RE-FLOWERED: AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF H.D.'S *SEA GARDEN*

by

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Abstract

While often cited as the exemplar of imagism, the modernist poet H.D.'s 1916 collection, *Sea Garden*, has been critically avoided in recent decades, redirecting scholarly focus to her later, more spiritually engaged writing. Overcompensating for previous neglect of H.D.'s work, this avoidance has likewise led many contemporary critical theories, such ecocriticism, to be eschewed despite the potential insights offered through their application. This thesis argues that H.D.'s unique poetic exploration of nature and the feminine in *Sea Garden* forms an imagined 'eco-system' and reveals it to be an explicitly ecofeminist and new materialist work. By closely reading the collection from this perspective, new interpretations drawn from the text facilitate a deeper understanding of H.D.'s personal philosophies concerning communion between humanity and nature. These concepts can then be identified throughout her subsequent novels and collections, revealing *Sea Garden* as setting an important thematic precedent to the rest of her life's work.

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Introduction

“Please picture me in the trees…
Please picture me in the weeds
Before I learned civility”
-Taylor Swift, “seven,” *folklore* (2020)

In July of 2020, singer-songwriter Taylor Swift released her eighth studio album, *folklore*. In a Twitter post written just before the release of the project, she states

> It started with imagery. Visuals that popped into my mind and piqued my interest… Pretty soon these images in my head grew faces or names and became characters. I found myself not only writing my own stories, but also writing about or from the perspective of people I’ve never met, people I’ve known, or those I wish I hadn’t… The lines between fantasy and reality and boundaries between truth and fiction [became] almost indiscernible. (@taylorswift13)

Though Swift has not called *folklore* an imagist work in exact terms, those familiar with the imagist movement will easily make the comparison based upon this description. Written during a period of social isolation in the early months of North America’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the album’s songs cover a complex network of topics and themes, exploring modern feminine introspection through the use of the literary image. These images combine the realms of the feminine, the mythological, and the natural together to examine individual frustrations with subjectivity and identity through detailed snapshot moments strung together. Most prominently is this present in the track quoted above, “seven,” Swift’s contemplation on the naivety of her Pennsylvania childhood and on one’s first perception of personhood outside the self. By asking the listener to “Picture [her] in the trees” and “weeds/Before [she] learned

civility," the speaker of the song implores the listener not to define her by the standards and expectations of society, but instead to see her as an active participant in a world as it exists beyond the confines of humanity, at a time before she had internalized them as rules that she must live by. She is not *in* nature but *as* nature – that is, should listeners picture the trees, they would be able to conceptualize the presence of her spirit within them.

This image of the spiritual merging of 'person' with 'tree' is not new to imagism. In her definitive imagist work, *Sea Garden*, modernist poet and writer Hilda Doolittle repeatedly captures this concept and expands upon it in her first published collection of poetry. She too wrote her work at a "troubled time": dealing with the onset of World War I, a "strained" marriage, the loss of a child, etc. (Wheeler, "Mapping Sea Garden" 41). Likewise, in her own Pennsylvanian youth, she formed her attachment to the natural world. Years after the publication of *Sea Garden*, in her semi-autobiographical novel, *HERmione* (1981), H.D. summarizes this philosophy directly: "Trees are in people. People are in trees" (5). For this reason, nature is a key feature throughout H.D.'s body of work, most obviously reflected in her consistent return to the image of the rose, stretching from the beginning of her published career in 1916 with *Sea Garden* to her final major written work, *Hermetic Definition*, posthumously published in 1972. *Sea Garden*, however, remains her most nature-centric collection of poetry, "a site of conflict and of transformation" (Collecott 95), exploring a complex network of imagist descriptions of the land and sea, as well as the diverse and varied narrative agents who reside there and call these domains their natural habitats.

Calls to action within the study of modernism, including Susan Stanford Friedman's 1975 article "Who Buried H.D.?", stress the past systematic failure of institutions to fairly address and critique H.D.'s work, explaining that "criticism is written from a subjective male point of view; that, no matter how scholarly and well-researched such articles may be, they are not value free" (806). Furthermore, Friedman notes, "What the chasm between H.D.'s poetry and the reading of some of her critics demonstrates is how distortions in this one case are a part of a more general pattern in criticism by which the work of women writers is misread" (813). These arguments have been key to expanding opportunities for proper analysis of H.D.'s later works, solidly cementing her as a vital member of and active, primary contributor to the modernist movement. However, now that a more expansive range of perspective has opened upon the remainder of her writing, analysis and consideration for *Sea Garden* has fallen mostly dormant, especially compared to the scholarship of other works of hers such as *Trilogy* or *Helen in Egypt*[1].

Just as much as H.D.'s later work, *Sea Garden* deserves to have the full extent of its potential insight explored. Notably, before this wave of critical reassessment, the collection was the subject of most scholarly attention to H.D.'s writing. This is because modernist academia is often concerned with assessments of form, as opposed to retroactive application of theory, some of which had not yet been in use at the time these pieces were originally published. The imagist movement was intentionally conceived with precise formal guidelines at its core, allowing *Sea Garden* to be used as a strong example of its strict ideals. Even after the publication of Friedman's article, detractors of H.D.'s work have continued to cite it as her only text worthy of note: "previous

evaluations of H.D.'s poetry were largely accurate in finding that early in her career she had a few short poems of astringent charm, while later she had produced longer works whose limited perceptions and impoverished stylistic resources made them little more than curiosity pieces” (Rainey 121). Perhaps this is partially influenced by the subject matter which H.D. explores within the collection, being a text primarily focused upon material description of traditionally romantic images not given concern in typical Modernist texts, especially those written by her male contemporaries[2]. Friedman suggests that this critical mindset holds a “double standard of judgment for men and women writers,” unfairly categorizing H.D. as “at her best” when restricting herself to “short, lyric, emotional poems about nature, love, and beauty” (“Who Buried H.D.?” 807). When compared to her later writing, *Sea Garden* appears to lack the same spiritual and narrative contemplations that propel her later texts into higher consideration, prompting an insistence that criticism “move beyond” H.D.’s imagist roots (Christodoulides 26). For these reasons, there is anxiety concerning the suggestion that we must return to the collection for revaluation, lest it be used again as an excuse to limit new readings of H.D.’s work. As eco-feminist critic, Val Plumwood, notes in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, “Feminine ‘closeness to nature’ has hardly been a compliment” (19).

This narrow perspective on nature within art – pointedly, art created by women – perfectly reveals the structures of value that have been built into human institutions and ideologies. Specifically, the devaluing of the feminine and the devaluing of the natural have come to coincide with one another. The oppositional placement of ‘men and culture’ versus ‘women and nature’ has then been a foundational aspect of common societal perceptions and structures within art, literature, politics, and even scientific research –

usually to the detriment of women's treatment and authority within these spheres. For example, if society adheres to a "polarising treatment of gendered characteristics" in literary scholarship, certain behaviours and expressions of self are suddenly out of bounds to not only women writers, but women critics and other groups of marginalized people as well; "common or bridging characteristics are ignored, discouraged, or actually eliminated," excluding them from critical spaces and opportunities to have their work inspire and influence others (Plumwood 51). The ultimate 'intellectual ideal' looks a certain way within Western culture: white, cis, straight, male, etc. This assumption then insists that anyone who does not fit this image must be fundamentally lacking in some way. Plumwood's ideas explore this phenomenon through the lens of eco-feminism, explaining exactly how this perceived duality is not only a false cultural narrative but ultimately a tool for the purpose of maintaining constructed social hierarchies and systems of control that benefit only a select group of people – in this case, the male viewpoints of modernist literary tradition:

> The concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast for the concept of nature, much as the concept of husband does for that of wife, as master for slave. Reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other encompassing and representing the sphere of materiality, subsistence and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him. The continual and cumulative overcoming of the domain of nature by reason engenders the western concept of progress and development. (4)

In order to properly combat the systematic devaluing of both nature and the feminine, this duality needs to be dismantled, not only placing these concepts as equivalent instead of oppositional to one another, but also by revitalising our understanding of their worth – as effective agents of significance in their own right. Though these exact theoretical frameworks had not yet been established, "Many stress that H.D.'s writing encourages an organic approach to critical theory, in which various theoretical frameworks arise naturally from reading" (Debo and Vetter 5). While her body of work precedes the contemporary ecocritical discourses that have become commonplace today, the subjects of H.D.'s writing and the subversive, almost animistic representations of her personal spiritual beliefs combine together, allowing her work to be framed from modern eco-feminist and new materialist perspectives.

While *Sea Garden* is typically critically separated from her later publications, H.D. does not abandon her unique use of nature imagery in these works. Instead, this imagery is a device used for the purpose of instilling the material aspects of her poetry with the same significance and impact afforded to the spiritual and mythological aspects by default. According to Plumwood, "The view that the connection of women with nature should simply be set aside as a relic of the past assumes that the task for both women and men is now that of becoming simply, unproblematically and fully human" (22) – what is 'human' ultimately being confined to the set standards listed previously. H.D. consistently strives to address the topic of transcendence, traditionally viewed as a 'human' ideal of 'reason' and therefore restricted from those deemed lesser by culture, as well as how this may be achieved outside of typical systematic, exoteric means. Nature is her primary tool for this. Plumwood explains further that

> Traditional femininity was devalued… but was also the expression of a range of tasks, values and interests, concerns, areas of life and social orientations of real value and importance; they cannot just be dismissed, because of this denial, as powerlessness. We can reject women's powerlessness without also rejecting the entire content of women's lives and roles and the areas of culture which have been assigned low status. (65)

Tragic and frustrating aspects of feminine existence within society – including their associated ties to the natural sphere – do not go unaddressed within *Sea Garden*. H.D. continues to allow feminine voices and perspectives to find solace and rumination within the wild by not rejecting it entirely, instead working in tandem with it.

By portraying nature, the material, the bodily, and the feminine as not only things capable of achieving an active, spiritually enlightened existence, but also as integral to the process of legitimate empowerment, H.D. subverts the common narratives of cultural acceptability for how woman should write and what about. At the same time, she elaborates upon the authentic, layered complexities of the feminine experience. Plumwood explains that "to view the traditional connection between women and nature as no more than an instrument of oppression" (20) is often a common response to rejection from the system, leading many women to conform to a nature/culture duality and assimilate into dominant roles better valued by society. However, the strengths of H.D.'s images and narratives are orchestrated by the very things that culture has dictated makes enlightenment impossible for them. Thus, *Sea Garden* actually sets an important precedent for the rest of H.D.'s work and should be granted the same level of thematic

analytical legitimacy as her subsequent texts; viewing it through an eco-feminist critical lens is one step in the process of doing so.

It is often a romantic, nostalgic image that comes with the depiction of humanity living 'among' the natural world. The common association between femininity and nature is often taken for granted within literature and art, especially within the poetic sphere. Terms such as 'Mother Nature' and traditions refer to both wilderness and open sea as places where 'she' may easily swallow the unprepared whole should you cross 'her.' *Sea Garden* is full to bursting with what are usually considered traditional personifications of nature: speakers addressing the presence of different flowers, trees, and other natural actors as individuals with 'human' traits and personalities. However, how H.D. chooses to explore this common concept within *Sea Garden* strays from the typical depictions of the natural realm in a unique way that has not yet been fully explored within academic criticism.

To solely describe H.D.'s work as 'personifying' nature is an incomplete summation of how she plays with the presence of seemingly human traits in the realm of nature. According to Anne Raine,

> [W]hile modernists were also interested in the nonhuman and concerned about modernity's socioecological effects, they used innovative formal strategies to disrupt, defamiliarize, distance themselves from, or imagine alternatives to conventional constructions of nature and human nature. Consequently, reading modernism ecocritically requires different strategies. (105)

H.D. is no exception to this. Indeed, she infuses *Sea Garden*'s recurrent descriptions of flowers, rocks, and plant life with a more active, spiritual dimension, acknowledging their

roles as effective inhabitants within a given space. They are not only figurative representations of personal and societal traits, but also literal players in the scenes in which they are participants. When the speakers of "Sea Rose" or "Pear Tree" cite the subject of their image as "you," they are addressing these bodies of nature directly, as actors capable of their own agency outside of humanity. New materialist critic, Jane Bennett, explores what she refers to as "thing-power" in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Thing-power, as described by Bennet, is the recognition of non-human agency within the inanimate, which turns the perception of an inactive object into that of an active subject so that "ordinary, man-made items [may] exceed their status as objects and… manifest traces of independence or aliveness, constituting the outside of our own experience" (xvi). This same line of thinking may easily extend to our interactions with the material, natural world. Addressing thing-power, Bennett posits that rational ideologies must open themselves up to broader philosophies of agency and lend voice to previously "discredited philosophies of nature" (18), like animism, in the process. In blurring the lines of agency between humans and material objects that surround us everyday, recognizing the intense impact that our physical environments have on not only our humanity but our place as subjects in nature, the false duality that oppresses and devalues both women and the natural world becomes destabilized.

Plumwood and Bennett's theories help illuminate H.D.'s use of nature as a space of empowerment for the feminine voice and body. Likewise, H.D. makes undeniable the nuanced multiplicity of marginalized perspectives and recenters the usually masculinely and/or culturally focused narrative towards them. *Sea Garden* accomplishes these depictions by using intra- and inter-textual allusions from history, mythology,

contemporary cultural images, and – of course – nature. Plumwood argues that "Dualisms are not just freefloating systems of ideas; they are closely associated with domination and accumulation, and are their major cultural expressions and justifications… Their development has been a historical process, following a historical sequence of evolution" (42-43). *Sea Garden* plays with many commonly perceived dualities, so often assumed obligatory and unchanging (nature vs. culture, the feminine vs. the masculine, the material vs. the spiritual, the bodily vs. the logical, etc.), and in doing so reveals not only how they function as a tool for restriction and oppression, but also how they may likewise be reclaimed by the feminine artist for the purpose of artistic and spiritual empowerment.

Before approaching *Sea Garden*'s text directly, a brief examination of H.D.'s early biography will lay a stronger foundation on which to build an ecofeminist close reading. Many influences on her personal philosophies concerning humanity's complex relationship to the natural world can be found here. These details can be found interspersed throughout other works (*The Gift*, *HERmione*, and *End to Torment*[3]), as well as within the unique circumstances of her upbringing, where her spiritual experiences in childhood provided H.D. with a more balanced perspective on the oppositional structures eco-feminism puts into question. Considering that *Sea Garden* was written during and within the wake of her college adolescence, examining H.D.'s early artistic relationships and their power dynamics is vital to understanding her choice in imagery, the specific frustrations they likely manifest, and their significance to her own artistic identity and creative processes. H.D.'s visions of nature as refuge for feminine marginalization are intentional, and there is a great deal of evidence to support this when considering the collection as a whole.

Beyond this, offering a deep reading of *Sea Garden* through the lens of eco-feminist and new materialist theories must be done with consideration for how nature exists as an actor – or more accurately, *actant* – within the poems' images. Actants are, according to Bennett, "a source of an action that can be either human or non-human; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, alter the course of events" (viii). So, in order to properly portray how the natural world shifts and changes from the effects of its own agency, it is necessary to observe how *Sea Garden* constructs a formal atmosphere and sense of place. Lesley Wheeler describes the completed collection as a poetic "eco-system" which uses a "delicate interdependence" of reoccurring imagery and ideas to portray its larger messages – "an environment, resonant with echoes, that demands exploration" ("Mapping Sea Garden" 40). I believe that this concept of the metaphorical eco-system can be translated into something more literal (or *literary*) within *Sea Garden*. It is precisely H.D.'s use of natural images that allows these connections and brings implicit narratives that span throughout the entire collection to the forefront: the 'sea' and the 'garden' from which it takes its name, the interaction between these two realms, the many imagined habitats they create, and the state they maintain in opposition to industrialized systems of modern civilization. The literary "eco-system," as depicted through H.D.'s imagist detailing, may be mapped together by the reader to display a more complete vision of the collection's themes and perspectives. This hypothetical map then lends itself best to analyzing *Sea Garden* not through solely its individual pieces, but instead as a holistic unit which itself has a kind of agency through which to relay its narratives.

Beginning by examining the significance of the Sea Flower poems[4] scattered intermittently among the *Sea Garden*, we can see how these pieces can be used as thematic scaffolding to the collection, presenting us with our primary forms of motif and giving us a kind of thesis statement from which to filter the rest of the collection. The position the Sea Flowers occupy is both figurative and literal, meaning that while they can function as an empathetic landing place for feminine solidarity, they remain their own individual subjects affected by oppressive forces outside of personification. After this analysis, examining the imagined landscape will include close inspection of the following key literary locations: the Sea, the Beach, the Wilderness, the Farmed Land (with the "Sheltered" Garden that exists alongside it), and the City. Each imagined location can be seen as a nexus point to particular eco-feminist concerns and representations. The Sea and the City stand in opposition to each other not only narratively through their chronological placements within the collection, but also philosophically through their use as greater manifestations of societally constructed dualities. By ordering these locations in a kind of associative gradient, with varying amounts of influence from both sides of the scale between nature and civilization, we can then see exactly how H.D. chooses to explore concepts of liminality and transformation throughout *Sea Garden*, as well as the nuances surrounding human interaction with nature.

Through H.D.'s depiction of the Sea, we are able to better understand how her vision of a nature tied to the feminine subverts the common personification and domestication that takes place in traditional depictions of anthropomorphized nature or other divine feminine forces. The setting of the collections first poems, the presence of

the Sea influences the portrayals of all other locations found within the eco-system of *Sea Garden*, playing a vital foundational role. Following the Sea, the next fundamental setting of the collection is the Beach. The Beach functions, within not only the Sea Flower poems but the entire text, as place of transformation and transition. Holding true to its place as the most obviously liminal space within *Sea Garden*, the Beach is a gateway to understanding the entire collection and the ways that actants – both of nature and of civilization – interact with one another.

The centre of *Sea Garden*'s literary eco-system, the Wilderness, strengthens this image of transformation and metamorphosis even further through the use of Classical allusion, where H.D. plays with recognizable stories from mythology to recontextualize common understandings of feminine agency in mythological narrative and shows how nature aids this process. The Wilderness then is where the strongest forces of reclamation exist in *Sea Garden*, prioritizing not only the spiritual and emotional autonomy of the oppressed, but also the agency and security of the female form and body. After this, the Farmed Land exposes limitations of utilitarian concepts of value that civilization places upon nature. H.D. uses this image as a space of cultivation for feminine frustration and confinement as subjects usually excluded from cathartic resentments and grievances, instead considered beholden to the whims of their association with the bodily and marginalized. Finally, the City is the cumulative point of all previous locations, being the focus of last poem in the collection and the final point of convergence for some of the strongest reoccurring images. H.D. examines the City as a place of spiritual neglect as a result of industrialization – a complete rejection of all which could be considered

"useless." Despite this strict attempt to distance civilization from nature, the City demonstrates continued human reliance upon and participation within it.

