

Translating Euripides:
Repression, Repetition, and Transference in H.D.'s *Ion*

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Introduction:

H.D.'s translation of Euripides' Ion is a pivotal work in her oeuvre. Although this modernist poet is perhaps best known for her early imagist poetry, most current H.D. scholarship deals with her later, post-Ion, poetry, in which she develops a woman-centered epic form parallel to Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot's male modernist epics. Susan Stanford Friedman and Dianne Chisholm have done extensive work on the development of H.D.'s poetics based on her psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud, which she underwent during 1933 and 1934 just before completing her Ion. And Eileen Gregory has argued that the influence of Euripides and other classical poets on H.D.'s poetry is enormous.¹ H.D. worked at her translation of Ion for nearly two decades. Over those years, she turned to the play again and again in times of crisis and was only able to finish her translation after her analysis with Freud, in 1935. H.D.'s translation may be seen as a gateway work, which led to her later acclaimed poetry, such as Trilogy and Helen in Egypt. In order to answer the fundamental questions of why H.D. became fixated on Ion and how it came to be integral to her poetics, we might begin with the play itself, Euripides' version, which is based on Greek Myth.

As the story goes, Ion was the son of Xouthos and Kreousa and the founder of the Ionian people.² In Euripides' version, as a girl, Kreousa is raped and then abandoned by the god Apollo. The rape results in a pregnancy, which Kreousa carries to term, but upon

delivery, she abandons the newborn, Ion, in the cave on the hillside of the acropolis where the rape occurred. Apollo instructs his brother Hermes to rescue the boy and carry him to Delphi, where he is raised by the Pythian prophetess of the Oracle, and where he later becomes the keeper of the Temple. The play opens years later. Kreousa is married to a non-Athenian, Xouthos, to whom she is awarded as tribute after he helped Athens in battle. Kreousa and Xouthos are childless. Concerned about their infertility and the future of the Athenian people, the royal couple travels to Delphi to consult the oracle of Apollo. Kreousa also secretly plans to ask the Oracle about the fate of the son she abandoned on the rocks years before. While at Delphi, Kreousa meets Ion, not knowing he is her long-lost babe. Meanwhile, Xouthos consults the Oracle and is told that the next person he sees upon exiting the temple shall be his son and heir. He, of course, encounters Ion and is quick to embrace him as his son—Xouthos believes Ion is his natural son, the result of a one night stand in his youth. When Kreousa discovers that Xouthos has been granted a son, and she remains childless, she feels that Apollo has added insult to injury and betrayed her once again. Enraged, she plots Ion's assassination, which promptly fails. She is discovered, and, hunted by Ion, she seeks refuge in the holy temple of Apollo. Just as Ion is about to kill Kreousa in the temple, the Pythian priestess emerges, a *dea ex machina*, arriving to unravel the play's complications. Pythia takes out the baby clothes and basket Ion in which was found, which Kreousa immediately recognizes and identifies, proving that she is Ion's natural mother. In a joyous reunion, mother and son reconcile, and the Athenians are granted an heir. Athena arrives in the end to foretell the future of the Athenian and Ionian people. And life goes on.

It is not uncommon for Euripides to manipulate myth for his own purposes. Of the Greek tragedians, he is known as the one who “adopts unusual versions from the repertory of myth,” and it is common for his “principals [to] escape from their predicaments” (Bovie x). Perhaps this and the fact that Euripides’ “plots and characters are often so realistically developed as to seem new and modern rather than classical” are some of the reasons why H.D. was drawn to Euripides (Bovie x). But beyond that, the play’s themes seem to lend themselves to translators and translation. Ion, with its anxiety about rape, illegitimate children, and foreign interlopers taking the throne, has everything to do with translation. As Lori Chamberlain explains in her excellent essay on the traditional metaphors of translation theory, translations are traditionally thought of as the bastard children of literature, always “relegated to a secondary role” (Chamberlain 314). She outlines the common parental and familial metaphors associated with translation:

The translator, as father, must be true to the mother/language in order to produce legitimate offspring; if he attempts to sire children otherwise, he will produce bastards fit only for the circus. Because the mother tongue is conceived of as natural, any tampering with it—any infidelity—is seen as unnatural, impure, monstrous, and immoral. Thus, it is “natural” law which requires monogamous relations in order to maintain the “beauty” of the language and in order to insure that the works be genuine or original.

(Chamberlain 317)

In terms of Ion, the title character is the illegitimate offspring of the rapist, Apollo, and the pure, autochthonous virgin queen, Kreousa. Thus, Apollo’s rape of Kreousa, because

it is not a true marriage, results in a bastard child and threatens the Athenian race. This explains why brutalized and abandoned Kreousa feels she must give up Ion—without a father, Ion is not authorized as the heir to the Athenian throne. The play, then, enacts the metaphors of translation. As Chamberlain further explains, “‘Legitimacy’ has little to do with motherhood and more to do with the institutional acknowledgement of fatherhood. The question, ‘Who is the real father of the text?’ seems to motivate these concerns about both the fidelity of the translation and the purity of the language” (Chamberlain 317). While the plot of *Ion* applies to many of the same metaphorical constructions of the relationship between the original and the translation, it inherently subverts many of those constructions and lends itself to a reading that promotes translation as a necessary and creative literary form, for Ion is reinstated as Athenian heir in the end when his *mother* claims him. This act also serves to unblock the infertility that plagues Kreousa and Xouthos and ensures the survival of the Athenian race. Thus, it is the mother as translator who authorizes and legitimizes Ion-as-text. Metaphorically, it is only through Ion’s necessary translation that the Athenian people live on. I argue that this notion of translation is partly what drew H.D. to *Ion*. By translating the play, she could work through her complicated and ambivalent feelings toward being a woman poet/translator, and she could work out her need to translate in order to authorize herself as a poet in a tradition that relegates the feminine to a secondary, non-authorial role.

My study concerns this need for translation and is based on Freudian psychoanalysis, especially theories of repression, repetition compulsion, and transference. I use Freudian theory, which with its reliance on transference and interpretation inherently applies to translation theory,³ to examine how H.D. uses translation to break

her writer's block and to confirm her position as a poet. Chapter I is a comparative examination of the repression of Kreousa's rape in Euripides' and H.D.'s versions of Ion. Chapter II looks at H.D.'s translation of Euripides through the lens of Tribute to Freud, her memoir of her psychoanalysis with Freud, in order to see how she uses the translation project as a continuation of her Freudian analysis. And Chapter III focuses on the process of transference to Euripides as father that occurs through H.D.'s Ion, which allows H.D. to work through her phallic fantasy and ensures her survival as the female heir to an Apollonian poetic tradition. Through my investigation, we shall see how H.D.'s translation of Euripides' Ion functions, not as a writing cure, as some critics have suggested, but as an ongoing psychoanalysis that allows H.D. to live on.

Chapter I:

Trauma and Translation: The Rape of Kreousa

A 1937 review of H.D.'s translation of Ion in The Criterion tells us that, in Euripides' version, "the Ion . . . is a thinly veiled attack of the stronghold on Olympian religion, the oracle of Delphi and its god. Apollo is proved a fool as well as a knave. Throughout a drama packed with human action and human emotions runs a constant theme: How could a god treat a girl so shamelessly?" (Manton 729). The question of course refers to the event that instigates the entire drama; namely, Apollo's rape of Kreousa, the virgin heiress to the throne of Athens, an event that is recounted numerous times before the play's end. We first learn of Kreousa's rape from Hermes' synoptic prologue:

. . .once Apollo wed Erechtheus' child—
 by force, that is; Creusa was her name.
 And this was at the place called the Long Rocks
 in Athens, the northern side of Pallas' hill.
 Without her father's knowledge—so the god chose—
 she carried her burden; then when it was time,
 she had the child at home, and brought him out
 to the cave in which the god had slept with her.
 There, in the hollow of a covered basket,
 Creusa set her baby out to die. (Roberts 14)⁴

In Euripides' text, the above lines begin, “*οὐ παῖδ’ Ερεχθέως Φοίβος ἐζευξεν γάμοις/ βίαι Κρέουσαν,*”⁵ and although in Greek there are stronger words for rape (*ἡ ἀρπαγή*, used for seizure, robbery, or rape) and more general terms for violence against women which are sometimes used for rape (*ἡ ὕβρις*),⁶ the construction of these lines makes it clear that the “marriage” (*γάμοις*) between Apollo and Kreousa is nonconsensual and even violent, as the dative *βίαι* suggests. Deborah H. Roberts, in her preface to her translation, concurs and points out the significance of the way “Euripides has ordered his sentences. The language of marriage only reveals itself as the language of rape as we move from one line to the next; we thus read briefly as marriage what then proves to be rape. . . . What [the gods] impose on mortal women is therefore neither marriage nor rape, and yet it is both” (Roberts 10). Because there is not always a clear distinction between these two terms, it is not uncommon for the speakers in the play to use words for marriage, mating, or sex when characterizing Kreousa's trauma. Often, however, other testimony is provided to indicate the violence and brutality of the act.

As Hermes' prologue continues, we learn that Kreousa's rape results in a pregnancy that she is forced to endure in secret—as the victim of rape, Kreousa, the only heir to the Athenian throne, cannot reveal the trauma she has experienced. Completely alone, she conceals the delivery of the child, and upon its birth, she returns to the scene of the crime against her, a dark cave on the hills of the acropolis. There, she abandons the newborn, leaving him to die. This marks the beginning of a compulsion to repeat and revisit the cite of the trauma. Thus, the trauma does not end with the rape/marriage but extends through her secret pregnancy, birth, and much-regretted rejection of the child and returns throughout the play. The rest of the play is fixated on overcoming this trauma.

In an 1896 letter to Wilhelm Fleiss which later became the basis for some of the ideas contained in The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud writes: “A failure of translation is what we know clinically as ‘repression.’ The motive for it is always a release of unpleasure which would result from a translation; it is as though this unpleasure provokes a disturbance of thought which forbids the process of translation” (Freud 175). Freud goes on to explain that events, especially sexual events, which are traumatic are often too painful for the subject to process, so instead, the subject simply suppresses them. With this in mind, one might expect a lack of translation in this play, for the combined trauma of Kreousa’s rape, subsequent pregnancy and abandonment of the product of that rape is quite a lot to digest (for the fictional character of Kreousa as well as for the play’s audience). And although one would anticipate the repression of such “unpleasurable” events, Euripides’ play, on the contrary, attempts to translate them again and again—the story of Kreousa’s rape and subsequent rejection of the child is explicitly told no less than 8 times, and referred to or implied a half-dozen more times over the course of the play. It is significant that each time the events are told, regardless of the speaker, they are told through a different interpretation or translation.

