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'Shored Against the Ruins': Edifying Romantic and Modernist Thought

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“SHORED AGAINST THE RUINS”: EDIFYING ROMANTIC
AND MODERNIST THOUGHT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts
English

By
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Accepted By:
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Abstract

This thesis explores the continuing aesthetic, philosophical, and social influences of Romantic and Modernist poetries. I trace the influence of Romanticism and Modernism as one that allows for a medium of expression that more clearly interprets both the act of reading and writing. These artistic periods and styles mutually serve to establish and validate enlightened ways of thinking that are currently lacking in the present day. I look to the poetry, philosophy, and prophecy of artists from both eras as they fuse and diffuse demonstrating the unique points of connection and disconnection for each of the poets whose texts are analyzed. The poets included in this inquiry into modes of thought that are explored and revealed during these two periods are: Schlegel, Blake, Coleridge, Hulme, Eliot, and H.D. I use this unique, and perhaps unexpected blend, to demonstrate how it is both the likenesses and differences in each of these poets' aesthetics that render them equally reflective of enlightened thought. The idea that the individual is and remains whole, while also reaching for unity with a greater more infinite whole affects all these writers. It also affects how readers view these writers. And it certainly affects how this thesis is constructed.

Dedication

To my father John and my mother Rebecca

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Brian McGrath for the privilege of working with him. Dr. McGrath's guidance and encouragement as my thesis director and academic mentor have empowered me as both a thinker and writer. He has helped me to discover clarity of voice as a writer and prepared me to move forward as a scholar by teaching me how to more closely say what I really mean. Thanks should also be extended to Catherine Paul. My interest in Modernist poetry, especially as relates to Romantic poetry, was first sparked in Dr. Paul's class. Her praise and critique fostered the confidence I needed to follow my own interests at the then unknown genesis of this project. I am also blessed to have the nurturing support of Jillian Weise. She has continuously made herself available to me for discussion and has taught me new and creative methods of both reading poetic texts and writing.

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Introduction

Progressive thought defines and is defined by many of the poetic and critical works from Romantics (about 1789-1832) and Modernists (roughly 1910-1960). One of the most significant shared connections between Romanticism and Modernism is found in their commitment to the journey toward enlightenment. These explorations into the mind reveal a fusion of individual and collective consciousness discoverable through the process of interpretive reading. In this thesis I consider several key poets from the Romantic and Modern eras in order to support my claim that Romanticism and Modernism are primarily defined by the effort to reach for enlightened thought.

I argue that we should look to Romantic and Modernist works in order to resurrect and redirect types of thinking that missing in the present day. The journey toward enlightenment on both an individual and social level, with free-thought serving as a starting point, is represented in the works I chose. Romanticism is frequently thought of as anti-enlightenment. While Romanticism reacts against philosophies of the Age of Enlightenment (around 1680-1790), it does not react against the idea of enlightenment.

Immanuel Kant offers a famous new definition of enlightenment in his “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” I use his definition of enlightenment to understand the idea of thinking pursued by Romantic and Modernist texts. Kant says, “*Enlightenment is mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.*”¹ He contends, “*Immaturity* is the inability to make use of one’s own understanding without the guidance of another.” It does not stem from a “lack of understanding but rather in the lack of

1. Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* 58-59, original in italics.

resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another.” Enlightenment is not a measure of knowledge in terms of facts and figures, but rather an ability to understand and interpret learned information in order to form one’s own opinion. Vast social enlightenment, as I argue appears in the Romantic and Modern eras, requires the materials from which to draw interpretable information. Kant points to the published word. An audience with the intellectual maturity and courage to think freely must then read the text. Readers who engage in reading by taking the responsibility of individually interpreting works embark on the journey toward enlightenment.

Like Kant, I support freethinking as the basis for enlightened thought and question whether “Rules and formulas, these mechanical instruments of rational use (or rather misuse) ... are the fetters of an everlasting immaturity.”² If we adhere to laws of thinking implemented by others and upheld by traditions, then we allow our thoughts to remain restricted. It is impossible to separate reason from madness, as both exist always simultaneously within one person. To conform to the idea that purely logical or rational thinking is ideal undermines the depth of human experience. It is to transform thinking into a mechanical operation. This is what Romantic and Modernist texts attempt to show us. We are not machines and should not consider our thoughts to be solely mechanical in nature. By approaching every question or problem with popular and well-utilized methods we reach the same or similar conclusions to everyone else. We do not come up with new answers, and so our ways of thinking do not arrive at enlightenment. If we want to be enlightened then we must look both to ourselves and to the past. There have

2. Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* 58-59.

been gains in the mass progress of thought. But there have also been more stagnant periods.

Kant concludes that the general populace of his day is not enlightened. His writings are produced and published during the historical cusp of the Age of Enlightenment and the start of the Romantic period. His ironic claim that the Enlightenment is not enlightened provides the stage on which to usher in what I understand to be a positive Romantic ideology. He singles out human laziness as the principal cause of this lack of enlightened thinking because it is simply easier to be told what to think than to take on the responsibility of thinking for oneself. Unfortunately, shared similarities in the lazy exchange of knowledge between the world populace of today and that of Kant's time have been drawn to the surface in this technological age. Just as the Enlightenment reflects a false idea of enlightenment that does not actually produce enlightened thought, so too does the present.

In a world where information (and misinformation) sharing through the Internet and television allows for an easy exchange of knowledge that transmits always under the control of others, we find ourselves once again in a position where anyone can apathetically pursue knowledge without the promise of enlightened thought. Yet, because of the amount of information available, we are able erroneously to convince ourselves of our own enlightenment without actually taking the responsibility of pursuing true enlightenment as defined by Kant. We can all be told what to think by the media, while we are alarmingly discouraged from thinking and using our own interpretive and imaginative talents. In this thesis I explore how Romanticism and Modernism can

intervene today by more clearly allowing, and in fact requiring, imaginative and interpretive thought. Thus, by interpreting Romantic and Modernist texts we are able to fulfill Kant's definition of enlightenment using the same method he proposes, the published word.

According to Kant, the public sphere is where enlightenment breeds. Published poems and works of criticism function in this sphere and allow readers to engage in free acts of thinking. By taking on the responsibility of understanding and arguing our own interpretations we are forced to trace the process of our own judgments and beliefs. Each poem and the critical essay allow for interpretations that relate our own individual consciousness to the public consciousness. The texts I have chosen to read in this thesis function as examples of the types of enlightened thinking once achieved and worth resurrecting.

In the first chapter I consider Coleridge's poem "Christabel." The question of whether or not a language based on traditional binaries communicates the essence of human experience appears at the forefront of this chapter. Since the character of Geraldine represents neither a living nor a dead being, and because she is ambiguously feminine (androgynous at points), she raises interpretive questions with which the reader must struggle. The reader is forced to construct his or her own meaning for Geraldine because the poem does not offer one. The reader must create his or her own logical interpretation by self-consciously exploring his or her own methods of understanding paradoxical language.

Some interesting connections surface from the paradoxical confluence of genders expressed through the character Geraldine. Traditional binaries of gender are destabilized in this poem, allowing for an inquiry into the virtues of what Coleridge coins the “androgynous mind.”³ This sort of imaginative mind embodies structures of thought associated with both femininity and masculinity. The idea of the androgynous mind exposes the multifaceted fullness of experience and perception. Traditional binary structures of thought are overturned by the concept of the androgynous mind. A more exact formula for understanding how we perceive is offered. Human experience is better reflected by complex and multidimensional classifications.

My reading of “Christabel,” supported by various critical documents by Coleridge, demonstrates a way of thinking unhindered by the restrictions of binary formulation. The androgynous imagination escapes the dualistic perception upheld during the Enlightenment, a perception that separates reason from sense. This lack of a boundary allows the reader to courageously overcome fears of (mis)interpretation by allowing for the fullness of each individual’s unique reading of the text. The androgynous imagination is free from the divisions and restrictions represented by binary oppositions such as masculinity and femininity. It unifies in its indeterminacy. Because, like the androgynous figure, our experiences cannot be represented in dualistic terms, the ability to take comfort in the unknown and interpret for oneself is an important lesson for achieving enlightenment.

3. Coleridge, *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, 587.

My inquiry attempts to place in conversation Romanticism and Modernism. The theory and poetics of these two types of art are related through the employment of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, as viewed in correlation to T.E. Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism" and T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *The Waste Land*. In chapter two, literary heritage reveals itself in the works of these two Modernists through their oppositional stance to Romantic philosophy and art. A variety of connections illuminated in the fascinating and comparable works of the Romantics and Modernists demonstrate the inescapable influence of Romantic aesthetics on even those poets of the Modern era who are often viewed as anti-Romantic.

The resistance to Romanticism in Modernist works actually reveals a veiled connection to Romanticism. By looking back into history and allowing for interpretive response, which for Eliot and Hulme proves negative in reference to Romanticism, the Modernists actually demonstrate the Romantic drive toward progress partially fueled by reactions to historical knowledge. Similarities in both Coleridge's and Eliot's sense of history exhibit a strong connection between Romantic and Modernist poetic philosophy. We could learn from Romantic and Modernist views that it is not enough to just acknowledge the facts and figures of history, but that interpreting history (or, really knowing history) is vital to progressively enlightened thought. Therefore while it is important to interpret for oneself, it is also advantageous to come equipped with knowledge of the histories associated with a text. By considering the literary roots of a text, our minds are opened to a more vast and holistic understanding of the work.

Finally I examine H.D.'s *Trilogy, Notes on Thought and Vision*, and some additionally critical works. Her texts serve as another example of the Modernist reflection of Romantic ideology. H.D.'s Modernist philosophies regarding the individual's union with the universe spring from the influences of both Blake and Freud. Not only does this demonstrate her connection to artists of the past but also her connection to a contemporary scientist. Poet-as-prophet figures such as Blake and H.D. are often perceived to be separate from scientific efforts to achieve psychological understanding. Yet, the two are merged in H.D.'s works. Her combined philosophical poetics of psychological and spiritual consciousness reaches to express the inexpressibly infinite and universal mind.

An invitation to write what cannot be said demonstrates that there are other aspects to interpretive thought that allow both the writer and reader to communicate beyond the meanings of words. H.D.'s glimpse into the spiritual and psychological mind demonstrates an approach to thinking that we often view as unfeasible. Contemporary society usually determines spiritual and scientific knowledge to be accessible through completely separate modes of perception. I look to the works of H.D. to mend structures of thought that separate spirituality and science. The primary error associated with this sort of separation is that it is a synthetic division. In truth, these two types of knowledge are embodied within all humans and are therefore always interconnected. From H.D. we learn to look inward while simultaneously reaching outward. This approach teaches the value of melding individually and universally interpretive modes of thought.

The idea that the universal permeates through the individual is fundamentally tied to Romanticism. Looking back to German Romantic texts and theories, a new vision of fragmentation reveals itself. This thesis spawned from an inquiry into the German Romantic fragment (or, Chamfortian form), as manifests in both English Romanticism and Modernism. I wanted to demonstrate how Romanticism and Modernism both represent styles that relate the individual to universal consciousness. The embodiment of fragmentary consciousness in both form and philosophy is where I found an initial point of connection between Romantic and Modernist philosophical poetics. I was interested in how tools and methods of Modernism remain tied to Romantic aesthetics. My tracing of Romantic influence in the form of the fragment revealed both similarities and differences between these two literary periods. In the end, my interest in exploring works from these two periods spawned from my response to the mutual break with convention seen in both.

Both Romanticism and Modernism represent turning points in literary history. I attributed the progressive nature of these movements to the philosophical fragment. But I discovered that the fragment is not the driving force behind progressively Romantic and Modernist works and thought. Rather, the fragment appears because of how it symbolically relates to modes of thinking. A fragment is a system (that stands alone); it exists in a state of separation within a greater cosmic system. It is the individual as relates to the universal. As understood in Romantic aesthetic philosophy the universal system is only revealed through the individual. In the Romantic period, a fragment represents totality. This has influenced not only art, but also how we view art. My initial inclination to trace the influence of the Romantic fragment eventually led me to the heart

of this thesis, which has more to do with how we think than it does with mapping of form.

