

What Homer Never Told Us: The White Goddess in the Poetry of H.D.

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That Robert Graves and the American poet H.D. shared a deep commitment to what they saw as the vital connection between poetry and myth is clear from their life's accomplishments. Although Graves rarely documented or acknowledged his many sources for *The White Goddess*, we know they were wide-ranging. His own father, the well-known Irish poet and balladeer, Alfred Perceval Graves; his mother, Amy Von Ranke Graves with her passion for folklore and song; his study of Greek, Latin, and Welsh; his voracious reading in myth, anthropology and history; and his close personal relationship with Laura Riding during the writing of this book all helped significantly in the shaping of *The White Goddess*. Although it seems unlikely, as Robert Canary has proposed, that Graves wrote the book primarily as a "rationale for ideals of poetic integrity" (94), much of his poetry does indeed show a clear and deep connection to the ideas presented in *The White Goddess*. As he tells us in his introduction, the function of poetry is the "religious invocation of the Muse" (14) and "the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Mood-goddess...and this remains the language of true poetry" (9).

H.D.'s lifelong passion for myth and its connection to poetry, she tells us in *Tribute To Freud*, began when she was seven: "it was Miss Helen who read us *Tanglewood Tales*. Friday afternoon at school. Those stories are my foundation or background, Pandora, Midas, the Gorgon-head—that particular story of Perseus and the guardian, Athene" (186-187). Later, she began translating Sappho and drama, in particular Euripedes, whose work she felt a special affinity for and, according to Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "may have been her largest inspiration for a revisionary stance" (qtd. in Gregory 26) And her father's

work as an astronomy professor at the University of Pennsylvania, instead of instilling in her an interest in science, as he had hoped, developed in the young Hilda a fascination for the mythological names of the planets and the constellations, eventually leading her to an avid interest in the zodiac, astrology, and the occult, which she used over and over again in her own life's work as an intuitive poet, one who had, in her own words, the "gift."

Her early, so-called "Imagist" poems reflect H.D.'s lifelong strategy of employing the stories she had heard as a child. For example, "Eurydice," composed in 1917, deconstructs the traditional mythic love story of Eurydice and Orpheus. According to both Virgil and Ovid, after their wedding, Eurydice dies after being stung by a viper. Overcome with grief, Orpheus descends into the underworld to find her and manages to charm Hades with the music from his lyre. Eurydice is handed over to Orpheus but with the warning not to look back at her until they have left the underworld. But he does just that and so Eurydice is snatched back into the darkness. Her story ends at the moment Orpheus looks back at her. H.D.'s poem, however, begins at the moment Eurydice is swept back into Hades, and rather than focussing on Orpheus' sorrow and death, the poem, through Eurydice's point of view, emphasizes her anger over the arrogance of Orpheus to dare defy the gods at her expense:

For your arrogance
and your ruthlessness
I have lost the earth
and the flowers of the earth
and the live souls above the earth

all the flowers are lost;
everything is lost,
everything is crossed with black
black upon black
and worse than black
this colorless light. (*Selected Poems* 36)

Eurydice manages to empower herself, however, for she points out to Orpheus at the end of the poem that despite her having to remain in hell, she has “more fervor / than you in all the splendour” of earth. “At least I have the flowers of myself / and my thoughts, no god / can take that.”

H.D.'s several visits to Greece solidified her lifelong passion for Greek myth as a tool for self-exploration and for revisions of the canon. In 1920, recovering from the traumatic years spent in war-time England, a miscarriage (in 1915), then the birth of her daughter Perdita (in 1919), the dissolution of her marriage to Richard Aldington, the death of both her brother Gilbert and her father, H.D. and her companion, Bryher (Winifred Ellerman), travelled to Corfu, where, as she describes in *Tribute To Freud*, she saw visions on the wall of her hotel room. These visions encouraged and inspired H.D. and later through her work with Freud in Vienna suggested that perhaps she was destined to “found a new religion” (51), a role that she explores most clearly in her later, longer works.

Another early poem of hers, entitled “Helen,” a forerunner of her epic *Helen In Egypt*, was an important result of her trip. Bearing striking resemblance to Graves' poem “The White Goddess” in both tone and meaning, the poem hints at Helen's connection to the White Goddess in her role as a scapegoat for what Graves referred to as “sober men / Ruled by the God Apollo's golden mean”:

All Greece hates
the still eyes in the white face,
the lustre as of olives
where she stands,
and the white hands

All Greece reviles
the wan face when she smiles,
hating it deeper still
when it grows wan and white.

remembering past enchantments
and past ills.

