Ecological Interventions: The *Künstlerroman* in H.D.'s *Madrigal Cycle*

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Abstract

The texts of H.D.'s *Madrigal Cycle*—comprised of *Paint It To-Day* (1921), *Asphodel* (1921-22), *Bid Me to Live* (1939-50), and the prequel *HERmione* (1926-30)—are often construed as autobiographical examples of the *Künstlerroman*, a narrative form of the *Bildungsroman* that focuses on the maturation of an artist figure. Existing scholarship on the *Madrigal Cycle* has considered the ways in which H.D. grapples with the genre's gendered and narratorial inadequacies—particularly the oft-marginalized position of women and the linear expectations of growth—with respect to describing her own artistic development. This thesis extends an ecocritical analysis to this work by considering how H.D. locates in nature an open-ended dynamism and plurality of growth that offer an alternative to these conventional roles and narratives. This turn towards nature motivates the development of what I call a model of ecological artistry that emerges from an awareness of nature as materially and biologically integral to the artist's formation. Her framing of the nonhuman world as an agentive, generative, and disruptive catalyst within these texts helps to destabilize the humanist conceptions of self upon which the genre rests by challenging the received boundaries between nature and culture and human and nonhuman. In considering the texts as a cyclical weaving and unweaving of the same story, this thesis analyzes how the *Madrigal* texts contribute to a rethinking of artistic growth not as an advancement towards refinement but rather as an ongoing engagement with the vibrant agencies of the human and nonhuman world.

Résumé

Les textes du *Madrigal Cycle* de H.D.—comprenant *Paint It To-Day* (1921), *Asphodel* (1921-22), *Bid Me to Live* (1939-50) et le prequel *HERmione* (1926-30)—sont souvent interprétés comme *Künstlerromane* autobiographiques, une forme narrative du *Bildungsroman* qui se concentre sur la maturation d'une figure d'artiste. La recherche existante sur *Madrigal Cycle* a examiné les façons dont H.D. est aux prises avec les limitations liées au genre et narratives du genre—en particulier la position souvent marginalisée des femmes et les attentes linéaires de croissance—en ce qui concerne la description de son propre développement artistique. Cette thèse étend une analyse éco-critique à la façon dont H.D. localise dans la nature un dynamisme ouvert et une pluralité de croissance qui offrent une alternative à ces rôles et récits conventionnels. Ce virage vers la nature motive le développement de ce que j'appelle un modèle d'art écologique qui émerge d'une conscience de la nature comme faisant partie intégrante matériellement et biologiquement de la formation de l'artiste. Son encadrement du monde non humain en tant que catalyseur agent, générateur et perturbateur parmi ces textes contribue à déstabiliser les conceptions humanistes de soi sur lesquelles repose le genre en remettant en question les frontières reçues entre nature et culture et humain et non-humain. En considérant les textes comme un tissage et un détissage cyclique d'une même histoire, cette thèse analyse comment les textes de *Madrigal* contribuent à repenser la croissance artistique non pas par sa progression vers le raffinement mais plutôt par son engagement continu avec les agences vibrantes du monde humain et non-humain.

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Introduction

From the publication of her first volume of poetry onwards, H.D. displays in her work an interest in nature as a powerful and capacious force. This investment in the more-than-human world did not go unnoticed, and her contemporaries celebrated the "wildness" of her poetry and extended this trait to her, too (Monroe 268). Amy Lowell notes that she has "a strange, faun-like, dryad-like quality" (qtd. Hughes 124), Harriet Monroe calls her "a lithe, hard, bright-winged spirit of nature to whom humanity is but an incident" (268), and her husband, Richard Aldington, conceptualizes her as belonging to an "out-door" school of American thought (qtd. Zilboorg 219). As Susan Stanford Friedman and Miranda Hickman note, attention to H.D. began to wane after 1930 and her work was largely "buried" and neglected (Friedman "Buried" 802, Hickman "Uncanonically" 10), but the scholarship emerging out of 1980s efforts to revive her legacy illustrated again the role of the nonhuman in her work. In a 1986 article, Eileen Gregory considers the "harsh power of elemental life" in *Sea Garden* (1916) as a force "to which the soul must open itself, and by which it must be transformed or die" ("Rose" 538), and three years later Gary Burnett writes of how her 1914 poem "Oread" extends consciousness into the nonhuman world: "the sea, pines, and rocks are, so to speak, *entities* and not things—they are beings in their own right rather than mere items in an Imagistic poetic inventory" (57). As early as 1978, Susan Gubar reflects on how the images of mollusks, worms, shells, and butterflies in *Trilogy* (1944-6) help H.D. to create a lexicon for women's creativity that eludes the "entrapment" of male-defined literary conventions ("Echoing" 198). This extensive scholarly focus on nature all evokes how it acts in H.D.'s oeuvre as a dynamic and influential force, a "wildness" that subverts expectations and provides a space for change and transformation.

Given this abundant use of natural imagery, the field of ecocriticism has recently provided a relevant lens through which to parse H.D.'s larger corpus, and in this current wave of scholarship, the presence of the nonhuman in her prose has received more attention. Broadly speaking, ecocriticism looks at literature through its relationship to the environment, with the aim of interrogating traditional ideologies that frame nature as a realm from which humans are separate. Various language has been employed to this effect, such as Stacy Alaimo's "trans-corporeality," to denote the overlaps between human and nonhuman bodies ("Bodily" 2); Jane Bennett's "agentic assemblage" to describe how society is bound up with microbes, plants, and animals (107); Timothy Morton's "mesh" of interconnectedness (*Ecological* 28); and Karen Barad's "intra-action" to emphasize the entanglement of agency (33). Ecocriticism is not a new area of study, as even within H.D.'s own lifetime there was growing interest in the intersections of environment and art,[1] but it has gained momentum in recent years, and its tools have offered generative ways of reading many texts, including H.D.'s. In Annette Debo's groundbreaking *The American H.D.* (2012), for example, she considers the significance of the American landscape in H.D.'s poetry and fiction and suggests that land "influences the development of characters" in her novels (xvi). Kim Sigouin similarly focuses on how H.D. considers "the body's ongoing interaction with nonhuman matter" (124), locating the body as the site through which H.D. stimulates a new mode of perceiving the world around her. Thinking of the body not as a "static entity" but rather an organism that is in a "perpetual state of transformation" as it interacts with the material world contributes to a rethinking of H.D.'s narrators and personae as part of a greater interconnectedness that impacts language and consciousness (127). Both critics concern

[1] Although ecocriticism is considered to have formed as a field of study in the 1990s, Annette Debo and Stacy Alaimo both cite Mary Austin, a contemporary of H.D., as expressing an early interest in how nature informs artistry and offers a conceptual and physical space to rethink cultural norms, especially those pertaining to gender (Debo 128-9, Alaimo *Undomesticated* 63).

themselves with the impact of the environment on H.D.'s writing, and while the enduring presence of nature in her poetry and prose has prompted many reflections on the relevance of these nonhuman presences in H.D.'s artistic imagination, this more contemporary turn to the ecocritical considers how these material agents actively inform development and formation in her work.

This question of development is evidently one in which H.D. was interested, as she devoted much of the 1920s and 1930s to writing *Künstlerromane*. The *Künstlerroman*—a subgenre of the more widely known *Bildungsroman*—follows the life and growth of an individual artist, usually interweaving the writer's autobiographical journey into the fictional protagonist's. The early twentieth century is rich with texts that might be viewed as such, including D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* (1915), Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915-67), James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), May Sinclair's *Mary Oliver: A Life* (1919), Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage In* (1928), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), Mina Loy's *Insel* (1937),[2] and many more. H.D., too, participated in this modernist zeitgeist of "portrait-of-the-artist" novels and wrote four texts making up her *Madrigal Cycle*: *Paint It To-Day* (1921), *Asphodel* (1921-22), *HERmione* (1926-30), and *Bid Me to Live (A Madrigal)* (1939-50).[3] All of the novels draw on the substance of her life, and despite featuring different characters and plots, they broadly follow H.D.'s early years in Pennsylvania and her subsequent travels abroad, marriage to Richard Aldington, and experience of the First World War. This period was formative in H.D.'s early career as a young artist and the texts explore the different facets of her growth. Of the texts, only *Bid Me to Live*

[2] As *Insel* was only published posthumously in 1991, this timeframe is provided by Andrew Gaedtke in "From Transmissions of Madness to Machines of Writing: Mina Loy's *Insel* as Clinical Fantasy" (*Journal of Modern Literature* 32.1: 2008, 143).
[3] These dates represent Friedman's estimates for the composition of the texts (*Penelope* 341-6).

was published in her lifetime, a mere year before her death, but her repeated return to the genre of the *Künstlerroman* reveals a lifelong interest in the matter of artistic development.

The history of the genre is relevant in thinking of why H.D. chose to engage with it so extensively. As Tobias Boes, Kelsey Bennett, Maurice Beebe, and others have noted, the *Bildungsroman* emerges from the Idealist tradition of the Enlightenment, characterized by its belief in human perfectibility.[4] Friedrich Schiller, considered one of the foundational thinkers of Idealism, argues in *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) that "every individual human being…carries within him, potentially and prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype of a human being, and it is his life's task to be, through all his changing manifestations, in harmony with the unchanging unity of this ideal" (qtd. Boes *Formative* 16). This notion of life as a series of "changing manifestations" in the pursuit of an ideal state is central to the idea of *Bildung*, of which Schiller was a prominent theorist. Bennett describes *Bildung* as "a summation of the eighteenth century's impossibly utopian Enlightenment ideals such as rational individual integrity or wholeness, man's basic goodness, and the progressive, organic growth of the personality in harmony with one's environment" (1). The genre of the *Bildungsroman* emerged from the fictional articulation of this organic growth, most famously by Johann von Goethe. His *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*—published the same year as Schiller's *Letters*—follows the eponymous character's trajectory from a young boy enamoured with the theatre to eventual businessman, and the novel is widely considered representative of the concept of *Bildung* as conceived during Goethe's lifetime. Even the language of "apprenticeship" implies that there

[4] Immanuel Kant outlines a teleological vision of moral perfection in many of his works, as in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Metaphysics of Moral* (1797), wherein he suggests perfectibility is not fully realizable but can be progressively worked towards through constant cultivation and education. The Marquis de Condorcet's 1795 *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Kind*, too, participates in the view that human progress constantly moves towards a "true perfection of mankind" (173).

exists the eventual potential for mastery, evoking the ideals of perfectibility and the perception of growth as progressive, teleological, and dialectical. Though the terminology of the *Bildungsroman* was only formalized long after the publication of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the novel has left an indelible mark on later studies, as much of the criticism on the genre turns to *Wilhelm* as a prototypical or originary text.

Beginning predominantly in the late nineteenth-century, there emerged much theorization and scholarship attempting to define and codify the *Bildungsroman* and its closely related subgenre, the *Künstlerroman*. Wilhelm Dilthey—widely considered to be the one who developed the term until Fritz Martini discovered its appearance in the lectures of Romantic critic Karl Morgenstern (Boes "Modernist" 233)—delineates the *Bildungsroman* in a 1906 lecture as a genre in which:

> A regulated development within the life of the individual is observed, each of its stages has its own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage. The dissonance and conflicts of life appear as necessary growth points through which the individual must pass on his way to maturity and harmony. (390)

Subsequent attempts to outline the principal characteristics of the genre in the twentieth century expanded upon Dilthey's core definition without diverging from this central understanding of the progression of maturation. Maurice Beebe offers an extensive analysis of the *Künstlerroman* over several centuries in his *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts* (1964), attempting to locate the different moorings of the genre over the decades and advancing the language of the "quest" so as to consider the artist's movement away from the home and journey into society. Jerome Buckley's *Seasons of Youth* (1974), which seeks to provide a comprehensive study of the genre, offers a similar archetypal narrative: a child of sensibility (usually artistic) grows up in a remote

area with a family hostile to his talents; his schooling proves inadequate and motivates him to leave the country for the city; this move to an urban environment marks the beginning of his real education, and through the coils of this modern world he comes to a state of maturity that discernibly departs from his adolescence (17-8). In all these delineations of the genre, development appears linear, cumulative, gradual, and total, with each sequential step providing the foundation for further growth. The maturation of child into man is of particular relevance in genre criticism, as this biological/chronological progression is seen as paralleling and instigating the intellectual and spiritual growth of the individual. Though scholars have addressed the nuances of the *Bildungsroman* across different countries and centuries, a definition emerges from such criticism that appears relatively comprehensive and straightforward.

This definition, however, is overwhelmingly and inherently androcentric. Beebe's study, for example, exclusively centers on male artists.[5] His predominant consideration of women is how they act as passive muse-receptacles for male artists and he uses the metaphor of childbirth to make a creative/procreative parallel, and he qualifies that total "submission" to women "destroy[s]" the artist (18). Even in Buckley's *Seasons*, his sole consideration of a female author, George Eliot, frames *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) largely as a story of Tom Tulliver's maturation rather than Maggie's. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland have noted in *The Voyage In* (1983) how this narrow understanding of artistic growth has made it difficult for women writers to "voice any aspirations whatsoever" (6-7), both in life and fiction. Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women* (1993) and Roberta White's *A Studio of One's Own* (2005) similarly echo how the assumption of mobility as a feature of development was often not

[5] Beebe briefly alludes to authors such as Willa Cather as writers of the *Künstlerroman* but notes that he "stop[s] with Joyce" because he best brings "the artist-novel to a climax by achieving the most impressive synthesis of its basic themes" (vi), thus excluding Cather from any further consideration.

feasible for women, and Fraiman notes how women in *Bildungsromane* typically serve as static figures meant to "measure out the hero's progress" rather than dynamic actors in their own right (7). White, moreover, follows Beebe's inference that women's agency hinders male artistry by tracking a trend in the genre wherein artists abuse women so as to refine their artistic genius (28). Fraiman frames her study of women's development by suggesting that "progressive development" and "coherent identity" are "enabling fictions whose limited availability to women" have contained women's growth and artistry (x). Abel, Hirsch, and Langland similarly suggest that this "fully realized and individuated self" is not even always representative of the goals of women or women characters (10-11), nor, indeed, for many men. The conventional characteristics of artist's growth as put forth by criticism of the *Künstlerroman* are particularly incommensurable for women artists, for as Laura Prieto notes, "the cultural prescriptions of femininity" have made it historically difficult for women to be seen as artists (4). This endless negotiation of personal and social crossroads means that the "linear structure of the male *Bildungsroman*" is rarely applicable in stories of women's development (Abel *Voyage* 11).

These difficulties were being noted and articulated by writers in the modernist period, too. In her memoir *Compassionate Friendship* (1955), H.D. writes of the difficulty of being a woman writer in the early twentieth-century male literary world: "We had no signposts, at that time" (90). Whereas the legacy of the *Künstlerroman* created a quasi-universal narrative of what trajectory men's artistic careers might follow, the familiar "signposts" were not available to women. Men might encounter difficulties in pursuing art over a more practical livelihood (as in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), but women would often be discouraged purely on the basis of sex; the words "[w]omen can't paint, women can't write" (42), for example, follow artist-protagonist Lily Briscoe like a refrain throughout Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

Additionally, even when women did write *Künstlerromane*, they were not always recognized as such. Cather's *The Song of the Lark*, which rather faithfully adheres to the traditional structure of the genre, was labeled by H.L. Mencken in 1916 as a "Cinderella" story instead (qtd. Huf 87), implying that Thea Kronborg's artistic success is a fantasy achieved only with the help of an intervening prince and not through her own maturation. The conventional form of the *Künstlerroman* was thus largely inaccessible to writers who were not white, privileged, usually heterosexual young men.

Women writer's engagement with the *Künstlerroman* was thus often done with the purpose of critiquing its established patterns and assumptions.[6] More generally, the modernist period has been identified as a watershed moment wherein there were conscious attempts to resist the tyranny of plot and introduce new methods of depicting consciousness, life, and, by extension, growth. Famously, in "Modern Fiction" (1925), Woolf elucidates a sentiment that life cannot be "symmetrically arranged" into a linear, cohesive pattern but rather is a "semi-transparent envelope" that contrasts the tidy closures of fiction (160). This language of englobing appears in her own fiction, notably in *The Waves* (1931) when Bernard "sums up" his life by denying the "orderly and military progress" of life and instead suggesting that there is a "globe of life" wherein an individual "is not one life" but rather multiple (184-5). Though Woolf does not address the *Bildungsroman* by name, such texts trouble the notion of a *Bildung* design of inner formation and speak more broadly to the rethinking of conventional portrayals of growth that were explored during this period. Linear resistance and women's opposition to normative

[6] This is not to suggest that male writers were not doing the same; in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for example, Stephen's growth does not adhere neatly to chronological time but rather occurs in "proleptic fits and retroactive starts" and "epiphanic bursts" (Esty 2). Stephen nonetheless follows many of the conventional "signposts" of the genre, and indeed the novel is often held up as the quintessential modernist *Künstlerroman*, whereas many of the novels by women included in this thesis were not immediately understood to be so because they diverged so greatly from established generic patterns.

development is also evident in her *Orlando* (1928) and *The Voyage Out* (1915), where the protagonists in many ways never grow up, either through the fantastical dilation of historical/biological time or through premature death. Certainly the "textual clusters" of the *Madrigal Cycle* (Friedman "Return" 237)—in which the texts shift narrators, markedly do not adhere to linear temporality, and are unfinished (in the case of *Paint it To-Day*)—reveal a fraught sense of development that is layered, circular, and perpetually dynamic.[7] Accordingly, scholars such as Friedman, Dianne Chisholm, and Gregory Castle have considered how the *Madrigal* novels "invoke[] the patterns of the genre [*Künstlerroman*]" to examine the narrative of development through the vectors of sexuality (Friedman), gender (Chisholm), and modernist experimentation (Castle) (Friedman *Penelope* 102).

Such modernist and later feminist interventions have served as salient entry points into rethinking generic criticism of the *Bildungsroman*, but a recent shift towards reflecting on the genre through an ecocritical lens has considered not so much the specificities of how development occurs but rather what this development signifies ideologically. Helena Feder explores the genre in *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture* (2016) and puts forth the argument that the *Bildungsroman* contributes to a humanist ideological history predicated on conceiving of the human as separate from and in opposition to nature (18). To illuminate this, Feder turns to the Enlightenment idea of *Bildung* and identifies the concept as inherently positing that becoming part of culture is simultaneously a "self-creation out of nature" (19). Indeed, Schiller

[7] The creation of the texts themselves is similarly circular and overlapping. H.D. considered *Bid Me to Live* to be the most polished of the *Cycle*, with *Asphodel* providing the materials out of which it was "[p]hoenix[ed]" (qtd. Hollenberg *Between* 247), but she also writes in a 1949 letter to Bryher that *Asphodel* is a "continuation of HER" (qtd. Spoo xiii). *Paint It To-Day* provides an originary reflection on queer desire that is subsequently seen again in *Asphodel* and *HERmione*, yet it has also been grouped with *Asphodel* and *Bid Me to Live* because of the overlapping perspectives on the First World War. Because H.D. worked on and edited the texts over the course of many years, there is not a strict chronological order to the texts, and this thesis has ordered the analyses by content and theme as opposed to date.

writes in his *Letters* that it is the artist's task to produce art that "triumph[s] over nature" (247), creating a binary that excludes considerations of the ecological interconnectedness of art, culture, and nature. Feder advances the notion that the *Bildungsroman* dialectically relies on and reinforces the humanistic claim to "radical uniqueness" and tells the story of "the formation of the human as the producer of itself as culture" (21); however, she also offers many examples of the genre that reveals "the cracks at the core of this claim" (2). She suggests the *Bildungsroman* simultaneously exhibits an awareness of nature's agency and the human/nonhuman connection and that the genre reveals a "cultural fantasy of detachment" that ignores these ecological intimacies (131). She engages not only with the language of ecocriticism to decenter such conceptions but also uses a posthuman lexicon, noting how posthumanism helps to challenge the "primacy of humanity" by signaling a renewed interest in the "web of complex relations" comprising the world (5, Darwin 73). Her suggestion of the impossibility of fulfilling the "promise" of humanism, which is a promise of human mastery and superiority, opens up the potential to reorient the focus of the *Bildungsroman* and the *Künstlerroman* away from the individual and towards a plurality of human and nonhuman agents.

Ecocriticism has offered a relevant vocabulary for examining H.D.'s work, and many scholars have provided insight as to how her novels intervene in the generic patterns of the *Künstlerroman*; what this thesis aims to do is bring these two bodies of scholarship together (in the same vein as Feder) to consider how H.D. engages with the nonhuman so as to trouble received ideas of the genre and its implications for development, gender, art, and nature.

The first chapter considers how *HERmione* engages with the conventional gender roles of the *Künstlerroman* through her relationship with George Lowndes, a figure modeled on Ezra Pound and his own artistic aspirations. As another, at times competing, artist, George threatens to

subsume Hermione's nascent attempts at writing by adopting her as a kind of muse in his own narrative. In this tradition, women are often compared to—or even conflated with—nature, as both are framed as the fertile, passive ground through which the (male) artist finds inspiration and advances his development. While at first struggling to resist this claustrophobic alignment, Hermione comes to recognize that the nonhuman world is not a passive space to be used for the transcendence of a male ego but rather one filled with dynamic, vibrant agencies that resist and circumvent such attempts. She thus locates within these natural networks a means to elude becoming a muse in another's *Künstlerroman* by instead developing an ecological artistry that engages with the agentive, more-than-human world and surpasses the narrower scope of George's art.

