, "Yeats's barbaric recasting of the image of the Muse, which he amalgamates with the *femme fatale*" of the early 20th century.[30] Although it does not explicitly take the form of a woman's body, Yeats's *daimon* is characterized with feminine pronouns, and Yeats ambiguously clarifies that the *daimon* is "the opposite sex to that of man."[31] The relationship between man and *daimon* likewise mirrors that of man and woman insofar as their sexual relations "reproduc[e] the relation of man and *daimon*," and as man and woman "interact as man and *daimon* interact."[32] Yeats's creative vision necessitates complementary antipodes whose attractions and repulsions are as co-constitutive as they are curiously gendered. Considering his theory of the gyre against that of William Blake, Yeats argues that "the woman and the man are two competing gyres growing at one another's expense […] The existence of the one depends on the existence of the other."[33] This complementary relationship, in which each relies upon and competes with the other to maintain its being, exists too between the poet and his Muse. The poet signs his name to a creation he alone did not produce, while the price of the Muse's immortality is silence. The "object of the *daimon*," Yeats argues, is to "create a very personal form of heroism or of poetry" for the poet,[34] and despite their ostensible polarity, the *daimon*, whose words the poet channels as his own, often blurs with the poet who pens her. In "Anima Hominis," Yeats famously remarked that "we make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of the quarrel with

[30] Vendler, *Yeats's Vision*, 11.
[31] W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 28.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 134.
[34] Ibid., 28.

ourselves, poetry."[35] If, indeed, the creative struggle between man and *daimon* reflects the quarrel between the poet and himself, we must admit the Muse's womanhood as no more than a mirror through which her generativity is channeled and onto which the poet narrates his myths. Unlike the procreation of woman, the creation of the *daimon* achieves the distinction of myth—for she is, of course, simply the poet himself. Free of woman's body, the *daimon* rises, too. In his *Autobiography,* for instance, Yeats encounters the Muse in the form of "a naked woman of incredible beauty, standing upon a pedestal and shooting an arrow at a star. I still remember the tint of that marvelous flesh which makes all human flesh seem unhealthy."[36] Under these terms, who would not exchange her body for one made of such poetic material?

Indeed, at the heart of Yeats's *Vision* is the crucial distinction between bodies given by women in the cycles of "human rebirth," and those given by myth, or "those of the Eternal Man."[37] Yet the language necessary to "give" bodies in myth proves inextricable from the language of woman's "giving" of bodies. Modernism's reliance on the language of woman's body has been remarked by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who argue that Modernist thought is predicated on a "Yeatsian mysticism that locates history's turning points in the bodies of such mythic heroines as Leda, Helen, and Mary," and that Yeats's poetic descendants "linked a new perception of what they saw as the archaic power of the feminine with the reactive urgency of the modern aesthetic they were themselves defining."[38] If, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, the language of woman's body defines the Modernist aesthetic, scholars should pause to consider the

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[35] W.B. Yeats, "Anima Hominis," in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 29.
[36] Yeats, *Autobiography*, 248.
[37] Yeats, *A Vision,* 169.
[38] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 5.

state in which we find her body. Perhaps the most striking body in *A Vision* is Leda, whose titular poem, "Leda and the Swan," prefaces Yeats's theory of the gyre. While we will not here consider Yeats's theory of the gyre in the involved complexity it merits, it is important to understand that, in Yeats's mythic system, historical specificity takes the shape of a gyrating, cone-shaped revolution of antithetical abstractions through which symbols and scenes progress in spirals through the lives of men.[39] In the chapter "Dove or Swan," for instance, Yeats traces four thousand years of human history through its historical cone from the Greek era, through that of Christ, to the early 20th century. He envisions the antithetical Greek era as born of Leda and the Swan, and his own era as born of the Madonna and the Dove. As literary critics have noted, the titular question "Dove or Swan?" emphasizes Yeats's choice between Judeo-Christian myth, symbolized by the Dove of the Holy Spirit, and classical myth, symbolized by Zeus the Swan. Yet Yeats's query "Dove or Swan?" is a query of generation that considers the godly patriarchs not in their creation as "prime mover," but in their impregnation of human women. Helen Vendler has suggested that, in a sense, the whole of Yeats's theory is an "enigmatic commentary on that enigmatic poem,"[40] and I would suggest further that, in a sense, the Modernist mythos marks man's attempted answer to this query.

Because the poem gestates, as it were, Yeats's theory of history and myth, "Leda and the Swan" is worth reproducing here in its entirety.

> A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
>
> Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
> By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
> She holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

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[39] See Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Vision: Romantic Modernism and Antithetical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), and Helen Vendler's *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays.*

[40] Vendler, *Yeats's Vision*, 105.

> How can those terrified vague fingers push
> The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
> And how can a body, laid in that white rush,
> But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?
>
> A shudder in the loins engenders there
> The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
> And Agamemnon dead.
> Being so caught up,
> So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
> Did she put on his knowledge with his power
> Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?[41]

The poem is, of course, incomprehensible without the myth—the god Zeus, patriarch of the classical pantheon, desires the Aetolian princess, Leda, and rapes her in the guise of a swan. The prolific result of this rape is the birth of four foundational figures of classical mythology: Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux. The poem's placement clarifies that, likewise, Yeats's "mythical method" is incomprehensible without the myth—and this rape results, too, in a prolific profusion of textual generation. That Leda's rape unlocks the "mythical method" of Modernism is the first and founding instance, for Yeats, of history reproducing myth in the world of men. The mythic reproduction of this reproductive scene is key to Yeats's argument that history's progression reproduces myth among men. Leda—and woman—are, as it were, "thrown under the gyre" by this mythic formulation, for it is her bleeding body that generates Modern poetry. Without Leda, there is no Trojan War, there is no *Oresteia,* there is no Rome. There is also no *Vision*, and, very likely, no Yeats. Mythology and its heirs are built on the aesthetic convention that Leda's body be raped and impregnated over and over again.

[41] Yeats, "Leda and the Swan," in *A Vision,* 179.

The Aesthetic Ascesis of T.S. Eliot & Ezra Pound

> our lot crawls between dry ribs
> To keep our metaphysics warm.
> —T.S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality"
>
> What they all needed was a good rape.
> —Nathanael West, *Miss Lonelyhearts*

Modernist poetry is strewn with many bodies such as Leda's, an aesthetic trend that led Gilbert and Gubar to accuse the movement of widespread "femicide."[42] Feminist critics of Modern poetry have focused merited scrutiny on Modernism's mortuary of violated women, even suggesting this urge to violation as a founding principle of Modernism. The accusation of "femicide" was radical in its time, not least because it dismissed the conciliatory protest that in these texts, women's bodies were only *aesthetically* rather than *physically* violated. The implication of this protest is, of course, that poetry has the power to violate symbols, but lacks the power to violate women, an argument that strictly entrenches the Modernist distinction between creatively-given and procreatively-given bodies. This distinction bears consideration and complication. The complex relationship between the body and its symbols is usefully summarized in the lines from T.S. Eliot's "Whispers of Immortality" excerpted above, in which Eliot notes that the "lot" of creatives, among which he counts poets such as himself, "crawls between dry ribs / To keep our metaphysics warm."[43] To "seize and clutch and penetrate" bodies, the poem argues, is key to approaching the "Absolute Entities" of metaphysics, and despite the carcasses that populate the poem's opening stanzas, the explicit image of Donne's poetic "penetrat[ion]" suggests that the

[42] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land*, 49.
[43] T.S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality," in *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), ll. 31-32.

metaphysically warm figure ensconced by ribs at the poem's end may well be *fetal* as well as fatal. This image of the poet seeking to kindle metaphysics in the mother's body is an apt introduction to our reading of Eliot and Pound, for each poet's creative mythos, even as it rarefacts the mother-given body into metaphor and myth, nevertheless remains lodged between the mother's ribs.

We may assume, as Hugh Kenner opens his biography of T.S. Eliot, that at this point in literary history, "scholarship has barely omitted to scrutinize a line" of Eliot's work, from the strangled heroine of his "Love Song of St. Sebastian" to the Lysol-embalmed corpse of *Sweeney Agonistes*.[44] Many worthy tomes have been dedicated to weighing Eliot's "vicious representations of women"[45] against the skill and beauty of his work, and to alternately vilifying and defending the poet's intentions. Our consideration of Eliot's poetic mythos will focus on its aesthetic rather than its moral fiber, and will consider Eliot's symbolic bodies primarily in terms of what Jewel Spears Brooker has deemed Eliot's, and Modernism's, fixation on a "return to origins."[46] Eliot succinctly narrated the era's etiological fixation in his *Athenaeum* essay "War-Paint and Feathers," in which he declared, "The maxim, 'return to the sources,' is a good one."[47] Brooker and others have cast the role of "origins" in Eliot's work in primarily anthropological terms, citing his interest in works such as James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, and Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary*

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[44] Hugh Kenner, *T.S. Eliot: The Invisible Poet* (New York: Harcourt, 1959), ix. The only line Kenner offers to contradict his thesis is the *Waste Land*'s "jug jug," a phrase from the scene of Philomel's rape which has since been duly scrutinized by feminist literary scholars.
[45] Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 41.
[46] Jewel Spears Brooker, "Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in *The Waste Land*," in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 131.
[47] T.S. Eliot, "War-Paint and Feathers." *Athaneum* (October 17, 1919): 1036.

*Forms of Religious Life*, as well as his poetic interest in etiological myths, most notably collected in *The Waste Land*. The earnestness of Eliot's approach to myth remains widely contested among scholars. While F.O. Matthiessen, for example, grounds his reading of *The Waste Land* in Weston's emphasis on "the analogous way by which various myths express the mysteries of sex and religion,"[48] Hugh Kenner, by contrast, argues that it is "plainly impossible" that Eliot took mythic systems such as Weston's very seriously.[49] Yet either reading of *The Waste Land* presents etiological questions that the text, and we, find difficult to answer, as well as a "heap of broken images" that may lead us to question, as Kenner does, "what on earth does it mean?"[50]—and, perhaps, "where on earth does it come from?"

Eliot's focus on "origins" is tied fast to what Ronald Bush has called Eliot's "Emersonian" conclusion, most notable in his later poems, that "life is always turned toward creation."[51] The etiological question is fundamentally a question of creation, and questions of creation are often lodged between the ribs, as it were, of questions of procreation. Bush unwittingly makes this concession in his argument that the true impetus of Eliot's work, as well as that of his Modernist fellows, "derives not just from the renewed authority that these works aspire to, but from their simultaneous awareness that such authority can never achieve permanent or legitimate *embodiment*."[52] The Modernist fixation on the "return to origins" indicates a crisis of "legitimate embodiment"—a fixation, in other words, on the primacy of bodies "given" by myth,

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[48] F.O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin: 1935), 50.
[49] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 443.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ronald Bush, "T.S. Eliot Singing the Emerson Blues," in *Emerson: Prospect and Retrospect*, ed. Joel Porte (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 179-80.
[52] Ibid., emphasis mine.

not by women. Scholarly consideration of Modernism's "return to origins" must account for this fixation on "legitimate embodiment," especially when its "heap of broken images"[53] figures bodies such as Leda's.

In a 1914 letter to Conrad Aiken, Eliot wrote of his creative process: "It is worthwhile from time to time tearing oneself to pieces and waiting to see if bits will sprout."[54] Eliot often penned this creation-by-dismemberment in his early poems, which, as Tony Pinkney observes, are populated with the disassociated "arms," "eyes," and "claws" of the poetic blazon.[55] Creation necessitates, it seems, an act of violence, and Eliot gives this violence a body in the well-known first words of *The Waste Land*: "April is the cruellest month, breeding."[56] Despite the poem's reliance on the myth of the Fisher King, whose impotence in Weston's account brings a blight onto the land, April's creative cruelty lies not in her withholding but in her *abundance* of "breeding," and in the "little life" she stirs out of the "dead land."[57] A fundamentally changed approach to the promise of breeding—and to the implications of this promise for the poet—marks, in fact, a primary distinction between the mythos of Yeats and that of Eliot. While, like Yeats, Eliot often symbolized woman's body as the "turning points" of his poetic narratives, these bodies, unlike Leda's, are often explicitly *infertile.* In *The Waste Land,* for example, scholars have widely remarked the unfortunate case of Lil, whose attempts to "bring [o]ff" unwanted pregnancies have left her looking, in the narrator's words, "antique,"[58] as well as the omnipresence of infertile mythic women

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[53] See T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in *Collected Poems*, ll. 22.
[54] *Letters of T.S. Eliot Volume 1: 1898-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 45.
[55] See Tony Pinkney, *Women in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot: A Psychoanalytic Approach* (New York: Macmillan, 1984).
[56] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 1.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., ll. 159, 156.

such as Dido, Artemis, Iseult, and Ophelia. The most striking Leda-analogue in *The Waste Land* is Philomel. In the Greek myth, Philomel, like Leda, is raped by a king, her brother-in-law Tereus. According to Ovid, to ensure Philomel's silence, Tereus cuts her tongue out of her mouth and abandons her in a foreign wood.[59] Philomel ingeniously overcomes this impediment by weaving the narrative of her violation into a tapestry that she presents to her sister, the wife of her rapist, and with whom she takes gruesome revenge on Tereus. In the myth of Philomel, the raped woman metamorphoses aviary, for Philomel is transformed into a nightingale whose mournful cry reiterates her violation. Unlike Leda's, however, Philomel's rape is not procreative, and her generation is cut short by her metamorphosis. In Eliot's narrative, Philomel first appears painted on a mantelpiece ornament displayed behind a couple who, as we learn in the lines that follow, fail fundamentally to communicate with one another: The nightingale, Philomel, who on the wall fills "all the desert with inviolable voice," crying "Jug Jug to dirty ears," introduces the dispirited squawk of the contemporary woman: "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak."[60] Like Philomel, and unlike Leda, procreation is not in this woman's narrative, for at her command, her partner utters the utterly unromantic phrase: "I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones."[61] Unlike the raped body of Leda, whose procreation builds the bodies that build history, the raped body of Philomel, like the speech of the woman that follows her, rings hollow. Indeed, Richard Badenhausen's remark that Eliot's attitude toward woman's body "alternated at times among fear, disgust, worship, fascination, hostility,

[59] See Ovid's narration of Philomel in *Metamorphoses.*
[60] Eliot, *The Waste Land,* ll. 98-116.
[61] Ibid.

attraction, sympathy, and understanding"[62] seems more aptly to describe Eliot's attitude toward April's fecundity than toward Philomel herself, for critics widely argue that Eliot's treatment of Philomel is "unambiguously sympathetic."[63] The problem with the ladies, as with Lil, seems not to be their womanhood but the capacity of that womanhood to reproduce April's cruelties through breeding. Indeed, if the blazon of the "ribs" in which the poet grows evokes the image of the fetus in the womb, it evokes also the dry and deadly "skull beneath the skin."[64] In Eliot's work, death always broods over the waters of generativity, and April's lilac is never far from fading.

Eliot's later work resolves this difficulty through the narrative strategy of ascesis. In *Eliot's Dark Angel*, Ronald Schuchard convincingly argues that the narrative violence committed against procreative bodies in Eliot's work sublimates "the physical body" to its "spiritual turmoil."[65] This turmoil is, as Schuchard argues, the "torture of the soul by the body,"[66] and this "body" should be understood as both the poet's passionate body and the bodies that incite his passion. Eliot's later poetry foregrounds ascetic women such as Julian of Norwich, whose voice is integral to the narrative of the *Four Quartets*' "Little Gidding." Yet the appearance of Julian of Norwich in "Little Gidding" differs crucially from the appearance of Lil in *The Waste Land*, for Norwich's body is absent from the poem. Instead, Norwich appears metaphysically through Eliot's repetition of her maternal-soothing phrase, "All shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be

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[62] Richard Badenhausen, "T.S. Eliot Speaks the Body: The Privileging of Female Discourse in Murder in the Cathedral and the Cocktail Party," in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*, 195.
[63] Brooker, "Mimetic Desire," 57.
[64] T.S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality," in *Collected Poems*, ll. 45.
[65] See Ronald Schuchard, *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.
[66] Ibid., 9.

well."[67] If the textual generation of Lil's over-breeding body in *The Waste Land* marks April's cruelties in the Modern "heap" of broken mythic symbols, the absence of Norwich's body in "Little Gidding" marks woman's sublime rarefaction into the transcendent speech of the spirit. Some critics have argued that Eliot's reverence for ascetic women such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe evidences his lifelong fascination with a feminine capacity to transcend the physical body,[68] and one scholar has even argued that the "suffering ecstasies" of the women in Eliot's poems "redeem the female body" through the "acute capacity for suffering" that grants women a "unique capacity" for bodily transcendence through "violent asceticism."[69] That Eliot's appreciation of woman necessitates the subjection of her body to "redemption" through "violent asceticism" should give us pause, especially in light of David Perkins's argument that Eliot could only "rejoice" in the full capacity of human bodies "without reserve" when they "became a transfigured element in a religious experience or symbol."[70] Indeed, the desire to rarefact human bodies into metaphysical bodies should give us equal pause, for it concedes the superiority of bodies given by God to bodies given by mothers, a concession that we should be unwilling to make. Furthermore, it suggests that "transcendence" of the mother-given body necessitates the violent reduction of the body to the words that flesh produces. While the importance of Norwich's rich theological work to the philosophy of "Little Gidding" seems a sort of feminist victory over Weston's self-defeating argument, reflected in *The Waste Land*, that

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[67] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *Collected Poems,* ll. [III] 18-19.
[68] See Susan McCaslin, "Vision and Revision in Four Quartets: T.S. Eliot and Julian of Norwich." *Mystics Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1986).
[69] See Shannon C. Hipp, "Eliot Among the Women" (Doctoral Thesis, Emory University, 2011). Hipp argues that "the women of his writing bear the brunt of their author's experimentation with the limits of suffering, and for that, T.S. Eliot admired them."
[70] Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry,* 22.

mythic "mysteries are so secret and sacred that no woman may venture to speak of [them],"[71] we should consider that the transcendental ascesis that grants Norwich the right to speak of metaphysical matters precludes the presence of her body. The aim of ascesis, after all, is disembodiment, and spiritual transcendence is predicated upon the rarefaction of the body into the physical void of the soul.

In this way, Eliot's ascetic mythos resembles that of the Vorticists, whose dictum, as Wyndham Lewis declared in the first issue of *Blast*, was that "THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY."[72] Scholars such as Miranda Hickman have argued that this all-caps declaration seems, in fact, to protest too much, and that, like Eliot, the writers of the Vorticist movement "regard[ed] the body as an indispensable element of the process toward revelation," and that their work evidences not only a "fascination" with the body, but also "admiration for its wild potency."[73] For the Vorticists, as for Eliot, writing the body "transforms the individual body into a condition" through the ascetic/aesthetic process of its rarefaction into words.[74] This ascetic/aesthetic program is succinctly encapsulated by José Ortega y Gasset's declaration in "The Dehumanization of Art" that the object of Modernist art is to produce "a man who resembles a man as little as possible."[75] The Vorticist project differs sharply from Eliot's, of course, in direction and shape, for while Eliot's ascesis directs the body to the heavenly plane, the Vorticist ascesis points the body to a mathematical geometry of pure form. Nevertheless, the Vorticist mythos shares Eliot's

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[71] Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 130.
[72] Wyndham Lewis, "B1," *Blast* 1 (1914): 141.
[73] Miranda Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 144.
[74] Ibid., 147.
[75] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture, and Literature* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1968), 22.

troubled preoccupation with the body's problem of "origins," which figures in the Vorticist canon as the problem of "generation." The Vorticist tradition solves the problem of origins by an appeal not to the heavens, but to mathematics. "Generation," explains Hulme's *Speculations, "*has been turned into something as hard and durable as the geometrical figure itself."[76] Vorticism locates creation not in bodies but in "semantic energies," of which the work of art is the "central locus."[77] Generation, in other words, occurs not in the fleshy and vulnerable domain of the body, but in the metaphysical domain of applied intellect. Hulme grounds the Vorticist mythos in the Platonic tradition of privileging form—which he, like Plato, allied with the "masculine"—over matter, which, likewise, both philosophers allied with the "feminine."[78] The result of this alignment is that, in the Vorticist mythos of generation, "the interest in living flesh as such […] is entirely absent."[79] Mina Loy delightfully parodied this philosophy in her play *The Sacred Prostitute,* in which "Don Juan" and "Futurism" demand of "Nature," "Oh, Mammy, you must help us. Futurism has invented a new game—we want to make our own children, evolve them from our own indomitable intellects."[80] When Nature refuses the request, citing the men's indulgence and precocity, Futurism declares, "There's nothing more to be got out of *her!*—Let's identify ourselves with machinery!"[81] Indeed, the wide variety of formal innovations for which Modernism is known begins

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[76] T.E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London: Routledge, 1949), 143.
[77] Charles Altieri, "Pound's Vorticism as a Renewal of Humanism." *boundary 2* 12, no. 3 (1984): 445.
[78] Plato's "Theory of Forms" surfaces across his works, most notably in *Symposium* and *Republic.*
[79] Hulme, *Speculations*, 106.
[80] Mina Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* in *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy,* ed. Sara Crangle (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), 206.
[81] Ibid., 207.

to resemble the poet's desire to deflect our vision toward any *formal* generative plane, whether mathematical or heavenly, where mother-given bodies have no sway.

The preclusion of the procreative body from the creative domain should complicate our conception of aesthetic systems that propose a formal focus on "the natural object," especially when those systems are ripe with procreated objects.[82] Indeed, Eli Goldblatt has argued that the "desire to sever the connection between art and 'women's work'," in which the Vorticists included procreation, seems to have been "one of the driving forces" in the work of Ezra Pound, whose Imagist doctrine codified Modernism's interest in the "natural object."[83] In his 1913 *Poetry* essay "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Pound proposed his manifesto of poetic creation, which includes the assertion that "the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object."[84] Pound continues: "If a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that the sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk."[85] Here, Pound positions himself against the upward-pointing symbolism of Yeats (and, pre-emptively, against the later Anglican Eliot) by suggesting that the creative power summoned by the poem lies primarily not in what the natural object points to, but in the natural object itself.[86] Pound expanded this argument in a consideration of his poem "In a Station of the Metro": "In a poem of this sort," he wrote, "one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a

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[82] See Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1954), 5, 9.
[83] Eli Goldblatt, "Gender Matters in Pound's *Cantos*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 15, no. 1 (1988): 52.
[84] Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts from an Imagiste." *Poetry* 6 (March 1913).
[85] Ibid.
[86] See Colin McDowell and Timothy Materer, "Gyre and Vortex: W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound." *Twentieth Century Literature* 31, no. 4 (1985).

thing inward and subjective."[87] As Colin McDowell and Timothy Materer have argued, the "reality of the cathedral is meaningless to Yeats unless it interprets or corresponds to an inner, spiritual reality."[88] Pound's criticism of the Yeatsian system is, they argue, that the "archetype of the Mother Goddess or theory about the medieval age" discovered by Yeats's poetic "dawdling" is "not precise enough to achieve an 'exact rendering of the thing'."[89] As Materer has noted elsewhere, however, both Yeats and Pound "shar[e a] stock of images" from which the "poet as magus" "transmit[s] to initiates the secret wisdom."[90] Crucially, although Imagism is often summarized in its focus on "the thing itself," it is important to consider that, in both Yeats's and Pound's system, poetic power comes *not* from "the thing itself," but from the poet's "*treatment* of the thing itself."[91] This concession of the "thing" to the poet is often obfuscated in scholarly considerations of Imagism that propose Pound's poetic system to grant radical power to the "natural object." Although the poetic symbol of "a hawk" should, in Pound's estimation, remain fundamentally "a hawk," poetic power lies not in the hawk itself, but in "man['s] use [of] symbols."[92] We must also consider that, in Pound's view, the poet has both the capacity and the duty to render the symbolic "hawk" as precise, proper, and perfect as the material "hawk." This follows the prophetic nature of Pound's creative process, as he explained in a letter to his father:

A. Live man goes down into world of dead.
B. The 'repeat in history.'

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[87] Quoted in Carol Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 93.
[88] McDowell and Materer, "Gyre and Vortex," 344.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 50.
[91] See Pound, "A Retrospect."
[92] Pound, "A Few Don'ts from an Imagiste."

C. The 'magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, bust through from quotidian into 'divine or permanent world.' Gods, etc.[93]

Here, the poet's symbolic hawk—produced through the mythic "magic moment"—is in fact *more* perfect, because more "divine," than the material hawk. Despite Pound's purported emphasis on "the thing itself," insofar as Pound's theory of the symbol is, as Northrop Frye argues of myth, an "art of implicit metaphorical identity,"[94] the metaphorical *vehicle*—the divine hawk, if you will—rises in value through the poet's touch over and against its material tenor. Pound is clear, however, that the poet gestates the hawk such that its "symbolic function does not intrude" into the poem's meaning.[95] The poet's hawk does not, then, point beyond itself to a Yeatsian sky, but rather points to the poet's *conception* of the hawk's essential "hawk"-ness.

We have considered the imprint of Pound's symbolic theory on the material hawk. What happens when the symbol is a woman's body? Marianne Moore posed this query in her 1931 *Poetry* review of Pound's *Draft of XXX Cantos*. Pound's work, Moore writes, "has a power that is mind and is music; it comes with the impact of centuries and with the impact of yesterday," but, she complains, "is not the view of women expressed by the *Cantos* older-fashioned than that of Siam and Abyssinia?"[96] The symbolic "knowledge" of women that Pound pens in his *Cantos*, Moore notes, is "knowledge of the femaleness of *chaos*…"[97] Moore's complaint is not misplaced, for in Canto XXIX, Pound elaborates:

…the female
Is an element, the female

[93] Quoted in McDowell and Materer, "Gyre and Vortex," 356.
[94] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 136.
[95] Pound, "A Few Don'ts from an Imagiste."
[96] Quoted in Ronald Bush, "Ezra Pound," in *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 354.
[97] Ibid.

Is a chaos
An octopus
A biological process
And we seek to fulfill…
[…] our desire, drift…[98]

The female "is a chaos," Pound writes, and the poet contains this chaos in the formal structure of the canto. This is, of course, a reductive reading of the *Cantos*, but it is a reading that we should not ignore. As Eli Goldblatt has noted, too often issues of gender in Pound's work are "treated like an embarrassing sex joke: Friends will pretend that they didn't hear it, or they will chuckle and explain it as meaning something universally valuable, while others will dismiss the teller as hopelessly sexist and therefore beneath concern."[99] It is precisely the nature of that which is "universally valuable" in Pound's work that should capture our attention. If, as Pound argues, the bodies in his poems are spelled in such a way that "the symbolic function does not intrude" into the body's "femaleness," the bodies conjured by the magus are worth our consideration.

It has been widely argued that the women who populate the *Cantos* are "marginal, do not speak for themselves, and hardly appear at all in the public stage of the poem,"[100] and as literary critics Wendy Flory, Bernetta Quinn, and Helen Dennis have saliently argued, their bodies appear almost exclusively as mythic symbols, many of which undergo violence and misuse. In Canto VII, for example, Pound presents two Muses, Truth and Calliope, who exchange insults such as "Slut!" and "Bitch!"[101] Goldblatt convincingly reads this spelling of the Muse as an attempt to "disarm her"

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[98] Ezra Pound, "XXIX," in *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1934), ll. 116-21.
[99] Goldblatt, "Gender Matters," 37.
[100] Ibid., 41.
[101] Pound, "VII," in *Cantos*, ll. 241.

with a "sexist joke."[102] Its sexism aside, the "joke" that Pound tells at the expense of the Muses helpfully foregrounds the procreative nature of the mythic symbol. Not only is woman "a chaos," but it is the generative chaos of the "Slut" that the poet formally contains in his spelling of the Muse. Critics have also noted the unnamed "German-Burgundian female" who is raped in Canto IX, quite possibly by its protagonist, and whose rape seems designed to demonstrate the danger that procreation poses to poetic protagonists.[103] Canto X presents Drusiana, who is traded by her father in marriage, as well as Parisina, a cousin of the protagonist who Pound beheads to illustrate the curse on the Malatesta family. As Goldblatt notes, despite serving as mythic "archetypes," none of these women are allowed the archetypical function of mothering children, although other women occasionally appear in this capacity to immortalize male characters through the procreation of heirs. Canto IX, for example, offers this succinct depiction of Sigismundo's first wife: "And there was an heir male to the seignor / And Madame Ginevra died."[104] In a keen manipulation of the passive voice, the poet escapes crediting Madame Ginevra with the very generation that caused her demise. In odd contrast, Canto XII credits a *male* character with maternity, as Jim X. recounts the story of a "pore honest sailor" who, after an operation in hospital, is presented with the baby of a "poor whore" as the doctor proclaims, "Here! This is what we took out of you."[105] As he contemplates his maternal responsibility, Jim X. explains, "he got better." While Jim X.'s etiological crisis is certainly more playful than Madame Ginevra's, both mark Pound's excision of woman's body from the act of generation.

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[102] Goldblatt, "Gender Matters," 42.
[103] Pound, "IX," in *Cantos*, ll. 104.
[104] Pound, "IX," in *Cantos*, ll. 22–23.
[105] Pound, "XII," in *Cantos*, ll. 103-11.

This excision complicates rather than solves the dilemma of the sluttish Muse, for Pound's abstraction of creation to the plane of poetic form cannot escape formal reliance on procreation. This reliance is epitomized in Pound's poem "Sage Homme,"[106] in which Pound imagines poetics as a metaphysical pregnancy. Crucially, while the poem relocates generation from the woman's body to the poet's pen, the formal structure of creation remains that of procreation. The poem begins:

> These are the poems of Eliot
> By the Uranian Muse begot;
> A Man their Mother was,
> A Muse their Sire.[107]

Pound seems to recognize the formal difficulties of this generative union, for he anticipates the reader's query: "How did the printed Infancies result / From Nuptials thus doubly difficult?"[108] Curiously, the answer lies not with the male poetic mother, but with the magus, for in the tenth line, one month late, Pound allows us a peek at the birthing chamber: "Know diligent Reader / That on each Occasion / Ezra performed the Caesarean Operation."[109] Although Pound's poetic pregnancy is accomplished by an exclusively male cast, and although its progeny is extracted rather than birthed, the poem's creative gestation is formally identical to that of procreation. That the symbolic form of Pound's poetic creation is geometricaly inseperable from pregnancy should give us pause in light of Pound's insistence that, in poetry of merit, the "symbolic function does not intrude" into the essential meaning of the symbolized object. If the pregnancy of the "Sage Homme" marks, as in Pound's depiction of the hawk, a pregnancy rendered *more* precise, proper, and perfect than human pregnancy by its

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[106] Notably, *sage femme* ("wise woman") is a French phrase for "midwife."
[107] Ezra Pound, "Sage Homme," in *Personae: The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926), ll. 1-4.
[108] Ibid., ll. 5-6.
[109] Ibid., ll. 8-10.

passage through the magus, and if its symbolization does not intrude into the essential nature of pregnancy, then the reader is forced to conclude that, for Pound, the essential nature of pregnancy has really very little to do with woman's body.

Pound's work has been widely characterized as "masculinist," and his contemporaries George and Mary Oppen complained that "in Pound there is no feminine."[110] To a less ingenious poet, the refusal of the "feminine" would complicate, if not wholly staunch, his plagiarism of procreation. Pound avoids this crisis by foregrounding the creative vitality of what he calls "precisely patterned energies."[111] Indeed, these energies are "precisely patterned" on woman's body, for, describing his uptake of these energies, Pound wrote in a letter to Marianne Moore, "You, my dear correspondent, / are a stabilized female, / I am a male who has attained the chaotic fluidities."[112] Recall that, in this letter, Pound explicitly correlated the "chaotic" with "femaleness," and emphasized that "the male / is more expansive" than the female.[113] Pound's attainment of woman's "chaotic fluidities" allows the poet to uptake the energetic chaos of "femaleness" without any of its material demands, and through this energetic union to achieve poetic "Parthenogenesis," that is, "the outpost of Incarnation."[114] Nowhere is man's poetic parthenogenesis more prominent than in Pound's 1922 "Translator's Postscript" to Rémy de Gourmont's *Philosophy of Natural Love.* Pound opens his postscript with a close-reading of Gourmont's assertion that "il y aurait peut-être une certain corrélation entre la copulation complète et profonde et le

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[110] Cited in Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Oppen and Pound." *Paudeuma* 10 no. 1 (1981): 63.
[111] Charles Altieri, "Modernist Abstraction and Pound's First Cantos: The Ethos for a New Renaissance." *Kenyon Review* 7, no. 4 (1985): 80.
[112] Ezra Pound, "Doggerel Section of Letter to Marianne Moore," in *The Gender of Modernism*, 363.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 365.

développement cérébral,"[115] arguing that, not only is Gourmont's assertion "both possible and probable, but it is more than likely that the brain itself is, in origin and development, only a sort of great clot of genital fluid held in suspense or reserve."[116] Because the brain is, as Pound argues, the "maker or presenter of images," its genital origin is particularly salient in our conception of poetic etiology. It does not seem to strike Pound that this genital fluid might be any other than his own, for he continues that "the power of the spermatozoide is precisely the power of exteriorizing a form," and that sperm is, in fact, the only "known substance in nature capable of growing into a brain."[117] Sperm is, Pound argues, "a sort of quintessence," and generation is conceived in "a spermatic sea of sufficient energy to cast a form [and] to exteriorize."[118] For centuries, Pound argues, man has "nibbled at this idea of connection, intimate connection between his sperm and his cerebration,"[119] and has conceived mythic systems that represent "man, really the phallus or spermatozoide, charging, head-on, the female chaos."[120] Pound seems at once to yearn that generation be a spermatogenic event and to concede, if grudgingly, the necessity of the ovule, for the next sentence undertakes an abrupt about-face: "The mind is an up-spurt of sperm, no, let me alter that; trying to watch the process: The sperm, the form-creator, the substance which compels the ovule to evolve in a given pattern, one microscopic, miniscule particle, enter the 'castle' of the ovule."[121] Yet conception remains, for Pound, at heart a

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[115] *Trans*: "There may well be a certain correlation between complete and profound copulation and cerebral development."
[116] Ezra Pound, "Translator's Postscript" to Rémy de Gourmont, *The Philosophy of Natural Love* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1922), 206.
[117] Ibid., 207.
[118] Ibid., 213.
[119] Ibid., 217.
[120] Ibid., 207.
[121] Ibid., 209.

spermatic event, for in the moment of conception, the sperm "demands simply," Pound argues, "that the ovule shall construct a human being."[122]

In the spirit of Pound's concession that he "offer[s] only reflections, perhaps a few data,"[123] let us bracket his questionable science and instead consider the implications of spermatogenesis on creativity. Creation, Pound suggests, is imminently phallic: "Even oneself has felt it," he writes, "driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London, a sensation analogous to the male feeling in copulation."[124] Unlike the male poet who can, as Pound assured Marianne Moore, attain woman's "chaotic fluidities," Pound's emphasis on the "integration of the male and the male organ" would seem to bar the "lady poet" from the pen.[125] The creative drive belongs, for Pound, emphatically to those who boast male organs, for Pound assigns to man "the 'inventions,' the new gestures, the extravagance, the wild shots, the impractical" work of creativity, as he alone possesses "the new up-jut, the new bathing of the cerebral tissues in the residuum, in *la mousse* of the life sap."[126] To man, Pound assigns "venturesomeness," and to woman the "utility" of her "hereditary aptitudes" for "useful gestures."[127] Alas, not even these "useful gestures" can woman claim as her own, for in a keen reversal of tenor and vehicle, Pound respells the metaphor such that woman's procreation is a metaphor for man's creation: Women, Pound argues, are responsible for "fecundating a generation of bodies *as* genius fecundates a generation of minds."[128] Pregnancy is not, for Pound, the metaphorical model of the poet's gestation

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[122] Ibid., 206.
[123] Ibid., 207.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 207–8.
[128] Ibid., 210, emphasis mine.

of ideas to birth; rather, man's genius is the metaphorical model of pregnancy! Not only is creation here distinct from procreation, but the only logical "next step," Pound continues, is that, in both domains, "as in the case of the male organ of the nautilus," man gain the ability to "grow a tool and detach it."[129] While one wishes him the best in this endeavor, one wonders at the effect this detachment might have on creation. Could man rid creation of procreation altogether? Could ideas spring fully-formed from *la mousse* of the male organ, doing away with woman's great passive vulva? Regardless of its practicability, that Pound considers this riddance a natural step in the progression of creativity should give us pause. Indeed, man's "going on making new faculties," as Pound notes, necessitates "forgetting old ones,"[130] and those forgotten faculties, in Pound's nautilic vision, include woman's.

## D.H. Lawrence and the Maternal Phallus

> You can't chop off the head of the Modern Woman.
> —D.H. Lawrence, "Matriarchy"

> Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.
> —Margaret Atwood

If we consider Pound's work as a poetics of the spermatozoid, we might consider that of D.H. Lawrence as a poetics of the phallus. Lawrence's work, from the early *Sons and Lovers* to the censored *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, swells with priapic energy—Peter Balbert has even characterized Lawrence's work as "a hymn to the phallus."[131] Some critics have suggested that this phallic "hymn" is, in fact, an anti-hymn against the

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[129] Ibid., 211.
[130] Ibid., 214.
[131] Peter Balbert, *D.H. Lawrence and the Phallic Imagination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 16.

"Magna Mater" with whom Lawrence grappled in his early work.[132] Scholars have thoroughly mapped the "shifting allegiance from mother to father" in Lawrence's work,[133] and have traced Lawrence's progression from "matriarchalism" to "phallic worship."[134] Daniel Weiss considers Lawrence's turn from the mother to the phallus as an Oedipal crisis, and argues that Lawrence's phallic fixation emphasizes his fixation on the mother. As Witter Brynner has noted, even at its most emphatically phallic, Lawrence's work remains haunted by the language of "matriarchal symbology."[135] Indeed, we should not read Lawrence's turn to the phallus as a dismissal but as a phallic re-spelling of matriarchal symbology in which the phallus, rather than the mother, is the prime creative mover. The primary tension between reverence and resistance to the mother, who Lawrence styles as the "Magna Mater," marks the artist's struggle to claim creative primacy against the procreative prowess of his *Mater*. Although some critics have dismissed Lawrence's "phallic worship" as "phallic swaggering to cover the lack of a womb,"[136] this swagger is worth our consideration, for

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[132] Lawrence most fully develops his argument with the "Magna Mater" in *Women in Love*, in which his protagonist soliloquizes: "Everything must be referred back to her, to Woman, the Great Mother of everything, out of whom proceeded everything and to whom everything must finally be rendered up. It filled him with almost insane fury, this calm assumption of the Magna Mater, that all was hers, because she had borne it. Man was hers because she had borne him […] She now claimed him again, soul and body, sex, meaning, and all. He had a horror of the Magna Mater, she was detestable" (206). See D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1920; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). All citations refer to the Oxford edition.
[133] George H. Ford, *Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Short Stories of D.H. Lawrence* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 161-2.
[134] Daniel Weiss, *Oedipus in Nottingham* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962). See also T.H. Adamowski, "The Father of All Things: The Oral and the Oedipal in *Sons and Lovers*." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 14., no. 4 (1981).
[135] Witter Brynner, *Journey with Genius: Recollections and Reflections Concerning the D.H. Lawrences* (New York: Peter Nevill, 1951), 293.
[136] Judith Ruderman, *D.H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 22.

it may be Modernism's most eloquent and explicit penning of the artist's struggle to reconcile creation and procreation, and to establish his primacy therein.

One Lawrence scholar, H.M. Daleski, has argued that "Lawrence, though believing intensely in himself as a male, was fundamentally identified with the female principle as he himself defines it." [137] Elsewhere, Daleski declares: "Lawrence was a woman in a man's skin."[138] Let us sit for a moment with Daleski's two statements, for while they largely mirror critical considerations of sexuality in Lawrence's work, the two statements differ crucially from one another. Contemporary critical readings often cast Lawrence in the language of gay and trans* studies: Norman Mailer, for instance, passionately argues that Lawrence "had the soul of a beautiful, imperious and passionate woman," and yet "was locked into the body of a middling male physique […] What a night-mare to balance that soul!"[139] Mailer positions Lawrence's "womanly" soul against Kate Millet's reading of his work as "gyno-phobic,"[140] arguing that "it is not only that no other man [than Lawrence] writes so well about women, but indeed is there a woman who can?"[141] Lawrence's complex sexual identity, Mailer argues, allowed him to "underst[an]d women as they had never been understood before."[142] While we might entertain that, as Mailer declares, "Never had a male novelist written so intimately about women" than had D.H. Lawrence,[143] it is important to clarify the distinction in Lawrence's poetic mythos between what Daleski has called "woman" and

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[137] H.M. Daleski, *The Forked Flame: A Study of D.H. Lawrence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 13.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Norman Mailer, *The Prisoner of Sex* (New York: Little, Brown, 1971), 132.
[140] See Kate Millet's scathing "Literary Reflection" on D.H. Lawrence in *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 237-293.
[141] Mailer, *Prisoner of Sex*, 132.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

what he has called "the female principle." This distinction is absent from Mailer's proposal of the male author's "womanly soul," yet it marks the distinction between creation and procreation in Lawrence's work. This distinction is complex, for, with Lawrence as with Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, the formal structures of creation and procreation are intimately related to one another, as well as to the mythic symbols in which they take their form. Lawrence clarifies this intimacy in an essay posthumously published in the collection *Phoenix II*: "In procreation," he argues, "the two germs of the male and female epitomize the two cosmic principles, as these are held within the life spell."[144] It is in this cosmic sense, as Lawrence argues in his *Study of Thomas Hardy,* that "every man comprises male and female in his being, [and] a woman likewise consists of male and female."[145] The male and female "principles," Lawrence argues, are embodied and contained by the procreated "life spell," but the cosmic nature of these principles marks their transcendence of the body. It is not *in*, he continues, but "*through* the gates of the eyes and nose and mouth and ears, through the delicate ports of the fingers, through the great window of the yearning breast" that "we pass into our oneness with the universe, our great extension of being, towards infinitude."[146] The relationship between "woman" and the "female principle" is further complicated by Lawrence's etiology. Of the biblical creation myth, Lawrence wrote in an unpublished Foreward to *Sons and Lovers* that the "whole chronology is upside down," for while in the myth the "Word created Man, and Man lay down and gave birth to Woman," Lawrence argues that, in fact, "the Woman lay in travail, and gave birth to Man, who in his hour uttered

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[144] Lawrence, *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 230.
[145] D.H. Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 93.
[146] Lawrence, *Phoenix II*, 235.

his word."[147] The "Woman," Lawrence continues, "is the Flesh," and as such, she "produces all the rest of the flesh."[148] Yet, curiously, Lawrence distinguishes Woman's production of flesh from the "female principle's" production of "Life," for he argues that "Life can never be produced or made," but is rather an "unbroken oneness, indivisible."[149] In the phallic poetics of Lawrence as in the ascetic poetics of Eliot and Pound, while woman's "giving" of flesh is etiologically inescapable, her generation is vitally distinct from the generation of what is called "Life." From this higher generation, her body is excluded. Her generativity is also vitally distinct from the generation of words, for while Woman might thank Lawrence for his concession that her travail, and not Man's, "gave birth to Man," she must also note that the *telos* of procreation is, for Lawrence, that "Man" might "in his hour utte[r] his word,"[150] and that the creative power of utterance originates not in the Word but in Man.

Man's creative primacy is imperative to Lawrence's poetic mythos precisely because of the suffocating shadow of the Magna Mater. For Lawrence, whatever "kill[s] the proud and inviolate self" is death to the creative spirit,[151] and the tenderness that the Mater demands of her progeny is antithetical to the proud inviolability that Lawrence demands of the poet. Just as the biblical Jesus discovered that "No prophet is accepted in his own home,"[152] the proud creative genius may falter facing the woman who wiped his behind, and whose bodily violability is the final confirmation of his own. Judith Ruderman has noted that Lawrence's mythos of the Mater is largely grounded in Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian narrative, and this grounding in myth allows

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[147] Quoted in Carol Dix, *D.H. Lawrence and Women* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 11.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Lawrence, *Phoenix II,* 230.
[150] Quoted in Dix, *Lawrence and Women,* 11.
[151] Quoted in Ruderman, *D.H. Lawrence,* 19.
[152] Mark 6:4 (New International Version).

Lawrence to shift his argument with the mother from the material domain—in which he is no prophet—to a domain crafted by Man's creative utterance. The artist's battle with the mother is both creative and ontological, and the battleground he chooses is his mythic spelling of the Mater's body. In his collection of essays *Twilight in Italy,* Lawrence argued that "the whole Greek life was based on the idea of the supremacy of the self, and the self was always male."[153] Lawrence, too, establishes the ontological primacy of the male self over and against the creative power of the mother, for he argues of the Greek hero Orestes that he "was his father's child, he would be the same whatever mother he had. The mother was but the vehicle, the soil in which the paternal seed was planted."[154] It seems reasonable to assume that Lawrence did not espouse the theory of preformation, wholesale refuted by the late 18th century, in a *material* sense, yet that he proposes the theory in *myth*, granting man the power of etiology, sets the terms of the battle in his favor.