Nonetheless, this thesis does begin with an interest in the function of the fragment. I am still interested in the rhetorical effect of the Romantic view of fragmentation. The German Romantic poet and philosopher Friedrich Schlegel outlines the function of the fragment in this manner:

A. You say that fragments are the real form of universal philosophy. The form is irrelevant. But what can such fragments do and be for the greatest and most serious concern of humanity, for the perfection of knowledge? B. Nothing but a Lessingean salt against spiritual sloth, perhaps a cynical *lanx satura* in the style of old Lucilius or Horace, or even the *fermenta cognitionis* for a critical philosophy, marginal glosses to the text of the age.⁴

What Schlegel point out is that the fragment form is not some sort of true form as relates to universal philosophy. The significance of the fragment does not lay in the form but rather in the way the form functions—the way it relates to external elements creates its value. Ultimately, the purpose of the fragment concerns the quest for enlightenment, “the perfection of knowledge.” It simply adds flare (or, more precisely, flavor) to the feast of knowledge. The fragment also helps produce an intoxicating elixir that spurs enlightenment. The form was initially my main concern. It allowed me to see the ways these disparate texts were interconnected nature of these texts. Now, however, I find that enlightened modes of thinking prove to be my primary interest. While the form does have

4. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 54-55.

worth as a tool, my interest lies in the structures of thought. Originally, I pictured the fragment to be a monument of enlightenment but now I see that it is better represented as a chisel. We find the monument to enlightenment in our own interpretive minds.

My efforts to study the fragment led me back to where I started this process, to acts of interpretation. How we interpret expands the breadth of our infinitely imaginative minds. As Schlegel puts it, “To read means to satisfy the philological drive, to make a literary impression on oneself. To read out of impulse for pure philosophy or poetry, unaided by philology, is probably impossible.”⁵ The drive to make sense of literature by allowing the text to make “a literary impression on oneself” is my main concern.

In the beginning I was mostly interested in form. Now I know that form is not what I find most remarkable about Romantic and Modernist poetry. What I have discovered is that the shared openness to interpretation (sometimes represented in the fragment) is of the highest importance to texts from both periods. A change in the way we gather knowledge is in order. The Romantics and Modernists provide examples of texts that call on us to pursue and achieve enlightened thought. The self-conscious modes of interpretation made available in Romantic and Modernist texts are worth consideration because they help us to better understand how we might engage our own infinitely interpretive and imaginative minds. And this just might result in our rediscovering a more enlightened version of ourselves and of our society.

5. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 80.

Chapter One

“Christabel” and the Reader’s Fear of Interpretation

Women are treated as unjustly in poetry as in life. If they’re feminine, they’re not ideal,
and if ideal, not feminine.

—Friedrich von Schlegel⁶

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s fragmented narrative poem “Christabel” follows the eponymous protagonist as she encounters a supernatural figure, Geraldine. While “Christabel” takes shape as a narrative poem it is not a traditional narrative because the character’s journey is revealed to be incomplete. The poem is a fragment for the reason that when it was first published it lacked a conclusion. One was added a year later but it still did not complete the plot. Coleridge relates the fragmentary condition of the poem to the reader in the preface. He informs the reader “in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind.”⁷ That whole, however, is not yet embodied in verse.

Coleridge’s grandson Earnest Hartley Coleridge (also a literary scholar and poet) states in his notes that the conclusion to “Christabel” “is of the nature of an afterthought.”⁸ As an afterthought, the conclusion does not serve to complete the work because it is not an integrated part of the poem and does not bring the plot to a close. The resulting lack of conclusion does play an integral role in encouraging the reader to engage with the text in a manner that paves the way for the deconstructionist vision of writerly reading. Helene Cixous states, “Writing and reading are not separate, reading is a part of

6. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 24.

7. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 57.

8. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 18.

writing. A real reader is a writer.”⁹ As relates to the concept of a writerly reader, I will expose how “Christabel” is a didactic poem that entreats the spectator to engage with the text and become the author.

In this chapter, I identify and support Coleridge’s intellectual model of androgynous thought as relates to and is related through the poem, “Christabel,” and its characters. Both poetic form and the treatment of the character Christabel expose how readers should encounter the poem. What is revealed is that readers should not look to the author, Coleridge, for meaning because the textual meaning does not lie in authorial intention. Furthermore, with its presentation of paradoxes, the text asserts that readers cannot simply draw meaning from literal or formulaic understanding of words. Just as the text does not conform to single genre or form, so too do words never conform to a single meaning. The ambiguous form and structure of “Christabel” creates the stage on which Christabel and Geraldine perform a drama of reading and interpretation. Their drama mirrors the reader’s encounter with the text.

As an allegory of reading, “Christabel” exposes the intellectual ideal of the androgynous mind as one capable of individual thought. Paul de Man’s concept of allegories of reading, as a metaphor for undecidability and “limitations of textual authority” emerges in both the character and narrative “Christabel.”¹⁰ The concept of undecidability revealed most conspicuously in paradoxical constructions of poetic form and character uncover a need for creative interpretation. A freethinking reader unhindered

9. Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder*, 21. For more readings that relate to unification of the author and reader see: Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.

10. De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 99.

by the traditional desire to find authorial intention or meaning behind his or her experience with the text is what “Christabel” requires. When a reader accepts the impossibility of reading, which “bars access to meaning [and] that yet can never cease to call out for its understanding,” the reader is free to encounter the text and create rather than find meaning.¹¹

The imagination is the key to unification of paradoxically complete and incomplete narrative structures, which simultaneously occur as the reader engages with the poem. Coleridge’s notion of the androgynous mind favors the unification of traditionally binary structures. In a new hierarchy of meaning, Coleridge exposes a more expansive, in the breadth of possibilities, as well as more inclusive, in its unifying nature, androgynous mode of thought. The binary unification is set to take place in the reader’s imagination and is brought forth by contradictions displayed in the figures of “Christabel” (the poem) and Christabel (the character). The reader is forced to create meaning beyond traditional binary terms and to access the unifying power of imagination.

At this juncture, I must clarify why the concepts of gender and genre are particularly important to my theory of reading. Gender and genre branch from the same etymological root. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, these words stem from the Latin, *genus*, simply meaning “kind, sort, or class.”¹² Both terms still hold the same basic meaning; they represent the imperfect methods of categorizing and communicating.

11. De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 77.

12. *Oxford English Dictionary*: 2nd ed., s.v. “Genre,” definition 1.a, and “Gender,” definition 1, <http://www.oed.com/> (accessed July 16, 2010).

The difference in how we understand gender and genre has more to do with social politics than it does with the defined meaning of words. Gender is often reduced to the form of binary classification, with male and female standing as opposites. Genre, on the other hand, usually implies a complex network of categorization. Nonetheless, gender and genre, as preconceived structures of classification, pose the problematic possibility of essentialist models of categorizing. The ways in which readers control and are controlled by traditional essentialisms promoted by concepts of gender and genre are disrupted in the text of “Christabel.” In effect, traditionally upheld social structures of classification are disordered. The result of this disorder is that readers who desire to maintain traditional views of reading, as an analysis of the intended meaning, find “Christabel” disturbing.

In her article, “‘Christabel’: The Wandering Mother,” Karen Swann states “‘Christabel’ frightened its reviewers, not because it was a successful tale of terror, but because they couldn’t decide what sort of tale it was.”¹³ The supernatural presence of Geraldine establishes a connection to the genre of the gothic romance. Swann’s assertion that readers expect and desire a tale of terror implies that readers want to rely on pre-existing expectations. They want the text to embody a genre that offers a rational explanation of the events described. Coleridge, however, asks his readers to revise their expectations. He calls for thinking that is unhindered by conformity to traditional and false classifications of generic and gendered modes of thought. Through his

13. Swann, *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, 718.

experimentation with form, Coleridge calls for an open and individual interpretation of the text.

In his preface to “Christabel,” Coleridge points out the most obvious way that he experiments with the form of the poem. He claims that his meter is “founded on a new principle.”¹⁴ He explains that each accent is counted, rather than the syllables, totaling four accents per line. It does not matter how many unstressed syllables appear between the stressed syllables. While accentual verse is not a “new principle,” the revival signifies an escape from tradition. In his footnotes, Ernest Hartley Coleridge clarifies what Coleridge conceives to be the “new principle” in verse. The notes relate that Coleridge’s “claim was that *Christabel* was the first poem in the English language composed on a deliberate principle of so varying a length of *time* (and if need be, number of syllables) as to make the tune of words a kind of running accompaniment to the sense” (59n3). The novelty of Coleridge’s concept of meter is not found in the meter itself, but in how it is intentionally employed to produce the effect of complimentary, and possibly musical, attachment to the reader’s perception. The progressive “new principle” is that of poetic advancement, which is achieved by harkening back. Accentual verse evokes the ballad, a form that is not popular for English poets at this point in history. This break from fashionable verse demonstrates how “Christabel” is “not modeled on any immediate or remote predecessor,” because it simply does not conform to the traditions popularly upheld (59n3). It breaks from tradition by reviving an old form. As a whole, “Christabel”

14. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 59.

represents the progressive nature of a simultaneous and cyclical escape from and return to tradition.

Christabel's Cyclical Story

In the end of the poem, which is not the end of the story, the character Christabel returns to her beginnings and Geraldine returns to her supernatural realm. In the “Conclusion to Part II,” Christabel is reconciled with her father. She is once again his adored possession. At the start of the poem Christabel is introduced as “The lovely lady Christabel,/Whom her father loves so well.”¹⁵ She is his beautiful object of affection. In the end of the poem she is portrayed similarly as “such a vision to the sight/As fills a father’s eyes with light” (*CH*, 660-661). This points to the cyclical nature of this poem’s narrative structure. The narrative recoils within its own structure.

The “Conclusion to Part I,” mirrors the beginning and is reflected in the “Conclusion to Part II.” As we read the first conclusion we are reminded of Christabel’s loveliness, as is portrayed in the beginning and the end of the poem. Beauty also once again appears in terms of vision: “It was a lovely sight to see/The lady Christabel, when she/Was praying at the old oak tree” (*CH*, 279-281). Her image, as an image of beauty, is unchanging. Even after Christabel encounters Geraldine, and after they embrace, Christabel remains seemingly untouched. This is a reflection of the fact that a reader’s interpretation, while changing their reading of the text, does not actually change the text. The poem stays, as it always will be—words on a page that remain always open to changing and new interpretations.

15. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 61-96, lines 23-24 (hereafter cited in the text using line numbers and the abbreviation *CH*).

Christabel returns to her state of innocence at the end of the poem. The first line of the “Conclusion to Part II” illustrates that she remains “a little child, a limber elf,/Singing, dancing, to itself,—” (*CH*, 656-657). This return to the beginning state of innocence happens after Christabel’s enlightening experiences with Geraldine occur. The reader encounters the text, just as Geraldine encounters Christabel. The result of both encounters is that “Christabel” and Christabel remain unchanged in an eternal state of “Singing, dancing, to itself.” The reader’s experience, represented by Geraldine’s presence, is an encounter (an event) that does not change the text, as it exists. At the end of this tale, Geraldine, lead by the bard, disappears just as mysteriously as she appears. Geraldine, most noticeably becomes what she is possibly presented as being in the beginning, a hallucination, ghost, or figment of imagination. She is a figure representative of the specters that haunt a reader’s interpretive imagination. The figure of the bard, as poet, ushers Geraldine out, just as she is brought forth, through the actual text of “Christabel.” It is the text that becomes the point. The story both begins and ends with the literary recycling of images, words, and metaphors.

Each of the characters serves to reveal the purpose of this text. The father, partial creator and original loving possessor of Christabel, is a possible metaphor for Coleridge as the poet. Christabel, as the title of the poem suggests, is the poem. Geraldine is the specter of interpretive imagination that haunts Christabel as she is set to wander alone. The bard, Bracy, who ushers Geraldine in and out of the poem is one of the traditional poets of the past. When the father asks, “Why, Bracy! Dost thou loiter here?” the poet himself, Coleridge, is really asking the poets of past why they linger within his text while

also demonstrating the reason why Bracy must linger (*CH*, 651). The bard's presence is the foundation for the beginning and end of narrative action. But this is not the bard's story; it is not a revival of some ancient ballad. It is the story of "Christabel." Yet, tradition must be present in order to be dismantled, thus even in a progressive text, a move forward requires a simultaneous look to the past. All of the metaphorical figures in this poem function to alert the reader to figures of their own interpretive unconscious, which serves as the foundations for and the restrictive elements of interpretive thought. The cyclical action reminds the reader of interpretive thought, which is not linear but rather re-cycles and filters past interpretive imaginings through the new lens of the singular poem. As a fragment, the poem reminds readers that interpretation can never be complete, as it stands alone. Interpretation relies on creative thought.

As a matter of fact, the cyclical story does provide an ending of sorts, just not of the traditional variety since the end lies within the realm of the reader's interpretive imagination. The break from narrative tradition that promotes linear structures of narrative form disturbs readers to the point that most copies of this poetic text include footnotes that give a supposedly recounted ending to Coleridge's own creation. It must not go unnoticed that if Coleridge had actually formed such an ending it would actually be a part of this complete text.

