Becoming HERmione

An Exploration of the Process of Subjectivity in H.D.'s *Her*

By

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Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen tar for seg H.D.s roman *Her*. H.D., pseudonym for Hilda Doolittle, er best kjent som en av de viktigste bidragsyterne til imagismen, en poetisk retning som på begynnelsen av nittenhundretallet fornyet den angloamerikanske lyrikken. H.D.s omfangsrike prosaproduksjon ble først oppdaget av feministiske litteraturkritikere på midten av syttitallet. Tekstene hennes ble da presentert som uttrykk for en feministisk modernisme som brøt med restriktive imagisme-doktrinen og utfordret de kunstneriske prinsippene praktisert av Ezra Pound og hans sirkel. Gjennom min lesning av *Her*, flytter jeg fokuset fra H.D.s posisjon som kvinnelig forfatter i en mannsdominert kunstverden til det kvinnelige subjektet H.D. skaper i sin prosa. I lys av Hélène Cixous' teori om "the subject at risk" og Julia Kristevas teori om "the subject-in-process/on-trial," utforsker jeg romanens representasjon av forholdet mellom subjektivitet, seksualitet og språk. Mens Cixous definerer subjektivitet som et resultat av jegets dialog med den andre, mellom hva hun kaller det "maskuline" og det "feminine," ser Kristeva på dannelsen av subjektet som et samarbeid mellom språkets to modaliteter, mellom "det semiotiske" og "det symbolske." Ved å lese H.D.s subjekt som et stadig samvirke mellom disse heterogene elementene, presenterer jeg *Her* som en prosessuell, utfordrende tekst som motsetter seg en tradisjonell, feministisk tolkning.

Contents

Introduction

The literary reputation of H.D., the pen name of Hilda Doolittle, is today that of a canonical modernist poet who also experimented with prose. Although H.D.'s abundant prose output – consisting of fifteen novels and novellas, short fiction and essays – was awarded with a wealth of critical attention when it was discovered in the mid seventies, the texts are now merely mentioned in passing. In contemporary discussions of modernist literature and the modernist novel, H.D.'s works remain strangely absent. The present thesis calls for a reexamination of H.D.'s prose oeuvre through an exploration of the novel *Her* (1981).

Up until 1975, H.D. was known exclusively as an Imagist poet. In 1911, Hilda Doolittle left her hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and followed Ezra Pound to London where she was introduced to the F.S. Flint and Richard Aldington. Together they became the initiators of Imagism, a poetic movement that, through its advocacy of free verse and the clear, precise image, changed the course of modern poetry. Pound soon regarded H.D. the -ism's most talented practitioner, awarding her early poetic attempts with the famous compliment "But Dryad… this is poetry!" (qtd. in DuPlessis, *H.D.*… 7), thus placing her at the center of one of the most influential literary movements of the early 20th century. However, Pound not only acknowledges H.D.'s first poem, he also "slashes, cuts, shortens and authorizes" it, as he "scrawls 'H.D., Imagiste' at the bottom of the page" (DuPlessis, *H.D.*… 6). Pound's creation of H.D.'s signature, which she would keep for the rest of her life, shaped her career in a twofold way: first, Pound's transformation of Hilda Doolittle to H.D., points to the modernist notion of poetry as a male vocation. The initials 'H.D.' conceal her gender, testifying to a need to comply with male standards, thus for her work to "'pass' as male writing – that is, not draw attention to itself as having been written by a woman" (Benstock, *Women of*... 333). Under this signature, which provided her with access to the major publishing houses and reviews in important literary journals, H.D. adopted the role of the modernist poet, the person who, according to T.E. Hulme, "get[s] the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind"; for whom the real struggle lies with the precise craftsmanship of language and "the subject doesn't matter" (qtd. in Eliot and Wallace 5). Second, Pound's creation of H.D.'s signature shows how male criticism was largely responsible for the shaping the female artist's identity and her literary reputation. By signing H.D.'s poem "H.D. –

Imagiste" Pound ties her name to a specific literary movement he is championing. Although H.D. would later drop "Imagiste," this label continued to be regarded as an integral part of her name, despite the fact that H.D. saw most of her later work, her prose production in particular, as "not-H.D." and "not-imagist" (DuPlessis, *H.D.*… 8). Pound thus enables and restricts H.D.'s artistic career.

While H.D. was proud of her success within the male domain of poetry, she was eager to move beyond the restrictive doctrine of Imagism: "Yes, the poems are satisfactory, but unlike most poets of my acquaintance (I have known many) I am no longer interested in a poem once it is written, projected or materialized. There is a feeling that there is only a part of myself there" (*Tribute to*… 149). From 1920 onwards, H.D.'s impersonal Imagist poetry is replaced by long, associative and exploratory poems, always evolving around a female heroine. While her epic poetry gained little attention from her contemporaries, her turn to prose was even further dismissed. When he first heard of H.D.'s intention to write novels, Richard Aldington, H.D.'s then husband, who like Pound was eager to shape her career, writes: "Prose? No! You have so precise, so wonderful an instrument – why abandon it to fashion another, perhaps less perfect?" (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 33). The view of prose as a less perfect medium, particularly for a woman who had succeeded as a poet, is reflected in the contemporary reviews and criticism of H.D.'s novels. As H.D. observes, "No one really much likes my prose, people don't think [it] worthy of H.D." (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 28). For those who had enjoyed H.D.'s mastery of poetic form, her semi-autobiographical, stream-of-consciousness prose texts seemed strangely unfinished and imperfect. In 1929, an anonymous reviewer for the *Spectator* comments on her novel *Hedylus*: "the colours and shapes are so closely confounded that one gets the impression of splintered mosaic" (qtd. in Taylor 121). Similarly, in a 1927 review of *Palimpsest*, Conrad Aiken writes:

> There are stylistic oddities – elisions and abruptness… and occasionally carelessness… one now and then founders a little in the fragmentary and chaotic and repetitive welter of the interior monologue… One would have preferred… a little more stiffening – more of the direct narrative… and less of the obsessed round-and-round of the heroine's mind, which… goes beyond the limits… of the aesthetically endurable… one feels, in the midst of this burning subjectivism, this consuming Narcissism, that it would be a relief to come oftener upon a simple narrative statement or a connected bit of dialogue. (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 28)

This preference for H.D.'s carefully chiseled "crystalline poetry" (Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 88) persisted throughout the following decades. While early poems such as "Oread" and "Heat" were frequently anthologized during the fifties and sixties, H.D.'s epic poetry was rarely taught or studied and her prose works remained unpublished (Friedman, "Who Buried…" 801). H.D. thus remained "caged in a literary movement that lasted all of six or seven years" (Friedman, "Who Buried…" 801).

Not before the late seventies and early eighties did H.D.'s "splintered mosaic" writing become subject of attention. Through the extensive work of feminist critics, Susan Standford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis in particular, H.D.'s oeuvre finally gained recognition. By focusing on her modernist strategies and peripheral position as a woman artist, these scholars explored H.D.'s strategies for making a place for the female writer within a modernism that was coded masculine (Buck 3). They further emphasized that H.D.'s artistry was not merely triggered by the constraining masculine tradition represented by figures such as Pound and Aldington; her texts are also inspired by women-oriented relationships (Buck 2-3).

Within a short amount of time, a vast amount of scholarship accumulated, dedicated to the presentation of this "other" H.D., previously unknown to the public. The discovery and publication of H.D.'s novels, short stories and memoirs rapidly transformed H.D., the Imagist poet into H.D., the writer of prose. An examination of the body of criticism concerning her novels makes it clear that critics and editors of H.D.'s posthumously published works have been eager to thematize these texts in accordance with ideological preferences. In their enthusiasm to show how H.D.'s voice contests the masculine definitions of modernism, feminist scholars of the eighties turned H.D. into an advocate of female subversiveness and marginality. In her 1975 "Who Buried H.D.?," the article that instigated the feminist criticism of H.D.'s works, Friedman argues that H.D.'s epic poems and novels were kept out of the modernist canon because they were works of "a 'woman poet' in a world in which the word 'poet' actually means male poet and the word 'mankind' too often includes only men" (803). In a corresponding manner, I propose that H.D.'s prose works today remain excluded from the canon because her critics have trapped her within the very feminine sphere Friedman seeks to free her from. As Robert Spoo observes, the very process of recovering H.D.'s later works also puts her "in the danger of being

'prosed'" (217): by focusing on the biographical and social realities of H.D.'s novels, most importantly the recurring themes of lesbianism and the hardship of the female writer, H.D.'s prose texts were read as manifestations of a feminist modernism grounded in "the powers of Otherness" (DuPlessis, *H.D.*… 69), while the subtle poetics and politics of these works to a large degree remained unexamined. Set free from the encapsulating label "Imagiste," H.D. now became, as Lawrence S. Rainey argues, trapped in the position of "canonical figure for a poetics of political correctedness" (qtd. in Spoo 204). The critical attention that was rewarded H.D. during the late seventies and eighties thus fixed her later oeuvre within a feminist paradigm, preventing further inquiry into her texts. Throughout the last decade, her prose has received little to no critical attention.[1]

In response, this thesis aims to reopen one of H.D.'s prose texts, the novel *Her* (1981),[2] a thinly veiled *roman á clef* that belongs to the four-novel *Madrigal* cycle.[3] Written in 1926-27, *Her* parallels H.D.'s experiences initially following her failure at Bryn Mawr College in 1912. The text circles around Hermione, an aspiring female artist who, torn between the expectations of her respectable family, her engagement to George Lowndes (Ezra Pound) and her erotic and emotional desire for Fayne Rabb (Frances Josepha Gregg), struggles to define herself. Through its portrayal of lesbian love, *Her* encourages a feminist interpretation. Friedman reads *Her* as H.D.'s successful attempt of overturning the masculine paradigm that hems her in as a subject and a writer. She relates the title of the novel to *Hilda's Book*, a collection of love poems dedicated to H.D. by Pound. In the poem "Shadow," the line "I saw HER yesterday," is continuously repeated by the male speaker who likens the female figure to "stars," as she lightens up his "darkness" (Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 118-19). Accordingly, as H.D. writes her text – where the heroine Hermione cancels out her position as the male artist's passive muse by choosing a woman-oriented relationship

[1] Lisa Rado presents an overview of H.D.'s prose in "The Perfection of the Fiery Moment – H.D. and the Androgynous Poetics of Overmind" in her *The Modern Androgyne Imagination: A Failed Sublime* (2000).

[2] As *Her* was first published by New Direction Books in 1981, the title was changed to *HERmione*. However, *Her*, H.D.'s original title, was used for the 1984 Virago Press publication to which this thesis will refer.

[3] The cycle includes *Paint it To-Day* (1986)*, Bid Me to Live (A Madrigal)* (1960)*, Her* (1981) and *Asphodel* (1992), written between 1921 and 1950.

– she turns Pound's passive "HER" into an independent and active "I," thus creating a place for herself as a woman artist.

Instead of focusing on H.D.'s voice within the masculine modernist tradition, this thesis will seek to explore the making of the female subject that H.D. creates in her narrative.[4] While Friedman and DuPlessis read in H.D.'s prose the emergence of a sovereign, feminine "I," the present reading will argue that H.D.'s novels in fact constitute a ceaseless displacement of a stable self. As tempting as it might be to equate the story of Hermione with the facts of H.D.'s life, the novel defies the existence of a conscious, self-determining subject. Thereby, *Her* resists being read autobiographically. In *Paint it To-Day*, the novel's narrator comments on her relation to Midget, the protagonist: "You might have called me Midget if you were very stupid, but I was not Midget" (qtd. in Vetter 108). Midget continuously wavers between claiming authority of her name and renouncing her attachment to it, making the text an interminable repositioning of a fluctuating self rather than the realization of a Self. In a similar manner, *Her* represents an inquiry into the workings of identity rather than the memoirs of the writing subject, making the text an investigation of the process of becoming. H.D. likens her fictional exploration of the interior with the breaking of a path through a forest; the novel represents a medium where she can "work through a wood, a tangle of bushes and bracken out to a clearing…" (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 34). In *Her*, this "tangle of bushes" manifests in associative language that works through repetition rather than precision. While critics had disapproved of H.D.'s meandering prose during the twenties, it continued to earn her disfavorable criticism in the eighties. In a 1982 review of *Her*, Carol Camper writes: "*HERmione* is an irritating book with many flaws. Effusive, indulgent, repetitious, rhetorically inflated, it also has a narrative that advances by fits and starts" (5). Through a close reading of these "fits and starts," a careful walk through the erratic forest of *Her*, I intend to show that H.D.'s prose, through its creation of the heterogeneous, undetermined subject, in fact bridges the early H.D., created by her male patrons and critics, and the later H.D. championed by feminist criticism. By studying the novel's nexus of subjectivity, sexuality and language, I will explore how *Her* creates a female subject that embodies both a masculine self, which holds the

[4] Claire Buck has undertaken a similar study in her *H.D. and Freud – Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse* (1991). Buck's focus rests mainly with H.D.'s poetry.

power to navigate the social sphere, and a subversive feminine self which contests the masculine realm with her "Otherness" (DuPlessis, *H.D.*… 69). *Her* thus presents a subject that belongs to neither a masculine nor a feminine paradigm, but participates in both.

On my journey through the text, I will consult the theoretical insights of Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. Claire Buck warns the reader of H.D.'s prose against the use of theory, as her writing already shows the influence of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. During the twenties, H.D. attended lectures on psychoanalysis in Berlin, and entered into analysis with Mary Chadwick and Hanns Sachs. In 1933 and 1934 she worked directly with Freud, whom she describes as "midwife to the soul," her "guardian of all 'beginnings'" (qtd. in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 17). Accordingly, as Buck observes, matters like the divided subject and the family romance are already present in H.D.'s texts, and "theoretical elucidation all too easily becomes trapped into banal description or a series of interpretative moves which turn out to be part of the structure of the text" (6). However, *Her* moves beyond Freudian theory and creates a self who, to a large degree, parallels Cixous's "subject at risk" and Kristeva's "subject-in-process/on-trial." Through my exploration of *Her* I aim to create a productive dialogue between these three parties without simply equating them with each other.

Cixous initiates her inquiry into the process of subjectivity by listing a set of binaries, "culture/nature," "head/heart," "intelligible/palpable," "form/matter," coupled by the rhetorical question "Where is she?" ("Sorties…" 63). Obviously, "woman" is the second term, as the passive opposite to the first term "man." The second-term concepts in Cixous's list are all necessary for upholding the structure they are part of; yet, they are barred from influencing or participating in this very system. The idea of the binary, where one element is favored over the other, forms the core of Freud's theory of identity formation. Freudian theory postulates that the daughter must let go of her mother, her first love object, in order to be with her father. Her relation to the father secures her position within the social realm, which is necessarily a paradigm of heterosexuality. The mother/daughter relation is thereby reduced to a competition for the father's favor. Jacques Lacan recasts Freud's triangle in linguistic terms, associating the child's insertion into language and subjectivity, into the Symbolic order, with the father. The mother represents the realm of the Real, an anterior pre-

linguistic state to which the Father permits no return. As the child enters into the social "the link to mother loosens," she is unattainable, whereas the link to the Father, to the conscious word, tightens ("Sorties…" 103-104). Thus, in both Freud and Lacan, the "I" can only take on meaning within the realm of the masculine, whereas the voice of women as mothers and daughters is silenced.

Cixous proposes a challenge to this phallocentric paradigm through a shift of emphasis from the Symbolic to the Real ("Sorties…" 92). In order to cancel out the murder of the mother, the subject must become "bisexual" ("Sorties…" 72). Cixous underlines that "bisexuality" by no means denotes "a fantasy of complete being… of unity," but rather, "the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes" ("Sorties…" 84-85). Neither should the term "bisexuality" be equated with homosexuality of any kind. "Bisexuality" was a widely used term in psychoanalysis during the seventies, and Cixous later moved away from it. In her 1997 interview with Mireille Calle-Gruber she states that "the word 'bisexual' does not belong to my universe of writing, I believe, but it comes from a language of the time" (*Rootprints* 50). However, within its frame of reference, "bisexuality" refers to "the psychic imprint made when one admits to the "presence" of both sexes in the mind" (Blyth and Sellers 27). The bisexual subject can be man or woman, "a being who [is] complex, mobile, open," and who "accept[s] the other sex as a component" ("Sorties…" 84).[5] In order for the subject to become "bisexual," a restructuring of the relationship between self and non-self must take place. By letting the other in, one risks asymmetry, leading to desire for appropriation ("Sorties…" 79). This desire however, is positive rather than negative. In a ceaseless dialogue between the two parts, the self recognizes and incorporates the other into her self, rather than using the other merely to confirm her sovereign "I" which confirms her place within the Symbolic. The exchange between the two thus exceeds phallic authority; language is wrestled from the Law which demands the subject to exist as a stable entity ("Sorties…" 86). "Bisexuality" thereby creates a space for the mother within the masculine realm language; it promotes non-closure and expansion of the writing

[5]Regarding her use of words like "man" and "masculine," "woman" and "feminine," Cixous states that "We have to be careful not to lapse smugly or blindly into an essentialist ideological interpretation" (81). She underlines that sexual difference is by no means "distributed… on the basis of socially determined 'sexes'"; there are men who do not repress their femininity, and women who express their masculinity (81).

subject. The "bisexual" text then represents a constant process of unnaming and renaming, it "divides itself, pulls itself to pieces, dismembers itself, regroups, remembers itself," and constitutes what Cixous calls "a proliferating, maternal femininity" ("Sorties…" 84). Accordingly, Cixous states, the genuine writer, philosopher and artist, the individual who "creates new values," the "inventors and wreckers of concepts and forms," must inevitably be "bisexual": "It is only in this condition that we invent" ("Sorties…" 84). An almost identical conclusion is reached by Virginia Woolf in "A Room of One's Own" (1929):

> If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine… (1026)

The insights of Cixous and Woolf find their resonance in H.D.'s *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1919), a meditation on the imagination and the creative process. Here she argues that the revolutionary potential of the artist rests with her ability to become a synthesis of self and other, of feminine and masculine, of body and mind: "Two or three people, with healthy bodies and the right sort of receiving brains, could turn the whole tide of human thought, could direct lightning flashes of electric power to slash across and destroy the world of dead, murky thought" (*Notes on*… 27).

"Bisexuality" thus resists death and determinacy; it opens up for an exploration of the heterogeneity of the self and of language. Kristeva elaborates on the concept as follows: "All speaking subjects have within themselves a certain bisexuality which is precisely the possibility to explore all the sources of signification, that which posits a meaning as well as that which multiplies, pulverizes, and finally revives it" ("Oscillations between…" 165). Although the term "bisexuality" disappeared from Kristeva's writings after the seventies, her use of the word in this context points to what lies at the core of her theory, her two modalities of language. To Kristeva, all signification exist as a dialectical interchange between the symbolic, which refers to grammar and syntax, and the semiotic, which refers to the physical aspects of signification. Semiotic pulsations are released by the maternal *chora*, a site of non-expressive drives which exists prior to language, prior to the social, and which can only be vaguely described as "rupture and articulations (rhythm), preced[ing]

evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality" (Kristeva, "Revolution in…" 94). At the same time, the semiotic can only find its realization as it transgresses into the Symbolic, into the realm of conscious, ordered discourse where it is constrained by symbolic stasis which are the structural elements of signification. Thus, the semiotic is not diametrically opposed to the Symbolic, it is a part of it (Kristeva, "Revolution in..." 92). Within the Symbolic however, the semiotic is the heterogeneous but inseparable counterpart of the symbolic: while the unconscious activity of the semiotic generates movement and motivating signification, the symbolic governs the way in which this meaning can be conveyed.

The constant oscillation between these irreconcilable but interdependent functions of language gives rise to an unstable subject that is always in motion, always in production. While in Lacan, subjectivity is rooted in the child's submission to the Name of the Father, Kristeva sees subjectivity as arising from the pre-linguistic maternal sphere. The Kristevan subject refuses to abandon her experience of the semiotic, she continues to relish in the gestural, the "wandering" elements of signification; she is "in-process" ("Revolution in…" 91). However, in order to be recognized as a subject, she must transit into the Symbolic sphere where symbolic elements – social rules and norms – will hamper her "wandering" and put her "on-trial." ("Revolution in…" 91). To prevent from being encapsulated in the masculine Symbolic, she must continuously find the means to signify her refusal to let go of the maternal within the realm of the Law.