Sea Garden is an incredibly nuanced and complex examination of society's devaluing of women and nature, crafted by interweaving numerous detailed images beside and on top of each other in a larger network of ideas. Contrary to contemporary perception, the collection's "alliance of vision with a *transformational* aesthetics and politics contests the perception of H.D. as a poet who embraced the aesthetics of the static" (Connor 50) and whose early work must be looked over in order to be legitimized within the canon. For so long, artistic expression has been considered a quality which separates humanity from the wilderness – it is for that reason why subjects concerned with art are referred to as 'the humanities.' Society understands music, literature, and visual media as material manifestations of an immaterial human soul. However, H.D. has created a collection that scrutinizes the false assumptions of a culture which is preoccupied with the masculine and the 'civil.' Her "rejecting" of the "materialist conception of reality" (Friedman, "Who Buried H.D.?" 808) is not a purging of these devalued traits, but a merging. How may ideas of feminine beauty and strength be amended by nature as opposed to limited by it? When recontextualization takes place, as Taylor Swift asks, "Are there still beautiful things" ("seven")? What does a revalued picture of society beyond the standards of civilization look like? *Sea Garden*'s very existence as a text argues that the feminine and the natural – the bodily, the material, the wild, etc. – are fully expressive agents within the philosophical landscape of poetry, literature, and modernism. Nature can be used as a reparative space for women and others

who have been subject to marginalization by rejecting the alienated, disempowered assessment of its functions, the only previous vision of the natural that has been offered.

Chapter One: Biographical Roots and Ideological Seeds

Before beginning an in-depth analysis of *Sea Garden*'s content and its unique exploration of ecofeminist theories, I wish to first establish how H.D.'s own personal ideologies and beliefs surrounding humanity's relationship to both nature and the feminine – while preceding the concrete establishment of contemporary, formal ecocritical theory – reflect what would later become ecofeminist schools of thought like those explored by Val Plumwood and her peers[5]. Though not as biographically influenced as later works, such as *HERmione* and *The Gift*, the main themes and images of *Sea Garden* find their origins within H.D.'s personal experiences. There is significant evidence to show that her consistent use of reoccurring symbols and concepts is a product of her very unique upbringing. Her exposure to both scientific understanding and spiritualistic philosophies through her parents, as well as the specific beliefs of Moravian spirituality practiced by her extended family, clearly had an impact on her perspective, as is reflected in her poetry and prose. Alongside these earlier influences, her subsequent collegiate artistic experiences, particularly her engagement to a young Ezra Pound and the resulting poetic creations he had fashioned in her honour, have also been used as a point of reference for her sense of identity as an artist and creator[6]. Ultimately, the most consistent elements which recur within each of these coming-of-age phases for H.D. are the seemingly inescapable structures of gender and nature. When these influences are combined, they form the foundation for the subversive literary understanding – centred upon often ignored, marginalized viewpoints – which is fundamental to the thematic throughline of not only *Sea Garden* and much of her other written work.

H.D.'s childhood was not entirely built upon the cultural preconception that the physical and spiritual are at an inherent opposition to one another. Instead, she was born into a unique position concerning her philosophical influences, where both science and spirituality were placed at a high value within her upbringing. This equal valuation was a product of her parents' contrasting beliefs and personal interests. Her father was an astronomer, likely sewing the seeds for H.D.'s particular future fascination with the celestial. Her father's occupation likely instilled an appreciation for material substantiality, later reflected in her meticulous, vivid descriptions of place and matter, something fundamental to the imagist writing style which "rel[ies] heavily upon precisely delineated objects from nature to embody subjective experience" (Freidman, *Psyche Reborn* 2). To contrast this, her mother was the more spiritually inclined of her parents and the most major force of influence in her early spiritual development, her family being active members in the Moravian Christian Church and community. H.D.'s investment in the occult is now well known, much of her late writing detailing the evolution of her personal journeys with the esoteric[7]. Frequently, her choice in imagery draws from allusion to not only the Classical but also Christian mythology, layering both ancient and modern religious symbolism together to craft new perspective outside of typical conventions. All of these influences form the defining topics and aesthetics of the imagist movement for which *Sea Garden* is often taken as the exemplar. However, simply being exposed to multiple outlooks does not guarantee that an individual is being taught to see these different subjects as equally valuable, or that she is learning to interpret them as interweaving facets of the same lived experience.

In *The Gift*, based directly upon her childhood and the beginnings of her personal spiritual understanding of the world, H.D. describes interactions that she would encounter with common material objects aided by the older members of her family. This fascination was not limited to her already scientifically inclined father. It was also important to her more religiously inclined relatives, including her grandfather (her mother's father):

> Everyone brought things like that to our grandfather, because he had a microscope and studied things and drew pictures of branches of moss that you could not see with your eyes. He put them on a glass-slide of pressed a drop of water from a bottle (that he had brought back from trips to the mountains) between two glass-slides. That (in time, it was explained) was fresh water algae, a sort of moss, invisible for the most part, to the naked eye. The apple of my eye. He was the naked eye, he was the apple of God's eye. He was a minister, he read things out of the Bible, he said, *I am the light of the world*. (*The Gift* 41)

Despite his position of spiritual authority – or perhaps specifically because of it – her grandfather frames more scientific interactions with the minutiae of the natural world as miraculous in of themselves, as opposed to something separate and less valuable. Adelaide Morris describes the continuing narrative from this introductory material/spiritual interaction as depicting "a succession of shocks in which objects regain their status as things. The Moravian world of H.D.'s childhood offered a particularly dense and luminous experience of objects saturated by code: in Bethlehem every artifact of daily life had an integrated familial, communal, and sacred resonance" (58). Though this argument does acknowledge the legitimate value placed upon the objects in H.D.'s young life, it takes for granted the inherent separation of the sacred from the material.

The understood ritual purpose of everyday items does help her form intricate narrative bonds out of her surroundings. However, beyond the interactions she describes between individual humans and stationary things, H.D. also places a great deal of weight upon the undisturbed active presence of material actants apart from human intervention.

Later in *The Gift*, when recounting depictions of various dogs in the pictographs and advertisements of her childhood home, H.D. asserts that "Mythology is actuality, as we know" (84). She pointedly states this while contemplating the 'dreaming' that comes from memory recall – how these potentially miscellaneous images and objects take on intense reverential meaning to her as time goes by. They take on the names of various deities from distinct ancient cultures, forming a sort of pantheon with the rest of the objects closest to her at the time. The true "dream-picture" which accurately casts the authentic emotional experience of the past does not simply "photograph" the visual of what was once there, "It must photograph the very essence of life, of growth, of the process of growing" (83). Perceptions of commonly found household entities are suddenly "marked out from the everyday, yet… enmeshed in the ordinary both in terms of cyclical return and in the domestic activity that marks the event itself. She introduces an unknown 'thing' that depends upon ordinary objects to come into being" (Anderson 110). Otherwise insignificant everyday items are imbued here with a firm sense of thing-power, their material reality slowly transforming from routine to something more. The act of taking "fleece... from Mamalie's medicine-cupboard... pulled off in tufts" to use for "mysterious occult ceremony" is a small but deeply sacred thing even for a young Hilda, who is also curious about the ritual purpose the many disparate items which lie untouched upon her father's desk (*The Gift* 85). According to Bennett, vital materialism seeks "a

polity with more channels of communication between [non-human and human] members" (104) where then "found objects… can become vibrant things with a certain effectivity of their own, a perhaps small but irreducible degree of independence from the words, images, and feelings they provoke in us" (xvi). She does not yet understand their meaning, but their presence alone allows her to understand the inherent spiritual energy they emit, without being told or shown by any human agent. Their variable potential activity is enough to transmit their vibratory effectivity to the rest of the room. Clearly, even early on in her life, H.D.'s perceived the realms of the rational, spiritual, and natural as sharing a more balanced space with one another than is usually permitted within societal values, and have overlapped each other to present more complex concepts.

Continuing to explore H.D.'s spiritual influences, it is notable how the relationship between gender and spirituality within the history of Moravianism, while not necessarily entirely 'progressive,' is at least much more nuanced and flexible compared to the often rigid patriarchal systems and expectations of many versions of Christian doctrine and worship. According to Elizabeth Anderson in *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination*, during the mid-eighteenth century, then leader of the Moravian Church, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf, sought to guide the movement with an ideology which "did not reject rationalism so much as an over-reliance on rationalism as a key to the mysteries of the universe" (44). This distrust of a universally employed, hyperrational philosophical mindset already echoes Plumwood's goal of deconstructing the structures of society which view rationality as the epitome of human actualization. However, as Anderson observes, this distrust becomes even more interesting when examining how

women were afforded a higher social value in tandem with these experimental spiritual ideals:

> Zinzendorf did emphasize a need for mutual devotion and honour between men and women. The dispersal of the patriarchal family allowed women to take on many leadership roles within the community. Women such as Anne Nitschmann, who became elder at 15, were highly regarded as spiritual leaders. Another controversy surrounding the Moravians was provoked by women's practice of women teaching and preaching. However, Zinzendorf oscillated between advocating for women preachers and retreating form the position by arguing that their role was circumscribed. Despite the egalitarian rhetoric, Moravian women seemed afflicted with a glass ceiling of their own. Most of their pastoral work involved the women choirs, they seldom achieved the prominence of male leaders and their preaching was often presented as exceptional rather than normative. After Zinzendorf's death the prominence of women in the church and their speaking and teaching roles declined, along with many other controversial elements of his theology and devotional practice. (47)

While the dynamics displayed within this picture of the early Moravian Church are by no means equal, there is still a foundation for gender roles which do not entirely adhere to common preconceptions of Christian identity and expression, opening up the possibility to question these predetermined hierarchies.

Though it would later be noted that H.D. categorized her later spiritual journey through the different male "initiators" in her life[8], her mother could be considered the original spiritual initiator of her childhood, being the person who made it possible for her

to be exposed to these particular schools of thought. Friedman elaborates upon a similar comparison within *Psyche Reborn*, explaining that "H.D.'s work began immersed in patriarchal imagery: Freud's psychoanalysis and esoteric mysticism. She used these images to restore the bond with her mother, to resurrect the Goddess, to revise woman as a cultural symbol, and thus establish a valid dimension of women's quest" (271). This "Goddess" is particularly important to the spiritual dimensions of H.D.'s writing, as it allows her to craft narratives where women are not only being guided through a journey of enlightenment but are specifically guided by women. Her choices of allusion to women of myth and legend (Aphrodite, Cassandra, Helen, Mary Magdelene, etc.) then act "as a symbol of woman's authentic self" in a "quest for selfhood involves direct confrontation with the dominant cultural norms shaping the nature and destiny of women in general" (ibid). Had she been raised in a more traditional sect of Christianity, where the completely patriarchal conception of spiritual leadership is rarely questioned or deconstructed, her writing may not have so strongly reflected such themes and ideas.

Inspired by own adolescent womanhood, H.D.'s personal narratives shift focus from perceptions of internal, familial space to external, transitional environments. Morris notes that, in contrast to the sacred material world of her childhood,

> Turn-of-the-century Philadelphia… was a world of things crisscrossed by competing and contested codes: civic and social rituals; academic rules, grades, and ranks; newfangled electrical, communication and transportations technologies; manufacturing facilities… The distance between Bethlehem and Philadelphia is not just a difference between a church culture and a social, academic, technological, and material market culture; it is also, for H.D., the

> difference between a world of transparent objects and a world of opaque and resistant things. (58)

When placed in the proper context, the "shock" of these new codes is not that the spiritual and the material are truly opposed to each other outside of Moravian worship, as was posited earlier. Passage into the larger reality of industrialized, modern civilization introduces social structures which deeply complicate the lives of women. The typical expectations for the supposedly natural progression of womanhood are arbitrary at best and intentionally suppressive at worst, showing how "'natural law' is usually an oxymoron; cultures project onto nature the 'laws' they want to find there" (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 153). H.D.'s depictions of 'coming-of-age' portray this construction of feminine identity as a constant confrontation with one's ability to adequately conform to the wants and needs of social authority: the institution of marriage, 'suitable' female sexuality, etc. Therefore, it is not within the urban centre that H.D. finds sanctuary for her growing sense of selfhood. Instead, she is at her most fulfilled within nature, in the surrounding forests of Philadelphia and slightly later, the landscapes of rural England. *Sea Garden* specifically leans into these images, "in particular the harsh, northern seacoasts of Cornwall and Maine, the uncultivated fields and woods she roamed near her home in Upper Darby, and the flowers of the garden planted by her grandmother and enlarged by her mother" (Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 2). Despite the refuge the natural world proves to be, however, it is not without the intervening influence of cultural constructs. Associating the feminine with nature still acts as a potentially limiting force instead of a liberating one, and examining H.D.'s own experiences with feminine artistic roles helps demonstrate this fact.

How society perceives the roles of men and women differs greatly within many avenues of culture. This includes both visual and literary arts, shown prominently in the concept of the 'muse.' Women are traditionally expected to fill artistic roles which are accessory to the artistic roles of men, who are expected to fill the role of an active creator. It is then an expectation of the Western poetic narrative that the male artist or writer's words are fueled by the presence of a passive feminine figure. The muse is the inspiration and arguable ultimate origin of this artistic output but is never herself allowed the agency to voice her own creative pursuits, only support those of the men around her. This is what Plumwood terms "backgrounding," when dominant cultural oppressors inferiorize those they wish to subordinate to the background of their cultural structure, placing themselves instead in the foreground (21). Systematic marginalization, as Plumwood goes on to explain, often ends up taking on a hypocritical and paradoxical quality: "Backgrounding is a complex feature which results from the irresoluble conflicts the relationship of domination creates for the master, for he attempts both to make use of the other, organising, relying on and benefiting from the other's services, and to deny the dependency which this creates" (48). The role of a muse is then backgrounded to a vital but ultimately passive space, making the reality of the role she plays that of a work's object, not subject. In cementing woman's roles in artistic creation this way, they are forced into oppositional restraints and kept from participating in the ideals of innovation and intellectual pursuit valued by society.

H.D.'s own artistic identity has had to grapple with this perception of the 'muse' over time. Though the origins of imagism have gone through their own recent reassessments, the mainstream historical legacy of the movement still places Ezra Pound

at its forefront. This has previously contributed to a narrative which attributes H.D.'s creative successes – which were, for so long, limited critically to her imagist work – to Pound's doing as well. While accounts such as Barbara Guest's 1984 biography, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World*, which claims "More important than any presumptive [marriage] was her awakening by [Pound] as a poet" (8), are no longer the norm, they are still proof of legitimate systematic forces which have "backgrounded" the artistic accomplishments of women. Rachel Connor reiterates this point while addressing the creation of imagism specifically:

> H.D's writing was seen by many as the prototype for imagist verse, which aimed to strip away all but the barest essentials of language and to foreground within the poem 'the thing itself' - the object represented. H.D.'s role in the shaping of images is made famous by the story of Pound's 'discovery' of her talents; as they were having tea at the British Museum in 1912, Pound read a poem that H.D. had just written and conferred on her the title, 'H.D., Imagiste', scribbling it at the bottom of the page. Told and retold by generations… this story has come to represent one of the defining moments of modernism: Pound's founding of imagism, the literary movement with the agenda of making poetry 'new'. What is elided in this version of literary history, however, is not just H.D.'s proper name - but the distinctive female voice of a poet who was very much a talent in her own right. (4)

Sea Garden was pointedly not published through the same avenues as her male peers; it was instead distributed by Amy Lowell's publisher, signaling that "H.D.'s connection with Lowell may indicate resistance to Ezra Pound's program for imagism" (Wheeler,

"Both Flower" 500). The outdated image of H.D. as entirely dependent upon Pound for creative inspiration willfully ignores the active agency that she took to maintain the ownership of her work apart from him. While it is undeniable that Pound had a profound impact upon H.D.'s life and writing, to prioritize his position within her work is deeply rooted within the misogynistic structures of artistic spaces and the scholarship surrounding them. If H.D. is so often acknowledged as the original 'master' of imagism, whose style and works would be used as the basis for the definitive conventions of the form, why is she then not the individual credited for these literary innovations? Most likely, it is the conception of her as satellite to her male contemporaries. For many, this is not even an intentional, malicious dismissal of feminine creativity. It is instead the result of a conditioned, ongoing, subconscious bias towards the stereotypical image of the enlightened, male intellectual, which is systematically placed at odds with our cultural perceptions of womanhood. This is one of the most vital reasons that we must deconstruct the concept of the 'muse' – something to which H.D. has devoted much of her written career.

Within the early, collegiate poetry of Ezra Pound, H.D. clearly occupies the role of the muse; natural imagery he projects on her can be interpreted as an objectifying symbolic force. These are images which H.D. reflects within *Sea Garden*, however this time from the reversed perspective. Infamously, Pound referred to H.D. as 'dryad', something that recurs throughout "Hilda's Book." When comparing specific images taken from "Hilda's Book" to those recurring throughout *Sea Garden*, many are exact quotations lifted from the Pound's poems and recontextualized by H.D. For example, the poems "Mid-day," and "Pursuit" contain symbolic parallels to the dedications written by

Pound: comparing her to a poplar tree (*End to Torment* 73), further comparisons to Greek mythology's Daphne (81), invoking the image of a "tree-born spirit" (84), etc. As H.D. was writing these poems, Pound was trying to enmesh her within the material world. This enmeshment on its own is not a bad thing – H.D. sees fundamentally how nature and humanity may be one and the same – but Pound uses natural imagery to objectify and portray her as ornamental.

In her novel *HERmione*, finished in 1927 and unpublished until 1981, H.D. expresses a legitimate communion with the natural world surrounding her adolescence – in fact, her most "authentic identity" is "indicated in the image of a tree" (DuPlessis 181) – but she simply does not trust the men around her to have the same nuanced, sacred understanding of that communion: "I am a tree planted by the river of water. George did not know that, was midge under peony, I am the word tree. He will have a new name" (*HERmione* 73). Re-appropriating these symbols of the feminine and the natural then became the main priority of H.D.'s creative output. She could relate to these images not solely for their aesthetic value, but out of an empathetic desire to free them from the same poetic confines that the 'muse' perpetuates. The crown embodiment of this allusionary reworking comes with her 1961 long poem, *Helen in Egypt*, where the epitome of all symbolic representations of beauty within Western poetics, Helen of Troy, is recontextualized to become a complex, multifaceted spiritual actor who manifests as many simultaneous aspects of herself based upon the conflicting, compartmentalised perception of her formed by both herself and the rest of the world. However, while this later work explores and embodies H.D.'s goals of feminine recontextualization completely through its very premise, her previous writing would be responsible for

likewise building the footing – or "wall" in this case – on which *Helen* stands. *Sea Garden* then, being her first major published compilation, establishes the subversion of these common depictions as a major factor within her written work, as we will examine soon.

