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“Are we dead?”: time in H. D.’s dialogue with Freud

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents H. D.’s dialogue with Freud on the theme of time and timelessness. Freud presented a conception of time that varied in accordance with the various levels of consciousness. But while linear time is presented in Freud’s writing as an essential part of development and mourning, timelessness has not been fully developed as such. A discussion of Freud’s conception of time is followed by a reading of H. D.’s memoir *Tribute to Freud*. H. D. offers a series of reminiscences of different periods in her life, with an emphasis on her analysis and on Freud. The reading of the memoir presents an intense and stimulating narrative of the encounter with Freud at the time of analysis and in *après-coup*. This translation revolves around timelessness as a path into a realm of imagination and fantasy, not sufficiently acknowledged by Freud as such, yet crucial to H. D.’s quest for an innovative poetic voice. The significance and elusiveness of timelessness is discussed using ideas from André Green and Walter Benjamin.

KEYWORDS

History of psychoanalysis;
Freudian theory; French
psychoanalysis (non-
Lacanian); literature; time;
unconscious

- Orlando: You should ask me what time o’ day. There’s no clock in the forest.
Rosalind: Then there is no true lover in the forest, else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of time as well as a clock.
Orlando: And why not the swift foot of time? Had not that been as proper?
Rosalind: By no means, sir. Time travels in diverse paces with diverse persons. I’ll tell you who time ambles withal, who time trots withal, who time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.
(Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 3 Scene 2)

Time, in the theoretical as well as the technical sense, is situated at the heart of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis addresses two forms of time or temporality in accordance with the different levels of consciousness. The conscious level, loyal to the reality principle, is structured according to historical or developmental time, while the unconscious is structured according to eternal time, or timelessness. Although Freud developed a dual conception of time, the emphasis that he placed on establishing one’s personal story in a historical sequence drew attention to the establishment of developmental time and to the formation of memory sequences.

I want to present this dual perspective on time through the distinct dialogue that the poet H. D. creates with Freud, her analyst, in the memoir that she wrote about him, *Tribute to Freud*. The text contains a memoir, named “Writing on the Wall”, written approximately a decade after analysis ended, as well as a diary written during analysis and re-edited

later, named “Advent”. H. D. strives to create a re-encounter with Freud and to give a new translation of their previous communications. First, I will present some of Freud’s insights regarding time, with an emphasis on historical time versus timelessness. Second, I will present the unique dialogue on time that H. D. creates with Freud in her writing both as an analysand and in *après-coup*. And finally, I will conclude with Walter Benjamin’s thoughts on the diary and connect them to H. D.’s crucial and brave quest for an innovative voice.

Freud’s insights on time

In his 1915 paper, “The Unconscious”, Freud structures the essence of the realm of the unconscious in relation to time:

The processes of the system *Ucs.* are *timeless* [*zeitlos*]; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system *Cs.* ... To sum up: *exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process* (mobility of cathexes), *timelessness* [*Zeitlosigkeit*], and *replacement of external by psychical reality*—these are the characteristics which we may expect to find in processes belonging to the system *Ucs.* (Freud 1915, 187, emphasis in the original)

The concepts conscious–unconscious and time–timelessness are dialectically related. There can be no reference to the unconscious independent of its relation to consciousness, and similarly, there can be no reference to timelessness that is independent of its relation to time and temporality. In facing the challenge of referring to timelessness as such, a question arises with regard to the developmental significance of the process of integrating time and timelessness.

In his 1925 paper “A Note Upon the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad’”, Freud raises an intriguing assumption about the acquisition of time in the developmental sense. He presents the mystic writing pad (*Der Wunderblock*), a multi-layered device that usually functions as a playful writing instrument for children, as a metaphor for the multi-layered psyche. To write on the mystic/magical pad, one scratches on the external celluloid portion, in a process similar to ancient writing methods, with no need for other materials. The erasure of the writing is also presented as simple: “If one wishes to destroy what has been written, all that is necessary is to raise the double covering-sheet from the wax slab by a light pull, starting from the free lower end” (229). Nevertheless, a close examination of the internal layers of the device shows that nothing that was written is ever completely erased:

the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad: it solves the problem of combining the two functions *by dividing them between two separate but interrelated component parts or systems*. But this is precisely the way in which, according to the hypothesis which I mentioned just now, our mental apparatus performs its perceptual function. (230, emphasis in the original)

The marvel (*Wunder*) of the writing pad is seemingly located in the disappearance of the engraved writing from the apparent layer, carried out with “a light pull”. But what Freud points to is a different, more obscure marvel that he finds much more intriguing: the fact that none of the writing ever really disappears. The engraving leaves “permanent traces of what has been written” on the innermost layer of the device.

The image of the magical writing pad challenges us to tunnel deep into our innermost layers, where traces that were apparently lost are revealed. The reminiscences and traces of significant experiences that seem to have been forgotten and therefore lost remain in fact forever present and archived in our psychic apparatus. Nothing significant is lost, only the path leading to it. The notion of the unconscious as a reservoir of libidinally cathected reminiscences and experiences allows us to conceive of psychic development as a playful movement through different layers of consciousness, beyond boundaries of time and otherness, with consciousness being constantly enriched by mysterious flickerings from the unconscious. This playful movement broadens psychic space and allows us to simultaneously write and erase, remember and forget. Psychic life is analogous to the magic writing process in that they both include engraving, erasing and rediscovering. One important difference, however, is that in contrast to the writing pad (where the hidden layer never appears on the external layer, and the writing engraved on it usually remains obscure, as a forever unfulfilled potential), in the psyche memories are libidinally charged and therefore continually insist on their presence in manifold ways.

