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978-0-521-10676-4 - H. D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines

Eileen Gregory

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CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

H.D. and Hellenism

H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines concerns a prominent aspect of the writing of the modern American poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle): a lifelong engagement with hellenic literature, mythology, and art. H.D.'s hellenic intertextuality is examined in the context of classical fictions operative at the turn of the century: the war of words among literary critics establishing a new "classicism" in reaction to romanticism; the fictions of classical transmission and the problem of women within the classical line; nineteenth-century romantic hellenism, represented in the writing of Walter Pater; and the renewed interest in ancient religion brought about by anthropological studies, represented in the writing of Jane Ellen Harrison. Eileen Gregory explores at length H.D.'s intertextual engagement with specific classical writers: Sappho, Theocritus and the Greek Anthology, Homer, and Euripides. The concluding chapter sketches chronologically H.D.'s career-long study and reinvention of Euripidean texts. An appendix catalogues classical subtexts in *Collected Poems, 1912–1944*, edited by Louis Martz.

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For Marie

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Acknowledgments

This book had its origins in September 1986 during the centennial celebrations of H.D.'s birth held in Orono, Maine, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I have vivid memories of those gatherings, the first assemblies of the many critics and poets who have seriously engaged in writing about H.D. I was struck then and still am by the originality and diversity of approach within this group, and also by a remarkable generosity and openness in their conception of professional exchanges. A desire to honor that spirit, so congruous with the kind of economy at work in H.D.'s writing, led me to undertake the *H.D. Newsletter*, where I had a means of continued exchange. The sense of a community of scholars, an imagined audience, has made my writing possible. Indeed, this study would have been inconceivable without the efforts of these critics over the past two decades to establish a climate in which H.D.'s writing could be considered respectfully and deliberately.

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