CHAPTER 8

Pallinodes and Eidola
"Catching up to the past" in H.D.'s Helen in Egypt

> Thinking of Ezra's work, I recall my long *Helen* sequence. Perhaps, there was always a challenge in his creative power…. It all began with the Greek fragments.
>
> (H.D., *End to Torment*, 41)

> Not just the slim volumes of Greek Chorus quality, but something else.
>
> (H.D. to Richard Aldington, December 27, 1952)[1]

> Great drama cannot be written about a phantom.
>
> (E. M. Butler, *The Fortunes of Faust*, 123)

εἴδωλον, τό

A. phantom
- **2**. any unsubstantial form
- **3**. image reflected in a mirror or in water
- **4**. in the system of Epicurus, film given off by any object and conveying an impression to the eye

II. image in the mind, idea; phantom of the mind, fancy
III. image, likeness
IV. later, image of a god, idol
V. εἴ. οὐράνια constellations

(*LSJ*)

eidolon

"Phantom" is the primary translation for the Greek εἴδωλον (*eidōlon*); in Homer it is a term for the beings in the underworld. In *Iliad* 23 Achilles almost defines the word upon being visited by Patroclus's ghost (*psychē*, l. 65) and then witnessing it disappear "like smoke" (l. 100): "Even in the house of Hades there is left something, / a soul and an image [*psychē kai*

[1] *HD/RA* 359.

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eidōlon], but there is no real heart of life [*phrenes*] in it," he says (lines 103–04).[2] It is an evasive definition. A soul and an eidolon[3] are Hades' "something" or, more accurately, "someone" (*tis*), but this being can only be described by what it lacks: that all-encompassing Greek word *phrenes*, signifying both heart and mind. The eidolon is a presence which points to something that is no longer there, a token of the person who once was. The ghost of Polydorus, who speaks the opening monologue in Euripides' *Hecuba*, is customarily designated as Πολυδῶρου εἴδωλον, though the word is not mentioned in-text; instead Polydorus is worried that his *phantasma* 'specter' (line 55) may upset his mother. Achilles' own ghost is important for the play – it demands the sacrifice of Hecuba's daughter Polyxena – but the word used in that case is again *phantasma* (94, 390). The distinction perhaps suggests that he is more divorced from materiality (hence the absurdity of Polyxena's sacrifice), whereas Polydorus's corpse later appears onstage.

In addition to eidolon as phantom – a state which opens no pathway for recovery or action except lament or revenge (as in the cases of Achilles in the *Iliad* and Hecuba in the play) – Homer offers an additional version of the eidolon: as the deceptive double for a person or god who is *elsewhere*. An eidolon is what Apollo creates to save wounded Aeneas from Diomedes in *Iliad* 5: "and all about this image brilliant Achaians and Trojans / hewed at each other" (451–52), while Aeneas "himself" is treated elsewhere by Artemis and Leto. This Aeneas double is the real precursor for Helen's eidolon in the Euripidean *Helen* that so attracted H.D. Euripides maintains both the motif of battle for an illusion (the phantom of Helen at Troy) and its corollary of divine care placed elsewhere (Helen herself "saved" by being transported to Egypt).[4] *Odyssey* 11 combines the two senses of the Iliadic eidolon: The Herakles whom Odysseus meets in the underworld is an eidolon, while "he himself" (*autos*) enjoys immortal life with the gods (lines 602–03).[5] This split is reflected in eidolon-Herakles' elaborate belt, clearly an echo of Achilles' shield in its inimitable and not-to-be-imitated artistry.[6] Yet, unlike the shield, the belt doesn't depict a rich and fluid world, where war and peace coexist, where music and dance

[2] Trans. Lattimore here and throughout.
[3] Unless transliterating a Greek quotation directly, I will be using this simplified transliteration of εἴδωλον throughout the chapter since this is what H.D. used.
[4] See also Duncan, *H.D. Book*, 594–98.
[5] The reference to Herakles' apotheosis is probably a later interpolation. Herodotus 2.44 also refers to the tradition of "two worships of Heracles," as both an immortal and a dead hero.
[6] Paraphrasing lines 613–14.

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have the final word, but only one side: war and violence, first suggested in the animal kingdom, then explicit in the human. The other side, we presume, is with the gods.

In the 1950s eidolon becomes a nexus for all of H.D.'s poetic concerns, as tied to Greek throughout her career: the (im)materiality of the image broadly conceived, the felt effects of unknown and indefinable forces (as seen in the possession by "inspiration" or "metres" or "eros"), the reality or textural/textual presence of things barely visible ("antiquity behind antiquity"), the less-than-firm split between life and death, peace and war (as embodied above in the double Herakles), but also the sense of deceit and dangerous illusion that may accompany attention to all of the above. H.D.'s protagonist in *Bid Me to Live* "was self-effacing in her attack on those Greek words, she was flamboyantly ambitious"; her ambition lies in her certainty that "the words themselves held inner words" and "if you look at a word long enough, this peculiar twist, its magic angle, would lead somewhere, like that Phoenician track, trod by the old traders" (162). So H.D.'s late long poem *Helen in Egypt* (*HiE*) is an extended attack on one Greek word: a hatching of the tracks encapsulated in *eidōlon* and of the long history of trades made on its behalf. *HiE* is not only a "drama" about a phantom – *pace* Butler (see epigraph) – but a drama about a phantom's translation. It is an attempt to understand and express in English the many dimensions of the Greek word, as reflected in the definition used as my epigraph above and in my few examples, and to explore precisely how they can all be encompassed in one word. What do they all have in common? And what kind of "bargain," to use another of H.D.'s terms in *Bid*, can be struck with *eidōlon* in English? Can a word or a text be in two places at once, or is a translation destined to be like the Odyssean Herakles: the real thing in heaven, the image in hell, and the two bound only by a common name?

HiE takes as its starting point Euripides' *Helen*, a play in which the real Helen has been sent off to Egypt by Zeus, while a Helen-double created by Hera goes off to Troy. The play dramatizes the male Greek characters' coming to terms (or not) with the eidolon. Helen herself knows about it and, though she laments its existence, she has everything sorted out epistemologically. She understands the problems the eidolon creates for *her*, separating her body from her name – her reputation – but she is not confused by it. In fact, she is so comfortable with it that she is able to use the principle of the eidolon for her benefit in the second half of the play by creating doubles for herself and Menelaus. She plots their escape by faking his death, convincing him to play the role of "dead" Menelaus's companion, while she acts the part of the devastated widow who will reluctantly

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marry the Egyptian king Theoclymenus just as soon as she can "bury" at sea her husband's supposedly absent body. Similarly, Euripides doesn't spend any time thinking about eidolon-Helen's existential status or activities at Troy. We are to assume she was Helen for all intents and purposes, that no one could exclaim of her, as Achilles did of Patroclus, "there is no real heart of life in it." It is not until the first part of Goethe's Helena-Akt in *Faust II* that we have an exploration of this phantom existence, albeit in slightly altered terms. Here the ghostly Helen isn't the Trojan eidolon, but the "real" Helen dragged out of the underworld and placed in Sparta, at the exact moment of her return from Troy, and just as Menelaus is about to kill her. As E. M. Butler writes in *Fortunes of Faust*, the book gave rise to *HiE*: In Goethe's "classical-romantic phantasmagoria the state of mind of Helen is the crux of the situation, a dream-like state of mind, into which doubts of her own reality intrude and bewilder her."[7]

Inspired by Butler's book and through it by Goethe, by her recent extensive reading of Dante – where the state of mind of what Homer would call eidola is treated – and by her own work in the poem "Good Frend" (where she explores the fate of Claribel, a name-dropped but otherwise absent female character haunting Shakespeare's *The Tempest*), H.D.'s *HiE* engages in a process of self-exploration that works both on a small, personal, psychoanalytic scale and on a larger, textual-historical scale. Just as the putative Helen tries to piece together her past by considering various alternatives/images of self, so the reader tries to piece together the many literary and mythical eidola of Helen and see whether they cohere around a common image or essence. The poet too, using Helen as a figure for poetic tradition itself – "she herself is the writing," we read (*HiE* 22) – tries to determine whether there is a place for herself in it and thus revisits and pieces together her own lifetime of engagement with these questions.

HiE is exactly the long imagist poem imagined in 1916, though of course not as Pound would have written it: Going beyond "the slim volumes of Greek Chorus quality" (see epigraph), it is a long poem that arises out of the core of a Greek play, deals with ghosts and shadowy images like the Noh, engages in small- and large-scale history, including literary history as world history, and brings in contact "east" (Egypt) and "west" only to show their existing interpenetration. Pound may have managed to write the long poem qua play in *Women of Trachis*, but he did so by partly excising what the late cantos contained and tried to control all the more, as exemplified by the recollection therein of πολυγλώσσου itself

[7] *Fortunes*, 233.

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and, synecdochically, by the presence of many tongues, and especially many layers of the Greek tongue. But if for Pound the moment of peace that passeth *through* understanding requires the erasure of details, the sweeping aside of loose ends, H.D.'s own, similar return to the 1910s in *HiE* entails following such loose ends to the end, not dropping a single thread, both internally in the poem itself and across her body of work. The Priapian fruit of "Orchard," the Iphigeneian ships, the Hippolytean "dart" of eros, the Ionic tension between belief and skepticism all recur here. What's more, the Klytemnestra, Achilles, and Helen occluded from the *IA* choruses appear for the first time, as does the Theseus absent from H.D.'s retellings of *Hippolytus*, while the whole poem is a correction and supplementation of H.D.'s partial view of the *Helen* in her early essay "Helen in Egypt." *HiE* is, then, as much a revisiting of poetic principles as Pound's *Women of Trachis*.

In *HiE* H.D. does not only explore Helen's alternative history (or histories, as the poem keeps growing) but also does "trade" with the very idea of the eidolon, and uses it to think and argue through the meaning, usefulness, and very possibility of poetry and translation, and their relation to movements of violence, war, or appropriation; the construction of the image and of rhythm; the nature of reflection, repetition, and truth. The importance of the concept of the eidolon for *HiE* has been previously recognized;[8] my argument here differs in the specificity with which I trace its lexical and conceptual translation throughout the poem and in that way also map H.D.'s close textual engagement with Euripides' *Helen* – without a detailed reading of which *HiE* cannot be fully understood, I show – and with her own earlier translations of *IA* and *Hippolytus*. I finally claim that *HiE* both performs and argues for the kind of approach to Greek – for what I have termed modernist hellenism – that I have been exploring throughout this book, balancing freedom and constraint, "philology" and poetry.

Moreover, just as H.D.'s earlier translations are inseparable from the poetry that preceded and followed them, and functioned as a space for the exploration of more general poetological concerns, so this dynamic is at work *within HiE* itself. The first section ("Pallinode") offers what Gregory has called H.D.'s "long-gestating translation" of *Helen*[9] and thus stays within its confines, while the other two sections ("Leuké" and "Eidolon") expand and develop, as it were, its eidolon, what *Helen* left out. What

[8] Most relevantly by Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 228–31, who connects it to religious rather than artistic themes.

[9] Gregory, "H.D. and Translation," 154.

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"Pallinode" literally re-cants is Euripides' tragedy; by being more "faithful" to all aspects of the Euripidean play, H.D. restores it and highlights the issues it presents more clearly than in the partial perspective of her early essay.[10] The essential palinode, H.D.'s going "against" Euripides and not herself, can only begin in earnest after this re(in)statement of Euripidean motifs. That is, the "translation" in "Pallinode" becomes the impetus for H.D.'s later writing – as *Ion* had been for *Trilogy*, the early choruses for *Sea Garden*, and *Hippolytus* for *HT* – that extends the prototype in ways already partially latent within it. As H.D. goes on with her poem, she no longer follows the Euripidean play quite as closely as in "Pallinode," but she does "hatch" key moments and motifs that allow us to read the rest of *HiE* as a continued meditation on the play, and a devising of an end for Helen that depends on, alludes to, but is not exhausted by the ones Euripides provides.

In the sections that follow I first examine the rich texture of connections that prepare the ground for the writing of *HiE*; I track H.D.'s readings in this period, connect her Helen project to its earlier inception in prose works of the 1920s, and briefly discuss the eidolon in the Euripidean *Helen*, especially through the lens of H.D.'s readings of the play. I then devote one section to each of *HiE*'s parts, first making a case for "Pallinode" as a translation of *Helen*; next showing that "Leuké" is an examination of the images/conceptions of Helen present in Euripides' play, for which H.D. uses the shorthand "veil" and "dream"; and finally arguing that, through a metapoetic consideration of all possible facets of the eidolon that includes a specific revisiting of Pound and Eliot's work, "Eidolon" vindicates the term by translating it as "token." The image of Helen encapsulates the question of art, always tied to the relation between antiquity and modernity, as H.D. translates herself, through Euripides, into the Homeric/Iliadic world.

"We all know": The Contexts of *Helen in Egypt*

"Link up, where I can": H.D., the Scholar

HiE was written over three consecutive falls (1952–54), one long section per year, with the accompanying prose captions completed during 1955. Before delving into its details, I would like to first discuss the circumstances and, more specifically, the readings, that led to its genesis. Norman Holmes Pearson referred to *HiE* as H.D.'s "cantos," and it is easy to see the poem

[10] Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 224, notes this with respect to Helen herself.

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as H.D.'s response to Pound's work (*ET* 32). But much like Pound in the *Cantos*, so H.D. here is more broadly engaged with the epic tradition, revisiting the *Iliad*, Dante's *Commedia*, and Goethe's *Faust*. She is, like Hipparchia, and in some ways like her conception of both Euripides and Meleager, a poet-scholar. If for H.D. Euripides is engaged in a translation project – and nowhere more so than in *Helen* itself – so is H.D. Her "original," though, is not only the *Helen* (and thus also Homer); in repeating Euripides' gesture – much as her Hipparchia enacts Sappho's – and translating her world back into the world of the epic tradition, she must also enter works that have intervened between his time and hers. As already in the *Ion*, H.D. is deeply engaged with Euripidean reception, working through Goethe, for example, as much as Pound does through Divus in his first Canto or Browning in his treatment of the *Agamemnon*. The apparent smoothness and lyricism of her verse in *HiE* belies the intensity of the reading that produced it, which is what I would like to retrace here.

H.D. too goes "back to 1912" in *HiE*, both in terms of re-engaging with her own translation work of the 1910s, and of her reading. For one, Gregory has highlighted how early H.D.'s exposure to and fascination with Helen and her relationship to Achilles was, citing her reading of May Sinclair's *Divine Fire* in 1911, a novel whose male protagonist is translating *Helen* and writing a play inspired by *Helen* called *Helen in Leuce*, about Helen and Achilles.[11] In *End to Torment*, H.D. makes a point of having said, in the early teens, to Pound – who was at that point presumptuously attempting to order Sinclair's writing life – that she had read the novel already in America, before her first trip to Europe and before even imagining she might meet Sinclair (9). Upon her death in 1946, Sinclair left part of her library to Pound, Aldington, and H.D., who inherited specifically her Euripides volumes.[12] By 1948, H.D. has also become re-engaged with Pound's work. She defends the *Pisan Cantos* to Aldington – "I felt, almost for the first time, that E. had really genius" – and reads, and takes notes on, Pound's *Spirit of Romance* (*SR*), using it to approach Dante, whose *Commedia* she is immersed in at the time (*HD/RA* 299).[13] Pound, the poet-scholar writing of Dante as a poet-scholar and attempting to sum up a medieval poetic tradition, prepares the ground for E. M. Butler, another poetically inclined scholar, whose expansive book on the Faust legend was

[11] "Working Notebook," 85.

[12] Found among H.D.'s books in HDP. Cf. *End to Torment*, 10.

[13] See also "H.D. by Delia Alton," 197–98, 206–07. The return to *SR* probably provides the impetus for her intense reading of Rougemont's *L'amour et l'occident* (on the troubadours and love rites), which becomes so important to the later parts of *HiE*.

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the catalyst for H.D.'s Helen project. "I caught fire from her *Fortunes of Faust* that I read in Lugano, summer 1952 – then, started the *Helen*," H.D. would later tell Pearson, and she would correspond with Butler frequently thereafter, until Butler's death in 1959 (*HD/NHP* 190–91). Goethe's use of Helen especially, reliant as it is on Euripides – with multiple thematic, structural, and metrical allusions, as Butler notes – is pointed because he goes beyond the mythical story and uses her self-consciously in order to probe and forge a relationship between the hellenic and the German, the classical and the modern. Both Pound and Butler's books, and the epic works on which they focus, shape H.D.'s own approach as well as her ambitions for *HiE* more broadly.

There are four themes that recur in H.D.'s readings of the late 1940s and early 1950s that all feed into *HiE* and illuminate her perspective and procedure: the confluence between scholar, poet, and translator; the resulting cross-fertilization of traditions that nonetheless allows for poets' individual stamp on them; the creation of a new, hybrid genre of quest narrative as drama (with a tripartite structure); and the link between the apparently obscure or mystical and the actual, between art and the world.

"Great poets … pile up all the excellences they can beg, borrow, or steal from their predecessors and contemporaries, and then set their own inimitable light atop of the mountain," Pound had written in *SR* (162). When H.D. copied the sentence into her notebook, she jotted down supporting facts (also taken from *SR*), underlining them in blue, all examples of such poetic hatching: Shakespeare "knew of Gower, and Gower and Chaucer knew of Dante" (*SR* 162, H.D. p. 13).[14] Pound adds, "Our knowledge of Dante and Shakespear [*sic*] interacts; intimate acquaintance with either breeds that discrimination which makes us more keenly appreciate the other" (*SR* 162). It is such an interactive knowledge – to "link up, where I can" (as H.D. writes Aldington in 1953) – that *HiE* aims to bring about (*HD/RA* 369). Like Pound, Butler traces a cross-linguistic, transcultural tradition – still, a tradition that individual poets can and do put their mark on. The story she tells highlights translation, making English the catalyst. Though she spends most of her book on the German trajectory of Faust, that trajectory, she claims, would not have been possible without the legend's transformation in England.[15] Butler notes that in the 1592 English translation of the first German Faustbook "many slight omissions and alterations contribute to a total effect of greater spiritual proportions,"

[14] HDP 43/1103.
[15] *Fortunes*, 339.

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and that the translator's "personality emerges more vividly than that of the original author" – an account that tracks so closely H.D.'s own earlier work with Greek that it is no wonder that H.D. thought Butler's work pulled her back "to poetry, to the old Greek scene."[16] Christopher Marlowe's contribution through *Doctor Faustus* (1592), meanwhile, is the elevation *and* allegorization of Helen; identifying her with classical beauty, and making the danger she represents comparable to that of Faust's other dangerous pursuits of knowledge and truth, Marlowe separates Helen from Faust's sexual appetite and turns her from an incidental into a central element of his quests.[17] H.D. "completes" both Pound and Butler's work: She extends the poetic links Pound traces both backwards to Euripides and forwards to her own work, and provides a counterpart to Butler's meticulously traced series of Fausts (e.g., "Lutheran Fausts," "English Fausts," "Anti-Goethean Fausts," etc.) with her examination of Helens, no longer as accessories to the male hero but "vital to the action."[18]

Both Pound and Butler present Dante and Goethe as the inheritors and transformers of their respective traditions. Their work far outpaces that of their predecessors and sets a new standard, essentially by inventing a new and inimitable form that is in some ways epic in scope, often lyrical in execution, and more or less dramatic in form. So Marlowe "immortalizes" the Faust legend because he "disengaged the essentially dramatic nature of the story of Faust," which Goethe would then push to the limits of drama as a genre in *Faust* II.[19] Pound dismisses "epic" as a genre for the *Commedia*. Though conceding that it is "in a sense lyric" (*SR* 153), he in the end argues for its dramatic conception:

> the soundest classification of the poem is Dante's own, "as a comedy which differs from tragedy in its content" for "tragedy begins admirably and tranquilly," and the end is terrible, "whereas comedy introduces some harsh complication, but brings the matter to a prosperous end." The *Commedia* is, in fact, a great mystery play, or better, a cycle of mystery plays. (*SR* 153–54; H.D. copies the last sentence)

HiE is also difficult to categorize, as is, in different ways, Euripides' *Helen*: Both begin "admirably and tranquilly," introduce "harsh complications," but find their way to a "prosperous end" (maybe). Certainly H.D.'s poem ends in the recording of some kind of mystery, the "significance" of whose

[16] Ibid., 37, 32. H.D., "Compassionate Friendship," 99.
[17] Butler, *Fortunes*, 51.
[18] Ibid., 8.
[19] Ibid., 50, 48.

