# Revision of Helen's Myth and a New Female Discourse in Hilda Doolittle's *Helen in Egypt*

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***Abstract***

*This article analyzes the American poet Hilda Doolittle's (H.D.) later work Helen in Egypt (1961) with a specific emphasis on the ways in which she reconstructs Helen's identity and a new female discourse by revisionist mythmaking. H.D. reworks the classical story of Helen of Troy and situates Helen in Egypt in an attempt to transform the old patriarchal myths to novel definitions of feminine identity, female discourse, female experience, female vision, and a female quest, which are all antithetical to the androcentric myths of the western world. H.D. foregrounds the reconstruction of Helen's identity in a revised myth in which Helen becomes the speaking subject. This new position that H.D. places Helen aims to eliminate the schism between gender norms and help Helen rebuild a new identity that is free from the accusations and hatred in the original myth. Revising Helen's myth from the feminine perspective enables H.D. to abandon the androcentric vision of the western literary tradition and to celebrate a novel female identity without restrictions and repressions.*

***Key words:*** *Revisionist Mythmaking, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Helen in Egypt, Female Discourse, American Modernist Poetry.*

***Öz***

**Hilda Doolittle'in *Helen in Egypt* Adlı Eserinde Helen Mitinin Yeniden Yazımı ve Yeni Bir Kadın Söylemi**

*Bu makalede daha çok isminin baş harfleriyle (H.D.) tanınan Amerikalı şair Hilda Doolittle'ın Helen in Egypt adlı epik şiirini eserin Helen karakterini revizyonist mit yaratımı aracılığıyla hangi yönlerden yeniden yapılandırdığı ve hangi açıdan yeni bir kadın söylemi oluşturduğu incelenmektedir.H.D., Troy'lu Helen'in antik çağda yaratılan öyküsünü batı dünyasının erkek egemen öykülerine tezat oluşturacak bir şekilde yeniden işleyerek, Helen karakterine yeni bir kadın kimliği, yeni bir kadın söylemi, yeni bir kadın deneyimi, kadına özgü yeni bir görüş ve yeni bir kendini keşfetme arayışı kazandırmak amacıyla şiirin mekanını Mısır olarak seçer. H.D. gözden geçirerek değiştirdiği Helen'in yeniden oluşturulan kimliğinde Helen'in konuşabilen özne durumuna gelmesini ön plana çıkarmaktadır. H.D.'nin Helen'e kazandırdığı bu yeni konum toplumsal cinsiyet normları arasındaki bölünmeyi ortadan kaldırmayı amaçlamakta ve ilk mitteki suçlama ve nefret dolu söylemlerden kendisini arındırabilmesi amacıyla Helen'in kimliğini yenilemesine yardım etmektedir. Helen mitini kadın bakış açısıyla yeniden gözden geçirmesi H.D.'ye batının erkek egemen edebiyat geleneğini terk ederek, kısıtlamalar ve baskılar olmadan yeni bir kadın kimliği yaratımını kutlamasına olanak vermektedir.*

***Anahtar kelimeler:*** *Revizyonist Mit Yapımı, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Helen in Egypt, Kadın Söylemi, Amerikan Modernist Şiiri.*

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

H.D. *Helen in Egypt*

**Giriş**

Hilda Doolittle, famously known by her initials H.D., is a modernist American poet. Throughout her life, she produced many works in different genres such as poetry, the novel, and essays. Among all, she attracted the attention of the literary circles as one of the leading figures of Imagism. In 1913, Ezra Pound called her "H.D., Imagiste"[1] for her impeccable use of language and content according to the tenets of the Imagist poetry. H.D.'s works signaled a distinct perspective for the women as they point to a process of transformation to an authentic selfhood for females who had been living under the male hegemony for centuries. Her viewpoints and productiveness also indicate the idea of the modern new woman who severed ties with the conventional idea of submissive, silenced, and repressed women in the previous ages. H.D. connects this idea of an independent woman with the modernist practice of exile, which endowed the artist, in particular female ones, with the opportunity to stay away from the enclosed household and closer to an artistic freedom. H.D. herself was an expatriate in Europe- in London and Switzerland- where she produced many of her works. Exile for the modernist poet meant movement, alteration, transformation, and freedom. And, the exile for women poets, and for H.D., at the turn of the twentieth century denoted a will against the obligations of domestic life and society that excluded women by restricting their capabilities, thus signifying a will towards a novel and distinct feminine identity and a female voice that is not governed by patriarchal norms.

