

# ‘Some terrible wind-tortured place’: Beauty, Imagism and the Littoral in H.D.’s *Sea Garden*

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*Abstract.* This essay explores notions of beauty in the first collection of the modernist poet H.D. (1886–1961), focussing specifically on seashore imagery and how this is used to de- and re-construct notions of beauty and poetic value. *Sea Garden*, published in 1916, traverses a coastal landscape and documents both its physical features and its unseen meanings. Wildflowers, rock formations, shellfish, and woodlands are placed alongside Hellenic nymphs and spirits, the footprints of past and present human dwellings, and the aesthetic eye of the poet. This collection propelled H.D. to literary acclaim by aligning her work with Imagism, an aesthetic movement defined by poet Ezra Pound that emphasized clarity and directness in verse. H.D.’s involvement with the movement is clear in her depiction of the landscape; portraits of wildflowers are rendered with almost scientific precision, whilst the physicality of the coastal vista is deconstructed into the immediate physical qualities of sand, saltwater, waves, and air. Ecological reality and a detailed eye for natural forms are used as vehicles to explore and define this Imagist aesthetic. Yet this collection, and indeed H.D. as a poet, consistently evades definition. In the same way that a shoreline is and is not land, is and is not sea, H.D. establishes dualisms in her verse that are constantly interrogated and questioned. The separations between human and natural, male and female, named and unknown, beauty and ugliness are found arbitrary and constricting in their separation, and new forms of beauty and poetic legitimacy located in the space between them. This essay traces the significance of the physical shore landscape in H.D.’s experiments with Imagism and the early formation of her poetic voice.

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O to blot out this garden  
to forget, to find a new beauty  
in some terrible  
wind-tortured place.

— H.D., ‘Sheltered Garden’, ll. 57–60.

H.D.’s early poem ‘Sheltered Garden’, published in 1916 in her first collection *Sea Garden*, calls for the traditional beauty of a garden to be destroyed in favour

of wilderness, a 'wind-tortured' place of trailing branches, scattered leaves and violent winds.<sup>1</sup> The garden, though beautiful with its orchards and borders of scented flowers, is stifling and oppressive in its too-neat domesticity; wilderness offers freedom, strength and a place where boundaries and resilience are tested. The poem promotes a renewal of the concept of beauty; beauty 'without strength', she writes, 'chokes out life' (ll. 41–42).

In this essay, I examine the concept of beauty set out in *Sea Garden*, with reference to the notions of beauty and poetic legitimacy that H.D. encodes into the littoral, focussing also on her poems about wildflowers.<sup>2</sup> The 'new beauty' set out in 'Sheltered Garden' is couched in a landscape that runs throughout the collection: an Atlantic coastal space of rugged cliffs, tattered wildflowers, screaming gulls, and biting winds. Landscape is seldom read as a central concern in H.D.'s early work, but the title of the collection itself, *Sea Garden*, alludes to a meeting of land and sea as the crux of the text.

The shore image is immediately striking in its evocation of the meeting of opposites. As Susan Stanford Friedman writes, the imaginative world of *Sea Garden* can be split into binaries:

her imagist poems are often linguistically and thematically structured on polarities such as land and sea, hard and soft, ripe and unripe, wild and sheltered, swift and slow, stunted and lush, torn and whole, pointed and round, positive and negative, salt and sweet.<sup>3</sup>

These words evoke the collection's landscape, and are chiselled from larger concerns between human and natural, male and female, self and other. H.D. merges these definitions to find beauty and poetic legitimacy in the space between them and in their interrelation. The shore landscape is itself a site of 'in-between-ness', being land and yet not completely land, sea and yet not completely sea, allowing for this traversing of dichotomies and assertion of new beauty. Rachel Carson in *The Edge of the Sea*, her evocative and closely-observed portrait of coastal life in New England, recognizes the shore as a landscape that is indefinable and in a constant state of change; 'today a little more land may belong to the sea, tomorrow a little less. Always the edge of the sea remains an elusive and indefinite boundary'.<sup>4</sup>

The title of *Sea Garden* both specifies and merges the physical qualities of sea and garden whilst capitalizing on their associational meanings; the garden

