

PETTYPIECE

SEX THEORIES AND THE SHAPING OF TWO MODERNS
Henningway and H.D.

ROUTLE



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Preface

The theories of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Havelock Ellis had a profound impact on the modern world. Evidence of this is apparent not only in the sciences but also in architecture, in philosophy, and in the arts. While these sexological theories have dramatically altered the way we think and act, they have also given us new language with which to speak and nowhere is that language more apparent than in the texts of the moderns. The “tangled evolutionary garden” becomes a recurring image in modern texts and is articulated in works too numerous to name. Darwin’s language has become a distinct part of the fabric of English; so, too, has the language of his successor Sigmund Freud. The names of Oedipus and Electra are more often associated with sexual fixations than they ever were with the ancient Greeks and one only has to say the words “Freudian slip” to denote an underlying motivation for making a mistake. And although Havelock Ellis is no longer as well known as he once was, many still recognize the term “sexual inversion” as homosexuality.

Strangely enough, while psychoanalytic readings have become commonplace in the field of critical inquiry relating to modern texts, few critics have actually made the connection that to accept psychoanalytic premises, one must recognize Darwin’s theories, for they are the very basis on which Freud founded his theory. Ultimately, Darwin is the source for most sexological theories and yet he is perhaps the least discussed in relation to literature. With this study, I hope to make a case for Darwin’s presence in the texts of Hemingway and H.D. as both writers examined what it meant to be man or woman in the modern era. Along with Darwin, I will also discuss the presence of Ellis and Freud, as they employed much of his theory in the creation of their own.

By incorporating contemporary theories into their presentation of character, Hemingway and H.D. demonstrate a keen awareness of the complex biological and psychological motivations for human social behavior. The

texts they wrought in the modern era are testimony to the heavy influence of sexological theories. Evolutionary thought and psychological examination seemed to be in the air in the 20s and these two authors exemplify the pervasiveness of both. While the authors attempt to define and describe human behavior and the motivation for it, they also present characters whose sexuality is often not in keeping with the gender traits they display. Further, both Hemingway and H.D. create characters whose genders seem to change; at one moment, we see characters like Catherine Bourne in *The Garden of Eden* displaying distinctly “feminine” behavior. Doting on her husband David, Catherine often appears as the epitome of the feminine wife, desiring only to please and admire him. At other points in the novel, however, Catherine cuts her hair “like a man,” wears David’s clothes and has sex with a woman. Brett Ashley likewise displays an uncanny femininity; even as she can “drink like a man,” Brett (whose name alone gives one “gender” pause) is most distinctly female with her curvaceous figure and demanding sexuality.

In *Paint it Today*, H.D. presents us with Josepha whose eyes “Angelo would have garnered in a group of holy boys, copied for one face and recreated for another” but whose eyes are also the “eyes of a Messalina” (9). Josepha often behaves boyishly and commandingly and yet is also “a girl;” this blending of gender traits is often described by H.D. as “unwholesome” even as her heroine Midget cannot be swayed in her adoration of Josepha. *Hermione* is also peopled with characters whose genders and sexuality are ambiguous and changing. Her Gart, the main character, describes herself as “nebulous” and the self-description is appropriate. The persistent blurring and shifting of gender is nearly constant in the texts of both Hemingway and H.D.; I argue here that this persistence is a direct result of the authors’ close examination of sexological theories.

Emphasizing biological drives as the primary forces behind human behavior, Hemingway created characters who illustrate Darwin’s explanation of the need to kill and eat in “the survival of the fittest,” and who also demonstrate his theory of the process of sexual selection undertaken by females in the drive toward procreation. Although H.D. didn’t credit human behavior as being biologically determined, she did believe strongly in psychology and psychoanalysis, which have evolutionary theory at their roots. H.D.’s novels are mainly chronicles of the psychological state of her main characters and often, these main characters are thinly veiled versions of her. Further, even as she argued against Darwin’s theories, H.D. often employed his terminology and made many links in her poetry and prose between the plant, animal, and human worlds.