Coleridge's friend James Gillman relates an ending to the poem that includes a marriage ceremony. He claims that Geraldine reappears, disguised as Christabel's "once favored knight," but that Christabel "feels—she knows not why—great disgust."¹⁶ Then

16. Gillman, *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, 179n7.

the “real lover” returns and “Thus, defeated, the supernatural being Geraldine disappears.” After Geraldine vanishes, “As predicted, the castle bell tolls, the mother’s voice is heard, and to the exceeding great joy of the parties, the rightful marriage takes place, after which follows a reconciliation and explanation between father and daughter”

I am interested in Gillman’s interpretation, not because it gives a stronger reading of the text, but simply because it relates to and further promotes the disturbing effects of unexpected breaks from tradition. While demonstrating the interpretive freedom that readers must exercise in order to find their own ending, Gillman’s interpretation confines this narrative in a way that points to a reader’s desire to find meaning in authorial intention. This is symbolically represented by the “reconciliation and explanation” that take place between the father and daughter in Gillman’s conceived conclusion.

Unfortunately, Gillman’s interpretation, serves to inform many interpretations, which unlike Gillman’s have often been less than flattering. Since Gillman converts this possible tale of terror into a comedy, with the common comic ending of a marriage ceremony, the reader’s interpretation is deceptively made easier. Just because the story takes on a traditionally linear narrative form after Gillman adds notes that include a conclusion, the fear of incorrect interpretation is not eased. If the tradition that this narrative breaks away from is originally the gothic, then the newly introduced comic aspect serves only to further confuse interpretation. It does not serve to ease the burden of interpretation. In Gillman’s extension of this story, Christabel’s “real lover” appears with a “ring which she had once given him in sign of her betrothment.” The marriage appears out of place in this text, especially if the text is understood to be a gothic tale of

terror. The wedding actually presents an important overarching metaphor existing throughout the entire piece that Gillman might have understood since he was a close friend with the poet. The marriage with which Gillman ends the text represents the same marriage that produces the work.

If Geraldine is associated with the androgynous and supernatural realm of imagination, then Christabel and her male betrothed, her “real love” (and I do think “real” serves as a key here) represents actual beings functioning in the “real” world. Christabel, as a poem, is its own real entity. The supernatural and real worlds connect and sometimes disconnect in the realm of literature, especially in Coleridge’s works. So, while Gillman produces a more concrete seeming conclusion often attached to the text, he does not obliterate the cyclical self-referential form of the original narrative. This poem’s circular unraveling serves less to tell a linear tale in any single constrictive form. Rather, the cyclical nature of this poem and the constant return from literal to metaphorical functions to demonstrate the continuous cycle that is representative of the literary imagination and the inner workings of the reader’s imaginative mind. Thus, even with an attached ending, readers still find this poem and the experience of reading it to be disturbing. The terror of interpretation is ultimately displaced from the reader’s own fear of imaginative breaks from tradition onto the characters within the poem.

Frighteningly Feminine Figures

Many readers and critics of the Romantic period respond negatively to “Christabel” due to ambiguous gender performances of Christabel and Geraldine, especially the latter. By calling attention to feminine negativity through the use of

androgynously female figures as metaphors for interpretive expectations (as relates to gender), Coleridge provides readers with the first glimpse into their own restrictive dichotomous structures of understanding. Therefore, the displaced horror that reader's encounter with the characters in this poem serves to reveal their own interpretive and imaginative inadequacies, or at least fear of inadequacies. This fear has been instilled by binary definitions of reading, where there are correct and incorrect interpretations. Appropriately, the tale of the two individual women within this work allows for an inquiry into the "limiting criteria" of interpretation through the metaphor of their gender.¹⁷ This investigation into imagination ultimately explores the dualities of all human consciousness. Universal exploration of the unconscious represented as individual and unified feminine experiences manifests in this poetic fragment, not to tell the full tale of one or two women, but instead to reveal each readers own disturbing and fragmentary narratives of interpretation.

Gazing deeply into human consciousness is indeed a disturbing and oftentimes confusing experience. Because a look into consciousness is so distressing and confusing, the supernaturally sexual scene that dominates the middle of this text serves as a fitting representation of discovering the inner-workings of the mind. The simple rendering of a scene involving female sexuality, especially the innocent figure of Christabel (who returns to innocence even after the encounter), is enough to horrify most readers during this point in history. The horror associated with female sexuality haunts this poem just as the supernatural Geraldine haunts Christabel. Contemporary readers still find the

17. Cixous, *Norton Anthology of Theory*, 2046.

relationship between Christabel and Geraldine disturbing. This is in part due to the continuing fears that surround ambiguities of female sexuality. But fear is elicited well before the two women engage in their mutually sexual experience with each other.

The poem's two female characters whose sexuality in itself is seen as horrifying, are seen as such because their sexuality is defined as negative in that there is nothing there; it is the lack of something that allows for penetration of the female. This leaves them distressingly vulnerable to male force and violence as alluded to at the beginning of the narrative. The negative sexuality of the female characters parallels the fragmentary non-presence of the conclusion of the poem. Thus, the non-present sexuality of the women works in concert with the non-presence of text, illustrating the reader's unconscious fear of violently penetrating the vulnerable poetic work.

The unconscious fear of phallus driven violence enters the reader's consciousness as Christabel first meets Geraldine. The often-privileged symbolic presence of male sexuality, the phallus, is disturbingly destabilized by both the non-presence and presence of female sexuality, unsettlingly reflected in Geraldine and Christabel. When Christabel finds Geraldine under the other side of "old oak tree" where she was compelled to "kneel beneath" and pray for the return of her male beloved (*CH*, 35-36). She hears a moan from the other side, certainly a troubling sound for the young protagonist to hear as she prays alone in the woods. The fact that it is a moan, while not necessarily a sexual moan, elicits the connection of sexuality to the text. The moan being associated with vocalized sexuality appears as silenced language. The clearly vocalized non-speaking form of communication reflects the poetic power of sensual communication through silence. Of

course poetry that expresses what cannot be said carries with it the terror of interpretive responsibility, which is perhaps the fear that drives the reader to continue reading and look for clues as to what the author might want him or her to think.

The reader's drive to discover what is not being said is mirrored by Christabel's curiously seeking out the source of the moan. As she seeks out the other feminine voice, she discovers the "damsel bright," Geraldine, who is "Beautiful exceedingly" (*CH*, 58; 68). Christabel's initial view of the beautiful Geraldine is interpretable as corresponding to the reader's recognition of poetic beauty upon first encountering the poem. The poet's dwelling on beauty does not last long. While Geraldine's neck, feet, and arms do not disturb Christabel, and while she does not find Geraldine's disheveled and bare appearance frightening in itself, there are aspects of the situation that induce fear. Geraldine's status as a "lady so richly clad," who has been violently unclad, is the most fear inducing aspect of this opening moment (*CH*, 67). As Geraldine will soon reveal, violent men have abused her. Therefore, the reader is not confronted with female sexuality as horrifying in itself at first, just as the poem cannot be horrifying in its singularity. But instead the initial terror associated with Geraldine, like the initial terror associated with reading the poem, is the fear of violent abuse and misuse of an object unfit to fight its own mistreatment. The reader's fear of misinterpretation is reflected in the feminine fear of masculine violence.

As Geraldine explains the events that lead to her disheveled, weak, and abused state, as she now lies under the tree, it becomes abundantly clear that male violence is the most frightening aspect of her predicament. She relates:

Five warriors seiz'd me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They chok'd my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white. (*CH*, 81-84)

Clearly, the cause of this lady's horrifying state is not her femininity alone but her violated femininity, violated by forceful warriors who "chok'd [her] cries" and carried her away with them.

Geraldine's feminine vulnerability mirrors the vulnerability of the text. The reader's fear that he or she, as the reader, might seize and violate the text is represented by the supposed events that precede Christabel's meeting with Geraldine. The reader is afraid of silencing the text (and its meaning), as the warriors "chok'd [Geraldine's] cries." The reader fears that, like the warriors, he or she will carry the meaning away to the unknown forest of his or her own imaginative mind. Although, the silence in the text might be calling for the reader to do just as the warriors have done with Geraldine. After all, it is difficult to determine whether Geraldine's story is something Christabel should believe or whether it is simply a story to elicit both pity and fear.

As they meet, "the lady strange" asks Christabel to "Have pity on [her] sore distress," and that is just what the charitable protagonist does (*CH*, 71; 73). Geraldine could be viewed as strange in herself, but the reader knows that such a simple conclusion blatantly disregards the fact that she might have been made strange by the acts of male violence. If the reader chooses to believe Geraldine, as Christabel does, then the reader is forced to recognize that the effects of masculine sadism have made Geraldine strange. As

relates to the interpretive process, Geraldine, as a figure for the supernatural imagination, might truly require some sort of healing due to violent acts of interpretation (which are represented by the warriors). If this is the case, then the poem begins to take on a less horrifying reading in reference to femininity. Instead, the horror is a result of gazing into the mirror in the form of woman, looking at the Other, just as Christabel views Geraldine, in order to see a reflection of the reader's conscious self.

When readers find the vulnerable sexuality of these two women to be disturbing, it is perhaps because they have really gazed within their own psyche. After all, it is through the text (the Other) that the reader (the Self) discovers himself or herself. Through the feminine Other, as represented by the character and form, the self gains definition. This leaves the feminine Other in a state of lost definition and ambiguity. Therefore, it is easy for readers to rely on patriarchal conventions and blame the victim, the feminine Other, for undesirable self-knowledge. By dwelling on the disturbing aspects of Geraldine and Christabel's physiological vulnerability, the masculine reader finds the women's sexuality to be alarmingly absent at the same time that it is present. An example often viewed to demonstrate the horror of Geraldine can also be seen in the disturbing effects of masculine violence on Geraldine. As Geraldine disrobes in order to join the already naked Christabel in bed, her form is described as "A sight to dream of, not to tell!" (*CH*, 253). Then as Christabel touches Geraldine's bosom, as Coleridge annotates in the 1824 edition, "she cannot disclose the fact, that the strange Lady is a supernatural being with the stamp of Evil Ones on her."¹⁸ First, it is important to note

18. Coleridge, *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, 174n2.

that Geraldine's "stamp of the Evil Ones," does not mean that she is evil. After all the wounds of violence left by the warriors would certainly designate a mark of evil.

Christabel's silence can be read as a sign of Geraldine's sorcery, but then are there not occurrences in everyone's experience that remain unable to be conveyed, especially those buried deep within the unconscious?

If Geraldine represents nothing more than an encounter with the unconscious and imagination in the form of a dream, she would indeed appear as "A sight to dream of, not to tell!" (*CH*, 235). This is not necessarily because she is horrifying in image but perhaps because she is a figment of Christabel's unconscious and unspeakable self. Geraldine next informs Christabel that "Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know tomorrow/This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow" (*CH*, 269-270). The knowing connection between these two women makes indistinguishable their separate experiences. The unifying, shared knowledge implies a possible oneness. Geraldine's mark of shame and seal of sorrow can be read as the stamp of the self-consciousness associated with experience. Geraldine continues with the claim that "vainly thou warrest,/For this is alone in/Thy power to declare" (*CH*, 271-273). The futile inner-struggle of Christabel is lonely and singular. Not only does this demonstrate the aloneness experienced when inwardly gazing into the self, but also highlights Christabel's singular duality in this scene, where both women climactically unite in an act of metaphorical convergence. After Christabel's experience with Geraldine very little remains in her "power to declare." Geraldine tells Christabel what she will be able to say:

That in the dim forest/Thou heard'st a low moaning,

And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air. (CH, 273-276)

This is clearly much less than has already been communicated to the reader in the last 200 and some lines of verse. Christabel's inability to tell all the details of her dream further reinforces the idea that "Christabel" communicates through Geraldine, just as the text communicates only through the reader.

The reader, like Geraldine, has the ability to relate encounters within the text. Geraldine and Christabel's encounter, as a possible dream, demonstrates the connection a reader makes with his or her own consciousness. The fact that the events that occur are possibly imagined is certainly also worth taking into account. If the sexual encounter between Christabel and Geraldine is imagined then it is clearly nothing more than an experience with herself. If the events are read as literal, and Geraldine is read as another woman, they still remain a metaphorical encounter with Christabel's self, being the same in form, which is female. Either reading has the potential to be unsettling, as they both involve intercourse with the conscious and subconscious elements of the interpretive mind. The disturbing view into a consciousness shared by all humans and unveiled by any reader who chooses to engage in reading is reinforced by the culturally destabilizing view of female homosexuality. Valerie Traub notes in her book *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* that sodomy laws did not technically apply to women but "the selective enforcement of sodomy laws suggests that the primary concern

of authorities was women's appropriation of masculine prerogatives."¹⁹ Therefore, it is perhaps Geraldine's authority as an androgynous (thus disturbingly masculine and feminine) figure that is what readers find most disturbing about the sexual encounter. Yet, the scene is not necessarily inherently as disturbing as it is rendered beautiful.