The second chapter looks at how *Paint It To-Day* intervenes in the linear, teleological, and progressive assumptions of development intrinsic to the *Künstlerroman*. As the genre is understood to follow the life of the artist from childhood to adulthood, the body plays a significant role in informing this maturation, with its successive, autonomous stages of growth underscoring conceptions of development more broadly. H.D. similarly locates the body as integral to growth, but rather than understanding it as a bounded and linear site, she instead envisions the body as porous and reactive to the surrounding world. This chapter brings together Alaimo's idea of the "trans-corporeal" and H.D.'s own concept of the "over-mind" to locate in the novel a reconceptualization of development as an ongoing initiation into the nonhuman cycles around her, allowing her to circumvent the linear impetus of the genre and validate alternative forms of artistic growth.

The third chapter examines the historical context of the First World War in relation to the genre, focusing on how representations of the world changed during this period. Whereas the

conventional *Bildungsroman* assumes a generally accommodating relationship between the individual and society, the trauma of war led many modernist writers to conceive of life as a more rootless and hostile experience. In *Bid Me to Live*, the protagonist, Julia Ashton, feels similarly stunted and repressed. The masculine violence of wartime London silences and traumatizes her, and consequently inhibits her attempts to develop as both a woman and an artist. It is only upon entering the elemental and vital seascape of Cornwall that she is able to heal and grow, which at one level restores the harmonious dialectic between individual and world. However, H.D. weaves the violence of war into nature and vice versa, and in doing so destabilizes the nature/culture binary—and its latent gendered hierarchies—inherent in the conventional genre's framing of the world. This chapter argues that it is the collapse of these binaries that facilitates a worldview able to address the traumatic events of war and locate an artistry that moves beyond these limiting frameworks.

The final chapter follows how the animal imagery in *Asphodel* intervenes in the construction of the "self" as envisioned in the *Künstlerroman*. The genre traditionally aligns the project of "self-cultivation" as the construction of a humanist dichotomy between self and other, but Hermione problematizes this division through her pregnancy. As she considers how the physical multiplicity of selves within her body troubles a cohesive sense of identity, she increasingly compares herself to animals to articulate a sense of becoming "other." Often, this registers a sense of discomfort with being multiple rather than a cohesive identity, as she evokes frogs, eels, reptiles, and other distinctly nonhuman animals to suggest that the usurpation of the humanist, bounded self is a dehumanizing process. However, this process of "self-destruction" as opposed to "self-cultivation" allows for a rhizomatic expansion of the idea of the human,

overturning rigid and anthropocentric dichotomies and expanding her creative consciousness to include this more-than-human sense of self.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to build on the valuable intersection of ecocriticism and the *Künstlerroman*—a juncture that has not yet been extensively explored—by analyzing how H.D.'s ecological interventions participate in a broader modernist destabilization of genre, artistry, and humanity. Without the same "signposts" available to guide artistic growth, H.D. uses the *Madrigal Cycle* to explore alternative paths of development that the woman artist might follow, and she draws on her longstanding interest in the oft-overlooked natural world as an insurgent and transformative force to do so. By unsettling normative conceptions of art and the human to include the presence and impact of these dynamic nonhuman agencies, she expands, too, the narrow definitions of the conventional *Künstlerroman* to include new ideas of growth and development.

"I am Her…I am Tree exactly": Reclaiming Subjectivity and Agency Through Ecological Artistry in *HERmione*

In a poem from his early collection of love poetry entitled *Hilda's Book,* Ezra Pound repeatedly writes the line: "I saw HER yesterday" (76). As the name suggests, the book was dedicated to H.D., and Dianne Chisholm has suggested that her novel *HERmione* may have been a "partial response" to this turn of phrase (91). H.D.'s text is one that closely follows the overarching structure of the *Künstlerroman*, in that it depicts the young eponymous character's struggle to advance after failing out of her science degree and her subsequent artistic awakening.[8] Akin to how "I saw HER" frames H.D. as a passive muse that inspires Pound's more waxing sentiments of "My Lady is tall and fair to see / She swayeth as a poplar tree" (73), the "HER" of *HERmione* grapples with positioning herself as an agent rather than object of her own artistic growth. Unable to locate examples of successful women artists around her, Hermione finds herself instead caught in a male literary tradition whereby women inspire the development of men. Pound's textual counterpart, George Lowndes, embodies a *Künstlerroman* rooted in this tradition and desires Hermione to act as his own "HER." Much as Pound compares his "Lady" to a tree, George similarly aims to transform Hermione into a muse-object through comparisons between her and nature. Such language again engages in a longstanding tradition of the *Bildungsroman,* whereby nature—like the muse—provides a passive, yielding space for men's development. Though Hermione at first articulates feeling suffocated by this conflation, she progressively perceives how the nonhuman world resists this passive characterization and exhibits a dynamic agency. If *HERmione* is a "response" to "I saw HER" as Chisholm suggests,

[8] Out of all the *Madrigal* texts, *HERmione* is the most frequently read as a *Künstlerroman* specifically, not just a *Bildungsroman*; Shari Benstock in *Women of the Left Bank, 1900-1940* (1976), Susan Stanford Friedman in *Writing the Woman Artist: Essays on Poetics* (1991), and more recently Gregory Castle in *A History of the Bildungsroman* (2019) have all considered how the text acts as "a portrait of the artist as a young woman" (Benstock 336).

then it might be understood as a refutation of the logics of the *Künstlerroman* as represented by George and his attempts to bring her into this narrative realm as his muse; instead, by accepting her connection to the natural world and acknowledging rather than refuting the vitality of the nonhuman, Hermione gradually comes over the course of the text to an awareness of her own agency and forges an alternative, ecological artistry that supersedes the limited androcentric and anthropocentric ideas associated with the genre.

Though the early twentieth century saw the expansion of opportunities for women, the realm of professional artistry still remained relatively inaccessible, and such barriers have contributed to the frequent absence of women from considerations of the *Künstlerroman*. Linda Huf suggests that women "have frequently balked at portraying themselves in literature as would-be writers" (1), and Patricia Meyer Spacks similarly advances in *The Female Imagination* (1975) that it is hard to recall any "serious literary work by a woman" that celebrates her journey to become an artist (199). Sharon Spencer even goes so far as to say in a 1947 article that "the woman artist is a missing character in fiction" and that it is "impossible to name even half a dozen major novels whose female protagonists have devoted their lives to one of the arts" (247). More recent scholarship has persuasively argued that the women did, in fact, produce "recognizable *Künstlerromane*" (Gubar "Birth" 26), but the perceived omission of women from this genre reflects how the constraints faced by these artists meant that the familiar trajectory of the *Künstlerroman* often proved to be inadequate at articulating the development of their own artistry. Such gendered differences were being vocalized during H.D.'s own lifetime, too, most famously by Virginia Woolf in "A Room of One's Own" (1929), which helped to convey the many physical, financial, and intellectual barriers meant to direct women's development down socially condoned paths and exclude them from entering a realm of artistry that was safeguarded

by men. She evokes the unique restrictions on women's artistry through the hypothetical figure of "Shakespeare's sister" (45); though Judith Shakespeare goes to London with the same artistic aims as her brother, she is met only with derision and, after being seduced and impregnated, takes her life. Such a tragic fate seems somewhat hyperbolic, but indeed many of the *Künstlerromane* written by women during the modernist period see the development of the female protagonists cut short, often through death: Rachel's musical education in *The Voyage Out* (1915) is promptly ended by a fatal fever, painter Enda Pontellier of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) drowns herself, and in Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), Alabama Beggs' dancing career ends after she gets blood poisoning from the glue in her ballet shoes. More often, the success of these artists is limited, or personal; Woolf's Orlando, for example, writes her magnus opus "The Oak Tree" after a century of working on it, yet it is never published or read by anyone other than herself. The truncated, fatal, or circumscribed narratives of these characters reflect the obstacles faced by many women artists and illuminate why this figure is difficult to locate, particularly when read through the paradigm of the conventional *Künstlerroman*.

Such constraints are evident in *HERmione*, too, where the protagonist struggles to envision a career in art as a pursuit that is available to her. While engaging with her former Bryn Mawr classmates, Hermione recognizes how to them, art is mostly seen as something women "tak[e]…up" as a social accomplishment rather than a serious pursuit (59). Further reinforcing this idea is the limited success of their creative endeavours, as exemplified by Jessie Thorpe—whose painting garnered her a little fame because it was "exhibited somewhere in Paris" briefly, but now has returned to Pennsylvania to sit rather benignly on a piano as a purely decorative object (48)—and her sister Nellie, whose essay discussing American literary consciousness is

praised as an accomplishment because it was "commented on" but "not actually accepted" for publication (49). Hermione notes that Nellie's essay lies "carefully uncreased in the Via Tornabuoni leather profile with the singing boys of Donatello embossed on the upper cover" (53); the ensconcing of this unread and unpublished essay in a folio depicting Donatello's artistry materializes the absorption of women's attempts to intervene in an artistic history predominated by men. Like Jessie and Nellie, Hermione feels drawn to artistry, but she struggles to articulate this desire: "She could put no name to the things she apprehended, felt vaguely that her mother should have insisted on her going with music…it had not occurred to Her to try and put the thing in writing" (13). The vagueness of the language here reveals the difficulty she experiences in conceiving of writing as a field that is actually available to her. Even after she begins to write, the circumscribed achievements of the women around her compel Hermione to demean her own artistic attempts. When her mother suggests that she "ought to go on writing…those dear little stories," Hermione dismisses the idea, responding: "Oh, mama, that's not *writing*" (80). While the rebuff suggests Hermione wants to carve out a conception of what constitutes "writing" that exists beyond her mother's recommendations, she simultaneously demeans her own writing here, and the typographic emphasis on the word seems to evoke an internalized standard that she feels her "little stories" fail to meet and thus bars her from entering a canonical realm of artistry.

Denied the status of artists themselves, women instead appear in many *Künstlerromane* as objects of male artistry, typically acting to bolster (or inhibit) men's growth whilst exhibiting none themselves. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel DuPlessis have both written on the role of the "muse tradition" in literature (Friedman "Portrait" 24), wherein the muse is a "voiceless, wordless figure" who requires the interventions of a male artist figure to articulate what she represents and, in doing so, possess her (DuPlessis "Family" 74). DuPlessis comments on the

contradictory duality of the traditional muse being placed "above" men as an object of their worship yet simultaneously "below" them, as it is only through their artistry that she might be granted a voice (74). Susan Gilbert and Susan Gubar similarly explore this creation/confinement paradigm by suggesting the muse is "penned" by men into a "sentence" and simultaneously "penned in" and "sentenced" to male control (13). This clever inversion elucidates how this literary tradition of men bringing absent and captive women into representation circumscribes their agency by interpolating them into roles that aid their art.[9] Maurice Beebe considers this idea explicitly in the genre of the *Künstlerroman* and suggests that the artist "*must* trap the Sacred Fount," usually embodied by a woman: "In the portrait-of-the-artist novel the Sacred Fount theme is most often expressed in terms of the artist's relationship to women…Although he may be destroyed by [his submission to love], he must go to Woman in order to create—just as a man can father children only through women—and his artist power is dependent on the Sacred Fount" (18). Women, when a passive "fount" that can be trapped, act as a positive force on male artistry; if, alternatively, they exhibit any agency that might result in men's "submission" to them, they are the cause of his destruction. In neither of Beebe's characterizations do women have the opportunity to become artists themselves, instead acting as a creative source unable to wield this energy without the input of men.

The muse is bound up in Hermione's understanding of women's art, too, as her mother, Eugenia, provides her with a powerful example of artistry but simultaneously channels this energy towards sustaining her husband and family.[10] H.D.'s own mother, Helen, taught painting

[9] This idea was again one being explored within the modernist period; though Woolf did not employ the language of the muse, for example, she does write how women have "served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (*Room* 32). Again, this language frames women as "above yet below," as they possess "magic" and "power," but it is only meant to bolster men.

[10] The overlap between being wife and muse is one H.D. evidently took interest in, as her fictionalized account of Elizabeth Siddal in *White Rose and the Red* (1948) explores Siddal as an artist who grapples with and resists her identity as an object of representation in her husband's art.

and music, and H.D. attributes her as being responsible for the development of her own "imaginative faculties" (*Tribute* 121), writing: "The mother is the Muse, the creator, and in my case especially, as my mother's name was Helen" (qtd. Robinson 4). Hermione's mother, Eugenia, also acts as a feminine "Eleusinian" artistic force, one that rivals her father's "Athenian" genius (31): "Words of Eugenia had more power than textbooks, than geometry, than all of Carl Gart and brilliant 'Bertie Gart'…Bertrand wasn't brilliant, not like mama. Carl Gart wasn't brilliant like Eugenia" (89). Whereas "science as Carl Gart [and] Bertrand Gart define[] it" feels "untenable" to Hermione (6), her mother's art brings clarity and meaning that surpass what science can offer. Eugenia, however, repeatedly inverts this hierarchy by instead emphasizing the inferiority of her own work in deference to her husband's. As Annette Debo notes of H.D.'s mother, Helen "suppressed her own talent in painting" to tend to her household (*American* 29), and H.D. says of her mother that she was "morbidly self-effacing" (*Tribute* 164). Eugenia—as a kind of Ruskinian figure—similarly channels her genius to help create an environment in which Carl and Bertrand might develop their ideas. Nowhere is this "morbid[]" self-effacement more apparent than when Hermione asks why her mother knits in the dark, to which she responds:

> "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." Father, your father. Eugenia sitting in the darkness, the green shade, fixed now here, now there over the just one blazing electric light, just one concentrated circle of light across the half of a desk… (79)

Eugenia's sacrifice of light so that her husband might work better presents Hermione with a visual of the deeply hierarchical model by which women must cater to the success and ambitions

of men. The emphasis Eugenia places on characterizing Carl Gart as "your father" similarly serves to remind Hermione that she, too, is meant to mimic this gendered dynamic; indeed, Eugenia asks Hermione to organize Carl's papers shortly after this exchange. She reminds Hermione that "your father and his work are more important" (96), to which Hermione asks, "more important than what exactly?" (96). The question remains unanswered, but implicitly it is understood that, as per H.D.'s idea that the mother was both muse and creator, Eugenia defers her powers as a creator to act more as a muse, fanning the flames of her husband's genius rather than exploring her own.

Following Eugenia's example, Hermione does not view herself as an artist and instead casts herself as a muse whose words and actions have already been preordained. She does so particularly through a renewed interest in her own name; while looking through her brother's bookshelves, she notes: "I am out of the Temple Shakespeare. I am out of *The Winter's Tale*. It was my grandfather's idea to call me something out of Shakespeare…I am out of this book" (32). Hermione perceives that men have conferred this identity to her, both in name and person, and throughout the text, she repeatedly returns to this formulation, qualifying that she is "Hermione out of Shakespeare" rather than simply "Hermione" (40). Of particular relevance is how Shakespeare's Hermione echoes the Pygmalion myth; she acts as a largely absent figure whose apparent death motivates much of the plot before appearing at the end disguised as a statue and coming "back" to life under her husband's gaze. In aligning herself with this Hermione, H.D.'s Hermione yokes herself to Galatea, who quite literally exists only as a product of male artistry. This feeling is further amplified when Hermione suggests that she is "saying something out of a play, words had been written for her, she was repeating words that had been written" (94-5). This notion of an inherited cultural script written by men is similarly reinforced

by an almost obsessive identification with a line of Swinburne's poetry quoted to her by George Lowndes: "*The hounds of spring are on winter's traces*" (72). The echo of *The Winter's Tale* in "winter's traces" compels her to adopt this line as a kind of moniker for herself: "The hounds of spring are, indeed, on winter's traces" (75), "*The hounds of spring are on winter's traces* let her fall forward" (76), "George had followed her somehow—*the hounds of spring are on winter's traces*" (85), and "she leafed over the book…*the hounds of spring are on winter's traces*" (124). The many layers of male artistry here amplify and consume her: she is drawn to Swinburne's poetry, which is said by the poet George, and which reminds her of Shakespeare. Artistry is irrevocably bound up with a male literary tradition that supersedes her own writing and renders her a kind of "fount" through which men's words pour, and Hermione consequently envisions herself as an object of and wellspring for other's art rather than an artist in her own right.

George Lowndes provides perhaps the most immediate example of this male literary pattern, but whereas Shakespeare and Swinburne restrict Hermione's ability to articulate her own subjectivity, George alternatively encourages her early attempts at writing. In many ways, George's narrative follows a familiar *Künstlerroman* narrative: he has independence, is rumored to have had an initiatory sexual experience (which often serves as a formative moment of development in other *Künstlerromane* such as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*), and has extensively travelled, having just returned from Venice. Most significantly, he has achieved acclaim for his art, which contrasts with that of the Thorpe sisters. Eugenia says that she heard George is "getting on famously, that all London, Munich, Paris and Berlin were at his feet" (95), and Hermione specifies that "Yeats had praised him in a review" and that "Maddox Ford wanted him to help in a new book he's doing" (95). Whereas the Thorpe sisters' creative attempts are discussed and appreciated only by a small sect of other women, George has already been

initiated into a canonical male realm of literary recognition. As the most successful example of an artist personally available to Hermione, George appears to her as "out of the Famous Painters' Volume" and "beautiful, constructed, made" (69), evoking a recognizable language of *Bildung* growth. Because she views him as being in a state of "advanced progress" (71), she accordingly turns to him as a mentor who might "define, and make definable" a possible future for her (63). In some ways his presence does bring greater clarity, as his return from abroad initiates a generic shift in the novel whereby Hermione, too, experiences many of conventions of the archetypal *Künstlerroman*, such as (hetero)sexual intimacy, the offer to travel, and the encouragement of her writing. George plays a role in all of these, particularly the latter, as he says of her poetry "I tell you *this is writing*" (149), a statement that is reminiscent of Pound's exclamation of "but dryad, this is poetry!" upon reading H.D.'s early work (qtd. Chisholm 82), and one that directly counters Hermione's prior claim of "that's not *writing*" (80). The presence of George in his respective *Künstlerroman* narrative thus helps to initiate Hermione into a more canonical pattern of growth and encourage the development of her art.

In allowing herself to be guided by George, however, Hermione recognizes how he simultaneously brings her into his competing *Künstlerroman*, again as the conventional and traditional muse. Her deference to him as a literary mentor results in Hermione acknowledging that "writing had somehow got connected up with George Lowndes" (71). Her writing is so "connected up" with him that Eugenia suggests that he is "teaching" her "what to say" (95).[11] Again, this idea of words being written for her directly hearkens to a "Hermione out of Shakespeare" and evokes a passive, silent muse brought to life only through men's art. Indeed,

[11] Hermione retorts: "Do you think I have so little spunk, so little character that I would repeat…words, words, words out of someone else's mouth" (95); ironically, of course, she quotes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* here, and again later says: "something is so horribly rotten in the state of Denmark" (96), thus implicitly confirming Eugenia's accusation.

despite the text ostensibly being centered around the developing artistic subjectivity of Hermione, George represents a more familiar coming-of-age journey predicated on the "assumption of the male self as the universal self" and necessarily undergirded by "female self-denial" (Joannou 202-5). He threatens to appropriate the text for himself by "seduc[ing]" Hermione into playing the part of Galatea to his Pygmalion (Chisholm 90), thereby rendering her his "HER" and claiming the agency and subjectivity of "I" for himself. Hermione becomes increasingly cognizant of the poetic confines in which he seeks to place her and experiences how the life-granting kiss of her Pygmalion further evacuates her of her own identity or artistry: "The kisses of George smudged out her clear geometric thought…I am smudged out" (73). Hermione must be "smudged out" of her own narrative to allow George to grow as an artist, and she recognizes what he desires of her towards the conclusion of the novel:

> He wanted Her, but he wanted a Her that he called decorative. George wanted a Her out of the volumes on the floor, out of the two great volumes. He wanted Her from about the middle, the glorious flaming middle, the Great Painters (that came under Florence) section…[George] was flattering her, tribute such as some courtier might pay to a queen who played at classicism…George saw Her at best as some Florentine page or some Florentine girl dressed for a pageant as the Queen Diana. (173)

The repeated formulation of "Her" as the object of the sentence ("He wanted Her, George wanted a Her, George saw Her") reveals how the loop of his desire encloses her within a restricting, suffocating script. He does not want her to come "out" of the volume but rather remain within it, perpetually eddied in the "glorious flaming middle" where he can bookend her growth and keep her as the "queen" to which he pays homage in his poetry (akin to the silent "Lady" of *Hilda's Book*). George's attempts to turn himself into the primary poetic subject and

her into the "decorative" muse-object ultimately stifle rather than encourage Hermione's artistic growth by "smudg[ing] out" her agency and subjectivity.