Greece sees unmoved,
God's daughter, born of love,
the beauty of cool feet
and slenderest knees,
could love indeed the maid,
only if she were laid,
white ash amid funereal cypresses. (*Selected Poems* 48)

Like Graves' Goddess, who was weakened by the patriarchal tribes who invaded Greece from Central Asia and whom "all saints reviled," Helen can only be loved when she no longer has any power, when she is "laid, / white ash amid funereal cypresses."

Although neither Graves nor H.D. did much in the way of acknowledging sources, there is strong evidence that both were familiar with the work of the nineteenth century anthropologist J.J. Bachofen and his *Mutterrecht* (most likely through other writers since Bachofen wasn't translated into English until 1967) and the Cambridge anthropologists, in particular Jane Harrison, whom Graves does acknowledge in his introduction to *The Greek Myths*. Both Harrison and Bachofen posited the theory that at one time societies had been largely matriarchal, worshipping a single, Mother goddess, but that after Central Asians invaded Mediterranean lands from 1500 B.C on, there was a gradual transformation to patriarchy. The result was a compartmentalising of the single goddess into various weaker goddesses and an emphasis on Apollonian logic and rationality rather than Dionysian intuition and inspiration.

Both Graves and H.D. suggested a return to, or resurrection of, the single Mother Goddess/Moon goddess as the source of inspiration for poets and to the Dionysian roots of poetry a necessary step in the writing of true poetry. "There is one story and one story only," wrote Graves in "To Juan at the Winter Solstice" (140) and H.D. in *Helen In Egypt* tells us "all myth/the one reality dwells here" (155). Although Graves noted the destructive, "devouring" aspect of the

White Goddess, manifest in the annual sacrificing of the king and also in the death of the "Muse-poet," both he and H.D. viewed her as a paradigm of the life force, one who clearly stood against the violence and chaos of the patriarchy. As H.D. writes in a longer, unpublished version of her memoir *The Gift* (1941):

Mary, Maia, Miriam, Mut, Madre, Mere, Mother, pray
for us. ...This

is Gaia, this is the beginning. This is the end. Under every shrine to Zeus, to Jupiter... there is an earlier altar. There is, beneath the carved super-structure of every temple to God-the-Father, the dark cave or grotto or inner hall or cella[r] to Mary, mere, Mut, mutter, pray for us. (qtd. in Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 329)

It is interesting to note that despite these vital connections between Graves and H.D., her early poetry was dismissed by Graves and Laura Riding in their *A Survey Of Modernist Poetry* as "so thin, so poor, that its emptiness seemed 'perfection,' its insipidity to be concealing a 'secret,' its superficiality so 'glacial' that it created a false 'classical' atmosphere" (qtd. in Snipes 18). Perhaps this was because Graves had not yet articulated his idea of the Goddess. Thanks to scholars like Rachel Blau duPlessis, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Eileen Gregory, it is clear just how far off the mark Graves and Riding were. Even if we did agree with their assessment, however, H.D.'s early Imagist poetry, in its insistence on the image as a "hieroglyph" to meaning, prepared her well for her journey through layers of misogynist tradition and personal tragedy to a place of wholeness and harmony, finally worked through in her epic *Helen In Egypt*. For it is in moments of intuition, where concrete images trigger personal revelation, that H.D., through Helen, discovers her true artistic, spiritual, and personal place in the world. Like other Modernist epic poems, T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*, William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Helen In Egypt*, as Friedman has pointed out, "poses the artist as a kind of prophet wandering in the wilderness of the modern world, drawing on the fragments of many cultures

to forge new myths that might give meaning to a world shattered by war, technology, and alienation" (Scott 86). But what is so radically and subversively different in H.D.'s work is its woman-centeredness; as in her earlier poem "Eurydice" here the poetic consciousness is female, not male, and identifies with Graves' Goddess. Subject rather than object, Helen writes over the Modernist script, not through reliance on the voices of the past, of authority, as Eliot's and Pound's personae most decidedly do, but through her own powerful Dionysian intuition, manifested in her ability to decipher various images from both the past and present, just as H.D. had read the writing on the walls in her Corfu hotel room.

