

Travel Grant Report

Travel Grant Recipient: Anna Fyta, University of Ioannina, Greece.

Research Project: The Influence of Euripides on H.D.'s Poetics

Institution visited: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, U.S.A.

Thanks to the Travel Grant generously offered to me by EAAS I was able to travel to the U.S. and conduct a crucial pending part of my doctoral research at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. This three-week research trip took place in June 2013 and I was given the unique opportunity to explore the extensive collection hosted at Beinecke known as *The H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) Papers*. These archives – offered to Yale by the late poet's literary executor Norman Holmes Pearson- constitute the largest archival body of this poet's work especially her long-term apprenticeship and creative reception of the dramatic and poetic works of classical and Hellenistic periods. The research with the Beinecke materials was crucial as it provided to me a deeper perspective on H.D.'s work with Euripides and the inventiveness and polyvalence with which this modernist poet and author received and infused the Attic dramatist's work into her own oeuvre.

As my doctoral work with H.D.'s Euripides was nearing the completion of the third year, this trip was invested with much anticipation and urgency. *The H.D. Papers* are well known among scholars and students of English Literature especially those whose studies center on Modernism. They are globally acknowledged for their importance in understanding the work of H.D., a pivotal yet largely ignored and marginalized female author and poet. As such, the H.D. archives have been systematically catalogued, searched, and scrutinized for more than three decades by many among whom several eminent scholars. As such, my trip also entailed a degree of risk that the works might yield nothing that would advance my argument nor would they facilitate the progress of the research question. Knowing that the emphasis would fall on the primary material I would find on H.D. and Euripides, I finally resolved to allow the experience itself to direct me towards a crystallization of my research work plan. And as one of my supervisors suggested, I let the papers "speak to me."

More specifically, *The H.D. Papers* feature an extensive range of the poet's work including manuscripts, notebooks, typescripts in various versions, journals, translations, rare printings and autobiographical writings, her experimentations with the then emerging art of the cinema and the much questioned genre of non-fiction and the original audio recordings of the poet reciting her long epic poem *Helen in Egypt*. From this extensive yet carefully catalogued and preserved work I finally divided my project into three parts: First access, record and file all directly related to my work Euripidean writings. Then I assessed, separated and classified –where relevant- information from H.D.'s correspondence especially during the peak period (approximately 1912-1930) of her quest in the world of classical Greece with fellow poets, other literary authors, contemporary scholars and critics. My search was then directed to the margins of the poet's work. In addition to *The H.D. Papers*, Beinecke owns a substantial range of books known as "H.D.'s Library". My investigation into her personal collection of books revealed a concealed yet directly related

corpus of her work on and around Euripides. H.D.'s classical textbooks seem to formulate the spine of her subsequent poetics and my search was inevitably geared towards discovering the breadth and the depth of her work not only on Euripides but also on other lyric poets, classical and Hellenistic authors who have –both implicitly and explicitly- also informed her reception of the Euripidean works.

During the past decade, research and H.D. related criticism has directed its evolutionary path towards other thematic, generic or tropological realms of her experimental writings, i.e. her preoccupation with the occult, the performing arts and a rekindled interest in her prose works. My seemingly regressive exploration into her classical, Euripidean texts points towards an understanding that the presence of Euripides is not just an experimental temporary practice in her writing. Throughout her literary and non-literary spectrum, H.D. receives the Euripidean dramaturgy with both an unexpected and stimulating pluralism of expression. Without witnessing the actual writing and extensive editing process with which H.D. created and developed her work, I would have either overlooked or neglected crucial material that is now gradually beginning to strengthen and consolidate the key argument of my doctoral project.

While at Yale, I was pleasantly surprised to see that interest in H.D.'s life and work had not subsided. The curator of Poetry at Yale Collection of American Literature Nancy Kuhl was at the time preparing a new photographic expo for H.D. at the Beinecke. She kindly lent me one of the boxes containing H.D. photographs she had on hold, updated me on H.D. materials and informed me on access to any new acquisitions. My three- week visit at Yale was greatly facilitated by the Beinecke people. I would like to thank the Beinecke Library staff that patiently dealt with my demands during this brief yet strenuous stretch. More specifically, I would like to thank Moira Ann Fitzgerald, Assistant Head of Access Services as well as, Ingrid Pressy, Naomi Saito, Dolores Colón, and Mary Ellen Budney, public services assistants and librarians for keeping me under their wing and facilitating my work.

This fulfilling research trip to the Yale University Beinecke Library enabled me to see that *the H.D. Papers* may be a collection of a poet's work catalogued and carefully preserved for future scholars but its contents still invite and offer a wealth of invaluable resources in the still evolving and proliferating H.D. criticism. At this stage of the writing process, my research has provided substantial backing evidence that will facilitate me to clarify the focus of my argument and gain an in-depth understanding of the texts I am examining. In addition, these very materials can further future directions in H.D. classical criticism. Last but not least, along with ELAAS, I am greatly indebted to Hellenic Association for American Studies (HELAAS) for its ardent support and its active involvement in the promotion of American Studies.