We have already noticed how in Euripides’ version the first telling of Kreousa’s rape hardly pulls any punches with regard to the violence of the act, despite the fact that it comes from a non-human source, the god Hermes, who also happens to be the rapist’s brother. H.D.’s version of Hermes’ opening lines intriguingly suppresses the violence of the original. H.D. translates “*Φοῖβος ἐζευξεν γάμοις/ βίαι*” simply as “Phoibos loved Kreousa” altogether omitting any sense of force (H.D. Ion 151, my emphasis). Yet, in both versions, each subsequent telling of the rape suggests, indicates, expresses, and/or -

condemns the violence of Apollo's act in varying degrees. During Kreousa and Ion's first meeting, she refers to the "shameless acts the gods commit," hinting at her own rape, and making no secret of her attitude towards Apollo and his vicious deed (Roberts 22). She demands, "Where can we look for justice, if our rulers/ themselves destroy us by their injuries?" (Roberts 22). These words suggest the pain, anger, and sense of betrayal Kreousa experiences. H.D.'s translation of Kreousa's first lines to Ion is even more forceful in expressing these emotions:

I thought:
 "you are doomed,
 race of women,
 O, woman,
 and women,
 and lost;
 why hope and of whom can you hope,
 whom the Daemons
 betray—" (H.D. Ion 172)

Given the fact that H.D. previously failed to translate the violence of Apollo's act, readers without any knowledge of Euripides' version of Ion may wonder where this strong sense of betrayal is coming from. In the original, it is clear that Apollo's rape of Kreousa is an example of a ruler "destroying us by their injuries." But H.D.'s version offers no such antecedent since the initial rape is characterized as a love affair. With no hint of rape, one reading H.D.'s translation with no knowledge of the original might, therefore, assume that Kreousa is suggesting that Apollo betrayed her simply by

abandoning her after their love affair. But it seems like a bit of a leap to suggest that this kind of betrayal dooms women as a race. One has to wonder what act would warrant such doom and gloom. Thus, by expressing a stronger sense of betrayal for a lesser offense, H.D.'s version simultaneously suggests that something is being repressed while it represses it. A few pages later, in both versions, Kreousa refers to her trauma again when she tells Ion, "Apollo knows about my childlessness" (Roberts 26).⁷ In tone, this line subtly suggests what we already know, that Apollo is responsible for her childlessness. These kinds of remarks signal the dark aftereffects of the trauma being suppressed, and at the same time, they signal the need for expression, or in terms of repression, for translation.

Soon after, Kreousa offers the first such translation. She tells Ion the story of her rape; only she translates it into someone else's story. That is, in a deflective move, she distances herself from the traumatic event, telling the story as if it happened to someone else:⁸

Creusa: One of my friends says that she slept with Phoebus

Ion: A mortal woman with Phoebus? It can't be so.

Creusa: And had his child without her father's knowing.

Ion: No! Some man did this to her, and she is ashamed.

Creusa: She says not. She has suffered terribly.

Ion: And she slept with a god? What did she do to suffer?

Creusa: She abandoned the child to whom she had given birth.

(Roberts 29)

It is significant to note the verb used for the act of rape in the Greek is *μυγήναι*, which is rather neutral; in this context it would normally be translated as ‘have intercourse with,’ but more generally, it simply means, ‘join or bring together.’ There is no suggestion of violence. Ion reacts with disbelief, and he assumes that Kreousa’s “friend” simply had an affair with a mortal which resulted in pregnancy. Kreousa denies it, and claims that her friend has “suffered terribly,” but Ion again finds it doubtful. Rather naïvely, he assumes that anyone would be happy to sleep with a god; he cannot see why anyone would experience “unpleasure” from such an experience. Again the Greek, *συνεζύγη*, “yoke” or “couple” makes no suggestion of violence or “unpleasure.” In fact, without Kreousa’s testimony that the friend has suffered, we have no other language indicating pain or suffering. Incidentally, H.D.’s version leaves out any mention of suffering or “unpleasure” completely:

Ion —no, a man’s act—

Kreousa —no—it was god—

Ion —child of Phoibos? (H.D. Ion 178)

In Euripides’ version, referring to suffering without explicitly describing it is perhaps another attempt for Kreousa to dissociate herself from the trauma. Although she is not repressing the memory altogether, she is only half-translating it in order to keep it at a distance. As a result of this partial translation, the evidence of Kreousa’s pain and trauma is brought to the surface elsewhere in this particular dialogue and in the rest of the play in general. In H.D.’s version, the repression is, again, stronger, signaling the need for translation elsewhere in the play.

When pressed, Kreousa does not even indicate that her friend's suffering was a result of the "coupling"; rather, she claims that it was a result of its aftermath, specifically the fact that she was forced to give up the baby she had in secret. As the conversation continues, both speakers refer to her pain, suffering, and misfortune: In line 357, Ion calls the story "painful," and in line 366, Kreousa says her friend, "feels pain—the woman he mistreated" (Roberts 31). In H.D.'s version, too, Kreousa hints at the trauma being repressed with references like, "all is black—" and she "whom he made suffer" (H.D. Ion 179). The cumulative effect of all the testimony of Kreousa's pain and suffering in Euripides' version leads to Ion's disapproval of Apollo's actions. After their conversation, Ion is left wondering about Apollo. He imagines the god:

Forcing girls into his bed, betraying them,

conceiving children that he leaves to die?

No! Since you rule us, you should practice virtue.

A wicked mortal is punished by the gods,

so how can it be just that you who write

the laws for mortals live without the law? . . .

Eager for pleasure, and incautious with it,

You do great wrong. . . (Roberts 34)

Here, Ion renounces Apollo, paving the way for fuller and more accurate translations of the story of Kreousa's rape. Ion exits the stage and the chorus enters, retelling the story a third time, and in two lines they characterize the traumatic events more precisely by asserting that Ion was "born of the violence/ of that bitter mating" (Roberts 36). In the Greek, we have the word for "wedding" or "mating" (Roberts' choice) modified by

“bitter”: “*πικρὸν γάμον.*” But the word that Euripides uses, which Roberts translates as violence, “*ὕβριν,*” also has the connotation of “wantonness” or “licentiousness,” and may specifically refer to “violence against women,” or rape.⁹

In her version, which only hints at the violence and suffering expressed in the original, H.D. translates Ion’s monologue rather differently. He begins by questioning Kreousa’s strange outbursts:

Why does she talk like this,
 this woman?
 what does she hint?
 she seems to hide something
 she speaks
 cryptically. (H.D. *Ion* 185)

In these lines, Ion again expresses that Kreousa is repressing something, and he wonders what it is. He knows that Kreousa “blames Helios,” but he is not quite sure why, and as a result, he is not ready to renounce the god, whom he has served since birth. Instead, he merely questions him:

Helios,
 answer me;
 say
 you are blameless;
 could you take
 a mere child
 and betray her?

could you betray her

and leave

your own child

to die?

no,

no,

no,

you are our Lord,

our virtue—

you punish

man's evil;

you could not

(it were unjust),

break laws

made for mortals. (H.D. Ion 186)

Again, reading H.D.'s Ion alongside Robert's translation of Euripides' version reveals how much H.D.'s version represses Kreousa's trauma. Although H.D.'s Ion begins to doubt Apollo's goodness, he is far from denouncing him. Rather, Ion clearly desires Apollo to remain "virtuous" and "blameless." Ion's uncertainty is followed by yet another half-translation of Kreousa's rape. The chorus retells the story of the "Virgin" who "left a child,/ her child/ and the child of Phoibos;/ O, unhappy girl," they pine, "she left/ her child, prey of the wild-hawks" (H.D. Ion 189). The chorus continues by asking

if there's ever been "a happy tale of a child,/ born of god and a woman," again only hinting at the suffering beneath the surface. There is no mention of violence or rape, only repeated suggestions of its aftereffects. In Euripides' version, on the contrary, Ion's indictment of Apollo leads to the chorus's accurate translation of the traumatic event, which subsequently allows Kreousa to break her silence about what happened to her.

Later in the play, when she discovers that Apollo has granted her foreign husband a child, but has left her childless, she says:

My hopes are gone, and all I tried to gain
by keeping quiet about that other marriage,
quiet about the child that I so mourn for.

No; by the starry home of Zeus above,
and by the goddess of our own high places,
and by the sacred headland of her lake,

I will no longer hide my rape, but speak—

and with the burden gone I will rest easy. (Roberts 55)

Each of the previous "translations" of her trauma have led Kreousa to the point where she has the strong impulse to translate the event for herself. She is now ready to break through her repression and translate. Her version, in which she addresses the rapist, Apollo, is perhaps the most compelling translation of the events in the play:

. . .you, child of Leto, I blame to this bright day.

You came to me, gleaming
and golden-haired,

as I gathered up
in the folds of my cloak
the flowers that blossomed
with yellow light;
you grasped my pale wrists, took me to that cave.

As I screamed for my mother
you lay with me,
a god, without shame,
and you pleased Aphrodite.

But I, unhappy,
gave birth to your son,
and fearful for his sake, as mothers are,

still cast him out,
in your bed, that place
where you made me suffer
and suffer again. (Roberts 56)

Robert's translation captures the sense of the passage very well. And in any language, it is striking how many times words for misery, pain, and suffering come up, especially in the last several lines. In the final clause, for example, half of the words refer to some degree of "unpleasure": "*ἵνα μ'εν λέχεσιν μελέαν μελέοις/ ἐζέβζω τάν δύστανον.*" *Μελέος* and *δύστανος* signify misery and wretchedness respectively. *Μελέος* is doubled in the

sentence, referring first to the marriage-bed (*λέχεσιν*) and second to the nature of their coupling (*εζεύζω*). And *τάν δύστανον*, the wretched woman, is what becomes of the innocent maiden picking flowers on the hillside.¹⁰

Yet one cannot deny the beauty of the language in these lines. In fact, because of its lush imagery, many critics and translators have interpreted Kreousa's monody to reveal actual praise for Apollo. But Lee's commentary on this passage, questions how critics are to interpret it:

The chief thematic question, however, is how precisely Kr. presents the rape, particularly with regard to the rich language which she uses. Is she really criticizing Apollo and showing rape to be utterly horrible, in which case the fine language only deepens our revulsion at the actual lust and violence of the god? Or does Eur. use a 'baroque technique' in which there is a tension between what Kr. intends—severe criticism of the god—and the picture which the language creates of a god who appears in glory and seems an ethereal seducer rather than an earthy rapist? (Lee 258)

Here, Lee is referring primarily to Anne Pippin Burnett's interpretation of the monody, which she says inverts the monody of Cassandra in The Trojan Women, where Cassandra "overtly praises her marriage while she bewails it" (Burnett 83). Burnett "calls this an unconscious tendency toward praise" and explains that Kreousa "means to unveil the god's crimes and to show him as a hypocrite unworthy of his cult, but this very purpose betrays her into references to the attributes that gave the god his beauty. . ." (Burnett 83). Burnett is not the only one to make this interpretation; in his translation, the French

translator Leconte de Lisle takes it even further by purposely ignoring the violent strain in Euripides Ion. And at least one critic characterized the translation as successful:

The most successful modern French adaptation of his work is perhaps L'Apollonide of Leconte de Lisle, translator of all the plays, who closely follows Ion while softening some of its ancient harshness. Thus Creusa had been wooed and won, not violated, by Apollo. And though in her mad childless jealousy she plans the murder of the unknown youth adopted by her husband, yet both her hatred and Ion's anger on discovering the plot are made less ferociously savage. (Lucas 156)

But this interpretation completely ignores the violence and pain expressed throughout the play, which I argue is integral to Kreousa's character development and the themes of the play in general. While it is true that versions that tone down the violence of Apollo's crime "soften" Ion's "ancient harshness," one has to question the value of purposely repressing, of *not* translating the inherent violence of the text. Indeed, by saying that the harshness is toned down in Lisle's translation, the above demonstrates that there is something innately harsh in the text. Repressing that strain leaves the heroine "mad," "jealous," and "murderous" without any compelling reason. She is just a crazy woman scorned, instead of Euripides' tragic and complex character.