American modernist poetry emerged in the early twentieth century and focused on novelty, renewal, and rebirth from the classical materials by reworking them in order to achieve meaning in the face of horrible wars and technological changes in the twentieth century. Modernist poets, who also pioneered Imagism in poetry, created a new discourse by experimenting with language to reach new styles of expression. Critic Clive Bloom asserts that modernists aimed to use a language that "had to be both individual and universal; poetic and vernacular; a withdrawal into the self as an expansion of the self into the conceptual space of 'America'" (1995:1). One of the leaders of the movement, Ezra

1 Please see Diana Collecott's elaboration on H.D.'s position in the modernist poetry as an imagist in her *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism: 1910-1950* (1999).

Pound used the phrase 'Make it New' that became to serve as the motto of the movement. In a similar fashion, William Carlos Williams stated in his talk "The Poem as a Field of Action" that modernist poetry is based on "a reexamination of the means—on a fresh basis" (1969: 285). Scholar Rebecca Beasley argues that though "modernism is defined by its experimentation, its insistent difference from that which has gone before, modernists are also devoted genealogists, energetically tracing their ancestry back through literary traditions" (2007: 63). In Beasley's words, then, Pound's slogan, 'make it new' may seem an "apparent contradiction" (2007: 63); since, it also points to the modernists' return to the past and to the idea that "the something is not wholly new: it acknowledges a former existence" (2007: 63). Pound's motto thus "registers a desire to bring things from the past into the present, to make the historical contemporary" (Beasley, 2007: 63), an idea which refers to the modernist poets' frequent use of the ancient texts, materials, and allusions in their search for fresh meaning.

Like many modernists, H.D. turned to ancient texts and myths as the essential roots of meaning and associations in a world torn asunder by great wars. H.D.'s poetic practice has been mostly defined as "revisionist mythmaking", as critic Alicia Ostriker defined it initially. Ostriker states, "whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist" (1982: 72). Ostriker states that

> [ … ] the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible". [ … ] Like the gods and goddesses of classical mythology, all such material has a double power. It exists or appears to exist objectively, in the public sphere, and consequently confers on the writer the sort of authority unavailable to someone who writes "merely" of the private self. Myth belongs to "high" culture and is handed "down" through the ages by religious, literary, and educational authority. At the same time, myth is quintessentially intimate material, the stuff of dream life, forbidden desire, inexplicable motivation-everything in the psyche that to rational consciousness is unreal, crazed, or abominable (1982: 72).

In line with Ostriker's elaboration on revisionist mythmaking, it is possible to argue that H.D. appropriates the myth of Helen to achieve cultural and social change in the minds of her readers. H.D. revises the story of Helen of Troy in a different land and from a female perspective in her epic poem *Helen in Egypt*[2]. Another critic Susan S. Friedman contends

that *Helen in Egypt* is "an epic-length poem" (1990: 374) that recounts "revisionist mythmaking" (1990: 376) of Helen of Troy "from a woman's perspective" (1990: 376). H.D.'s selection of a woman's myth like Helen's reveals her desire to create a "distinct voice, one true to the historically different experience of women" (1990: 374). Friedman argues that creation of a woman's myth in a revisionist perspective lies in the fact that Hilda Doolittle "understood that creation of selfhood for women involves not only a new expression of women's experience, but also a transformation of the androcentric cultural tradition which has shaped and often thwarted that experience in the first place" (1990: 374).

In relation to the women's position in the modernist revisionist mythmaking, Adrienne Rich claims in her book *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* that "Re-vision" is "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (1995: 35) and it "is for woman more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (1995: 35). For H.D., mythology served as a vehicle to delineate both cultural and individual upheavals; cultural in the sense that it is the shared property of the western world; and, personal in that it includes conflicts and contradictions people have experienced throughout the centuries. H.D. engaged in the task of rewriting classical stories in order to digress from the common materials and rework them in accordance with her own contextual objectives.