If Lawrence chose this mythic battleground because it best supports his strengths and aims, it should give us pause that the *telos* of the battle is not only to conceive the male creative hero, but also to conceive his matricidal act of self-liberating violence. Ruderman convincingly casts Lawrence as a "modern-day Orestes" committing "what he thinks is justifiable homicide [of the mother] in an effort to return the patriarch to his rightful throne,"[155] and Lawrence's take on both the Magna Mater and the 20th century *nouvelle femme* is largely patterned on the need to staunch what he styled in a letter to Robert Mountsier as a "Clytemnestra victory" over Orestes's revenge.[156] Lawrence's choice of myth as the battleground on which to contest the mother necessitates that we,

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[153] Quoted in Ruderman, *D.H. Lawrence,* 18.
[154] Quoted in Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 21.
[156] Ibid.

in the spirit of Gilbert and Gubar, suspend rigid critical differentiation between the mythic fantasy of "matriarchy" and its embodiment among women. For, indeed, Lawrence penned his Orestes-inspired mission to "return the patriarch to his rightful throne" in sociopolitical as well as mythic terms, most explicitly in his 1928 *Evening News* article "Matriarchy," cheekily re-titled by the paper, "—And If Women *Were* Supreme…"[157] Lawrence opens his article by presenting the quandary of Modern man, who feels himself "overwhelmed" by the "strange unloosed energy of the silk-legged hordes" of *nouvelle femmes*.[158] The "masculine soul quakes," Lawrence writes, at the strange new battleground of "women, women everywhere, and all of them on the warpath!"[159] Modern man, Lawrence argues, is not afraid of "petticoat-rule," for "Elsie is not interested."[160] What Elsie wants, it appears, is to "buzz round the coloured lights of pleasure" without the "gainsaying" of Modern man.[161] This is anathema to Elsie's Tommy—it is worse than "petticoat rule"—and Tommy is, Lawrence bemoans, "afraid of being swamped, turned into a mere accessory of bare-limbed, swooping woman; swamped by her numbers, swamped by her devouring energy."[162] Tommy declares that "Man must be master again!," but recognizes that this "*must* is all very well [but] who is going to master her? Not Tommy!"[163] Tommy "talks rather bitterly" about the "monstrous regiment of women, and about matriarchy," which Lawrence here defines as "mother-rule," and which seems "the last word of horror to the shuddering male."[164]

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[157] D.H. Lawrence, "Matriarchy," in *Late Essays and Articles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 104.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

Lawrence, of course, is not keen to let matriarchy have "the last word," and instead the essay buttresses Tommy's quaking mass of manhood into a makeshift Orestes. Although Lawrence laments that "you can't cut off the head of the Modern woman"—in myth, impractical; in Britain, illegal—he bestows upon Tommy another, less tangible sword. He does not cut woman's head from her shoulders, but rather ties her body inescapably to procreation, and thus cuts woman's body from "real life."[165] "Courage!" Lawrence assures his Orestes, "Perhaps a matriarchy isn't so bad, after all," for after all, historically, a matriarchy manifests socio-politically as little more than a culture of homes in which "the women did the drudgery and minded the brats,"[166] allowing the "real life of the man" to flourish in the "sacred practices" of religion, education, and sociality in the "community of men," "away from his family, and from women altogether."[167] The "real life" is *not* spent in the "little home," Lawrence emphasizes, and when one is "clutched by his family," his creative intuition is thwarted, and he "becomes a negative thing."[168] When man is negative, "the woman, perforce, becomes positive, and breaks loose into the world," a situation antithetical to the creative and personal freedom of man.[169] Tommy's "real life" must be purchased with Elsie's body. Tommy, unfortunately, is not man enough to "master" Elsie into this transaction—Elsie must be coaxed to make the sacrifice herself. The solution, Lawrence argues, is to "give woman her full independence, and with it, the full responsibility of her independence. That is the only way to satisfy women once more: Give them their full independence and full self-responsibility as mothers and heads of the family."[170] Carol Dix reads

[165] Ibid., 105.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., 104.
[168] Ibid., 105
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.

Lawrence's proposal as empowering to women, and argues that Lawrence's re-spelling of "matriarchy" for the *nouvelle femme* suggests his dedication to women's independence, noting that in a letter discussing his draft novel *The Sisters*, Lawrence described the project as "working on the idea of woman becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative."[171] Yet Lawrence makes painstakingly clear that the matriarchal "self-responsibil[ity]" he offers Elsie is not designed to further her own "real life," but that of Tommy, and that Elsie's freedom is designed to dissuade her from "break[ing] loose into the world."[172] It is designed to keep Elsie "hensure" rather than "cocksure," as Lawrence writes in his essay "Cocksure Women and Hensure Men."[173] The "ideal" woman—which, Lawrence clarifies, "the vast majority are not"—displays not "mental sureness," but the henny sureness of "physical condition."[174] In the human farmyard of the Modern world, Lawrence argues, the cock, "who is never so sure about anything as the hen is about the egg she has laid," yearns to be "hensure," and the hen, who sees that "cocksure is boss," yearns to be "cocksure"—indeed, in the Modern world, "all the cocks are cackling and pretending to lay eggs, and all the hens are crowing and pretending to call the sun out of bed."[175] Crucially, while Lawrence disparages the cock's desire to be "hensure," it is on "the tragedy of cocksure women" that Lawrence focuses his allegory.[176] The "tragedy of the modern woman," Lawrence argues, is that "the lovely henny surety, the hensureness which is the real bliss of every female, has been denied her," and that Modern women "find, so often, that instead of

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[171] Dix, *Lawrence and Women,* xi.
[172] Lawrence, "Matriarchy," 227.
[173] D.H. Lawrence, "Cocksure Women and Hen-sure Men," in *Late Essays*, 125. See also Lawrence's essay "Women Are So Cocksure," in *Late Essays*, 115-18.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., 126.

having laid an egg, they have laid a vote, or an empty ink-bottle, or some other absolutely unhatchable object, which means nothing to them."[177] Indeed, Lawrence argues, denied the "numbness of hensurety" that is her mother-right, the Modern woman finds that "she has missed her life altogether. Nothingness!"[178] Poor Elsie—Lawrence has destined her to choose between hensure "Negative" and cocksure "Nothing." Elsie's situation is all the more unfortunate for her lack of interest in matriarchy—for indeed, as Lawrence tells it, it is Tommy who yearns for hatchable objects, and Elsie for the warpath, the ink-bottle, and the "coloured lights of pleasure."[179]

Crucially, for Lawrence, the inkpot denied to Elsie grants Tommy the creative hensurety for which he yearns. Indeed, Lawrence's preface to *Women in Love* casts the male artist's labor with the inkpot as a sort of egg-hatching mission: "Man," Lawrence writes,

> struggles with his unborn needs and fulfillment. New unfoldings struggle up in torment in him, as buds struggle forth from the midst of a plant. Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along. The struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of Life. It is not superimposition of a theory. It is the passionate struggle into conscious being.[180]

The artist's creative act, Lawrence clarifies, is an act of hatched "being" essential to the mythic conception of "Life," in which, as Mary Burgan argues, the male creator, "encompassing the functions of both seed-bearer and womb," performs both gestation and delivery.[181] Lawrence's "obstetrical" aesthetics, Burgan argues, shows an author

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Lawrence, "Matriarchy," 103.
[180] Quoted in Fiona Becket, *D.H. Lawrence: The Thinker as Poet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 193–4.
[181] Mary Burgan, "Androgynous Fatherhood in *Ulysses* and *Women in Love*." *Modern Language Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1983): 178–197.

"obsessed by the need to bring forth a new creation that transcends the limitations of the devouring mother's temporality and the Earth Mother's random, timeless fertility," and who rejects the limitations of woman's body to "proclaim the masculine maternity of [his] own fiercely achieved poetic vocation."[182] Lawrence culminates his unpublished "Foreword" to *Sons and Lovers* with the argument that the inkpot produces "the Father—which should be called Mother."[183] Burgan considers Lawrence's creative mythos in terms of an "androgynous fatherhood" that we might better term "phallic maternity." For the creative agent in Lawrence's inkpot is neither the womb nor the pen but the penis—indeed, the phallus, argues Bonnie Kime Scott, "may be Lawrence's ultimate character."[184] "The phallus," Lawrence emphasized in his defense "A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*," is "special," and its distinction is rooted in phallic generativity: "The phallus is a column of blood that fills the valley of blood of a woman."[185] It fills, as well, the ink pot, as Lawrence emphasized in his late novel *John Thomas and Lady Jane*: "I *know* it is the penis which connects us with the stars and the sea and everything," opines Connie to her sister Hilda. "It is the penis which touches the planets, and makes us feel their special light. I know it. I *know* it was the penis which really put the evening stars into my inside self […] But now it's in me as well as outside me, and I hardly need look at it. I *am* it. I don't care what you say, it was the penis gave it me."[186] It should not surprise the reader that, unable to master Elsie, Orestes pens this odd mouthful of praise for man's generation in the mouth of Elsie's sister Connie. Furthermore, that Lawrence grants the power to "touch the planets" to the material *penis* rather than the

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[182] Ibid., 180.
[183] D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (New York: Viking Press, 1913).
[184] Bonnie Kime Scott, "D.H. Lawrence," in *The Gender of Modernism*, 221.
[185] Quoted in Ibid.
[186] D.H. Lawrence, *John Thomas and Lady Jane* (New York: Penguin, 1927; New York: Heinemann, 1972), 132. All citations refer to the Heinemann edition.

mythic *phallus* emphasizes the tenuous divide between the mythic and material in Lawrence's creative mythos, for the symbolic godhead of the penis and the phallus are as inextricable as are creation and procreation. "In most men," Lawrence continues, this "godhead" was "dead," for

> To most men, the penis was merely a member, at the disposal of the personality. Most men merely used their penises as they use their fingers, for some personal purpose of their own. But in a true man, the penis has a life of its own, and is the second man within the man: the penis is a mere member of the physiological body. But the phallus, in the old sense, has roots, the deepest roots of all, in the soul and the greater consciousness of man, and it is through the phallic roots that inspiration enters the soul.[187]

Lawrence's mythos of phallic inspiration pens a bleak portrait of woman's creativity, and undermines its very possibility. Indeed, stripped of both cocksurety and hensurety, Modern woman is left somewhere between "Nothing" and "Negative," ambivalently endowed with neither procreation nor creation. Indeed, as Burgan notes, although Lawrence may grant Woman the "last word of horror," or even, as in the case of *Women in Love*, the last word of the novel, "the essential last word is the novel itself—a creation born of man and bearing his hope that it will carry his image beyond death."[188] The Word is hatched by man—and the Word is, for Lawrence, finally phallic.

## Sigmund Freud and the Mythic Apostrophe

> Her behavior is symbolic: But this behavior becomes bitter reality.
> —Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

> If there is any justice in the next life, women will make the laws there and men will bear the children.
> —Bertha Pappenheim, Sigmund Freud's Hysteric "Anna O."

[187] Ibid., 228.
[188] Burgan, "Androgynous Fatherhood,"193.

Sigmund Freud is more often considered in the language of poiesis than poetics, and may seem an odd bedfellow for T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence. Our consideration of woman's place in the Modernist mythos would be incomplete, however, without consideration of her place in Freudian theory. Like Eliot and Lawrence, Freud evinces both a deep investment in mythic symbols and a radical reworking of these symbols, and, much like Modernist literature, Freud grounds his epistemology in a theoretical respelling of mythic narrative. Freudian scholars have widely noted Freud's "role as storyteller"[189] in the case studies on which he built the field of psychoanalysis, and in *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud himself remarked, "It still strikes me as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories."[190] Indeed, in the Freudian mythos, the role of the psychoanalyst is that of a reader and writer who deciphers the psychic lives of his patients by listening to their recollected histories, and who re-authors their narratives with his own critical pen. The "creative writer," Freud wrote, "cannot evade the psychiatrist, nor the psychiatrist the creative writer," for their projects overlap in both method and content.[191] Indeed, as Juliet Mitchell has argued, "it is quite evident that [Freud] viewed the work of psychonalysis itself as another kind of myth," and that Freud's psychoanalytic mythos narrates the "unperceived, fragmented, and incoherent" myths lived by the Modern mind.[192] Donald Meltzer, likewise, has compared the mythic structure of Freudian theory to the "Virgin-leading-Dante" structure of *The Divine Comedy*, in which the theorist-hero journeys through the shadowy symbolic dream-

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[189] Jeffrey Berman, *The Talking Cure: Literary Representations of Psychoanalysis* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 8.
[190] Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 160.
[191] Sigmund Freud, "Jensen's *Gradiva*," in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. IX, 8.
[192] Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 367.

world of the analysand's unconscious self.[193] As Freud stresses in *Moses and Monotheism,* these myths "exercis[e] an incomparably powerful influence on people in the mass, and rais[e] an irresistible claim to truth against which logical objections remain powerless."[194] Myth's irresistable "claim to truth" recalls the tension between symbol and conviction that, as Michael Bell argues, is endemic to myth.[195] This tension is endemic, too, to Freudian theory, which, as Elizabeth Grosz has argued, grapples with the complex intimacy between the corporeal and the psychic, and the "mysterious leap from the body to the mind."[196] This "leap" is particularly complex in the case of woman, and our consideration of the Freudian mythos will consider Freud's creative approach to the particular riddles presented by Modern woman.

As Jane Gallop argues in *Thinking Through the Body,* Freud often approaches such riddles through literary means. Gallop cites the essay "Constructions in Analysis," in which Freud apologizes for handling his subject matter in the "cursory fashion that [he has] employed," confessing that, "nonetheless, [he had] not been able to resist the seduction of an analogy."[197] Gallop extrapolates from Freud's confession a key to his methodology, suggesting that Freud's critical apparatus is "seduced" by the structural allure of analogy and literary narrative. Consider, for instance, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, which, as Mitchell notes, "epitomizes man's entry into culture

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[193] Donald Meltzer, "Routine and Inspired Interpretations," in *Countertransference,* ed. Lawrence Epstein and Arthur H. Feiner (New York: Jason Aronson, 1979).
[194] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* in the *Standard Edition*, vol. XXIII, 84. Freud continues by comparing the "*credo quia absurdum*" of religious mythology to the "pattern of the delusions of psychotics."
[195] Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism, and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[196] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 51.
[197] Jane Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 22.

itself,"[198] and in which Freud re-spells the Sophoclean myth of Oedipus Rex. Freud's "discovery" of the Oedipus complex was "confirmed," he stated, by "a legend that has come down to us from classical antiquity: A legend whose profound and universal power to move can only be understood if the hypothesis I have put forward […] has an equally universal validity."[199] That legend is, of course, "the legend of King Oedipus and Sophocles' drama which bears his name."[200] Freud validates his theory not only in the "legend" of King Oedipus, but also in the authored text that bears the narrative, for it is with the creative pen of *Sophocles*, rather than the force of "destiny"[201] that drove Oedipus, that Freud aligns his project. For while much of the power of *Oedipus Rex* lies in the "particular nature of the material" it narrates, Freud emphasizes the creative power of the authorial magus. Indeed, Freud argues that the creative work of Sophocles, which he characterizes as "revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement" the narrative at hand, "can be likened to the work of psychoanalysis,"[202] and Freud casts Sophocles as narrator of "the reaction of the imagination" to the "typical dreams" of men's desire for the mother and murder of the father.[203] If Freud does, as Madelon Sprengnether has argued, "cas[t] his fate with that of Oedipus,"[204] he also casts his fate with that of Sophocles, the magus behind the myth. Indeed, as Freud wrote to his colleague Wilhelm Fliess, "the chief patient I am preoccupied with is myself,"[205] and as he notes in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,

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[198] Mitchell, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 377.
[199] Ibid., 260.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., 264.
[204] Madelon Sprengnether, *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), xi.
[205] Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1887-1904* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 52.

the Oedipus complex, which he "now regard[s] as a universal event," was discovered "in [his] own case," for the myth "seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he feels its existence within himself."[206] The myth and the magus constitutively write one another, and the pen grants the theorist enormous creative power. One understands how such creative power might prove, in Gallop's language, "seductive."

The narrative "seduction" that Gallop notes in Freudian theory is crucial to Mitchell's characterization of Freud's work as "another kind of myth," for as Northrup Frye has argued, myth structures a series of "implicit metaphorical identities" between the world of "human beings" and the world of "human desire."[207] As Sarah Kofman has argued, in Freud's work, "myth holds truth as a potentiality, but that mythic force becomes meaningful only when enacted through the formations and formulations of psychoanalytic science."[208] Indeed, we might consider Freudian methodology as not only seduced, as Gallop has argued, by "analogy," but by the specific analogies afforded by literature and myth. Rather than turn a Freudian eye on the literary text, let us now "turn our reading expertise on Freud," considering the Freudian mythos as a series of narratives that Freud "wrote but could not and does not control."[209]

Let us focus our readerly eye on Freud's 1933 lecture "Femininity." Indeed, Freud invites our literary gaze, for he opens his lecture by citing Heinrich Heine's *Nordsee* as poetic evidence of history's head-knocking against the riddle of woman:

> Heads in hieroglyphic bonnets,
> Heads in turbans and black birettas,
> Heads in wigs and thousand other

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[206] Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 61.
[207] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136.
[208] Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman: Woman in Freud's Writings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 78. See also Kofman's *Freud and Fiction* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), which examines four fictional texts on which Freud commented in his case studies.
[209] Ibid., 22.

Wretched, sweating heads of humans…[210]

Freud again gestures to poetry at the end of his lecture, advising his audience that if they "want to know more about femininity," they should "enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets […]."[211] Adrienne Rich reads Freud's poetic gesture as "an edgy yet candid acknowledgement of his own limitations," and of the limits of psychoanalysis.[212] In contrast, Sarah Kofman reads Freud's "double appeal to poetry" as a strategic devaluation of art's epistemological power. By framing his theory with poetry, Kofman argues, Freud "reveals that poetry is basically a decoy force that 'operates for knowledge' as long as it is reappropriated by psychoanalysis and subordinated to its truth."[213] Indeed, Freud quipped in an earlier lecture that "poets, it is true, talk of such things; but poets are irresponsible people and enjoy the privilege of poetic licence."[214] Kofman argues that, likewise, while enjoying such "poetic license" in his own work, Freud uses the language of poetry to diminish the voices of women in his narratives. Noting Freud's statement in *Studies on Hysteria* that he frames his case studies as "short stories [that] lack the serious stamp of science,"[215] Kofman argues that this literary frame demands that, once the patient has "revealed her secret," she "consen[t] to collaborate with the doctor and to recognize *his* word as the voice of truth."[216] The hysteric patient's narrative—as if by "poetic licence"—is "always full of gaps, foreshortened, defective, disconnected, incomplete; lacking in 'links',"[217] and Freud poetically re-spells her speech as "an unnavigable river whose stream is at one

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[210] Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," in *The Standard Edition,* vol. XXII, 112.
[211] Ibid., 134.
[212] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 204.
[213] Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman,* 103.
[214] Sigmund Freud, "Anxiety and Instinctual Life," in *Standard Edition* vol. XXII, 105.
[215] Quoted in Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman,* 45.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., 43.

moment choked by masses of rock and at another divided and lost among the shallows and sandbanks."[218] Freud's narration implies not only that her voice is, like poetry, a "decoy force" whose meaning is exegeted by the psychoanalytic text, but that many of the women's voices that populate Freud's texts may be, like a poetic chorus, Freud's own.

Indeed, Freud's narration of woman's voice closely recalls literary critic Jonathan Culler's theorization of poetic apostrophe. Culler argues that apostrophe makes explicit the inherent, subtle process by which the poet creates an "I-Thou" relationship among poet, subject, and audience, and by which the poet "establish[es] with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him [the poet]."[219] Apostrophe involves the poet's address to an absent or inanimate being who is animated by its narration in the poem even as its narration animates the poet. Culler exemplifies apostrophic animation in Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," in which the poet's address to the "Wild West Wind" commands of his subject: "Be thou me."[220] Barbara Johnson further argues that Shelley's apostrophic relationship with the West Wind establishes the poet's ability to "throw voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness," and that the use of apostrophe is *always* "in a sense saying to the addressee, 'Be thou me'."[221] This implies, of course, that the poet "has animation to give," and may both "digres[s] from straight speech" and "manipulat[e] the I-Thou

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[218] Sigmund Freud, "Fragments of an Analysis," quoted in Ibid.
[219] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 141.
[220] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," quoted in Ibid., 142.
[221] Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 188.

structure" of the poem.[222] The weilder of apostrophe holds, in other words, the power to animate life—and to animate life on his own terms.

With this in mind, let us return to the opening lines of Freud's lecture. After citing the poet as witness to history's laborious head-knocking against the "riddle of the nature of femininity," Freud addresses his audience in a curiously apostrophic manner: "Nor will *you* have escaped worrying over this problem—those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply—you are yourselves the problem."[223] Let us consider how Freud's address creates a distinctively gendered "I-Thou" relationship between the theorist, his subject, and his audience, and how the theorist's address "animates," in Johnson's words, its subjects. Freud's address to the "Gentlemen" in the lecture hall establishes an "I-Thou" relationship of relative creative parity. Freud states that these men have, like the theorist, "worr[ied]" through "fresh attempts at solving the most important conundrums,"[224] and although the theorist's own attempt foregrounds, of course, his lecture, the creativity of the men in the lecture hall is validated by Freud's address. The "I-Thou" relationship that Freud creates with "those of you who are women" is more complex. The "Ladies" in the lecture hall are denied the chance to "worr[y] over" her own riddle—she is *herself* the riddle. Like Shelley to the West Wind, Freud addresses the subject of his inquiry with an apostrophe that poeticizes her as *absent* from the theorist's inquiry—*the creative work of riddling through this problem will not apply to you*, the theorist apostrophizes, *for you are yourselves the problem.* The distinction between the Gentleman and the Lady in the lecture hall is that, in terms of Shelley's "Ode," the "I-Thou" relationship between Freud and man

[222] Ibid., 185.
[223] Freud, "Femininity," 112.
[224] Ibid.

resembles that between Shelley and his reader, while the "I-Thou" relationship between Freud and woman resembles that between Shelley and the Wind. This distinction has ontological import for the woman in the lecture hall, for Freud does not address her with "O, Woman" or "O, Femininity," but "O, *Problem*." While Freud continues his lecture by problematizing the easy conflation of the Ladies in the lecture hall with "femininity," Freud's inquiry is framed by the apostrophic animation of woman *as problem.* If Hardy's work animates Tess as "actualized poetry," Freud's work animates woman as actualized theory. The Freudian apostrophe is, of course, unanswerable on its own terms, for actualized theory does not worry over riddles, and neither creates nor speaks.

She does, however, as Culler notes, "hel[p] to constitute" the theorist, for Freud's narration of woman creates the theorist as such.[225] Indeed, Freud's apostrophe narrates woman's ability to address the "riddle of the nature of femininity" as, like poetry itself, a "decoy force" subordinated to the theorist's "voice of truth."[226] Although Freud projects his "voice of truth" to complicate the very gendered conceptions on which his apostrophe is based, his apostrophic act claims what Johnson has called the "right to play femininity," and which she argues constitutes "the condition of possibility for male privilege itself."[227] Some critics, such as Luce Irigaray, have argued that Freud's inquiry narrates woman as the "blind spot" in what she calls Freud's "old dream of symmetry" between men and women, and that, for Freud, the "feminine" only appears as "inter-dict," or "between the lines" of a narrative told by the theorist's voice of truth.[228] By

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[225] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, 141.
[226] Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman*, 45.
[227] Barbara Johnson, *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race, and Gender* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 127.
[228] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 22.

contrast, Juliet Mitchell has urged readers to contextualize Freud's theory in its "particular task" of "decipher[ing] how we acquire our heritage of the ideas and laws of human society [and how] the unconscious mind *is* the way in which we acquire these laws."[229] In other words, Mitchell might counter, Freud's apostrophe does not *dictate* but *emulates* the "I-Thou" relationship already extant in the Modernist mythos. Mitchell argues that "without their context," some of Freud's more "notorious concepts," particularly those in which women have come off badly, become "either laughable or ideologically dangerous," and she emphasizes that readers of Freud must understand that his focus is "the material reality of ideas both within, and of, man's history."[230] Mitchell notes that Freud grew "increasingly uneasy" about the terms he "borrowed" from language, particularly the terms "masculine" and "feminine,"[231] noting a 1915 footnote to Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Human Sexuality* in which Freud remarks upon the "uselessness" of these terms.[232] Nevertheless, Mitchell notes, Freud "returned to the erroneous terms with the fascination of a man who could not see his way through them as terms."[233] Freudian readings of "woman" and "femininity" inevitably knock against this vital tension between, in Jackson's words, women and the word "Woman," or, in Freudian terms, the woman in the lecture hall and her narration in fantasy, symbol, and drive. The relationship between the problem of "Woman" and the woman in the lecture hall is less than perfectly distinct.

Simone de Beauvoir aptly noted this tension in *The Second Sex,* arguing that psychoanalysis, "like all religions," sometimes uses terms "in their narrowest meanings,

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[229] Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism,* xvi.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid., 45.
[232] Ibid., 46.
[233] Ibid.

the term 'phallus' for example, designating very precisely the fleshy growth that is the male sex organ," while at other times using words in an "infinitely broadened" capacity that "take[s] on symbolic value: The phallus would express all of the virile character and situation as a whole."[234] While the phallus marks the symbolic value *par excellence* in the Freudian mythos, it is crucial that we take its feminine counterpart, the ovum, into consideration as well. Those who like "simple answers," Beauvoir notes, define the woman in the lecture hall not only by her anatomical ovary, but by the word "ovary."[235] Does woman's ovary, then, like man's phallus, "express all of [her] character"? [236] The answer is not simple, for Freud rarely proposes simple answers. While Freud's lecture often gestures to the scientific method—often to introduce, in Kofman's words, "indecision and aporia"[237] regarding "masculinity" and "femininity"—Freud warns against too-easy definitions of terms that "giv[e] way to anatomy or to convention."[238] Anatomy, Freud argues, cannot "lay hold" of "masculinity" and "femininity," for anatomy affirms that "an individual is not a man or a woman but always both," and that the individual is subject to "considerable fluctuations."[239] Freud notes the "inadequacy" of conflating masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity, for women, Freud notes, "can display great activity in various directions," while "men are not able to live in company with their own kind unless they develop a large amount of passive adaptability."[240] Yet, crucially, the "activity" that Freud presents to complicate

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[234] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; New York: Viking, 2010), 49. All citations refer to the Viking edition.
[235] Ibid., 21.
[236] Ibid., 49.
[237] Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman,* 109.
[238] Freud, "Femininity," 113.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid., 114.

woman's ontology is her "function of rearing and caring for the young."[241] Woman is not by nature strictly passive, Freud argues, for a "*mother* is active in every sense toward her child," and the lactation by which she feeds her child "may equally be described as the mother suckling the baby or as her being sucked by it."[242] The activity through which woman escapes passive definition as an ovum is, absurdly, motherhood—woman escapes the womb to be ensnared by the breast. Crucially, while Freud narrates the mother as active as she suckles her child, he does not see her as active in its conception, for Freud narrates conception as "the male pursu[ing] the female for the purpose of sexual union, seiz[ing] hold of her and penetrat[ing] into her."[243] Once successful in his penetration, Freud narrates, "the male sex-cell is actively mobile and searches out the female one, and the latter, the ovum, is immobile and waits passively."[244] Woman, then, while active after parturition, is passive at the moment of conception, and the power of animation belongs to the sperm. Freud's narration of conception recalls not only Aristotle's homunculus, but Shelley's ode to the West Wind: The sperm "searches out" the passive ovum to animate, through its address, a being to which it demands, "Be thou me." Freud's conception narrative marks his patrilineal claim to the being that man animates, and the active "symbolic value" accorded to the phallus reaches, as Beauvoir notes, beyond the story of conception. What, then, is the "symbolic value" of the ovum? In the psyche, Freud argues, "woman" and "passivity" are not co-constitutive, but in anatomy, "a relation of the kind exists."[245] Furthermore, Freud argues, his narrative of sperm and ovum is "indeed a model [*vorbild*] for the

[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid., 113.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.

conduct of sexual individuals during intercourse."[246] Certainly, the aim of Freud's lecture is to complicate rather than codify the "masculine" and "feminine," and Freud's anatomical model seems, as Kofman has argued, a concession to anatomy designed to emphasize the "nonessential nature" of such a relation at the psychic level.[247] Yet "this *vorbild*," Kofman argues, "is not very clear: Is it to be understood as a biological model inscribed in the body and functioning unconsciously?"[248] To further complicate the matter, the Freudian *vorbild* operates through the very "reasoning by analogy"[249] against which Freud cautions his audience, yet by which we know Freud to be seduced.

Despite the seduction of poetry, Freud, like any good poet, knows the limits of his apostrophe. Whether, as Rich argues, Freud's final remarks concede the limits of his psychoanalytic inquiry, or, as Kofman argues, they emphasize the inadequacy of other methodologies, Freud's final outward gesture opens the "problem" of woman beyond the unanswerable bounds of the theorist's apostrophe. Freud concedes that there are no "simple answers" to the riddle of woman, and that any answer to this riddle—even the theorist's—proves inevitably "fragmentary."[250] "If you want to know more about femininity," Freud declares, "enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets […]."[251] Although Freud does not ask Modern woman to elaborate her riddle, we know now that "the poets" are sometimes women. We will pretend that Freud's gesture marks his final apostrophe to the woman in the lecture hall—a command that she turn to her own experience, and that she elaborate that experience through poetry. The Modern woman has a lot to say about the riddle of her being, and her double act as both

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[246] Ibid.
[247] Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman*, 115.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid., 117.
[250] Freud, "Femininity," 134.
[251] Ibid.

poet and problem uniquely qualifies her to “worry” over this riddle. She stands at the edge of the theorist’s apostrophe, ready to speak for herself. It is to her that we now turn.

# Part II

## Mina Loy

There is no Love or Lust
Only propensity.
And tame things
Have no immensity.

—Mina Loy

# Chapter Two

## "Prettily Miscalculate / Similitude": Mina Loy's Maternal Manifestos

### Modernism's "Erotic and Erratic" *Nouvelle Femme*

> One can scarcely help sensing at bottom a strange feeling for the most subterranean of human reactions, of a plodding animal resentment, and of a laughter that is curiously physical.
> —Yvor Winters of Mina Loy in *The Dial*

> You may give birth to us
> or marry us
> the chances of your flesh
> are not our destiny
> —Mina Loy, "Apology of Genius"

Alfred Kreymborg, one of Mina Loy's first editors, once demanded in frustration, "If [Mina] could dress like a lady, why couldn't she write like one?"[1] Among her contemporaries, what Kreymborg deemed Loy's "sophistry, clinical frankness, and sardonic conclusions," which she penned in a "madly elliptical style scornful of the regulation grammar, syntax, and punctuation," drove her critics to extremes of praise and horror, and her "utter nonchalance in revealing the secrets of sex" was widely denounced as "nothing less than lewd."[2] Loy's love poems were denounced by Modernist critics as "swill verse," "erotic and erratic," and, most poetically, "hoggerel."[3] T.S. Eliot complained that it was "hard to evaluate her because she lacked an 'oeuvre'"—an "anachronistic demand for a woman of her time," as Loy biographer

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[1] Quoted in Roger L. Conover, "Introduction" to *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), xvi.
[2] Alfred Kreymborg, *Our Singing Strength: An Outline of American Poetry* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1929), 488-89.
[3] Quoted in Carolyn Burke, "The New Poetry and the New Woman: Mina Loy," in *Coming to Light: American Women Poets in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 45.

Carolyn Burke has noted[4]—and both Eliot and Pound considered Loy the "most radical of the radical set."[5] Harriet Monroe, then editor of *Poetry* magazine, voiced a similar complaint: She disliked Loy's "bizarre" poetry, though she admired Loy's "beauty ever-young, which has survived four babies."[6] More recently, in a 1966 *New York Review of Books* review of Loy's *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, Helen Vendler concluded that Loy's poems "do not add up."[7] The polarized response to Loy's verse reflects the anxious response of Modernism and its critics to that new, "rare and exotic species, *la nouvelle femme*."[8] Indeed, Loy's contemporaries widely considered her the *nouvelle femme* par excellence, and the *New York Evening Sun*'s profile of the Modernist "New Woman" demanded, "If [Loy] isn't the 'modern woman,' who is, pray?"[9]

While, as scholars have widely noted, Loy playacted the role of "Modern Woman" with panache, Loy's work presents a much more complicated portrait than the *New York Evening Sun.* Loy troubles easy presentations of Modern woman by troubling the bounds of the presentable, and by making indelicate inquiries of the *nouvelle femme*'s "sexual freedom."[10] Literary critics have largely characterized Loy's poetry as an "aggressively" modern expression of, in Paul Peppis's words, "the radical aesthetic and sexual doctrines of free verse and free love," and reviews of Loy's work often lop the uneven edges from Loy's philosophy of womanhood to better fit the "feminist political"

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[4] Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), viii.
[5] Quoted in Conover, "Introduction," xvii.
[6] Quoted in Janet Lyon, "Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses: The Space of Possibility in the Florence Writings," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet,* ed. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Chicago: National Poetry Foundation, 1998).
[7] Helen Vendler, "The Truth Teller," *The New York Review of Books* (September 19, 1996).
[8] "Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned," *New York Evening Sun*, 13 February 1917, 10.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid. Popular discussion of the *nouvelle femme* often centered around "free love" and her "sexual freedom."

agenda of the Modernist "New Woman."[11] In Loy's work, however, sex is neither so free nor so sexy as in the Modernist myth of "free love," and the "seismic orgasm"[12] the *nouvelle femme* is after cannot quite escape the shadow of the childbed and abortion table.[13] Neither is woman in Loy's work quite so "liberated" as the sexualized language in which she is narrated. Loy's work disrobes the New Woman's "sexual freedom" of the "sham camellia" behind which lurk the "elements unconditionally primeval" of sex and sexuality,[14] and Loy draws our eye to the

> Long lines of boxes
> Of dolls
> Propped against bannisters
> Walls and pillars
> Huddled on shelves
> And composite babies with arms extended
> Hang from the ceiling
> Beckoning
> Smiling
> In profound silence[15]

from the shadows of Modernist "free love." Loy is certainly, as Janet Lyon argues, a "femme-bender" whose raw and vivid depictions of womanhood complicate Modernist sexual narratives, "collapsing the cultural dichotomies of art and morality, production and reproduction, revolution and reform, performance and biology,"[16] and her poems pose crucial questions about the Modernist approach to gender, sexuality, and creative genius. Yet however short one's dress and however liberated one's politics, Loy argues, babies hang smiling from the ceiling of *all* our sexual experiences—the silent possibility

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[11] Paul Peppis, "Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology," *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 4 (2002): 561–579.
[12] Mina Loy, "Parturition," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 78.
[13] In Chapter Three, we will consider this in depth in our reading of "Parturition" and *Love Songs.*
[14] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 88, 96.
[15] Mina Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 70-79.
[16] Lyon, "Pregnant Pauses," 382.

of conception "beckoning" like souls asking to be born. Babies hang over the heads of the "shop walker," who ambles under their gaze "to annoy the shop girl,"[17] as well as the head of the "cocotte," who feels "shame" at the intimacy she feels with their stare.[18] They hang, likewise, over the heads of Loy and her readers—and Loy demands that we raise our eyes to recognize the silent summons. Scholars have widely noted that Loy, in Roger Conover's words, "sidled up to the eternal platitudes" of love, sexuality, and maternity, using the "scope of her poetic capability and range"[19] to radically re-spell these platitudes in the light of 20th century womanhood. Loy critics, however, have largely avoided eye contact with the babies on the ceiling by situating Loy's approach to eternal sexual "platitudes" as, in Virginia Kouidis's words, a "desire to transcend biological process and merge with cosmic becoming."[20] Yet Loy's approach to the platitudinous eternality of procreation merits more careful consideration, and we will attempt here to meet Loy's sexual philosophy, however awkwardly, on its own terms. An honest reading of Loy's work must not attempt to transcend the ache and bother of the body—it must meet the primeval gaze of the babies on the ceiling.

In a 1915 letter to Carl Van Vechten, Loy wrote, "I know nothing about anything but life—and that is generally reducible to sex!"[21] The language Loy chose here is instructive, for it emphasizes the central problem of "sexual freedom" in the *nouvelle femme*'s role as both woman and *littérateur*.[22] Loy modestly proposes the centrality of sex

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[17] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 80-82.
[18] Ibid., ll. 86.
[19] Conover, "Introduction," xxxvii.
[20] Virginia Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 124.
[21] Quoted in Linda A. Kinnahan, *Poetics of the Feminine: Authority and Literary Tradition in William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Denise Levertov, and Kathleen Fraser* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50.
[22] See the final line of Loy's *Love Songs.*

to her writing, but also bluntly reminds us that the conception of human life is "reducible" to its origin in sexual union. Indeed, Loy lives and writes on the troubled edge between these readings of the word "conception," and Loy's work does not shrink from gruesome physical and philosophic inquiry into the *nouvelle femme*'s manner of "bearing," in turn, the culture and children that shaped the 20th century. In contrast to her male contemporaries, with many of whom Loy was on friendly or romantic terms, Loy narrates the Modern woman at the center of creation, for in her double capacity to create and procreate, woman's body is the "laboratory of creativity"[23] of Modernism. Yet embodying and bodying forth Modernity is a heavy weight to bear, and Loy's work is less a celebration than a calculated negotiation with this reality. As Loy argues in the "Apology of Genius" excerpted above, Modernism's mythos of creative genius is distinctly alienated from the "chances of the flesh" that haunt the creative hero, and the artistic production of creative "genius" is often a veiled apologetics for the hero's "birth."[24] The genius, like the hero, must campaign against the "Mater" to attest his freedom,[25] for, as Simone de Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex,* "a god is not engendered" by woman's body.[26] The genius that Loy proposes does not, as does the godlike hero of the poem, "forge the dusk of Chaos" in the "raw caverns of the Increate,"[27] but rather forges both poems and people in the creative caverns of her body. The "birth" of the hero is, in other words, not the antipode but the precise site of the

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[23] Lyon, "Pregnant Pauses," 382.
[24] Mina Loy, "Apology of Genius," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 21, 23.
[25] See Loy's essay "Conversion," which notes that, in the work of the "Holy Church," "the Fathers," and "Freud," readers are "offered no escape from the post-natal womb of the eternal Mother / And the Eternal Mother devours her literary kittens——— / invariably." Mina Loy, "Conversion," in *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*, 227.
[26] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; New York: Viking, 2010), 49. All citations refer to the Viking edition.
[27] Loy, "Apology of Genius," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ll. 31-32.

hero's genius. The Modernist conception of "genius" is, for Loy, bound up in the problem of origins, for one cannot be conceived without the other, and the unique genius of the Modern woman is her capacity for "conception" in all its senses. Yet this is also her great challenge, for as such, her creative bounty is subject not only to the "censor's scythe" of the "delicate crop" of her words, [28] but also to the "grotesqueries of pain" endemic to her body's harvest.[29] While this harvest marks the greatest creative privilege, the "procreative truth" of woman's genius may compromise or even kill her, and she must navigate the nexus of Nature and Culture with eyes wiped of the "illusions" with which women are convinced to abdicate either their genius or their bodies.[30] Loy walks a dangerous tightrope between New Womanhood and "unconditionally primeval" ground.[31]

Embodying Futurism: Loy Among the Heroes

> To Signor Marinetti, however, must be awarded the palm for superlatively vigorous language. And woman, like *Mona Lisa* of old, smiled and smiled the while she listened to the same old story.
>
> —Margaret Wynne Nevinson, "Futurism and Woman"

> May the coming wars elicit heroines similar to the magnificent Caterina Sforza who, while her city was under siege, looked down from the heights of the walls at the enemy forces threatening to kill her son in order to force her to surrender and showed them her sex, screaming: "Go ahead and kill him! I still have the mold for making more of them!"
>
> —Valentine de Saint-Point, *Futurist Manifesto on Woman*

Scholarly readings of Loy's work have often been anchored in the poet's complex intimacies with her *avant-garde* contemporaries, particularly with Futurist writers such

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[28] Ibid., ll. 36-38.
[29] Loy, "Ada Gives Birth to Ova," in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*. Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[30] Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* 154.
[31] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 96.

as F.T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini.[32] When literary history has noted Loy's poems, she has often been narrated as a poet either of "free love" or of motherhood—a Madonna, we might say, or a whore[33]—a self-splitting binarization in unfortunate lock-step with the Futurist dictum that "Woman must be either mother or lover."[34] In Roger Conover's words, Loy is generally recalled as a "sexual body […] slightly out of focus," engaged in a wild "*ménage a cinq*" [35] with a Modernist luminary or penning him "running up-stairs to another woman's apartment" as she gives birth to his child.[36] As Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas has noted, many scholars have attempted to "establish an anchor" in Loy's notoriously difficult poetics by "invoking [the] fairly predictable narrative framework to contain the text" of Loy's involvement and "disenchantment" with *avant-garde* artists.[37] Yet while Loy's "disenchantment" with these men shines clearly in works such as "Lion's Jaws," in which Loy casts herself as a "buffoon"-ish advocate for women in a mythos predicated upon her "contempt,"[38] Loy's project is much broader than its satiric reading of others. At times, indeed, the language in which Loy envisions womanhood aligns uncomfortably closely with that of her Futurist colleagues, and we should recognize the spirit of Futurism as well as the spirit of Feminism in Loy's work. Loy's play at the nexus of Futurism and Feminism is worth

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[32] Carolyn Burke, for example, reads the long poem "The Effectual Marriage or The Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni" as an allegory for Loy's affair with the Futurist philosopher Giovanni Papini.
[33] See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
[34] Valentine de Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman (Response to F.T. Marinetti)," in *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 112.
[35] Conover, "Introduction," xi.
[36] See Loy, "Parturition," ll. 29. This poem will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.
[37] Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas, "Little Lusts and Lucidities: Reading Mina Loy's *Love Songs*," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, 112.
[38] Mina Loy, "Lion's Jaws," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 113.

careful consideration, for while it has been largely side-stepped by Loy criticism, it lies at the heart of Loy's conception of the Modernist problem of origins—a problem that Loy casts as an anagram for the problem of "woman."

On a personal copy of her "Aphorisms on Futurism," Loy marked out each use of the word "Future" or "Futurism" and wrote, in its place, "Modern" or Modernism."[39] This overwriting suggests, as Christina Walter has argued, that Loy "believed her claims to have a much wider purchase" than in Futurist ideology alone,[40] as well as that Futurism and Modernism have a sort of palimpsestic relationship. Scholars have expressed understandable perplexity at the alliance of women artists with Futurist ideology, not least because, as art historian M. Barry Katz succinctly states, "the ambiance of the time would seem to have denied this."[41] Yet Loy argues in her "Aphorisms" that Futurism offers "the primary tentatives towards independence," and urges readers to "ACCEPT the tremendous truth of Futurism / Leaving all those / — Knick-knacks.—"[42] Loy's alliance with the Futurist mythos poses, as Janet Lyon has argued, a curious "bind," for, as a Futurist, "to write as a *woman* means to write from a subject position under fire, especially if one writes in the idiom of revolution."[43] Although Loy recognized that her Futurist friends saw her, as she writes in "Lion's

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[39] Christina Walter, "Getting Impersonal: Mina Loy's Body Politic from 'Feminist Manifesto' to *Insel*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 55 no. 4 (2009): 689.
[40] Ibid.
[41] M. Barry Katz, "The Women of Futurism," *Women's Art Journal* 7, no. 2 (1986-87): 3. Katz considers the work of Valentine de Saint-Point, Rosa Rosà, Adriana Bisi Fabbri, Alma Fidora, Leandra Angelucci, and Marisa Mori, foregrounding both the alliances with and departures from Futurism in the work of these artists.
[42] Mina Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 151-52. Although Conover categorizes manifestoes such as Loy's "Aphorisms on Futurism" and "Feminist Manifesto" as "prose," I will maintain Loy's original line breaks and enjambed capitalization in my citations. Loy is, foremost, a poet, and we should read her enjambment in these manifestos as poetically intentional.
[43] Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 151.

Jaws," as the "'excepted' woman"[44] to their manifestoed "contempt for woman,"[45] the "cautious pride / extorting betrayal" of her tokenization did not "warrant her surrender" of "Woman wholesale" to the language of the Futurists.[46] The surrender of "Woman" to Marinetti's contempt would be no "Victory."[47] Yet nor would her concession to "the Woman's Cause," capitalized also in its distance from Loy's lived experience, which makes Loy feel a "buffoon" and only "claims a 'sort of success'."[48] Loy's "revolution," crucially, seeks to "destroy" the "prejudices" of "the past," the Futurists, and the Feminists,[49] and her alliance with Futurist ideology never cedes the existentially difficult "contempt for woman" that Futurism demands.[50] Yet Loy sees, too, in Futurism a tool to "clear" the "fallow-lands of mental spatiality […] MAKING place for whatever you are brave enough, beautiful / enough to draw out of the realized self."[51]

Both Loy and Marinetti see in Futurist ideology a useful tool to "draw" from oneself, through self-realization, another self, and both Loy and Marinetti metaphorize this creative autonomy as birth. Of course, the scenes of parturition envisioned by Loy and Marinetti are diametric in both aim and content, and a distinct asymmetry in their conception of "birth" marks Loy's most crucial departure from the Futurist mythos. At the heart of this schism, like Helen on the ramparts, is woman's body, which Marinetti is as eager to escape as Loy is eager to insist on its creative power. The misogynist dicta of the Futurists have been widely recorded by scholars of Modernism, and critics have

[44] Loy, "Lion's Jaws," ll. 56.
[45] F.T. Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, 86.
[46] Loy, "Lion's Jaws," ll. 57-60.
[47] Ibid., ll. 61.
[48] Ibid., ll. 113, 118.
[49] Loy, "Aphorisms," 150.
[50] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 86.
[51] Loy, "Aphorisms," 152.

noted the Futurist drive to rarefact the body from the "ancestral lethargy" of flesh and genealogy to the mechanistic "final frontiers of logic."[52] Crucially, this rarefaction of the body is rarefaction by the word, for, as Marinetti argues in *Le Futurisme,* the "voluptuary obsession" with the body is "nothing but an invention of the poets," and as such, it must be the "poets who will take it away."[53] He will have no such luck, of course, with the poetry of Loy, but neither can Marinetti escape the language of the body, particularly that of woman, in his own work. Consider, for instance, the movement's founding document, Marinetti's "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," published in a 1909 edition of *Le Figaro.* The foundational image of Marinetti's manifesto is Marinetti born again, "draw[ing]" himself, as Loy might say, "out of the realized self" of his narrated revelation.[54] In Marinetti's narration, the "furious sweep of madness" that drove his wild ride to the "final frontiers of logic" drove him also, in the flesh, into a ditch, where he thrashed about in "disgust" with his "wheels in the air."[55] This ditch is, it seems, a makeshift roadside womb, as Marinetti soliloquizes from the breech position, "Oh! Maternal ditch,"

> nearly full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your bracing slime, which reminded me of the sacred black breast of my Sudanese nurse. When I climbed out, a filthy and stinking rag, from underneath the capsized car, I felt my heart—deliciously—being slashed with the red-hot iron of joy![56]

The gaping apathy and filth of the ditch is succeeded, to Marinetti's "red-hot" joy, by a "crowd of fishermen" who, with "patient and meticulous attention, rigged up a derrick and enormous iron grapnels" to fish Marinetti's car, "like a large shark," from the

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[52] Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Le Figaro* (20 February 1909). See, for instance, Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).
[53] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 86.
[54] Loy, "Aphorisms," 152.
[55] Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 50.
[56] Ibid.

sledge.[57] The "muddy water" of the ditch is resolved, through the industry of man and machine, into "good factory slime—a mix of metallic scum, useless sweat, heavenly soot."[58] Thus reborn, Marinetti dictates to "all the living men on earth" his manifesto.[59] Yet despite his "contempt for woman," and despite the iron "grapnals" that, like forceps, deliver him from woman's "bracing slime," Marinetti's narrative fails to deliver him from metaphorical plagiarism of the event that he seeks to escape. If Marinetti's dramatic transformation of "muddy water" to "factory slime" seems temporally implausible, perhaps we should attribute this detail not to his failed narration but to his inability to shake, in myth as in life, the mother's "bracing slime" from the enfleshed body. Although he manages to rarefact what the *Corriere della Sera* reported as "the sudden appearance of a bicyclist" that "resulted in the vehicle being flipped into a ditch"[60] into "two lines of reasoning, equally persuasive and yet contradictory [whose] stupid argument was being discussed right in my path," [61] the womb undergoes no such metaphoric transformation. Even as he declares that, "at last, mythology […] ha[s] been superseded,"[62] Marinetti crafts in the "Manifesto" his own "foundation myth."[63] That myth is, in Jeffrey Schnapp's words, "the birth of Futurism."[64] Even in the founding myth of Futurism, Marinetti finds himself unable to "take […] away" his "voluptuary" reliance on the body.[65]

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 51.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Quoted in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "A Preface to Futurism (On the 100 Year Anniversary to the Publication of the *Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism*)," *Modernism/modernity* 16, no. 2 (2009), 203.
[61] Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 49.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Schnapp, "A Preface to Futurism," 204.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 86.