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"Message" neither Helen nor "we" "wholly understand" (*HiE* 303). As suggested by its engagement with other epics and by its scope, *HiE* has epic ambitions, but, much like Sappho in Fragment 16 (see below), is invested in resisting some of epic's connotations (see, e.g., *HiE* 289). The poem is also highly lyrical insofar as there is mostly a "single" speaker, and it is written in a Dantescan tercet form. We are invited to read H.D.'s tercets in the light of Dante, as her very first stanzas follow a loose terza rima scheme: hosts–Walls–ghosts, Fall–alone–temple. Though she doesn't maintain this,[20] it "link[s] up." But through its prose captions – a version of the Benjaminian chemist's running commentary used in *Ion* –*HiE* becomes both a work of sometimes deceptive scholarship, and a dramatic work. It is dramatic because it contains other voices (Thetis, Theseus, Achilles, Paris), sometimes more and sometimes less explicitly, and those voices often speak in further "borrowed" voices. It is primarily dramatic, though, in the relation between its constituent parts: The captions often disagree with or misrepresent the poem that follows them, and increasingly acquire their own agenda.

H.D.'s captions are also partly owed to Dante, or rather to the Dantescan scholarly legacy. H.D. connects them to *The Portable Dante*, which included a translation of *The Divine Comedy* by Laurence Binyon. Binyon had been Assistant Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum in the early 1910s and part of the Pound–H.D. circle; Pound held his translation of the *Inferno* in high esteem, and line-edited his *Purgatorio* in the 1930s. The captions in *The Portable Dante* (actually not by Binyon but by the scholar C. H. Grandgent) offer not only a brief summary of the canto that follows, but an account of it; they give a sense of the prevailing critical opinion and a dash of interpretation. They thus exceed the "factual" and are more subjective than one might expect in such a tome.[21] Through the interaction between captions and poems in her own work, H.D. makes the reader constantly acknowledge both the production of and attachment to belief/story/interpretation, and thus explores the very notion of the foundational myth as she herself had presented it in the *Ion*. There are, moreover, unexpected shifts in perspective involving

[20] *Pace* DuPlessis, *Career*, 108, and Liveley, "H.D. in Homer," 31.

[21] See also Barbour, "Origins of the Prose Captions," 471. The volume's editor calls the captions "arguments," inviting a connection to the prose arguments preceding Euripidean plays in all the editions H.D. used (xxxiii). On H.D.'s captions more broadly, see primarily Barbour, but also Hokanson, "Questioning Revision," 337–41, who risks oversimplification by aligning poetry with lyric and prose with epic; Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, 358, who highlights the "Penelopean endlessness of (re)interpretation and inscription"; and Glaser, "Aging and the Unconscious," 103.

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both dramatic elements. In "Eidolon" 3.3, for example, we are told by the caption that "*we see with the eyes of Helen*," yet the poem is revealed at the very end to be from Achilles' perspective (and perhaps it's his perspective seen through the eyes of Helen) (243).

Though the poem was not initially composed with a tripartite structure in mind, *HiE*'s three parts echo broadly H.D.'s Dantescan and Goethean models. "Pallinode" opens with Helen in an uncertain state, and in a kind of "selva oscura," surrounded by violence and war, as well as by wronged yet "guilty" characters (such as Klytemnestra). "Leuké" involves the revisiting of past friends or lovers, whose guilt is now seen in a more nuanced way since all the speakers are engaged in a still painful, purgatorial self-examination of their choices. Astral imagery begins to accumulate at the end of "Leuké," leading into the often more allegorical "Eidolon," which offers a deeper and more self-aware understanding of the past and the self and ends with an invocation of "someone greater than Helen" and with an intuition of "the infinite rhythm / of the heart and of heaven" (303, 304) that recalls the ending of *Paradiso*, especially in Binyon's translation. The Goethean structural echo is even more precise. Goethe's Helena-Akt, the third in *Faust* II, is itself partitioned into three scenes. The first is mapped onto "pure" Greek tragedy ("stately, slow-moving, almost statuesque; it aims deliberately at producing a feeling of unreality," per Butler) and imitates tragic meters.[22] H.D.'s "Pallinode," as I will argue below, follows the Euripidean *Helen* very closely and replaces the almost-murder of Helen by Menelaus in Goethe with an attack by Achilles. Goethe's second scene brings Helen into a Germanic medieval setting and explores the possibility of communion between Helen and Faust given their temporal and thus temperamental difference. In "Leuké" H.D. places Helen between Paris and Theseus, hitting a more contemporary note by turning Helen's interactions with the latter into a psychoanalytic session of sorts. Goethe's third scene is focused on both poetry per se and, moving the temporal story forward, on neoclassicism and on more recent, romantic appropriations of Greece. Helen and Faust are in an Arcadian landscape and observe the ascent and death of their child Euphorion, identified with Lord Byron, before Bacchic revelry ensues and Helen disappears, followed temporarily by Faust. In Butler's view, the scene is "as deliberately unreal as the first" but "it has none of that haunting quality of sorrow for an irreparable loss."[23] The same could be said of "Eidolon"; on the one hand, we are back

[22] *Fortunes*, 235.
[23] Ibid., 236.

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in Egypt, but on the other, the poem's energies are more recuperative than those of "Pallinode." "Eidolon" is, moreover, as its title indicates, intensely self-reflective and conscious of its own production of artifacts. Though in Goethe the exciting promise of the union between the modern world and Greece fails with the catastrophic death of Euphorion, the children H.D. envisions in "Eidolon" (Euphorion himself mentioned in the captions) are imbued with a qualified but greater hope for the possibility of such a translation. *This* is the challenge that fires up H.D.'s imagination: how not to let Helen, and through Helen Greek antiquity, fade back into the cloud.

Pound and Butler, finally, help H.D. articulate her ambitions for *HiE*, and they do so by offering models and answers for the questions she had always asked in her Greek work regarding the use, value, and ethics of artistic work, and especially work that looks to the past. "Dante's work: keys or passwords," H.D. jots down in her notebook (p. 12), referring to this sentence in *SR*: "there are works of art which are beautiful objects [that cause immediate delight] and works of art which are keys or passwords admitting one to a deeper knowledge, to a finer perception of beauty; Dante's work is of the second sort" (154). Whistler's paintings offer another example of "the second sort": They are initially puzzling but "on leaving [them], and going from the gallery one finds new beauty in natural things" (*SR* 154). Pound points to that crucial connection between art and world, phrased here in mostly aestheticist terms: art as a flashlight or "new eyes," which H.D. will discover again a few years later in her reading about *Helen*. Her most prominent Euripidean scholarly intertext, Henri Grégoire's lengthy and nuanced introduction to the play, argues for "la grande actualité de l'*Hélène*," and H.D. would explicitly mark *Helen*'s political context both in "Compassionate Friendship" and in a late appended note to her early *Helen* essay.[24] Grégoire sees the political relevance and commentary of *Helen* not only in the larger plot (war is futile, etc.), but as recorded in its most apparently fanciful and "obscure" details – for example, the offhand mentions of the metamorphosis of Callisto or of Cos.[25] He thus gives license to H.D. to embed a contemporary critique in an apparently ahistorical or timeless drama.

[24] *Hélène*, 23. According to Friedman's archived note in HDP, Box 59b, H.D.'s copy of Grégoire was much marked, but I have not been able to locate it. H.D. gleaned much information from Grégoire that she then used in the poem: the connection between Helen and Aphrodite (25n1); Helen's link to Nemesis (26); her consistent presentation, *before* Euripides, as a "demon," which Euripides generally attacks (26–30); the idealization of Egypt (34–36 and 45n2); the play's similarity to *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (36–37); its connections to romance (38–39); and the emergence of the dying-for-love theme (39n2). See also Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 224–25.

[25] *Helen* 375–83; see Grégoire, ed., *Hélène*, 21–23.

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Butler similarly connects textual complexity and self-consciousness with political relevance. Her book ends on Faust's most recent transformation in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947). Though she finds Mann's gesturing towards Nazi Germany forced, she identifies as the novel's greatest contribution another moment that intertwines the creative and the critical: the Faustian protagonist Adrian Leverkuhn's description of his final oratorio, which Butler deems "the most profound and imaginative commentary and interpretation the first Faustbook has ever received" in German.[26] It is as if the first Faustbook has finally "come home," to quote H.D.'s Thetis (*HiE* 108), since "all the most moving and poetical passages" in Mann "derive directly" from this first recorded telling of the Faust story and "are closely modelled on it textually."[27] Butler calls this an "extraordinary case of dynamic inspiration" by a "long-forgotten archaic text," and again, she may well have been talking of H.D.'s *HiE*, and its return to the forgotten story of the Euripidean *Helen*.[28] But in taking up *Helen*, H.D. also revisits her own understanding of and writing on the play thirty years earlier – in a short poem, in the essay "Helen in Egypt," and in *Palimpsest* – which downplayed its political and ethical critiques, a topic to which I now turn.

"Again, a Pallinode*": H.D.'s early Helens*

We plunge into the text, as if into an open secret:

> *We all know the story of Helen of Troy but few of us have followed her to Egypt. How did she get there? Stesichorus of Sicily in his* Pallinode*, was the first to tell us. Some centuries later, Euripides repeats the story. Stesichorus was said to have been struck blind because of his invective against Helen, but later was restored to sight when he reinstated her in his* Pallinode*. Euripides, notably in* The Trojan Women*, reviles her but he also is 'restored to sight.' The later, little understood* Helen in Egypt*, is again a* Pallinode*, a defence, explanation or apology.*
>
> *According to the* Pallinode*, Helen was never in Troy. She had been transposed or translated from Greece into Egypt. Helen of Troy was a phantom, substituted for the real Helen, by jealous deities. The Greeks and Trojans alike fought for an illusion.* (*HiE* 1)[29]

"We all know," the context is a shared tradition shaped by "the story of Helen of Troy." Helen is undoubtedly a much-discussed figure, as evidenced by the spate of books that have taken her as their theme in the

[26] *Fortunes*, 335.
[27] Ibid., 338.
[28] Ibid., 335.
[29] I maintain H.D.'s italics for *HiE*'s prose captions throughout.

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last forty years, each picking up different threads of her reception and story.[30] Helen in this respect is the opposite of Shakespeare's Claribel, whose unknown and neglected fate in *The Tempest* had prompted H.D.'s last poem before *HiE*. Written after *Trilogy*, "Good Frend" was included in *By Avon River* (wr. 1945–46, pub. 1949), H.D.'s tribute to Shakespeare and Elizabethan poetry more broadly. Like the poem, the prose section of that book – originally intended as lecture notes for an American lecture tour – aims both to record Elizabethan figures, poets, and poems "lost" to or forgotten by us (like Claribel), and at the same time to imaginatively fill in the gaps in the biography of the least forgotten, William Shakespeare. It is perhaps this latter-day, prose version of Meleager's anthological project that has H.D. weaving the garland of Elizabethan poetry, that primes her for her "return to the Greek scene," while at the same time suggesting to her that even the most discussed can be most unknown. As a mixed scholarly and poetic work, moreover, *By Avon River* is a transitional point between the *Ion* and *HiE*. Sharing the larger scope and "anthological" procedure of the latter, it also, like the former, constantly enmeshes poetry with a world presumed to be outside it: Claribel is read through Elizabethan travel chronicles, poems are read against political circumstances. External context is more tenuously present in *HiE*, though, like *The Cantos*, the work is performatively, densely con-textual – and indeed, that balance between world and word, "exoteric" and "esoteric," is what H.D. was most proud of (*HD/NHP* 180).

"We all know," *HiE*'s prose voice begins, then proceeds to tell us that we don't. We are offered an alternative story, yet it too is "known," not unique, something less than an apocryphon, already "repeated" (as H.D. here quotes herself: "'restored to sight'"). This performative gap or tension between statement or tone and actual, performed "meaning," between manifest and latent content, guides the entire caption. The firm opening, the torrent of "facts" that follows, the sure tone belie H.D.'s interventions, her shaping of the story that appears to privilege poetry as a genre, redemption or restoration for Helen, and English (or error) over Greek.

Stesichorus was indeed the first to begin to tell us the story of Helen's absence from Troy, but in the few lines that remain of his poem, there is no mention of Egypt.[31] It was a historian – Herodotus – not a poet who

[30] See Austin, *Helen of Troy*; Blondell, *Helen of Troy*; Gumpert, *Grafting Helen*; Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen*. For a concise overview of the Euripidean tragedy's reception in variety of media, see Silva, "Helen."

[31] Some later sources do attribute the Egypt story to him; in any case, it is summaries and not poetic lines. See Solmsen, "ONOMA and ΠΡΑΓΜΑ," 119, and Segal, "Two Worlds," 561.

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first placed her there and used her absence from Troy as a means of rationalizing the duration of the Trojan War (the Trojans would have just given up Helen had she been there).[32] It is possible that H.D. did not know this, but it is mentioned by two of her heavily relied-upon sources, Grégoire and Robert Graves's *Greek Myths*, and these captions were written last, with reference books. She definitely does know, however, that Euripides followed his palinode in *Helen* with another invective in *Orestes*. H.D. is obsessed with chronologies and dating in her notebooks – a chronological list of Euripides' plays is copied there – and references to the *Orestes* appear throughout *HiE*. And finally, she knows that someone else has shaped this story, and in the particular way she intends to tell it – a contribution silenced here. For it is Pausanias who connected the three alternative Helen myths that feature most prominently in H.D.'s poem: the blinding of Stesichorus, the phantom Helen in Egypt, and the marriage between Helen and Achilles after their death on the island of Leuké. Pausanias reports a legend that Leonymus of Crotona visited Leuké and, upon his return, said that "Helen was living with Achilles [in wedlock], and commanded him to sail to Himera and tell Stesichoros the loss of his eyes was caused because of her wrath: that was how Stesichoros wrote his Recantation [*palinōdian*]."[33] The meeting between Achilles and Helen is thus placed at the origins of the palinode tradition, and it is what the first section of H.D.'s own poem will focus on. In this first paragraph of "facts," then, in the work's very opening, H.D. is already performing a kind of palinode, a correction and editing, of the very palinode tradition.

In H.D.'s telling, a "Pal(l)inode" encodes not simply the first gesture of retraction, but also the subsequent repetitions or revisions of that gesture that blend with each other – so much so that when we get to "*The later, little understood* Helen in Egypt," we are not sure whether she is referring to her own work, just now beginning, or to Euripides' play *Helen*, which she elsewhere (and previous to the writing of this poem) consistently calls "Helen in Egypt."[34] Just as the question of translation or influence rears its head, and just as *pal(l)inode* itself is multiply translated ("*a defence, explanation or apology*") in avoidance of the usual "recantation," so Helen, the subject of these odes and palinodes, becomes slippery – "*transposed or translated*" herself from Sparta to Troy or Egypt – and in moving from origin to destination releases a ghost located in neither place.

[32] Herodotus, *Histories* 2.112–20.
[33] Paus. 3.19.13, Levi's translation slightly modified.
[34] For example, on October 13, 1952, she asks Bryher "if Helen in Egypt is among" her books. YCAL GEN MSS 97, Box 16, Folder 627.

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"Pallinode" is similarly a ghost term, neither the Greek παλινῳδία nor, quite consciously on H.D.'s part,[35] the English *palinode*. "Pallinode" enacts the Greek *palin* 'again' 'back' through a literal doubling of the liquid *l*, while also clarifying the English pronunciation of the word. Yet it neither repeats nor retracts it nor even creates it anew, but makes space within an old word for an additional letter, a new vibration: not *palin* again, but *pallin*. Not a retraction reliant on the distinction between truth and error, nor a recantation similarly reliant on a conversion from guilt to innocence, both processes with a clear sense of direction, but a reverberation – is that what a pal(l)inode is? You can't simply unsay or un-sing, move from origin (error) to destination (correctness); the "deleted" remains, and the energy released in the movement may end up in a different place altogether. This new "pallin" accentuates a visual rhyme with "*all*" and "*illusion*" – the words that (almost) start and end this first caption – while maintaining the echo with "*alike*," a word that alerts us to the crucial question of similarity and identity that is raised by Euripides' play and by this poem.

H.D. referred to the first part of *HiE* as "Helen in Egypt" even after the following two had been composed and the captions written, suggesting that she thought of it as directly related to the Euripidean play; she didn't decide upon the title of "Pallinode" until late in the editing process.[36] It is thus worth thinking about the degree to which this first section, or even the whole poem itself, *is* one. In this section I retrace H.D.'s earlier work involving Helen especially in her Euripidean guise, in order to determine the kind of relation that exists between H.D.'s earlier perceptions of the myth and *HiE*, as well as the kind of work that *HiE* is: a defense, explanation, or apology? A recantation? A mirror image? A translation?

Where has H.D. treated Helen less fairly? Perhaps in her early poem "Helen," which was inspired by Teucer's line in Euripides' play that "all Greece hates" Helen,[37] and in which she presents Helen (seen through the eyes of hateful Greece) as a wan, speechless statue. Indeed, that's the image on which "Pallinode" 1.1 ends and which it retracts: "the old enchantment holds, / here there is peace / for Helena, Helen hated of all Greece" (2). Surely, too, *HiE* is a palinode more broadly against the Western epic (and dramatic) tradition, with its masculine bent, to which even Euripides belongs, turning as

[35] She spells the word correctly in her notes on Euripides and Stesichorus (Gregory, "Working Notebook," 109). H.D. similarly doubles the *l* in her poem "Callypso" (*CP* 388, where the spelling has been editorially corrected; cf. note on p. 619).

[36] *HD/NHP* 183, 281.

[37] See Friedman, "Serendipity," 8.

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he does his Helen into a paragon of chastity and "that most insipid of fancies,"[38] as if that was the only option. H.D.'s poem has been read as a "matriarchal" epic or as advocating for a renewal in both male and female gender roles.[39] After all, Helen is its speaker but one of her self-appointed tasks, it seems, is to help Achilles with his "labours" – not an accidentally chosen word – so that a "new mortal" may be born. In this respect, it is an exemplary poem of "hatching":[40] a new epic and a new hero out of the shell of the old.

Integral to this renewal is "love," proposed as an antithesis to the epic itself, to the martial rhetoric of allegiance (with its "*Command*," "*campaign*," and "*dictator*," as H.D. puts it), to a world-war-ravaged Europe newly under nuclear threat (*HiE* 51).[41] Of course the question of eris–eros, or, as H.D. increasingly puts it in *HiE*, of *mort–amour*, is not a new one: not for H.D., who as we have seen was intensely preoccupied with it in her early Greek translations, and not for "Western" tradition. Indeed, as H.D. surely knew, it was Sappho who first proposed this alternative to war, who first repeated Paris's judgment, choosing like him love or desire over, in her case, explicitly martial alternatives, and who (partly) identified with Helen for following her heart. "Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves," Sappho proclaims in Fragment 16, and then offers Helen going to Troy as an example.[42] Whether Fr. 16 is itself a palinode on the Helen story is a much-debated question,[43] but it does explicitly propose the alternatives that H.D. is considering. Moreover, Sappho had since antiquity been considered a *female* Homer,[44] an idea which would be reinforced by the Oxyrhynchus discovery of this particular poem, with its eschewing of war for a private love, of the marching feet of soldiers for the more delicate feet of Helen (implicitly) and of the speaker's own beloved Anactoria. In translating towards the future, H.D. is still turning back to the past, and also to her *own* literary past, which includes Sappho: "Eidolon" will catch Helen at exactly this moment of sailing away to Troy.

[38] Per Murray, *Euripides and His Age*, 146.

[39] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 255–72, explores this aspect masterfully in her psychoanalytic, feminist reading of *HiE*. Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 222–23, nuances Friedman's position by arguing that *HiE* is against the classical *tradition* rather than Euripides as a "sexist" writer per se.

[40] See Hollenberg, *Poetics of Childbirth*, ch. 6, for the motif of childbirth in *HiE*.

[41] H.D.'s concern about atomic warfare is evident in *The Sword Went out to Sea* (wr. 1946–47), a novel whose imaginary forays into different historical periods offer valuable preparation for *Helen in Egypt*.

[42] Trans. Campbell.

[43] See Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, 114–16, Du Bois, "Sappho and Helen," Fredricksmeyer, "Diachronic Reading," and Pfeijffer, "Shifting Helen."

[44] On Sappho and Homer see Rosenmeyer, "Her Master's Voice."

