Portrait of HD by Islay Lyons.

HD

TRIBUTE TO FREUD

WRITING ON THE WALL · ADVENT

FOREWORD BY
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INTRODUCTION BY
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FOREWORD

THE PAST IS literally blasted into consciousness with the Blitz in London,' H.D. said. Her sessions with Sigmund Freud, when she first wrote about them in 1944, were a part of the past. With him, the desk and walls of his consulting room filled with bibelots which were tokens of history, she had gone back to her childhood, back to the breakup of her marriage and the birth of her child, back to the death of her brother in service in France, and the consequent death, from shock, of her father, and back to the breakup of her literary circle in London – Aldington, Pound, Lawrence, each gone his way. In the Vienna of the early 1930s, with its lengthening shadows, she was putting together the shards of her own history, facing a new war, knowing it would come, fearing it as she had feared its predecessor.

Freud helped her to remember and to understand what she remembered. When she composed 'Writing on the Wall,' published in book form as *Tribute to Freud*, the war had come. Destruction was not a threat but a reality. Experience was a palimpsest. Again she recognized for herself the importance of persistence in remembering. Remembering Freud was significant, for remembering him was remembering what she had remembered with him. 'For me, it was so important,' she wrote, repeating, 'it was so important, my own LEGEND. Yes, my own LEGEND. Then, to get well and re-create it.' She used 'legend' multiply – as story, a history, an account, a thing for reading, her own myth. H.D.'s war years brought an astonishing revitalization. Silent in a sense for years, suddenly

she wrote her war trilogy, several novels and short stories which are still unpublished, the text of *By Avon River*, drafts of *Bid Me to Live*, and *Tribute to Freud*. They were re-creations. All literature is.

The earlier version of *Tribute to Freud* has been out of print in America. Its reputation and its fascination as an informal portrait of the great psychoanalyst have persisted. In the past two years an English edition has appeared, as well as a French and an Italian translation. A German translation will appear shortly. Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer, reviewed the 1956 publication in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. He set a tone. 'The book, with its appropriate title,' he said, 'is surely the most delightful and precious appreciation of Freud's personality that is ever likely to be written. Only a fine creative artist could have written it. It is like a lovely flower, and the crude pen of a scientist hesitates to profane it by attempting to describe it. I can only say that I envy anyone who has not yet read it, and that it will live as the most enchanting ornament of all the Freudian biographical literature.' H.D. was pleased. She would have been pleased by its most recent praise; Norman Holland in his *Poems in Persons* (1973), a psychoanalytic study of the creation and reception of poetry, says, 'I know of no account by an analysand that tells more about Freud, his techniques, or the analytic experience as it seems from within.' This expanded version of *Tribute to Freud* tells still more.

'Writing on the Wall' was written, as she says in her prefatory note, 'with no reference to the Vienna note-books of spring 1933.' These had remained in Switzerland. It was when she returned to Lausanne after the war and recovered the notebooks that she wrote ' "Advent," the continuation of "Writing on the Wall," or its prelude.' The original had been a meditation; 'Advent' was its gloss. This more personally

detailed section was omitted from the originally published book. Now, however, it is appropriate to include the second part, in which she comments on 'Writing on the Wall' as well as expands herself and the significance of self. 'Advent' is testimony.

I am on the fringes or in the penumbra of the light of my father's science and my mother's art – the psychology or philosophy of Sigmund Freud,' she wrote in 'Advent.' 'I must find new words as the Professor found or coined new words to explain certain as yet unrecorded states of mind or being!' There had been recordings, of course, Freud's own or like Otto Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, which Freud shrewdly recommended to her when she told him of her dream of the Egyptian princess and the child afloat in the bulrushes. But Freud does, she wrote, 'follow the workings of my creative mind.' Freud knew she had to make her own recordings. No one else could do that for her. Freud had a passionate concern with the ontogeny of art. It was by no accident that the theosophist van der Leeuw and H.D. had contemporary hours on the Berggasse.