Both H.D. and Hemingway complicate their presentation of instinctual behaviors by including in their texts the presence of sexually and morally ambivalent characters. Clouding the drives to hunt, to kill and eat, and to select with the desire for morality and heroism, Hemingway and H.D.

create characters reflective of a fusion of Darwin's sexual and evolutionary theories with Ellis' more metaphysical theories of love, inversion and sexual compulsion. These characters also often exhibit traits evocative of Freud's psychoanalytic theories of sexual fixation, obsession, transference, and conflict. My study focuses on the ways in which Hemingway and H.D. explain human behavior through the sexual complexity of their characters and how this complexity exemplifies contemporary sexual theories, for sexuality and its "shifting" is at the heart of both authors' work.

Introduction:

“Strange Bedfellows”

Unless we comprehend the exact process which is being worked out beneath the shifting and multifold phenomena presented to us we can never hope to grasp in their true relations any of the normal or abnormal manifestations of this instinct.

—Havelock Ellis

The connections between H.D. and Ernest Hemingway are not, at first glance, obvious and when I began this study, I contemplated whether or not a case could be made linking such strange literary bedfellows. However, while they appear an “odd coupling,” these two writers have much in common biographically, philosophically, and psychologically. Their similarities become apparent when selected works of Hemingway and H.D. are examined through the lens of contemporary theories of evolution and human sexuality. The theories of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Havelock Ellis were the rubrics used by Hemingway and H.D. as both writers examined what it meant to be man or woman in the modern era. By incorporating contemporary theories into their presentation of character, Hemingway and H.D. demonstrate a desire to “examine the exact process which is being worked out beneath the shifting and multifold phenomena” comprising human sexuality that Ellis refers to in the epigraph above. Their acute awareness of the complex biological and psychological motivations for human behavior is at the heart of both writers’ work as is the confusion resulting from gender expectations and deviations from them.

With an emphasis on biological drives as the primary forces behind human behavior, Hemingway created characters who illustrate Darwin’s argument that the lives of all biological species are driven by “a struggle for existence” (*The Origin of Species* 53) which depends on a cycle of killing, eating, and procreating. His evolutionary theory shattered the image of man as king of the natural world, and the social and historic impact of *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* was very great. Darwin’s “reduction” of humans to the level of other natural organisms, rather than privileging them to a higher status, felled with one blow countless years of religious and philosophical posturing. Further, his insistence on the

importance of the female in the process of sexual selection deconstructed the myth of the sexually passive female.

While Darwin's evolutionary theories are the basis for H.D.'s and Hemingway's explanation for human behavior, both authors complicate their presentation of these instinctual behaviors by including in their texts the presence of sexually and morally ambivalent characters. The drives to hunt, to kill and eat, and to select are often presented alongside desires for morality, heroism, selflessness, and true romantic love; these seemingly conflicting ideals result in characters reflective of a fusion of Darwin's sexual and evolutionary theories with Ellis's more metaphysical theories of love, inversion, and sexual compulsion.

Ellis agreed with Darwin's evolutionary theory that

[h]e who is not content to look, like a savage, at the phenomena of nature as disconnected, cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation. He will be forced to admit that the close resemblance of the embryo of man to that, for instance, of a dog—the construction of the skull, limbs and whole frame on the same plan with that of other mammals, independently of the uses to which the parts may be put—the occasional re-appearance of various structures, for instance of several muscles, which man does not normally possess, but which are common to the *Quadrumana*—and a crowd of analogous facts—all point in the plainest manner to the conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor. (*Descent of Man* 909-10)

and further that

[s]exual selection [. . .] has played an important part in the history of the organic world [. . .] In the lower divisions of the animal kingdom, sexual selection seems to have done nothing: such animals are often affixed for life to the same spot, or have the sexes combined in the same individual, or what is still more important, their perceptive and intellectual faculties are not sufficiently advance to allow of the feelings of love and jealousy, or of the exertion of choice. When, however, we come to the *Arthropoda* and *Vertebrata*, even to the lowest classes in these two great Sub-kingdoms, sexual selection has effected much. (*Descent of Man* 910)

However, while Ellis agreed to the theory of a "common progenitor" and to the notion that primarily, women were most frequently the selectors in the act of sex and that this selection was crucial to man's development and success, Ellis also believed that in the case of humans, sexual love could contain an intangible or spiritual element. The sexologist believed that in fact, the sexual act between two lovers resulted in a sort of spiritual elevation. For example, even as Ellis describes the aroused sexual instinct

(tumescence) as a biological response to stimuli, as does Darwin, Ellis further explains that