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HiE can be construed more specifically as a palinode or defense against the appropriation of the epic tradition by H.D.'s own male contemporaries, including Pound; recall Helen as the sound of "doom" in Pound's early *Cantos*.[45] Euripides had the *Oresteia* in mind when writing the *Helen*, and the situation in this play can be seen as exactly the opposite of that in the *Eumenides*.[46] Certainly H.D.'s lengthy treatment of Klytemnestra can be read against Pound's vision of her murderous, unjust, and all-too-glad hand and his symbolic use of her as the corrupting usurious cultural force bringing down heroic generals, seen most recently by H.D. in the *Pisan Cantos*. The penultimate stanza of *HiE*'s opening section ends with Klytemnestra, signaling her important role in the work; she is portrayed not as the evil other, but as Helen's "twin-sister" and also as the "shadow of us all" (2). "Shadow," another version of the eidolon, suggests the revisionary work H.D. will be doing and implies that Klytemnestra's actions were only the necessary counterpart of all of *our* actions. That Klytemnestra's role was altered in late revisions of "Pallinode," to better and more negatively characterize Helen, may also be indicative of H.D.'s focused ambition.[47] On a larger scale, she is very much taking up the concerns that Pound seems to have abandoned as his work became more and more politically and economically dense and rigid: the spirit of romance (literally Pound's own book, but also filtered through her reading of Denis de Rougemont), Dante, and of course Homer.[48]

Yet H.D.'s intervention is more specific than that, in both the cases of the classical tradition writ large and of that tradition as appropriated by Pound. Going well beyond the "Helen" poem, H.D.'s early engagement with Helen is multifarious and thoroughly informs her choices in *HiE*. It is her single sustained early work on *Helen* – the essay "Helen in Egypt" – that the late H.D. revises, by returning as she does to the Euripidean play. The essay contains important early statements illuminating H.D.'s conception of her poetics that we have already discussed in previous chapters. However, when it comes to the *Helen* itself, the pretext for the essay, H.D.'s interpretation of Euripides falters and splits up. In this essay, "seeing through the words" means emphasizing the imagistically evocative setting, the figure of Helen as she initially appears, and the role of the

[45] See Twitchell-Waas, "Seaward," on *HiE* as a response to *The Cantos*.
[46] As Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus," notes; see 31n13 for additional bibliography.
[47] H.D.'s edits draw out Helen's blindness with respect to Klytemnestra; lines referring to her are crossed out, as is a whole section which she speaks, while Helen's treatment of her becomes more ambivalent and her sympathy attenuated (HDP 31/828).
[48] See Liveley, "H.D. in Homer," 21–30, for H.D.'s earlier engagement with Homer.

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chorus – all of which are aligned in her reading – but not really thinking through the play philosophically. While she "externalizes," makes physically present onstage through her prose description the Nile, the sea, and the various birds mentioned in several of the play's lyrical passages, she seems acutely aware of the play's difficulties yet eager to dismiss them.

> It is true as critics assert, this play, one of the poet's worst, is full of artificialities, is cold in tone, is meaningless. It is this, but through all the tedious dialogue, through the crude mechanism of discovery and recognition, through the trite and appallingly dull repetitions, **Helen** the Helen of the world of poetic reality remains the same, remote, electric, white, smiling, goddess, bird. The story is silly, willful almost, as if the poet mocked himself. But what does it matter? Helen is there – she is standing on the shore. The white waves creep up and creep back eternally, over and over. (12)

H.D.'s visionary and rhythmic outlook on the Euripidean play is tempered by her acknowledgment that "certainly this play is bad" (13). But focusing on the image of Helen and the chorus, she dismisses the "artificialities" without taking too seriously the critique they may represent. Though she tracks Helen's transformation from the initial image ("phantom") of the wronged, different yet still recognizable Helen on the foreign beach into a "now articulate, definite, a Greek woman" in her interactions with Teucer and Menelaus, and finally, though not explicitly, into one of the play's "Clap-trap, dull, tinsel, ball-room Hellenes," she doesn't explore that apparent multiplicity (10, 13). Similarly, though she sees the chorus as representing an ancient ritual ("a survival of some old religious ceremony"; 10) and though she notes of Helen's elaborate fake mourning ritual for Menelaus that "[Helen's] love of ceremony interests [Theoclymenus]" (17), she doesn't connect the two. She stops short of considering what this trick ceremony may suggest about ceremony in general, including the one she seems so drawn to. The play's evocative choral songs, where the chorus "answer Helen … woe for woe" (12), make one forget, she claims, "the external trivialities of the play" (14), the plot that shows the main characters doomed to repeat the same mistakes that led to war in the first place, and that suggests the deceptive potential of ritual.[49]

There is a single suggestion in the essay that H.D. finds the play unsettling despite her being, as she admits, "intoxicated a little with my own idea" (9). The beginning of "Helen in Egypt" constructs the analogy between Helen

[49] H.D.'s account of the play, and of the function of the chorus specifically, is surprisingly close to that posited by Ford, "Lyrical Doubling," who argues that in this play of profound epistemological uncertainty, the imaginative sympathy the choral songs exhibit provides the only reprieve.

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and "the white waves" that is picked up in the passage cited above. It imagines an extensive correspondence between Helen's prologue in the Euripidean play and features of the sea: They share a structure of concealment and revelation, they are both familiar but capable of surprise. The prologue, weaving known and unknown stories, is a sea on which we sail, and it is our task, H.D. claims, to use its words as "port-holes" in order to "look out from our ship, our world … on to a sea that moves and changes and bears us up" (9). She literally does so herself: Identifying speech with speaker, H.D. turns Helen into water. In Euripides, Helen points to the Nile and tells us that "Fed by the melting of pale snow it drenches Egypt's fields with moisture."[50] H.D., however, detects a deeper analogy: "As the white snow that melts upon the desert is still the snow though it rushes, a river toward the sea, this is not Helen, yet still Helen" (4). The essay's end, which does not coincide with the play's, zooms back out and focuses on landscape and chorus, image and meters, relying on imagery from *Helen*'s third stasimon:

> They have all gone. There is the wind and the sea as usual, and the sand so soon brushed clear as if no foot had touched it. There is the tomb of Proteus and the blinding sun. And there is the circle of Greeks again, impersonal, praying for the safety of the ship, lying ready to depart. (18)

We might be tempted to say that Egypt, symbolizing the pre-Hellenic, "wins"; it is what remains when the Hellenes are gone, erasing their traces from its land. Yet "there is the circle of Greeks again," surprisingly left behind in a foreign place after the ship of "tinsel…. Hellenes" has departed. This may be H.D.'s tacit acknowledgment that their ritual is the authentic one – a callback to the mourning women in *IA*'s third stasimon whose pain remains the same regardless of whether the stories about Helen are true. Representing the "impersonal" essence of "Greekness," the permanence of the sea rather than the transformational and potentially duplicitous qualities of the water that comprises it, they exceed the machinations of Helen and Menelaus and are what is worth paying attention to.[51] Indeed, though H.D. doesn't dwell on it, the alignment of the chorus with Helen – lyrically indicated when the chorus unexpectedly join Helen in her lament in the parodos[52] – is broken as the chorus continues to sing of the Trojan widows cutting their hair in mourning, while Helen does the same only in imitation, as part of a ruse since *her* husband is now found to be alive.[53]

[50] Lines 1–3; trans. Kovacs here and throughout.
[51] See also Ford, "Lyrical Doubling," 301, and Segal, "Two Worlds," 571–72, on the Egyptian setting.
[52] Ford, "Lyrical Doubling," 296.
[53] Meltzer, "*Kleos* in Euripides' *Helen*," 250–51.

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Helen and Euripides' *Hecuba* are major intertexts for *Palimpsest* (1926), so the way they are treated and *not* treated there helps us see part of what H.D. is recuperating in *HiE*. "Hipparchia" picks up right where the *Helen* essay leaves off, continuing the contemplation of the chorus. Marius doesn't identify his sleeping lover Hipparchia – Greek woman exiled in Rome – with Helen (who after all escaped from Egypt) but with the female community of exiled Greek women. Much as the *Hippolytus* chorus wishes to fly off to the Hesperides, this chorus too at play's end yearn to be like birds that would follow the syrinx of their leader (aligned with Helen, who is in fact sailing away).[54] So Hipparchia:

> Her arms were lying bare outside the red cover and ended in claws, a bird-angular wing structure, featherless. *With the sea-gulls to chant*…. Again he sought helpless, this time, for Euripidean choros. Somewhere bird-women, Syrens [*sic*], sang on sands in some distant continent. That trivial makeshift of a tragedy (he recalled it) Euripides' trite Helen. A trivial makeshift of a tragedy. But with a choros that sang out tyrannous, the cold bird-spirits that called toward Hellas, banished on a foreign continent. (*Palimpsest* 16)

It is Helen who calls upon the "winged" Sirens to help her lament her fate just as the chorus are about to make their entrance (lines 167–69). The Sirens are tied to Persephone's abduction,[55] a myth which will form the basis of the *Helen*'s second stasimon; indeed, here already Helen asks them to convey her lamentations to "Persephone / in her halls of night" (lines 175, 177). H.D. links the Sirens to the end of the play too, and, unlike in the essay, emphasizes their lament. In "Hipparchia," that is, she creates the perfect mirror image of beginning and end, elided in the essay, suggesting both circularity and, perhaps, the eternal continuation of this Siren call. That she remembers the women here, even has Marius do it, suggests she is unsatisfied, still thinking about the play and its difficulties for interpretation if one is equally attached to Helen and to the chorus. Though H.D. will have Helen leave Egypt for Leuké in *HiE*, she returns her to the Egyptian shore for the work's third part and explicitly addresses her relationship with the chorus there.

In "Hipparchia" Marius thinks of *Helen* – even more ambivalent about its value than the H.D. of the essay – while Hipparchia is caught by its metrical sea (*Palimpsest* 39). She does not name it, however, choosing instead to focus on *Hecuba*'s "sea choros" (the play's first stasimon,

[54] *Helen* 1478–83.
[55] As seen, for example, in Ovid's later account (*Met.* 5.552).

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whose translation H.D. would eventually publish). Connecting the Greek women's bird song in *Helen*, muted in its disappointment, to the Trojan women's fearful evocation in *Hecuba* of the seas on which they will travel after the destruction of their homeland allows H.D. to focus on the story of loss that *Helen*, with its mostly recuperative 'happy' ending, occludes. Hipparchia herself functions in a space of loss; her obsession with the plunder of Corinth – equated with the plunder of Troy – and her exile in Rome make her identify with the Trojan Women in *Hecuba* because she feels she has nowhere to go back to. She is also haunted by her dead brother's ghost, though she does not acknowledge him right away, just as *Hecuba* begins with the ghost of Polydorus though Hecuba herself does not yet know of his death. The play depicts Hecuba's debasement by the Greek heroes, especially Odysseus, and her betrayal even by her allies, just as Hipparchia feels used by her various lovers. *Hecuba*'s answer to loss and violence is more of it; so Hipparchia "triumphs" over her Greek original in her translation (discussed in Chapter 1) and courts madness.

Also embedded in "Hipparchia" is a third Euripidean play, *Andromache*, which focuses on the exiled life of a single Trojan woman. Its ending offers H.D. a way to mediate between the unsatisfactory conclusion of *Helen* and the too-dark ending of *Hecuba*. In *Andromache* Thetis appears as the *dea ex machina* and sets aright the conflicts of the play, rescuing Andromache; crucially, for *HiE*, Thetis gives an update on her son Achilles, whose ghost would demand the sacrifice of Hecuba's daughter Polyxena in the later *Hecuba*: He is "dwelling in his island home on the strand of Leuke in the Sea Inhospitable," presumably purified of his wartime deeds.[56] In the middle of the novella, Hipparchia begins composing a poem ostensibly about Achilles that actually turns out to be about Thetis bearing "a god" (*Palimpsest* 40). Soon Hipparchia herself has become "a giant Thetis among islands" who would "re-sanctify" those islands, "string them, thread them, irregular jagged, rough-jewel on a massive necklet, no frail woman-ornament, nor one to be bartered for fresh continents" (41). H.D. is again using the imagery from her "Helen" essay and merging *Hecuba*, *Andromache*, and *Helen* in order to describe what Hipparchia calls a "trance-state" (41). The "priestess" response to the loss of Greece is its aestheticization in a sense – what is gone petrifies into a jewel and is offered to the gods as sacrifice, so that something may come out of the loss (Greece resanctified might be Greece revived, reassembled, though not bartered like the Trojan women). Whereas *Hecuba* is all about loss, and

[56] Lines 1260–62; trans. Kovacs.

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Helen in its main plot appears to be about total recuperation, *Andromache* allows at least Hipparchia a brief respite through ritual viewed as preservation rather than lament. Its Thetis, as reimagined here, will recur at the end of "Pallinode" and will be treated more skeptically.

The *Helen* continues to be present but elided in the rest of *Palimpsest*. Raymonde in "Murex," we recall, exits her trance through a "translation" or hatching of Poe's "To Helen." The triptych's last novella is H.D.'s first Helen in Egypt, "Secret Name." It takes place in the interim of the "Murex" timeline, 1923, but its protagonist Helen Fairwood seems less haunted.[57] While H.D. later said that she was working "on a translation of Euripides' *Helen in Egypt*, which I never finally assembled" at the time of her own trip to Egypt in 1923, she repudiated the presence of the name "Helen" in the story since "the Helen is only twice mentioned," and wished for the character's renaming ("H.D. by Delia Alton," 218–19). It is this evasion of the full *Helen* that *HiE* returns to and "corrects" – much as Pound in his *Elektra* brings to fruition his earlier haunted preoccupation with the Aeschylean *Agamemnon*. H.D. also seems to realize in her return to this play – and to Helen's other appearances in Euripides and Homer – that by eliding the "plot," she had also elided Helen's own "role as a manipulator of *technê* and *mêchanê*, of deception and the double vision which confuses the more prosaic every-day mentalities of Menelaus and Theoclymenus, [and] also signifies the restorative force of art itself."[58] The play thus offers her an opportunity to more fully explore the tensions she had broached in her *IA* choruses and through *Hippolytus*, but also in the *Ion* – which ends Kreousa's story with the assertion of her author-ity but doesn't show us what that means. That is what *HiE* returns to and adds: the rapprochement of the Hellenes and the Helens.

Helen *and the eidolon*

As H.D. partially intuited in her early essay on the play, besides or beneath its "romance" plot,[59] Euripides' *Helen* raises serious philosophical questions about the nature of knowledge and reality;[60] the power of divinity

[57] See Bryant and Eaverly, "Egypto-Modernism," on the modernist fascination with Egypt and on H.D.'s well-informed depiction of Egypt specifically.
[58] Segal, "Two Worlds," 610.
[59] Ibid., 557.
[60] Solmsen, "ΟΝΟΜΑ and ΠΡΑΓΜΑ," Segal, "Two Worlds." Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 225–26, discusses Segal's essay in relation to H.D.

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and oracles;[61] mythmaking and language;[62] the nature of art or drama;[63] and the origin of song.[64] The major omission in H.D.'s essay, and one that can function as a synecdoche for the rest as the nexus of neglected interrelated questions, is the consideration of the eidolon. H.D. is too invested in the idea of the new, blameless Helen and intrigued by the play's imagery and its meditations on song to think about the eidolon's implications. But it is the eidolon and associated terms (ἄγαλμα [*agalma*] 'statue, image' and νεφέλη [*nephelē*] 'cloud') that stand out when H.D. returns to the play in the 1950s, and are indeed marked in her reading notebook.[65]

The eidolon in Euripides' *Helen* remains offstage. All we know about it is that it is indistinguishable from Helen: Paris was fooled, Menelaus was fooled – and in case we think of those two as fools already, the sober, humbled Teucer and the skeptical messenger were also fooled. Euripides aims to create the same unsettling confusion in his audience. Most brazenly, shadow-Helen's parting words (reported by the messenger) before she disappears echo closely those the real Helen has earlier uttered onstage.[66] The tragedian also blurs the two more inconspicuously throughout the play. When the eidolon disappears, it goes "towards the folds of the ether" (πρὸς αἰθέρος πτυχάς [l. 605, my translation]). Helen has told us of her translation to Egypt in the exact same terms: Hermes took her "in the folds of the ether" (ἐν πτυχαῖσιν αἰθέρος [l. 44, my translation]). Moreover, "the ether" is where her brothers, the Dioscuri, come from at the end of the play (δι' αἰθέρος [l. 1496]). The cloud (νεφέλῃ [l. 45]) in which Helen is hidden during the journey to Egypt is what the eidolon is made of; Menelaus calls it νεφέλης ἄγαλμ' 'image made of cloud' (l. 705), a formulation which Helen repeats (l. 1219). Menelaus's strange use of ἄγαλμα, usually meaning "statue," also has a precedent in Helen's own words: Early in the play she wishes her face could be rubbed off, as if she were a painting or a statue (ἄγαλμα [l. 262]).[67] What Euripides is getting at with the formulation νεφέλης ἄγαλμα is precisely that making-into-statue, that solidification of air. The eidolon doesn't betray its nebulousness; it isn't an image of a cloud or a cloudy image – it is precisely *not* that – but an image

[61] Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus."
[62] Meltzer, "*Kleos*."
[63] Downing, "Literary Self-Reflexivity," Marshall, *Structure and Performance*.
[64] Ford, "Lyrical Doubling." I am indebted to all of the above-cited scholars for my interpretation of the play.
[65] Gregory, "Working Notebook," 89.
[66] Meltzer, "*Kleos*," 248.
[67] Suggesting the difficulty of the word here, two of the five sub-definitions of ἄγαλμα in the *LSJ* have as examples these very lines: ἄγαλμα 4 'portrait, picture' uses line 262, and ἄγαλμα 5 'image' uses 705.

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of Helen, and that is what is so deceptive about it. The eidolon is an image or form *composed* (ξυνθεῖσ᾽) of air, much like the words coming out of the Euripidean Helen's mouth.

Euripides' *Helen* is very much about such statues made of clouds, about the way in which rumor becomes fact, and desired belief truth – about what "we all know," and our desire to confirm it, against better evidence. That is, the play is as much concerned with the newly chaste Helen's reunion with Menelaus as it is with the reunion between name and thing or name and person.[68] Helen's prologue introduces this motif: "And for the fight against the Trojans I was put forward for the Greeks as a prize of war (though it was not me but only my name)," she claims, adding that "even if my name is reviled in Greece, my body shall not here be put to shame" (lines 42–43, 66–67). This separation between name and body is amplified by the gods' production of an additional body: Helen's eidolon fashioned by Hera and given to Paris. But as the play unfolds, and especially after the phantom's disappearance into the thin air whence it originated, Helen and her name come ever closer – not because her name is rehabilitated but because she comes to embody what she said (in the beginning of the play) was only *said* of "Helen" but was not true. She tries to charm Menelaus and the Egyptian king Theoclymenus when each is skeptical of her; she manipulates situations by using a woman's way (e.g., line 1049); she deceives the husband she has (deceptively) promised herself to in order to escape Egypt with her former husband and thus becomes Theoclymenus's ravished wife;[69] and, finally, she seeks the glory of Troy – or so we are told by the messenger. In the battle that erupts offstage as the Greeks are escaping from Egypt, Menelaus calls on his "picked fighting men of Greece" to "kill, cut down the barbarians"; one of the voices amplifying his message in the bloody battle is Helen, who exhorts from the stern, "Where is the glory [*kleos*] you won at Troy? Show these barbarians" (lines 1593–94, 1603–4). Even if, according to the play's premise, Helen hasn't been as involved in the Trojan War as she seemed to have been, she is fated to spearhead its re-enactment.

The ending enacts in miniature what the whole play shows. Despite all the powerful laments against the war from Helen and her chorus of women; despite Menelaus's ridiculous behavior when we first see him in Egypt,[70] and the biting revelation of the unreason/futility of war; despite

[68] On the split between bodies and names, see Solmsen, "ONOMA and ΠΡΑΓΜΑ," 119–21.
[69] See also Meltzer, "*Kleos*," 238.
[70] Marshall, *Structure and Performance*, 39–40.