<sup>1</sup> H.D., 'Sheltered Garden', in *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, ed. by Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1986), pp. 19–21. All poems and subsequent references are cited from this edition and given after quotations in the text.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this essay, I have grouped H.D.'s poems about coastal wildflowers under the casual heading of 'wildflower poems'. This group consists of the poems that draw a singular portrait of a single wildflower species and comprise of 'Sea Rose' (p. 5), 'Sea Lily' (p. 14), 'Sea Poppies' (p. 21), 'Sea Violet' (pp. 25–26), and 'Sea Iris' (pp. 36–37); all in *Collected Poems*.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Hilda Doolittle (H.D.)', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Poets, 1880–1945*, 348 vols (Detroit: Gale Research, 1983), XLV, pp. 125–26 (p. 125).

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), p. 1.

being domesticated and knowable, the sea wild and mysterious. This liminality of the space between the terrestrial and the marine is not to be confused with fragility or uncertainty; here, H.D. is able to legitimize an identity left marginal by a male, heteronormative poetic tradition. John Gillis aligns the study of ecotones — a transition area between two biomes where two differing ecologies meet and integrate — as something that ‘intersects with a growing awareness of all things once regarded as marginal’;<sup>5</sup> for Carson, meanwhile, the shore is itself a ‘marginal world’ that legitimizes an isolated human experience. She continues, ‘only the most hardy and adaptable can survive in a region so mutable [...]. In the difficult world of the shore, life displays its enormous toughness and vitality’.<sup>6</sup> The life-affirming and destructive wilderness longed for by the stifled speaker of ‘Sheltered Garden’ is materialized at the point of land meeting sea; the liminality of the shore expresses H.D.’s marginalized identity as a bisexual, female poet, whilst its harsh elements bring images of strength, endurance, and survival.

The littoral allows H.D. to de- and re-construct accepted modes of beauty and poetic legitimacy in the dismantling and merging of the boundaries between definitions; between male and female, Imagist and non-Imagist, human and natural, scientist and poet. Notions of beauty in H.D.’s early poetry and the littoral are linked, but the shore also becomes a site of self-actualization for the young poet. The image of the coastal wildflower, bound to and shaped by its eco-tonal environment, becomes emblematic of an androgynous, Imagist, naturalist poet, themselves asserting and testing the fluidity of their poetic identity.

By the time of *Sea Garden’s* publication, H.D. had moved from her Pennsylvania hometown to a life amid London’s modernist literary circles. She was a prominent Imagist under the tutelage of Ezra Pound, temporary editor of the *Egoist*, and well-versed in her contemporaries’ poetic discourse. After her arrival in London in 1911, H.D. met frequently with Pound at the lectures of T.E. Hulme, where the arrival of a new ‘dry’, ‘hard’, and ‘classical’ form of poetry, eventually to become Imagism, was discussed.<sup>7</sup> In the much-recounted story, Pound conjured the word ‘Imagiste’ in 1912 when H.D. presented her poems to him in the British Museum tea room; ‘This is poetry’, he announced, signing the adage ‘H.D. Imagiste’ beneath her manuscript.<sup>8</sup> Letters written between H.D. and F.S. Flint furthermore demonstrate a poet with great involvement in the Imagist movement both in its organization and as a creative practitioner.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> John R. Gillis, ‘Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones’, *Island Studies Journal*, 9.1 (2014), 155–66 (p. 155).

<sup>6</sup> Carson, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> T.E. Hulme, ‘Romanticism and Classicism’, in *Speculations; Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. by Herbert Read (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1999), pp. 113–40 (p. 126).

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by H.D., *End to Torment: A Memoir to Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Cyrena N. Pondrom, ‘Selected Letters from H.D. to F.S. Flint: A Commentary on the Imagist Period’, *Contemporary Literature*, 10.4 (1969), 557–86.