In the chapters to follow, I will trace Hermione's process of becoming a "subject-in-process/on-trial," the "bisexual" subject who exists as a constant frustration between feminine and masculine, self and other, semiotic and symbolic. Chapter I will concern H.D.'s rewriting of Freud's family romance. It will explore how Hermione quest for subjectivity necessarily must start with an organization of her own narrative around the opposing roles of her father and her mother. Chapter II will investigate *Her*'s presentation of love, a concept that, from the eighties onwards, replaces the term "bisexuality" in the theoretical discourses of Kristeva and Cixous. In the modernist art practices of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Kristeva sees a "revolution in poetic language," an unleashing of the semiotic dimension which reinstates the mother's body into the Symbolic. Accordingly, I will show how *Her* postulates an intimate link between Hermione's love for the other, her love for the mother and her writing. Chapter III is dedicated to the novel's love

triangle, a recurring theme throughout H.D.'s prose oeuvre. By exploring Hermione's need for both her male and her female lover, the chapter emphasizes the novel's resistance to a categorical feminist reading. Chapter IV will treat the novel's depiction of madness, and I here examine how a disintegration of the love triangle, the dialogic relation between masculine and feminine, triggers a breakdown into hysteria, which results in a loss of subjectivity. The final chapter examines Hermione's "writing cure," exploring how her coming to writing equals her coming to selfhood. Through its focus on Hermione's text, the chapter also challenges the traditional readings of the novel. By reading the narrative of Hermione, a subject that never really *is* but exists through continuous transformation, I argue that *Her* is a prolific, challenging text that invites for exploration beyond the present thesis.

I. Family

In order to become a processual subject, H.D. argues that one must be "born again": "There are really two flecks of protoplasm and when we are 'born again' we begin not as a child but as the very first germs that grow into a child" (*Notes on*… 50). *Her*'s creation of the female subject and artist is thereby grounded in the nuclear family, in the protagonist's relation to her two parents. In the following, I will investigate the structures represented by Hermione's mother and father; structures that find their parallel in Cixous's elements of feminine and masculine and in Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic modalities of language. Hermione's inability to integrate these opposing elements leads to her entrapment between the maternal and the paternal realm: Either she must cancel out her *jouissance*, her experience of the semiotic, and conform to the masculine Law of One, or she must renounce the Symbolic and retract silently into her body (Kristeva, "About Chinese Women" 155).

The opening scenes of the novel tell of a daughter's estrangement from her family, of a subject who no longer believes in a unified self. Helplessly roaming the Pennsylvanian forest, a symbol of both her psyche and the social realm, Hermione Gart is in the process of realizing that the relation between her given names and her self no longer appears natural nor finite:

> Her Gart went round in circles. "I am Her," she said to herself; she repeated, "Her, Her, Her." Her Gart tried to hold on to something… Clutching out toward some definition of herself, she found that 'I am Her Gart' didn't let her hold on… She was not Gart, she was not Hermione, she was not any more Her Gart, what was she? (3-4)

In response to this lack of correspondence between signifier and signified, Hermione finds herself trapped between the need to mend the split and yet again "belong" to her name, and a desire to break away from it: "she did not know what she wanted" (7). On the one hand, Hermione clings to the sense of identity and safety that a given name can provide; on the other, she is aware that her signifiers "Her," "Hermione," and "Gart" are immobilizing, as they deprive her of a real sense of self. "Her," due to its polysemous relation to the third person pronoun, appears anonymous and void of personality; it is "a little too short" (337), too wide a signifier. Further, the nickname locks Hermione in the position of a grammatical object; she becomes an image – that

which is spoken about, gazed at, rather than that which speaks and acts. Although "Hermione" carries a more specific quality, it also dispossesses Hermione of the subject position by pointing to a borrowed identity: "I am out of *The Winter's Tale*" (109), Hermione states, alluding to Shakespeare's beautiful Queen Hermione who is turned into a statue.[6] Accordingly, Hermione remains paralyzed by her name, which is "quite too beautiful … to be used in daily conversation" (200). This name has been bestowed upon her by the older Gart, Hermione's grandfather, emphasizing the presence of a powerful father who governs the Law. By carrying the Gart-name, Hermione becomes its signifier; she upholds the law but is refrained from interfering with it. Thus, Hermione is left "going round and round in circles" (4), orbiting around the Pennsylvanian pine-trees – phallic symbols representing unattainable power-centers.

Hermione's experience of claustrophobic trees, of social surroundings that wall her in, is further developed through the algebraic concept of conic sections. By failing her math exam, Hermione has flunked out of Bryn Mawr College. Thus, she has failed to meet the expectations of her social surroundings, for which a college diploma equals the successful individual and the lack thereof leaves the subject uncompleted:

> [S]he would never get away from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania whirled round her in cones of concentric colour, cones … concentric … conic sections was the final test she failed in. Conic sections would whirl forever round her … Science … failed her … and she was good for nothing. (5-6)

By analogy, Hermione's upper class Pennsylvanian society is governed by a formulaic way of thinking which can be tested scientifically. Accordingly, the subject is not a variable, but a constant term. For example, the signifier "Gart" has a predetermined and fixed signified which is "dominance, power, success," and the confirmation of the subject thus matches the verification of an algebraic function.

[6] Also Eugenia, Hermione's mother, might point to Shakespeare's character of Hermione. In *A Winter's Tale*, Hermione gives birth to a daughter, but due to the king's suspicion that the child is a bastard, the child is abandoned. Hermione has named this child Perdita (Latin for the "lost one"), to which H.D.'s Hermione might allude. "Perdita" is the name of H.D.'s only daughter, born in 1919. Also, in Greek mythology, Hermione is the daughter of Helen. "Helen" is the name of H.D.'s birth mother. As noted by Diane Chisholm, H.D.'s intricate interweavings of classical, mythological and personal texts constitute a perpetual search for a self, where the writer is playfully entangled with her characters who also "are searching for their author" (82).

Such a code depends on a homologous relation between its semiological and epistemological systems, between signifier and signified, and its truth is established as the "the sum of the units is the same in the two terms but their combinations are different" (Guiraud 58). By failing to master the language of science, Hermione becomes aware that subjectivity does not lie in a name; it is a variable that the algebraic formulae cannot explain. Further, Hermione's status of "unresolved equation" does not expel her from the ideological systems which have previously entrapped her, but tightens her relation and puts her back with her family: "now she knew that failing at the end meant fresh barriers, fresh chains, a mesh here" (12). Hermione is now aware that only those who master the law, those who hold the power of definition are allowed the freedom of movement; her failure prevents her from progressing on her path through the forest, on her quest for self-knowledge. Walled in by pine trees made up of cones, thus symbolic elements of language that stand for rationality and fixity, Hermione finds herself "standing frozen on the woodpath," like Shakespeare's Hermione (5). The question "what was she?" (5) inevitably remains unanswered.

While the notion of conic sections accounts for Hermione's relation to her surroundings, it also elucidates the theoretical grounding of the text as such. As Helen McNeil notes, conic sections mathematically explain the vortex, which forms the basis of Pound's Vorticism, a theory of poetry that superceded the Imagist doctrine he had previously championed together with H.D. (viii). In Imagism, the thing or the object was not to be presented as a substitute or a symbol for something else, but appeared valuable in itself and was to be treated as directly as possible. Accordingly, both the form and theme of a poem were to be carried through the image: "The image forged a new relationship between signifier to signified, fixing a strict relation between the word and its referents, to produce meanings formerly embedded in phrases and sentences" (Benstock 328). The structure of the Imagist sign thus echoes the mathematical equation. Although Hermione longs to break out of the concentric circles of Pennsylvania, she is still in need of a clear and concise image, for a one-to-one correlation between her name and her self. Staring at a great tulip tree, she tries to "focus on one leaf to hold her to all leaves; she tried to concentrate on one frayed disc of green, pool or mirror that would refract image. She must have an image no matter how fluid, how inchoate" (5). Grounded in the concept of the mirror, Imagism can be defined as passive and mimetic.

In contrast, Vorticism sought to energize the image and make it active. The poem still carries meaning, but this meaning is now variable. Pound states: "[The Image] is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can and must perforce call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which ideas are rushing" (qtd. in Benstock 330). Vorticism, with its focus on force and energy, redefined Imagism in masculine terms, and what Pound first discovered in H.D., a female artist and his lover, was now *passé* (Benstock 331). Pound's abandonment of Imagism was to H.D. an act of betrayal against her, both as poet and woman. *Her*, which can be read as a response to Pound's actions thematically and formally, overthrows not only Imagism, but also Pound's Vorticism. Natan Zach describes the nature of Vorticism as follows: "[T]he *image* projected by Pound's mature, but never satisfactorily resolved, doctrine can be described as content conceived as form. It provides a medium for exploration, rather than a territory to be explored" (237). In other words, Vorticism did not explore the workings of language, "never investigated the hinged relation of signifier to signified" (Benstock 331). Thus, through the becoming of Hermione, *Her* investigates the nature of the sign itself, the process of signification.

Accordingly, the text postulates that pine trees cannot make up the forest alone; this would lead to a tyrannical, autocratic society where the successful subject functions as a closed sign, a frozen statue rather than a speaking subject. The stasis of the symbolic trees is disrupted and rejected by Hermione's pull towards an unknown territory: "Another country called her, the only thing that would heal, that would blot out this concentric gelatinous substance that was her perception of trees grown closer" (7). Hermione's vague sensation of this "other country" can be read as semiotic pulsations, as the surfacing of unconscious and repressed elements of the maternal, semiotic drive charges that maintain the pre-linguistic unity with the mother inside of the Symbolic (Kristeva "The Subject…" 134). The semiotic is a continuous flux, a wandering and unsettling force that charges the process of signification by disrupting the consciousness and permanency that the symbolic represents. Within the text, this infinite flow of possibilities and movement is symbolized by water:

> … a long sea-shelf. She felt herself go out, out into this water substance. Water was transparent, not translucent like this celluloid treestuff. She wanted to see through reaches of sea-wall, push on through transparencies … Trees, no matter how elusive, in the end, walled one in. Trees were suffocation. (7-8)

The link between the sea and the mother is also found in the writings of Kristeva, who plays with the homophonic relation between the French *mer* and *mère*: "the word is where the sea/mother (*mer*/*mère*) sings" ("The Impudence…"). As the maternal breaks with the conscious level of language, like breakers crashing against land, "infinite renewal" and negotiation of the sign is ensured (Kristeva "The Subject…" 134). Also Cixous points to sea and mother as a homologous site where unity is dissolved. The sea/mother represents "a body decoding and naming oneself in one long, slow push" (qtd. in Jenson 198): by returning to the mother in language, the self is reorganized, renamed, continuously reborn.

It is important to note that Cixous' and Kristeva's concepts of *la mer/mère* is only discernable within a signifying practice, within language; the semiotic must enter the Symbolic in order to disrupt it. Kristeva positions art as the privileged site of experiencing the body of the maternal. Painting, music, and literature open up the possibility for new and interconnected chains of signifiers, and consequently loosen the signifier's fixed relation to the signified. These practices then carry the potential or transforming the Symbolic order, the social realm:

> … since it is itself a metalanguage, semiotics can do no more than postulate this heterogeneity: as soon as it speaks about it, it homogenizes the phenomenon, links it with a system, loses hold of it. Its specificity can be preserved only in the signifying practices which set off the heterogeneity at issue: thus poetic language making free with the language code; music, dancing, painting, rendering the psychic drives which have not been harnessed by the dominant symbolization systems and thus renewing their own tradition. ("The System…" 30)

Correspondingly, Hermione's yearning for the sea is triggered by her memory of a painting in which the painter, later understood to be Hermione's mother, has painted "green on green, one slice in a corner that made a triangle out of another dimension" (6), and where "the stream that started high up on the hill ran away into the gold frame" (148). The river figures as a dynamic component within the image, and simultaneously it breaks with the frame, with that which holds the image together. It thus points to the semiotic force as "mov[ing] both inside and beyond the Symbolic" (Oliver, *Unraveling the*... 10). The painting, representing a feminine redefinition of the forest, presses upon Hermione's "compartmented mind" (31), leading her to conclude that "such painting must lead to certifiable insanity … I am certifiable or

soon will be" (6). Indoctrinated by the language of science, Hermione cannot access the poetic, the "other dimension" represented by her mother's picture. Its integration of tree and water is yet unknown; within Hermione the two elements do not yet combine in a fruitful manner. While the trees of science and sanity are threatening with suffocation, water postulates madness, the danger of drowning. Subjectivity can be found in neither sphere.

However, the memory of the mother's artwork is accompanied by an internal picture of "a crane shadow passing across a wild cherry half in blossom" (13); an image anticipating Hermione's becoming. The cherry is wild, growing outside of a cultivated garden, and is in the process of transforming from bud to flower. In combination with the transient shadow, the image defies both the passiveness of Imagism and the movement of Vorticism; it becomes an image of transfiguration. The experience of the cherry thus points to Hermione's later position as an artist: "There was a sort of composition of elements that her mind, fused to the breaking point, now apprehended … it had not occurred to Her to put the thing in writing" (13).

Hermione's entrapment between the symbols of tree and water is mirrored in her relation to her parents, Carl and Eugenia Gart. Carl Gart, a stern father and an acknowledged science professor, figures as the *pater familias* in the novel. Through his invention of the mathematical Gart formula, Carl represents the force that masters the workings of the world:

> Gart and the formula seem in their minds to be responsible for everything. There was an earthquake in Peru … They thought Gart formula was answerable … They say Professor Gart and the eclipse or Gart formula and the tidal wave or Professor Gart says the north pole has moved a bit to the south or the north pole is tilting toward the north. (116)

Moreover, as an authority on science, Carl is presented as the definer of the closed ideological system of Pennsylvania. Thus, by failing at Bryn Mawr, Hermione has failed to acquire her father's language. Barred from the realm of professional work life, Hermione spends her days piling and cataloguing Carl's inaccessible scientific papers, paralleling her previous circling around the trees: "It was easier to do these things than not to do them. She was hypnotized by these things" (79). Hermione then upholds the formula that restricts her, a social order which is "pressing things down in test tubes" (112): "God, some sort of Uncle Sam, Carl-Bertrand-Gart God shut us up in a box" (96). This box is inevitably labeled with the subordinate second terms of

Cixous's binaries; the women of the Gart house are regarded as "matter," not "form"; "heart," not "head"; "passivity," not "activity" ("Sorties…" 63). Thus, they are eligible for the roles of mothers, daughters and wives: "[Carl Gart] called her daughter like a Middle West farmer, like someone out of the Old Testament, like God saying *daughter I say unto you arise*. He called her daughter out of some old, old volume … she left the room … defeated" (100). Confined to the role of obedient daughter, Hermione is prevented from developing her own, alternative formula. Consequently, the society of algebraic equation persists, highlighted by Hermione's circular mantra, "names are in people, people are in names" (199). While the language of Gart structures and defines reality, this reality in turn defines and reinforces the structures of language.

However, the unified signs of science are also arbitrary, and "leave no room for any substantive analogy between signifier and signified" (Guiraud 58). Whereas Hermione holds the belief that "God was in a word" (38) and "the word was with God" (198), the third-person narrator rejects the totalitarianism of the Gart formula by exploring the Garts' understanding of the signifier "American" as a marker of cultural and national identity. To explain the concept of this identity, the tree metaphor is revised. Identity, thus meaning, is now seen as fine fibers that form organic tissue, which eventually develop into the tree's roots. Although the tree is rooted in a particular place, its origins are manifold, stretching far beyond the growth's present location: "The birdfoot violets she so especially cherished had far Alpine kinsfolk … the hepaticas she called 'American' grew in still more luminous cluster at the base of the Grammont … She could not know that no race is in itself integral, but that each has its fibres elsewehere" (9-10). The narrator thus presents an understanding of identity that resembles Kristeva's *intertextuality*, a concept grounded in Mikhail Bakhtin's principle of Dialogism:

> Bakhtin was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to another structure … [The] 'literary word' [is] an intersection of *textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context. ("Word, Dialogue…" 35-6)

The word, the literary or cultural text and the individual subject can never exist as an isolated entity, but must be seen as a woven fabric whose fibers come from multiple

places, inevitably making it a part of a larger universe of texts and discourses. The meaning of a given entity is generated through dialogue, a process that "moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders and constitutes a *path* that is not restricted to the two poles of univocal information between two full-fledged subjects" (Kristeva, "Revolution in…" 121). For Hermione however, brought up in a world of the unambiguous, the path *is* restricted. According to the Gart formula, communication is static, and dialogue is understood as an exchange of components of predefined meaning where "Words [are] said over and over, over and over. They were a stock company playing in a road show, words over and over. All very well cast for the parts, can't get out of this show … Funny show for Gart and the formula" (40). The label "American" has therefore not been negotiated, but equals the closed, upper-class society of the Garts. Thereby, the narrator concludes that "[Hermione] did not know what *gnothi seauton* meant … there was no one to tell her that America reaches round and about and that ghosts live even in America" (47). The Garts' Pennsylvania then constitutes an arbitrary unit, and like Hermione on the woodpath the social system exists in a deadlock between two poles: "The term 'alien' had not yet been invented. [They were] 'aliens' in Europe, now 'alien' in America, they had peculiar standards. But they had no words for those things; they were not English, were not German, they were not according to the later formula 'American'" (46-7). Consequently, the social rules and norms that govern Hermione have no firm basis in reality; they have been made, systematized and authorized by the lawmakers of the society, by figures such as Carl Gart.

The Symbolic power of Carl finds its contrast in Eugenia, the artist mother.[7] However, Eugenia is no longer a practicing artist, "[her] fibres were rooted and mossed over and not to be disrupted" (9). From old photographs, Hermione envisions her mother as a rebellious young woman, "[wearing] a dart across her fluffed out Hellenistic hair" (147). But like Hermione, she has become enmeshed in the Law of Gart: "Eugenia with her 1880 Hellenistic beauty made a drudge for this thing" (40). Eugenia has put her artistic affinities on hold so that the formula can be sustained, and Hermione finds her mother's submissiveness disappointing: "'Why are you always

[7] The name "Eugenia" is a derivation from the masculine name "Eugene," which stems from the Greek *eugenes* meaning "well-born." H.D. thus alludes to the mother figure of the novel as being of noble, wealthy heritage. Further, the adjective "eugenic" refers to a human being who is "adapted to the production of fine offspring." Also, in accordance with the tree-metaphor, "Eugenia" is a genus of flowering plants in the myrtle family. (*OED*)

knitting? Only old ladies knit and knit like you do.' 'I am an old lady. I can knit in the dark. I can't sew in the dark. Your father likes the light concentrated in a corner. He can work better if I'm sitting in the dark.'" (79). Eugenia thus appears as a conventional mother figure; she is generous, self-sacrificing, and complies with the rules of Pennsylvania. However, the narrator emphasizes Eugenia's latent potential to put into motion the elements of *la mer/mère*: "If Eugenia Gart pulled up her mossgrown fibres, Pennsylvania itself would ache like a jaw from which has been extracted a somewhat cumbrous molar" (9).