Significantly, in the notes to Analyzing Freud, a recent collection of H.D., Freud, and Bryher's letters, Susan Stanford Friedman tells us that "H.D. owned and marked portions of a three-volume set of Leconte de Lisle's translation of Euripides' plays into French prose. The Ion is especially heavily marked" (Friedman Freud 529). And in a letter to Bryher in this edition, H.D. writes, "You see, I get to my Greek via L. de L.

translation” (Friedman Freud 529). This may explain why H.D.’s Ion represses Kreousa’s trauma throughout the play; however, it does not explain why in H.D.’s version of Kreousa’s monody, the violence of the trauma is finally expressed:

you I accuse;

you, born of Leto,

you bright

traitor within the light;

why did you seek me out,

brilliant, with gold hair? vibrant,

you seized my wrists,

while flowers fell from my lap,

the gold and the pale-gold crocus,

while you fulfilled you wish;

what did it help, my shout

of mother,

mother?

no help

came to me

in the rocks;

O, mother,

O, white hands caught;

O, mother,

O, gold flowers lost;

O, terror,

O, helpless loss,

O, evil union,

O, fate;

where is he whom you begot? (H.D. Ion 210-1)

Although it is a freer translation, H.D.'s vers libre version, with its repeated cries of terror represented by the paralellistic "O," expresses the trauma of Kreousa's rape. Lines like, "you seized my wrists," "while you fulfilled your wish," and "O, evil union," clearly indicate the violence of the act. The trauma that is repressed up until this point is finally translated.

H.D.'s version also retains the luminous description of Apollo, calling him, "brilliant with gold hair," and the lush description of the setting, with all the references to gold flowers. In my reading, the beauty of Kreousa's description of Apollo and the rape in both versions underscores her sense of betrayal, and as Lee puts it, the "utter horribleness" of Apollo's brutality. H.D.'s enjambment over the lines, "you bright/ traitor within the light," which is reminiscent of Hermes' initial "wed Erechtheus' child—/ by force. . . ," captures the simultaneous sense of beauty and betrayal. We see the act as bright and beautiful until the next line reveals treachery within the light. Furthermore, the trauma is intensified by Kreousa's description of Apollo, who, for all his beauty, ought to be benevolent. The other characters' reactions to Kreousa's story reinforce the intensity of the trauma. The Old Man, "a longtime family servant"

according to Roberts, is mortified at what Kreousa is telling him. Thus, in a scene that is almost like a session of Freudian analysis, the Old Man asks for clarification.¹¹ He asks for another translation. Thus begins the fifth retelling of the story of Kreousa's rape and its aftermath. The Old Man offers a remedy for Kreousa's pain. He offers to kill Ion, so that on top of her earlier traumas Kreousa will not have to experience the trauma of allowing a bastard child of her foreign husband to be the heir to her throne.¹² The assassination attempt, however, fails, and the play culminates in Kreousa being hunted by Ion for ordering the crime. In a reverse repetition of the trauma of abandoning her newborn son in the dark cave where Apollo raped her, Kreousa flees Ion and seeks refuge at Apollo's altar. Despite the sacred setting, Ion is ready to kill Kreousa for her crime against him—the second time she has tried to kill him (he is not yet aware of the first)—but Apollo's Pythian priestess intervenes by bringing Ion the basket and baby clothes she found him in. Kreousa sees Ion's baby things and recognizes them as her son's. She begins to speak, and Ion tells her to be quiet. But Kreousa, who broke her silence with her previous translations of events, replies, "Silence is not my part" (Roberts 80). This prompts yet another retelling of the story of her trauma, the sixth translation of those events in the play. After identifying the contents of Ion's basket, which proves to him that she is his mother, she tells him about his father:

Creusa: There were no torch lit dances at the wedding
 that gave you birth.

Ion: It hurts to hear it.
 Am I low-born, then, mother? Who was the man?

Creusa: I take Athena Gorgon-slayer as witness—

Ion: Why do you say this?

Creusa: the goddess whose olives crown my rocky hill—

Ion: You speak to me in twists and turns, not plainly.

Creusa: that by nightingales' rock, with Phoebus—

Ion: Pheobus? Why do you speak of him?

Creusa: I went to bed with him in secret.

Ion: Tell me, since what you will say is my good fortune.

Creusa: In the tenth month, my hidden pain,
you were born: the god was your father.

Ion: If this is true, you tell me what I long for.

Creusa: I wrapped you in some weaving I had done,
while still a girl—my effort at the loom—
but did not tend you as a mother does;
I did not nurse you and I did not wash you.
In a lonely cave, a feast
For the beaks of birds to tear at,
you were given up to Hades. (Roberts 85-7)

Overwhelmed with joy at their reunion, Ion forgives Kreousa for trying to kill him twice and apologizes for trying to kill her. The language that Kreousa uses to describe her rape and Ion's conception is much milder than any previous description. What Roberts translates as "I went to bed with him, in secret," (*κρυπτόμενον λέχος ηυνάσθην*) literally reads, "in secret marriage-bed I lay" with him (Lee 146). H.D.'s version is an even milder "I was his bride" (H.D. *Ion* 250). There are two reasons for this shift in tone: the

first is simply that Kreousa is protecting Ion from the gory details of the complete story. Without the troubling details of his conception, Ion is then able to rejoice at the fact that he is a half-god. The second reason for Kreousa's mild language is that she has already had the benefit of fully translating her trauma twice. After breaking her silence, and releasing the suppressed trauma, she can now "rest easy" without dwelling on the pain and suffering she experienced.

This, however, does not diminish the brutality and violence of her trauma, which she acknowledges in subsequent lines and to which the rest of the play is a testament. Rather, it signals that she is better able to integrate the painful events into her existence and move on:

Gods, gods. What happened long ago was terrible,

and terrible what we have done here too.

We are tossed from this to that as fortune turns

and good luck follows bad: the wind keeps changing.

Let things stay as they are. Enough of sorrow.

Now let there be fair weather for us, child. (Roberts 87)

In Euripides version, the successful translation of the traumatic event allows for the reunion between Ion and Kreousa, which results in fertility and creativity. The reunion allows Ion to take his place as the heir of Athens, and lifts Kreousa and Xouthos's infertility, which, as Athena subsequently reports, will result in the birth of two more sons: Dorus and Achaëus (Roberts 90). If the play were a series of psychoanalysis, Kreousa might be said to be cured. The news of her future offspring symbolically suggests that she will live on happily as will the Athenian people. In H.D.'s version, the

above lines are shortened to a mere, “it’s over,/ don’t speak of it—,” which sounds like more repression instead of continued translation. Does this mean that H.D. refuses to be cured? For H.D. the trauma of Kreousa’s rape is bound up in her own trauma and repression. Is she, therefore, choosing, as Freud has suggested some analysts do, to avoid the successful end of analysis in order to protect against the pain of reckoning with her similar trauma?¹³ This cannot be the case entirely since H.D.’s *Ion* allowed her to break her writer’s block and served as a gateway to some of her best poetry. In order to understand exactly how H.D. translates the trauma that seems to be repressed, we must look more closely at how she uses the translation of Euripides’ *Ion* as a continuation of her psychoanalysis with Freud.

Chapter II:

‘I am, I am, I AM a P O E T’: H.D.’s Translation as Analysis Interminable

If Kreousa exhibits a repetition compulsion by translating and retranslating the story of her rape over the course of Ion, we might say that the poet H.D. shows a similar compulsion in translating Euripides. In her excellent study of H.D.’s lifelong preoccupation with the classics, Eileen Gregory neatly outlines the four periods of H.D.’s engagement with Euripides: From 1912-19, H.D. investigates the chorus as a form and translates “choruses” from Iphigenia in Aulis (1915) and Hippolytus (1919), and makes some effort at translating from the Ion, perhaps throughout the whole period between 1915 and 1920.” Then in the early twenties, “H.D. reads many of Euripides’ plays and works at translations of the Helen, the Ion, and the Bacchae, publishing choral songs from the latter two as well as from the Hecuba. A third period occurs immediately before and after H.D.’s analysis with Freud in 1933 and 1934,” which results in Electra-Orestes and Ion, which she finally publishes in 1937. And then, in the early fifties, “H.D. returns to the matter of Troy in conjunction with the composition of Helen in Egypt, rereading five plays of Euripides in Leconte de Lisle’s translation” (Gregory 180-1). It is important to remember that the previously cited letter to Bryher, in which H.D. states that she consulted Lisle for her translation of Ion, was written in 1935. Thus, not only did H.D. use Lisle to get to Euripides for her translation but also she continued to be influenced by Lisle’s version of Euripides well into the 1950’s as she worked on her later epic poetry.

Gregory’s historical outline of H.D.’s translation work shows not only that H.D. was preoccupied with Euripides for most of her writing life but also that she returned

specifically to Ion over and over in the twenty-year period between 1915 and 1935, a time when, according to Dianne Chisholm, she was formulating her poetics.¹⁴ What is it about Ion that kept H.D. coming back until she finally succeeded in translating it? And why did it take H.D. twenty years to complete her translation process? Gregory tells us that "critics approach H.D.'s Hellenism as a sublimation, evasion, or repression of traumatic events, as opposed to the historical confrontation found in her narratives and memoirs or in trilogy" (179). That is, most critics assume that H.D. used translation as a way of avoiding the traumatic events she experienced in the war years. But, as we have already seen in the case of Kreousa, translation *undoes* repression, and repetition compulsion is "a force able to overcome the repression which. . . weighs down upon [distressing experiences]" (Freud Collected, V 145). In the following pages, I will look at H.D.'s engagement with and translation of Ion in order to discover exactly how this ongoing project helped H.D. to break through the writer's block that tormented her throughout the twenties and into the early thirties when she was developing her poetics. Specifically, I will look at H.D.'s translation project as a kind of ongoing psychoanalysis, a continuation of her analysis with Freud.

