Restoring the Mother in Hilda Doolittle's *Trilogy*

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ABSTRACT

Hilda Doolittle's Trilogy reposes the myth of the hero quest of the mother. This new myth restores the mother (i.e. the Lady of her vision) the central position in the resurrection story. Despite all the barriers and obstacles, mother remains central to inspire her offspring. Whereas Eliot projects the rotten state of the Western culture on the women's body, H. D. subverts this conventional image to create a new myth in reverence of the source of artistic inspiration. Eliot demonstrates the decayed state of European culture while H. D. disrupts the normative cultural delineation of women as mere objects either to be glorified or abhorred. H.D.'s regenerative vision stems from the feminine creative source, the mother goddess. Like Eliot and other modernists she uses mythological allusions in her attempt to regenerate the decadent European culture and life, but her approach differs from theirs. Her effort is to restore the feminine voice –through the representation of the mother goddess –a space in the male dominant European tradition. In modernist reconstruction of myth, we can see multiple forms of narratives, such as film and fiction with underlying universal patterns of archetypal characters and their actions. In modernist narratives, mother embodies love, creation and sacrifice.

Keywords*: mother archetype, hero quest, modern reconstruction of myth,*

Myths are narratives of shared experiences of individuals of all times and cultures. Myths narrate humans' common feeling and emotion in forms of symbols. These symbols are metaphors of characters, such as hero, child and mother. These mythological characters stand for specific unique actions, such as quest, journey and sacrifice. Traditionally, myths are specific accounts of gods and heroes in their designated roles and responsibilities. Mythology accounts for the study of myth that resonate specific actions and characters, blending past and present, male and female, tradition and modern, and microcosm and macrocosm. H. D.'s *Trilogy* is a personal

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quest in which the poet attempts to rewrite a new myth. This new myth restores the mother (i.e. *the Lady of her vision*) the central position in the resurrection story. Like the palimpsest, the new myth does not totally erase the old, but retains many traces of the past. *Trilogy*, in that sense, is also a religious text where the "Woman" evolves as the "poet, mystical seer and God" (Doolittle viii). Since there was no precedence, H. D. had to create a language suitable for her story to be told. She successfully navigates this problem by appropriating the male language to develop a narrative that tells the true story of resurrection unlike the efforts of her contemporary male poets. H. D. realized that such an effort meant undertaking the enviable task of making her readers see things in new perspective. In her attempt, she does not altogether alter the Biblical story of the birth of Christ or the apocalypse; rather she provokes us to see these events through a new lens. It seems, for H.D., that the destruction of war currently witnessed is but the "Apocryphal fire" (4) since it is only make- belief brought about by "sorcery, bedevilment" (4). Moreover, the principle idea of resurrection in Christian theology is also not authentic. Instead, for her, the true story of resurrection is only possible through the veneration of the mother figure. It is, therefore, my task to trace, in *Trilogy*, how H.D. revises the myths in order to restore the central position to the mother in the story of resurrection.

As an archetypal character, mother embodies positive and negative, Angel and Devil, and good and evil. Basically, the mother image springs from the same dichotomy. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell elucidates popular representation of mother:

> Images of virgin birth abound in the popular tales as well as in myth. One example will suffice: a queer folk tale from Tonga, belonging to a little cycle of stories told of the handsome man, Sinihau. The tale is of particular interest, now because of its extreme absurdity, but because it clearly announces, in unconscious s, everyone of the major motifs of the typical life of the hero: virigin birth, quest for the father, ordeal atonement with the father, the assumption and coronation of the virgin birth, quest for the father, ordeal, atonement with the father, the assumption and coronation of the virgin mother and family, the heavenly triumph of the true sons while the pretends are belated hot. (312)

Mother embodies love and compassion. When life comes first, mother becomes of

source of energy. Considering the mother role multiple forms, we associate the mother with honored words: ideal care taker, rescuer and loyal to the authority.