H.D. drew upon an alternative story of Helen, one she discovered through her translations of Euripedes' tragedy *Helen* and through the poetry of the Sicilian lyricist Stesichorus, a contemporary of Sappho, that, incidentally, Graves, in his work *The Greek Myths* (Part 2) thought was the "far more likely" version (277). According to both Euripedes and Stesichorus, "Helen was never in Troy. She had been transposed or translated into Egypt. Helen of Troy was a phantom, substituted for the real Helen." Thus, the "Greeks and the Trojans fought for an illusion" (*Helen* vii).

So in the Pallinode, the first of the three parts of the epic, Helen finds herself in the Amen temple, having been mysteriously transported to Egypt, possibly by Zeus, and needing to understand this phantom self, the other Helen, "hated of all Greece" and needing to recall her past in order to do so. Contemplating Helen on the ramparts of Troy, where Homer positioned her in *The Iliad*, is crucial because, as Susan Stanford Friedman has suggested, "Helen cannot begin the process of authentic self-definition until she has come to terms with the identity created for her by the dominant culture" (*Psyche Reborn* 254), which, of course, is the Hellenic patriarchy that Graves criticizes.

Pallinode, in Greek, means defense (literally singing against) and H.D., via Helen, "sings against" the misogynist, patriarchal, classical tradition, represented by Homer's *The Iliad*, by verbally attacking the heroes of the Trojan War and the culture of war, distinguished by

violence and destruction: "Agamemnon? Menelaus? Odysseus? / Were they each separately / encased by the iron-armour, / was each Typhon, a Whirlwind of War?" (84) Such a culture is directly connected in Helen's mind with a long tradition of patriarchy: "The Command was bequest from the past, / from father and son, / the Command bound past to present / and the present to aeons to come, / the Command was my father, my brother, / my lover, my God" (61). And it is a culture that has used Helen, like Eve, as a scapegoat, an excuse for its own violent nature. "[S]o they fought, forgetting women, hero to hero, sworn brother and lover, and cursing Helen through eternity" (4).

There's an important connection with Graves here. Both his biographer, Richard Perceval Graves, and Robert Canary have suggested that yet another impetus for the writing of *The White Goddess* may have been his trench warfare experience in World War I, where the gruesome details he witnessed drove him to see the futility of war and a concomitant need to reject patriarchal images of the warrior. And, of course, his harrowing experiences in World War II, not as a soldier but as a civilian who had to leave his beloved Majorca. As he writes in the last chapter *The White Goddess*, entitled "The Return of the White Goddess," "Apollo wields the atomic bomb as if it were a thunderbolt" (476). H.D. also had first-hand experience with war, having lived through both World Wars in London. She very clearly intended a connection between the patriarchal forces of the Trojan War and those scenes she witnessed in London, indicated in her notebooks and in her choice of words in describing the Trojan War and its so-called heroes:

"dictator (51)," "holocaust (5)," "Command" (60). Her preference for Euripides over Aeschylus, as Eileen Gregory has so convincingly pointed out, also reinforces H.D.'s commitment to pacifist notions: "H.D. found in Euripides—as Pound in Aeschylus and Homer—a mirror for the visceral and bewildering experience of war....He consistently disintegrates the intellectual and moral nomos of the heroic world and simultaneously reveals the intensity of isolated lyric moments" (25).

To Helen, Achilles, the great hero of *The Iliad*, is the paradigm of patriarchy, the equivalent of the Egyptian god Osiris, ruler of the dead:

“Lord of your legions. King of Myrmidons, / unconquerable, a mountain and a grave, / Achilles” (6).

He is also associated in Helen’s mind with the sacrifices of women in the name of war, in particular her sister Clytemnestra’s daughter, Iphigenia, who, lured to Aulis with the promise of wedding Achilles, was instead sacrificed to Artemis so that the Greeks would have winds to sail to Troy. In Helen’s mind “Achilles sanctioned the sacrifice” (81). As part of her recovery of an authentic past, then, Helen defends her sister’s killing of Agamemnon as revenge for the death of her daughter, while at the same time championing the cause of “mother right”:

“she could never forget / the glint of steel at the throat / of her child on the altar” (72), implying that the real source of violence was not Clytemnestra’s murdering Agamemnon but the false pledge made to lure Iphigenia to Aulis: “...the pledge was a pledge to Death, / to War and the armies of Greece” (73). Even more significantly, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia are identified with the White Goddess and her original power when Helen describes them as white swans, an interesting revision of the Leda and the Swan myth, which engendered both Helen and Clytemnestra: “one swan and one cygnet / were stronger than all the host, / assembled upon the slopes / and the hills of Aulis” (76).