When looking for what might have drawn H.D. to Ion, one might immediately notice similarities between H.D. and Kreousa. As I have already noted, both have experienced traumas that result in a sort of repetition compulsion. On the surface, it seems obvious that H.D. might have been drawn to a character who was brutalized and then abandoned by a supernatural force. In the years around the first world war, H.D. experienced a number of painful losses that left her, as she puts it, "battered, and dissociated from [her] American family and English friends" (H.D. Tribute 48). In the

span of a few years, H.D.'s first pregnancy ended in miscarriage; her brother was killed in battle; her father died from the shock of it; her intense friendship with D.H. Lawrence ended abruptly and painfully; and her marriage to the British imagist poet Richard Aldington dissolved as a result of infidelities on both their parts. Then, in 1919, H.D. became pregnant a second time with the child of Cecil Gray, a musician with whom she had had an affair. Around the same time, she contracted influenza, which was epidemic in that year, and barely survived to carry the child to term. But she did survive, miraculously, with the help of a new friend, Winifred Ellerman, the writer and British shipping heiress better known as "Bryher," who from that point on became H.D.'s lifelong companion. Though rape is not part of the equation, one can make a preliminary comparison between Gray, the ethereal musician, who promptly abandons the mother of his child, and Ion's Apollo. Indeed, toward the end of her translation of Ion, H.D. calls Apollo "*that luxury-loving, yet totally vibrant and detached musician,*" a description that could easily apply to Gray (H.D. Ion 234). But, curiously, despite a clear identification with Kreousa's trauma, H.D.'s version severely downplays Kreousa's rape and shows little interest in condemning Apollo for his cruel behavior. In the aforementioned 1937 Criterion review, Guy Manton rightly characterizes H.D.'s translation as, on the contrary, a "hymn of praise to Delphi, [which] bears little resemblance to Euripides' play either in language or dramatic purpose . . . , and in places of irony she has given us a mystical exaltation of Greek religion, climate, and archeology" (Manton 729). H.D.'s translation is quite antithetical to the original version which indicts Apollo. It is clear, then, that H.D.'s interest in Ion is more complicated.

H.D.'s use of Lisle to get to Euripides may help readers to understand why her version lacks direct attention to Kreousa's rape. Although it may at first come as a surprise that H.D. would use a decidedly inaccurate and un-feminist version of the play as a guide, a consideration of H.D.'s ongoing psychoanalysis offers an explanation. H.D., we should recall, sought help from Freud specifically in clearing up a specific type of neurosis, writer's block. And as Freud reminds us, the "aetiology of all neuroses is indeed a mixed one" (Freud "Analysis" 321). To be sure, the founding of H.D.'s neurosis was not a simple one. H.D. wanted more than anything to be a poet as worthy as her male counterparts. The trauma of being abandoned by those same poets, her friends and lovers, in the teens tapped into a larger sense of rejection from the male poetic tradition that she felt as a woman poet. This sense of rejection may have originated with Ezra Pound, her first love and lifelong friend. As Jacob Korg explains in biographical study of H.D. and Pound's lifelong relationship, their early friendship "set a pattern that she was to relive many times, for her lesbian tendencies did not prevent H.D. from attaching herself to authoritative men as disciple and sometimes as a lover, eventually coming to distrust them, and ultimately to feel that she was rejected. The story was retold with her husband, Richard Aldington, the writer D.H. Lawrence, the composer Cecil Gray, the psychologist Havelock Ellis, the air marshal Lord Dowding, and the journalist Lionel Durand. Her analysts, Erich Heydt and Freud, could also be added to this list except that her relationships with them ended without pain" (Korg 10). So, H.D.'s early rejection by Pound seems to be the foundation of a repetition similar to Lisle's version of Kreousa's rejection by Apollo. But that rejection takes on larger significance in terms of H.D. wanting to be, like Pound, a poet.

During their two periods of psychoanalysis in 1933 and 1934, Freud equated H.D.'s desire to be a part of a male poetic tradition (one that includes Pound, Aldington, and Lawrence) with penis envy. Freud diagnoses H.D.'s writer's block as stemming from her desire to have been born male. H.D. reports in Tribute to Freud, her memoir of her psychoanalysis with Freud, that Freud insisted "that not only did I want to be a boy but I wanted to be a hero. He suggested my reading Otto Ranks *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden*" (H.D. Tribute 120). Thus, although H.D. could identify with the battered character of Kreousa, she could also identify with the passionate poet-musician Apollo. Lisle's version of Euripides, therefore, allows H.D. not only to repress the trauma she experienced by repressing Kreousa's rape but also to act out her fantasy of being a poet in the Apollonian tradition. In this way, H.D.'s translation of Euripides, through Lisle, allows her to continue the psychoanalytic work she did with Freud. Indeed, it is while she is working on her translation of Ion, a year after her work with Freud, that H.D. finally declares herself a poet. She writes to Bryher: "I went through such an inferno that I seem to have come out the other end and to say to myself I am, I am, I AM a P O E T and you know I never said that before" (Freidman Freud 528). Yet, the question remains, how would working on a translation allow one to declare oneself a poet?

It might be said that H.D. has a natural affinity for the work of translation. In Tribute to Freud, H.D. recounts how as a child she often felt like a foreigner: "I do not always even understand the words my brother uses. He is a big boy and known to be quaint and clever for his age. I am a small girl and small for my age and not very advanced. I am in a sense, still a foreigner" (H.D. Tribute 26). Elsewhere, she comments

on her occasional inability to understand Freud, and her need to translate: “He might have been talking Greek. The beautiful tone of his voice had a way of taking an English phrase or sentence out of its context (out of its associated context, you might say, of the whole language) so that, although he was speaking English without a perceptible trace of accent, yet he was speaking a foreign language” (H.D. Tribute 69). It becomes evident in Tribute to Freud that the language barrier she struggles with is not one between English and German, but between male and female.¹⁵ This interest in foreign language should not come as a surprise given H.D.’s experience as an expatriate. In 1911 H.D. went to visit Ezra Pound, in London, and she ended up staying in Europe for the rest of her life. In a sense, this choice to become an expatriate is way of embracing foreignness that she had felt even as a child in relation to her older brother. And it seems the tension between being included and being excluded, claimed or abandoned, becomes a theme in H.D.’s oeuvre. As Norman Holland puts it, “the opposite of fusion in the H.D. myth is the sense of being a foreigner, left out, someone who exists, as it were, in the third person. . . . To compromise between total fusion and total alienation, H.D. likes to establish the boundaries and edges of things” (Holland 494). Indeed, in Tribute to Freud, she describes herself as being “on the fringes, or in the penumbra of light of my father’s science and my mother’s art” (H.D. Tribute 145). As an American living in Europe, as a woman poet wanting to be a part of a male poetic tradition, as a bisexual in the early twentieth century, H.D. is and is not an outsider; she is, by choice, on the fringes. One might say H.D. is predisposed to translating.

Accordingly, Tribute to Freud itself is a kind of translation. It consists of two versions of the same “text,” two memoirs of the same experiences. And as Joseph Riddel

explains, in his study of H.D.'s relationship with Freud, "the two texts do not exactly duplicate one another, though there are common themes, but compose a sort of palimpsest of supplementary reflections" (Riddel 29). The first section, "Writing on the Wall," was written in 1944 from memory, without using the notes she took while she was seeing Freud. Part two, "Advent," was assembled in 1948 from her original notes. The book, therefore, consists of two translations of a text that is already a translation; that is, a translation in the sense that it is an interpretation of H.D. and Freud's common experience of transference. We may recall that the German word for transference, *Übertragung*, is often used to mean "translation." Furthermore, much of H.D.'s analysis centers on an experience that can be characterized as an originary translation: the "Writing on the Wall" incident, the daytime hallucination which H.D. experiences in Greece in 1920 where Bryher took her to recuperate after giving birth to her daughter, Perdita, and overcoming the flu. H.D. and Freud spent much of their time together interpreting and analyzing H.D.'s vision, this waking dream, where three images (an airman's head, a mystical chalice, and the Delphic tripod) appear on the wall of her hotel room (H.D. Tribute 44-6). It is after her analysis with Freud that she embraces her position on the border and becomes confident as a skillful translator.

Thus, when Freud prescribes a writing cure for H.D.'s writer's block, H.D. chooses to *translate*. As Eileen Gregory tells us, this translation project of Euripides Ion was "H.D.'s first sustained effort to follow Freud's advice, or to satisfy his reiterated expectation, that she resume writing" (Gregory 206). By the 1930's H.D.'s audience had come to value her translations, which is most likely another reason why H.D. turned full time to translation after her analysis with Freud. She chose a translation project partly

because of demand—around this time, she met Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder, who encouraged her to work on her Greek translations. Wilder, specifically, wanted to take her translation back to the States with him (Friedman Freud 515). Also, as Susan Stanford Friedman reports, “As a translation of another poet’s genius, it marks H.D.’s return to the safe cage of being the ‘Greek H.D.’ her fans demanded instead of being an innovative voice in her own right” (Friedman Freud 516). The arguability of whether being the Greek H.D. and being an innovative voice are mutually exclusive notwithstanding, it seems that translation offered H.D. a sense of security that may have partially allowed her to return to creative work. Thus, H.D.’s translation of Euripides, by allowing her another experience of transference, comes to embody the writing cure that Freud prescribed the year before.

I have already noted H.D.’s repetition compulsion. It seems that the act of translating is similar to the transference that occurs in analysis, where the analysand can work through a trauma by talking about it, re-experiencing it in a safe environment, and transferring the repressed emotions onto the therapist, thereby disrupting the repression. Just as with her previous experience with Freud, H.D. could work through her own trauma by working through the parallel traumas presented by Euripides. In this way, H.D., herself, saw her translation work as a kind of psychoanalysis. Even when H.D. first turned to Euripides after World War I, as Susan Stanford Friedman tells us, the therapeutic powers of the project were evident: The work “had been magically regenerative, removing her from the suffering of war-stricken London, healing her on the stark shores in the crystalline sea air of Druidic Cornwall” (Freidman 515). And H.D. herself describes those early translations of Euripides as “psychic work,” which she

connects to her pregnancy and the beginning of her lifelong relationship with Bryher: “I was working on [Ion], during pup-pregnancy and when you arrived—so no doubt it is all mixed up with that and my trip with you” (qtd. in Freidman 515).¹⁶ In letters to Bryher written in 1935, when she was finishing Ion, H.D. wrote, “I do miss you, but feel if I get this Ion done, it will break the backbone of my H.D. repression.” She continues, “I feel this Ion is a sort of fancy-dress edition of my phallic fantasy—evidently is. Also all the sun-god stuff and the Delphic, hitches on to us in Corfu. One can not explain it ‘away’ and I don’t want to—but it is good to get the pattern” (Friedman Freud 297). Tribute to Freud offers much to clarify these statements. There, she reveals an intense affection for Delphi, which she says, “had always touched me very deeply” (H.D. Tribute 49). This affection is no doubt the result of H.D.’s equating Delphi with the source of poetic creation: “Delphi,” she says, “specifically, was the shrine of the Prophet and Musician, the inspiration of artists and the patron of physicians. . . . The tripod, we know, was the symbol of prophecy, prophetic utterance or occult or hidden knowledge; the Priestess or Pythoness of Delphi sat on the tripod while she pronounced verse couplets. . .” (H.D. Tribute 50-1). Delphi, for H.D., is a symbol of poetic production.