In "The Walls Do Not Fall" H.D. attempts to recover the female myths by her evocation of the pre-Christian goddesses, particularly, "Isis, Aset or Astarte" all of whom are connected with fertility cults. As noted by Aliki Barnstone, in the introduction to *Trilogy*, H.D. "draws a connection between the denigration of the goddesses as 'harlots' and 'old flesh-pots' and the denigration of women writers" (Doolittle xiv). But poetry, for her, has regenerative powers even in this age of suffocation. That these goddesses are associated with fertility rituals and regeneration is an indication that things will eventually change. Regeneration is also reflected by H.D.'s attempt in reinvigorating writing, by finding a means of articulation that will unite her dream and her vision, past and present. But more importantly, she sees this possible through the repositioning of the feminine in the "spirit [of] the word" (Doolittle xv) that has until now excluded women.

H. D.'s use of this evocative language superimposes the past with the present, dream with vision when she says, "An incident here and there" (3) where "here" stands for London and "there" means the past, that is, Luxor in this case. The past is evoked by her allusion to "the Luxor bee, chick and hare" (3), all symbols of fertility and regeneration by their reference to Ra, the sun god. The use of the fertility and regeneration symbolisms demonstrates her vision in the regenerative power of poetry. Moreover, the superimposition of the "here and there" evokes the cyclical nature of H.D.'s vision of history. She can, therefore, say, "there, as here, ruin opens / the tomb, the temple; enter, / there as here, there are no doors:" (3). But hope resides even in destruction: "through our desolation, / thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us / through gloom:" (3). Destruction will give rise to creation as history has shown how the death of one glorious civilization heralds the coming of the other.

Using a more inclusive and intimate language, unlike Eliot who is prophetic and sonorous in *The Waste Land* or Pound who is distant, erudite and bitter in the *Cantos*, H.D. invites the readers with some optimism when she says, "yet the frame held: / we passed the flame: we wonder / what saved us? What for?" (4). The questions are rhetorical for they foretell the story of a repositioning of the past, the story of change and of refining one's sensibility through the modification of our perspective. An interesting comparison can be wrought out if we see the *Trilogy* vis-à-vis *The Waste Land*.

Maud Ellman in her insightful essay, "Eliot's Abjection" states, "The Waste Land is a poem about waste. In a ceremonial purgation, Eliot inventories all the 'stony rubbish' that he strives to exorcize" (180). She further expounds that

> These ruined cities [in *The Waste Land*] suggest that the very notion of the center has collapsed, leaving only a centrifugal dissemination of debris. The poem teems with urban waste, butt-ends of the city's days and ways: empty bottles, sandwich papers […]. Abortions, broken fingernails, carious teeth, and 'female smells' betoken cultural decay as well as bodily decrepitude. The filth without insinuates defilement within. (180)

Like Eliot, H.D. too acknowledges the destruction brought upon by war. She writes of "ruin everywhere […] the fallen roof," "sliced wall" (4), "pressure on heart, lungs, the brain / about to burst its brittle case" (4) etc. Yet, contrary to Eliot, she also sees in this destruction the tenacity and resourcefulness of art and the artists. Differing from the male's gaze that sees only destruction, waste and moral depredation, for H. D. the ordinary dilapidated objects take on new meaning and become rare objects instead. With an archeologist's insight she notes, in the aftermath of the blitz, that "poor utensils show / like rare objects in a museum" (4), while Eliot can only speak of "Falling towers / Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London / Unreal" (485). H.D., in *Trilogy*, seems to be appropriating the male gaze; she seems to be advocating a change in perspective, a change toward a more feminized way of looking at things, one that can see beauty and the notion of re-growth in destruction.

Another thing that binds Eliot and H.D.'s presentation is their feeling that the prevalent values are not sufficient in the enactment of the resurrection. Eliot looks to the Vedas (where the fable does not specify the gender of the gods, demons or the humans) for inspiration, while H.D.'s source leads her to the elemental spring from where all of culture developed, that is, the mother goddess. She recognizes the fact that the present values have denigrated this primordial power when she says "nor listen if they shout out, / your beauty, Isis, Aset or Astarte, / is a harlot" (5). She calls the present age: "you are retrogressive, / zealot, hankering after old flesh-pots" (5). Her defiance is implicit in the utterance.