[a]t the same time, it is probable, we are exploring the mystery which underlies all the subtle appreciations, all the emotional undertones, which are woven in the web of the whole world as it appeals to us through those sensory passages by which alone it can reach us. We are here approaching, therefore, a fundamental subject of unsurpassable importance, a subject which has not yet been accurately explored save at a few isolated points . . . (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex* 1:3 2)

Ellis's description of sex as an almost mystical and monumentally important subject is in complete agreement with the presentation of sex in the works of H.D. and Hemingway. Time after time, the texts of both authors revolve around sexual relationships and the problems that often ensue because of their failure. This failure is often due to the inability of one character to successfully have sex, the sexual object choice is the same sex, the infidelity of one or more characters, or the fact that the sexual relationship is so consuming that it results in neurotic or obsessive behavior. For Hemingway and H.D. it would seem that "sex is the central problem of life" (Ellis *Preface, Studies in the Psychology of Sex*).

While the works of H.D. and Hemingway evince an awareness and agreement of Ellis's ideas regarding sex, the characters both authors create are complicated by their Freudian behavior, as well. Characters, particularly sexually ambivalent ones, often exhibit traits evocative of Freud's psychoanalytical theories of sexual fixation with particular regard to the mother complex. Freud articulates this fixation in his notes, stating that

the later inverts go through in their childhood a phase of very intense but short-lived fixation on the woman (usually the mother) and after overcoming it, they identify themselves with the woman and take themselves as the sexual object; that is, proceeding on a narcissistic basis, they look for young men resembling themselves in persons whom they wish to love as their mother has loved them. (*Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* 560n)

While "boyish" men are not common in the works of H.D., boyish women *are*; both Midget and Josepha exhibit a boyishness, as do Her Gart and Fayne Rabb. However, Hemingway does present effeminate men, such as those occupying the Cafe Select in *The Sun Also Rises* and often makes references to unmanly men and his distaste for them. These characters have not gone unnoticed by critics and there has been much speculation regarding Hemingway's possibly latent homosexual desires resulting perhaps from his ties to his mother; H.D. likewise has been discussed as having a strong desire for her mother's affection. In fact, both H.D. and Hemingway were so greatly influenced by their mothers that numerous critics have pointed out both authors' tendency to seek sexual partners who projected

character traits strongly associated with their mothers. It is not surprising, then, that H.D. and Hemingway project many of these traits onto their fictional characters. The inability of Hemingway (and H.D.) to completely “let go” of the mother’s image as associated with sexual object selection seems to further illustrate Freud’s mother complex which states that

[t]he man seeks above all the memory picture of his mother as it has dominated him since the beginning of childhood; this is quite consistent with the fact that the mother, if still living, strives against this, her renewal, and meets it with hostility. In view of this significance of the infantile relation to the parents for the later selection of the sexual object, it is easy to understand that every disturbance of this infantile relation brings to a head the most serious results for the sexual life after puberty. (*The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* 618-19)

Although it is impossible to say which theorist held greater sway with H.D. or Hemingway at any given time, it is important to realize that the work of Ellis and Freud could not have occurred without Darwin’s establishment of the evolutionary premise, as explained at length by Lucille Ritvo. Ritvo argues that Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis are built directly on Charles Darwin’s sexual and evolutionary theories and asserts that Darwin not only directly influenced Freud but that the two scientists’ works would have the same societal impact, as well as suffer the same misreading. Ritvo states that

[t]he life of the creator of psychoanalysis coincides almost exactly with the onset of the “Darwinian revolution.” Freud’s life and work reveal the impact and also the vicissitudes of the new theory. Fossilized in the extensive corpus of Freud’s writings is the evolutionary theory of Darwin’s day, including aspects expunged by time. Freud’s own theory became subject to surprisingly similar misinterpretations and assaults. (1)

She further explains that while Freud and Darwin never met, they shared close associations in the scientific community, particularly during Freud’s early days as a zoologist. The young Freud read the first unedited and credible German translations of Darwin’s work, and as Ritvo states, “Freud’s references to Darwin are of” an “idealized and unambivalent nature” (17). Although Freud does not directly credit Darwin in relation to his psychological works, he does acknowledge the great naturalist’s important contributions to science in general. Freud stated that “the theories of Darwin, which were then of topical interest, strongly attracted me, for they held out hopes of an extraordinary advance in our understanding of the world” (*An Autobiographical Study*). Freud’s firm belief in the work of Charles Darwin makes acceptance of his psychoanalytic theories dependent upon an assumption of evolutionary ideals.