Earlier, H.D. emphasizes that “Delphi and the shrine of Helios (Hellas, Helen) had really been the main objective of my journey,” connecting Delphi and Apollo’s shrine to Greece itself and to her mother, whose name was Helen (H.D. Tribute 49). She states that her “writing on the wall” experience occurred when she was on her way to Delphi: “I was physically in Greece, in Hellas (Helen). I had come home to the glory that was Greece” (H.D. Tribute 44). For H.D., returning to Greece, specifically to Delphi, is like returning to her mother, who significantly was a painter and musician. Freud

interprets this connection as H.D.'s "desire for union with [her] mother," which fits into his diagnosis that H.D.'s neurosis stems from her desire to be born male (H.D. Tribute 44). For Freud, H.D. exhibits classic penis envy:

In females. . .the striving after masculinity is ego-syntonic at a certain period, namely, in the phallic phase, before development in the direction of femininity has set in. But later it succumbs to that momentous process of repression, the outcome of which (as has often been pointed out) determines the fortunes of the woman's femininity. A great deal depends upon whether a sufficient amount of her masculinity-complex escapes repression and exercises a lasting influence on her character. . . .Very often indeed, however, we find that the wish for masculinity persists in the unconscious and, in its repressed state, exercises a disturbing influence.

(Freud "Analysis" 355)

In other words, H.D.'s writer's block stems from the repression of her masculinity complex. Rather than desiring a union with her father, she wishes she were a boy so that she may unite with her Apollonian mother, so that she may be a poet. Thus, H.D.'s fascination with Delphi as translated into her writing on the wall experience can be read as "a suppressed desire to be a Prophetess, to be important anyway" (H.D. Tribute 51). So, when H.D. claims that "Ion is a sort of fancy-dress edition of my phallic fantasy," she is referring to her position as a woman poet wanting to be born a boy so that she could be part of the male tradition.

We are already beginning to see the manifold reasons that H.D. turned to Ion. H.D., a figure on the fringes, found much to relate to in the mythological cast of the play:

Apollo's Pythian Priestess, Hermes, and Athena, are all familiar characters in H.D.'s poetry, and especially in Tribute to Freud. Hermes, for example, who delivers the play's prologue, is, as H.D. emphasizes in her commentary, "the god of writing, of writers and orators, of the spoken word—" also of translation, not only because "he speaks for his brother, master-musician and prophet, Helios, Phoibos, Apollo, Loxias, king of Delphi" but also because he is the divine messenger and the accompanier of souls to the underworld (H.D. Ion 151). Thus, he is given the name "Hermes Psychopomp" (*ψυχοπομπός*, transmitter, guide of spirits/souls), the one who escorts souls to the underworld (Grimal 199). Hermes stands on the threshold between worlds. In Tribute to Freud, H.D. also associates Hermes with Freud, because she sees them both as healers. Hermes, she says, is "the leader of the dead. . . who took the attributes of Thoth of the Egyptians. The T of Tau-cross became the caduceus with twined serpents. . ." (H.D. Tribute 101). The caduceus is, of course, the symbol used for the medical profession, signifying healing, partly due to the twined serpents, which traditionally symbolize continual cycles of death and rebirth. Hermes is a translation figure because translation itself is a kind of rebirth of the 'original.' As H.D. puts it, "who could be more fitting as an introducer or announcer?" (H.D. Ion 151).

In Ion, Hermes also allows for Ion's living on, when he transports Ion from the cave where Kreousa abandons him, but he is not the only translation figure in the play. Another one of H.D.'s favorite figures plays an important role in ensuring Ion's survival; namely, the Pythian priestess, who becomes Ion's wet-nurse and raises him. Thus, Ion, the biological son of the Athenian queen, is also, by translation, a child of Delphi, which H.D. associates with the unconscious and with poetic production. As Friedman tells us

“the unconscious is an oracle whose obscure messages contain divine truth; as the source of artistic vision, the unconscious is a muse whose dream symbols inspire conscious expression in aesthetic form. For H.D., psychoanalysis unsealed the blocked entrance to the ‘well of living water’ buried by repression” (Friedman Psyche 73). But, according to this, poetic production only occurs through translation, through interpreting the unconscious’ dream symbols. The Pythia, then, becomes a translation figure.

It is perhaps not surprising that, in a letter to Bryher, H.D. compares Freud to the Pythia: Describing one of their sessions, she says, “to end with, he told me very, very, very sweetly that of course one interpretation of ANY thing with a person like myself was not sufficient, that there must be ‘two or multiple interpretations.’ O my god, talk of the two-faced oracle of Delphi. . . Papa has a hundred” (Friedman Freud 66).¹⁷ It is interesting, though, that she makes this comparison after explaining the Freud saw the same Pythian qualities in her that she is assigning to him, indicating that H.D. is taking her cue from Freud, learning to be the many-faced interpreter that he is. H.D. assumes the position of the Pythia, the prophetess of Delphi, to reconcile the two languages, which is also a theme of the play:

The reconciliation of opposites is brought about in the play through the mediumship of the Pythian priestess. Uniting contrasts--bridging the upper and lower worlds, the super-conscious and the sub-conscious, the realms of gods and men--the Pythia brings the hidden to birth. As oracle, the Pythia, possessed by the god in the form of a serpent, was archaically connected to the underworld and death. However, the Pythia in Ion is wholly purged of darkness; ‘freed from all taint of necromancy. . .’ This

‘wraith-like priestess’ should well serve H.D. as an etherealized emblem of the artist. (Walsh 125-6)

Like H.D., the Pythia lingers on the border between conscious and unconscious. Thus, H.D. uses the Pythia, the prophetess and symbol for poet or artist, as a figure of the translator in her poetry and translations, equalizing original creation and translation: The poet is a translator is a poet.

Hermes or Pythian Prophetess, H.D. identifies with the master translator, and in both cases she transforms ‘original’ production into translation. Elsewhere she performs the same feat with the original ordinary figure, Athena, who, according to myth, had no mother and was born from directly Zeus’ head. She is the original ‘legitimate’ child. Thus, as Freud notes, she becomes a larger symbol of patrilineal descent:

A great advance is made in civilization when man decided to put their inferences upon a level with the testimony of their senses and to make the step from matriarchy to patriarchy.—The prehistoric figures which show a smaller person sitting upon the head of larger one are representations of patrilineal descent; Athena had no mother, but sprang from the head of Zeus. A Witness who testifies to something before a court of law is still called a “Zeuge” [literally, “begetter”] in German, after the part played by the male in the act of procreation; so too in hieroglyphics a “witness” is represented pictorially by the male genitals. (Freud Histories 88)

In Tribute to Freud, H.D. recounts an experience where Freud presents H.D. with a small statue of Athena in order to make a connection between Athena’s masculine legitimacy and penis envy. At first, H.D. wonders why Freud shows her his collection of antiquities.

She asks, “Did he want to find out how I would react to certain ideas embodied in these little statues?” (H.D. Tribute 68). It would seem so. Freud holds out his Pallas Athené to H.D. proclaiming her his favorite. ““She is perfect,’ he said, ‘*only she has lost her spear.*’ I did not say anything. He knew that I loved Greece, he knew that I loved Hellas. I stood looking at Pallas Athené, she whose winged attribute was Nike, Victory, or she stood wingless. . .” (H.D. Tribute 69). It may be clear enough why this object is so highly prized in Freud’s eyes. As H.D. interprets it, “the little bronze statue was the perfect symbol, made in man’s image (in woman’s, as it happened), to be venerated as a projection of abstract thought, Pallas Athené, born without human or even without divine mother, sprung full from the head of her father, our-father, Zeus, Theus, or God” (H.D. Tribute 70). She is a symbol for male birth, wholly free from feminine stain. So, this little object, which is a representation of a female who has “lost her spear,” is also a phallic symbol, a symbol of male power.

However, H.D. seems purposely to ignore Freud’s insinuations, in favor of finding her own interest in the Athené. She appears to avoid what Gayatri Spivak calls the danger for women taking their place in Freud’s legacy (as deconstructionists): “Women armed with deconstruction must beware of becoming Athenas, uncontaminated by the womb, sprung in armor from Father’s forehead, ruling against Clytemnestra by privileging marriage, the Law that appropriates the woman’s body over the claims of that body as Law” (Spivak 49). Although H.D., too, loves Greece, Hellas, she does not seem to have the same fondness for the Athené. Rather, she focuses on her winged attribute, Nike. Eileen Gregory notes that here, “Athené appears to stand . . . as a sign of H.D.’s own victory” (Gregory 215). Elsewhere, H.D. notes, in relation to an earlier vision H.D.

experienced as a girl in Pennsylvania, which H.D. refers to as her signet vision, that Athena had a serpent at her feet:¹⁸ “There were, and are many varieties of serpents. There was among many others the serpent of Wisdom that crouched at the feet of the goddess Athené and was one of her attributes like the spear” (H.D. Tribute 89). Gregory explains, also, that “Athené carries the paradoxical wisdom belonging . . . implicitly, to the old hermit Freud: the wisdom of the serpent biting its tail. Athené too is close to the serpent and to the Gorgon, and her ‘*shining intellect, standing full armed*’ can see one Perseus-like through the descent inter serpentine meanderings, disintegration, and darkness.” In this way, with her relation to serpent, Athené is a symbol for death and rebirth, and, by extension, translation. This is the view of Athena that H.D. finds significant and preferable.

By transforming every Greek god she encounters into translation figures, H.D. dissolves the tension between translation and so-called original poetic production. To her, there seems to be little or no distinction between the original and the derivative, because, in a rather Derridian sense, the original is always already a translation.¹⁹ When H.D. translates, she legitimizes her work as creative and legitimizes herself as a poet in a male poetic tradition that is hostile to what it sees as the female, the derivative, the translation. Thus, Ion’s “themes of maternal and paternal fixations, illegitimacy, and creativity that had been the centerpiece of her sessions with Freud” allow H.D. to work through her writer’s block issues in a broader creative sense. “Working again on Ion in the summer of 1935 could complete the process of rebirth begun in 1918 [when H.D. was pregnant with her *illegitimate* daughter] and renewed during analysis with Freud” (Friedman Freud 514-5). These themes had preoccupied H.D. personally and creatively for almost 20 years.

Just like Ion's return to his origins, H.D.'s work as a translator returns her to her origins. As Eileen Gregory explains: "The play is . . . etiological: it enacts a founding--the founding of Hellas itself. It is concerned with origins and roots. For this reason it poses questions to H.D. that remain pending throughout the long course of a psychological, hermetic search, coming to a climax with Freud" (Gregory 212). By translating Ion, H.D. is able to formulate her poetics and found herself as a poet. But, as we shall see, this founding is complicated and encompasses all the ambivalent feelings H.D. holds toward being a female poet in a male tradition.