This retrogressive age or its zealous acts do not discourage the poet for, in her vision, she sees the poet's role as the restorer of the "Scepter, / the rod of power" (7). The rod of power, however, is not only a phallic symbol as "it is crowned with the

lily-head / or the lily-bud" (7), a symbol for Virgin Mary and Easter. So, the phallic association is neutralized. Moreover, this idea of neutrality is reinforced by the reference of "Caduceus," a rod or wand associated with Hermes, the messenger god. According to Barnstone, in the mythology

> it is said that Hermes found two snakes fighting and put his rod between them […]. For the Romans it became a symbol of neutrality or truce and was carried by heralds and ambassadors making them immune to attack. The intertwining snakes on a staff appear in Babylonia as a symbol of the sun god, fertility, wisdom, and healing. In alchemy, it is the symbol of the union of opposing forces. (Doolittle 175)

H.D. seems to be here seeking to bring the two opposing forces of the masculine and the feminine (the yang and the yin) together to restore the balance. She sees the new poet in the role of the healer of all the pain and suffering; she is the healer and unifier of the schism between the male and the female.

Another interesting comparison between *The Waste Land* and *Trilogy* are the two authors' preoccupation with the "in-betweenness" of things and their use of the abject*. Ellman speaking of Tiresias, whom Eliot's Notes to *The Waste Land* assigns the unifying character in the poem, says that "Throbbing between two lives,' Tiresias could be seen as the very prophet of abjection, personifying all the poem's porous membranes. For he not only confounds the sexes but undermines the difference between the living and the dead" (184). H.D. too conceives an "in-between" state for the artist. She, in an almost didactic passage, asks artists, in this unfavorable situation of war, to emulate the "sea-shell" (8), which is neither an animal nor a fish. Even in this "in-between" and ambiguous state, however, the "oyster, clam, mollusk / is master-mason" (8) who create their own shelter and withhold within them the "selfless, / that pearl-of-great-price" (9). H.D. evokes the abject to disturb the normative identity and order. The artists become the vomit when she says, "be firm in your own small, static, limited / orbit and the shark-jaws / of outer circumstance / will spit you forth" (9), while the "shark-jaws" belong to the dominant patriarchal culture who revel in war and destruction. By identifying the poets/herself with vomit she adopts the revile position, a position of

** A term formulated by Julia Kristeva. By abject she means "that which 'disturbs identity, system, order:' it is the 'in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'" (Ellman 181).*

being the waste or refuse in order to subvert the givens of society.

On the other hand, the "in-betweenness," and the abject in *The Waste Land* do not work so much to demolish the normative culture as to reaffirm it. Ellman regards the poem as "an obsessive ceremonial, because it re-inscribes the horrors it is trying to repress" (179). In the light of Ellman's critique of *The Waste Land*, Eliot, it seems, is trapped in a quagmire of waste and refuse that he himself has created. Critics like Maud Ellman in "Eliot's Abjection" and Harriet Davidson* in "Improper Desire: Reading *The Waste Land*" do not attribute Eliot any success in his attempt to write a modern story of resurrection. H.D., in *Trilogy*, however, uses the abject as transition. For her the "in-between" state is important in her evolution. She speaks of the breaking off of the limiting walls, restrictions and the boundaries when she refers to herself as the "worm" (11). Even here she undertakes the role of a "parasite" (12) making "you cry in disgust" (12). She, however, undergoes metamorphosis after she has escaped all dangers: "spider-snare, / bird-claw, scavenger bird-beak […] storm-wind" (110). The more the dangers the more she benefits: "I profit / by every calamity" (12), but she is not afraid of the transformation for she has had her vision. She is irreverent and unrepentant on her adopting this defiled state. She is not afraid of the "in-betweenness;" instead she welcomes the transition and like "the industrious worm, / spin[s] [her] own shroud" (12).