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the thematized and constantly displayed unreliability of reports and reputations, once the two-Helens problem is cleared up as magically as it came about, all the main characters, including even the theoretically pure Egyptian prophetess Theonoe (daughter of the dead Proteus), continue to strive for *kleos* while we the audience continue to look out for and listen to messengers' reports.[71] The play's conclusion is "a successful replay of the Trojan War,"[72] with a reversal of its players, where the deluded "loser" is not the Greeks who went to Troy for a phantom, but Theoclymenus the "barbarian" who foolishly believed in Helen's phantom ritual. Grégoire, whose edition of the play H.D. consulted, speaks of Euripides' *Helen* as a "prétendue rehabilitation": not a full "palinodie mythologique," but a politically expedient "demi-sympathie" for Sparta.[73] This large-scale undeceiving (everyone's illusions about reality and war shattered because of the eidolon) followed by a "re-deceiving" – in a way a palinode of its own – is mirrored in the play's many local, unexplained reversals and contradictions, and is at the heart of Euripides' critique[74] – and the early H.D.'s blind spot. As Segal puts it in his monumental study of *Helen*'s deployment of pairs of opposites, the play never "completely resolves the question of which aspect of reality is the 'true' one."[75] But if a positive lesson is to be drawn from the play, it may be that a consideration of art – whatever form its image made of cloud may take (the eidolon of Helen, the mournful songs of the chorus, the play Helen puts on for Theoclymenus, Euripides' own play) – is central for engaging with the complex epistemological, theological, and moral questions that *Helen* poses.

"Come Home": "Pallinode" as Translation of Euripides' *Helen*

When H.D. first writes to Bryher about her work on *HiE* in the fall of 1952, she presents it as both an act of memory and, initially with hesitation, of translation. Though she mentions her old Greek books, she asks Bryher not to send them, for "I am following a simple line, just what I remember of names etc. etc." On the next day, she speaks of a "revived memory of Proteus too." After receiving the books that Bryher nonetheless sends, she

[71] For Theonoe, see Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus," 25, 27–28; Meltzer, "*Kleos*," 249–50, also discusses *kleos* in the Theonoe scene but without Sansone's incisive skepticism. On unreliable reports, see Meltzer, ibid., 238, 249, 252.

[72] Meltzer, "*Kleos*," 238.

[73] *Hélène*, 30.

[74] See Downing, "Literary Self-Reflexivity," 7–8, 11–14. Segal, "Two Worlds," 608, also noting echoes between beginning and end, offers a more positive reading.

[75] "Two Worlds," 559.

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exclaims, "it is a miracle. I started the Euripides Iphigenia again…. Well, this has really re-born me. I could have wept at the old Florence binding – such memories."[76] In her annotated presentation of H.D.'s working notebook Gregory has shown that H.D. took notes from Leconte de Lisle's translation of *Helen* probably in spring and summer 1953, while also consulting her Loeb, edited by Arthur Way.[77] But H.D.'s reference to the binding suggests that Bryher also sent her early Greek-only editions (by Dindorf), which do have such unique bindings. That is, she has access to Euripides' *Helen* in Greek from very early on in the writing process and, as I will argue, "translates" it in "Pallinode."[78] Not only Helen's self-presentation and transformation but also the arc of the plot (with Achilles standing in for all the Euripidean males) are here recreated, while the chorus that was so attractive to the early H.D. is relegated to the last book.

Helen itself offers two models for translation or transport, through Teucer and Menelaus. Teucer is called by Apollo to create an imitation homeland on Cyprus, "calling the place by the island name of Salamis in honor of my far-off land" (lines 148–50); this is a model of non-return and of haunting, as Teucer has to translate Salamis (in)to Cyprus. Menelaus in contrast promises perfect return and restitution, as exemplified by the Spartans' successful escape from Egypt and presumed return to their homeland. The way each character behaves in Egypt is accordingly different as well. Teucer is very aware of Egypt as a foreign land with different customs, and, despite his initial impulse, he doesn't kill Helen because of it (lines 75–77). Menelaus cannot fathom it, and much of the play's comedy is the result of his inability to process what it may mean to be in a different place. Both of these options remain open, unvisited at *Helen*'s end, though the messenger's report about the battle on the ship and the repeat Trojan War gives us a clue as to Menelaus's success, which is further bolstered by the Dioscuri's promise that they "will escort [Helen] to your own country" (line 1665). H.D.'s "Pallinode" plotwise rehearses the Menelaus option, returning to and *repeating* the Euripidean play; we even end with Helen almost on a boat being lured by Thetis to "come home" (108). The captions too encourage this reading, insisting on Helen's

[76] Letters from October 13, October 14, October 16, 1952; all in Beinecke, GEN MSS 97, Box 16, Folder 627.

[77] "Working Notebook," 83, 89.

[78] In her 1871 *Elektra* (Oxford: Parker; geometrical snake-print binding), one of the two pages H.D. has marked is quite close to her *HiE* concerns; it mentions Thetis, the Nereids, and dancing (around line 430) – a kind of chorus like that which the choragus Thetis presumably leads at the end of "Pallinode."

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identity as a Greek while also being critical of her inability to truly "translate" herself into Egypt, especially since what she finds there is "Greek" already, has been made Greek by her vision/perception. But the mode of the telling, and "Pallinode"'s continuation into the two subsequent parts of *HiE*, especially "Leuké," suggest a Teucerian approach to Euripides on H.D.'s part.

"Pallinode"'s theatrical opening takes us back to Helen alone on the Euripidean *skēnē*, usurping the usual position of a god with her lengthy monologue. As in a tragic prologue, she sets the stage: She describes "this Amen-temple," with its "corridors of lotus-bud / furled on the pillars" (2), echoing the Euripidean Helen's description of her Egyptian surroundings (lines 44–46), and she introduces the "characters" (I Helen, hosts). But first she sets up a false scene:

> Do not despair, the hosts
> surging beneath the Walls,
> (no more than I) are ghosts;
>
> do not bewail the Fall,
> the scene is empty and I am alone (1)

Her speech itself reflects the Stesichorean fragment that H.D. had mentioned in the caption: "That saying is not true; you did not go in the well-oared ships, nor did you come to the walls of Troy."[79] Like Stesichorus, H.D. simultaneously creates an image before our eyes and denounces it,[80] telling us that the Trojan War we presumably see with her is only a ghost, only in her and our mind, only a product of vision that she pre-emptively presumes we share with her, much as the caption's "We all know" does. The metatheatricality implicit in the reference to an empty scene is everywhere present in the Euripidean play – with a critic, for example, turning the *Helen* into an allegory for dramatic composition itself.[81] In addition to tone or attitude, H.D.'s opening hits all the same thematic notes as Helen's prologue, including details ignored or dismissed in the earlier essay: Helen's parentage and Zeus's care (p. 1), the war for Helen's sake and resultant Greek hate (2), her fear of being cursed by them (5), the phantom (3), the Greeks beside the Trojan Walls (5). H.D.'s full-fledged shift to the war after the poem's first section – as the caption puts it, "*Her concern is with the past, with the anathema or curse*" as she envisions "*the*

[79] Plato, *Phaedrus* 243b.
[80] Following Beecroft's reading of the Stesichorus fragment in "Stesichorus's *Palinode*."
[81] Downing, "Literary Self-Reflexivity."

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Greeks who perished on the long voyage out, or who died imprecating her, beneath the Walls" (5) – mirrors again the Euripidean prologue, where Helen, after describing being spirited away to Egypt, says,

> my poor husband, gathering an army, went to the towers of Ilium to win me back by force. Many lives were lost by Scamander's stream because of me. And I, who have suffered everything, am cursed by men, and all think that I have abandoned my husband and brought a great war upon the Greeks. (lines 49–55)

"Cursing Helen through eternity," indeed (4).

The caption for Book 1, section 3, appears to be the first major swerve from the Euripidean template, suddenly raising the possibility that "*it all happened, the ruin … in order that two souls or two soul-mates* [namely, Achilles and Helen] *should meet*" (5). The debate about Achilles is in fact modeled on the one about Paris, rehearsed in all the Euripidean plays that H.D. is reading:[82] the anxiety about the "kiss in the night" functions as synecdoche for passion (*erōs*) justifying strife (*eris*). The need to redirect it arises out of the premise of Euripides' play, if it is to be taken seriously: If Helen didn't follow Paris to Troy, how can we ask the eros–*eris* question that seems so fundamental to Greek myth and that interests H.D. so much? The Helen–Achilles story as an appropriate substitute is already latent in Euripides. In the prologue Helen speaks of her own "name's" involvement as a secondary cause of war (lines 42–43), immediately after suggesting that one of the reasons Zeus may have willed the Trojan War was to make known "the best of Greece," namely Achilles (line 41).[83] H.D.'s poem similarly uses the eidolon/name theme ("Alas, my brothers, / Helen did not walk / upon the ramparts," p. 5) to transition to the Achilles theme, referring to "your own invincible, unchallenged Sire, // Lord of your legions, King of Myrmidons, / unconquerable" (pp. 5–6).[84] In both texts, events are at this point attributed to the will of Zeus: "God for his own purpose / wills it so" (5), writes H.D., conveying the Euripidean Διὸς / βουλεύματ' (lines 36–37). Some of the details about Achilles himself are also suggested by the *Helen*: Achilles is here not to be recognized "by accoutrements of valour," because as Teucer tells Helen, his armor has

[82] See Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus," 19–24, on the judgment of Paris and its presence in *Helen*.

[83] On ancient juxtapositions of Achilles and Helen in relation to the origins of the Trojan War, see, for example, Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, 97–102. In *IA*, as H.D. notes, Klytemnestra asks "why her child, why not Helen's etc." (Gregory, "Working Notebook," 99).

[84] Here and below I am using two slashes to indicate a stanza break.

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been taken away from him (7).[85] If Achilles' absent weapons are figured by Euripides as an equivalent to Helen's eidolon,[86] H.D. quite appropriately emphasizes that, correspondingly, "this Helen is not to be recognized by earthly splendour" (7).

Helen's protracted encounter with Achilles in "Pallinode" is an amalgam of her encounters with all the male characters in the Euripidean play: Teucer, Theoclymenus, Menelaus, and even the only mentioned Paris. If all women are Helens, H.D. seems to suggest, then all men can be Achilles, and again we may detect here her indebtedness to Butler's book.[87] Achilles, like Teucer and Menelaus, is "shipwrecked, / drifting without chart, / famished and tempest-driven" (6). Like them, too, though he is a victor, he feels like a loser: "the bane of battle / and the legions lost; // for that was victory," H.D. writes (7), echoing the Euripidean Teucer's statement that "I helped sack [Troy] but came to grief myself" (line 106). Achilles refers to "Troy-gates broken / in memory of the Body" (7); Helen while talking to Teucer also laments, "Poor Helen! On your account the Trojans are ruined!" (line 109). Achilles, like Teucer (line 81), blames "Helena, cursed of Greece" (16). The emphasis H.D. places on Achilles' sight corresponds to that of Euripides on Teucer's: When Helen asks him if he saw "Helen" at Troy, Teucer responds, in one of Euripides' playful moments, "I saw her with my eyes no less than I see you" and insists, after Helen continues to probe the reliability of his vision, "I saw her with my eyes. And my mind also sees" (lines 118, 122). Similarly Achilles both claims that "I have seen you upon the ramparts" (16) and contests Helen's assertions to the opposite ("You say, I could not see" [49]). Teucer's travel to Cyprus, where he will re-claim his homeland of Salamis, is echoed in Achilles' seeking to "reclaim the coast" (of Egypt in this case). Like Teucer, who "wanted to see Theonoe, chanter of the gods' will" (line 145), Achilles wants to "ask the oracle" (63), but delegates the task to Helen, who refuses, just as in Euripides she tells Teucer to sail on (lines 151–53). Upon Teucer's departure, Helen wishes for the erasure of her face and its substitution by a plain instead of a beautiful form (line 263); H.D.'s Helen wants to "hide my eyes," "veil my face" (16). Her solution of blackening her face (15) may owe something to Euripidean Helen's plan to exchange her white robes for black ones and "bloody my cheeks with my nails" so as to play the role of a widow

[85] *Helen* 100, 102.

[86] In that struggles for these essentially absent things are the source of Teucer's and Helen's difficulties; see Downing, "Literary Self-Reflexivity," 7.

[87] Elsewhere H.D. speaks of Achilles-Lancelot (*End to Torment*, 42), and thinks of Achilles as a version of Faust (*Hirslanden Notebooks*, 11).

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(lines 1088–89).[88] Thus Achilles, who does eventually attack Helen, turns into Theoclymenus, the Egyptian king Euripides' Helen wants to deceive and escape from. The agonistic nature of Achilles' relationship to Helen in "Pallinode" is primarily modeled, however, on that with Menelaus in *Helen*. The tenor of Achilles' questioning of Helen shares some of the desperation in Teucer's speech, but as it escalates it approaches Menelaus's confusion – "'where are we? Who are you?'" – who indeed calls Helen Hecate (line 567), as Achilles does here: "are you Hecate? Are you a witch?" (16).[89] As in the Euripidean scene of Menelaus and Helen's supplication of Theonoe, which is surprisingly structured as an agon between them even though they both want the same result,[90] so in *HiE* Helen resists Achilles' efforts to sort out the eidolon question by attempting to refuse an agon: "must I summon Hellenic thought / to counter an argument? // must we argue over again, / the reason that brought us here?" (37).

H.D. also stages a recognition scene between Helen and Achilles: "How did we know each other? / was it the sea-enchantment in his eyes / of Thetis, his sea-mother? // what was the token given?" (7).[91] The sequence hints subtly at Euripides' play, where the recognition scenes are quite complex and where eyes are indeed sites of enchantment and mystification. Euripides' Helen refers to tokens of recognition that she would show to Menelaus;[92] they are not needed, however, because everyone immediately recognizes Helen, and then has to disbelieve their eyes, either under the weight of reason (Teucer) or previous experience (Menelaus). Despite her presence, that is, Helen isn't identified on the basis of external factors (or of Odyssean tokens), but according to others' mental key. So H.D. reveals in Achilles' escalating verbal attack that the real threat Helen poses is that of unreadability: "*We must blame someone*, *Hecate – a witch – a vulture, and finally, as if he had run out of common invective, he taunts her – a* hieroglyph," the caption suggests (15).

But, as in Euripides, Helen's unreadability and malleability is also her power, should she choose to use it. In *Helen* she creates an eidolon of Menelaus, of herself, and of Greek mourning rituals, as if putting on her own play. In *HiE* Helen applies to Achilles the same ambiguity or instability of self she sees in herself. Though she had read him as "*Greece-incarnate*,"

[88] Cf. Bryant and Eaverly, "Egypto-Modernism," 446, who highlight the racial undertones of the scene; given the Euripidean and Homeric precedent (*Iliad* 18.23–27), it strikes me as less likely.
[89] In *Trojan Women* 893, Hecuba warns Menelaus of Helen's powerful "spells."
[90] Marshall, *Structure and Performance*, 38–42.
[91] Perhaps a reference to *Iliad* 16.33–35.
[92] *Helen* 290–9.

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"*still Achilles*" (15), by the beginning of "Pallinode"'s second book, she changes course. Achilles' attack on Helen was initially viewed as expected ("*we must blame someone*") and is even mocked for being hackneyed ("*This is almost funny*"), but Book 2 begins by identifying it as a "*problem*" of "*latent hostility*" that Helen needs to understand (15, 19). What had been eminently readable now launches a new area of investigation, and indeed we are at this moment introduced to Helen herself as a reader of hieroglyphs (21, 25, 29). In *Helen*, Menelaus's plan of murder-suicide (should their escape fail) induces Helen to come up with a better escape plot, to become the reader of her situation and turn into "enchanter" or artist instead of only relying on the oracle Theonoe's support. Here, Achilles' actual attack makes Helen more explicitly take on the role of the prophetess: "no, I was not instructed, but I 'read' the script, / I read the writing when he seized my throat" (25).

Helen, however, seems drawn to repeat the pattern set by Euripides' play, to follow the Menelean path of return – and again, this is the nature of H.D.'s own palinode as a retelling of the Euripidean play. So, Book 2 ends with Helen giving up, "shed[ding]" the "imperious quest" for knowledge or understanding as she would "a priestess' mantle" (33):

> *Let the temple walls flower with "the indecipherable Amen-script." It is not necessary to "read" the riddle. The pattern in itself is sufficient and it is beautiful.* (32)

In the poem that follows, this surrender takes the form of a long series of questions, listing the many (bad) things Achilles may have done. First he is seen through mythical reference (whether he may have acted as an Orpheus,[93] Phaethon, or Prometheus), then more specifically through his wartime violence against men and women (34). Helen attempts various justifications – "he drew as a magnet drew / the ore from the rock?" – in order to make the inevitability of war more palatable (34). Since "was War inevitable?" is precisely the question she had tried to stop herself from asking, Helen ends the poem with prayer: "Amen-Zeus, let me not ask, / but claim him and know the Sun, / hidden behind the sun of our visible day" (34). She does, however, return to this solution more decisively several books later: "it was Fate, it was Destiny, / as a magnet draws ore from a rock" (67), she asserts, parroting the Euripidean Helen's self-defense from *Trojan Women*, where Helen relieves herself of blame by pointing to Aphrodite as

[93] The Orpheus reference in connection to Achilles' destructiveness may have been suggested to H.D. by *IA* 1211–13.

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all-powerful goddess (lines 946–50). Despite the promise of a redefinition of masculinity – also present in the first half of Euripides' play through the thoroughly defeated Teucer and the obviously burdened Menelaus – Achilles, like Menelaus, is not yet "the new Mortal / shedding his glory" (10), and it is instead Helen who sheds her questioning mantle and claims the Greek ships: "mine, all the ships," she keeps repeating (25).[94] Her last attempt at resistance is to "tell and re-tell the story" of Iphigenia's sacrifice "to find the answer" (84). But she only finds a common submissive femininity binding them: "what did we know of any / of our Lords' activities? / we lived alone and apart," while the "Lords" were "a Whirlwind of War" (84). In the next section, Helen again suppresses her own questioning as she goes along: "the heart does not wonder? / the heart does not ask? / the heart accepts, // encompasses the whole / of the undecipherable script; / take, as you took // Achilles' anger … / this is the only answer; // there is no other sign nor picture" (86).

Once H.D.'s Helen has given up as a reader and embraced the pattern – as Helen implicitly does in the messenger's account in Euripides when she calls on the Greek men to show the "glory of Troy" – she "conjure[s] the Dioscuri" to tie up loose ends (86). Helen's twin brothers twice come to her literal and figurative rescue in Euripides. In *Orestes* they prevent Helen's murder at the hands of Orestes and pronounce her a goddess. In *Helen* it is the prophetess Theonoe, Helen's accomplice, who materially benefits since the Dioscuri prevent her brother Theoclymenus from killing her; at the same time, they also secure Helen's own reputation – the latter task H.D. will assign to Thetis in the seventh book of "Pallinode." In Book 6, however, Helen asks her brothers to address the issues she cannot resolve once she has made the decision to "accep[t]" Achilles: Klytemnestra's memory and suffering, and Achilles' blindness. Helen has herself tried to correct both. Putting on her *Odyssey* mask, she has unsuccessfully attempted to soothe Klytemnestra by insistently *naming* her Nepenthe ("I will call my sister Nepenthe, / forgetfulness of the past" [72]) despite her sister's obvious inability to forget;[95] and, as we have seen, she has alternately resisted and tried to understand Achilles. So, the Dioscuri are asked to "Grant Clytaemnestra peace" and "guide Achilles" (86), just as in *Helen* they guide Theoclymenus away from violence and rescue Theonoe, who has, like

[94] See Twitchell-Waas, "Seaward," and Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, ch. 8, on masculinity and war, and Marshall, *Structure and Performance*, 32–33, on Menelaus.

[95] "Nepenthes" is the Egyptian grief-suppressing drug that Helen gives Menelaus and Telemachus in *Odyssey* 4.220–21.

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Klytemnestra, betrayed her living kin in order to honor the dead (Proteus/Iphigenia).

Towards the end of "Pallinode," H.D. also conveys a sense of the Euripidean Helen's concocted ritual, increasingly allowing her Helen to take on different roles. Having already been proclaimed by an early caption as "the writing" (22), Helen proceeds to claim all parts of Euripidean tragedy – becomes "*the Greek drama*" – tentatively exploring other subject positions before returning to her own as traditionally conceived (91). We have already seen her assume the position of playwright, giving Klytemnestra a new name in an attempt to change her part in the story, from vengeful Fury who "was glad when her son / stayed his hand, / to hear herself say, / *remember Iphigenia*" (*HiE* 75) to a person incapable of mourning, "not if his mother died and his father died, not if men / murdered a brother or a beloved son in his presence" (*Odyssey* 4.224–25). In return, though, this Helen claims Orestes as her son, asking "can I take her [= Klytemnestra's] place?," and, as suggested above, additionally identifies with Iphigeneia (91) – just as in Euripides Helen pretends to be a widow, and her theatrical act is there emphasized through the contrast with the first stasimon, where the fate of actual Greek widows is lamented (lines 1124–25). In Euripides the increased self-referentiality makes us doubt the seriousness with which we are supposed to take the proceedings; so here Helen wavers, questioning the rationalizations she has created, her re-attachment to her own glorious image. Seeing how she herself has created the "story" she wants, she begins to doubt it: "How does the Message reach me?" (87), "is it all a story?" (88), "have I imprisoned myself // in my contemplation?" (89). H.D.'s response is to heighten the lure of ritual, to which she herself had fallen prey in the 1920s, creating a more compelling version of the Euripidean Dioscuri (whom she has in any case already deployed) to quell Helen's doubts.