Thus, in order for Achilles to be transformed into the “New Mortal,”

he must revise his position and connect to the power of the White Goddess, represented by Helen but also by his mother, the goddess Thetis. Paradoxically, it is Achilles' famous vulnerable spot, a result of Thetis failing to dip his heel in the waters of the Styx when he was a child, that allows for this. Because in the second that he was distracted by Helen's scarf on the ramparts in Troy while he was adjusting his sandals, he was shot in his heel by Paris. Both these moments, Thetis dipping him into the river Styx and Helen distracting him, represent the intervention of the feminine in his life. Like Graves' White Goddess, whose "worn magnificence" makes us "forget cruelty and past betrayal," this life force is more powerful than the "Command": "She is stronger than Fate/and a chaffing greave, loose at the ankle" (61).

When Helen first sees Achilles shipwrecked on the shore in Egypt "with sea enchantment in his eyes" (7) and limping across the sand, she theorizes that perhaps she had been responsible for bringing him to Egypt, for restoring him to life: "...as if I, Helen, had withdrawn/from the bruised and swollen flesh, the arrow from its wound" (8). At first, Achilles doesn't recognize Helen, wondering if she is a witch, but when he does realize that it is Helen of Troy, presumably the cause of all his troubles, he attempts to strangle her with "his fingers remorseless steel" (17). But it is, in fact, in that very moment of near strangulation that Helen, as a priestess in the Amen temple, is able to decipher the undecipherable, to "read the writing when he seized my throat" (25), to understand "How are Helen in Egypt/and Helen upon the ramparts/together yet separate" (63). In this important imagistic and epiphanic moment, what Pound defined as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pratt 18), she realizes that Love, and not Helen, was the catalyst for war, that the "sail was the veil of Aphrodite" (110). That is, Helen's scarf or veil that distracted Achilles on the ramparts was also the sail that brought the Greeks to Troy: and both belong to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, or more accurately here, the goddess of desire. In a clever word play, Eros is thus aligned with Eris, the goddess of discord who threw the apple onto the banquet hall floor, eventually leading to the famous Judgment of Paris and the Trojan War, and also Ares, brother

of Eris and the ill-favored son of Aphrodite and Zeus.

Significantly, Helen's ability to answer the innumerable questions, to decipher the undecipherable so "enchantment may find a place/where desolation rules" (90) comes not through rational thought or reliance on authority, but through intuition and a rejection of authority, by brushing "aside all the traditional philosophy and wisdom" (78), which, of course, has been the domain of men: "I was not instructed, but I 'read' the script," Helen tells us (25). This strategy, which I suggested earlier is key to understanding H.D.'s place in the Modernist tradition, becomes especially crucial in the second part of the poem where Theseus, the model for whom was clearly Sigmund Freud, helps Helen decode the hieratic messages of her past, particularly as they relate to her past lovers. Here we see H.D. putting her "gift" to the test, with the encouragement of her analyst, Freud, whom she worked with in Vienna, first for three months in 1933 and then for five weeks in 1935. Freud used his own collection of ancient artefacts, which he kept, in his office, to help patients identify important psychological conflicts in their lives—a technique H.D., along with her visions and dreams, found a powerful tool in her own recovery.

Although Graves was interested in Freud and psychology, through what John Smeds says was a "hasty reading of *Interpretations Of Dreams*" (8), through his connection with the psychologist and neurologist W.H.R. Rivers, and through a brief friendship with the Bengali philosopher Basanta Mallik (R.P. Graves 275), he was eventually resistant to the idea of myth as "original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings" (*Greek Myths* 22); rather, "a true science of myth should begin with a study of archaeology, history, and comparative religion, not in the psycho-therapist's consulting room" (*Greek Myths* 21). In his 1960 Postscript to *The White Goddess*, he further rejects "witchcraft, spiritualism, yoga, fortune-telling, automatic writing, and the like," insisting that he "belong[s] to no religious cult, no secret society, no philosophical sect; nor do I trust my historical intuition any further than it can be factually checked" (488), though, of course, he did believe in what he called the magic of true myth. And it seems safe to say that *The White Goddess* shows Graves drawing upon free associa-

tion and intuition in astounding and powerful ways.

