



H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse

By Claire Buck

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Critical interest in the American woman writer H.D. (1886-1961) is focused on her relation with psychoanalysis and modernism. Early feminist criticism of H.D. was concerned to specify the place of femininity within modernism and to investigate the ways in which her writing challenges gender-oblivious constructions of modernism. Rather than examine the ways in which H.D. can claim a voice as a woman, this book explores the nature of the self that H.D. constructs in her writing and from which she derives her models of subjectivity and sexuality. Drawing on recent critical theory, and tracing the direct influence of Freud on H.D.'s work, Claire Buck argues that H.D.'s writing engages in a resistance to certain models of signification, in particular the psychoanalytic, thereby raising important questions about reading, power and mastery. The book explores the interrelationship of two possible readings of H.D.'s work: as enacting an affirmation of a full feminine subjectivity, or as entrapped in an inevitable narrative of woman as 'lacking'. Using the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, Claire Buck investigates phallic narratives of femininity in H.D.'s writing in an attempt to understand the central role H.D. gives to bisexuality as a concept. This enables H.D. to reinscribe femininity beyond the terms of either 'lack' or 'wholeness'. Making use of H.D.'s unpublished manuscript material, Claire Buck offers new insights into H.D.'s poetry and prose, and examines her structural use of bisexuality as a model of reading both text and subjectivity.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Buck's scholarly text offers new insights into the writing of H.D. that break away from the established school of feminist critical analysis. Examining the 40-year span of H.D.'s career, she explores the nature of self H.D. creates through her writings. Buck demonstrates links between language, subjectivity, and sexual differences; the changing relationships between those links; and the implications such changes have in representing femininity. Although H.D. underwent analysis with Freud in 1922 and 1934, Buck argues that elements of Freudian psychoanalysis can be read in all of H.D.'s work, including the early poems and certainly the prose and verse translations. Buck's text and notes reveal extensive research into the feminist criticism by DuPlessis and Friedman and a thorough grounding in Freudian psychoanalysis. She builds upon those theories to present H.D. as a complex artist seeking to establish an identity that combines the masculine and feminine through language. For comprehensive literature collections.

- *Denise Sticha, Carnegie Lib. of Pittsburgh*

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