It is the chorus that materializes in the "image or eidolon" of Thetis to close "Pallinode" and speak its seventh book, a nod to H.D.'s earlier idea that the chorus represents or speaks for the god (93).[96] Having exhausted *Helen*'s plot in the rest of "Pallinode," H.D. here reviews the Euripidean stasima, though this "chorus" section does not have significant formal differences from the preceding books. Thetis opens her song by praising "a woman's wiles" that allow her to "take the stars" or "sweep the sea" or

[96] H.D. may have selected Thetis due the *Andromache* passage referred to above, or to the fact that Thetis, qua potential instigator of war, is a sister figure to Helen. Pausanias notes that Thetis was worshipped in a local cult in Laconia, much like Helen (3.14.4–6, 3.15.3).

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"plunge beneath the surface, / without fear of the treacherous deep," echoing Euripides' third stasimon, where the chorus hail Helen, imagine the sea journey that will lead her back to Sparta, and describe the astral realm of her brothers (93). The third stasimon also asks the Dioscuri to restore Helen's name (lines 1506–7), which is precisely Thetis's mission here:

> the harp-strings will answer
>
> the chant, the rhythm, the metre,
> the syllables H-E-L-E-N-A;
> Helena, reads the decree,
>
> shall be shrined forever;
> in Melos, in Thessaly,
> they shall honour the name of Love,
>
> begot of the Ships and the War;
> one indestructible name,
> to inspire the Scribe and refute
>
> the doubts of the dissolute;
> this is the Law,
> this, the Mandate:
>
> let no man strive against Fate,
> Helena has withstood
> the rancor of time and of hate. (96)

Just as in *Helen*, where Castor asserts that after her death Helen "will be called a goddess" and like the Dioscuri she "will receive gifts from mortals" because "Zeus wishes it so" (lines 1667–69), so here "The Lords have passed a decree … that Helen be worshipped, // be offered incense / upon the altars of Greece, / with her brothers the Dioscuri" (95). Meanwhile, the proclamation of Helen's name – envisioned in a call-and-response setup similar to that evoked in *Helen*'s parodos and second stasimon – echoes Castor's giving the name "Helen" to the island that "received you stolen from your home" (lines 1673–75). Recalling the Aeschylean puns on her name, which connect *hele* to a verb that means "captured" or "destroyed," Euripides suggests here that "Helen" should be forever associated with being captured and spirited away: in the case commemorated, by Hermes protecting her from Paris; in the "original" myth by Paris; at the end of *Helen* by Menelaus himself. So here H.D. highlights the words to be conceptually bound with Helen by leaving them unrhymed: "Love," "War," "name," "Law," and "withstood." The ideas of love as war and of the name (as the law or the pattern) are what has withstood, stood against time. The

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eidolon problem is resolved by assimilating Helen into her name as if there had never been a problem at all.

For these equations to be possible, though, Helen has to "be still" (103): to acquiesce to Trojan *kleos* and to assuming the role of Achilles' mother, to claim not only the "ships" but him too. As the first caption in Book 7 proclaims, Thetis is "*in complete harmony with Helen*" (93), rhetorically replacing Klytemnestra, as indicated by the shifting of the poem's "sister, shadow" motif from the latter to the former (103). That is, Helen no longer identifies with the woman who tried to curtail (albeit catastrophically) the Trojan *kleos*, but with the one who inadvertently started the war and, in the *Iliad*, prolonged it. As Thetis prepares Helen for her journey, she also trains her to be passive: "Be still, I say, strive not," "you can not return to the past // nor stay the sun in his course," "be still, I say, why weep?" (103); "be at peace" (104); "Seek not another Star," "seek not to know// too much," "grieve not for Clytaemnestra," "call not, awake / no soul to doom / of old remembered hates" (105); "Strive not to wake the dead" (107). Though she challenges Helen to "dare the uncharted seas" (107), she also finally instructs her to "come home" (108). The departure from Egypt is figured explicitly as an abandonment of reading when Thetis argues for the superiority of (Greek) nature over Egyptian writing: "a simple spiral-shell may tell / a tale more ancient / than these mysteries" (107); "the mystery of a forest-tree, / whispering its secrets upon Cithaeron, // holds subtler meaning / than this written stone / of leaves of the papyrus" (108). Thetis lures Helen with the promise of living nature and a hint of the Muses' song on Cithaeron – that is, stereotypical marks of "Greekness" – which, unlike the petrified papyrus leaves, will easily disclose their secrets. In doing so, she reveals her similarity to the Thetis imagined by Hipparchia in *Palimpsest*, who had also offered an aestheticized Greece as a solution.

The tension between the caption that introduces Thetis in Book 7 and the poem that follows suggests that we approach her skeptically, however. The caption begins with the images that the poem will end on, and explains them away: "*Phoenix, the symbol of resurrection has vanquished indecision and doubt, the eternal why of the Sphinx*" (93). Yet, when we reach the last stanza – "Phoenix / has vanquished / that ancient enemy Sphinx" (94) – the almost exact verbal repetition makes us realize that the prose has preemptively vanquished readers' potential indecision about these creatures/symbols.[97] That is, the prose stands as the phoenix to the poetic sphinx.

[97] Barbour, "Origins of the Prose Captions," 487, offers a less sinister reading.

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And if we think of Helen herself as both sphinx (in her "problematic" guise as unreadable hieroglyph) and phoenix (the deified "*Helena*" who arises from "the rancour of time and of hate" and "shall remain"), then we see that the transformation from sphinx to phoenix is exactly what "Pallinode" has been trying to accomplish, now recruiting Thetis to bring it to fruition (96, 104). Though she initially praises female prowess, Thetis then aligns Helen's weaving – the quintessential symbol of her power in *Iliad* 3, when she appears for the first time in Western literature "weaving a great web / … and working into it the numerous struggles / of Trojans … and … Achaians" (3.125–27) – with Klytemnestra's violence:

> if a woman fights,
> she must fight by stealth,
>
> with invisible gear;
> no sword, no dagger, no spear
> in a woman's hands
>
> can make wrong, right;
> do not strive to re-weave, Helen,
> the pattern the Fates decree
>
> or tangle the threads of Nemesis (97–98)

Even if we grant that Thetis only hopes for the ceasing of strife,[98] why wouldn't re-weaving be part of a "fight by stealth"? Presumably because it would contest the image or "name" that is being constructed here as Helen is told to just become who she was. As long as she is, by stealth, on her way to Greece, the other questions "Pallinode" (or *Helen*) has raised seem to not matter: "asleep? awake? a phantom or a dream, / Helen, the sails are set" (106). Thus the poem ends like Euripides' play, deferring or papering over the real issues it has broached.

"Pallinode," then, just gives us *Helen* back. It traces over the play's narrative and structure, its characters, some of its image motifs, and many of its destabilizing questions but, like its Euripidean precedent, returns to the status quo, goes back again to the same "ode." It is a palinode to the extent that it corrects and supplements H.D.'s own earlier reading of the play; in doing so, however, it becomes the *Helen* – or, as H.D. called both this section and the Euripidean play, "Helen in Egypt" – and repeats

[98] As Friedman does ("Creating a Women's Mythology," 178–80), *contra* others who read the passage as misogynistic. H.D.'s lines also echo *Agamemnon* 940, while in *Helen*'s first stasimon, lines 1155–56, the Euripidean chorus similarly claims that "If contests of blood shall always decide, never will strife / cease."

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its incomplete palinodic gesture. But, for the larger *HiE* to resume, and for a true palinode, qua reverberation or intervention, to take place, the questions must be asked again. So "Leuké" begins with Helen explicitly denouncing the name that "Pallinode" has given her: "I am not nor mean to be / the Daemon they made of me" (109). "Let them sing Helena for a thousand years, / let them name and re-name Helen," our speaker proclaims, dissociating herself again from the identity she had acquiesced to, since she now "can not endure" the "weight of eternity" that the name *Helen* confers (110).

Leuké: Helen as Veil or Dream

In "Leuké" H.D. properly engages with the issue of the eidolon that had also been elided in the essay. The Helen we see in "Pallinode" is fairly similar to the one in Euripides: She insists on her reality and distinctness from the eidolon, the importance of her name and of the split between her name and body, and on the interconnection between her fate and that of the Greek and Trojan warriors. Yet, as *Helen* never tells us which was the true reality, "Pallinode" also does not answer Achilles' question at its very center: "'Helena, which was the dream, / which was the veil of Cytheraea?'" (36), a question implied but not explicitly asked by Menelaus in *Helen* (who just swaps one Helen for the other, as Grégoire notes). In the face of this repeated query in which she is named but not identified, H.D.'s Egyptian Helen – relying on her Euripidean counterpart as much as on the Helen imagined by Goethe – cannot but have her certainty about herself shaken even as "Pallinode" as a whole seeks to re-establish it. "Which was the dream, / which was the veil" is, essentially, H.D.'s reformulation of the eidolon question. So, for example, the eidolon of Aeneas is a "veil" for the real Aeneas in *Iliad* 5; it is a veil to the extent that it draws our attention away from, and thus disguises, the "truth," what we're really after. Its function is to stand in our way; it is "an image, a likeness" (*LSJ* 111) in the pejorative, Platonic sense. A dream, on the other hand, is the more benign version of the eidolon: Like Patroclus appearing to Achilles, it is real yet lacking, a ghost, or "image in the mind" (*LSJ* 11). Notably, for H.D. there is no third option, no "real Helen,"[99] except perhaps as created by Achilles' address: Helena.

If "Pallinode," following Euripides, turns Helen from Helen in Egypt into "Helen of Troy," "Leuké" explores the Euripidean play's solution and

[99] Cf. Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, 229–30.

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the split it depicts between a mortal Helen who will die in Sparta (but who is also repeating the Trojan story in being re-abducted) and an immortal Helen joining the Dioscuri on the firmament – a split that recalls that of Herakles in the *Odyssey* and in some ways that between Helen and her eidolon too. We may further align each section with the two options in Achilles' question. "Pallinode" concentrates on Helen as veil, while "Leuké" – the white island, the blank slate – is a space for projection, and is focused on Helen as dream, offering two versions of her: mortal Helen, imagined by Paris the young lover and aesthete, and astral Helen projected by Theseus the older lover-mentor. As I will show in detail below, the "veil" is specifically tied to the *Helen*; for that play pretends to offer the new Helen but instead reverts to the old one and thus stands in the way of a more nuanced understanding of Helen. *Helen* promises change but enacts repetition; it distracts with a trick (the "new Helen") in order to tell the same story, to allow the same situation to repeat itself. The veil thus becomes a figure for the traditional story that inevitably ties Helen to war and lost lives. H.D. explicitly offers this reading in "Pallinode." "Leuké," in contrast, presents the Helens that different "authors" (i.e., Paris and Theseus) are trying to project – much as Euripides or H.D. willed an incomplete vision of an Egyptian Helen. Through Paris and Theseus H.D. begins to explore more fully the nature of the eidolon and what its disappearance might mean; in this, she goes beyond Euripides, who merely broaches the issue before having the formerly victimized Helen use it to her advantage. Paris in the end separates our speaker from the eidolon he has created once he stops recognizing her as "Helen of Troy," while Theseus urges her ascension into divine, eidolon(qua constellation)-like being, continuing and deepening Thetis's encouragement towards homecoming.

The veil is not only a metaphor that H.D. chooses to employ. Veil/garment imagery is profoundly resonant in *Helen*, and related to the handling of the war and thus implicitly to the cloud;[100] πτύξ (*ptyx*) 'fold' 'layer,' the word used to describe the ether into which the eidolon disappears, is also commonly used for garments (*LSJ* 1.2). The first reference is in the scene of Helen's abduction by Hermes, who surprises her while she is gathering rose petals into her robe (line 245), like another Persephone or Kreousa. Garments qua veils play a central role in Helen's escape scheme and the ritual she pretends to engage in. Helen and Menelaus undergo reverse transformations: Pretending to be his own attendant, Menelaus is

[100] *Helen* mostly uses the word πέπλος 'any woven cloth used for a covering' (*LSJ*).

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nonetheless restored to more fitting kingly attire, shedding his rags, while Helen, pretending to be a widow, switches to black mourning robes (line 1088). After this garment exchange, some fabric is still left over. The Greek custom for burying a "shade" (line 1240), Helen claims, is that it must be buried at sea in empty robes (line 1243). In the play's plot, this is of course the brilliant ruse that allows the Greeks to get a ship. But, symbolically speaking, it is as though for Menelaus and Helen to be able to return to Sparta, they must bury the emblems of their Trojan selves, and the ritual involving Menelaus is precisely the counterpart of Helen's disavowal of her beauty; her eidolon is gone, and now his shade qua warrior must be done away with as well. It is, however, doubly a ruse: not just for Theoclymenus, but for us too, since they do not go through with the ritual and Helen, though "disguised" in mourning, still seeks the Trojan *kleos*. Instead of rebirth, we have repetition.[101]

H.D.'s deep engagement with Euripides is evident in the way that she deploys her "veil." In "Pallinode" it is tied almost exclusively to "the host": Already in the first poem, Helen asserts that "I hear their [= the host's] voices / there is no veil between us" (2). The "host" offers her a first way of engaging with the imagery surrounding the Euripidean eidolon. Though H.D. will develop the Persephone analogy (complete with the mention of rose petals) in "Leuké," she repurposes the rose petals first in "Pallinode" when Helen claims the host away from Achilles: "they were mine, not his, / the unnumbered host; // mine, all the ships, / mine, all the thousand petals of the rose" (25). This is an idea carried over, though translated here for the first time, from *IA*, where the army, and especially the Myrmidons, seemed to be allied with Helen, against Achilles. In that play, it is Achilles whose name is separate from his body[102] and who seems relatively uninvested in the war. In his first appearance Achilles speaks of the Greek army's "eros," while Agamemnon refers to their "Aphrodite" (i.e., desire) to get to barbarian land and prevent the theft of Greek wives.[103] That is, "Aphrodite" is not only involved in Helen's abduction but in the whole Greek army's attitude towards the war. So, H.D.'s Helen both unifies the host and unites herself with them. Just as she vows to defend her "deathless name," she gives them "one name," "Eros, the Hawk Horus," aligning them too with the "veil of Cytheraea" (37, 41). Helen's own question, "can one weigh the thousand ships / against one kiss in the night?," becomes

[101] For a differently shaded reading of the rebirth theme in *Helen*, see Segal, "Two Worlds," 593–97.
[102] *IA* 910, 947.
[103] *IA* 808–09, 1264–65.

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moot in the context of "Pallinode," whether the "kiss" is that between Helen and Paris in Sparta or between Helen and Menelaus/Achilles in Egypt (37).[104] It is the same as weighing "Helen against the lost, / a feather's weight with a feather" since there is no difference between Helen's eros and the host's (30).

Like Helen in Euripides, H.D.'s "Pallinode" Helen continually returns to the host, but unlike her Euripidean counterpart who initially blames herself for their misfortunes, this Helen quickly credits them with saving her from Achilles. This Helen is from an early moment resisting the very story of her translation to Egypt and separation from the war, again curiously identifying what appears to be a moment of innocence in *Helen* (blameless Helen empathizing with Greek soldiers who fought an illusory war) with its opposite. As Achilles' figurative and literal assault on Helen is replayed, Helen imagines that "it was they, the Holocaust, / a host, a cloud or a veil // who encircled, who sheltered me, / when his fingers closed on my throat" (38; similarly at 41, 44). That the cloud would also be a veil seems like a fairly straightforward metaphor; in the most basic sense, the host cover Helen because they die for or instead of her. In an echo of the Euripidean Helen's proposed ritual, this Helen blackens her face and claims a veil of dead soldiers – akin to Menelaus's empty shroud, or even the tapestry she weaves in *Iliad* 3 – for her protection. By making the veil interchangeable with the cloud (since they are both protective and associated with the war), H.D. also conflates Helen's putative transport to Egypt in a cloud with the cloud that replaced her, something already suggested by Euripides' use of νεφέλη for both. Going beyond Euripides, she further identifies the two clouds not with Helen herself but with the war dead, who are after all engendered by her "transport" (whether to Troy or to Egypt), as if they were all part of the same fabric.

Eidolon qua veil comes to suggest, then, the interposition of the traditional story in any attempt to alter it, the interdependence of Helen and her image, the "face" and the "thousand ships." There is no room for a second Helen, and we see this already in Euripides. Faced with a Helen whose resemblance to his wife he sees and for whom he seems to have developed some sympathy, Menelaus finally resists her plea that he believe her story by saying that "I trust my many labors at Troy, not you" (line 593). Then, even after recognizing our Egyptian Helen, he forces a trade-off between

[104] This is H.D.'s take on a Marlovian question (v.i.97–99), which receives an affirmative answer from Marlowe's doomed Faustus: "Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel, / And then return to Helen for a kiss" (108–09).

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the host and this Helen when pleading with Theonoe. Menelaus demands that Hades return the dead he received from his sword for Helen's sake if Theonoe cannot be convinced to grant him Helen (lines 969–74). In exchange, he suggests, Hades will receive Helen herself (lines 989–90). Either the dead are dead for Helen's sake, or Helen *is* not. Preserving the idea of a Helen and of a war for Helen is more important than establishing the "truth." This is the case for the play at large too, with its return to Trojan glory; Helen is necessary and will somehow go back into her role even if she insists, as she does in the beginning of *Helen*, on an alternate story. It comes as no surprise that when "the image or eidolon of Thetis" speaks the entirety of "Pallinode"'s last book qua choragus, neither the prose nor any element of the poem suggests that what is being spoken is not the words of Thetis herself. As Helen has taken up the old story and merged into her image, so has Thetis into hers.

If the "veil" was the ritual or story towards which we are drawn and which we are compelled to repeat, the "dream" is the projection that inspires it, both for Helen and the host as represented by Achilles. Helen-as-veil is the result of a particular, and particularly powerful, image (or dream) of Helen projected by the warring Greeks, and that is why Achilles is the one to bring it up. Though the captions in "Pallinode" consistently suggest that Helen our speaker, Helen in Egypt, must be ("*obviously*," p. 41, "*Surely*," p. 42) the dream, the poems have little to say about it. It is Achilles who clarifies how the "dream" will be deployed, and implicitly helps account for the captions' insistent tone. When "*We see, with the eyes of Achilles, Helen upon the Walls*," we encounter Helen as "mist," resolved not into a veil but into a dream (49, 48). "Had she enchanted us // with a dream of daring, of peril, / as yet un-writ in the scrolls of history, / unsung as yet by the poets?," Achilles asks, hinting at the double significance of Helen (50). Helen's enchanting power lies first in Greece's disbelief in and fundamental disturbance by a story in which a woman (may) dare to do what she wanted, that is, by her own unprecedented dream of daring;[105] second, she enchants, as we have seen, by offering *them* a dream of daring, which they do not want to let go of. The latter is exactly the argument the rhetor Isocrates would make in his "Encomium on Helen."[106]

Helen's change between "Pallinode" and "Leuké" is indicated by the status of her veil. When she appears to Paris in Leuké "in torn garment, in rent veil," he can hardly recognize her because "your garment sheathed

[105] See Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, *passim*.
[106] *Discourses* 10.52, 10.67.

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you / like an image in Egypt," as if she had been embalmed by Euripides and H.D. in her permanent association with the war (145, 146). Theseus and Paris rend the veil by attempting to change the story, for each of their Helens expresses a different archetype. Yet neither has the force of the traditional story yet: While "Pallinode" is conflicted on Helen's existential status, "Leuké" insists on the immateriality of these Helen-dreams, consistently imagining Helen as ghost. Whereas, moreover, the alignment between Helen and the host in "Pallinode" developed along the lines of the *IA*, the main versions of the Helen-dream here are resurrected from the oppositions that structure *Hippolytus:* sensual Helen (imagined by Paris and aligned with her eidolon, with Aphrodite, and with "spring love") and intellectual/pure Artemisian Helen (imagined through Theseus) (200). These reflect the split Helen at the end of the Euripidean play – the wife that follows Menelaus to Sparta and the celestial Helen that is deified with her brothers – as well as the two options for relation to the past offered by Menelaus (return, repetition) and Teucer (imitation, recreation).