The representation of the mystic writing pad gives expression to the subjective notion of time: "This discontinuous method of functioning of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time" (Freud 1925, 231). The subjective notion of time is presumably developed with the experience of gaps between perception and consciousness. As the different layers of the writing pad are differentiated, so too is there a differentiation between perception and consciousness. Between the external sensory information gathered by perception and the internal processing of that information, there is a temporal gap. This gap creates the subjective notion of temporality, and it involves perception and the different levels of consciousness. The unconscious is continuously involved in the processing of perceptual information, and this implicitly affects the ways in which this information is processed and temporality is internalized (Laplanche [2006] 2017, 204–206).¹

Throughout his work, Freud articulated the aim of psychoanalysis as being "to fill in gaps in memory" (1914, 148) and to gradually provide the analysand with a story, history. The unconscious is thus presented as the psychic realm of primary thought processes, the reservoir of memories and memory traces that are formed in different developmental stages. There, experiences continue to resonate, continually and eternally living on. In his 1937 paper "Constructions in Analysis", Freud accentuates the historical aspect of the analytic work, as expressed in the analytic construction "when one lays before the subject of the analysis a piece of his early history that he has forgotten" (Freud 1937, 261). Whereas interpretation tends to refer to a specific aspect of the analysand's psyche, construction offers him a story. This story refers to the analysand's early history and is constructed or reconstructed from information gathered in analysis. The task of the analyst is "to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind or, more correctly, to construct it" (258–259). The analogy between psychoanalysis and archeology is presented in this context, for the historical story of the psyche is being compared to the construction of an ancient building:

¹As many studies have pointed out, the main limitation of Freud's theory of the acquisition of time and temporality is his blindness to the pivotal significance of the object in this process (Birksted-Breen 2003; Green 2002, 2005; Laplanche 1999a, [2006] 2017; Priel 1997).

just as the archaeologist builds up the walls of the building from the foundations that have remained standing, determines the number and position of the columns from depressions in the floor and reconstructs the mural decorations and paintings from the remains found in the debris, so does the analyst proceed when he draws his inferences from the fragments of memories, from the associations and from the behaviour of the subject of the analysis. (259)

The analytic work collects various forms of reminiscences and memory traces and gathers them into a historical sequence that, taken together, creates a story, a personal timeline from the forgotten early past to the present. Establishing one's personal history is recognized as a developmental achievement, which inevitably includes mourning over fantasized and actual loss (Birksted-Breen 2003, 1504).

André Green points out what he describes as the "polychrony of time" in psychoanalysis, emphasizing a distinct time dimension that stands in strong contrast to historic time:

Although reality obliges us to submit to the coercion of time from youth to old age, this hard necessity can be circumvented by the subsystem which is able to enact wish fulfillments at the heart of an internal world in which we immerse ourselves each night, and in which we believe quite as much as we do in the external world during waking life. Because this is the creation of our desires, we believe in it more than we do in what we call external reality which we are obliged to accept. Such is the basis of our beliefs in a timeless psychic reality. (Green 2005, 182)

Thus, alongside the significance of the acquisition of historical time as part of the adaptation to reality, the continuous possibility of pushing away from linear time and connecting to the experience of timelessness and eternity is no less crucial for psychic development, connecting oneself to infantile undifferentiated states (Sabbadini 1989). Repeated and chronic regression to states of timelessness is connected to the inability to transform traumatic experiences into symbolic thought (Amir 2016). Freud's notion of *Nachträglichkeit* suggests another dynamic of memory that involves time, later to be developed as *après-coup*. This concept suggests that certain traumatic experiences are only partly perceived at the time of occurrence, but take on meaning retrospectively in a complex set of psychological operations (Laplanche and Pontalis [1967] 1973, 114).

H. D.'s dialogue with Freud on time

The author and poet Hilda Doolittle, known as H. D. (1886–1961), started as an Imagist poet under the influence of her friend Ezra Pound. In the years before the war, she suffered from an ongoing writing block, which was one of the main reasons why she sought analysis. The war period came after her analysis terminated and it led her to innovative and enriched writing, which included experiments in new genres such as memoir and autobiography. The notion of reliving the analytic encounter through the medium of writing stands at the centre of the memoir written by H. D., because the termination of her analysis does not present itself in the text as an actual event. Instead, her writing represents a quest for a new poetic encounter with Freud. *Tribute to Freud* offers a unique insight into the ties between literature and psychoanalysis by a patient who is also a poet. She structures the text with her impressions from the time of analysis and from her early childhood (Tzur Mahalel 2019, 137–172).

H. D.'s memoir was written after Freud's death, but before that, in May 1936, Freud wrote her a thank-you card. The card was written approximately two years after the analysis ended, in response to a gift Freud had received from H. D. (H. D. 1974, 194):

Dear H. D.

All your white cattle safely arrived lived and adorned the room up to yesterday.

I had imagined I had become insensitive to praise and blame. Reading your kind lines and getting aware of how I enjoyed them I first thought I had been mistaken about my firmness. Yet on second thoughts I had concluded I was not. What you gave me, was not praise, was affection and I need not be ashamed of my satisfaction.

Life at my age is not easy, but spring is beautiful and so is love.

Yours affectionately,

Freud

I find Freud's letter intriguing, as it puts forth explicitly his struggles with old age and loss, relationships and love. Time, in this letter, is presented in the historical-developmental sense of years passing by. One's personal story is situated on a historical timeline that begins at birth and leads gradually towards death. Yet Freud refers in this letter to another dimension of time, which exists in a dialectical relationship with historical time. This perception of time as cyclical is embodied, for example, in the reaction to the beginning of spring, to experiencing bloom as it first sprouts from winter sleep, and the tender feeling of love that appears unexpectedly in spite of one's expectations of insensitivity. Freud refers here to the comforting return of the seasons, the beauty of nature as it cycles around again, and the ability of love to comfort one for the pain involved in coping with life's losses. As spring reappears each year in its suitable time, love can reappear out of absence and anguish (Freud 1916).

In Freud's letter to H. D., cyclical time is presented as a comfort in the face of the challenge of historical linearity. Accepting the inevitable historical sequence carries with it the challenge of facing inevitable loss and termination, for all living phenomena exist under the limitation of time. In this context, one can presume that the significance of memory in Freud's thinking lies in the ability to gain and enrich memories through passing time. Enriching the reservoir of memories has the potential to comfort us while facing the continuous loss of time. Yet a question arises in the context of linear versus cyclical time: can the comfort found in the appearance of beauty truly compensate us after loss, or are we in need of yet another dimension of time?