**Revising Helen's Myth and Creating A Female Discourse**

*Helen in Egypt* is divided into three parts, Pallinode, Leuké, and Eidolon, each of which is composed of prose introductions that contribute to the new story Helen tells about her life in verse. By abandoning the patriarchal vision of the western literary traditions and the language used by patriarchy, H.D. revisits the story of Helen who was hold responsible for the Trojan War, and recreates Helen's myth by making her the speaker of her own poem. Book One, Pallinode, begins with "the story of Helen of Troy" (H.D., 1961:1) and how she is transported to Egypt. The narrator in the prose part states that Stesichorus of Sicily in his *Pallinode* firstly and Euripides in *The Trojan Women* secondly reviled Helen, and thus they were both "struck blind" (H.D., 1961:1) due to their "invective against Helen" (H.D., 1961:1). Stesichorus and Euripides were both "restored to sight" (H.D., 1961:1) after they wrote "a defence, explanation or apology" (H.D., 1961:1). Critic Horace Gregory argues

2 *Helen in Egypt* is not H.D.'s first engagement with the mythical figure of Helen. H.D. previously responds to the androcentric version of Helen's myth in her poem "Helen" (1924) where she accentuates the hostile vision of patriarchy that holds Helen responsible for the war.

that Stesichorus "probably inspired Euripides to write his Helen in which … Helen is in Egypt" (1961: vii) and "all this is, of course, post-Homeric, yet post-Homeric versions of a myth often owe their inspiration to earlier, to half-forgotten, pre-Homeric sources" (1961: vii). Gregory's argument situates H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* as "no translation, but a re-creation in her own terms of the Helen-Achilles myth" (1961: vii) with the "overlying theme of rebirth and resurrection" (1961: viii). The narrator in the prose part reaffirms the knowledge that Helen is in Egypt, stating, "*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 the Trojans alike fought for an illusion*" (H.D., 1961: 1). H.D. positions Helen in Egypt in light of this explanation so as to eliminate the blame put on her, though Helen is shown to be still wrestling with this blame throughout the poem. It is the appearance of Achilles in Egypt that reminds her of her status as "femme noire of antiquity" (H.D., 1961: 15), and she feels the guilt once again. She repentantly says:

> How could I hide my eyes?
> how could I veil my face?
> with ash or charcoal from the embers? (H.D., 1961: 16)

Though H.D. places Helen in a location far away from Greece, she shows her to be still struggling against her previous notoriety. Helen yields to the image of the reviled or hated Helen, yet she regains her consciousness as she prays to "dear God" (H.D., 1961: 13) or "*All-father*" (H.D., 1961: 12) to "let him [Achilles] forget" a "night-bird hooted past" (H.D., 1961: 13). This struggle is at times burdensome for Helen, for she is left with the memories of the misogynist opinions of the western world about her identity. At other times, Helen feels that she is in a "dream or a trance" (H.D., 1961: 5) in which she cannot be sure of her status as Helen of Troy or Helen in Egypt. H.D. reinforces this idea of the dream by stating that Helen who is "mysteriously transposed to Egypt, does not want to forget. She is both phantom and reality" (1961: 3). Furthermore, as Diana Collecott argues, Helen has a "multiple personality" (1999: 147) at the beginning of the poem when Achilles feels perplexed:

> … he
>
> knew not yet, Helen of Sparta,
> knew not Helen of Troy,
> knew not Helena, hated of all Greece (H.D., 1961: 14).

On the one hand, the burden of the memory and dreamy feelings appear as impending questions which Helen wishes to free herself from; on the other hand, Helen's "concern is with the past, with the anathema or curse" (H.D., 1961: 5). In fact, Helen's unwillingness to forget the past provides her with the agency to turn all of these problematic questions against the misogynist tradition by means of revising the myth. H.D. characterizes Helen as a figure who needs "*piece and time to reconstruct the legend*" (H.D., 1961: 6). Helen claims that "there is a voice within me, listen- let me speak for me" (H.D., 1961: 174), and thus allows the reader to "focus on utterance, on what is said, as well as on who is speaking" (Collecott, 1999: 147). In essence, H.D. subverts the symbolic structure of the patriarchal language through her creation of a female voice that aims at a new female discourse. H.D. gives Helen the power to face the patriarchal values and restore a new female discourse and identity that she herself creates from a woman's perspective. Critic Julia Kristeva calls this subversion of the language and the search for oneness the semiotization of the patriarchal language, which can be achieved through the arts. Kristeva maintains that poetic language can be revolutionary in such a challenge where grammar of the symbolic meanings and order of the patriarchal language is dislocated:

> Art – this semiotization of the symbolic – thus represents the flow of jouissance into language. Whereas sacrifice assigns jouissance its productive limit in the social and symbolic order, art specifies the means – the only means that jouissance harbors for infiltrating that order. In cracking the socio-symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself, and releasing from beneath them the drives borne by volcanic or kinetic differences, jouissance works its way into the social and symbolic (1984: 79-80).