Whereas Eugenia represents an underground, generative power, Carl holds the capacity to hamper her revolutionary potential. Thus, Hermione finds herself caught between the functions of her parents: "In Hermione Gart, the two never fused and blended (9). Her immobilization at the threshold of these two worlds is expressed through a depiction of the Gart home, where a sharp boundary between outside and inside is symbolized by the entrance door: "'Gart lawn made a jade triangle and the box hedge at the back merged so flatly with the forest that the forest and the box made one barrier; Gart, Gart barrier. Her pulled to the screen door, clicked it inside … must keep it fastened" (24). On the hall table there are fresh lilies, flowers that Hermione identifies with throughout the novel.[8] Hermione's experience of the lilies is presented as an Impressionistic painting where, like in the Imagist poem, the brushstrokes are visible, its essentials discernable, yet the image is nontheless unified:

> Like the first colour-impressionist she saw blobs, perceived matte colour as pure tone. The wood-lilies were thumbed in from a laden palette. Orange was put in, with a thumb, against Van Dyke brown of seasoned woodwork … She waded back down the hall where lilies reflected lilies in bright surface of dark parquet. (23-4)

The lily-image is soothing and promising; the shiny floor provides Hermione with a momentary, transient reflection of herself. However, this mimetic, imagistic quality is not sustainable; the image dissolves, breaks down into its components, creating a chaotic sphere with no clear contours: "[She] clutched at the upright stairpost, it was buoy to her drowning. The floor went round and the smeared-up blobs of impressionistic lilies" (24). To prevent losing herself, Hermione must cling to the

[8] Helen McNeil suggests that the figure of Her Gart alludes to Edith Warton's "androgynously named" heroine Lily Bart of *The House of Mirth* (1905) (x).

thought of "trees, trees, trees" (24), leaving inside for outside, yet again closing the screen door behind her. She swings between the maternal and the paternal, but her oscillation is not dialectic. Thus, Hermione is left homeless; the Imaginary feedback she desperately needs remains missing. Looking into a barrel of springhouse water, the only self-perception available is that of the smeared out painting: "Forehead too high, hair too lank, eyes that stared and stared, blobs of inconsequent blackness" (11).

Kristeva sums up the kind of entrapment Hermione experiences, the lack of selfhood resulting from a choice between two irreconcilable modes of existence, as follows:

> We cannot gain access to the temporal scene, i.e. to political affairs, except by identifying with the values considered to be masculine (dominance, superego, the endorsed communicative word that institutes stable social exchange) … Others, more bound to the mothers, more tuned in as well to their unconscious impulses, refuse this role and hold themselves back, sullen, neither speaking nor writing, in a permanent state of expectation punctuated now and then by some kind of outburst: a cry, a refusal, an "hysterical symptom" ("About Chinese Women" 155)

In response, Hermione seeks to cancel out this double bind, to repudiate both her mother and her father. Hermione has, throughout her adolescence, replaced her parents with the fantasy of a sister that exists outside of the closed system of her family. This figure represents an ideal other, a mirror that provides her with self-knowledge: "A sister was a creature of ebony strung with wild poppies or an image of ivory whose lithe hips made parallel and gave reflection of like parallel in a fountain basin" (10).

In order to fill the void of the imagined sister, Hermione first turns to Bertrand Gart, her older brother. Much like Hermione, the young Bertrand is portrayed as sensitive and self-conscious, and a mutual love for literature binds them together. The relationship of the siblings is portrayed through the image of two pairs of staring eyes, both craving for the other to provide a definition of oneself: "That was all there was between them (enough), grey eyes that stared at grey eyes with some unexpressed and undefined craving, the craving of the fiend almost for his narcotic" (17-8). However, unfamiliar with the phenomena of dialogue, the need to receive cancels out the need to give, and both Bertrand and Hermione remain solitary entities with no bridge

between them. To suppress the painful feeling of incompleteness, Bertrand turns to science, and his ability to master the laws of mathematics. His father's language becomes "his anesthesia" (18). Leaving his old copies of *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen with Hermione (17), Bertrand thus conforms with the first term of Kristeva's double bind, identifying with the masculine values of superiority, the superego and the established, unified word: "Bertrand answered every question anyone could ask him" (18). "'Why do they call mockorange Philadelphus? Is it because it is from Philadelphia?'" Hermione asks, to which Bertrand can reply, "No. It's because of Ptolemy Philadelphus in Egypt'" (18). Astonished by her brother's accurate answers, Hermione nonetheless finds them unsatisfying, and is unable to accept the correlation between a white flower called mock orange and an Egyptian king. While Bertrand agrees to the set relation between name and flower, signifier and signified, Hermione, a failure in conic sections, "reached out … but … failed to reach Bertrand, to attain the anesthesia her odd brain sought for" (18).

Therefore, Hermione's search for a sister persists, her next candidate being Minnie Gart, Bertrand's wife, who embodies the second term of Kristeva's double bind, namely the position of the hysteric. "Minnie is my sister," Hermione hesitantly states, complying with Eugenia's rule that the relation between two sisters-in-law necessarily becomes that of sisters: "By a rule that had roots mossgrown in Pennsylvania, Minnie became by some illogical reasoning 'my sister'" (10). Thus, instead of filling the position of the ideal mirror, Minnie is Hermione's sister under Symbolic Law. By taking the Gart name, Minnie has, like Eugenia and Hermione before her, become encapsulated by a formula she is refrained from interfering with; she is, as Catherine Clément claims of the hysteric, "a prisoner inside the family" ("The Guilty One" 8). While Hermione's position within the family is that of a frozen statue on a wood path, Minnie's standing within her marriage is that of an inanimate object of science. When first introducing his future wife to Hermione, Bertrand merely presents a lock of Minnie's hair: "She couldn't grasp what it was, even when she saw it. She stared at this thing … the red-brown strand of poor little Minnie Hurloe's hair … In that red lock, was the whole of Minnie Hurloe (19). Deprived of the subject position, Minnie now suffers from hysterical attacks; she has fallen back on the "certifiable insanity" (6) that Hermione fears. Kristeva defines the hysteric as an individual "torn between two contracts": On one hand, she suffers from "the reminiscence of a radical excitability that cannot be symbolized, one that is

experienced as a gap, as passivity, as female castration"; on the other, she experiences "[a] seductive identification with the paternal authority of symbolic knowledge and cognitive competence" ("Coutertransference…" 71). The hysteric thus simultaneously rejects and relates to the power of the Symbolic.

Accordingly, while Bertrand assists his father with the formula, Minnie wanders the Gart property in solitude, "haunted by things that have no palpable explanation" (20), plagued by eternal headaches: "Minnie was there, a barometer that showed always glowering weather. Her eyes were the colour of mauve blotting paper that has faded almost white and is smudged with inkmarks. The inkmarks must be because Minnie had a headache, rings under Minnie's woebegone, sad eyes" (16). Minnie's silence is interrupted by hysterical outbursts that disturb the harmony of the Gart home. While Hermione finds Minnie repulsive and tyrannical in her violation of the safe and familiar Gart formula, she also understands Minnie's frenzies: "Minnie was right. In some horrible torturous cranny of her inferior little being she was right however. There was reason in her hysteria, in her tantrum" (21). Within the household, Hermione and Minnie share the position of the second term concepts of the binary, and Minnie's outbursts challenge the formula, the boxes and test tubes, the carefully catalogued lots of papers by which the sisters-in-law are enmeshed. Clément claims that the role of the hysteric, the prisoner, is also that of "the resistant heroine: the one whom psychoanalytic treatment would never be able to *reduce*" ("The Guilty One" 9). In a corresponding manner, Hermione prophetically states that "Gart would fall, be cut through by railroads, factory-chimneys… Bertrand and Carl Gart (and even the Gart-formula?) would be extinguished, but not Minnie" (22). Thus, the revolutionary potential of Eugenia's forest painting, the ability to make free the language code and challenge the status quo, is also latent within Minnie's madness.

What Hermione cannot relate to, however, is Minnie's seductive relation to Carl Gart, whom she insists on calling "father." If Minnie refers to Carl as her father, Hermione and Minnie's entrapping relation of sisters-in-law, or sisters-under-the-Law, is tightened: "The word 'father' as Minnie spoke it reversed itself inward, tore at the inner lining at the thing called Her Gart… 'Father' was a run forward, a plunge backward; that thing that had no visible embodiment" (16). Because of her relation to the Law, Minnie cannot become Hermione's ideal other, the mirror that is to restore her self image: "If her father was also the father to… this thing, then the half of her, that twin sister was forever blighted (16). Hermione's fantasy of a sister that exists on

the outside of the Symbolic universe of her parents can find no real life equivalent; the figures of Bertrand and Minnie have become mere replicas of Carl and Eugenia. Hence, the double bind cannot be canceled out, and isolation within either realm remains unbearable. While a total deposing of the Gart formula leads to anarchy, to drowning, a complete repression of the maternal element of water leads to the dictatorship of the Symbolic law. Therefore, what is needed is a traversal between the Law, embodied by Carl and Bertrand, and its transgression, as represented by Eugenia and Minnie.

The ability to create an inside/outside dialectic is presented through Mandy, the black housekeeper. Despite her position as servant, Mandy figures as the most free and self-governing character within the Gart-realm: "Mandy had her formula" (27). Both Friedman and DuPlessis stress her importance, her connection with the maternal in particular. While Friedman proposes that the image of Hermione's white hand and Mandy's black arm meeting in the cherry-bowl in the cherry-pitting scene represents "a pre-Oedipal fusion of selves" (*Penelope's Web* 124), DuPlessis suggests that "Mandy's difference is … valuable to Her in and for itself; Mandy also prefigures and contains … sources of … maternal and sororal mirrors" (*H.D.*… 62). However, Mandy is not important to Hermione merely because she is a black, marginalized woman, but due to the knowledge she has acquired by being in the position of the other. Mandy's connection to the maternal must be read in relation to her knowledge of the word; her ability to express the otherness of language, wrestle language from the Law. While the Gart language is "a stock company [of] words said over and over" (40), Mandy's language is first and foremost characterized by its musicality. To Kristeva, it is above all the tonal and rhythmic qualities of poetic language that express the semiotic activity of the maternal. These elements of language exist beyond the unit of the sentence, beyond meaning and signification: "By *music*, I mean intonation and rhythm, which play only a subordinate role in everyday communication but here constitute the essential element of enunciation and lead us directly to the otherwise silent place of the subject" ("The Novel…" 167). Alone with the family housekeeper in the kitchen, Hermione "[falls] into the rhythm of Mandy's speech, the moment she began to speak to Mandy" (26), and the quality of this speech finds its visual representation in the cherries Mandy prepares. Hermione notes that the cherries are not from their garden, Mandy has picked wild cherries, which points back to Hermione's incomprehensible image of the cherry-flower in transformation:

"'Whose are these cherries? I thought we'd gathered all the cherries.' 'That little back-at-the-hedge tree. No one ever touches it'" (26). Unwittingly underscoring her rootedness within the law, Hermione replies, "'That's not a cherry tree for picking'" (26). She thus adopts the role of law-enforcer, faintly echoing God's words to Adam and Eve, the words that Eve challenged. Cixous uses this scene, "the scene of the apple," to explain the struggle between the Law, the discourse of God which represents the masculine, the first term concept of the binary, and the Apple, representing the second term concept, the feminine ("Extreme Fidelity" 133). While the Law is passive, invisible and negative, the Apple is present, visible and full, it has an inside which Eve has the audacity to explore. This story, Cixous states, tells us that "the genesis of woman goes through the mouth, through a certain oral pleasure, and through a non-fear of the inside" ("Extreme Fidelity" 133). Cixous's "oral pleasure" connects with Mandy's intimate understanding of language, which Hermione yearns to acquire. Therefore, as their discussion shifts from cherries to Tim, the black gardener, and Mandy's explanation that one can never get a black man to pick cherries, Hermione challenges Mandy by claiming that "A gardener is a gardener, a black gardener is as good as a white gardener … Man is man" (26-7). While Hermione remains oppressed due to her gender, Mandy is doubly subordinated by gender and race. Thus, she states in return: "A man ain't a man. A black man is a black man" (27). Their dialogue takes on an abstract, Platonic quality, focusing on the process of signification and the negotiation of meaning.

However, while Hermione admires Mandy's subversiveness, she also finds her pleasure with the wild cherries and their ability to make "better jam than others" to be repulsive (27). Mandy challenges the fallibility of the Gart realm, where only cultivated garden cherries can serve as food, thus she undercuts the stability that Hermione's identity rests on. As Hermione looks at her white hands on which "Red-black made mulberry-coloured black-red stain" – stains almost the color of Mandy's skin, and the color of blood, symbolizing an attack on the Law (27) – she postulates a link between the disruptive element of Mandy's behavior and that of Minnie's hysteria, stating "Mandy – you're mad, Mandy" (27). To Hermione, the speaking woman is necessarily mad; the female voice is linked to insanity. While Mandy has gained her subjectivity by reaping the wild cherries, the fruits of the forbidden tree, Hermione has not yet learned how to, and she remains trapped between the realms of father mother: "I'm not at home in Gart. I'm not at home out of Gart. I am swing-

swing between worlds, people, things exist in opposite dimension" (25). In order to reorganize her narrative, Hermione must find a way to connect her two dimensions, incorporate both Gart and non-Gart into herself. The next chapter will explore love, the utmost form of dialogue, of intertextuality, as the site through which Hermione's double bind can be unraveled.

II. Love

In contemplating the nature of love, Kristeva states: "Vertigo of identity, vertigo of words: love … One simply has the impression of speaking at last, for the first time, for real" ("In Praise…" 3). Proposing a tight link between love and the act of speaking, Kristeva, drawing on Freud, understands love as synonymous with the psychoanalytic talking-cure ("Extraterrestrials…" 381), where three elements interact: the subject, her loved object – imaginary or real – and the analyst, who can fill his position in two opposing ways. By occupying the place of the Other, the analyst becomes the subject's ideal lover, and he can thus turn into a dominating, defining power, making the cure a master/slave relationship ("In Praise…" 13). In the ideal cure however, the position of the Other is filled by what Kristeva terms "the Meaning of Discourse"; meaning is generated through an exchange or a traversal between self and other, by means of "association, displacement, condensation" ("In Praise…" 14). Love then, is not simply concerned with a 'me' and a 'you,' or even a 'we'; "what is really at stake is *between*" ("In Praise…" 3).

In what follows, I will explore the love relations in the novel, and the degree to which they reach the dialogic state of *between*. The first part of the chapter concerns Hermione's relationships with her two lovers; while George tends towards the position of omnipotent analyst, Fayne becomes a vehicle through which meaning and identity, the beloved Other, is negotiated and brought to the fore. With Fayne, the individual as a closed entity, valuable in itself, is left behind – love becomes a dialogue through which the subject is constantly renewed, equaling "the infinity of the signifier" (Kristeva, "Throes of Love…" 277). By carrying the potential of breaking with the static boxes of the Gart formula, love becomes a synonym of poetic language. As Hermione suggests, "Writing. Love is writing" (149). The second part of the chapter proposes that love and artistic practice are inextricably intertwined. Through an exploration of the mother/daughter relation of Eugenia and Hermione and the novel's representation of childbirth, I will present love as both the instigation and the outcome of writing: out of love, the mother must initiate the breakup of the mother/child symbiosis so that her daughter can enter the Symbolic and become autonomous. Language and writing are thus born out of the body. In reverse, through her poetic text, the daughter invokes the semiotic elements of the maternal, expressing identification with and love for the mother. In order to establish a dialectic relation

between the fixed oppositions of inside and outside, Hermione must learn to speak the language of love.

The breakdown of Hermione's static sense of self starts with the appearance of the lovers, which is announced by the simultaneous arrival of two letters. George, the handsome, flamboyant poet, is writing from Florence to give notice of his return to America. Hermione is enticed by George's passion for movement, his ironic distance to Pennsylvania and his vast knowledge of the world beyond. Still, she feels his "huge scrawled-over handwriting" on writing paper that is thin and distinguished, the color of sea-grey, to be violating (28). While George rejects the fixity of Pennsylvania, he does not dismiss the notion of Hermione as his passive muse; Hermione associates herself with the paper and perceives George as the pen. His letter thus foreshadows the role he will play in Hermione's quest for selfhood: George's words restrict Hermione, they overwrite the dimension related to the sea, but they nevertheless carry a force she must acquire in order to rewrite her own narrative and gain her subjectivity.

While Hermione feels encapsulated by George's writing, the letter from Nellie Thorpe, Hermione's Bryn Mawr acquaintance, emphasizes the ambivalence of Hermione's character: "I never know what to call you, you are fey with the only wildness that pertains to ultimate solution" (33). Nellie invites Hermione to a tea party, "to see a girl I want to see you" (34). The letter anticipates the arrival of Fayne, whose name phonetically ties up with Nellie's description of Hermione as otherworldly, fey with the wildness of Mandy's cherries.

The scene of the letters is laden with heat and erotic undertones, linking Hermione's forthcoming libidinal reorganization to the forbidden. Fanning herself with her letters, Hermione feels that "The wind made only the slightest little flutter of the ribbon of her undergarment; things stuck fast … the dress was almost thick enough not to see through … Eugenia would be sure to see she had no petticoat on" (29). The dual tension created by the two letters challenges the fixed boxes of the Gart formula, it anticipates a co-existence of masculine and feminine, the restrictive and the subversive: "Nellie Thorpe in her hand. George. Two people utterly inapposite, never coming together at all in any compartment of her compartmented mind. My mind is breaking up like molecules in test tubes. Molecules all held together, breaking down in this furnace heat" (31). Accordingly, the letters bring about a change in the protagonist's use of her two names – "Hermione" and "Her" – which up until then

have been employed interchangeably and at random. Critics traditionally have read the name "Her" merely as the object status out of which an independent "I" must be born. This reading proposes that the scene of the letters brings yet another layer of meaning to Hermione's nickname. From this point onwards, "Her" is associated with the self belonging to the "other world" of water and art, while "Hermione" becomes the conventional, conscious self that participates in society and abides by its rules. Hermione's two selves are thereby analogous to Kristeva's dyad of semiotic and symbolic which intersect in the poetic word: Whereas "Her" relates to the discharge of bodily drives and the non-representational, "Hermione" represents stability and structure, the representational. The arrival of the letters initiate a co-existence of the two: "I am the word … HER. Hermione Gart hugged HER to Hermione Gart. I am HER. The thing was necessary. It was necessary to hug this thing to herself" (32- 33). Hermione now faintly perceives that an interconnection between her two selves is possible and desirable, and through its exploration of this duality, *Her* becomes a text of love.

The confrontation between Hermione's two selves is particularly evident at Nellie's tea party, where Hermione and Fayne first meet. Nellie's guests are "university ladies" in the making, gathering to show off their artistic and academic accomplishments, to verify the law that regulates their group: "The people in the room were assorted, out of different boxes, yet all holding to some pattern, they had the same trademark of nonentity" (55). Suitably, the restrictive "Hermione" acts as the perfect guest; she complies with Nellie's formula, which surfaces as "a gramophone disk … of a conversation" (71), by automatically repeating, "oh, what a pretty tea cloth," and "I failed utterly" (51). Simultaneously, "Her" is aware that someone is tampering with the tactful setting, "someone was interfering with the teacups" (51-52). This someone is Fayne, whose piercing eyes shatter the hypocrisy of "Hermione" and fractures the carefully constructed box of Nellie's party. While the others perceive only "Hermione," the Bryn Mawr failure, Fayne, "the thing that made the floor sink beneath her feet and the wall rise to infinity above her head" (54), "*was* seeing Her" (52). Again, Hermione swings between her allegiances to two different worlds, not completely able to side with either Nellie, the lawmaker, or Fayne, the lawbreaker. Engaging in a debate on what the educated American should read, Fayne challenges the Bryn Mawr paradigm by suggesting Dostoevski, "that word that sends out a fringe, somewhat untidy aura" (58), a name whose fibers clearly stem from

elsewhere. While Nellie states that "Walt Whitman is our Dostoevski" (58), Hermione can neither confront nor confirm the Bryn Mawr formula, only "play hide and seek behind Henry James and Meredith" by quoting George's views on literature (58).

However, when engaging in a one-on-one conversation with Fayne, Hermione is forced out of her hiding. Their exchange is presented as direct, unmarked dialogue; in accordance with Kristeva it is the dialogic space that is created between the two that is of importance, rather than the idea of two full-fledged subjects presiding over univocal information. Looking to Freud's writings on love, Kristeva describes this space as emerging from "reciprocal identification and detachment (transference and countertransference) … one open system connected to another" ("In Praise…" 14-5). The sphere of *between* constitutes a continuous negotiation between the symbolic and semiotic elements of signification; it opens up for the experience of heterogeneity of language: "Love … constitutes a determination of language with all its resources spread out" ("Throes of Love…" 277).