Further restricting Hermione are the comparisons George makes between her and the natural world, an act that evokes a literary tradition often reinforced in the *Künstlerroman*. As noted by Feder, the *Bildungsroman* as a genre relies on and contributes to the "humanist myth" of mankind's "separation from and opposition to nature" (18). This idea of "self-creation out of nature" both requires the nonhuman, natural world to provide the grounds for this transcendent subjectivity while simultaneously casting it as a diametric opposite (18); whereas humans are dynamic agents, the nonhuman, natural world is necessarily passive and yielding. The parallels between this passive nature and the muse-object have not gone unnoticed. Simone de Beauvoir, for example, considers in *The Second Sex* (1949) how in men's writing, "woman is related to nature, she incarnates it" and thus acts as "the privileged Other" through whom "the subject fulfills himself" (248). Stacy Alaimo echoes de Beauvoir's idea in *Undomesticated Ground* (2000), suggesting that the conflation of women with nature serves to reinforce a "misogynistic logic" by which both provide the uncontested ground for men's advancement and accomplishment (3). Scott Hess similarly advances in his study of the nineteenth century that whereas men are aligned with "agency" (189), women are "associated with and limited by nature in a mediating role that serves primarily male needs and desires, rather than their own" (190). Such an alignment between women and nature has prompted what Alaimo calls a "feminist flight" from nature (3), whereby critics such as de Beauvoir sought to reform this conflating dynamic, believing that it barred women from the transcendent subjectivity of the male protagonist. Such attempts, however, expose and perpetuate the deeply engrained

anthropocentric binaries of nature/culture and human/nonhuman and contribute to the conception of the natural world as a passive space devoid of agency itself.

George, too, participates in this patriarchal tradition that denies the agency of nature and women in favour of a transcendent male subjectivity. The majority of the scenes between George and Hermione occur while walking through the forest close to Hermione's familial home, initiating a kind of ambulatory exchange between himself and the woods. He does not, however, aim to describe the intricacies of the forest but instead characterizes the landscape through the words of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*, repeatedly calling the woods "the forest of Arden" and dramatically intoning: "*This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks…bearded with moss and with garments green, indistinct in the twilight*" (65). Though George frames the forest in these quotes as inspiring a creative surge through his immersion in this space, such characterizations instead evacuate the complexity of the woods and grant him the privileged position of creator in a longstanding male literary tradition. It is, as Hess phrases it, "the expression of a vast egotism" rather than an "actual ecosystem" (8). His superior transcendence over the forest does not permit it to act as a dynamic, vibrant space but instead reinforces humanist binaries by transforming it into a dramatic stage upon which his own vision might be realized. Hermione, too, is forcibly cast as an actor in this artificial scene:

> Almost this is the forest of Arden and Orlando stepping out with agile feet across leaves strewn across a narrow woodpath. Almost she was lost, stepping back and back into the pages of some familiar rhythm, *now this is the forest of Arden*. Almost her long legs were bound in Elizabethan trunkhose and almost in her hand, under her hand was a silver chain

> which almost she was about to drop about the throat of George, of Orlando kneeling, *wear this for me one out of suits with fortune*. (66)

George displays his "advanced" transcendent artistry here, transforming the setting and casting himself as the Orlando to Hermione's Rosalind. The language of "bound" and "silver chain" signals the lack of agency she has in this setting, as she again steps "back into the pages" of Hermione out of Shakespeare and becomes merely a "fount" through which the words of male artistry are spoken. Again, George's subjectivity supplants Hermione's and compels her to experience the woods as an extension of his artistic consciousness.

To further his claim to her, George repeatedly fuses Hermione with the natural world so as to deny her agency and establish her as his muse. Much as Pound called H.D. a "dryad," George too ascribes a nonhuman quality to Hermione, repeatedly referring to her as a "hamadryad" or "goddess" (107, 63). Such language evokes the muse as a figure "above" yet simultaneously "below," closer to the earth and somehow a part of the landscape, with the nymph in particular a figure often transformed by an intervening god into trees, flowers, or animals.[12] Pound's comparison of his "Lady" to a "poplar tree" evokes this connection, and George's words, too, have the effect of absorbing Hermione into the "forest primeval." After her walk through the woods with George, Hermione grapples with her subjectivity and agency: "I am in the word TREE. I am TREE exactly…I am smudged out. TREE is smudged out" (73). The conflation between tree and herself again initiates this "smudg[ing] out" that inhibits her own artistry. Like a nymph turned into a tree, she feels imprisoned by "concentric tree-circle on concentric tree-circle" and formulates that trees are "suffocation" that "barricade[] her into

[12] A "hamadryad," specifically, is described in Thomas Bulfinch's mythology as one that "perish[es] with the trees which had been their abode and with which they had come into existence" (167), and George's use of this kind of nymph thus emphasizes a particularly forceful bond between women and nature.

herself, Her into Her" (50, 8, 64). The "Her into Her" transformation of Hermione into muse occurs, too, when George's mother, Lillian, compares her to a mermaid: "Yes, you are Undine, or better, the mermaid from Hans Andersen" (112). Though it is not George who draws this parallel, the sentiment acts as an extension of his desire, as the story of Andersen's little mermaid succinctly evokes the muse tradition and the conflation of women with nature. The mermaid must trade her singing voice for legs and thus abandon her own artistry to silently inspire a man, but she ultimately cannot escape her bond with the sea and dissolves into foam at the story's conclusion. Hermione's response of "Yes, I am Udine. Or better the mermaid from Hans Anderson" strengthens the parallels between her and this nonhuman muse (112), as her exact repetition of Lillian's words reinforces that her voice has already been stolen and replaced by the words of others. By describing Hermione through the language of a dryad, a tree, and a mermaid, George relies on the perceived passivity of nature to further bind Hermione as his muse through a suffocating conflation.

This pattern of a transcendent male subjectivity circumscribing the agency of nature and— by extension—Hermione is one with which she is familiar, as it is also at the heart of her earlier failure in science. Though the field of science was, during this period, increasingly acknowledging the connections between the human and nonhuman,[13] Hermione's father and brother belong to a tradition whereby the scientist exists in a privileged, superior, and removed state. Hermione imagines them as a "Carl-Bertrand-Gart God" that seeks to encompass the movements of the nonhuman world through a "Gart theorem of mathematical biological intention" (96, 4). To this end, they perform experiments that exert control over nature by

[13] Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) offers perhaps the most cogent example of this destabilization between human and nonhuman. As it was published in the Victorian era, it is a work with which H.D.'s father, grandfather, and brother were very likely familiar, but as Carrie Rohman argues, the text's "radical blow to anthrocentrism…was not immediately or consistently registered" until the turn of the twentieth century (5).

extracting nonhuman elements from the environment to configure them into this formula. Whereas her father and brother find this process to be revelatory, Hermione instead feels "suffocate[d]" when remembering an owl her grandfather kept in a loft, or a toad her brother "unearthed" (9), or the microbes Carl and Bertrand keep in the basement in an aquarium. In part, this suffocation arises from Hermione's identification more with the objects of study rather than her scientist father; she compares herself to "a frog on a wide slab of beautifully sterilized and radiantly clean glass" (108), and she articulates a feeling that the sky is "a flat lid…pressed (in Pennsylvania) over their heads…like Carl Gart…pressing things down in test tubes" (112). Having failed to enter the privileged realm of the experimenter, Hermione becomes, instead, one of the experiments. Even her father sees her through this lens; one of the only interactions Hermione has with him is while he looks at algae through a microscope, and she notes that "the thing…would look odd, unholy in its beauty under the microscope" (99). When Carl Gart turns away from this experiment to view his daughter, he similarly observes of "the thing before him" that her eyes shine "odd and unholy in a white face" (99). The similar language of "odd and unholy" yokes daughter and algae together in a manner that equates the two as "things" of scientific study, amplifying Hermione's suffocation and reinforcing her alignment with the natural world in a way that anticipates what George seeks to do in his art.

Configured as an extension of the natural world rather than set apart from it, Hermione is simultaneously in a privileged position to view the intricacies of the nonhuman that the microscopic lens of her father and brother overlook. As Kim Sigouin suggests, Hermione does not "completely reject scientific practices" but rather "notices the limitations of a science that fabricates systematic patterns" (134). Indeed, Hermione employs the tools of her failed trade when she tries to see through a "psychic lens" that, like a microscope, attempts to focus on the

world around her, but whereas Carl uses the microscope to "exactly suit his vision" and reinforce scientific binaries (100), Hermione instead inadvertently experiences a fantastic dilation of the nonhuman that destabilizes these ideas. A "huge bee" "boom[s]" in her ear, "his presence like an eclipse" (13-14), a mosquito "br[ea]k[s] through the ceiling" and "gnaw[s]" at Hermione with "enormous mammoth jaws" (210), and a tree trunk becomes a seething "territory, a continent, a planet" (55). Her magnification of the natural world is reminiscent of her father's, but because she cannot extricate herself from this realm and place herself above it, she instead is confronted with the very real agencies of the nonhuman. They boom, break, whirr, and gnaw, insisting upon their presence and agency in a way that the restrictive "flat lid" of the microscope seeks to prevent. Hermione's mode of seeing reveals, too, how the nonhuman resists being placed in a limiting theorem and instead eludes classification: "In Philadelphia people did not realize that life went on in varying dimension, here a starfish and there a point of fibrous peony stalk with a snail clinging underneath it" (13). This insistence on life occurring in "varying dimension" again magnifies vibrant nonhuman agents to emphasize what a scientific methodology like the Gart theorem fails to acknowledge.

Most concretely crystallizing the failure of this theorem to contain the agency of the nonhuman world is an episode in which a storm floods the Gart's basement and ruins an aquarium containing one of her father and brother's longstanding breeding experiments. She encounters her father in the middle of the storm after he attempts to salvage it, where he tells her: "The thunder got 'em…The whole lot swam out, flooded out, cross section and the cross hatchings were simply flooded out" (91). Here, the "Carl-Bertrand-Gart-God" seems to fail, and Carl himself momentarily concedes to the agency of the nonhuman experimental subjects, saying that they "swam out" and that the thunder "got 'em," as if the storm were a deliberate attempt to

reclaim what he sought to contain and control. Carl reclaims his position as scientist by countering that he and Bertrand will "begin another breeding" (92), but the storm becomes a revelatory event for Hermione by the failure of her brother and father's science to adequately define and delineate the nonhuman. Whereas her father instinctively reverts to a model by which he might once again control these agents, Hermione alternatively is able to see the way these agents can surpass the design of the "biological mathematical definition" by recasting her perception through a "psychic lens" that does not isolate the nonhuman so as to study its properties but rather magnifies their presence and, in doing so, acknowledges and recognizes nonhuman agencies.

In acknowledging the agency of the nonhuman, Hermione is also able to identify how these agentive networks are entangled with and undermine the boundaries of the human, cultured world. Though H.D.'s life predated the advent of formal ecocritical theory, her writing engages with many of the ideas central to ecocriticism. Early in the text, for example, Hermione gazes into "branches of liriodendron, into network of oak and deflowered dogwood" and feels that she is "nebulous" (3). The language of the "network" has become particularly salient in ecocritical thought for the expansive interconnectedness it evokes; Jane Bennett has written on the "interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity" (31), and Alaimo advances the language of "trans-corporeality" as a means to counter the vision of the "ostensibly bounded human subject" and instead conceive of the human as "always intermeshed with the more-than-human world" ("Bodily" 2-4).[14] Akin to Bennett's interfolding networks and Alaimo's trans-corporeality, Hermione's feeling of being formless while in these nonhuman networks permits her to "go out"

[14] Alaimo's emphasis on the permeable "interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures" aims to trouble the divisive bridge between "human" and "environment" (2). Her use of *trans* is to indicate how these natural/nonhuman and cultural/human realms are not separate but rather "entangled territories" that constantly act upon and shape one another (3).

into a kind of "water substance" whereby she is connected to the world around her (7): "Hermione let octopus-Hermione reach out and up and with a thousand eyes regard space and distance and draw octopus arm back, only to replunge octopus arm up and up into illimitable distance" (71). This "octopus-Hermione" again creates a nonhuman conflation but does so generatively this time; she is able to engage and interact trans-corporeally with the many agencies around her, unlimited and unrestrained by bounded form and instead existing in a porous and all-seeing convergence between realms. In participating in this exchange, she reframes and reclaims the restrictive formula imposed by George;[15] rather than being confined by trees, she advances that she is "part of Sylvania" and formulates more generally that "Trees are in people. People are in trees" (5). The chiasmatic statement grants equal influence without hierarchizing the human over the nonhuman, overturning the humanist claims of a transcendent, bounded individual in favour of a trans-corporeal constructive relationship. She concretizes this rejection when her mother remarks "Hermione you are inhuman sometimes," to which she responds, "I am always" (121). This statement marks a departure away from the restrictive binaries in which she is forcibly confined to nature at the expense of her agency and towards a liberating recognition of the vast and expansive networks with which she is "always" entangled.

She frames this entanglement as a kind of dialogic process by which "conversation" between the human and nonhuman "[goes] on in several layers" (71), mutually informing and being informed by one another in what might be understood as an ecological artistry. As the limitations of George's art become increasingly apparent, Hermione grapples with what writing "ha[s] to do with" instead (71). She advances that writing is more closely related to "the

[15] As Adalaide Morris writes, Lowndes is really "a classical scientist in poet's clothes" who, in the same worldview as Hermione's father, believes "the observer retains both objectivity and mastery because he possesses a universally valid system of measurement" ("Science" 208).

underside of a peony petal" or "trees on trees" than George or others realize (71-2), and over the course of the text, Hermione's understanding of her writing becomes less bound up with male artistry and more with this natural creativity, which she associates with ancient Greek culture:

> Things, a bird skimming across a window, were a sort of writing on a wall…The Greeks made birdflight symbolic. I mean the Greeks said this spelt this. The sort of way the wing went against blue sky was, I suppose a sort of pencil, a sort of stylus, engraving to the minds of augurers, signs, symbols that meant things. I see by that birdflight across an apparently black surface, the curves of wings meant actual thing to Greeks, not just vague symbols but actual hieroglyphics…hieroglyphs… (125)

Her evocation of a Greek lineage is reminiscent of her mother's "Eleusinian" magic with words, but whereas Eugenia redirects her creativity to act as muse, Hermione aligns herself instead with the figure of the augur. Contrary to George's "vast egotism" transforming the forest into a Shakespearean setting, Hermione advances an artistry that is informed by the creative agency of the nonhuman and emerges from the nexus of these energies, with bird flight forming "writing on a wall" and "hieroglyphics" that can be divined and articulated by those who are attuned to these runic languages. This ecological cognizance of bird flight in particular acts as a kind of gauge throughout the text by which to measure Hermione's artistic growth. At the beginning, she attempts to follow a bird "whirr[ing]…into heavy trees about her" above her but loses sight of it (4). Nonetheless, she recognizes that this bird is "in line with something" significant (55), and repeatedly focuses on birds throughout the text, following their "trapeze-flight" (125). Only by the end of the novel is she able to engage with the nonhuman meaningfully and assert: "Birds across windows spelt things. Her had realized that birds made a pattern, made a hieroglyphic for people, wise men, augurers" (185). Again, this hieroglyphic writing represents the confluence of

human and nonhuman agencies, producing a kind of conversation that can only be understood by those who develop an awareness of this generative exchange. It is through this exchange that Hermione feels she will "reveal [her]self in words" and that "words may now supercede [sic]" the binaries perpetuated by her father's science and George's art (76), and this ecological artistry thus establishes an alternative framework through which to advance her artistic growth.

By embracing this ecological artistry, Hermione recognizes not only the failure of these binaries but also the limitations of artistry as conceived in the *Künstlerroman*. Though she desires, in part, to become "beautiful, constructed, made," she also sees how this model of artistry is incongruous with what she experiences of herself: "Europe existed as static little pictures…Pictures were conclusive things and Her Gart was not conclusive" (7). George, as a product of this European education as part of his *Künstlerroman*, aims to achieve this privileged state of completion, but being "conclusive" simultaneously relies on the anthropocentric assumption of "self-creation out of nature," as Feder calls it. Hermione gradually comes to recognize that because his artistry requires the pacification of nature, he cannot engage with the dynamic agencies of the nonhuman: "A green flame ran and she realized George would never make a pear tree burst into blossom, would never raise out of marshes the heads of almost-winter violets…George languished in Elizabethan doublet in galleries, he was painted upon ceilings. He did not run with a stream's running…" (171). Though George is part of a canonical artistic tradition existing "in galleries" and "painted upon ceilings," he is barred from a more vibrant form of artistry that acknowledges the intermeshing of nonhuman and human agents. Alternatively, Hermione recognizes how being a part of vast agentic network allows her to connect and engage with an artistry that surpasses George's: "It was George with his volumes who was wordless, who was inarticulate; not Her Gart…I would run along a birch tree. I would

run along a pear tree. I would make our pear tree by the corner of the barn burst into flower this moment" (171). The repetition of "run" infuses her with a vitality that the "languish[ing]" George lacks and framing him as "wordless" refutes his prior attempts to turn her into his silent muse. Again, Hermione acknowledges how her connection to the nonhuman provides her with a means to resist him:

> But she knew seated upright by the tree bole…that Undine was not her name, would never be her name, for Undine (or was it the Little Mermaid?) sold her sea-inheritance and Her would never, never sell this inheritance, this sea-inheritance of amoeba little jellyfish sort of living creature separating from another creature. "I am not Undine," she said, "for Undine or the Little Mermaid sold her glory for feet. Undine (or the Little Mermaid) couldn't speak after she sold her glory. I will not sell my glory." (120)

This refutation of Undine is not a denial of the nonhuman comparisons but rather a reclamation of this legacy through ecological artistry; her "sea-inheritance" is her "glory" that allows her to "speak," thus rewriting the story of the little mermaid to become that of an artist who retains, rather than sells, her voice. By reclaiming her "sea-inheritance," Hermione is able to assert that "if this is what Europe does to people…I don't want Europe" (135). This refutation of "Europe" is simultaneously a refusal of the conventional *Künstlerroman* and marks her desire for an ecological artistry that embraces rather than refuses the agencies of the nonhuman.

Hermione ultimately employs this ecological artistry to identify herself as an artist rather than an object of a male literary tradition. Rather than a silent muse, Hermione envisions instead: "I am the Tree of Life…I am…HER exactly" (70). The statement connects her and the nonhuman in a conversational and productive network in which both act as creative forces, and the insistence on "I" asserts that Hermione might act as the subject of her own narrative through

this generative exchange. This nascent agency is realized by the end of the novel, which concludes with Hermione walking through a snowy forest: "Her feet went on making the path. Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a forest…the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayon across the winter whiteness…leaving her wavering hieroglyph as upon white parchment" (223). At first, it seems to evoke the winter imagery to which she has been yoked throughout the text, but here it is written by Hermione rather than an external, intervening male artist. The "hieroglyph" of her feet marks a creative exchange between human and nonhuman through which Hermione is able to rewrite, in a sense, her status as being "Hermione from the *Winter's Tale*" or "winter's traces" (66); instead, it is her own winter's tale that remains at the end, traced in the snow. Whereas Hermione is reluctant to think of herself as an artist through the paradigm of a male literary tradition, she is able to assert for the first time that she is a "creator" through this ecological mode of artistry that circumvents the restrictions of a canonical, patriarchal framework.

If the novel is a kind of response, as Chisholm suggests, then H.D.'s metamorphosis of Pound's "I saw HER" into "I am HER exactly" might be understood as a way to push back against the traditional roles afforded women in *Künstlerromane*. Engaging with the longstanding trope of women as nature allows for an interrogation of how men's artistry and, indeed, even their development often relies on their perceived passivity to provide the means for advancement. With few models of women's artistry available to her, Hermione initially allows herself to be cast as muse and conflated with nature, yet in doing so she instead becomes aware of the capacious network of nonhuman agencies around her. Rather than following in the pattern of the men in her life, Hermione instead embraces a more collective and expansive vision of agency that differs from the transcendent subjectivity of the familiar *Künstlerroman* artist, like

George. She questions, too, if figures like George are not similarly limited by the genre's conventional roles, as his inability to take into account the vibrant agencies around him ultimately diminishes his work, much as Carl Gart's scientific oversights lead to his own failure. Hermione, by contrast, locates an ecological artistry through her connection with the natural world that exceeds the limits of an anthropocentric and androcentric model, and the designation of herself as a "creator" rather than an "artist" indicates that she is, perhaps, moving towards a generative force beyond the purview of the *Künstlerroman* altogether.

"a sea change into something rich and strange": Nonlinear Development and Trans-Corporeal Initiation in *Paint It To-Day*

The *Bildungsroman*, fundamentally, is a narrative centered around development. While much of the early critical work done on the genre sought to define an overarching pattern characterizing this growth, more recent scholarship has troubled this trajectory, particularly calling into question its teleological and chronological assumptions. The linear pull of the narrative in many ways mirrors the biological growth of the subject, with the idea of *Bildung* inherently suggesting that the development of the individual's body and mind is unidirectional, sequential, and progressively moving towards a state of perfection. The modernist period, however, questioned many of the principles inherent in this model of growth. Not only was the body no longer understood to be a bounded and autonomous site, but linearity, too, was perceived as anathematic to the modern condition of life. The entire idea of "development" thus underwent a transformation, with many twentieth-century authors explicitly defying the biological linearity of the conventional *Künstlerroman*. H.D.'s *Paint It To-Day* offers one such example, as it sees the burgeoning artist Midget struggle to follow a normative pattern of growth as she drifts somewhat aimlessly throughout Europe. H.D.'s 1919[16] *Notes on Thought and Vision*, which she composed shortly before *Paint It To-Day*, registers this sense of difference by attempting to sketch an alternative framework of how development for artists such as her might occur. She advances the concept of what might be called a "trans-corporeal" artist, to borrow Stacy Alaimo's lexicon, wherein creative growth occurs through the body's ongoing interaction with the environment. Similarly, in *Paint It To-Day*, H.D. destabilizes the idea of the progressive, linear body as a contained entity by instead emphasizing its perpetual intermeshing

[16] This year is the date of *Notes*' composition according to Albert Gelpi's introduction to the text (7).

with surrounding nonhuman matter. Artistic development is thus similarly reconsidered not as a movement through successive stages but rather as constantly changing alongside and in response to the world. In rethinking the *Künstlerroman*'s developmental trajectory, H.D. also abjures the genre's conventional aspirations of completion, instead advancing that ultimately the aim of both life and art is to exist in a state of incompleteness construed not as an inferior, incomplete state but rather a dynamic and creative process.