H. D.'s further irreverence for the normative values can be seen in her creation of the transformed figure after undergoing metamorphosis. She equates the new creature with the heathen goddess, Isis, who is endowed with "winged head-dress / of horns" (13). This image is further reinforced with the image of the "erect king-cobra crest" (13), who is supposed to be "Uraeus […], a representative of [Isis] and appeared on the headdress of Egyptian deities and rulers" (Doolittle 176). What makes this an incriminating evidence of H.D.'s irreverence is that she along with reviving Isis, the heathen mother goddess, also restores the position of honor to the serpent that in the

* Davidson speaking of *The Waste Land* says, "While the poem provides an emotional and often visceral critique of the state of human life, it equally provides a critique of the desire to transcend and escape that life, and it offers no alternatives beyond that life or the persistence of that desire" (123). He concludes by saying that "The passionate and paradoxical desire to end desires lead only to the continuation of life in all its variousness, confusions, tragedies, and improper desires" (131).

Biblical story is the devil that corrupted Adam and Eve. By invoking Isis and the serpent in one breath, H.D. disassociates the evil out of the snake and, by extension, out of Eve who is supposed to have brought diseases and death to this world by her disobedience to God. Throughout *Trilogy*, H.D. rewrites history from a feminized perspective; it is her attempt to reclaim the true mother figure that has been lost within the Christian domain.

In this effort she will not be worried about the "new heresy" (14) that is labeled on the poets. For she knows that the "[…] Sword, / [is] the younger brother, the latter-born, / […] *in the beginning* / *was the Word*" (17). Word, by coming in the beginning, is the source that gave knowledge. It enabled creation and so, it is the mother. H.D. adds, "Without thought, invention, / you would not have been, O Sword" (18) and culminates her assertion that without "Word's mediation" (18) swords and inventions, with which men indulge in warfare, would "have remained / unmanifest in the dim dimension / where thoughts dwell / beyond thought and idea, / their begetter, / Dream, / Vision" (18). Since poets deal with words, she sees the poet as the dreamer and the visionary, the begetter of thoughts and ideas. But her conception of the poet is feminine because poets are the master of words, the source or the mother. Since words came first, therefore, the poets are the creator and mother of thoughts, ideas, dream and vision. Consequently, she says of the poets, "we nameless initiates / born of one mother" (21) whose "[…] presence was spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray, / rare as radium, as healing" (20). As creators of vision and as the true daughters of "one mother," these poets in this time of immense destruction need inspiration to effect a transformation. That can come only with the retelling of the story of the mother that has been erased from the face of written history. It is this revival of the mother (or Mary as symbolized by the color blue) that H.D.'s effort will be directed toward. Henceforth, her quest will be to find "Love, the creator" (47) by retelling the story of "Hest. / Aset, Isis, the great enchantress […] the original great-mother" (47).

H.D.'s effort to restore the mother and particularly rewrite the Bible resonates when she speaks of how her "thought / would cover deplorable gaps / in time, reveal the regrettable chasm; / bridge that before-and-after schism" (54). In "The Walls Do Not Fall" she recovers the female myths, the myth of Isis as a prelude to her rewriting of the Biblical story about the two Marys. These two figures have been projected either as a whore or as the virgin, and it is this deplorable gap that H.D. will restore. She will reveal

the regrettable chasm between the two representations of the same mother figure, and finally she will bridge the past with the present; she will retell the story of femininity that will link the "before-and-after schism." In doing so she asserts, "we know no rule /of procedure" (59). She considers herself as possessing "no map" (59) so that she can trace her own path; so that she can draw her own map in enacting the resurrection myth of the mother. Since "The Walls Do Not Fall" is just a prelude, she can, as of now, only sense the possibility of reaching "haven," an in-between state that will ultimately lead to "heaven" (59).

"Tribute to the Angels" initiates the process toward transformation that H.D. foretells in the first book. To do this she begins in the alchemical tradition by transforming words: "Now polish the crucible / and in the bowl distill / a word" (71). Once again her choice "marah" (71), meaning bitter, is a testimony to the fact that H.D. undertakes to subvert the normative culture using the abject. The metonymy "bitter" stands for the marginal position of women that H.D. has undertaken to deconstruct. Adopting almost Derridian play of signification, H.D. moves from "marah" to "mar" till "marah-mar / are melted, fuse and join / and change and alter, / mer, mere, mere, mater, Maia, Mary" (71). "Mar / sea, brine, breaker, seducer / giver of live, giver of tears" (71) are some symbols of femininity and mother which ultimately transforms, for H.D., from "marah," or bitter, to "Star of the Sea, / Mother" (71). Carrying on the good work, she proceeds to restore the goddess of love, Venus, who is traditionally depicted as voluptuous like a temptress, into a more venerate position. Playing on the word Venus, venereous (74), venerate and venerator (75), H.D. skillfully restores the revere image onto Venus. She seems to tell us that etymologically Venus is but derived from veneration and that is what she deserves.