Accordingly, Fayne approaches Hermione as her equal; the binary of superior/inferior that Nellie enforces is cancelled out. Through their short conversation, definite expressions slip away; signifiers do no longer entirely match their predetermined signifieds. The meaning of the word and the identity of the speaker are now thrown out of balance, picked apart and reorganized. The dialogue is marked by indefinite phrases such as "I don't know," "or something," "I mean," and "like…" which challenge the validity of the statements they modify. Moreover, the rhythm of the exchange springs out of repetitious dashes signaling hesitation, as in the following passage: "'What then is George like?' 'Oh, I don't know – rather like Aucassian and Nicolette. I mean he once said I was.' 'Like –' 'One or the other. Aucassian, you know, and Nicolette, you know. 'I don't know.' 'Well – that sort of thing'" (61). Compared to her previous conversation with Nellie, the exchange with Fayne represents "the same game, but involving something very different" (61). With Fayne, Hermione is no longer the master of her own speech; her words are shot through with "the gambler's instinct … a premonition rather than a recognition" (53), which might be read as parallel to Kristeva's semiotic pulsations. Accordingly, fixed, univocal meaning is called into question. Hermione's previous self-definitions, which George provides, are revealed as inadequate. Although the discussion with Fayne fails to provide any satisfying alternatives, Hermione nonetheless feels herself "com[ing] to as from an anesthetic" (61) at the end of their conversation. With Fayne, it is the

very act of speaking and listening that proves pleasing and meaningful; their exchange becomes an exploration of language, a dialogue of love: "love… Under its sway, one does not speak *of*. One simply has the impression of speaking…" (Kristeva, "In Praise…" 3).

Hermione no longer perceives herself as a fixed entity; the conversation becomes, as Kristeva's poetic language, a "wandering within the identity of the speaker and the economy of its discourse" ("From One…" 137). By entering into dialogue with Fayne, who figures as the ideal sister, Hermione searches not so much for her true self, as for its innovative potential: "Her words now were a gambler's heritage, heady things, they would win for her, they would lose for her" (61- 62). Through Fayne, Hermione apprehends that a fruitful integration of her two selves – the restrictive "Her" and the transgressive "Hermione" – can only happen through language, through communication with the other, thus, by putting oneself at risk. Concluding that their interaction represents "a twinkling of an eye into another forest" (62) – the forest of Eugenia's painting – Hermione indicates that the "gambler's heritage," which provides her with a new relation to the word and to the other, is the heritage of the mother.

Fayne's capacity for love finds its contrast in George, for whom Hermione represents the feminine complement to his masculine "I." Back in the constraining realm of Gart, the swift glance into the forest of Fayne appears irretrievable. Hermione now falls back on her previous position of "bewildered pathfinder," searching for "some sort of path out of this dangerous shut-in Pennsylvania" (63). Also, George has revealed the suffocating power of the Gart formula and wants to free Hermione from a family he describes as "barricaded by barbed wire" (102). Mesmerized by George's force and determinacy, Hermione conforms to the role of his passive partner, pleading for George to clear her path, provide her with a clear sense of a unified self:

> [S]he wanted George to correlate for her, life here, there. She wanted George to define and to make definable a mirage, a reflection … She wanted George to make the thing an integral, herself integrity. She wanted George to make one of his drastic statements that would dynamite her world away for her. (63)

As the attractive George leads Hermione by the hand down a path in the Pennsylvanian forest, she is relieved to feel her "gambler's instinct" grow faint, as

"Her bec[omes] almost Hermione" (64). George brings movement to the previously claustrophobic forest by transforming it into The Forest of Arden of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. He adopts the role of Orlando and encourages Hermione to play his beloved Rosalind: "Almost Hermione was out of Shakespeare with George" (65). Nevertheless, while George holds the power to bring the static to life and provide Hermione with a way out of her stifling surroundings, a troubling question returns: "Why is it that I can't *love* George Lowndes properly?" (65).

Through a comparison of Shakespeare's forest and George's staging of it, the novel presents an understanding of love that bears striking similarities to those of Kristeva and Cixous. While for Kristeva, love is "one open system connected to another" ("In Praise…" 15), Cixous sees it as "a displacement of a self towards a *you*" ("Grace and Innocence…" 28). This incorporation of the other within the self, surfaces in Shakespeare's androgynous characters of Rosalind and Orlando. While Rosalind has two personas, the female Rosalind and the male Ganymede, Orlando is attracted to both her feminine beauty and her boyish guise. He thus embodies Kristeva's concept of "traversal," which implies the experience of sexual difference "not as a fixed opposition ('man'/'woman'), but as a process of differentiation" ("From 'Oscillation…'" 165). By admitting to the coexistence of both sexes in the mind, Orlando, like Fayne, shows a readiness to abandon a construction of the self that requires the "murder of the other" (Cixous, "Sorties…" 70). Instead of appropriating the other in order to sustain his self, he realizes that his "I" is only perceivable in the space between self and other; subjectivity arises as the self is shot through with otherness. The boundaries that divide the two parties are then permeable, making the relation between lovers one of conjunction rather than opposition (Cixous, "Grace and Innoncence…" 70).

Thus, if George had been a successful Orlando, he would have abandoned his position of mastery and allowed for Hermione to retain her difference, develop from static to dynamic: "this time Hermione from the *Winter's Tale* (who later froze into a statue) would have been Rosalind with sleek, deer-limbs and a green forester's cap with one upright darting hawk quill" (66). In George's forest however, there is no place for the equal other; Orlando and Rosalind exist as predetermined oppositions where the subject must be either/or, never both/and. As foreshadowed by George's letter where scrawled-over writing violates sea colored paper, Hermione is in danger of becoming a text created by George's pen. George's gaze petrifies her, concretizes

her in a still image which parallels the Imagist poem. Pound describes Imagism as the "sort of poetry where painting or sculpture seems as if it were just coming over into speech" (in Zach 234), making Imagism "a doctrine of *hardness*" (Zach 238). As George titles Hermione with "Greek Goddess" (64), he confines her in the position of frozen statue; she remains the fixed, feminine counterpart who upholds his masculine self-reflection, providing him with "Imaginary power" and "Imaginary victory" (Cixous, "Sorties…" 79). Whereas the relationship between Hermione and Fayne is grounded in dialogue, George adopts a monological format, demanding that Hermione be silent: "'don't talk,' he now said, 'don't talk'" (68). Experiencing a lack of communication, Hermione "knew why she couldn't love George properly" (65).

While Hermione represents a dialogic poetics of love, George embodies Pound's theory of Vorticism. Through his constant travels, George seeks to escape the entrapping Symbolic schemes of Pennsylvania and America; he champions the Vorticist insistence on "movement, energy and intensity" (Zach 236): "George had been to Europe, had come back and gone back again and had come back again. Why didn't George stay put, stay there or stay here?" (69). Like the Vorticist image, George is "active rather than static and fixed" (Zach 236), a contrast to the Imagist image and the passive object position Hermione has been committed to. However, while George acts as the sovereign subject, his identity has been constructed by him only, it is monological rather than dialogical. George challenges the notion of a predetermined Pennsylvanian identity, he puts the static image into motion, but he does not transform it. In Hermione's words, "George was neither beast nor man" (85), he is neither simple nor complicated: "If [George] had simply bared teeth, torn away garments with bared fangs, she would have understood, would have put narrow arms around great shoulders, would have yielded to him" (85). Despite being "the high-water mark of the intelligentsia" (71), he is "not attuned to high beating intellect that had raced ahead of him, that he had not caught for all his wit" (85). "Intellect" here seems to correspond with "love," or with H.D.'s notion of the "over-conscious" – a coexistence of body and mind, of the "sub-conscious" and the "conscious" (*Notes on*… 40). Within George, a dialogic relation between the maternal and the paternal is lacking; George is only mind.

Consequently, if Hermione stays with George, the creative sphere of *between* that she briefly experienced with Fayne will remain a Garden of Eden, a country forever lost. In contrast to the Biblical account of the Creation, Hermione's Edenic

Arden – a forest of love – is connected to the mother and not the Father: "Repudiate the Forest of Arden and cling to the memory of that Forest as a man clings to the memory of his mother…" (67). Hermione's desire for Fayne, for the Forest of Arden, equals the unconscious memory of her mother, her first love object, and this memory surfaces in Hermione's constant affection for Eugenia's painting. Gaston Bachelard notes: "to *love* an image is always to *illustrate* a love; to love an image is to find, without knowing it, a new metaphor for an old love … As soon as anyone loves a reality with all his soul, then this reality is itself a soul and a memory" (116). Hermione now returns to her mother's image by translating it into language: "I am the Tree of Life. Tree. I am a tree planted by the rivers of water. I am … I am … HER exactly" (70). By identifying with her mother's tree, Hermione is again experiencing "Her," the self pointing to Kristeva's semiotic pulsations; she reunites with her mother, with "HER exactly." The river sustains the tree; water bridges Hermione's two selves, it represents a nourishing link between inside and outside: "All water is a kind of milk" Bachelard writes, "[m]ore precisely, every joyful drink is mother's milk" (117). Whereas a tree cannot survive without water, language is nurtured by the maternal, by semiotic elements of signification; without them it is dead and void of meaning. Hermione has previously ingested this loving liquid in dialogue with Fayne, and she now seeks to retain the presence of *la mer/mère* by putting her mother's painting into writing.

Writing as Hermione knows it belongs to a masculine paradigm of knowledge and accomplishments, "was an achievement like playing the violin or singing like Tetrazzini … had somehow got connected up with George Lowndes" (71). Nevertheless, George lacks a dialogic relationship to the other, the realm where the heterogeneity of language can be experienced – he is unfamiliar with the "Tree of Life," with the poetics of love: "George could never love a tree properly" (73), he "doesn't know what trees are" (84). Despite his intellectual success, his writing remains monological. Hermione on the other hand, intuitively feels that writing is connected with "cones of green set within green cones" (72), postulating a link between the mother, love and poetic language. In the following, this nexus will be explored through the prism of Kristeva's *herethics*, according to which the subject is bound to the other through love and not through the Law, as Lacan suggests.

Herethics, presented in "Stabat Mater" (1976), is an ethics based on the love-relation between mother and child. Pregnancy, Kristeva argues, is a state where the

self is inseparable from the other, where the other is within the self; the other is not a self-governing entity but is dependent on the subject.[9] Pregnancy thus challenges Lacan's Symbolic order, which is determined by a sovereign and unreachable Other. It is the inaccessibility of the Other, of the Real, which produces the breach between signifier and signified. Kristeva however, does not deny this separation in language, the gap put forth by Lacanian theory. Although mother and child share a symbiotic existence there is an irremediable abyss between them, the child is always an other: "a mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language – and it has always been so" (238). Out of love, the mother must "wean the child" (Oliver, *Unraveling the*… 68), she must initiate the breakup of their symbiosis so that the child can enter the Symbolic and become an autonomous being. The mother however, knows that the Other is not beyond experience, but is born from the body, is flesh of her own flesh, comes from within and is natural. The gap between signifier and signified is not total; pregnancy constitutes a bridge, a balance between nature and culture, between the drives and the Symbolic. Thus, it is love that generates the move into the Symbolic order and charges language with meaning.

While the mother must acknowledge the Symbolic, the Symbolic does not recognize the mother. Within the Symbolic scheme Kristeva claims, the mother figure, with her unsettled identity of both/and, can only exist as myth or fantasy; the mother's love is repressed. The mother constitutes an intersection between semiotic and symbolic, between flesh and word, but her body is negated and becomes second-term. The Virgin Mary, the figure that generates the argument of "Stabat Mater," has split into "virgin" and "mother"; her role as virginal icon, representing non-death, non-sin and non-sex, is boosted on behalf of her maternal generativity. This dualistic presentation of the Virgin finds its parallel in Hermione's two selves. "Hermione," the frozen statue, represents a predetermined female identity that maintains the Symbolic order, while "Her" is related to Hermione's artistic potential, to the prolific pleasure of *jouissance* which is rejected within the Gart-realm. In order to break up the binary understanding of the mother Kristeva urges her reader to listen to the mother's music, her presence in language.

In *Her*, the loving link between mother and child, flesh and word transpires as Eugenia narrates the story of Hermione's birth. A raging storm mirrors the

[9] H.D. notes that she was most aware of the elevated state of the "over-conscious," the integration of body and mind, while she was pregnant (Rado 65).

circumstances of the morning Hermione was born, and Hermione feels as if she is "deep underwater" (87). She thus makes a symbolic return to her mother's womb, to a space that exists before and beyond the Symbolic. Alone in the kitchen, mother and daughter are "flung now into profound intimacy," time and space is left behind, and each of the two women "forg[ets] herself":

> Eugenia forgetting herself spoke to herself. 'Your father was *afraid* … that the doctor wouldn't help us.' Eugenia was speaking from somewhere outside herself … 'It was such a funny *time* to have a baby … It seems odd having a baby (I don't know why) by daylight … It was all over in a few hours … it was so funny … It was so odd. I had you in the morning.' (88-9)

By listening to her mother's reminiscence, Hermione feels herself being born over again, conceived by the words of the story telling of their unity and separation, born through language: "*Unless you are born of water ... unless you are born of water ...* they were born of water, reincarnated (89). The narrator echoes John 3:5, where Nicodemus asks Jesus: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus replies: "Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (The Bible, NT 117). In the Biblical narrative, the kingdom of God figures as the unattainable Other; that which is flesh can only reach for unity with the spirit by submission to the word of God. As Eugenia delivers the story of Hermione's birth, her words bind child and mother together; body and spirit intersect and flesh becomes word: "Let a body venture at last out of its shelter, take a chance with meaning under a veil of words. WORD FLESH" (Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" 235).

Eugenia's narrative constitutes a feminine creation scene as the two storms overturn the binaries of culture/nature, head/heart and masculine/feminine. During the storm of Hermione's birth, Carl Gart is "*afraid*"; the storm is preventing the doctor's formula of science from interfering. Instead it is Mandy, who Eugenia refers to as "mother," and "Demeter" – the Greek goddess of fertility – who serves as midwife and helps silence the Biblical-like storm: "Demeter … lifting the tired shoulders of a young Eugenia had driven the wind back, back … The house took a deep breath settled down, decided to settle down for another re-incarnation. It was Eugenia who had saved it" (90). Correspondingly, at the present level of narration, the fragility and constructedness of the Garts' "biological-mathematical definition of the universe" (6)

is revealed. While Eugenia is telling the story of life, Carl and Bertrand's fifteen-year-long science experiment is destroyed by the flood. While the Gart formula has previously equaled the word of God, the Godly power is now borne by the poetic words delivered by the mother: "*The morning stars sang together*. Words of Eugenia had more power than textbooks, than geometry, than all of Carl Gart and brilliant 'Bertie Gart' as people called him. Bertrand wasn't brilliant, not like mama. Carl Gart wasn't brilliant like Eugenia" (89).[10] Thus, it is the generative force of language, passed on from generation to generation, which guarantees the immortality of the mother figure: "herethics is undeath, love" (Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" 263).

In regard to the icon of the Virgin Mary, Kristeva argues that her milk and tears are "metaphors of nonspeech, of a 'semiotics' that linguistic communication cannot account for" ("Stabat Mater" 249). The Virgin comes to represent a "return of the repressed" semiotic; in a sphere of monotheism her tears "reestablish what is non-verbal" ("Stabat Mater" 249). Likewise, in response to Eugenia's narrative, Hermione is wordless while tears are streaming from her eyes: "Her eyes were statue's eyes, blurred over, eye-spaces where eyes should be. Her eyes were a blank covered with a white surface, a statue with eyes of a statue seeing nothing … I can't see things. I'm crying …" (90-1). In order to escape her position of statue, Hermione must find the means to translate her tears into words.

Suitably, it is Fayne who initiates Hermione's final break with the monotheistic Gart formula. Together with George, Hermione is watching Fayne play the male lead in a college performance of George B. Shaw's play *Pygmalion,*[11] whose plot, in an uncanny manner, mirrors the relationship between George/Gart and

[10] In Job 38:1-41 God asks Job where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid, pointing to the greatness of God the creator and the weakness of man: "6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb?" (The Bible, OT 636). In *Her,* the mother's narrative has the generative power; it initiates life by prompting water to flow through the word.

[11] Shaw's play, in which the character of Professor Higgins seeks to transform a Cockney flower girl into a refined society lady, is a reinterpretation of the Greek myth of Pygmalion, where a sculptor carves the perfect woman in ivory who later transforms into a human being. In *Her*, these two narratives blend: While George makes it clear that they are watching a staging of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Hermione observes the characters on stage wearing Greek tunics (138).

Hermione.[12] In resemblance of Rosalind, Fayne appears on stage disguised as a man; she is both feminine and masculine. She thus figures not as the omnipotent sculptor of *Pygmalion* but as a loving other who might bring Gart's and George's statue to life: "That could be no other than Fayne Rabb because ouija-board perceptions saw who was Pygmalion, saw a stretch of sea coast, saw a boy in a tunic who was Fayne Rabb, who was Pygmalion" (138). After the play, the two women meet in the passage *between* stage and backstage, at the threshold between conscious and unconscious, self and other. In their direct, unmarked dialogue, they appear as two intersecting systems (Kristeva, "In Praise…" 15): "I'm glad I waited in this corridor.' 'Oh – then you recognize me?' '*Recognize* you? But I always knew you'" (139). Through her inclusion of the other within her self, Fayne is "a stretch of sea coast," she points back to the mother whose love for her child is also a love for herself, as much as it is a willingness to abandon herself and exist for the other. Thereby, in line with Bachelard, Hermione's love for Fayne is a metaphor of love for the mother, whom she has "always kn[own]": "Other loves will come, of course, and be grafted onto the first ability to love … The chronology of the heart is indestructible" (Bachelard 116).

Hermione's love for the other now becomes a site of self-exploration. Alone with Fayne in her private room, Hermione speech is unrestrained, spontaneously gushing forth: "'I don't want you to think that I'm reading. It's things back of me. It's things back of me. You draw things out of me" (143). As the differences between self and other meet and challenge each other in love, the self recognizes the other, keeps her difference alive so that it can continue to challenge and change the self. Cixous elaborates on her "economy of love":

> To understand the other, it is necessary to go in their language, to make the journey through the other's imaginary. For you are strange to me. In the effort to understand, I bring you back to me, compare you to me. I translate you in me. And what I note is your difference, your strangeness. At that moment, perhaps, through recognition of my own differences, I might perceive something of you … The movement is like a voyage. ("Conversations" 146)

The desire stemming from the positive inequality between two lovers promotes non-closure and expansion of the speaking subject (Cixous, "Sorties…" 79); through a

[12] Through *Pygmalion*, *Her* and H.D.'s personal history are loosely linked: While George Lowndes and Shaw share the same first name, Shaw's protagonist Eliza Doolittle carries H.D.'s family name.

continuous displacement of self and other, language figures as an infinite space through which Fayne, the loving Pygmalion, transforms Hermione's static self-image into a dynamic one. While Hermione has previously been a frozen statue on a woodpath, she is now associated with the path itself, meandering through the forest: "I mean looking at Miss Her Gart, I see a green lane. There is some twist to it, a long lane winding among birch trees" (145). Hermione no longer figures as a closed entity but a searching self who, through continuous traversal between self and other, journeys through the workings of language. By loving Fayne, Hermione's tears – the repressed (erotic) pleasure of *la jouissance* (Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" 249) – are brought into the Symbolic, they manifest in words. Hermione no longer regards the word as a finalistic unit, but realizes that "Ordinary words aren't always ordinary" (144); words are "projections of things beyond one" (146). Through her love for the other, Hermione connects with her mother: "Knowing her, I know Her" (158). The link between nature and culture, semiotic and Symbolic, is now reestablished; in love, Hermione's two selves merge through the word.

Hermione finally turns to poetry out of necessity. Her writing becomes "the thin flute holding [her] to eternity" (161); it upholds her relationship to the m/other and testifies to her continuous becoming through language. Similarly, Cixous writes: "If space without bounds hadn't been given to me, I wouldn't have written what I can hear. Because I write for, I write from, I start writing from: Love" ("Coming to Writing" 42). In contrast, George, whose writing "proffered Shaw, Maeterlinck, Bertrand de Born" (72), declares that "Love doesn't make good art" (148). At the same time he lauds Hermione's first poems with "*this is writing*" (148). Hermione however, intimately knows that writing and loving is one and the same; they are interconnected processes of differentiation and celebrations of the heterogeneity of word and subject. Thus, in response to George's paradoxical statements, Hermione can only conclude, "Writing. Love is writing" (14), words that are paralleled by Cixous: "Writing, loving: inseparable. Writing is a gesture of love. *The Gesture*" ("Coming to Writing" 42).