In her memoir, H. D. retraces her impressions from analysis and asks questions regarding temporality, memory and loss, and the possibility of challenging the common boundaries of historical time. The memoir opens with her troublesome encounter with the limitations of time. She writes, "It was Vienna, 1933–1934. I had a room in the Hotel Regina, Freiheitsplatz. I had a small calendar on my table. I counted the days and marked them off, calculating the weeks. My sessions were limited, time went so quickly" (H. D. 1974, 3). The limited time haunts her both as a representation of the mourning of experiences that were not given interpretation or even expression in analysis and as a reminder of the inevitable end, the upcoming separation from analysis and Freud's

upcoming death. She writes, "There was so much to be explained, so little time in which to do it" (87). She recalls that at one moment Freud reproached her for looking at her watch during the session. He told her, "I keep an eye on the time – I will tell you when the session is over. You need not keep looking at the time, as if you were in a hurry to get away" (17, and again in 144). But H. D. notes that the reality was just the opposite of what Freud implied: rather than being eager to leave, H. D. was taking these precautions because she "*was afraid*" (141, emphasis in the original).

In her writing, H. D. recalls two childhood memories involving her brother, who later died in the Great War. She does not remember to what extent these reminiscences were given significance in her analysis. In spite of her being unable to recall whether she even told them to Freud at the time, however, they are given a pivotal position in retrospect: "These pictures are so clear. They are like transparencies, set before candles in a dark room. I may or may not have mentioned these incidents to the Professor. But they were there" (29). Later, she returns to these two reminiscences and their significance in her retranslation of her childhood roots, encounter with Freud, and evolution as a person and a poet:

We travel far in thought, in imagination or in the realm of memory. Events happened *as* they happened, not all of them, of course, but here and there a memory or a fragment of a dream-picture is actual, is real, is like a work of art or is a work of art. I have spoken of the two scenes with my brother as remaining set apart, like transparencies in a dark room, set before lighted candles. Those memories, visions, dreams, reveries—or what you will—are different. Their texture is different, the effect they have on mind and body is different. They are healing. They are real. ... But we cannot prove that they are real. (35, emphasis in the original)

These reminiscences seem real because, like transparencies set before candles in a dark room, they let the light penetrate through them and fight the predominant darkness. In this image the flame of the candle does not appear as is, but through a transparency, a screen, similar to the mechanism of the psychoanalytic screen memories that stand near the early traumatic memories and serve the double function of a reminder and a buffer. With them, the subject can experience a reminiscence, a fragment of the memory's light or essence, yet only through a protective screen, a metonymy of sorts. She feels in retrospect that these memories contain a certain message from a different time dimension, because the intense impact they have on her has not faded over the passing years; their effect seems timeless. "Memories too, like the two I have recorded. ... are in a sense super-memories; they are ordinary, 'normal' memories but retained with so vivid a detail that they become almost events out of time" (41–42). Thus, H. D. binds together reminiscences from various times in an innovative sequence, and a new translation is created regarding a destiny that calls to her throughout the years.

In analysis itself, H. D. and Freud were invested in constructing her story. "The Professor said he was curious to see how the story would proceed, now we had the frame. I too was curious. If the Professor could not solve my problem, no one could" (158). But the question of whether they truly discovered the story's frame haunts H. D. during and after the analysis. Alongside her feeling that she was understood and safe in Freud's presence, she is also tortured with doubts about the extent to which he really did understand her views and beliefs. In "Advent", the diary part of the memoir, she presents the reminiscences and experiences that haunted her from the Great War and her childhood:

I cried too hard ... I do not know what I remembered: the hurt of the cold, nun-like nurses at the time of my first London confinement, spring 1915; the shock of the *Lusitania* going down just before the child was still-born; fear of drowning. ... If I let go (I, this one drop, this one ego under the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud) I fear to be dissolved utterly. (116, first ellipsis in original)

These painful experiences are brought to consciousness from a blur of associations and time sequences. There were other experiences that haunted her nights in Vienna as an analysand. On those long, dreadful nights, H. D. was challenged by odd, morbid images that led her to repeated, anxious questions. The questions revolved around her confusion over whether she was experiencing these images in fantasy and dreams or in actual reality. She finds herself tortured by these questions and also by the question of whether, assuming that the images are fantasmatic, they are fantasies that were created in the past and are now being revived from memory, or fantasies that are being created anew as alleged past events. "I don't know if I dreamed this or if I just imagined it, or if later I imagined that I dreamed it" (123); "Did I make it all up? Did I dream it? And if I dreamt it, did I dream it forty years ago, or did I dream it last night?" (128). She is not able to settle the question and gradually drowns herself in repetitive thoughts and doubts that only increase her confusion and dread: "No wonder I am frightened. I let death in at the window. If I do not let ice-thin window-glass intellect protect my soul or my emotion, I let death in" (117).

As H. D.'s morbid, perhaps psychotic, anxieties increase in intensity, especially with regard to certain childhood memories, real or imagined, she desperately seeks anchors in reality. "I will have to switch on the light soon, for my eyes, staring into darkness, wonder if again I crossed the threshold" (127). The threshold she dreads to cross is the threshold of linear time that anchors consciousness and secondary processes. Losing this anchor challenges her with the danger of losing her mind. She wants to bring these intense night-time experiences to Freud but, for some obscure reason, keeps forgetting. Perhaps she is afraid that he will not understand: "If I tell the Professor about the cactus *and* the butterfly, he will think I have made up one or the other, or both" (127, emphasis in the original).

Thus, from the outset of analysis, a split is created between her relatively ordered analytic experience and her chaotic night experiences, in which the historical sequence of the events is blurred and chaotic. The order and sequence of the analysis were created, in H. D.'s view, by the order that Freud represented, "The Professor's explanations were too illuminating, it sometimes seemed; my bat-like thought-wings would beat painfully in that sudden searchlight" (30). Freud's beam of light represents structured analytic thought, which strives for objective and scientific constructions, whereas her thought aims to fly to a dark and ambiguous dimension. Later, she adds, "I have said earlier in these notes that the Professor's explanations were too illuminating or too depressing" (91).

The difference in views between Freud and H. D. in regard to time had to do with their stances towards death. She writes in her diary, "But he confused me. He said, 'In analysis, the person is dead after the analysis is over.' Which person? ... The Professor had said, 'In analysis, the person is dead after the analysis is over—as dead as your father'" (141). H. D. was left confused and mute in the face of Freud's determination in this regard and of the connection he draws between death and their upcoming separation. Termination and death are facts that she felt she could not grasp. Regarding her mother's death,

which occurred a couple of years before the analysis, she writes, "I did not want to face this. There are various ways of trying to escape the inevitable. You can go round and round in circles. ... Or your psyche, your soul, can curl up and sleep" (31).