Indeed, reliance on her body seems his primary grievance with woman. The "contempt for woman" that Marinetti declares foundational to Futurism is the expression, he clarifies in *Le Futurisme,* of "the tyranny of love" that "encumbers the march of man and prevents him from transcending his own humanity."[66] In the founding myth of Futurism, she has succeeded. By bringing him, lamentably, to birth, the insistent womb establishes both man's humanity and a metaphorical precedent that not even Marinetti can transcend. Yet he will try in manifesto to transcend the insistent womb, for women are, he bemoans, "too earthy" for the "male Futurists," and have become, in the Modern era, "a mere symbol of the earth that we ought to abandon."[67] Although Loy expressly refuses the "contempt for woman" expounded by Marinetti, his language in this essay provides a clue to the value that Loy finds in the Futurist mythos. Though she argues that the deflection of his hatred onto "woman" is misguided, Loy too isolates the "tyranny of love" as a primary Modernist problem, and in her "Feminist Manifesto" bemoans as well the woman "conceived as the reservoir of love, engine of lust, woman-poison, woman as a tragic bibelot, fragile woman, obsessing and fatal."[68] For Loy, this narrative is an "illusion" that woman must reject to bring her creativity to birth.[69] The key word in Loy's reading of Marinetti is *conception*—woman conceived as "tragic bibelot" is not woman as Loy knows herself, but woman as penned by others, and penned badly. Loy, too, proposes in her "Manifesto" the "destr[uction] of the family," although not because, like Marinetti, she considers herself "such [a] fighter that [she] won't have children,"[70] but because the family as *conceived* in

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 89.
[68] Ibid., 86.
[69] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 153.
[70] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 89.

myth and history reduces the mother to "dependence" and "parasitism."[71] Curiously, it is Marinetti's language of rarefied "conception" that enables Loy to inscribe her body into Futurism not as "woman *conceived*" but as woman, and as woman who, insistently, refuses the "transcend[ence]" her presence refutes. A primary joy of Loy's work, and a source of her poetic genius, is an absurdly earnest approach to an ideological economy that contests, at its foundation, her very being. To Marinetti's demand that "poets must do their utmost, with ardor, splendor, and generosity to increase the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements,"[72] Loy earnestly presents her "Parturition," in which woman's body is the nexus of "The was—is—ever—shall—be / Of cosmic reproductivity."[73] To the avowal that "there is no beauty that does not consist of struggle," and that "poetry must be conceived as a violent assault launched against unknown forces,"[74] Loy, in agreement, offers the poeticization of her body in labor as the "gurgling of a crucified wild beast" that produces, astonishingly, "LIFE."[75] Loy's Futurism is, paradoxically, a Futurism that insists on the primacy of the body—the woman's body, no less—in the production of art and of culture. Woman speaking to Futurism must, as Janet Lyon argues, "constantly work a double shift, speaking even as [her subject position] clears a legitimate space for itself."[76] Yet Loy does not quite choose, as Lyon argues, between "tak[ing] as her topic the ideological rehabilitation (or even defense) of that subject position" and "delegitim[ization]" by the revolutionary masculinist mythos.[77] Rather, she writes with the confidence of one whose metaphors

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[71] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.
[72] Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 51.
[73] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 105-106.
[74] Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 51.
[75] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 47, 78.
[76] Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 152.
[77] Ibid., 151.

are inescapable, who is the *point de repère* of both Modernism and the human body—of the mother who smiles to herself as men "dream of one day being able to create a mechanical son, the fruit of pure will, synthesis of all the laws" that science seems always on the "brink" of, but never manages to discover.[78]

To better understand Loy's radical "Feminist Manifesto" of Futurist womanhood, let us detour through another "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," this one written by a woman who, unlike Loy, embraced both the fates of Lyon's "double shift." This "Manifesto," which the poet and painter Valentine de Saint-Point explicitly published in "Response to F.T. Marinetti," engages Futurism's "masculinism"[79] and mechanical language to argue that the Futurist woman's unique task is, in Lyon's words, "to inspire and galvanize heroic new men."[80] It will also be her task, it seems, to gestate them, for Saint-Point's manifesto ends with a rousing battle-cry that urges women to their heroic duty—that is, to "MAKE" heroes.[81] Futurism's "contempt" of woman is appropriate, Saint-Point implies, insofar as Marinetti's manifesto demands the "exaggeration" of masculinity and proposes "THE BRUTE" as the "model" of Modernism.[82] Yet Saint-Point's program of Futurist "virility" depends on the womb to

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[78] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 89. Loy mocks this sentiment in her play *The Sacred Prostitute,* which we will consider later in this chapter.
[79] This is Janet Lyon's term in *Manifestoes*, 167.
[80] Ibid., 153. The word "galvanize" is Saint-Point's own, from her "Futurist Manifesto of Lust" (in *Futurism,* 131), and carries mechanistic Futurist overtones.
[81] Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," 113. Saint-Point is best known as the model and muse of the sculptor Rodin.
[82] Ibid. Crucially, Saint-Point distinguishes "men" and "women" from "masculinity" and "femininity," urging masculine "virility" to compensate "races benumbed with femininity" (110). Marinetti should direct his contempt, Saint-Point suggests, at femininity rather than at women: "Humanity is mediocre. The majority of women are neither superior nor inferior to the majority of men. They are equal. Both merit the same disdain" (109). Nevertheless, Saint-Point expresses contempt for certain *kinds* of women in her manifesto, such as women who "make children only for themselves" (109-110) and women who "keep a man at her feet with tears and sentimentalism" (113). The

constitute, in both flesh and metaphor, the virile Futurist "hero." This hero is, crucially, insistently characterized as "he,"[83] and while men perform the hero-work of "warring and struggling," Saint-Point exhorts, "you [women] must make children."[84] Although herself debarred from heroism, woman participates in the heroic process by "reward[ing]" the hero with her body, in turn mating with and giving birth to him.[85] Through woman's sexual "sacrifice to the cause of Heroism," woman generously allows the hero in her orbit, "whether a son or a father," to "live his own life of audacity and conquest."[86] As lover or mother, woman provides the hero with his body, and, thus enfleshed, he is tasked to make a hero of himself.

Yet even as she exalts women to "make children," Saint-Point is careful to diminish woman's "vitality" in the hero-making process, for the man's "force" of "lust" is the heart of the hero's gestation.[87] Although she is tasked to "mak[e] the son of the future," her powers of conception are not sufficient to the task, for she "*receives* a boy" from, we are led to assume, a heroic source of sperm.[88] The "prodigious *expression* of the race" Marinetti demands is not conceived by the mother's expression of creation, but by the expressed heroic subject she creates.[89] Through the prowess of the poet, man's lust

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women worthy of contempt, it seems, are those who lack or refuse the masculine "virility" that Futurism demands.

[83] Ibid., 110-111. This is particularly notable because, in Saint-Point's view, "every superman, every hero to the extent that he has epic value, every genius to the extent that he is powerful, is the prodigious expression of a race and an era precisely because he is simultaneously composed of feminine and masculine elements, femininity and masculinity: which is to say, a complete being" (110). Yet Saint-Point's heroic "complete being" is, nevertheless, insistently *man.*

[84] Ibid., 113.

[85] Ibid., 110.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., emphasis mine.

[89] Ibid. In her "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," Saint-Point does argue that "Flesh creates, just as mind creates. In the eyes of the universe, their creations are equal. One is not superior to the other. And mental creation depends on fleshly creation" (in *Futurism,*

gives himself *to* himself through the vehicle of woman, and collects her as a "trophy" in the bargain.[90] Woman is not the hero, nor is she quite the hero's origin. Yet she has created, somehow, a debt she cannot possibly promise to pay: "YOU OWE HUMANITY SOME HEROES. NOW MAKE THEM!"[91]

This debt is a debt of the body, for "*true* mothers," Saint-Point argues, "will always be mediocre lovers, and lovers will be insufficient mothers."[92] Yet woman's hero-making drive defies, and indeed disallows, the Futurist maxim that "Woman must be either mother or lover."[93] The mother, of course, by definition, is also, or has been, a lover; the lover, by definition, risks motherhood—woman walks a dangerous line between mediocrity and insufficiency. Crucially, although it facilitates his heroism, this debt is not demanded by *man*, Saint-Point clarifies, but by *nature*. The "forces of nature" that demand use of her body are, Saint-Point argues, "sublimely unjust," but are imprinted upon the hero-making process, and are, indeed, endemic to the woman's body.[94] Rather than attempt to impose "order" on these forces through the "intellectual error" of feminist political activism—an error which, Saint-Point argues, women's "instinct will eventually recognize"[95]—woman should concede the sublime injustice that nature has built into her body, and should find in this concession creative rage. "LET WOMAN REACQUIRE," Saint-Point demands, "THE CRUELTY AND VIOLENCE THAT LETS HER FLY INTO A RAGE OVER THE DEFEATED," because,

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130). Yet although these "creations" are equal, both privilege the "virility" of the male hero, whose "lust is the act of creating, and is creation" (130).

[90] Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," 113.

[91] Ibid. It is notable that Saint-Point did not herself pay this debt, for she did not have any children. She played the role of "lover" rather than "mother."

[92] Ibid., 112.

[93] Ibid., 112. Saint-Point likely borrowed this maxim from Marinetti, who, among others, cites it widely in his Futurist writings.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., 111.

Saint-Point continues, she too is "DEFEATED."[96] The "Futurist Woman" of Saint-Point's manifesto draws her power from "the desperation that gives the heart all its power,"[97] and her triumph is predicated upon her defeat. She is, finally, the "heroine" under siege who chooses to lose her city or her son, and who raises her skirts to the conquerors, promising fecund interest on her debt.[98]

It is easy to deride Saint-Point's bellicose demands on woman's body—Loy certainly does—but we should not, as Loy does not, dismiss them entirely. Although Loy scholars have reasonably focused their critical energies on Loy's biting departures from Futurism's mythos of womanhood, it is worth considering the moments in which Loy's conception of womanhood, like that of Saint-Point, harmonizes with Futurism, for these moments shape Loy's conception of her creativity. Let us consider, for a moment, Loy's early poem "Three Moments in Paris," which is widely read as an ode to the salon culture of the Futurists. In the wee hours of the morning, the speaker recalls, as her companion's

> indisputable male voice roared
> Through my brain and my body
> Arguing dynamic decomposition
> Of which I was understanding nothing

she experiences a

> Beautiful half-hour of being a mere woman
> The animal woman
> Understanding nothing of man
> But mastery and the security of imparted physical heat
> Indifferent to cerebral gymnastics
> Or regarding them as the self-indulgent play of children
> Or the thunder of alien gods
> But you woke me up[99]

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[96] Ibid., 112.
[97] Ibid., 111.
[98] See the epigraph to this section, and Ibid., 111.
[99] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," ll. 21-28.

Indeed, as Virginia Kouidis notes, in letters to Carl Van Vechten, Loy credited Marinetti with "waking her up" and teaching her to recognize her "vitality."[100] Yet in the Futurist mythos, woman expresses "vitality" through not cerebral but bodily gymnastics, bending her womb to the hero's "Mastery." In light of Futurism's "contempt for woman," Loy's enlightenment foremost enlightens its own cost—the alien gods, after all, may not be friendly, and she may not like what comes to light. Indeed, as she moves from "understanding nothing" to awakening, the speaker discovers that woman does not argue "dynamic decomposition" with the indisputable male voice, but herself dynamically decomposes.[101] When the light of inquiry is "focused precisely upon her," woman sees that she, like the plump cherry in the brandy glass, "prophetically blossoms in perfect putrefaction."[102] This is the "force of Nature"—woman blossoms with not only the seed of the hero, but the seed of her own rotting, in her body, and to "assume" the "mental attitude" of vitality is to "cease to be a woman."[103] Such is, in Saint-Point's words, the "cruelty and violence" of Nature that leaves woman "defeated" before she begins.[104] Loy does not shrink from the "force of Nature" within her—like the "brandy cherries / in winking glasses," her speaker "decompos[es] / Harmoniously."[105] Nor does she relax into the primal animality of the "mere woman," for she can no longer claim to "understan[d] nothing of man."[106] Rather, all facts in hand, Loy positions herself on the border of cerebral and animal, speaking as both Nature and Culture. As she quips in "Summer Night in a Florentine Slum," when "Nature

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[100] Quoted in Kouidis, *Mina Loy*, 8.
[101] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," ll. 8.
[102] Ibid., ll. 66-67.
[103] Ibid., ll. 18-19.
[104] Saint-Point, "Futurist Manifesto on Woman," 112.
[105] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," ll. 59-60.
[106] Ibid., ll. 25.

umpires," the game is never "fair."[107] Yet this "double shift" of her inequity gives woman immense creative power. Woman must focus the light of her inquiry on this fact and determine what to do with it.

Inequity and Completion in Loy's "Feminist Manifesto"

> Evolution fall foul of
> Sexual equality
> Prettily miscalculate
> Similitude
> —Mina Loy, *Love Songs*

> Women must destroy in themselves the desire to be loved.
> —Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto"

In a letter to Mabel Dodge, the first reader of her "Feminist Manifesto," Loy queried, "Do tell me what you are making of Feminism… Have you any idea in what direction the sex must be shoved—psychological I mean."[108] Although critics eager for a foothold in Loy's "erotic and erratic" poetry often grasp her "Feminist Manifesto" as a "key statement," in Christina Walter's words, of "Loy's lifelong aesthetic,"[109] it is important to frame Loy's "Manifesto" as, at heart, a query—where do women go from here? Loy's "Manifesto" rejoins this question in the language of Futurism and Feminism, playing the fruitful aspects of each discourse against the other. And yet, Loy joked to Dodge that her "absolute resubstantiation of the feminist question" in the "Manifesto" was "easily to be proved fallacious—There is no truth—anywhere."[110] Perhaps this retreat implies, as Walter argues, that Loy felt "so hesitant" about her

[107] Loy, "Summer Night in a Florentine Slum." Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[108] 1914 Letter from Mina Loy to Mabel Dodge Luhan. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[109] Walter, "Getting Impersonal," 668.
[110] 1914 Letter from Mina Loy to Mabel Dodge Luhan.

manifesto that she felt the need to "distance herself" from its argument even with a sympathetic listener,[111] and may mark, as Lyon argues, Loy's concern that her subject position in the Futurist mythos disallowed her to write in its language.[112] Yet Loy's "Manifesto" is also, in its original sense, an *essai*,[113] to which she also urges her readers—"Leave off looking to men to find out what you are **not**—seek within yourselves to find out what you **are**."[114] Loy's "Manifesto" asks how woman might formulate a "feminist" selfhood in a "masculinist" language, and refuses, in that language, to cede "woman" to Marinetti's "museum case of corrupt history."[115] With this question, Lyon argues, Loy "may have written herself into a tight spot" from which she could neither escape "into the arms of a Futurist avant-gardism or the solaces of feminism."[116] This is, of course, the very "tight spot" that provoked Loy's *essai*, for, unalloyed with the other, neither Futurism nor Feminism offers an adequate language to conceptualize the Modern woman. Crucially, it is neither Futurism nor Feminism but their *conception* that must be alloyed into adequacy, an alloy that Loy will accomplish, as Marinetti demands, through poetry. It is not the *spirit* of Feminism, but "the feminist movement as *at present instituted*"[117] that Loy deems, in her opening declaration, "**inadequate**," and Loy's alliance with the *spirit* of Feminism distinctly distinguishes her Manifesto from those of Marinetti and Saint-Point.[118] Likewise, while Loy rejects

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[111] Walter, "Getting Impersonal," 668.
[112] Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 156.
[113] Loy's "Manifesto" is an "essay," I mean, in the tradition of Montaigne's *essai*, in which an author develops her rhetorical stance through the process of writing.
[114] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.
[115] Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 156.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Emphasis mine.
[118] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 153. While I have maintained Loy's typographical bolding and underlining in my citations of her Manifesto, I have chosen not to disrupt the structure of the page by maintaining Loy's varied font sizes. All words that appear

Marinetti's contemptible *conception* of "woman," she demands, in the Futurist *spirit*, the "**Absolute Demolition**"[119] of the systematic "utilitarian and opportunistic cowardice"[120] by which women are restrained from self-"realisation."[121]

Furthermore, Loy distinguishes her position from political Feminism, as she distinguished herself from Futurism, by a distinct insistence on the primacy of woman's body as the basis of "vital creation."[122] The Feminism proposed by Suffragettes proposed economic and political solutions to what Loy considered a fundamentally Natural dilemma. Loy urges her readers to dismiss the division of women, promoted by both Victorians and Futurists, into "two classes / **the mistress, / & the mother**," for "every well-balanced & developed woman knows that is not true."[123] It is precisely her capacity to be *both* mother and lover that drives Loy to demand that woman

> Be **Brave** & deny at the outset—
> that pathetic clap-trap war cry **Woman is the equal of man**—
> for
> She is **NOT!**[124]

Loy's proposition of woman's inequality differs crucially, of course, from that proposed by Futurists such as Giovanni Fiorentino, whose excitable essay "To Save Woman??!!" concludes that woman is "too deeply stamped with inferiority" to be salvaged, and that, in Futurism's utopic revolution, "Woman, together with the frivolous and stupid nature with which she is born, will die."[125] Rather, in Loy's formulation, woman's

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enlarged in the original text are also bold and underlined, and the emphasis carries here.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 51.

[121] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 153.

[122] Ibid., 155.

[123] Ibid., 154.

[124] Ibid., 153.

[125] Giovanni Fiorentino, "Variations on the Theme of 'Woman.' To Save Woman??!!," in *Futurism,* 240. This charming essay fails to formulate a method by which the Futurists

inequality is the very basis of her creativity, and grounds the possibility that Fiorentino and his revolutionary sons may come into being. Indeed, Loy denies Fiorentino even Saint-Point's hero-focused vision of creation, for the "right" to maternity belongs not to the hero but to "woman." Loy argues that, as such, "Woman must become more responsible for the child than man."[126] Scholars traditionally read this line as Loy's concession, in the name of inequality, to the Victorian demand that women be the primary caregivers of children.[127] Yet we should read this also as Loy's demand that her body be taken seriously in the production of the hero. Although "every woman," Loy argues, has the "right to maternity," it is the "race-responsibility" of woman, particularly those of "superior intelligence," to produce "children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex."[128] The eugenic creation of Futurism's revolution, in other words, lies not with Marinetti, who dreamed of "creat[ing] a mechanical son,"[129] nor with Fiorentino, who hoped to "re-create" humanity in man's image,[130] but with woman—and not only with exceptional women such as Loy, but with "every woman," even the "unfit" or "degenerate" or "contempt[ible]" ones. Loy's reversal of the Futurist procreative "debt" into *every* woman's maternal "right" marks a crucial difference between Loy's eugenic program

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might "overcome the stupidity of woman!!" other than "to annihilate woman, destroy her and then be able to re-create her, reshaping her in the light of our great and renewed aspirations which the small mind of a woman will never be able to understand" (241). One sympathizes with Enif Robert, who, upon reading Fiorentino's essay, responded, "Chi è quest'imb…?" ("Who is this imb[ecile]?") Quoted in Paola Sica, *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism, and the New Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 44.

[126] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 155.

[127] Furthermore, this was not in fact played out in Loy's life, as she regularly left her young children abroad for long periods with relatives and nannies.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 89.

[130] Fiorentino, "Variations,", 241.

and that of the Futurists. Loy's vision of maternity differs starkly from that proposed by Marinetti, which she parodies in the draft novella *Brontolovido.* With "jaundiced snarl," Loy narrates, Futurism "laid down a law—'Woman must always have something in her paunch. If it is not the lover it is el Bambino'."[131] Loy resented the Futurist longing to classify her body as "lover" or "mother," and to value her body by the objects with which it is filled. Rather, the hero of Loy's narrative is the mother, who reverses the Futurist metric by valuing her "alliances" only insofar as they facilitate woman's "vital creation."[132]

Although Loy sought, in the spirit of Futurism, an "incalculable & wider social regeneration than it is possible for our generation to imagine,"[133] Loy's eugenic program propagates rather than annihilates. Loy grounds her eugenic program not in the production of the "hero" but in women's "psychic development," arguing that

> Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life—& not necessarily of a possibly irksome & outworn continuance of an alliance—spontaneously adapted for vital creation in the beginning but not necessarily harmoniously balanced as the parties to it—follow their individual lines of personal evolution—[134]

Loy's eugenic program here recalls the early 20th century tradition of "free love eugenicists," who aimed to reach "social regeneration" through free love, "voluntary motherhood," and the so-called "Love Child."[135] An exemplar of this tradition is a 1912 opinion piece in the *Freewoman* that celebrated the "beautiful child, i.e. the child born from intense mutual passion" as "the best physically and mentally" and "much in

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[131] Loy, *Brontolovido*. Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[132] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 159.
[133] Ibid., 156.
[134] Ibid., 155.
[135] Peppis, "Rewriting Sex," 570.

advance of the average child."[136] Yet Loy's eugenic program differs from that of the "Love Child" in both its emphasis on the mother and its suspicion of "free love." The "social regeneration" envisioned by Loy's "Manifesto" is not primarily the result of filling the earth with "beautiful" babies but with "superior" mothers free to pursue their "personal evolution" through "vital creation." In this way, Loy's eugenic program somewhat resembles that of Margaret Sanger, who refuted a prominent physician's claim that "high intellectual culture" came at the expense of woman's "reproductive energy" by arguing that, rather, "reproductive energy […] is transferred to other creative processes, perhaps even to a greater extent in women than in men."[137] It may be, Sanger argues, that sexual and maternal desires are "not so frequent among women of intellectual attainments and pursuits," but that among these women, there exists a "finer and greater intensity in the fulfilment of that desire."[138] Maternity is, in Loy's manifesto of womanhood, another "faculty for expressing herself" with which "Nature has endowed the complete woman."[139]

As we will see in the next chapter's consideration of Loy's poem "Parturition" and her *Love Songs*, Nature's "completion" of woman is neither equal nor equitable.

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[136] Gideon, "The Love-Child." *Freewoman* (28 March 1912), 376.
[137] Margaret Sanger, "Motherhood—Or Destruction." *The Woman Rebel* 1 no. 3 (May 1914), 22.
[138] Ibid. Carolyn Burke has hypothesized that Loy was familiar with Sanger's work, noting that Loy asked Mabel Dodge about Sanger's legal battle to distribute birth control and that she may have read Sanger's magazine, *The Woman Rebel*. When a friend expressed astonishment to Loy at Sanger's distribution of pamphlets about contraception and feminine hygiene, commenting that "There are those of us over here who won't believe that 'That's' all Love is," Loy reportedly observed to Dodge that their friend was experiencing "virginal hysterics… Of course *'That's'* all nothing and yet *That's* all it is—the *more* is spiritual effervescence" (Burke, "New Woman," 40). Yet Loy distanced herself from feminist political activism and from formal approbation of the feminist movement, writing to Dodge, "What I feel now are feminine politics—but in a cosmic way that may not fit in anywhere" (40).
[139] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.

Man's liminality to woman's "completion" creates, for woman, enormous creative power, but also an enormous amount of work, both practical and emotional. This is, indeed, the "sublime injustice" of Nature. Loy does not urge women, as does Saint-Point, to encourage man's "conquest" of women by refusing to "stop at the first furrow that he fructifies,"[140] but simply pens him, in "Parturition," "running up-stairs" to another woman's apartment as she gives birth to his child.[141] Nor does Feminism quite offer respite from Nature's injustice, for in *Love Songs,* Loy argues that the language of equality "prettily miscalculate[s] / similitude" between unequal sexes, for "evolution fall[s] foul of / sexual equality."[142] Even the "unnatural selection" offered by Feminism and, we must conclude, by Loy's eugenic program, only

> Breed[s] such sons and daughters
> As shall jibber at each other
> Uninterpretable cryptonyms
> Under the moon.[143]

The "irresponsibility of the male," in other words, and the "superior Inferiority" of woman, are items rather than ideals, and Loy's "Manifesto" neither exhorts nor ignores Nature's inequity.[144] Instead, Loy offers practical solutions to her readers. Loy's proposal is not "free love" in the tradition of the "Love Child," or of Shelley, Marinetti, and Pound; "Free Love" that accounts for pleasure without maternity is not a practicable answer to the Modern sexual question. Rather, recognizing the inequity built into her "complete" body, woman must recognize that "Men & women are enemies, with the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the

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[140] Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," 112.
[141] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 28.
[142] Loy, *Love Songs*, [XXIX] ll. 1-4.
[143] Ibid., ll. 5-9.
[144] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 38.

exploited," and as such, women must "destroy in themselves the desire to be loved."[145] In the spirit of Futurism, Loy urges woman to reject the "tyranny of love" that prevents her from "transcending," in Marinetti's words, man's badly-penned conception of her being.[146] Woman must "withdraw herself" from love, in Marinetti's words, "as one withdraws a manuscript from a publisher who has shown himself incapable of printing it decently."[147] Yet the publisher, of course, is Marinetti—and the Victorian poets, his unlikely literary fathers.

## Glitter and Decay in "The Stomach" and *The Sacred Prostitute*

> I'm a woman & you're the man who has annihilated me—my prurient womb! […] I ask myself what am I going to get out of this? My computation is nix!
> —Mina Loy, *Brontolovido*

> Every time woman gives herself to man, it means a struggle between her pride and her desire. […] I know you're going to win—But do fight me with new weapons—I want to be amused.
> —Mina Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*

In his introduction to *The Last Lunar Baedeker,* Roger Conover emphasized the difficulty of grasping, and of publishing, "the essential Mina Loy."[148] Loy's work is marked, in Carolyn Burke's words, by "a number of disappearances, falsifications, disavowals, and deliberate disguises," and Loy "probably would have maintained that there was no such thing as the essential self."[149] If there is, in Loy's work, a sort of "essential" self, it is tempting to locate this "essence" in its origin, the mother's creative

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[145] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 155.
[146] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 86.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Roger Conover, "Introduction," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker* (New York: The Jargon Society, 1982), xliii.
[149] Carolyn Burke, "Supposed Persons: Modernist Poetry and the Female Subject," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 1 (1985), 136.

"vitality." Yet her "vitality," too, is marked by disavowals and disguises, and the difficulty of grasping woman's essence is due in no small part to its profligate publication by those who have penned it badly. Woman's creative vitality is penned in by the language of "the Master,"[150] who falsifies her as either a "Sweet heart" or an "Eternal Mother" who "devours her literary kittens——invariably."[151] Woman's body must contend with what Loy calls "the 'pose' inspired by the Master"—that is, the aesthetic seduction of man's falsification of woman, which demands that she concede her double capacity for creation to be Man's creative Muse.[152] There is a certain seduction to being immortalized in art, not least that one is able to mitigate in paint or marble what Marinetti calls the "terrifying tenderness" of the body.[153] Although the Futurist revolution demands what Loy calls "dynamic decomposition,"[154] Marinetti is profoundly disturbed by the "perfect putrefaction" of the body this dynamic requires. This disturbance is particularly profound when the putrefying body is a woman's, for her body's dissolution fits nowhere in man's narration of woman as hero-crafting "lover" or "mother." The very decomposition that Futurism demands puts woman's body "out of use"[155] and exposes the telic fragility of the body that woman won't let man "transcend."[156] In the story "Terrifying Tenderness," Marinetti embodies his disturbance in the person of his mother, who he fruitlessly seeks in the nighttime street:

> Where are you?...
> Are you calling me? …
> Where are you? …
> Where? …

[150] Loy, "The Stomach," 105.
[151] Loy, "Conversion," 227-28.
[152] Loy, "The Stomach," 107.
[153] F.T. Marinetti, "Terrifying Tenderness," in *Futurism*, 451.
[154] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," ll. 8.
[155] Loy, "The Stomach," 104.
[156] See Marinetti's remark in "Contempt for Woman" that woman "prevents him from transcending his own humanity" (86).

Where? ...[157]

When he finally discovers her, the mother petitions, disappointingly, that the artist "repeat against [his] heart the distant beating of mine" by taking a woman as his lover.[158] At first, the artist appears ready to concede to his mother's demand, lauding she who "made me metallic and quick," and responding, "Mother I believe in you only woman not woman. I want what you want. I will respect the woman chosen by you."[159] Yet the chosen woman, it seems, "is dead," for "she cried too much out of pleasure or pain under the cog wheels of the aerial hurling machine of muscles and ideas that I am."[160] The task of trying to fill a woman, an "empty little uneven slipping flask of perfume," with love and ideas is too much for the artist to bear, and he accuses the mother of abusing her "tenderness" to "inundate the world and drag me along!"[161] The artist is saved from his temptation to tenderness by a "hoarse voice" that "screams,"

COWARD!
I'LL HAVE YOUR HIDE! …
RIFF-RAFF! …
IMPOSTER! … PASSÉIST! …[162]

The story ends in an outbreak of violence no less terrifying than tenderness, as the voice of the "soul," merging with that of the artist, declares of the mother:

GIVE ME A KNIFE! …
GIVE ME A
KNIFE! …
A knife as big **as the main-mast!**
To smash her into a hundred, a thousand
two thousand
three thousand
passéist books […]

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[157] Marinetti, "Terrifying Tenderness," 451.
[158] Ibid., 452.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

we'll refill with paaaaaper![163]

Thus is woman's body, curiously, smashed not into human pieces, but into paper, and thus does Marinetti evade both the tenderness of the mother's heart and the wreckage of the tender body. One must admit the attraction of such a fate, if one must decompose, though to be smashed from body into art is to cede the body's "vitality" to man's pen, and to be "posed" in art and history by man's hand. Yet immortality holds a certain seduction, even if it is not quite one's own, and even if it requires "falsification." There are, Loy contends, two possible responses to this seduction. The first is the response of Valentine de Saint-Point, which Loy chronicles in "The Stomach" as woman's concession of her womb to man's "artistic polemics."[164] The second, which Loy chooses for herself, is to use the Master's artistry against him, articulating the *a*-musing power of the Muse. Indeed, both of these approaches produce immortality, and in both, woman is, in her own way, "smash[ed]" into a book. Yet the book into which Loy pens her body is her own, and by snatching the main-mast of language from man's hand, she sets the terms of her creation and decomposition.

The protagonist of Loy's curious story "The Stomach" is the young Virginia Cosway, who has been chosen by a sculptor as the model for his rendering of *La Tarantella.*[165] The sculptor "had taken her fingers," Loy narrates, "between two of his

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[163] Ibid., 453. One cannot help but reading the main-mast here as somewhat phallic.
[164] Loy, "The Stomach," 108.
[165] While Loy nowhere explicitly connects this story with that of Valentine de Saint-Point and Rodin, the parallels are too tempting to elide. Saint-Point and Rodin had, like Virginia and the Master, the relationship of Muse and Master Sculptor, and like Virginia, "only too early after [Valentine] had refused him the sculptor had leapt to a rare and official celebrity, and [she] found herself powerless to cap him with a husband of greater distinction" (Ibid., 106). While Rodin lacks a sculpture titled *La Tarantella,* he sculpted many dancing nudes, many of which have, as in Loy's story, protuberantly emphatic pelvises. The Musée Rodin in Paris held in the summer of 2018 an exhibit entitled "Rodin and Dance" that surveyed the "exultation of the body" in Rodin's work, and an extensive gallery of his sculptures and paintings of dancers can be found on the

own and slid them further down and apart upon her hip; then with accurate gesticulations he had inspired her with 'the pose'."[166] It is crucial to note that, while Loy narrates this moment as Virginia's "primal creation by the Master," who had, with his keen hands, "hammered her into a posture in which she was to become fixed for life," Virginia believes "the pose" to be her own, and she wears the Master's "pose" as a "tag of identification."[167] Indeed, the Master's calcification of the young girl into keenly-posed iron is, Virginia says, the "authorised edition of Virginia Cosway."[168] The position into which Virginia has been "hammered" by the Master is characterized by its "centre in the region of the hips," as if the Muse were "enticing aesthetic culture into her womb to be reborn for her audience."[169] The artist's "momentous projection" of Virginia's "tilted pelvis," at which museum-going tourists gazed with "mouths open," becomes, indeed, the "arbiter of aesthetics" in the art of the period, and even as Virginia's body grows, "in its age," quite "fibrous and rigid," the authorized version of Virginia Cosway remains immortally posed beside her aging, unauthorized body.[170] At the story's end, the unauthorized version of Virginia's body, growing as rigid in its approach to death as its aesthetic double, begins to decompose into uncanny "whiffs" of her work as the Muse, that "protracted maternity of *outre-tombe*."[171]

Yet, crucially, Virginia's story neither begins nor ends with Virginia's aesthetic "maternity." The story begins, rather, with "the mother," whose blind eye follows

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Musée Rodin's website. Lastly, one cannot quite ignore that, after Valentine, Loy chose for her protagonist one of the only conceivable Anglophone names that begins with a "V."

[166] Loy, "The Stomach," 105.
[167] Ibid., 105-106.
[168] Ibid., 106.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid., 107-108.
[171] Ibid., 108.

Virginia's rise to the pedestal in the Public Gallery. The mother is nearing death, and her expiring "flesh" and waning "lucidity" are repeatedly covered, "cleared," and "garnished" by her daughter, Virginia, who aims to render the decomposing mother as "delicate and decent" as a statue. The unauthorized version of the mother, a "bundle of human garbage" buried under "cheerful flowers" and "wool," Virginia entombs in a "tabernacle" acceptable to the eye, for the mother is, to visitors, "terrifying"—in "out of use," Virginia muses, "there is ugliness."[172] By contrast to the mother's fruitlessness, Virginia is excessively in use, exhaustively dancing *The Tarantella* for the artist-gallery each day on her pedestal, arbiting aesthetics for the era. Yet it is not, of course, Virginia on the pedestal, nor she who arbiters aesthetics; she has ceded her creation to The Master. Nor is the mother, of course, quite fruitless, for by creating Virginia, the mother's womb, like the sculptor, created something of great use and beauty. Indeed, at story's end, it is only Virginia who has failed to create anything, and whose flesh is entombed in the "tabernacle" of the sculptor's vision. Virginia's "maternity of *outre-tombe*" produces only a womb as rigid and unused as that of her sculpture.[173] Yet while the *Tarantella*'s iron womb usefully arbiters aesthetics, Virginia's aging womb is "out of use," in which there is no aesthetic but "ugliness."[174] In the story's final lines, the narrator notes in the "wrinkled lids of [the] navel" of Virginia's womb a "calculating eye"[175] like the "blind eye" of the mother whose "decay" Virginia sought assiduously to cover.[176] Vitality lies, finally, with the Master and the Mater—not the Muse. One fears

[172] Ibid., 104.
[173] Ibid., 108.
[174] Ibid., 104.
[175] Ibid., 108.
[176] Ibid., 104.

that Virginia's vitality is fruitless, and that, like Sophia in *Brontolovido*, her calculation is "nix!"[177]

Loy faces, too, the question that Sophia poses to her womb: "I ask myself what am I going to get out of this?"[178] Faced, like Virgnia, with her "annihilat[ion]" in the "pose," Loy decides that the Muse at least ought to have some amusement. If Loy will be immobilized in art, she will arbiter the aesthetic, and will design the tabernacle in which she will be buried. She will, too, pen man as profligately as he has penned her, fighting man, as she demands he fight her, with "new weapons"—the sword of Futurist language in the hand of the "lady poet."[179] In her play *The Sacred Prostitute*, Loy earnestly wields the language of Futurism against the writers of its manifestoes, apostrophically poeticizing the characters of "Futurism," "Nature," and "Love" in an a-musing satire of Futurism's "contempt" for woman. The play charts a monologuing chorus of men who wander through, as "The Idealist" puts it, the "maze of abortive experience" of man's failed union with woman, lamenting that men "have never been able to solve the problem of Love."[180] The "problem of Love" is here, as it is for Marinetti, really the problem of "woman," for, as Futurism declares, "Love is a feminine conception spelt 'Greed' with a capital 'G'—this is female, all right!"[181] Yet despite Marinetti's avowed "hatred" of "love," expressed in his "laconic phrase 'contempt for woman',"[182] Loy's Futurism confides to Love that, while he wants to appear "too hard to want to be loved" among his ideological peers, "in reality," he has "an infinite need

[177] Mina Loy, *Brontolovido*.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 210.
[180] Ibid., 189.
[181] Ibid., 197.
[182] Marinetti, "Contempt for Woman," 86.

of tenderness."[183] Yet, terrified by his need of tenderness, Futurism demands also of Love—"*quickly, afraid of being bored*"—that she "be atrociously carnal."[184] This triple demand for tenderness, carnality, and self-sufficiency—that is, that woman play both mother and lover, and that he be free from both—puts Marinetti in a terrible quandary, for he is forced at once to declare that "women are only animals, they have no souls,"[185] and to demand of woman that she allow him to "reach [her] soul through the medium of [her] body."[186] Loy's satire does not resolve the questions that it poses—does woman have a soul? Has she a body? Rather, Love recognizes that the "game of love"[187] between man and woman is unwinnable in the available language—"any possible move *I* make is bound to be in the wrong direction." [188] When woman "gives herself to man," Love muses, it "means a struggle between her pride and her desire,"[189] and this struggle constitutes a "game of advantages" in which "woman starts with a handicap of 'vantage out'!"[190] Man's narration of the "problem of love"—that is, the "problem of woman"—is only the "same old story" of Nature's inequity coated in the glitter of "superlatively vigorous" language.[191] Man only substitutes Nature's sublimely unjust demands with his own, and in his vigorous re-telling of the "same old story," Modern man does not succeed, as he aimed, at "mak[ing] things new," but only in "making them *louder*."[192]

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[183] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* 198.
[184] Ibid., 199.
[185] Ibid. See Marinetti's declaration in "Contempt for Woman" that "women have suddenly become too earthly," and are "a mere symbol of the earth that we [Futurists] ought to abandon" (89).
[186] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* 199.
[187] Ibid., 205.
[188] Ibid., 203.
[189] Ibid., 210.
[190] Ibid., 203.
[191] Margaret Wynne Nevinson, "Futurism and Woman," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, 74.
[192] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 205.

Although Love's satiric distance from man's "same old story" merits her amusement, it marks a sidestep rather than a rhetorical refutation of Nature's "eternal axiom."[193] Loy's aloofness is, indeed, her *tarantella*, a dance which, if exhausting, she has at least choreographed herself. As Kouidis notes, Loy was quick to "moc[k] her own illusion that she was the exception to Futurist contempt for women—these 'amusing' men needed no muse."[194] Loy satirizes the "wheedling" Futurist claim to her exceptionality in *The Sacred Prostitute*,[195] as Don Juan applauds Futurism's lovemaking strategy—"Ah, now it's recognizable—insult the sex, to catch the demonstrated exception?" Futurism croons in reply, "Precisely. This dodge covers the whole field—hitherto you stopped short at maternity—we annihilate woman completely!"[196] Futurism's proposed nexus of woman's exceptionality, maternity, and annihilation is worth our consideration, for the play's ending clarifies that her creative "vitality" is the "ultimate profundity of [woman's] body"[197] that Futurism is really after. Loy mocks the Futurist desire to "annihilate" woman in "Lion's Jaws," in which she imagines

> The antique envious thunder
> of Latin littérateurs
> rivaling Gabrunzio's satiety
> burst in a manifesto
> notifying women's wombs
> of Man's immediate agamogenesis[198]

Man's greatest desire, Loy suggests, is not only to be a-musing, but also a-gamogenetic—that is, his inviolability demands that he annihilate both lover and mother. This is, as Loy recognizes, to annihilate woman, for, as Saint-Point dutifully

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[193] Ibid., 154.
[194] Kouidis, *Mina Loy*, 9.
[195] Loy, "Lion's Jaws," ll. 55.
[196] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 205. See also Ezra Pound, *Make It New* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).
[197] Ibid., 201.
[198] Loy, "Lion's Jaws," ll. 40-46.

reminds us, "woman must be either mother or lover."[199] Despite this desire, however, Futurism recognizes that his proposed agamogenesis is nothing "more than a bluff," for "Nature is *so* uncompromising" in granting maternity only to women.[200] Yet Futurism proposes a future "constructed on speculation" and "machination"[201]—that is, on the subordination of Nature to the intellect of man—and as such, does not hesitate to innovate Nature's most uncompromising mandates. After lamenting maternity's uncompromising demand for a womb, Futurism tries to compromise Nature by pleading, "Oh, Mammy, you must help us. Futurism has invented a new game—we want to make our own children, evolve them from our own indomitable intellects."[202] Nature is less than enthused by this demand, simply suggesting, "Then do it."[203] Don Juan continues to plead, "You always do what *we* want, dear, are we not your favorite offspring? In fact, you would be the perfect mother, if only you had restricted your family to *us*."[204] Nature then becomes shrew, responding, "I made you entirely independent, except for this question of reproduction—and you have shown no filial gratitude whatever […] Nothing ever satisfies you!"[205] His insatiability refused by uncompromising Nature, Futurism shrugs, "There's nothing more to be got out of *her!*—Let's identify ourselves with machinery!"[206] Denied the procreative power of the womb, compromise is forged in metal. Cast in the light of agamogenetic desire, the *avant-garde* epistemology of mechanical innovation comes to resemble the petulance of a child denied a baby by his mother. Worst of all, not only is woman inevitable, but

[199] Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," 112.
[200] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 205.
[201] Ibid., 195.
[202] Ibid., 205.
[203] Ibid., 206.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., 207.

Nature is "looking into the feminist propaganda—and seriously considering allowing her to grow up!"[207]

Loy's satire re-frames the Futurist debate on tenderness and creation, but it does not give her the final upper hand. While there is a certain power in the narrator's ironic detachment from the demands and narration of men, Love does not leave the play liberated from the "sex war," for as Reality declares in the play's final lines, "As long as you have them both [men and women], they will total up the same."[208] Loy's re-spelling of the weapons mobilized against her still leaves her face-to-face with those weapons, and if she relaxes her eyelids, she may find herself sinking into "the pose," softened by the physical "heat" of her "Mastery."[209] The bounds of the play do not have the power to free Love, only to leave her "amus[ed]" by the scope of her own disappointments.[210] As Loy admits in "Lion's Jaws," despite her biting critique of their approach to woman's body, the Futurists in her acquaintance, "these amusing men," nevertheless

> discover in their mail
> duplicate petitions
> to be the lurid mother of "their" flabbergast child
> from Nima Lyo, alias Anim Yol, alias
> Imna Oly[211]

Poetic genius does not free woman from the "force of Nature"—rather, it multiplies within her anagrammatic selves that, in turn, spurn and embrace Love's sexual position. Mina laughs at man's demands—Nima would like his child. These desires are both real, and are not contradictory, for they are the same desire re-arranged. If the poet's power to articulate this paradox in language furthers her difficulty, it also keeps

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[207] Ibid., 206.
[208] Ibid., 215.
[209] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," in *Baedeker*, ll. 21-28.
[210] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 214.
[211] Loy, "Lion's Jaws," ll. 49.

her awake. The pen-wielding poet does not escape "dynamic decomposition,"[212] but has the power, at least, to "[f]ill the paper"[213] with a narrative that images her "decomposing / Harmoniously."[214] The method by which the force of Nature keeps women coming back to Love is the same method by which the poet keeps readers coming back to the text: "All we have to bear in mind is to keep the surface glittering."[215]

[212] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," [I], ll. 8.
[213] Marinetti, "Terrifying Tenderness," 453.
[214] Loy, "Three Moments in Paris," [II], 28-29.
[215] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, 215.