At the end of her *Pallinode*, Helen has "withstood / the rancour of time and of hate" (96), realizing "it was not her fault"; in fact, she is the Phoenix who will rise from the ashes of war, who has vanquished the "ancient enemy" (94), the Sphinx. H.D.'s associations of the Phoenix with female resurrection and the Sphinx with the male probably come directly from Graves. In his explanation for the shift from a matrilinear society to a patriarchy, Graves suggests that "the Egyptian Sphinx became masculine like the Assyrian winged bull" (417). "The Phoenix," writes Graves, "a symbol of resurrection, is sometimes born in the palmtree, linked with the Tree of Life in Eden and (190) also linked with the myrrh egg (413). Both these associations become important in the next section of the poem, when Paris reminds Helen of her alternate identity as Helen Dendritis, Helen of the Trees, and when Theseus reminds Helen that she was born from the eggshell of Leda and the Swan.

Although Helen has been happy in Egypt, her quest is not yet over. Having been instructed in the mysteries of the Amen temple, which are linked to the Eleusinian mysteries of pre-Hellenic myth, and free of a tradition that blamed her, Helen must still go through a process of self-definition, by again recalling her past and reconciling her seemingly contradictory selves (daughter, mother, wife, lover, person); she is called by her spiritual mother, Thetis, (and incidentally Achilles' mother) back to her home and so must leave Achilles for awhile. Significantly, it is not to Troy or her birthplace of Sparta that Helen goes but to the island of Leuke, or l'Isle Blanche, the white island, the island of Thetis. In one of her notebooks, H.D. specifically identifies Thetis as the White Goddess: "Achilles waits or Hercules or Osiris...does it matter...do I care... only Thetis, the White Goddess...let her hold me in this her island...her egg shell" (Notebooks). Like the speaker in Graves' poem, Helen sails to Leuke to find her "whom we desired above all things to know, / Sister of the mirage and echo" (154). We know that Freud had encouraged H.D. to return to the Greek islands because of her visions and because he felt the islands represented a return to the womb and thus a return to the mother. The feminist scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have also identified

Greek islands as a place of female artistry (231), which fits here in that parallel to Helen's quest is H.D.'s quest to find artistic wholeness, an aim she clearly shared with Graves. All of these associations suggest that it is on Leuke that Helen will undergo rebirth as she recollects and reconstructs her life, as the daughter of Leda and the swan and the (twin) sister of Clytemnestra and Castor and Pollux, as the lover of Paris, and, finally, and most importantly, as the daughter of the Mother (White) Goddess, whose protean nature she finally comes to understand and which helps her to reconcile her several identities.

Paris, an early lover, is the first to appear to Helen on Leuke, reminding her of her identity as Helen Dendritis, Helen of the Trees, of their past love and of her promise never to return to Greece. Paris can't understand why Helen would want to be with Achilles, "and the thousand spears" (142), the one responsible for the sacrifices of his own sister, Polyxena, and also Iphigenia, Briseis, and Chryseis. Leuke is the island of light, not a place of darkness, Paris tells her, and besides, he says to Helen, "Achilles never loved you" (143). His challenge to Helen reminds her once again of her several identities and of the paradoxes in her life, for although Paris killed Achilles in Troy, that act also brought Achilles to Helen in Egypt. As she gradually aligns herself with the White Goddess, she decides that because he represents young love, Paris could actually be her son, fathered by none other than Achilles: "he, my first lover, was created by my last" (185), a variation of the Isis/Osiris/Horus myth which Graves discusses in *The White Goddess*. Thus, although it is tempting for Helen to remain with Paris in his small, cozy room, she realizes her place is not with this youthful figure, and so she continues her self-exploration.

Abruptly, Helen finds herself in Athens with Theseus, another figure from her past.