Along with the burst of creativity that characterized the period when H. D. was writing the memoir on Freud, while she was living in London during the Blitz, she was also approaching a period of personal crisis. Soon after the memoir was finished, H. D.'s close friend Bryher (who lived in Switzerland) rushed H. D. to the mental health institute *Küsnacht* in Zurich in a severe psychotic state (Guest 1984). The memoir should therefore be read as a personal quest for meaning in a period when meaning was gradually collapsing. Another thing that challenged H. D. at the time of writing the memoir was the fact of Freud's death. In this regard, she writes:

I would have taken the hour-glass in my hand and set it the other way round so that the sands of his life would have as many years to run forward as now ran backward. ... I would change my years for his; it would not be as generous a number as I could have wished for him, yet it would make a difference. ... Moreover he himself, in his own character, has made the dead live, has summoned a host of dead and dying children from the living tomb. (H. D. 1974, 73–74)

Alongside the limited time that Freud offered her in analysis, he also suggested the timelessness of the unconscious. Embodied in his discovery of the unconscious lies an inner and mysterious realm of fantasy and archaic memory traces, which have an everlasting timeless existence. H. D. writes in retrospect about Freud's theory of the unconscious, "It was not that he conjured up the past and invoked the future. It was a present that was in the past or a past that was in the future" (9).

In spite of her experience in analysis as continually mute, "shy and frightened and gauche as an over-grown school-girl" (99), H. D. found the courage to admit to Freud how much she struggled with limited time and ill-fitting temporality. Freud's response is presented as singular:

When I said to him one day that time went too quickly (did he or didn't he feel that?) he struck a semi-circle attitude, he threw his arm forward as if ironically addressing an invisible presence or an imaginary audience. "*Time*," he said. The word was uttered in his inimitable, two-edged manner; he seemed to defy the creature, the abstraction; into that one word, he seemed to pack a store of contradictory emotions; there was irony, entreaty, defiance, with a vague, tender pathos. It seemed as if the word was surcharged, an explosive that might, at any minute, go off. (Many of his words did, in a sense, explode, blasting down prisons, useless dykes and dams, bringing down landslides, it is true, but opening up mines of hidden treasure.) "*Time*," he said again, more quietly, and then, "*time gallops*." (74–75, emphasis in the original)

Freud's reply to H. D.'s impression of time is presented as an elusive invitation to rethink the very concept of time. It is presented as carrying great emotional and mental, even theatrical, investment, as if he could with his words awaken long-gone cultures. The contradictory emotions and the implied reference to Shakespeare's *As You Like It* are translated by H. D., in *après-coup*, as a message to her to seek an innovative dimension of time.

H. D.'s memoir presents writing as a force that has the potential to save her from illness, insanity, the terror of war, and death. It is presented as mythical, mysterious, and great. H. D.'s crucial need for an alternative dimension of time is expressed in her diary as an archaic quest:

I concentrate on the minutes, the minutiae of these hours. ... My findings are important to me and have an atmosphere. Before I could walk properly, I could tell time. Long before I knew my alphabet, I knew the three clock letters. ... So I am back again in the mysteries; the childhood of the individual is the childhood of the race, wrote our Professor. (142–143)

And in another place:

Length, breadth, thickness, the shape, the scent, the feel of things. The actuality of the present, its bearing on the past, their bearing on the future. Past, present, future, these three – but there is another time-element, popularly called the fourth-dimensional. The room has four sides. There are four seasons to a year. (23)

She refers to the expression that Freud used at significant analytic moments – “we had struck oil” – criticizing it as his “businessman’s concrete definite image” (83). She writes,

The point was that for all his amazing originality, he was drawing from a source so deep in human consciousness. ... He called it striking oil, but others—long ago—had dipped into that same spring. They called it “a well of living water”. (82)

She connects Freud’s materialistic stance towards the ancient gods with his view of the unconscious. Although she admires his discovery of the unconscious, in retrospect she finds essential differences between his views and hers. For H. D., the unconscious is a limitless sphere, holding much more depth and richness than it did for Freud. Her wish, as revealed in the memoir, is to continue Freud’s ideas about the unconscious, to further explore and research this mysterious realm,

these shapes, lines, graphs, the *hieroglyph of the unconscious*, and the Professor had first opened the field to the study of this vast, unexplored region. He himself—at least to me personally—deplored the tendency to *fix* ideas too firmly to set symbols, or to weld them inexorably. (93, emphasis in the original)

Throughout the memoir, H. D. reminds herself that “the Professor was not always right”. She needs to be reminded of this in order to discover her own perspective on time and consciousness. The possibility of Freud not always being right serves as a counter-stance to her perspective as an analysand that he invariably had to be right, expressed for example in the statement, “He must know everything or he didn’t know anything” (16), or when she writes in her diary, “Nothing I remember matters now except in relation to my telling it or not telling it to Freud” (151).

In *après-coup*, H. D. substantiates their distinct views on time:

So again I can say the Professor was not always right. That is, yes, he was always right in his judgments, but my form of rightness, my intuition, sometimes functioned by the split-second (that makes all the difference in spiritual time-computations) the quicker. (98)

For her, there was always another dimension, another time, another sequence. As an analysand, it was not as clear to her as at the time of writing, when it became as clear as a transparency held in front of a candle in a dark room.

“I do not want to become involved in the strictly historical sequence. I wish to recall the impressions, or rather I wish the impressions to recall me. Let the impressions come in their own way, make their own sequence” (14). H. D. repeats the notion of freeing herself from the restraints of the actual, with variations, throughout the text: “I could verify the actual date of their appearance by referring to my notebooks, but it is the

general impression that concerns us, rather than the historical or political sequence" (59), and later: "I have said that these impressions must take me, rather than I take them" (95).

The sequence of associations leads H. D. to the memory of Freud's 77th birthday, which took place while she was his analysand. Upon entering Freud's room, she notices that the whole room is filled with flowers. She, in contrast, has not brought a birthday gift. She says to him, "I couldn't find what I wanted. ... I wanted to give you something different" (9). Though she fails to bring Freud a birthday present during her analysis, on one of his later birthdays, she succeeds better. Freud regularly received orchids for his birthday, and H. D. was one of the few people to whom Freud had revealed that his true favorite was the gardenia.