H.D.'s attempt to endow Helen with an authorial voice through which to create her new self is a revolutionary struggle in that she changes the grammatical structures and order of the English language through inversion, rhythm, enjambment, and repetition. Though this break from the law of the patriarchal language seems an act of transgression, H.D. claims a both grammatical and gender authority that is promising, generative, magical and transformative for Helen. The symbolic order in Kristeva's argument represents the paternal aspect of language whereas the semiotic is identified as maternal and feminine. Kristeva defines ruptures as agents in the semiotic or non-signifying processes. Helen's transgression in the field of language and her claim for a new voice undermines the social and symbolic order, representing what Kristeva calls the jouissance, enjoyment, or pleasure brought by this sense of renovation. H.D.'s use of ruptures also symbolizes risks for change

and continuity in a patriarchal world where the role and voice of women become invisible. Far from being marginal, this diversion from the symbolic order becomes revolutionary in creating a female discourse for Helen as she assumes the speaking subject who heads towards a sense of wholeness and unification that she lacks in her suppressed condition in Greek mythology.

The authority Helen gains as a result of her use of language renders her "the center of consciousness in an epic aimed at revising both mythology and the concept of woman's selfhood" (Friedman, 1990: 376). In Egypt, Helen is after her love for Achilles and she asks for Thetis's, Achilles's mother's, permission to love him. Achilles is a source of inspiration and life to Helen when she describes him as a lover who has "the sea enchantment" "in his eyes" (H.D., 1961: 14). Though this "sea-enchantment" is a sign of Achilles's alienation to the destructive wars in Greece, Helen is again faced with her past image of a reviled woman or a "woman of pleasure" (H.D., 1961: 15), as she reminds herself that Achilles still "carries with him the threat of autocracy" (H.D., 1961: 15). This is the initial struggle that Helen faces in Egypt. Achilles, although "he was shipwrecked, / drifting without chart, / famished and tempest-driven" (H.D., 1961: 7), after his journey to Egypt, catches Helen at her wrist (H.D., 1961: 16) and clutches her throat (H.D., 1961: 17) under the influence of the command of the patriarchal world of Greece. Achilles calls her "Hecate" (16), "a witch" (H.D., 1961: 16) due to the "latent hostility" (H.D., 1961: 18). Though Achilles attacks Helen in the first place, he is estranged from the male command as he oscillates between the command and Helen's image. Achilles joins Helen in her continual self-questioning after Helen's appeal to Thetis. Thetis's recurrent appearance is another significant element that helps this union and Helen's rejuvenation. Helen receives the help of a female goddess, who makes her journey a quest that is supported by matriarchal powers as opposed to the hegemony of the patriarchy. This initial conflict between Helen and Achilles, as Friedman asserts, reveals H.D.'s analysis of "the dialectical opposition of masculine and feminine values that form the symbolic backdrop of Helen's quest" (1990: 377). Friedman maintains that H.D. "portrays an enormous chasm between the traditionally overvalued 'masculine' world and the undervalued 'feminine' world" (1990: 377). Considering H.D.'s attention to such a visible chasm in her poem, it can also be argued that the conflict between Greece and Egypt is another set of opposition for H.D. Her preference for Egypt for the setting of the poem instead of Greece also comes from her faith in the mysticism of Egypt. Furthermore, as Barbara Guest argues, "the complicated, mathematical structure of Egyptian thought would begin to supplant the Greeks, whose minds were no longer so instructive, whose modern land had somehow failed to enchant" (1984: 156-157). H.D. sees Egypt as a magical place that has a regenerative power for the ills of ancient Greece. H.D.'s preference for a helper

like Thetis and of a place like Egypt is suggestive of the idea of rebirth represented by the new phase of love sparkled between Helen and Achilles. With the help of Thetis's guidance, Egypt becomes a place of rebirth for both Helen and Achilles.