# Chapter Three

## "Mother I Am": Mina Loy's Irate Pornography

### Pound, Joyce, and Loy's *Logopoeia*

> The Spirit
> is impaled upon the phallus
> —Mina Loy, "Joyce's Ulysses"
>
> The gilded phaloi of the crocuses
> Are thrusting at the spring air.
> —Ezra Pound, "Coitus"

In a 1918 review in *Others: An Anthology of New Verse*, Ezra Pound lauded Mina Loy's poems as "interesting and readable," but imagined that Loy's verse would "drive numerous not wholly unintelligent readers into a fury of rage-out-of-puzzlement."[1] Pound defined for Loy's work a new genre of poetics, which he called "logopoeia."[2] Pound defines "logopoeia" as "poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas."[3] Logopoeia is, in other words, a poetics of words rather than "music"—"a mind cry, more than a heart cry."[4] Unlike the heart cry, the "arid clarity" of the mind cry has a uniquely troubled edge, for it represents "the utterance of clever people in despair, or hovering upon the brink of that precipice."[5] Steve Pinkerton has cited Loy's essay "The Logos in Art" to argue that Loy centers the Logos as the "creative principle that reside[s] at the heart of Modern art."[6] In

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[1] Ezra Pound, "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy," in *Ezra Pound: Selected Prose 1909-1965* (New York: New Directions, 1950), 425.
[2] Ibid. Although in this early piece Pound attributes the origins of "logopoeia" to Loy and Moore, in later works, he claims that Jules Laforgue originated the genre.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Steve Pinkerton, *Blasphemous Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 54.

her notes to Loy's collected *Stories and Essays*, Sara Crangle more cautiously notes that, because "Logos can mean word, speech, discourse, or reason, and is often conflated with the divine," Loy's poetics is "thus tied to her ongoing explorations of aesthetics and metaphysics."[7] Considering the magus's definition of Loy's work as a poetics of the Logos, the glittering precision of Loy's language in this essay is worth careful consideration. The passage cited by Pinkerton appears at the end of Loy's essay, as she argues that "there is no renaissance without breath—the breathing upon of the logos—"[8] It is notable that Loy's consideration of the Logos is unfinished business—her thought ends not with a full stop, but with a dash. This pause marks both Loy's "ongoing exploration" of the Logos and its continued "insinuat[ion]" in Modern art.[9] Yet the passage is notable, too, for its awkward syntax, for Loy's language leaves unclear the subject of the "breathing." One reading of the passage suggests, as in Pinkerton's reading, that it is the Logos who breathes, and that this breath animates the spark of creation.[10] Yet another reading implies that the Logos must be *breathed upon* to animate its creative spark. The curious causal relationship between breath, Logos, and animation is further complicated by Loy's vision of artistic creation as "renaissance," a word that narrates the birth of both art and bodies. In one reading of Loy's passage, the spiritual "breath" of the Logos animates a transcendental textual birth; in another, Loy simply notes that there is no generation without breathing bodies. Yet these readings are, like Mina Loy and Imna Oly,[11] as anagrammatically inextricable from one another

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[7] Sara Crangle, "Notes" to *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy* (London: Dalkey Archive, 2011), 397.
[8] Mina Loy, "The Logos in Art," in *Stories and Essays,* 262.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Pinkerton, *Blasphemous Modernism,* 50.
[11] Mina Loy, "Lion's Jaws," *The Last Lunar Baedeker: Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), ll. 49.

as the forces of Nature and Culture. For if the genius of the Word breathes upon the flesh to animate its textuality, the genius of the flesh animates the possibility of the Word's animation. As Roger Conover has argued, "Pound might have added yet a fourth term to his lexicon to describe Loy—*prosopopoeia*, or poetry whose active voice animates the absent."[12] We might consider, too, a fifth poetic term that Pound missed, for one whose body animates the bodies she voices—mother.

Critics versed in post-Derridean theory might balk at the characterization of Loy's work as "logocentric," and might rightly accuse Pound of inserting his critical phallo- where it does not belong. Yet Loy's work plays at the edge of what Derrida would later criticize as a "metaphysics of presence"[13] that seeks unmediated access to meaning and being through markers that fix meaning and being in language. Derrida's critique of logocentric discourse centers on its illusion of the "transcendental signified," an "absolute and irreducible" referent at the heart of the signifying system.[14] Logocentric discourse, Derrida argues, refers questions of meaning and being to the metaphysical lodestone of a "transcendental signified," which provides the closure of stable meaning to an otherwise endless field of signification. Derrida's criticism of logocentrism de-thrones the privileged signified by tracing its historical evolution, noting its progression from the "Monad" in Neo-Platonist philosophy, to "God" in Christian theology, to "human consciousness" in Romantic literature. Meaning is not, Derrida argues, objectively fixed in language, and the historical evolution of the "transcendental signified" demonstrates it as yet another text to be interpreted. In Derrida's reading, the primary failure of logocentrism is its desire to pin meaning to a

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[12] Roger Conover, "Introduction" to *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* xxxviii.
[13] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 49.
[14] Ibid.

reference point outside the domain of textuality, and its failure to recognize that there is no escape from the infinite play of textual interpretation.

One symptom of logocentrism, Derrida argues, is the subordination of disembodied writing to embodied speech, and of the signifier to the "transcendental signified." In Derrida's estimation, that the "transcendental signified" is itself textual deconstructs the "metaphysics of presence," for the textual remoteness of signifiers from the transcendental signified reflects the essential instability of transcendental meaning. The failure of the transcendental signified to mark presence—and, finally, to signify transcendentally—destabilizes easy demarcations of presence and absence, interiority and exteriority, embodiment and disembodiment, and speech and writing. Indeed, the failure of the transcendental signified marks the failure of transcendental language.

Loy, too, is suspicious of the transcendental, although her work, in Pound's words, "hover[s] upon the brink of that precipice."[15] If, for Loy, there is a transcendental signified, it is not God nor language, but woman's body—or, rather, in Loy's work, if there is a *point de repère* from which being originates, it is not God, nor language, but the mother. In the game of origins, Loy proposes, the mother is both signifier and signified, and Loy's work complicates the relationship between signifier and signified by writing woman's body in both referential positions. Loy is at her most characteristically logocentric in her consideration of man's "agamogenetic" reach toward creative genius. Despite his creative attempts to de-center woman's body as the "first cause" of human life, meaning, and signification, Loy argues, man has failed to demonstrate historical evolution away from the mother as creative "transcendental signified." The demands of

[15] Ibid.

Saint-Point's heroic ethics and of Manrinetti's masculinist manifestoes are fingers pointed, Loy quips, toward the signified body of the mother, without whose procreative meaning-making the Futurist mythos would collapse. In other words, in Loy's work, the creative "genius" of man points to the procreative "genius" of the mother's body. Woman's "genius" is not, however, "transcendental," for her creation transcends neither Word nor flesh. Loy neither seeks to subordinate the flesh to the intellect nor to subordinate the intellect to the flesh. Rather, Loy actively embeds the Logos in the very flesh that Pound supposed it rose above,[16] complicating the "brink" between the writer's word and body. If the Logos is, for Pound, transcendental poetic genius, for Loy, it is a genius of the flesh, and marks the glittering surface on which Word and flesh coincide. If, for Pound, the Logos as the "Word made flesh" is an act of substitution, for Loy, the influence is mutual—as the Word creates the flesh, the flesh makes the Word more fleshy. Word and flesh are in a constant state of play, and the origin of "being" constitutes a matrix of intertextuality irreducible to the written or the physical. If, in the Derridean critique of logocentrism, the collapsed distinction between signifier and signified complicates the distinction between embodied speech and disembodied word, in Loy's work, the collapsed distinction between creative and procreative genius complicates the distinctions between creation and procreation, between the acceptably masculine and the acceptably feminine, between lived and poetic narratives of parturition, and between Word and flesh. If the written body points to a signified body of flesh, the fleshly body is equally imbricated in the textuality of its own narration. As both signified and signifier, procreator of bodies and creator of words, the woman

[16] See also Peter Nicholls, "Arid Clarity: Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, and Jules Laforgue." *The Yearbook of English Studies* (32): 2002, 52-64.

writer lives and plays, Loy argues, as the nexus of this intertextual matrix. She is in a doubly creative "genius."

To better understand Loy's matrix of Word and flesh, let us consider two early poems that treat it directly: "Joyce's Ulysses" and "Parturition." Loy's ekphrastic rejoinder to James Joyce's novel begins not with the breath of the Logos but the "voice and offal / of the image of God,"[17] which "present"

> The word made flesh
> and feeding upon itself
> with erudite fangs
> the sanguine
> introspection of the womb[18]

Joyce is, Loy argues, a "Master / of meteoric idiom,"[19] yet his generation of the Word does not quite amount to creation. Although Joyce's text "spawns / guttural gargoyles / upon the Tower of Babel,"[20] he is finally "recreator / Joyce" who does not create *ex nihilo* but "flashes the great reflector."[21] Joyce's spawn is not, finally, "creation," but reflection and recreation—however idiomatically masterful, his mastery extends over "offal" and "Babel" rather than bodies. In Derridean terms, Loy argues that Joyce constructs a logocentric dyad of signifying brainchild and "transcendental signified" child of the womb, which, armed only with a pen and not an ovum, he fails either to embody or transcend. Loy's conception of Joyce as "recreator" rather than creator stands in stark opposition to Joyce's own conception of his work, for he explicitly compared his artistic production to the production of children. In a 1912 letter to his wife Nora, Joyce described *Ulysses* as "the book I have written, the child which I have

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[17] Mina Loy, "Joyce's Ulysses," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 3-4.
[18] Ibid., ll. 33-37.
[19] Ibid., ll. 30-31.
[20] Ibid., ll. 52-54.
[21] Ibid., ll. 57-59.

carried for years and years in the womb of the imagination as you carried in your womb the children you love."[22] Joyce analogizes his creativity in terms of his wife's procreativity, yet explicitly maintains the sexual division of labor between creative Word and procreative flesh. In Joyce's mythos, man and woman, Word and flesh, mind and body are, in Susan Stanford Friedman's words, "simultaneously drawn together in analogy but separated irrevocably in function."[23] In Derridean terms, Joyce turns on its head the subordination of written signifier to "transcendental signified," maintaining the division between pen and womb but asserting the creative superiority of the "womb of the imagination" over the womb of the mother. Joyce's women, as Friedman argues, "produce infants through the channel of flesh, while his men produce a brainchild through the agency of language."[24] Loy argues, however, that the flesh made by the Word is not creation, but only a *reflection* of the "sub rosa" of the flesh[25]—in Joyce's case, an awkward attempt to write into signification the womb that Nature refused him. Barred the double creativity of the womb, Joyce's narration of what Loy terms the "hole and corner temples"[26] of the flesh marks not birth but an outhouse of digestive re-creation that fails to transcend mimesis of woman's procreation. *Ulysses* gives us not birthed bodies but, in Gilbert and Gubar's words, a "calligraphy of shit."[27] The calligraphy is masterful, but marks only mastery of the Word. Man's "hole and corner temple" is a pen without a womb, and his creative genius is limited to the Word.

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[22] Quoted in Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse." *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 1 (1987): 57.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Loy, "Joyce's Ulysses," ll. 59.
[26] Ibid., ll. 47.
[27] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 232.

Loy's "Parturition" Poetics

> As one reads of Mina Loy's babies, one's sphincters loosen. Her copulators stay copulated […] Mina Loy dipped her pen into the glands of Bartholin, and wrote.
> —Kenneth Rexroth

> Our person is a covered entrance to infinity
> choked with the tatters of tradition
> —Mina Loy, "O Hell"

Woman's, however, is not, and herein lies the heart of Loy's poetics. Loy narrates a calligraphy not of re-creation but of creation, for both her "womb of the imagination" and her body are, as Janet Lyon says beautifully, a "laboratory of creativity."[28] The woman writer has the power not only to make flesh out of words, but also to make flesh out of flesh. Loy situates the Modernist problem of origins—that is, the metaphysical problem of God[29]—squarely in the woman's body, and offers in the Modern epic tradition her own heroic tale. Loy's epic is as grand as *Ulysses*, and longer, for it lasts as long as a life. It is an epic not only of the Word, but also of the flesh, for it produces not only a heroic protagonist, but also a real human life. Tasked with producing the hero that Modernism demands, Loy produces both herself and a child.

It is crucial that we read "Parturition" as a maternal epic, for, crucially, it is the belabored speaker, and *not* the produced child, who is the focus of Loy's poem. Unlike most maternity poems, which reflect on motherhood with a babe in arms, the poem begins *in medias res*, at the height of the speaker's labor. The poem's first line clearly instructs us how to read its cast of characters—the laboring woman declares, "I am the

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[28] Janet Lyon, "Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses: The Space of Possibility in the Florence Writings," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet,* ed. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Chicago: National Poetry Foundation, 1998), 382.
[29] Ibid., 387.

centre."[30] Against Futurism's narrative "expression" of the hero, Loy centers her epic on the mother's "parturition" rather than the child that it produces. Man appears only as a peripheral figure, "running up-stairs" to another "woman's apartment" and singing an airy tune recounting the "tid'ly did'ly" frivolity of woman that starkly contrasts the protagonist's "gurgling of a crucified wild beast."[31] In contrast to the journey of the man—"He is running up-stairs"—the journey of the woman is far worthier of epic representation, for she is "climbing a distorted mountain of agony."[32] Indeed, the epic labor of the birthing woman is that of a poetic hero, for not only does her "ego succee[d]" in the enormous task of "unifying the positive and negative poles of sensation," but the mother finds "precipitating into me / The contents of the universe."[33] The birthing woman's cervix is no less than "contraction / To the pin-point nucleus of being."[34] The birthing woman's cervix is the center of the universe. The ontological question is here clarified as the boundaries of the

> without
> within
> within
> without[35]

that take the shape of the contractions of the cervix. For the contents of the universe to come to life through one's body—successfully—is no less than the whole aim of philosophy, and the hero who reaches this epic moment is no less than a genius.

Yet the genius of Loy's parturitive mother is *not*, as some critics have argued, "a form of artistic transcendence."[36] Her genius is much more difficult to bear, for it does

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[30] Loy, "Parturition," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 1.
[31] Ibid., ll. 29-33, 55.
[32] Ibid., ll. 40-41.
[33] Ibid., ll. 62-63, 100-01.
[34] Ibid., ll. 9-10.
[35] Ibid., ll. 11-14.
[36] Lyon, "Pregnant Pauses," 387.

not transcend the pain and gore of childbirth, but is inextricable from the "cosmos of agony" of woman's body.[37] Indeed, as Janet Lyon has noted, Loy's poem presents childbirth as the "carnal instantiation" of "cosmogony."[38] Loy narrates parturition as the unique moment at which flesh and Word, Nature and Culture, signifier and signified, and individual and cosmos constitute one another. Loy's speaker does not, as Virginia Kouidis has argued, "transcend biological process and merge with cosmic becoming."[39] Rather, the biological process *is* the precise point at which the birthing mother carnally instantiates the cosmos—the moment of birth is, in "Parturition," the creation of human being and meaning. Untangling Loy's conception of "genius" means untangling our desire that woman "transcend" the forces of Nature, as well as our distinction between the force of Nature and the force of God. The poem's cosmogony, at the center of which lies the mother, is "The was—is—ever—shall—be / Of cosmic reproductivity" into which the birthing speaker is "absorbed."[40] The organ chords of the Christian "Doxology" emerge here staccato and strange through the teeth of the panting woman in labor, whose body seems as far removed from the robed transcendent God of the Christian hymn as the belabored "gurgling beast" from the "tid'ly" girl of the father's cheery tune. This is the "lascivious revelation"[41] of parturition—that the solution to the cosmological argument, the *esse*, is procreation. The *esse* does not, as Loy criticism has concluded, "transcend" the body. For Loy, in every verb tense, *the essence of being is reproducing being*.

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[37] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 6.
[38] Lyon, "Pregnant Pauses," 387.
[39] Virginia Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 124.
[40] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 108-9, 106.
[41] Ibid., ll. 77.

In the Christian tradition, the solution to the cosmological argument—the *esse*—is God's declaration "I AM."[42] Loy re-spells this declaration to narrate herself at the center of cosmogony: "Mother I am / Identical / With infinite Maternity."[43] For Loy, the event of birth does not mark the transcendence of the flesh to merge with cosmic being—rather, the process of parturition marks woman's identicality with the cosmos. The *esse* of the cosmos is to reproduce the cosmos, and at the moment of parturition, woman is, in doxological terms, God. Lest our desire to attribute "transcendence" to woman's cosmic being lift us too high into the clouds, Loy reminds us that this *esse* extends also to the "white feathered moth" and the "cat," for as the mother is absorbed into "cosmic reproductivity," there

> Rises from the subconscious
> Impression of a cat
> With blind kittens
> Among her legs
> Same undulating life-stir
> I am that cat[44]

The difference between the birthing mother and the birthing cat, of course, is that the mother's genius extends not only to the flesh, but also to the Word.[45] The human mother not only completes the epic quest, but also writes the epic—she not only *is* but also *says*

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[42] See, for example, Exodus 3:15-15. Here, Moses, God's chosen prophet, asks God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God replies, "I AM WHO I AM." In the Christian tradition, God's declaration of His (sic) being, "I AM," is often cited as one of the "names" of God.
[43] Loy, "Parturition," ll. 101-03.
[44] Ibid., ll. 110-15.
[45] In one way, Loy's argument here presages contemporary arguments made by philosophical movements such as Animal Studies against the Western metaphysical distinction between human and non-human animals on the basis of human access to language. In the birth cry and the nursing sigh, Loy argues, the human and feline mother speak the very same language. On the other hand, however, Loy casts the human mother with the power to access written language, which she both values and denies the feline mother.

"I AM." Yet the autonomy of woman's "I AM" is inevitably complicated by the nature of parturition, for she not only *is* but *is the nexus* of several intersecting forces. The "centre" of the birthing woman is, after all, "exceeding its boundaries in every direction"[46] as the cervix widens past the bounds of the mother's body to produce the child. Pain itself is also a persona in this process, for it is "exotic" to the speaker, who notes that it visits her "from so far away" and is "no part of [her]self."[47] Though her body is the nexus of the cosmos, and although in parturition she is identical with its force, it is also distinct from her, for the moment of her absorption into the cosmos involves a "vacuum interlude" of the "negation of [her]self as a unit."[48] The woman is instrumental to cosmic reproductivity, but is not quite in charge of the process—rather, her body is the site of the epic struggle between Nature and Culture, between Word and flesh, between the "undulation[s]" of "living / Death / Life."[49] Yet she also *is* this undulation, for parturition multiplies the woman's selves such that her "I AM" *is* "knowing / All about / Unfolding."[50] The pain she feels is the agony of her self splitting open and multiplying to create signification. The mother has the unique power to channel selves, and to *be* these selves as they unfold—and then, of course, to write about it.

Yet woman's centrality to the cosmic *esse* is not an unqualified power, for that cosmos is a cosmos of agony. Indeed, the birthing woman's power to say "I am the centre" is the power to say "I am the centre / of a circle of pain,"[51] and woman's power to create both Word and flesh means that not only is she, like the cat, a "crucified wild

[46] Ibid., ll. 1, 3.
[47] Ibid., ll. 56, 58, 61.
[48] Ibid., ll. 67-8.
[49] Ibid., ll. 120-23.
[50] Ibid., ll. 124-26.
[51] Ibid., ll. 1-2.

beast," but that she also *knows* and *speaks* her crucifixion. Although woman's epic identicality with cosmic reproductivity—her godhood, as it were—might be expected to bestow certain advantages outside the birthing chamber, as Loy notes, this is not the case, for the morning after birth,

> Each woman-of-the-people
> Tip-toeing the red pile of the carpet
> Doing hushed service
> Each woman-of-the-people
> Wearing a halo
> A ludicrous little halo
> Of which she is sublimely unaware[52]

must pretend as though she were not, for a brief period, God. Indeed, as Loy notes in the poem's final lines, she will even be expected to recite a Doxology not in her honor—"Man and woman God made them— / Thank God."[53] Woman not only embodies the cosmic "circle of pain," but as Loy writes in "The Dead," she sees that the "unsurpassable openness of the circle" is the "legerdemain of God."[54] The great cosmic joke on woman is that, although her body serves as its point of contact with the Earth, this agonizing honor grants her only "superior Inferiority" to man.[55] Indeed, in contrast to woman's role in procreation, man's role requires not agony but pleasure, for from the birthing woman he obtains a child to carry his name as well as an uninterrupted moment to cast his seeds into the "tid'ly did'ly" woman "upstairs." When "Nature umpires," the game is never "fair."[56] Yet the cosmic *esse* is dexterously artful, for despite its agony, men, women, moths, and cats yet endlessly reach to instantiate it. The

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[52] Ibid., ll. 127-34.
[53] Ibid., ll. 136-37.
[54] Loy, "The Dead," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ll. 38-9.
[55] Loy, "Parturition,", ll. 38-9.
[56] Loy, "Summer Night in a Florentine Slum." Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

agonizing unfolding of this dexterous art marks, for Loy, the heart of woman's creativity.

The Irate Pornography of Loy's *Love Songs*

> Her love songs had *scent*—too much civet for some, too much theelin for others.
> —Roger Conover
>
> She made a moth's net
> of metaphors and miracles […]
> looking for the little love-tale
> that never came true
> —Mina Loy, "Giovanni Franchi"

The dexterous art of generation is inextricably bound with the problem of love. In Loy's work, "so-called love"[57] is the "glittering" surface that "gloss[es] over" the "mess" of procreation,[58] and Loy demands that her readers "detach" the glitter from love to face its "initial element."[59] As such, Loy's *Love Songs* are anything but conventional, and the outrage they elicited from her contemporaries only validates the strength of the "illusion" Loy exposes.[60] Behind love's glittering surface of marital comfort and "sarsenet ribbon"[61] is the familiar force of Nature and the struggle it entails. Neither Victorian values nor the sexual "freedom" of the New Woman permit love in its conventional narration, for the poet knows the cosmic puppeteering "Wire-Puller" Nature intimately, and knows that its force does not allow men and women to "look straight at"[62] each other. As Loy argues in her "Manifesto," the only point at

[57] Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 156.
[58] Mina Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute*, in *Stories and Essays*, 215.
[59] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 156.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Mina Loy, *Love Songs*, in *Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ll. 49.
[62] Ibid., ll. 72.

which "the interests of the sexes merge" is not in love but in "the sexual embrace,"[63] and as such, it is here that Loy focuses her inquiry.

It is here, also, that Loy begins her *Love Songs,* for the poetic sequence begins with "wild oats sown in mucous-membrane," a lightly-disguised spurt of semen:

> Eternity in a sky-rocket
> Constellations in an ocean
> Whose rivers run no fresher
> Than a trickle of saliva[64]

In a delightful re-spelling of the poetic *blazon,* man appears here not as lover or as master, but as a trickle of sperm.[65] If woman's cosmic contribution to generation is her parturition, man's lies in his

> skin-sack
> In which a wanton duality
> Packed
> All the completion of my infructuous impulses
> Something the shape of a man[66]

The reduction of man to his testicles, and of love to those testicles' spurt, is a humorous deflation of both Victorian moral purity and the "gilded phaloi" of Loy's poetic contemporaries. Marinetti's trickling rocket to the future barely reaches lift-off, much less reaches the skies. When spilled outside the woman's womb, man's seed does not

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[63] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.
[64] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 6-7, 9-12.
[65] As Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas notes, the "barely euphemistic suggestions of sperm 'sown in mucous-membrane' and of oral sex and an orgasm that dies off in a 'trickle of saliva' force upon the reader the physical fact of sex—that sex is, after all, a bit messy. This is a direct challenge to Victorian morality and punctures the saccharine euphemism of Eros imaged as a mischievous chubby cherub with bow and arrows." Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas, "Little Lusts and Lucidities: Reading Mina Loy's *Love Songs*," in *Mina Loy, Woman and Poet*, ed. Maeera Schreiber and Keith Tuma (Chicago: National Poetry Foundation, 1998), 117.
[66] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 19-23.

here appear, as in Pound, as a "quintessence" of cerebration,[67] but as "erotic garbage"[68] that the woman must wipe from the bed. Loy's depiction of love's seedy reality is relentlessly explicit, and as one critic complained, her syntax is "almost gratuitously specific."[69] We might deem Loy, as Loy deems Nature, somewhat of a "pornographist."[70]

Loy's poetic pornography is a direct challenge to a literary tradition that has seduced women with the glitter of love without touching the reality of testicles. Yet the two are, for Loy, inextricable, for the endgame of woman's "Once upon a time"[71] is indeed the childbed. Eros is not presented here, as in traditional mythology, as a cherubic babe with love-tipped bow and arrows, but as "Pig Cupid," whose "rosy snout" is "rooting erotic garbage" among the wild oats on the bed.[72] His snout also roots out the "erotic garbage" of the "Once upon a time," for such myths are, Loy suggests, "coloured glass"[73] so pink that woman can hardly see the hard sexual realities behind love's sparkling veneer. In contrast to the messy realities of "Pig Cupid," the speaker describes the glittering façade of "unimaginable famil[ies]" painted on the "mezzanino" of literary history—unlifelike

> Bird-like abortions
> With human throats

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[67] Ezra Pound, "Translator's Postscript" to Rémy de Gourmont, *The Philosophy of Natural Love* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1922), 213.
[68] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 4.
[69] Nicholls, "Arid Clarity," 64.
[70] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 297. Rachel Blau DuPlessis makes a similar argument, noting of Loy's presentation of Nature as an "irate pornographist" that "'Irate' means angry, excited, incensed; 'pornographist' makes of Nature an angry or emotional producer of texts depicting sexual intercourse. Given Loy's poem, this would put her in precise alliance with Nature—she too is an angry writer depicting sexual intercourse who has certainly 'shed… petty pruderies'." Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Seismic Orgasm: Sexual Intercourse and Narrative Meaning in Mina Loy," in *Mina Loy, Woman and Poet,* 60.
[71] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 5.
[72] Ibid., ll. 3-4.
[73] Ibid., ll. 18.

> And wisdom's eyes
> Who wore lamp-shade red dresses
> And woolen hair
> One bore a baby
> In a padded porte-enfant
> Tied with a sarsenet ribbon
> To her goose's wings[74]

The painter of the family on the mezzanine has not, like Loy, succeeded in creating a family, but an aborted attempt at creation. The mother painted on the mezzanine is delicate and wise, a "Mother Goose" of downy asexual comfort, and the children she produces appear ready-made in their ribbonned porte-enfants, skipping pregnancy and labor altogether. Loy is intrigued by this angelic painted family, but notes the incongruity between the family and the shadow that it casts on lived reality:

> But for the abominable shadows
> I would have lived
> Among their fearful furniture
> To teach them to tell me their secrets
> Before I guessed
> —Sweeping the brood clean out[75]

The brood's secret, of course, is that it hasn't been bred at all—rather, it marks the painter's "Spawn of Fantasies"[76] conjured to populate the "starry ceiling"[77] of myth. The painted mother is no mother at all—she is only the "glitter" of "erotic garbage." This angelic Mother Goose represents the necessary antipode of the "tid'ly did'ly" whore of "Parturition"—in Saint-Point's terms, the "mother" who completes the "mistress."[78] The physical realities of "breeding" are absent from man's abortive attempt to narrate

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[74] Ibid., ll. 39-50.
[75] Ibid., ll. 51-56.
[76] Ibid., ll. 1.
[77] Ibid., ll. 40.
[78] Valentine de Saint-Point, "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," in *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 112.

woman in art, and Loy's speaker feels this absence lurking in the painted mother's shadow.

If man is an inaccurate artist, Nature is an "irate pornographist"[79] who does not blanch at the "disheartening odor" of the realities of sex.[80] If Loy's love song is a "cosmos / Of coloured voices / And laughing honey," it is also a cosmos of "spermatozoa / At the core of Nothing / In the milk of the Moon."[81] Isolated as "erotic garbage" or abstracted in an "unimaginable family," man's spermatozoa and mother's milk mark the core of "Nothing," which, as the speaker notes, is "inconceivable."[82] However, mated at conception, the creative fluids of man and woman mark the "turning / To the antipodean."[83] The antipodean meeting at conception of man/woman and Nothing/Being marks not only, as in mythology, the end of life on earth, but also its beginning. Indeed, the power to create bodies from the

> impact of lighted bodies
> Knocking sparks off of each other
> In chaos[84]

re-spells the biblical creation story to narrate the sperm and ovum as the origin of the world. Far from the "starry celing" of the mezzanino, at the moment of conception, "Where two or three are welded together / They shall become god."[85] The conception of life, Loy reminds us, is never immaculate.[86]

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[79] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 297.
[80] Ibid., ll. 109.
[81] Ibid., ll. 92-97.
[82] Ibid., ll. 297-98.
[83] Ibid., ll. 368-69.
[84] Ibid., ll. 164-66. One wonders whether these lines inspired Sharon Olds's somewhat pornographic poem "Strike Sparks."
[85] Ibid., ll. 147-48.
[86] My reading here contrasts with Stephen Pinkerton's argument in *Blasphemous Modernisms* that Loy's cosmogonic vision is "blasphemous." Loy crafts a cosmogony in which the mother is situated with full faith and authority at the center of the universe—the mother does not "blaspheme" against God by patterning her procreation on his

Whether it brings conception or apocalypse, the meeting of antipodes is always, Loy argues, a struggle:

> Shuttle-cock and battle-door
> A little pink-love
> And feathers are strewn
> Dear one at your mercy[87]

Joannes is not, it appears, feeling merciful, for conception is not the godhood he desires. Several readers of the *Love Songs* have proposed an abortion "encrypted" in its lines,[88] a reading buttressed by these strewn feathers on the battleground of love. Indeed, at the "mercy" of man, here, too, conception ends not in life but in "birdlike abortions."[89] We might read the "crucifixion" of stanza XXXI as a failed counterpoint to the parturitive mother's "crucifixion," a sacrifice that produces not the child's life but its death:

> Crucifixion
> Of an illegal ego's
> Eclosion
> On your equilibrium […]
>
> Crucifixion
> Wracked arms
> Index extremities
> In vacuum
> To the unbroken fall[90]

The conceived child's body, indexed and "wracked" out of life, is sacrificed to preserve the "insolent isolation" of the father from the "interference" of the infant's imposed

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creation, for she, not He, creates bodies with her body. Rather, cosmogonic narratives that situate God rather than the mother as the "first cause" blaspheme against the mother.

[87] Ibid., ll. 99-103.

[88] See, for example, Janet Lyon, "Pregnant Pauses," and Maeera Shreiber, "Love Is a Lyric / Of Bodies: The Negative Aesthetics of Loy's *Love Songs to Joannes*," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*.

[89] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 43.

[90] Ibid., ll. 407-16.

"intimacies."[91] Joannes desires to destroy the tiny "I" created by the collision of antipodes before its hatching can disturb the equilibrium of the lovers' magnetic polarity. Man's abortive approach to antipodean collision is in line with the apocalyptic vision of myth painted on the "starry celing" rather than the godhood woman knows to be conceivable in her body. Yet this sacrifice is the mother's, too, for her experience of failed creation is that

> The procreative truth of Me
> Petered out
> In pestilent
> Tear drops
> Little lusts and lucidities
> And prayerful lies[92]

The failure to give life is, for Loy's speaker, the failure of love, for the "broken flesh" of which the couple partakes at love's "profane communion table"[93] is not that of absorption into godhood but that of their "wracked" absent child.[94] The "procreative truth" of the speaker's identicality with the cosmos seeps out of her body with the wracked child, as does, the poem implies, the "exhilarated birds" whose wingbeats measured her desire for man.[95] This exhilaration is dampened to a "solace-winged […]

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[91] Ibid., ll. 404-06. Rachel Blau DuPlessis reads the mother as the imposer of her intimacies, which is a complementary reading to mine. Indeed, men often see the imposition of family intimacy as the onus of the mother.
[92] Ibid., ll. 266-71.
[93] Ibid., ll. 33-4.
[94] In his study *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns*, Stephen Kern proposes several works by Lawrence, Yeats, and Eliot as "proof-texts" of the Modernist period, in which "the awful separation between potential passion and any actualization possible in life" is evidence of "the indestructible barriers between one human being and another." See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 36. Likewise, in his Letters, Yeats argued that "the tragedy of sexual intercourse" was "the perpetual virginity of the soul." See W.B. Yeats, *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 174. For Loy, the tragedy of sexual intercourse is sterility, and the possibility of the child marks the only possibility of fully embodied contact between man and woman.
[95] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 82.

flutter,"[96] and the spark-knocking of the lover's lighted body is diminished to the light of a "glow-worm."[97] Virginia Kouidis reads this "fading light" in light of the glowworm in Rémy de Gourmont's *Natural Philosophy of Love*, in which he notes that, "for the purposes of creation, glowworms are attracted to each other by their phosphorescent wings; then after coupling they fade as lamps when extinguished […] coupling accomplished, their reason for being disappears and life vanishes from them."[98] The speaker knows, Kouidis argues, that her "vital light was only bait in the sexual game,"[99] and that the refusal of conception marks the fading of love, for she finds the lover's green-lit body "slowly drenched / To raylessness."[100] The poem's "final sense of loss," as Rachel Blau DuPlessis has argued, is not between the speaker and her partner, but between the speaker and the "missing child,"[101] or between the speaker and the refused godhood of her failed conception. The fulfillment of the speaker's "I" is, finally, at the "mercy" of a man whose "white dawn / Of your New Day / Shuts down on me."[102]

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[96] Ibid., ll. 234-5.
[97] Ibid., ll. 229.
[98] Quoted in Kouidis, *Mina Loy*, 72. Given Loy's relationship with Pound, and Pound's relationship with Gourmont, it is not out of the question that Loy was familiar with the *Natural Philosophy of Love.*
[99] Ibid.
[100] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 230-31.
[101] DuPlessis, "Seismic Orgasm," 63.
[102] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 444-46. As DuPlessis argues in "Seismic Orgasm," despite the speaker's "lucid female gaze, her completions are inside his testicles: the sperm to make her fruitful. But the wanton duality is not simply an abstract portrait of his genitalia, but of her double impulse toward licentious, rebellious sex and desire for male fertilization" (54). DuPlessis characterizes this approach as "maternalist thinking meets free love" (54).

Modern Woman's Secret in the No Man's Land of Meaning

> "Men have educated us."
> "But not explained you."
> "Describe us as a sex," was her challenge.
> "Sphinxes without secrets."
> She looked at him, smiling.
> —Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

> Creation, simply—was destroyed by the concept Art.
> Art is a grimace of Creation.
> Creation—is the making— —
> Art is the aping— — — —
> —Mina Loy, "Lady Asterisk"

Love's battlefield is that of Nature in disguise, and as we now know well, Nature is an unjust umpire, and fights with glitter. With love's erotic glitter in her eyes, it takes the speaker of the *Love Songs* twenty-eight stanzas to recognize that what she took as the "mist of living" rising from her lover's body was actually "smoke" rising from the home they might have built together.[103] Yet with the Victorian promise of home and hearth in flames, the speaker realizes too the impossible position of the New Woman:

> Evolution fall foul of
> Sexual equality
> Prettily miscalculate
> Similitude[104]

The sexual and political liberation of the New Woman purports to rise above the strict sexual *mores* of the Victorian "Lady in a Garden," and while Loy praises this liberation, she warns women against claiming equality with men.[105] The New Woman's claim to

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[103] Ibid., ll. 342, 349.
[104] Ibid., ll. 350-53.
[105] Eric Murphy Selinger makes a similar argument: "The 'I' of [Loy's] poems is not a mystified or sentimental Lady in a Garden—but she is not a free and undeceived New Woman, either, enjoying the fruits of her 'fantasies' of sexual freedom. Her fantasies have yielded only a grotesque 'spawn,' and the speaker herself has been transformed into a 'weed' amid Pig Cupid's crop of wild oats, 'white and star-topped' but planted in an oppressively physical ground of 'mucous-membrane'." Eric Murphy Selinger, "Love in the Time of Melancholia," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, 26.

equality with man, Loy argues, is a "prettily miscalculated" stab at similitude that takes proper account neither of Nature's unjust umpiring nor of woman's procreative potential. Nor does "equality" solve the Lady in a Garden's sexual dilemma, for "free love" poses certain complications for women that it does not pose for men. As she has been narrated in the Modernist mythos, and as she has presented her case sexual equality, the New Woman has held silent regarding the complex implications of "free love" on her procreative potential.[106] These complexities extend, too, to her *creative* potential, for the miscalculated similitude between men and women complicates their communication. Loy explores this miscommunication in "Gloria Gammage," which tells the tale of Gloria, an outlandish caricature of the sexually-liberated *nouvelle femme par excellence*.[107] Gloria embodies Modern woman's departure from the sexually-mystified virgin-become-mother, for she is characterized by her "desire to stuff everything into her vulva to see what marvelous creative modifications it had undergone in the process."[108] Like the Lady in a Garden, Gloria is characterized in terms

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[106] Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues of the *Love Songs* that, in Loy's writing, "perhaps the future paragons of 'caressive calling'—more modern sex radicals than she—might be able to have sex without thinking that their combined discharges and ejaculations are 'human insufficiencies / Begging dorsal vertebrae.' But Loy exists in an angry mourning for the lack of or loss of a child from sex, a rejoining, for both radical and eugenicist reasons, of sexual intercourse and reproduction, which can be the most traditional justification for the sexual embrace" ("Seismic Orgasm," 64). In Loy's writing, the question of "free love" demands that woman not only consider her *desire* or lack of desire for a child, but also her relative inability to enforce her procreative preferences on others and on her own body.

[107] Some critics have read the character of Gloria Gammage as a spoof of wealthy "millionheir" arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan, who frankly detailed her diverse adulterous encounters in the memoir *Intimate Memories* (1933). Virginia Kouidis notes that Loy once deemed Dodge Luhan the "only woman yet evolved" (*Mina Loy*, 26), and the story highlights the "prettily miscalculated" equality offered the New Woman.

[108] Mina Loy, "Gloria Gammage," in *Stories and Essays,* 26. Sean Pryor notably reads the story through a Freudian lens, speculating that Loy may have drawn on Freud's "discussions of wordplay," and may have been influenced by his treatment of puns, portmanteaus, and wittiness in *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). See Sean Pryor, *Poetry, Modernism, and an Imperfect World* (New York: Cambridge University

of her sexual potential, but unlike the careful reservation of the Virgin, to Gloria, "being was indeed as [she] had long suspected—an infinite orgy,"[109] and the whole of life is, to Gloria, "a pie, probably sweet—she wanted to stir and dip into it with her fingers—and pull out a plum."[110] The glory of the 20th century is that Victoria's Garden of Eden has produced the very forbidden fruit on which Gloria may fatten the gams that she spreads at her pleasure.

Yet the glory of Gloria Gammage's gams produces pain as well as pleasure, for both she and her husband suffer from Gloria's sexual freedom. Complications emerge, to Gloria's chagrin, from all quarters. First, Gloria's infidelities render her "listless to her husband's wooing,"[111] leading her husband to defend his right to her body against that of her lovers with free love's own rhetoric: "It's all nonsense […] It's a question of making up one's mind—anyone can go to bed with anyone—if they have to—"[112] Indeed, the husband's sexual plea contains a veiled threat that emphasizes the final constraint of woman's "sexual freedom"—thus stated, woman's sexual *freedom* to stuff man into her vulva begins to resemble a sexual *mandate* that woman exercise her freedom to fulfill man's sexual desire. Gloria's sexual freedom is the freedom to be hunted into sex by men, including the husband and lover she has chosen—indeed, the name of her lover, Cacciatori, translates from Italian as "hunter."[113] However tasty,

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Press, 2017), 91. Gammage's genital fixation may certainly lend itself to a Freudian reading of the text. However, while Loy praised Freud's "solution of the problem, 'To mention or not to mention' [sex]" in "History of Religion and Eros," this praise is in the context of declaring Freud "unnecessary to the future" (Loy, "History of Religion and Eros," in *Stories and Essays,* 252). Loy also expresses profound suspicion of Freud and psychoanalytic theory in essays such as "Conversion" and "Censors Morals Sex."

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid., 28.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Perhaps Gloria's compensation is that "cacciatori" is also a delicious pasta dish.

Cacciatori complicates life's plum pie, for when Gloria's jealous husband shoots her lover in a duel, Gloria attempts suicide to distract her scandal-weary father from her role in the duel. One wonders whether certain "creative modifications" to Gloria's womb may have contributed to this familial crisis, for the "commotion of the intestines" with which Gloria "has fully paid the debt of threatened honor" mirrors the symptoms of common abortifascient medications.[114] In any case, it is clear that Gloria's desires lay far from procreativity, for, indeed, babies tend to impede one's "infinite orgy."

Yet despite Gloria's rejection of maternity, her absent child is central to the text. After her attempted suicide, as she and her husband "lounge about on her convalescent bed," they decide that "in all probability—her nerves would have been more normal—if only they had had a child—for every month—finds Antony mooing around the golden bedroom—and any stray member of the house party is informed—that Antony is 'the cow mooing for its lost calf'—"[115] Here, Antony resembles the father in Loy's unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*, who, Loy writes, was "a cheated child with only one miracle left him to perform—the creation of his own duplicate […] In a kind of fixation he seemed to hanker after offspring as proof of his own significance."[116] Gloria and her husband have divergent schemes for Gloria's body—Gloria desires to stuff people *into* her vulva as proof of her significance, while Antony desires to draw people *out* of Gloria's vulva as proof of *his* significance. The birth of a child might indeed render Gloria "more normal," but this normalcy would come at the expense of her sexual freedom. The idealized sexual freedom of the *nouvelle femme* is, for Gloria, the freedom to "reac[h] out for things and rid herself of them with the self-same amplitude

[114] Ibid., 28.
[115] Ibid., 29.
[116] Loy, *The Child and the Parent*, Chapter X. Mina Loy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

and never meditat[e] on her actions."[117] Indeed, Loy's Gloria recalls another Gloria, the protagonist of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Beautiful and Damned*.[118] Gloria Gilbert also rejects motherhood, for she recognizes that "the biography of every woman begins with the first kiss that counts, and ends when her last child is laid in her arms,"[119] and she is unwilling to abdicate her own biography to build that of her progeny. "I refuse," Gloria soliloquizes,

> to dedicate my life to posterity. Surely one owes as much to the current generation as to one's unwanted children. What a fate—to grow rotund and unseemly, to lose my self-love, to think in terms of milk, oatmeal, nurse, diapers… Dear dream children, how much more beautiful you are, dazzling little creatures who flutter (all dream children flutter) on golden, golden wings—Such children, however, poor dear babies, have little in common with the wedded state.[120]

If Modernity has wizened woman to the realities of sex, it has wizened her also to the realities of motherhood, and the *nouvelle femme* recognizes that the "dazzling little creatures" sex produces are less ornamental than obstinately demanding. The Glorias of both tales have several concrete aims: To circulate freely in society, to preserve their physical beauty, to rise above less-liberated women, and to face life ironic and carefree. Both women see the realities of maternity as at odds with these aims. Gloria Gammage recognizes that to commit oneself to gestation is no longer to commit oneself to consumption, for it is more painstaking to rid oneself of one's child than of the Ducca di Cacciatori, and a mother may be unable to "stuff her vulva" as she did before pregnancy wracked its own "creative modifications" on her body. To commit oneself to

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[117] Loy, "Gloria Gammage," 28.
[118] Indeed, while the protagonists of Loy's story are named Gloria and Antony, those of Fitzgerald's novel are Gloria and Anthony. One wonders if one text influenced the other.
[119] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned* (New York: Scribner, 1922; New York: Penguin, 2007), 53. All citations refer to the Penguin edition.
[120] Ibid., 125.

gestation is also to recognize one's own mortality, for as Gloria Gilbert notes, childbearing poses an appalling "menace to her beauty."[121] Gloria's prerogative is to "exist only as a conscious flower, prolonging and preserving itself,"[122] a project complicated by the physical wrack of childbearing. Indeed, as the protagonist of "Parturition" discovers, woman's maternity may incite her lover to defect to other women whose love-making is "free" from the child he helped to create. Maternity disrupts woman's freedom in the sexual economy of "free love" as it displaces her from the pedestal of her exceptionality. In the sterile social sphere of Palms, Gloria Gammage lords the uniqueness of her "eccentricities" over her social rivals, "throw[ing] her Paris frocks all over the bedroom floor" like a child, and snubbing the men and women of her circle who lack her "complex sophistication."[123] Maternity, on the other hand, shatters this uniqueness, for it democratizes mothers not only across social strata but across species—as Gloria Gilbert notes, "motherhood was also the privilege of the female baboon."[124] Furthermore, as Gloria Gilbert argues, motherhood marks the abdication of woman's prerogative to "never meditat[e] on her actions," for she must think not in terms of life's infinite orgy but of "milk, oatmeal, nurse, diapers…"[125] Motherhood disrupts what Gloria Gilbert marks as the rule of the New Woman: To "never give a damn."[126] Motherhood marks the necessity that woman give a damn. Indeed, the mother must bake rather than savor the plum pie of life. As she is narrated in the Modernist mythos, Loy implies, the "sexual freedom" of the New Woman is antithetical to the reality of maternity, for to be as dazzling as is demanded of the New Woman is

[121] Ibid., 330.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Loy, "Gloria Gammage," 27.
[124] Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, 330.
[125] Ibid., 125.
[126] Ibid.

exhausting—it takes a lot of work to keep a man around. Indeed, the processes of "preservation" necessary to the maintenance of woman's sexual freedom mark a mandate as all-consuming as maternity, and the New Woman's preservatives seem as stiffening to the womb as formaldehyde.

Despite Loy's satiric distance from the Glorias, it is important to consider that the pain and complications of Modern "love" apply to Loy as well as to the abstract *nouvelle femme*. As Loy wrote in a biographical sketch intended to appear in Carl Van Vechten's article about "Literary Ladies," her "conceptions of life have evolved while I have been stirring baby food on spirit lamps and my best drawings behind a stove to the accompaniment of a line of children's cloths hanging round it to dry."[127] Alongside this domestic self-portrait, we must also consider the accounts narrated by Loy biographer Carol Burke of Loy's long absences from her children, whom she often left for years at a time with nannies or odd aunts abroad to pursue her creative endeavors and love affairs unburdened by the necessity of their care.[128] As Helen Vendler dryly noted, Loy was "unwilling or unable to assume responsibility […] for her young children, who she left in the care of servants."[129] These cold facts, Vendler argues, "do not add up" with Loy's ecstatic accounts of pregnancy and childbirth.[130] Loy's failure to make her creative genius "add up" with the demanding realities of motherhood, Vendler's criticism implies, marks her complicity with the very divide between Word and Flesh that her work resists, and as such, marks the failure of her philosophic system. Yet asking Loy's philosophy to "add up" in this way mistakes the posing of a question for its answer.

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[127] Quoted in Kouidis, *Mina Loy*, 6-7.
[128] See Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996).
[129] Vendler, "The Truth Teller."
[130] Ibid.