If the reader interprets the sexual scene in the poem as a beautiful act involving womanly love, then the beauty in the poem may also appear to a source of terror. A focus on the beauty that this text demonstrates results in a reader's, perhaps all too self-aware, choice to break with traditional patriarchal and literary conventions. Just as Christabel chooses to perform the first act of faith in womanly love by helping Geraldine, the reader must perform the first act of faith in engaging with the text. The reader must willingly help the text communicate its story, through the act of creative interpretation. This must be done without conforming to the limitations of gendered genres. In the same way that Christabel "stretch'd forth her hand/And comforted fair Geraldine," the reader must allow the text to extend a comforting connection (*CH*, 104-105). Christabel's initially reaching forth mimics the inviting extension of the poetic verse. But, the poem narrates a story only if the reader allows entanglement with the imagination. Just as Christabel and Geraldine unite, so too must the text with the reader's mind.

As the story progresses, the sexual joining of the two women occurs in a trance-like state. This could be read as simply a reflection of the surreal experiences with the unconscious. Or, it could be a suppression of Christabel's orgasmic and enlightening experience. As Geraldine "holds the maiden [Christabel] in her arms," which are as

29. Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 44.

gentle “As a mother with her child,” Christabel weeps and smiles (*CH*, 299; 301). Her happy tears directly follow the release as “Her limbs relax” (*CH*, 313). Then as it is all over, “the blood so free,/Comes back and tingles in her feet./No doubt, she hath a vision sweet” (*CH*, 324-326). I need not further explain the obvious sexual imagery of the blood rushing, tingling, tearfully happy experience that Christabel has just encountered. Instead, I would like to focus on the mirroring maternal imagery and interactions between Geraldine and the ghost of Christabel’s mother.

The maternal embrace of Christabel by Geraldine serves to align both the mother and lover within the vision of the unconscious mind. This connection between parent and lover is a common connection in psychoanalytic theory. While Coleridge writes before psychoanalysis takes shape as a science, the myths of universal consciousness can be traced back throughout literature. “Christabel” is no exception. Coleridge does not simply reproduce or recycle this myth. Instead, he destabilizes it by making the female child sexually concerned with her mother, instead of the more traditional father daughter scenario. This mythological reworking does more than simply break with tradition. It also highlights the manner in which Coleridge calls for readers to connect with the text. Just as Christabel takes pity on Geraldine and comforts her, so too does Geraldine provide shielding comfort for Christabel. This demonstrates the mutually comforting connection that openness of the text to the imagination and the imagination to the text makes possible.

Escaping the Embrace of the Author

Another factor to consider in this unusual mythological reworking, where the daughter exhibits sexual love for the mother, is the function of the father figure within the poem. One aspect of this revised myth that makes it more believable is that the mother is Romanticized by simply being dead, therefore not in competition with the daughter for the father's affection. But more importantly, it is perhaps the father's overly affectionate behavior that oppresses Christabel. Thus, while the father confines and even owns Christabel, the ghost of her mother's affection empowers the protagonist to escape the father's oppressively affectionate hold. The father, as a figure for the author, continues to possess Christabel, even though she demonstrates some independence in the text. While, the mother as a figure of the author allows for Christabel to embark on her own journey, and engage with anyone. The mother better represents the figure of the author with which Coleridge should be aligned. A text that is open to any reading by any individual is no longer in the author's possession.

Roland Barthes proposes a similar metaphor for reading in his "The Death of the Author." He claims that "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'teleological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, non of them original, blend and clash."²⁰ The patriarchal connection of Christabel with her father demonstrates the inescapable control of the father associated with interpretations that focus on authorial intent. The father does not involve any physical binding or force, but instead demonstrates how the text

20. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 146.

metaphorically always returns to the authorial authority, which does not serve to expand the story but rather leads to a recoiling collapse, represented by the cyclical structure of this narrative. The father, like the author, decides to whom the text will be given. Therefore, Christabel's wanderings when she dreams "Of her own betrothed knight" do not demonstrate freedom as the wandering might imply, but rather show how even her dreams are controlled by her only known escape from fatherly control, which still occurs in the form of patriarchal approved control (*CH*, 27). Just as Christabel is restricted by patriarchal control, so too is the text if it is viewed to be under the authority of the author, as the father.

On the other hand, Christabel's mother reinforces the idea that a unified marriage between text and reader results in reverberations of consciousness. On her deathbed, Christabel's mother says that "[Christabel] should hear the castle bell/Strike twelve upon [her] wedding day" (*CH*, 200-201). The bell does in fact strike twelve in the poem announcing the connection of reader with text, just as much as it announces the connection of Christabel to Geraldine. Christabel's mother appears as a vision, a specter. This demonstrates that there is more than one supernatural force at work within this poem. While Geraldine represents the imaginative unconscious mind, Christabel's mother represents the universal unconscious that comfortingly haunts all artistic creation.

Coleridge's decision to publish "Christabel" as a fragment functions as a choice that freely divides authorial control over the story with the reader. He shares authorship with the reader by enabling the reader to become the writer. The open-ended structure of this poem allows for engagement, which does not conform to traditional hermeneutics

that scientifically reconstruct meaning. The poem is not a fragment in the sense that it takes the form of ruins to be pieced back together. What remain are not the fallen or lost pieces of an already forged structure from which to rebuild meaning. "Christabel" is a fragment because the author does not write the complete story. It resembles ruins of a partially built structure that remain open to new and additional construction. In this scenario, the reader is allowed to become the author of the missing pieces and create meaning. "Christabel" provides a stage for an on-going debate between hermeneutics (as a formulaic method to approach universal meaning) and interpretation (as a way of encountering a text to create individual meaning).

Chapter Two

Mirroring Romanticism: Hulme and Eliot's Modernist Reflection

New or not new: that's the question which is asked of a work from both the highest and lowest points of view. From the point of view of history, and curiosity.

—Friedrich von Schlegel²¹

According to T.E. Hulme's influential essay "Romanticism and Classicism," there are two major types of poetry, the two indicated in the title. Unquestionably, Hulme claims that Modernism will correspond to classical form. He states, "I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming."²² While many scholars assert that Hulme's prophecy has been fulfilled, I disagree. Since T.S. Eliot (influenced by Hulme) is one of the many Modernist poets who are often distinctively viewed as divorced from the aesthetics of Romanticism, I will hold his critical works and poetry in concert with Hulme's essay up against Romantic tenets. I will do this using Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as my primary source for defining and defending Romanticism. Thus, I will demonstrate how and why Coleridge's Romanticism is a mirror in which Hulme and Eliot's Modernism should be viewed.

It is my primary aim to reveal the complementary influence of Romantic predecessors upon Modernist poets in order to demonstrate the importance of engaging with previously published works and ideas. Hulme and Eliot's interactions with literary history are often presented as resisting Romanticism. Nonetheless, both these Modernists engage with their poetic predecessors. They read works from several periods and critique

21. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 23.

22. Hulme, *Speculations*, 133 (hereafter cited *SP* in the text).

their literary heritage. In this chapter I foreground the ways in which Modernists, Hulme and Eliot, recognize the complicated relationship they have with literary history. I focus primarily on their interactions with the Romantics because it is in Modernist resistance to Romantic ideology that they conform to the progressive and non-conforming nature of Romanticism.

As I have done in my first chapter, this chapter both analyzes and demonstrates the benefit of a way of thinking that can lead to enlightenment. Ironically, the argument in this chapter might be viewed as oppositional to the argument of the first. In the first chapter I asked my reader to look within the poem “Christabel” and to find understanding in the individual imagination. I examined how the self-referential nature of the text teaches readers to use their imaginative mind, thus opening the door to enlightened thought. In this chapter intertextuality is emphasized as a means of understanding a text, which once again opens a door to enlightenment, albeit a different door from the one that is opened by the previous reading.

One advantage of intertextual understanding is that the tracing of influence does add richness to understanding the text. Historical reading cannot find meaning by discovering author’s intention, but it does expose a textual heredity. Also, if we view a text in reference to its interactions with other texts then we too are allowed to engage in the conversation. Only when the reader has knowledge of the influences present in a work can he or she hope to find a deeper and more enlightened reading. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Eliot and Hulme’s reflections on Romanticism actually demonstrate the positive influence of Romanticism. Knowledge of Eliot and Hulme’s

relationship with Coleridge contributes to a more complex and enlightened reading of their works that exposes the progressive nature of Romanticism's influence on Modernism.

While a few critics, most famously Randall Jarrell, explore the connections between Romanticism and Modernism, there remains a critical space to be filled especially in terms of positive Romantic influence on Modernism.²³ Randall Jarrell calls attention to Romantic influence with his claim that Modernism is “an extension of Romanticism.”²⁴ I am interested in the narratives that assert a complimentary relationship between the Modernist and Romantic aesthetics. I have narrowed my focus to Coleridge's work viewed alongside of Eliot's and Hulme's. These are sources for some of the most remarkable connections between Romantic and Modernist designs. I have specifically made the choice to view Eliot and Hulme in this light primarily because they both so adamantly attack the popularity of Romantic aesthetics by attacking Romantic predecessors.

The Presence of the Past

In his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Eliot claims that Wordsworth's concept of poetry is erroneous, and even “perverse” in reference to the idea that “poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express.”²⁵ He explains further “The business of poetry is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones.” His point is that the poet, the poet's emotions, history, and even his sense of self are in no way associated

23. For more on Romanticism as an influence of Modernism See: Jarrell, *Kipling, Auden, and Co*; Logenbach, *Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 100-29; Diepeveen, *The Difficulties of Modernism*.

24. Jarrell, *Kipling, Auden, and Co*, 77.

25. Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 57-58 (hereafter cited SW in text).

with the purpose of creating great poetry. His problem with the Romantics is that they emphasize the poet's experience over the reader's encounter with the text. As I exposed in the last chapter, this is not necessarily the case. Yet, just as the Romantics reacted against Enlightenment philosophy, Eliot sets himself up as the Modernist martyr against Romanticism. Eliot's claim that "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality," certainly complicates any engagement Eliot may have with Romantic predecessors (*SW*, 53). Eliot's theory appears to question the Romantic association of remembered events in the poet's own experience when he states that:

The mind of the poet is a shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material. (*SW*, 53)

Many readings focus on the poet's divorcing of the poet from himself. Tradition appears in some readings to be separate from the poet's individual sense of self. I believe these readings to be misreadings.

Thanks to Harold Bloom it is easy to claim that any reading by a great poet of his predecessors must be a strong misreading; however, what I intend to show at this juncture is that a solely anti-Romantic interpretation of Eliot's theory and poetry is limited. Basically the strength of Eliot's misreading is not his self-proclaimed dissent from

Romantic traditions but rather the strength of his poetry found in his unknowing conformities with certain Romantic traditions.

Thus, it is not only his misreading of the Romantics but also of his own work that makes Eliot a strong poet. It should not go unnoticed that Eliot does refer to the “best” parts of a poet’s work as the “most individual” (*SW*, 53). Granted, he is not saying that the “best” part is created by the “most individual” poet; but certainly, the more immense and rich any poet’s unique ancestry of influence, the more individual his work. Indeed, Eliot deliberately engages with the dead poets through his continuous quotations, as can be seen throughout his poetry. The first quotation I will discuss appears italicized and as a block thirty-two lines into the poem. The lines read:

Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

*Wo weilest du?*²⁶

This is obviously German, not English. And while it is clearly the first quotation that indicates its reference to another text, it is not the first piece of text he gets from elsewhere. The title of the first section, “The Burial of the Dead,” is the “title give to the burial service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer” (*WL*, 5n3). Eliot often subverts his influence; his footnotes are minimal and do not serve to cite quotations. Yet, a simple glance at the many footnotes added by several editors to *The Waste Land* points directly

26. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 1-20, line 6 (hereafter cited in text *WL*).

to a plethora of influences on Eliot's poetry. His poetic voice takes on the voices of his predecessors, whether acknowledged or not.

Eliot's turn away from his predecessors is more political than aesthetic. Eliot actively suppresses his own heritage. This rhetorical move situates him as the new breed of poetic genius. He said to Richard Aldington: "any innuendos I make at the expense of Milton, Keats, Shelley and the nineteenth century in general are part of a plan to help us rectify, so far as I can, the immense skew in public opinion toward our pantheon of literature."²⁷ Eliot proclaims that his anti-Romantic statements are "part of a plan." His plan involves correcting a bias or distortion in "public opinion" as pertains to "the pantheon of literature." It must be noted that Eliot does not say that the Romantics bare the burden of responsibility for the "skew in public opinion." The choice to use the word pantheon is of particular significance as pertains to the way Eliot describes his literary predecessors and the general favoritism of their works by the public.