Out of Achilles's violent assault comes the love between Helen and Achilles. Love and hatred constitute yet another opposition that H.D. expresses in such terms as "La Mort, L'Amour" (1961: 268), and love and death throughout the poem. Critic Rachel Blau DuPlessis contends that such oppositions are "set in dialectical motion" (2007:121) in *Helen in Egypt*. "Though La Mort, L'Amour will merge in the final illumination" (H.D., 1961: 271), H.D. makes use of these warring concepts in illustrating the conflicts between the destructive masculine and regenerative feminine worlds. All Helen needs is regeneration, which is provided by her commitment to eliminate the hegemony of patriarchy and her determination to renew her identity. However, the path to regeneration is filled with such polarities that also give way to spiritual improvement and creativity. Although the meeting between Helen and Achilles seems destructive at first, it comes to assume a healing quality. H.D. construes this recovery as Helen and Achilles's common journey for unification and recovery from the Greek myth, for Achilles comes to "distrust the original oracle of the purely masculine 'iron-ring whom Death made stronger'" (H.D., 1961: 55). Achilles's questioning marks a drastic change in his personality from a warrior to a member of the female world of quest and rebirth.

In the second part, Leuké, "L'isle blanche" (H.D., 1961: 109), Helen again goes back to the past memories. Leuké is a significant location mainly because it is the place where "Achilles is said to have married Helen who bore him a son, Euphorion" (H.D., 1961: 109). In Egypt, Helen "did not taste of Lethe, forgetfulness, on the other hand; she was in an ecstatic or semi-trance state" (H.D., 1961: 109). As the narrator states, Helen is still in a dual state: "Though she says, 'I am awake, no trance,' yet she confesses, 'I move as one in a dream'" (H.D., 1961: 109). Helen goes back and forth between the dream state and the act of remembering the past. She recalls "her 'first rebellion' and the so far suppressed memory and unspoken name — Paris" (H.D., 1961: 109):

I am not nor mean to be
the Daemon they made of me;
going forward, my will was the wind,

(or the will of Aphrodite
filled the sail, as the story told
of my first rebellion;

the sail, they said,
was the veil of Aphrodite),
and I am tired of the memory of battle,

I remember a dream that was real;
let them sing Helena for a thousand years,
let them name and re-name Helen,

I can not endure the weight of eternity,
they will never understand
how, a second time, I am free (H.D., 1961: 109-110).

Helen announces that she gives up convincing the whole world of her innocence, wishing to free her mind and soul from the burden of the battle. Her announcement that she is now free is again obstructed by the appearance of Paris whom she remembers as the "cause the war" (H.D., 1961: 110). Paris attempts to deceive Helen into the idea that Achilles "was never her lover" (H.D., 1961: 138), intending to "break this spell" (H.D., 1961: 138), the enchantment between Helen and Achilles in Egypt. Paris "feels that Helen is still under the spell of 'Egyptian incense wafted through infinite corridors'. He reminds her of her vow in Priam's palace, 'never, never to return' and their defiance of 'Achilles and the thousand spears'" (H.D., 1961: 141). Paris describes Helen as "Rhodes' Helena, Dendritis" (H.D., 1961: 142), and as "Helena of the trees" (H.D., 1961: 141). Furthermore, though Paris tries hard to persuade Helen of her past image by saying, "you [Helen] died in Troy on the stairs" (H.D., 1961: 141), Helen seems resolute about keeping free from the old patriarchal myth. Helen's efforts to free her identity from the myths that "name and re-name Helen" (H.D., 1961: 110) denote a strong will of regeneration, of rebirth "to a new self by first destroying the false self created by the culture" (Friedman, 1990: 390). Similarly, Alicia Ostriker also contends that *Helen in Egypt* is "first of all personal, one woman's quest epitomizing the struggle of Everywoman" (1982: 82), whose "interior life comes to include and transcend the external historical world represented and inhabited by males-but it does not reject that world" (1982: 82). Helen's preference to "reconstruct the Greek past" is the ground on which she rebuilds her identity. The "history and literature" in *Helen in Egypt,* in this sense, is "never authoritative but always to-be-deciphered, tangential to, incorporated within, the feminine mind" (Ostriker, 1982: 82). Conscious of all dualities and oppositions, Helen reworks history and literature in ways that are contrary to the ideas proposed by the history

and myths on her identity. Paris's appearance in the poem affirms Helen's new position in that he is faced by the vision of Helen who rejects "the traditional duality of woman as angel or demon" (Friedman, 1990: 390) as he tries to eliminate the possibility of a new self in Helen.