H.D.'s sense of Classical narrative, as is more explicitly demonstrated in her later works such as *Helen in Egypt*, does not enmesh itself with the traditional understanding of what we usually identify as a Modernist 'epic,' rejecting many of the accepted characteristics for the renewed form set forth by her contemporaries, such as Pound in *The Cantos* or T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*. In her analysis of *Sea Garden* as a "gesture" towards the Classical epic, Jaqueline M. Foertsch explains H.D.'s position as one intentionally rooted along the "margins," voices usually forgotten in Classical narratives and those works which are directly inspired by them (100). Typically, the epic presents itself as a story demonstrating "models of courage, survival, and honourable behaviour" which may then be further appreciated by the group to whom it pledges its allegiance; those who are meant to see themselves within the text are essentially its "citizens" (99). The ancient understanding of 'citizenship' was that of a free, male landowner, whose position afforded them the privilege of political voice and power not allowed to those who were not part of this select group – all these being characteristics which Plumwood designates as markers of societal value within the oppositional power dynamic dictated by culture. The values of civilization as it is currently constructed, as well as the criteria whichs allowed you to participate within it, are placed at odds with both the feminine and the ecological, trapping them firmly in the 'background.' Therefore, it is unsurprising that

the genre often fails to address the experienced realities of those who do not fit this category.

H.D.'s goal, then, by engaging with traditional symbols of poetic mythmaking is to reconfigure the perception of self-value afforded to these groups of people (all of whom would find themselves measured as 'less valuable' by the standards of dominant, hegemonically masculine civilization), bringing them to the 'forefront' of these universal narratives, and granting them the agency which they have previously been denied. Friedman has termed this "re-vison," specifically stating that "[H.D.] did not conceive of the poet as a passive receptacle for the images and symbols of tradition," instead understanding that "the poet engages in an active, dialectical process of weaving traditional and personal revelations into new patterns of vision" (*Psyche Reborn* 226). It is a re-'vision' not simply because it recontextualizes or reconstructs the original images and their literary associations but also because it displays the point-of-view through entirely new eyes, creating a text that seeks to platform the legitimacy of marginal experiences: like those of women and the natural world.

Using contemporary ecofeminist theories to analyze H.D.'s work does not simply mean attributing a retroactive lens to works in which these ideas are only coincidentally applicable. These theories instead unveil a philosophical mindset which has been fundamental to her creative self-expression throughout her entire written career. Due to her unique upbringing, her early exposure to alternative structures of spiritual leadership, as well as the circumstances of her creative development, H.D.'s writing is an account of her long-running exploration of these topics as well as the evolution of their use that has taken place with them. The recurrent examinations of spirituality and gender that have

been seen as unique to her later work are very real and present within *Sea Garden* as well. Legitimizing a framework which understands an emotional intimacy with the natural, material realm is key to fully comprehending H.D.'s thematic preoccupations. And so, when approaching the text of *Sea Garden*, an ecologically minded critical lens will ultimately aid in recontextualizing previous readings of the collection.

Chapter Two: All That the Water Touches

The Imagined Landscape

To fully understand the many overlapping patterns and narrative aspects of *Sea Garden*, it first must be possible to see the many individual working parts of its literary mechanism and how they function together to craft something larger and more figuratively complex. The collection is not traditionally considered a formal long poem and is rarely analyzed as a whole, tangible setting, with critics instead focusing on the symbolic relationships between separate poems within it. However, *Sea Garden*'s particular curation lends itself to a much more cohesive, narratively driven critical analysis than is usually afforded to it, aided by the unique features and conventions of imagism. The shared images between poems within the collection go beyond superficial similarities. Instead, they are more accurately described as recurrent motifs, threading each poem together through symbolism, thematic context, and atmosphere. Throughout this chapter, I will be using these transient set pieces as a framework for analysis. Specifically, I theorize that, as demonstrated by consistent instances of *explicit* reoccurring imagery and language within the many isolated sections of the text, H.D. uses *Sea Garden* to craft the *implicit* image of a larger, more complete landscape, formed by piecing together the images described in individual poems as a complex, symbiotic unit. In order to observe and analyze the many non-linear narratives and thematic mosaics of *Sea Garden* as efficiently and recognizably as is possible, I will use the concept of an imagined landscape of imagistic form to organize the contents of the collection, focusing on the strongest images within each section of the eco-system and their differing implications for ecofeminist thought.

While H.D. does not craft a linear story through *Sea Garden*, it is still very apparent that she has attempted to instill each poem with a consistent sense of place, building a specific setting within the conventions of the collection's own mythmaking, which operates by its own rules, structures, and histories. There are several critics who have previously noted *Sea Garden*'s cohesive nature, though they less heavily incorporate it into their individual readings. Wheeler's use of the term "eco-system" actually originates from approaching *Sea Garden* within this context; the many possible locations of *Sea Garden* may be "mapped" to various different natural settings, easily classified through these shared descriptions of imagery (40). Eileen Gregory likewise emphasizes the cohesion of the collection, describing it as "a consciously crafted whole, with studied consistency in landscape, voice, and theme," where the physical space – its topographical, geological, and biological elements included – are integral to the experience of interpretive reading: The reader is consistently presented with "desolate sandy beach strewn with broken shells, large promontories and rocky headlands; inland, a barren stretch of spares but hardy vegetation beyond the beach, and low wooded hills nearby; deeper inland, the marshes and places of luxuriant or cultivated growth" (Gregory 536). In Gregory's own reading, this landscape forms a setting echoing the island of Lesbos, inspired by Sappho's written work and the influence it has had on H.D.'s own writing (529). However, it is my belief that the conceptual setting formed throughout *Sea Garden* is not beholden to any precise boundaries of perceived nationality or human prescription. Naming it as any one solid location, either fictional or true-to-life, does disservice to the evolving nature of these images in relation to each other. In fact, the imaginary landscape's ability to insist on its own existence, despite its contradiction

to human perceptions of organized narrative, is exactly what makes it a powerful and informative focal point to the collection.

In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett conceptualizes that thing-power is sometimes best understood by observing the way that groupings of seemingly passive objects interact with each other to create assemblages of active agents in a given space. Assemblages are specifically described by Bennett as "material cluster[s] of charged parts that have… affiliated, remaining in sufficient proximity and coordination to produce distinctive effects" (24). As these groupings are dependent on the force of things placed *together* and in relation *to* each other, they create a tangible conception of agency represented through the collaboration of these individual materials. According to Bennett, their "efficacy or effectivity… becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts" (23). This detail of Bennet's theory determines that, regardless of whether these components could have initially been gathered by human intent, a collection of pieces acting as an assemblage portrays its own messages and meanings separate from its originally conceived mode of perception and format. A human agent may designate specific expectations for how these hypothetical 'things' are meant to function or may be interpreted as when put together, both critically and physically, but the assemblage will maintain its own agency notwithstanding by virtue of its own materiality.

While the concept of assemblages is applicable to several different parts of *Sea Garden*, which will be explored later in more detail, it is also highly applicable to the text's larger literary landscape. Though each poem in the collection depicts individual narratives and separate images to the reader, envisioning the text as a whole work

bestows is a unique sense of cohesion. Rachel Connor offers the insight that "H.D.'s engagement with the visual is always plural and multi-faceted" (1), not confined to a position of stasis but instead "shifting and heterogeneous, mediating (often unconsciously) between a number of ideological positions" (8). Imagism, by design, relies upon careful, curated physical descriptions in order to encapsulate the emotional atmosphere of a single moment in time. If we are to imagine these images as poetic photographs, the feelings and ideas that they capture when isolated from each other take on new meaning when then placed next to one another, much like a collage. Alongside this comparison, H.D. uses methods similar to the concept of 'montage' in film[9]. Both of these formats consciously use the theory of assemblages for the purpose of art, something deeply rooted within the spirit of modernism which sought to "break with tradition [and] shift way from the traditional parameters of poetic form towards in the innovative" using "a range of art forms - including the visual arts, music, dance and cinema" (2-3). *Sea Garden*'s unique collective sense of narrative is then not completely alien from the accepted presentational rules of poetry, but instead an evolution of the specific goals and features of imagism to a grander scale through experimentation with an intricate web of visual interdependence.

There is a notable ambiguity to the identifying characteristics of the collection's various speakers, resulting the text in establishing a cumulative voice which "possesses consistency" and "a similar tone and intensity, even in poems dealing with specific dramatic situations and appearing to have sometimes male and sometimes female speakers" (Gregory 537). Many other critics such as Rachel Connor (50), Jaqueline M. Foertsch (103), and Susan Standford Friedman (*Psyche Reborn* 57) have themselves

pointed out the more androgenous nature of some of the poems, further confirming the non-traditional manifestations of gendered perspective H.D. is using throughout *Sea Garden*. However, in examining the features of a narrative voice, it too can be framed through the lens of a literary assemblage. A speaker's voice denotes a recognizable and individual viewpoint through the many given pieces of a lyric verse's thoughts and feelings. Especially within imagism, where the minutiae of a poem can be vital to decoding precise bits of information relayed to the reader, the details which a speaker chooses to focus upon, as well as their subsequent personal reactions to them, can paint a fuller picture of the viewpoints these active textual agents hold. For that reason, while the speakers of *Sea Garden* may not often definitively exist within the strict binary of male or female, there is still a distinctly feminine voice present throughout. This voice emerges to make pointed, personal remarks about the experiences of women and their relationships to the differing material and conceptual actors within the imagined landscape of the collection. Mara Scanlon describes H.D.'s writing as a reoccurring "negotiation of the feminine" (36), a reflection consistent with Friedman's assessment that her "mythmaking from a woman's perspective began in a negation of male perspectives," eventually "develop[ing] aspects of the old into antithetical myths which validated female experience, female quest, and female vision" (*Psyche Reborn* 212). Therefore, analyzing how these narrative voices portray their particular outlooks on gender – and its accompanying, associated qualities – within *Sea Garden*'s setting is only aided by distinguishing where these scenarios and accounts take place, for the sake of proper comparison.

Finally, the form and chronology in which the collection has been published should also be put into consideration. Gregory too finds that "The poems of *Sea Garden* appear to have been selected and arranged quite deliberately. The separate lyrics are not presented in chronological order, though their order is clearly not random… The unity of *Sea Garden* is not immediately apparent; nevertheless the work gives a singleness of affect" (537). Though written as individual poems, at different times (pieces such as "Hermes of the Ways" and "Orchard" being published on their own as early as 1913 (MacKay 55)), these poems were published in this form as an intentional network of corresponding ideas. Were new poems added, currently included poems taken away, or an entirely different order given to the text, a completely divergent experience would be gained from reading work as a whole. The collection is therefore its own kind of assemblage as a compiled work, able to convey patterns and narratives in a way that is not possible when read in a fractured, exclusionary state. It is for these reasons that I wish to use this imagined geographical landscape as a lens through which to properly examine *Sea Garden*'s eco-feminist leanings, examining each location and how they each act as a stage to various different scenes and images, beginning with the most prominent and important agents presented to us throughout the text: the Sea Flowers.

The Sea Flowers

While they only occupy a small portion of *Sea Garden*'s text, the Sea Flower poems[10] and their subjects are an integral part of the imagined eco-system that H.D. builds. They are what foremost bears the symbolic weight of the collection, exemplified most by being its namesake; what else should someone term a place where 'sea flowers' grow other than a 'sea garden?' There are several different methods that H.D. uses to

employ the Sea Flowers as tools to examine roles of femininity in relation to nature and culture. They are the thematic core of *Sea Garden*, presenting both a primary symbol of figurative resonance with images of the natural world which humanity may project itself upon, as well as a literal depiction of the authentic, active presence of ecological agents placed within the landscape of the collection, enduring their own legitimate strife and perseverance. By integrating both of these interpretations, we may contextualize and better engage with all facets of the text's ecofeminist concepts. In fact, the Sea Flower poems may be understood more precisely as a thematic microcosm of the whole collection – the figurative scaffolding to *Sea Garden*'s eco-system – with "Sea Rose" even more pointedly acting as its thesis statement.

The speaker of "Sea Rose" responds to the subject of the poem with affection for their particular strength and beauty, but not because its stalk is sturdier or its petals more lush and full. It is arguably the physical opposite of strong and beautiful, as we expect based upon the traditional perceptions of these concepts. It is a "harsh rose", described primarily as being battered, "thin" or "sparse," with "stint of petal" (*Collected Poems* 5). This is a rose without ornamental value and could easily be considered less cohesively valuable as a result of this. However, the speaker also goes on to say that the Sea Rose, regardless of its material conditions, is "more precious" compared to the "wet rose" and "spice rose." These are flowers which have, in contrast to the Sea Rose, been sheltered and have so far been afforded the privilege to grow without the hinderance of the wilderness' trauma, most likely kept for the sake of traditional beauty and ornament. In their coddling though, they are also without the same freedom. As the Sea Rose grows amongst the rocks and sand of a stretch of beach, it succeeds in surviving in a place

traditionally inhospitable to their growth without human intervention. Nonetheless, the speaker extolls the virtues of the Sea Rose, stating explicitly that it is because of the rose's ability to live despite its conditions that it is remarkable and worthy of praise. It proves itself strong through its improbable endurance and in being "lifted" by the winds of the sea, the act "harden[s]" it to something beyond its fragile origins.

If we use flower language as a reference for contemporary cultural symbolism, Kate Greenaway's *Language of Flowers* – a text that H.D. would have been familiar with considering her established childhood relationship to Greenaway's works (*The Gift* 147) – gives some very interesting insights into the messages of "Sea Rose." Greenaway places roses generally among the usual categories of symbolic meaning, beauty and love being the most immediate associations that one would likely make within Western culture. However, exploring the more specific roses this directory lists reveals another layer of figurative motif that H.D. possibly draws from. A "unique" rose is specified as meaning "Call me not beautiful" (Greenaway 37). This definition uses a flower to state not a general idea but instead a direct and explicit statement of defiance towards traditional expectations of beauty and romantic intention which aligns itself perfectly with the messages being conveyed within "Sea Rose." Likewise, Greenaway designates a "withered" rose – possibly the closest match one could find to the torn and ragged roses described within the poem – as meaning "transient impressions." Having these flowers be fundamentally defined by their transient, shifting nature confirms the importance of their liminality, something that will be explored shortly when examining the role of the Beach, but it also gives a fundamentally transgressive quality to them; they are defined by their inability to be defined.

Despite this paradox of description, it has often been remarked that the Sea Flowers act as figurative representations of human individuals, as they exist relative to societal expectations and the performance of beauty. Wheeler designates these images directly as "metaphors [that] invite engagement with many issues of pressing concerns to women artists, including sexuality, reproduction, and the complex relations between the natural and artificial, wildness and domestication" (496), acknowledging how they maintain their applicability throughout the whole collection, beyond their function as an isolated category of motif within the text. A similar description is offered by Feortsch, who presents the Sea Flowers as "offer[ing] a lesson in courage" and a "defiant statement of hope for an oppressed life... glorified by torturous encounter with the elements" (101). Feortsch's reading places the Flowers' symbolic power in a much broader context. When interpreting the flowers figuratively, it is easy to view them as stand-ins for groups who have been culturally marginalized by the predominant, hegemonic forces of civil society in the Western world: the same perspectives which H.D. consistently centres her work upon. In the case of *Sea Garden*, the historical methods through which women specifically have been marginalized by society lend readings to favour interpreting the Sea Flowers as representatives of women or at least as implicitly feminine subjects. Then, to Gregory, the Sea Flower poems represent "the harsh power of elemental life, to which the soul must open itself, and by which it must be transformed or die" (538). Gregory also chooses to emphasize the "mysterious icon" of the Sea Rose image (539). While this reading succeeds in properly acknowledging the nuanced realities of the Sea Flowers' complex and contradictory symbolic textual manifestations, it also indirectly reinforces the isolating perceived otherness of nature and its inhabitants, separate from humanity.

Once this perceived cultural limitation is removed, however, *Sea Garden*'s relationship to human communion with the ecological world is far more openly synergistic.

Commonly, even among women and other marginalized groups who experience dehumanization within society, there is strong hesitation to equate the human experience – especially expressions of our emotional and intellectual struggles of self – to that which we consider 'less than' ourselves. In *Undomesticated Ground*, Stacy Alaimo explains: "While humans may sometimes be generous about extending 'human' characteristics to certain animals, we are for the most part less receptive to arguments that move in the opposite direction, 'reducing' the transcendentally 'human' to the level of the animal" (40). It is even less often that we are willing to attribute the sacred 'transcendence' of humanity to plant life, nor frequently do we 'reduce' ourselves to shared experience with the Earth's flora. The Sea Flowers' struggle, when considered figuratively, easily translates to the emotional expression of human struggle, even if the same physical repercussions are not directly experienced. Though a human woman can likewise endure the sensory challenges of rough winds and salt water, she is not going to be affected as a plant would be. Still, humanity is able to metaphorically conceive how the wind could create material damage that mirrors our own on an emotional and/or intellectual level, as well as the existential challenge of being forced to 'cultivate' ourselves under conditions that are at the least perilous, less than ideal for our spiritual growth, and at the most, actively harmful to our wellbeing. Seeking to relate further to ecological agents beyond this state of being is where we begin to encounter the previously mentioned conceptual boundaries.

In those few instances when humanity chooses to compare itself literally to plants, the focus trends toward the aesthetic, usually not referring to exact comparative details but qualitative equivalents instead. This is often the case even when possible behavioural similarities are accounted for as well. One explanation for this can largely be attributed to the lack of obvious, observable sentient behaviour and/or choice observed within plant life. At the beginning of *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben makes note of the Ancient Greek distinction between *bios*, meaning life as we understand it in the state of existing, something that can belong to anything that 'lives,' and *zoē*, meaning life as we understand it in a social sense, which belongs only to those who are permitted civil interaction on a political and cultural level (1). Similarly subject to the same systems of discrimination and oppression as those Agamben describes, a nature that is unable to directly express its wants or needs rarely is afforded any active platform on which to advocate for itself, making it most vulnerable to alienation. Though plant life is 'living', we struggle to conceive of it as being 'alive' the same as we would a human individual, capable of asserting their personhood through speech or actions with which we can sympathize. More often, humans have a much less difficult time anthropomorphizing the 'animal' and can therefore can easily see when someone is, for example, 'stubborn as a mule' or 'loyal as a dog'; these are phrases used frequently not only in art but in daily colloquial speech. It is, however, a challenge to explain how a human individual's personality has the same characteristic markers as that of, say, a rose.