The word pantheon reveals in the facets of its meaning the belief that these publicly idolized self-asserted poet-as-prophet figures of the Romantic era do stand as creators or gods. More importantly, the permanence of Romantic presence in the literary mind takes the shape of an immovable structure. This structure is a temple, a place of worship, and thus takes the form of a place of spiritual communion with the infinite beings (poets), providing access to realms of universal connection (poetry).

And yet, belief in a god and a temple of worship do not ensure spiritual connection. As occurs in all religions, a blind following does not result in a deeply

27. Eliot, *Letters*, 460.

universal connection. The universal connection able to be achieved in the realm of poetry is not open to readers who do not understand the progressive nature of poetry. By dwelling in the literary past, readers unquestioningly uphold blind faith in aesthetics of the past. This does not allow for canonization of different and new poets. Within the structure of literature, it is unquestioning worship that results in the blind belief that the aesthetic of the gods is Romantic. Moreover, the Romantic extension towards infinite being and knowledge that entrances the public is unachievable if readers allow themselves to be lead solely by the Romantics.

Paradoxical Poetics: Cyclical Poetic Constructions

Appropriately, the image of the serpent represents to Coleridge the motion of the poetic journey. Coleridge relates that the ideal poetic journey involves a pause with each step in which the mind “collects the force which again carries him onward.”²⁸ This image of the serpent represents a recoiling that produces a springing forward. Thus ideally, according to Coleridge, Romantic poetry is progressive while also being retrogressive. A movement backward allows for a swift and powerful poetic springing forward. Therefore, the past becomes an integral part of the present motion of poetry. The “historical sense,” as Eliot describes, functions in a similarly serpentine or cyclical manner. Progress results from a concurrent retrogression (*SW*, 49). Eliot explains that the “historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence” (*SW*, 49). This perception “compels a man to write not merely his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of literature ... had a

28. Coleridge, *Complete Works*, 372 (hereafter cited *CW* in text).

simultaneous existence that composes a simultaneous order” (SW, 49). Just as Coleridge calls for a retrogressive movement in order to create a progressive present, so too does Eliot expose that a simultaneous encounter with the past and the present is a compelling force of the literary mind. Eliot’s similar concept of poetic movement deviates from Coleridge’s primarily in terms of a carrying of the past into the present. While Coleridge’s serpent regresses and then moves forward, Eliot’s concept of retrogressive and progressive movement includes a suspension of the past, which is always within the present. History cannot be escaped.

Thus, while Modernist poetry fulfills the tenet of the Romantic genre, of a cyclical moving forward (away from the past) by also and at the same time traveling backward, it does make improvements to Romantic theories. The improvement is made in the idea that the past is carried forward. Therefore, it benefits the reader’s ability to come away from the text with a strong reading to share this historical sense.

In the preceding chapter I examined the metaphor for the cyclicity of literature in Geraldine. Similar symbolic figures also appear in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. Coleridge’s “Christabel” contains the ambiguously feminine figure of Geraldine, represented also as being undead (neither living nor dead). Similar feminine figures of the undead also appear in *The Waste Land*. The first example is the hyacinth girl. Readers know the hyacinth girl’s status as undead because her character clearly says, “I was neither/Living nor dead” (WL, 39-40). Her function, like Geraldine’s, is as an ever-present absence within the text that symbolizes the disconnected connections of finite from infinitely imaginative thought. Since she is neither “living nor dead,” the

impossibility of communicating what exactly she *is* in the form of a traditional dichotomy establishes a shared sense of irony.

The type of ironic situation that is present, through the ever-present absence of the figures, is Socratic irony. Schlegel asserts that Socratic irony “contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between absolute and relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.”²⁹ These figures demonstrate the inherent ambiguity of thought (as expressed in language) by functioning as a paradox. Geraldine and the hyacinth girl function outside the confines of the traditional binary relationship between life and death. By embodying both sides at once, these figures exhibit the imperfections of communicating the infinitely imaginative mind using finite structures of language. By stepping outside the finite bounds of language tied to the real world, Eliot demonstrates a Romantic tendency toward impossible, yet still communicative, constructions of ambiguous language.

According to Northrop Frye, the hyacinth girl is a Matilda figure.³⁰ Dante’s Matilda, like Proserpine, represents and embodies the life-death-rebirth cycle.³¹ When we first encounter the hyacinth girl she says, ““You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;/“They called me the hyacinth girl” (WL, 35-36). She announces her presence with a clearly distinct voice, yet she also refers to herself in past tense, which serves to demonstrate her absence. She is both present and past. Also, functioning as Coleridge’s Romantic vision of the undead Geraldine, as well as his Life-in-Death figure in *Rime of*

29. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 13.

30. Frye, *Eliot*, 54.

31. Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, 246-260.

the Ancient Mariner, Eliot's hyacinth girl is a paradoxical embodiment of both life and death, always both living and dead while at the same time neither. As with Coleridge, "Eliot's fondness for cyclical imagery meets us at every turn."³² His imagery, while impossible according to finite understanding of the world, functions to demonstrate the otherwise impossible possibilities that manifest in words. As Frye so eloquently puts it:

for Eliot as for Coleridge before him, we end with the Word as the circumference of reality, containing within itself time, space, and poetry viewed in the light of 'the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written.'³³

Eliot uses the Romantic trope of linguistically unified dualities. His figures embody the dualistic condition of human experience and thought, while demonstrating linguistic means of escaping the finite trappings of the world. This escape is achieved in Romantic terms through use of poetic imagination.

Infinite Imagination and Finite Fancy

Since a central point of contention for the Modernists against Romanticism is the favoring of imagination over fancy, this seems to be a natural point for my continued inquiry into Modernism as an extension of the Romantic genre. Coleridge's explanation of this separation of creative thought presented by German aesthetics most thoroughly distinguishes these functions of the mind for English readers. Therefore, I will primarily focus on Coleridge's classifications of the imagination and fancy, pointing out where disagreements between his conception and Hulme's and Eliot's occur.

32. Frye, *Eliot*, 49.

33. Frye, *Eliot*, 46.

Imagination is a function of the highest creative mind according to Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*. The imagination is divided into two faculties in Coleridge's notion. The primary imagination is "the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (CW, 363). The secondary imagination functions as an "echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the mode of its operation." Since the difference lies in the potency and manner of operation, I must first turn to the classifying definition of the primary imagination in order to understand both creative faculties.

Significantly, Coleridge indicates that the primary imagination is both a life and a power within all human awareness. It also reverberates through the restrictive "finite" human mind with the power of creation, an "eternal act" associated with the "infinite I AM." It joins the human mind with the eternal, infinite, and universal mind of God. Clearly, the primary imagination is the function of the Romantic mind that Hulme desires to suppress, since it functions in as a transcendental force.

Coleridge's choice in referring to God as the "infinite I AM" is worth some careful consideration. Beyond the obvious reference to the infinite, as breadth of imaginative reach, this phrase also contains linguistic symbolism in the form of a pun. The infinite and spiritual experience of moving beyond the finite realm of human consciousness presents itself through the use of language. Although some readers may interpret the similarities in the words "I AM" and "iamb" to be no more than a playful

pun, I see it as holding serious significance. It also demonstrates the view that poetry is a godly act, or at least one of Communion. This sort of spiritually individual and universal connection is achievable through the creative imagination. And such a concept is certainly not new. The figure of the prophetic poet is commonly aligned with Romantic poetry, but it is rooted in classic poetry. In early ancient Greece, poetry and prophecy were the same word.³⁴ The universal and spiritual aesthetic is not easy to abandon because poetry is always an act of creation for both the poet and the interpreting reader. The creative life of the mind is difficult to separate from spiritual and universal connection presented by poetry because it is through creation that a universal communion takes place.

Hulme, in his dispute with Romanticism, favors a finite form of verse in his rhetorical turn away from the infinite imagination. To Hulme poetry should not reach for the infinite functions of human thought found in the imagination. Rather it should use empirical language, which he claims aligns more closely with the fancy. His first paragraph concludes, “fancy will be superior to imagination” (*SP*, 113). This is a prophetic assault on the Romantic concept that imagination is the highest function of the poetic mind. Hulme distinguishes between imagination and fancy as “they first began to be differentiated by the German writers on aesthetics in the eighteenth century.” Unlike his German predecessors, Hulme favors fancy over imagination. Coleridge relates the following distinction that Fancy “brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental

34. For more on the ancient roots of poetry and prophecy see: Nagy, *Poetry and Prophecy*, 56-64.

coincidence”; the Imagination “modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one, *il più nell’ uno*” (CW, 202-203).

Hulme anticipates a turn away from the emotional poetry of the infinite imagination associated with Romantic predecessors. Instead, Hulme’s brand of Modernism privileges the finite structures of fancy. Even Hulme’s method of defining and separating fancy from imagination, reveals that fancy is superior to imagination. What this points to is the important distinction from Romantic (Coleridge’s) definitions of imagination. According to Coleridge imagination creates unity of structure. Division, on the other hand, defines fancy. Hulme’s prophecy represents a common and unifying goal associated with the both the Romantic and Modernist movements, the goal of progress. Hulme’s prophecy serves as a point on which to establish my argument that Modernism does not separate from the Romantic aesthetic but actually expands the Romantic infinite gaze.

Hulme’s prophecy is flawed in reference to his Modernist sensibilities. Prophecy implies a union of the mind with some form of spiritual and universal knowledge. This sort of unity and infinite reach for knowledge is exactly what Hulme himself aligns with the Romantic imagination. If his intention is to escape from Romantic aesthetic ideologies, then his error lies in the not so finite conditions that he outlines for detachment from Romanticism. A conversion back to classical aesthetics, foretold by Hulme as a prophecy, demonstrates how he cannot escape Romantic ideology. His prediction in the form of prophecy implies a spiritually infinite communion with the universe, which he uses to relate to his audience. Rather than using language that

demonstrates the classical sense of “finiteness, this limit of man,” he unreservedly proclaims that his prediction is a prophecy. The prophecy points to a spiritual connection enabling universal knowledge. This extension towards the universe from within the individual finite mind demonstrates the shared inward and outward gaze associated with both Romantic and Modernist poetry. Also, poetic progress by means of outspoken resistance to predecessors functions in both Romantic and Modernist texts.

Hulme professes that objectors to his prophecy of a massive shift in popular poetic genre take a Romantic stance because they are under the influence of Romanticism, like a person under the influence of a drug. He says, “the awful result of Romanticism is that, accustomed to this strange light, you can never live without it” (*SP*, 127). The drug is equated with the idealistic notion that poetry taps into an infinite and universal union of the conscious and unconscious mind. However, as with most drugs the after-effects are gloomy. Hulme celebrates classical empirical thinking by saying that “In the classical attitude you never seem to swing right along to the infinite nothing” (*SP*, 127). This statement implies the Romanticism is defined by childishness. With the words “swing right along” he makes it seem like he is describing a child frolicking. The child-like language that Hulme uses to describe Romantic encounters with “the infinite nothing” implies that the intangible infinite nothingness cannot be understood.

Within Hulme’s statement manifests an eternal paradox of language, one that epitomizes Romantic interest more than nothingness itself. The Romantic project involves infinity in paradoxical terms, as I have already discussed in my previous chapter. Romantic comfort in the infinite impossibility of communicating the

incommunicable (in this particular case, the nothing), through allowing the reader to interpret and fill the gaps in meaning with their own meaning, is what Hulme also allows for with his metaphorical and conceptual statement about swinging “right along to the infinite nothing.” For this reason, I am compelled to question Hulme.

The concept of “infinite nothing” is simply not the finite something. Thus Hulme’s swing toward a finite something, which is an abstract and ambiguous idea formed by conceptual terms, demonstrates a Modernist inability to break away from Romantic aesthetics, even as Hulme ambiguously defines them. Furthermore, Hulme’s claim that “the bad Romantic aesthetic” promotes essentialism in the view that poetry *must* communicate some sort of spiritual infiniteness is now an all too common misreading of Romanticism. This misreading is perhaps based more on personal, and political, biases than on what is actually communicated to be the purpose of Romanticism by the Romantics. He even hints at this with his statement “If you asked a man of a certain set whether he preferred the classics or Romantics, you could deduce from that what his politics were” (*SP*, 114).