Like Freud, Ellis also grounds his work in Darwin's theories, footnoting him profusely in many of his works, as well as freely adopting the use of many Darwinian terms. One crucial difference between Darwin's and Ellis's approach to the explanation of sexual behavior, however, is Ellis's belief in the transcendental properties of human sexual contact. As noted, unlike Darwin, even while Ellis believed that sexual relationships were often the root of many of life's problems, he also felt that while human sexual contact was a direct result of instinctual desires, the sex act itself when undertaken elevated the male and female involved to an almost spiritual realm. Ellis's claim to the transcendental quality of sex would appeal to the ethereal H.D., but the pragmatic Hemingway would find it harder to accept. Instead, Hemingway would be drawn more closely to Ellis's case studies, such as those in *The Dance of Life*, and more particularly, those involving sexual obsessions such as *Erotic Symbolism*.

While H.D. and Hemingway explore the importance of sexual theories as explanations for human behavior, they also examine gender as a culturally constructed, fluctuating dynamic. Both authors illustrate the instability of sexual and personal identity when gender traits are reassigned, as in *The Garden of Eden* and *Kora and Ka*, for example. The instability of identity, the capacity for transformation, the self as fluid and often progressive, all are related concepts which appear frequently in the works of Hemingway and H.D. as they explore both the genesis and metamorphosis of identity. I attribute the persistent presentation of sexual identity as fluid to H.D.'s and Hemingway's knowledge of "man's ancient bisexual nature," an idea crucial to the sexual theories of Darwin, Ellis, and Freud (Sulloway 158-9). The continual, yet futile, quest for a stable identity pursued by Hemingway and H.D. is most evident in *Paint it Today*, *Hermione*, *Bid Me to Live*, and *The Sea Garden*, by H.D., and *The Garden of Eden*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and "The Sea Change" by Hemingway.

My purpose in illustrating a shared awareness of sex theories and the instability of identity in the works of these two authors, one male, one female, is twofold: first, to deconstruct the myths alleging Ernest Hemingway's misogyny and morbid preoccupation with masculinity, and second, to illustrate the distinct similarities in the theoretical premise of works written by men and women in the modern era. By reading Hemingway with and through H.D. (the influence of contemporary sexual and evolutionary theories ever in mind), Hemingway's texts illustrate an acute awareness of the struggle for meaning, for purpose, for identity, a struggle shared equally by both sexes. They no longer appear morbidly preoccupied with "male" identity; instead, his works are evocative of a deep knowledge of the "bisexual" natures of men and women. Similarly, by reading H.D. with and through Hemingway, her openly homoerotic prose texts are evidence of the close relationship of sexuality, self-identity, and

artistic creativity; the fusion of sexuality and self-perception with creativity evidenced in her texts is acutely reminiscent of Hemingway. This similarity is important both as evidence that male and female modern authors were struggling with the concept of defining a sexual and artistic self, and as a catalyst for closer scrutiny of H.D.'s prose works. Her insistent questioning of human behavior and subsequent search for explanation in the realms of contemporary sex theories are so consistent with Hemingway, the near-exclusion of her prose works from the modern American literary canon seems unusual.

Chapter One constitutes a brief discussion of the historical situation in America immediately preceding the publication of Hemingway's and H.D.'s early work and addresses the increasingly popular interest in contemporary sexual theories. The work done by Elaine Showalter ("Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the Fin de Siecle"), Eve Sedgwick (*Epistemology of the Closet, Tendencies*), and Teresa De Lauretis (*The Practice of Love*) on early-twentieth century sexuality is the foundation for much of my argument here; not less important, however, are texts by D'Emilio and Freeman (*Intimate Matters*), Gilbert and Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic*), and Jay and Glasgow (*Lesbian Texts and Contexts*), for their emphasis on the social evolution of sexuality. The changing nature of sexuality and the subsequent social reaction which ensued informs my later discussion of the numerous biographical similarities between H.D. and Hemingway and posits an explanation for the profound influence of contemporary sexual and biological theories in their work. While I draw on theorists such as those named above whose work is grounded in the social evolution of human sexuality, it is not my purpose to examine Hemingway and H.D. through the psychological and sexological lenses of late-twentieth century theorists. Rather, my purpose is to examine them through the lenses that are most crucial to Hemingway's and H.D.'s own era.