III. My Three Ions: H.D. as the (Il)legitimate Autochthonous Heir

Eileen Gregory tells us that H.D.'s translations are a tribute to both Freud and Euripides, "two writers whom H.D. considered equal and similar 'modern' fathers and masters of psychological life" (Gregory 206). As we have seen, she returns to these father figures again and again as a way of working through her repression. As Gregory explains, H.D.'s "working of Euripidean texts is repetitious and redundant, to some extent fixed on recurring figures, removed from actual memory. . . . In his complex role Euripides for H.D. is parallel to Freud as a figure of healer and guide--skeptical, scientist, wise man, visionary—" (Gregory 182). Returning to the Greek text of Euripides is like returning to Greece, which H.D. sees as having natural healing powers. Meditating on the map of Greece in her notes on Euripides, she says, "I am never tired of speculating on the power of that outline, just the mysterious line of it, apart from the thing it stands for. That leaf hanging a pendant to the whole of Europe seems to indicate the living strength and sap of the thing it derives from. Greece is indeed the tree-of-life, the ever-present stream, the spring of living water. . . ." (H.D. Ion 133). This description is reminiscent of her characterization of Freud: ". . . for all his amazing originality, he was drawing from a source so deep in human consciousness that the outer rock or shale, the accumulation of hundreds or thousands of years of casual, slack, or even wrong or evil thinking, had all but sealed up the original spring or well-head. He called it striking oil, but others—long ago—had dipped into the same spring. They called it 'a well of living water' in the old days, or simply the 'still waters'" (H.D. Tribute 82). In his introduction to Tribute to Freud, Kenneth Fields notes, "Freud, she thought, 'had dared to say that a dream came

from an unexplored depth in man's consciousness and that this unexplored depth ran like a great stream or ocean underground. . . and that it was the same ocean of universal consciousness, and even if not stated in so many words, he had dared to imply that this consciousness proclaimed all men one'" (Tribute xxix-xxx). If we return to the example of the Pythia, we can see how returning to Freud and Euripides as her literary fathers would help H.D. to write again. Each gives her access to the well of living water, the unconscious, and allows her to authorize herself in the Euripidean and Freudian tradition of translation. H.D.'s Ion itself is a testament to her new found authorial presence.

What is perhaps most striking about Ion as a translation is its form. H.D. transforms Euripides' play into an innovative vers-libre drama. As Friedman reports, "the volume is a highly experimental form of translation. H.D. breaks up the longer Greek lines into short, lyric flashes and interweaves her own prose commentary throughout the play. 'It is what every translation ought to be—a recreation,' writes Eric Walter White to H.D." (Friedman Freud 516). One example of this is the form of her dialogues, which H.D. describes in her interstitial commentary, as "*perfectly matched lyrical conversation.*" She likens these dialogues to "*a pattern in tapestry.*" Here is her translation of the dialogue between Ion and Kreousa at their first meeting, which we saw previously in Roberts' translation:

Kreousa: —I have come here—

Ion: —you have come here?

Kreousa: —for a friends' sake—

Ion: —what does she want?

Kreousa: —I dare not speak—

Ion: —speak and tell me—
 Kreousa: —she was Phoibos’—
 Ion: —do not say that—
 Kreousa: —and had his child—
 Ion: —no a man’s act—
 Kreousa: —no—it was god—
 Ion: —child of Phoibos?
 Kreousa: —hid in the rocks— (H.D. Ion 177-8)

This kind of tapestry dialogue marks the “*psychic affinity*” between Ion and Kreousa (H.D. Ion 214). Although there are two speakers, their lines, each “*perfectly matched*” at 4 syllables a piece, intertwine to create what is more like one lyric poem than a Euripidean dialogue. H.D. uses the same translation technique to translate a large portion of the dialogue between Kreousa and the Old Man, which shows a similar lingual affinity. We have already seen how Kreousa’s dialogue with the Old Man in the Euripides version is like a session of Freudian analysis, where the analysand recounts traumatic events in order to break through repression. In H.D.’s translation this comparison is perhaps more acute given H.D.’s experience with Freud. Just as H.D.’s Kreousa and Old Man finish each other’s sentences to create another translation of the trauma, H.D. and Freud’s collaborative work results in the translation of H.D.’s trauma and subsequent repression. As Chisholm explains, “Freud is implicated in the collective translation of her writing, a ‘high-powered’ projection and extension of psychic and artistic potential. . .” (Chisholm 11). It is through H.D.’s co-translation with Freud and her translation of Freud that H.D. works through her desire for union with her mother and

her phallic fantasy. For Freud, despite his dissatisfaction with it, is the mother in the transference: “The Professor’s surroundings and interests seem to derive from my mother rather than from my father. . . . He had said, ‘And—I must tell you (you were frank with me and I will be frank with you), I do *not* like to be the mother in transference—it always surprises and shocks me a little. I feel so very masculine.’ I asked him if others had what he called this mother-transference on him. He said ironically and I thought little wistfully, ‘O, very many’” (H.D. Tribute 146-7). Thus, the masculinity-striving H.D. feminizes and seeks union with him Freud so that she may take the place of the male sovereign. A similar process of transference occurs when H.D. translates Euripides.

H.D.’s translation of Euripides may be seen as a transference, which results in a completely new form. Rather than simply translating Euripides, H.D. may be thought of as creating a new text that replaces the previous one. Indeed, through her translation of Ion, H.D. takes the place of Euripides as author. This is made evident in places where she co-opts the lines and ideas that belong to the chorus in Euripides’ version, folding them into her interstitial commentary. H.D.’s section XII commentary indicts Apollo for his crime: “*This sun-god had mixed the vibrations, has committed that most dire of spiritual sins, he has played fast and loose with the dimensions of time and space. He appeared for a whim, to a girl, and that girl, their queen; and for a whim, deserted her. A god should know his place. . .*” (H.D. Ion 222). This commentary replaces Euripides’ chorus’ indictment of Xuthus and Apollo for “their unjust breeding of children” (Roberts 67). By replacing the chorus’ indictment of Apollo with her own diluted version, H.D. sets up her later commentary which downplays Apollo’s crime and ultimately lets him off the hook:

But Kreousa, on the other hand, had found something that all the time was there. In spite of invective against her lover, in spite of the recurrent motif of loss and desertion, in spite of the reiteration, the accusing tirade, was she too, like her own son, arguing down something in her own spirit, rather than inveighing against mere outside circumstance? It seems now, we guess for the first time, that the spark lit by her lordly lover had never really gone out. . . .

Would Kreousa of Athens, virgin and queen, at last analysis, have chosen a lesser lover than the lord of light? (H.D. Ion 235)

This passage makes evident the repression of Kreousa's rape and Apollo's guilt, for here Kreousa is characterized as having *chosen* Apollo as her lover and as loving him still. H.D.'s tone in this commentary is authorial; she presents this version as if it were the only version, shaping the way we read the play. The original Euripides is eclipsed by H.D.'s version.

In a previous section (XIV), H.D. interjects her own experience into the body of her translation, again stepping into a more prominent authorial role:

On my visit to Delphi, I was surprised to find coral branches of our so-called Judas-tree, cutting irregular, jagged purple against the weathered masonry of ruined porches. Here is the same shock, as of an intrusion, against lined marble and stark Doric column, of the most exotic of eastern patterns; fragrance, colour, taste—as if the poet had, inadvertently, spilled wine-purple through the pure line-ing of his own verse. (H.D. Ion 230)

It is clear that this is her own commentary in her own voice, and her voice is authorial. It is as if she is inserting herself into the play, just as the Judas-tree inserts itself into the landscape of ancient ruins. And the resulting form of her version of Ion is just as cutting, irregular, and jagged. This commentary is what inserts her into the place of the author/poet. Paradoxically, it is her position of the foreign, female, intrusive ‘Other,’ that allows her to betray the original Greek. By diluting the chorus’ indictment of Apollo and then removing his guilt by claiming the Kreousa chose him as a lover and forgave him for abandoning her, H.D.’s translation enacts a similar ravaging of the original. This act of betrayal further allows her to act out her phallic fantasy by placing her in the position of Apollo, ravages and betrays Kreousa. Indeed, in her version, H.D. takes some surprising liberties. In addition to stealing many of the chorus’ lines, and thereby placing herself at center stage of the play, H.D. freely admits to translating Euripides play in rather unabashedly subjective ways. She says of her choice of the vers-libre form, “*The broken, exclamatory or evocative vers-libre which I have chosen to translate the two-line dialogue, throughout the play, is the exact antithesis of the original. Though concentrating and translating sometimes, ten words, with two, I have endeavoured, in no way, to depart from the meaning*” (H.D. Ion 174). It is difficult to see how a translation that is the “*exact antithesis of the original*” could “*in no way, . . . depart from the meaning.*” We have, in fact, already seen that H.D.’s version, like the Lisle version, which she used as a bridge to the Greek, rather departs from the meaning of the original by repressing the rape of Kreousa and avoiding a strong indictment of Apollo. Thus, just as Apollo overpowers and betrays the pure and innocent Kreousa, H.D. overpowers and betrays the “*pure line*” of Euripides’ original—and it is important to point out the “*pure*

line” refers both to the verse form of the Greek original (the actual lines of poetry) as well as the autochthonous line of the Athenian royal family, both of which signify the purity of the authorized male poetic tradition. It is as if H.D. is castrating Euripides-as-father so that she may take his place in the tradition. The result is her usurpation of Euripides by the Judas-like betrayal of the original.

This precisely fits in with Freud’s diagnosis that H.D. neurosis stems from penis envy. According to Freud, “the unsatisfied wish for a penis should be converted into a wish for a child and for a man, who possesses a penis” (Freud “Analysis” 355). While in the end of her Ion H.D.’s Kreousa gains a son and a lover, H.D. herself has not yet worked through her “H.D. repression,” and therefore, she has not yet wished for a child who possesses a penis. Instead, H.D. wished to *be* the child, the heir. For this reason, H.D. identifies with Ion, perhaps more than with any other character in the play since Ion embodies the ambivalent feelings H.D. feels toward the male poetic tradition, which she feels betrayed by and, at the same time, wants to join. But like Ion, H.D. usurps the throne that is already rightly hers. Significantly, H.D. in her translator’s note, tells us that, “the word ION has a double meaning. It may be translated by the Latin UNUS, meaning one, or first, and is also the Greek word for violet, the sacred flower of Athens” (H.D. Ion 7).²⁰ So, inherently Ion, the figure, and Ion, the play, are authorized as originary by being ‘the first’ and being associated with Athens. As the capital, the *πρωτεύουσα*, Athens is ‘first’ city of Greece, whose patron, let us not forget, is Athena, borne from her father’s head, without the taint of a mother, a birth that is typically likened to the act of writing. It is no wonder then that Athena in the play watches over Ion, for he symbolizes the same kind of originary birth. It is significant that one does not normally translate a proper

name. Ion can only be Ion. But H.D. translates the name so that Ion, the character, signifies more than just a name. By translating Ion, H.D. shows us that Ion signifies *autochthonous heir*. And yet, it is only through a series of translations that Ion becomes authorized and instated as the heir of Athens.