Loy's manifestoes of womanhood, like her body, are a "laboratory of creativity" rather than a polished tome, and Loy knows herself bound by the same injustices of Nature as the women she narrates. Loy does not propose to solve the New Woman's dilemma of procreativity—only to note the incredible power of her body. Loy does not propose to solve Nature's injustice—she merely asks that we consider the uncomfortable questions she poses. It is worthy, Loy's work and life suggests, to pose uncomfortable questions even if one has not worked out the answers, and even if there may not *be* an answer. If Loy's work poses the question—"How free is 'free love,' really?"—her life offers the same insight as her poems—"Really, not so free." If her work poses the question—"Is woman both creative and procreative?"—her life and poems offer a resounding "Yes" anchored not in the changing of diapers but in the giving of birth. While life-giving greatly heightens woman's creative vitality, the demands of "baby food" and "children's cloths" limit her ability to fulfill that vitality, and Loy's propensity to outsource the quotidian duties demanded of mothers recognizes this position. That Loy did not find a solution that "added up" suggests that she could not, despite her wide reading and living, find one. We might consider that, faced with the "sublime injustice" of Nature and the demands of Modernism upon woman's body, Loy was forced to make certain concessions. To cast Loy's failure to be at once a "good artist" and a "good mother" as a poetic failure is to succumb to the illusion of "prettily miscalculated similitude" against which Loy warns her readers. Even if one has not succeeded in solving the riddles of art, love, and motherhood, Loy's work suggests, it is worth having posed the questions.

Man, of course, faces no such difficulty in his pursuit of "free love" and artistic creation. Nor, we should note, have men's poetics been so often dismissed for their failure to reconcile creative "brainchildren" with the caretaking of human babies.

Indeed, if Nature's calculations included "similitude" between men and women, Loy argues, this calculation misfired in a puff of glitter, for Nature instead "breed[s]" distinctly antipodal "sons and daughters"[131] whose "clash[ing] together / in seismic orgasm" only emphasizes their "further / Differentiation."[132] Despite that the pleasure of this clash is somewhat of a "lop-sided miracle," women return to it, and to the incommensurability of union's "one flesh,"[133] again and again. Some critics, such as Rachel Blau DuPlessis, have read woman's identicality with Nature as "at issue" with Loy's criticism of the sexual struggle that Nature imposes on woman. Yet this reading assumes that to be identical with Nature is to mark Nature as beyond reproach. This is not, in Loy's work, the case, for neither Nature nor the self lies beyond the poet's critical eye. Nature is monstrously amoral, and sublimely unjust. Women are identical with Nature, and as such, they know this injustice well; woman's body is the precise embodiment of Nature's sublime injustice. The woman writer must hold this at once in her pen and in her body, and must decide, from the rampart of her imminent defeat, which concessions she will choose.

Woman's identicality with the force that gives her "vantage out!"[134] in the sexual struggle creates, as one might imagine, some difficulties. Poetic criticism of the very force that constitutes her "procreative truth" is itself the work of an "illegal ego," and as such, constitutes a sort of "crucifixion."[135] Furthermore, even the undeceived thinkers of the Modernist era cannot "look straight at" or talk to one another.[136] Instead, the "sons

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[131] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 355.
[132] Ibid., ll. 376-70.
[133] Loy, *The Child and the Parent.*
[134] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* 203.
[135] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 407-8.
[136] Likewise, Twitchell-Waas notes that "Loy insists on a highly skeptical orientation toward language and offers the poem to the reader as an 'irritant' rather than an expressionistic lyric to be sentimentally identified with," which, he argues, "results in a

and daughters" of Modernism "jibber at each other / Uninterpretable cryptonyms / Under the moon."[137] Men and women have difficulty "looking straight at" one another, much less *speaking* with one another, and man has largely narrated woman as either *not-man* or as an incomprehensible Sphinx whose being eludes him entirely. Man has had trouble looking straight at woman, and as such, man has argued, woman *must* have a great and impenetrable secret. Consider, for instance, Gloria Gammage, who, the narrator notes,

> Keeps a no man's land of meaning in those sleek stroking corners of her eyes—and Antony—who will never be able to construe its significance—is anxious that no man else ever shall—
>
> In this way—keeping the Secret—of the Sphinx.[138]

The realities of womanhood are difficult and complex, and it is easier for man to build a woman out of words than to confront her uncomfortable realities. It is easier, too, to cast woman as a riddle than to listen to her story. Freud famously dismissed woman from his consideration of the "riddle of the nature of femininity" by reminding her, "you are yourselves the problem."[139] Man has invested significant energy in his investigation of the "riddle" of the problem of woman, and Loy argues that the domains of psychology, literature, and pornography have been largely devoted to this inquiry.[140] In a manuscript draft of her unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*, Loy likewise notes

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relentlessly ironic handling of language [that is] unsettling in the refusal of a clearly identifiable or stable stance" ("Little Lusts," 112).

[137] Loy, *Love Songs,* ll. 357-58.

[138] Loy, "Gloria Gammage," 28.

[139] Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," in *The Standard Edition* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. XXII, 112.

[140] In her essay "Conversion," Loy considers the "obsessions prescribed" by "The Fathers and Freud," accusing the Church, the Freudians, and D.H. Lawrence of "mechanized mysticism" that confuses woman for a "huge slimy serpent of sex." Mina Loy, "Conversion," in *Stories and Essays*, 227-28.

that such inquiries have often proven quite lucrative for he who dares to brave the Sphinx's stare:

> Sir Digby Bing—has dissected how many female corpses? How long was interne of the "Lying In." Has scrutinized how many films of female diseases under the microscope? Has observed woman in every stage of pregnancy—in every stage of decay; at puberty at the climacteric. Knows the womb inside out, upside down.
>
> > Unfortunately the Sphynx is still solid.
> > And there is no consulting specialist for delight.
> > Dear Lady Bing herself is very delicate.
> > One guinea for the great strategist.
> > "No nice woman ever likes it."[141]

We must assume that the "great strategist" voices woman's indifference to sex in this passage, for the Sphinx, like Lady Bing, has not been consulted. In Loy's essay "The Library of the Sphinx," the Sphinx peruses her bookshelf to join man's investigation of the riddle that she poses. Her inquiry is framed, however, by its own impossibility, for she begins with the realization that, despite the volume of ink men have spilled on the subject, "the secret of the sphinx is not conveyed in words."[142] Perusing the "pornographic literature," the Sphinx discovers that this is because, according to pornography, "the sphinx has never spoken."[143] The Sphinx disproves this narrative as she ponders aloud that the reason for her silence must have been her "womanly modesty."[144] Despite her wide narration in pornography, the Sphinx does not find herself there. Nor does she find herself in the "new 'liberated' literature" of the Modernist period—neither in the "soggy atmosphere" of T.S. Eliot's poetry nor in the "superiority complex of the male" in the literature of D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and

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[141] Loy, *The Child and the Parent*.
[142] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," in *Stories and Essays*, 253.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

Frank Harris.[145] Their work, the Sphinx notes, is populated with caricatures of "the immature girl child" and the "buck rabbit" of the "virile male impetus" that conquers her—it is no wonder, the Sphinx quips, that in *The Waste Land* the flattened typist "turns on the gramophone / and swallows her hairpins."[146] Likewise, the Sphinx discovers, the scientific objectivity of psychology has only "connived in the deception of the beatific possession" of woman by casting woman solely in terms of her intimacies with men.[147] Havelock Ellis even tells the Sphinx directly, "Woman […] put up with what she got and she got *nothing*!"[148] The Sphinx put up with woman's "nothing," she sobs, because she "dared not lose my literature— […] it was so lo-o-o-vely!"[149] Loy's analytic eye is more severe, as she replies: "Your literature—let us examine it, your literature—It was written by men—And the sphinx never gave a sign."[150] If the Sphinx "had spoken a word—" Loy begins to postulate, "but no—So Lawrence along with the others—tumbles a maiden on the bank of a river—"[151] Indeed, the apostrophic adulation with which the Sphinx praises her narrators is familiar to readers of Lawrence and Freud,[152] and when the Sphinx speaks, it is with the careful articulation of the hostage of man's

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[145] Ibid., 254-56.
[146] Ibid., 257. Loy here re-writes a portion of "The Fire Sermon," the third section of *The Waste Land:*

> She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
> Hardly aware of her departed lover;
> Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
> "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone.

[147] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," 257-58.
[148] Ibid., 254.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 256.
[152] See Chapter One.

pen. The speech of the Sphinx closely resembles that of the "Ladies in an Aviary" in Loy's *The Child and the Parent,* who, entrapped by the man "who brings sugar to the cage," must wax adulatory for their own survival:

> "What would you like us to be?" they inquire in a flutter of modest aspiration; while the solitaires on their fingers shift up and down the wires that close them in.
>
> "Angels," their visitor replies, holding the sugar higher […] "Here is love," cries the great strong man, "tis woman's whole existence. This loaf of sugar glistening […] in their impatience to be satisfied."[153]

Loy clarifies, however, that though the *sphinx* may have been silent about her failed narration, woman has not been silent. Though the sphinx said nothing as man's inquiry presented her, at all angles, the beatified body of the *fille de joie,* women such as Emma Goldman, Loy notes, certainly spoke.[154] Alas, in his excited narration of the *fille de joie*, man was "too drunk to notice."[155] The *fille de joie* is, Loy clarifies, a "hoax"—as is, it seems, the Sphinx.[156] If, as Loy considers, the "sphinx does not know her own secret," this is not only because, as Oscar Wilde suggested, she does not have one, but because she does not exist.[157] The Sphinx is, rather, the repository of man's confused narration of woman, objectively objectified as myth. Indeed, Loy casts the secret of the Sphinx as the "unconsummated significance of the asterisk," for if her secret is not "conveyed in words," it is because her secret is "the signal of a treasure which is not there."[158] The

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[153] Loy, *The Child and the Parent*.
[154] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," 258.
[155] Ibid., 259.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Loy's presentation of the "Sphynx without a secret" resonates with later feminist representations of the Sphinx, which have sought to re-appropriate the figure from Oedipal myth. One thinks in particular of Muriel Rukeyser's poem "Myth," in which the Sphinx reveals that Oedipus's refusal to acknowledge woman was the cause of his mythic downfall. See Muriel Rukeyser, "Myth," in *Breaking Open* (New York: Random House, 1973).
[158] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," 253. That Loy here directly alludes to Wilde's work is confirmed by her note in a manuscript draft of "Chapter X: A Certain Percentage of

secret of the Sphinx is an empty signifier because, as she has been narrated by man's pen, woman is an empty signifier. The Sphinx is, it seems, an asterisk without a footnote.[159]

Yet man holds tightly to this asterisk, and goes to epic lengths to counterfeit a footnote. This poses a problem for the woman who desires, as Loy exhorts, to seek among women what she *is* rather than to seek among man what she *is not*,[160] for the empty signifiers Modernity narrates are not "new," but only make man's confusion "*louder*." [161] Against man's cacophony of riddles, it is difficult to hear oneself think, and, as Loy notes, man prefers his riddles to the stories told by women. Loy parodies man's counterfeit narration of woman in "Pazzarella," a satiric retelling of the Pygmalion and Cinderella myths that Loy frames as the narrator's "gigantic opus for the vindication of female psychology."[162] Geronimo narrates the woman "Pazzarella—for so I have named her," whose being "succeeded in diffusing in the atmosphere a vague evaporative quality so illusively irritating that it exasperated me as nothing had ever done before."[163] Pazzarella is not only "illusive" but elusive, for she is a "living enigma" even

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Women" of *The Child and The Parent.* Next to the typed phrase "…perhaps because this secret is such as it would never occur to a rational humanity that she should keep, the man who was the least concerned in finding out concluded that women are Sphynxes without secrets," Loy hand-wrote the name "Oscar Wilde."

[159] Like this one.

[160] Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," 154.

[161] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* 205.

[162] Loy, "Pazzarella," in *Stories and Essays,* 97. As Sarah Hayden notes, Loy acknowledged this story as a "parody of Gio[vanni Papini]'s work," and the story is dedicated to "the most sympathetic of misogynists." See Sarah Hayden, *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 25. This is almost certainly also a jab at Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, with whose totalizing philosophies of womanhood and female sexuality Loy had intimate and troubled relationships. See Loy's late essays "Conversion" and "Havelock Ellis." It is notable and curious that Hayden is the only major Loy scholar who has considered this story, and that her treatment only cursorily situates the story in the context of Loy's artistic response to the Futurist men of her circle.

[163] Loy, "Pazzarella," 65.

to the man who pens her.[164] Indeed, it seems that Geronimo, her narrator, pens her elusive and irritating precisely to be eluded and irritated by her, for the "sadistic delirium of destruction" incited by these emotions gives the author both a "feel[ing of] safety in [his] superior acumen" and license to rape Pazzarella.[165] Geronimo seems to realize this conundrum, for his created Pazzarella reminds him, "I am hardly even a woman. I am only the scapegoat to carry the load of your spleen induced by those tasteless females who won't admire your funny nose—while I dote upon it."[166] Geronimo is nevertheless incensed by the immateriality of his penned lady-scapegoat, for at this reminder, he imagines "slapp[ing] her face" and rushing from her house.[167]

Pazarella's reflection on her immateriality is incited by her desire to "have a son" by Geronimo, and by her "desperate impotence" in the face of this desire.[168] Penned by Geronimo, of course, Pazzarella's penned desire doubles that of man. The "child that the future needs," Pazzarella tells Geronimo, "is the child of the two of us"[169]—that is, the child of the "superior woman" and the "superior man."[170] Yet this child never materializes, for though Geronimo is seduced by the "promising warmth" of woman's "rapacious womb,"[171] he feels ambivalent about the possibility of a child, for he fears replacement by it. He may fear replacement, also, by Pazzarella's procreation, for the generation of Pazzarella's womb threatens to distract from the work of his pen.

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[164] Ibid., 68.
[165] Ibid., 68-69.
[166] Ibid., 76.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 76-77.
[169] Ibid., 77.
[170] Ibid., 87. This conversation parodies Loy's exhortation in the "Feminist Manifesto" that the "superior woman" reproduce for the benefit of mankind. This perhaps highlights the inevitable absurdity of woman's reproductive situation, as woman is always already framed and "penned" by male narratives of creation and procreation.
[171] Ibid., 80.

Geronimo sidesteps this distraction by foregrounding his authorship. Indeed, Geronimo poses his artistic creation as the long-befuddling secret of the Sphinx. On her deathbed, as Pazzarella wastes away after long pining for her wandering lover, Pazzarella demands of Geronimo, "Listen—"

> In the long, long, lonely night I call to you; we make the supreme discovery together—only your bodily presence makes me mute. Nevertheless, my secret is so vital to the world's destiny, it almost seems that the world would come to an end should I fail to confide it to you. It is so simple, a moment would suffice for the telling. So obvious—[…] feel the beat of my heart, that may convey it to you—"[172]

Indeed, as Geronimo notes, the beat of Pazzarella's heart "*was* irregular."[173] Made out of pen and paper, even. "Fate commands me," Pazzarella continues, "to reveal it to you. I *will* tell you. LISTEN! Geronimo—Woman—"[174] Before Pazarella can continue, Geronimo interrupts: "The riddle is solved, my poor child," he replies, "I am your secret. Now lie in peace."[175] The genius of this passage lies not only in the reader's desire to discover—though she knows it is impossible—the secret of womanhood from Pazzarella's mouth, but in that Pazzarella does not die at her author's bidding, but only becomes louder. Indeed, as she howls to his displeasure, Geronimo must evict her from the text by pivoting his narrative away from her body to a disembodied "vital rhythm" of "ideas, facts, form and sound," in which "chaos" he is able to drown out the sound of Pazzarella's voice.[176] From his godlike vantage point at the chaos of origins, Geronimo draws his "inspiration," and grows "enormous—omnipotent."[177] After "centuries of mystery," he declares, he had solved the riddle of woman—"the secret of woman is that

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[172] Ibid., 90.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 91.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., 96.
[177] Ibid.

she does not exist."[178] Into the void where woman might have been, the male artist, "being a creator," realizes that he "can create woman."[179] And so he does—he "decided to 'create' Pazzarella."[180] The scare quotes that surround "creation" here are instructive, of course, for Geronimo's great godlike creative act is to write an irritating riddle the answer to which is himself. It does not surprise the reader, as it surprises Geronimo, that, "like the hero of an ancient fable unexpectedly endowed with the understanding of the conversation of animals," he "find[s] no difficulty in interpreting the language of a creature so dissimilar to [him]self,"[181] for he has put the very words into that creature's mouth. Yet if Geronimo's art is, as Loy says elsewhere, only a "grimace of creation,"[182] this grimace holds enormous mythic power. Modern woman might sympathize with Pazzarella as she "cogitated every possible means of escape" from her own inexistence, including study of the "theories of the laws and harmonies of sex, the rights of women which, once having been won, leave woman as solitarily woman as before," and might sympathize that, in fact, "Pazzarella had known all along what she was—woman aware of herself."[183] Indeed, the text also shows *Loy* aware of herself, and of her narration by others. One cannot help but recall the love-making scene in *The Sacred Prostitute* in which Futurism reads "Women" his "proto-poem":

> Tatatatata ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta
> plum plam plam pluff pluff frrrrrr
> urrrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaaaaaa
> pluff plaff plaff gottgott gluglu
> craaa craaa
> cloc-cloc gluglu gluglu cloc-cloc
> gluglu

[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid., 97.
[182] Loy, "Lady Asterisk," in *Stories and Essays*, 45.
[183] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," 96.

scscscsc—[184]

Indeed, man's jibberish is the closest that the pair come to intimacy, for when Futurism asks, "Do you feel that you could get into a more intimate relationship than you are *now*?," the Women, "inspired," sigh, "*No*."[185] Later, during his attempt to seduce Love, Futurism performs a play called "Man and Woman" in which he declares, "I—dynamic—plastic—velocity—stop!"[186] We might consider these "proto-poems," like Pazzarella, "Once upon a time," or the starry ceiling, so much "erotic garbage." Yet by virtue of its narration, Loy's work also teeters on the edge of that "erotic garbage." Loy's *Love Songs*, for instance, end by emphasizing the impossibility of communication between lovers. After the speaker proposes godhood at their "weld[ing] together," for instance, Joannes ostensibly recoils, and the speaker replies,

> Oh that's right
> Keep away from mePlease give me a push
> Don't let me understand you Don't realise me
> Or we might tumble together
> Depersonalized
> Identical
> Into the terrific Nirvana
> Me you—you—me[187]

The distinct jibbers of Nature and Culture both point to the desire for creation, but the creative desires of men and women are at odds with one another. Woman's desire for the conjunction of "you—me" is incommensurable with man's desire for "dynamic—plastic," and as such, the fulfillment of both desires falls flat.

Furthermore, Loy's narration of "Pig Cupid" inevitably lends Loy his "rosy snout," for the poem is engaged in the very "rooting erotic garbage" that it criticizes.[188]

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[184] Loy, *The Sacred Prostitute,* 196.
[185] Ibid., 196-97.
[186] Ibid., 204.
[187] Loy, *Love Songs*, ll. 149-57.
[188] Ibid., ll. 3-4.

Although of a different sort than the mezzanine's starry ceiling, the *Love Songs* themselves are a sort of "Spawn of Fantasies / Silting the appraisable."[189] Indeed, by proposing her own erotic "Fantas[y]" in the *Love Songs*, Loy completes her alliance with Love's strategy of glitter. The *Love Songs*' fantastic rooting in the erotic aligns its writer with Eros. Yet unlike the "erotic garbage" of man's pen, whose "gilded phalloi" generate somewhat more sparkle, Loy's work balances the poetic and material senses of love's "erotic garbage." If Loy's work provokes, as Pound argued, a sort of "rage-out-of-puzzlement,"[190] it may be that her pornographic complication of the boundary between poetic and physical troubles not only our view of love's glitter, but also of what ought to be said. After all, as Pazzarella notes, the "male intellect" often "reduces [woman] to absurdity,"[191] and woman is unlikely to reproduce man's absurd riddling in her narration. Loy's work is, at heart, that of "woman aware of herself,"[192] and who knows that her awareness is produced by her narration. In our consideration of Loy's poetics, we have looked squarely at the forces that shape, crack open, and narrate woman's body—at both the babies on the ceiling and the writing on the wall—and have refused to be lulled, as many Loy critics have been, into the glittering language of bodily "transcendence." Woman's creative genius, in Loy's work, does not "transcend" the agonizing, pluralizing, world-creating *esse* of woman's body, and the "mere animality" of her procreation is as vital as it is excruciating to woman's creativity. Indeed, in Loy's work, woman's narration of her procreative genius is not the transcendence but the embodied constitution of her doubled pro/creation, and by taking Loy's consideration of woman's bodily genius on its own terms, we have seen her body in labor as the very

[189] Ibid., ll. 1-2.
[190] Pound, "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy," 425.
[191] Loy, "Pazzarella,", 83.
[192] Loy, "The Library of the Sphinx," 96.

face of God. Against critics who cast Loy as a poet of "maternity" or "free love,"[193] or as a footnote to her avant-garde contemporaries, we have respected Loy's situation at the "center" of her creative cosmogony—a center she claims without hesitation at the expense of child, man, machine, and God. If Loy's narration of her genius has edged upon the awkward or indefensible—essentialist, eugenicist, pornographic—perhaps it is, as Yvor Winters wrote of Loy's work in *The Dial*, "not clumsiness, but the inherently unyielding quality of her material that causes this embarrassment."[194] If Loy has failed to answer with her life the questions that she poses in her writing, perhaps it is because, as Harriet Monroe complained, that "the load being too heavy to talk about, she carries it as she may, making gay little satiric *moues* at us as she passes."[195] However uncomfortable Loy's questions, and however enigmatic the *moues* she offers, we should not, as Monroe did not, look away, for Loy may speak the "dark underside of the saint's ecstatic sensibility."[196] In Loy's work, creativity never lives far from woman's body, and scholars ignore the sublime injustice by which we are written into being at our peril. The "New Woman" lives an agonizing bodily negotiation between Word and flesh, and her genius is birthed from, not transcends, the body. When faced with the glittering seduction to "transcend" the chaos and cramp of the body, Loy demands that we ask ourselves, as Pazzarella asks Geronimo—"Even in your own colossal intellect, is there not lacking perhaps some other trifle—?"[197]

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[193] See DuPlessis, "Seismic Orgasm," and Peppis, "Rewriting Sex."
[194] Quoted in Conover, "Introduction," xxix.
[195] Ibid., xxvi.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Loy, "Pazzarella," 89.

# Part III

## H.D.

be indigestible, hard, ungiving.
so that, living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,
selfless,
that pearl of great price.

—H.D.

# Chapter Four

## "Khaki Killed it": H.D.'s Madrigal on the Home Front

### The Matrix of War and the *Death of a Hero*

> Between the conception
> And the creation
> Falls the Shadow
> —T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*

> Was there nothing else in the world? Men and guns, women and babies. And if you have a mind, what then?
> —H.D., *Asphodel*

"How long will men make war? — As long as women have children."[1] The Gnostic proverb rings of fatalism as well as fatality. The dealing of life and the dealing of death are both, as Nicole Loraux has argued, historical acts of patriotism, as illustrated by the Spartan tradition of inscribing names on the tombstones only of "men who had fallen in war and women who had died in childbirth."[2] In the discourse of war, it seems, the first binary is not between man and woman, but between hero and mother—the maker of war and the maker of babies. The rhetoric of war, as Nancy Huston argues, creates "symbolic equivalence" between the "craft" of war and of children, and this equivalence casts War in the language of generation.[3] Consider, for instance, the Modernist military historian Ernst Jünger, who argues in his aptly-titled *War, Our Mother* that the making of war, much like the making of children, is a "virile form of regeneration" through which both soldiers and civilizations gain new life.[4] That

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[1] Quoted in Nancy Huston, "The Matrix of War: Mothers and Heroes." *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1 (1985), 153.
[2] Nicole Loraux, "Le lit, la guerre." *L'Homme* 21, no. 1 (1981): 37.
[3] Huston, "The Matrix of War," 153.
[4] Ibid., 168.

the symbolic equivalence between war-making and child-making is, as Huston argues, "one of the rare constants of human culture"[5] raises several crucial questions. These questions take concrete shape in the work of Modernist thinkers, who delivered their children and brainchildren against the backdrop of a World War's cannon fodder. If, as Huston suggests, the mythos of War posits warcraft as man's creative "brainchild," is the battlefield the scene of a Joycean "postcreation" in which the hero creates a more "virile" civilization than that procreated by the mother? If the pen generates human bodies as, in Thomas Hardy's words, "actualized poetry,"[6] what is the generative value of the sword?

Curiously, scholars of Modernist literature have frequently narrated the explosive cultural and literary developments of Modernism in terms of the unique "creative activities of wartime."[7] A "Great War," it seems, is capable of revitalizing not only bombed-out fields, but also tired epistemologies. Some Modernist authors, such as D.H. Lawrence, envisioned the first World War as an opportunity to shoot down an effeminate Victorian culture, and in its place to birth a virile social order grounded in the erotic and aesthetic energies of the "new Man."[8] Indeed, the "Great War" is often implicitly, when not explicitly, credited as the foundational impetus of the Modernist aesthetic and *mores*, and as First Mover of the creative innovations of the period. This

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1891; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 182. All citations refer to the Oxford version.
[7] See Marina Mackay, "The Lunacy of Men, the Idiocy of Women: Woolf, West, and War." *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 124. Mackay notes that "virtually all" the canonical figures of British and Irish modernism—Lawrence, Conrad, Joyce, Yeats, Ford, Mansfield—were epistemologically influenced by the first World War.
[8] Judith Puchner Breen usefully considers Lawrence's approach to World War as cultural cleansing in "D.H. Lawrence, World War I, and the Battle Between the Sexes: A Reading of 'The Blind Man' and 'Tickets, Please'." *Women's Studies* 13 (1986): 63–74.

tradition is perhaps best exemplified in Paul Fussell's canonical work of literary criticism *The Great War and Modern Memory,* which argues that, as Modernists such as Lawrence and Hardy "'wrote' the Great War," the War was likewise writing them.[9] Not only, Fussell argues, did the Great War shape the frame of "Modern memory," but it instigated too a "transmutation of personality" in Modern man.[10] The Great War, Fussell proposes, created a "new world of myth" whose archetypal hero was the resurrected Lazarus—a hero who, like the Moderns, knew well the intimate immanence of death and the burdensome hope of resurrection.[11] Soldiers and survivors of air raids were "received," poet Edmund Blunden noted, "as Lazarus was," and good news from the front often made those at home feel as though the missing had, as Siegfried Sassoon wrote of David Chromlech, "suddenly risen from the dead."[12] Others, such as novelist Henry Williamson, considered the Great War's generative power in terms not of resurrection but rebirth, envisioning the soldier's emergence from the trenches "not broken, but reborn."[13] "It was as though," he writes, "I had become another person altogether, or, rather, as though I had entered another life."[14] Likewise, the poet Max Plowman wrote that the soldier's battlefield emergence from the trenches was "marvelous […] It is like being born again."[15] Curiously, here, the terms of the Great War's creativity appear not only aesthetic but procreative—the War's creative power to

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[9] See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 6. The popularity and entrenchment of Fussell's approach is evident in the critical longevity of this book: *The Great War and Modern Memory* was awarded the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism, and was ranked #75 on the Modern Library's list of 100 Best Non-Fiction Books of the 20th Century.
[10] Ibid., 115.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 114.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

write history and memory is also the power to *write bodies* into transmuted states of "resurrection" and "rebirth." In the mythos of Lazarus, death-dealing, re-birth, and writing are triangulated at the origin of Modernism—and the First Mover is the creative violence of War.

What we might call the "Lazaran" approach to Modernism's problem of origins merits further consideration, for, as Fussell notes, the "new world of myth" produced by the Great War has rhetorically oriented the scholarly narrative of Modernism.[16] Consider, for instance, scholarly accounts of Eliot's war poetry,[17] which often anchor Modernism's "problem of disembodied voices"[18] in Eliot's "concern with recomposing bodies."[19] Crucially, in this reading, the Modernist problem of origins is confused with the problem of patching together bodies that wartime bombs have blown apart. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" is particularly strewn with decomposed bodies failing to communicate with the "dead land" in which they find themselves—the "broken jaw of our lost kingdom" is ripe with the scattered incomprehension of "dried voices" and "sightless" eyes."[20] The poem confronts, as Adam J. Engel notes, the "inescapable ontological problem" of Great War artists—what *are* these disassembled bodies, and what can or should we do with them?—and, in Engel's words, "transmutes" these bodies *blazoned* by War into "a question of poetic function" by disassembling poetic language to meet the transmutation of the post-War body.[21] In this reading, crucially, Eliot's aesthetic innovation is only nominally his own—the creative power of the post-

[16] Ibid. See in particular the chapter "Myth, Ritual, and Romance."
[17] Particularly war-time readings of "The Hollow Men" and *The Waste Land.*
[18] See Adam J. Engel, "Talking Heads: Bodiless Voices in *Heart of Darkness,* 'The Waste Land,' and the First World War." *Conradiana* 45, no. 3 (2003): 23.
[19] Ibid., 34.
[20] T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," in *Collected Poems: 1909–1962* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), 79–82.
[21] Engel, "Talking Heads," 23.

War artist *must meet on its own terms* the creative power of the War. Scholarly readers of "The Hollow Men" often cast Eliot's "disassembly" of poetic language as an attempt to "express meaning beyond" the bounds of language and the body,[22] but the images produced by Eliot's disassembled language are in fact quite relentlessly material. Indeed, while the poem's often-cited

> Voices […]
> In the wind's singing
> More distant and more solemn
> Than a fading star[23]

are *observed* by the poetic speaker, distinctly "there,"[24] the poetic "we" is not a disembodied voice but an amputated body:

> In this last of meeting places
> We grope together
> And avoid speech
> Gathered on this beach of the tumid river[25]

Eliot presents a devastated triad—man, language, nature—whose meaning-making has been amputated by the ontological problem of the War's creative violence. The disassembled body's response to this devastation is, of course, that the creative power of language appears here as distended and infected as the "tumid" river that laps the bomb-blown speakers—that the body's language must meet the creative terms imposed by the War. Yet it is important to note that, despite that the body appears here as a "paralysed force" producing "gesture without motion,"[26] the body, although hollow, remains—Modernism's "problem of disembodied voices" [27] is crucially *a problem of the*

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[22] Thomas Day, "Between the Conception / And the Creation: Eliot's *The Hollow Men*." *English* 57, no. 219 (2008): 235–244.
[23] Eliot, "The Hollow Men," [II], ll. 7-10.
[24] Ibid., [IV], ll. 6.
[25] Ibid., ll. 6–9.
[26] Ibid., [I], ll. 12.
[27] Engel, "Talking Heads," 23.

*body*. Eliot's paralyzed bodies suffer from the critical burden of what Thomas Day terms "betweenness,"[28] which is articulated in the final stanzas of "The Hollow Men":

> Between the idea
> And the reality
> Between the motion
> And the Act
> Falls the Shadow[29]

Scholarly readers of Eliot have largely mobilized these metaphysical lines as a schema by which to read the lines that follow in metaphysical terms.[30] However, the "shadowy fissure" that intrudes between the poem's final stanzas falls not only, as Day notes, between "thought and feeling,"[31] but also "Between the conception / And the creation."[32] Day reads this image, too, in metaphysical terms, arguing that the two terms between which the Shadow falls represent "the theory and practice of poetry itself."[33] This familiar deflection of "conception" and "creation" into metaphysics allows Day to read the following stanza in a language of "*notional* impotence" that recoils, as Day envisions the Hollow Men "recoiling," from the "*detail* of desire, from *particular* emotion," despite the "definite articles" that, as Day notes, preface the terms.[34] Eliot's language, however, evokes Loy's Pig Cupid as strongly as Kant:

> Between the desire
> And the spasm
> Between the potency
> And the existence
> Between the essence

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[28] Day, "Between the Conception / And the Creation," 235.
[29] Eliot, "The Hollow Men," [V] ll. 1–5.
[30] See A.D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Moody reads the poem's final section as evidence that "The Hollow Men" is "as much a poetry of thought as any to be found in Eliot's work" (121).
[31] Day, "Between the Conception / And the Creation," 236. Considering the title, you can imagine my surprise upon reading in the article's first sentence that the piece "considers the relation between thought and feeling in Eliot's 'The Hollow Men'."
[32] Eliot, "The Hollow Men," [V] ll. 7–8.
[33] Thomas Day, "Between the Conception / And the Creation," 236.
[34] Ibid., 240.

And the descent
Falls the Shadow

*For Thine is the Kingdom*[35]

We must consider the possibility that Eliot's speaker is more than *notionally* impotent, for the creative potency of War transmutes not only the terms of artistic creation, but also of procreation. Eliot opens the poem's final stanza with a sing-song dance not 'round a Grecian Urn, but "*round the prickly pear*,"[36] an image that some scholars have considered a transmutation of the ancient fertility dance round the fecund mulberry bush into a nursery rhyme more fitting of the "cactus land" of "death's other kingdom."[37] Indeed, the Shadow falls not only, as Day has argued, between theory and practice, but in the space of procreation—for does pregnancy not also "fall" between "conception" and "creation," between "potency" and "existence"? If the poem's transmuted "fertility song" is, as Engel has argued, a "failed attempt to bridge the gap between life and death," it may be that the gap has already been filled by the Shadow of War.[38] The import of this Shadow is as material as it is metaphysical, and War's "shadowy fissure" limits the creative vitality of the dismembered triad whose narrative it interrupts. Crucially, the mythic power of the Shadow is that of Lazarus rather than Mary, not that of procreation but of resurrection—its power extends only to the mutilation and revivification of *already extant* bodies. The creative power of War rebirths the Modernist problem of origins as the systematic resurrection of War's own potentiality, for, as Eliot notes, to neither victor nor vanquished but to the Shadow itself goes the "Kingdom." The world ends, as it began, with the sonic nursery "whimper" of

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[35] Eliot, "The Hollow Men," [V] ll. 13–19.
[36] Ibid., ll. 1.
[37] See Brian C. Southam, *Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1994).
[38] Engel, "Talking Heads," 23.

a body groping for meaning in an unfamiliar landscape, and War's iterative power is evident in the repetition of the poem's final lines. The cruelty of April is that, the creative terms of War having been imposed, we, the Hollow Men, persist nevertheless in our creation on these terms, fulfilling War's demand for subjects and soldiers to populate and write into posterity a "Kingdom" that is not ours.

The creative terms of War produce art that matches its meter and rhythm. As Virginia Woolf noted in her "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid," the bellicose drone of the military "hornet" in the sky "rouses another hornet in the mind."[39] The metric "pop pop pop" of the military hornet and the roving beam of the "searchlights" create, Woolf notes, a "queer" climate for thought that "interrupts cool and consecutive thinking."[40] As Woolf writes the War, the War writes Woolf—the result is, as scholars have noted, that Modernist writing often mirrors the disjointed cadence of War. The impact of War on "narrative shape" is not only, as Mary Dudziak and Andrew Frayn have noted, an "insistent" telic drive[41] to an "inevitable endpoint,"[42] but also a deep uncertainty about the possibility and manner of one's arrival at that endpoint, and a magnetic barrage of urgent distractions that pull one's eyes from the narrative that one was writing. Indeed, Woolf argues, among the "mind-hornets" that War incites in the "chambers of the brain" is Modern man's desire to "fight against a real enemy, to earn undying honor and glory by shooting total strangers, and to come home with [a] breast covered with medals and decorations."[43] Such glory is, says the young soldier Woolf quotes, "the

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[39] Virginia Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid." *New Republic* (October 21, 1940).
[40] Ibid.
[41] Andrew Frayn, "Modernism and the First World War." *Modernist Cultures* 12, no. 1 (2017).
[42] Mary L. Dudziak, *War-Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.
[43] Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace."

summit of my hope… It was for this that my whole life so far had been dedicated, my education, training, everything."[44] In Woolf's view, War "writes" Modern man not by *creating* in him the violence necessary to proliferate its Shadow Kingdom, but by *resurrecting* in him an "ancient instinct" to iterate death, which is "fostered and cherished by education and tradition."[45] The "voices of the loudspeakers" do not *create* but *resurrect* the violent "voices in himself."[46] Yet the voices of the loudspeakers—the creative call of War—transmute man's narration of the voices in his self into his active iteration of *War's* narrative. In Woolf's view, the creative power of War is the power to incite, direct, and narrativize the most ancient instincts of the Modern man.

While Woolf does not narrate Modern man's creative violence in the language of generation, she offers woman's "maternal instinct" as its direct correlative. Even as we try to redirect his actions in the service of peace, Woolf argues, we cannot "blame" the soldier for his "instincts" any more than we can "blame" the mother for her children:

> Could we switch off the maternal instinct at the command of a table full of politicians? Suppose that [an] imperative among the peace terms was: "Childbearing is to be restricted to a very small class of specially selected women," would we submit? Should we not say, "The maternal instinct is a woman's glory, It was for this that my whole life has been dedicated, my education, training, everything."[47]

However "ancient" the instinct, Woolf suggests, it is directed, dedicated, and narrativized by the mythos of the era, for "if it were necessary for the sake of humanity, for the peace of the world, that childbearing should be restricted, the maternal instinct subdued, women would attempt it. Men would help them. They would honour them for their refusal to bear children. They would give them other openings for their

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

creative power."[48] Thus should we also, Woolf argues, "compensate the man for the loss of his gun"[49] by redirecting his creative forces. If violence and fecundity are *instincts* we cannot alter, Woolf suggests, War and motherhood are *occupations* that, however well-qualified for them our instincts render us, we can set aside in favor of other "creative" openings. The soldier returning from war and the woman refusing motherhood can trade rifle and cradle for the author's pen.

Woolf's analogization of man's instinctual war-making and woman's instinctual child-making analogizes, by extension, the creative forces of birth and war. This analogy not only frames, in the Lazaran tradition, the power of war as the "creative" counterpart of birth, but also casts an uncomfortably violent shadow on the creative power of child-making. Is her instinct to motherhood, as is man's instinct to war, woman's "subconscious Hitlerism"?[50] Does her creative act resemble the air-raid orchestra outside? Indeed, by its symbolic equivalence, has her creative power, in some way, *caused* the air raid? Huston argues that the analogization of war-making and child-making invites two distinct causal interpretations: First, that "if women would only stop having children, men would stop making war," and second, that men "make war *because* women have children."[51] In its most literal sense, of course, the Gnostic proverb only tautologizes that the possibility of men's making war is predicated on women's having children.[52] The proverb also encourages us, however, to read the making of war

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. Of man's "subconscious Hitlerism," Woolf writes, "Destroy that, and you will be free." One wonders if the same holds true for woman's maternal instinct.
[51] Huston, "The Matrix of War," 161.
[52] See former American Speaker of the House Paul Ryan's December 14, 2017 news briefing, in which he notes that "we need to have higher birth rates in this country" to bolster the American economy and military, and asks that American women patriotically "do their part" to "increase the working population in America." See the 12/14/2017 entry in the C-SPAN online video library.

as a sort of patriotic *couvade* through which the hero resurrects his mother's labor on the battlefield. The rhetorical *couvade* of warcraft allows the hero, like Jünger, to prefix his virile "re" to the mother's "generation," granting War the phoenix-like capacity to give life to the bombed-out ashy fields at which, of course, he has just directed the bomb. On the battlefield, Huston argues, the hero "pay[s] his tithe of suffering" to civilization, directing his most "ancient" instinct to replicate the creative act of the mother.[53] If the hero's battlefield *couvade* is, as Huston argues, an "archetypal triumph" over his incapacity to give life,[54] it also serves the distinct social purpose of establishing in mythos and *mores* that man is born to battle, and woman to birth those who battle. In Huston's words, "women are required to breed, just as men are required to brawl."[55]

These distinct, instinctual visions of creativity cannot, it seems, live well together—it is difficult for Lazarus and Mary to look at one another. As military historian Gerard de Groot has noted, during the First World War, a "great gulf […] developed between [men] at the Front" and women on the Home Front.[56] Paul, the soldierly protagonist of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front,* feels "repelled" by the "foreign world" of the family scene to which he returns from the battlefield: "There is my mother, there is my sister, there my case of butterflies, and there the mahogany piano—but I am not myself there. There is a distance, a veil between us."[57] He feels an "irresistible attraction" to the domestic scene that his mother and sister have meticulously prepared for his return, but his mind remains plagued by

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[53] Huston, "The Matrix of War," 168.
[54] Ibid.,156.
[55] Ibid., 168.
[56] Gerard De Groot, *The First World War* (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2001), 135. See also Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[57] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Little, Brown, 1929), 112, 107.

the "hornets" of the battlefield: "I would like to be here too and forget the war, but also it repels me. How can that fill a man's life… how can they do it, while out at the front the splinters are whining over the shell-holes…"[58] George Winterbourne, the protagonist of Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, reflects that while his two lovers at home "resented and deplored the War," they remained "admirably detached from it," and failed to recognize, as he did, the "widening gulf which was separating the men of that generation from the women."[59] This gulf originates, according to Aldington, in the fecund power of the hero's death. Women on the Home Front, Aldington narrates, found the death of the hero "rather exciting and stimulating […] especially erotically stimulating," and the battlefield deaths of George and his father have, "strangely enough," an "almost wholly erotic" effect on George's mother, who replaces her bomb-blown son and husband with the arms of an adulterous lover.[60] "The war," Aldington narrates,

> did that to lots of women. All the dying and wounds and mud and bloodiness—at a safe distance—gave them a great kick, and excited them to an almost unbearable pitch of amorousness. Of course, in that eternity of 1914–18 they must have come to feel that men alone were mortal, and they immortals; wherefore they tried to behave like *houris* with all available sheiks—hence the lure of "war work" with its unbounded opportunities. And then there was the deep primitive psychological instinct—men to kill and be killed; women to produce more men to continue the process.[61]

The Great War, Aldington's narrator suggests, inspires in women its creative correlative: "Oh, yes, you'll get it, as long as that subtle female instinct warns them there is potency in your loins."[62] Indeed, in *Death of a Hero,* war-making and baby-making are both creatively correlative and mutually causal. At its heart, the Great War

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[58] Ibid., 112-113.
[59] Richard Aldington, *The Death of a Hero* (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1929), 227.
[60] Ibid., 9, 11.
[61] Ibid., 11.
[62] Ibid., 135.

was not, Aldington narrates, the result of international conflict, but was "shoved on by great forces [that governments] are too timid and too unintelligent to control"—that is, the forces of "more babies and more bread, more bread and more babies."[63] The War was, he argues, "fundamentally a population war—bread and babies, babies and bread. It's all oddly mixed up with the sexual problem we were battling."[64]

The "sexual problem" battled by Winterbourne and his fellows is worth exploring at length, for at its heart is not only the problem of bread, babies, and battlefields, but a seismic shift in the balance of generation and autonomy among Modernist men and women. The "sexual problem" of the Great War is intimately tied to the emergence of the *nouvelle femme*, and the amputated sort of manhood that, in Aldington's narration, emerges from her new-ness. The Great War coincided, the narrator notes, with a profound cultural rejection of 19th century values among his generation, as, schooled in both "Freudian and Havelock Ellis theories" and the miseries of their mothers, men and women Modernized the reproductive *mores* of earlier generations.[65] They "had seen in their own homes," Aldington writes, "the dreadful unhappiness and suffering caused by Victorian, and indeed Edwardian, ignorance and domestic dennery and swarming infants, and they reacted violently against it."[66] In place of the "bullying, jealousy, parasitism and baffled sexuality" of the Victorian generation,[67] the Moderns substituted the directive that "Men must be 'free'

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[63] Ibid., 252.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 17.
[66] Ibid., 167.
[67] Ibid., 130. The dyad of Mrs. Shobbe and her mother is among the novel's most tragic pairs: "Her well-off Victorian parents had given her a good education of travel and accomplishments, and had systematically and gently crushed her. It was chiefly the mother, of course… With what ghastly pertinacity does a disappointed wife 'take it out' on her daughter! Not consciously, of course, but the unconscious cruelty and

and women must be 'free'."[68] In the novel's first pages, George Winterbourne lives the Modernist directive of "Free Love" with his two properly Modernized lovers, Elizabeth and Fanny. The two women, Aldington narrates,

> both had that rather hard efficiency of the war and post-war female, veiling the ancient predatory and possessive instincts of the sex under a skillful smoke-barrage of Freudian and Havelock Ellis theories. To hear them talk theoretically was most impressive. They were terribly at ease upon the Zion of sex, abounding in inhibitions, dream symbolism, complexes, sadism, repressions, nonsense about them. No silly emotional slip-slop messes would ever come their way. They knew all about the physical problem, and how to settle it. […] They knew that freedom, complete freedom, was the only solution. The man had his lovers, and the woman had hers. But where there was a "proper relationship" nothing could break rather flat bosoms. Female wiles and underhand tricks? Insulting to make such a suggestion.[69]

Aldington does, of course, make such a suggestion, though he softens the blow by conceding of the "infinite subtlety of females!" that "one must admit they need it."[70] Women need "female wiles" because, in Aldington's estimation, while Modernized sexual *mores* mark a worthy attempt to "learn something from the adulteries of others," the mythos of "Free Love" is only "another tyrann[ical]" approach to the problem of generation that fails to resolve the sexual inequality at its core.[71] Indeed, despite her earnest faith in the ideals of New Womanhood, when Elizabeth suspects she may be pregnant with George's child, she mobilizes her "female wiles" in a panic to coerce George to marry her and to abandon his love affair with Fanny. In Aldington's narration, fecundity breeds conservativism among the New-est of New Women. George is baffled by his lover's desire for financial and marital stability, and fears the Victorian

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oppression of human beings seem the most dreadful. To escape, she had married…" (130).
[68] Ibid., 17.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 153.
[71] Ibid., 167.

future that he vowed he had escaped. George envisions Elizabeth, babe in arms, complacently reminding him that his "first duty is to provide for me and the children," and envisions himself, "the poor man, very soon becom[ing] a member of the infinite army of respectable commuters…"[72] Repulsed by the "rather primitive and humiliating"[73] prospect of domestic monogamy, George chooses to escape the "infinite army" of baby-makers by joining the "infinite army" of war-makers—"Poor old George got so fed up he went off and joined the infantry."[74] Winterbourne's deft sidestep of paternity through military service, of course, leads him finally to the "line of bullets"[75] that ends his life in battle—a conclusive evasion of domestic duty. Considering the circumstances of Winterbourne's death, the reader may find herself wondering, as Aldington's narrator wonders aloud, "Ought we, ought I, to attach any blame to Elizabeth and Fanny?"[76] Aldington offers woman a gracious if unconvincing pardon, musing, "I don't think so. There were plenty of other things to disgust him with life."[77] One somehow resents, however, Elizabeth's domestic demand for "more babies and more bread, more bread and more babies,"[78] and wonders whether she, like the government officials who send soldiers to their deaths, "shove[s] on" the Great War by

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[72] Ibid., 139.
[73] Ibid., 147.
[74] Ibid., 19.
[75] Ibid., 392.
[76] Ibid., 197.
[77] Ibid. Notably, in *Bid Me to Live*, H.D.'s novelization of the events narrated in *Death of a Hero*, H.D. insinuates that Aldington's "impulse" to join the wartime infantry was not his sexual entanglement but the "Greek and Roman battles [that] pervaded the literature they read and translated and the art they had seen in Italy and France." See Caroline Zilboorg, "Introduction" to *Bid Me to Live* (New York: Grove, 1960; Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), xx. All citations refer to the University Press of Florida edition. Indeed, H.D.'s account, which is structured around Aldington's leaves on the Home Front, emphasizes Aldington's pleasure in and dedication to the sexual triangulation and "free love" he depicts in his novel.
[78] Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 252.