The last part, Eidolon, stages the "slow process of synthesizing dual selves in the search for wholeness" (Friedman, 1990: 379). Helen's voice that reproduces a woman's myth and a female discourse heads toward Helen's quest for selfhood by critiquing the issues the text problematizes. Paying attention to the persistent opposition between the female and male worlds, H.D. presents the female voice constructed by Helen's quest as one that points to a distinct realm from the patriarchal world. Friedman explains that H.D. uses the metaphor of the hieroglyph "to represent the hidden meaning of the buried self" (1990: 401). Helen tells Achilles that she knows the "script" (H.D., 1961: 14) and she is "instructed" (H.D., 1961: 14) to decode the hieroglyph, inviting Achilles to join her quest so as to share the "mystery" (H.D., 1961: 13) in Egypt with him. And, she "*achieves the difficult task of translating a symbol in time, into timeless-time or hieroglyph or ancient Egyptian time*" (H.D., 1961: 13). Thus, for Helen, deciphering the hieroglyph means decrypting the self in her search for its reconstruction. H.D. dramatizes this path to renewal in the synthesis of the polarities between the male and female worlds and between certain conceptions such as love and death. Helen's love becomes a cure for Achilles as his rebirth in Egypt after the deadly wound on his heel makes him the "New Mortal" (H.D., 1961: 10).

Helen once more confirms the relationship between dualities through the myth of Isis and Osiris with an emphasis on the circular and healing processes involved in their story. As is clear in Achilles's story, death causes destruction and love brings healing, but still the clash of these two forces seems to be the necessary constituent for rebirth. Isis and Osiris are deities of fertility in Egyptian mythology. Osiris was the god of Nile, and Isis was the goddess of abundance. The narrator elucidates that Helen "*invokes (as the perceptive visitor to Egypt must always do) the symbol or the 'letter' that represents or recalls the protective mother-goddess. This is no death-symbol but a life-symbol, it is Isis or her Greek counterpart, Thetis, the mother of Achilles*" (H.D., 1961: 13). H.D. equates Isis and Thetis in their roles as protective goddesses who follow reparative solutions. Pat Remler recounts that Isis's husband "Osiris is killed by their evil brother Set, who tricks Osiris into climbing into a box" (2006: x). Osiris is then "sealed in the box and dies when it is thrown into the Nile. Isis, the bereaved wife, searches for and finds the body of her dead husband and is determined to give him a proper burial on Egyptian soil" (Remler, 2006: x) in keeping with the ancient Egyptian funerary practices. Set is "*the death-dealing dragon or Typhon-serpent*"

(H.D., 1961: 66), and "Typhon, a Whirlwind of War" (H.D., 1961: 84), symbolizing death, destruction, and disasters. Isis's part is significant in this myth in that she acts as a healer after she finds Osiris's coffin. Isis needs to overcome Set again when Set recaptures the coffin and, as Geraldine Pinch articulates, "tore the body into fourteen parts and scattered them throughout the Egypt" (2002: 79). Isis "searched for the parts and buried each in the place where she found it" (Pinch, 2002: 79) and when "she finds the body or its parts, she restores them to wholeness" (Pinch, 2002: 79). Osiris's resurrection takes place in Isis's act of making Osiris whole again and her giving birth to Osiris's child, Horus, by reviving his sexual powers (Pinch, 2002: 80). Osiris's rebirth in his son Horus parallels Achilles's revival on the sands of Egypt after his enemy's attack. Incorporating the myth of Isis and Osiris into Helen's quest for wholeness, H.D. reveals that the two opposing conflicts, love and death, are mutually intertwined, situating Isis and Helen as generators of life who skillfully combat the "death-cult" (H.D., 1961: 99).