While the politics of Romanticism, as opposed to Modernism, might be an interesting discussion and topic with which to expand my inquiry into the Romantic influence on Modernism, at this point I abstain. I would like to take the focus away from politics, since politics seems to be a source of division between Romantic and Modernist ideologies. A look to philosophical ideals of the infinite and finite reach reveals that poetry of the Romantic genre does not solely develop from a successful encompassing of universal consciousness. To do so would be impossible. Rather, for the Romantics the

universal reach is simply a metaphor for progress. The comfort in universal extension, even as this infinite reach might never achieve unification with the infinite universe, is truly the Romantic ambition. Comfort with infinite subjects does not express infinity, but rather what cannot be fully contemplated. The paradox is more central to understanding the methods of Romanticism and it is a paradox that is given life in the Romantic imagination.

Frye points out that it is a “regrettable feature of Eliot’s critical theory” that he avoids using “the term ‘imagination,’ except in the phrase ‘auditory imagination.’”³⁵ While I too am frustrated by Eliot’s evasion of the term imagination, it is perhaps important to consider why he chooses to discuss imagination using the term auditory imagination and whether or not he really abandons Romantic employment of the imagination. Eliot describes the auditory imagination thusly:

feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning middle and end.³⁶

The idea that poetry should not only house itself on the page but also remain memorable in the mind of the reader expresses a difference in the function of imagination in Romantic and Modernist poetics. The difference simply relates to the affect of imagination on the poet, as opposed to the effect of poetry on the reader’s imagination. Nonetheless, imagination does play an important role in the experience of interpreting.

35. Frye, *Eliot*, 48.

36. Eliot, *Use of Poetry*, 111.

One of Eliot's ambitions in writing a poem is to impress the poem itself onto the mind of his reader. He achieves this through his use of language and poetic form. The construction of *The Waste Land* is in fact in the form of a religious chant or song. Eliot's memorable ending line, "Shantih shantih shantih" is a traditional ending to meditative prayer (*WL*, 433). Ultimately, his entire poem is a meditative experience that allows the reader to be carried through this transcendental experience of reading by means of the repetitive and cyclical verse. This indeed aligns with the spiritual connection between reader and poet that Romantics find in imaginative verse. It also reflects the idea of musical verse that is perpetuated by Coleridge. As I have already discussed, Coleridge conceives of the form of "Christabel" as a "new principle" of poetry. This "new principle" emphasizes the accentual nature of verse as "a running accompaniment for the senses."³⁷

Therefore, Eliot's auditory imagination differs from Coleridge's primary imagination, most distinguishably in terms of the mode in which it functions. This difference does not demonstrate a complete abandonment of Romantic imagination; instead, it shows Eliot's employment of what Coleridge terms secondary imagination in order to achieve the desired effect of language as it mingles with the minds of both the poet and the reader. When utilizing the secondary imagination, the drive towards unity does not occur as an intuitive unconsciously spiritual connection, as it does with the primary imagination. The secondary imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: or where the process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles

37. Coleridge, *Christabel*, 59.

to idealize and to unify” (CW, 364). This process might be more comparable to religious experience of prayer, whereas the primary imagination is more associated with a spiritual connection to a god. Prayer, reflected in the poetic structure (most noticeably at the end) of *The Waste Land*, “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create” the connection to universal consciousness. Thus, it is perhaps within the purpose of the secondary imagination, and not the fancy, that Eliot roots his poetic thought.

At this point it should be noted that the secondary imagination does not in fact always unify but there is a struggle to do so. This struggle to unify what perhaps cannot be unified in a finite sense of worldly language is observable in both Romantic and Modernist poetry. As with Coleridge, Eliot explores the human mind and the fragmentation of memory. Not only does Eliot’s definition of the auditory imagination bring memory to the forefront of understanding his poetry, but his poetry itself reminds the reader that memory is a function of the mind that is embodied in Eliot’s poems. In *The Waste Land*, the lines “... Do you see nothing? Do you remember/Nothing?’/I remember” remind the reader that memory is how one achieves both vision and action in this poem (WL, 121-122). Memory drives the poem forward, just as the backward pull of the serpent; and before the response, “I remember,” there is a pause. This pause demonstrates not only a suspension of memory but also that recalling memory is what propels the poem forward.

Memory, according to Coleridge, aligns with fancy and is dependent not only on finite structures of thought, but also on past events. These events occur in particular places at particular times, but once it takes the form of a poem it is already outside the

systems of time and place in which the initial event actually happened. Memory is unified in the mind through systems of construction and destruction. The creation of the poem allows the words themselves to become “the circumference of [a new] reality.”³⁸

This sort of new memory, I claim, is not the memory associated with fancy but is memory as it lives in the imagination of the poet. The Romantics tend to employ poetry as a means of reflecting through artistic recreation on the remembered emotions of a sublime experience supposedly felt by the poet him or herself. Modernists (according to Eliot’s philosophy) create completely new emotive, maybe even sublime, events in the form of the poem. Eliot says, “the difference between art and the event is always absolute” (*SW*, 56). This is because the art is a completely new event in itself.

Instead of recreating past events, Eliot strives to create a new event—a new event that he intends to be memorable. Coleridge’s fancy is “no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space” (*CW*, 364). It is clear that Hulme and Eliot redefine Romantic imagination and fancy, not based on evidence presented by Romantic authors but on their personal agenda to fight against the literary establishment that privileged principles of Romanticism. Fancy is distinguished from the imagination as a “difference in kind”: “if the check of the senses and reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium and the last mania” (*CW*, 202). The metaphors of delirium and mania hint to the minute differences between these two classifications. It also hints to the psychological impact of these functions, which is madness. As I have already discussed in my prior chapter, mutually delving into the conscious and unconscious mind

38. Frye, *Eliot*, 46.

in order to create poetic understanding through acts of creative interpretation forces the reader to take a look within his or her infinite mind.

Hulme's desire to avoid imagination aligns with the idea that the infinitely interpretive text is complicated by the Romantic comfort with infinite poetic imagination. The joining of the separate unities within the poet's imagination and the reader's interpretations symbolically extends what cannot be any further extended, which is the infinite breadth of the poem itself. Memory, which is viewed as a comfortingly finite (human) function, is arranged in terms of time and space and is generally made available through conscious recall.

While many memories are conscious, some memories remain buried in the unconscious mind. This complicates the finiteness of memory because the realm of the unconscious might be infinitely filled with repressed memories, some of which appear in consciousness through the realm of dreams. Of course, dreams (especially shared dreams) once again direct attention to the mysterious workings of the infinite and universal mind. The unconscious mind houses infinitely incommunicable mysteries, which are subjects to be communicated in both Romanticism and Modernism. The contradictory Romantic mind still finds a place in the poetry of the Modernist movement. Theories involving insight into poetic creation through processes of separating by classifying in order to arrive at a more holistic aesthetic theory, demonstrate the inescapable influence of Romantic aesthetics on the Modernists.

The use of nearly scientific, certainly philosophical, language and methods of classification for understanding the function of the creative psyche, as seen in Coleridge's

Biographia Literaria, serves as a theoretical Romantic foundation on which Modernism builds. Romanticism is often viewed as oppositional to aesthetics that value empirical systems for understanding the natural and artistic worlds. The Romantics, with an abandonment of overly systematic aesthetics, do not completely counter the logically systemized art that categorizes classic aesthetics. There is not a sense of complete disorder. Instead, classical aesthetics are transmuted into a new sense of order, an order that emerges even in potentially paradoxical disorder. Romantic methods of understanding art come to light in the meaningfully paradoxical disordered-order as a demonstration of the functions of imagination, memory, and the realm of universal consciousness accessible through restrictive verse and freed by interpretation. The ordered and finite verse becomes a channel for communion between the philosophical and poetic mind.

Eliot takes Romantic traditions a step further by disordering narrative structures of verse. As seen in *The Waste Land*, dialogue occurs between a large number of speakers. It jumps from speaker to speaker as well as from scene to scene, thus creating anything but a finite experience. The fascinating and comparable concept of dialectical synthesis permeates Romantic and Modernist conceptions of literary composition. And, the cyclical and fragmentary understanding of the literary imagination is extended in Eliot's Modernism through the influence of his Romantic predecessor, Coleridge. These poets, both of whom are clearly aligned with Romanticism (Coleridge) and Modernism (Eliot), share aesthetic theories. The shared drive toward progress (and away from the past) points to a connection between these two periods of mass enlightenment. We should

not try to replicate the past. As demonstrated by the geniuses of both the Romantic and Modernist periods, we should question and form opinions about our predecessors in order to achieve higher and progressive thought.

Chapter 3

H.D.'s Prophecy in Dialectic Fusions

The poetizing philosopher, the philosophizing poet, is a prophet. A didactic poem should be and tends to become prophetic.

— Friedrich von Schlegel³⁹

H.D.'s fragmented Modernist long poem, *Trilogy*, demonstrates the remedy for the painful experience of consciousness. Her elixir aligns with, as Geoffrey Hartman describes, a “particularly Romantic” solution, which is “to draw the antidote to self-consciousness from consciousness itself.”⁴⁰ In this way H.D. carries forward the Romantic tradition of exploring self-consciousness. The figure of the poet within the poem allows for an examination of the painful experience of maturation, or consciousness, that “is accompanied by an increase in self-consciousness.”⁴¹ And the remedy for this “analysis that ‘murders to dissect’ is found through the aesthetic.”⁴² Through engagement with the works of her contemporary (and friend) Sigmund Freud as well as with Romantic works, primarily William Blake, H.D. reveals a uniquely fused language of psychological and spiritual consciousness. Her exploration of consciousness and unconsciousness is expressed in the form of her Modernist re-vision of the Romantic fragment. By uniting scientific and aesthetic philosophies, H.D. becomes a poet-as-prophet figure within her own works. I do not intend to bring light to any particular divinations within H.D.'s works as relate to events that might occur in the future. Instead,

39. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 52.

40. Hartman, *Hartman Reader*, 180.

41. Hartman, *Hartman Reader*, 108.

42. Hartman, *Hartman Reader*, 108.

I aim to demonstrate how H.D.'s poetry serves as a realm of transcendent artistry that holds the prophecy of its own creation.

As a self-fulfilling prophecy, the poet is an intrinsic element of the text. The prophet is usually tied to the prophetic act; the action of creating poetry is exposed once again for modern readers to always be connected with the poet. The result of repairing this once broken connection between the poet and poetry, exposes an argument about enlightened thought, which is achievable through enlightened reading. In H.D.'s poetry both objective and subjective approaches to understanding the text apply. Traditionally separated modes of thought are united in H.D.'s mutually spiritual and scientific verse. The connections between spiritual and scientific knowledge in the creative realm of poetry produces a new means of understanding human perception. H.D. must create her own terminology in an effort to label her unique melding of psychospiritual philosophy.

“Jelly-fish Consciousness”: A Poetic Psychospiritual Philosophy

In this chapter I argue that H.D.'s fragmentary theories about consciousness, her vision of the universal artistic mind, which she calls in her *Notes of Thought and Vision*, “jelly-fish consciousness,” functions in a semi-Blakeian as well as semi-Freudian way.⁴³ H.D. weaves the two into her own unique psychospiritual ideology. As a matter of fact, in the fragmentary philosophy and poetics of H.D., her mythology unfurls revealing that poets unite the psychological and spiritual self. This psychospiritual mythology serves as a demonstration of how embodying both at once as inseparably separate opens a realm of transcendental artistry.

43. H.D. *Notes on Thought and Vision*, (hereafter cited *NTV* in text).

Ironically, “Poets are useless” appears as a line in H.D.’s epic poem *Trilogy*.⁴⁴ Yet, as the reader continues reading the poem demonstrates the prophetic role a poet does serve. After the initial declaration about the uselessness of poets the rhetoric employed continues to engage in a powerful, yet seemingly contradictory, dialogue. At first poets are “useless” but then they are described as “authentic relic,/bearers of secret wisdom,” as well as the “living remnant/of the inner band/of the sanctuaries’ initiate” (*T*, 14). Essentially poets are members of an elite group privy to the ancient and “secret wisdom” of heaven (and thus also hell and all other fragments of the universe) (*T*, 14). The initial appeal to commonly perceived paradoxes reveals unification under the terms of another conflict, which is that of what is said and what is meant.