"great forces [she's] too timid and too unintelligent to control."[79] One resents, also, the "chorus of girls in red pre-war military tunics" who bait soldiers to the battlefield by "kicking up their trousered legs in unison" to punctuate a cheerful tune reminding Modern Man that "all the girls love Tommy."[80] Whether frightening Man from his domestic duties or enticing him to the Front with stockinged legs, it is clear that, in the mythos of the Hero, woman is an integral cog in the machinery of War. Indeed, the impetus of the Hero's death is co-extensive, it seems, with the novel's answer to the pivotal question of the "sexual problem" at the heart of the Great War: "The point is, did George and Elizabeth (consider them for the moment, please, rather as *types* than individuals) come better prepared to the erotic life than their predecessors, were they more intelligent about it, did they make a bigger mess of things?"[81] The narrative's clear answer, it seems, is "no" and "no" and "yes"—at both the individual and the national level, Modernity's *nouvelle* approach to generation and autonomy is only the Victorian problem of "bread and babies" spelled differently as "Free Love" and "War," and the "mess of things" this re-spelling entails ends in the death of a hero.[82] When faced with the making of babies and war, Aldington suggests, the most *nouvelle* of Moderns are stripped of the theories of "freedom" with which they'd like to clothe the "deep primitive instinct—men to kill and be killed; women to produce more men to continue

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 368-69.
[81] Ibid., 158.
[82] In her essay "The War at Home," Nosheen Khan argues that Aldington's narrator, "forgetting that this situation is not of women's making, but one ordained by patriarchy, takes revenge by portraying women as callous parasites, as does Aldington." Elizabeth and Fanny, Khan argues, "are not representative of the women of the war," but are "merely invented targets for Aldington to vent his spleen upon." See Nosheen Khan, *Women's Poetry of the First World War* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 88.

the process."[83] For Aldington as for Woolf, the "problems" of baby-making and war-making are co-extensive, and one hears in the *Death of a Hero* reverberations of the Gnostic proverb: "How long will men make war? — As long as women have children."[84] Crucially, for Aldington, the symbolic equivalence between child-making and war-making does not, as does Fussell's mythos of Lazarus, hyperbolize the "creative activities of wartime"[85] as the revitalization and rebirth of bombed-out fields and tired epistemologies. Aldington's novel does not end, as does Lawrence's, with a virile and Lazaran "new Man,"[86] but with "poor old George,"[87] upon whom the bullets of the "universe explod[e] darkly into oblivion."[88] In Aldington's narration, in other words, Lazarus does not resurrect, but simply dies—and welcomes death, in part, as a reprieve from fecund women. By the novel's end, the War has made of Aldington's Hero not a virile "New Man" nor even a prophetic "disembodied voice," but simply an empty body. Indeed, even the "disembodied" voice that narrates George's tale is not his own, but that of Aldington and Aldington's narrator, who see George not as a body but as a "symbol of the whole sickening bloody waste of [War], the damnable stupid waste…"[89] At the end of Winterbourne's narrative, neither Elizabeth, the Modern "type" of woman, nor George, the Modern "type" of man, have created anything but George's death; Elizabeth's pregnancy produces no child and no family, and George's war-making produces only his own corpse. The symbolic equivalence of child-making and war-making here reduces the creative power of both to dark "oblivion."[90] These are,

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[83] Aldington, *Death of a Hero,* 11.
[84] Quoted in Huston, "The Matrix of War," 136.
[85] Mackay, "The Lunacy of Men," 124.
[86] Breen, "D.H. Lawrence," 71.
[87] Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 19.
[88] Ibid., 392.
[89] Ibid., 28.
[90] Ibid., 392.

for Aldington, the terms of War's creative power; in the *Death of a Hero*, Modernism's problem of origins is co-extensive with War's creative power to narrate and amputate the Modern Hero's body. The Great War wrote George Winterbourne into death at its hands even at his conception—not only through his narrative iteration of Rudyard Kipling's bellicose masculine directives,[91] but through Winterbourne's own surname, which bore George into the last season of life as the heir to the fate of his patronym. Driven by his "primitive instinct," and fleeing that of Woman, the Modern Hero forecloses his creative power to iterate that of War. He "spr[in]gs to his feet. The line of bullets smash across his chest like a savage steel whip."[92] When War demands to write one's body, he asks himself, and us, "What right have we to live? And the women?"[93]

War Work on the Home Front in *Bid Me to Live*

> What is the war? People, faces that don't matter. That is the war. The war is people and faces that don't matter.
> —H.D., *Asphodel*

> Her outer mind, frozen on the top, would go on quietly, this day and this day. But underneath, she was shot to bits—they all were—waiting for the end. The war will never be over.
> —H.D., *Bid Me to Live*

The protagonist of *Paint It Today,* the earliest-penned novel of H.D.'s so-called "Madrigal Cycle," apostrophizes her reader's query: "How did she get through the days of the war, you may ask, if she took no part, if she did nothing at all to help, one

[91] Ibid., 77. The head of Winterbourne's school "invariably quoted" Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" to his pupils, noting that, "Indeed, unless you know how to kill, you cannot possibly be a Man, still less a gentleman." This narrative "made a corpse" of George, but follows the institutional "code" of the "manly fellow" who sacrifices his life when "his country did not need his brains, but his blood" (111).
[92] Ibid., 392.
[93] Ibid., 207.

way or the other? It is all very well to talk, during a war. People can talk. Who dare ask us in our ordinary years what we do with ourselves, how we pass the time?"[94] War demands narration, and H.D. offers her narrative account of the Great War in a cycle of four *romans à clef*: *Paint It Today* (1921), *Asphodel* (1921–22), *Bid Me to Live* (1923), and *Her* (1927).[95] *Bid Me to Live*, originally titled *A Madrigal*, is often read as H.D.'s "response" to Aldington's *Death of a Hero*,[96] and although H.D. resisted the interpretation of her work as an effort to "clear up her situation as described in R.A.'s autobiographical novel,"[97] the narrative parallels between the two works are unmistakable. H.D.'s daughter Perdita Schaffner noted in her postscript to the 1983 Black Swan edition of *Bid Me to Live* that the work is not only a *roman à clef* but is "straight autobiography, a word-for-word transcript" of the poet's "days of the war."[98] Aldington's narration, as Caroline Zilboorg has noted, is "more liberal with the biographical facts" than is H.D.'s,[99] and the "striking resemblances"[100] between H.D. and Aldington's Elizabeth incited Christopher Ridgway to argue in his introduction to the 1984 edition of Aldington's novel that "the plot of

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[94] H.D., *Paint It Today* (New York: NYU Press, 1992), 69.
[95] The dates in parentheses mark the years in which scholars hypothesize H.D. wrote the works of the Madrigal Cycle. Of the four works in the series, only *Bid Me to Live* was published in H.D.'s lifetime; the work was published by New Directions in 1960, the year before H.D.'s death. *Her* (also called *HERmione*) was first published by New Directions in 1981 with an introduction by H.D.'s daughter, Perdita Schaffner; *Paint It Today* was first published by New York University Press in 1992 as part of the series "The Cutting Edge: Lesbian Life and Literature"; and *Asphodel* was first published, despite H.D.'s hand-written instruction to "DESTROY" the work across the front page of the manuscript, by Duke University Press in 1992.
[96] See, for example, readings by Caroline Zilboorg, Cassandra Laity, Susan Stanford Friedman, Vivien Whelpton, Nosheen Khan, and others. Here, see Caroline Zilboorg's "Introduction" to *Bid Me to Live* (xxxv).
[97] *Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their Lives in Letters*, ed. Caroline Zilboorg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 417.
[98] Perdita Schaffner, "A Profound Animal," postscript to H.D., *Bid Me to Live (A Madrigal)* (London: Black Swan, 1983), 186.
[99] Zilboorg, "Introduction," xxxv.
[100] See Vivien Whelpton, *Richard Aldington: Poet, Soldier, and Lover, 1911–1929* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 335.

*Death of a Hero* is a grossly unjust representation of Aldington's life with H.D. […] The character of the vain cynical Elizabeth bears no recognizable relation to that of H.D."[101] When, shortly before the novel's publication, Aldington informed H.D. that he had just completed a "satirical onslaught on my family," he specified that his "heroines" were patterned not on H.D. and Dorothy Yorke but on "Valentine Dobrée and Nancy [Cunard], who said I might."[102] H.D. never indicated that she saw herself in Aldington's Elizabeth, and expressed her "amuse[ment]" at the alleged parallel, writing, "I am sure you did not mean this for Julia" [the protagonist of H.D.'s *Bid Me to Live*].[103] It is possible, of course, that the multipolar resemblance of Elizabeth and Fanny is due to Aldington's characterization of the women "rather as *types* than individuals,"[104] and H.D.'s narrator concedes as much in *Bid Me to Live* as she muses that she and Bella, the Yorke/Fanny figure, were to their shared lover "simply abstractions, were women of the period, were WOMAN of the period, the same one."[105] Yet Aldington's narration of the two women often maps quite closely, and quite painfully, to both his views on H.D. and Yorke[106] and the views of Rafe, the Aldington character in H.D.'s *Bid Me to Live*. Consider, for instance, Aldington's characterization in *Death of a Hero* of Elizabeth and Fanny as the sexual partners of his protagonist, George Winterbourne. While Elizabeth "hesitated, mused, suffered," Fanny "acted, came a cropper, picked herself up gaily and

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[101] Christopher Ridgway, "Introduction" to Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero* (New York: Hogarth Press, 1984).
[102] *Lives in Letters*, 212-13. Vivien Whelpton convincingly argues that this remark may have been neither an honest representation of his inspiration nor an "attempt to prevent H.D. from feeling hurt," but rather Aldington's "way of telling H.D. about his relationships with these two women. […] He wanted H.D. to understand that he continued to attract beautiful women." See Whelpton, *Richard Aldington*, 335.
[103] *Lives in Letters*, 417.
[104] Ibid., 158.
[105] H.D., *Bid Me to Live*, 62.
[106] See *Their Lives in Letters.*

started off again with just the same zest."[107] Where Fanny "look[ed] stunningly fashionable," Elizabeth "merely looked O.K.," and "you guessed," along with Aldington, "that she had other things to think about besides clothes."[108] Likewise, H.D.'s Julia is described as "almost ridiculously some nun-figure, gaunt, over-intellectualized," while Bella was "poured carefully" into dresses of brightly-colored silk.[109] Aldington narrates that Fanny, unlike Elizabeth, "really cared about love-making. It was her art. It was for her neither a painful duty nor a degrading necessity nor a series of disappointing experiences, but a delightful art which gave full expression to her vitality, energy, and efficiency."[110] Fanny was, Aldington narrates, "emotionally and mentally far less complicated than Elizabeth, less profound," and because of her intellectual simplicity, unlike Elizabeth, to Fanny, the "new sexual regime" of Free Love "presented fewer possible snags."[111] Likewise, in *Bid Me to Live,* Rafe takes great pleasure in describing to Julia the sexual acrobatics of Bella, his "star-performer,"[112] and remarks to Julia, as Aldington remarked to H.D.,[113] that he "would give [Yorke/Bella] a mind, I would give you a body."[114] "You don't feel anything," Rafe accuses Julia, and Frederick, the D.H. Lawrence character, "had spat at her, 'our languid lily of virtue'."[115] In both H.D.'s and Aldington's novels, H.D./Elizabeth/Julia is the "type" of the soul,

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[107] Ibid., 158.
[108] Ibid.
[109] H.D., *Bid Me to Live*, 1, 60.
[110] Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 159.
[111] Ibid. In letters to John Cournos, Yorke complained that she resented her depiction in *Bid Me to Live* as, in her words, an "illiterate bunny-brained whore," and noted that while "of course I think [H.D.] had plenty of cause to hate me," she had equal cause to resent H.D., who, she wrote, "had no body" (29 September 1960).
[112] H.D., *Bid Me to Live,* 26.
[113] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 38.
[114] H.D., *Bid Me to Live,* 1.
[115] Ibid., 94.

and Yorke/Fanny/Bella the "type" of the body, a bifurcation that leads Julia to remark in frustration that she is "cut in half (all wives are now),"[116] and leads Bella to accuse that Julia "tyrannize[s Rafe's] soul […] He loves my body, but he isn't all there, half of him is somewhere else."[117]

Crucially, where Aldington/Winterbourne/Rafe considers this bifurcation as the result of inequitably gendered "primitive passion"[118] and the Modernist failure of "free love,"[119] H.D. approaches the bifurcation of her body, and that of Bella, as women's war work. "Given normal civilized peace-time conditions, of course," Julia emphasizes, "all this could never have happened."[120] Yet the narrative terms of War insist that Julia modify the shape of her desire to fit the duties of a wife on the Home Front—to bifurcate, or amputate, her being into "body" and "soul" to offer holistic respite to her soldier returning from war. "All about her," H.D. narrates in *Paint It Today,* "people cried of nobility, of sacrifice; all the world was led to its devotion to sacred duty. All the world was splendid and heroic. Every soul she knew. All had some song of duty or distinction. What was her duty?"[121] Her duty is, it follows, to "tomorrow let him love, for today is dead."[122] This call to arms evokes the poem inscribed as the epigraph to *Bid Me to Live,* Robert Herrick's "To Anthea, Who May Command Him Anything," which lauds, in the language of "honour" and "decree,"[123] the poet's lover Anthea as a military officer in allegiance to whom the soldier valiantly faces the battlefield, even if to do so

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[116] Ibid., 26.
[117] Ibid., 61.
[118] Aldington, *Death of a Hero,* 17.
[119] Ibid., 167.
[120] H.D., *Bid Me to Live,* 85.
[121] H.D., *Paint It Today,* 46.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Robert Herrick, "To Anthea, Who May Command Him Anything," in *Bid Me to Live,* ll. 10.

means his own death, and, consequently, the death of their love. As Caroline Zilboorg has argued, the poet's imagined death in Herrick's poem "is a testament to the extent of the poet's love and fulfills the beloved's wishes; it is somehow 'for' her, a willing sacrifice of himself that allows Anthea to live on her own terms."[124] In H.D.'s narrative, Anthea appears not as the soldier's beloved but as the returning soldier, and the poet not as Herrick but as Herrick's mistress, Julia, for whom Herrick wrote the poem. In the mouth of H.D.'s Julia, the poet's promise that when the beloved "bid me love, [she] will give / A loving heart to thee"[125] doubles to include not only Julia's promise of her own loving heart to her beloved Rafe, but also Julia's promise to free *Rafe's* loving heart so that he may give his body to other lovers.[126] Like the battlefield, to "let him love" is not without its casualties, for the emotional wounds this "permission"[127] inflicts upon both Julia and Bella are narrated in viscerally physical language. Bella is, like Winterbourne at the end of *Death of a Hero*,[128] "shot to pieces" by the triangulated relationship, but unlike Winterbourne, who gains posthumous military decorations and misty-eyed public applause, Bella has "nothing to show for it but her patent-leather hat-box, her bright fringed shawl, her two tortoiseshell hairpins."[129] Julia, too, is wounded by her

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[124] Zilboorg, "Introduction," xxxi.
[125] Herrick, "To Anthea," ll. 3-4.
[126] Zilboorg reads this quite differently, arguing that "as homage to Anthea, *Bid Me to Live* is a novel about Julia Ashton's authority, her ability to assert her will and to control her own writing" (xxxi), and reads the poem as an exploration of "what it means to love when a poet becomes a soldier who must go off to war, what it means when love destroys itself in an ultimate sacrifice" (xxxii). The poet and sacrifice in Zilboorg's reading appear to be Aldington('s). In H.D.'s reading of the poem, the poet cannot, I would argue, be a soldier: Just as Aldington's experiences of war, as chronicled in *Death of a Hero*, amputated the sensibility of poetry from his personality, the war also, as Zilboorg herself notes, mandated that Aldington "could not be both a soldier ready to die in France and the poet-lover that H.D. had fallen in love with" (xxvii).
[127] Throughout *Bid Me to Live,* this is Bella's word for both military officers' leave and the sexual liberty of "free love."
[128] Although not, of course, like Aldington in reality, or Rafe in *Bid Me to Live.*
[129] H.D., *Bid Me to Live*, 62.

"permission," noting that "it was worse than caring. It was like having a body and being dead, mercifully, and then someone coming and saying no, you aren't dead, you are only half-dead, crawl back to your body."[130] To crawl back to the wounded body and continue to struggle is, for Julia as for the soldier on the battlefield, a duty of allegiance to the correlative war-work of Rafe: "He was dead already, he had died a half-dozen times, he was always dying."[131]

In the familiar War narrative, the woman on the Home Front as well as the soldier on the battlefield are "shot to bits—they all were."[132] This brutality is not *her* narrative, H.D. notes, nor Aldington's, nor Yorke's, for "nobody was to blame for anything, or the war was to blame for everything."[133] The War has, here, as crucial a narrative force as the poet, the soldier, and the lover, and if H.D.'s narrative does not cast about quite so earnestly for blame as does Aldington's, it is perhaps that H.D. sees the narrative force of War more clearly. The "times" and "customs" lamented by the "lost generation" are certainly, H.D. notes, "their own, specifically," but also form a palimpsestic layer of the "cosmic, comic, crucifying times of history"[134] that reach from the battles of Greek myth through the Modern warfare trenches. The past is "blasted to hell"[135] by gunfire even as it reiterates the form and content of the epic fight for Troy, and as we shall consider in our reading of *Asphodel*, H.D.'s poetic identity hovers between the moorings of her Modern "times" and "customs" and her reiteration of Penelope, "weaving" her narrative "with Troy town down and my husband has been

[130] H.D., *Asphodel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 144.
[131] H.D., *Bid Me to Live,* 16.
[132] Ibid., 41.
[133] Ibid., 69.
[134] Ibid., 1.
[135] Ibid., 11.

faithless."[136] "The war," as Julia iterates like a Greek chorus through the novel, "will never be over."[137]

Bearing Modernity in *Bid Me to Live* and *Asphodel*

> I had a baby, I mean I didn't—in an air raid. I know what pain is.
> —H.D., *Asphodel*

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty. But could this truth be beautiful? Maybe it was.
> —H.D., *Bid Me to Live*

On May 7, 1915, the *Lusitania,* a British ocean liner carrying almost 2,000 civilian passengers, was torpedoed by a German military submarine. Two weeks later, Richard Aldington wrote to Robert Lowell that his wife, H.D., "was delivered of a little girl still born… it was a beautiful child & they can't think why it didn't live. It was very sturdy but wouldn't breathe."[138] The "dead child," H.D. writes in *Asphodel*, "happened actually almost identically with the breaking out of the war,"[139] and the events of the Great War became inextricable for H.D. from the stillbirth of her child.[140] "Something had died," H.D. writes of her stillbirth in *Asphodel*, "that was going to die. Or because something had died, something would die."[141] This ominous cycle of violence echoes the

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[136] H.D., *Asphodel*, 136.
[137] See, for example, H.D., *Bid Me to Live*, 4, 41, 81, and others.
[138] *Their Lives in Letters*, 14.
[139] H.D., *Asphodel*, 86.
[140] Crucially, Donna Krolik Hollenberg notes that "neither the childbirth metaphor nor the symbol of the child per se appears in H.D.'s work until after her creative renascence in World War II." See Donna Krolik Hollenberg, *H.D.: The Poetics of Childbirth and Creativity* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 19. Likewise, Rachel Blau DuPlessis notes that H.D. "felt herself had been undermined and devastated politically and personally by World War I […] militarism is decried, and the anti-generative and anti-erotic world view." See Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *H.D.: The Career of That Struggle* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 72.
[141] H.D., *Asphodel*, 4.

narrative's chorus that "the war will be over (the war will never be over),"[142] and the scene of H.D.'s stillbirth is rhythmically in tune with the air raid during which she gives birth: "Guns, guns, guns, guns. Thank God for that. The guns had made her one in her suffering with men—men—men—Thank God she had suffered to the sound of guns."[143] There is something narratively inevitable about the conjunction of the air raid and delivery room, about the mother in labor and the father absent "in khaki."[144] "Was there nothing else in the world," the narrator muses, but "men and guns, women and babies"?[145] She had been both "trained" and "cultivated," she remarks, for this moment, "for just this horror."[146] The horror for which H.D.'s narrator has been trained is grammatically unclear—has she been cultivated for the air raid? The delivery room? Do the delivery room and the air raid iterate the same mythic narrative? "Somewhere, somehow," H.D. writes in *Asphodel*, "a pattern repeated itself. [L]ife advances in a spiral" with an ancient, "explicit pattern—all this was meant to happen. It was pre-ordained, written or carved in a temple wall."[147] The "pre-ord[ination]" of H.D.'s narrative is grounded in her understanding of history as the palimpsestic re-iteration of ancient stories that re-inscribes, in artistic assemblage of historical specificity, an

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 114. Interestingly, Donna Krolik Hollenberg suggests that Hermione's "identification with male heroism" in these lines "is inevitably self-destructive because it involves a disavowal of her female sexual identity" (*The Poetics of Childbirth,* 37). In contrast, I would suggest that while the comparison, as Krolik Hollenberg argues, "justif[ies] and ennoble[s] her suffering in childbirth by giving it apocalyptic dimensions" (37), the apocalypse of the birthing table is co-constitutive rather than mutually exclusive with the Great War battlefield's "breaking and breaking for some new spirit" (H.D., *Asphodel*, 18).
[144] Ibid., 115.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 116.
[147] Ibid., 90.

"explicit design" of mythic narrative patterns.[148] As Deborah Kelly Kloepfer explains, in H.D.'s understanding, history's palimpsest is "a parchment that has been written over several times, earlier versions having been imperfectly erased. It creates a strange, marginal writing that is both intentional and accidental; it must be excavated, sought after, at the very moment that it is seeping through unbidden."[149] Likewise, the battlefield "trenches" of the Great War are

> good earth, and the seed fell there and grew and grew and grew. Some brought forth sixty, some thirty, some hundred. A hundred. 1900. Hundred. 1800. Hundred. 1700. Hundred. What was hundred? 500. But you thought of 500 B.C. […] 500 B.C. was not so far away. She might have lived it yesterday, it was nearer than to-morrow.[150]

The march of centuries across the battlefield palimpsest marks, H.D. argues, the growth of the "seed" that falls onto the battlefield's "good earth." In H.D.'s iteration of the mythic narrative of War, the "good earth" of the battlefield is her body, which produces, like the *Lusitania*, tragic civilian casualties: "Then 1915 and her death, or rather the death of her child. Three weeks in that ghastly nursing-home and then coming back to the same Rafe. Her different."[151] The narrative parallel between stillbirth and the battlefield is emphasized by *Asphodel*'s epigraphic invocation of W.S. Landor's wartime epic "Aesop and Rhodope," in which Landor emphasizes the "inevitable fall" of poetic voices, earthly loves, and earthly kingdoms to the faint "echo" of remembered myth.[152] Mirroring Aesop's injunction to Rhodope that "there are no fields of amaranth

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[148] H.D.'s palimpsestic approach to history and myth should be considered in tandem with, although it is not identical to, Yeats's theory of the gyre.
[149] Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, "Fishing the Murex Up: Sense and Resonance in H.D.'s *Palimpsest*," *Signets* 27, no. 4 (1986): 185.
[150] H.D., *Asphodel*, 132.
[151] Ibid., 12.
[152] Walter Savage Landor, *Imaginary Conversations of Greeks and Romans* (London: E. Moxon, 1853), 19.

this side of the grave,"[153] H.D. writes of her stillbirth, "if she woke up dead, after the baby, after the chloroform […] If she woke up, there would be no peace—there are no fields of asphodel this side of the grave."[154] H.D. did "wake up" after her stillbirth, and found there, as she suspected, little peace. Indeed, H.D.'s narration of the months following her stillbirth resembles Winterbourne's narration of soldiers returning from the Front. The state of her mind and body, she writes,

> Was a deadly crucifixion. Not one torture (though God that had been enough) but months and months when her flaming mind beat up and she found she was caught, her mind not taking her as usual like a wild bird but her mind-wings beating, beating and her feet caught, her feet caught, glued like a wild bird in bird-lime. […] No one would ever know it for there were no words to tell it in.[155]

Julia's choice to bear rather than abort her War-conceived child, H.D. writes, was, like Rafe's choice to join the infantry, "a mangy sort of choice, for she couldn't help it. It was like 'yes I joined the army as a volunteer.' What was it?"[156] In Aldington's narration, Winterbourne's choice to join the infantry is driven by a chorus of voices, from his schoolmaster and his father to his unit commander and Rudyard Kipling, who exhort him to War to "produce a 'type of thoroughly manly fellow'."[157] In *Bid Me to Live*, Julia is persuaded to bear her child by a similar chorus of voices, who exhort her, "Now, Mrs Ashton, you have such a nice body, you will always regret it if you do not have this

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[153] In his introduction to *Asphodel*, Robert Spoo notes of H.D.'s substitution of "asphodel" for "amaranth" that the substitution is "typical of her quotational style and may have been unintentional" (xv). As Susan Stanford Friedman notes, H.D.'s substitution may also refer to Odysseus's descent into the underworld, where he "sees the shade of Achilles stride off into 'fields of asphodel', and to certain early poems by Aldington." See Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 386.
[154] H.D., *Asphodel*, 178. Notably, this is the first instance in the novel in which the phrase is repeated unitalicized—out of H.D.'s, rather than Landor's, mouth.
[155] Ibid., 113.
[156] Ibid., 164.
[157] Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 111.

child."[158] This disembodied exhortation to maternity is anchored, crucially, in "Mrs Ashton's" womanhood as Winterbourne's exhortation to war is anchored in his manhood, and upon the stillbirth of her child, like the soldier who fails in his battlefield duty, H.D. fears that "men will say" of her, "O she was a coward, a woman who refused her womanhood."[159] She hears also the "curse" cast upon her and upon "whatever might then have been" by the delivery nurse, who, after her stillbirth, exhorts, "You know you must not have another baby until after the war is over."[160] Yet among this prolific chorus of exhortations, Julia struggles to voice the narrative herself—not only as "there were no words to tell it in,"[161] but also as she hears another disembodied voice, reminding her that "women can't speak and clever women don't have children."[162] Caught between speech and maternity, she struggles too to communicate her narrative to Rafe, with whom she stutters,

> "I thought you understood. I didn't want to worry you about it. It was not your fault. I couldn't help being as you said—well—paralysed—with fear—I mean, they told me at the nursing-home that I must not have another child—"
>
> "Ah—" he said.
>
> "—until after the war was over." The war would never be over.[163]

Neither the lost child nor their failed union were, Julia assures her husband, his fault—"nobody was to blame for anything, or the war was to blame for everything."[164] The mythic narrative that sacrificed Julia's child was the same that sacrificed Winterbourne

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[158] H.D., *Bid Me to Live*, 4.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 12.
[161] Ibid., 113.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., 94.
[164] Ibid., 60.

and the passengers of the *Lusitania*—it was not H.D. nor Aldington, not Julia nor Rafe, but War—"khaki killed it."[165]

Khaki inflames, it seems, the endemic dangers of woman's body. In or out of the war zone, there is, "for women, any woman," a "biological catch, and taken at any angle, danger."[166] Woman's sexual choices are only ever a "mangy sort of choice,"[167] for danger waits at every turn—if a woman "dried up and were an old maid, danger. You drifted into the affable *hausfrau*, danger. You let her rip and had operations in Paris (poor Bella), danger."[168] This danger complicates, in H.D.'s view, both the freedom of "Free Love" and the life experience open to Modern Woman. Consider the case of "poor Bella." Bella's troubled success with her project of "Free Love" is evident from the troublesome parallelism of her sexual experience—to "let her rip" and love as one desires may lead, as in Bella's case, to the necessity that her body be ripped open by back-alley Paris abortionists. In Bella's case, the fulfillment of one desire necessitates the casualty of another, for although Bella "really wanted to have [the aborted] child,"[169] she could not, in her freedom from its father, provide for her offspring. "You see," Bella explains to Julia, "I wouldn't have had any money, how would I educate [i]t?"[170] Bella

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[165] Ibid., 108.
[166] Ibid., 82.
[167] Ibid., 164. This recalls feminist philosopher Carol Gilligan's consideration of pregnancy, abortion, and maternity as a constitutive "dilemma" that shapes women's sense of ethics and selfhood. The dilemma "engages directly the critical moral issue" of "how women deal with choices" (71). The complex inadequacy of the choices offered to women is epitomized in woman's decision to abort or continue a pregnancy, for it highlights that women rarely face obviously "right" or "moral" decisions. Against man's "ethics abstracted from life," to which women are culturally conditioned (104), Gillian argues that her reproductive dilemmas often produce in woman a distinct ethics based on the impossibility of choice and "conflicting responsibilities" (105). See Carol Gilligan, "Concepts of Self and Morality," in *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[168] H.D., *Bid Me to Live,* 164.
[169] Ibid., 60.
[170] Ibid., 59.

attempts to clothe the memory of being "slashed about by unauthorized abortionists" in "green silk" and glass after glass of vermouth, but the ghost of the "child that Bella might have had with someone in Paris" haunts her like an amputated body part in her subsequent sexual encounters, reducing her to a "brooding deer-like animal [that] had been hurt, horribly."[171] Bella's butchered body and the painful amputation of her desire is driven largely by "the war and things that happened in the war."[172] Wartime has, Julia notes, a troublesome armory of "tricks" to compel both its breeders and brawlers. As he abdicates his commitment to "Free Love" to commit himself to Bella, Rafe justifies his decision to Julia in terms of his duty:

> "I want you to know," he said, "that you are the most beautiful woman in the whole world. Bella wants a child," he said in the same breath. "If it was just Bella and me, it wouldn't matter. It's something outside Bella and me." He called it a child. Bella had spoken of a child. Was Bella actually brave enough, did she know what she meant, did she know what she wanted? Or was it just the usual wartime trick?[173]

The War has a way, Julia notes, of warping and re-narrating desire. The "something outside Bella" that compels Rafe to chase paternity may not be what he "call[s]" a child, but may simply be the "usual wartime trick"[174] that demands that men and women brawl and breed. Without a script to follow, how could a "parrot like Bella," Julia muses, know what she wants—"what was it Bella wanted? Did any one of them know what any of them wanted?"[175]

The War's complication of desire intimates the problem of the *nouvelle femme,* whose Modernity is grounded in the freedom of "women doing what they like."[176] In

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[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., 58.
[173] Ibid., 81.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid., 60.
[176] Ibid., 58.

wartime, Julia notes, however fervently one may "believe in the modern woman," and in "intelligent women having 'experience'," such Modernity marks a "very, very thin line to toe, a very, very frail wire to do a tight-rope act on."[177] The Modern Woman requires, as Bella's mother notes, "some very specific handling," for "the line was too thin" for woman to tip-toe across it to sexual freedom, such that, finally, "the demarcations remained what they always had been."[178] Indeed, despite and because of her "freedom," Bella's body is persistently and invasively "handl[ed]" by lovers, fetuses, abortionists, and *mores*, and is finally "handl[ed]," in this scene, into the archetypal shape of mother-cradling-infant on the Home Front, awaiting a father at War. Bella nominally manifests the difficulty of the wartime Modern Woman to achieve the freedom she desires—she is, in Italian, "beauty"; she is, in Latin, "wars."[179] The problem of beauty is, as embodied in the "slashed about" body of Bella, the problem of War, and the battlefield of the Modern Woman is the Modern Woman's body. The casualties that dot this battlefield include not only Julia's and Bella's offspring, but also their desire and sense of self. The author of these casualties is not Julia, nor Bella, nor Rafe, but "khaki."[180] War offers women little freedom, and no reprieve from the battlefield of the body, for War demands not only death, but life, the "something outside" one's own body that it narrates as a child. For both Bella and Julia, "Something had to come of this, of the war."[181] They have produced death, and the narrative demands that they, too, produce life.

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Perhaps, likewise, Julia's name is meant to reflect a feminized Julius Caesar, Latin conqueror and prolific writer of prose. Rafe's nomenclature is more curious—perhaps his name is indicative of the orthographic "rafe" or "raphe," a diacritic that indicates fricative pronunciation.
[180] H.D., *Asphodel*, 108.
[181] Ibid., 86.

Fields of *Asphodel* and H.D.'s Goddess of the Machine

> *There are no fields of asphodel this side of the grave.* But there are. There are.
> —H.D., *Asphodel*

> We are strung together, we all have lungs, must breathe, we men and gods.
> —H.D., *Asphodel*

At a party in London, their first meeting in this life, Brigit Patmore queried Richard Aldington (Darrington in *Asphodel*), "Darrington, you know Hermione [H.D.], don't you?" "O very well," Darrington responds, "Yes. For a long time. […] It was well about B.C. 325 (pre fifth anyhow) in Thessaly. Maybe Tempe."[182] The couple met, in *Asphodel*'s narration, at the moment that the Great War's palimpsestic turn met that of Thessaly and Tempe, and at that moment, H.D. and Aldington stepped into the mythic narrative onto which the palimpsest had mapped them. H.D. scholars have meticulously considered the narrative imbrication of H.D.'s work with Greek myths, and have thoroughly mapped the points at which H.D.'s palimpsest meets that of ancient myth. Susan Stanford Friedman's notable *Psyche Reborn*, for instance, considers H.D.'s mythic system as the voice of Psyche "reborn" in the Modernist era, and considers this rebirth as the Modern "soul's discovery of the esoteric wisdom underlying the hieroglyphs of war."[183] Indeed, a mythic-minded critic might read H.D.'s Madrigal Cycle, as the narrator herself often does, as a palimpsestic *roman à clef* in which historical people and events appear as masked "mythological personae"[184] reiterating the people and events of ancient myth, and might consider H.D. at her desk in wartime London, as Hermione does in *Asphodel*, "danc[ing] on the walls, for Troy is

[182] Ibid., 58.
[183] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 217.
[184] Ibid., 2.

burning, Troy town is down…"[185] These readings are crucial, of course, to our understanding of H.D.'s approach to history, for the "mythological personae" that structure her *oeuvre* often work, as Friedman argues, as "personal metaphors or masks" that allow H.D. to situate her personal pain and artistic triumph in mythic narrative, and to gain sufficient narrative distance from her emotion to express it artistically.[186] Here, we will focus primarily on H.D.'s crucial deviations from the mythic narratives she engages. Although it is "hard," as both Hermione and Penelope know, "weaving with Troy town down and my husband has been faithless," H.D. declared that she "was no Penelope."[187] Unlike *Asphodel*'s Fayne Rabb, who "reads Dante and thinks it's real," Hermione sees mythic narrative as rather a "light reflected from bright mirrors that deflects, that blinds one's eyes with its dazzle but that really hides the image."[188] While the "image of truth, of beauty" iterates its mythic narrative forever in the "Grecian urn," we must ask, alongside Hermione, "Where is he, Keats, of that somewhat washed out ode?"[189] Though he crafted the urn, and perhaps, in history's turn, embodied its "image of truth," Keats is not himself that truth, and Keats lies, of course, on the other side of the grave from his interlocutor. The primary question of H.D.'s *Asphodel* is the impression of mythic narrative on the historical bodies of those who narrate myth, and who must consider, as does Hermione, whether there is mythic "asphodel this side of the grave."[190] H.D.'s narrator considers this problem in *Asphodel* by grounding mythic narrative in her historical specificity:

> "There are no fields of asphodel this side of the grave." There are no fields… fields. What is a field? A field is a plot of grass and it is strewn with flowers.

[185] H.D., *Asphodel*, 123.
[186] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 2.
[187] H.D., *Asphodel*, 136.
[188] Ibid., 20.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 136.

> There are small sweet pulse, butterfly weed, little thyme heads. Butterflies wing across them, tiny butterflies. You can take a field and spread it like a rug across the floor and you can step on the field, stepping out of your bed. You can stand on the field and you can watch the mark your foot makes. […] *There are no fields of asphodel this side of the grave.* But there are. There are.[191]

The mythic asphodel depends, in H.D.'s narration, on the presence of "tiny butterflies," and on the "mark your foot makes" in fields upon which real people and butterflies could stand. Mythic asphodel depends, in other words, on its impression on the historically specific bodies that narrate its being. One of these, of course, is H.D., who weaves narrative fields of *Asphodel* as she writes.

By choice or compulsion, H.D.'s characters often take on the narrative role of myth's historically specific vehicle. The protagonist of *Asphodel,* for instance, takes on, in turn, the mythic roles of Penelope, Cassandra, and Madonna, and is variously appellated, as we shall consider in greater depth in Chapter Five, "Astraea," "Nereid," and "Dryad," among others.[192] Hermione's appellations are, crucially, primarily bestowed by her male lovers, prompting Hermione to muse, "Do men get so lonely that they must love an Oread? There are women, women, women, women in the street, on the stairs, in railway carriages brushing past you, brushing past you on the stairs little man."[193] Her position at the nexus of myth and history puts Hermione in the awkward position of being, at once, "too metaphysical. Not metaphysical enough."[194] This is, of course, precisely the accusation leveled against H.D. by Aldington—that, at once, she was too much a nymph who "had no body," and that, during her stillbirth and subsequent pregnancy, she was *too* much a body and not quite enough a nymph. Of course, the realities of pregnancy, stillbirth, and motherhood are more complex than the

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[191] Ibid.
[192] See, respectively, Ibid., 151, 13; H.D., *Her* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 118, 120.
[193] H.D., *Asphodel*, 189.
[194] Ibid., 76.

image of the "*nereid, lovely mother*"[195] to which woman is called, and maternity requires, as it were, too much body to fit properly into the narrative shape of myth. Considering her lost pregnancy in *Asphodel*, Hermione visits an art museum and muses, "What's the use of art and art and Beauty when there's one filthy brat with a running nose that you hate anyway who cringes at you and leaves finger marks on your summer clothes…"[196] While, of course, their bodies are necessary to historically iterate myth, children trouble myth by leaving greasy human imprints on myth's images of beauty—they pick and stomp and cry on, as it were, the pristine fields of asphodel. They are more invasive than the "tiny butterflies." Yet the mythic appellation to which woman is called, Hermione notes, demands of her, "Have all the children. Suffer little children—"[197] As Bella discovers in *Bid Me to Live*, such "suffer"-ing often transmutes one from a nymph to a wounded animal. Such suffering evokes the image of maternity presented by H.D.'s narrator in *Paint It Today*, who describes

> crawling into the rabbit hutch, scent of old straw and this morning's lettuce leaves and yesterday's half-gnawed carrot tops and sprinklings of oats and stiff straws to be rewarded at the last with a vision of eight pink bodies, eight unexpectedly furless and rigid bodies, to be lifted, one by one from the nest of tight packed straw […] while the weary old bunny thumps, disconsolate in the corner.[198]

The historically specific reality of the disconsolate mother thumping wearily about the carrot-tops does not map onto the vision of maternity narrated to Hermione by the men of her acquaintance, who promise an aesthetic "halo, a thin ring of gold" to the god-producing "Madonna."[199] The persona of the mythic mother is, crucially, quite vague, and Hermione is suspicious of the "Madonna something or other della something" onto

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[195] Ibid., 15.
[196] Ibid., 13.
[197] Ibid.
[198] H.D., *Paint It Today*, 4.
[199] H.D., *Asphodel*, 13.

which George Lowndes (*Asphodel*'s Ezra Pound character) wants to map her maternity.[200] Hermione is not quite sure that the Madonna is either a proper mother or a proper lady, and asks of her, "Lady if you are a lady though they said you had one illegitimate child whom they called God, listen to me. Are you really a creature to bring and alleviate people's odd numbing blackness? Are you really a mother and would you really understand?"[201] The crucial question of whether the mythic mother is, indeed, "really a mother" who "really understand[s]" haunts both H.D.'s approach to motherhood and critical consideration of H.D.'s approach to maternity. In any case, Hermione recognizes in the "Madonna something or other" her own dilemma—in her maternity, she is, like Hermione, "too metaphysical. Not metaphysical enough."[202] Indeed, carrying a child not her husband's, at once both woman and nymph, Hermione finds her body in a familiar mythic narrative. Hermione recognizes in the Madonna the fear that her "bed will suddenly turn into Zeus in the night," and that she is, as Darrington accuses, "the sort of thing that would draw God from Heaven."[203] She recognizes, too, her husband as a "secondary Joseph" who "barter[s] his wife, who had sold his honour" to allow Zeus into Europa's bed: "Well, I don't mind, Astraea, if it's Zeus but no one else […] The bed (so clean) might at any moment become Zeus or the Bull that carried off Europa." [204] Darrington sells, as it were, his historically specific marital honor such that Hermione might take her place in the palimpsest as Madonna, Europa, Echo, the god-seduced mother of gods. The "gods had always," Hermione muses, "loved women,"[205] and she imagines that "lying on the rocks […] God had

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid., 76.
[203] Ibid., 68.
[204] Ibid., 156.
[205] Ibid., 155.

swept across her white clean body and maybe it was the sun-set. People had children like that. Things, you see, never die and layers of life were all co-existent."[206] Like the "good earth" of the battlefield that resurrects Troy as wartime London, Hermione's body is impressed with the "same seed, the same germination that had always been"[207] impressed into the womb of "every queen, [C]leopatra, the mother of Jesus."[208] That the same narrative of "resurrected" battlefields and "reborn" Madonnas iterates its palimpsest through the annals of history shows, Hermione muses, both the profound creativity of woman's body and "the utter uninventiveness of God."[209] For while every Europa, Cleopatra, and "every char-woman" [210] iterates the births of her child, and, "worse than having a baby a real one, herself in herself trying to be born," as well as, on the Home Front, the "husband due again,"[211] the "inventiveness" of God extends only to the first seed, resurrected not by God but woman through the painful germination of her body. The mythos of woman is the mythos of Mary, who gestates, births, and is reborn; the mythos of God is the mythos of Lazarus and of War, whose germination only "resurrects" seeds dropped "long ago" in the mythic "painted coffin" of the soldier and the womb.[212] The narrative demands that woman undertake the "unimaginable terror, the pain, the disappointment"[213] of gestation to produce the kingdom-founding child.[214] The impression of mythic maternity on Hermione's body is the palimpsestic

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[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid., 164.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., 145.
[212] Ibid., 164.
[213] Ibid., 154.
[214] We will explore the dilemma this poses to the woman artist in our discussion of H.D.'s visions in the next chapter.

dilemma that, as Hermione concludes, "the most awful thing in the world would be to be the mother of God."[215]

H.D. criticism has largely read the mythic abstraction of Hermione's maternity into the role of Madonna "reborn" as a narrative "mask"[216] designed to distance the epic events of pregnancy and childbirth from the troublesome, historically specific estranged human husband, absent human father, and disconsolately thumping maternal body.[217] The temptation of such abstraction is understandable in its rarefaction of historically specific discomfort to the mythic realm of Zeus and Europa. Yet this reading diminishes the earnestness of H.D.'s claim that the impression of myth on the body—to be at once "too metaphysical" and "not metaphysical enough"—is at once Hermione's reality and "the most awful thing in the world."[218] H.D.'s palimpsestic iteration of mythic narrative is not a narrative *strategy* to employ but a narrative *dilemma* to be faced, for myth is not a tool to be picked up at will, but an event as deadly as artillery. The narrative power of myth is evident, of course, on the battlefield, in which historically specific Tommy dies in the name of Britain and Troy, but the most striking iteration of myth's fatal power is *Asphodel*'s Shirley Thornton, the erstwhile fiancée of George. Shirley is caught fast between the mythic narrative of the "little wise virgin" she must be before her marriage and that of the "vulgar midinette in a bride's veil"[219] she will become in her marriage. Shirley is roundly mocked by Darrington and Lowndes for her very *ancienne femme* approach to love and sex, and at last, she ends her life with a bullet to the brain. The

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[215] Ibid., 13.
[216] See, for instance, Friedman, *Psyche Reborn.*
[217] We might also consider this tendency to mythic abstraction in parallel with H.D.'s penchant for publication pseudonyms, which, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues in *H.D.*, allow her to "conceiv[e] some of her work as not-H.D." (7).
[218] H.D., *Asphodel,* 13.
[219] Ibid., 101.

reaction of Hermione, Darrington, and Lowndes to her death is consistent with the mythic narratives that Shirley sought to escape: "But we thought she was going to marry George."[220] "Shirley was a virgin."[221] "She should have married someone."[222] Even in death, Hermione asks Shirley to embody the tragic mythic heroine Cassandra, "smitten by the sun-god."[223] Indeed, it is just this demand that she embody myth, Hermione concludes, that killed Shirley, for it was not love, Lowndes, or even Shirley but "detached power that had killed Shirley."[224] The "khaki" of mythic narrative so embeds itself in historical specificity that one cannot tell it from love, and it is the demand that Shirley wear the khaki of Dryad, Madonna, Cassandra that leaves her a casualty of war. Shirley does not actively shatter herself, Hermione notes, but "herself, the immaculate image, the saint, the spirit, had been shattered for her. Forever. A white bullet had shattered it."[225] Myth is as real, and for Shirley, as fatal as battlefield artillery; in a striking parallel to Winterbourne's suicidal run toward German gunfire in *Death of a Hero*, Shirley finally finds "fear gone" at the receiving end of the "white bullet"[226] that removes her body from historical specificity. By ending her life, Shirley grasps the power to remove, if only for a moment, the historical specificity of Dryad, Madonna, Cassandra, and deprives them of her body. Yet this "white bullet" does not, of course, quite save her from mythic narration, for even in death, Shirley's life is variously dissected in the narrative language of "virgin," "bride," and mythic goddess, and only pages after her death, the myth reclaims its stake in Hermione, another erstwhile

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[220] Ibid., 100.
[221] Ibid., 101.
[222] Ibid., 103.
[223] Ibid., 102.
[224] Ibid., 103.
[225] Ibid., 104.
[226] Ibid.

fiancée of George's, as she embodies in succession "Dryad, "Astraea," "Nereid."[227] History, Hermione muses, is "girded by this fantastic procession" of women bearing, shedding, and re-bearing "names," which "came and went like lights flashing on a white screen,"[228] and each of these "Greek name[s] is of course a person […] Names make people. People make names,"[229] and names imprint their palimpsestic history on the people that they "make."[230]

For the breeder as for the brawler, the creative power of myth is not abstract, but leaves, as it were, its greasy fingerprints on the fabric of human lives. Yet to see that to embody myth may be "most awful thing in the world" does not save H.D., or us, from this fate, and we must meet with brave creativity the mythic narratives we inherit. To inherit these narratives, H.D. clarifies, does not mean to resurrect them, but to birth them anew through the palimpsestic canal of oneself—H.D. is not, crucially, *Psyche Resurrected,* but *Psyche Reborn.*[231] That historically specific woman performs the hard work of rebirthing both mythic personae and "herself in herself trying to be born"[232] allows her to meet the myth's demand for life with her own set of demands, and as we shall see in Chapter Five, for H.D., these demands include the imposition of her *own* creative terms on the creative terms of myth. This creativity is "born" in her own body, for it is as she births her daughter Perdita that she finds "the strength to utter, forming

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[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid., 105.
[229] Ibid., 181, 127.
[230] In the next chapter, we will consider in greater depth the creative power of the mythic "name" to shape the narrative of H.D. as mother and as woman artist.
[231] See also Donna Krolik Hollenberg's argument in *The Poetics of Childbirth* that "instead of providing concealment, [H.D.'s] historical and mythical masks reveal the extent to which she internalized the conventions of an androcentric model for creativity, and they show her awareness of the need to modify this model in order to develop as an artist" (51).
[232] H.D., *Asphodel,* 145.

somewhere" the "white bullets" that bought Shirley her freedom.[233] To survive the palimpsest requires neither that one "mask" one's historical specificity in Penelope of Troy or that one deprive her of a body, but that one recognize that, at once, one both *is* Penelope and *is no* Penelope, and that the act of rebirthing Penelope alongside oneself, of forming the white bullets of myth, is the very basis of the creative act. The woman who would survive the myth must be, as Hermione describes, "a sort of goddess in the machine, very much still in the machine," who, through "us[ing] the machine," grows "greater than the machine."[234] Facing Landor's refutation of their being, she fabricates her own fields of *Asphodel.*

[233] Ibid., 198.
[234] Ibid., 166.