*Sea Garden* is often read for its Imagist credentials, H.D.'s crystalline verse being demonstrative of Pound's belief in direct and succinct poetry; many of the collection's poems can be read as illustrative of the 'new beauty' Imagism sought to find in precision. A series of poems in *Sea Garden* draw botanical portraits of coastal wildflowers; 'Sea Rose' (p. 5), 'Sea Lily' (p. 14), 'Sea Poppies' (p. 21), 'Sea Violets' (pp. 25–26), and 'Sea Iris' (pp. 36–37). These poems fall throughout the collection as wildflowers grow haphazardly along the shore, and establish a reversal and scrutiny of traditional beauty. Each flower is characterized singularly in concentrated imagery that compares the beauty of each wildflower species to its domestic relative. The wildflowers are celebrated for their resilience and fragility in the face of the harsh landscape. The flowers have petals which are broken 'like a shell', they are 'thin twigs' ('Sea Iris', ll. 4, 7), 'slashed and torn' ('Sea Lily', l. 2), and 'stunted' ('Sea Rose', l. 5). Yet they are 'doubly rich' ('Sea Lily', l. 3) for their struggle; they are 'lifted up' by the wind and sea-waves, ('Sea Lily' l. 18), their petals are 'fire upon leaf' ('Sea Poppies', l. 14), and they are stars edged with frost ('Sea Violet', l. 17). Beauty is aligned with strength here; the promise of 'Sheltered Garden' that beauty 'without strength | chokes out life' takes on literal meaning in the survival of the plants. The roots of the sea iris 'drag up colour | from the sand' (ll. 16–17); their beauty is an incidental feature of the landscape but also a product of active friction with their surroundings. Under the influence of Imagism, each flower is characterized by a central colour — white and blue sea violets, amber and gold sea poppies, blue and green sea irises — the basic shape of their petals, their textures as torn and windswept wildflowers and their acrid, earthy scent. The 'Sea Rose' capitalizes on its associations as a poetic trope to denote colour and shape:

Rose, harsh rose,  
 marred and with stint of petals,  
 meagre flower, thin,  
 sparse of leaf,  
  
 more precious  
 than a wet rose  
 single on a stem —  
 you are caught in the drift. (ll. 1–8)

'Sea Rose' illustrates most clearly H.D.'s Imagist influences with its exposition of a single flower and outright rejection of the romanticism of the domestic rose. Where Pound calls for 'direct treatment of the object', H.D. answers with an illustration of a single flower in its most basic of terms. Hulme's advocacy of hard, dry, terse poetry is similarly portrayed in the sterile 'meagre' flower caught by the 'crisp' wind. Part of the doctrine of Poundian Imagism is that 'the natural object is always the adequate symbol', yet H.D.'s depiction of natural objects of the shore is complex, and goes beyond mere aesthetic exercise.<sup>10</sup> *Sea*

<sup>10</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry*, 1.6 (1913), 200–06 (p. 201).

*Garden* explores the nuances of transcribing the natural world into verse whilst interrogating the poetic function and tradition of such tropes.

It is tempting to read the new beauty of 'Sheltered Garden', for instance, as a specific rejection of Victorian femininity. The speaker is suffocated by a closeted, domestic space of 'scented pinks' and coddled orchard fruit, and wishes for the freedom of uninhibited growth and the chance to test their resilience. Other poems in the collection follow a similar narrative; in 'The Gift', the speaker rejects the image of a pearl necklace for the sea, a life she believes 'holds what this lacks' (l. 78).<sup>11</sup> The pearls not only take on significance as a symbol of traditional femininity but as a codified and 'tamed' object from nature. Throughout, the speaker's impression of the wild coastal landscape is one of awe, an admiration for the power and danger of the crashing sea, a beauty found in wildness and destructiveness. In 'The Shrine', a poem about the sea and a connatural feminine water spirit ('She watches over the sea' reads the poem's subtitle), the sea's hypnotizing beauty forms an image of powerful femaleness:

We hail this shore –  
 We sing to you,  
 Spirit between the headlands  
 And the further rocks.  
 [...]  
 Your eyes have pardoned our faults,  
 Your hands have touched us —  
 You have leaned forward a little  
 And the waves can never thrust us back  
 From the splendour of your ragged coast. (ll. 75–78, 83–87)

The 'splendour' H.D. finds in wildness and steadfastness is surely representative of her own fight for expression.<sup>12</sup> Imagism, though propelling H.D. to literary acclaim, did not offer complete self-actualization; a female writer navigating a predominantly male modernism would have been acutely aware of the associations between Hulme's dry, terse poetics and masculinity, and femininity's association with wetness, sentimentality, and bad art. 'Sea Rose' and the other wildflower poems not only celebrate the triumph of wilderness over domesticity or ugliness over beauty, but reclaim them as symbols. The red rose, white lily, and delicate violets are no longer tropes for female beauty under a heteronormative gaze, but through the test of the shore's harsh elements represent the resilient spirit of the female poet.