The obstacles on Isis's way do not prevent her from giving life to Osiris. Likewise, hindrances on Helen's way do not detain her from further continuing to develop a sense of quest and a female insight. She creates her identity as well as a female discourse through which to assert her identity. Helen speaks and writes in her own terms, which enables her to write her myth from a female perspective. It is crucial to note that Helen's discourse and her revision of her story includes other female characters and their reparative talents that lack in the male world. H.D. presents to her readers how this regeneration is flourished by the appearances of the two goddesses, Isis and Thetis. The constantly changing goddesses, Isis and Thetis, also contribute to the reconstruction of a fresh mythology that Helen inscribes in her own words. The two goddesses frame the overwhelming strength of love as opposed to hatred. The masculine world begets hatred and war, and thus stands as the counterpart of this power of love and life.

It is possible to argue that Helen's position in exile and her alienation from Greece allow her to view her identity critically and reconstruct a new individual self. Now that she "has withstood / the rancor of time and of hate" (H.D., 1961: 96) in Egypt, it becomes possible for her to free herself from the hatred of the western world. Once she feels this power and is able to eliminate and reconciliate the confrontation between love and hatred, she is shrined forever as "H-E-L-E-N-A" (H.D., 1961: 95). As she reasons out this clash between love and hatred in Isis's story, Helen searches for the ways to reconcile the opposites. She appeals to "Theseus, god-father" (H.D., 1961: 176) about "the loves of Achilles" (H.D., 1961: 176) to reach a solution, and answers that Achilles and she

were past caring;
O, the rage of the sea,

the thunder of battle,
shouting and the Walls
and the arrows; O, the beauty of arrows,

each bringing surcease, release;
do I love War?
is this Helena? (H.D., 1961: 177)

Though she remembers the memories of the past and Helen of Troy, Helen can "encompass infinity by intense concentration on the moment" (H.D., 1961: 200). Remembrances in Helen's quest for a new identity work in positive ways that help Helen review the past. They act as prerequisites that assist Helen to finish "her cycle in time" (H.D., 1961: 200). She retrospectively recalls her experiences and harmonizes them with her quest by binding herself "with the Girdle" (H.D., 1961: 205).

The circlet, the story Zone;
As I stare in the precinct,
to decipher the Amen-script,

so I would read here
in my crystal the Writing,
I would measure the star-space (H.D., 1961: 205).

Remembering the pieces of her past "picture by picture" (H.D., 1961: 204) in her crystal and through "reflection and meditation" (H.D., 1961: 206), Helen transcends the conflicts arising from opposites and thereby clarifies her vision for her new identity. The task that remains to do for Helen is to find her way out of the opposites "through the power and tenderness of Theseus" (H.D., 1961: 206). Theseus becomes the healer, a shelter and a "god-father" (H.D., 1961: 176) in Helen's quest. He incarnates both the mother and father figures, and acts as an androgynous figure who leads Helen to a vision through which she severs her ties with the past. Theseus claims that

so rest — rest — rest —
here, we are half-way to the mountain,
the mountain beyond the mountain,

the mountain beyond Ida;
you found your way through despair,"
"but do not look back,

neither across the dividing seas,
to the sand and the hieroglyphs,
nor further (though nearer)

to the Towers and the blackened Walls,
there is nothing to fear,
you are neither there nor here,

but wavering
like a Psyche
with half-dried wings" (H.D., 1961: 165-166).

Theseus compares Helen to "a psyche with half-dried wings" (H.D., 1961: 166) or to a butterfly that will get out of the web to "re-integrate" (H.D., 1961: 170) with her new identity. H.D.'s proposition that Helen is neither here nor there affirms Helen's position as universal rather than as a subservient female figure. Theseus claims that Helen is safe and "she need not be afraid 'to recall the shock of the iron-Ram, the break in the Wall' or equally, she is free to forget everything" (H.D., 1961: 170). Theseus endows Helen with the freedom to recall the past and work through its sorrows for a fresh start. Furthermore, Theseus acts as a guiding figure for Helen as he directs her to the "woven wool" (H.D., 1961: 170). The symbolism of the butterfly and its woven wool portrays the need to go back and forth in time through the labor of memory. Theseus's placing Helen in the butterfly cocoon is an attempt that seems impossible in the usual birth process of a butterfly, for once the cocoon is shattered it is impossible to reenter it and stick its pieces together. The butterfly and the cocoon function as the reminder for Helen of the distance she has to cover in her quest so as to reach a sense of wholeness and wash away her previous identity. Theseus's role contains both a mother and father figure who nurses and protects Helen from the malice of the patriarchal world. In her new cocoon and in Egypt alike, Helen can achieve strength