# Chapter Five

## "Herself Perfect": H.D.'s Parthenogenetic Poetics

### *Her* and the Problem of Being Called

> People if you like to believe it can be made by their names. Call anybody Paul and they get to be a Paul.
> —Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar"

> I am I
> I am my name.
> My name is not my name.
> It is the name of what I say.
> My name is what is said.
> I alone say.
> —Laura Riding Jackson, "Disclaimer of the Person"

"I saw HER yesterday," Ezra Pound writes in *Hilda's Book,* one whose "SOUL WAS SO FULL OF ROSE / LEAVES STEEPED IN GOLDEN WINE THAT THERE / WAS NO ROOM THEREIN FOR ANY VILLEINY—"[1] The rose-soul to whom Pound addressed this little book of poems is "Saint Hilda," H.D., the poet's lover and "*Sancta Patrona*."[2] Across the poems of *Hilda's Book*, H.D. assumes myriad mythic appellations—she is, in turn, cast as "La Donzella Beata,"[3] "*virgo caelicola*,"[4] "Maenad," "bassarid,"[5] the

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[1] Ezra Pound, "Shadow," in *Hilda's Book,* ll. 14, 26-28. Ezra Pound Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This poem, among several others from *Hilda's Book,* is also published as a postscript to H.D., *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound by H.D. With the Poems of "Hilda's Book" by Ezra Pound*, ed. Norman Holmes Pearson and Michael King (New York: New Directions, 1979).
[2] Pound, "*Sancta Patrona Domina Caelae*," in *Hilda's Book,* ll. 2.
[3] Pound, "La Donzella Beata," in *Hilda's Book. Trans*: "The Beatific Maid."
[4] Pound, "*Sancta Patrona*." *Trans:* "The Virgin of Caelicola."
[5] See H.D., *End to Torment,* 17.

biblical Ruth,[6] Ysolt or "Is-hilda,"[7] and "Dryad."[8] Later, Pound would sign one of Hilda's poems with the name by which scholarship remembers her, inscribing Hilda Doolittle into the literary canon as "H.D., *Imagiste,*"[9] and, with a "slash" of his pen, would propel H.D. "out of the shadows"[10] and onto the pages of *Poetry.*[11] Indeed, H.D.'s early career as both poet and Muse is often narrated around what Susan Stanford Friedman would call the "plague" of names bestowed upon her by lovers and poetic mentors.[12] As H.D. notes in *End to Torment,* an autobiographical account of her friendship with Pound, Pound's poetry cast "strange spells of old deity" that invoked "metamorphosis" in its objects,[13] and Pound did not hesitate to cast such spells upon H.D. These "spells" took the form of names, metamorphosing the young Hilda Doolittle into, in turn, a Madonna, a "tree-born spirit of the wood,"[14] a "Lady" fit for a lover, and

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[6] Pound, "To One That Journeyeth with Me," in *Hilda's Book*. Pound opens with the well-known concession of the biblical Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi, upon the death of her husband: "Naetheless, whither thou goest I will go" (ll. 1).
[7] Several poems in Pound's *San Trovaso Notebook* are addressed to Hilda as "Is-hilda" or "Ysolt." See Ezra Pound Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
[8] See also Susan Stanford Friedman's useful discussion of Pound's appellations in *Hilda's Book* in *Penelope's Web*. Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 118.
[9] In *End to Torment*, H.D. narrates how Pound, upon reading her poetry, "slashed [it] with a pencil. 'Cut this out, shorten this line. Hermes of the Ways is a good title. I'll send this to Harriet Monroe of *Poetry*. […] And he scrawled 'H.D. Imagiste' at the bottom of the page" (18).
[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Elizabeth Hirsh counters Stanley Coffman's assertion that H.D. "was no theorist" of Imagism by arguing that, indeed, unlike Hilda Doolittle, "'H.D.' was no theorist" of the Pound-penned Imagist tradition, but rather "an example of a theory, an image, her images, presented in evidence for a male-authored truth." H.D.'s inscription as "H.D., *Imagiste*," Hirsh argues, grounded H.D. criticism in a "naïve reading practice [that] reinscribed as history what was, after all, only a theory." Elizabeth A. Hirsh, "Imaginary Images: 'H.D.', Modernism, and the Psychoanalysis of Seeing," in *Signets: Reading H.D.,* ed. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 430.
[12] Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* 167.
[13] H.D., *End to Torment,* 17.
[14] Pound, "Rendez-vous," in *Hilda's Book,* ll. 84.

"H.D."[15] The power of names to "make people" is a primary concern of H.D.'s oeuvre, for names imprint their palimpsestic history on the people that they "make."[16] Just as "people make names" by appellating spells of "old deity," names "make people" by the imposition of their mythic history on historically specific bodies.[17] Names "*are* people," H.D. wrote in *Asphodel*, and "hold light and seem to gleam with light within themselves."[18] Indeed, names hold crucial, creative, animating power, and lend this power to those who call and are called. H.D. scholarship often emphasizes the authorial power of she who wields the mythic name to shape the narrative turn of history's palimpsest, rightly calling to readerly attention the reverence with which H.D. re-spells the figures of Greek myth.[19] Indeed, H.D.'s masterful re-spelling of mythic and literary tradition, which she deems "Penelope's web,"[20] weaves a poetic identity between writerly subject and mythic object, between the machinery of myth and her historical specificity, the web of "a sort of goddess in the machine, very much still in the machine" who, by "us[ing] the machine," grows "greater than the machine."[21] There is vital creative power in the liminal identity of poetic subject *and* poetic object, and in weaving Penelope's web as "no Penelope."[22] Yet the nature of the palimpsest should complicate blithely empowered readings of this weaving, for even if the poet is "no Penelope," the mythic invocation of her name tangles the weaver in familiar narrative

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[15] See, in particular, Ezra Pound, "Domina," in *Hilda's Book.* At the end of this chapter, we will consider the "Lady" of H.D.'s *Trilogy* poems against the "Domina" or "Lady" of Pound's *Hilda's Book.*
[16] H.D., *Asphodel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 127.
[17] Ibid. As H.D. writes in *Asphodel*, "Each Greek name is of course a person […] Names make people. People make names" (127).
[18] Ibid., 181.
[19] Foremost among scholarly considerations of H.D. and myth is Susan Stanford Friedman's *Psyche Reborn* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989).
[20] H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 1956), 153.
[21] H.D., *Asphodel*, 166.
[22] Ibid., 136.

threads. Indeed, as we have seen in *Asphodel*, the mythic names to which woman is called may prove as powerfully deadly as they are powerfully creative, and the various names to which she is called mark, as Susan Stanford Friedman has argued, "literally—literarily—H.D.'s plague."[23]

The problem of *being called* to which woman seems inexorably subject deserves our consideration, for this plague of appellations critically shaped H.D.'s approach to poetry and womanhood. In Chapter Four, we considered H.D.'s navigation of her mythic calling to the roles of "Astraea," "Nereid," and "Dryad," among others,[24] and heard her muse in wonder of the lovers who called her to these roles, "Do men get so lonely that they must love an Oread?"[25] Men are so lonely for "old deity," it seems, that they rarely cease to seek it in the Modern woman's body.[26] Indeed, poems and novels written by H.D.'s lovers and friends—particularly Pound, Aldington, and Lawrence—call wildly not for woman, but for "HER." Priests and legislators, Aldington warns in his *Death of a Hero*, "have warred with Her" with weapons from "circumcisions to prudery," and have "laid down rules for Her," but while these "well-meaning persons have tried to domesticate Her," the attempt proved "Useless!"[27] Pound "saw HER" as he wrote *Hilda's Book*, Her hair "spun gold fine wrought and wondrous," Her eyes "clear pools / Holding the summer sky within their depth."[28] "Her" is, at times, a "mage powerful and subtly sweet"[29] with a soul too full of rose-petals for "villeiny" [sic];[30] at others, she is "My Lady," a "tall and fair […] poplar tree" casting "mystic

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[23] Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, 118.
[24] See, respectively, H.D., *Asphodel,* 151, 13 and *Her,* 118, 120.
[25] H.D., *Asphodel,* 189.
[26] One wonders if men have some sense that this deity is, by extension, their own.
[27] Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero* (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1929), 136.
[28] Pound, "Shadow," ll. 11-12.
[29] Pound, "Ver Novum," in *Hilda's Book,* ll. 8.
[30] Pound, "Shadow," ll. 27-8.

danaan spell[s]";[31] at others, she is Daphne,[32] or a "tree-born spirit of the wood."[33] HER identity is as elusive as it is vociferously poeticized in Modern literature, perhaps most infamously in Robert Graves's "historical grammar of poetic myth," *The White Goddess*. The "Goddess," Graves explains, "is a lovely, slender woman" who "suddenly transform[s] herself into sow, mare, bitch, vixen, she-ass, weasel, serpent, owl, she-wolf, tigress, mermaid or loathsome hag."[34] Indeed, in Graves's narrative, HER identity is elusive *because* it is vociferously poeticized, and is vociferously poeticized *because* it is elusive, for the *telos* of the Goddess is to inspire men to write poetry. Poetry, Graves writes, is the "aggregate of instances from which the idea of poetry is deduced by every new poet," and as such, "has been increasingly enlarged for many centuries."[35] It follows that the Goddess, "deduced" anew by poets across the palimpsest of history, enlarges in tandem with poetry, growing more diverse as she is penned by new poetic visions. Yet "it must never be forgotten," Graves warns the man with pen in hand, that the Goddess is, at heart, "a personification of primitive woman—woman the creatress and destructress."[36] The mythos of the Goddess, Graves argues, "remains the language of true poetry—'true' in the nostalgic modern sense of 'the unimprovable original, not a synthetic substitute'."[37] Yet although the Goddess is, for Graves, "a woman," she is *by* and *about* men, and is as abstracted from the specificity of historical women as is HER objective pronoun. "HER" often appears in *Hilda's Book*, for instance, as a "dryad" or

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[31] Pound, "Domina,", ll. 2. Later in this chapter, we will see H.D. radically re-conceive "the Lady" in her poetic *Trilogy*.
[32] Pound, "The Tree," in *Hilda's Book*, ll. 3.
[33] Pound, "Rendez-vous," ll. 1.
[34] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1948), 24.
[35] Ibid., 422.
[36] Ibid., 386.
[37] Ibid., 10.

"hamadryad"—Pound's affectionate name for H.D.[38]—but HER diverges in appearance and persona from the chapbook's addressee at crucial poetic moments.[39] HER is, crucially, not *woman* the "creatress and destructress," but a *narration* of creation and destruction abstracted in the poet-penned feminine pronoun. Woman is but a poor "synthetic substitute."

It is curious that H.D. scholarship has not considered the identity crisis at the heart of *Her*, H.D.'s narrative re-weaving of her early twenties, in light of the figure of "HER" presented by Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington, both lovers and mentors of H.D. *Her* traces its heroine Hermione's first critical encounters with myth, love, language, and selfhood as Hermione grapples with the ontological border between *object* and *author* of poetry. Hermione's crisis of identity indicates the failure of poets she loves—including, at times, herself—to adequately pen her complex relationship with myth and language.[40] It follows that *Her* opens on a curiously phonetic existential crisis.

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[38] See, for instance, H.D., *Her* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 107. It is notable here that the Goddess of Graves's monograph is intimately related, in her myriad forms, to trees, and is several times explicitly called "Dryad." See Graves, *The White Goddess,* in particular chapters X, XI, XIV, and XXIV.

[39] For instance, H.D., the ostensible Lady of the chapbook bearing her name, had hair that was quite dark rather than "spun gold."

[40] The crisis of identity that Hermione faces recalls Louis Althusser's theory of "interpellation," in which he posits that the individual's response to the call of another (in Althusser's theory, to the call of the law) constitutes the subject as such. In H.D.'s work, woman's response to the call of *myth* constitutes her doubled identity as both mythic iteration and historically specific woman, and as such, we might consider H.D.'s conception of woman as, in Althusserian language, doubly interpellated. As Judith Butler argues in her reading of Althusser's theory, the subject's interpellation creates "compliance and obedience" to the law at the moment it constitutes the subject, and implies a "prior complicity with the law without which no subject emerges" (121, 107). While Butler reads such "prior complicity" as the impossibility of a subjective interpellation that is not subject to "subjection" and "misrecognition" (12), H.D.'s approach to myth considers woman's interpellation in myth as both "recognition" and "misrecognition" at once—as we shall see in our readings of *Her* and H.D.'s "tributes," woman "make[s]" the myth as the myth "make[s] her, and woman is, at once, both "Penelope" and "no Penelope." That her identity is, at times violently, "subjected" to the interpellative call of myth is endemic to the historical turn of the palimpsest. See

"Her Gart went round in circles," the narrator asserts. Hermione assures herself, "I am Her,"

> she repeated, "Her, Her, Her. Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, "I am Her, Her, Her."[41]

This crisis is, the narrator assures us, "predictable by star, by star-sign."[42] It was already spelled out, as it were, in the palimpsest; it was inscribed in Her name. Hermione clings to Her identity, "not knowing why she so clung,"[43] yet "Her" neither satisfies Hermione nor yields the solid ground of identity she seeks. She finds that the tautological "I am Her Gart" does not allow her to meaningfully "hold on" to selfhood; rather, "her fingers slipped off; she was no longer anything […] what was she?"[44] Indeed, Hermione's existential disorientation is spell-cast in the name that she is called. H.D.'s daughter Perdita Schaffner hypothesized in "Pandora's Box," her introduction to the 1979 publication of *Her*, that H.D. chose for her autobiographical heroine the name "Hermione" to emphasize the "split dimensions" of Her self: "Hermione of Greek mythology, daughter of Menelaueus and Helen. Also, most significantly to me, Shakespeare's misunderstood heroine of *The Winter's Tale*, mother of Perdita."[45] The persona of Hermione is re-spelled across literature and myth in the name of the heroine, not least in the name of H.D.'s heroine. As Hermione's stammered identity emphasizes, just as H.D. is both Penelope and *no* Penelope, Hermione is both Her and *no* Her. This

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Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *On Ideology* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2008), and Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[41] H.D., *Her*, 3.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 8.
[44] Ibid., 4.
[45] Perdita Schaffner, "Pandora's Box," in *Her*, xi.

negation is inscribed in Hermione's name—HER–mio [mine]—ne [is not].[46] I bear Her name, but Her is not quite mine. I spell Her out in my body—her name "make[s]" me, Hermione—but even as Her inscribes Her name on my body, Her is mythically distinct from my body. The "split dimensions" of Her/mione's identity engender a crisis of linguistic awkwardness. Her does not quite fit as Her should in a sentence. Of course, both the hamadryad and the grammatical "Her" are squarely the *object* rather than the *author* of poetry, and pose woman in the grammatically awkward position of the objective pronoun. Such pronouns are written rather than write; Her does not take a verb. Indeed, in *The White Goddess,* Graves unwittingly concedes that the Goddess was made out of poetry all along: "The truth is that only gold ore can be turned into gold; only poetry into poems."[47] Pound's poetic respelling of H.D. threatens to "efface her," in Rachel Blau DuPlessis's words, "into a poem,"[48] and *Her* is haunted by echoes of George Lowndes's assertion that "*You are a poem though your poem's naught*."[49] "I thought I was

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[46] "Mio" signifies "my" in Italian, and the linguistic root "mi" carries the possessive connotation across Romance languages. Likewise, across Romance languages, "ne" is variously positioned in the sentence to signify "not" or negation (e.g. *je ne suis pas* [French]). This transnational linguistic leap tracks with both the transnationalism inherent to H.D.'s formulation of the historical palimpsest and literary historical considerations of H.D.'s work as "transnational" in nature. For instance, Celena E. Kusch presents a strong argument for a "transnational" reading of H.D.'s work, noting that "no poem [in *Sea Garden*] indicates that the speaker's location is *in Greece*, and no poem grounds itself firmly in a classical historical context," and arguing that, instead, H.D.'s work "engages the same questions of international, cosmopolitan identity and American national belonging that are central to modernist debates about defining US literary identity." Celena Kusch, "H.D.'s American *Sea Garden*: Drowning the Idyll Threat to U.S. Modernism," *Twentieth Century Literature* 56, no. 1 (2010): 48. Likewise, Rebecca L. Walkowitz reads H.D.'s work in transnational terms, considering her relationship with both America and the European continent. See Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[47] Graves, *The White Goddess*, 17.

[48] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Romantic Thralldom in H.D." *Contemporary Literature* 20, no. 2 (1979): 406.

[49] H.D., *Her*, 74.

someone," Hermione muses, "but he calls me *personne*. Nobody. I am nobody when it comes to writing."[50] Faced with *naught*, separated from *person*-hood by the feminine "*ne*,"[51] Hermione resolves to "find a new name."[52] As DuPlessis has suggested, the grammatical awkwardness that follows any attempt to situate Her as the subject of the sentence both emphasizes Her objective status in language and "suggests the presence of some resistant, stubborn matter that will not be captured or surveyed."[53] Indeed, as Her launches a grammatical protest against Her objective status in language, Her repurposes "the very qualities that have authorized the exclusion of the 'feminine' from language" to threaten its soundness and order.[54] If Her is, as George Lowndes argued, "a poem, though her poem is naught," Her does not, it seems, make what Pound would consider a very *good* poem. Something is lacking—perhaps golden hair, or "villeiny"—and the language is all wrong.

Indeed, Her calls into question both the soundness of Pound's poetic vision and the project of poetry itself. Despite Pound/George's attempts to "spell" Hermione as "HER" in both H.D.'s account and *Hilda's Book*, he finally fails to achieve her "metamorphosis" on his poetic terms.[55] Pound's poetic failure marks his failure to grasp the complexity of what he calls the "kindred claim"[56] between woman and myth. In "Rendez-vous," the final poem of *Hilda's Book,* Pound writes of his beloved:

> The moss-grown kindly trees, meseems, she could
> As *kindred claim*, for tho to some they wear

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[50] Ibid., 105.
[51] *Personne*, of course, is a French *faux ami* that means not "person" but "nobody." French words that end in "ne" are most frequently gendered feminine.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985), 73.
[54] Christine Berni, "The Recuperated Maternal and the Imposture of Mastery in H.D.'s *HERmione*." *Women's Studies* 25 (1995): 54.
[55] H.D., *End to Torment,* 17.
[56] Ezra Pound, "Rendez-vous," ll. 5-9.

> A harsh dumb semblance, unto us that care
> They guard a marvelous sweet brotherhood
> And thus she dreams unto the soul of things[57]

Although Pound notes in his beloved a "kindred claim" to the "brotherhood" of those who "drea[m] unto the soul of things," this claim is mediated through the poet's appellation. The beloved's "kindred claim" to the "soul of things"—a claim which, a Dryad might dream, could inspire her to poeticize that "soul"—is spelled in terms of "brotherhood," a kinship that structurally interdicts her. Her does not dream her own dreams on the page, but dreams the dreams of "*us* that care"—the dreams of "brotherhood"—and these dreams appear, of course, in the language of Pound's poetry. Her is, finally, a *portrait* of a dreamer rather than an author of dreams—she is Daphne rather than Ovid. Yet despite Her interdiction from dreaming, the goddess proposed by Pound offers Hermione an appealingly coherent identity in a time of phonetic crisis. At first, Hermione notes, she "*wanted* George [Pound] to define and to make definable a mirage, a reflection of some lost incarnation, a wood maniac, a tree demon, a neuropathic dendrophil."[58] Yet her reality, of course, proves more complicated than the Pound-penned goddess myth. On "more than one occasion," Hermione notes, George complained that she "never manage[d] to look decently like other people," looking in turn "like a Greek goddess or a coal scuttle."[59] George here clearly bifurcates Hermione into what he conceives as two distinct identities: the poetic and the plebian, HER and not-HER, the goddess and the coal scuttle. Crucially, Pound conceives these distinct identities in a temporal "or" relationship: Hermione is not, at once, both poetic *and* plebian, she is not both HER *and* not-HER; in Pound's spelling, Hermione vacillates

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[57] Ibid.
[58] H.D., *Her,* 62, emphasis mine.
[59] Ibid., 64.

dizzyingly among antipodes that fail to grasp H/herself in her totality. By contrast, Hermione muses that she is neither simply as "in the world" as the coal scuttle nor, "unhappily," as "out of the world" as the goddess, but is rather, as Pound's "or" prohibits, both at once.[60] Indeed, Hermione conceives herself as a "psychic magpie" who constructs an identity by compiling "small trivial vestiges [… and] little unearthed treasures."[61] Crucially, this assemblage is as ambivalent as it is inevitable, for these "treasures" are "things she did not want, yet clung to."[62] Hermione muses that, although with his pen Pound "wanted to incarnate Her," he "knew enough to know" that his incarnation "was not Her."[63] Indeed, Hermione finally concludes that not only has the poet failed to "incarnate" HER in Hermione, but he has failed to understand, at every level, his poetic subjects: "George doesn't know what trees are. George doesn't know what I am."[64] If the "test of a poet's vision" is, as Graves argues, "the accuracy of his portrayal of the Goddess,"[65] what should we make of poetry that fails to incarnate its object? If woman "makes" the goddess as the goddess-name "makes" woman—and if woman is, by Graves's definition, "*manqué*" from the historical grammar[66]—how has poetry failed so profoundly in its one defining task?

Curiously, scholarly readers of *Her* often adopt Pound's antipodal approach to Hermione's identity, and his grammatical approach to poetic authority. L.S. Dembo, for instance, distinguishes "Hermione Gart, to all appearances a fairly normal if willful young woman," from her "unseen, virtually demented other self called HER Gart,"

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 8.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 64.
[64] Ibid., 84.
[65] Graves, *The White Goddess*, 24.
[66] See our later discussion of Pound's declaration that H.D. is an "oracle *manqué*" (H.D., *Asphodel*, 39).

who, Dembo notes, "endlessly questioning her identity and Being itself, often enters nightmarish realms."[67] Other scholars, such as Barbara Guest, have also cast this "other self" in terms of madness or hysteria,[68] proposing a narrative in which the existential crisis of a "hysterical and near-delirious Her" is finally resolved in the domestication of Hermione's language into recognizable poetry.[69] Indeed, the Hermione of *Asphodel* argues that such hysteria is endemic to mythic appellation: "Every Greek name is of course a person. Names are people and hold light and seem to gleam with light within themselves. Words, people. Names. Of course, the Greeks must have gone mad saying those words. The very names induce a sort of hysteria."[70] This hysteria is integral to what I have termed the *problem of being called*—the "kindred claim" that Pound and others have failed to grasp is that Hermione is, at once, the goddess and the coal-scuttle,

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[67] L.S. Dembo, "H.D. *Imagiste* and Her Octopus Intelligence," in M. King (ed.) *H.D.: Woman and Poet* (Orono, ME: The National Poetry Foundation, 1986), 212. Curiously, Dembo's suggestion that a "fairly normal" young woman lacks willfulness recalls Pound's assertion that the rose-colored soul of "HER," his own imagined "young woman," lacks the capacity for "VILLEINY."

[68] Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 26.

[69] Janice Robinson, for instance, concludes that *Her* is a "mad text." See *H.D.: The Life and Work of An American Poet* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 17. Feminist critics of H.D.'s work have produced a robust and lively discussion of this textual "hysteria" in terms of what French feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous term "écriture feminine," or feminine writing. See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976). Likewise, Dembo characterizes Hermione's text as the attempt of her hysterical and "formless identity to achieve form," and the attempt to bridle her "unbridled imagination" in the "reason and sanity that alone can formulate it as poetry" ("H.D. Imagiste," 211). Claire Buck criticizes H.D. scholars such as Dembo, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Rachel Blau DuPlessis for what she considers their "assumption of an unproblematic, self-contained, self-mastering identity to account for women's use of language," instead arguing that H.D. figures woman's body as a form of signification that allows a complex and multipolar feminine identity by occluding the distinction between signified and signifier. See Claire Buck, *Freud and H.D.: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 56. In response to this shifting theoretical wind, in *Penelope's Web*, Friedman considers H.D. and her characters in terms of linguistic construction rather than adherence to cultural norms of feminine identity.

[70] H.D., *Asphodel,* 181.

and that the mythic-hysterical HER both "makes" and is made by Hermione. Pound's failure to grasp the "and" constitution of woman is a fundamental failure of his poetry. The co-constitution of both HER and not-HER foreclosed by Pound *is* the kindred claim; hysteria is endemic to the "split dimensions" of the woman who has been called to enter the palimpsest. As such, the reality of Hermione's approach to language is dissonant both with Dembo's narrative progression from "formless identity" to "reason and sanity"[71] and with Christine Berni's argument that Hermione's hysterical text "forecloses the possibility of discursive authority or extra-textual origin."[72] The linguistic hysteria of the Greek name *is itself* both the extra-textual origin and the discursive authority by which Hermione, called to bear the palimpsest, is made as she re-makes it through her body.[73] At issue, as Berni herself notes, is the desire of both Hermione and her scholars to "escape the confines of language," and the "question of whether resistance to a pre-existent symbolic order must somehow come from outside that order, or whether resistance can exist within it."[74] In *Penelope's Web*, Susan Stanford Friedman frames Hermione's resistance to the myths of *Hilda's Book* as a celebration of her power to shape her identity: "Trapped as a 'tree' in Pound's text [*Hilda's Book*]," Friedman argues, "H.D. freed herself by reclaiming 'treeness' for Hermione in her own text."[75] Once she is spelled as "Dryad," Friedman notes, "trees become the motif of Hermione's autonomous inner self."[76] Indeed, Hermione claims for her own the

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[71] Dembo, "H.D. Imagiste," 211.
[72] Berni, "The Recuperated Maternal," 57.
[73] As we will see in our consideration of H.D.'s *Notes on Thought and Vision*, this "hysterical" discursive authority is intimately related to the Greek "hystera," or womb.
[74] Berni, "The Recuperated Maternal," 57.
[75] Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, 118.
[76] Ibid.

"harlequin language"[77] of Dryad in which George pens her: "I am a tree. TREE is my new name out of the Revelations. He shall have a new name written on his forehead. The mark of the beast. I have the mark of the beast."[78] To a contemporary reader, this seems a painful and strange sort of resistance that smells like concession—is the woman writer's best hope of authorial "freedom" to "claim" as her own the name with which man has penned her in? Should we celebrate her "freedom" when the bird "claims" as her own the bars of a linguistic cage? While it is quite tempting, both emotionally and theoretically, to frame H.D.'s approach to myth and symbol in the language of "resistance," her relationship with the discursive authority of the mythic name is more complex than resistance or celebration. When a woman is called to bear the palimpsest—when she is called to "make" the mythic name that will "make" her—the myth itself, that is, what Berni calls the "existent symbolic order,"[79] is irrevocably carved in time as it has been narrated in the historical turns of the palimpsest. While historically specific woman "re-spells" the story of "old deity" through her body, birthing the name anew with each turn of the palimpsest, the myth itself is not a negotiable language. Indeed, Hermione's approach to myth and language is, as she describes in *Asphodel,* that of "a sort of goddess in the machine, very much still in the machine," who, through "us[ing] the machine," grows "greater than the machine."[80]

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[77] H.D., *Her*, 69. Here, Hermione both praises and dismisses George as an artist: "George," she muses, "was out of the Famous Painter's Volume," but his "harlequin words, harlequin language" leads Hermione to ask, "Was there a George at all? Is there a George at all?" and finally to conclude, "You're nothing, George. I mean precisely nothing" (69).

[78] Ibid., 82. We should note here that, like the Greek name, the mark of the beast is *bestowed* upon she who bears it—the mark is an appellation to which one *is called*. See also Chapter XIX, "The Number of the Beast," in *The White Goddess*.

[79] Berni, "The Recuperated Maternal," 57.

[80] H.D., *Asphodel,* 166.

Although the language of myth "makes" her, in other words, woman *also makes the myth*, and bears it "greater" than before it passed through her body.

This is why, in *End to Torment*, H.D. recants her concession that George/Pound "had long ago been right" to say "*you are a poem though your poem's naught*."[81] "Mr. Pound," she apostrophizes after his death, "it was all wrong. […] The girl in your arms (Dryad, you called her) […] Mr. Pound, with your magic, your strange spells of old deity, why didn't you complete the metamorphosis?"[82] Pound's failure to metamorphose the girl in his arms into a "Dryad" lies, in part, in the goddess's mastery of the linguistic machinery. Called to *be* rather than to *wield* the word, Hermione discovers herself in a strangely powerful position:

> I am out of the Temple Shakespeare. I am out of *The Winter's Tale*. Lilies of all kinds… I am out of this book… I am the word AUM. Hermione dropped the volume. This frightened her. God is in a word. God is in a word. God is in HER. She said, "HER, HER, HER. I am Her, I am Hermione… I am the word AUM." This frightened her. […] I am the word… The word was with God… I am the word… HER.[83]

Hermione hesitates to complete the first verse of John, although the missing phrase haunts her discovery: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*."[84] But Hermione does not recognize herself as a "God" in the way that George, or even St. John, would formulate Him, for Hermione's Word is "and" rather than "or." She is, at once, Shakespeare's Hermione from the *Winter's Tale*; *and* she is Homer's daughter of Helen and Meneleus; *and* she is "AUM," the sacred mystic syllable.[85] Yet, like Her, the goddess does not quite fit perfectly into the language. In

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[81] H.D., *Her*, 74.
[82] H.D., *End to Torment*, 17.
[83] H.D., *Her*, 32. Bear *Her* "lilies" in mind in our consideration of *Tribute to Freud.*
[84] John 1:1 (New International Version).
[85] In Indic languages and Hindu practices, the *pranava*, or mystic syllable, is also known as *aksara* (literally "imperishable letter of the alphabet") and *omkara* (literally "origins"

*Asphodel*, H.D. recalls asking a friend, "Bert," about Calypso, the nymph who detained Odysseus: "He said a goddess out of a Greek poem. That was the first time I had ever heard of a goddess. 'Who was she? What is one? Why that, what you said, something about less God'."[86] Bert laughed, but did not correct Hermione: "A goddess as a—god—less, a God—less. Less what?" "It was you," Hermione countered, "who said it, not me. I didn't say anything about any less."[87] Hermione's misspelling of the goddess's name reveals the missing letter obscured in Pound's poeticization of HER. She is defined, Hermione notes, by *lack*—she lacks the pen necessary to *write* the Word, she lacks HER deity and golden hair, and she lacks the poetic language to "achieve [her] utterances."[88] She is finally, in George's estimation, an "oracle *manqué*."[89] HER has, in Pound's formulation, "no room therein for any villeiny"[90]—or creativity. Yet HER name has the creative power to "make" Hermione, and HER language is the language to which Hermione has been called. H.D.'s work is haunted by the question of the woman's place in myth, and by myth's place in woman: "A goddess is a god less—where did that come from?"[91] That came, it seems, from each "poet from Homer onwards who has independently recorded his [sic] experience of her."[92] Both Penelope and "no Penelope," both HER and no HER, the web that H.D. weaves will have a different texture. Assembled from the "split dimensions" of mythic narrative and historical specificity, faced with a magpie nest of mythopoetic treasures and historical realities that she does

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or "divine female energy"). See Diana Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York: Random House, 2013), 245.
[86] H.D., *Asphodel*, 25.
[87] Ibid., 26.
[88] Ibid., 39.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Pound, "Shadow," ll. 28.
[91] H.D., *Asphodel*, 122.
[92] Graves, *The White Goddess*, 24.

not want, yet clings to, H.D. bravely pronounces the silent "l" in the "Goddess" of Graves, Pound, and Aldington. This time, the Goddess will be penned by her "synthetic substitute," woman, and their kinship will be clarified in poetry. Once the "l" has been pronounced, the "lack" of the goddess can be enunciated as the historical specificity of woman—the coal scuttle lurking under the goddess's golden hair—and a poetics of the god-less can emerge.

## The Problem of Perfection in *Tribute to Freud* and "The Master"

> "She is perfect," he said, "*only she has lost her spear*." I did not say anything.
> —H.D., *Tribute to Freud*

> She was self-bearing,
> The mixed burden
> Of man-woman.
> —"*Yr Awdil Vraith,* Gwion's Song," in Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*

H.D.'s poetry of the god-less first emerged as a series of visions and dreams. It is crucial, in my estimation, that this poetry emerged as *visions* before its inscription on the page, for this deferral both situates H.D.'s poetry squarely in what Freud would deem the "Kingdom of the Illogical"[93] and yields creative power to the myth to which H.D. is called. The modality of *vision*, in other words, is a modality of creative deferral that offers shelter from what Freud called the "governing laws of logic"[94]—and from what

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[93] In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud deems both dreams and poetry the "Kingdom of the Illogical […] where the governing laws of logic have no sway." Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams,* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. IV, 53. This "kingdom" marks, in H.D.'s words, the "hieroglyph of the unconscious" (*Tribute to Freud,* 93). See also Lionel Trilling's well-known literary criticism of Freud's understanding of poetry as "indigenous" to the "poetry-making organ" of the "unconscious mind." Lionel Trilling, "Freud and Literature," in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking, 1950), 266-67.

[94] Ibid. As we will see in H.D.'s "Tribute to the Angels," an epic re-spelling of the Goddess myth, H.D.'s poetics resists the "facile reasoning" of "logically" exegeted

Pound might call the "brotherhood"[95] of poetry. The governing structure of H.D.'s poem is neither that of the Muse's incarnation nor that of the "laws of logic," but that of the mythic hieroglyph. The "kinship" structure of H.D.'s poetry differs from that proposed by Pound in that her poetics of the hieroglyph creates co-constitutive "split dimensions" of poetic meaning, and as such, demands a distinctly "and" heuristic of poetic readership. H.D.'s "and" approach to poetry, as we shall see, is grounded in her complex relationship with myth, gender, language, creativity, and the "split dimensions" of woman's body. This "and" heuristic will also prove crucial in her approach to that other Modernist "brotherhood," the psychoanalytic tradition.

H.D. worked closely with Freud, the patriarch of psychoanalysis, as both analysand and mentee, and her kinship with this "brotherhood" is complex. As Susan Stanford Friedman notes in *Psyche Reborn*, Freud informed H.D. that she would "carry on the torch of his [Freud's] ideas in her own way."[96] Yet though both Freud and H.D. considered H.D. as poetic successor to Freud's analytic work, both remained painfully aware that, within its mythos, H.D. harbored, as it were, a silent "l." In psychoanalysis as in poetry, H.D. found herself "called" to incarnate myths with which her historical reality felt dissonant, and her hieroglyphic "re-spelling" of these myths constitutes the heart of H.D.'s kinship with these two Modernist "brotherhoods." Of course, the necessity to re-spell these fraternal myths is grounded in their misspelling of the "god-less"—and of woman. Although Freud was, in H.D.'s estimation, "one of the greatest

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symbols. H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," in *Trilogy,* in *H.D.: Collected Poems 1912-1944* (New York: New Directions, 1957), [35] ll. 3.

[95] See Pound, "Rendez-vous," and discussion of this poem above.

[96] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn,* 22.

minds of this and perhaps many succeeding generations," the "Professor," as H.D. called Freud, was "not always right."[97]

In one of the most strikingly poetic passages of H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. recounts a scene in which Freud presents to her his favorite figurine, a bronze Pallas Athena whose spear and wings have broken and are missing. "She is perfect," Freud tells H.D., "only she has *lost her spear*," and she will "never fly away from Athens."[98] Freud's declaration that the figurine is "perfect," H.D. muses,

> meant not only that the little bronze statue was a perfect symbol, made in man's image (in woman's, as it happened), but venerated as a projection of abstract thought, Pallas Athené, born without human or even without divine mother, sprung full-armed from the head of her father, our-father Zeus … he meant as well … it is *perfect*, a prize, a perfect specimen of Greek art, produced at the moment when the archaic abstraction became humanized but not yet over-humanized … to be weighed in the balance and—pray God—not to be found wanting!"[99]

It is tempting to focus here, as many critics have rightly done, on the compromise of Athena's "perfection" due to the loss of her spear—indeed, H.D.'s account foregrounds Athena's loss, first italicizing, then capitalizing Freud's words. Freud's presentation of Athena seems calculated to gently and obliquely enunciate woman's castration in the psychoanalytic mythos, spelling H.D., like the spearless Athena, as missing the crucial signifying phallus—as a *god less* a phallus.[100] Woman is "perfect," Freud emphasizes,

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[97] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 18.
[98] Ibid., 69.
[99] Ibid., 70.
[100] Norman Holland was among the first to hypothesize that Freud chose to present H.D. with this Athena figurine to "make her confront the unconscious operation of penis envy in her psyche." See Norman Holland, "H.D. and the 'Blameless Physician'," *Contemporary Literature* 10, no. 4 (1969): 485-86. H.D.'s narration of this exchange marks the only explicit nod in *Tribute to Freud* to the Freudian theories of penis envy and the castration complex. That H.D. largely chooses to eclipse these theories in her tribute to psychoanalysis, and that, as I will argue, she rejects the image of Athena as her visionary determinative, marks a crucial divergence from Freudian theory, and suggests that, on these matters, H.D. did not consider the Professor to be "right."

only in the "imperfection of the castration to which she is biologically destined."[101] Athena appears here as "the figure of woman as the pure reflection of man," specifically man's "*form*,"[102] and Elizabeth Hirsh proposes that, in H.D.'s work, the figure of Athena marks both woman's constitutive castration in the psychoanalytic mythos and the "poetic Image of Imagism"[103] that Eliot deemed the "*point de repère*" of Modern poetry.[104] Indeed, as Freud presents her in this passage, Athena strikingly resembles the clamored-after "HER" of Graves, Aldington, and Pound. She does not herself project, but "is a projection"—not of material reality but of "abstract thought."[105] She is "humanized but yet not over-humanized"—the mythic perfection of H.D.'s "too metaphysical. Not metaphysical enough."[106] She is mythically motherless, having sprung fully formed from the head of her father—"our father," the brotherhood patriarch—Zeus. Spelled by Freud, as HER was spelled by the poets, she was "made," by her enunciation, in "man's image."[107] Indeed, in Freud's presentation of Athena, the *point de repère* of psychoanalysis appears to be that of Modern poetry—it was the god-less all along, sprung fully-clothed in the language of myth from the pens of the Modernist brotherhood. In a real sense, as Hirsh has proposed, H.D.'s "argument" with the mythos of psychoanalysis—and, I would add, with the mythos of poetry—"resolves into a question of how Nike is to be seen, a question of what it is to see."[108] Indeed,

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[101] Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman, "Woman is Perfect: H.D.'s Debate with Freud," *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 3 (1981): 421. This is, DuPlessis and Friedman note, an "ironic perfection which Freud insists on for women, one created precisely by the absence of the phallic mark of power" (421).
[102] Hirsh, "Imaginary Images," 436.
[103] Ibid.
[104] T.S. Eliot, "American Literature and the American Language." *The Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1 (1966): 18.
[105] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 70.
[106] H.D., *Asphodel*, 76.
[107] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 70.
[108] Hirsh, "Imaginary Images," 436.

Freud's and H.D.'s differential spelling of the god(l)ess Athena lies at the heart of the "argument" that H.D. called "implicit in our very bones,"[109] and H.D.'s re-spelling grounds the poet's hermeneutics of the hieroglyph—a visionary heuristic of mythic grammar motivated, but not authorized, by the psychoanalytic tradition.

For if the name "makes" Athena, she also has the power to "make" the name.[110] Scholarly considerations of *Tribute to Freud* have traditionally read H.D.'s vision at Corfu as a triumphant and correlative re-spelling of Freud's myth of the wingless Athena, and have emphasized H.D.'s longing for "synthesis" between the "poles of opposition"[111] of mythic narrative and historical experience.[112] This longing for "synthesis," argues Susan Stanford Friedman, led to H.D.'s "transcendence of differences in a vision that incorporated the whole."[113] Yet this reading of H.D.'s vision glosses several vital differences between Freud's myth of the wingless Athena and H.D.'s vision of Niké in the sun—most crucially, that H.D.'s vision re-spells the goddess's name. That the Corfu vision marks H.D.'s triumph over Freud's wingless Athena is so deeply engrained in the critical consensus that some scholars use the names *Athena* and *Nike* interchangeably in their consideration of both passages of *Tribute to Freud*, in turn situating Freud's wingless figurine as "Nike"[114] and the subject

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[109] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 13.
[110] As H.D. writes in *Asphodel*, "Names make people. People make names" (127).
[111] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 14.
[112] DuPlessis and Friedman, for example, argue that H.D.'s Corfu vision "counters his [Freud's] symbolic statement of woman's imperfection by free associating on Athené in her guise as Niké Apteros (Wingless Victory), the goddess whose statue in Athens keeps the city safe because she can never fly away. […] Thus H.D. transforms Freud's image of powerless-ness into one of power" ("Woman Is Perfect," 421). It is crucial to note, however, that this "transformation" is more complicated than "reclaiming" the winglessness of Niké, for, as we shall see, Niké is not always wingless, and her identity is more complex than this reading suggests.
[113] Ibid.
[114] For instance, Hirsh writes of Freud's presentation of the spearless Athena that "*Nike* is at once identified with the figure of woman as the pure (indeed motherless) reflection

of H.D.'s vision as "Athena."[115] Yet—against the consensus of scholars—I would propose that, while it does re-spell Freud's myth of the wingless Athena, H.D.'s Corfu vision is not really about Athena at all. It is, rather, an explicit vision of "my Niké,"[116] goddess of Victory, a Greek name richer and more complex than that of her mother, Athena.

Let us read H.D.'s Corfu vision anew—looking, this time, not for "synthesis" with Freudian mythology, but for the "argument" with Freud in Niké's bones.[117] Our first clue is the difficulty of H.D.'s visionary experience. Revelating is difficult work, and H.D. doesn't have much help from the divine. H.D. finds herself "stiff with effort" as she strains to reach the revelation—indeed, her body is "frozen like one of those *enemies* of Athené, the goddess of wisdom, to whom Perseus showed the Gorgon head."[118] Am I, she wonders, "a suspect, an enemy to be dealt with?"[119] Is it possible, H.D. muses, that this revelation comes not *from* but *in spite of* the gods? In other words, the visionary experience prompts H.D. to ask not *Am I Athena?* but *Am I the* enemy *of Athena?* She could, H.D. muses, be "Perseus, the hero who is fighting for Truth and Wisdom," but unlike Perseus, who could "wield the ugly weapon of the Gorgon's severed head, because Athené […] had told him what to do,"[120] H.D. has received no

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of man (specifically of his *form*)" ("Imaginary Images," 436). This is quite curious because, as we will see, Athena and Nike are not interchangeable goddesses, and indeed, Nike was *not* motherless—she is generally considered to be the daughter of Athena and the River Styx. See *Encyclopedia Brittanica,* s.v. "Athena."

[115] For example, in *Psyche Reborn*, Susan Stanford Friedman argues that the Niké of H.D.'s Corfu vision is "Athena as the goddess in her form as Nike Apteros or Wingless Victory" (82). Friedman reads H.D.'s Niké in her form as an "attribute" of the goddess Athena rather than as a distinct figure.

[116] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 56.

[117] Ibid., 13.