Once H.D. has restored the old goddesses to a more venerate position, her next task is to find a suitable language to describe the *Lady of her vision*. Since such a language is not available to her immediately, she resorts to describing *the Lady* in terms of what she is not. She lists the many representation of the Mother in artwork, all conceived through the male gaze, only to dismiss them. All the representations reflect the normative image of woman as "bowed down / with the weight of a domed crown" (93), trapped "in a golden halo" (93) or "in cathedrals, museum, cloister" (94). These static pictures though an image of perfection since the artists have "missed never a line" (94) present the patriarchal conception of the female with "lowered eye-lids / or eye-

lids half raised" (94). This is not how H.D. envisions her *Lady* to be. For her, *the Lady* should reign supreme; she would not be made in the patriarchal mold; she would not be secondary to the child. H.D., therefore, says, "she bore none of her usual attributes; / [and] the child was not with her" (97). The "T-cross [now] becomes caduceus" (98). Consequently, she now identifies herself with Hermes Trimegistus, the mystical Gnostic scribe, who along with Saint Michael, will "spear […] / the darkness of ignorance" in order to "cast the Old dragon" (98), that is, the patriarchal Christian religious tradition and myth, "into the abyss" (98).

Leveling the hierarchy, H.D. declares that *the Lady of her vision* isn't "hieratic" (103). She is neither "very tall" nor "frozen" (103), as the Christian conception of Virgin Mary. H.D.'s *Lady* carries "a book" (103) with "blank pages / of unwritten volume of the new" (103). With H.D.'s lifelong fascination with the palimpsest, I believe, these blank pages do retain something of the old since *the Lady* "carries over the cult / of the *Bona Dea*" (103). Contrary to the pictures drawn by the painters, she is not trapped "in a cave like a Sibyl" or in stained glass windows of the churches. Rather she is fresh like a newly emerged "butterfly / out of the cocoon" (103). Making *the Lady* the sole focus of her narrative, H.D. says that she is both mother and bride to us all. In doing so, she restores to *the Lady* her sexuality that had been wrested out of Her by our religious tradition. And again following the example of the palimpsest she asserts that *the Lady's* story will reveal our story which is "the same –different –the same attributes, / different yet the same as before" (105). It is not in-articulation that produces these lines but H.D.'s belief that in the new story the traces of the old remain, which are yet significantly new stories, perhaps, told with a new perspective.

Once H.D. has found the language to articulate her representation of *the Lady*, she can finally present her in the human form. Her alchemical powers have been brought into fruition in "The Flowering of the Rod," but only after undergoing identification with the abject and low life. This transformation "from bronze and iron, / into the Golden Age" 124) is "No poetic fantasy / but a biological reality, / a fact" (125). To prove her point she once again reminds us whence she came from by likening herself with the low-life: "I am an entity/ like bird, insect, plant / or sea-plant cell" (125). She seems to be saying that even if you pretend "not [to] know me, /deny me, do not recognize me, / shun [my abject form]" (125), yet I will bounce back "for this reality / is infectious –ecstasy" (125). With the ecstasy of renewal in the air, she proceeds to retell

the story of the two Marys, her model for *the Lady of her vision*.

Ever an iconoclast, H.D. once again reverses the chronological order of the Biblical story. In her inversed narrative, Mary Magdalen's anointing of Jesus' feet is set before the nativity scene in Bethlehem. The two episodes are significant in that H.D. by conflating the two Marys as one subsumes her larger purpose of restoring the marginalized mother her due position in the patriarchal Christian culture.