Theseus, who had stolen Helen when she was a young girl, tells her that "All myth, the one reality dwells here" (215) and Helen tells Theseus, as he soothes her wounded feet and warms her by the fire, "I wanted to come home. ... I cannot go on, on, on/telling the story/of the Fall of Troy" (153). Under the protective and fatherly guidance of Theseus, an analogue for Sigmund Freud, Helen is assured that "only

the Quest remains (158) and that Theseus will guide her. Theseus advises Helen that she must return to the shell: "wrapped in this shawl, my butterfly, / my psyche, disappear into the web, / the shell, reintegrate" (170). What he is suggesting, as Freud had to H.D., is that Helen needs to reconnect with the Mother, for the shell is not only a cocoon but also a seashell, which Graves points to as a possible source for the White Goddess: "the mound of sea-shells, or quartz, or white marble, underneath which dead kings were buried" (*The Greek Myths*, Vol. 1 13) and which is also associated with the resurrection of the Phoenix. Furthermore, the shell is an egg shell, from which Helen and her twin brothers were born, again reminding Helen of life before the war and of her role as both daughter and sister. And as a daughter, she is also Persephone to Thetis' and Leda's Demeter: "I was taken / but never forsaken by another / by Hades" (195). Graves' single reference to Helen in *The White Goddess* connects Helen to Persephone: "Helen was not a mortal woman; she was Helle, or Persephone, a Goddess of Death and Resurrection" (257). This recognition helps her to reconcile her own disparate parts, to see the protean nature of the goddess, which H.D. clearly drew from Graves. In one of her notebooks she acknowledges her debt "**the New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination**" (Notebooks). Susan Stanford Friedman makes a further, crucial connection: "As the white goddess of birth and growth, Helen of Troy was Aphrodite with her young lover Adonis (Paris)...As the red goddess of love and battle, Helen was identified with Thetis as mother in her relationship with Achilles that began in Troy and moved to Egypt. And finally, as the black goddess of death and divination, Helen was Persephone, the bride of Achilles-Dis or Kore, the daughter of the goddess Demeter and seed of the rebirth to come (*Women's Studies* 184).

In *Eidolon*, the third and final section of *Helen In Egypt*, Achilles calls Helen to return to him in Egypt with the recognition that "you had come home, / but the long way (211). Helen has learned that she is the protean goddess, the Triple Goddess, the White Goddess and that opposites can merge, can synthesize. So she answers the final undecipherable question:

Love and Death are indeed one and the same, both La Mort and
L'Amour:

so the dart of Love
is the dart of Death,
and the secret is no secret

the simple path
refutes at last
the threat of the Labyrinth,

the Sphinx is seen,
the Beast is slain
and the Phoenix-nest

reveals the innermost
key or the clue to the rest
of the mystery;

there is no before and no after,
there is one finite moment
that no infinite joy can disperse

or thought of past happiness
tempt from or dissipate;
now I know the best and the worst;

the seasons revolve around
a pause in the infinite rhythm
of the heart and of heaven. (303-304)

Reminiscent of Grave's "still point of the wheel," Helen's moment of mythic and psychic wholeness transforms her into "a reborn soul who has recaptured her past without shame, understood her identity as a woman, and perceived the dualities inherent in herself as well as the polarized world" (Friedman, "Creating a Woman's Mythology 191).

As the White Goddess whose original unity has been restored, she is now ready to join Achilles, the "New Mortal," who appropriately recalls his wooden doll, his eidolon, given to him as a child by his mother, Thetis. This recollection allows him to connect with the feminine both through Thetis and through Helen in its association with Helen of the Trees: "while another tree, / the tree before Chiron's door, / holds another secret, / a sorcery even more potent, / a wooden doll / that Thetis' child hid away" (291). Thus, the 'miraculous birth' of their child Euphorion is a symbol of the rebirth of both Helen and Achilles.

If, as Graves wrote in his introduction to *The White Goddess*, "the test of a poet's vision...is the accuracy of his portrayal of the White Goddess and of the island over which she rules" (24), then perhaps at last Graves would have approved of H.D. as a fellow visionary poet and artist. Their shared commitment to the principles of The White Goddess, manifest in brilliant but often enigmatic ways, to her power to inspire and invoke the creative spirit, and to the sacredness of that power surely connect these two modern poets in significant ways. Although Graves can be given only partial credit for guidance in H.D.'s lifelong quest, it is clear that H.D. found in his Goddess an affirmation of her work; in a coda to *Helen In Egypt*, her poem "Winter Love" (written in 1959 but published posthumously), she again calls on the White Goddess and perhaps on Graves himself when she writes: "we will go on together, / and find the way to hyacinths by a river" (*Hermetic Definition* 113).

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