Like H.D., Ion is not directly installed as the heir. First his mother tries to return him to the earth, in a reversal of his grandfather's birth, by abandoning him in the cave where she was raped.²¹ Then, Hermes carries him across to Delphi, where he is raised by the Pythia; then Apollo transfers him to Xouthos before he is finally reclaimed by his mother in the nick of time. In the end of the play, Ion returns to Athens. He is (re)adopted by his birth-mother and instated as the heir to the throne of Athens, resurrected (as it were) through a process of translation as the first son of Athens. Ion himself marks his own rebirth when he refers to himself as "one who died but did not die" or "alive/ and dead/ —both" (Roberts 84; H.D. *Ion* 248). Like Ion, the poet H.D. is born anew through translation. The translation of *Ion* marked "as well the rebirth of the writing mother, phoenixlike, out of the ashes of war" (Friedman *Freud* 529). Near the end of H.D.'s *Ion*, just after Kreousa has proved to Ion that she is his long lost mother by identifying the contents of the basket in which he was found, H.D. describes in her commentary a new Ion who is born from this experience. H.D. explains that there are now three Ions: the spirit, who is the abandoned babe on the rocks, the son of Apollo; the mortal, who is the keeper of his oracle and the adopted son of Xouthos; and now, the Ionian, who is the autochthonous son of Kreousa and a combination of the former two:

*"the boy's duality must cry out in agony as he seeks to find the balance
between the detached introversion of the temple servant and the dream of*

easy mundanity, power and human delight. There is a third Ion to be born from the struggle of these two, the Ion whose power is predicted by the speaker of the prologue. . . From Ion the spirit and Ion the mortal, is born a third, a compound of man and god, Ion, the Ionian.

But this birth, like all birth, is physically painful, and spiritually heart-breaking. . .

Ion, the Ionian, will be born of this box, but the youth in painful state of transition, now asks, who am I?" (H.D. Ion 243)

HD's interpretation is significant for it resonates with H.D.'s own experience. Ion, the Ionian, a hybrid of spiritual and mortal, is born by returning to his origins; and although this ensures the continuation of the line and the development of the Ionian people, this transition is as painful as any. We may recall that repression—the failure of translation—occurs when pain (unpleasure, as it were) is avoided. Thus, Ion, the Ionian's, rebirth—or translation—is painful.

But the pain is better than the alternative, since the alternative is death. Not the death of Ion, but the death of the Athenian people since, without Ion, there is no heir; there is no future. In terms of H.D., the alternative is the death of the writing self as part of the poetic tradition. We must acknowledge that Ion, more than anything, is a play about the founding of a people. As Deborah Roberts tells us in the preface to her translation that Ion is "hardly comic in the story it tells, a story not only of private grief but also of the destruction of civic continuity" (Roberts 5). Kreousa's trauma does not only affect Kreousa and Ion, it affects the entire community, entire culture, because it leaves Athens without a future. If Ion is fixated on Kreousa's rape, it is because

Kreousa's rape threatens the future of Athens. And if the play is fixated on anything else, it is the fact that the Athenian "people's roots are in the earth itself" (Roberts 14). This refers to Ion's grandfather, Kreousa's father, Erechtheus, who is said to have been born directly from the earth.²² Erechtheus was reared by Athena and crowned the king of Athens. Thus, Athens and its people are founded by someone who is literally of the earth, making them truly autochthonous. This gives rise to a distrust of foreigners, those who are *not* of the land, and that is why Kreousa is so disturbed when she thinks that Xouthos, her husband (himself a foreigner) is allowing another foreigner (and a bastard at that) Ion, to usurp the throne of Athens. To Athenians, nothing could be worse. This is why Kreousa is so quick to plot Ion's murder.

Ion himself seems curious early in the play, and later, anxious about the Athenian fear of the non-originary. When he first meets Kreousa and learns that she is from Athens, he asks, "is it true/what men say?/ . . . /earth begot,/ your begetter?" (H.D. Ion 173). Then, later, when Xouthos emerges from the temple and claims him as his son, Ion asks about his mother: "—am I earth-born?" (H.D. Ion 194).²³ When Xouthos tells him that he is not earth-born, but instead the result, most likely, of a Bacchic one night stand, Ion becomes concerned about how he will be received in Athens: "I think/ the Athenians,/ That earth-born race, will hate me, an outsider, illegitimate. . ." (H.D. Ion 198). Although she says her, "*translation is complete*," H.D. leaves out "*the greater portion of the long, polemical discussion of Ion, in reply to the king, urging his return to Athens;. . . and the latter part of the epilogue, which is historical narrative having to do with a prophecy, concerning the future of the Ionian race.*" Robert's translation retains these sections and elaborates on the reasons for Ion's anxiety:

. . . They say the Athenians
 take pride in being native to their soil.
 I will arrive there twice disabled, born
 of a foreign father and myself a bastard.
 With this against me, if my position is weak,
 I will be called a nobody, a nothing.
 And if I try for prominence in the city,
 and seek to be someone, those who have no power
 will hate me: for what's stronger always rankles. (Roberts 45)

Ion continues to explain the importance of finding his mother, and expresses his deep hope that his mother is a true Athenian because, “when a foreigner comes to a city of pure blood,/ he may be a citizen in name but still/ his mouth's a slave's mouth and he can't speak out” (Roberts 47.) Ion's concern about his foreignness and language bring the metaphors of translation into focus. The autochthonous Athenians who correspond to the literary tradition that undervalues translation would despise a foreigner and bastard who was not issued directly from the land like their ancestors. In terms of H.D.'s position as a female poet, a foreigner on the fringes of the male poetic tradition, it may be clear why she omits these lines from the text. The displeasure may have been too much to take. But this lack of translation results in an incomplete text. Freud offers the analogy of omitting words from a text to describe the process of repression:

Without pressing the analogy too closely we may say that repression is to the other methods of defense what the omission of words or passages is to the corruption of the text, and in the various forms of this falsification we

can discover parallels to the manifold ways in which the ego may be modified. It may be objected that this analogy breaks down in an essential particular, for the corruption of a text is the work of a purposeful censorship to which we have no counterpart in the development of the ego. But this is not so, for this purpose is amply represented but the compelling force of the pleasure principle. The physical apparatus is intolerant of unpleasure and strives to ward it off at all cost and, if the perception of reality involves unpleasure, that perception—*i.e.* the truth—must be sacrificed. (Freud “Analysis” 338-9)

This would certainly apply to H.D.’s omission of the portion of Ion which pertains to Ion’s fears of being taken as a foreigner. Perhaps H.D. would be justified in wanting to avoid the unpleasure of being taken for a foreigner. For, Ion’s fears may be justified despite the fact that Xouthos, who is the epitome of foreignness in the play, is not concerned with his foreignness, and he tells Ion not to worry about his position. The chorus, which H.D. identifies as the subconscious of play,²⁴ indicts Xouthos for being foreigner and bringing another foreigner in to take the throne, a crime just as serious as Kreousa’s rape by Apollo:

Let song reverse itself:

Sing harshly of *men’s* loves.

For Xuthus, grandson of Zeus,

Forgetful of his marriage,

did not get children at home, and share his luck

with my mistress; instead he favored

a foreign Aphrodite,
and acquired a bastard boy. (Roberts 67)

The play's subconscious clearly expresses a fear of the foreign and the illegitimate: "My city has good reason/ to defend itself against interlopers,/ foreign intruders. Call on our ancient leader:/ Erechtheus, king, come lead us once again" (Roberts 48). All of this is central to Ion, and although H.D. does not neglect this strain altogether, she only focuses on the pain of the whole community insofar as she views it as a representation of her own anxiety as female poet on the fringes of a male tradition. As such, H.D.'s fear of the unpleasure that would result from claiming this position of foreigner does not stop her from translating Ion so that the play hinges on the *transfer* of power to the reborn Ion, the hybrid child of Kreousa, the betrayed virgin autochthonous queen, and Apollo, the powerful god of poetry and music.

In this final turn, H.D. may identify again with Kreousa as the mother of the heir to the throne of Athens, which completes the process of conversion of penis envy to the wish for a male child, and takes us back to H.D.'s primary experience with Pound as the Apollonian figure who loved her then rejected her. Jacob Korg's Winter Love helps to flesh out the parallels between H.D.'s relationship with Pound and Kreousa's relationship with Apollo. Korg explains that through her translations and poetry, H.D. was creating a "legend" of her own life, and End to Torment, H.D.'s memoir of her lifelong relationship with Pound, "shows that Pound was a central figure in the 'legend that H.D. was fashioning of her life, both in her fantasies and in her writings. It opens with an impression of the nineteen-year-old Pound in the Pennsylvania snow, and moves on to recall some of the scenes of their erotic friendship, the kisses in the woods, the treehouse,

the books Pound lent her, and the poems he recited” (Korg 161). H.D. referred to their passionate affair as the “fiery moment” (Korg 162), itself reminiscent of Apollo, the “lord of light” (H.D. Ion 235). Furthermore, Korg reports that throughout her life, H.D. yearned for a male child who symbolized her union with Pound: H.D.’s “writing and behavior strongly suggest that she was obsessed throughout her life with a similar desire [to have a child with Pound], and used the figure of a ‘child’ as a private symbol of her attachment to Pound. The hypothetical child continued to live in her imagination as the symbol of a union she found both irresistible and impossible” (Korg 192). Korg goes on to tell us that in End to Torment, H.D. becomes fixated on “a little boy with ‘short red-gold curls’ who deeply impressed her. An entry made about a month later identifies the boy with ‘the “fiery moment” incarnate.’ Pound, we recall, had red hair, and ‘fiery moment,’ as we have seen, is the term H.D. frequently used in referring to her youthful affair with him” (Korg 193). H.D. later connects this young boy in the train station to the pianist Van-Cliburn: “Included in this composite of her imagination is the child from the station; the pianist Van Cliburn, of whom she recently read; and ‘Ezra at one time’ (Korg 194). In End to Torment, H.D. mentions that the article, which introduced her to Van Cliburn, describes him as “a born flaming virtuoso,” which may account for the connection (H.D. End 50). A few days after writing about the article, H.D. reports that Van Cliburn is “the Idol that should have been. . . If I was not the Child, as I obviously was not (as a child), I would have the child. . . And the Van, this Vanya is the Child. . . There must be others, perhaps many others. And Ezra, at one time, was an Idol. . .” (H.D. End 51-2). Van Cliburn as the soul-child of Pound and H.D. is reminiscent of Ion as Apollonian heir to the Athenian throne. Furthermore, Korg tells us that the child image

is revived in the coda to Helen in Egypt, “Winter Love,” with the Esperance figure, who has Odysseus, Achilles, Paris, and Meneleus as “joint fathers:” “ According to her journal, therefore, the child figure, embodies Helen’s (and H.D.’s) capacity for love and hope, a power of imagination that enfolds four lovers within it” (Korg 194).

These connections show how H.D. may have completed the process of translating her penis envy into the wish for a male child. Ion seems to have allowed her to do that.

Earlier, Korg notes that it “is striking that her real child, Perdita, seemed to have no relevance to this image” of the child as Apollonian heir for H.D. (Korg 192). But perhaps H.D.’s translation is what finally changes that. For, like Ion, H.D.’s own illegitimate child, Perdita is legitimized through the translation of the play. Her birth is legitimized through the dedication of the book. H.D. writes to Bryher about the dedication:

This is the dedication of ION, if you don’t mind.