Consequently, much of the evidence for my hypothesis that Hemingway and H.D. were acutely affected by contemporary biological theories of sexuality is derived from the detailed works on these authors' early lives by biographers Kenneth Lynn, Barbara Guest, and Mark Spilka, who all agree on the important influence both authors' androgynous early upbringing had on their later work, as well as to the importance of what these authors read. Growing up in households heavily influenced by science, both Hemingway and H.D. read numerous scientific texts, including the works of Darwin, Ellis, and later, Freud.

Freud's "discovery" of the id, the ego, and the superego; his articulation of Oedipal and Electral fixations; his hypotheses regarding psychological stages of development and arrest; and his terminology for discussing sexuality in general, gave the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries the language to discuss the changing nature of human sexuality. Likewise,

Ellis's case studies chronicling human sexuality forced issues such as bisexuality, androgyny, inversion, and sexual fetishism to the forefront of psychological studies. Most importantly, however, the work done in the study of human sexuality by Freud and Ellis could not have been accomplished without the groundbreaking sexual and evolutionary theories articulated by Charles Darwin. These three "sexologists" theoretically framed the ongoing discussion of sex that preoccupied late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century society; their texts greatly influenced the lives and works of H.D. and Hemingway as they struggled to understand and explain human behavior.

Chapter Two extends the discussion of biographical similarities between Hemingway and H.D. in the context of the expatriation of both authors and expatriation's relevance to their work. As Americans abroad, H.D. and Hemingway became members of a clique of writers and artists exploring new forms. In Europe H.D. would meet other women writers, many of whom were practicing bisexuals or lesbians, and the impact of their open sexual expression on the Moravian farm girl was profound. Part of the same social circle, Hemingway also made the acquaintance of numerous authors, among them, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ezra Pound. These literary connections were crucial to the development of H.D. and Hemingway as writers; it was with these other expatriated writers that H.D. and Hemingway would share their work and their ideas, including their interest in science and its relation to sexual and emotional behavior.

Perhaps the most influential writer in Paris for H.D. and Hemingway, indeed, for all the moderns, was Gertrude Stein. Stein is one of the most direct ties binding H.D. and Hemingway, for they were both occasional attendees at her weekly salon. At the evening gatherings, Stein would act as literary, intellectual, and artistic critic; her knowledge of scientific theories, her determined explorations with language, her appreciation for artistic change, her insistence on leading her own sexual and national life, and her celebration of love in an era seemingly devoid of it were qualities which made her hugely important in the lives of the moderns. Association with Stein and her ideas helped both H.D. and Hemingway articulate their own artistic and ideological explorations.

Like Stein, Hemingway and H.D. experienced a changing sense of national identity while in Europe; H.D.'s national sympathies changed so abruptly that several critics argue that she married English poet Richard Aldington in part to become a British citizen. Hemingway, to a lesser degree, questioned his national sympathies, contemplating America's political ideologies and foreign policies during his early days in Paris. Simultaneous with this political questioning was a deeper artistic one; Hemingway would often examine closely his ability to write about home only when away from it. Their experiences as Americans in Europe intensified H.D.'s and Hemingway's awareness of shifting identity; the influence

of other expatriated writers work, as well as the exposure to these writers' often sexually ambiguous or dysfunctional lives, helped contextualize H.D.'s and Hemingway's explorations of self, sexuality, and meaning.

Evidence for the profound impact of expatriation is most acute in the "war" stories of H.D. and Hemingway; where one is during a war, who one sides with, how this can change and how one changes because of it, are persistent questions for both authors. These questions are often linked to sexual identity, particularly in *Bid Me To Live*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and numerous Hemingway short stories. I focus on several texts by Hemingway and H.D. in the second part of chapter two as I discuss the increasing momentum of identity "slippage" and transformation the further these authors move away both physically and mentally from their original geographic "homes."