Given the trajectory of "Pallinode," where the possibility of a Helen beyond the veil is foreclosed, and the fact that our speaker in "Leuké" opens by rejecting that perspective, "Leuké"'s Trojan Helen is more easily disposed of than the divine Helen projected by Theseus which takes up most of the section. For Paris, Helen is the Trojan eidolon, whose disappearance he initially refutes. Whether Helen accepts her image, as Thetis urges, or renounces it as she does in the opening of "Leuké," he insists that it is still there. "Who will forget Helen?" is the main motif of the Paris-voiced Book 2, suggesting that neither he nor those who died will. Paris asserts that both Achilles and Helen have failed in erasing Helen though she "courted annihilation" (140). But he also paradoxically tries to do it himself: "I am the first in all history / to say, she died, died, died, / when the Walls fell" (131, and again 141). Paris cannot see our speaker except as the eidolon and cannot envision a return of Helen to Sparta or anywhere else; his Helen is dead once their moment of intimacy is denied (132–33). Yet even after she is "gone, gone utterly," Paris recalls her in the guise of Aphrodite; he casts "this haven, this peace, this return" as a replay of "Adonis and Cytheraea," further turning Helen into an embodiment of nature, "Helena of the trees" (132, 140, 141). Unable to let go of his attachment to the eidolon's reality – indeed, materiality – he in the end commands our speaker to disappear as it does (and like Helen in *Faust*): "stop; vanish into thin air; / break the charm; // dissolve like fire" (146). In sending Helen back into her eidolon and away from Leuké, he prepares the ground for Theseus's intervention.

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After the path of return is dismissed again despite Paris's attempts to resurrect it, "Leuké" turns to the Teucerian option. It suggests that Helen could be reinstated elsewhere, first in a way already intimated by Paris and which recalls the syncretism of the *Ion*: through connection to a greater mythical pattern. At the same time, she is also integrated into the pattern of H.D.'s hellenic works to that moment. The "new" place that Helen can go to, after Egypt becomes Greece and Paris's Troy is left behind, is Athens, on the way to which H.D. had left her Kreousa and Ion. The figure of Theseus allows H.D. to return both to her own loose ends (as Theseus had been absent from her Hippolytean imaginings) and to her character's (as the story of Helen's early abduction by Theseus is not one much "sung by the harpers"). Moreover, to the extent that Theseus is aligned with Freud, H.D. can revisit his reading of her engagement with Greece as an obsession with Helen Doolittle, her mother, and a desire to return to the womb:

> The Professor translated the pictures on the wall … as a desire for union with my mother. I was physically in Greece, in Hellas (Helen). I had come home to the glory that was Greece. Perhaps my trip to Greece … might have been interpreted as a flight from reality. (*Tribute* 44)

Is this an accurate interpretation of H.D.'s "return to the Greek scene," her institution of a new Salamis, a new motherland in a different place? Though all of these paths – mythic, literary, psychoanalytic – are explored, often in their merging rather than their distinctness, "Leuké" ends with Helen at a crossroads: "teach me to remember, // … / teach me not to remember," she asks Theseus (207). She wavers between embracing the erasure of the past proposed by Theseus – her reinstatement in the newly discovered "immaculate purity, / security" of the both astral and womblike island of Leuké (described, e.g., as Thetis's "egg-shell") – and its continued recall, which becomes tied to her own sense of agency (194, 197).

Just as Achilles loomed over H.D.'s *IA* choral songs but his role in the unfolding of that tragedy was barely addressed, so Theseus is the unseen character in her versions of *Hippolytus*. In the Euripidean play Theseus most explicitly combines the Aphrodisian and Artemisian poles: He is passionate and impulsive but also reasonable. He doesn't suffer from either the madness or the repression that Phaedra and Hippolytus do, and at the end of the play he is the one who actually speaks to Artemis. H.D. draws our attention to exactly this aspect of his character here: "*The opposites have been reconciled, actually, in Theseus*" (227). While Paris insists on the Trojan eidolon and on Helen's exceptionality, Theseus projects an

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all-encompassing vision. He sees reality as a kind of eidolon: "all myth, the one reality," he pronounces (151). Indirectly addressing Helen's own game of role exchange in "Pallinode," he emphasizes pattern: "there was always another and another and another, / shall we match them like knuckle-players" (162). His Helen images proliferate though they are united by her name as rose petals are all part of a single rose (another extension of "Pallinode" imagery beyond the Trojan tale): "Helen on the way to Egypt," "Helen returning," "Helen on the sea-road, / nearing Troy"; "Helen – Helen – Helen – / there was always another and another and another; / the rose has many petals" (163, 187). Like Thetis, Theseus tries to re-set Helen into Greek myth, but her place there is more mobile: "live with the swan, your begetter, / return to the Shell, your mother, // Leda, Thetis or Cytheraea" (165). Similarly, though his insistence that "This is Athens, or was or will be" suggests that he, again like Thetis, imagines a fully Greek Helen, what defines "Athens" is its placelessness (151). Theseus asks Helen to stay at a distance both from Egypt and Troy and from "here": "you are neither there not here // but wavering / like a Psyche" (166).[107] He more explicitly codes her journey as a resurrection, recalling the primary definition of the eidolon, as seen in the cases of Patroclus in *Iliad* 23 and Polydorus in the opening of *Hecuba*, both of whom are precisely neither here nor there. Still, though Theseus encourages Helen to stay on the move, he also advocates for, if not the creation of a new Salamis, a foundation of a Hel(l)enic home elsewhere, in the no-place/all-place that he perceives Leuké to be.

Contributing to Helen's mobility is H.D.'s reconstitution in "Leuké" of the elements in *Helen* that connect that play to other mythical paradigms. In her *Helen* essay, H.D. had somewhat surprisingly seen Helen's encounter with Theoclymenus as one between Artemis and Hippolytus: He "like another Hippolytus … drops at her feet the spoils of his desert-hunt" and "She shines like the goddess Artemis in the night-forest" (16). This early reading of the play returns in her placement of Hippolytean details throughout the Helen–Theseus section. Helen speaks of being found as a "Maiden" "entangled in the nets / your huntsmen spread," like another Artemis trying to "free the birds" (154). Near the end of "Leuké," Helen merges into the Artemisian, asking "is it Death to know / this immaculate purity, / security?" (194) (to which *HT* would say yes). She then proceeds to renounce her motherhood and potential identification

[107] For a brief overview of the image of the psyche-butterfly in H.D., see Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, 8–11.

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with Demeter in order to align herself with pure Maiden Persephone ("I am only a daughter, / no, I am not Demeter," "I am Koré, Persephone"), and to emphasize that she too "was taken" by Achilles, like Persephone by Hades (195, 196). *Helen*'s second stasimon is about Demeter and Persephone; the tenuous connection between the Demeter myth and our play is made somewhat cryptically in the second antistrophe, where the chorus claims that Helen has "incurred the wrath of the Great / Mother … by not honoring / the goddess' sacrifices" (lines 1355–57). Grégoire treats this strange choral song in detail, interpreting Helen's sin against the Great Mother as, essentially, an attempt to impersonate her.[108] This is what Euripidean Helen has to atone for, and this is what H.D.'s Helen does in purgatorial "Leuké."

Not unlike Paris, who concluded his section by urging the disappearance of Helen into thin air, Theseus too places her in the sky, allowing her to imagine the isle of Leuké as "the Moon," the sphere of Artemis (193). H.D. thus evokes both the end of *Helen*, where our heroine is deified as *sister* rather than wife (cf. *Odyssey* 4), and especially that of *Orestes*. In this, his next extant play, Euripides takes even the half-palinode back, contrasting a vain Helen with a distraught Elektra. *Orestes* still ends with Apollo proclaiming the deification of Helen, now in a constellation which is found, like the eidolon in *Helen*, ἐν αἰθέρος πτυχαῖς, in the folds of the ether (line 1636). But H.D./Helen suggests early on that Theseus's dream vision may not fit either, that this cannot be Helen's home. Like Hippolytus in *HT*, Theseus tries to take possession of Helen's feet: He unclasps "heavy thongs" from her "wounded" feet and then refers to "these clumsy boots," to imply perhaps the difficulty of getting at Helen's real "feet" and emphasize that the shoes she has been wearing so far – offered by Paris (boots) and Achilles (sandals) – do not suit her (151, 152). Theseus asks her to put on "your own fleece-lined shoes," but also suggests he could choose for her (152). By "Leuké" 4.5 Helen seems to have worn the shoes offered, yet she responds defiantly, knowing that these shoes are not hers either. "Who wore these fur-edged shoes before?," she asks Theseus, notably changing his description of them (155). Aware that he is placing her in his pattern of patterns, she answers in kind: "laugh Theseus, slay another Minotaur" (155). That is, H.D. may bring forth the starry Helen from the end of *Orestes*, but it is also Helen the reader and measurer who reappears, suggesting, *contra* Euripides, that her deification does not end her story, much

[108] He also reads the episode through a specifically Athenian lens, which would reinforce H.D.'s decision to weave this motif into the Theseus section (*Hélène*, 14–17).

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as her forced merging with the eidolon by Paris did not either. "I would see further," she says, explaining,

> I would bind myself with the Girdle,
>
> the circlet, the starry Zone;
> as I strove in the precinct,
> to decipher the Amen-script,
>
> so I would read here
> in my crystal, the Writing,
> I would measure the star-space. (205)

Moreover, despite Theseus's efforts to separate Helen from the realm of war, our speaker knows that it cannot but be part of her identity, even if not her whole identity as in "Pallinode." She cannot have a blank slate, cannot start anew, pretending the new Salamis or the new Helen could forget or erase the past without being haunted by it – to take off the veil, just like Pound's Herakles takes off the mask of agony, and be done with it. Her final desire is "to re-assemble the host, / so that none of the heroes be lost," to gather the limbs of Osiris, as H.D. has here gathered her own early work and thinking (207). It's that kind of "Writing" – where finally Helen herself comes face-to-face with and probes her many images, both historically and as put forth in *HiE* – that "Eidolon" takes up.

"Which was the veil, / which was the dream? / they were one": Eidolon as Token

The threads running through H.D.'s readings in the epic tradition come together in *HiE*'s final section, "Eidolon." While "Pallinode" functioned as a translation of the *Helen* and "Leuké" extended to other Euripidean plays, "Eidolon" presents itself as a translation on a larger scale. It treats "the tradition" (Homer, Goethe, Pound, Eliot) more broadly on the one hand and, on the other, represents H.D.'s most forceful and specific intervention in it. That intervention consists in the attempt to make a positive case for the eidolon, as distinct from the "veil" and "dream" presented in the previous sections, and thus to argue for the actuality and efficacy of art, as well as for the possibility of a relation to the past that is not a retelling of the same old story. The poem's dramatic elements also surface most prominently here: Many voices are featured, while the narrative is propelled forward by the tension among competing stories. It is here, moreover, that the captions diverge the most from the poems that follow them. By

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homing in on the eidolon itself, H.D. turns the question of Helen into the question of art *tout court*, as well as into that of the relation between antiquity and modernity.

"Eidolon" is H.D.'s pallinode proper. It repeats the scene (set up in "Pallinode") but changes it, having now worked through all the elements that make up the Euripidean *Helen*, as well as through her own previous work with Euripides. The question "Eidolon" asks is thus also one it enacts: how to remember or build on the past, how to use old images, constructions, or patterns without being drawn back into repeating them – as *Helen* and "Pallinode" did. Structurally, "Eidolon" stands in a unique relation to *HiE*; it is both the third and final part, and its remit is to review, reflect, and reflect on, the whole work. H.D. draws attention to this by resorting to such a structure a second time, at the very end of *HiE*, where we find a short poem also titled "*Eidolon*." The poem, printed in the italics until then reserved for the captions, stands as a whole unto itself – as if replacing or condensing the long section "Eidolon" we have just read – and appears at the same time to be part of that section (all the more so because "Eidolon," unlike the previous two sections, consists of six and not seven books). This double part–whole relationship is crucial to H.D.'s re-conceptualization of the term *eidolon*, and explains (as we will see below) her final translation of the word as "token." In "Leuké" the two "dreams" of Paris and Theseus followed opposite paths; Paris only saw a part of Helen, while Theseus only saw wholes ("all myth, the one reality"), for which Helen's individuality did not matter. The "veil" in "Pallinode" symbolized the imposition of a partial story on the whole; a full understanding of Helen was occluded by the tradition associating her with war. Conceiving of *eidolon* as token allows flexibility: A token is both distinct or at least finite and, by its very nature, incomplete, pointing away from itself. This translation redirects the eidolon/image away from the binary oppositions of life–death, truth–illusion, reality–fiction, presence–representation, allowing it instead to function as a concrete potentiality, a part of many possible wholes.

In both Paris's and Theseus's dreams, Helen disappears into the ideal, whether out of spite or sympathy and whether the mythical paradigm through which she is interpreted is narrow (Cytheraea) or broad ("all myth"). Despite revolving around reflection and thematizing the many forms of the image and its manifold powers, "Eidolon" returns Helen from the ether by embedding her in a broader textual materiality and by emphasizing her own active role in its de- and re-construction. We can more easily understand "Eidolon" as the intervention that *HiE* has been building

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towards if we recall the Euripidean play. As there Helen "kills" Menelaus only to resurrect him as he was, so Helen with Achilles here, but now not simply to re-enact the pattern. Whereas in "Pallinode" she stops reading, gets frustrated with not gaining knowledge, and calls on the Dioscuri and Thetis, here Helen comes into her role as "enchanter" yet reverses or rejects Euripides' play, where Helen used her enchanting powers to restate the pattern and to essentially re-correct the palinode. Thinking of "Eidolon" as revisiting that moment in *Helen* where Helen herself takes on the production of eidola – the sham ritual – helps account for this part's increasing self-consciousness and for its emphasis on the notion of an eidolon and allows us to see H.D.'s precisely honed intervention: her final, and, unlike in the early essay, now fully considered argument that such production of eidola (different forms of art) may be something more than a sham. The eidolon may always function as a token of the pull of tradition, or the pull of Greek antiquity, but "if you look at [it] long enough, this peculiar twist, its magic angle, would lead somewhere" else, and allow for the forging of a different kind of intimate connection between antiquity and modernity, Greek and English (*Bid* 162).

Each of the section's six books treats a different "eidolic" aspect, moving towards an ever-expanding definition. Book 1 presents eidolon as voice, as an interior doubled self, and simultaneously echoes earlier sections of *HiE* itself. Book 2 moves outwards from eidolon as personal, internalized story; it considers eidolon from a more theoretical perspective as fiction, deception, or lure, while revisiting H.D.'s prior Greek work, from the imagist "Orchard" and *IA* through the *Helen* essay and *Hippolytus* to *Ion*, and homing in on the ethics of song and violence/war that all her Euripidean versions had in common. Books 3 and 4 open up to "tradition" or history, reflecting on Achilles' and Helen's "legends," the creation and destruction of their literary eidola, while also featuring the poem's first material eidolon. From the emphasis on sound/song in the first two books we move here to an examination of the image which allows H.D. to engage with the image-based poetics proposed by Eliot and Pound. After both Achilles and Helen have been released from "legend," Book 5 revisits the legend that this very poem, *HiE*, has built, while also developing the possibility of its having been "nothing at all," thin air after all. Finally, Book 6 and "*Eidolon*" turn Helen herself into a reflective surface; trying to recover eidolon from nothingness – just as Goethe couldn't do in his Helena-Akt – H.D. offers a final translation that surprisingly brings together the cosmic and the minute, as well as English and Greek: token.

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Voices from Elsewhere

Positioning the work as a large-scale translation, H.D. in "Eidolon" tries for the first time to see what Euripides was "looking at" or translating – namely, Homer – as the final step in their now joint transposition into "that world." The section, especially in Books 3 and 4, spends more time with Helen and Achilles at Troy, a feature of Euripidean plays also to be sure, but with Homeric resonances highlighted. Book 1, with its tracing of eidolon as voice, prepares the ground. While, throughout *HiE*, there is a strong sense of voice coming from elsewhere,[109] Eidolon begins from this "derivative," reflective position, and even identifies it as such. Unlike in "Pallinode" or "Leuké," where we were told that Achilles, Paris, or Theseus spoke, in "Eidolon" such identifications are put into question. Already in the very first poem the caption broaches the question of the eidolon explicitly: "*Helen is called back to Egypt. It is Achilles who calls her – or is it the image or eidolon of Achilles who is 'commanded to say, Theseus commands me'*" (208). Similarly, in 1.4, when Paris comes in, the caption tells us "*Paris, or the voice or image of Paris, would call Helen back to 'my small room'*" (213). Achilles' and Paris's sections (1.1–1.4 and 1.5–1.7 respectively) are full of quotations or echoes from earlier poems spoken by Theseus and Helen in "Leuké," while Helen's concluding poem in 1.8 weaves in phrases from all the preceding sections in "Eidolon" Book 1 which had been supposedly spoken by other characters. As H.D. would have known,[110] Menelaus presents Helen in *Odyssey* 4.279 as a skillful imitator of voices, adding to her characterization as a weaver of images in *Iliad* 3: Standing next to the Trojan Horse, she "made [her] voice sound like the voice of the wife of each of the Argives" hidden in it, almost successfully tempting them all to reveal their presence and thus the ruse. Here H.D. goes one step further. Helen imitates the voices not only of wives, but of the heroes themselves. In an even more obvious gesture of self-reflexivity, the many direct quotations from previous sections of *HiE* are put in the same italic font as the captions. The two apparently separate domains bleed into each other now (as eidolon and "reality" do), until the very last segment of this long work: a final poem, outside of the book structure, placed in italics itself.

Having revisited the idea of writing as transmission of a voice from elsewhere that blends into one's own, H.D. then applies it to her own

[109] For example, pp. 88, 180.
[110] And as her closely read source Grégoire, ed., *Hélène*, 25n3, in any case notes.

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work, her own sense of writing within a tradition, in the second book of "Eidolon":

> *There is a story, a song "the harpers will sing forever." It is a play, a drama – "who set the scene? who lured the players?" The players have no choice in the matter of the already-written drama or script. They are supremely aware of the honour that "all song forever" has conferred upon them. They would play their parts well.* (230)

While the "harpers will sing forever" motif has been present in the poem – a nod perhaps to the self-consciousness with which Homer presents specifically Achilles and Helen in this respect[111] – the explicit reference to characters "play[ing] their parts well" is first introduced here; a few pages later too, Helen speaks "*by rote*" (234). The matter-of-fact, distant tone of the prose contrasts with the urgency of the questioning in the poem that follows:

> who set the scene?
> who lured the players from home
> or imprisoned them in the Walls,
>
> to inspire us with endless,
> intricate questioning?
> why did they fight at all?
>
> was Helen daemon or goddess?
> how did they scale the Walls?
> was the iron-horse an ancient symbol
>
> or a new battering-ram?
> was Helen another symbol,
> a star, a ship or a temple?
>
> how will the story end?
> was Paris more skillful than Teucer?
> Achilles than Hector? (231)

Going beyond the return to an old story as yet another iteration of the same pattern, a normative tale in which everyone behaves (or the poet has everyone behave) as they should to gain the glory of song, H.D. presents the "known text" as the source of further questions. She offers a brief list of modern and ancient interpretations: Helen as daemon or goddess is already in the *Iliad* and in the famous *Agamemnon* chorus, while the symbolic readings gesture to more recent views. How "the story" ends is still

[111] *Iliad* 3.125–28, 6.357–58, 9.189.

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an open question – or rather, H.D.'s asking it here and now performs that very opening. The use of the first-person plural in "inspire us" – like the question format, a late addition and an anomaly in this text[112] – only drives the point home. The juxtaposition of the prose and lyric passages further enacts the possible polysemy. The lyric diverges from the story foretold, as indeed H.D. will eventually want to argue that the "new Helen" can truly diverge from, be hatched out of the old, rather than simply return to it ("Pallinode") or erase it ("Leuké"). Neither an opposition, nor a retraction, nor an empty repetition, but a pallinode, an eidolon.