Despite the varied and evolving definitions of the *Bildungsroman*, a widely agreed upon precept of the genre is that the formation of the individual coincides with and is informed by the body's maturation. The concept of *Bildung* was, according to Peter Hans Reill, predominantly a "physiological" one (143), and Denise Gigante echoes that the term denotes "education, acculturation, and ontogenesis bound up together" (29).[17] As Daniel Aureliano Newman notes, the history of *Bildung* is inextricable from the paradigmatic shift occurring in the eighteenth century in the field of embryology, which saw the move away from preformationism—the idea that organisms are fully formed from the start—towards epigenesis, which advances that development occurs progressively and through successive, autonomous stages (Newman 29). Goethe, the oft-cited progenitor of the *Bildungsroman*, was himself interested in morphology and wrote several papers on biology, including one on the "progressive metamorphosis" of plants:

> the metamorphosis of plants…can be seen to work step by step from the first seed leaves to the last formation of the fruit. By changing one form into another, it ascends—as on a spiritual ladder—to the pinnacle of nature… (918)

[17] While more contemporary and retroactive scholarship is offered here, it is worth noting that eighteenth century critics explicitly considered the body central to *Bildung*, too. Most notably, Johann Gottfried Herder, cited by Todd Kontje as "the most influential disseminator" of the concept (2), emphasizes in *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784-91) the primacy of genetic expression in development, writing that "genetic force is the mother of all life" (qtd. Kontje 2).

Goethe depicts formation here as sequential and cumulative, occurring "step by step" with each stage informing the subsequent like rungs on a ladder and moving towards a "pinnacle"; this vision of growth might thus be understood as participatory in the epigenetic discourse on bodily development occurring in his lifetime. These embryological breakthroughs also had a profound influence on ideas of human development more generally and contributed to the rise of the recapitulation theory, which suggested that the growth of the embryo mirrored and contained the entire ontogenetic growth of the individual, which in turn acted as a microcosmic recapitulation of humanity's phylogenetic evolution as a species (Beer 99). Daniel Punday and Gillian Beer have long since argued that there are significant parallels between theories of corporeal development and narratology,[18] and indeed much scholarship on the *Bildungsroman* has iterated how the genre envisions the emergence of the individual as "gradual and accumulative, an irreversible process of development through successive stages" (Felski 136). Mikhail Bakhtin explicitly yokes the body and narrative together in his essay on the *Bildungsroman,* as he suggests that "biological time" (the age of the protagonist, his progress from youth to maturity) provides the physical substrate for the unfolding of narrative in "biographical time," which sees the hero "pass[] through unrepeatable, individual stages" of childhood, education, marriage, and so on (22). The impact of the legacy of epigenesis and recapitulation on the genre is particularly clear in Bakhtin's emphasis that this trajectory is devoid of "any cyclical quality" (22); much as the body does not regress in its development, so too does the growth of the individual require linear, unidirectional advancement through a series of chronological stages.

[18] Punday advances the language of "corporeal narratology" to describe the body's impact on the characterization and visualization of the narrative world (ix), and Beer writes on the legacy of Darwin's evolutionary theory on emplotment in *Darwin's Plots* (1983).

By the twentieth century, however, this linear biological paradigm was being challenged and replaced by more complex, nonlinear developmental models. The events of the World Wars are often cited as instigating a radical rethinking of the corporeal through their production of fragmented and wounded bodies; as a result, Mary Ann Doane writes, modernity is often conceptualized in violent terms like shock and trauma, which suggest "a penetration or breach of an otherwise seamless body" (543). Formative, too, in this corporeal disruption was the emergence of technologies that allowed the body to be physically viewed in new ways. The 1895 development of the X-ray by Wilhelm Röntgen, for example, revealed the interior secrets of the living body and consequently made people "more aware of their embodied state of being" (Maude 118). Many modernist writers subsequently envisioned the writing process as a deeply corporeal one that collapsed binaries of inside and outside: Virginia Woolf describes the body as the mediating "glass" through which the soul looks ("Being Ill" 193), T.S. Eliot suggests the creative process is one that comes out of "the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts" ("Metaphysical" 250), and Gertrude Stein writes in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* of her desire to connect the "insides of people" with the "rhythm of the visible world" (119). This image of the porous and reactive body was further perpetuated through the development of experimental innovations such as tissue culture, grafting, and artificial parthenogenesis, which Susan Squier argues influenced modernist literary practices of opening the "temporal and spatial boundaries of the individual" and overturning conventionally held "organizing principles of development" (146). With the advent of this technology, the body was increasingly regarded not as a contained and bounded site but rather as one that could be opened, artificially conceived, and augmented for the purpose of developing something entirely new.

As these ideas and technologies nuanced the biological linear model of development, so too did this trajectory lose its hold over the narrative grammar of the *Bildungsroman*. Much as scientists of the era experimented on the body, modernist writers experimented with plot and explicitly troubled the conventions of the genre. Stein defies linearity when she writes in 1935 that the "narrative of to-day" is no longer a "narrative of succession" (*Narration* 20), and Woolf, too, overturns the progressive impetus of development in *Orlando* when she suggests that "growing up…is not necessarily growing better" (164). The implicit suggestion that growing down might alternatively be better reverses the chronology of *Bildung* and exposes a vulnerability of the genre, as much of its rhetorical and ideological power arises from its supposition that "progressive metamorphosis" is not only the natural condition of life but also the only desired movement. The modernist reversionary and revisionary deformation of the *Bildungsroman* can thus be understood as participatory in a revolution of the body, and one in which the conception of growth fundamental to the traditional genre is reframed not as an autonomous, sequential, and uninterrupted process but rather a highly sensitive and nonlinear one prone to fragmentation, disruption, and variance.[19]

H.D. participates in this modernist reconsideration of growth in *Paint It To-Day*, wherein the protagonist Midget struggles to adhere to the conventional *Bildungsroman*'s prescribed trajectory of acculturation and development. In a 1957 journal entry, H.D. describes of her own youth a sensation of being physically and perpetually stuck in the middle, unable to move forward:

[19] Henri Bergson was deeply influential on modernist thought in this regard, as he describes consciousness in *Time and Free Will* (1889) as freely flowing and dynamically fluctuating, and that time, too, is a subjective experience rather than externally imposed by measurable, successive time. The body, too, in *Matter and Memory* (1896), is framed as acting as a mediator that registers and engages with the world, as in *Creative Evolution* (1907), where he considers how the flow of life is "borne by the fluid mass of our whole physical existence" (qtd. Ardoin 67).

> I dream of some conflict in school or college. I am a misfit. I am always "in the middle of a term," too advanced in some ways, backward in others. I am either at the head of the school procession or at the tail, because I am so tall. I am either first or last, I am both in London. (*Hirslanden* 31)

Reminiscent to this feeling of being strangely out of place in both body and mind, Midget articulates a sense of being flung out of the expected pattern of growth: "Midget had left school, had left childhood, girlhood; was drifting unsatisfied, hurt and baffled out of a relationship with a hectic, adolescent, blundering, untried, mischievous and irreverent male youth" (7). Not only has she failed to move through the anticipated stages of "childhood, girlhood," but she has altogether "left" them in an incomplete and aborted state. The depiction of Midget as subsequently "drifting" does not convey the forward movement of "progressive metamorphosis" but rather a sense of aimless and directionless stasis, if not regression.[20] She is, in her own words, "exactly ten years behind in [her] development" (40): she has "failed in her college career," has "failed as a social asset with her family," and is consequently "left unequipped for the simplest dealings with the world" (7). Marriage to an "irreverent male youth" might have proved a socially permissible way forward, but she has turned this path down, too. To borrow Bakhtin's language, Midget's failure to adhere to conventional "biographical time" seems to almost induce a kind of stasis in her "biological time" too, as she remains precariously on the cusp of the childhood/girlhood she deliberately "left" yet is unable to enter the preordained subsequent stage of womanhood.[21] She instead perceives herself as being "a big young girl" and, similar to H.D.'s

[20] This feeling is in *HERmione*, too, when she unhappily reflects on unsuccessfully being "forced along slippery lines of exact definition" (3).

[21] The name "Midget" seems intentionally evocative of "Mignon" in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Mignon, as a character, is a young, artistic child on the cusp of womanhood who eventually dies; Midget's similar artistic inclinations and feelings of perpetual youth might thus be a conscious allusion to this text and, by extension, the genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

own descriptions of her physical disproportion, "too tall" (15).[22] For Midget, such traits seem to "separate[]" her "irreparably" from others (20). This corporeal otherness and inertia are reflected in Josepha's suggestion that "perhaps some day Wee Witches will grow up" (32). The language here conveys that they are different from others; instead of "grow[ing] up" into young women, they exist in a static "witchy" state that marks their developmental and physical alterity.[23]

Midget repeatedly relates this nonnormative developmental modality as being a product of her body's formation in the American landscape, which Annette Debo has considered in *The American H.D.* through an explicitly ecocritical lens. In Debo's words, there is an overarching trend in H.D.'s fiction wherein "place becomes an active spirit" that forges and informs the growth of characters (130); the environmental "spirit" takes on a particularly material dimension in *Paint It To-Day*, in which the narrator advances: "Language and tradition do not make people, but the heat that presses on them, the cold that baffles them, the alternating lengths of night and day" (20). What is described here is a modernist body: it is sensitive, unstable, and forged through its movement in the world rather than a predefined cultural model. In line with this sentiment, Midget conceives of the differences between herself and Europeans predominantly through landscape; whereas the winds in New England are a "rush of swords that cut" into the earth and tear the branches off trees (14), Europe is filled with gardens and "paving stones" that create a "carpet" beneath people's feet (23, 16). These environmental differences are embodied,

[22] Feelings of stunted development and incongruous patterns of physical growth often intertwine in twentieth-century *Bildungsromane*, such as in Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927) where Mariella's body "had merely been stretched out without much alteration of the long vague curves of childhood" (29), and in Carson McCuller's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) where Frankie worries that she will "grow to be over nine feet tall" and become a "Freak" (271).

[23] This liminal state has been explored elsewhere by Jed Esty in *Unseasonable Youth* (2012) and Susan Fraiman in *Unbecoming Women* (1993). Both consider how antidevelopment in women's novels often serves as a means to resist social expectations of maturation, and Fraiman, too, notes how in *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver is repeatedly tied to witchery, which is used to vilify her alterity but also indicates a latent insurgency in her resistance to the conventions of *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman* (138).

too. Midget and Josepha's bodies are described as "taut with the inbreath of a new layer of storm wind" and "air forged, whetted of ice on wind" (82, 4). The landscape's unbounded volatility permeates the borders of their body and imbues them with an inherent tumultuousness often framed as an "other force" that generates a physical excess in the two whereby they are again "too tall" and their eyes "change indefinitely" (14, 21). Europeans, in contrast, have been forged into passivity due to their own civilization of the landscape, as the "carpet" beneath their feet inhibits the natural, material interaction. Midget thus feels being an American renders her "a thousand, thousand years separated" from the "pretty, civilized" Europeans (19), who can only "appreciate[]" but never "know" the "roughness and the power of wilderness" that Josepha and Midget—the "Wee Witches"— intimately understand and embody (14).

This formative engagement between bodies and environment is one H.D. articulates a few years prior to *Paint It To-Day* in *Notes on Thought and Vision,* in which she describes the body as inextricably bound up in the physical world. She does so particularly through her conceptualization of the "over-mind" (1), a mental state wherein consciousness is not contained in the brain but rather woven into the body. H.D.'s interest in the intermeshing of mind with body is reminiscent of other modernist conceptions of writing as an embodied process, but H.D. continues into a broader consideration of how the body extends into the world. She characterizes the over-mind as "like a closed sea-plant, jelly-fish or anemone" that occupies a definite space while simultaneously being intimately connected with and dependent on the surrounding environment (2). The image of the jellyfish is one H.D. builds on, as she describes the over-mind as being radially distributed throughout the body and extending into the surrounding world much like "jelly-fish feelers" that facilitate a sensory engagement and exchange (19). In discussing this communication, H.D. describes both human and nonhuman agents as "receiving stations, capable

of storing up energy, over-world energy" (47), and suggests that this energy is "transmitted" between sympathetic human and nonhuman bodies in a mutually constructive process (47). *Notes* has a long history of being considered as prioritizing "female ways of knowing through the female body" (DuPlessis *Career* 40), but the text can also be read not through the advancement of a gendered body but rather a trans-corporeal one, which—as Alaimo theorizes—is "intermeshed" with the physical world and engages in a perpetual porous interaction between human and nonhuman (2). This intermixing of energy and matter destabilizes the bounded subject and instead "underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2). The "other force" animating Midget and Josepha might thus be understood through H.D.'s idea of the over-mind as reflective of a trans-corporeal state wherein the body is sensitive to and influenced by the surrounding world.

Envisioning the body as a porous and responsive site also prompts H.D. to reconsider how this trans-corporeal over-mind might develop. As Tobias Boes notes, the concept of *Bildung* does not convey "any outside guidance or sculpting influence…[it] instead refers to a formative development governed by inner law" (46). H.D.'s depiction of growth, however, does not participate in this autonomous vision; instead, the exchanging of energies requires active exertion and presence in the world rather than occurring passively. She describes, for example, the over-mind as "the jelly-fish above [the] head, this pearl within [the] skull, this seed cast into the ground," but notes that "no man by thought can make the grain sprout or the acorn break its shell" (50-2). Rather, growth is achieved by "till[ing] the field" and "clear[ing] weeds from about the stems of flowers" (52), a metaphorical language that speaks to the greater material and energetic exchange in which the body participates. The pearl, too, cannot form without the confluence of both external matter and the interiority of the oyster; H.D.'s suggestion that "the

body is like an oyster" that "makes the pearl" thus again prioritizes a trans-corporeal exchange between humans and the vital matter of the environment. The emphasis on the word "make" similarly evokes active effort and formation rather than passive development, and to further concretize this sentiment, H.D. concludes *Notes* by again reiterating that "no man by thought can add an inch to his stature, no initiate by the strength and power of his intellect can force his spirit to grow" (52). Growth of the over-mind instead requires the conscious and deliberate exchange of nonhuman and human bodies to develop, rather than adhering to "inner law."

In conceiving of growth as thus, H.D. also rethinks the linear progression of development as imagined in conventional *Bildungsromane*. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's description of *Bildung* echoes the botanical language employed by Goethe when he writes: "The bud vanishes as the blossom bursts forth…once the fruit appears one could in like manner say that the blossom is a 'false' presence of the plant, its truth having been supplanted by that of the fruit. These forms not only differ but, by their mutual incompatibility, actually displace one another" (4). Growth, here, becomes entirely teleological, with the prior steps serving only for the purpose of reaching a final form. Moreover, Goethe and Hegel's foundational descriptions of *Bildung* through evocations of plant development seem to superimpose a universal and recapitulatory schematic of growth, as if it is the inherent condition of every living thing to adhere to this homogenous movement towards perfection. Rather than depicting development as chronological, unidirectional, and universal, however, H.D. instead emphasizes how the growth of the over-mind is something "every person must work out his own way" (23). To illuminate this differential process, she describes an episode wherein she visualizes her three states of over-mind growth as:

1. Over-conscious mind.

2. Conscious mind.
3. Sub-conscious mind.

She notes, however, that the young scholar with whom she discusses the over-mind orders his stages differently and employs terminology that diverges from H.D.'s to describe these stages.[24] These differences in order and language visualize that growth is not a generalizable process but rather one uniquely experienced. H.D. further specifies that although both she and the young man place these states in a row, these states might be better understood as being in the shape of "the triangle, or taken a step further, the circle," as "the three seem to run into one another" (46). Rather than progressive developmental steps that culminate in a definitive and finalized over-mind, in H.D.'s reading these stages are interconnected and occurring simultaneously without conclusion. Even the visualization of the over-mind as underwater creatures evokes an undulatory movement that resists the linear propulsion of Goethe's ladder or Hegel's teleological blossoms. The text itself participates in this cyclicality, as it often reiterates, alters, and contradicts itself. Scholars such as Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, Susan Stanford Friedman, Adalaide Morris, and Barbara Guest have cautioned against too heavily anchoring any reading of H.D.'s work through it because of these inconsistencies,[25] but Kathleen Crown and Kathryn Simpson have both argued that the instability and roughness of the text contributes to H.D.'s broader project of destabilization and experimentation of both body and narrative. Crown writes that *Notes* is a "manifesto…*in process*," one that is not static or complete but instead is like the body in that it is "perpetually under construction, in process, and…permeable and vulnerable" (219-

[24] It is significant that H.D. specifies her over-mind as differing from a young male scholar's, as she often favoured departing from the models of knowledge of the men around her (particularly evident in her break from Imagism). It is reminiscent, too, of Hermione's divergence from the artistic education associated with George/Ezra.
[25] Kloepfer describes the text as a "not altogether successful attempt[] at theory" (196), Morris says it is "rough and contradictory" ("Concept" 279), Friedman uses the word "full-blown" (*Penelope* 9), and Guest critiques that *Notes* reads, in parts, as "alarmingly like D.H. Lawrence at his philosophic worst" (120).

20). *Notes*, as a textual body, thus enacts the very corporeal development H.D. envisions within its pages: reactive, in flux, and constantly changing.

Considering the proximity between H.D.'s composition of *Notes* and *Paint It To-Day*, the former provides a helpful lens through which to consider the latter, and Midget's failure to enter a normative pattern of development can thus be re-read as a deliberate attempt not to lose this trans-corporeal, over-mind intimacy with the world. Though she repeatedly denotes herself a "failure" for not following this prescribed model, she also perceives how this very framework can be reductive and inhibiting. She characterizes the trajectory of "childhood, and girlhood, and very young womanhood" as akin to a "tyranny, a slave yoke about her neck" (10), and she echoes this sentiment again when she claims that "time ha[s] her by the throat" and calls herself "the proverbial drowning man" stuck in its pull (40). Such sentiments participate in the broader modernist interrogation of linearity and narrative. Midget particularly emphasizes how "civilizing" and "schooling" have the effect of "devitalizing" and "drain[ing]" her of her "living fervor," "sap," and "vivid living power" (5-7). This vital imagery might be considered alongside Helena Feder's notion that the conventional *Bildungsroman* idealizes man's coming out of nature, and indeed the epigenetic "progressive metamorphosis" of the genre connotes a movement towards an increasingly human and perfect shape that erases the natural, originary state. Midget, however, reverses this process by suggesting that adhering to this "conventionalized" model is what leads to the "los[s]" and "blurr[ing]" of her "valiant outline" (15, 5). She instead valorizes the trans-corporeal "living" state as one that the conventional trajectory of growth and acculturation seeks to diminish and erase.

The value of the trans-corporeal connection with the natural world is particularly emphasized in an episode wherein these two models are explicitly compared. Midget reflects on

her youthful interactions in a garden with two other young girls, the "wonderful and goddesslike" Olive and the "beautifully graciously condescending" Cornelia (4). Whereas Olive and Cornelia are "capable and efficient and alert to men and women and the manners of the world," Midget perceives herself as a member of an "inferior race" with her "stiff legs and arms and short hair and no grace and beauty of girlhood" (5). Though developmentally "inferior," Midget is also accordingly closer to the "visible world" (76). She is a "small monster" (6), a "bird or intermediate, of a lost reptile race, clawing its way into the pear and wisteria tangle" (4), who has not yet civilized into proper form. The other two, alternatively, have traded the growth of their over-minds in favour of knowing "the manners of the world" and closed themselves off to a trans-corporeal "living power." This disparity becomes particularly clear when the three walk through the forest and find a mulberry tree. Though Olive and Cornelia find the tree and see its fruit, it is only the unformed and supposedly "inferior" Midget who can "scale[] the tree" and shake its branches (5), thereby rewarding herself and the other two with sweet berries and implying that she has preserved and developed something that the others have lost in their adherence to a conventionalized and normative growth.