Subsequently poets are described as “non-utilitarian” and “pathetic” (*T*, 14). Yet, it must not go unnoticed that these words appear in quotation marks and therefore do not reflect the dominating voice of the work. Changing voices informs the reader of not only contradictory points of view within the text but also suggests a keen awareness of the poet’s interactions with the audience. She engages in a defense of poetry, an effort shared by many poets. Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* can certainly be read as a defense of poetry. So too can Eliot’s “Tradition and Individual Talent.” But H.D. already knows that within the poet lives the poetry of the past. As a poet writing about poets, H.D. offers herself as a figure for the individual who lives with and among the fragments of poetry’s past. This past manifests itself as an Other self in the form of the poem. According to Harold Bloom, “To the poet-in-a-poet, a poem is always *the other man*, the

44. H.D. *Trilogy*, 14, (hereafter cited T in text).

precursor, and so the poem is always a person, always the Father of one's Second Birth."⁴⁵ H.D. represents the "poet-in-a-poet" when she writes:

living within,
you beget, self-out-of-self,
selfless,
that pearl-of-great-price. (*T*, 9)

These lines reveal the function of the poet's inner thoughts as they describe the production of the poem. Her inner-self is "beget, self-out-of self," as the text. The poem then becomes a selfless entity, eternally tied to the poet (*T*, 14). It is a reflection of self, like the reflection in a mirror, which is clearly not the self while embodying most of the characteristics that define the self.

Writing as a poet about poets, H.D. takes on the distinctive characteristic of a sharp sense of artistic and psychological self. Her gaze moves from a look within her own artistic and psychological mind to the figure of herself within the poem. But this gaze is always beyond the fragments of H.D.'s self. These fragments of H.D.'s identity are parts of a shared whole. Her personal fragments become fragments of the universal and transcendental realm of artistry, which is a space shared by all artistic influences. H.D.'s glimpse into this realm carries with it a spiritual and artistic significance.

Productive Misreading of Freud's Unconscious

It is not H.D.'s psychological poetics alone that make her a poet worthy of what Bloom defines as "poetic strength." It is also her various acts of "misprision," which

45. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 19.

involve a personal melding of poetry with psychospiritual philosophy.⁴⁶ Bloom claims that “Poetic strength comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead, and from an even more triumphant solipsism.” He further explains that “To live, the poet must *misinterpret* the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father” (*T*, 19). Unification of poetry with psychospiritual philosophy is made possible by a misinterpretation of the dead poets. This misinterpretation is fueled by H.D.’s spirituality and the psychoanalytic theories of her famous friend, Sigmund Freud. As a close friend of Freud, as well as one of his patients, H.D. demonstrates a desire to achieve heightened self and social awareness. She is sensitive to the fact that her desire for self-examination requires a means for mapping the individual and universal mind.

Artistically, she seeks to understand herself as an individual poet and as the fragmented ruins of her predecessors. Her examination of self-consciousness uses the tools of psychoanalytic science. She learns about psychoanalytic theory from Freud and utilizes his science within her poetic and prophetic texts. While the similarities H.D. shares with Freud are a fascinating topic, already observed by many literary theorists, I am interested in where H.D. and Freud disconnect. I am most concerned with where H.D. most productively misreads Freud.⁴⁷ The difference between artist and scientist demonstrates the separate qualities of the individual unified by a fragmentary

83. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 9.

47. For detailed explorations into the topic of where H.D. connects and disconnects with Freud see: Buck, *H.D. and Freud*; Friedman, *Analyzing Freud*, and *Psyche Reborn*; also Hogue, *Scheming Women*.

understanding of the universe. Each one holds a privileged knowledge of the human mind, as well as distinctive perceptions of the relationship between psychology and art.

Freud describes the unconscious as “the ‘*repressed.*’”⁴⁸ He explains further that “ego is itself unconscious” and “the unconscious ego ... seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed.” Unconscious systems serve to help Freud understand and explain psychological disorders. Certainly, the unconscious is not a place of comfort or spiritual enlightenment for Freud. It is the poet, not the scientist, who appears to find comfort in unknowing. For H.D., the unconscious is a place of comfort because, as I explained earlier, it is in the realms of both what is known and unknown where great art is created. The poet’s transcendence of the fear and terror of the unknown, through allowing the unknown to remain unknown, the unsaid to remain unsaid, demonstrates a different interpretation of experiences with consciousness and unconsciousness from that of Freud.

Because H.D., as a poet, has the freedom to adopt Freud’s scientific understanding of human psychology without being bound to scientific methodologies and professional practices, she is able to investigate and create new methods for exploring individual and universal consciousness. She unravels the already woven critical theories produced by Romanticism and reweaves her own unique tapestry. H.D. knows that consciousness is not only accessible through science. Her focus is different from that of a scientist, as Alik Barnstone relates:

48. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 20-21.

Freud was concerned with bringing up the materials of the unconscious so that the individual could live rationally, not driven to the destructive forces of the unconscious. In contrast, H.D. ruminates on “what happened when this life was over” (TF, 102). She believes that the hieroglyph of the dream translates into otherworldly, spiritual signs. The dream is as Emerson, her philosophical soul-mate, puts it: “a template whose walls are covered with emblems, pictures and commandments of the Deity.”⁴⁹

Along with a psychoanalytic search for self and universal awareness, H.D. seeks spiritual enlightenment within herself. She also desires to spread her spiritual knowledge to others. She searches for “otherworldly, spiritual signs in her dreams and translates these “spiritual signs” into her poetics. *Trilogy* is an Apocryphal poem that “combines Gnosticism with H.D.’s Moravian background” (*T*, xv). Through her poetic texts it may appear that H.D. seeks both individual and universal transcendence as well as the ability to propagate her higher Gnostic wisdom. But most importantly her poetry demonstrates the comforting freedom found in restrictive language and verse. A similar, restrictive freedom is often associated with religious belief.

Perhaps this supplies the reason that Freud diagnoses H.D. with the psychological disorder of megalomania, a hidden desire to invent a religion (*T*, xii). Even as H.D. possesses a great respect for Freud, since she considers him to be her “Professor,” she still questions his theories, as any engaging student might (*T*, xi). Although H.D.’s own theories reflect the influence of Freud, her understanding of consciousness varies greatly

⁴⁹ Barnstone, *Trilogy*, xi-xii.

from his. According to H.D. there are three manifestations of life: “body, mind, over-mind” (*NTV*, 17). The body embodies material existence, the mind encompasses psychological reality, and the over-mind transcends corporeal and self-centered perceptions in favor of an artistic, universal connection (the poetic mind).

H.D. is a mystic poet. She is not a scientist like Freud and does not choose to view the world through a purely scientific lense because she recognizes one of the failings of science. The spiritual self cannot be scientifically defined and qualified, especially if it is to be separated from the intellectual self. As a matter of fact, “Poetism is the medium of meditation between H.D.’s Moravianism and Freudianism.”⁵⁰ While H.D.’s Modernist sensibilities cannot avoid the scientific ordering of the world, science is not her primary area of interest when it comes to defining consciousness. Empirical understanding of the mind through psychoanalysis greatly influences the poetics of H.D., but she is more concerned with a psychospiritual union.

Yet, while H.D.’s purposes are different from Freud’s, H.D. does directly compare her vision of the three states of consciousness with Freud’s three states. To H.D. her three consciousnesses are labeled and ordered as such:

1. Over-conscious mind.
2. Conscious mind.
3. Sub-conscious mind. (*NTV*, 46)

50. Chisholm, *H.D.’s Freudian Poetics*, 159.

Even as H.D. maintains some of Freud's basic labeling methods there are differences, including substituting the "over-conscious mind" for the "universal mind." Freud arranges things thusly:

1. Conscious mind.
2. Sub-conscious mind.
3. Universal mind. (*NTV*, 46)

Freud's subconscious mind unlocks the "universal mind" through the Freudian theoretical perspective. Comparatively, according to H.D., "the sub-conscious and the over-conscious are entirely different states, entirely different worlds." She explains further: "The sub-conscious world is the world of sleeping dreams and the world great lovers enter, physical lovers, but very great ones" (*NTV*, 49). Her definition of the sub-conscious is attached to the realm of dreams. The idea that transcendence is open to "physical lovers," but only very great ones, implies that this sort of knowledge is accessible through material manifestations of love. The love referred to in this statement is not purely physical, and the fact that it is compared to the "world of waking dreams" points to the vividness of the experience. The world of the over-conscious not tied to the material world. This implies a type of intercourse beyond the physical. The over-conscious mind is the realm of intellectual intercourse, where art connects with the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional human mind.

Unlike Freud, H.D. primarily concerns herself with spiritual universality as it connects to art, love, and sexuality, with all three being capable of achieving differing levels of mystical and transcendental spiritual experience. All of these experiences are

united and understood in the event of intellectual awakening. For H.D., this event occurs when writing or reading poetry of the over-mind. As Chisolm writes: “Just as Freud delivered dream interpretation from an elite of oneirocritics to an open method of free association and lexicography, H.D. would deliver Freud’s dream work from the high priests of psychoanalysis to the open field of poetry.”⁵¹ Freud’s sub-conscious has little to do with spirituality, specifically a spirituality that is part of the intrinsic self. This is what H.D. interprets as the catastrophe brought on by psychoanalysis.

Freud the scientist does not recognize the universal consciousness of the over-mind that H.D. associates with “jelly-fish consciousness.”⁵² His focus lies too much with the mind and so with forms of scientific enlightenment. But, the spiritual and artistic over-mind is inaccessible through the intellect alone. It also involves an emotional consciousness. Visions of the over-mind involve both centers of consciousness, the brain and the womb. The womb, or “love-region” (since this consciousness is not an only female trait), signifies a creative and nurturing consciousness (*NTV*, 20). It also alludes to the maternal act of artistic creation, which is not only an emotional connection the artist feels for his or her work. This emotional connection also points to the pain of creation.

As with childbirth, the sting of “jelly-fish consciousness” produces a new creation worth the pain. H.D., like Blake, discusses this metaphysical consciousness with the comfort (found even in discomfort) of being a poet. She claims, “The swing from normal consciousness to abnormal [jelly-fish] consciousness is accompanied by grinding

51. Chisolm, *H.D.’s Freudian Poetics*, 214.

52. H.D. *Notes on Thought and Vision*, 48.

discomfort of mental agony” (*NTV*, 9). Maybe this should not be surprising since she links the “jelly-fish consciousness” of the over-mind to the stinging creatures found in the ocean, the “jelly-fish or anemone.” Jelly-fish consciousness is a source, the beginning, a birthplace for poetry, which is “an inland matter”: it “takes place near caverns and rivulets, replete with mingled measures and soft murmurs, promises of an improved infancy when one hears the sea again.”⁵³ Therefore, it is creation and conclusion. All poets leave this place but only the greatest return again and again to it.

The idea that one must experience pain in order to achieve higher wisdom is no new contention. For H.D., the highest wisdom is poetic in nature. Poetic wisdom magnifies and unifies the corporeal and the ethereal. Both spheres are fragments of a greater whole. Her understanding of poetic fragmentation aligns with Schlegel’s vision of the fragment as “a miniature work of art”; it “has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine.”⁵⁴ Just as H.D.’s “jelly-fish consciousness” is associated with the painful experience of a sting, Schlegel’s fragment is associated with the painful quills of a porcupine. Both philosophically and aesthetically driven experiences elicit thoughts of potential psychological pain. Unlike Freud’s vision of the unpleasure in releasing the repressed, H.D.’s vision is not entirely unpleasurable. The aesthetic and philosophical liberation of the repressed fragments of the whole self is pleasurable even when unpleasurable in H.D.’s philosophy.

53. Bloom, *Map of Misreading*, 15.

54. Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 45.

Blakeian Influence: Mythology as Psychospiritual Prophecy

At this point, it is on the subject of artistic consciousness that I focus my inquiry into the, Freudian/Blakeian mythology of H.D.'s unique mind. Therefore, I would like to hold H.D.'s mythologies up against Blake's in an effort to demonstrate H.D.'s Romantic privileging of the artist over the scientist as the source of psychospiritual insight. In her work *Trilogy*, H.D. builds her own Apocryphal mythology in three parts, just as Blake builds his with *Book of Urizen*, *Book of Ahania*, and *Book of Los*. Perhaps not surprisingly, "Like other great artists [H.D.included], Blake had a profound intuitive grasp of human psychology."⁵⁵ For H.D., psychology melds with spirituality, just as Blake's illuminated texts and illustrations meld to form the work as a greater whole.