The enactment of Mary's encounter with Kasper in "a little booth of a house" (130) is a fictional account meant to redeem Mary Magdalen of her notoriety as both the woman possessed by the devil and as well as her image of being a whore. The devils supposed to have possessed Mary Magdalen are but the powers that "Kaspar might call / the […] daemons" (145). In keeping with the portrayal of the visionary *Lady*, Mary Magdalen secures the alabaster box of "myrrah" (159) by presenting him with the mystical vision. Even though Kaspar, as a representative of patriarchy, feels that "no secret was safe with a woman" (133), he, nevertheless, ultimately, when the truth is revealed to him, feels compelled to hand her the jar.

H.D., interestingly, seems to try and correct Mary Magdalen's notoriety assigned to her because of her character's conflation with the other Marys in the Bible. H.D. remarks about it when she says, "O, there are Marys a-plenty" (135). Incidentally, nowhere in the Bible is Mary Magdalen by name referred to as the prostitute. Susan Haskins in *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* writes, "Mary Magdalen was, from the earliest centuries of Christianity, closely linked to and ultimately conflated with two other New Testament figures –a woman described by Luke as a 'sinner,' and Mary of Bethany, who appears in Luke's gospel and in John's account of the Passion" (16). Heskins continues by saying that "Confusion about the identity of these women dates from at least the third century, but it was not until the end of the sixth century that Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) was to settle the question by declaring that Mary Magdalen, Mary of Bethany and the sinner in Luke were one and the same" (16). Consequently, H.D.'s assertion that "through my will and my power / Mary shall be myrrh" though "I am Mara, bitter" (135) is a reflection of the tremendous strength that H.D. must invoke to overturn the patriarchal image of this woman. Purposefully, therefore, H.D. links Mary to the heathen goddess of fertility by asserting that she is "myrrh-tree of the gentiles, / the heathen" (135). She also recalls the story of how she was transformed to "a myrrah-tree" even though "she had born a son in unhallowed

fashion" (135). That way H.D. doesn't deny Mary her sexuality by making her the other extreme of the whore. On the other hand, if we imagine that the two Marys (Virgin and Magadalen) are conflated here, then it also means that the birth given by the Virgin Mary was an unhallowed one since she wasn't married when she conceived the baby. Because the Bible doesn't recount Mary Magdalen having a baby, therefore, by referring to the birth, H.D. is but conflating the two. Hence, Mary can say, "I am Mary, though melted away" by the Church, both in terms of being denied her sexuality and also in terms of being made into a whore. But that does not mean that she cannot resurrect herself: "I shall be a tower" (138), an institution that will rise above the Church.

Belonging to the margins of the society, both Mary Magdalen, the whore, and Kaspar, the heathen, has some commonality that bind the two. Hence, Kaspar is finally granted the vision while Simon experiences discomfort on seeing Mary. Kaspar is shown the mystical vision of "Paradise / before Eve […]" (155). He understands everything even though the words do not resemble anything he had heard. The translated message revels to him the story of "Woman" that had been erased from human memory: "*Lilith born before Eve* / *and one born before Lilith*, / *and Eve*; *we three are forgiven*, / *we are three of the seven* / *daemons cast out of her*" (157). As daemons they are the heathen, Kaspar's goddesses. He can name the seven "without fear of eternal damnation, / Isis, Astarte, Cyprus […] Venus" (145); the other three are but "Lilith, Eve and the one born before Eve" whom Kaspar might rename as "Ge-meter, De-meter, earth-mother" (145). In that case the casting of the seven "devils *daemons*" (145) have severe implications. H.D., once again, in her enigmatic style has subverted the miracle within Jesus' act of casting demons out of Mary Magdalen. Instead this act becomes a pivot around which the whole notion of women's subjugation revolves.

Kaspar's final tribute to *the Lady* is when he takes the jar as gift to the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. It is the reenactment of the nativity scene but again told from a woman's perspective since the child is conspicuous by its absence. Instead Mary holds the center stage. It is as if the three wise men are there to worship the coming of *the Lady*. We assume that the Lady is Virgin Mary because of the three magi, Balthasar, Melchior and Kaspar, who have come to worship Jesus at his birth. H.D., however, has already conflated the Virgin Mary with Mary Magdalen in the final scene. This becomes even more obvious when Kaspar remarks that the "beautiful fragrance" (172) came not from the unbroken jar but "came from the bundle of myrrh / she held in her arms"