For

B.M. Athens 1920

P.M. Delphi 1932.

Do you think that would march? I would like to use the M. as it makes

you and Pup related. . . (Friedman Freud 529)

M stands for Macpherson, Bryher’s married name and Perdita’s legal last name (which was, perhaps, arbitrarily, taken from Kenneth Macpherson). H.D.’s gesture toward relating Bryher and Perdita legitimizes the girl in a feminized family. So, in the end, H.D.’s desire to be the male child is replaced not with her desire to have a male child, but with the birth of her illegitimate female child, who signifies living on. This dedication as

a pronouncement is perhaps parallel to Athena's pronouncement of Ion as heir at the end of the play. It is significant that H.D. places women in the line of sovereign males, which includes Pound, Freud, and Euripides. It is as if she castrates the entire male tradition in order to take her place within it. Like the third Ion who is born anew at the end of the play, a new H.D. is born through the translation and merging of her rejected female and powerful male selves. She, therefore, simultaneously gives birth to and *is* the illegitimate autochthonous heir.

Conclusion:

Although H.D.'s writer's block was lifted after she completed her translation of Ion, her neuroses stemming from being a female poet in a male tradition were not necessarily cured. As Freud reminds us in his article, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," just because problems are resolved in therapy does not mean that they will not recur (Freud "Analysis" 317). Indeed, although H.D. overcame her writer's block, she continued to struggle with the same neuroses throughout her life. She, therefore, used her translation work, as well as her later poetry, as a kind of analysis interminable, an ongoing series of psychoanalysis, which may not have cured her, but which allowed her to live on. This lack of cure might prompt us to think that H.D.'s psychoanalysis and translation work was ultimately unsuccessful. As Freud puts it, "It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those 'impossible' professions in which one can be quite sure of unsatisfying results" (Freud "Analysis" 352). But, he continues, "It is not my attention to assert that analysis in general is an endless business. . . ." (Freud "Analysis" 353). On the contrary, "The business of analysis is to secure the best possible functioning of the ego; when this has been done, analysis has accomplished its task" (Freud "Analysis" 354). For H.D., the best possible functioning not only means physically living on but also being able to produce writing that may live on.

Jacques Derrida's work on translation theory is applicable here in terms of the survival of the text:

A text lives only if it lives *on* [*sur-vit*], and it lives *on* only if it is *at once* translatable *and* untranslatable. . . . Totally translatable, it disappears as a

text, as writing, as a body of language [*langue*]. Totally untranslatable, even within what it believed to be one language, it dies immediately.

Thus, triumphant translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living *on*, its life after life, its life after death. The same will be said for what I call writing, mark, trace, and so on. It neither lives nor dies; it lives *on*. And it ‘starts’ only with living on. (Derrida “Living On” 101-3)

In terms of H.D.’s translation of Ion, the text is totally untranslatable because it is bound up with H.D.’s trauma and repression, and yet she must translate it. When she does, she replaces the original with her translation. But at the same time, she ensures the living on not only of her writing self but also of the original text, for we know more about the original Ion through H.D.’s subjective translation of it.

Thus, in order to judge the success of H.D.’s psychoanalysis and translation work, we must also judge the work that came after it. This not only includes H.D.’s post-Ion writings, which are considered by many to be her most successful, but also the subsequent translations of Ion. Most notable, we might consider T.S. Eliot’s late play, The Confidential Clerk, as a kind of translation of H.D.’s translation of Ion.²⁵ While Eliot did not base his Confidential Clerk entirely on H.D.’s Ion, he was aware of her version, and most likely considered it on some level in his adaptation of Euripides.²⁶ Twenty years before Eliot published Manton’s aforementioned review of H.D.’s Ion in The Criterion, Eliot wrote a commentary on H.D. as a translator for Poetry. In it, he commends H.D. for avoiding the pitfalls of adequate translation: “H.D. is a poet. She has at least avoided the traditional jargon prescribed for translators: she has turned

Euripides into English verse which can be taken seriously. . .” (Eliot “Classics” 102). Although he finds fault with some of her choices, he concedes that “often she does succeed in bringing something out of the Greek language to the English, in an immediate contact which gives life to both, the contact which makes it possible for the modern language perpetually to draw sustenance from the dead” (Eliot “Classics” 103). Later, in his essay, “Euripides and Professor Murray,” he again uses H.D.’s as an example of good translation as opposed to what he considers bad translation; namely the work of Gilbert Murray: “The choruses of H.D. are, allowing for errors and even occasional omissions of difficult passages, much nearer to both Greek and English than Mr. Murray’s. He goes on to say that we need translators and studies of translators, and we need to make the classics present to us, but that Murray on the contrary, “leaves Euripides quite dead” (Eliot “Euripides” 77). By this logic, H.D., who brings Euripides back to life through her translation, is reminiscent of Freud-as-Hermes Psychopomp. She contributes to the continual retranslation of Ion which may be seen as another kind of analysis interminable and which allows not only for the survival of the text but also the living on of the poet.

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Notes

¹ See especially Freidman's Psyche Reborn, Chisholm's H.D.'s Freudian Poetics, and Gregory's H.D. and Hellenism.

² Like H.D., I am using the Greek spelling for the characters Kreousa and Xouthos. Other critics, as we shall see, prefer the Latinate, Creusa and Xuthus.

³ As Andrew Benjamin explains in "Translating Origins," in the term, *Nachträglichkeit*, deferred action, translation figures from the start with psychoanalysis (18). Benjamin's essay shows us how the original is always already a translation.

⁴ Although many translations of Ion are available, I primarily use Deborah Roberts' recent version for my study, particularly because of the sensitive way she deals with the terms for rape in the text. When referring to the Greek version, I use the Aris & Phillips edition which includes the original Greek along with K.H. Lee's prose translation and commentary; however, unless otherwise noted, all interpretations and commentary are my own.

⁵ Lee 46. A word for word translation would read: "the child of Erechtheus Phoebus yoked in marriage/ with force Kreousa."

⁶ See Liddell, et al. We will revisit these terms later in the text.

⁷ H.D. translates the same line as, "Phoibos knows it" (H.D. Ion 176).

⁸ Deflection is a kind of defense mechanism—by telling the story as if the trauma happened to someone else, Kreousa temporarily avoids the shame and unpleasure of returning to the traumatic experience.

⁹ See Liddel, et. al., "ὄβρις."

¹⁰ Ann Pippin Burnett notes that "the scene of girls gathering flowers is conventionally erotic" and is usually a precursor to "divine rape." She gives Persephone and Europa as examples. See Burnett 85.

¹¹ In her study of psychological terminology in Euripides, Shirley Darcus Sullivan points out that in this dialogue, the sympathetic Old Man uses nautical metaphors to describe the pain he feels as he listens to Kreousa's story: "evils are like a wave overwhelming a ship of *phren* [mind]. One wave had just "exhausted" *phren* and another waves comes hard upon it. *Phren* once again is the location of this suffering." See Sullivan 30.

¹² Fear of the foreign in Ion will be addressed in Chapter III.

¹³ See Freud "Analysis" 341.

¹⁴ Dianne Chisholm's excellent study of H.D.'s poetics of translation, H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation, argues that H.D.'s intertextual interpretation of Freud is what allowed her to formulate her poetics beginning after World War I (12, 19).

¹⁵ H.D. refers on several occasions to an “implicit argument” between her and Freud. See, for example, Tribute 13, 18, 149. See also my discussion of Athena below as an example of how H.D. experiences this language barrier between the sexes.

¹⁶ “Pup” was H.D.’s pet name for her daughter. H.D. referred to herself and to Bryher using similar animal names, Cat, Fido, etc. These references are pervasive in her letters. See Friedman Freud 1-1ii.

¹⁷ In Tribute to Freud, H.D. also compares Bryher to the Pythia because she encouraged H.D. to share, thereby helping her to translate, her writing on the wall experience, (48).

¹⁸ See Tribute to Freud 64-6. Incidentally, H.D. notes that it was Ezra Pound who helped her to interpret this early vision.

¹⁹ See, for example, Derrida “Freud,” especially p. 211, and Benjamin “Translating Origins” *passim*.

²⁰ It is significant that H.D. mentions Ion in Tribute to Freud: “violets were laid on the pages of a paperbound copy of Euripides’ Ion, open on the table of my Corfu Hotel Belle Venise bedroom. It seemed a ‘mystery’ but Bryher must have left them” (167). It seems H.D. was even thinking of Ion while in analysis with Freud.

²¹ Nicole Loraux interprets Kreousa’s abandonment of Ion as a reversal of Erechtheus’ birth in her excellent article, “Kreousa the Autochthon: A Study of Euripides Ion.”

²² Grimal notes that Erechtheus and Erichthonius, who is sometimes depicted as the former’s father or grandfather, are “often indistinguishable” (139). Erichthonius was born of Mother Earth as a result of Hephaestus’ [the god of fire and metal] lust for Athena” (181). Incidentally, Hephaestus is also credited with being midwife to Zeus in Athena’s birth: “When the time came for [Athena] to be born, Hephaestus split Zeus’s head open with an axe. A girl in full armor sprang forth from his head” (66). Erichthonius was apparently conceived when Athena “went to Hephaestus to get some weapons. He fell in love with her, and, although lame, caught up with her. While she resisted him he ejaculated on her leg. In disgust she wiped his semen off with a piece of wool which she threw on the ground. In this way Mother Earth was fertilized and Erichthonius was born. Athena regarded him as her own son and brought him up without the other gods knowing” (67). Finally, Hephaestus, who is commonly known as the son of Hera and Zeus, is sometimes said to have been produced by Hera alone (180). If this is true, then in some version of the myth, both of Erichthonius’ parents were issued directly from their single parent, both so-called originary births requiring no “outside” involvement. This kind of genealogy intensifies the acuteness of the Athenians’ connection to their land.

²³ Of course, as the true son of Kreousa and the god Apollo, Ion is as close to earth-born as one can be.

²⁴ “*The chorus in a Greek play is, in a sense, a manifestation of its inner mood, expression, as it were, of group-consciousness; subconscious or superconscious comment on the whole*” (H.D. Ion 149).

²⁵ In her biography of H.D., Barbara Guest mistakenly indicates that H.D.’s Ion was “the foundation” for Eliot’s Family Reunion, citing Howarth as a source. Family Reunion was

actually based on Aeschylus' Eumenides. But it is likely that Eliot read and was at least partly influenced by H.D.'s translation of Ion.

²⁶ In his Figures Behind T.S. Eliot, Herbert Howarth is quick to emphasize that Eliot based two of his plays, The Cocktail Party and The Confidential Clerk, on the two Euripides' translations which were reviewed by Guy Manton in The Criterion in 1937; namely, Fitts and Fitzgerald's Alcestis and H.D.'s Ion. Even before those reviews, however, Eliot knew H.D. and her work and was particularly interested in her translations. Even if he did not consciously set out to adapt H.D.'s version of Ion, Eliot certainly admired her work as a translator, which he saw as much more valuable than the Gilbert Murray's translations, and one cannot imagine that her translation did not influence him whatsoever.

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