As noted, there are the physical aspects of comparison which could be explored to elevate the Flower from object to subject – roses are considered to be quite beautiful and

delicate, but they also have prominent thorns meant to protect them, holding the potential to harm as well as delight. I would argue, though, that this is not the same as a rose 'behaving' in a way that is characterized as 'thorny'. We currently cannot discern whether harm caused by a rose's thorn was committed with intent, as opposed to the many potential indicators of malice gained from observing human behaviour. Human-vegetation comparison in the form of flower language, as examined earlier, is also a common vehicle for the personification of plant life. However, an ascribed symbolic meaning for the sake of exclusively human communication outside of the wild does not necessarily guarantee that a plant or flower's meaning is derived from anything other than an arbitrary cultural attribution. A rose can transmit from one human to another the vague message of 'beauty', but that does nothing to explore the concept of beauty as an actionable behaviour. Likewise, in instances where flowers derive their meanings from mythological origin, for example the iris and the Greek goddess from which it and "coloured membrane of the eye" (Wheeler, "Both Flower" 503) take its name, these descriptions and symbolic attributions are the result of narratives in which these plants have already been anthropomorphized.

H.D.'s Sea Flower poems examine these living, active plants as subjects through the lens of their own collective character. When instead viewing the Flowers as their literal natural images, they are not only subject to physical marginalization in the context of the poem itself, but also remain likewise culturally marginalized. As both nature and the feminine are devalued by the same systems, this exclusion from aforementioned full citizenship within civilization does not confine itself to the metaphorical even when taking these pieces at their most immediate face value. The associations made between

femininity and nature are the result of both their perceived inferiority, meaning that as we discuss where women 'fit' within the societal order, the material and spiritual wellbeing of nature is likewise placed in the same margins. Plumwood explains that these structures which have been built on the foundation of devaluing both women and nature come as a direct result of the perpetuation of the idea that male perspective, equated with high ideals of 'logic' and 'reason,' "is taken for granted as simply [the default] human model" and that everything else "is seen as a deviation from it" (23). This specific inferiorization of women strips them of political and spiritual agency outside of their use to the established order and fundamentally dehumanizes them, as "The tragedy of being a woman consist[s] not only in having one's life and choices impoverished and limited, but also in the fact that to be a good woman [is] to be a second-rate human being" (26). Neither the feminine nor the natural are allowed the full privileges of personhood afforded by dominant, masculine societal structures, meaning that they share a kind of communion through their othering: while civilized culture has been made inaccessible to them, they are contrarily granted access to forms of understanding and determination that are likewise inaccessible to their oppressors. By using the Sea Flowers as the main subjects of the text, H.D. is actively seeking to open readers to the idea that humanity is not only much closer to nature than we often allow ourselves to perceive, but also that immersion in nature may be used as a realm for empathetic, personal empowerment and spiritual enlightenment outside of the dictations of patriarchal tradition, which so often dismisses and/or demonizes the bodily and material.

Examining the importance of ornamental value within artistic depiction and literary culture can help us to better conceptualize how these Sea Flowers bridge the gap

between women and their more material counterparts. Wheeler notes how "the [image of the] flower has provided a powerful idiom for female lyricists negotiating a double role as both aesthetic objects and creators of beauty" ("Both Flower" 496). This likely springs forth from women's attempts to deconstruct their traditional confinement to these metaphorical roles, especially when placed as the object of external artistic expression. H.D.'s own frustrations with her confinement to a 'muse' role are reflected here. How often are woman described in the figurative as plant life, flowers, or fruit? The common parallels draw comparisons to the beauty, delicacy, freshness, or ripeness of these things, but rarely any of the less flattering characteristics or traits of nature. In rare times when this is permitted, a woman is more likely to be perceived as something from the animal kingdom, automatically reenforcing a perspective of her as not only non-human but sub-human. In *Storied Sea and Living Metaphors in the Blue Humanities*, Serpil Opperman explains how strictly aesthetic discussions of the natural world, "no matter how well masked," seek to "stimulate totalizing strategies of domination and exploitation" (447). "Drawing on such frequently used image[s]," according to Opperman, both stems from and feeds further "descriptions that homogenize the actual diversity of life forms and move them away from human concern" (448). While this specific article focuses upon the agency of sea life, it is still conceivably applicable to other natural features, such as plant life, and to discussions about how we choose to other our human peers in poetic and/or literary description. Much like how the backgrounded 'muse' role confines woman to passive, decorative features within the poet's work, the total objectification of non-human organic agents serves to maintain a status quo where their independent creative and expressive efforts are conceived as inherently less valuable, despite acting as the source

for said poet's inspiration. Then, as women are viewed as 'object' now instead of 'subject,' they themselves are transformed into images which solely exist within the figurative, contrary to the reality of their genuine lived experiences.

The "hot house rose" in this way is not a 'real' woman – though, not because a woman who has not endured some form of suffering 'lacks' the necessary traits to exist as a full person. It is instead that this is a concept of a person that has been cultivated and would not exist on its own without the intervention of androcentric society and utilitarian, industrial civilization. Whether as placeholders for living, breathing women or living, growing plants, H.D.'s Sea Flowers are placed as the direct contrast to this concept. They are separate from the imagined ideal, unable to be valued for their objectified, ornamental value due to their aesthetic distress – the blunt, material signal of their struggles and the consequences of their oppression. However, it is precisely these hardships which H.D. uses to emphasize their beauty as strong, active agents, allowing them to exist "as a poetic object and also generate art" (Wheeler, "Both Flower" 504). It is a "view of nature" that does not colour it "as an unsullied world apart" from our own, "ultimately distanc[ing] nature" from us and that which we associate with it (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 142). By removing the veil of a solely romanticized, figurative perspective on nature, H.D. is also removing the perspective which inhibits us from understanding humanity as being a participant who exists in tandem with the wider non-human world.

These themes and messages are constantly referenced back to as the collection continues. Intermittently, other Sea Flower poems continue to draw upon the images invoked by "Sea Rose," recontextualizing and expanding upon the concepts of strength

and beauty in the form of flowers found at the water's edge, battered but still surviving. The Sea Flowers then can be seen as the apex species of the collection. How they interreact with the imaginary landscape and tie the many images of this eco-system together is vital to understanding the entire work, particularly those locations which may at first seem least dependent upon the land which they touch.

The Sea

If H.D.'s portrayal of the Sea Flowers goes beyond the usual limits of literary device, combining perspectives which value both the figurative and the literal to grant agency to images of plant life, her descriptions and characteristic use of the Sea display how the imaginary landscape of the collection holds a kind of sentient, spiritual presence to it, likely the influence of divine feminine forces. The Sea is a vital actant, specifically designated as a signifier of transformed matter and the catalyst to forms of metamorphosis both spiritual and material. This is demonstrated most obviously among the Sea Flowers but it is also important among many other poetic features of nature and humanity within the collection. The eco-system of *Sea Garden* is shaped by the Sea in a way that it could not have been had H.D. chosen to focus solely upon a landlocked, pastoral setting. Her description of place has a distinctly Classical feel to it, using and emphasizing allusions to Ancient Greek mythology and atmosphere, making them crucial to the conventions of the collection's worldbuilding, dependent upon an accessible coastline and maritime activity. The Sea as its own character within *Sea Garden* subverts the typical domesticated depictions of a personified 'Nature,' putting into question our utilitarian views of natural resources, colonization and entitlement, and how separation of the material and spiritual realms further distances humanity from contemplating its place

as an environmental actor. After the thesis statement that is given to the reader through "Sea Rose," H.D. deliberately dives into depictions of the Sea to better establish the consistent symbolic aesthetics and conventions of these cultural subversions.

As previously explained, there is a false duality that has been constructed around the cultural and societal associations between nature and civilization, extending into further oppositions such as the feminine and the masculine. Among these, importantly, is the false opposition between the material and the spiritual – an apparent opposition which we have already established was challenged by H.D.'s upbringing. The material is seen primarily as the realm of nature and the feminine, defining how their interactions with the greater world are perceived and usually, ultimately confining them to the domain of what is solely tangible (Plumwood 25). The most prominent way that this is achieved is by designating the realm of femininity as that which concerns the bodily. In contrast to this are concepts like logic and reason that can then be defined as belonging in the realm of the spiritual and intangible, leading to deep cultural associations between that which is intellectual and enlightened to the masculine. Plumwood elaborates that "behind the view that there is something insulting or degrading about linking women and nature stands an unstated set of assumptions about the inferior status of the non-human world" (26). As society views the material in opposition to the masculine and, therefore, what is human, it permits culture to reinforce the belief that in order to access the spiritual and find intellectual or artistic fulfilment, we must then reject and transcend the bodily, the physical, and the feminine.

Conceptually, the City can easily be used as the nexus point to H.D.'s visions of civilization and culture within *Sea Garden*'s eco-system, being the most literal depiction

of the outcome of industrial exploits. In exploring how these false oppositions and dualities parallel one another for the sake of thematic emphasis, H.D. uses the Sea as a thematic bookend to the beginning of *Sea Garden*, placed opposite to the City within a hypothetical a spatial continuum. This spatial conflict also extends to how H.D. uses the Sea as a nexus point of spiritual personification, explicitly portrayed as a tangible manifestation of the divine. She chooses to credit a distinctly untamed force of nature as the definitive source of the imagined landscape's literal and figurative divinity. In this, the spiritual and the material are placed as equals to one another; arguably, they could even be seen as being one in the same. That H.D. also chooses to make the Sea a feminine force is what truly completes this reclamation, though not without the difficulty of navigating the potential reductive implications that may also come from this.

Personifications of nature that are reliant upon envisioning nature as a feminine figure can often be problematic for a variety of reasons, most the result of aforementioned assumed dualistic worldviews. Feminized nature is traditionally depicted as a domesticated space, or at least as a space in need of domestication, tamed through industrialization and colonialization. North American 'frontier' literature especially is a culprit of this, agricultural cultivation of the land being such a prominent aspect of these narratives. According to Alaimo, it has been commonly "feared that (feminine) 'sentimentalism' would taint (male) encounters with the wilderness - the wilderness which should, ideally, serve as a rugged male refuge far from the 'coddling of civilization' that enervates them" (*Undomesticated Ground* 97). Further, "many of the flights 'back' to nature" of the early twentieth-century "were bound up with the white, middle- to upper class anxiety about control… The need to preserve nature was often

advanced, implicitly or explicitly, as evidence for the need to preserve the dominion of white, upper-class males" (94). The institutional preservation of natural spaces is reliably far from an act of good will toward non-human entities or even towards human relations to nature; it is essentially a claim to property and future industrial development.

In either situation, there is an irony to the idea that civilization would be 'coddling' these men, as it is a system and institution which has been slowly developed to value the traits and characteristics that put them at the most social advantage. Entering the wilderness is therefore a suitable 'challenge' to them – the rules which they have become used to are not present and must be instituted by them, giving them a sense of power and control. Venturing into the woods, where they are then given the responsibility of using the surrounding raw materials at their disposal to aid in the ease of their own survival, makes the ideal, masculine subject a conqueror of nature and colonist as well. Immersion 'into the wild' this way reinforces an exceptional understanding of humanity's place among nature, as the reinvigoration of one's humanity hinges upon the ability to solidify one's position as superior to the natural world: Typical "modes of understanding the material world are a far cry from models of recognition, intra-action, encounter, or companion species, as they seem to evade the recognition that humans are entangled with [nature]" (Alaimo, "Feminist Science Studies" 193). To be 'among' nature is not to see oneself as a participant within it, but instead to be a force apart from it, who then must conform to their preferences and standards. This is a very colonial vision of nature, which re-enacts institutional systems in a realm where they do not usually exist for the sake of upholding societal expectations.

Traditionally, women have been taught that their interactions with nature are less centered upon this idea of 'conquering' and that they are relatively more equal with nature. This has both positive and negative sides to it. Within the wilderness, it is possible for women to be able to immerse themselves in a realm which, unlike modern Western civilization, is not entirely defined by the values of masculine power and the overvaluing of the concept of reason above all else. It is therefore more possible for them to use the wilderness as a space where they are free from some of the systems that they are currently bound to within civilization. However, this does nothing to combat the distance that is reinforced from concepts of humanity and value that both nature and woman continue to be subject to. "[O]ld dualisms of nature/culture, body/mind, object/subject have been trotted out time and time again to posit women and racially marked others as more bodily and hence 'closer' to a debased nature," and serving as rational justification for the subjugation of both parties (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 145). It is for this reason that engaging with the idea that woman are automatically inherently closer to nature, as opposed to being linked by circumstance, can be dangerous. H.D. subverts these implications by casting her representation of the feminine divine within *Sea Garden* not as a traditional 'Mother Nature' figure, bound to the land and dirt and "enclosing [her] within the domestic" (172), but instead the Sea. The Sea has often been personified within fiction, poetry, and in real-life superstitious practice as a feminine presence. However, H.D.'s association diverts from the usual objectifying depictions of feminine nature by turning the Sea into a fully personified agent with a specific will of her own and a significant amount of personal power.

This unique depiction of the Sea is first directly referenced within the second poem of the collection, "The Helmsman." Something immediately worthy of note about "The Helmsman" is that it is the only poem in the collection that is written from a definitively masculine point of view, the titular Helmsman being the alluded speaker of the text. H.D. voices the perspective of someone who traditionally benefits from the subjugation of the very forces he is confronting (feminine, natural space), then using the speaker's contemplations as an opportunity to explore the inner conflict which comes from reassessing one's predetermined cultural prejudices. Additionally, this helps craft the speaker's tone – marked here with a particularly reflective, almost mournful emotion – and make it an important comparative tool moving forward throughout the collection. While the same reverent language and tone is being used in both pieces, placed next to "Sea Rose," "The Helmsman" is not praising the subject of his words so much as appeasing them, assuring his regret and asking forgiveness for his previous actions and assumptions.

The use of the pronoun "we" (*Collected Poems* 5) implies the presence of a larger group or movement of people which this Helmsman comes from. This could be anything from a particular population or culture to, of course, humanity broadly. This group has moved inland "past wood flowers" (6) onto solid earth and the wilderness set upon it, seemingly as an escape from the forces of the Sea and the harsh living conditions found there. The Helmsman describes his people as being "cut off from the wind," their previous connection to the Sea severed both physically by their retreat to dry-land and spiritually by their rejection of the divine forces that manifest there. This spiritual severance is further clarified by the Helmsman's choice to describe his people as now

"worship[ping] inland," following a new spiritual path since they have "forgot[ten] [the Sea's] tang." Though the Sea's conditions were not necessarily hospitable or nurturing, they had gained something that they benefitted from spiritually which is no longer accessible to them. The new forests and plant life of the inland are "sweet to taste," but they have also "broke" and "tore" these new surrounding, taming and processing them for their own ease of living. We see that the Helmsman views these actions as misguided and seeks to return to the domain of the Sea instead.

In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker expresses the understanding that "we have always known you have wanted us" (7). With this statement comes an understanding that while the natural divine force of the Sea is untamed and challenging to traverse, it is not doing so with the intention to drive these people away. The Sea is its own home. It is true that it does not provide the same number of resources for utilitarian development as inland. However, what it does provide is a kind of freedom and kinship to those who seek it. The title of 'helmsman,' one who steers a vessel on the water, is one that is dependent upon the existence of the Sea, meaning that the speaker fundamentally defines himself based on his relationship to nature. To not acknowledge this dependent relationship backgrounds the Sea to a passive, receptive participant to the Helmsman's ventures – an understanding of their relationship which is clearly false based upon the speaker's own words. Ultimately, the Helmsman, along with an undetermined selection of his people's population, steer their boat back into the Sea's waters. The "hesitation" (7) of the rocking boat poses questions about the outcome of this expedition: are these people uncertain that they will be received with acceptance? Or is there still a fear or longing amongst them that the boat – infused with the active thing-power to complete its

purpose to keep them afloat – understands and does not wish to continue forward because of? Perhaps the hesitation is not of the boat or the people within it but the Sea itself, still contemplating whether those who scorned her are deserving of her forgiveness or mercy. Regardless, this ambiguity is an extension of the Sea's most important behaviour characteristic: her unpredictability.

"The Helmsman" succeeds in demonstrating one of the most common problematic aspects in depictions of ocean life and the Sea, while also beginning the process of reassessing those same issues. Contrary to our conceptions of the land, humans have a great amount of difficulty conceptualizing the water as being a habitat that we interact with. Serpil Opperman explains that, while personified representations of the ocean usually contribute to an 'othering' of nature, "symbolic stories [do not] reduce the sea to a cultural signifier" and instead "are products of an imaginative impulse to visualize through poetic language terrestrial-aquatic interactions and encounters" (450). Read entirely figuratively, this piece could be seen as a reflection upon this alienation and the evolutionary origins of humanity. Humans are organisms which long ago originated from the water. However, it is now the case that we have lost our ability to survive immersed in the water long-term without the assistance of technological intervention. The image of a boat being launched into the Sea is then a vision of mortal futility. The Helmsman and his people are trying desperately to reintegrate themselves into a space that is no longer welcome to them. From this perspective, their campaign into the water could possibly have nearly just as much colonial intent behind it as their retreat inland. That said, this still places the Sea as a space separate from human life, reinforcing these problems as opposed to subverting them. By examining the piece subsequent to "The

Helmsman" in collaboration with it, we can achieve a more complete vision of H.D.'s intended messages.

The Sea as a feminine figure is reinforced more explicitly in the first line of "The Shrine," with its subtitle: "She watches over the sea" (*Collected Poems* 7). A more concrete possibility as to who "She" is in this instance will be explored further later but, for now, it still provides us with a clear understanding of who is being addressed and/or spoken about in the following text. Divided into four parts, "The Shrine" switches perspectives between at least three different speakers who share deeply contrasting opinions of the same location. The first speaker begins the first stanza by inquiring of the Shrine in question,

> Are your rocks shelter for ships –
> have you sent galleys from your beach,
> are you graded – a safe crescent –
> where the tide lifts them back to port –
> are you full and sweet,
> tempting the quiet
> to depart in their trading ships?

Instead of an ancient place of worship, as could be expected considering the title of the poem, the "Shrine" being referenced is actually the rocky waters at the edge of the land's cliffside, keeping sailors from accessing the beach. Notable is the similarity between the words "galleys" in the poem and "gallows" – that in some instances they may be mistaken for one another, much like how the cliffside here has been mistaken for a safe landing for ships. The speaker is pleading is to know the Sea's intentions: is she luring these sailors here on purpose? Regardless, there is anger in response to her presence, marking her as "evil." Ideally, she would have been "full and sweet" with opportunity for

these sailors, who are tempted by the shore to claim the land and resources there, much like in the masculine pioneer narratives described earlier. Allusions to “lights” in the distance imply an expectation of civilization beyond the beach. Instead, this proves to be an illusion caused by the natural debris landed upon the rocks, “slate and pebble and wet shells” reflecting what the sailors wished to see. Though they “sought a headland” away from the “wind-blast” of the rough waters, hoping to be sheltered by the coastline, they unknowingly fled to rocks cut from the very forces they meant to hide from. The speaker of the poems’ first section ultimately deplores the Sea and her rocks, stating “you are useless” (8), solidifying that their intentions were ultimately exploitative ones. As this destination is no longer available to act as provider to humanity, it is not conducive to institutional development. By physically rejecting the prospects of colonisation, the Sea disallows the speaker from achieving political or capitalistic benefit.