(172) that "we know is, / the myrrh or the *spikenard*, *very costly*, was Kaspar's" (159) given to Mary Magdalen after their encounter in the "little booth of a house" in the "market-place" (130). This also explains why Kaspar did not take the "two jars" (168) with him. Though it was said, "one jar was better than the other" (168); now without Azar, the great-grandfather, "no one can tell which is which" (168). In fact there is no need to distinguish between the two because ultimately both end up with Mary, who contains in her all the manifestations of the mother goddesses, be it Isis, Astarte, Venus, Lilith or Eve. Once that is realized H.D.'s task is over.

Aliki Barnstone, in the introduction to H.D.'s *Trilogy*, says, "the Virgin Mary faces the past, becoming Isis, Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus, and she faces the future, immortalized as *the Lady* of H.D.'s vision" (xiv). That is, the Virgin Mary acts as a bridge that connects the past with the future, dream with vision. The position of the Virgin is in between the forgotten Goddesses and the Christian tradition where the goddess has always been relegated to the background. She is denied her sexuality in the Christian tradition. H.D., breaking from the monolithic patriarchal tradition, revives the goddess of the past; in reviving Isis, Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus, and associating Mary with these goddesses, H.D. restores Virgin Mary her sexuality. Mary, as the goddess coming in between the revelation and the pre Christian religion, not only connects the two like a bridge but through the retelling of her story she also reveals to H.D. the *Lady of her vision*.

Modern society sees myth somewhere between the real and the imaginary. At points, myth can be juxtaposed to reality. Other times, it is always real and universal. In the ideological line of the second perception, myth cannot be isolated from reality since truth remains underneath narratives. In Modern Reconstruction of Myth,

> The romantic inventors of "myth," theorists and poets alike, consciously construct it as a privileged site in the modern agon between belief and disbelief. And the history of the new concept remains during the nineteenth century largely the record of an intensifying struggle between what Schlegel called "enthusiasm" and "irony." On one hand, the notion of "myth" as vehicle of access to transcendence becomes increasingly reified in middle-class culture, particularly in literary circles. On the other, this success generates the first major counterattacks, the critiques that culminate in Marx and Nietzsche. (49)

Frederick Nietzsche takes myth in a constructive dimension, whereas Marx takes this for a mode of false consciousness. With changing paradigms of men's understanding of the art, myths undergo process of transformation. In that sense, mother in myth stands for the real and ideal, and caring and regenerating.

As a representative epic poem of the modernist period, H.D.'s *Trilogy* easily invites comparison with Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Both use allusions abundantly, both deal with the war, both delineate the dilapidation of morality in the modern age, and both portray women in the poems. But the two poets differ in their treatment of women characters. Ellman in "Eliot's Abjection," quoting the poet, states, "Eliot himself declares that all the women in *The Waste Land* are one woman, and that is because they represent the very principle of urgency" (185). She further adds, "For Eliot, […] the misogyny is so ferocious against itself. For the text is fascinated by the femininity that it reviles, bewitched by this odorous and shoreless flesh. 'Women' as the text conceives her, is the very spirit of its own construction, the phantom of its own in-betweenness" (185). Analogous to Eliot, H.D.'s depictions of the women in *Trilogy* are also one woman but there is no misogyny involved. Instead she venerates women and feels that the resurgence of the feminine spirit will bring about a resurrection of the decadent European culture.

H. D.'s woman is not the phantom though she grows out of the in-between state. She is, despite all the barriers and obstacles, dynamic and inspiring. Where Eliot projects the rotten state of the Western culture on the women's body, H. D. instead subverts this conventional image to create a new myth where women are revered and desired as the source of artistic inspiration. Eliot uses the abject to demonstrate the decayed state of European culture while H. D. uses it to disrupt the normative cultural delineation of women as mere objects either to be glorified or abhorred. H. D.'s regenerative vision stems from the feminine creative source, the mother goddess. Like Eliot and other modernists she uses mythological allusions in her attempt to regenerate the decadent European culture and life, but her approach differs from theirs. Her effort is to restore the feminine voice –through the representation of the mother goddess –a space in the male dominant European tradition.

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