In November of 1938, after Freud arrives in London, H. D. is finally given the opportunity to "continue a quest, a search" to find the desired flower. She sends them with a card, on which she writes, "To greet the return of the Gods"—but does not sign her name (11). From the time of their initial encounter, H. D. had become deeply attached to Freud's unique study, which she describes as the "mysterious lion's den or Aladdin's cave of treasures" (132). The picture of the ancient temple of Delphi and the statues of the gods greeted her as she entered the room and gave her solace in difficult moments: "Sometimes the Professor knew actually my terrain, sometimes it was implicit in a statue or a picture, like that old-fashioned steel engraving of the Temple at Karnack that hung above the couch" (9). Freud recognized her attachment to his room and their shared affinity for the ancient. "The Professor said that we two met in our love of antiquity. He said his little statues and images helped stabilize the evanescent idea, or keep it from escaping altogether" (175).

Alongside their shared love for the ancient, the two also shared a love of journeys to faraway places. During analysis, they travelled together metaphorically:

In one of our talks in the old room at Berggasse, we had gone off on one of our journeys ... this time it was Italy, we were together in Rome. ... "Ah, the Spanish steps," said the Professor. "It was those branches of almond," I said; "of all the flowers and the flower baskets, I remember those best." "But," said the Professor, "the gardenias! In Rome, even I could afford to wear a gardenia". (9, emphasis in the original)

In London, H. D. fulfils her wish to give Freud the gift of gardenias, "I did not want to murmur conventional words; plenty of people had done that. ... I did find what I wanted, that cluster of gardenias, somewhat later" (63).

H. D.'s choice of flowers, along with the mysterious card, are references to affinities and cherished notions shared with Freud that go beyond linear time and conventional thought. The letter Freud writes to her in response, which she quotes in the memoir, speaks the same elusive language:

Dear H. D.,

I got today some flowers. By chance or intention they are my favorite flowers, those I most admire. Some words, "to greet the return of the Gods" (other people read: Goods). No name. I suspect you to be responsible for the gift. If I have guessed right don't answer but accept my hearty thanks for so charming a gesture. In any case,

Affectionately yours,

Sigm. Freud (H. D. 1974, 11)

Freud is thus up to the challenge presented to him, writing back with a solution to the riddle she has sent him. Interestingly, he asks that her confirmation of his solution be silent. This request revolves around the unique communication that the analytic couple shared, crossing boundaries of convention.

Freud's letter is presented in full in the memoir as evidence of the existence of this shared foundation and mutual spheres. Yet the letter does not stop at alluding to what they share; it also refers, implicitly, to their areas of controversy. Freud's playful and somewhat humorous substitution of "Goods" for "Gods" alludes to the notion that the objects she greets are not the gods themselves, but an artistic representation of the abstract idea of the gods. He believed in a dual perspective on the ancient statues and images, as material goods on the one hand and as holding symbolic significance on the other. Yet for H. D., such a duality is impossible, and she strongly rejects it:

Did he want to find out how I would react to certain ideas embodied in these little statues, or how deeply I felt the dynamic *idea* still implicit in spite of the fact that ages or aeons of time had flown over many of them? Or did he mean simply to imply that he wanted to share his treasures with me, those tangible shapes before us that yet suggested the intangible and vastly more fascinating treasures of his own mind? (68, emphasis in the original)

For H. D., the presence of the ancient gods and temples is real, real as the childhood memories she raises earlier. She believes that this presence cannot and must not be integrated with materiality and convention, for integration holds the danger of ruin for the pure essence of the divine.

H. D.'s quest for timelessness

The inspirational sources that assist H. D. in investigating various phenomena are imagination, intuition and fantasy. She believes in transcendence, life after death and finding ways to communicate with divine forces, because of her roots and education in the Moravian church and through her deep connection with the mythical world (Augustine 1998; Guest 1984, 9–21). Freud represents to her a complex matrix of both affinity with the ancient world of mythology and the occult, and strong belief in modern science and the possibilities it opens up for investigating phenomena objectively, rationally and materially.

For H. D. as an analysand and a poet, her most significant asset is her poetic voice, and her quest for that voice is therefore paramount. Her writing embodies the creation of a private realm constructed from imagination and introspection in a place out of time, a space of eternal timelessness. There, she can overcome termination, destruction and terror, and free herself from the strains and limitations of reality. In her diary, she writes, "I said that I could not lose him, I had had his books before I met him and would have them again when I left Vienna. There is a formula for Time that has not yet been computed" (H. D. 1974, 145). The textual space thus provides an alternative encounter with Freud, one that is everlasting and limitless and where she can continue to create innovative representations of him.

The quest for this distinct space helps her collect experiences of disappointment and frustration in which she feels lonely, silenced or misunderstood. She collects some of these moments in her writing and provides them with a new translation of her point of

view and emotional stance. A moment like this is presented in the following entry from her diary:

But when the Professor said, "Perhaps you are not happy," I had no words with which to explain. It is difficult to explain this to myself or to find words to scribble in my note-book. It is not a question of happiness, in the usual sense of the word. It is happiness of the quest. (145)

H. D. expresses here the difference in emphasis between Freud and herself. Whereas Freud draws attention to the transference relationship, with its gratification and frustration, she is attuned to something she articulates as a quest – but a quest for what? At another point in the text, she writes, regarding her encounter with Freud, "We had come together to substantiate something. I did not know what. There was something that was beating in my brain; I do not say my heart—my brain. I wanted it to be let out. I wanted to free myself from repetitive thoughts and experiences" (13).

The memoir and the diary differ in the retrospective point of view they offer in terms of translation, for whereas the diary offers an immediate translation of H. D.'s experience as an analysand, along with distinct impressions of her dialogue with Freud, the memoir suggests a broader point of view. The late translation offered in the memoir was waiting for the right time to express itself, for, towards the end of her diary, she writes, "Little things, seemingly unimportant, take precedence. I remember how the Professor said that you never know until the analysis is over what is important and what is unimportant" (148). In the memoir, written a decade later, she is looking for a "whole *translation* of the Professor and our work together" (108, emphasis in the original). As in Laplanche's theory of translation in *après-coup* (1999b, [1987] 2016, [2006] 2017), H. D. returns to her reminiscences of Freud and seeks the deeper meaning of their encounter and the enigmatic messages encrypted for her to translate. Towards the end of the memoir, she writes, "We have only just begun our researches, our 'studies,' the old Professor and I" (H. D. 1974, 100). Although she has set a defined date for finishing the memoir, as she approaches the end she strongly feels that in fact their research has only just begun. The termination point is presented as a starting point, for writing takes place in a limitless time dimension.