In refusing to adhere to the "devitalizing" model of growth, Midget instead turns to the nonhuman environment to locate alternative developmental patterns. She explicitly juxtaposes the linear, progressivist, humanist model with a natural, cyclical, nonhuman one when, while winding her watch, she reflects:

> Was there time to be considered as an asset or as a blundering slaves' taskmaster, a slave bound to intimidate, to threaten in his frenzy, blinder slaves?…A thousand years ago there had been roses, thousand, thousand roses; roses now; roses in the garden where

> Midget climbed the tree; wisteria there, wisteria here; a pear tree always, always about to blossom, always blossoming. What had time to say to this? (31)

Again, the linear temporality of normative human time is depicted through the language of coercion and slavery and emblematized through the watch that Midget winds. Here, however, the natural world seems to challenge this schematic. The roses, wisteria, and pear tree exist both "a thousand years ago" and "now," thus surpassing the limits of the human clock and instigating an expansive, cyclical temporality that collapses past and present. The image of the pear tree as "always about to blossom, always blossoming" similarly refutes the ladder-like image of a sequential growth moving towards a state of finality by emphasizing instead the perpetually emergent temporality and inherent dynamism of nonhuman development. This difference prompts Midget to consider how there is a "a present which is dead" (80)—one that follows a "rapt and rigid formula" that seeks to devitalize (3)—but also "the living present" (80), wherein "past and future" lose their distinction and instead are both occurring simultaneously. She compares this living present to the "echo of the seashell" (13), an image that materializes an enveloping collapse of linear time and instead invites a nonhuman temporality to supplant a humanist, restrictive agenda of development. The cyclical growth of the environment thus provides Midget with a more generative developmental model than the linear model advanced in the *Bildung* trajectory of growth.[26]

The generative quality of this nonhuman developmental model inspires Midget and Josepha to engage in a kind of trans-corporeal lyricism, wherein they metaphorically configure

[26] Though this essay does not explore this facet of the novel, the queer relationship between Josepha and Midget is certainly of relevance in considering Midget's move beyond linear temporality. Jack Halberstam in *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), Elizabeth Freeman in *Time Binds* (2010), and Kate Haffey in *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality* (2019) have all considered how queer desire rethinks and rejects the "bildungsroman-like narrative" of "birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Haffey 4, Halberstam 2), and for many twentieth-century writers could only be expressed in fragmented and nonlinear ways.

themselves as possessing nonhuman bodies. When Midget moves through the tidy drawing rooms of Londoners, for example, she reflects:

> Again it came to her as it had many times…what centuries they were apart, centuries in time, centuries in space. Did they live in the same world? She and Josepha…lived isolated, clarid, separate, distinctive lives in America. That was natural. It was natural that she and Josepha…should be cast out of the mass of the living, out of the living body, as useless as natural wastage, excrementitious, it is true, thrown out of the mass, projected forth, crystallised out, orient pearls… (18)

Midget imagines herself as "cast out" and "separate" from others, with the "mass of the living" becoming a "living body" out of which she is expelled. In being denied access to the "living" human, civilized, European body, Midget and Josepha refigure themselves through a nonhuman corporeality: their forms are "crystallised" into "orient pearls." The language is reminiscent of H.D.'s description of the over-mind as a kind of corporeal pearl, and this imagery thus implies that this expulsion is not undesirable but perhaps necessary in denying the biological linearity of conventional growth. Pearls, too, begin their life as "useless" waste, yet they are forged within the oyster to become something recognizably luminous; similarly, Midget's metaphorical alignment with the pearl, while conveying her feelings of physical and developmental alterity, connects her to a more valuable and desirable realm and grants her a similarly "luminous vision" (63). This lyrical replacement of the "living body" with the nonhuman continues throughout the text. Josepha, for example, eventually seems to follow the imperative for "Wee Witches" to "grow up" when she enters a heterosexual marriage and later becomes pregnant, yet she nonetheless replaces the image of her pregnant body with another nonhuman embodiment: "Me and a piece of me like that slimy Seaweed propagates itself by breaking off itself" (51). Despite

seeming to adhere to the pattern of life expected of her, Josepha again relies on nonhuman language to convey her participation in an alternative—here asexual—developmental framework. In their sustained replacement of the conventionalized human body with the nonhuman, Midget and Josepha are thus able to reframe their feelings of witchy alterity not as a failure to meet a linear trajectory of *Bildung* growth but rather as a desirable development modality that enables them to access a "luminous" and trans-corporeal over-mind.

Moreover, the language employed in their "crystallisation" to pearl deliberately connects Midget and Josepha to an artistic development that diverges from conventional artistry. As Kathryn Simpson notes, the rhetoric of Midget and Josepha being pearls "thrown out of the mass" strongly echoes Walter Pater's description in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873)—a text with which H.D. was undoubtedly familiar[27]—of artistic genius being "crystallised" out of the "great mass" into something valuable (3). The use of this Paterian imagery thus aligns their metaphorical crystallization into pearl as suggestive of their participation in a specifically artistic development that separates them from others. Midget and Josepha, however, specify that they feel "separated from the separated too…They were separated from the elite, from the artistic, the musician, at least from all the artists and literary specimens it had been their privilege so far to encounter, in the art circles of the midlayers of so-called Bohemia" (20). What further separates Midget and Josepha is, again, related to their trans-corporeal intimacy with the nonhuman world. Midget reflects that as a child she became "initiated" to the world while in a "frenz[y] of exploration" (19):

[27] Eileen Gregory writes that "Pater shaped the literary generation of the nineties within which H.D.'s early formation took place" and that she would have been familiar with his work "not only directly through her reading but indirectly through widespread dissemination" (*H.D.* 75). H.D. also alludes to *The Renaissance* in *Asphodel*: "But there's that other one, you know, Madonna of the Rocks, Pater wrote about it, didn't he?" (20).

> She was crawling under the wood framework of the arbor, crushing with lithe shoulders and small body, the narrow border of green spikes, now a little wilted…This special midspring heat layer was to be forever after associated in Midget's mind with a new fragrance which…could only be described as *cold.* (19)

This episode becomes a formative experience, not only in that it literally molds her (layer by layer) through the pressing of heat and cold on her body, but also in developing her awareness of the interactive network of human and nonhuman agents. H.D. similarly describes artistry as requiring an Eleusinian "initiation" in *Notes* (31), where she suggests that only those with "the right sort of receiving brains" who are open to the ongoing energetic and material trans-corporeal exchange of the world can "turn the whole tide of thought…and destroy the world of dead, murky thought" (27). The "work of art" produced by such minds is a "materialization" of this "electric force" between artist and environment (61). To illuminate this process, she gives the example of a painter "who concentrated on one tuft of pine branch with its brown cone until every needle was a separate entity to him and every pine needle bore to every other one, a clear relationship" (42-3). The painter, through conscious engagement, is able to acknowledge the vast interactive network to which he belongs, and Midget similarly is brought into this over-mind awareness while moving intimately through the woods. Whereas she has been initiated into this trans-corporeal exchange, the other artists she encounters have not: "It was no fault of this English woman, pretty, sophisticated, that she had never felt or smelled or tasted grapevines flowering" (19). Midget's alignment with the trans-corporeal body and nonlinear development thus initiates an alternative artistic growth that separates her even from other artists who follow the trajectory of growth envisioned in the conventional *Künstlerroman*.

The ultimate aims of the *Künstlerroman* similarly change in this alternative developmental model; rather than seeking to become an artist who moves out of nature and towards perfection, Midget instead seeks to foster an artistry that embodies her ongoing confluence with the nonhuman world. The language of "fragrance," which helps to initiate Midget into an artistic awareness of the world, becomes fundamental to her conceptualizations of artistry itself:

> She, Midget, did not wish to be an eastern flower painter. She did not wish to be an exact and over-*précieuse* western, a scientific describer of detail of vein and leaf of flowers, dead or living, nor did she wish to press flowers and fern fronds and threads of pink and purple seaweed between the pages of her book…She wished to embody, as this other quality, the fragrance of the flowers. (17)

Midget does not aim to occupy the position of a "scientific" observer separated from the world but rather remain intimately bound up within it. Her desire to "embody" the "fragrance" of flowers frames the preservation of a trans-corporeal engagement with nonhuman bodies as the aspiration of artistry, rather than creating something that transcends nature. Midget advances this form of art as an explicitly superior one when, while in the Louvre, she considers a sculpture of Heramphroditus to be "forced and artificial," calling it "a wax rose, cut from wax without fragrance, without reality or meaning…a blossom made of wax, not modeled even with living fingers, but poured into a set mold" (65). The sculpture is a dead thing devoid of "fragrance"; it was not created by someone with "living fingers" alive to the vibrant nonhuman and human exchange of energies, but rather follows a set pattern to merely replicate an existing model. Midget contrasts this wax-like sculpture to another in Rome, also of Hermaphroditus, to be "a gentle breathing image, modeled in strange, soft, honey-colored stone…This was a spray of

honey flower" (65). This statue is the original, not a replication, and manages to embody "fragrance" in a way the Louvre's *Hermaphrodite* does not. Midget views the statue as living and "breathing," and she envisions that it is "comfortably asleep" rather than a dead, wax rose (65). There is simultaneously an unfinished and open-ended quality to the Roman statue that the Parisian one lacks, and Midget's preference for the former aligns her with an artistry that does not seek to move away from the nonhuman world but rather aims to maintain an ongoing trans-corporeal intimacy.

The final chapter of the text sees Midget reflect on her own artistic development, and the language of "sea change" emerges as a means to articulate this alternative modality and trans-corporeal artistry. In what feels like a dream sequence, Midget moves through a watery yet forested scene—the "visible world" for which the chapter is named (76)—while interacting and conversing with a nebulous character named Althea. Althea seems to question and criticize Midget at times, at one point telling her: "You are very tall…The tunic you wear shows all the worst of your body. Your legs are too thin but perhaps you will outgrow that" (82). Her words echo Midget's descriptions of her developmental and corporeal distortion at the beginning of the text and introduce again the biological impetus of the *Bildungsroman* to "outgrow" her current state, but Midget refutes it here; "I am completely grown," she responds (82). This growth is not a finished or complete state, as Midget also iterates that "nothing is static" and "all things change" (84), but in insisting she is grown, she reinscribes her earlier feelings of regression and stasis as not anathematic to her artistic maturation but rather part of it. She legitimizes the cyclical and perpetually emergent process of growth she undergoes and refutes the narrative of "progressive metamorphosis" as the only model of development available. She similarly valorizes the trans-corporeal artistry to which she aspires when Althea and she encounter Percy

Shelley's tombstone, inscribed with "He hath suffered a sea change into something rich and strange" (88). The line alludes not only to Shelley's watery grave but also to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, wherein these words are spoken by Ariel in reference to Ferdinand's (supposedly) drowned father. Midget's interaction with this allusion suggests an initiation into a canonical artistic world, but it simultaneously offers a trans-corporeal vision of dissolution into water and underscores the environmental exchange and embodiment motivating her artistry. Whereas for Shelley, Shakespeare, and *The Tempest*, the "sea change" is specifically one that connotes death, finality, and the end of an artistic career, Midget instead declares "I am alive" (83). No longer the "proverbial drowned man" caught in the pull of linear time, she is instead generatively intermeshed in the sea in a cyclical, dynamic, and open-ended process of growth. This sea change does not bring her to an end, but rather initiates her into a "rich and strange" trans-corporeal artistry that transcends the canonical, patriarchal tradition to which it originally alludes.

Paint It To-Day thus participates in the modernist reconceptualization of what "development" entails in the *Künstlerroman*. Rethinking the body as existing in an incomplete and reactive state counters the idea of *Bildung* central to the conventional *Bildungsroman*, wherein the body—and thus the (white, male) individual—inherently follows a preordained pattern with a teleological emphasis on the final form. By drawing on natural cycles rather than linear models, Midget becomes a trans-corporeal artist who develops through a witchy, Eleusinian initiation into an expansive and generative network of human and nonhuman exchange, and in doing so she refutes the restrictive model of biological linearity and social acculturation that inhibits her growth at the beginning. The ending of the text sees her embrace the idea of "sea change" as a valid form of growth that refutes the impetus to reach a final,

perfected state and instead embraces art and life as ongoing, perpetual, and unfinished. *Paint It To-Day*, as a textual body, exists in a similarly unfinished state; H.D. simply writes "In preparation, *White Althea*," yet never continued this proposed section, and the novel was only published posthumously. Though H.D. could not have intended for it to be published as such, the text's incomplete nature seems to ask if completeness is required for either artistry or development to be meaningful or if, alternatively, it is in resisting normative ideas of perfection that a greater form of artistry might arise.

"cypress in a whirlwind": Naturalcultural Ecologies of Violence in *Bid Me to Live (A Madrigal)*

If, as James Hardin suggests, most traditional definitions of the *Bildungsroman* assume a generally accommodating relationship between the individual and the world (xxi), then it is unsurprising that the genre experiences what Franco Moretti calls a "crisis" in the twentieth century (229). Whereas the archetypal *Bildungsroman* witnesses its hero experience various instances of initiation and maturation that ultimately secure his place in society, the modernist *Bildungsroman* does not see this harmonious development occur; instead, there is growing disillusionment with a culture seen as increasingly cruel, violent, and hostile. The First World War was deeply influential in this shift; as Moretti notes, it was a rite of passage that killed rather than developed young men, and those who were spared were not more worldly but rather "maimed, shocked, [and] speechless" (229). While Moretti consequently advances that the Great War was the final "coup de grâce" to the genre (229), scholars such as Gregory Castle and Jerome Buckley have pushed back at this claim, suggesting that this disturbance gives the genre "a new sense of purpose" in rethinking the individual's relationship with the world (Castle 5).

Their discussion of how the incommunicable trauma of the battlefield both undermines and renews the genre implicitly links its status and fate to men, and they consequently overlook women's interventions of the *Bildungsroman* in response to war. Though she did not fight in the trenches, H.D. was similarly affected, and *Bid Me to Live* is perhaps the most intimately related of the *Madrigal* texts to her traumatic wartime experiences. A series of devastating losses hindered H.D.'s ability to write about the war, but in the years just before the Second World War, she was increasingly thinking about "how to meet adequately the violence of the war that might be coming" rather than becoming subsumed by her losses and pain as she had in the First (Hickman *Geometry* 177). *Bid Me to Live*, which was composed during this period of

reflection,[28] can thus be read through its imperative to re-engage with former and future trauma in order to locate a way to advance and find "purpose" as an artist in an increasingly volatile world. At one level, she does so through a return to nature. The protagonist, Julia Ashton, feels stunned and stalled as both a woman and an artist within the inhospitable and patriarchal setting of wartime London, but upon moving to the vital seascape of Cornwall, she locates the affirming connection with the world that was lacking before and can once again write. However, violence is present even here, too, and throughout the text this natural violence often is influenced by, entwines with, and even informs the violence seen in London. Rather than being purely destructive, however, this ecology of violence reveals the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman agents and productively destabilizes many of the restrictive ideologies that inhibit Julia's growth at the beginning of the text, specifically binary gender and the rigid separation between civilization and nature. Thus, it is not in seeking to restore harmonious engagement with the world but rather embracing its upheaval that Julia finds the means to productively engage with her trauma and develop as an artist.

Although *Bid Me to Live* was, per her own admission, deeply autobiographical,[29] H.D. nonetheless found writing the book to be a difficult process. Though she notes in a letter that the novel began to first take shape in 1921 ("H.D." 201), it required many years, extensive work with Sigmund Freud (and later, Erich Heydt), and living through another war before she could complete it. Like many other "war-shocked and war-shattered people" (*Tribute* 93), H.D. struggled to communicate her traumatic experiences, but Suzette Henke also advances that there were gendered elements to war's incommunicability, as it was predominantly the language of

[28] Again, this timeline of 1939-50 is taken from Susan Stanford Friedman's estimates given in *Penelope's Web* (341-6).
[29] When asked by Lionel Durand if the novel was autobiographical, she told him that it was, "word for word" (qtd. Robinson xiv).

"shell shock" that was employed in the early twentieth century to conceive of war's effects (xi). This language explicitly links trauma to the war but simultaneously fails to recognize its impact on those who were not active combatants. Because war was predominantly understood as affecting men in the trenches and not those at home, women's wartime involvements and descriptions of war were often erased from popular memory in favour of what Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick calls the "patriarchal war narrative" (3). In these narratives, the masculine world of the battlefield serves as the setting and the trauma of war is largely connected to the violence of the frontlines. This violence was often displayed as inhibiting growth and creativity, as in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), but within more avant-garde modernist movements, the hypermasculine aesthetics of violence were also being celebrated. F.T. Marinetti, for example, asserts in "The Futurist Manifesto" (1909) his desire to "glorify war," calling it "the only cure for the world" that he felt was becoming feminized and "gouty" (20-1). In England, too, Wyndham Lewis' Vorticist magazine *Blast* published a 1915 "war number" that engaged with the "power" of war-machines and technology as sources of creative inspiration (23). In this mode of artistry, too, women are absent or even scorned for their perceived irrelevance to these industrial wartime worlds. H.D.'s struggle in writing of her own trauma during these years is thus understandably fraught, as the way this violence impacted women was not as widely discussed.

While the trenches are absent in *Bid Me to Live*, violence nonetheless abounds in Julia's life. As Alice Kelly writes, the primary death of the novel is not of a soldier but rather of a civilian; namely, Julia's stillborn child, who never experiences the war in person and who dies before the events of the text. This loss is undoubtedly traumatic, and this trauma is reflected in

the disruptive and "non-realist" presentation of its death (Kelly 155). As Julia thinks of the child shortly after an air-raid, her thoughts emerge in a fragmented and abstract manner:

> …her mind, which did not really think in canalized precise images, realized or might have realized that if she had had the child in her arms at that moment, stumbling as she had stumbled, she might have…No. She did not think this. She had lost the child only a short time before. A door had shuttered it in, shuttering her in, something had died that was doing to die. (12)

The language here is deeply uncertain. Her mind—much like that of a shellshocked soldier—no longer processes in fluid or "precise" images. The linguistic wavering in the switch from "realized" to "might have realized" suggests, much as later trauma studies formalized,[30] that the loss of her child has rendered her experience of reality unstable. Even more unreal is the already-dead child that she envisions here as perpetually and unavoidably dying in her arms with every shock of war, and its repeated absence resides at the heart of a text as "a gap in her consciousness, a sort of black hollow, a cave, a pit of blackness" that constantly destabilizes at the level of the sentence (12). Kelly notes how an earlier draft of the novel makes more explicit both the imagined and real death of the child: Julia envisions how stumbling during a raid while holding a child would have "bashed its head against the dark wall" and then reminds herself that this death will not transpire as it was already "still-born" (qtd. 165). In the published version, H.D. intentionally obfuscates the death of the child, hiding the violent image in ellipses and framing the child as "lost" rather than stillborn. The revision, in its deliberate displacement, makes Julia's trauma more textual, as the war-death of the child remains an absence at the center

[30] Elaine Scarry has suggested that violence initiates a "split" between the material reality of the world and the individual's perception, resulting in an "unsharability" that eclipses language (4). In Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), she similarly posits that trauma is "wordless and static" (175), and that is "shatter[s] the construction of the self" (51).

of the novel that she has lost the ability to articulate. Moreover, there is no "patriarchal war narrative" that might offer a framework to tell of this loss. She reflects how her husband, Rafe, is able to "tell" of what he "went through," but she cannot: "my agony in the Garden had no words" (46). The child does not die in the external world of war but rather within her body, and thus she repeatedly conflates the death of the child with her own, both explicitly—"her death, or rather the death of her child" (24)—and descriptively through the image of her "own corpse" lying bloody and aborted (46). Julia's trauma is consequently "shuttered" within her, unable to find expression or healing externally.

Further shuttering her in is the setting of the London bombings, which render the city a wasteland and force the characters of the text to remain in a series of claustrophobic and restrictive rooms. The city that Julia sees is hellish and devoid of natural life; air-raids turn the city into a "grave-yard," where the paving stones become "tomb-stone[s]" and the air is charged with "layers of poison-gas, the sound of shrapnel" (16, 102). While walking through London after one such raid, Julia reflects that it is "a dead city" filled with "ashes and death" (109), rendered noxious and inhabitable by the "blaze and flame of chemicals" (109, 39). As a result, Julia spends the majority of the novel inside a small apartment, which she describes predominantly through the visible signs of protection it offers: "Three double rows of curtains hung in parallel pleats from curtain poles. Julia had hemmed them herself. Behind the curtains were thick double shutters with heavy iron bolts that they drew across in air-raids" (9-10). The room is constantly being bolted, shuttered, and hemmed in by Julia with the aim of keeping the war out, but the imminent threat of war renders even this space hostile. Throughout the text she makes multiple observations of how the room sways in "air-raid fashion" (27), and she anxiously predicts that the ceiling might "come down" or the walls will "crush her" (111). She "turn[s] like

a rat in a cage round and round this room" (55), which is also "a room that was a tomb…or womb that had ejected her" (119). Again, the ghostly visage of the stillborn child emerges and creates another moment of incommunicability, represented textually in the elliptical pause and the image of the vacuous tomb/womb. The traumatic and inhibiting experience of the room is evident, too, in the instability of the narrator, as there are frequent grammatical splits as Julia oscillates between first and third person: "Julia saw the room. This is not my room…" (118). Unable to enter the infernal world of London without facing death, yet unable to remain in her apartment without fearing it, Julia's body and mind are consequently described as inert, "frozen" (71), "flayed" (42), and entrapped in this restrictive and oppressive wartime setting.