H.D. uses her own inventive mythologies to help shed light on both the pleasure and pain of philosophical discovery. Therefore, I find Blake to be the most natural window into the Romantic structure of H.D.'s texts and complimentary literary theories. Their roles as artists allow them to deal with such esoteric subjects as the intellectually achieved spiritual-universal-self with more ease than might psychological scientists. Certainly, science is not equipped to deal with subjects such as spirituality, since spiritual experience has no way of being quantified or categorized in concrete terms. Spiritual experience relies on comfort in the unknown. Science looks to classify and categorize, to make the unknown knowable. Poets, on the other hand, find comfort in the experience of "being in uncertainties," as described by Keats in a letter to his brother.⁵⁶

55. Johnson and Grant, *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, xiv.

56. Keats, *English Romantic Writers*, 1275-1276.

The state of consciousness that H.D. terms “jelly-fish consciousness” functions as a realm where the psychological mind meets the spiritual self. Unlike H.D., Blake’s influences obviously cannot include psychoanalytic theory since the science of psychoanalysis did not exist before Blake. Thus he does not classify consciousness utilizing a scientific system. Blake does not name his manifestations of life using H.D.’s vocabulary. How could he? Yet, Blake’s *Urizen Books* embody these similar “states or manifestations of life.” Urizen personifies the material body of the universe and creative forces. Similarly, Ahania’s reliance on the joys of memory render the inner-workings of her psychological mind. Los represents the transcendent art-inducing sting of intellectual and spiritual universal unity, like that of H.D.’s “jelly-fish consciousness.”

Trilogy depicts this mutually uplifted and fallen condition in terms of the society in which H.D. lives. She wrote this poem in London during the London Blitz, Germany’s WWII air war against England. The first lines make the connection of the poem with the poet and the war quite clear. It begins: “An incident here and there,/and rails gone (for guns)/from your (and my) old town square” (*T*, 3). These lines demonstrate the fallen position of society. Yet, “still the Luxor bee, chick and hare/pursue unalterable purpose.” These images of animals, representative of all life that continues to thrive, are more than a simple allegory of physical endurance. In the poetry of H.D., “eternity endures” in the form of myth; particularly spiritual myths that still survive after civilizations have been destroyed. The bee, an Egyptian symbol for life and death, survives in the form of an artifact. Therefore, the endurance of the myth is maintained by its artistic conception, as

well as through its after-life in works of art like this poem. This poem offers the hope of cultural survival in the midst of civilization's fall.

The reader engages in an experience that reflects both pleasure and pain, which H.D. associates with the state of "jelly-fish consciousness." H.D. and Blake celebrate this painfully transcendent state of being. H.D.'s *Trilogy* and Blake's *Urizen Books* depict the mystical realm of consciousness. *The Urizen Books* function as "Blake's 'Bible of Hell.'"⁵⁷ His "Genesis, *Urizen* is a chronicle of beginnings."⁵⁸ (112). But these are not the beginnings of an infinite universe. Instead, Blake's universe spawns from an ending. Like Blake's mythology, H.D.'s is a creation-from-destruction story. Her reworking of myth is found in "the tomb" that "ruin opens" (*T*, 3).

While H.D.'s and Blake's similarities were what I initially found most intriguing, I have now come to the conclusion that where they differ is where H.D. situates her most compelling and unique poetic vision. Both H.D. and Blake expose the trauma inducing state of higher artistic consciousness. Their methods and symbols differ because Blake's world is discovered through a more traditional use of binary relationships, where woman is opposite of man, where the feminine is derived from the masculine. Within Blake's work (paralleling most Romantic culture), femininity is portrayed in many ways to be weaker than masculinity. The Romantic figure of the woman embodies raw emotion. Yet she does have powers that man does not, the ability to carry life within her womb, as well as feminine beauty, which is often associated with angelic innocence in Blake's mythology. Femininity is a state of vulnerability and weakness, as we saw in Coleridge's

57. Johnson and Grant, *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, 130.

58. Johnson and Grant, *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, 112.

“Christabel.” It must not go unnoticed that within Blake’s mythology, Enitharmon (Eve) is essentially raped. She does not have full control over the powerful life-creating force of female fertility.

As a demonstration of this binary, mythopoeic, Miltonic use of male and female characters within the *Urizen Books*, the first book of *The Book of Urizen* describes the traumatic creation of woman, much like the traumatic creation of poetry. Blake’s own version of Eve, who is begotten of the elements that make up both Los’s body and spirit, fructifies as Enitharmon. Los’s pity for Urizen—who is “deadly black, / in his chains bound”—catalyzes the separation of his male from his female self, “For pity divides the soul.”⁵⁹ Blake continues with a grotesque version of the birth of Enitharmon:

Fibers of blood, milk, and tears:

In pangs, eternity of eternity

At length in tears & cries embodied

A female form trembling and pale.⁶⁰

Enitharmon’s birth is unquestionably disturbing, not only as physically and mentally felt by Los, but also to the universe and the gods that created it. Femininity proves to be both weaker and more grotesque than masculinity. Femininity is often exulted in Blake’s texts because of his “nature worship,” which translates to “Mother-worship.”⁶¹ Here, however, this does not seem to be the case. Pulling from Northrop Frye’s reading of Blake:

59. Blake, *Urizen Books*, 84, line 53.

60. Blake, *Urizen Books*, 92, lines 4-7.

61. Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 75.

The fall of many began with the appearance of an independent object-world, and continued into this state of Generation, where we begin life in helpless dependence on Mother Nature for all our ideas. This independent nourishing force in nature Blake calls female will.⁶² (123)

Although Blake is progressive in his views on women and femininity for his time, he does not have the same sense of gender fluidity as H.D. I will return to the gender fluidity exhibited in H.D.'s works after some elaboration of Blake's sense of gender. After Los is divided, masculine and feminine are separate and must remain as such in Blake's texts. Although Los may start out as slightly hermaphroditic, since before the split into man and woman Los must have embodied both, after the separation, male and female take on distinctively disconnected characteristics. Blake sees this separation as a fall.

For this reason it may be interpreted that Blake conforms to a traditional binary view of gender; however, the fact that distinct genders are a result of the fragmentation of one being should not be overlooked. Thus like Blake's, H.D.'s work reflects a fluid sense of masculine and feminine consciousness, even when she separates male from female. Initially, I found this connection to be one of the most fascinating aspects of Blake and H.D.'s mythologies. After further consideration, I conclude that the differences from Blake are the most intriguing parts of H.D.'s poetry. Her differences from her predecessors enable her own poetic prophecy.

62. Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 123.

The Transcendent Hermaphrodite

H.D.'s mythology rhetorically returns to and embraces the hermaphrodite. In theory, H.D. ultimately attributes hermaphroditic traits to the spiritual and artistic universal consciousness of every individual who is able to ascend to a level of mystical and intellectual knowledge. These hermaphroditic traits, I argue, are the philosophical ideal in H.D.'s works, her magical formula to speak the language of the birds (the mystical language of the gods). At the heart of this aesthetic work, gender is a binary transcended by gods (and great poets are included among the gods). A new binary is both prophesized and generated within H.D.'s texts. Hermaphroditic traits are privileged over masculinity and femininity, which are united as separate genders.

As a poet writing in the mythopoeic Modernist period, H.D. is intensely aware of her position as a woman. Her revision of masculine mythologies exhibits a paradoxical dependence on and separation from masculine tradition. H.D. breaks the gender mold, thus demonstrating the fluidity of gender; and yet, while she is a part of "the boys club" she is also distinctly female in voice. Because she must adopt masculine forms, symbols, and mythologies, she embodies her own god-like creation, the hermaphroditic-poet-as-prophet. Her pen becomes her metaphorical phallus and her distinctively female mind combines with her art to form her hermaphroditic poetic voice.

Hence, H.D.'s "jelly-fish consciousness" functions as an ancient and hermaphroditic ability. She asserts: "The brain and the womb are both centres of consciousness, equally important" (NTV, 21). Regardless of her choice to use a womb metaphor, H.D. maintains men are also capable of this state of consciousness through

their equivalent “love region.” It is not the masculine or feminine that is favored here, but the hermaphroditic artist as creator. H.D. communicates with the universe by becoming the god of her own creation. H.D. writes: “there was One/in the beginning, Creator/Fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever” (*T*, 54-55). In departing from Blake, H.D. claims that gods remain eternally hermaphroditic, thus favoring the hermaphrodite as the most pure and true spiritual form.

H.D. associates the “jelly-fish consciousness of the over-mind” with the intellectual artist. She claims:

Most of the so-called artists of today have lost the use of their brain. There is no way of arriving at the over-mind, except through the intellect. To arrive at the world of over-mind vision any other way, is to be the thief that climbs into the sheep-fold. (*NTV*, 21)

“Jelly-fish consciousness” is associated with the artist; it demonstrates an elite form of consciousness, but not one exclusive either to men or women. Instead, this form of consciousness belongs to the hermaphroditic mind of the poet, H.D. herself. There is no need for H.D. to explicitly paint a world of male destruction, since the war itself already does. Therefore, her focus as poet turns instead to hermaphroditic creation out of destruction. Within her mythology both genders serve to demonstrate destructive forces.

H.D. must fight for a place in poetics. Her fight is one of creation out of destruction. She is not afraid to fight for a mutually feminine and unfeminine spiritual understanding. As a masculinized woman, H.D. explores her own place in a patriarchal world. As a poet, she entangles the influences of Blake and Freud into her mythology.

Fragments of Freud and Blake, misread by H.D., position both Freud and Blake as gods of creation who deal with the finite material universe. In *Trilogy* H.D. writes: “When in the company of gods, /I loved and was loved” (*T*, 20). Freud is described as

the Genius in the jar
which the Fisherman finds,
He is Mage,
bringing myrrh. (*T*, 10)

Freud is in a jar because his “Genius” is confined to and restrained by science. When the fisherman finds this “Genius in the jar,” Freud is imagined as the magician “bringing myrrh” and precious holy gifts.

Therefore, it can be assumed that although Freud, in H.D.’s mythology, manifests as a god, he does not have access to the universal over-consciousness. Although Freud does open a doorway into the realm of “jelly-fish consciousness” for others, primarily for artists and poets like H.D., Freud’s influence becomes a symbol for the material connection with universal understanding. The material and metaphysical spheres are always simultaneously separate and unified in the mind of the hermaphroditic poet.

When H.D. describes Freud as her Urizen-like god, she seems to take on the voice of Ahania. For Blake, “Ahania is the Sophia or bride of Wisdom, her name being a faint echo a Athene.”⁶³ Ahania certainly fits with H.D.’s self-image. She is an intelligent, female, and god-like artist. In the *Book of Ahania*, the female character laments the loss of her happiness. She remembers the love they shared and desires the union between the

63. Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 277.

material body of Urizen and her own emotional mind. This once again demonstrates how H.D.'s poetic creation is inherently born of destruction.

Re-vision of the Ruins

The destruction from which H.D.'s philosophical poetics are wrought is not simply a fused fragmentation of Blake's and Freud's works. Her philosophy, like her poetry, is personal. Thus, I turn our attention once again to explorations of her psychology. The fragments of herself join in her text and unify the individual with the universal. Her individual self-awareness allows for H.D. to examine the fragments of herself in a patriarchal society. She writes in and for a society in which she is rarely viewed as whole, but where she is always whole. Thus, the poetic appeal and metaphysical allure of H.D.'s text unquestionably stems from her hyper-fragmented experience. The translation of her experience manifests as the long Romantic and Modernist fragment, *Trilogy*. H.D.'s distinctive vision in the form of revision materializes her prophecy.

Consequently, H.D. answers questions about who might truly know the secrets of understanding and communicating the experience of universal consciousness. The artist, not scientist, is the hero of H.D.'s mythology. *Trilogy* illuminates H.D.'s belief that poetic genius possesses the privileged knowledge of over-conscious existence. Only poets, more precisely strong poets, retain the ability to put the fragmented pieces of the universal puzzle together. She proves herself as an artist; she proves that she is capable of understanding the secrets of "jelly-fish consciousness." If this means that Freud calls her a megalomaniac, then so be it.

She certainly is a charming megalomaniac. Although she might put her self on a pedestal of artistic supremacy, and though she might found her own religion, her poetics relate a desire to create out of destruction. H.D. asserts:

this is the new heresy;
but if you do not even understand what words say,
how can you expect to pass judgment
on what words conceal? (*T*, 14)

The “new heresy” is the claim that “poets are useless.” H.D.’s reaction to this claim, in the form of poetry, demonstrates that poets “understand what words say.” Therefore, poets are better able to understand “what words conceal.” Basically, through working towards an improved means of communicating the depths of the mind and soul, the poet gains insight into the knowledge of what cannot be related, what is unable to be said, what can only be felt. Personal experience is where the connection with universal consciousness hides. H.D.’s poetic prophecy of the “jelly-fish consciousness” floats beneath the depths of her self-consciousness. H.D. teaches the universal connection to the individual simultaneously and decisively using both scientific and spiritual modes of thought. Readers must endure the painful sting of “jelly-fish consciousness” in order to understand her texts on a deep and transcendent level. Each reader must dive into the depths of her own mind while simultaneously allowing herself to be swept away. The result is a mutually independent and social mode of thinking that allows for a richer and more inclusive reading of the poetic text.

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