The textual space offers H. D. an experience known to her from dreams. In one of her dreams brought to analysis, she is, fascinatingly, following an Egyptian princess walking down the stairs to the water where a baby is nestled in a basket, in reference to the biblical story of Moses: "Down, down the steps she comes. She will not turn back, she will not stop, she will not alter the slow rhythm of her pace.... There is no before or after, it is a perfect moment in time or out of time" (36–37). This "perfect moment in time or out of time" brings her closer to what is gradually revealed as the aim of her quest, "the realm of fantasy and imagination, flung across the abyss, and these are a poet's lines" (108). The timeless realm of fantasy and imagination is presented distinctly in a mysterious recollection of a forgotten poem she learned as a child, Mignon's song *Kennst Du das Land* from Goethe's 1795 canonical Bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The poem provides H. D. the opportunity to create a new translation of her reminiscences from analysis, more profoundly needed after Freud's death, and thus the memoir becomes Freud's alternative "Garden of Remembrance" (Tzur Mahalel 2017).

Although Freud emphasized timelessness as one of the essential characteristics of the unconscious, he was very cautious in regard to the existence of an inner attraction to immortality and timelessness. He treated these characteristics of the unconscious as facts, avoiding a thorough discussion of the extent to which people find themselves drawn to them. Perhaps he had reservations about the inevitable connection between timelessness and transcendence. The princess dream, for example, is interpreted by Freud in the context of the biblical story of Moses in the basket, who was drawn from the Nile by the princess of Egypt. Freud, who was deeply absorbed with this biblical story at the time, asks H. D. whether she identifies with the baby, Moses, or with his sister, Miriam, who does not appear in the dream but in the biblical story is hiding in the rushes. This question regarding her identity continues to trouble H. D. through the years and she translates it in her own way: "Am I, perhaps, the child Miriam? Or am I, after all, in my fantasy, the baby? Do I wish myself, in the deepest unconscious or subconscious layers of my being, to be the founder of a new religion?" (37). Looking back on her experience as an analysand, H. D. feels that the most crucial ideas for her, which she calls "transcendental", were not treated by Freud in a satisfying way. On this deep dispute, she states dramatically, "About the greater transcendental issues, we never argued. But there was an argument implicit in our very bones" (13).

The main field in which Freud did express his affinity to immortality and timelessness was literature and poetics. He referred to poets he adored as "eternal" and as "the magnificent immortals" (*die Herrlichen, die Unsterblichen alle*) (Freud 1900, 474). The only place he allowed himself to cautiously express his own personal wish for eternal existence was with respect to his scientific work, as embodied in his writing (Razinsky 2015). For example, in "The Interpretation of Dreams", Freud presents a personal dream in which a female professional assistant asks him to lend her something to read, and he offers her Rider Haggard's *She*:

"A *strange* book, but full of hidden meaning," I began to explain to her; "the eternal feminine, the immortality [*Unsterblichkeit*] of our emotions ..." Here she interrupted me: "I know it already. Have you nothing of your own?"—"No, my own immortal [*unsterblichen*] works have not yet been written". (Freud 1900, 453, emphasis in the original)

Freud remains silent at this point in the dream, reflecting "on the amount of self-discipline it was costing me to offer the public even my book upon dreams—I should have to give away so much of my own private character in it" (Freud, 1900, 453). Thus, in spite of the efforts and hardship Freud needs to overcome in order to publish his first important book, he is distinctly aware that this is the inevitable price he has to pay in order to produce "immortal works", and it is a price that he is willing to pay.

The willingness to accept hardship in order to achieve scientific or literary immortality is also present in Freud's relationship with H. D.; as mentioned, her writing block was one of the reasons she seeks analysis in the first place and it occupies both Freud and herself during her analysis. In "Advent", H. D. gives expression to her thoughts about her writing block, for after she forgets her bottle of smelling salts on Freud's couch, she has a dream. "In my dream, I am *salting* my typewriter. So I presume I would salt my savorless writing with the salt of the earth, Sigmund Freud's least utterance" (1974, 148, emphasis in the original). She continues to express her frustration: "I have never been completely satisfied with any of my books, published or unpublished. ... My books are not so

much still-born as born from detached intellect. ... There is a feeling that it is only a *part* of myself here" (148–149, emphasis in the original). Letters from Freud to H. D. show that he had requested her books to be sent to him before the analysis begun and followed her work closely after the analysis ended (189–194). Freud's stance towards immortality, as embodied solely in literary work, is not satisfactory to H. D. Struggling with limited time, historical sequence and unbearable losses, ruin and death, she is seeking for a grander answer. She is seeking for a realm of timelessness in which she can heal from these hazards, never to face her "Dragon of war-terror" (94), her "threat of world ruin" (85).

André Green argues that Freud's avoidance of relating to timelessness failed to acknowledge its developmental and healing significance. Green discusses the inner movement towards and away from timelessness and primary processes as a constant weaving and undoing. A crucial distinction is made between Freud's repetition compulsion and the continuous need for illusion, imagination and fantasy. The compulsion to repeat is motivated by the urge to actualize archaic configurations over and over again. This pattern involves the death drive, and therefore the destruction of time, and even, as Green suggests, a murder of time, "*Destruction destroys the representation of objects that we hate and also destroys the temporal processes connected with them*" (184–185, emphasis in the original). Timelessness, on the other hand, is an enigmatic attraction to the internal world, to renovate the link to the unconscious by being in contact with primary processes, eternal fantasies and dreams. This contact is motivated not by destruction, the way that repetition is, but by the process of life and development:

So what is the meaning of the enigmatic timelessness? I think that what Freud meant was that the memory traces of our libidinal desires and the capacity that we have of reinvesting them again is never lost and is always potentially active. It retains its vivacity and its possibility of being reinvested at the level of its traces, even when sexual potency is lost. Hence, insofar as the desires, wishes and phantasies that are part of our unconscious being are concerned, there is something in them that never wears out. We can think of it as a sort of reserve of life, hope, and of illusions, too, which at least make life tolerable when it has become less agreeable owing to the process of ageing. In the unconscious, wishes do not concern the things that we hope will happen; they take the form, in their representations, of *wishes that have already been realized*. (Green 2005, 183, emphasis in the original).