While love prompts Hermione to progress on her path of self-knowledge, it constitutes a difficult border-existence which continuously threatens to topple into destructiveness. Accordingly, the first part of the following chapter will explore how the love of Fayne and Hermione becomes isolated within the maternal realm, refusing to acknowledge the Symbolic order. In turn, the second part of the chapter will

examine the women-oriented relationship as tending towards the paternal – turning the two lovers into supporters of the very patriarchal order they struggle against. I then argue that heterosexual norms cannot simply be replaced by a feminine paradigm; the double bind of the subject cannot be cancelled out.

III. The Triangle

The emancipating nature of Fayne and Hermione's relationship has lead critics to regard women-oriented love as a conclusive solution to Hermione's condition and to the text as such. Friedman and DuPlessis state: "H.D. … investigates lesbian difference from heterosexual norms and presents the love between Her and Fayne as a liberating gestalt of psychic, aesthetic and erotic passion" ("I had…" 216). In what follows, I challenge this reading by arguing that the novel by no means negates or replaces the heterosexual paradigm, as presented by the Gart formula, with a harmonic, feminine scheme. While Hermione's relation with Fayne has the power to hold her to eternity, prompting her to let the melody of her mother echo in her speech, their love threatens to tip over into each of the two realms: "'I mean I see (through you) the meaning of – of – ' 'Eternity?' 'No-oo – not that exactly.' 'Maternity?' 'Oh horrible – ' 'Paternity?' 'Fayne – are you really still there?'" (145). Enclosed in either the maternal or the paternal sphere, the prolific space of *between* is negated, and love transforms into a destructive urge to control and dominate the other. In order to ensure the generative borderline-existence of love, Hermione's identification with Fayne is not enough; she must also embody the paralyzing Symbolic power represented by George. I will thereby explore how the poetics of *Her* is necessarily a poetics of the triangle.

Whereas the previous chapter showed how the relationship of Hermione and Fayne echoes the loving link between Hermione and Eugenia, their bond will now be examined through the prism of Mrs. Rabb's narcissistic relation to Fayne. Narcissism, Kristeva states, is to a certain degree a precondition for love; the lover is "a narcissist with an *object*" (Kristeva, "Freud and Love…" 250). For the loving mother, her child figures as the supreme other, providing her with an ideal self-image (the narcissistic moment), and at the same time she must allow for the child to separate from her, to become an autonomous being. Thus, love is generated as the mother, attached to her object of desire, simultaneously acknowledges the Third Party which exists beyond her beloved; it is in the eyes of the Symbolic that her loved one is recognized as a *she*. (Kristeva, "Freud and Love…" 251). Accordingly, Eugenia and Hermione's relationship is both separation and union: "I love Eugenia, but I can not stay here," Hermione states (94). Hermione must leave her mother in order to gain her dependency; nevertheless, she remains attached to her through the love which

surfaces in language. The loved object then serves as an intermediary link between the lover/mother and the Symbolic scheme.

The narcissist on the other hand, is someone who fails to accept the Symbolic, and thereby she lacks the ability to love. According to Kristeva, narcissism is grounded in the initial intervention of the mother/child relation, in the phase of abjection. The abject is a state which is to be replaced by the other after the child has processed through the mirror stage. It is an intense feeling; "at once somatic and symbolic," by which the subject revolts against an external threat from which she needs to distance herself; simultaneously, she senses that the danger is actually coming from the inside (Kristeva, "'unes femmes'…" 118). Abjection then, is "a desire for separation, for becoming autonomous and also a feeling of an impossibility of doing so" (Kristeva, "Interview with…" 135-36). Thus, the abject exists prior to identity; it is a state of undecidability where the child is not yet subject and the mother not yet object, where mother and child have not separated, but concurrently, they are no longer identical with each other: "Abjection is therefore a kind of *narcissistic* crisis" (*Powers of Horror* 14).

This narcissistic crisis materializes in the relationship between Mrs. Rabb and Fayne, where neither can break out of their bond. Fayne has grown up alone with her mother, she has been kept home from school, deprived of contact with the outside world, men in particular: "You see people wanted to marry mama … One had a pony … His name was Langstreeth … He said one day if mama wouldn't marry him, he would wait for me to grow up and he would marry *me*. Then mama struck me. I mean it was so funny" (157). In sum, Symbolic intervention, interaction with the Third Party, is negated: "You see there was something wrong – I mean mama won't let anyone come near me. I mean she never did let anyone come near me" (158). Fayne's attitude towards her maternal imprisonment is twofold; while describing herself as "tragic" and "horrible," yearning to break the dyadic relation to her mother, she nonetheless needs Mrs. Rabb, embarrassingly explaining, "You see we have each other" (157).

Thus, within her mother's house, Fayne is no longer "fey with wildness"; she is simply called by her birth name "Pauline," a name that to Hermione "negated Fayne" (160), depriving her of her subject position. Although mother and daughter depend on each other it is Mrs. Rabb who dominates the relationship: while the child serves her mother as a symbol of her own authentication, there is in turn no reason for

her to serve as an intermediary link for the child to become independent. (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 13). Thereby, Mrs. Rabb rasps, "I am a mother, I am her mother. I am mother, mother, mother" (159); she clings to her daughter and to the state of abjection. During the initial phase of abjection, the mother controls the infant's boundaries between body and non-body and regulates its anal and oral drives. Likewise, Mrs. Rabb continues to make Fayne dependent on her maternal authority: "mama said I was ill … She made me ill … Then she nursed me … She would make me ill and then nurse me" (158). Kristeva argues that the abject is "the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost"; through her union with her child she recalls the irretrievable relationship with her own mother (*Powers of Horror* 15). The abject then appears in order to uphold the "I" within the Other. The abject mother is therefore "phobic," "she has no other object than the abject" (*Powers of Horror* 6). Accordingly, Mrs. Rabb mistakes Fayne for herself; she can only sustain her own ego within her daughter. While the abject mother cannot acknowledge the Symbolic, the Symbolic – to which Mrs. Rabb's maternal power and ambivalent identity is a threat – does not acknowledge the abject mother. Mrs. Rabb's reluctance to separate from her child and turn her daughter over to that which negates her, is thereby reinforced: "Within the economy of [the] Phallus, only the child authenticates her, so why should she let it go?" (Oliver, *Unraveling the*… 59).

Despite Hermione's aversion to Mrs. Rabb's destructive bond with her daughter, she adopts the role of Mrs. Rabb in her relation to Fayne. She attempts to isolate her in her own private sphere, to merge with the ideal sister who provides her with a self-image: "It's better her coming here … up in this room, alone in this room" (180). Secluded in Hermione's room, Fayne is no longer open and individualistic, but falls back on the dependent position of Pauline. She appears physically and psychologically feeble; she speaks "like a sick child" (179) and relates to Hermione as if she were the abject mother: "Something in you makes me hate you. Drawn to you I am repulsed, drawn away from you, I am negated" (146). Mirroring Mrs. Rabb, Hermione becomes the nursing mother; when with her poetry she lullabies Fayne into quietude. Or, as Fayne puts it, "Your voice is drug to me" (179). Placing her hand over Fayne's heart, Hermione feels the rhythm of heartbeat and poetry merge, and as Fayne falls asleep, the two fuse into one feminine entity, into "Her" (181).

While dialogue with Fayne has previously served as the loving link between Hermione's two selves, their exchange has now come to a standstill. "*O sister my*

sister O singing swallow, the world's division divideth us" (179), Hermione compulsively repeats throughout her reading, hinting at unease about the sustainability of their union.[13] As Friedman observes, this refrain might be read as alluding to the troubles of a lesbian relationship: "Its warning foreshadows the difficulties Fayne and Her face in their unconventional love. They are aware that the world would consider them 'indecent'" (*Psyche Reborn* 43). Similarly, Cassandra Laity understands the line as "suggesting the heterosexism that denies lesbian love" (*H.D. and*... 36). In order to preserve this relationship, however, Hermione negates "the world's division," she seeks to cancel out the binary organization of reality which splits the feminine from the masculine, nature from culture and self from other. Lying across the body of her sleeping Fayne, Hermione's hands "stretched like some suppliant across the dead body of its child or slain young lover" while she thinks, "What is so terrible about it?" (181). As Mrs. Rabb dominates her daughter by making her sick and healing her, Hermione's love topples into a wish to sustain and control Fayne: "I will keep her heart beating. I will keep Her asleep" (182). In isolation and silence, in sleep and in death, Fayne is hers; their perfect unity of "Her" can be preserved indefinitely: "I will not have her hurt. I will not have Her hurt. She is Her. I am Her. Her is Fayne. Fayne is Her. I will not let them hurt HER" (181). Whereas Friedman finds this passage to "signal a liberating woman-identification in [Hermione's] relationship with Fayne" (*Psyche Reborn* 43), I read its merging of identities as destructive: As Hermione keeps "Her" away from "them," she deprives her beloved of her otherness, of her subjectivity. By leaving no room for Fayne Hermione also negates love, and she thus obstructs her own libidinal self-organization instigated by Eugenia's forest and her own poetic word.

Complete loyalty to the Symbolic however, represents a similar threat to Fayne and Hermione's relationship. A love secluded in the paternal realm becomes governed by Cixous's masculine Imaginary which is based on "the murder of the m/other" ("Sorties…" 70, 103-4) and equals a rejection of the poetic word. Enmeshed in the Symbolic, the lover adapts to the masculine endeavor of reaching for a supreme "I." She then regards her other merely as someone who could provide her with

[13] The line is taken from A. C. Swinburne's poem "Itylus" where the eight stanza reads: "O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow/ The heart's division divideth us" (55). For comprehensive studies of H.D.'s textual reworkings of Swinburne, see Cassandra la's "H.D. and A.C. Swinburne: Decadence and Modernist Women's Writing," and Susan S. Friedman's "Origins: Rescriptions of Desire in *Her*" in her *Penelope's Web*.

"Imaginary profit" (Cixous, "Sorties…" 79), with a stable image. As their relationship develops, both Fayne and Hermione attempt to assume the position of omnipotent analyst, while the lover's dialogue that has previously bound the two is cancelled out. In discussing the nature of their relationship, Fayne states: "You are not myself but you are some projection of myself. Myself, *my*self projected you like water…" (146). Water, the nourishing liquid associated with the mother's love, is now a mere surface where the self projects the other like the sun projects its shadow – the shadow testifying to the sun's existence. Whereas in love, both parties become heterogeneous, infinite signifiers, self and other now stands for a closed sign: The self comprehends herself as the signified while the other appears to be her signifier.

Thereby, Fayne and Hermione's feminine rewriting of *Pygmalion* reverses again, and the myth falls back into the realm of the paternal. As neither can accept the passive role of Galatea, their dialogue becomes a battle for the role of the sovereign sculptor: "'And I – I'll make you breathe, my breathless statue.' 'Statue? You – *you* are the statue' (163). By adopting the masculine values of "mastery, superego [and] the sanctioning communicative word" (Kristeva, "About Chinese Women" 155), Fayne and Hermione conform to the Symbolic order, they become "virile women" (Oliver 108), "playing at being supermen" (Kristeva, "About Chinese Women" 155). Within this scheme, love figures as a contract of ownership and while arguing whether George belongs to Fayne or Hermione, Hermione states: "'Well then, speaking man to man, Fayne, why don't you take him?'" (219).

In this light, Friedman's argument that the novel constitutes "a matrix of maternal and homoerotic desire" which overthrows the phallocentric plot (*Penelope's Web* 135) seems dissonant. It is clear that Hermione can develop her selfhood and her artistry neither as the feminine "Her," nor as the masculine "Hermione." Secluded within either the maternal or the paternal realm, love becomes a destructive rather than a productive force. *Her* is thus governed by neither of the two paradigms, but is charged by a dynamic collaboration between three parties: the subject, her beloved and the Symbolic order.

Her presents the bonds between Hermione, Fayne and George as a variation of the love-triangle, which was an almost obsessional motif in H.D.'s fiction of the twenties and thirties. The triangle plot typically evolves around a female, bisexual protagonist and her difficult relationships with one male and one female lover. While Friedman and DuPlessis suggest that H.D.'s novels should be read as manifestations

of a struggle between hetero- and homosexuality ("I had…" 215), Lara Vetter stresses that it is not the notion of being bisexual that seems to motivate H.D.'s prose works (110). Rather, the concern of these texts lies with how bisexuality, an identification with both the masculine and the feminine can be translated into language, find its textual manifestation. During her sessions with Freud in the early thirties, H.D.'s bisexuality and the relation between sexuality and writing becomes one of their major topics. In a letter to Bryher she writes:

> Papa [Freud] says "you had two things to hide, one that you were a girl, the other that you were a boy." It appears I am that all-but extinct phenomena, the perfect bi-. Well, this is terribly exciting … it seems the conflict consists partly that what I write commits me – to one sex, or to the other, I no longer HIDE … no doubt, before I leave, we will come to some balance" (24 November 1934). (in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 311)

Friedman argues that this balance is found and articulated in works such as *Kora and Ka* (1930), *Mire-Mare* (1930), *Nights* and "Nartex" (1928) (*Penelope's Web* 310). These texts are described as carrying the mark of "erotic and linguistic sterility"; erotic and psychical bisexual existence means being "cast out of a 'home' category – whether heterosexual or lesbian," as "neither man nor woman" (*Penelope's Web* 310). In "Nartex," the relationship between the novella's three characters is described as a merging of identities, sexualities and qualities into one harmonious: "We're not three separate people. We're just one" (qtd. in Vetter 109). Contrastively, in *Her*, this perfect balance between two libidinal economies is not yet articulated; the "bisexuality" presented by the novel can by no means be regarded as fantasy of a complete, harmonious being (Cixous, "Sorties…" 84). Rather, Hermione's cross-gender identification exists as a difficult crisscrossing between self and other, where the need to exist as both/and surfaces as a perpetual struggle, void of closure.

While Fayne and Hermione have chosen each other, George is the prime subject of their private conversations, always interfering with their twosomeness. As Hermione lullabies Fayne with her poetry, Fayne's last words before falling asleep disturbs the sphere of feminine unity Hermione is trying to establish: "'Tell me what does George Lowndes say about me. Tell me Hermione" (180). Fayne, isolated by her abject mothers, craves to be recognized by the masculine; she yearns for the Symbolic intervention that is needed in order to become an autonomous subject. In return, Hermione too must admit to Fayne the necessity of George's presence. Through his

Symbolic power, George represents a masculine contrast to the feminine "Her" by which Hermione can "experience what she is not, what she is, what she can be" (Cixous, "Sorties…" 86): "I try out on George the thing that is in me. The thing that is me" (178). The novel then echoes H.D.'s sexual, emotional and mental identification: During her marriage to Richard Aldington she continued to explore her desire for women, and throughout her enduring relationship with Bryher she never gave up on her love of men (Friedman and DuPlessis, "I had…" 226). By incorporating both masculine and feminine qualities into herself, the female subject "neither refuse[s] to insert [her]self into the symbolic order, nor embrace[s] the masculine model for femininity (the 'homologous' woman) which is offered her there" (Moi 139). Thus, she entangles the double bind, traverses between the first- and second-term concepts of Cixous's binaries.

Although the relation to Fayne triggers Hermione's turn to poetry, Hermione is also indebted to George. While Fayne has liberated the "gambler's instinct," the libidinal drives that charge her speech with meaning and make language matter, it is George, with all his intellectual magnificence, who has introduced Hermione to the pen, to the medium in which she can articulate her experience: "[A]ll the time George Lowndes with his own counter, had found her a way out" (75). Fayne and George, each strikingly different from the other, thus represent inextricably linked qualities that parallel the dialectic between Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic. The interdependence of these elements within the subject figures as a connection between life and language; it "guarantees a relationship between body (*soma*) and soul (*psyche*)" (Oliver, "Julia Kristeva" 559). H.D. elucidates: "as it takes a man and a woman to create another life, so it takes these two forms of seed, one in the head and one in the body to make a new spiritual birth" (*Notes on* ... 50). Thereby, Hermione's becoming, her proliferating "WORDFLESH" (Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" 235) poetry, can only take place as she admits to the presence of both sexes in the mind (Cixous, "Sorties…" 84). By identifying with George and Fayne Hermione becomes a porous substance through which liquid – mother's milk – may pass.

This self exists as a "*process* of differentiation" which continuously calls into question the sovereign position of the subject, the subject as master of her own speech, and thus her own self (Kristeva, "From Oscillation…" 165, emphasis added). Hermione now knows that the relation between herself and her lovers is one of intertextuality; her text is not integral in itself but depends on a continuous absorption

and transformation of the texts of both Fayne and George. In order to ensure her selfhood, Hermione has become dependent on the presence of both, and a loss of love thereby becomes a loss of self. Her new awareness of the processual subject can then be dangerous, as H.D. notes, "the swing from normal to abnormal consciousness is accompanied by grinding discomfort of mental agony" (*Notes on*… 19). The following chapter examines how a shattering of the triangle, starting with Hermione's engagement to George, turns love into madness and leads to a complete disintegration of the subject.

IV. Madness

Whereas in love, the subject comes into existence by the productive integration of feminine and masculine, hysteria represents a state where the split between these oppositions is so severe that they become irreconcilable. The subject remains "torn between two contracts" and loses ownership of herself (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 71). In his case study of Anna O.,[14] Joseph Breuer writes: "At moments when her mind was clear she would complain … of having two selves, a real one and an evil one which forced her to behave badly" (24). Breuer – representing the first term of the binary structure, the masculine, the therapeutic position of reason – postulates Anna O.'s first self as the "real one," a term pointing to a conventional social self which adjusts to and accepts established roles and behavioral norms. In contrast, her second self is "evil"; it breaks with the law of reason, and it is Anna O.'s knowledge of this self that determines her madness. Similarly, George proposes Hermione's poetic monologues to be "simply witchcraft" (172). Also, when trying to explain the nature of "Her," Hermione's other self, George exclaims, "Oh God, hamadryad, forget all that rot" (118). This second self, a knowledge exclusive to the female patient, stands in an obverse relation to the positive, first self: knowledge recognized by the male doctor and by George. Thus, as noted by Shoshana Felman, the existence of the other self – the feminine – is not acknowledged in its own right, and in western culture, "the ethic of mental health is masculine" (21).

Interestingly, the notion of madness on both the level of narrative and plot – the breakdowns of *Her* and Her – is more or less left out by critics who have previously discussed the novel. Also, the structure of hysteria, the notion of a "double contract" which charges the text and the character of Hermione throughout, has remained unmentioned. In the few instances Hermione's breakdown is actually mentioned, it is treated as a singular thematic event where only the last of her physical

[14] Anna O. (pseudonym for Bertha Pappenheim) was a patient of Josesph Breuer, Freud's colleague and co-author of *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). Anna O. initially coined the term "talking cure," and her treatment is seen as marking the beginning of the field of psychoanalysis.

and mental collapses is considered.[15] Madness is here read as the result of George's involvement with Fayne; it unleashes as women-oriented love is rejected. In response, the first part of this chapter will re-examine *Her*'s representation of hysteria, its series of narrative and thematic breakdowns. The second part of the chapter will explore the meaning of Hermione's madness, asking how does hysteria convey meaning and, more importantly, what does it mean? While Shoshana Felman suggests that hysteria constitutes "a manifestation of both cultural impotence and of political castration," pointing to defeat (118), Friedman and DuPlessis view Hermione's illness as "creative madness" which clears the path for "an autonomous identity" ("I had…" 213). By exploring Hermione's intimate relation to language, to the written word in particular, I will attempt to synthesize these seemingly irreconcilable views.