I begin intensive reading of psychoanalytic journals, books and study Sigmund Freud,' she wrote in 1932. 'There is talk of me possibly going to Freud himself in Vienna.' The one who principally talked was Freud's distinguished student and member of the Circle, Dr. Hanns Sachs, whom H.D. had known in Berlin and with whom she had had sessions. Earlier than these, and less satisfactory, were some twenty-four sessions in 1931 in London with Mary Chadwick, to whom she had gone when the collapse of a friend threatened her own composure. Still earlier had been the informal conversations with Havelock Ellis in Brixton at the close of World War One. He had traveled, later, in 1920, on the same boat with Bryher and herself to Malta and Greece. The companionship seems to

have made no memorable impact on any of them. Disappointed in his indifference to her manuscript 'Notes on Thought and Vision,' she remembered him chiefly in terms of Norman Douglas' *mot*: 'He is a man with one eye in the country of the blind.'

In Freud's fuller vision she found both stimulation and encouragement. Years later than either 'Writing on the Wall' or 'Advent' she returned again to his memory. The end of her life was near, and she was hospitalized with a broken hip. 'Of course,' she wrote, 'as the Professor said, "there is always something more to find out." I felt that he was speaking for himself (an informal moment as I was about to leave). It was almost as if something I had said was *new*, that he even felt that I was a *new* experience. He must have thought the same of everyone, but I felt his personal delight, I was *new*. Everyone else was *new*, every dream and dream association was *new*. After the years and years of patient, plodding research, it was all *new*.'

Newness was what happened to Freud's bibelots and H.D.'s remembering when their contexts changed. We are always remaking history. Returning to the details of her childhood, in Freud's consulting room, surrounded by his little treasures, she was redefining both her childhood and them. '"My mother, my mother," I cry,' she noted of a dream, 'I sob violently, tears, tears, tears.' Her mother was Moravian, and allied to the Mystery and to love feasts; her mother painted, she was musical, and it was she who gave his first musical training to her brother, H.D.'s uncle, J. Fred Wolle, who later studied organ and counterpoint in Munich and was, in H.D.'s Bethlehem childhood, organist of the Moravian church. He established the now seventy-five-year-old Bach Festivals for which Bethlehem is chiefly known today. H.D.'s grandfather (Papalie), the Rev. Francis Wolle, was the author of *Desmids of the United States* (1884), the well-known

Freshwater Algae of the United States (1887), and *Diatomaceae of North America* (1890). He used the microscope, but more significantly to his family he had been for twenty years, until his retirement in 1881, head of the Moravian Seminary. H.D.'s ambience was Moravian.

Her father was older and, as she repeatedly inferred, from 'outside.' H.D. was the child of the second marriage of a widower. He was a middle-western New Englander; he taught mathematics; he was an astronomer who mapped the stars at night and napped until noon. 'I never had a letter from him in my life, but our mother shared her letters from him, on rare occasions when he was away from home. He would write humsical, rhymed verses sometimes.'

She was her father's favorite, her older brother was her mother's, she felt. 'But the mother is the Muse, the Creator, and in my case especially, as my mother's name was Helen.' 'Obviously,' she wrote in 'Advent,' 'this is my inheritance. I derive my imaginative faculties through my musician-artist mother.' But the inheritance was not simple. '"My mother, my mother," I cry. . . .' As she wrote elsewhere, 'She only felt that she [was] a disappointment to her father, an odd duckling to her mother.'

Charles Doolittle was born in 1843. His first marriage took place in Michigan in 1866; his second, to Helen Wolle, in 1873. He was 43 when H.D. was born, and Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at Lehigh. From 1895 to 1912 he was Professor of Astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of the Flower Astronomical Observatory in Upper Darby, on the outskirts of Philadelphia. He was a scientist with honorary degrees, and the author both of monographs on the results of observations with the Zenith telescope, and of *Practical Astronomy as Applied to Geodesy and Navigation* (1885). His son Eric (1869–1920) succeeded him both to the professorship and to the directorship of the observatory.