H.D. first hears the voices of her own older Greek works; such allusions become more frequent in "Eidolon" than they were in the previous two sections. The debate between Achilles and Paris in Book 1 recalls that between Artemis and Apollo at the end of *Hippolytus Temporizes*; Achilles is aligned with a cult of death, while Paris, who accuses Achilles of hunting "man," focuses on mankind. Unlike in *HT*, where Artemis "wins" the debate, and unlike in *Hippolytus*, where she intervenes with Theseus – we saw a combination of those two scenes at the end of "Leuké" – here it is Helen who weaves the threads between Paris and Achilles. She does so by looking back rather than by predicting a future of destruction like Artemis in *HT*: "Theseus would have the answer, // but no, I will not call / until I review all the past / in the new light of a new day" (226). Though, moreover, Helen then proceeds to offer Theseus's answer – "this is Athens or was or will be" (227, echoing 151) – she immediately interrupts herself: "but O the ecstasy – familiar fragrance, / late roses, bruised apples" (227). Just as H.D. had pushed aside the tyranny of the "pure" Athenian, perfectly balanced, ideal loveliness in favor of the Priapic late offerings in "Orchard" early in the imagist years, so here she begins to suggest the insufficiency of the Thesean model. Just as there the acknowledgment of lateness freed up speech, so here it occasions memory: "now I remember, I remember," Helen exclaims, and what H.D. recalls is her earlier conceptions of *Helen*'s stasima, now treated more skeptically (227).

As would befit a rewriting of the second part of *Helen*, in which, unusually, all of the play's stasima are concentrated, H.D. revisits her assumptions about the role of the chorus as a ritual institution, trying to think herself into and out of Helen's invented ritual. In the Euripidean play, Helen's invention and performance of the ritual to "bury" her husband's eidolon (represented by empty robes) contrasts with the stasima

[112] HDP 31/830. This section of "Eidolon" (2.5) is heavily edited, with a whole first draft and several lines in the subsequent draft crossed out.

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that bracket it. For the chorus treats the same theme differently. The first stasimon laments the fate of *real* women mourning their husbands in the way that Helen only pretends to, while the second turns to the divine mourning of Demeter and connects it to the Eleusinian mysteries. Helen is thus literally placed somewhere between "what is god and what is not god" (line 1137) as Euripides offers us two conflictingly shaded interpretations of her action. Is her ritual simply the human version of the divine chorus that gathers around Demeter – the latter represented and commemorated in some way in tragedy itself – a ritual that can help assuage sorrow but can never fully rectify the loss? That is, even though it is not genuine (as any festival is only a re-enactment of the initial impulse that prompted it), does it retain its validity because it borrows the ritual structure? Or is Helen's ritual reprehensible because conducted under false premises, because while she has been theoretically in sympathy with the other female victims of the war in the first half of the play (the parodos, split between Helen and the chorus, offers a mourning song similar to Demeter's), she now simply apes their sorrow to get her way while leaving them behind? At first H.D. seems to suggest, like *Helen*'s second stasimon, that ritual mitigates destruction when she adds yet another shading to the reason for which Troy was "lost": "a round of Delphic priestesses, / beating on Holy Ground, // a rhythm before the altar" (232). Yet Helen then offers the opposite perspective, aligning herself with the first Euripidean stasimon. She wonders if the women doomed because of their association with Achilles (Briseis, Polyxena) "matter[ed]," a question that is symbolic, historiographical, and aesthetic all at once: "did they count at all, / or were they mere members of a chorus // in a drama that had but one other player?" (241). Now the chorus is not the "author" or underwriter of war, but its victim, reflecting that same ambiguity present in Euripides' *Helen*, and implied in the *IA* stasima as H.D. had translated them almost forty years before. Is loss made meaningful through its recuperation in a ritual or artistic context, or is that a privileged position to take, available to Helens and Demeters but not to ordinary women, for whom loss is just loss? This is precisely the question that H.D. in her early essay did not want to probe and that Helen in "Pallinode" had tried to eschew by identifying with Iphigeneia.

The issue of ritual falls into "Eidolon"'s larger-scale questioning of the relationship between creative and destructive impulses; indeed, Helen's ritual in *Helen* encompasses both. What had been in "Eidolon" Book 1 a debate between "l'amour" (signified in the passage below by the "fluttering veil" of Helen/Aphrodite) and "la mort" becomes now one between poetry

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and war, essentially asking *Helen*'s question but in the terms of *IA*'s first stasimon (discussed in Chapter 3 above):

> was a funeral-pyre to be built,
> a holocaust of the Greeks,
> because of a fluttering veil,
>
> or because Apollo granted a lute-player,
> a rhythm as yet unheard,
> to challenge the trumpet-note? (229)

Soon H.D. extends the appeal of the "rhythm as yet unheard" from Helen (lured by Paris) to "poets" (thus clarifying the "us" inspired to "infinite questioning" above), and turns the Trojan War into poetry's Hel(l)enic eidolon:

> Was it Apollo's snare
> so that poets forever
> should be caught in the maze of the Walls
>
> of a Troy that never fell? (232)

H.D. implies that the story of "the maze of the Walls" was more seductive than that of Helen in Egypt, which is why the former prevailed. Just as Greeks nominally fight for Helen, but actually – as already the *Iliad* suggests (often through Achilles), as *IA* confirms, and as *Helen* allegorizes – for themselves (seeking *kleos*, obeying eros), turning Helen into an empty pretense, an eidolon which even when revealed, as in *Helen*, does little to prevent a new mini-Trojan War from breaking out, so poets are (willingly?) tricked into singing about a war that didn't happen ("a Troy that never fell"), indulging in a poetic fantasy of documentation, memorialization, or praise instead of documenting or participating in wars that did, or forgoing the writing about war altogether. Are poets, then, like Menelaus or Helen herself in *Helen*? They pretend to lament war, violence, and the losses that result but are themselves permanently propagating, navigating if not creating the script, are themselves permanently attached to an eidolon. Such an alignment comes from considering *IA* in light of *Helen*, but also from thinking about that play as a whole in a way that H.D. had not done in 1915. This criticism complicates the position that we assume H.D. is staking for herself here, highlighting her continuing ambivalence about her poetic activity and her engagement with a poetic war and an old mythology.

Yet, having offered this critique – the most subversive view of the complicity of war and song that she has traced in all her versions of Greek tragedy – H.D. tentatively takes it back. Helen has a task, and so do the poets. We are now not "caught," but "called" to the walls:

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I am called back to the Walls
to find the answer,

to wander as in a maze
(Theseus' Labyrinth),
to explore each turn of the street,

for a way to the ships and the wharves,
to return and sort over and over,
my bracelets, sandals and scarves – (232)

The passage offers us a different way of understanding the "Troy that never fell." The still-standing Troy, in which poets wander and to which they can be called back, is one that is always there to be probed, where there is always something left over to sort. That is, H.D. may be sidestepping entirely the question of reality versus fiction or illusion, the question of "what really happened," in favor of the result: the permanent reality of an imaginative space that is inarguably constructed on the one hand (Theseus' Labyrinth made by Daedalus, "the scene" discussed above) but still unknown on the other. Hence Helen's specific return to "my bracelets, sandals and scarves," beautiful accessories, to be sure, but also instruments of constraint and circumscription, binding her wrists, feet, and neck. The process H.D.'s Helen prepares to engage in here is similar to that of her Kreousa, who tells and retells her own story of constraint until she herself can take possession of it. The tension is conveyed rhythmically as well; "bracelets," "sandals," "scarves" are all dactylo-trochaic words (deliberately echoing back precisely to the, in English stress-scansion, dactylic Greek names "Theseus" and "Labyrinth") that push against the iambic pulse of their line, just as "over and over" switched the previous two lines' rhythm from rising to falling. Much like the momentary "rhythm" that revealed Artemis and Hippolytus's suppressed and elusive connection in *HT*, so here within the overarching, readable rhythm or known story pattern a different set of "metres" might be felt. It is such new paths that the next two books will focus on as we move from palinode (the telling of the same story in a way that seems subversive but conforms) to pallinode (intervention).

Of Ships and Dolls: Achilles Meets Herakles

Books 3 and 4 revisit the making and breaking of legends as such, starting with the traditional Achilles. They conceptualize the process in terms imagistically similar to those outlined above. So, in 4.4 Helen compares

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having "watched, / as a careful craftsman, // the pattern shape, / Achilles' history," both to various things *breaking* ("As a circlet may break / in the heat of the smelting-fire, / or a plate of armour crack") and to images being created ("seen him like the very scenes // on his famous shield, / outlined with the graver's gold") (262–63). The shaping of the "history" is the cracking of containing or protective structures (circlet, armor), and "craft" seems to lie in knowing to wait for them to break, in *watching* them break, or hatch, and then be outlined again. And, unlike the purely spectatorial watching at the end of "Pallinode" where Helen awaits revelation to come from elsewhere ("I will watch and wonder, / lost in an ecstasy, / awaiting the Miracle" [92]), there is no *deus ex machina* here, but solely Helen's, and H.D.'s, crafty, watchful re-view. These books thus continue to be multiply allusive: still to H.D.'s own work (especially the *Hippolytus* and *IA*) but now also to that of her contemporaries Eliot and Pound, and to the *Iliad* as H.D. deepens her examination of Euripides by translating herself into the world he was looking at in turn. She locates the intersection of all these texts/traditions in a literal, material eidolon, as she moves down the *LSJ* definition from ghost to artifact: "an image, a wooden image, / a mermaid, Thetis upon the prow" (240). She concretizes the idea of the old "scene" or ritual and its potential openness examined in Book 2, making it easier to consider its construction and impact and at the same time turning this sculpted image of Thetis into another token for art more broadly, just as song was in Book 2.

The "wooden image" brings together the parodos from *IA* with Walter Pater's "Hippolytus Veiled," and with H.D. favorite, Pausanias. In *IA*, after an epode on Achilles "whom Thetis bore / and Chiron trained, / running in his armor / by the sand of the shore,"[113] the chorus spend several strophes describing the Greek ships, homing in on the "ensign" (*sēma*) of each. Naturally, on Achilles' fleet, "In gilded images high upon their sterns / stood Nereids"; H.D.'s translation singularizes the ships so that "On the prow of each / A goddess sheds gold: / Sea-spirits are cut in tiers of gold" (*CP* 74).[114] The tension in the presentation of the image between passive ("are cut") and active ("sheds"), fixed and mobile, is one that "Eidolon" consistently explores. In going back to her *IA* parodos, H.D. retells it from an excluded perspective – one that is featured in the play itself, much as Theseus's is in *Hippolytus* though absent from H.D.'s versions – namely

[113] *IA* 208–11, trans. Kovacs here and below.

[114] *IA* 239–41. H.D. reads στάζω 'drip' for ἵστημι 'stand,' perhaps intentionally, since she consistently endows these figures with more active qualities than Euripides.

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that of Achilles. At the same time, the fascination the wooden image exerts on Achilles here recalls the Paterian version of the Hippolytus story, where the youth worships exactly such a wooden statue of Artemis, and does so at the expense of his relationship with his self-sacrificing Amazon mother. So in *HiE* the eidolon and Thetis substitute each other: Achilles "forgot her, / the charm, the eidolon, / when his own mother came, // and he forgot his mother" (292). It is Pater's story that reveals the active (and potentially negative) power that such constructs can exert, and while in *HT* H.D. had aligned Artemis and Hippolyta and further linked both with Phaedra, she returns now to Pater's more rigid version of the myth. Finally, Pausanias 3.14.4 provides an account of the historical significance of such a wooden statue of Thetis in Helen's home turf of Laconia during the Second Messenian War, crucially (for H.D.) connecting literary works with both cultic practice and documented events. In Pausanias's telling, moreover, the statue helped reconcile a Spartan and a Messenian woman, leading them to build a temple for Thetis together; the story thus provides a pacifist female counterpoint to Euripides' and Pater's masculine and militant fantasies.

In Book 3 H.D. presents Achilles' construction of the image of Thetis and "our" construction of his Iliadic legend as parallel processes. She summarizes the middle part of the epic in 3.5 ("Achilles skulks in his tent, / they said," "so they armed Patroclus / and Patroclus was slain"), and then offers a "palinode" to the "they said," by placing "Achilles' self" not in the tent but as "a far shadow upon the beach," a reluctant warrior that prays to "his love" for a "swift return" (247–48). Focusing on Achilles on the beach, a kind of eidolon of the Iliadic warrior, she turns him into a version of Helen in Egypt; he has been translated to Troy but is not wholly there. In 3.6, we see Achilles' not inaccurately characterized "tempest-self" as it materializes in *Iliad* 19–21 and especially in his fight with the river Xanthus, before moving on to "Achilles' anger, // his unspeakable grief" for Patroclus which leads to the battle with Hector (249). Yet, for the eidolon of Patroclus that visits Achilles in Book 23, H.D., hatching Euripides who himself hatches Homer, offers the eidolon of Thetis: "so he went to the prow / of his love, his beloved, // feeling her flanks, / tearing loose weed from her stern, / brushing sand from her beams, // not speaking, but praying" (248). H.D. puts the eidolon not near the end of war, as a figure for the loss that would explain Achilles' final rage, but, partly inspired by *IA*, at its beginning – just as it is in *Helen*.

H.D. hatches the image of Achilles by the sea, present both in the *Iliad* and in *IA*, using the eidolon detail from *IA* and "Hippolytus Veiled" as

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a spotlight through which to read Homeric epic on the one hand and the modernist mythologies of her contemporaries on the other. She first introduces the Thetis eidolon by placing her Achilles in a "scene" set by Eliot and Pound's Heraklean imaginings. Herakles has already entered *HiE* in relation to Achilles in both "Pallinode" (e.g., 4.7) and "Leuké" (7.5). Mythologically, this makes sense. Herakles is what Achilles could not be – namely, a son of Zeus – insofar as Thetis was fated to bear a son greater than his father.[115] Herakles is, in contrast, more closely aligned with Helen, also a child of Zeus; one of the classic eidola, his split self after death mirrors Helen's own double fate at the end of *Helen*. Like Pound and Eliot, H.D. stages a moment of illumination through memory for her solitary hero, combining the Poundian Herakles' vision of paternal law "in a sudden flare," "in an instantaneous flash," with that of Eliot's speaker in the Heraklean "Marina," who sees himself as father and maker.

> a sail sensed, not seen;
> a bow, a familiar prow,
> a hand on the rudder,
>
> ropes, rope-ladders, the smell of tar,
> I think he remembered them all,
> (when he stooped to gather the sticks),
>
> scattered tackle and gear,
> a wheel, a mast, a dipping sail;
> he struck the flint
>
> and the blaze outlined
> the skeleton shapes
> of the broken sticks
>
> and caught the inflammable weed
> in a sudden flare
> and a sputter of salt;
>
> what scent? what wind? what hope
> on the ledge of a desolate beach?
> what did he remember last, what first?
>
> I think he remembered everything
> in an instantaneous flash,
> . . . . . .

[115] See Slatkin, *Power of Thetis*, 70–84, 97–107.

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and looked at Helena,
what spirit, what daemon, what ghost?
a host of spirits crowded around the fire

but I did not see them;
he could have named them all,
had he paused to remember,

but he only saw the ships
assembled at Aulis
he only remembered his own ship

that would lead them all,
he only saw an image, a wooden image,
a mermaid, Thetis upon the prow. (238–40)

While the fire imagery points to *Women of Trachis*,[116] the marine landscape, ship references, and the "what" questions echo even more strongly Eliot's "Marina." There too we read about the "*scent* of pine," "reduced by *wind*," "the *hope*, the new *ships*" (*P* 107–08, my emphasis). There too the speaker proclaims, "I made this, I have forgotten / And remember"; asks, in imitation of Seneca's Hercules quoted in the poem's epigraph, "What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands / What water lapping the bow"; and reflects on "what images return / O my daughter." H.D.'s Achilles has both the Eliotic self-consciousness – he recovers his mother qua constructed image, though he cannot yet remember, as Eliot's speaker can, that "I made this" – and the Poundian blindness, the exclusion of what does not cohere ("but he only saw …"). Yet, while "Marina" opens and closes with specific and vivid imagery, its speaker's emotional climax is in the penultimate stanza: in an intentionally more pointed yet vaguer "this" ("This form, this face, this life") and "that" ("let me / Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken") that, as often in Eliot, allow for a subjective sense of the ineffable, a hint of divine presence. In contrast, H.D.'s and Pound's heroic illuminations conclude with the concrete and constructed image, which is more (H.D.) or less (Pound) explicitly partial. Where Pound suppresses the other tongues that could angle his image differently, H.D. spends the rest of "Eidolon" pursuing them.

[116] Pound sent H.D. the translation immediately upon its appearance. On February 11, 1954, she thanks him for this "so new-old" work, subtly hiding how much of it she has read (EPP 20/895); on July 13, 1954, she admits to Aldington she hadn't yet read it when she wrote Pound (RAP 2/4). Still, given her own "new-old" writing at this time, it stands to reason that she may have given *WT* a good look, whether in February or in July – good enough to spot its climactic scene, with its extensive stage directions and capital letters. July 1954 is also when H.D. starts work on "Eidolon." By November 24, 1955, she has "only read [*WT*] once" (EPP 20/895). In *End to Torment*, 43, she aligns Pound with both Odysseus and Herakles.

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In *IA* H.D. had emphasized the living, active power of the sculptural works on the ships' prows, and here she develops that idea: first using the Thetis image to motivate or naturalize Achilles' many conversations with Thetis on the Trojan beach in the *Iliad* (e.g., in 3.5, as cited above) and then, more importantly, to show the powerful guiding force of such a constructed image.

> I say there is only one image,
> one picture, though the swords flash;
> I say there is one treasure,
>
> one desire, ...
>
> . . . . . .
> I say there is one image,
>
> and slaves and princesses
> and the town itself are nothing
> beside a picture, an image, an idol
>
> or eidolon, not much more than a doll,
> old, old – for ship-rigging and beam
> can be changed, a mast renewed,
>
> a rudder re-set but never the hull;
> this is the same, this is my first ship,
> this is my own, my belovéd
>
> who will lead the host (243–44)

The poem's anaphoric structure helps highlight the multiple trajectories traced for "eidolon," both as concept and as term. The "image" becomes a "picture" – a word with more specifically artistic connotations – that is valued and hoarded ("treasure"), arousing "desire." The chain is then pulled backwards: We return from picture to image, and can go even further back linguistically, reaching idol, then eidolon itself. An "idol" is a worshipped image; its power is not separate from its substance. In connecting it to its etymological source, H.D. tries to make the same case for the ancient "eidolon" itself. The abrupt shift to the ship imagery underlines this point as the Thetis eidolon and the ship it is carved into become one. Indeed, when *HiE* later returns to Thetis on the ship, the line between them becomes completely blurred: "O idol, O eidolon, /… / is she carved of red cedar? / … / he set her upon a plinth / like the curved prow of a ship, / and perhaps the tree is a ship" (291–92). What was initially presented as an analogy (between the original "image" or object of desire and the ship's hull, each respectively worth more than princesses and new masts)

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is actually an identity. The image is the ship; they are made of the same materials and are both the means (or perspective) through which Achilles navigates the world.

But even here, and in contrast to *WT*, the imagistic is subordinate to the linguistic, sculpture to poetry. The repetition of the declarative "I say" suggests that what is presented is not "truth" but another story or speech act, another moment of legend-creation, or self-justification, that blinds the speaker to the harrowing description of Troy's "desolation, destruction" (243). It thus compounds our sense of the power of language over the physical world, its role in shaping reality. H.D. enacts this process of effective "saying" in her verse. Like Eliot's speaker in "Marina," Achilles reviews the possibilities and limits of renewing a ship both metaphorically and literally – H.D. does the same with her words. She builds up to "eidolon," deconstructs it again down to "doll," then offers a doubled anagram ("old, old"), while at the same time renewing her own previous translations of it as "image" or "picture." As with Achilles' claim about the hull, not everything changes; on the small scale, the skeleton of sound remains though it is constantly rearranged, and on the larger scale, the emphasis on the interrogation of images persists. H.D.'s technique of lexical repetition and sonic echo that forms one of the basic structural features of *HiE* (and represents, of course, a use of the eidolon qua [sonic] mirroring) encodes, as in Euripides' *Helen*, both the danger of mere "formalis[m]" and the potential for "transformative echo."[117]

In Book 6, H.D. picks up on this tension between formalism and transformation in order to more sharply distinguish Achilles and the host from Helen in terms of their understanding of the eidolon; here she comes closest to the gendered Pausanian presentation of the Thetis statue. War, she suggests, comes not from eidola but from their forgetting. After describing the contagion of war, she echoes the very first poem in "Eidolon," where Achilles said that he is "commanded to display // a brand, a flame, torch" before admitting that his own "saying" is also commanded (209). So here, we read of the "torch of one brandished spear / that enflames a thousand others" (293). But the continuation of war seems premised on the absence of literal reflection:

> O light reflected from polished buckler
> and shield, a mirror to show the dead,
> we may not look upon,

[117] Ford, "Lyrical Doubling," 301.