While critics agree that it is Fayne who becomes Hermione's ultimate sororal mirror, it is actually Lillian Lowndes, George's mother and the third of Hermione's mother figures, who provides Hermione with a true image. Lillian, a lettered, beautiful and independent woman who has traveled the world and raised her son alone, calls Hermione "Undine." This name implies that Hermione, through her engagement to George, is yet again trapped in the position of statue; she has sacrificed her voice for her feet, sold her sea-inheritance to be on solid ground, to be with a man.[16] The name "Undine" thus embodies the position of the hysteric, pointing to an inability to keep both voice and feet, navigate in water and on land – belong to the feminine inside and the masculine outside at the same time. Lillian articulates what Hermione intuitively knows, that by accepting an official commitment to George, and thus conforming to the patriarchal law, she is negating herself, negating the part of Rosalind. She is "playing not false to George, not false to Fayne [but] playing false to Her, to Her precisely… a thin, vibrant and intensively sincere, young sort of unsexed warrior" (187). With her new name, it is no longer necessary to pretend in order to please, and the "certifiable insanity" Hermione predicts at the text's beginning finally unlatches: "I will tell them there is no use. Lillian has found out that my name is Undine" (113).

[15] See for example S. Travis' "A Crack in the Ice. Subjectivity and the Mirror in H.D.'s *Her*" and Rachel Blau DuPlessis' "The Authority of Otherness" in her *H.D. – The Career of That Struggle.*

[16] German novel by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqé (1811), about a water spirit who marries a knight in order to gain a soul.

The moment the name "Undine" is voiced, the notion of the "correlated subject" (63) shatters, as does the logic of the text. The coherent sequence of narrative and the linear time of language now breaks down; the novel enters "hysterical time": "The hysteric (either male or female) who suffers from reminiscences would … recognize his or her self in the anterior temporal modalities: cyclical or monumental" (Kristeva, "Women's Time" 192). Monumental temporality has "no cleavage or escape"; it does not pass, it is "all-encompassing and infinite," and can thus hardly be thought of as "temporality" at all. (191). As Hermione is having dresses fitted for her engagement party, the event breaks up into a jumble of unrelated episodes that have recently taken place, whereupon the novel moves into non-temporality. These short installments include an image of rotting moss in the Gart well, which has poisoned their drinking water and endangered them of typhoid; another one of a boy with a bloody leg, caught in a trap in the Gart woods, whom Hermione unsuccessfully has tried to help; and the image of one of Gart's lifeless butterflies under a glass case, "like a leaf, suffocating" (115). With their relation to disease, death and decay, these episodes shed light on the discomfort of the fitting scene. Fabrics in colors of George's liking are pinned tightly around Hermione's body, and the dress comes to symbolize her enmeshment within the Gart paradigm. The source of water, the mother's liquid, is now contaminated, and as George's fiancé, Hermione will remain trapped in the Gart woods, barred from continuing on her path of self-realization. The event at the dressmaker's becomes a stifling moment that cannot be escaped; it anticipates Hermione's collapse.

Before turning to Hermione's downward spiral into madness, it is necessary to have a closer look at the hysteric's notion of a double contract, the irreconcilable demand for both feet and voice. This tension manifests in an oscillation between power and powerlessness, as Hermione exclaims, "I'm too strong and I'm nothing and I'm frightened" (176). On the one hand Hermione longs to raise her voice, or, in Judith Butler's words, to "take the place of the father in public discourse as speaker" and demand subjectivity (qtd. in Kahane 9). On the other hand, she feels allegiance to "the music of the mother," to what provides access to self and language but resists articulation: "Mad, wild against her brain like innumerable white swallows, went beat of sea surf, the heavy growl and thunder of the surf and the out-growl growling of the sea surf (125).

The hysteric then, suffers from two kinds of reminiscences, "the reminiscence of their seductive identification with the paternal authority of symbolic knowledge and cognitive competence, and the reminiscence of a radical excitability that cannot be symbolized, one that is experienced as a gap, as passivity, as female castration, as a narcissistic flaw or as depressive disregard" (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 71). Accordingly, Hermione both refuses and acknowledges her position as George's fiancé. On the one hand, she feels suffocated by George's denial to see her as an active subject; in the eyes of George she is merely "decorative" (172). Through the institution of marriage, this passive object-position will be hers by law: "I am Hermione Gart and will be Hermione Lowndes … it wasn't right. People are in things, things are in people. I can't be called Lowndes" (112). She thus rejects imprisonment by self-assuredly asserting her own power, telling her husband-to-be, "I love Her, only Her, Her, Her," a statement that points back to abject relation with Fayne. Accordingly, George renames her "Narcissa" (170). On the other hand, Hermione still returns to the question that opened the text, "What am I? *What am I?*" (174), telling George "I did want to be rescued – I do, I do" (191), pleading him to help her find a name which will cancel out both "Narcissa" and "Undine." However, only love can synthesize Hermione's two names, only love "reconciles narcissism and hysteria" (Kristeva, "Freud and Love" 250), and as chapter two has shown, George is not a lover. Thus, as love is negated, hysteria unlatches.

Hermione's first breakdown takes place in the forest, and she realizes that time has circled back to start, or has not moved at all: "It was George back at the beginning, starting where they had left off so long ago, a month ago? A year ago?" (117). Hermione's hold on outside reality begins to rumble; the moonlight materializes, becomes a tangible gauze claustrophobically enveloping her, as if in a garment which she physically attempts to tear apart: "she flung her arm suddenly at full length upward … Oh God, it's something tearing" (117). In the outside world, it is Hermione's dress from the dressmaker's that tears, the suffocating outfit made to George's taste. On the inside, however, it is Hermione's mind that splits, and the seemingly romantic outing to the forest becomes an internal battle between Hermione's two selves: "The back of her head prompted the front of her head, slid a fraction of a fraction … away from the front of her head … separated from the front of her head, actually almost with a little click" (118). This explicit description of the breaking mind – the "insanity" feared throughout the novel's initial pages – is

manifested in a collapse of Eugenia's forest image, the tree "planted by the rivers of water" (70). While the maternal, feminine water has previously nourished the paternal symbol of the tree, the two now break apart, and Hermione can identify with only one at the time. On the one hand, she returns to the soothing image of the wood path that winds through the forest; Fayne's metaphor for Hermione's processual identity. The metaphor is now extended, when the path is likened to a river: "The river Meander runs like that woodpath across the forest" (119). On the other hand she adopts an aggressive position towards George, trying to appropriate his power of definition by returning to the name "Tree": "I am Tree and I shall have a new name and I am the word tree" (119). As Kristeva argues, "Phallic identification with the father leads the hysterical subject (male or female) to *compete against maximal symbolic performance*," resulting in rapid, abundant and poorly integrated discourse, in a search for knowledge and intellectual curiosity ("Countertransference…" 70). The hysteric's maxim sounds, "Tell me what I know. If not, I will not tell it to you," which is a sort of "hysterical blackmailing" ("Countertransference…" 70) that can be noted in the following exchange between Hermione and George:

> "I am like a blue cornflower in water. You said I was a blue flower seen in water." "I said you were a larkspur, a sort of blue hyacinth or Canterbury bell." "But they're all so different." "They are and they ain't so very. I *said* you were a larkspur." "Larkspur," she repeated, and added "Ritterspuren" … "Ritterspuren are knight's-spurs Georgio" and saying "knight's spurs" and remembering blue and larkspur-blue and the blue of cornflowers which George said she wasn't. (119)

While George answers Hermione "as if her mind was still one mind" (120), the rather banal argument about the color blue becomes to Hermione a frantic battle for subjectivity, a desperate attempt to wrestle loose from Undine: "Undine (or the Little Mermaid) couldn't speak after she sold her glory. I will not sell my glory" (120). Again, this demonstration of self-claimed power is accompanied by vulnerability: While "hysterics seek a maximal symbolic and psychic *jouissance*," they simultaneously "postulate the impossibility or the futility of this desire" (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 70). Thus, paradoxically, Hermione's agitated rejection of Undine leads to a fainting fit, a physical collapse; she can only keep to her feet by the assistance of George. Further, George brings her back to the Gart home, to her mother and father, and to the starting point of both the character and the text as such.

The claustrophobic feeling of the forest increases as Hermione's breakdown recurs with George's visit to the Gart house; in a physical and mental sense, the walls are caving in. Through subtle allusions to Breuer's case study, the text's reference to hysteria is further emphasized. Hermione, who has survived merely on dry toast throughout the narrative, now eats oranges, echoing Anna O.: "[Anna O.] had eaten almost nothing but oranges during the first stage of her illness" (Breuer 37). "Now it's winter," Hermione states, "oranges make it winter" (169), and as will be discussed later, winter becomes the season associated with collapse. Further, while Anna O., an Austrian, started to speak English and later French and Italian due to her condition (Breuer 30), Hermione becomes preoccupied with the German language, the language of her father's academic volumes, a language she cannot speak but which now keeps running "on and on … German had caught one in a mesh" (203).[17] Hermione's turn to German coincides with her impulsive singing, music being another language that she has consciously shied away from throughout the narrative, believing herself to be unschooled (166):

> She achieved a note, a song note that brought her back to a body that was vibrating, that was static yet vibrating here and there … (could she sustain it?) – *Du meine Herzen, du mein Ruhe*. She wished George wouldn't try to join in, he had no voice whatever … He hadn't no voice really. It was George with his volumes who was wordless, who was inarticulate; not Her Gart sitting on a hearth rug with *Du bist mein Grab* going now too deep into her insides. (170-71)

Hermione terms this music "water music" (170), it comes from deep within and brings her "back to a body," back to the mother. Water and music are boundless and playful, and from the rhythm of these semiotic elements Undine's voice and language spring out. Hermione regards the knowledge of this music as exclusively hers; George cannot access it, since within this realm he is voiceless, wordless. "Water music" thus appears as a tool by which Hermione can wrestle loose from her fiancé, from the Pennsylvanian forest, from the Gart-formula: "Men are not strong. Women are stronger. I am stronger. I turn and twist out of those iron arms because if he had held

[17] To H.D., Freud's patient and student, German was indeed the language of patriarchy. Her *Tribute to Freud* (1944), a series of reflections on her treatment, is dedicated to "Sigmund Freud *blameless physician*" (in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 26). Alluding to Asklepios, the Greek God of medicine and healing, H.D. presents Freud as both her "Professor" and guardian (in Friedman *Psyche Reborn* 26).

me, I would have been crushed by iron. Iron is in walls" (173). In line with the conclusions of critics such as Friedman, DuPlessis and Travis, Hermione's feminine water-voice initially seems to represent a power by which she can supersede and replace masculine law.

However, the text subtly underlines that the nature of water music is twofold – it is "*mein Herzen, mein Ruhe*," but also "*mein Grab*"; it postulates the danger of a destructive isolation within the maternal realm that resists the notion of the processual subject. What the law has silenced cannot merely form the basis of a new social contract; the two components remain inseparable and one system cannot simply replace the other: "The limbs of Her were water. Could she stand on water limbs? She swam (found use for limbs in water) toward the piano. The piano was a rock, a raft … she must hold on to this great rock; a house on a rock, I will build my house, she said, on a rock" (174-75). However, when reaching land, water is negated; "Her" and "Hermione" cannot be synthesized and physical breakdown is the only reaction left: "she felt her water-knees break and water-ankles let her feel how very insecure her marble feet were. Two people. I am Her … George put two hands under the armpits of a statue that was falling… (175).

In contrast to Hermione, Fayne manages to reconcile her inner self with the outside world, as George, and not Hermione, manages to break the symbiosis between Mrs. Rabb and her daughter through his sexual and intellectual involvement with Fayne: "he was so inexpressibly tactful with poor mama. I sometimes think mama is mad. I know I am" (186). George's Symbolic intervention is accepted by the Rabbs, and as he successfully intersects their isolated reality, process is guaranteed and madness is negated. This, however, deprives Hermione not only of women-oriented love, as suggested by previous critics, but also of the possibility of a fruitful relation with George. Hermione is, as previously described through her relation to her parents, "broken like a nut between two rocks, granite and granite" (81); she splits into "two people" (175) whose hearts cannot unite into one: "The heart in a white urn froze and bound Her so that she could not run away from the other, the unfamiliar beat and whirr her heart made at the name of George" (186). Abandoned by her lovers, the traversal between masculine and feminine, self and other is revoked and the path of self-knowledge is obstructed: "The person beating against impassable barrier of underbrush was alone" (188). Thus, as George confirms his relationship with Fayne, a

hysteric breakdown is inevitable. The dialectic relation between body and word now dissolves; Hermione has become Undine:

> An arrested moment, a moment with a white wrist, a moment that was balancing a hat on its hand, might last forever. One moment sets the pace for all, all moments and one moment trembled … The moment was fluid, it was "Yes, you are Undine. Or better the mermaid from Hans Andersen." … The moment was fluid, the moment answered the moment; "Yes, I am Undine. Or better the mermaid from Hans Andersen." (190)

Again, monumental time replaces linear time; Hermione's language becomes incoherent, rapid, it is shot through with specks of memory and fantasy and bursts of uncontrolled laughter. Furthermore, this "verbal haste," indecipherable to the surrounding world, is contrasted with a "spastic, mute body" (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 71). The inability to synthesize the requirements of the symbolic and the requirements of the "excitability" of the semiotic makes the hysterical subject resort to compromise solutions such as somatic symptoms (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 71). In Dianne Hunter's words, "the body signifies what social conditions make it impossible to state linguistically" (486). Hermione's immobilization materializes as what she describes as "a – sore throat or something…" (193), her throat is "freezing up": "breath made a runnel in the throat like an icicle on a hot stove … Words made runnels in the throat, different shapes like frost on nursery windows. I never saw frost on any other window. Stars of frost were incrusted on her long throat" (193). The speaking subject is now silenced, frozen; in accordance with the Shakespeare play from which Hermione has her name, winter has arrived; she is yet again a statue feeling "shut in a little box, the box had been put away quiet on a shelf, the box was quiet" (192).

Hermione's last breakdown clearly points to defeat; she is muted, overpowered, and her condition seems to echo Felman, who suggests that the language of the hysteric can only signify a "*request for help*," pointing to "a socially defined help-needing and help-seeking behavior [which] is itself part of female conditioning, ideologically inherent in the behavioral pattern and in the dependent and helpless role assigned to the woman as such" (118). However, by defining the hysteric subject as weak and incapable, Felman downplays the hysteric's forcefulness, her demand to be heard, and her desire to signify. Thus, I will read Hermione's

ambivalent conduct, her verbal haste and the following discrediting of speech, not so much as a defenseless call for aid, but as a demand for the listening ear, for the ear of the lover, the daring, "open system" that does not shy away from the voice of the ambiguous. Hermione's last accusation to George sounds, "why didn't you come nearer" (174)? In contrast to Felman, Juliet Mitchell does not consider the hysteric's behavior as initially female, and instead of emphasizing the powerlessness of the hysteric subject, she points to the hysteric as striving to convey the knowledge of the feminine, of her split position: "I do not believe there is such a thing as female writing, a woman's voice. There is the hysteric's voice which is *the woman's masculine language ... talking about feminine experience*" (289-90). The hysteric's language is then more than a minimal request for help; it represents a means by which the female subject unsettles the patriarchal paradigm that deprives her of subjectivity.

However, the hysteric voice of Hermione is not heard; her attempt to communicate experience is not recognized as "talking" or language as such by her surroundings, which are in lack of loving ears. Her behavior, which George cannot decipher, which he writes off as "hysterical" (191), results in imprisonment in the Gart-home where, three months in bed, Hermione remains physically unable to use her feet. In order to cure their daughter of her ambiguous behavior, make her walk and talk as "Hermione," the Garts turn to the Law of One, to Christianity and science, the two patriarchal voices Hermione has sought to challenge with her own. First, a Christian Scientist visits, telling her, "Elijah arose at the voice of the Lord and walked" (196). But, the words of the Father and the gospel of homogeneity and not heterogeneity have no healing power; they cannot synthesize the conflicting demands of her two selves or mend the split which is located beyond the surface level of her coded signification: "if she went on and on saying the same thing perhaps in time people would realize that the thing back of the thing was the thing that mattered" (198). Her abundant speech however, her plea for the ear, is awarded with medication, with "invalid-weak tea" (216), which slows her, dulls her down, further depriving her of her own voice.

Hermione's position in the family mirrors that of Minnie, whose status as "sister" Hermione now explicitly accepts (208). While Hermione's vocal and bodily speech either goes unnoticed or is discarded as symptoms of a curable illness, Minnie's hysteria is regarded as an unfortunate female condition with which little can be done. Minnie speaks, but the Garts have stopped listening. Thus, despite their

subversive potential, Minnie's outbursts by no means overthrow the Gart formula. As argued by Clément, the hysteric "doesn't disperse the bourgeois family" ("Exchange" 156). However, while the Law of One persists, her hysterical speech is "an element that disturbs arrangements" (Cixous, "Exchange" 156), which indicates that the paradigm of Gart is not infallible: "[Minnie] depreciated the house front, steps, the symmetrical recumbent jade pillars of low, carefully clipped terrace" (15). Minnie nonetheless remains a captive to Gart, "a prisoner inside the family" (Clément, "The Guilty One" 8); her hysteria is presented as endless solitude, as individual sorrow and suffering.

In contrast, Hermione's illness and winter are temporary; her case presents the disintegration of hysteria as necessary in order for the repressed subject to reclaim a healthy and productive relation to both self and the surrounding world: "… Obeying their orders. Whose orders? I have been almost faithful. In order to be faithful I will forego faith, I will creep back into the shell in order to emerge full-fledged, a bird, a phoenix. I will creep back now in order to creep out later …" (221). Hysteria then becomes an intermediate stage between an old and a new self; as noted by Clément, "the hysteric … is between the family walls, which she does not leave, and a *jeune naissance* (a new young birth), the I-nnascence that is not yet accomplished" ("The Guilty One" 55). Between fall and spring, winter represents a cleansing process where the soil must be made "ripe for a new sort of forestation" (57). Thus, the revolutionary potential of Hermione's hysteria lies not so much in her capacity to "castrate" the surrounding symbolic scheme, as Cixous suggests of the hysteric ("Exchange" 154), but in her latent ability to give birth to herself, bring her self into the world anew.

The question remains, how can the madness that reduces Minnie to a mere shadow take on such a positive quality? How can the hysteric subject generate her own process? Echoing Eugenia's story of Hermione's birth, Hermione's emergence from her sickbed is grounded in spoken language, where her "peerless, fatherless excitability makes [her] crack the phallic framework that supports [her] cognitive congruence" (Kristeva, "Countertransference…" 70). Hermione's speech is now governed by the semiotic, by the maternal, making her hysteria appear as a second infanthood, a return to the nursery, to a time before the intrusion of the Symbolic. Her madness represents, as suggested by S. Travis, "a recapitulation of primary development, a regression back into the state of undifferentiated, rhythmic drives" (134). The final stage of illness, a phase of rebirth, materializes as fragmentary text

which is full of digressions and gaps; the linear organization of time and language loosens, the world as it is known becomes deranged: "… so that things unhinged from nowhere. Nowhere was right here. Here was nowhere. Being here one was nowhere, in time and space there was no such thing as anywhere" (207-208). The partition between inside and outside, initially symbolized by the Garts' front door (24), now disintegrates as Hermione's free-running monologues breaks the barrier between thought and speech: "I wasn't talking, I was only thinking … you see open doors," Hermione tells nurse Dennon. Through the notion of the open door, an open passage between the semiotic and the symbolic, Hermione starts to mend the gap between her two selves, to reestablish the bond between body and mind which the Gart formula has deprived her of: "We broke everything having the screendoor mended" (211).

On the level of the word, Hermione's wide open door leads to an unlatching of the signifier. While Gart regards the word as a finite sign, Hermione's word is poetic; it is "polyvalent and multidetermined" (Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue…" 36), an interconnected chain of meaning. As nurse Dennon insists on calling Hermione "Miss," Hermione replies: "They call me Miss, I am a miss: I have been a Miss. Hit or Miss … I am a miss, a miss, a miss. I am as good as a mile" (204). In this context, the word "miss" first points to an unmarried female, which can be interpreted as negative as the woman might have been unable able to find a partner, or, as Hermione, has been left by her lovers. Further, "miss" implies failing and points to Hermione as a failure within academia and love – within her social system. On the other hand, the parallelism "amiss," the state of being inappropriate and out of place, becomes Hermione's strength and determines her new birth. As "miss" she is peerless, becomes an open signifier with no set signified. Thus, through Hermione's final stage of illness, the Gart-formula is interrupted, and the poetic word unlatches: "[W]hat is hysterical yields art," Cixous and Freud argue ("Exchange" 157), and as Chisholm observes, Gart has become G/art (90). The capital "G" of God, Gart and George no longer encapsulates Hermione, and her initial yearning for the absolute, for the means to believe in "I am Hermione Gart precisely" (3), is exchanged for an understanding of the self as heterogeneous and manifold.