Crucial to my discussion of expatriation and national "dualism" are works by Andrea Weiss (*Paris Was a Woman*) and Shari Benstock (*Women of the Left Bank*) which chronicle the American artist's experience in modern Europe. Also integral to my discussion in this chapter is Stephen Cooper's description of the development of Hemingway's political and social conscience (*The Politics of Ernest Hemingway*).

In Chapter Three I present a reading of Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* through the lenses of Darwin, Ellis, and Freud, arguing that Hemingway's sexually ambivalent characters in the novel reflect his absorption in and subsequent translation of contemporary sexual theories. I question the myths regarding his homophobia and misogyny. While I do not attempt to argue against Hemingway's negative portrayal of homosexuals, I do wish to complicate the reading of this portrayal, for Hemingway's "homophobia" has been both overemphasized and oversimplified. Through a reading of characters such as Catherine and David Bourne from *The Garden of Eden*, I attempt in this chapter to illustrate Hemingway's struggle to bear witness to the modern awareness of androgyny, sexual ambivalence, and homosexuality. Here and elsewhere I argue that Hemingway's negative view of homosexuality was a response to Darwin, one that verifies Eve Sedgwick's ideas of "homosexual panic." In my lengthy analysis of *The Garden of Eden*, I suggest that, while it is the culmination of his lifelong contemplation of human sexual behavior, the manuscript's unfinished state reflects his underlying sense that theories of sexuality and identity are, like sex itself, given to further evolutionary change.

Much contemporary criticism of androgynous or sexually ambivalent characters in Hemingway's work links the existence of these characters to his early childhood, during which the young Hemingway was dressed and raised as a "twin" to elder sister, Marcelline. While the impact of his androgynous upbringing, critically examined by Mark Spilka (*Hemingway's Quarrel With Androgyny*), and Comley and Scholes

(*Hemingway's Genders*), is compelling and I will discuss it briefly here, Hemingway's presentation of androgyny and other aspects of human sexuality is also profoundly impacted by his early reading of sex theories. Because Hemingway's presentation of sexual ambivalence is based on Darwin's theory of bisexuality, as well as Ellis' theories of inversion and erotic symbolism, I deal with these theories in depth. Chapter Three will also discuss Hemingway's more veiled Freudian imagery. Possible explanations for Hemingway's persistent denial of Freud's influence are offered here as well. Because much of Freud's work revolves around the phallus, the fear associated with its loss, and the latent homosexuality associated with male bonding, Hemingway perhaps feared that an association with Freud's work would implicate him as a potential sufferer of latent desires. Ironically, by negating Freud's psychoanalytic theory yet subsequently implementing many of its elements in his work, Hemingway inadvertently engaged in very "Freudian" behavior: he engaged in the reflex mechanism of denial integral to his homosocial acceptance.

In Chapter Four I address H.D.'s texts which are similarly occupied by sexually ambivalent characters and who likewise behave in a manner articulated in the works of Darwin, Ellis, and Freud; unlike Hemingway, however, H.D.'s characters repeatedly attempt to explain themselves in the psychoanalytic terms of Freud. The impact of Freud is much more obvious in the work of H.D. as is that of Ellis, possibly because H.D. had a personal relationship with Ellis for an extended period and maintained a patient-analyst relationship with Freud for nearly two years. While H.D. maintained a relationship with Ellis (they traveled together several times and maintained a correspondence for many years), it was never as deep nor emotionally important as the one she had with Freud. Although Ellis had many important ideas, to H.D., Freud was the true genius.

H.D.'s blatant incorporation of sexual theories and autobiography into her prose works is a calculated departure from the strict confines of much of her poetry. It appears to be an attempt at effecting what Dianne Chisholm calls Freud's "writing cure" (15). This idea seems applicable to all of H.D.'s prose works that are intensely autobiographical and seem to have been produced more for the well being of the author than the audience. Although H.D. did not undergo psychoanalysis with Freud until 1933-34, she was reading Freud and "revising" his theories years earlier. Freud's insistence on the necessity of autobiographical writing and completing a "straight narrative without embellishment" (Chisholm 69) resulted in a prose oeuvre which chronicles H.D.'s life and the lives of the moderns she knew. While this "life writing" may have aided H.D. in her search for self, it is also an invaluable tool for contemporary scholars seeking a deeper understanding of the modern era.

H.D. and Hemingway draw on biological and psychological theories not only to portray certain characters' sexual ambivalence, but more