The remainder of the poem both explores this idea further and directly challenges it. The third section of “The Shrine” continues the atmosphere of fear and apprehension set by the first speaker, but without the same level of anger. This speaker’s boat has been able to venture closer to the rocks than those previous, claiming that they “dared deeper than the fisher-folk” (9), passing “men in ships” presumably much larger than their own vessel. Unfortunately, they too come to disappointment at the realization that they will not be sheltered by the incoming land. Despite repeated warnings from others, the speaker is disheartened at the loss of a prospective new home and too comes to see the rocks as a “useless waste.” Contrary to this, in both the second and final sections of “The Shrine,” the shared speaker (presumably, indicated by the continuity between events) holds a deep reverence for the Sea and the rough waters surrounding this stretch of land.

They have come to see the Sea as “grave” but “beautiful” (8), a much more nuanced perspective than the previous claim that she is “evil.” They plead not for the Sea to reveal her intentions, but instead to “stay tender; enchanted,” and they do so in exchange for their worship. By promising a proper tribute, here “throat on throat of freesia,” they acknowledge that this is not their land to take or own. They see beauty in the beach that the other speakers cannot see, clarifying that the Sea is “not forgot” among them, a sentiment echoing back to “The Helmsman.” In the final section of the poem, the second speaker’s ship finally makes it to shore when the others could not. Having proven themselves to value to the presence of the divine there by “sing[ing] to… [the] spirit between the headlands” (9), the Sea allows them to pass through the rocks and wrecked ships. Though they are mortal and human, they do not place themselves at a greater importance to nature and are therefore “pardoned” of those “faults” (10). It matters not to them whether the Sea is “useless”; they are fully aware that nature exists outside of the convenience of humanity.

The sense of alienation that is portrayed in “The Shrine” is very different from the one that we received previously in “The Helmsman.” While the latter conveys the stance of a group who had forgotten the importance of the Sea within their lives, attempting to now regain access to her, “The Shrine” shows the perspective of those who were only able to learn of her agency after witnessing the consequences of it. They were not alienated from her because they saw her as being inherently apart from them, at least not to begin with. Instead, in seeking potential refuge in the sands by her waters and being met with danger and death, they experienced what was essentially her rejection. The first speaker of “The Shrine” uses terms which imply that they view the rocks as having a set

intent usually not considered in objects on their own. To them, they are an actively hostile force – not out of coincidence due to their location, but out of explicit, malignant intent. Alaimo explains that "Enlightenment rationality and capitalist production split nature into a "'good' Nature that is dominated and rationalized (which acts as the ideal cultural reference) and a 'bad' Nature that is hostile, menacing, catastrophic, or polluted" (*Undomesticated Ground* 96). The "evil" they reiterate here is deception; the conclusion that they come to is that the Sea is manipulative, attempting to lure prospective colonizers in with the implied promise of bounty, only to then betray them when they are too close to turn back. This is the first time in *Sea Garden* that we see the word "useless" appear, and its original context sheds light upon its relationship to the devaluating of nature as it continues to be brought up throughout the rest of the collection.

This poem may be interpreted in ways that focus either on the spiritual or material aspects of the text separately. However, by combining these perspectives, we gain a more nuanced reading of the 'Shrine' as it exists as an active subject, as opposed to the passive object that would be expected of something as usually sedentary and inanimate as a collection of rocks in the ocean. The first, more spiritually focused reading is one which solidifies the Shrine as proof of divine, ancient presence within the collection, and one which sets up the reoccurring invocation of feminine divine power throughout the text. Eileen Gregory describes this entity as a "complex, syncretic figure" with a "powerful, shaping presence," "drawing together qualities of [the Greek goddesses] Aphrodite, Artemis, and Athene [sic]" (534). Though Gregory chooses intentionally not to assign this force any set name or title, I believe that the primary manifestation of feminine, natural divine presence in *Sea Garden* is meant to be an implicit depiction of Aphrodite.

The initial descriptions of the Sea that we are given place direct emphasis upon the violent, powerful nature of her waters. "The Shrine" provides us with images of sea foam and spray, splashed up against the rocks (7). This can be linked back to Aphrodite's creation myth, where she first rose out of the ocean, formed *of* the sea foam (Hamilton 33). One of the other major indicators that H.D. has included, recurrent throughout the collection, is repeated reference to myrtle, a tree associated directly with Aphrodite (34). Moreover, Aphrodite's station as the Goddess of Beauty positions her as an authority to determine what is considered beautiful. Beauty remains the collection's most prominent theme, so her continued participation within the physical and political landscape only makes sense. This particular point in mind, it may be that the speakers' frustrations with the Sea partially come from a place of resentment over the Goddess's own failure to conform to passive, ornamental expectations of beauty, a societal standard that we have already seen presented in opposition to the Sea among the Sea Flower poems. As H.D. would later use Helen's own voice to re-vision her position as a symbol of beauty, Aphrodite can be seen acting similarly here as well. Either way, clear confirmation of a specific divine presence throughout *Sea Garden* aids to expand the grounds of analysis for the text's subversive spiritual qualities.

The second interpretation that we may explore is much more materially focused, but still places importance upon the active, physical role of nature. The Shrine can be seen as an assemblage, a congregated body of interacting 'things,' which establish an agency of their own through said interactions. The rocks would not be such a threat if not for the water they are immersed within, as well as the potentially bountiful land of resources which they guard. It is all these actants together that draw the sailors in to the

coastline and the Beach. In seeking to enter the headland, these sailors have incorrectly interpreted the inland as a vessel for either passive material resources or the pre-existing settlement of other humans, and therefore as something disconnected from the surrounding area on the water. However, if acting as an assemblage, the speakers' of "The Shrine" are essentially forced to acknowledge the agency of the landscape, addressing their woes to it directly as though it were another person.

When you enmesh these two separate reading together, this is once again where we can see H.D. using the feminine divine as a means of leveling the gap between the spiritual and the material. It could be argued that in showing an open hostility to those who wish to exploit its material resources, H.D. demonstrates the agency of not only nature's bodily power and autonomy, but feminine bodily power and autonomy as well. It is easy to think of the ocean as an intangible force, since the form it takes is so vast and fluid. However, water is a material substance with a strong capacity to inflict real, extensive damage: "If life is a geological force… its expiry, like its wet birth, is likely to be waterlogged" (Opperman 444). There are several instances in *Sea Garden* where water is a primary weapon against manmade constructions, not just in the form of the Sea directly but also as other natural forces like storms, which we will be exploring later.

Returning to the appearance of "useless," this term continues to be repeated throughout the whole collection from this point onward, almost always said in resentment toward an undomesticated force the designated speaker is addressing, whether that be the Sea, the wind, or other natural aspects which do not conform to the needs of society. In masculine, industrial civilization, nature only holds value insofar as it is able to be seen as "useful" to the hegemonic societal order. This is usually the capacity perceived natural

features – including “the bodies of animals and women” – have to provide “unacknowledged raw materials” for the construction of [civilized] nation[s],” as well as the availability of space for the sake of cultivation and further industrialization (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 140). These are likely the resources that these sailors are hoping to gain access to, and the same which the Helmsman and his people were successful in interacting with. Apart from the Sea’s role in keeping people away from the land, it is worth examining how these conventions of ‘usefulness’ apply to the Sea itself conceptually, as “The ocean has been portrayed as the earth’s last frontier of wilderness, which in terms of American mythology, positions it… from narratives of domination” (Alaimo, “Feminist Science Studies” 193). The physical location and habitat of the Sea is mostly exempt from this kind of exploitation due to the transient, shifting form that it holds. Even when affected by institutions such as the fishing and oil industries, the amount of the world’s surface area which is taken up by water is too vast an expanse to ever occupy fully. She cannot be dominated because nothing can be built upon her. It is for this reason that H.D.’s feminine representation of nature avoids many of the problematic implications attached to other depictions of feminine nature. Her version of the Sea is not one that is not obliged to act as nurturer or provider, nor is domestication a realistic goal that could ever be put forward to ‘tame’ her wild behaviour. In being an alien space, the fluid, arguably esoteric nature of her waters is a direct result of her ‘bodily’ existence, contradicting any kind of argument that these concepts are somehow fundamentally separate from one another.

In this way, H.D uses humanity's alien perception of the ocean and underwater life intentionally by reframing the danger perceived there not as monstrous or eldritch, but instead as mercurial and divine. Alaimo explains that, usually,

> Articulating marine depths with [abstract, otherworldly forces] frames them as places to encounter pure, untouched otherness, without any of that nagging guilt, anxiety, or responsibility that may accompany the contemplation of places clearly marked by histories of colonialism, climate injustice, or environmental devastation. ("Feminist Science Studies"194)

However, *Sea Garden* does not ignore these historical imbalances by depicting the Sea as something more akin to a godly manifestation. The lack of appreciation or understanding that she is subject to is the fault of societal ignorance, not any failing on her part to concede to the arbitrary or exploitative expectations imposed upon her. Though the Sea is still apart and 'other' from humanity in these contexts, a direct contrast is made between the fulfillment of those who choose to value her presence and their reliance upon nature, and those who instead remain ignorant of the role nature plays in their own lives and what is missing should they continue upon this path. The hopes and regrets of the Helmsman and his crew, as well as the many others described contemplating and venturing upon the water, echo onward throughout the rest of *Sea Garden*, colouring each interaction that humanity has with the natural divine. The farther away from the water society proceeds inland – and the more industrialized culture becomes – the harder it becomes for many speakers to find spiritual fulfillment. Frustration and discomfort are common occurrences and the space of transition between the Sea and land is the narrative introduction to this.

The Beach

The majority of *Sea Garden* takes place beyond the Sea, impressing upon the reader the feeling that divine presence dwells mostly at a distance from the 'life' in this ecosystem. Even if one does not consider its symbolic representation of preternatural forces, water exists in as conceptually immaterial a physical state as is allowed relative to solid, earthly mass. This places the dry land as seemingly opposite to it, functioning within the collection as a space representative of the material realm. However, as we have established, this assumed opposition is a false one that has been societally constructed. The Beach is therefore the most explicitly liminal space within *Sea Garden*'s landscape, being where these two concepts meet and communicate with one another. This is also the location where the majority, if not all, of the Sea Flower poems take place. These Flowers are the figures who best exemplify this intermediate state, reinforced by their position at the margins. While we have already addressed their figurative and literal use within the text as plant life and organic matter, this liminality opens up the opportunity to explore further implications of how they fit into the implicit narrative that is formed in mapping the landscape of *Sea Garden*: specifically, their position as transformational characters on a spiritual journey and whose metamorphosis signals not only personal struggle but personal development as well.

The Beach in *Sea Garden* is not only a marginal space, but a liminal one. Gaining its name from the Latin term for threshold, "limin," liminal states can be found in any situation where a transformation of some kind takes place. Diana Collecott notes, "Whereas [some] anthropologists identified individuals in this transitional phase as dangerous and polluting hence risky for society as a whole, [others] saw their potentiality

in a positive light, defining liminality as ‘a realm of pure possibility’” (100). To exist liminally is to – in being in-between – belong to both and neither possible realms at the same time. The Sea Flowers, being themselves both marginal and liminal, then can be interpreted further as the representative point where the false oppositions of dualistic cultural values meet. Similarly to how H.D. portrays the Sea in such a way that we could witness the leveling of different planes, usually placed contrary to one another, the Sea Flowers too function to merge seemingly oppositional ideas. We have already seen these expressed in the text: they are both fragile but strong, are associated with traits both traditionally feminine and masculine, and are agents of nature in their literal interpretation and of humanity in their figurative use, etc. Here I would like to explore how *Sea Garden* merges concepts of the divine and the mortal, anchored firmly in their interactions with nature and the processes of metamorphosis which are made possible there.

“Sea Lily” is a noteworthy poem within *Sea Garden* because it depicts not only one of the Sea Flowers in its liminal habitat, but the actual process through which it undergoes its transformation from a ‘lily’ to a ‘Sea Lily’. Upon first encounter, the poem reads much like “Sea Rose” and the rest of the Sea Flower poems. Mainly, the poem focuses on how, while these flowers do not adhere to traditional standards of beauty, their less desirable traits to society make them stronger and therefore, more beautiful. The Sea Lilies are described as “slashed and torn but doubly rich” (Collected Poems 14) compared to tamed vegetation, such as the hot-house rose mentioned in “Sea Rose.” Words such as “flecked” and “dashed” are used to detail the damage being done to them

by the sand and wind. Placed upon the “temple-steps,” the “great heads” of the Lilies end the poem “cover[ed]… in froth” after having been “lifted up” by the wind.

As is demonstrated by this specific piece, the speaker (or possible multiple *speakers*) of the Sea Flower poems focus their attention on those subjects who are able to successfully endure hardship, and who are then rewarded and celebrated accordingly. As Miranda B. Hickman notes “[Violence] also sometimes suggests forces necessary for regenerative transformation… Wished for liberatory gestures [throughout the collection continue to] repeat the violence done to the flowers” (15). Likewise, in exploring the nuances of material identities, Bill Brown argues that “Reevaluating the material world seems to depend on its re-use and on some violence that violates the coherence of the objects” (15). In this case, the Flowers' "coherence" could be seen as their 'adherence' to societal structures and expectations. This establishes the struggle that the Sea Flowers go through as a process worthy of reverence and spiritual value. Since the damage done to the Sea Lilies is the result of the brutal forces of the Sea – forces that we now understand to be inherently divine and feminine – it could be argued that this transformational trauma is in some way a rite of passage or a blessing of some sort. For this reason, in the context of the larger narrative lore surrounding *Sea Garden*’s imagined landscape, we may interpret this speaker as another follower of the Sea’s divine manifestation, echoing the perspectives of the speakers in both “The Helmsman” and “The Shrine,” or even Aphrodite herself, praising the virtues of the Flowers at the base of her unconventional ‘temple.’ The natural, ‘bodily’ aspects of the Sea Lillies’ existence then are not things that separates them from the divine –they are a vital condition for the completion of spiritual actualization.

The wind, an established symbol of divine spiritual presence (Anderson 131), tears apart the petals of the Sea Lilies, but they are also being transported to the site of divine worship, as though they are being welcomed into the fold. There is the strong implication of direct intent in this action – aside from the wind, mention of myrtle bark (*Collected Poems* 14) reenforces that the poem seeks to invoke the idea of Aphrodite's hand. By being "lifted" onto the temple steps – a term that we have also previously seen used to describe the Sea Rose – they are being fully inducted into the divine, crossing their threshold state. Ascendance (or transcendence) in this case is then both figurative and literal. Not only does this reinforce the inherent value of these flowers, but it also confirms to the reader that spiritual and material existence are not meant to be placed at odds with each other, with spiritual existence usually perceived as taking hierarchal precedence. Compare this to the condemnation of the sailors in "The Shrine": they chose to see their treatment as a punishment or deception, but if we are to revaluate this interaction through the same lens as "Sea Lily," their ship being sent through the rocks would instead be a normal, ritualistic practice to the Sea. Judging this through solely human standards of respect then categorizes this as a hostile action, when the Sea is not human and therefore can not be held to the conventions of 'civilized behaviour.' Though there is a similarity to the image created in "Sea Lily" with an offer of worship that we would usually associate with the religious act of sacrifice, that does not seem to be entirely the case here. They are instead at equal power with one another. A physical offering at a shrine would not impact spiritual practice as much as it does if its material being did not hold power beyond simply the metaphorical: "The soul needs terribleness (awe, intensity, excess) and torture (tension, strife) in order to possess vitality or to

achieve its distinctive beauty" (Gregory 544). So, in enduring a transformational gauntlet on the Beach, the reverence of the Sea Lily becomes a kind of ritual practice bound to the feminine divine.

Throughout the rest of *Sea Garden*, the Beach continues to be a merging point beyond providing a stage for acts of metamorphosis. For example, "Hermes of the Ways" is a poem unrelated to the Sea Flowers that still exists within this threshold location. Being the messenger god, finding Hermes placed within a liminal space is to be expected (It is also notable that this poem is placed chronologically directly after the poem "Sea Iris," depicting a Sea-torn image of the flower named after the Greek messenger goddess, transitioning one piece of communicative expression to another). This specific depiction of Hermes portrays him as being "of the triple way" (*Collected Poems* 37) referencing the syncretic concept of Hermes Trismegistus and therefore embodying several aspects of the same godly force at the same time. Not only then does Hermes occupy a liminal position of space, but also one of greater spiritual existence. He is stationed at a stream, another liminal detail, which can be interpreted as either where running water meets the Sea or as the transient strip between two separate sections of land. From either of these perspectives, there is a definite sense of movement, signalling the active agency of the eco-system here in keeping the momentum of transformational nature.

Notably, this section of land is also "poplar shaded" (38). This confirms that, much like the Sea Flowers, the trees here have consistently been subject to struggle and transformation, described as being twisted and "late ripened," likely from the wind and salt. They are "not the shadow of the mast head," which references back to the mast head of a ship, a manmade structure used to venture out onto the water, where humans cannot

go on their own. As well as this, the shape of a mast head is tellingly that of the cross. The trees are not aligned with the straight, structured ideals of organized, new religious culture, but instead with more ancient, esoteric knowledge and a deeper relationship to the feminine, natural divine as a result. Despite not being 'of' the ocean, the plants and other material aspects of land are unavoidably coloured by their proximity and relationship to the Sea. Though the water may transition into sand, this delineation can never truly establish any firm boundary between these two locations. They, by nature, must exist within one another.

The Beach, the first image in *Sea Garden*'s landscape that we encounter, is the 'portal' to the rest of the collection, much like how a boat must first land upon the shoreline before its occupants may enter inland. It is here where the unpredictable nature and discomfort of Greenaway's "transient impressions" take root, introducing feelings of liminality and expressions of metamorphosis that are then echoed throughout the rest of the text. The likewise transient nature of divine figures helps to make this argument, embodying forces that still hold reverence beyond the grasp of civilization. Aligning them with nature then becomes an act of transgression against concepts of spiritual fulfillment which exclude anyone but the rational, masculine cultural ideal. Analyzing how H.D. uses pre-existing Classical aesthetics and storytelling to enhance the themes and motifs of *Sea Garden* can help us better understand exactly where allusion fits into her crafted eco-system. To do so, we must look again to the text's references to Greek mythology, feminine mythmaking, and how these ideas inherently gesture towards communion with nature.