and experience rebirth as if she is in a mother's womb without any fear of destruction. Egypt itself operates as a mother's womb with the regenerative power it provides for Helen. Helen's soul is born afresh like a butterfly just like Achilles's rebirth as the "new Mortal" (H.D., 1961: 10) at the beginning of the poem. Theseus is a seer who is "wholly intellectual and inspirational" (H.D., 1961: 297) and who provides energy and tenderness Helen needs during her self-quest. Theseus guides Helen to the reconciliation of the opposites such

as day, night,
as wrong, right,

as dark, light,
as water, fire,
as earth, air,

as storm, calm,
as fruit, flower,
as life, death,

as death, life; (H.D., 1961: 190).

Out of all these dualities, Theseus states that a rose can be "deflowered" (H.D., 1961: 190), yet at the same time it can also be "re-born" (H.D., 1961: 190). Theseus once again points to the regenerative clash between love and death, the initial causes of the war, asserting that Helen is now "at home" (H.D., 1961: 190) in Egypt after the conflict between La Mort and L'Amour. Theseus's words help Helen convince that she can now live without shame because this opposition is to be blamed, not Helen herself. Helen reaches such a point where she purifies her vision of the blame of the western world through remembrance and meditation. She "would relate the pictures in time to the pictures in eternity" (H.D., 1961: 204), believing that "the crystal will reflect the past / and that present-in-the-past" (H.D., 1961: 204). In her crystal, like a prophet, Helen can detect not only the past but also the present, and thus intersects the two dimensions into one unified entity that transcends time and space.

Helen relates the past and the present to eliminate the tension between love and hate, and reconciles "an ever widening fight" (H.D., 1961: 199) that arises from this ancient conflict. Her interrogation of this relation between the past and the present becomes clearer as she deciphers the "indecipherable hieroglyph" (H.D., 1961: 21) that stands for the "temple

symbols" (H.D., 1961: 22). As Friedman asserts, H.D. uses "the metaphor of hieroglyph to represent the hidden meaning of the buried self" (1961: 401). H.D. draws on Freud's theory of the "dream-work" which is "based on an analogy to hieroglyphs" and which "puts latent impulses and instincts into a visual language that the analyst and the analysand must translate into rational terms" (Friedman, 1990: 401). H.D. states that Helen "*herself is the writing*" (1961: 22), which Helen herself is to decode in her quest of a fresh identity. Helen reveals her unconscious and questions workings of her psyche to figure out the burden the patriarchal culture associated with her identity. The Egyptian hieroglyphs that she sees on the temple walls point to the inscriptions related to her new identity. Helen is instructed in Egypt that the "secret of the stone-writing is repeated in natural or human symbols" (H.D., 1961: 22), through which she unifies the past memories with her meditation on them to reach a sense of wholeness in the regenerative atmosphere of Egypt. She confirms this sense of unity with her child, Euphorion. "The ultimate experience" (H.D., 1961: 288) that contributes to Helen's quest is the "miraculous birth" (H.D., 1961: 288) of Helen and Achilles's child, Euphorion. The narrator of the prose passages relates that the "promised Euphorion is not one child but two. It is 'the child in Chiron's cave' and the 'frail maiden,' stolen by Theseus from Sparta" (H.D., 1961: 288). Euphoria literally means an extremely strong feeling of happiness. In this respect, Euphorion, the child, can be perceived as an award that Helen wins as a consequence of her perseverance during her self-discovery.

**Conclusion**

H.D. empowers Helen with the ability to face and challenge the realities of the past and with the determination to live as a free individual. As Diana Collecott argues, "women's lack of empowerment to speak has along history" (150) in literature. Helen gains a new identity that helps her write her own story and voice it in her own terms. In doing so, she defies the language of the patriarchy by creating a new discourse where she can lay bare her new story. This sense of liberation evinces that in *Helen in Egypt*, modernist vision for women, women writers and female characters alike emerges as a literary mode that creates a female discourse, female writing, and a female self at the end of a female quest. Helen's quest for her lost self –one that is free from the images of hatred– endows her with the power to inscribe her own story in her own ink.

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