Through its exploration of the mobility of both word and subject, the text also emphasizes love and sexuality as open, ambiguous systems that are neither limited to one specific lover nor a set sexual orientation, thus to a masculine understanding of reality. It is the notions of love and desire in themselves, the risk of opening up to a

person and what springs out of such a meeting that Hermione now regards as valuable, rather than the idea of the enduring relationship or the ability to identify either with a heterosexual or a homosexual paradigm. Hermione is able to let go of her painful losses: "I hold Fayne now for one last moment … No… not any more George… but others. I will make new friends" (215). George and Fayne now represent variations of the lover, variations of love, which, like the word and the self are manifold, playful, inviting participation but resisting ownership of any kind.

In order to fully regain her position as subject, Hermione must break the hysteric's unity with the world of objects; she must leave the "unhinged" reality where thought and speech appear as one and the same. "I have been wandering … too long in some intermediate world" (221), she states and accordingly begins to transfer her hallucinations into the Symbolic realm. Hermione's disconnected speech is replaced by more or less coherent stories; self-created narratives of her own self. Hermione now presents herself as a Lacadaemonian message-bearer in Greek Sparta, a brave character who bears "a double sword, a double burden," who carries a message written "in forgotten metres" (220) – the message of love. In this story, Hermione is not alone, she is neither defeated nor neglected; Fayne's betrayal is cancelled out by the thought of new lovers, of "runners wait[ing] at every station to carry on the message" (220). This notion of storytelling, of metonymic re-presentations of painful incidents, forms the basis of Anna O.'s talking cure. Through her dialogue with Breuer, Anna O. was able to transfer the events that had previously appeared as unbearable and ever-present into the Symbolic. Thus, the act of storytelling breaks up the hysteric's intimate relation to the body and to the world, a relation that, in Luce Irigaray's words, has become "too present, too immediate" (in Herndl 59). According to Dianne Price Herndl, this gap or separation carries a double function (67). First, by being allowed to freely define her selfhood through her own metonymic narratives, she can leave her previous object-status and enter that of subject. Second, through this newly gained position of selfhood, Anna O. takes on "a new metaphor"; she becomes the doctor and generates her own cure.

In *Her*, nurse Dennon initially inhabits the position of doctor, which is taken over by Hermione. While Amy Dennon listens patiently to Hermione's stories, her listening is not that of the ideal lover or analyst; she fails to understand Hermione's new relation to language, her polyvalent signifier. As Hermione plays with the word

"miss," Dennon can only reply, "Yes. Yes. I see the thing is very funny" (204). Through her interaction with Dennon, Hermione is not heard; the bridging dialogue between analyst and analysand, by which the subject is re-organized and made autonomous (Kristeva, "In Praise…" 14), is lacking. In a similar manner, Bertha Pappenheim, Breuer's Anna O., was not cured as her treatment was broken off; she suffered several relapses during the following years (Herndl 67). According to Herndl, Pappenheim only fully regained her position as subject with the publication of her 1890 short story collection *In the Rummage Store* which triggered a productive career as writer and translator: "It was not until then, until her subjectivity was visibly represented in the world, that she fully recovered" (67). Also for Hermione, the final step of her self-cure is reached by her turn to the written word. In order to leave the position of the hysteric, Hermione must claim the role of doctor; she must help herself by writing her narrative:

> Solid and visible form was what she had been seeking. I will put this into visible language. Amy Dennon will say this or this. Amy Dennon will say you were harassed, disintegrated and disassociated by preliminary erotic longings, wakened as it were in sleep, sleeping in a dream as in a dream we sleep and in a dream we are awakened, perceiving the dream (in the dream) to be only a dream and in the dream saying, the dream (in the dream) was the wildest of stark foreboding … The dream in the dream should be put into stark language. (213)

Thus, the next and final chapter will concern Hermione's "writing cure," exploring how her desire for the written word generates her final return to the Symbolic order.

V. Writing

Whereas oral storytelling provides the hysteric with the active position of the subject, writing, according to Herndl, is necessary in order to ensure this newly gained subjectivity. First, as the hysteric inscribes herself, she reconstructs her experience as other, as text, as that which is "not-me"; writing thus "takes the place of the hysteric and leaves the subject" (68). Moreover, writing makes the hysteric visible even if she is absent. With her written word "she produces a discourse that will take her place … Writing can provide an other to 'hear' her discourse, even if such another is not present, 'she' can be 'read.' That is, she can be seen" (68). While acknowledging Herndl's emphasis that writing creates the necessary gap between inside and outside, this chapter will also explore the persistent interdependency between the individual and her text. As the hysteric brings her narrative, her signifier, into the world, her access to the signified, to the body, is not closed; an intimate relation between the two persists and comes to the fore through the very act of writing. Further, writing is not merely a finite product by which the subject can be recognized by the surrounding specular signifying economy, it is also a process through which the subject gains access to herself, recognizes and reads herself, creating grounds for a continuous rewriting of her own text. The aim of this chapter is thus to investigate writing as an arena for self-exploration and self-creation, a medium through which the split between body and mind, inside and outside can be mended. By examining *Her*'s representation of writing, the chapter will challenge traditional readings of the novel's final sections.

The chapter thus investigates what lies at the core of H.D.'s oeuvre, an irresolvable link between life and art, between reality and fiction, where, in Cixous' words, "there is never one without the other" ("Preface" xviii). Hermione's notion of selfhood is now found through her position as both writing matter and producer of the text. In the same manner as one of H.D.'s more famous literary personae, Helen of *Helen in Egypt*,[18] Hermione escapes her object position by bringing her own narrative into the world; she transforms the passive image of George's "Her" into a processual

[18] *Helen in Egypt*, an epic poem with prose captions, was written during the fifties and published in 1961, the year of H.D.'s death. The text fuses and rewrites the stories of Helen of Troy from Homer's *Iliad* and Helena of Greece, and follows the palimpsestic character of Helen through her development from "semblance to selfhood" (Benstock 166).

narrative which replaces her initial longing for a passive, reflecting mirror. Like Helen, Hermione realizes that "she herself is the writing" (22).

The analogy of writing as childbirth, the intimate relation between body and text – first presented in Eugenia's story of Hermione's birth and later in her forest-painting – is further emphasized through Hermione's return to the outside world. As she leaves the Gart-house for the first time after her final collapse, approximately nine months after the text's opening scene, the previously suffocating and too hot forest is covered in snow. The world as it was formerly known has been made fresh, carrying the quality of a blank page:

> Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a forest. The world had been razed, had been made clear for this thing. The whole world had been made clear like that blackboard last summer. Last summer Gart lawn had been a blackboard but not quite clear … Now the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayon across the winter whiteness. (223)

Again, Hermione's writing contrasts that of George. While George's literary output is institutionalized, and to a large degree motivated by the need for success, Hermione's writing is a private need, it is motivated from the inside. The act of writing is now stripped down to its core; pen and paper are redundant, as Hermione's body becomes her means of writing. Her feet "seemed to be filled with memories" (224), memories of "[a] head that had split open one day" (223), and of "Narcissa" (224). By telling these lived stories with her feet, Hermione is able to create distance, produce space between narrative and body, between the signifier and the signified. Through the act of writing, her stories, as Herndl argues in a different context, become other; she realizes that they "didn't now much matter" (223). At the same time, her narrative is motivated by her bodily experience and literally springs out of her body; a close link between the two must be maintained in order for her self-exploration to continue. Reaching a downward slope, Hermione looks back and studies her text, noticing that "her track was uneven and one footprint seemed always to trail unsteadily" (224). Thus, through her tracings in the snow, Hermione does not merely enter the signifying economy; she also declares space for an irregular variable, for the (female) body in language. The necessary link between Kristeva's semiotic and symbolic is now in the process of recovery; Undine's feet and voice are coming together.

The nature of Hermione's new language, which opens up to the ambiguous and the unsettled, needs further elucidation. Hermione describes her signification in the snow as "a wavering hieroglyph upon white parchment," where "The embankment made the roll from which more parchment might be shaken" (224). Like Freud, H.D. employs the image of the Egyptian hieroglyph to signify the hidden meaning of the unconscious, of the buried self (Friedman, "Creating a…" 401). In "The Claim of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest," Freud describes the dream-content (the manifest dream, as opposed to the latent dream-thought) as a pictographic script, *Bilderschrift*:

> [T]he interpretation of a dream is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphics. In both cases there are certain elements which are not intended to be interpreted (or read, as the case may be) but are only designed to serve as "determinatives," that is to establish the meaning of some other element. The ambiguity of various elements of dreams finds a parallel in these ancient systems of writing. (qtd. in Derrida 277)

In hieroglyphic writing, the same sign can be interpreted in diverse ways, depending on the context: as a logogram (morphemic reading), as a phonogram (phonetic reading), or as an ideogram (semantic reading). Through this complex stratification of components, the hieroglyph represents a picture puzzle, a labyrinth; it challenges the logocentric understanding of the sign as immediate, independent and transparent. Similarly, for Freud, the dream-work is no longer a linear process of exchange or meaning but a "playful permutation which provides the very model for production … of *work as a particular semiotic system* … the development of 'thinking' before *thought*" (Kristeva, "Semiotics…" 83-4). Hieroglyphic script and dream-content are not dead symbols to be decoded; they point to the process, the event of writing (or the work of the unconscious) and its modes of operation.

The hieroglyphic figure emphasizes that the nature of the sign is determined by its presence and not by essence or fundamental nature; its meaning inevitably springs out of "a play of differences" (Derrida, "Freud and…" 276). Hieroglyphs thus embody Kristeva's notion of the poetic, of language which is "unobservable" ("Semiotics…" 85), not confined in words, but existing in the very motion of language as such. Through the act of tracing her path, writing her own hieroglyphic text, Hermione realizes that Mandy's formula – whereby "a man ain't a man" (27),

and Hermione is not contained in "Hermione" – can also be hers. In *Helen in Egypt*, H.D. writes:

> I think I see clearly at last,
> the old pictures are really there,
> eternal as the painted ibis in Egypt,
> the hawk and the hare,
>
> but written in marble and silver,
> the spiral-stair, the maze
> of intricate streets,
>
> each turn of the winding
> and secret passage-ways
> that lead to the sea,
>
> my meanderings back and forth,
> till I learned by rote
> the intimate labyrinth … (264)

Through writing, Hermione's initial wish, "to get away to the sea" (29), is in the process of fulfillment. Instead of the previous feeling of being walled in and suffocated by trees, and the need for George to "dynamite her world away for her" (63), Hermione is now able to enter, explore and develop the meandering paths of the forest: "The work of the trace is itinerant, producing and following its own route, the trace which traces, the trace which breaks open its own path" (Derrida "Freud and…" 268-89). Like the hieroglyph both pronounces and performs the function of the sign, the tracing of the path represents the subject's simultaneous creation and interpretation of her self. Hermione's hieroglyphic tracks in the snow thus echo Cixous "Coming to Writing," where the process of writing and the process of reading are presented as one and the same: "Life becomes text starting out from my body. I am already text … I enter into myself with my eyes closed, and you can read it … This reading is performed here by the being-who-wants-to-be-born" ("Coming to Writing" 52). Through the processual text that bridges feet and voice, the subject gains access to herself, unlocks the "secret passage-ways/that lead to the sea," paths leading to self-knowledge.

Through Hermione's hieroglyphic mode of expression, the text once again plays with the idea of a feminine language as a replacement for the masculine word, which Hermione sees as forcefully, mechanically "cut[ting] its way like a snow

plough" (214). Her discovery of the untouched snow-white world echoes the earlier discovery of "water music" by which George was made "wordless" (170); the snow has erased and replaced the old scheme. The arbitrary dividing-lines between properties are no longer visible; the patriarchal names denoting ownership over the ground have been wiped out: "Gart lawn and Gart forest and the Werby meadow and the Farrand forest were swept clear" (223). Further, Hermione assumes the position of Gart, of God; she understands the fields and the forests to be "virginal for one purpose, for one Creator" (223), pointing to a possible shift from the masculine to a feminine paradigm, based on "the powers of Otherness" (DuPlessis, *H.D.…* 69). However, as previously seen in the novel's women-oriented relationships, the wish for a reigning paradigm, for sustaining the position of a sole Creator, becomes an expression of "a fantasy of the phallic," of an omnipotent mother through which the Law would be reestablished (Jardine 11). By merely changing the subject's cause or gender, the system is not really overturned. As Kristeva puts it, "Those who refuse to think the subject-in-process/on-trial risk becoming the object of a trial" (qtd. in Jardine 11). In other words, the Law and that which it has censored remain indivisible.

Accordingly, the text keeps itself in check; it unnames and renames itself (Cixous, "Sorties…" 84) by spelling out the impossibility of a feminine world-order. Hermione's track in the snow has lead her to hard, ice-covered ground, which cracks as she tries to move across it. In her analysis of the text, Shari Benstock reads the breaking of the ice as pointing to the impossibility of leaving the position of the hysteric by quoting the following passage from the novel: "She stood part of next year, part of last year, not totally of either. The crack widened, actually snapped suddenly… Her feet were held, frozen to the cracked ice surface. Her heart was frozen, held to her cracked, somewhat injured body" (225-6). Benstock thus reads against the grain of Friedman and DuPlessis's feminist interpretations, pointing to Hermione's mastery over word and world as short-lived: "Just when it seems that Hermione … [is] becoming the subject of her discourse rather than the object in someone else's discourse – she is stopped dead in her tracks. The subject splits again, breaking the hieroglyph" (342). However, by reading the breaking ice as negative and immobilizing, Benstock fails to capture the subtleness of the ice metaphor. Instead of depriving Hermione of her position as subject, as Benstock suggests, I read this event

as a metaphor for the signifying process, a process which to Kristeva inevitably correlates with that of the subject.

In order to further explore the scene of the cracking ice, I will look closer at the break of the semiotic into the confining realm of the Symbolic, a break which prepares the child to enter language. Kristeva calls this the "thetic phase":

> The thetic phase marks a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic. The second includes part of the first and their session is thereafter marked by the break between signifier and signified. *Symbolic* would seem an appropriate term for this always split unification that is produced as a rupture and is impossible without it. ("Revolution in…" 102)

Although the maternal chora exists presymbolically as a "rudimentary combinatorial system" that is generated by biology, it needs to enter and later break with the symbolic in order to reach the complexity discernible in artistic practices ("Revolution…" 118). The poetic then, becomes an *effraction*, a breach, where the semiotic must reenter the Symbolic in order to disrupt it: "In taking the thetic into account, we shall have to represent the semiotic (which is produced recursively on the basis of that break) as a 'second' return of instinctual order and as the transgression of that order" ("Revolution…" 118). The semiotic is engendered by its constant break with the laws and limits of the Symbolic; only through confrontation can it move beyond its borders and alter them. Thus, their relationship is necessarily reciprocal; together they form the process of signification (Oliver, *Unraveling the*… 41).

This "impossible unity" of the semiotic and the symbolic can be traced in H.D.'s image of water and ice. By stamping with her heels to gain foothold, Hermione fractures the ice, making a "tiny upward jet of running water" break through. Benstock finds Hermione immobilized as the crack widens. Reminded of her illness, Hermione "recall[s] the suffocation" (226), debating "whether it would be better to step back or to leap and risk the breakage" (225). However, the running water and its constant potential of bursting through, "something beneath hammering the undersurface" (225), brings a promise of life. In the friction-point between liquid and solid, inside and outside, Hermione searches for the first signs of spring: "She wanted to touch the narrow black strip under the bank, was sure of finding something growing" (225). Leaping back to her pathway with the reverberation of the break ringing in her ears, Hermione concludes that the "runnel that was frozen" (224) – an

image previously associated with her silenced throat – can be challenged, put into movement.

This event thus associates the return of Hermione's voice with the reproductive force of spring; while during her illness Hermione "cre[pt] back into a shell" (221), like a growth restricted by snow and dead matter, the confinement has been nourishing and prepares and triggers her bloom, a new outbreak: "The opposite bank was shadowed with a tangle of old creeper … There might conceivably be just the beginnings of things, common chickweed or arbutus bud under that protective mat of creepers" (224). Thus, the cracking of the ice does not so much represent a return to illness and to the position of object, as Benstock argues, but an *effraction*. Hermione is yet again confronted with the confines of the Symbolic; she reenters the earlier state of "Hermione," the statue that is "static, frozen … on a woodpath" (6). However, the return is only temporary; it triggers a rediscovery of the generative power of the semiotic "water music" and its constant ability to break through.

Hermione's rebirth can therefore not be read as short-lived or futile; it is neither barred by the patriarchal paradigm nor results in a loss of subjectivity, as suggested by Benstock; neither does it overthrow the existing system and create a new feminine reality. Rather, the text emphasizes that the double bind cannot be cancelled out; it must be unraveled through a reconfiguration of the speaking subject. Hermione now exists as a "split unification" (Kristeva, "Revolution in…" 102), as constant frustration between "Hermione" and "Her." Her voice is found in the difference between ice and water, she is poised at the threshold between freezing and melting. In her defiance of the self as unitary entity, Hermione seems to embody Kristeva's "subject-in-process/on-trial," a subject who slips between the lines, emphasizing the necessary dialectic between the modalities of semiotic and symbolic:

> The notion of the subject-in-process … assumes that we recognize, on the one hand, the unity of the subject who submits to a law – the law of communication, among others; yet who, on the other hand, does not entirely submit, does not want to submit entirely. The subject-in-process is always in a state of contesting the law, either with the force of violence, of aggressivity, of the death drive, or with the other side of this force, pleasure and jouissance. (Kristeva, "A Conversation…" 26)

Whereas the hysteric has been defined through her allegiance to an impossible "double contract," the processual subject is capable of traversing between the positions of inside/outside the law; through the dialectic of this contradiction she continues to revive her voice, constantly arriving at a new position. However, while Hermione has regained her voice and feet, contesting the law by means of her hieroglyphic signification, she has yet to make a successful return to society. Her text is written in solitude, it lacks the dialogic relation to the other.

Hermione's reconciliation with the law is triggered as she crosses paths with Jimmie Farrand who invites her in for tea. With her new identity grounded in being "amiss," Jimmie, representing the inside of the Law, appears threatening in his expectation of her being "a miss." While Hermione first rejects the offer, concluding that "I wanted to be alone to – to – see things," Jimmie assures her that she can also "see things indoors" (228). In the end, Jimmie is able to talk and walk Hermione out of her private forest: "He held the branch back like a curtain. The curtain keeps me in here. Here I am safe but I must walk out to people. People won't hurt you if you try to understand them" (228). By slowly articulating her failure in academia and in love by connecting her path to that of Jimmie, the transference-love first experienced with Fayne gradually returns: "If Jimmie was part of things and Her having accepted things was part of things, then Her was part of Jimmie" (228). In the dynamic space created between the two, Hermione's errors are re-organized. In Kristeva's words, "they are no longer those failures of a finalistic linear process that anguished me before" ("In Praise …" 14). Hermione's new self-configuration is completed when Jimmie introduces her to his friend Harold Grim, a college dropout, who clearly represents the male double of Hermione Gart.[19] Travis suggests that Hermione's exposure to Jimmie and Harold downplays her need for the social, thus the outside realm; the encounter figures as the "first test [of Hermione's] newly constructed world," a world which to Travis must be exclusively female: "Hermione realizes how easily she could conform, be the female double of Grim and alienate herself" (198). However, it is Jim and Grim who complete Hermione's cure; Harold spells out Hermione's dual experience of failure, the experience of a binary society which leaves no place for the "erroneous" subject:

[19] "Harold" is also the name of H.D.'s brother.