Chapter Three: Beyond the Threshold

The Turning Point

Within the imagined landscape of *Sea Garden*, both the Sea and the Beach demonstrate complex depictions of the natural world which challenge traditional societal boundaries. While these locations still function with the seemingly oppositional confines of their cultural associations, H.D. consistently presents them as transgressive spaces. They are not simply alienated by civilization for their failure to conform. Instead, they are actively and intentionally inaccessible to those who would seek to exploit them. Their value cannot be fully assessed or dictated by human needs because they have not agreed to any standards for the terms of their existence. The Sea does not cease to 'be' if humanity cannot traverse there without technology, nor the Beach if nothing 'useful' can be grown in the sand. However, as our analysis moves inland, beyond the 'threshold' of the Beach, H.D. shifts the collection's focus toward natural spaces 'of use' to human civilization and the effects this accessibility has on them.

In the Wilderness, the Farmed Lands, and City, the roles and expectations of nature and femininity are undeniably influenced by dominating industrial forces. In fact, the existence of these locations depends upon their relationship to civilization conceptually. The Wilderness encompasses all land that has yet to be properly domesticated by humanity, but may still be ventured into, as exemplified by the previously mentioned myth of the North American frontier. With this potential domestication, agriculture is then considered one of the most important markers of anthropological development, meaning its presence within the collection marks the first instance of societal 'cultivation' explored in "Sea Rose." Finally, the City is the very

centre of hegemonic order, where obligatory conventions of masculine reason are at their most confining to anything deemed 'other' to acceptable human categorization. Within these sections of the collection, H.D. shows the frustrations and conflicts these figures of the feminine and natural spheres endure within confinement, as well as their methods of reasserting themselves to regain personal empowerment despite their circumstances.

The Wilderness

Inland is the home of the material plain in contrast to the immaterial and the divine, represented by the Sea and bridged by the Beach. However, the land which makes up the Wilderness in *Sea Garden* is itself a gateway: between the untamed and the civilized, before we enter the agriculturally developed spaces of the collection. While the Beach lies between the Sea and the land, the Wilderness is what sits at the bridging point conceptually for the Sea and the City, where the urban populations of humanity reside. It is the location where images of plant life and nature are the most dense, but also where they are therefore most accessible to industrialization and colonization in an uncultivated state. Many feminist critics have admonished depictions of womanhood defined by physical terms of nature; Stacy Alaimo posits instead that "The feminist flight from nature fails to transform the terrain of struggle, leaving in place the very associations - with stasis, with passivity, with abject matter - that have made nature a hazardous terrain from feminism" (135). Reconfiguring feminine immersion in the wild requires careful assessment and context. Through its continued 'uncivilized' being, the Wilderness remains a space that holds potential for both subjugation *and* empowerment. By taking a close look at how interactions between individuals within this space transpire, as well as the real social forms that they reflect, we may then understand exactly how H.D.

revaluates men and women's differing perspectives and conceptual relationships to nature.

H.D.'s explores of these ideas within the Wilderness by delving deeper into Classical allusion. Specifically, she populates the undeveloped areas of *Sea Garden*'s imagined landscape with the implied presence of partially divine creatures who are more deeply connected to nature than the inland and City's human inhabitants are capable of in their current culture. As discussed in the first chapter, Ezra Pound's special term of endearment for H.D., 'dryad,' is a type of forest nymph, commonly found in many Greek myths. Nymphs are feminine figures which straddle the bridge between the material and the divine, placed within the realm of the wild but not that which is considered human or mortal. They are sentient agents, but they are also not human, and often do not behave as such. Traditionally, they are also very strongly connected to concepts of liminality, divine femininity, and the material habitation of nature. As Gregory explains, discussing different uses of the term and their associations,

> The nuptial moment is a threshold state, and the bride is a figure of passage. For the Greeks, the bride or *nymphe* denotes a woman at the moment of transition from maiden to wife and mother. Aphrodite, who is herself a Bride, guides these women in the refinement of their grace and in the cultivation of desire. The threshold of the bridal moment, sacred to the goddess, represents then a moment of fullness in beauty… The name of nymph is also given to the goddesses who inhabit the wild regions of nature. They too are elusive and liminal figures, being, like aspects of elemental nature itself, both inviolate and erotically suggestive. (532)

The particular importance of nymphs within *Sea Garden*'s narrative threads can be best demonstrated by examining the poems "Mid-day" and "Pursuit." While these pieces may be – and often are – read separately from one another, I believe that reading them as a matched set aids us to better discern the power dynamics between speakers, as well as the implications of what H.D.'s depiction of nymphs says about not only the rest of the Wilderness but the whole eco-system of images and themes within the collection.

"Mid-day" is a poem that portrays a picture of isolation, powerlessness, and the anguish which results from these states of being. H.D. does so by direct comparison between a sentient, living person and an othered, living feature of plant life: a poplar tree. The speaker witnesses the strength and fortitude of the poplar trees on the hill and longs to become one with them, envying the traits which she sees herself as lacking. This grief extends to the point that she wishes that she could be, not just *like* a poplar tree, but could *be* a poplar tree, echoing H.D.'s core sentiment concerning "trees" and "people" once again (*Collected Poems* 10). A figurative reading of this piece is extremely thematically relevant to ecofeminist ideas. "Perish[ing] on the path" can be understood as a lament concerning the "path" of civilization – a constructed, man-made route created for the sake of convenience to humanity, cutting through the soft, easily altered soil and setting those who walk upon it to a predetermined destination. A path is also the most controlled aspect of a park or trail – places that are otherwise supposed to be demonstrative of nature 'untouched.' They are straight and confined, able to be manipulated into whatever form the builder seeks to create. A woman in society is placed upon this path and expected to fill a particular role, usually ornamental and passively controlled. The "scattered" "black seeds" are then wasted opportunities, lost to the oppressive force of the

heat of the sun and pressuring the woman onward. Away from the path and on the hill – where "Hermes of the Ways" establishes there is no imposed aesthetic or agricultural control, especially under the ground where the roots of the trees are – the speaker sees trees which are able to grow to their full potential and ascend upwards into fulfillment. Figuratively, she is aware of the oppression she is unfairly subject to and envies the strength of those who have never suffered at the hand of societal expectations. However, there is also much that can be gained from once again delving into a more materially focused reading of the text, where these encounters with wasting natural images translate into very literal states of being.

As we continue to encounter scenarios of metamorphosis, we see how H.D. uses these two poems to contemplate the depiction of transformation as an instance where one's 'humanity' (or perhaps 'selfhood,' considering the piece's nymph connection) is perceived as an explicit disadvantage. To 'transcend' in this instance would be to instead take on the traits of the non-human – quite the opposite of earlier anxieties of degradation in comparison to nature explained by Alaimo. Plumwood also emphasizes the problematic nature of human essentialism, arguing "It must take up the challenge to western culture… to conceive women as being as equally and fully human as men. But it can only do this properly if it problematizes the dominant conception of the human, and of human culture, as well as that of the rational individual" (29). This subversion again demonstrates how H.D. merges these seemingly oppositional concepts together into one shared artistic representation. The speaker of "Mid-day" does not see the poplar trees as inferior to her, in fact seeing their form as ideal compared to her own limited humanoid experience. She seeks not to find spiritual fulfillment through an escape from materiality,

but to instead become extra-material; she finds freedom through nature's exclusion from society, as opposed to being bound by it. These aspects of the poem then becomes even more pronounced as the reader encounters its neighbor within the collection.

"Pursuit," when read entirely on its own, relays the thoughts of a speaker as he attempts to retrace the path of another individual. The power dynamic immediately shows itself to be skewed in the speaker's favour, mirroring the behaviour of a hunter and his prey more than a friendly, benign chase between equals. The speaker has a confident and nonchalant tone as the poem begins, asking "What do I care" (11) that his surroundings have become difficult to read, as he is still able to identify the trail of his hunt. This assuredness implies that the speaker is experienced in tracking – gained from at least one previous encounter, but more likely the result of this scenario's frequent occurrence. He notes a footprint at edge of a stream, now torn and covered in crushed plants. The heel has sunk deeply into the earth, alluding to the "swift" and frantic state of his hunt's movements. The seriousness of the situation is confirmed further, the speaker's prey cited as having "dragged a bruised thigh" with them, injured as they flee, though it is unclear exactly how these injuries occurred. The subject of pursuit is explicitly attempting to evade someone or something, with the speaker currently being the only suspect available to the reader. The terms "lifted" and "split" are found again here, echoing the language of the Sea Flower poems and inviting a more direct comparison: they are perceived outwardly by appearance as fragile and struggling, but there is more to their capacity to persevere than is immediately apparent. Notably, the speaker assesses that his prey stopped at a patch of dwarf-cornel (now commonly referred to as dogwood) and larch trees (12). Among Greenaway's translations of these plants' meanings, dwarf-cornel is

assigned the characteristic of durability (15) while larch is representative of audacity and boldness (26). Both of these are traits which one would assume animals of prey lack, placing them at a more vulnerable position. However, as the speaker continues to analyze the trail, he finds that this is where the path ends. He imagines his hunt calling upon the strength of “wood-daemons” (*Collected Poems* 12) for protection and allyship, done in an act of desperate self-preservation. The speaker notes that his prey’s steps have been “lightened” and “[He] can find no trace of [them]” any longer. “Pursuit” focuses not upon the current thoughts and feelings of the speaker but the potential actions of the subject of his attention, who in turn seems to be in a perilous, desperate position.

When reading both “Mid-day” and “Pursuit” in tandem with one another, we are able to find the narrative throughline that is so obviously formed between these pieces. The collection’s inclusion of nymphs and their resulting mythmaking ties deeply into H.D.’s re-vision and recontextualization of not only pre-existing mythological figures but also the very setting and images of *Sea Garden*. “Pursuit” directly references the hyacinth flower (11), crushed into the ground and recalling an emotional beat of nature in distress, similar to seeing the shrivelled seeds referenced by the speaker of “Mid-day.” In mythology, Hyacinth is one of the many past lovers of the god Apollo – one who meets an unfortunate death and is subsequently turned into a flower in remembrance (Hamilton 116). Primarily the God of Healing and Prophecy, Apollo’s own infamous reputation comes from his consistent inability to maintain romantic or sexual relationships without imminent disaster, almost always as the result of a vastly unequal power dynamic. Looking at the narrative of these two poems when read together, the events that emerge are incredibly similar to the story of another one of Apollo’s marks, Daphne. In this

myth, Apollo had fallen in love with the forest nymph Daphne and pursued her relentlessly, though she herself was not interested in him in return. His obsession would eventually lead Apollo to physically chase the nymph without end. As Daphne reached a point of exhaustion, fearing that she would be caught, she prayed for release from his pursuit and was turned into a laurel tree (Hamilton 156). The parallels here are hard to dispute, both the narrative presented within *Sea Garden* and Daphne's myth describing an encounter where a feminine figure – who is explicitly aligned with nature and plant life – is threatened by the unwanted advances of a predatory, masculine figure. This fact combined with specific details provided by the poems' imagery firmly suggests this being an intentional choice. However, in keeping with the relevance of H.D.'s Classical allusions, these points of comparison become even more enlightening when we consider another similar Greek myth as well.

Appearing in various *Metamorphoses*, Dryope is yet another feminine, naturally aligned figure who is best known for her relationship to Apollo. The account most relevant to *Sea Garden* comes from Antonius Liberalis[11]: upon seeing Dryope dancing with the nymphs of the forest, Apollo became obsessed with her, later raping and impregnating her. After this, she would continue to spend most of her time with the nymphs, who would induct her into their ranks, leaving a black poplar tree in her stead (March 168). In the poem "Mid-day," two of the most prominent natural details depicted are the previously mentioned poplar trees and the presence of overwhelming "black" (*Collected Poems* 10) which covers the dry stalks and seeds that lie upon the path – thus implying the image of a black poplar specifically, called upon by the speaker in her distress. She desires to be "great" in the same way that the trees are to escape the

inevitability of the situation she is in. Then, in "Pursuit," this new speaker's prey – now presumably the previous speaker – is unable to be found, lost among the rest of the surrounding nature of the Wilderness. Having now provided this additional context, we are led to the obvious conclusion that the poplar lover's wish has been granted to her after she "stammer[ed] with short breath and gasp[ed]: / wood-daemons grant life – / give life – I am almost lost," turning her into the very thing she admires in order to escape the fate of being caught (12). H.D. has crafted a complex and rapidly evolving imagined eco-system, where it is possible for partially divine creatures such as nymphs to be free from persecution and exploitation through merging materially with nature itself. These features combined connect Daphne's and Dryope's myths more explicitly to H.D.'s recontextualization, placing the narrative of *Sea Garden* within a larger continuum of stories that utilize transformation as a vital representation of physical safety and spiritual healing.

With the introduction of this literal metamorphosis, H.D. provides yet another layer of perspective to previously explored images and the legitimacy of their material agency, re-visioning how we perceive concepts drawn directly from the collection itself beyond mythology. In the imaginary landscape crafted through *Sea Garden*, the speaker of the Sea Flower poems addresses the Flowers directly to acknowledge their active, material power. Their beauty is an experiential, earned quality, not dictated by the expectations of ornamental standards set by society, nor the utilitarian standards of industrial productivity. Both "Sea Lily" and "Pursuit" explore an act of spiritual transcendence using similar language (again emphasizing the word "lifted"), creating a parallel between the plant life found in the Wilderness and the Sea Flowers as agents of

transformation and strength. "The drama here," Gregory notes, "is simply the speaker's merging with the wildness of another creature, who, whether human, animal, or spirit, into the element of nature, like a dryad into a tree" (543). But what if this comparison were not entirely simile but a literal occurrence within the larger context of evidence provided? Is it possible that some of the flowers that we encounter are themselves nymphs who have undergone a kind of metamorphosis? Considering that the speaker of "Pursuit" is completely unable to identify the transformed black poplar among the rest of the forest, these transformations do not seem to afford any more conceivable sentience or behaviour to the resulting plant life. They are not suddenly magical exceptions to the material reality of their new forms. Most importantly, this connection meshes with the thematic elements that are so vital to the Sea Flowers' narrative; their growth comes as a direct result of the marginalization they have endured at the hands of dominant, masculine civilization.

Though he may also be an explicit divine presence within the collection, Apollo's appearance has a very different tone and purpose from Aphrodite's. An "aspiration" for Apollo's worship and values is one of "lucid vision" as well as "measure and formal control," contrary to ancient associations with "frenzied" "madness" given to Aphrodite (Gregory 547). To many artists of the modern era, Apollo is most associated with the pursuit of mental clarity and logic, something glorified as the masculine, cultured ideal within the values set by developed civilization, contrary to the emotional and unpredictable realm of feminine nature. Apollo is then representative of the imposition of these value hierarchies which actively seek to oppress women and any other backgrounded group. Even aspects of society which are culturally aligned with the

marginalized background are subject to the same systems that place them at a disadvantage; the realms of the bodily or emotional, for example, are confining and suppressive when operating within the logic and patterns of institutions which take their subjugation as an inherent, deserved mode of existence. As Plumwood comments, “The view of the other as inessential is the master’s perspective. The master’s view is set up as universal, and it is part of the mechanism of backgrounding that it never occurs to him that there might be other perspectives from which he is background. Yet this inessentialness which he believes the slave to have in relation to his own essentialness is an illusion” (Plumwood 48). However, using its perceived ‘otherness’ to their advantage, immersion in nature can be a crucial act of protection and self-actualization for those subject to marginalization. The nymphs and Sea Flowers are figures who have undergone systematic trauma, and through the use of a realignment with nature, untouched by rigid cultural structures, they have become stronger. They are able to reclaim the ownership of their material bodies and sexualities through this process and are essentially ‘re-flowering’ themselves – in this instance, literally.

The Wilderness acts as a playground for H.D. to recontextualize and re-vise Classical mythologies from a different, more woman-focused perspective, placing emphasis upon figures which have traditionally been taken for granted within their own narratives. There are differing arguments which could be made concerning the particular myths and figures H.D. means to draw from. However, I believe that it is more likely the case that she seeks to pay tribute to all of them. Much as *Helen in Egypt* would later portray the layered realities of perception and existence for Helen of Troy, *Sea Garden* sees the common persecution and objectification of nymphs within ancient Greek

mythology and interpolates their struggles in with those of disempowered, organic, non-animal beings. Rachel DuPelssis, in relation to her concept of 'romantic thralldom,' explains the reparative logic behind H.D.'s depictions of power imbalance:

> In her life's work, H.D. returned constantly to a pattern of personal relations that she found perplexing and felt to be damaging to herself and other women: thralldom to males in romantic and spiritual love… [She] had to invent in her works patterns for male-female relationships less damaging than, but equally as satisfying as those she and other women had experienced. (178)

These transformations allow subjects of marginalization to explore the potential for personal empowerment in their material, bodily states while still being protected from the invasive forces of invasive, masculine dominance. Metamorphosis into plant life is then not a punishment or tragedy but instead the result of direct communion with divine, natural forces and the power of their individual agency – a true choice in how they wish to live and what forms they wish to take. Should the civilized, industrial world not only fail to accommodate but also actively inflict harm upon them, they are not obligated to participate within it.

The Farmed Land

Before finally entering the gates of *Sea Garden*'s City, the final location of H.D.'s imagined landscape, the Farmed Land, presents the final transition from untamed nature to urban civilization. It is undoubtedly domesticated by the structures and needs of society, but it is also focused primarily upon the natural agents and plants that dwell there, as opposed to the presence of humanity and culture which is dominant in the City. However, the Farmed Land is where vegetation is considered the most 'useful.' This

change creates an interesting contrast to images discussed earlier within the collection, depicting areas of the imagined landscape considered disappointments when assessed by the standards of utilitarian development. Instead of speakers frustrated by their inability to dominate the natural settings around them or, alternatively, experiencing guilt for their lack of appreciation for nature's perceived failure to nurture, the speakers of these poems find their emotional conflicts drawn from the rigidity of domesticity and propriety among conventional society. The poems which most invoke the image of domestication within *Sea Garden* share a specific narrative voice, one characterised primarily by a deep frustration and turmoil over the cultivated nature of plant life surrounding them. With this shared voice also comes what is arguably the most straight forward narrative arc presented in the entire collection. Within this arc, H.D. examines the intervention of divine forces upon human civilizations, rejecting the subjugation of their realm. While not a valued trait of "use" to culture and society, the untamed natural world's unpredictability is proven extremely powerful, demonstrating itself as a legitimate threat to those who flee from it, regardless of how far inland they are willing to venture.

Beginning with "Sheltered Garden," the speaker feels confined within the restraints of civilization, controlled by the standards of ornamental beauty placed upon them, immediately invoking the same feminine perspective given to the Sea Flowers. This confinement is not only figurative but literal, as every pathway built in the garden circles back into itself, stalling any sense of progress or freedom when navigating its maze. The speaker recounts the tailored, kept design of the garden, filled with unnamed flowers described as "border pinks" and "wax-lilies" (*Collected Poems* 19), species chosen likely for their pretty, inoffensive presence; she states that she has "had enough"

of them. What she wishes for contrary to this is the “scent of resin,” a more “coarse” or “astringent” sensory experience, as opposed to the smothering, sweet scents of the garden flowers, from which she feels the need to “gasp for breath.”