H.D. as a girl sometimes thought of William Morris as a spiritual father. 'This is the god-father that I never had. . . . I did not know much about him until I was (as I say) about sixteen. I was given a book of his to read, by Miss Pitcher, at Miss Gordon's school; – a little later, Ezra Pound read the poetry to me. The book Miss Pitcher gave me was on furniture, perhaps an odd introduction. But my father had made a bench for my room, some bookcases downstairs, from William Morris designs. My father had been a carpenter's apprentice, as a boy. This "William Morris" father might have sent me to an art school but the Professor of Astronomy and Mathematics insisted on my preparing for college. He wanted eventually (he even said so) to make a mathematician of me, a research worker or scientist like (he even said so) Madame Curie. He did make a research worker of me but in another dimension. It was a long time before I found William Morris and that was by accident, though we are told that "nothing occurs accidentally." I must choose, because my life depends upon it, between the artist and the scientist. I manage in the second year of college to have a slight breakdown and I manage to get engaged to Ezra Pound.'

She made her choice. Her parents objected to Pound as a son-in-law. She had left Bryn Mawr, then she left Philadelphia for New York, and then left New York for London. Henceforth she was alone. She wanted her mother but she wanted her father too. Both figured in her 'legend.' Her poem 'Tribute to the Angels' was written in the same year as 'Writing on the Wall.' In it she asks,

what is this mother-father
to tear at our entrails?
what is this unsatisfied duality
which you can not satisfy?

The house in some indescribable way,' she wrote in 'Advent,' depends on father-mother. At the point of integration or regeneration, there is no conflict over rival loyalties.' This was the integration she sought, the point at which she could say, having memory with understanding, 'I owned myself.'

The breaking-away, however, had been a necessary step. Looking back, in 1950, she wrote me, 'I don't suppose it was the fault of Bryn Mawr that I didn't like it. My second year was broken into or across by my affair with E.P., who after all, at that time, proved a stimulus and was the scorpionic sting or urge that got me away – at that time it was essential. I felt there I had fallen between two stools, what with my mother's musical connection and my father's and half-brother's stars! I did find my path – thanks partly to E.P., also R.A., Lawrence and the rest.'

But she separated from Richard Aldington and, finally, divorced him. The story she has told in *Bid Me to Live*. Aldington had already given his version in *Death of a Hero*. It was the subject of John Cournos' *Miranda Masters*. D. H. Lawrence touched on it briefly in *Aaron's Rod*. Few episodes have been so amply treated.

Lawrence appears frequently in *Tribute to Freud*, especially with reference to his story, 'The Man Who Died.' In *Bid Me to Live* he plays a significant role. He had the *gloire*. But her reference in 'Advent' to their leave-taking is enigmatic: ' "I hope never to see you again," he wrote in that last letter.' Perhaps her comments to herself after reading Harry Moore's biography of Lawrence have some relevance. 'I have read,' she said, the last two-thirds of the book, painstakingly reviewing my own feelings. I find confirmation of certain problems of my own, for instance, about Freud. Lawrence was instinctively against Sigmund Freud, Frieda was intelligently for him. But it was long before I had "come" to Freud that Frieda spoke to

me of "love." It was in the *Madrigal* [*Bid Me to Live*] drawing-room, but did not come into my romance. Frieda and I were alone together in the big room. Frieda said that she had had a friend, an older man, who had told her that "if love is free, everything is free." There had been the scene the night before or shortly before, in which Lawrence said that Frieda was there for ever on his right hand, I was *there* for ever – on his left. Frieda said when we were alone, "but Lawrence does not really care for women. He only cares for men. Hilda, *you have no idea of what he is like.*" '

Pound's belligerent disapproval of Freud cooled their friendship, though it was rewarmed during the St. Elizabeth years. An unpublished letter from Pound to H.D. in 1954 gives the tone of his disapproval. 'I can't blow everybodies' noses for 'em,' he wrote. 'Have felt yr / vile Freud all bunk / but the silly Xristers bury all their good authors / ... instead of sticking to reading list left by Dante / ...You got into the wrong pig stye, ma chère. But not too late to climb out.'*

Others never quite took the places of these three. Stephen Haden-Guest was a more casual friend. Arthur Waley was at best an acquaintance. Kenneth Macpherson, Bryher's husband, was much closer. H.D. liked his novels as well as his company. With him as film director she acted with Paul Robeson in *Borderline*. To *Close-Up*, of which Macpherson was an editor, she contributed articles on the cinema. But none of these, nor others later, had the *gloire*. Freud was the exception.