> Harold Grim brought things in true perspective. He didn't care (he did care) about … expulsion from his college. It meant everything and it meant nothing. There was nothing in America for them but rows of desks and stabilization and exact formalization… there was nothing but standardization or dancing at a carnival. In between there were no nuances (for them). For them there were no nuances. (233)

As Hermione has exchanged her sick bed for her running feet, Harold proposes movement and travel as remedy for the deadlock which their Pennsylvanian society has put them in. Jimmie is going to Europe, taking Harold as his driver, and Hermione is encouraged to come with them to Venice to stay with Mim, Jimmie's mother, the widow of Mr. Farrand. Mim is described as "something that had had a new lease of life … someone who was dancing on the Lido," on sandy banks by water (232). Mr. Farrand's death has freed her and enabled her for dynamicity and transgression, for the possibility of leaving the Farrand house. Similarly, Cixous regards loss as necessary for the processual subject. While "having is … *to be had,*" opening up for the danger of being "defined through one's having," losing dispossesses the subject of her fixed goals, making the subject a "being-en-route" (*Rootprints* 150). A similar connection between loss and pain and the act of path-breaking, is found in Freud, who argues that "pain leaves behind it particularly rich breaches" (qtd. in Derrida, "Freud and…" 254). Derrida describes the Freudian breach as the opening up of its own space by effraction: the "breaking of a path against resistances, rupture and irruption becoming a route" ("Freud and the Scene…" 268-89). Thus, a possible passage to Europe echoes Hermione's tracing in the forest; the crossing of the Atlantic will represent a breach with the patriarchal, binary paradigm represented by America throughout. While America is "a carnival and boys (from Yale) … a carnival or desks with stooping shoulders," "Europe in consciousness became … a room painted over with bright figures and within it people dancing…" (232). Europe becomes a metaphor for the heterogeneous, for movement and (semiotic) activity, it becomes analogous to Cixous' realm of the Other: "Thank God, there is not only the world. Beyond the world there is the Other side. One can pass over, it's open or it opens. Thank God one can go there. Where? There" (*Rootprints* 150).

With Jimmie and Harold's help, Hermione understands that only passage, thus continuous crossing between self and other, between here and there, guarantees subjectivity. Hermione now leaves the Farrand farm as an analysand successfully leaving her analyst: "Grim and Jim stood there like two gatekeepers, opening a gate,

swift thought that so exactly saw things; Jim so swift seeing so exactly" (234). Dashing homewards, feeling her "feet puls[ing] forward … winged with the winged god's sandal," Hermione is preparing to leave roots for routes; she has become a self who springs out of love, who seeks "less… [her] truth than… [her] innovative capacities" (Kristeva, "In Praise…" 15). Through paths generated by the inseparable nexus of (transference) love and writing, and renewal, continuous rebirth is ensured. Thus, *Her* ends on a dynamic note, leaving Hermione in-between herself, Jim and Grim, in-between America and Europe, and with the "choice" between a heterosexual and a homosexual orientation open. As the text moves towards its end, it signals motion, unsettlement, and embodies Hermione's earlier conclusion that "It never does freeze properly. There's always water running" (225).

However, despite *Her*'s indeterminate quality and its resistance to any absolute resolution, critics have brought rather categorical conclusions to the text, based on its very last words:

> Practical and at one with herself, with the world, with all outer circumstance, she barged straight into Mandy in the outer hallway. 'Oh, Miss. I have thought you was back long since. I done left Miss Fayne all alone upstairs in your little workroom. (234)

In response to this ending which appears rather awkward and unsettling, critics have tried to explain the unexpected presence of Fayne, attempting to provide some sort of conclusion to the novel on the level of plot. In their "I had two loves separate: The Sexualities of H.D.'s *HER*," DuPlessis and Friedman argue that "the last sentence of the novel contains an enigma that can only be unveiled in another novel" (214). This novel is *Asphodel*, the next novel of the *Madrigal*-cycle in terms of the chronology of H.D.'s life. The opening scene of the sequel portrays Hermione and Fayne's arrival at the coast of France, which for DuPlessis and Friedman corresponds with real events: "In point of fact, H.D. went to Europe in 1911 with Frances Gregg and her mother, not with her neighbors. The failure of Fayne and Her to break through convention in *HER* did not end their literary or biographical existence together" (214). While the critics look beyond the text in order to explain its ending, referring to biographical information and subsequent texts, Travis shows "how a metaphoric reading of the climactic closing scenes gives *HER* novelistic closure, allowing *HER* to emerge as an integral text" (124). By way of Luce Irigaray's semantic link between the *la glace* of

ice and *la glace* of mirror, Travis reads the cracking of the ice as a reenactment of Hermione's mirror-stage,[20] allowing her to arrive on the other side of the bank as a newly born subject, "at a balance between self-constitution and fragmentation" (137). However, Travis' interpretation of the closing passage does not correspond with her otherwise convincing reading, because of its unsupported speculation about what *will* happen to Hermione after the novel's close:

> The novel ends on [the] dual note of Fayne and the workroom, the two symbolic sites through which Hermione will search for a new constitution of her self. Fayne will be neither muse nor mother to Hermione; neither woman will be frozen into the static image of the other … She will try again with Fayne to establish that relationship so elusive, yet so essential… (139)

Thus, in what appears as a need to present a harmonious, well-balanced interpretation, Travis too concludes her reading with something that is not a part of the text.

Also on the thematic level, the text's celebration of the ambiguous and the undetermined is stifled by the critic's need to conclude, to say, like the early Hermione, "precisely" (6, 12, 54). Friedman reads the final passage as confirming her argument that *Her* is a lesbian text; Fayne's return points to the birth of a new paradigm where artistry and women-oriented love are dependent on each other: "Lesbian love ultimately replaces heterosexual love as a form of desire compatible with women's creativity" ("H.D.'s Rescriptions…" 29). In her *Penelope's Web*, a similar argument is put forth: "The dyad of male subject and female object exists in the novel in the figures of George and Her, but not as closure; rather as the beginning of a story that must be undone … 'Love is writing' in *HER* is the multilayered matrix of maternal and homoerotic desire" (135). Through these readings however, Friedman merely replaces one closure with another; she performs what the novel rejects, "stabilization, formalization … pressing things down in test tubes" (233). Although Benstock challenges Friedman's positive conclusion, her reading is just as fixed:

> Her's plans to travel, to change her situation, are blocked with Mandy's announcement … that Miss Fayne is 'all alone upstairs in your little workroom.' Fayne's presence is an ominous sign that Her's victory against the domination of others for her spirit and her future has been short-lived … By no means is it a text that offers hope for bonds between women in a patriarchal

[20] See Irigaray's essay "And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other."

> world. Much less does it trace an enabling relation between woman-identified sexuality and the woman writer's sensibility. (348-9)

Benstock acknowledges what Friedman does not, that Fayne's return inevitably results in "new divisions," pointing to an "impossibility of resolution" rather than simple closure (349). However, Benstock regards the emergence of splits and divisions as merely negative, as paralyzing the individual instead of generating productivity, as suggested by the text throughout.

In response to these critics, this reading proposes that the key to the text lies not so much with Fayne or in the novel's last words, but in the preceding lines where Hermione, on her dash through the forest, puts forth her plan of using the money her grandmother has set aside for her trousseau to finance her passage to Europe: "The money *is* mine. Gran left it for my marriage … this will be my marriage" (234). While Hermione has previously struggled to define herself through her relationship with either George or Fayne, she now understands that the only commitment she can make is to the unpredictable journey, to the act of path-breaking. Further, this "marriage" can only be realized by means of maternal heritage, by Gran's money explicitly and semiotic activity, "which introduces wandering … into language" (Kristeva "From One…" 136), implicitly. Thus, what has gone untreated in previous criticism of the novel is its advocacy of the poetic word, of love, of that which, according to Freud, is forbidden:

> As soon as writing, which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube onto a piece of white paper, assumes the significance of copulation, or as soon as walking becomes a symbolic substitute for treading upon the body of mother earth, both writing and walking are stopped because they represent the performance of a forbidden sexual act. (qtd. in Derrida 288-89)

Freud proposes that the prohibition of incest generates the conventional society; the uninterrupted relation to the mother is repressed, and the communicative aspect of language is maintained. The subject-in-process, however, exists by the risk of reactivating the elements of the maternal, making poetic language analogous to incest:

> it is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the

> mother from becoming an object like any other – forbidden. (Kristeva "From One…" 136)

Thus, the path made by a woman, the poetic language she sets forth, not only breaks the prohibition of incest, but also the taboo of homosexuality. However, the question remains: is lesbianism within the text merely reduced to the displacement of the maternal into the poetic? Kristeva's view on this issue has become the subject of a vigorous debate. Judith Butler reads Kristevan theory as rejecting an "unmediated cathexis of female homosexual desire" (111). According to Butler, Kristeva inevitably sees "the consummation of this desire [as] lead[ing] to the psychotic unraveling of identity … the lesbian [is] 'other' to culture" (111). Therefore, women-oriented desire must be displaced into maternity or the poetic. For Butler, Kristeva thus postulates an "indissoluble link" between heterosexuality and coherent selfhood for women (111).

In turn, Kelly Oliver interprets Kristeva's displacement of lesbianism in a positive manner. She argues that by ultimately connecting women's homosexuality to the maternal, Kristeva has put lesbianism at the core of all feminine sexuality: "feminine sexuality is fundamentally homosexual" (*Unraveling the…* 140). According to Oliver, lesbianism does not essentially lead to the unwinding of subjectivity; rather, it carries the potential of the opposite, a view that *Her* echoes. It is Hermione's intimate relation with Fayne which first triggers her process of self-organization by introducing the notion of love, thus the notion of writing into the novel. And as Hermione leaves her illness behind with the event of the cracking ice, the sound of water breaking through – suggesting parturition, rebirth – brings immediate thoughts of Fayne: "the break seemed to be prolonged, would be till it touched stars … It's like a violin string. It's like Fayne exactly" (225). Hermione's desire for Fayne also surfaces as she dares to mediate her story to Jim: "'I had a – a friend.' 'A – a friend' brought a pulse or beat but it wasn't her heart" (229). As discussed in chapter three, the novel, like Kristeva, postulates that a relationship which rejects the Symbolic can lead to psychotic tendencies. However, *Her* does not make homosexuality "other," as Butler argues of Kristeva. The text does not propose homoerotic desire to be "an impulse to power," or the "fuel and fire" (DuPlessis *H.D.…* 69) which can overturn reality. Neither does it cancel out the option of a lesbian relationship, as Benstock claims. Rather, the novel suggests that any kind of

love, hetero- or homosexual, remains possible as long as it struggles to stay at the threshold between inside and outside.

Thus, H.D.'s theory – of love, of the word, of the subject and of writing – lies in the constant traversal between feminine and masculine, semiotic and symbolic: the dialogic discourse between self and other. When in *Asphodel*, Hermione reaches Europe, she can do nothing but conclude that the "impossible unity," earlier described as her "plague" and "redemption" (*Her* 67), is the only available existence: "We are here. We are *there*. We will go mad being here and there unless we give up simply, stay here and are lost, stay there and are dead. To be here and there at the same time, that is the triumph" (*Asphodel* 46). In H.D.'s poetics, subject and text are generated as we manage to leave the "dull little houses of our minds" (*Notes on…* 40), as we venture on the path through the forest – out into the loving space of *between*.

Conclusion

In order to bring "the world of vision into consciousness" one must learn how to use both "lenses," H.D. argues (*Notes on* … 23). This thesis has traced Hermione's development from the position of a frozen statue to a processual selfhood, attempting to show how the protagonist's two selves, "Her" and "Hermione" have become "HERmione," as suggested by the title of the American edition of the novel. With its embodied and graphically marked split, this name suggests a coexistence of two separate entities, of two "lenses" within one subject: masculine and feminine, body and mind, desire and reason, unconscious and conscious. The existence as a composite whole, an exchange between the structures that initially spring out of the opposing figures of mother and father, is to H.D. the goal of the writer: "The realization of this over-conscious mind is the concern of the artist" (*Notes on*… 40).

Accordingly, the aim of this thesis has been to explore H.D.'s creation of the female subject by traversing between the literary and the theoretical, between *Her* and the thoughts of Kristeva and Cixous. It has not been my intention to fix the interpretation of the novel through theoretical insights. As H.D.'s prose texts explicitly engage with Freudian theory, and it would be redundant to explore the novel by means of psychoanalytic insights merely to show this affinity. Further, as Buck has already pointed out, the connections between sexual difference, subjectivity and language, which are emphasized by present-day theorists such as Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray are "already present in H.D.'s writing and need not be uncovered by means of recent critical theory" (5). Nevertheless, I have not intended to downplay the need for contemporary theory and show that H.D. has already "said it all." My goal has been to create a dialogue between theory and text where neither party is privileged – where each voice speaks to the other without bringing it to silence.

Through this "double lens" I have explored how the novel's emphasis on love – a continuous interchange between and within individuals – voids the text of any fixed conclusion. While Hermione initially presents herself by stating "I am Her, Her, Her … I am Hermione Gart precisely" (3), the final pages tell of a subject who no longer seeks to possess any exact or rigid definition of her self or her coordinates. As Jimmie Farrand encounters Hermione in the forest he states, "I didn't know you were here," to which she replies, "Well, I'm not. Not strictly speaking" (228). Hermione is

now a fluctuating space, full of possibilities, and the meaning of this space resides in its constant transformation through meetings with the other. At the novel's close, Hermione has become the message bearer she envisions herself to be during her illness, the runner who creates and conveys a hieroglyphic script – "a message … in forgotten metres" (220) – always in search of a loving receiver. Instead of representing a fixed entity of meaning, Hermione now conveys meaning, and like the Cixousian subject she "does not stop running … [her] truth is in this race" (Calle-Gruber 216).

While my focus has been on the novel's presentation of identity formation, the aesthetic level of the text merits further attention, its dialogic relation to the medium of film in particular. During the mid to late twenties, the period when *Her* was written, H.D. was ardently engaged with the art of cinema. In 1927, H.D., Bryher and Kenneth McPherson launched the small production company POOL (which produced four films, published a wide range of books), and the monthly film journal *Close Up*, (which was explicitly dedicated to the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema). The most substantial project of the POOL group was their first film, titled *Borderline*, made in 1930 in Territet, Switzerland, where the company had its base. *Borderline*, whose script was written by H.D., evolves around an interracial love triangle, and its actors include H.D., Bryher, Gavin Arthur, and Paul and Eslanda Robson. Anne Friedberg notes that the production remains a "puzzling anomaly" to film historians: in the midst of cinema's adaptation to sound, *Borderline* is a silent film (370). The plot is fragmented and elliptical, and the storyline remains incomprehensible to the viewer without the accompanying pamphlet that serves as a key to the film. As Friedberg emphasizes, the narrative particularities of the film are overshadowed by its visual aspects, its carefully constructed scenes and images which are to effect the viewer psychologically (379). McPherson elaborates on his production in the following way: "Instead of the method of external observation, dealing with objects, I was going to take my film into the minds of the people in it … To take the action, the observation, the deduction, the references, into the labyrinth of the human mind…" (qtd. in Friedberg 375). This account befits *Her*, a text that leaves the lens of the microscope behind, and ventures into the internal labyrinth of its protagonist. The novel's narrator comments on the difference between the static, scientific lens of Gart and of Imagism, and the processual lens championed by the novel, by relating it to cinema: "Precinematographic conscience didn't help Her. Later

conscience would have. She would later have seen form superimposed on thought and thought making its spirals in a manner not wholly related to matter but pertaining to it" (60). While "precinematografic conscience"[21] points to an external, direct treatment of a thing, as suggested by McPherson, cinematic consciousness represents a transformation of the internal and the constant development of thought: "George couldn't play this game, not really play this game, for art was what science wasn't. Art was the discriminating and selecting and bringing odd distorted images into right perspective" (139).

The attentive reader will notice that the above quote, which presents an impression of "thought" developing in "spirals," points to the notion of concentric circles – the formula that initially encapsulated Hermione. This verbal representation of the mathematical concept finds its visual manifestation in the logo of the POOL company, which shows white ripples in a black pond of water. In their 1929 catalogue of publications, the group elaborates on the meaning of the image: "The expanding ripples from a stone dropped in a pool have become more a symbol for the growth of an idea than a simple matter of hydraulics … As the stone will cause a spread of ripples to the water's edge, so ideas once started will go to their unknown boundary" (qtd. in Marlowe). In this context, science no longer suffocates; it expands and enables representation. As Kristeva's Symbolic constitutes a coexistence of semiotic and symbolic elements, cinema is necessarily a dialogue between technology and art. It is this "double lens" that triggers H.D.'s enthusiasm for film: "Art and life … drama and music … epic song and lyric rhythm, dance and the matter of science here again take hands" (qtd. in Mandel 315). In a similar manner, *Her* represents a dialogue between the literary and the filmic.

While *Borderline* is generated by an "unprecedented liaison between psychoanalytic and cinematic theory" (Friedberg 370), *Her* translates this project into language. To ensure *Borderline*'s transformative *effect* on the spectator, McPherson thoroughly prepared for its shooting by illustrating the different episodes with about one thousand sketches, describing exact movement and camera angle (Friedberg 379). Likewise, *Her* replaces explicative dialogue with meticulously staged scenes that become, as Hermione proposes of the poetic word, "projections of things beyond one"

[21] Here I propose, with Charlotte Mandel, that the word "conscience" might be read as "consciousness" (310).

(146). As George praises Hermione's poetry, asking "Who helped you do this thing?" this filmic image follows:

> A picture was cut off by the shoulders that squared across it. At either edge of the shoulders a bit projected, oozed, so to speak, out, thick green put on thick thick green. The little boy and girl daubed in carefully showed to the right of the squared shoulders of George Lowndes. On the other side, the stream that started high up on the hill ran away into the gold frame. The thick gold frame projected, outjutting beyond the squared-in shoulder of George Lowndes. "What do you mean George? Who helped me do what thing?" (148)

The visual impression of the mother's artwork speaks the unspeakable, expresses what cannot consciously be pinned down – the maternal heritage that surfaces with Fayne and brings Hermione to writing. Although George is covering Eugenia's painting, the "camera" is placed in such a way that we see color "oozing" past his masculine shoulders. The image thus captures the essence of Hermione's poetry; it incorporates the restrictive George, who has introduced Hermione to the pen, and the semiotic pulsations that transgress the word.

The effect of this "cinematic" narration is of particular importance when it comes to *Her*'s splitting of the narrative instance into a present and a past self. In the novel's opening scene, the conscious "eye" surveys the "I": "Her Gart was then no prophet. She could not predict later common usage of uncommon syllogisms; 'failure complex,' 'compensation reflex,' and that conniving phrase 'arrested development' had opened no door to her … She could not see the way out of marsh and bog" (3). At other instances, as when Fayne approaches Hermione for a kiss, the viewpoint moves to the other side of the camera, elegantly slipping from the director to the actor: "A face bends towards me and a curtain opens. There is swish and swirl as of heavy parting curtains. Almost along the floor with its strip of carpet, almost across me I feel the fringe of some fantastic wine-coloured parting curtains" (163). In accordance with McPherson's cinematic aesthetics, the reader is here taken into the "I," "into the mind" of the protagonist (qtd. in Friedberg 375); the scene is conveyed by an internal, psychological "camera." The parting curtains, as if on a stage, suggest a movement from an inside to an outside – a displacement of a self towards an other. Further, the intensely physical sensation of these curtains might allude to the narrator's unspeakable feeling as the approaching "wine-coloured" lips are parting for a kiss.

Through its oscillation between the two narrating instances, the novel carries out Hermione's hieroglyphic writing on the level of narration; the narrator simultaneously pronounces and performs her self, she unceasingly writes and reads the text. The novel thus champions perpetual movement, and avoids any position of mastery, as demonstrated by its unsettling ending.

Correspondingly, the meaning of *Her* reaches beyond the conclusions of the present study. By emphasizing the borderline-existence of *Her* I hope to have unsettled its reputation as merely a poet's autobiographical prose or a "lesbian text" (Friedman and DuPlessis, "I had…" 209). Like a stone dropped in water, the novel represents a source from which concentric expansions can develop to their "unknown boundary"; through its notion of the "double lens" *Her* invites continuous exploration.

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