The fruits that grows there is bitter to the taste, as they have not been allowed to see the sun and ripen, where they would be able to “test their own worth” (20) in the elements and prove themselves to be better, more satisfying forms of nourishment. The speaker argues that even a “bitter” melon, hit by the harshness of “exquisite frost,” will taste better than one that has not been given the opportunity to properly grow. Her solution to these problems would be to see the garden turned into a “terrible wind-tortured place” (21), believing that it would only make it more beautiful to have these decorative flowers be shattered by the wind and thrown about, “showing that the fight was valiant.” A mirror to “The Helmsman,” she seeks to “forget” the Sheltered Garden, though, not to escape the mercurial exposure of nature but to immerse herself within it. The main thesis of *Sea Garden*, that “beauty without strength/chokes out life” (20), is echoed in this piece the most explicitly, expressing the desperation for catharsis which grows in spaces valued by their ability to maintain their objectifiable status.

Nourishment continues to be a relevant issue within the Farmed Lands. The portrayal of Mother Earth which we are most used to is for her to be stationed as the ultimate provider and nurturer to humanity – In taking advantage of the natural processes of the earth through agriculture and domestication, we are being cared for by nature at its expense; our well being and bodily sanctitude are placed before its own. Full fields and orchards are therefore often a symbol of security and abundance. However, H.D.’s depictions of agricultural processes in *Sea Garden* subvert this expectation. For example,

in "Orchard," the speaker of the poem asks that the trees "spare us from loveliness" (29), that the pear trees have "flayed [them] with their blossoms" (28) as the beauty of the plant life there has harmed them in some way. The flowering pear trees have attracted bees, "the air thundering their song" or buzzing, which are swarming around the orchard and frightening the speaker. These bees are "honey-seeking," meaning the blossoms are likely primed and ready for pollination. A necessary act of nature then seems chaotic and dangerous to those who planted and rely upon the trees for food and profit. "Honey" is frequently used throughout *Sea Garden* to symbolize spiritual and/or intellectual substance or nourishment, the act of "seeking honey" being a compressed journey of "spiritual and cultural renewal" (Anderson 108). Bees use the pollen from flowers to create honey for their colonies, thus nourishing themselves and others with the very physical, tangible product of these plants. Continuing to analyze the recurrent pattern of flowers as bridges between the material and the spiritual, H.D. is directly connecting one's spiritual development to the capacity to value backgrounded natural processes not tied directly to the industrial structure.

This focus upon honey and spiritual substance challenges the perception of flowers as a purely ornamental or "useless" form of vegetation. Pollination is an important step in the process of not only honey production, but also the fertilization of new plants such as agricultural crops meant to feed humans, including those living in urban centres. Especially in recent years, growing concerns about the world's endangered bee populations have forced mainstream consideration of the vital role these small animals play in our own lives and thus also our dependence upon them; it is hard for humanity to conceptualize how agricultural practices are the result of a much more

symbiotic relationship with nature than has traditionally been perceived. 'Reasonable' function in this case is based not in genuine rational or measured behaviour – if the speaker cares about what is logistically best for the plants and their productive capabilities, they would not fear the surrounding bees, they would be grateful for their presence as their pollination would result in higher quality fruits. Likewise, bee keeping is an extremely common agricultural practice and, when given the right opportunity, allows bees to craft their own domestic spaces which provide additional nourishment to both them and humans without conflict. However, the speaker of "Orchard" maintains that these bees are a threat. No matter how well the fruits mature, they are of no use to those growing them if the swarming insects make them inaccessible for harvest. The bees are an untamed element of nature, seemingly invading their domesticated space, and giving them free reign over the orchard would then allow an unsanctioned reclamation of this land. Humans would no longer be the most powerful agent within this part of the eco-system. If the fruits are then never able to reach their 'ideal' form given human intervention, one must consider whether it is worth it to set standards for 'good' fruit based upon the expectations of civilization alone.

The Farmed Lands (and accompanying Sheltered Garden) project a strong atmosphere of confinement, something built upon in other pieces of the text. "Evening," possibly the most transparent and straight forward piece of the collection, depicts a sunset cast upon the flowers of a tamed garden area (*Collected Poems* 18) – showing that even in their cultivated state, these plants are still deeply in tune with their position as liminal figures within *Sea Garden*'s complex eco-system. Further expanding upon the role of the Sheltered Garden, "The Wind Sleepers" invokes a similar feeling to "The Helmsman,"

one of regret in the face of lost spiritual potential. Having also fled from the divine forces of the Sea, the titular speakers of the piece recount the loss of their spiritual connections, fleeing “through the city gate” (15) to dwell within civilization. They demand for someone to “propitiate us” and “tear us a new alter,” satiating their spiritual needs, not through construction but instead destruction – the same destruction called upon by Sheltered Garden’s speaker. That they “no longer sleep/in the wind” can take on a dual meaning. The wind, being a motif representative of divine natural forces, has grown too rough for them, meaning that they no longer feel at peace within it as they did before; they no longer feel nurtured by it. However, this could also mean that they have reached a breaking point for their spiritual dormancy, and that their forceful demand for worship is an attempt to reclaim the divine power they once had access to. They do not ask for quiet prayers or offerings but chanting and dancing that may “never halt,” bringing about “discord.” This will, in their hopes, cause the Sea to wash away the City with “the roar of a dropped wave.” The limited scope of the Sheltered Garden is not sufficient in any capacity to maintain either spiritual or material fulfillment, so it must be “meted” – brought to justice – by invoking the Sea once again to overtake the industrialized City.

There are other poems throughout the text that express similar sentiments of frustration, now more specifically focused on the Farmed Land. “Garden” is another piece concerned with exploring the virtues of the Sea Flowers, this time from the perspective of a speaker who does not solely praise them but notably wishes to become like them. The Sea Flowers are revered tremendously by the speaker, who states that “if I could break you/I could break a tree” (24). Trees are more readily granted respect as parts of nature within civilization. Not only are they much larger and sturdier than other forms

of plant life, but they are seen as more "useful" to society, having various obvious applications beyond the ornamental. Most importantly, they can be cut down and used as resources for fuel and building material. By equating the strength of a flower to the strength of a tree, the speaker seeks to place the less appreciated forms of nature into the same category of value as those already given respect by humanity. The speaker also implies that if they "could scrape the colour/from the petals" of the "rose, cut in rock," "like spilt dye," they could similarly absorb the rose's strength; if they were to don the colours of the rose upon their person, they could use the physical matter of the plant to gain spiritual power. This representation of the bodily turned spirit is reinforced by the similarity of this image to that of a rock covered in blood. Blood is likewise a material substance which is vital to humanity's spiritual essence, both valued for its necessity to life and also resented for its existence as a reminder of human mortality.

Bennett states that "it is easy to acknowledge that humans are composed of various material parts (the minerality of our bones, or the metal of our blood, or the electricity of our neurons). But it is more challenging to conceive of these materials as lively and self-organizing, rather than as passive or mechanical means under the direction of something nonmaterial, that is, an active soul or mind" (10). The physical body, though governed by internal mechanisms we have little access to without technological intervention, is designed to function as a holistic unit. In a similar vein of thought, Polina MacKay argues "We should not mistake... H.D.'s high regard for spiritual awareness as a call to disregard the body… For H.D., the body is not just a physical entity (the body of an individual); it is also a natural phenomenon, which stores and mediates energy, and an artefact" (54). Might the human body possibly be considered its own assemblage of vital

individual pieces of matter, working together as a collective piece of organic machinery? The heart cannot function without the oxygen of the lungs, which itself cannot function without the signals of the brain, which in turn cannot function without the pulse of the heart. This could be said of almost all organs in the human body. In a strictly oppositional system of forced duality, the mind and spirit are separate from the body, able to be 'freed' from the trappings of mortal life through divine transcendence. A new materialist vision of the human body counters this assumption by suggesting instead that it is precisely the intricate and invisible physical acts of the body working in tandem with one another that infuse us with our sense of spirit, requiring no transcendence from the material world at all to find enlightenment.

When we extend this line of thinking to relate to the collective "spirit" of plant life, we are centering a less traditionally anthropocentric way of thinking about the natural world and its place at level with human interaction and independence. H.D. has described the spirit as a "seed" in other works (53), which implies that another, fully grown image of nature is the spirit's ultimate form: a tree. To her, the strength witnessed in the average tree is as institutionally solid as the works of civilized architectural bedrock: "The trees... were not so far incarnate, were of another element... Trees formed upright shafts and rose upright into shafts that held crossbeams of trees" like the ceiling of a Gothic cathedral (*HERmione* 64). Civilization typically perceives nature and vegetation as being much more delicate than the human body. However, they will not die of old age the same way that an animal does. We have tangible, easily accessible proof of the long survival of trees, an undisturbed specimen being able to live several lifetimes

beyond that of the average human – some trees and forests living to be thousands of years old.

All this being said, the ‘weaknesses’ of the human body are not viewed equally across the spectrum of sex and gender. Women are very rarely allowed any form of catharsis within the expectations of polite society and culture. The ‘drama’ of expressive emotional reactions like rage or despair are valued differently when expressed by a woman, as opposed to when being suppressed by a man. Feminine emotional reactivity is seen instead as a lack of control – to some, the antithesis to reason – which makes someone a rational, clear minded thinker capable of making correct decisions and behaving in a ‘civil’ manner. In fact, negative emotional reaction from a women is often considered a failure of her material being – an inevitable result of her feminine biological inferiority. Plumwood explains that “Homogenisation in gender stereotyping is well known, involving the appeal to homogeneous and eternal male and female ‘natures’… assert[ing] that ‘women are all alike’” (54). This is where the concept of hysteria originates, and why it has been used so often as a reason to dismiss the plights and concerns of women, even when expressed publicly and consistently. Another expectation of feminine biology is that one must use her body and emotions for the sake of productivity, lest she become materially superfluous. This kind of objectification is usually argued for the ‘benefit’ of civilization and mirrors the colonial narratives mentioned earlier: “Male texts present the land as the feminine principle of gratification, as a mother, a lover, or both; but when the land fails to live up to a pastoral ideal, she becomes a ‘victim [of] masculine activity’” (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 14). New generations must be born to pass on the ideologies and philosophies of Western culture in

order to preserve it and aid future generations with its knowledge. They are also then producing new workers for the upkeep of systems and institutions that reinforce these forms of thought. If this cycle exists to recreate itself, how then are these problems ever to be properly addressed? A fundamental disruption – or complete destruction – of the system would be required in order to release humanity from the grip of the hegemonic hierarchy of values.

This narrative reaches its climax in the poem "Storm," considered a quintessential imagist verse. Finally, the "terrible wind" called up by the speaker of "Sheltered Garden" fulfils its role in unhinging these cultivated spaces from the confines imposed on them. Using the force of its wind and rain to "crash over the trees" and "crack the live branch" (*Collected Poems* 36), the previously smothered plant life is torn apart, making room for stronger, more impressive vegetation to grow in its place. Much like in "Sheltered Garden," the speaker of "Storm" cheers on this retributive act of nature, wanting it to "burden the trees with black drops." Describing the rain as "black" in this instance gives it a toxic, poisonous quality, and invokes a feeling of active malice; this is an intentional decision, and the victim of its warpath has been selected carefully. Additionally, to plague nature with drops of "black" harkens back to the poem "Mid-day," where the "black seeds" and "blackened stalks" (10) of the plants on the path perished from the harsh rays of the sun. "Garden" too invokes similar imagery to "Mid-day" by having the speaker call upon the wind to "cut apart the heat" (25) which keeps the fruit from being able to "fall" and provide nourishment. Now, instead of heat and overbearing light, these plants are destroyed through the swift intervention of wind and water. So, while an aggressive act, the storm levels the land and gardens quickly, as opposed to delighting in

a slow, torturous end. After "Storm" destroys the previously despised areas of cultivation, the penultimate poem of the collection, "Pear Tree," depicts a space of agriculture that has succeeded in retaining its nourishing, satiating qualities. The speaker praises the beauty and superiority of this tree, which "bring summer and ripe fruits" (39), a vast improvement to the visually beautiful but barren trees of the previous poems.

H.D.'s exploration of *Sea Garden*'s agricultural centres subverts common understanding of natural productivity and propriety in order to highlight the inconsistencies which surround both human perception of 'usefulness' and feminine catharsis. Hickman expresses that the frustration expressed in this group of poems "suggests a call for release from the fetter of conventional post-Victorian femininity; and because the volume was published at a suffragist moment, also suggests that violence as figuring forms of cultural violence affecting women" (15). Though the historical context behind this argument provides better context for the societal restrictions H.D. has been writing the collection within, it overlooks the main point of the narrative arc these poems form: rage against the imposed order of domination is a completely valid response to the oppression one has been placed under. Instead, H.D. uses the aesthetics of destruction as a force that "divorces womanhood from its conventional association with domesticity, implying that only windswept wildness can nourish" (Wheeler, "Both Flower" 496).

The City

The final, most isolated location mapped within *Sea Garden* is the City. There are few pieces in the collection that take place within a developed, urban setting. Instead, the vast majority are focused upon locations where the presence of nature is prioritized. Considering that this is the case even in places where a gentrified domestication of

natural space is in the forefront (such as the Farmed Land), H.D. subverts the typical backgrounding of nature within the functional organization of the collection as well as its thematic conceptualization. There is no need to afford dominant structures of civilization any more room to represent themselves because they are already able to do so at every other opportunity. However, ecofeminist theory calls for a bridging of these concepts, meaning that a full exclusion from the narrative would be counterintuitive to the arguments H.D. puts forward throughout the rest of the text. For this reason, examining the implicit but crucial elements of the natural world that still reside within the City offers the reader a viewpoint which most mirrors their own: a contemporary space of human civilization, seemingly devoid of anything outside the hegemonic ideal, but not without the remaining potential for a more full and balanced conception of the world.

Aptly titled and placed at the end of Sea Garden, "Cities" is a poem focused entirely upon modern urbanity's spiritual lacking. The speaker's tone is hostile, a marked "disgust" (*Collected Poems* 40) tempered not only from them but seemingly at them as well, showing their othered status even among other citizens. The images of the piece describe the aftermath of industrialization and the loss of spirituality that has taken place as a result. The City is heavily "crowded," filling "street after street/all patterned alike" and trapped within the systems of both social and physical conformity. There is seemingly only "one garden-space" among the "house[s] of the hundred," nature being dictated by the strictest possible boundaries. Old "temples" and "marble" "palaces" used to be the architecture here, but they have long since grown "faint" and been replaced with the more efficient, less artistically stimulating structures. Noted "incense-flowers" and "incense-trees" which the speaker reflects fondly upon are likewise missing, being the

“fragrance” which “marks sacred space” (Anderson 132). This absence further demonstrates how even ‘suitable’ forms of ornamental nature have been stripped from this location. The speaker then finally identifies the individual responsible for “crowding the city so full that men could not grasp beauty” as himself a man, addressed as “he.” The City had once been a place of beauty and spiritual nourishment, “no crevice unpacked with honey,” until it was decided that there must be a “new city” filled with “new people” in “new cells” (*Collected Poems* 41). These changes are not the non-political evolutions of an equal populace, they are intentional choices with the goal of distancing civilization from othered agents or actants that may, in the dominant culture’s opinion, weaken it.

This description of the City presents the reader a variety of potential images. Reference to “cells” immediately evokes the image of a prison. *Sea Garden* has its own depiction of such a space, a bleak lament from one prisoner to another as they cross the threshold from captivity to impending execution (Collecott 101). However, more figuratively, this image reinforces the vision of the City as being a place of restriction, as dictated by the expectations and conventions of ‘civilized,’ industrial society. The imprisonment in question could be seen also as an ideological one; in being constricted by the predetermined cultural values which place masculinity and modern civilization at the forefront, society is itself limited – imprisoned – within these systems of thought. There is also an element of this description reminiscent of a beehive, which similarly contains very precise and geometric “cells” in the form of combs. They are both of nature, being the product of animal labour and base instinct, but of a kind of industry, being a sophisticated construct made for the purpose of containing and directing a population – just not a human one. Seeing “no honey of flowers here” (*Collected Poems*

41) is then not only a reference to the previous Flower poems and their spiritual complexities which are absent within the City's limits, but also a specific parallel to a beehive without its main source of pollen and therefore, nourishment. Thus, the City is not inherently flawed or without nature's presence; it is simply incomplete – somewhere that has lost sight of its connection to and dependence upon the material in its pursuit of transcendence through industrialization.

Mass industrial efforts seem paradoxical from an ecofeminist perspective. One of the aspects which makes the uncritical deification of industrial expansion problematic is its inability to acknowledge the presence of collaboration among the human, the mechanical, and the natural spheres. In devoting so much focus to the goal of transcendence, the perceived figurative train of 'progress' that wishes to distance itself from the boundaries of nature instead binds humanity to the material in ways that hinder our abilities to see the importance of nature within our lives. This transcendent goal is often closely attached to capitalistic venture and militaristic production, meaning that it is heavily dependant upon material resources – for construction, transportation, agriculture, etc. Overreliance on industrialized systems of life results in the separation of humanity from identity and community outside of productive, economic standards – humans are no longer 'people' but 'citizens' and 'workers': "Such fetishism confounds political economy's account of value, alienates itself from any enlightenment horror of waste, and settles happily into an inhuman (not antihumanist) history" (Brown 5). A more balanced vision of technological evolution would understand that humanity alone is not solely responsible for the products of innovation, nor should we be so consumed by material productivity that we begin to live for the purpose of labour alone. The complex reality is

that we are forging new creations with the aid of what nature makes available to us, not because it is ‘for’ us but because we happen to exist alongside it.

According to the speaker of “Cities,” there are the remnants of “old cells” (*Collected Poems* 41) throughout the new streets and buildings, containing “grains of honey” and “stray pollen.” Only those “left to recall” are able to find and understand these spaces, as the rest of the streets have “spread larvae across them,” these larvae being the replacement for honey. The term “useless” returns once again, addressed to the speaker of the poem from the larvae. Here, those ridiculed as “useless” are not nebulous and non-communicative forces of nature but instead active human participants of civilization. Even among other humans in a human space – without the veil of figurative associations to flowers or nymphs or any other symbolic images – those who do not (or *can* not) conform to the requirements for ‘citizenship’ are shunned. The speaker wonders, “is [their] task less sweet?”: Is the spiritual task of the oppressed harder to fulfill while under persecution? How are they expected to ‘contribute’ to society if they are never afforded access to it in the first place? The larvae do not simply ostracize the speaker’s people, they are an active threat to their existence, warning that “Your cell takes the place/of our young future strength.”