This is exactly the notion of time that H. D. was looking for in her psychic and poetic development. Alongside the importance of historical time, she feels the crucial importance of a realm that does not involve termination and also does not involve the destruction of time.

H. D. asks for a time dimension that would exist independently of linear time. In the realm of imagination, "we ourselves are free to imagine, to reconstruct, to see even, as in play or film" (H. D. 1974, 77, emphasis in the original). Therefore, when she returns to her memories of analysis in her writing, she distinguishes between realistic facts and her own motivation: "But there was no return to Berggasse, Freudgasse that was to have been. But in imagination at least, in the mist of a late afternoon, I could still continue a quest, a search" (11).

Looking at her analysis in *après-coup*, H. D. expresses her fascination with Freud's recreation of timelessness in the analytic setting: "The years went forward, then backward. The shuttle of the years ran a thread that wove my pattern into the Professor's" (1974, 9). This weaving forward and back crossed limitations of history and differentiation, between future and past, self and other. H. D. was fascinated by this movement across boundaries

of time and selfhood, yet had doubts regarding Freud's appreciation of this movement. For many reasons, it was deeply crucial to her to write her impressions during and after analysis, in spite of Freud's disapproval:

Perhaps this is an old conundrum. Perhaps there is no answer to it or it may be dangerous to ask it. ... At least, I could record the details of my experience, could note them down, could weave and re-weave the threads, the tapestry on this frame. (161)

In her writing, H. D. is the creator of the frame. Like Penelope (153), she can weave and re-weave her own tapestry, her own text. In her late memoir of Ezra Pound, *End to Torment*, H. D. writes about the vicissitudes of the crises of war and the fateful choice she made then, to turn away from life and devote herself to writing:

When I came here to Küsnacht, May 1946, after the war, I cleared out the grubby contents of my bag. Why did I tear up the pictures? Well, they were frayed and old, as I was, and I must find new talismans. I found them in my writing. (H. D. 1979, 6)

The diary's final entry

My concluding remarks on H. D.'s moving dialogue with Freud on time revolve around time and writing a diary. H. D. clung to her diary throughout her analysis even though Freud strongly advised her to refrain from it (1974, 185, 187). As a writer suffering from writer's block at the time of analysis, keeping a diary was for H. D. an inseparable part of becoming, of grasping a fragile sense of self. My reading of H. D.'s memoir is accompanied by admiration for her courage in maintaining a strikingly complex stance towards Freud. She struggles to articulate the limitations of his point of view on crucial issues, such as time and fantasy, while never losing her grasp on her affection and gratitude towards him. This stance is brave because she is at the same time continually aware of representing a minor literary voice in multi-layered ways (Deleuze and Guattari [1975] 1986). H. D. tells her analytic story as an analysand, as a woman and as a person approaching a breakdown, and yet she continues to seek a voice with which to break her analytic and poetic silence. She presents herself as "the invisible intuitive rootlet", while Freud is presented as the "Tree of Knowledge". And yet, in spite of her manifest inferiority, she is determined: "'If he is so wise, so clever,' the smallest possible sub-soil rootlet gives its message, 'you show him that you too are wise, are clever'" (H. D. 1974, 99).

In this context, the question of timelessness, as presented in the memoir, should be understood in a broader sense than just having to do with time per se. The question of time enables H. D. to discover and initiate an independent realm of experiences, prior to language, form and structure. For her, establishing "the realm of fantasy and imagination" is her only chance to touch upon her horizon, to fling "across the abyss" and find her "poet's lines" (108).

Walter Benjamin's "The Metaphysics of Youth" is an enigmatic, spiritual paper that, although it is one of his early writings, written approximately between 1913 and 1914, appeared only after his death. Benjamin relates to youth as the divine element within the transcendent human essence (Hotam 2019). An intriguing argument on the genre of the diary is presented there: although there is a tendency to see the diary as a text that contains a chain of experiences and is governed by events in an earthly sequence of time, possibly presenting the writer's story or history, the diary "does not occur in

developmental time ... It does not occur *in* time at all, for time has vanished. Instead it is a book of time: a book of days [*Tagebuch*]" (Benjamin 1996, 11, emphasis in the original).

The diary is understood by Benjamin as a form of writing that situates the self in a time-less realm, for only in a place outside of time can one find the freedom to experience oneself in the purest form. The diary forms an "I" beyond daily events and choices, an "I" that is constructed from silence:

for in the diary our self, as time, impinges on everything else, the "I" befalls all things, they gravitate toward our self. But time no longer impinges on the self, which is now the birth of immortal time. The self experiences timelessness, all things are assembled in it. It lives all-powerful in the interval; in the interval (the diary's silence), the "I" experiences its own time, pure time. (12)

The diary offers an entrance to "a timeless realm" (10). This distinct text "is the unfathomable document of a life never lived, the book of a life in whose time everything that we experienced inadequately is transformed into an experience perfected" (11).

The possibility of lingering in this distinct potential of being creates an alternative space, a landscape distinct from the external world. The distinction this space preserves from actual experience is crucial to its existence, and the most crucial distinction is the distinction of time, the deviation from historical time to timelessness. In a space outside of time, there is silence within the unconscious that can be heard through its resonance in fantasies and imagination, dreams and literature:

That is the landscape. ... But from all the time when we stand there quivering, one question remains: Are we time? Arrogance tempts us to answer yes—and then the landscape would vanish. We would be citizens. But the spell of the book bids us be silent. (Benjamin 1996, 12–13)

The last entry in H. D.'s diary is dated 15 June 1933, just before her abrupt separation from Freud because of political circumstances. She writes about a nightmare that struck her:

Continued rumors are perhaps responsible for last night's dream, a nightmare. An enormous black buffalo, bison, or bull is pursuing a cart or carriage in which we are all crowded. Had the car plunged over the cliff? Were we in it? Some of us, a group of six or eight, now seated on a mountain slope, ask, *are we dead?* (H. D. 1974, 187, emphasis in the original)

The confrontation with the actual moment of separation from analysis challenges H. D.'s quest for an alternative "formula of Time." The demand to accept the end of analysis meets the demand to accept termination in general. The movement to the unknown edge of termination, whether in a cart, carriage or car, is a representation of the overwhelming dread in response to the potential enmeshment between the realm of timelessness and the limitation of historical time. For H. D., as for Benjamin, the existence of timelessness depends on its continuous and persistent detachment from linear time.