J.J. van der Leeuw was a symbol rather than a person. H.D. in fact knew nothing but what she wrote about him in the two parts of *Tribute to Freud*, until in 1957 I could by chance tell her more and send her some of his books. He was the author of the

*The quotation from the letter from Pound to H.D. © 1974 by the Estate of Ezra Pound.

often reprinted *Gods in Exile*, of *The Fire of Creation, The Conquest of Illusion*, and of *The Dramatic History of the Christian Faith*. Born in 1893, he joined the Theosophical Society in 1914, and was General Secretary of the Netherlands Section in 1930–1931. He founded the Practical Idealist Association for youth, and was field organizer for the New Education Fellowship. He lived for a short while in Australia. Of how he reached the Berggasse there is no published record. Looking back, H.D. always remembered him there. 'I wrote of J.J. van der Leeuw and the illness or breakdown I had after I heard of his death in 1933. I connected him with my older brother and the fact that I could not "take" the fact of his death in action in France, because I was expecting this child – so later, with my father's death. Death is all around us.'

'Death and Birth – the great experiences,' as H.D. described them. Emily Dickinson talks much about death. H.D. talks much about both – and about re-birth. Emily Dickinson was wonderfully feminine; H.D. was womanly. One senses the fullness of her experiences, in *Tribute to Freud*, precisely as one feels the skilled warmth of Freud's response. She would remember a person or a phrase and exhibit it to Freud, as he in turn picked up the correlative artifact and symbol from his desk. 'There,' she wrote in 1955 in Küsnacht, still remembering, 'in the print tacked to my wall above the couch, piled high with its heaps of books, manuscripts and letters, sits the Professor at his desk. There are books behind him and books and papers on his desk. There on his desk, too, are a number of the images he so loved and treasured, perhaps (although I do not identify it) the very Egyptian Osiris that he once put into my hands. "This is called the answerer," he said, because Osiris answers questions." '

Writing on the wall posed questions. Osiris, with the help of Freud, showed the way to answers. It is as H.D. put it in her

Tribute – 'The picture-writing, the hieroglyph of the dream, was the common property of the whole race; in the dream, man, as at the beginning of time, spoke a universal language, and man, meeting in the universal understanding of the unconscious or the subconscious, would forgo barriers of time and space; and man, understanding man, would save mankind.' Man would, could at least, write.

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON

New Haven, Connecticut

July 1973

INTRODUCTION

[illegible] psychic coral-polyps? Do we build one upon another? Did I [illegible] aqueous) in the Scilly Isles, put out a feeler? Did I die in my polyp [illegible] station and will I leave a polyp skeleton of coral to blend with this [illegible] myriad-minded coral-chaplet or entire coral-island? My psychic [illegible]rences were sub-aqueous.

H.D.

1

EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT H.D., but unfortunately her reputation seems to have outlived her readers. Despite the objections of several critics, two distorting commonplaces about her persist. The first is that she was the 'perfect Imagist,' the best exemplar of the narrowest of modern movements. The second that she was a living anachronism, an artifact from ancient Greece, burning with a hard gem-like flame. This view was amusingly stated by Harriet Monroe, the first publisher of her poems: 'She is as wild as deer on the mountain, as hepaticas under the wet mulch of spring, as a dryad racing nude through the wood . . . she is, quite unconsciously, a lithe, hard, bright-winged spirit of nature to whom humanity is but an accident.'[1] *Tribute to Freud*, with the notebook of 1933 published here for the first time, is the crucial book for setting her work in its proper perspective. In it we see a complex and sympathetic woman trying to make sense of the world in ways that are comparable to those of other writers of her period.