While most of “Cities” lacks optimism for the spiritual health of urban space, the “spirits” (42) referred to in the payoff of the poem – currently dwelling in the City, ‘haunting’ both those still esoterically engaged and those who have become ignorant to their presence – are clearly the remaining echoes of oppressed values to followers of a older spiritual path, more closely tied to nature. From a more materially focused angle, the transformation of ‘old’ into ‘new’ is not an act of destruction, but itself a kind of

transformation. There is a substantial reality to civilization beyond its cultural modes, considering what buildings and roads must be built with. Alaimo argues that our standards of classification for the material world are flawed since "Nature is artifactual in the sense that even nature is something made, not something existing 'out there' in some essential, eternal, exploitable form" (*Undomesticated Ground* 158). A stone wall does not simply cease to be rock when it has been carved and built into a formal structure. Even more modern production of synthetic materials such as plastics and polymers are fabricated out of fundamental molecules of combined chemicals which had to exist whole in nature in some form prior to their mixture. It is a misconception to say that these things are entirely 'new', as opposed to simply being further elaborations and combinations of what has already existed as a part of nature. The very same matter – the "cells" – is always present if we pay close attention.

Sea Garden closes with this image, one closest to our own modern civilization. Marginalized people and environments are not resisting oppressive forces on an equal playing field. These hostile cultural perspectives are referred to as 'systems' and 'constructs' for a reason; they are deeply imbedded in our everyday lives, with their own complex networks to uphold. According to Bennett, "The ethical aim [of new materialism] becomes to distribute value more generously… Such a newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers will not solve the problem of human exploitation or oppression. but it can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations" (13). Because of this, it is important to explore images where we struggle to find empowerment in nature but continue trying to do so regardless. While it would be convenient and cathartic for a

storm to rip through and provide a blank slate, nature should be valued precisely because of its inability to be controlled. The political applications of ecofeminist and new materialist thinking are specifically designed with resistance to oppression in mind. If space continues to be created to allow alternative considerations of what we value, previously silenced voices will no longer be “crowded” or “usurped” by systems of domination that they live under.

Conclusion

Though *Sea Garden*'s imagist snapshots supply us with vivid details from which we may build our own visions of the potential landscape, there is ultimately no set location where the collection's events take place. In a work so concerned with states of transformation and flexibility, the contents themselves should be "such that the transition from start to finish of a text may involve a radical shift in perceptions of normality and a willingness to abandon old ideas and identities in order to take on new ones" (Collecott 100). Much like the poems that are not ordered or classified by chronology or category, the 'real' map of *Sea Garden* is spectral and liminal in nature, overlapping within itself to demonstrate the complex perspective it weaves. I have discussed these locations in terms of their thematic 'distance' to one another but, as we have established, the goal of ecofeminist theory is not to further separate the realms of reason and enlightenment by rejecting them completely. It may very well be that the Beach sits directly next to the City in this eco-system, the most prominent spiritual transformations of the anthology taking place just beside the space which challenges them the most. Perhaps it is even because of their proximity that they may exist as they do – that being so close to the source of their struggle and isolated from the other areas of nature on the map, they are forced to find what freedom to grow that they can, scrounged up among the margins. An eco-system does not function as a set line of strictly dictated relationships and resources. It is instead the assemblage of many interwoven actants whose lives may only be fully comprehended through examining all outlooks and symbiotic ties within it.

Transparency is not a trait that H.D.'s writing is well known for, but it is precisely because of the opaque, esoteric presentation of her work that so many seek out its truths.

It is often the case that we discuss her pieces in terms of how they must be approached, usually for the purpose of introducing new, inexperienced readers (Debo and Vetter 7). Upon first encounter, deciphering her words through the veils of inaccessibility placed over them can prove a genuinely daunting task for an initiate, requiring them to build a certain stamina for comprehension and analysis – something that could be aptly compared to gaining one's 'sea-legs.' One potential way of helping readers establish their own sea-legs is the application of theoretical frameworks which better organize the themes and images imbedded within the text. This close reading has been dedicated to *Sea Garden*, but other works by H.D. have been referenced consistently, providing important and relevant additions to analysis. As noted by Burton Hatlen, "Her later work does not so much reject Imagism as build upon it" (108). We have already seen how *The Gift*, *HERmione*, and *End to Torment* confirm H.D.'s personal investment in the feminine artistic identity and the natural plane; the same may be applied to other narratives apart from her autobiographically influenced writing as well. *Hermetic Definition* continues this tradition by primarily focusing upon the image of a "rose." *Helen in Egypt* explores ecofeminist ideas too, its particular use of multilayered feminine spiritual identity being a fundamental aspect to understanding the text. However, in order to best demonstrate these transient literary qualities, I would like to briefly consider H.D.'s war saga, *Trilogy*[12], drawing attention in particular to the evolution of themes and images established by her early imagist poetry.

In *Trilogy*, several reoccurring natural and material textual throughlines point toward an ecologically minded spiritualism that puts emphasis on the feminine relationship to nature, reflecting ecofeminist ideologies first established within *Sea*

Garden. The primary nature image H.D. uses throughout *Trilogy* to explore the enlightenment narrative is the metamorphosis of a worm to a butterfly, first presented to the reader within "The Walls Do Not Fall." This worm lives "on the leaf" and "in the dust", perceived little more than as a "parasite" (*Collected Poems* 516) with "no righteousness" (515). However, H.D. then subverts the common negative symbolic associations made of worms, instead setting it as a protagonist to the first section of the poem. It makes the transition of a spiritual initiate through metamorphosis, much like the Sea Flowers. H.D. frames the worm as "industrious" and "unrepentant" (516) in the face of oppressive adversity, able to see the world as a place of "magnified beauty" (515), acknowledging that they are only a small part of a much larger, interrelated biome of multiplicity and content to be so. This abstraction comes only as a result of the worm's devaluation, as it is not so concerned with upholding structures and institutions of hegemonic dominance that it cannot see the position it holds in the larger eco-system. The worm's very nature is as a catalyst for enlightenment, transforming it into the "butterfly" which echoes the form of the gods and goddesses who have already succeeded in completing "their [own] worm-cycle" (517). But, in this case, transcendence beyond nature is not the ultimate goal; the metamorphosis from worm to butterfly is vitally organic and bodily, changing the matter of the creature itself, not simply its sense of identity.

H.D.'s exploration of the material world in *Trilogy* is not limited to organic matter; she also emphasizes the agency of otherwise inanimate, nonbiological material. Once again in "The Walls Do Not Fall," she lists "the stylus,/the palette, the pen, [and] the quill" (518), all implements of writing and communication. While these tools

"endure," the pages that they write upon do not, as they are subject to "the meanest/of man's mean nature": destruction. The ancient wisdom – the "authentic relic" – that H.D. and other poets like her uncover through their philosophical explorations is discredited, marked as "non-utilitarian" and therefore nonessential to the dominant structures of society (517). H.D. goes on to name the Egyptian pharaoh, Hatshepsut, specifically as an example of the erasure of women in the documented canon of history and civilization. After her death, Hatshepsut's name and likeness were removed from not only public but private structures, erasing all possible evidence that she had ever held the position of pharaoh. While claims that this was carried out as a response to Hatshepsut's gender have been contested in modern archaeological research, at the time that *Trilogy* was being written, this was the widely accepted explanation for this action (Bryant and Eaverly 79). As Hatshepsut and her step-son technically ruled as co-regents, their cartouches often being placed next to each other (93), erasing her name would result in the only complete historical documentation of this time citing no existence of a woman king, only a man. That role then is confined to the masculine sphere, unwelcome to those who are not the traditional beneficiaries of the societal order.

The evocation of Hatshepsut's name in association with these concepts solidifies her place as a symbol of ancient spiritual enlightenment, more stable and lasting than 'civilized,' modern institutions. The speaker of *Trilogy* describes "smouldering ash under our feet" coming from "the burning of book," highlighting the impermanence of paper documentation (*Collected Poems* 518). As Marsha Bryant and Mary Anne Eavery explain, H.D. understands that "Egyptian sacred architecture has a degree of 'sheer permanence' and 'cryptic power' that [the contemporary world and the Classical world]

lack (78). While the paper scripts of new religion and society are easily burned, the stone structures and carvings of the past, such as those that display Hatshepsut's name, are not. Though attempts by her heir were made to conceal her existence, they were unsuccessful in that task. The physical, material existence of these monuments are a vital aspect of maintaining the spiritual practices they mean to represent, their thing-power revealing itself to stand up to millennia of time's destructive scrutiny. Carving names into stone imbues them with much longer a sense of permanency than simply ink on paper or fallible human memory. This is not just communication through language. As Bryant and Eaverly claim, it is a spiritually valuable manifestation of identity which continues to make itself known even today, counteracting the "physical vulnerability" (79) that H.D. saw in her own writing and protecting it. It is explicitly through material means that the spiritual is able to be passed down through centuries of history, tying the two together intimately and subverting oppositional disassociations between them.

Much like the identity of Hatshepsut, H.D.'s work has resurfaced over the past several decades and been given a proper academic reassessment. "Much recent criticism of H.D.'s early work," as Elizabeth Anderson notes, "has explored ways in which her Imagism cuts against the grain of earlier assessments of the movement… Her most popular and frequently cited poems demonstrate a dynamic energy that refuses to be confined" (106). However, there are still fundamental aesthetics and ideas in these poems, especially those concerned with displays of nature and the feminine, that complicate and slow this process. Plumwood explains that

> Even the ancient forms [of marginalization] do not necessarily fade away because their original context has changed; they are often preserved in our conceptual

> framework as residues, layers of sediment deposited by past oppressions. Culture thus accumulates a store of such conceptual weapons, which can be mined, refined and redeployed for new uses. (44)

This has not and will not be the last time the legitimacy of a woman's influence in a typically masculine domain will be intentionally looked over. The opening section of *Trilogy* puts a visual parallel to this historical disparity, making the comparison between the razed buildings of London after a bombing and the ruins of, at the time, recently rediscovered tombs in Luxor, Egypt. While the devastation of a war-torn city presents its reader with a frightening confrontation, it also portrays a more melancholy version of the same cathartic purging displayed in *Sea Garden*'s "Storm." Images of "ruin everywhere" (*Collected Poems* 509) in the aftermath of the Blitz, comparable to the destruction of Pompeii (510), while often shocking, still go on to "symbolize the freedom and possibilities" that arise when "old values and systems collapse, allowing for the possibility of something new, something possibly less antagonistic toward women" (Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground* 80). Despite the length of time between their publications, the themes and images H.D. establishes in *Sea Garden* set the precedent for the woman-centric, ecocritically minded narratives present in her later works such as *Trilogy.* The empowerment of nonhuman entities within natural spaces, acknowledgment of material agency outside of human interaction, and the recontextualization of narratives in myth and history to recenter the feminine perspective are all crucial aspects of these works. Had *Sea Garden* not formed the foundation for these ecofeminist critical alignments, the evolution of H.D.'s poetry may not have achieved the fresh and nuanced spiritual expressions that it did. Therefore, her imagist works remain a vital key to

gaining a more complete understanding of her artistic goals and identity, beyond the confining formal readings of past scholarship.

Bennett describes that it is the "vibratory" nature of assemblages as "the mood or style of an open whole in which both the membership changes over time and the members themselves undergo internal alteration" (35). How else then might the concept of 'mapping' a poetic narrative be useful to the study of H.D. and modernism? Using the same multilayered logic behind the imagined landscape and eco-system of *Sea Garden*, H.D.'s larger body of writing too can be imagined as a complex network of artistic explorations, mythological re-visions, and personal spiritual contemplations. There is likely not a single piece of her collected work which does not benefit in some way from comparison with another of her texts. According to Friedman, H.D.'s specific mode of mythmaking are "deeply rooted in tradition and committed to its preservation. But... she did not conceive of the poet as a passive receptacle for the images and symbols of tradition" as her male contemporaries had done. "Instead," Friedman asserts, "the poet engages in an active, dialectical process of weaving traditional and personal revelations into new patterns of vision" (*Psyche Reborn 226*). By acknowledging that her work is best understood as part of a larger continuum, the issue of transparency and accessibility to H.D.'s writing essentially solves itself. One of the major conceits of modernism – that an individual could educate themselves on the Western canon through references and interpolations in transformative works – operates similarly; the main difference between the two points is that this 'new,' larger picture focuses upon the personal canon of one writer.

Beyond any of the other possible applications of the ideas explored through this close reading, an ecofeminist perspective of *Sea Garden* provides a new dimension of appreciation for H.D.'s philosophy and world views as understood outside means of textual interpretations. Though practicing her craft at a time before any of these theoretical frameworks had been given their exact terminology, her writing and she herself were obviously anxious about the oppressive practices of marginalization, constrictive societal expectations based upon arbitrary dualities, and the re-examination of society's obsessions with dispassionate 'transcendence' from the material and natural worlds. The ecofeminist concerns of *Sea Garden* – and her subsequent works as well – are then not simply the attribution of a philosophical theory to a piece of art to which it is coincidentally applicable. Ecofeminism instead brings forth legitimate extrapolations from H.D.'s own political and ideological beliefs. Choosing to overlook newer forms of theory in modernist studies leaves the discipline at a huge disadvantage, as this also leads critics to overlook highly relevant social dimensions to the context of art's creation, as well as potential viewpoints that would have been innovative for the time. Addressing traditional modernist scholarship's aversion to younger critical frameworks, Anne Raine states, "While the new modernist studies [have] taken a more historical and materialist view of modernism… even such revisionist accounts rarely consider nature or ecology as part of the field in which modernist texts participate" (100). Raine likewise notes that this issue has been publicly acknowledged for quite some time, as it has been the call of other critics such as Friedman to bridge this gap and direct our focus upon "a planetary modernist studies," "where postcolonial and environmental justice… unsettle dominant Euro-American assumptions about nature by exploring the multiple, contested versions of

nature and environmentalism that emerge out of particular histories in particular places" (ibid). What better an artist through which to begin exploring this dynamic than a woman whose work has recently been, in a way, unearthed, ready to be analyzed and recontextualized using so many diverse points of view?

Sea Garden can then be seen as a kind of manifesto for H.D.'s goals as a poet and creator. Plumwood assesses that "Human domination of nature wears a garment cut from the same cloth as intra-human domination, but one which, like each of the others, has a form and shape of its own. Human relations to nature are not only ethical, but also political" (13). Life within any devalued, marginalized group automatically makes one's mere existence political, as long as there are those who maintain structures and systems that push a controlled, ideologically limited vision of 'humanity.' H.D. uses *Sea Garden*'s vast and varied ecological features to form a new habitat for othered agents. Stacy Alaimo reiterates that "As landscape becomes a character, with the power to affect plot, the nature/culture distinctions weaken, the generic lines between story and nature-essay disappear" (*Undomesticated Ground* 81). The collection's 'thesis' in "Sea Rose" thus holds genuine weight as a statement of philosophic, artistic intent: those who have struggled to grow in a civilization which is fundamentally hostile towards their very being may, in fact, find empowerment through communion with other oppressed agents in society. Strength and beauty are not dictated by the utilitarian needs of industry and culture but rather by the act of endurance and the authentic experience of living as oneself. All of this can be told – mythology becomes actuality – through the image of a flower in the rocks.

Endnotes

1. *Trilogy* (see note 12 for publication history) and *Helen in Egypt* (1961) are works from H.D.'s later career, considered more complex and spiritual than her early poetry. An example of how ecofeminist theories may also be applied to these works in future scholarship is discussed further in the Conclusion, focusing primarily on *Trilogy*.
2. Some examples of H.D.'s male contemporaries include Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams. The former two share H.D.'s fixation with the spiritual and mythological, best demonstrated in works such as Pound's *The Cantos* (1972) and Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), while Williams is another figure notable for his imagist poetry, concerned with capturing the fine environmental details of brief moments in time. Like many female writers, H.D.'s work has been disproportionally neglected by modernist academia when compared to scholarship surrounding these three alone, despite participating in the same artistic spaces and movements.
3. *End to Torment* (1979), *HERmione* (1981), and *The Gift* (1982) are works by H.D. that were published posthumously. While *The Gift* and *HERmione* are semi-biographical fictionalizations of her childhood and young adulthood *End to Torment* is a fully biographical account of her personal and professional relationship to Ezra Pound. The publication of *End to Torment* also includes a collection of poems written by Pound addressed to H.D., titled "Hilda's Book." The relevance of these works is elaborated upon in Chapter One.
4. The Sea Flower poems that I refer to include "Sea Rose" (*Collected Poems* 5), "Sea Lily" (14), "Sea Poppies" (21), "Sea Violets" (25), and "Sea Iris" (36). I have grouped these together as a collective Sea Flower group based on their shared described location and recurring symbolic messaging.
5. Though more narrowly focused through its relationship to feminist theory, ecofeminist thought is as broad an ideological category as ecocriticism, with varied philosophical approaches to its study. Figures in the movement such as Val Plumwood, Stacy Alaimo, and Donna Haraway come from an anti-essentialist school of ecofeminist theory which seeks to find less binary, anthropocentric solutions to inequality.
6. These details can be found from H.D.'s own perspective in both *HERmione* and *End to Torment*.
7. H.D.'s occult beliefs provide the basis for the majority of her later writing, such as *Trilogy* and *Hermetic Definition* (1972). Matte Robinson's book, *The Astral H.D.* (2016), provides a good source for more information pertaining this topic, which is outside the range of this thesis.

8. Matte Robinson and Demetrios P. Tryphonopoulos list Ezra Pound, Sigmund Freud, and Hugh Dowding as being among these 'initiators' (130). Robinson and Tryphonopoulos also make note of the uncredited spiritual influences within H.D.'s life who were not men: Francis Gregg, the subject of H.D.'s adolescent bisexual awakening, and Bryher, H.D.'s partner, whose gender expression did not fit within the traditional binary (130-1).
9. H.D.'s body of work actually extends beyond the literary sphere to include film studies. Bryher founded a film production company in 1927, POOL Productions, as well as an accompanying journal titled *Close Up* (Connor 19). H.D. was a frequent contributor to this journal and an actor in one of POOL's films, *Borderline* (1930) (23).
10. See note 4.
11. Antonius Liberalis was a Greek writer, his *Metamorphoses* being his only surviving work and one in a list of many other works bearing the same name, the most recognizable authored by Ovid. It is speculated that the dates of Liberalis' writing range somewhere from 100 to 200 AD, though there is little documentation to clarify this or any other biographical information (Celoria 2).
12. *Trilogy* is a long poem, named as such because it is a collection of three separate parts: "The Walls Do Not Fall" (1944), "Tribute to the Angels" (1945), and "The Flowering of the Rod" (1946). Written during the Second World War, *Trilogy* reflects upon the sense of spiritual severance and fragmentation which follows in the wake of warfare. Because of its complex philosophical and religious explorations, it is considered an important work of H.D. that elevates her imagist techniques to a stronger artistic form.

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