The largely domestic setting of the text also brings to the surface the gender politics structuring this space, as Julia struggles with her role as a soldier's wife and the expectations of self-abnegation demanded of women during the war. Though women's participation in the fields of medicine, industry, and agriculture during the wars in many ways blurred conventional gender roles, wartime propaganda also reinforced this hierarchical division of the sexes by emphasizing the different duties expected of men and women. Posters of wives standing in doorways as they looked off at a sky emblazoned with the words "Women of Britain say—Go!" fortified the idea that women were separate from the fighting and were meant to tend the hearth while men bravely fought (Fox). England, too, was often depicted in the form of a fertile, wealthy, and usually defenseless woman meant to be protected (Fox). Even propaganda that encouraged women to "do[] their bit" for the war emphasized their utility to the frontlines rather than framing them as active participants engaged in their own fight (Kelly 166). Women had a certain cultural role to play in this paradigm, and thus it is apt that H.D., when reflecting later in life on the parallels between Julia and herself, wrote, "I had accepted the Establishment. That is, I had accepted the

whole cosmic, bloody show. The war was my husband" ("Thorn" 170). The war, here, is a "show" wherein citizens must "accept[]" their part, and Julia similarly describes how everyone is "acting in a play…trained actors who had their exits, their entrances" (90). Rafe "in his uniform" is "dressed up, play-acting…war-time heroics" (150), Julia compares herself to "someone in a play" (128), and Bella—Rafe's mistress—is a "star-performer" (47). There is even a scene wherein the characters put on an impromptu performance depicting the fall of mankind, which symbolically parallels the loss of an Edenic pre-war paradise. Within the grand teleological performance of war, everyone must become an actor with a preordained social role to play.

Significantly, however, "war" and "husband" are equated in H.D.'s comment; implicit in this conflation is the expectation that wives, as non-combatants, must defer their own needs to serve the war effort. Men are "centre of the stage" in the patriarchal world of war (150)—even in their play-acting, Julia is cast as the silent "tree of life" (111)—and she thus feels compelled within this wartime culture to marginalize her own pain to ease her soldier-husband's. Rafe's affair with Bella, for example, is a deeply upsetting experience for Julia—she says of it that "something was being severed, was being cut in half" (47)—yet he justifies his desire for the "harlot" mistress' "body" and the "saint" wife's "mind" through an appeal to the ethos of sacrifice encouraged of women during this period (8), claiming he needs both to "forget" his war-induced pain (95). Julia notes that despite Rafe's division of her and Bella into a virgin/whore, mind/body dichotomy, they are both "simply abstractions…women of the period…WOMAN of the period, the same one" (103). Bella and Julia are stripped of their agency and denied expression of their trauma (such as her stillbirth, or Bella's abortion) in

favour of playing the supporting role of "WOMAN."[31] The capitalization of "WOMAN" even seems to emulate typographically the propagandistic calls for women to aid the war by helping men. Julia thus compares the "marriage-bed" (another kind of stage) to a "death-bed" (17), as it encloses and silences her once again in a restrictive gendered social role that strips her of agency and negates her own trauma.

These gendered cultural dynamics also extend into the realm of artistry, as Julia repeatedly encounters artistic interventions from the men around her that attempt to circumscribe her creative voice. Much as H.D. was surrounded by male artists who commented on her writing, Julia finds her work critiqued by both her husband and Rico, a character evocative of D.H. Lawrence. Writing is, in many ways, bound up with both, as Julia reflects how it was poetry that "brought Rafe to her" (59), and that Rico is part of her "cerebral burning, part of the inspiration" (67). Within the male-dominated society of the war, however, both men feel emboldened to edit, slash, and diminish her work. Rafe says of her writing that it is "a bit dramatic" and "Victorian" (54), and he tells her to "boil" her work down by "cut[ting] out the *clichés*" (56). Similarly, Rico—when reading her Orpheus sequence—tells her: "Stick to the woman speaking. How can you know what Orpheus feels? It's your part to be woman, the woman vibration, Eurydice should be enough. You can't deal with both" (51). Her Orpheus writing reflects an attempt to articulate her wartime trauma, as she describes a "black earth shattered" and a state of "being dead, not-dead, sundered and lost" (52-3), but Rico's words suggest that this is a realm of which Julia is not entitled to write. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis notes, he has given himself permission to voice both men and women but denies Julia the "parallel and complementary right" to "enter into

[31] In Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, which also considers his wartime life with H.D. (Elizabeth) and his affair with Dorothy Yorke (Fanny) from the perspective of the artist/soldier George Winterbourne, women are similarly absent abstractions seemingly separate from the war: "'Elizabeth' and 'Fanny' were now memories and names at the foot of sympathetic but rather remote letters" (279).

the feelings of men" ("Romantic" 183, *Bid* 62). He curtails her to the "speaking" role of women but then further diminishes her voice by rendering her merely a "vibration." Julia herself becomes a kind of Eurydice through this agential diminishment, confined to the incommunicable and traumatic depths of the underworld/war while the Rico-Orpheus amalgamates her story into his. Much as the younger Hermione struggles to resist becoming a muse, Julia again finds herself being confined to a similar role here: "she was to be used, a little heap of fire-wood, brush-wood, to feed the flame of Rico" (88). The oft-coupled binaries of nature/culture and woman/man emerge in this comparison; Julia is a passive, natural resource—a "tree of life," as it were—meant to provide for Rico and allow him to transcend the earthy world, while she is reductively tethered to it. This curtailing of her creative voice compels Julia to discredit or even tear up her own writing, calling her poems "discarded pages" (52), a "preliminary scribbling" (53), and mere "abstractions" (61), saying that what she writes "really isn't anything" (43).

The latter half of the novel, however, sees Julia leave London and go to Cornwall, a more elemental and liberating space that contrasts sharply with the urban and cultural trauma of war. Prior to Cornwall, Julia's experience of London is broken up by pre-war memories of a warm and bountiful nature. She remembers of her courtship with Rafe "those later May Italian pinks with the summer pinks in Paris" (33), and she reflects on the "heady scent of woods and wild spaces" (64), the "tawny suns" of chrysanthemums (56), and "the spike of an orange-tree with fruit and blossom" that contrasts with the metallic, dead trees of London (26). Running like a refrain throughout the London portion of the novel is "Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness" (35, 61, 84), the first line to John Keats' pastoral poem, "To Autumn," which serves again to recall a time prior to the war when seasons did not "revolve[] around horrors" (37). While the "misery" and "indifference" of London make these "seasons of mist" feel irretrievably remote

(158), Cornwall reintroduces this pre-war realm to Julia: "The whole place was out of the world, a country of rock and steep cliff and sea-gulls…The jagged line of cliff, the minute indentations, the blue water that moved far below, soundless from the height, were part of her" (144-5). Cornwall is "out" of the industrialized horrors of war and apart from the world that constricts her; she emphasizes that the claustrophobic "toy-house" and "theatre" are all "far away" in this vast landscape (150), liberating her from the domestic, gendered performance that stifles her. Instead, she feels an expansion of the self as she becomes "part" of the capacious seashore and "perfectly at one with this land" (145). Akin to Keats' poem, a kind of pastoral world is depicted in Cornwall, as it provides for Julia an anti-industrial retreat from the tensions of urban life and a means to connect human feeling to natural beauty.

The evocation of a pastoral, expansive landscape amidst war is in many ways unusual within the wider modernist oeuvre, as many framed this kind of nature as belonging to a pre-war past. Virginia Woolf, for example, references a Romantic, pastoral ideation of nature in *To the Lighthouse* when she considers how walking along the sea conventionally serves "to marvel how beauty outside mirror[s] beauty within" (109), but in the "Time Passes" section of the novel—which encompasses the events of the First World War—she describes how oily wreckage is strewn throughout the waves and how the seascape is marred by "ashen-coloured" ships (109). "The mirror was broken," she writes (110); the war renders this once-pastoral visage of nature impossible. Paul Fussell similarly deems the war to be "the ultimate anti-pastoral" (23-4), with its horrors within the entrenched landscape making it antithetical to the innocence, hope, and regeneration celebrated by this tradition. In this anti-pastoral mood, Aldington describes the landscape of war as marked by death rather than life, an "infernal cemetery" filled with "smashed bodies and human remains" (366). Accordingly, a deeply apocalyptic vision of nature

in decline emerges wherein nature is no longer a place of retreat but rather a disturbing and fractured reflection of mankind's own violence. Famously, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) depicts a desiccated London wherein decay and collapse overtake everything:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief
> And the dry stone no sound of water (I, 19-24)

Like H.D., Eliot describes London and its citizens as being reduced to "stony rubbish" and "broken images," but he adds that all forms of natural life are diminished into dead trees, parched rivers, and infertile roots. War's destruction has not only brought an end to human life but also nonhuman vitality. Similarly, in *Spring and All* (1923), which was inspired by *The Waste Land*, William Carlos Williams' imagines a "world without us" in which "houses crumble to ruin" and "cities disappear giving place to mounds of soil blown hither by the winds" (6). Regrowth occurs, but it is a "new" world of glowing cities and industrial effluvia that is built on the dried, lifeless fields of the old (11). Purely pastoral images were thus increasingly viewed as obsolete and inefficient at capturing the modern condition of life, which allowed the urban city—and especially the city marked by signs of war—to emerge as "the protagonist" of modernist literature (Harding 11). Though the processes of modernization had long since deepened mankind's physical and conceptual division from nature, the war seemed to materialize the notion that humans had irrevocably scarred the bucolic realm and severed themselves from its regenerative and restorative cycles.

Nature in Cornwall, however, restores such imagery, and returning to these open and vital spaces allows Julia to address her trauma in a way London inhibits. She articulates how the "cold, healing mist" of Cornwall helps to remove "the gas…from [her] lungs" (145, 175), with such language echoing Keats' pastoral "mists" and imbuing the landscape with a specifically restorative quality.[32] Healing, here, encourages expression; unlike her life in London, which "blot[s] her up" and robs her of her voice, in Cornwall she feels that everything around her is a "sign" that "spel[ls] something" to her (146-7). Even a seemingly "meaningless" path becomes instead "symbolic" (147)—a "hieroglyph" filled with meaning (146)—which is reminiscent of the bird hieroglyphics in *HERmione*. Similar, too, to the augury language Hermione uses, Julia envisions that this world consciousness is given to her because she is a "seer, see-er" (146), a "priestess," and a "wise-woman" (147). As opposed to the traumatic loss of expression she experiences in the city, the elemental world of Cornwall offers almost an excess of communicability where she does not have to restrict her voice as a woman to appease male egos. This restoration is evident at the level of the text, which becomes more cohesive and organized in this section. Whereas ellipses and dashes abound while in London, Julia's time in Cornwall sees more commas appear and tie thoughts together like connective tissue in a healing wound, and sentences become more regularly structured and grammatically complete. This narrative change creates a less fragmented and traumatized state of mind and implies a greater ability to ground herself in reality, which is evident too in Julia's many descriptions of the natural world through its apparent realness: "She had walked out of a dream, the fog and fever…into reality. This was real" (146), and "Real earth. Oh, the earth is real!" (150). Opening narrative to nature helps to remedy the incommunicable trauma of war and allows her to write once again, as the

[32] H.D. herself wrote of the countryside in a 1916 letter to Frank Stuart Flint that she felt "drugged" by the foliage (qtd. Robinson 126), again attributing a medicinal and recuperative property to these natural spaces.

novel ends with Julia reaffirming the value of her art and vowing to "write the story" (181). Cornwall thus restores a pastoral, maternal world that is lost in the repressive masculine aesthetics of London and reverses the trend towards deathlike silence seen in the first half of the novel.

Yet Cornwall and London are not so easily divided; rather, the war-torn cityscape and the rocky shores appear rather similar to one another. There is a tendency in H.D.'s writing to weave together the violent imagery of war into the natural world. In *HERmione*, for example, while watching a thunderstorm from inside, Hermione says she is "shut up inside a submarine or a bomb that will burst suddenly" (87). This "bomb" is lightning, which causes the whole world to be "blown up suddenly" (87). The sound of the rain against the house, too, is akin to "lead and shot and silver turned to gunfire" (87). Though the events of the novel precede the war, H.D. wrote it during the interwar period, and the sensation of being tightly shut in a building while bombs blaze outside undoubtedly evokes her experience in London. Similarly, Cornwall is not a peaceful, passive land. Nature here is "ragged" (143), "cold" (143), "parasitic" (144), "jagged" (145), and "stinging" (147), and often bears signs of destruction:[33]

> There was a patch of ghost-flowers in some burnt-down underbrush. The skeleton twigs made a dead-dwarf-forest for the carpet of ghost-flowers. They were wood anemones that fluttered and bent in the wind. Mist lay over the field of anemones and the twisted burnt twigs left from last year… (144)

[33] This language is reminiscent of the vocabulary found in *Sea Garden* (1916), too, where manmade and nonhuman warfare interweave in poems such as "Sea Violet": "The white violent…lies fronting all the wind / among the torn shells / on the sand-bank" (25). The duality of "torn shells" as both a natural (calcium carbonate) and cultural (ammunition) artifact suggests that the two realms are not discrete or separable from one another.

The burnt, bent, and twisted flowers and trees make up their own city of "ashes and death" that mirrors London. Such razed imagery attributes to nature not a docile passivity but rather a violence and brutality that nuances the conventional bucolic tropes of the pastoral.

Similar to Hermione's description of the storm as a bomb, Julia draws comparisons between nature in Cornwall and the war in London. She describes, for example, how the "salt-soaked" branches in the fireplace "sputter" and "burn" with "special chemical flame" (158), with such language deeply evocative of the "blaze and flame of chemicals" she sees in London (39). A windstorm occurs, too, and Julia imagines that it is "shov[ing] with a giant shoulder…as if it were trying to push the house down" (159). Much like the air-raids of London, this gale "pound[s] on the wall" and tries to knock over homes (159), thus resembling the very forces Julia tries to escape by her relocation to Cornwall. Conversely, Julia often frames war's destruction by comparing it to natural disasters, such as a "cyclone" and a "tidal wave" (106, 52). She repeatedly renders London a kind of Pompeii by imagining that the bombs are "volcanoes bursting" and "erupting" (52, 109), burying everyone under "hard lava" (52). Such conflations are, again, evident throughout her work, as H.D. similarly describes war as a natural force in *Paint It To-Day* by comparing it to waves and storm clouds. Nature and war are thus yoked together so as to describe the violence of the other, blurring the geographical and descriptive distinctions between London and Cornwall.

These metaphorical comparisons between human and nonhuman violence help to illuminate how culture and nature are not separate realms but rather constantly interweaving. Destabilizing this binary is part of what ecocritical scholarship seeks to do: Bruno Latour, for example, rejects these categorizations in favour of a "collective" entanglement of human and nonhuman (174); Donna Haraway similarly advances the term "naturecultures" to emphasize

how nature and culture mediate and co-constitute each other so deeply as to render these entrenched binaries arbitrary (96); and both Lawrence Buell and Timothy Morton discuss the world as an "intrinsically, interconnected web of relations" with "no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving" (Buell 137), and they iterate how ecocritical practices seek to "collaps[e] the distance between…society and natural environment" (Morton *Ecology* 154). Because the processes of industrialization, modernization, and urbanization all reinforced this division and bolstered ideas of human dominance over nature, modernist literature has—as Anne Raine notes—not been as widely explored through this ecocritical lens (99). However, more recent works such as Kelly Sultzbach's *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination* (2016) and Bonnie Kime Scott's *In the Hollow of the Wave* (2012) have focused on how confrontations with the brutalities and trauma of war fostered a broader awareness of the "slippery exchanges" between nature and culture (Sultzbach 3). Indeed, the First World War was one fought both with and within nature, blurring conventional dualisms. Peter Sloterdijk has, for example, called it an "ecologized war" because it was largely conducted in the atmosphere with chemical warfare, which effectively weaponized the environment's capacity to kill by targeting ecologically-dependent functions (20), and Dorothee Brantz notes how survival in trench warfare was dependent on the "ability to blend in with the landscape and become indistinguishable from the environment" (75). Though modernism has been repeatedly viewed as disengaging from the natural world, this characterization ignores how many modernist writers were, in fact, keen readers of the early twentieth century as an ecological event.

In this vein, the descriptive overlap between natural and cultural violence throughout *Bid Me to Live* explores how war materially and tangibly undermines such dualistic distinctions. Julia reflects on war's impact on the environment when discussing how the air has become a

cloud of "poison-gas" that seeps into her husband's lungs and seems to spread into her own when he kisses her (39). The language of "air-raid" becomes quite literal here, as air itself is raided with the "pattern" of war that rearranges its chemical composition, turning it into what she and Rafe call a "fug" that is both natural and man-made (41). Like "air-raid," hyphenated words in the novel often underscore the extent to which nature and war overlap, as in "war-spring" (101), "war-tornado" (86), and "war-tide" (101). Such constructions reveal a dialectical "natureculture" whereby war is framed through its effects on the environment; nature, in turn, is implicated in this cultural violence. The text features, too, an abundance of circular, cyclonic imagery, including "circle of halo-light" (61), "circle on the watch" (63), "candle-circle" (64), "circles of worlds" (72), "centre of a cyclone" (106, 111), and "cyclone-centre" (118). These images visualize the warring world as a collective entanglement of human and nonhuman agencies wherein they "swirl" together in a "whirlwind" (169). H.D. thus creates in this text what might be called an ecology of violence that sees natural and cultural forces interact and alter one another, thereby nuancing the ideation of nature as a passive and separate realm.

While this violent ecology in some ways evokes Eliot's London insomuch as nature is transformed by human activity, H.D. does not envision nature as destroyed by or subordinated to culture. Rather than passive matter awaiting intervention, nature similarly impinges upon and forcibly alters human life. During the windstorm in Cornwall, Julia reflects how the "elements" have always violently interacted with "man," but that the shocking and shattering forces of this naturalcultural "battle[]" have inspired creativity rather than merely destruction: "this house would have slipped off the cliff edge, if man had not (long ago) discovered ways and means to fasten bolts, to weld beams, to fit doors, windows, against elements" (159). The very

infrastructure of humanity is productively shaped by nature, inspiring cultural transformation through the violent interactions of human and nonhuman agencies.

Recognition of the dialogic interlinkages between nature and culture allows Julia to see that this potential for renewal and regeneration is not only possible within an idealized pre-war pastoral realm but within the wasteland, too. Upon seeing a "dead branch" post-raid, she recalls a plane-tree that she spent many hours watching from her apartment window (113). The memory seems to remind her of the enduring vitality of nature even within the war,[34] as she reflects that this is "not a dead branch" but rather a "golden bough" (114). The evocation of the golden bough—which alludes to the branch that the Sibyl tells Aeneas he must take with him to the underworld—suggests that the living natural power of the elements seen in Cornwall are alive, too, in London.[35] The bough is itself emblematic of collapsing binaries, as it brings together light and dark, life and death, overworld and underworld, and human and nonhuman entities, and here it similarly serves to weave together nature and the city through this natural presence. Julia's alignment with the Sibyl in her ability to see the presence of and need for this power evokes the prophetic language inspired by Cornwall and suggests that the restorative world consciousness she achieves there is possible in the city. Through this enduring connection, the war-torn

[34] The choice of a plane-tree is of note, as the species had a reputation for thriving in urban environments, as evinced in Amy Levy's 1889 poem "A London Plane-Tree": "Green is the plane-tree in the square / The other trees are brown; / They droop and pine for country air; / The plane-tree loves the town" (17).

[35] Relevant in this discussion is that bombing's destruction contradictorily created "implausibly lush zones" within London (Mellor 166). British naturalist R.S.R. Fitter, for example, wrote an environmental survey of London after the Blitz in which he describes the aggressive growth of nature in these sites ("a horse-chestnut tree in Camberwell that was stripped of almost all its leaves in July was in full bloom again in September" [228]) and that rose-bay, ragwort, and fireweed became the "pioneer colonists" of these exposed spaces (233). Fitter comments that "it is sometimes forgotten that much of Greater London stands on some of the most fertile soil of the British Isle; it just happens that under the present order of society it is more profitable to grow factories than fruit or vegetables" (228). His comment of "grow[ing] factories" evokes a supposition of human control over nature, yet the statement as a whole reveals that nature is never absent from these urban spaces. The fertility of the golden bough in some ways anticipates this flourishing regrowth and regeneration.

landscape of London is thus not wholly devoid of the potential to renew and recreate; rather, this violence is in some ways requisite in generating a more vitalizing vision.