H. D.'s question "Are we dead?", lying painfully open at the end of her nightmare and the termination of analysis, echoes Benjamin's question, "are we time?" Our confrontation with linear time as it travels, ambles, trots and, as emphasized by Freud, gallops, causes us to feel the need for time to stand still. The presence of termination and death, embodied in the hourglass, brings the penetrating and illuminating light of explanation to bear on our bat-like thought wings. The realm of the unconscious, as encountered in dreams, psychoanalysis and poetics, enables one to wonder, move, even fly in the realm of

imagination, memory traces and fantasy. The essence of a “life never lived” remains as an everlasting horizon in a “perfect moment in time or out of time”, pure time, never to be actualized or fulfilled.

Translations of summary

L'autrice de cet article nous introduit au dialogue de H.D. avec Freud autour de la question du temps et de l'intemporalité. Freud défendait une conception du temps qui varie en fonction des différents niveaux de conscience. Mais, tandis que le temps linéaire apparaît dans les écrits de Freud comme une part essentielle du développement et du deuil, l'intemporalité n'y a jamais été élaborée en tant que telle. Après une discussion de la conception du temps chez Freud, l'autrice nous présente une lecture du mémoire de H.D., *Visage de Freud* (1977). H.D. convoque une série de souvenirs appartenant à différentes périodes de sa vie, tout en mettant l'accent sur son analyse et la personne de Freud. La lecture de son mémoire offre un récit intense et stimulant de sa rencontre avec Freud au temps de son analyse, mais aussi dans son après-coup. Cette traduction tourne autour de la question de l'intemporalité perçue comme une voie d'accès au domaine de l'imagination et du fantasme, qui n'a pas été suffisamment reconnue par Freud en tant que telle, alors qu'elle apparaît comme cruciale aux yeux de H.D. dans sa quête d'une voix poétique novatrice. La signification de l'intemporalité et sa complexité sont ici discutées par l'autrice, qui s'inspire d'idées d'André Green et de Walter Benjamin.

Dieser Beitrag befasst sich mit dem Dialog, den H. D. mit Freud über Zeit und Zeitlosigkeit führte. Freud präsentierte eine Vorstellung von Zeit, die im Einklang mit den verschiedenen Bewusstseinssebenen variierte. Während jedoch lineare Zeit in Freuds Schriften als ein wesentlicher Teil von Entwicklung und Trauer dargestellt wird, wurde Zeitlosigkeit hierfür nicht vollkommen erschlossen. Einer Diskussion von Freuds Vorstellung von Zeit folgt eine Auslegung der von H. D. verfassten *Memoiren Tribut an Freud* (1974 im englischsprachigen Original und 2008 in der deutschsprachigen Neuübersetzung erschienen). H. D. spricht eine Reihe von Erinnerungen an verschiedene Phasen ihres Lebens an und rückt dabei ein besonderes Augenmerk auf ihre Analyse und auf Freud. Bei der Lektüre der Memoiren zeigt sich eine intensive und anregende Schilderung der Begegnung mit Freud während der Zeit der Analyse und im Anschluss. Diese Übertragung beschäftigt sich mit Zeitlosigkeit als Weg in den Bereich der Vorstellungskraft und Fantasie, der als solcher von Freud nicht hinreichend gewürdigt wird, jedoch für die Suche von H. D. nach einer neuen poetischen Stimme entscheidend war. Die Bedeutung von Zeitlosigkeit sowie ihre schwere Fassbarkeit werden unter Einbeziehung des Denkens von André Green und Walter Benjamin diskutiert.

L'articolo si concentra sul dialogo di H. D. con Freud a proposito dei temi del tempo e dell'atemporalità. La concezione che Freud aveva del tempo varia a seconda dei diversi livelli della coscienza presi in considerazione, ma mentre nei suoi scritti il tempo lineare viene presentato come un elemento essenziale dello sviluppo psichico e del processo del lutto, l'atemporalità non è stata mai pienamente sviluppata come concetto a sé stante. La discussione del concetto freudiano di tempo è qui seguita da una lettura del libro di memorie dedicato a Freud da H. D., intitolato “I segni sul muro” (1974). H. D. offre in quelle pagine una serie di ricordi di diversi periodi della sua vita, dando particolare rilievo alla sua analisi con Freud. Le sue memorie offrono al lettore una narrazione intensa e stimolante dell'incontro con Freud, sia al tempo dell'analisi sia da un'ottica retrospettiva. Questa traduzione ruota attorno all'atemporalità intesa come sentiero che conduce a un regno di immaginazione e fantasia: un aspetto che Freud non riconobbe a sufficienza, ma che ebbe nondimeno un ruolo cruciale nella ricerca da parte di H. D. di una voce poetica innovativa. L'importanza e la natura sfuggente dell'atemporalità vengono qui discussi facendo riferimento a idee di André Green e Walter Benjamin.

Este artículo presenta el diálogo de H. D. con Freud sobre el tema del tiempo y la atemporalidad. Freud presentaba una concepción del tiempo que variaba de acuerdo con los diversos niveles de conciencia. Pero si bien el tiempo lineal en los escritos de Freud se presenta como parte esencial del desarrollo y el duelo, la atemporalidad no ha sido plenamente desarrollada como tal. Se analiza la concepción del tiempo en Freud, seguida por una lectura de las memorias de H.D.

"Tributo a Freud" (1974). La escritora ofrece una serie de reminiscencias de diferentes periodos de su vida, con énfasis en su análisis y en Freud. La lectura de las memorias presenta una narrativa intensa y estimulante del encuentro con Freud en el momento del análisis y en el *après-coup*. Esta traducción gira en torno a la atemporalidad como un camino hacia el reino de la imaginación y la fantasía, no reconocido suficientemente por Freud como tal, sin embargo crucial para la búsqueda de una voz poética e innovadora en H. D. Se discute la importancia y el carácter esquivo de la atemporalidad, usando ideas de André Green y Walter Benjamin.

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