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lest we pause and waver
and question the chances of war;
O glory of Pallas,

O Gorgon-head,
turn us not to stone, let us live to strike
merciless strokes for the Flower

that is Greece. (294)

The warriors cannot face the other side of their shield because they would be putting themselves in the position of their enemies – who, to the extent that the shield holds, are soon to be dead – and thus in a position of vulnerability. By further allegorizing the shield as the Gorgon head, they exaggerate the effect of the "pause": permanent inaction, their moment of hesitation immortalized in stone. The shield or Medusa is what protects them, but only as long as they use and do not see it, only as long as they forget about it. Yet the figure who is truly active here is Helen; for it is she who is speaking, ventriloquizing the warriors, as we discover at the end of the poem. She completes the inversion of the Odyssean scene started in Book 1 by suggesting that the real pernicious temptation is not the voices of the soldiers' wives but their own voices since, we learn, "the warriors lured [Achilles] out" of his hiding place on the island of Scyros (294). Moreover, though this poem deceptively begins and ends with the same question – "could a woman ever // know what the heroes felt" (293), "what can a woman know / of a man's passion and birthright?" (294) – we realize that the question isn't Helen's but the warriors' and that, in successfully articulating it, Helen answers it in the positive. This is a measure of how far she has come; these warriors, "the host," had been her allies in "Pallinode," but now she has understood how to distinguish their eidolon from hers. Unlike them who see the Flower that is Greece without understanding its fragility, unlike Achilles who repeatedly "say[s] there is only one image," Helen can conjure and disperse many, including her own.

The Final Trade: From Eidolon to Token

The last three books of *HiE* attempt to reconcile the ideas we have explored thus far: the multivocity and malleability of Books 1 and 2 with the blindness seen in Achilles in Book 3. Book 4 functions as degree zero, an attempt to deny all that has come before by homing in on the most substantial critique of the eidolon: something made out of nothing, an illusion not worth paying attention to, or an unhealthy dependence

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that ought to be extinguished. We have already seen Achilles' destructive "nothing / beside" above; for him, the eidolon erases everything else, and he barely knows it. Should the eidolon, and with it Helen, be erased instead? Book 4 begins with a repeated palinodic gesture – "It was nothing, nothing at all," "it was all nothing," we keep reading (255–56, 258) – and ends with Helen's account of her attempted suicide at Troy, then merged with Achilles' attack on her in "Pallinode." But, like Helen in *Helen*'s second half, this Helen too is now fully in charge of the play. She combines earlier parts of *HiE*, and shifts in and out of roles and characters (as with the warriors above). So, though we have read of her death before, now in the latter half of Book 4 Helen joins Achilles' story of his wandering through Troy in Book 3, Paris's story of her death there in "Leuké," and the landscape of "Hermes of the Ways" in order to describe her failed drowning: "I lay / on the salt grass and my hands / tore at the bitter stems // that cut me like adders' tongues; / it was dark, I had not the power / to leap from the platform or wharf" (266). She also reconsiders the astral fate laid out by Theseus, wondering if she would "blaze out like a meteor" (274). Having thus erased herself, Helen plays the role of Thetis for Achilles (261), and additionally sees herself as the Thetis equivalent for Paris, proposing yet another eidolon albeit a less potent one than Achilles' wooden doll: "Paris is beautiful enchantment / and enchantment lives / in the tree he called *Dendritis*" (291). Soon enough she has become both men too. Rather than being enchanted by Paris, she now calls herself "an old enchanter" (297), and then self-consciously reacts to Paris as Achilles had reacted towards her (299–300). Helen's performance of her malleable and inconsistent identity suggests she has actively taken on the part of the Helen tradition itself, which similarly makes the signifier "Helen" into a reflective surface for individual or communal prejudices, fears, and desires. Unlike in Helen's ritual in Euripides, though, the goal here is not a full repatriation, or even the establishment of a Teucerian imitation homeland. *HiE* is instead committed to remaining the reflection, in all senses, of all prior traditions, including the one it has just created.

Though Helen and Achilles are increasingly presented as creators – Achilles sculpts the eidolon as "child or a master-hand" (292), Helen "spin[s] the infinite thread" (298) and "plot[s]" a "formula" (297) – they follow the same pattern that H.D. does in the "eidolon–doll" passage above, and do not produce something entirely new, instead rearranging previous lines and scenes. "Nothing at all" isn't opposed to something concrete, a static product, but to a pattern of action:

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thoughts too deep to remember,

that break through the legend,
the fame of Achilles,
the beauty of Helen,

like fire
through the broken pictures
on a marble-floor. (258–59)

The thoughts break through the legend like fire – a destructive and an animating spirit, as we might expect – but the simile tells us that the pictures are *already* broken. The breaking-through itself, that is, has to first reconstitute the broken image in order to break it anew, just as H.D. herself has done in "Pallinode" and over the course of *HiE*. If we read into H.D.'s rhetorical choice here, it is only in imaginative reflection (through simile) that we may get a glimpse of the process before it is forgotten. This is H.D.'s/Helen's major breakthrough: The veil of the dominant narrative, the dream of alluring eidola, the totemic power of a repressed image-attachment *are* not. Like the word *eidolon* scrambled and reconstituted in the passage discussed above, they consist of pieces to be put together, and they can be put together otherwise. They are, we might say, tokens, but that to which they point cannot be definitively determined.

Artistic productivity and procreation seem to be linked here, as they are in H.D.'s other work, but *HiE* also troubles the procreative patterns it sets up, as reflected in H.D.'s handling of the Euphorion legend. Though the captions mention this magical child, he does not actually appear in the poems. Instead, Achilles' and Helen's respective "children" are imagined as their past selves, which they/the poem has rediscovered. Earlier in "Eidolon," H.D. had turned to the mythical moment at which Helen becomes interesting, at which her identity splits: her departure from Sparta. Helen recalled seeing "my child"

playing with my work-basket,
the reels rolled to the floor
and she did not stoop to pick up

the scattered spools but stared
with wide eyes in a white face,
at a stranger – and stared at her mother,

a stranger – that was all,
I placed my foot on the last step
of the marble water-stair

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and never looked back;
how could I remember all that? (228)

This remembered mother–daughter scene indicates that Helen is imaginatively leaving the Thesean maidenhood projected for her at the end of "Leuké." Two details link the passage to Sappho's Fr. 16, where this exact moment was first envisioned: There Helen, who "went sailing off to Troy with no thought at all for her child or dear parents," reminds the speaker of the absent Anactoria, whose "lovely step" she wishes to see.[118] So here Helen's departure is signaled by the placement of her foot; moreover, it is not her leaving but rather that she "never looked back" that serves as the culmination of this memory of her "first rebellion," foreshadowed but not presented many pages earlier in "Leuké" 1.1. Though by the end of Fr. 16 Sappho's sympathies seem to be with those left behind, the beginning of the poem suggests she is on Helen's side; after all, Helen's abandonment of her family is introduced as an exemplum of Sappho's dictum that "the most beautiful thing on the black earth … is whatsoever a person loves." H.D.'s Helen is similarly torn. Revisiting this scene in "Eidolon" Book 6, she more explicitly identifies the child with herself – a proper eidolon – which suggests that we think of the abandoned "work-basket" allegorically:

and if I remember a child that stared
at a stranger and the child's name is Hermione,
it is not Hermione

I would stoop and shelter,
remembering the touch on my shoulder,
the enchanter's power.

(290)

Helen complicates her alignments here, in this more benign version of the Kreousa–Apollo–Ion triangle. She both recalls the allure of the enchanter (probably Paris, but a few pages later she gives herself that title; what or who Helen loves is also left unnamed/unspecified in Fr. 16) at the moment of departure, and now looks back, stooping to gather the reels, no longer letting her old work product lie. As these musically elegant, sonically interwoven passages signal, it is the memory of that past "work-basket" and its "spools" that is being revisited, literally rewoven at last here – in H.D.'s case, that includes Sappho, Homer, *IA*, *Hippolytus*, and *Ion*, but also the *Helen* itself, all put together three decades later. In a passage that H.D. underscored in her copy of Leconte de Lisle's *Helen*, the

[118] Trans. Campbell, slightly modified.

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messenger describing to Theoclymenus the Greeks' departure notes that Helen is the last to get on the boat and focuses on her elegant foot climbing the ladder (line 1570). Aligning the two moments of departure – from Sparta and from Egypt – through the detail of Helen's foot, which earlier had been differently covered up by the poem's male characters, H.D. points to the insufficiency of the Euripidean recantation (and of her own enchantment with it), which she here aims to amend by going back to the beginning.[119]

So, in Book 6, H.D. ties this moment to the motif of legend-breaking:

> tender kisses, the soft caresses,
> given and received; none of these
> came into the story,
>
> it was epic, heroic and it was far
> from a basket a child upset
> and the spools that rolled to the floor;
>
> and if I think of a child of Achilles,
> it is not Pyrrhus, his son,
> they called Neoptolemus,
>
> nor any of all the host that claimed as father,
> the Myrmidon's Lord and Leader,
> but the child in Chiron's cave (289)

The children of Achilles and of Helen are the characters themselves, but as *this* poem has seen them, the one in Chiron's cave constructing his Thetis eidolon, the other on the verge of departure, abandoning threads that are now getting picked up.[120] "Childhood," that is, is coded as the recovery of an earlier creative moment. The programmatic reference to epic recalls yet again Sappho Fr. 16, which repeatedly compares "what one loves" to armies, ships, and chariots, rejecting them all. Yet, in the same way that Sappho doesn't change any of the details of the myth she uses, but suspends its meaning between two alternative framings (Helen just followed what she loved; Helen caused her family pain much as Anactoria is hurting Sappho) while letting its primary associations (war) hover in the background, so H.D. here is not interested in the production of the new. There

[119] In a first draft for this passage, H.D. adds in a third, earlier moment of departure, turning the child into Klytemnestra: "Or was it Clytemaestra's eyes that stared at a stranger / when Theseus first lured me away?" (HDP, 31/830). This may represent her attempt to "finish the last book, with a return to the sister motive" ("Compassionate Friendship," 160).

[120] See also H.D.'s similar musings in "H.D. by Delia Alton," 192, on her own return to the past with Freud's help.

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is no Euphorion, no mating between a "new" Helen and a "new" Achilles (who would be perhaps a "Neo-ptolemus" 'new-warrior'), no forced merging of antiquity and modernity, whose impossibility Goethe already documented and whose tropes have become tired. Instead, H.D. returns to her original idea of Euripidean translation: She insists on translating her world back into that world, a world that is "old, old" but not exhausted, its tokens or words containing yet more paths to be trodden.

At the same time, the poem begins to admit its own legendary, and thus breakable, status. We have a palinode of "Pallinode" when Helen finally admits that "I was a phantom Helen / and he was Achilles' ghost" (263). Subtly referring to Euphorion's fate in Goethe, Helen wonders, "would we blaze out like a meteor? // would the blazing ember / sputter and fail and fall / or burn forever?" (274). Despite the continuing avowal that "it was nothing" (282), by Book 6 Helen takes control of the process and diverts this phantasmagoria into "some chance unexpected thing, / the simple magic coming // from something lost or left over" (280–81) – the magic of the old arising anew. Rather than the Thetis eidolon, the "lost" thing that Achilles retrieves is a "flint": literally the material for fire-making, for starting the process of breaking through the broken pictures and watching them re-form. The penultimate section of "Eidolon" expands on this motif:

> I see the pitiful heap of little things,
>
> the mountain of monstrous gear,
> then both vanish, there is nothing,
> nothing at all, a single arrow;
>
> what had Paris to give her, or Eros?
> for even the aim of Achilles
> was not so sure, his bow so taut,
>
> and even the arrow of Chiron
> might sometime fail the mark,
> but this one, never. (301–02)

What does this single arrow symbolize? It is attached to neither male figure, nor eros, nor epic war, nor the mundane little things, but functions as the mark of their connection ("*tension*" as one caption calls it) – a connection conceived as vulnerability. In the very first book of "Pallinode" Helen imagines withdrawing an arrow "from the bruised and swollen flesh" of Achilles' heel (8). Identified with "his mortality," the arrow is proclaimed "the token" by which they "know each other" (9, 7). Here it materializes after "nothing," pointing to an unknown way, to one of many possible

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directions of a future and equally precarious hatching, as the work's final caption will suggest: "*One greater than Helen must answer, though perhaps we do not wholly understand the significance of the Message*" (303). Just as "Eidolon" began with voices from its past, so now it cedes its palimpsest to voices from the future.

Earlier on in "Eidolon" we were told that the dream and the veil "were one" (238). That was not *HiE*'s conclusion, but the beginning of its last movement as it attempted to find yet another series of alternatives for "eidolon." The veil and the dream "are one" because both reveal by obscuring; that is, though they obscure, they create the illusion of the possibility of truth, of vanquishing the poetic sphinx, of deciding even between these two alternatives ("which was the dream, which was the veil"). In contrast, the "arrow" or "token" points out the obscure. "Token," etymologically related to the German *Zeichen* 'sign,' is something that, like an arrow, points to or is destined for something else, reflecting "Another." A token is "a thing serving as a visible representation of a fact, quality, feeling": a "nothing" become something, an eidolon of an emotion.[121] It also intersects with eidolon qua "constellation" in its first obsolete sense of "a sign of the zodiac."[122] Thus "token" is or can be, literally, a token for the word *eidolon* and, at the same time, the "inner wor[d]" it holds "if you look at" eidolon "long enough"; it is where "this peculiar twist, its magic angle … lead[s]" (*Bid* 162). The words' concrete semiological connection, located in the small print of the dictionary, paradoxically refers to material of cosmic proportions, but only insofar as the latter has been already shaped: a constellation, the zodiac. Viewed this way, the eidolon is not a dream, something unreal, on the verge of death or barely escaping Hades, nor is it a veil obscuring the truth; rather, it is a way of making sense of the world through a process of destruction and construction, through the making and unmaking of constellations. It can be passed on, taught,[123] but its necessarily incomplete nature does not foreclose what the receiver will make of it. Eidolon-token as word and concept, like H.D.'s Helen, is neither fully Greek, a complete return to the old paradigm (the Menelaus option), nor a recreation that transplants the old paradigm in a new place, keeping only the name, as Teucer was asked to do. It is neither purely hellenist, nor fully modernist, but precisely a token of both impulses.

[121] Definition 1, in *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3rd ed.
[122] *OED* 1b.
[123] "Token" is cognate with "teach" (*OED*).

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"Left Over"

The word *eidolon* was earlier reduced to a skeleton of sound – the hull that remains, the rhythm that reverberates even if the steps are different. Similarly, *HiE*'s section "Eidolon" is reduced to a single poem by the same name that concludes it: "just call it EIDOLON, as the very last page of the whole of EIDOLON, that is Book III, it gives the clue, the final – that the figure-head of the ship is this 'dream' or mother-symbol OR Helen or what you will," H.D. instructs Pearson (*HD/NHP* 164). H.D.'s account – apparently conclusive but in fact multiple ("what you will") – mirrors the last poem of "Eidolon" Book 6, which insists that "the secret is no secret" (303). Unlike in "Pallinode," though, here "the Sphinx is seen" not vanquished and the "Phoenix" is confined to its "nest" which "reveals … the clue / to the rest of the mystery" (303). What is established is a system of reference – a constellation – rather than an answer, and to the extent that there is a clue, it is encapsulated in the word "token," used finally in the penultimate line of "*Eidolon*."

The poem "*Eidolon*" is indeed a small-scale reflection, a token of the larger "Eidolon" section since many of the main motifs reappear. But where "Eidolon" 6.8 focuses on celestial and mythical imagery, ending on a moment of peace, "*Eidolon*" hears what is left over: It foregrounds the sea and recalls a broken heart and a broken world. Each poem's concluding image is hatched from H.D.'s early Euripides translations. Section 6.8 alludes to the conception of rhythm we've traced through *Hippolytus* (for which we've been prepared through the poem's second stanza: "so the dart of Love / is the dart of Death"): "the seasons revolve around / a pause in the infinite rhythm / of the heart and heaven" (303, 304). Despite the initial distinction between the earthly and the celestial, the conventional (cyclical, alternating) rhythm of the former's seasons encompassed in that of the latter, the "heart" seems to partake in both, as indeed it does sonically. These lines recall the ending of Dante's *Paradiso*, but Dante focuses on continuing movement rather than interruption: "But like to a wheel whose circling nothing jars / Already on my desire and will prevailed / The Love that moves the sun and the other stars."[124] H.D.'s "pause" – the pause to which the warriors in "Eidolon" 6.3 refuse to submit – can be thought of as the "intersection of the timeless / With time," as Eliot puts it in "The Dry Salvages" (*P* 199), though shaded differently. It is not a moment of divine illumination, but signifies a momentary change in both patterns, a

[124] Trans. Binyon, in *Portable Dante*, 544.

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new rhythm in the Benvenistean sense of temporary form. This pause isn't static, but constitutes a revolution in two senses: a return, a palinode; and an intervention, a pallinode.

Not content with ending on celestial abstraction – as Eliot might have been – and determined to restore the human "high imagination" that fails in Dante,[125] the second and final ending of *HiE* offers an example of the "pause," relying on the Thetis-eidolon motif first glimpsed in *IA*: "only Achilles could break his heart / and the world for a token, / a memory forgotten" (304). Most of "*Eidolon*" is actually focused on the sea as a producer of sound ("its beat and long reverberation, / its booming and delicate echo") and as a writer ("its ripple … spells a charm / on the sand" [304]). This recalls H.D.'s early *Helen* essay, where she identified Helen's prologue with the sea itself and suggested that "a sea that moves and changes and bears us up, and is friendly and vicious in turn" is what we would see if we used "the lines of this Greek poet … as port-holes … that look out from our ship, our world" (9). Achilles' desire for the sea is thus paralleled by H.D.'s for Helen's story and for the connection between "our world" and "this world" of the past whose echoes we still hear and into which we try to translate ourselves. This "sea" is not yet known, but intimated. That is why the emphasis on the "memory forgotten" is balanced by the "token." Yes, on the one hand, the unconscious guides human behavior but, on the other, the existence of the "token" suggests that the memory isn't fully suppressed. Like the old story or the old word that is still open if we look, this is a sphinx-like memory that we don't remember how to read. The token, representing that moment of pause, connection, and potential revolution, points to something that we need to construct; construction can take the form of breaking, and that breaking, as we have seen, can be "friendly and vicious in turn." This particular poem's tokens in the end point us not to Thetis, but to Helen herself. Her name and characteristic attributes unmentioned in "*Eidolon*," she nonetheless triply reverberates here: through the recovered analogy with the sea; by partial synecdoche since the poem opens with her line "*what could Paris know of the sea*," which had, however, earlier identified her with Achilles (299); and through sound. For what ties *HiE*'s two endings together is "the metres": the extrametrical syllable "en" that concludes the anapestic last line of "Eidolon" 6.8 ("of the heart and of heaven") as well as the final couplet of "*Eidolon*" ("and the world for a token, / a memory forgotten"), and which rhymes

[125] Ibid.

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with the poem's unspoken eidolon – Helen, erased and yet present, translated and not.

Just as H.D. acknowledged in *End to Torment* that "it all began" with her and Pound's collaborative work on "the Greek fragments" (see epigraph), Pound recognized upon H.D.'s death that "H in Egt *the* real epic," noting exactly that continuity and coherence he himself had aimed for and failed to achieve. Whereas he laments in *Drafts and Fragments* that "Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me. / … / I cannot make it cohere" (*Cantos* 116/816), he praises H.D.'s work's "integrity from 'pool of fir' [from the imagist poem "Oread"] to splendid Helen in Egypt."[126] Yet, as *HiE* makes clear, the secret of H.D.'s success is that she interrogates her preferred images and texts – what else is *HiE* than H.D.'s long examination of Helen as an eidolon of Western culture and of her own fascination with her? – and is thus able to think critically about and consciously reincorporate "what is left over." At the same time, she is willing, unlike Eliot, to grant texts and images independent power, which for Eliot is always taken over by the reflective mind. By finally choosing to translate eidolon by token, she "tokenizes" or condenses her relationship to Greece in a single word: "token" encapsulates the constant process of making and breaking, constraining and freeing – of translating or trading – that operates on multiple levels at once (literal, metaphorical, ideological, symbolic, personal) and that occasionally crystallizes into a momentary form or rhythm (a completed translation of a lyric, an intimated connection) but is nonetheless always subject to change. A token is something taught and something that signifies allegiance, or serves to authenticate, but it can also function as mark of what is not yet, or once again not known.

[126] Letter to Pearson, cited in Korg, *Winter Love*, 198.

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