The disruption of the conventional nature/culture bifurcation also reveals how this ecology of violence undermines other dyadic and hierarchical categories that dovetail from this binary, particularly those concerning gender. While Julia's trauma is many ways produced by the patriarchal world of war and further "shuttered" in by the voiceless, passive, and domestic realm to which she is forcibly consigned, the violence of the war also simultaneously destabilizes and deconstructs the binaries of active/passive, male/female, and public/private. Scholars such as Friedman, Kelly, Anne Fernihough, and Goodspeed-Chadwick have all considered how H.D. nuances the "patriarchal war narrative" by revealing how women are not exempt from war's violence but rather in a war zone of their own. Militarised language, for example, extends into the home; Julia describes being "superficially entrenched" in her apartment and the imminent threat of being "routed out" by enemies (11). This civilian battlefield is, like the frontlines, capable of producing wounded bodies, as Julia falls during an air-raid and "bruise[s]" her leg, only to realize there is in fact a "black gash" in her knee (11). Kelly compares Julia's slow realization of the injury's extent to a soldier who fails to grasp the severity of his wound, thus drawing a parallel between the psychological and physical injuries of "home front trauma" to the battlefield (164). The line between soldier and civilian is, indeed, tenuous throughout the text. In a scene where Rafe puts his military-issued wristwatch on Julia and then embraces her, she reflects on the feeling of "the rough khaki under her throat" and describes how the buttons of his uniform press against her chin and chest (29). Enveloped in his khaki-clad arms, Julia, too, is adorned in a soldier's uniform, and the distinction between passive female civilian and active male combatant merge as the two hold one another. Julia's perception of domesticity and

militarism as a performance, coupled with a setting in which bombs materially dissolve the boundaries between public and private space, reveals the constructed nature of these gendered roles and how they must be theatrically played out so as to maintain their distinction. Though this wartime violence is not straightforwardly valorized, H.D. conveys how these shattering forces productively challenge and undermine restrictive gender binaries.[36]

Indeed, rather than merely an escape from the urban, masculine city into a feminized pastoral, it is the collapse of these binaries altogether that allows Julia to envision a nascent mode of artistry that transmutes her incommunicable trauma into writing. The end of the novel sees Julia reflect on a creative consciousness she calls the *gloire*, a term likely alluding to Lawrence's 1918 poem "Gloire de Dijon" wherein the subject is an unnamed woman compared to the titular flower.[37] The poem reinscribes the gendered dimensions of the nature/culture divide, yet Julia imagines a *gloire* that diverges from such hierarchies, which feel increasingly untenable to her. "What did Rico matter," she asks, "with his blood-stream, his sex-fixations, his man-is-man, woman-is-woman? That was not true. This mood, this realm of consciousness was sexless, or all sex" (62). The two-fold refutation (sexless/all sex) of the conventional gender divide is repeated when Julia reflects on Rico's earlier circumscription of her writing:

> Perhaps you would say I was trespassing, couldn't see both sides, as you said of my Orpheus. I could be Eurydice in character, you said, but woman-is-woman and I couldn't be both. The *gloire* is both. No, that spoils it; it is both and neither. (176-7)

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[36] The duality of war's destruction and regeneration is explored more in *Trilogy* (1946), where she describes the "blossoming" of a "half-burnt-out apple" and buildings being "sliced" and subsequently "open to the air" (4). Ruin gives way to new potential, and Miranda Hickman and Lynn Kozak have considered H.D.'s translation of 'Euripides" in this light, too, focusing on how it addresses war as both something that traumatizes women and simultaneously offers "new cultural roles into which to mature outside those associated with inherited norms of femininity" ("Poppies" 460).

[37] This connection is being made alongside Rachel Blau DuPlessis' suggestion of the possible link in "Romantic Thralldom" and given the explicit reference to "*gloire-de-Dijon* roses" in *Bid Me to Live* as Julia reflects on Rico's poetry (168).

This movement of "both and neither" celebrates what Hickman calls the "androgynous condition" of the *gloire* that is mercurial and fluid rather than fixed and defined ("Uncanonically" 21). She is both Orpheus and Eurydice, and yet neither, as she collapses the distinction between these roles. Embracing this androgyny allows Julia to move away from a gendered view of nature by intervening in the image of the rose, an oft-used symbol for both women and nature's muse-like and decorative qualities, as in Lawrence's poem. Julia refutes such dualisms by instead claiming that "this is not a red rose nor a white one, it is *gloire*, a pale gold" (168). Again, there is a movement of rejecting conventional binaries (red and white) in favour of something that is not either/or but instead both/neither. Moreover, the image of a gold rose ties back to the golden bough, thus aligning the *gloire* with an organic form of creativity that acknowledges the interconnection between human and nonhuman experience and between nature and the city rather than maintaining such binaries. Like the bough, the *gloire* offers a way to move through the underworld/war in a nebulous state that resists dualisms.

Refuting these conventional hierarchies also prompts Julia to consider what form her artistry will take moving forward in this volatile world. She vows to "get something out of this war" (175), specifically yoking together this artistry with the violent ecology of war rather than locating it in a purely pastoral space; as she notes, "nature-worship doesn't express" the *gloire* (183). She also specifies, however, that she does not aim to write a "Greek chorus-sequence" that merely reproduces and affirms the existing binaries of the patriarchal war narrative (175). To convey this new mode of storytelling, Julia suggests that "the child is the *gloire* before it is born" and that she lives within "the unborn story" (177), which relies on the "both/neither" indeterminacy of the fetus to conceive of how this new form of artistry might diverge from conventional dualisms. This language again evokes the traumatic event of the stillbirth, yet here

she engages with this trauma to envision a means of creation and life rather than destruction and death. The moment relates back, too, to Julia's earlier hope that "[t]he more unformed the black nebula, by reasoning, the more glorious would be the opening up into clear defined space, or the more brilliant a star-cluster would emerge" (13). The "star-cluster" of the *gloire* generatively comes from the "black nebula" of war and trauma, not despite it, reframing violence not solely through its loss but from the potential it holds to lead to new forms that are "more glorious," "more brilliant." The unborn child becomes the unwritten text of her war experience, and it is the prospect of writing this story that allows Julia to conceive, for the first time, that there is the possibility for a future.

The final image is of Julia writing: "It is myself sitting here, this time propped up in bed, scribbling in a notebook, with a candle at my elbow" (177). While some scholars such as Goodspeed-Chadwick have related this moment to the creation of *Trilogy*, H.D.'s volume of war poetry, this passage might also see the metatextual production of *Bid Me to Live* itself as she writes the "unborn story." It is not merely a retreat from the war to Cornwall that allows for this writing to occur; rather, it is made possible through her gradual awareness of how wartime naturalcultural violence carries the potential to transform and renew through the collapse of conventional structuring ideology. That H.D. ends the novel with Julia able to write of her trauma suggests the text does not signify a deathblow to the genre of the *Bildungsroman* or the related *Künstlerroman* as Moretti suggests, but instead gestures towards a rethinking of how both the artist and the narrative of the artist must evolve in a world so different from the past. Rather than trying to restore traditional ways of viewing the world as stable and harmonious, she identifies how it is through embracing this destabilization that "a new sense of purpose" might be found and a more generative and enduring artistry might develop.

"The thing within her made her one with frogs": Multiplicity, Animality, and the Unsettled Humanist Self in *Asphodel*

While all the *Künstlerromane* of the *Madrigal Cycle* allude to or engage with the aesthetics of pregnancy,[38] *Asphodel* is the only one that explicitly features a narrator who is with child. Set in the years prior to and encompassing the birth of H.D.'s daughter, Perdita, the novel follows Hermione across two pregnancies—both a still- and livebirth—as she simultaneously works to hone her artistry. Although the rhetoric of birth has often been employed to connote the process of artistic production,[39] Hermione does not find the parallel between creativity and procreativity so easy to navigate; instead, she often voices concerns that the birth of "this thing" will force her to "g[i]ve up the stark glory of the intellect" (170).[40] Pregnancy is framed here as at odds with the *Künstlerroman*, in which the refinement of the self into a stable artistic identity is the goal. Rather than becoming an increasingly cohesive identity, however, the pregnant Hermione instead experiences herself as a multiplicity holding many selves, one of whom is the developing fetus. She fears her own identity is usurped by this process, and she increasingly compares herself to animals to articulate a sense of being dehumanized as a result. However, she engages with the unsettling experience of multiplicity initiated by her pregnancy to subsequently unsettle the dichotomies of self-formation as posited by the conventional *Künstlerroman*. Rather than seeking to move to an increasingly unitary and discrete self, Hermione instead comes to

[38] *HERmione* takes place over a nine-month "gestational" timeframe (Friedman "Portrait" 29), *Paint It To-Day* discusses Josepha's pregnancy and the "unborn being" of the developing self (6), and *Bid Me to Live* provides an extensive rumination on stillbirth and the gloire as a child to be born.

[39] Donna Hollenberg offers an extended consideration of this "childbirth metaphor" in *H.D.: The Poetics of Childbirth and Creativity* (1991) (4), and Susan Gubar writes in "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine" (1983) how male writers would appropriate the birth metaphor to legitimize their writing while also consigning female creativity to the womb to reduce their art as "the mere *re*petition of *re*production" (26).

[40] The use of "glory" resonates with its presence in *HERmione* as a reference to artistry ("I will not sell my glory" [120]). Here, pregnancy and "glory" are counterposed.

recognize how this state of being more-than-one facilitates a lyrical expansion of the self that ultimately offers a more visionary artistic consciousness.

Central to the *Bildungsroman* is the concept of the "self" as the base unit upon which the narrative is built. The subject of a *Bildungsroman* is one who must necessarily undergo change, but he increasingly moves towards a unitary, coherent, and stable self that is always latently possible but only realized through maturation. Scholarship by Helena Feder, Paul Sheehan, and Karalyn Kendall-Morwick has emphasized that because the genre possesses a deep-rooted connection with the humanist tradition, the *Bildungsroman*'s narrative emphasis on self-formation is simultaneously part of a broader discourse on what constitutes the "human" (Feder 2, Sheehan 2, Kendall-Morwick 507). Within the framework of liberal humanism, this definition is largely predicated on a divide from all that does not fall under the category of the self, or namely what is "other." As Sheehan notes: "The human's 'others' are also those categories perennially associated with the human but which humanist philosophy has attempted, with varying degrees of success, to exclude. These are the subhuman, the parahuman, the preterhuman" (8). In the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud was echoing this humanist conception of self in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), where he elaborates a theory of "organic repression" in which mankind must subdue its originary animality—which he relates elsewhere to the "polymorphous" state of early childhood (*Standard* 190)—in order to achieve a coherent state of humanity (66). The genre of the *Bildungsroman* similarly operates on an exclusionary and Cartesian model, one that sees a refinement of the autonomous humanist self through the rejection of supposedly inferior identities and agencies.

In *Asphodel*, however, Hermione narratively conveys an experience of being deeply fragmented and unstable, rather than unified and coherent. Throughout the novel—and

particularly after the war has begun and she experiences a stillbirth—she describes herself as being in "two parts" (148), "several pieces" (170), and "a mesh of self" (104). Rather than bounded and discrete, she instead feels "no difference between in and out" (152), and she accordingly is unable to create a stable definition of herself. Akin to how *HER*-Hermione links her compulsive need to repeat "I am Her" with attempts to stave off a psychic "dementia" (3), *Asphodel*-Hermione's frequent use of the interrogative conveys a similar rupturing of mind and identity:

> "What were you saying, darling?"…Self of self was so buried. Who had said "darling"? Hermione leaned standing against the table, leaned standing and staring. Who had said what? Who was she? Where was she? Would she be the same, herself the same, a statue buried beneath the kisses of the war...What was she going to do, say? What would she think? Her thoughts were not her thoughts. They came from outside. (125)

Her sensation that "self of self" is "buried" prompts a crisis of identity wherein she doubts her ability to process the world. Even as she offers information in one sentence ("Hermione leaned against the table"), she immediately questions the validity of her perception in the next ("Where was she?"), initiating a narrative wavering that destabilizes the cohesion of her subjectivity. Indeed, her mind appears fractured and permeable here, as her thoughts are framed as intrusively seeping in from "outside" rather than from her interior formulations. While the "kisses of war" influence this fragmentation, Hermione imagines that her sense of self is "shattered" even prior to it (105), and Sanna Melin Schyllert has suggested that throughout both halves of the novel, there is a sustained attempt to create a second-person "you" against whom the "I" of Hermione might be defined, but these referents overlap and blur together, dissolving the borders of the narrator (Schyllert). While "you" is used initially to refer to other characters in the text, it

increasingly serves as a pronoun upon which Hermione relies in articulating her own feelings of self-alienation: "She was right here, face looking at you is right face for you Hermione. Your face now belongs to you" (149). Hermione thus relies on the first-, second-, and third-person in describing herself, narratively positing the "self" as a site of multiplicity rather than a unitary construction.

Hermione's pregnancies reinforce this psychic split by making multiplicity a material reality. As the conventional protagonist of the genre is male, pregnancy generally lies beyond the scope of the *Bildungsroman* or the *Künstlerroman*, and even nineteenth-century novels centered on women's development would often conclude with marriage rather than extend onto the topic of pregnancy.[41] In part, pregnancy's peripheral status in traditional narratives of self-development might relate to its divergence from the desired unity of self; as Schyllert notes, it initiates a "literal form of intersubjectivity" in which two identities reside in one body (Schyllert). Hermione reflects on this intersubjective state of pregnancy as a division of self: "Self. What is self?...you are more a self than I am, but I am giving myself to you to make a self. Are you giving yourself to me to make a self? What is a self?" (179). Her questions are relevant in the scope of the genre: what shape does self-formation take if that same self is in the process of (re)producing another? Hermione questions the limits of this self by noting that it is impossible to neatly divide the two, as "self and self" are "confused and blurred" in a process of mutual becoming (179). With her earlier stillbirth, too, Hermione struggles to articulate what has happened to herself; as Elizabeth Brunton suggests, the loss of the child initiates a crisis of "self-expression" (67). The pages concerning the stillbirth abound with the presence of "I," as if in an

[41] To clarify, there are examples of earlier texts centered on women artists that address pregnancy, but these pregnancies tend to "associate birth with the depravity of fallen women or the death of an artistic career" (Gubar "Birth" 20), as with Marian Earle in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and the Princess Halm-Eberstein in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

attempt to redraw the boundaries of herself, but at times the child slips back into this conception of self: "I had a baby, I mean I didn't" (116). A sense of plurality lingers in the proliferation of "I"s, and her subsequent echoing of Robert Browning's poem "An Englishman in Italy" to describe the state of the war-torn world—"Europe is splitting like that pomegranate *in halves on the tree*" (110)—simultaneously resonates with her own pervasive feeling of being divided into multiple selves across these pregnancies.[42]

To understand this state of being "polymorphous," Hermione turns towards animal imagery to comprehend both her pregnancy and herself. Within an ecocritical discourse, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have suggested that the animal has long since provided a way to conceive of this state of being more than one. "The wolf," they write, "is not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics; it is a wolfing" (239). These words emphasize how wolves (among other animals) are understood as a swarm, a population, and a pack of many that overlap and interact with other wolves, species, and environments; "in short, a multiplicity" (239). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that human "fascination for the pack, for multiplicity" reveals an interest in the inherent "multiplicity dwelling within us" (240). They counter the humanist (and specifically Freudian) vision of "becoming-human" as an increasingly unitary and categorical self by advancing an alternative "becoming-animal" that resists such hegemonic identities through diffusion into this network of many.

Similarly, Hermione's depiction of pregnancy evokes the plurality of becoming-animal to describe the experience of growing multiplicities within her and the sensation of moving away from a bounded, humanist self. She explicitly reframes birth not in humanist terms but rather as a

[42] The twinned associations of the pomegranate as both a symbol of Persephone's fertility and an emblem of the underworld again is apt, as the line is situated between Hermione's stillbirth and livebirth, thus materializing the two halves (death, life) of the pomegranate.

zoomorphic procreation of animals: "I don't understand having a child. It seems to me that I must be having a colt, a frog. It seems to me I must be having a dragon, a butterfly" (159-60). Notable is the sheer number of animals she lists here, as if this multiplicity can scarcely be held within one animal form but must be articulated through many. Frequently, too, she compares the pregnant body to a butterfly, describing herself as "being disorganized as the parchment-like plain substance of the germ that holds the butterfly becomes fluid, inchoate" (158).[43] This sensation of being "disorganized" and "fluid, inchoate" spurs her to declare that she is "animal, reptile" (158), and she reconfigures herself as "lizard-Hermione," "eel-Hermione," "alligator-Hermione," and "sea-gull Hermione" (158). Her words gesture towards a humanist failure to ascertain the feeling of multiplicity and suggest that the language of animality better evokes her current state, as she fuses herself into a myriad of half-animal figures through these metaphorical constructions and compound-nouns.

Though Deleuze and Guattari's rhetoric of animality was not available to H.D., the early twentieth century was uniquely primed to consider these human-animal interactions beyond the hierarchical framework of liberal humanism. In Carrie Rohman's *Stalking the Subject* (2012), she writes that the "animal problem" had a particularly charged presence in modernism, developing as it did in the wake of Charles Darwin's "catastrophic blow to human privileges vis-à-vis the species question" (1). Rohman suggests that in the nineteenth century, the full ramifications of Darwin's theory were not yet fully felt by the wider populace; instead, the language of social Darwinism was often employed to bolster traditional ideas of power, civilization, and the superiority of the human in the face of less-evolved animal "others" (5). She

[43] This butterfly imagery to convey the fluid boundaries of the childbearing self is relevant in Mina Loy's "Parturition" (1914), too, wherein the pregnant speaker evokes the image of a "dead white feathered moth" to morph herself into a kind of moth/er that transcends human boundaries (6).

advances that this prevailing schema of Western subjectivity was not extensively challenged until the turn of the century, wherein it permeated more widely into the cultural imagination how Darwin's linkage of humans to animals collapses categorical differences rather than affirms them, prompting a "crisis in humanism" (21). Freud's theory of organic repression, for example, reflects this crisis; his ideology yokes humans and animals together in a psychological continuum while simultaneously seeking to distance itself from this zoological connection.

Modernist writers similarly grappled with this humanist crisis, and Rohman suggests that their texts "variously re-entrench, unsettle, and even invert" this traditional hierarchical relationship (12). Margot Norris' 1985 study *Beasts of the Modern Imagination,* for example, looks at what she calls a "biocentric tradition"—which she traces to Darwin (6)—in the works of Franz Kafka, D.H. Lawrence, and Ernest Hemingway to consider how their writings engage with animality to critique anthropocentric aesthetics. In a 2001 lecture series, Jacques Derrida similarly cites Lawrence's poem "Snake" as an example of an encounter with a nonhuman creature that "comes before" and thus decenters the humanist subject (*Beast* 240). Both Rohman and Peter Meedom have turned to Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) as refusing to provide "a recognizable description of the human as residing above the animal" and instead calling for "an expanded definition of humanity that includes characteristics usually disavowed in Western culture" (Meedom 225, Rohman 143). Such criticism has located in the modernist period a strain of thought that interacted with the multiplicity of the nonhuman to "unsettle" the primacy of the human subject.

While *Asphodel*, too, evinces an "unsettling" of the discrete humanist self, there is a textual layer that registers this overturning as, indeed, unsettling. Pregnancy is a realm that she approaches with anxiety and (at times) dread, describing it as "an abyss of unimaginable terror"

wherein lies “pain,” “disappointment,” and “utter horror” (154). She depicts the multiplicity of the childbearing self as an almost sliding back into the voiceless “abyss” of animality, or a kind of descent along the hierarchical chain of evolution. The child itself she describes as a “frog-shaped small greedy domineering monster” (158), and the appearance of hybridized toad, eel, and insect bodies in relation to birth evoke the forms of life that are seen as particularly remote from the evolved animal of the human. Similarly, she describes her childbearing “self” as “a lotus bud slimed over in mud” (179), with herself returning to a state of primordial muck that provides that basis for life rather than acting as a higher form. This diminished sense of self is echoed, too, in her descriptions of being a “jelly of vague unrest” and an “inchoate mass” (156), again evoking this sense of multiplicity while simultaneously associating it with a shapelessness except in relation to the child, for whom she is a “hollow vessel” or a “cocoon” providing room for its development (153).

Significant, then, is Hermione’s comment that she feels “dehumanised” upon staring in the mirror (141). Elizabeth Grosz writes that the animal serves in the humanist imagination as “a necessary reminder of the limits of the human” and reveals “the precariousness of the human as a state of being, a condition of sovereignty, or an ideal of self-regulation” (12); accordingly, even this slight sensation of becoming-animal fundamentally destabilizes Hermione’s ability to remain human. The word “dehumanised” emerges at the juncture between the two pregnancies, implicitly suturing them together here in this liminal moment of reflection and inscribing both with this rhetoric of dehumanization. Brunton posits that this language is taken from wartime magazines and newspapers—which sought to depict Britain’s enemies as “sub-human” (74)—in order to describe the feelings of victimization and loss surrounding her stillbirth, but it relates, too, to the animal discourse Hermione employs in her second pregnancy. In both, Hermione

experiences a reduction of the self and an evacuation of agency as she is framed as merely the material matrix for growth rather than an agent of her own, prompting her to view the polymorphism of pregnancy as a disturbing "othering."

This "othering" takes on a specifically gendered valence, particularly in relation to reproduction. Genevieve Lloyd and Val Plumwood have both explored how the "master model" of the humanist individual not only defines itself in contrast to the "areas of life which have been construed as nature" (Plumwood 28), but also "in opposition to the feminine" (Lloyd 105). Like animals, women have been traditionally framed as irrational creatures guided not by the mind but the body, and especially the "womb," an organ described throughout history as an "animal desirous of generation" (Green 138). Lucy Bland characterizes the early feminist movements happening in H.D.'s own lifetime as aiming to disassociate this conflation of women with their childbearing bodies, so that they might be viewed as more than just a "walking womb" (91). The twentieth-century saw these tensions play out as increasingly accessible birth control, greater access to prenatal medical services such as ultrasounds and pregnancy tests, and growing discussions around women's sexuality in many ways afforded them more agency; simultaneously, the emergent Eugenics movement and its call for selective breeding, nationalistic rhetoric in response to war and declining birth rates for women to fill the country's "empty cradles" (Barnard 438), and concerns that new birthing technology endangered women by "divorc[ing] [them] from nature" again sought to limit these choices (Booth "Woman" 83), culturally bringing women back into a "pronounced identification" with their reproductive abilities (Gubar "Birth" 21).[44] It is thus understandable that many modernist women writers

[44] The information offered here is largely compiled from Susan Squier's *Babies in Bottles* (1994), Ann Oakley's *The Captured Womb* (1984), Shirley Green's *The Curious History of Contraception* (1973), and Christina Hauck's "Abortion and the Individual Talent" (2003).

display a troubled relationship with childbearing in their writing, as in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* wherein Miriam reflects that "women stop[] being people" when they go off into "hideous processes" (qtd. Gubar "Birth" 41), or Olive Moore's description of maternity in *Fugue* (1932) as a "cow-like vocation" (283).