[118] Ibid., 52, emphasis mine.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

such instructions.[121] Although H.D. narrates her vision in the mythic tradition of "writing-on-walls" re-spelled through the palimpsest of "Biblical [and] classical literature,"[122] the difficulty of her revelation suggests a fundamental "argument" with the revelator narrative to which H.D. is called. Unlike John on the isle of Patmos, whose angel of Revelation appeared before his eyes in clear and precise detail,[123] it proves "a difficult matter" for H.D. to follow the mystic patterns that the disembodied "moving finger" makes against the wall.[124] Furthermore, unlike John, H.D.'s vision offers neither exegesis nor instructions about what to do with her revelation. The harbinger of her vision is rows not, like John's, of golden lampstands but of question marks: "I did not know what this scrollwork indicated […] but now I think this inverted *S*-pattern may have represented a series of question marks, the questions that have been asked through the ages, that the ages will go on asking."[125] H.D.'s vision proposes, in other words, not divine answers but earthly questions, and exegesis lies not with the angel but with H.D. As such, H.D.'s vision differs crucially from the narrative of divine revelation proposed by John and Homer in which the divine gifts a narrative to be

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[121] Feminist critics of psychonalysis might also point out that, as a woman, H.D. could not wield the Gorgon head in the same way as Perseus due to the Medusa's symbolism of the devouring force of woman's sexual and maternal drives. For a historical overview of the Medusa myth, see Erich Neumann, *The Origin and History of Consciousness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 87; for the classic feminist take on the Medusa myth, see Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa."
[122] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 50.
[123] See Revelations 1:1–20. The angel of the Lord who appears to John is clearly visible to the revelator—"I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me" (12, NIV)—and offers clear instructions as to the content, meaning, and *telos* of his vision—"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands in this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (19–20, New International Version).
[124] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 52. H.D. also explicitly compares her revelations to those of the biblical John in her later epic poetry, most notably in the "Tribute to the Angels."
[125] Ibid., 55.

enunciated in the revelator's writing. Rather, H.D. senses that the divine—at least Athena—has not authorized but denounced the revelator's vision, and is threatened by the writing on the wall.

It is crucial, then, that, rather than Athena, it is "Victory, Niké, as I called her exactly," who, like the question marks that punctuate the ages, "then and there goes on."[126] Niké is, in H.D.'s vision, "a common-or-garden angel, like any angel you may find on an Easter or Christmas card," but unlike the common angel, "she is not flat or static, she is in space […] not flat against the wall. She is a moving-picture and fortunately she moves swiftly."[127] Niké's swift movement is another clue to Niké's "argument" with Freud's wingless Athena, for in the mythic frieze, while Athena always appeared "wingless," Niké most often appeared "winged."[128] In the Greek pantheon, Niké is sometimes read, as Susan Stanford Friedman reads her, as an "attribute" or manifestation of Athena, a reading supported by H.D.'s note in *Tribute to Freud* that the Niké of her vision recalled the Athenian "Temple of Victory,"[129] also called the Temple of Athena Niké, which is dedicated to the worship of "Niké Apteros or Wingless Victory."[130] Yet while Athena was worshipped *in the form* of Niké at the Temple of Victory, and while Niké was worshipped as an "attribute" of her mother, Athena, Niké has, too, a narrative of her own. Crucially, this narrative is both mythic and historical, for Niké was recognized as a sort of "mediator" between "gods and men."[131] Indeed, in classical art, Niké often appears as a figurine carried in the hands of

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[126] Ibid. Separated by a section break, the vision of Niké directly follows the vision of the scrollwork question marks.
[127] Ibid.
[128] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Nike."
[129] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 56.
[130] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn,* 82.
[131] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Nike."

Athena or Zeus, and Pausanias's *Description of Greece* describes the statue of Athena in the Athenian Acropolis as "hold[ing] a statue of Niké (Victory) about four cubits high, and in the other hand a spear."[132] Niké, then, is both a goddess in her own right *and* the image of Athena—she is both herself and the hieroglyph of another. Niké is a goddess, in other words, of explicitly "split dimensions"—she is in myth, as is Athena, *and* she is "in space," as a dynamic presence in the world of "men."

Both herself and another, both deity and its icon, Niké inhabits the fluid boundary between myth and history. Niké is a goddess of the frieze, marking the moment at which myth protrudes into the historical world, not "flat against the wall" but carved "in space."[133] In this way, she is perhaps the purest form of *glyphe* (from the Greek *glyphein*, "to carve"), which designates both the symbolic figure *and* the ornamental scrollwork of the frieze.[134] As both *image* and *imago,* Niké inscribed among the sculptural "scrollwork" of ancient interrogation points marks, as does the *glyphe*, the modalities of mythic symbolism and decorative ornamentality "speak[ing] together."[135] The split speech of the god-less is not the easy revelation of the prophet, but a series of images as difficult to exegete as an ancient Doric frieze—another sort of *glyphe*, the hieroglyph. The hieroglyph inhabits, as Niké does, the fluid boundary between two modalities, and Elizabeth Hirsh has even argued that the hieroglyph "inscribes an uncertainty concerning its own nature similar to that of the *eidolon*."[136] Indeed, Niké's shadow reverberates in H.D.'s revelation, for "Niké, Victory" seemed to H.D. "the clue,

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[132] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), ll. 1.24.7.
[133] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 55.
[134] See Hirsh's discussion of the *eidolon* in "Imaginary Images," 447.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 447.

seemed to be my own especial sign or part of my hieroglyph."[137] The hieroglyph is word *and* image, ornament *and* meaning, image *and* imago; it is "sacred writing" carved in the space of history. The narrative heuristic demanded by the hieroglyph is that of "and" rather than "or," and its manifold modalities allow an enunciation of myth and history as complex as Niké and her revelator.[138] The hieroglyphic heuristic is a narrative approach fit for the "split dimensions" of the god-less—and of woman.

Considering the two scenes from *Tribute to Freud* through a hieroglyphic heuristic, Freud's presentation of the wingless and spearless Athena appears as an attempt to codify the hieroglyphic *determinative*—a logogriph designed to disambiguate interpretation of the hieroglyphic system. The Professor deemed such codification necessary after H.D. revealed the hieroglyphic determinative of her Corfu vision, which she deemed the "last concluding symbol."[139] Unlike its difficult predecessors, the final scene of H.D.'s vision appeared as "a clear enough picture or symbol," and presented "a circle like the sun-disk and a figure within the disk; a man […] was reaching out to draw the image of a woman (my Niké) into the sun beside him."[140] This image seemed

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[137] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 56.
[138] Noting that Freud interpreted H.D.'s Corfu vision as a desire for union with her mother, Helen, and for a "material home" (see *Tribute to Freud,* 44), Elizabeth Hirsh counters that "to return home to mother would break down the motherless formal perfection of Nike with the materiality of writing, specifically of a picture writing that contests the entrenched opposition between Image and Symbol, or the closely related opposition between signifier and signified" ("Imaginary Images," 437). H.D.'s "exploration of the borderline between opposites," Hirsh continues, "constitutes the most radical impulse of H.D.'s writing practice, one that was often at odds with her desire to be perfect" (437). It is first important to note that it is Athena, *not* Niké, who is cast in terms of "motherless formal perfection," for although her attributed parentage shifts across Greek mythology, Niké is usually attributed a mother. I would also contest Hirsh's assumption that H.D.'s exploration of the "borderline" between opposites is at odds with her exploration of "perfection"—as we shall see in "The Master" and *Notes on Thought and Vision*, the "and" heuristic opened by this exploration in fact *enables* the perfection of woman.
[139] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 56.
[140] Ibid.

to H.D. to be "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"[141]— the codification and exegesis, in other words, of the hieroglyph's difficult language. In turn, Freud reproached the determinative offered by H.D.'s revelation as "merely an extension of the artist's mind," an "echo of an idea," a "freak thought that had got out of hand, gone too far," and a "dangerous symptom."[142] The counter-determinative offered by Freud is a judgment and a warning against H.D.'s vision of the sun-lit Niké. It is curious that Freud's interpretive warning mirrors that of Athena in H.D.'s vision—Freud's reproach is a sort of "Gorgon's head" held up to one who the guardians of wisdom fear may become "a suspect, an enemy to be dealt with."[143] Indeed, one is tempted to dismiss, as H.D. does, that Freud's Athena was indeed made in the image of "woma[n], as it happened," and to accept Athena instead as "a perfect symbol, made in man's image."[144] Athena need not be inscribed as Niké was beside man in the sun, for she has been a member of the "brotherhood" all along. It is crucial, then, that it is not *Athena* but *Niké* who serves as the "determinative" of H.D.'s hieroglyphic system, for the relationship between Athena and Niké marks the relationship between woman and myth—Niké is both Athena *and* no Athena as H.D. is in both myth and history.[145] Freud's warning against H.D.'s sun-lit Niké is all the more poignant because it also marks, in H.D.'s view, Freud's judgment of "value."[146] In his judgment of wingless

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., 51.
[143] Ibid., 52.
[144] Ibid., 70.
[145] Niké's relationship to myth, in other words, mirrors the relationship to myth that H.D. expounds in *Asphodel,* as she narrates herself "weaving" Penelope's web as "no Penelope"—that is, H.D. bears Penelope's narrative into historical specificity through her body, and through her iteration, shifts the shape of the narrative (136).
[146] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 70.

Athena, H.D. writes, Freud "was speaking in a double sense," valuing both the perfection of the Athenian symbol and the figurine's freedom from "scratch or flaw."[147] H.D. feels, too, Freud's judgment in a "double sense," as both edict and assessment of "actual intrinsic value."[148] This value extends not only to the mythic figurine, but to what H.D. calls the "*pound of spirit* between us, something tangible to be weighed and measured."[149] In both senses, Freud's judgment rules in favor of Athena over Niké. Niké is not, in Freud's pronouncement, "perfect," and it is not hers but Athena's "pound of spirit" that will be "weighed in the balance and—pray God—not be found wanting!"[150] Freud will not be the one to "draw the image of a woman […] into the sun beside him."[151]

H.D. will hold that pen. Indeed, she had already done so, in "The Master," a poetic distillation of her analysis with Freud that she wrote in 1935 but refused to publish during Freud's lifetime.[152] As Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid., 70.
[151] Ibid., 56. Freud's refusal to, as it were, inscribe H.D. into the sun beside him results in the excruciating emotional conundrum that we will consider in H.D.'s poem "The Master." There, H.D. describes Freud as unbearably and lovably human as she reviews the artifacts so dear to him: "he left the room / leaving me alone / with all his old trophies, / the marbles, the vases, the stone Sphynx, / the old, old jars from Egypt; / he left me alone with these things / and his old back was bowed" ([IX] ll. 8-13). Yet the very artifacts whose love and care humanizes the Professor are the embodiment in marble of the myths that, to Freud, determine H.D. as "less"—the wingless Athena, the conquered Sphynx. H.D. finds herself in the familiar position of a woman who dearly loves a demonstrably lovable man who refuses the fullness of her personhood, and whose own personhood is buttressed by his conviction. She continues, blinded by "the sort of terrible tears / that won't fall": "I went away, / I said / "I won't have this tyranny / of an old man / he is too old, / I will die, / if I love him" ([IX] ll. 17-23).
[152] In a November 1935 letter to Bryher, H.D. wrote that she would not "spoi[l]" her analysis with Freud by allowing the poem to be published in her friend the poet Robert Herring's literary review magazine *Life and Letters Today*. The poem was first published in 1981 in *Feminist Studies* alongside a commentary on the poem by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman.

Friedman note in their commentary that accompanied the poem's posthumous publication, "The Master" is an "extraordinary" counterpart to *Tribute to Freud* that "directly addresses the compelling questions of identity that H.D. brought to Freud, but that she did not reveal in her public accounts" of the Professor, most notably her "anger with Freud, her rejection of the prescriptive bias in his theories of female sexuality, her love for women, her bisexuality, and the relationship of her womanhood to her destiny as a poet-prophet."[153] The poem begins in the eulogistic language of the *Tribute*, describing Freud, "the old man," as "very beautiful," and musing,

> I knew wisdom,
> I found measureless truth
> in his words,
> his command
> was final;
> (how did he understand?)[154]

As DuPlessis and Friedman note, the poetic syntax at the beginning of "The Master" seems to "fus[e] Freud and God so that they are like two aspects of one being."[155] Indeed, Freud is implied as the poem's titular "Master," and its first section "recognize[s] that he was beyond all-men."[156] The "tyranny"[157] of Freud's wisdom silences the poet, who concedes, "I don't know what to suggest, I can hardly suggest things to God / […] I do not know what to say to God."[158] Yet silence does not suit the poet, nor does Freud's "talk of the man-strength,"[159] and the poem's fourth section turns from eulogy to anger. "O, it was late," H.D. writes,

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[153] DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman Is Perfect," 419.
[154] H.D., "The Master," in *Collected Poems,* [I] ll. 1-8.
[155] DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman Is Perfect," 420.
[156] H.D., "The Master," [I] ll. 44. DuPlessis and Friedman note that the syntactic confusion of Freud and God, "while a graphic expression of her awe, also makes her challenge to his interpretations a form of blasphemy" ("Woman is Perfect," 420).
[157] Ibid., ll. 42.
[158] Ibid., [II] ll. 1-2, 9.
[159] Ibid., [IV] ll. 18.

> and God will forgive me, my anger,
> but I could not accept it.
> I could not accept from wisdom
> what love taught,
> *woman is perfect*.[160]

The italicized phrase, of course, signifies Freud's determinative of the wingless Athena, which H.D. here explicitly refuses. In its place, the following sections of "The Master" will propose an alternative determinative to the hieroglyph of woman.

Like Freud's "perfect" determinative, H.D.'s vision of perfection is grounded in woman's body. Yet H.D.'s determinative, "herself perfect,"[161] answers Freud's determinative with a very different vision. The poem's final image—the "last and concluding symbol"[162] of "The Master"—is the mysterious Rhodocleia, whose worshippers cry together,

> "O heart of the sun
> rhododendron,
> Rhodocleia,
> we are unworthy your beauty,
> you are near beauty the sun
> you are that Lord become woman."[163]

Scholarly readers of "The Master" have largely glossed the figure of Rhodocleia as a "goddess"[164] or "dancing woman,"[165] yet it is crucial to observe that the "goddess" Rhodocleia does not appear, as do Athena and even Niké, in any book of Greek myth that might have graced Freud's shelves. Rhodocleia is, crucially, H.D.'s creation, and as H.D. asserts the divine right to "make people" by calling Rhodocleia by name, she too *is made* by the call of the name she creates. It is curious that, although the name

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[160] Ibid., ll. 21-26.
[161] Ibid., [V] ll. 43.
[162] From H.D.'s definition of "determinative" in *Tribute to Freud,* 56.
[163] H.D., "The Master," [XIII] ll. 20-25.
[164] See Friedman, *Penelope's Web*.
[165] See footnote ten in DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman is Perfect," 428.

Rhodocleia does not appear in Ovid or in Homer, the name *looks* as though it should appear there, a peer to the grammar of Greek mythic language. This is surely no accident, for H.D. saw herself as bound to the language of myth even as she re-spelled this language in her poetry,[166] and indeed, I propose that Rhodocleia represents a composite re-spelling of the "split dimensions" of mythic and historical identities, and as such, precisely embodies H.D.'s "and" narrative heuristic. H.D.'s Rhodocleia may well represent the poetic union of "Rhodos," the wife of the Greek sun god, and "Cleia" or "Cleïs," the daughter of the Greek poet Sappho.[167] As such, Rhodocleia would finally fulfill the promise of Niké—woman, beloved "heart of the sun,"[168] inscribed into the "sun-disk"[169] throne beside her husband, Helios. Yet despite the intimate kinship between the man and woman in the sun-disk, the latter identity inscribed in Rhodocleia's name suggests that it is not the hand of Helios, but of the poet, who has inscribed the goddess in the sun. Inscribed also in her name is the poet's preoccupation with the still hand of the Master, for she invokes also the Muse of several minor poems

[166] H.D. scholarship tends to cast H.D.'s re-spelling of myth, whether Greek or Freudian, in the language of "translation," but this metaphor is not quite right. DuPlessis and Friedman, for instance, argue that, once faced with Freud "utter[ing] his statement about 'perfection' as if in a powerful foreign tongue," H.D.'s "project is to 'translate' [Freud's] words and gesture into her own language, one that is not based on the premise of female inferiority" ("Woman is Perfect," 124). Yet, crucially, the "foreign tongue" to which H.D. compares Freud's tone is *Greek*, the very language of myth to which H.D. is also called: "She has lost her spear. He might have been talking Greek" (*Tribute to Freud*, 69). The move from the italicized Freudian "*woman is perfect*" in the fourth section of "The Master" to the triumphant declaration that man "shall see woman, / perfect" in the eleventh section is not produced by translation but transposition—the language is the same *because it is the only language*.

[167] See Sappho's poem "Cleïs": "Sleep, darling / I have a small / daughter called / Cleïs, who is / like a golden / flower." Sappho, "Cleïs," in *Sappho,* trans. Mary Bernard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), ll. 1-5.

[168] H.D., "The Master," [XII] ll. 20.

[169] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 56.

by Rufinus, an epigrammatic poet of late antiquity, which address "Rodocleia" on the issue of "Her Melancholy Singing":

> Still, Rodocleia, brooding on the dead,
> Still singing of the meads of asphodel,
> Lands desolate of delight?
> Say, hast though dreamed of, or remembered,
> The shores where shadows dwell,
> Nor know the sun, nor see the stars of night?[170]

Rhodocleia, like the author of the poem, "broods" upon the loss of the great Master—for, as H.D. muses, although "one does not forgive him," yet also "one does not forget him / who makes God-in-all possible."[171] Read as a "tribute" to Freud, the first lines of Rufinus's poem recall Freud, the knowing analyst with pen in hand, sifting the unconscious shores of H.D.'s "dreamed of" visions. Yet, unlike Rufinus's "Rodocleia," H.D.'s Rhodocleia is woman-penned, and she "know[s] the sun" as mistress in both its senses, as lover and as "Lord." It is she, not Freud's "stone Sphynx"[172] or "white Mother"[173] who has the last word. The "double sense" of H.D.'s Freudian theory mirrors the "double sense" of the tribute itself. Like Freud's doubled "judgment" of woman, Elizabeth Hirsh argues, we should read H.D.'s "tribute" to Freud in both senses of the word—as praise, eulogy, and memorial, but also as "payoff, extortion, blackmail: In short, a canny acknowledgement of his power partly veiled by [and] as an expression of

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[170] Rufinus, "To Rodocleia: On Her Melancholy Singing," 1-6. Collected in *Grass of Parnassus: Rhymes Old and New,* trans. Andrew Lang (London: Longman's Green, 1889), ll. 1-6. My suspicion that H.D. was familiar with this poem is buttressed by Aldington's assertion in *Asphodel*, cited earlier in this chapter, that "you are that Rhodocleia," which mirrors the language of Rufinus's poem: "I know thee who thou art ! / *That* Rodocleia, Glory of the Rose" (ll. 26-27). One wonders, too, if Rufinus's "meads of asphodel" is the source of H.D.'s substitution of "asphodel" for "amaranth" in her citation of W.S. Landor in *Asphodel*'s epigraph.
[171] H.D., "The Master," [X] ll. 1-6.
[172] Ibid., [IX] ll. 10.
[173] Ibid., [II] ll. 14.

indebtedness."[174] H.D.'s "tribute" to Freud is the tribute of Niké to Athena, which re-enunciates, *in memoriam*, the inescapable language of her godly inheritance, but which retains her wings. The "tribute" blasphemes, as it were, in the language of the prophet. The poem, finally, is "mastered" not by Freud, but Rhodocleia—her beauty and ecstatic "split dimensions" the determinative to woman's "perfection."

Yet, in H.D.'s tribute, man is implicated in woman's "perfection" in several notable ways. First, although man is denied participation in Rhodocleia's "mysteries"—to both godhead and its ecstatic celebration—his eyes and his knees are demanded:

> no man will be present in those mysteries,
> yet all men will kneel,
> no man will be potent,
> important,
> yet all men will feel
> what it is to be a woman[175]

Men will see, faced with woman's perfection,

> how long they have been blind,
> poor men
> poor man-kind
> how long
> this thought of the man-pulse has tricked them,
> has weakened them,

and will, finally, "see woman, / perfect."[176] It is curious that DuPlessis and Friedman read the "sun-worshippers" of the poem's final stanza as "the 'we' of women

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[174] Hirsh, "Imaginary Images," 432. It is only in this sense that we could read H.D.'s "tribute" to Freud as Joseph Riddell reads it, as an allegorical "tribute" to the mythic signifying power of the phallus. See Joseph Riddell, "H.D.'s Scene of Writing—Poetry As (And) Analysis," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 12, no. 1 (1979): 41-59.
[175] H.D., "The Master," [XI] ll. 8-13. One cannot help but read a "double sense" in this final line: By his devotion to Rhodocleia, man will finally appreciate woman's divinity; barred presence in the "mysteries" of "man-strength" ([IV] ll. 18-19), to kneel, to feel impotent and unimportant, is "what it is to be a woman."
[176] Ibid., ll. 19-27.

worshipping together,"[177] for the poet's declaration that "men" and "man-kind" "shall see woman, perfect" is immediately followed, in the first line of Section XIII, by:

> And they did;
> I was not the only one that cried
> madly,
> madly,
> we were together,
> we were one; […]
>
> sun-worshippers,
> we flung
> as one voice
> our cry
> Rhodocleia[178]

Perhaps man's acclamation is required, in part, due to the impossibility of "forget[ting]" and "forgiv[ing]" him—it is poignant, indeed, that the "brotherhood" of psychoanalysis and poetry rejects the very "God-in-all" that it "makes possible"[179]—as well as, in part, due to his inescapable presence in the palimpsest of myth and history. Man's second implication in woman's "perfection" is more complex, for it distills his power without the necessity of his body. Indeed, as scholarly readers of "The Master" have emphasized, H.D.'s perfected "woman" is "complete in herself,"[180] for, as H.D. establishes in an often-cited line, "she needs no man."[181] Yet this is because, as the stanza continues, "herself / is that dart and pulse of the male."[182] The poet distinguishes her proposition from Freud's formulation of "man-kind" by her insistence that this perfection belongs to "*her*self," and by the parenthetical rejoinder to Freud's imagined protest, "ah, where is your man-strength?"[183] It is, indeed, a curious formulation of

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[177] DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman is Perfect," 427.
[178] H.D., "The Master," [XXII] ll. 1-13.
[179] Ibid., [X] ll. 1-5.
[180] DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman is Perfect," 423.
[181] H.D., "The Master," [V] ll. 39.
[182] Ibid., ll. 41.
[183] Ibid., ll. 6.

woman's "perfection" that embodies the "pulse of the male." This vision of womanhood is best understood through H.D.'s hieroglyph of the flower, which blooms in excess through the pages of "The Master." In Section V, woman is imagined as "this flower / that in itself had power over the whole earth,"[184] and her blossoming into being is described as "the delicate pulse of the narcissus bud, / pushing from the earth."[185] The hieroglyph of the flower, I propose, is "perfect" in its union of the mythic symbolism of femininity and fertility and the self-pollinating "dart and pulse of the male." The floral hieroglyph, in other words, counter-determines Freud's withholding of Athena's spear by granting her a stamen, supplanting the withheld male distinction of destruction with bisexuate parthenogenesis. This creation is, as Rhodocleia's name suggests, of no less "intrinsic value" than that of man, for she is inscribed into the sun-disk beside him; it is the creation of Sappho in her daughter's name-sake poem, the work of both mother and poet. It is also, like the "narcissus bud" that pulses as it blooms, insistently self-oriented, poeticizing its perfection of pulsing stamen that bursts into vulvular bulb, in its perfection demanding creation, too, of the landscape: "Rhododendrons, awake."[186]

The hieroglyph of the flower appears also in *Tribute to Freud,* as H.D. recalls with the Professor a memory from her childhood. In this scene, as she walks the roads near her home with her brother, a gardener invites the young Hilda to choose any flower from his garden as her own. She chooses the "Madonna lily," which she plans to present to her mother, and the gardener cuts the lily's stem to present the young girl with the flower. When Hilda presents the flower to her mother, the mother instructs

[184] Ibid., ll. 37-38.
[185] Ibid., ll. 4.
[186] Ibid., ll. 19-20.

Hilda to plant the flower on her grandfather's grave.[187] In Freud's reading of the scene, "the old man was obviously, he said, God," and the "lily was the Annunciation-lily."[188] H.D. is, in Freud's reading, cast as the virgin Mary, for the scene took place in H.D.'s hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Bethlehem, as Freud argued, "is the town of Mary."[189] Freud reads the memory as the familiar narrative of God's impregnation of Mary with the Christ-child, who is born to overcome the grave. Yet the flower of H.D.'s memory does not overcome but ornaments the grave, and it was not Mary but an "ivory Vishnu" figurine on Freud's desk, "sit[ting] upright in his snake-hood like the piston of a calla-lily," that prompted H.D.'s memory.[190] Certainly, Vishnu and Mary make a curious pair of counter-determinatives to H.D.'s childhood recollection. In Freud's reading, H.D. is conventionally cast as a Madonna-figure who conducts the lily's symbolic fertility between God-the-Father and the grandfather in the grave. This role of the Madonna did not appeal to H.D., who asserted in *Asphodel*, "I always think the most awful thing in the world would be to be the mother of God."[191] Read, as Freud reads it, as the Biblical narrative of the Madonna, H.D.'s childhood memory is both a tragedy and a warning. The "Madonna," this reading suggests, candidly concedes her fertility to the "brotherhood," and this concession necessitates her amputation from the taproot of vitality. The "Madonna" narrative of maternity is neither creative nor visionary, for it marks, as H.D. writes in *Asphodel*, the "utter uninventiveness of God,"[192] and restricts the visionary scope of the cut lily to the gravestone on which it is planted.

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[187] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 120-21.
[188] Ibid., 123. In Christian symbolic art, the "Annunciation lily" traditionally symbolizes the Madonna's virginity and spiritual purity.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 122.
[191] H.D., *Asphodel*, 13.
[192] Ibid., 164.

The Madonna's concession to God's uninventive generation cedes the power of the stamen or piston, the "dart and pulse of the male," to a "brotherhood" that would deny in her that pulse. Yet affirmation of the stamen shifts the narrative entirely—indeed, here, the stamen shifts the hieroglyph across continents and religions. In place of Mary, then, is the flowering Vishnu, Hindu creator of the universe, whose shape-shift between genders secured for the gods the elixir of life.[193] The bisexuate image of flowering Vishnu recalls, of course, the flowering Rhodocleia, whose pulsing narcissus bud makes her the flower which, "need[ing] no man," "in itself had power over the whole earth."[194] If the Madonna myth marks woman's narrative call to generation, H.D.'s hieroglyph of the lily clarifies that the Madonna's generation is, at best, compromised parthenogenesis. How much more "uninventive" is God than Rhodocleia, whose blooming bisexuate body is, in botanical terms, "perfect."[195]

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[193] See in the narrative epic *Mahabharata* the fascinating Hindu myth of Mohini, the female avatar of Vishnu, whose shape-shifting seduction of a host of *asura* or demons allows her to secure the *Amrita*, or elixir of immortality, from the thieving *asura* to secure immortality for the *devas* of the Hindu pantheon. It is also noteworthy that while, traditionally, the Hindu triumvirate are worshipped in their masculine "aspect," the gods are genderless, as is the Absolute or *Brahman* to which their worship leads the faithful.

[194] H.D., "The Master," [V] 38-39.

[195] Botanical science clarifies that some plants produce flowers that contain both a stamen and a pistil, while others produce only a stamen or only a pistil and require cooperation with a counterpart to reproduce. Botany has deemed the stamen a "male" part and the pistil a "female" part, anthropomorphizing flowers with phallic "filaments" and "ovaries." Flowers that contain only one "sex" are called "imperfect flowers," and those that contain both "male" and "female" parts are called "perfect flowers." H.D.'s botanical hieroglyph not only highlights the beauty and fertility of woman's "perfection," but brilliantly offers the language of botanical science as evidence in her "argument" with psychoanalysis—if Freud won't listen to her argument, perhaps that of another scientific discipline will suffice.

The Lady's Tribute to Poetic *Vision*

> To every man and woman in the world it is given at some time or another, in some form or another, to make the choice.
>
> Every man and woman is free to accept or deny life—to accept or reject this questionable gift—this thistle.
> —H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision*

> I said, I can not name it,
> there is no name;
>
> he said,
> "invent it."
> —H.D., "Tribute to the Angels"

In a letter to Bryher, her lover, companion, and the adoptive mother of her child, H.D. wrote, "I have gone terribly deep with Papa [Freud]. He says 'you have two things to hide, one that you were a girl, the other that you were a boy.' It appears that I am that all-but-extinct phenomena, the perfect bi."[196] H.D. hypothesizes that her diagnosis as the "perfect bi" is intimately related to her creative drive, for "what I write commits me," she wrote, "to one sex, or the other, I no longer HIDE."[197] Freud's diagnosis of H.D. as the "perfect bi" gave H.D. the language to consider her erotic love for both men and women, and Freud's formulation of this language is the primary indication, in "The Master," of his proximity to God:

> I had two loves separate;

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[196] Letter to Bryher. H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The validation that H.D. found in Freud's diagnostic "call" recalls, too, the language of "interpellation." As we shall see in our consideration of "The Master," while H.D.'s bisexual identity was crucially formed by the "call" of Freudian theory, H.D., too, re-spelled Freud's interpellative "call" on her own terms, and the bisexuate Rhodocleia differs crucially from that narrated in Freudian theory.
[197] Ibid. It is noteworthy that H.D.'s poetry was often characterized, especially by her contemporaries, as masculine and "crystalline." Alfred Kreymborg once mused that, in H.D.'s poetry, "never the soft, the effeminate, is allowed to intrude, not even among the flowers." Quoted in Bonnie Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990), 54.

God who loves the mountains,
alone knew why
and understood
and told the old man
to explain
the impossible,
which he did.[198]

Yet what Freud's theory made possible it did not authorize, for when H.D. relayed the details of her youthful love affair with Frances Gregg, confiding to Freud that she "had been infatuated with Frances Josepha and might have been happy with her," Freud quickly responded, "No—biologically, no."[199] In *Asphodel*, H.D. muses of another "perfect bi," Joan of Arc, that she "shouldn't ever, ever have told them that [she] saw things," for her bodily perfection produced danger as well as visions: "They had trapped her, a girl who was a boy and they would always do that. They would always trap them, bash their heads like broken flowers from their stalks, break them for seeing things, having 'visions,' seeing things like she did and like Fayne Rabb [the Frances character]. This was the warning, Joan of Arc."[200] Scholars of H.D.'s work have productively considered the Sapphic manifestation of her bisexuality, and many feminist critics have rightly and reparatively foregrounded the "experience of erotic and emotional bonds with women" in H.D.'s work.[201] Yet H.D.'s diagnosis as the "perfect bi" is constitutive as well as erotic, and we will here focus our attention on H.D.'s ontological constitution as "bi"—what I have botanically termed the "bisexuate" as an

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[198] H.D., "The Master," [II] ll. 33-40.
[199] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* 152.
[200] H.D., *Asphodel,* 9.
[201] This focus is visible across the work of Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman; here, DuPlessis and Friedman, "Woman is Perfect," 423. DuPlessis and Friedman offer particularly strong Sapphic readings of H.D.'s flowers, noting the flower's symbolism of both the vagina and of lesbian eroticism. My reading of the flower as bisexuate complements rather than contests this reading. See also Claire Buck's *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse*, which proposes a feminist psychoanalytic reading of H.D.'s "bisexual" language.

attribute of a "bisexuality" that is largely cast, in both theoretical and popular parlance, as primarily a function of desire.[202]

Freud's theory of bisexuality, H.D. saw, was a theory of bifurcation, and of conflict; ironically, it ends not in perfection, but in flowers "broken […] from their stalks."[203] H.D.'s vision of the "bi" re-spells the Freudian narrative in the language of "and," the language of the "perfect" flower. As in the case of the flowering lily, this vision of the "perfect bi" is intimately kin to both woman's creativity and procreativity—to Sappho as both mother and poet. H.D. offers her own theorization of the "perfect bi" in her under-read treatise *Notes on Thought and Vision,* which proposes an economy of visionary creation rooted in the bisexuate vitality of woman's body. H.D. drafted this treatise during a 1919 sojourn in the Scilly Islands almost two decades before her analysis with Freud, and the "somewhat inchoate" theorization enunciated here established both, in Albert Gelpi's words, the "essential ideas she would come to express more profoundly in the great sequence of [the] *Trilogy,*"[204] and her gendered "argument" with Freud. Indeed, though H.D. would later find wisdom and validation in Freud's theorization of the "bi," these early *Notes* are precious for their distance from Freudian language and their unadulteration by the specter of woman's "lack." The theorization of the "perfect bi" found here is notably little changed from that embodied

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[202] In other words, for H.D., as for Freud, to be the "perfect bi" is not only to love both men and women, but to *be* both male and female, as hieroglyphically enunciated in the flowering Rhodocleia. In no way does this diminish the importance of the dual erotic drive—the "and" erotic drive is embodied in the bisexual constitution.

[203] H.D., *Asphodel*, 9. Here, H.D. anticipates the spirit of later 20th century feminist critics who would accuse Freudian bisexuality as masculinity in disguise. See, most notably, Hélène Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa* and Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

[204] Albert Gelpi, "The Thistle and the Serpent," in *Notes on Thought and Vision* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982), 7.

in the flowering Rhodocleia of "The Master"—strong tribute to the rhetorical and visionary strength of H.D.'s side of the "argument."

H.D. begins her *Notes* by proposing a visionary hierarchy of the "states or manifestations of life: body, mind, over-mind," asserting that "the aim of men and women of the highest development is equilibrium, balance, growth of the three at once."[205] The "over-mind" is the locus of creativity, and is inherently bisexuate: "Vision is of two kinds," H.D. argues, "vision of the womb and vision of the brain,"[206] and "the brain and the womb are both centres of consciousness, equally important."[207] H.D. imagines vision of the brain as a "jelly-fish consciousness" that evokes, in her "personal language or vision," the "serpent" of death and wisdom,[208] and which constitutes "the seeds cast into the ground" of creativity.[209] Just as it "takes a man and a woman to create another life," both of these "two forms of seeds," one "in the head and one in the body," are necessary to "make a new spiritual birth."[210] Creative vision requires, as it were, both the stamen and the bulb. Although the serpentine "jelly-fish" center is metaphorized here as a "man" whose "seeds" facilitate creation, this center varies starkly from the psychoanalytic "phallus" and the serpent of Greek myth, for it lives centered as "a foetus in the body." [211] Indeed, H.D. continues, "the majority" of vision is "vision of the womb,"[212] and while "all men have possibilities of developing this

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[205] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision,* 17.
[206] Ibid., 20.
[207] Ibid., 21.
[208] Ibid., 40.
[209] Ibid., 50.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., 19. To clarify the connection between the jelly-fish and the serpent, H.D. writes: "The world of vision has been symbolized in all ages by various priestly cults in all countries by the serpent. In my personal language or vision, I call this serpent a jelly-fish" (40).
[212] Ibid., 21.

vision,"[213] it is "easier for a woman to attain this state of consciousness than for a man."[214] For H.D., visionary creativity is anchored not only in the theoretical matrix but in her own burgeoning womb, and she continues: "For me, it was before the birth of my child that the jelly-fish consciousness seemed to come definitely."[215] The relationship between the womb and the "vision of the womb," as well as between man and the male "dart and pulse," is a question that would follow H.D. into her later work, and a question that these *Notes* do not fully resolve.[216] As is evidenced by H.D.'s post-partum anecdote, the historical woman's womb is implied in the mythic "womb-vision," but the two are not co-constitutive. The body "may be used," in these *Notes*, as an "approach to the over-mind or universal mind,"[217] and is unglamorously metaphorized as a "lump of coal" that "fulfills its highest function when it is being consumed."[218] In this way, the relationship between the womb and the "vision of the womb" recalls the palimpsestic relationship between historical woman and myth. Indeed, in *Her*, H.D. uses the language of the jelly-fish to describe her relationship to HER: "I am Her. She is Her. Knowing her, I know Her. She is some amplification of myself like amoeba giving birth, by breaking off, to amoeba. I am a sort of mother, a sort of sister to Her."[219] The

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[213] Ibid., 23.
[214] Ibid., 20.
[215] Ibid.
[216] I hope that future scholars of H.D. will consider the fraught relationship between H.D.'s ecstatic vision of creative pregnancy and the reality of her motherhood. It is both curious and crucial that, despite the visionary creativity opened by her pregnancy, H.D. the mother had little to do with her offspring, Perdita, offering the child to Bryher to raise "*exactly* like a puppy" (*Asphodel,* 206). Perdita wrote of her mother, "H.D. was hardly an archetypal mother … she was intensely maternal—on an esoteric plane. She venerated the concept of motherhood, but was unprepared for its disruptions. She flinched at sudden noise, and fled from chaos. Mercifully for her, she was well-buffered. See Perdita Schaffner, "The Egyptian Cat," in *Hedylus* (Redding Ridge: Black Swan, 1980), 185.
[217] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision*, 46.
[218] Ibid., 47.
[219] H.D., *Her*, 158.

body is, in H.D.'s vision, the historical "oyster" that creates the mythopoetic "pearl of great price."[220] It does so singularly, like the flowering "narcissus bud" that called from the fields not only rhododendron, but Rhodocleia, too, myth's re-birth in stamen and bulb.

While the perfect vision of the "bi" is available to men, it develops most spectacularly in women. Perhaps this is a function of the "oyster" of the womb, or perhaps it is because men, fixated on "the man-strength,"[221] refuse to honor woman's cognate to the serpent. Indeed, the male friends and mentors to whom H.D. confided these *Notes* responded with warning or incomprehension. The sexologist Havelock Ellis, H.D. reports in *Tribute to Freud*, "appeared unsympathetic, or else he did not understand or else he may have thought it was a danger signal."[222] Although Freud claimed to "underst[and] perfectly," he misdiagnosed H.D.'s ecstatic bisexuate vision as loneliness,[223] and although Pound helped H.D. to incorporate the visionary "serpent and thistle" of the *Notes* into a personal "sign or totem," he failed to grasp the bisexuate determination of the symbols.[224] Like the jelly-fish and the womb, like the stamen and the bulb, H.D.'s signature thistle and serpent mark the bisexuate basis of her creative vision. While H.D.'s signet has been widely exegeted by both H.D. and her scholars,[225] the most striking determinative to the hieroglyphic thistle and serpent is the "singularly prickly Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with its attendant Serpent."[226] The

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[220] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision*, 50-51.
[221] H.D., "The Master," [IV] ll. 18.
[222] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 130.
[223] Ibid., 131.
[224] Ibid., 65.
[225] See, in particular, H.D.'s attempts to exegete the signet with Pound and Freud in *Tribute to Freud* (most notably 64-65 and 88-90), and Susan Stanford Friedman's *Psyche Reborn*.
[226] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, 89.

thistle is, as God tells it, the barren consequence of woman's search for knowledge. In H.D.'s hands, however, the thistle and serpent grow together vitally creative, the parthenogenetic "Flowering of the Rod."[227]

The oyster's body parthogenetically creates a pearl of great price that asymmetrically embodies the pearl's narrative calling. The pearl recalls the pearls of Aphrodite, but bears the marks of history, and of the oyster's body. The pearls of Aphrodite "make" the oyster as the oyster "makes" the pearl. The pearl is its myth's palimpsestic "tribute," embodying both praise and blasphemy. The poetics of the oyster is the poetics that H.D. would later enunciate as the "goddess in the machine," who, "using the machine," grows "greater" than the machinery.[228] She grows "greater" through the language of the poet, and through the poetic re-spelling of her name in the mythic palimpsest. Let us end, then, where we began, answering the call of "old deity" with HER re-spelling in H.D.'s late *Trilogy* sequence, a "Tribute" not to Freud but to the "Angels."

H.D.'s "Tribute to the Angels" forms the center of the epic *Trilogy*, and narrates the poet's divine encounter with the "Lady." Bred by the brotherhood to seek divinity in "man-strength," the poet begins her quest for the divine searching for "Gabriel," "Uriel," or "Annael," the "moon-regent Angel[s]" of biblical myth.[229] She is surprised to find, instead, the "Lady," though when she sees Her, she has known Her all along: "How could I imagine / the Lady herself would come instead?"[230] The Lady marks divinity in split dimensions, and her attributes are manifold:

> We have seen her
> The world over,

[227] See H.D.'s late poem of this name in her *Trilogy* sequence.
[228] H.D., *Asphodel*, 166.
[229] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," in *Collected Poems*, [28], ll. 1, 14.
[230] Ibid., ll. 15-16.

> Our Lady of the Goldfinch,
> Our Lady of the Candelabra,
> Our Lady of the Pomegranate,
> Our Lady of the Chair […][231]

Yet although the Lady is "of the Pomegranate," she is not precisely Persephone; though she is "of the Goldfinch," she neither quite Madonna nor the Christ.[232] But "none of these" familiar myths, the poet writes, "suggest her as I saw her,"[233] for in the poet's vision the Lady "bore / none of her usual attributes; / the Child was not with her."[234] The Lady is not quite, as the poet is assured by other poets, the "new Eve who comes / clearly to return, to retrieve / what she lost the race,"[235] for she bears none of the shame that Eve's narrative requires. Nor is she, as the poet is assured, quite "Holy Wisdom, / *Santa Sophia*, the SS of *Sanctus Spiritus*, / so by facile reasoning, logically / the incarnate symbol of the Holy Ghost,"[236] for she "wasn't," says the poet, "hieratic," nor was she "frozen"[237] in the exegesis of priests. She "carries a book," but it is "not / the tome of the ancient wisdom," and, indeed, its pages, the poet imagines, "are the blank pages / of the unwritten volume of the new."[238] While she "carries over the cult / of the *Bona Dea*,"[239] she is "greater" than the Roman fertility goddess, for she is not only Madonna but a "mother-father" who "tears at our entrails" with an "unsatisfied duality" that the

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[231] Ibid., [29], ll. 1-6.
[232] In early Christian iconography, the goldfinch is often thought to symbolize the soul or the Passion of Christ. One medieval myth held that the spot of red on the goldfinch's plumage is inherited from the goldfinch who plucked a thorn from Christ's crown of thorns on the cross. A common triad in medieval alterpieces was the Christ Child, the Madonna, and the Goldfinch: See, for instance, Luca di Tommè's *Virgin and Child Holding the Goldfinch in His Hand.*
[233] H.D., "Tribute to the Angels," [31], ll. 1-2.
[234] Ibid., [32], ll. 12-14.
[235] Ibid., [36], ll. 8-10.
[236] Ibid., ll. 1-4.
[237] Ibid., [38], ll. 3.
[238] Ibid., ll. 9-12.
[239] Ibid., ll. 7-8.

books of ancient wisdom do not "satisfy."[240] The book the Lady carries marks a new turn of the palimpsest, its blank pages etched with the erasures of history—her book "is our book,"

> written
> or unwritten, its pages will reveal […]
> the same—different—the same attributes,
> different yet the same as before.[241]

The Lady's book is, indeed, as she is, and as is H.D.'s poem, a "tribute to the Angels"[242] that emphasizes both her inheritance and her blasphemy of the narratives she re-spells. The poet's invocation of the Lady is cast as the work of an "alchemist,"[243] which, though patronized by Hermes, Greek god of exegesis, is not quite authorized by "hieratic" Hermeticism. As the Lady's name "makes" the poet through her "tribute" to the Angels, the poet "makes" the Lady through her poetic alchemy. The poet gathers familiar words of "old deity" in which the "tome of ancient wisdom" has cast the goddess,

> a word most bitter, *marah*
> a word bitterer still, *mar*,
> sea, brine, breaker, seducer,
> giver of life, giver of tears;

and with her pen, as she "polish[es] the crucible / and set[s] the jet aflame," she spells alchemically until

> *marah-mar*
> are melted, fuse and join
> and change and alter,
> mer, mere, mère, mater, Maia, Mary,
> Star of the Sea,
> Mother.[244]

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[240] Ibid., [9], ll. 7-10.
[241] Ibid., [39], ll. 19-24.
[242] Ibid., [41], ll. 4.
[243] Ibid., [1], ll. 2.
[244] Ibid., [8], ll. 3-14.

The Lady's name, the poet muses, has been "desecrated" by her spelling in mythic tradition; the "knaves and fools" who have penned her have

> done you impious wrong,
> Venus, for venery stands for impurity
> and Venus as desire
> is venereous, lascivious,
> while the very root of the word shrieks
> like a mandrake.[245]

Yet in the hands of the poet, the goddess is grammatically cast, too, in this book's turn of the palimpsest, as

> O holiest one,
> Venus whose name is kin
> to venerate,
> venerator.[246]

The union of desecration and veneration is endemic to the Lady's name, and "makes" the Lady, as the Lady, through the poet's hand, "makes" and re-makes her name through the poet's pen. Yet although, re-spelled by the poet's hand, the Lady is freed from the "cave" in which the brotherhood of poets caged the Sibyl,[247] the marks of myth are still upon her story. The Lady's name pays "tribute," however painfully extracted, to the language of her calling; she is "made," through her name, both "venerous" *and* "venerated." As "Psyche, the butterfly, out of the cocoon,"[248] the god-less claims, invariably, her wings. Yet though she is, as scholars emphasize, triumphantly "reborn," this birth leaves her a nominal inheritance that presses narrative cocoon-marks on her body. She is spelled by, as she re-spells, the myth that gives its language to her being. The Lady's triumph lies not in her re-birth but in the narrative possibilities she opens. The inheritance she offers to the next turn of the palimpsest is that not only of Athena,

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[245] Ibid., [11], ll. 3-10.
[246] Ibid., [12], ll. 8-10.
[247] Ibid., [38], ll. 15-16.
[248] Ibid., ll. 19-20.

but of Rhodocleia; not only of Madonna but of the Lady; of a Psyche more "venerated" than "venereous." She offers this inheritance, as does H.D., through language and through her body, in Sappho's role of both poet and mother. For although she marks, of course, the narrative inheritance of myth, she also marks, as H.D. did, as we do, the historical specificity of woman:

> This is no rune nor symbol […]
> she was not impalpable like a ghost,
> she was not awe-inspiring like a Spirit,
> she was not even over-whelming
> like an Angel.[249]

She is, as we are, myth made *palpable,* not only the abstracted "*rosa mystica*,"[250] but also the "cluster of garden-pinks" and the "Christmas rose."[251] She is both *rosa* and "Christmas rose"—the hardy *hellebore*, which, in the myth, the girl lacking a suitable gift gave to the Christ child. The spelling of her body into poetry marks the place at which, with great hope, "we are satisfied, we are happy, we begin again."[252] She is Hellas reborn *hellebore*—a perfect flower.

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[249] Ibid., [40], ll. 1, 17-20.
[250] To see the *rosa mystica* extracted squarely into myth, see T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding."
[251] Ibid., [43], ll. 20-22.
[252] Ibid., ll. 9-10.

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