Hermione, too, connects animals and women to explore this gendered "othering" and to articulate her feelings of diminished control over herself. In describing her first pregnancy, she reflects:

> …almost a year and her mind glued down, broken, and held back like a wild bird caught in bird-lime…she found she was caught, her mind not taking her as usual like a wild bird but her mind-wings beating, beating and her feet caught…men will say O she was a coward, a woman who refused her womanhood…But take a man with a flaming mind and ask him to do this. Ask him to sit in a dark cellar and no books…but you mustn't. You can't. Women can't speak and clever women don't have children. (113)

She engages repeatedly in this simile of "like a wild bird" throughout the text to draw a comparison between birds caught in a manmade substance and herself, trying to access the world of the "mind" but trapped by patriarchal hegemonies in the corporeal "otherness" of "womanhood." Within the scope of this socially constructed "womanhood," Hermione feels she can either be "clever" or have a child, but not both; men, with their Cartesian claim to the "flaming mind," do not have to make this choice in either the *Künstlerroman* or society more broadly. As Donna Hollenberg and Miranda Hickman suggest, such moments narrate a "feared incompatibility between motherhood and authorship" (Hollenberg *Poetics* 34). The perception that the procreative is inimical to the creative, and vice versa, prompts a "fear of entrapment" by both the childbearing body and the "conventional script" of the "heterosexual dyad" it entails

(Hickman *Geometry* 167-8). Hermione employs similar language of being "entrapped" as she reflects on being a wife and possible mother (157): "she was caught back into the body of Mrs. Darrington…like a bird caught in a trap…herself was like a wound, a burn against herself, within herself. Hermione in Mrs. Darrington turned and festered…Trying to get out, trying to get away, worse than having a baby a real one, herself in herself trying to be born" (144-5). Again there is evidence of the dichotomous imperative to choose: she can either give birth to "herself in herself"—the artist—or have a child, fulfilling the duties of "Mrs. Darrington." Yet the language of reproduction and the evocation of being once again a caught bird implies that, regardless of which she chooses, neither is without implicit patriarchal control, as being the "other" half of pregnancy's "heterosexual dyad" relegates her to the realm excluded by humanist subjectivity.

In *Notes on Thought and Vision*, H.D. reflects further on this state of "otherness" in relation to pregnancy. She writes that a vision of "jelly-fish consciousness" occurred to her "before the birth of [her] child" (20), wherein she identifies the "womb" as an important "centre[] of consciousness" (21). She suggests the womb is just as relevant a center as the brain and offers the hybridized image of the "womb-brain" to convey this significance (22), a configuration that resists the Cartesian duality of body and mind and one that reclaims the cultural diminishment of women to their wombs in a more generative way. However, there is still, as Hickman writes in *The Geometry of Modernism* (2005), language in *Notes* that "damns" the body (170), which H.D. posits is—when "without a reasonable amount of intellect"—little more than "an empty fibrous bundle of glands" (17). She emphasizes this cumbersome corporeality through references to "elephantiasis" and "fatty-degeneracy" (17), with such descriptions anticipating her later characterizations of pregnancy as a jellied, inchoate, nonhuman state. Her connection, then, between childbearing and the jellyfish—as a kind of

amniotic creature that was, in the years prior to this manifesto, infamously used by Wyndham Lewis in *Tarr* (1918) to describe women as a "lower life form" whose "jellyfish attributes" inhibit artistry (qtd. Scott "Jellyfish" 171)—registers some unease with the pregnant body's incoherent multiplicity, animality, and "otherness" and the subsequent threat to self-development it presents.

While this comparison to the amorphous and fetus-like jellyfish is at once unsettling, H.D. also generatively engages with the experience of "otherness" it yields to destabilize humanist, hierarchical binaries. Notably, she connects the "jelly-fish consciousness" not only to childbirth but also to a vision she had in 1918. She recounts this moment in *Tribute to Freud* (1956), writing first of her fear of her "one ego" being "dissolved utterly" under the scrutiny of "[her] father's telescope, [her] grandfather's microscope [and] the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud" and then countering this anxiety with a "'jelly-fish' experience of double ego" that "immunize[s]" her (116). Whereas the "one ego" is fragile, precarious, and at the mercy of men's definition, her "double ego"—with its fragmentation and "jellyfish attributes"—does not dissolve but rather protects her, akin to a womb. The experience of being multiple and "other" is not necessarily anathematic to the self here, and in fact it is the pursuit of a contained, unitary self that is posited as destructive. With regards to *Notes*, Eliza Hayward posits that H.D. engages with the "mobile, proliferating, and ambiguous" associations of the jellyfish to valorize a "double-ego form" that permits access to a greater state of visionary consciousness (193). Rachel Blau DuPlessis similarly suggests that it is the "Tiresean" multiplicity offered by "Otherness" that grants "dual lenses for vision" (*Career* 40-1), with this creative sight residing outside the definition of selfhood offered by humanism. Feelings of dehumanization and "otherness" are therefore not antithetical to self-formation but rather offer positive valences, too, in providing a

path to an alternative "jelly-fish consciousness" of the self that extends beyond the hierarchies of the humanist subject.

Ecocriticism offers helpful language for parsing the meeting of self and "other" in this "jelly-fish consciousness." To return, again, to Deleuze and Guattari, they posit two contrary modes of thinking: the "arborescent model" and the "rhizome model" (91). In the former, thought—like the shape of the tree for which it is named—is hierarchical and moves unidirectionally towards a higher form that is perceived as increasingly stable and complete. The "rhizome," however, which takes its name from lateral-growing subterranean root systems, is always in the process of becoming without start or end, existing across multiplicities that overturn rigid dualisms and binaries.[45] This rhizomatic network is decentralized and expansive, inclusive rather than exclusive, and emphasizes mutability and proliferation over unity and fixity. Within this framework, the "other" is not separate from the self but rather part of it, and the rhizome's relevance to ecocriticism is clear in the work of Bonnie Kime Scott, Plumwood, and Rosi Braidotti, all of whom engage both directly and indirectly with Deleuze and Guattari in rethinking the self/other binary. Scott notes of women's modernist writing that "nature does not stay conveniently separate or 'other' from culture," but that instead there is a "blurred middle ground between the bestial and the human" that disrupts these humanist categories and "the very practice of categorization" itself (*Refiguring* 73). Plumwood offers the language of "ecological selfhood" to describe this middle ground (17), wherein the "other" plays "an active role in the creation of self in discovery and interaction with the world" (176). Braidotti similarly situates a "nomadic subjectivity" as one that transgresses the dualism of self and "other" by envisioning a

[45] The use of the rhizomatic in relation to H.D. is motivated in part by Dancy Mason's engagement with this terminology in "'I am a Wire Simply': Morse Code, H.D.'s *Asphodel*, and Modernist Posthumanism" (2017), wherein she addresses the intersections of technology, "machinic identity" (90), and multiplicity in *Asphodel*. She, too, uses the rhizome to consider Hermione's interventions in the dichotomies and binaries of self-formation.

"non-unitary subject" that proposes an enlarged sense of "interconnectedness" to include the constitutive presence of the nonhuman (35). All of this ecocritical work moves away from unitary visions of the self as an autonomous entity and towards a "jelly-fish consciousness"; namely, one that generatively reframes multiplicity not as merely a destruction of the coherent self but also a production of a more expansive subjectivity.

This jellyfish subjectivity emerges, too, over the course of the last chapters in *Asphodel*, as Hermione gradually comes to recognize the fantasy of a self-contained selfhood. She notes that although she had "determined to sink into her own self-made aura" (185)—to create a bounded self that refutes "otherness" in favour of the conventional humanist subject—she ultimately cannot hold onto this "self-made" self: "daemon eyes drew out of her all these things, all these other things" (185). The self is not made independently, or autonomously, or through demarcating the "other"; instead, it is always being informed by and entangled with the world. While there is a humanist instinct to protect herself from these "daemon eyes," she reflects that "[t]hings are part of you as the threads of a deep sea creature" (148), gesturing towards the impossibility of unweaving oneself from this expansive and ongoing network. She recognizes, however, that this is broadly true rather than unique to her alone, as she notes of her husband, Jerrold Darrington, that in certain moments, she sees that "his self had opened to let self out" (147). He, too, contains multiple "other" selves, but they are "hidden" and "sleeping" selves that even he has not acknowledged, and perhaps ones he seeks to suppress (147). These rhizomatic "threads" thus extend into everyone, generating multiplicities in all and undermining the notion of the bounded, unitary self more generally.

Departing from an arborescent thinking of the self opens Hermione up to a more expansive and circular idea of the self that productively engages with this intersubjective

multiplicity rather than aiming to deny it. Akin to how Cornwall provides Julia a realm to reconceptualize the restrictive binaries of London in *Bid Me to Live,* it again offers a realm for Hermione to interrogate the hierarchies of self-formation:

> I am priestess, infallible, inviolate. I am chosen…I see in rings, in circles, light is advancing in a spiral. Light struck from the wall. Gulls. Crabs in sea pools. The wild orchids ring rocks…The white bull that lowers after me seeks to slay me. The fox crawls out of his hole to watch me. (151)

The language of the priestess emerges, as it so often does in H.D.'s oeuvre, to convey a moment of initiation and revelation that moves beyond received ideas. Here, this seeing "in rings, in circles" offers a luminous vision that includes the "other" rather than excluding and subordinating these nonhuman agents in the pursuit of selfhood. Her sight expands laterally—rhizomatically—to connect the nonhuman world with herself in a circle, overturning the neat division of self and "other" as the many "I"s at the start of the passage open up to include this list of animals, who then act as the subject of the sentence rather than the object. This more reciprocal and ecological self is furthered by Hermione's subsequent vision: "Layers of life are going on all the time…Layers and layers of life like some transparent onion-like globe that has fine, transparent layer on later (interpenetrating like water) layer on layer, circle on circle" (152). Reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's "globe of life" in *The Waves* (184), the layers of life comingle and interpenetrate, creating a non-hierarchical and "co-existent" system that encompasses all rather than seeking to exclude (155). Her suggestion that "the thing within her made her one with frogs, with eels" (158), therefore, might be understood not as a diminishment of the self through this multiplicity and animality but rather the formation of a "one" that exists within a perpetually plural and expansive network of the self that unsettles conventional dichotomous modalities.

Along these lines, Hermione rethinks pregnancy through this expansive self and resists the dyadic, humanist categories it conventionally connotes. Though initially disturbed by pregnancy's multiplication of the self, she gradually observes how this enables her to refute the world of "men, men, men" and their attempts to "mar or make her" as a subordinate "other": "Men could do nothing to her for a butterfly, a frog, a soft and luminous moth larva was keeping her safe" (162). Here, she embraces the previously unsettling proliferation of insects and frogs; unlike the patriarchal and humanist schematic, this rhizomatic community of animals keeps her safe and facilitates growth rather than destruction. Consequently, rather than basing her decision to have the child on social norms or gendered expectations, she instead posits her choice through her broader kinship with the nonhuman "other," asking not Darrington or Cyril Vane (the father of the child) but rather the "swallows wheeling and swirling before the small open window if she should have it" (153). She takes the sign of a swallow flying into the house as affirmation that she will give birth, symbolically moving the procreative act of copulation here as opposed to with Vane. This human/nonhuman exchange is entirely removed from patriarchal or humanist considerations, and she acknowledges how this decision in fact directly counters public expectations regarding her body and self, noting that women "don't go off to Cornwall in war-time and have babies" (154).

Removing Darrington and Vane from this initial moment of conception prompts her to engage in what Hollenberg calls a "fantasy of parthenogenesis" (34). This idea helps in considering why Hermione returns so often to hordes of worms, eels, lizards, and frogs to describe her pregnancies; while registering her discomfort with the polymorphous and intersubjective state, she also begins to consider alternative modes of nonhuman reproduction that lie beyond the scope of a patriarchal and humanist framework. She considers childbearing,

for example, as akin to a kind of ongoing plant growth: "the seeds brought to the light after thousands of thousands of years, sprouted, germinated…the same germination that had always been and Hermione was now sister with every queen" (163). The act becomes part of a maternal yet asexual process that removes gendered hierarchies of male/female, and is reminiscent, too, of H.D.'s descriptions of creative consciousness in *Notes* as a seed grown through tilling and watering (52). It similarly restores the image of pregnancy as a "lotus-lily folded in the mud" (177), positing it not as a mere reduction into mud but rather a site of transcendence and creation. Hermione thus weaves the procreative and creative back together through this "womb-brain," prompting her to reframe childbearing not as inhibiting artistry but rather as facilitating a new conception of art: "I have made this thing" (158). In saying so, she rewrites the cultural scripts of pregnancy to overturn the limiting binaries of the self and provide a more generative notion of pregnancy's multiplicity.

Multiplicity is woven into her concept of herself as an artist even after her pregnancy. Throughout the novel, Hermione is repeatedly compared to witches, and in the second half of the text she increasingly identifies with the identity of "Morgan le Fay" (141). As in *Paint It To-Day*, the language of witchery emerges in relation to her feelings of being non-normative (here "dehumanised") and she depicts le Fay as one who similarly exists in a state liminal alterity that is not entirely human. Instead of trying to become human, le Fay "weaves" human and nonhuman together through her ecological artistry: "Weave, that is your métier, Morgan le Fay, weave grape-green by grape-silver and let your voice weave songs…you are like a flower of green-grape…you are part of the air…you are one with the forest" (169). This "one" is, again, always lyrically expansive, including not only le Fay and the forest but also "Circe and Cassandra and the Oreads and Hermione," all of whom are "strung together" into a plural

identity of creative witchery (175-6). Included, too, is the child—who she calls "small le Fay" (179)—and Beryl, a Bryher-persona and the woman with whom she chooses to bring up her daughter. Hermione sees Beryl as a fellow "witch" (185), another "le Fay" (173), and consequently "Morgan le Fay" becomes a "fluid and shared" artistic identity between all three of them (Schyllert), offering an intersubjective and rhizomatic referent that resists the self-containment of the "I" and instead laterally extends through this proliferation of women and into the nonhuman world.

The multiplicity of pregnancy as a disturbing and alienating experience consequently unsettles her humanist instincts, and her move towards animality as an initial response to being "dehumanised" ultimately facilitates a rhizomatic and ecological conception of selfhood that interrogates the dichotomies of the humanist subject altogether. *Asphodel* ends with Hermione and Beryl agreeing that they will raise the le Fay child "like a puppy" (206), signifying an enduring use of animal imagery after her pregnancy. That the three become a kind of creative, witchy, multiplicity—a pack, even—suggests that rather than attempting to suppress this more-than-human "jelly-fish consciousness," she instead embraces it as a helpful framework for rethinking the self beyond the humanist binaries of the conventional *Künstlerroman*. Changing the pursuit of a unitary and categorical self for the creation of a plurality of selves intervenes in the genre's central imperative of self-cultivation, ultimately allowing for a more expansive idea of the self, the artist, and the human, too.

Conclusion: A Song of Many Voices

This thesis has sought to bring together both ecocriticism and genre studies to consider H.D. interventions in the *Künstlerroman* through nonhuman engagement. *HERmione,* as the novel concerning H.D.'s youth in Pennsylvania, offers a formative picture of a young artist in her quest to become a writer. Rather than entering this world of artistry by way of becoming another's muse, she instead locates a generative creative consciousness in the nonhuman that exists outside the bounds of men's artistry. In *Paint It To-Day,* set just after these events, she similarly explores the trajectory of development an artist must follow. Her resistance to and refutation of these linear models allows her to envision a form of growth that is ongoing and perpetual, corporeally enmeshed with and informed by the surrounding world. War touches the events of this novel, but it is explored at length in *Bid Me to Live*, wherein she grapples to find a way to advance as an artist in a culture that feels increasingly hostile and repressive. Throughout the text, she becomes aware of how war makes apparent that nature is a similarly violent and active force, one that constantly intervenes in and alters the human world. She engages with the destructive aesthetics of war to undermine restrictive ideas of male/female and culture/nature and conceive of an artistry that overturns these binaries altogether. The conception of a new artistic mode is of concern in *Asphodel*, as it addresses pregnancy in relation to art. The novel registers her anxiety that procreation and creation are fundamentally incompatible, and while her descriptions of being dehumanized further elucidate this tension, it also allows her to engage more generatively with the multidimensionality of the nonhuman mode to trouble the genre's inherited concept of the human self. In sum, these analyses have aimed to reflect on each text's nuance and contributions in a larger discussion of artistic development through their shared impetus to draw on the nonhuman world in interrogating the logics of the genre.

What has motivated an ecocritical reading of H.D.'s *Madrigal Cycle* is, in part, her use of the word "madrigal." H.D. only makes loose reference to a "Madrigal cycle" in her memoir *Thorn Thicket* (196, 182), and in many ways the project of grouping the texts has been a scholarly process that has led to much debate regarding which novels belong. Regardless of exactly which texts H.D. envisioned as part of this cycle, the idea of the "madrigal" was one she infused with deep significance both in relation to her writing and life, as it appears in her letters and journals in connection with words such as "marriage" (*Thorn* 173), "mantra" (180), and "message" (193). Though the madrigal as a musical form was increasingly uncommon after the seventeenth century (Roche 145), its relevance to H.D. possibly originated from its arrangement, which typically consists of several voices singing. Considering that her mother taught music and that her relationship with composer Cecil Gray took place in the years of the *Cycle*'s setting, H.D.'s choice of the name "Madrigal cycle" was likely not an uninformed decision.

The *Madrigal Cycle* is indeed aptly polyvocal, featuring many different singers to tell the same story of becoming an artist. H.D. did not necessarily intend all the texts to be read in the same form they appear in today—*Asphodel*, notably, was labeled "DESTROY" (Friedman *Psyche* 39)—but she did envision them as interconnected and related. Influenced, as she was, by Walter Pater, she evokes in her fiction what he wrote in *The Renaissance*: "That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it" (152). The *Madrigal Cycle* is one such "design in a web," creating not the "clear, perpetual outline" of an individual but rather weaving together many, at times omitting what another reveals, or replacing one form of creation (such as the act of writing at the end of *Bid Me to Live*) with another (the birth that concludes *Asphodel*). No one

text is entirely authoritative or definitive, but instead creates a mesh of storytelling through the different vocal registers provided by Hermione, Julia, and Midget.[46]

Ecocriticism similarly posits that the world is always polyphonic—variously described as a "cacophony of multiple signifying agents" (Alaimo "Introduction" 13), a "swarm of vibrant materials" (Bennett 107), and an "interconnected web of relations" (Buell 137)—and consequently no one voice is prioritized above the rest. The bringing together of these many human and nonhuman singers helps to decentralize the telling of one life into a story of many. The cyclicality latent in this entanglement similarly destabilizes the hierarchies of narrative by resisting the imperative to have a beginning and an end, instead suggesting that one is always in the process of becoming. In this vein, the engagement with the nonhuman within each of the *Madrigal* texts seeps more broadly into the aims of the *Cycle* as a whole, wherein the impact of these many material, nonhuman agents is reflected in the proliferation of narrative voices. Writing similar stories across multiple texts and narrators is therefore not done so as to concretize a definite identity or encapsulate the entirety of her artistic growth; rather, it gestures towards a polyvocal artistry that extends its "threads" into the multiplicity of the world to offer a more expansive and perpetually emergent idea of development.

The creation of a *Künstlerroman* that is collective, cyclical, nonhierarchical, and polyphonic is thus itself an ecological intervention. Analyzing the texts individually allows for an exploration of her many different selves and how each challenges received ideas of gender, artistry, and development, but when taken together, the *Cycle* presents a new form for the genre to take by emphasizing the cacophonous plurality of formation. Attempts to categorize, qualify,

[46] That H.D. used so many different nom de plumes to her work—including not only "H.D." but also "J. Beran," "Edith Gray," "Helga Dart," "Helga Doorn," "Rhoda Peter," "D.A. Hill," "John Helforth," and "Delia Alton" (Morris "Relay" 496)—similarly conveys the significance of plurality in her artistic identity.

and itemize the characteristics of the *Künstlerroman* fundamentally operate on the assumption that the story of one individual's maturation might offer an archetypal schematic for artistic growth more generally. While criticism in the past few decades has questioned if any text actually adheres to this pattern,[47] women writers have long since questioned the genre's relevance and applicability to their own ideas of artistic development. Considering the *Madrigal Cycle* within this legacy has been undertaken by many scholars of her work, and so, too, have the ecocritical vectors of her writing been increasingly explored. By thinking of the *Cycle* as an ecological intervention of the genre, however, this thesis aims to emphasize how she contributes to a broader reconceptualization of artistry as a kind of madrigal itself: many voices, both human and nonhuman that, when taken together rather than in isolation, allow for the creation of the richest song.

[47] Jeffrey Sammons has called the *Bildungsroman* a "phantom genre" that has lost meaning outside the historical context of the Enlightenment (239), Marc Redfield suggests the genre has largely been an "ideological construction of literature by criticism" rather than a sustained and organized novel form (vii), and Jed Esty cites the importance of the genre in shaping literary criticism but notes its "nonfulfillment in any given text" (18).

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