While H.D. may have been keen to reject the stifling expectations of Victorian femininity, to have her identity smothered by the 'masculine' poetics of Pound and other modernists was no alternative. Richard Aldington writes to her in a letter about her poetry, 'Remember H. D. cannot afford to be anything less than perfection'; the smothering foliage of the garden parallels her private

<sup>11</sup> 'The Gift', *Collected Poems*, pp. 15–18.

<sup>12</sup> H.D., 'The Shrine', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 7–10.

pressures of being not only a poet but a wife and muse.<sup>13</sup> In the memoir of her relationship with Pound written at the end of her life, H.D. recalls Pound's words to her in their youth; 'You are a Poem, though your poem's naught'.<sup>14</sup> As Stanford Friedman explains, 'as his wife, she would be his poem, no longer a poet in her own right'; as a devout follower of Imagism, she would also be an extension of his work and not a creator of her own.<sup>15</sup> The littoral site of *Sea Garden* may therefore be read a site of freedom for the young poet, where she can somewhat escape the influence of these male poets and, by extension, male poetic tradition. William Boelhower writes in his formulation of the 'highly fluid space' of the literary Atlantic that the liquid space of the sea 'leaves no traces, and has no place names, towns or dwelling places; it cannot be possessed'; the shore represents a passage from terrestrial possession and naming to the sea's freedom in fluidity and liminality.<sup>16</sup>

Whilst H.D. pursues beauty in *Sea Garden*, she is deliberately wary of traditional standards of beauty if they are imposed by a male eye. Constructing beauty along the aesthetics of hardy shoreline flowers allows H.D. to escape the pressures of the male poet's gaze through a reversal of romantic tropes, without renouncing her own identity. As is made clear in *HERmione*, the shore is her own space. The landscape is characterized by both stasis and fluidity, with stoic cliffs standing alongside the long arcs of swooping seagulls and the crashing of the waves. Beauty is redefined in wilderness and the ability to be both active and passive at once, to write the crystalline verse of the Imagists as well as her own uninhibited expression. The flowers, at the meeting of land and sea, situate themselves in a new standard of poetic beauty that emphasizes the freedom of living in between binaries. If Hulme advocated a 'hard', 'dry', and ultimately 'masculine' poetics over a feminine 'wet' poetry, the shore as a meeting place of land and water, dry and wet, means that the poems of *Sea Garden* ascribe to neither. The flowers draw their roots from the soil but are shaped by spray and surf; the voice and eye of the poet evades the confines of gender. It is their ability to be both land- and water-dwellers that ultimately gives the flowers their poetic value.

The beauty at the shoreline goes beyond the merely metaphorical; H.D. also engages in the close observation of natural forms in a littoral habitat, blurring the lines between the poetic preservation of beauty and scientific observation. In a later 1926 short story, 'The Moment', H.D. finds beauty in an insect in both its significance as a natural object and a chance to break away from male tradition:

<sup>13</sup> Richard Aldington in a 1919 letter to H.D., Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Box 1, folder 11, dated 31/1/19).

<sup>14</sup> *End to Torment*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> William Boelhower, 'The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix', *American Literary History*, 20.1-2 (2008), 83-101 (pp. 92-93).

Beauty cannot be kept 'secret', so that beauty of the renaissance, though amplifying the ideal or idea of the Saviour, at the same time defeated it. A moth, the sheerest most commonplace of white phantom, drugged with a night-flower in a little garden, has more biological significance than all of Leonardo.<sup>17</sup>

*Sea Garden's* wildflower poems also locate 'beauty' in 'biological significance'; they are emblematic of the Imagist drive for precision and for scientific observation. With these wildflower portraits H.D. actively removes the flower image from any romantic or pastoral association to examine their purest natural forms; the poems set out each flower with Imagist exactitude, suggesting a celebration of wild nature that begins at the shore. Hester Blum argues that analyses of marine spaces in literature should go further than metaphor and figurative language into 'what is literal in the face of the sea's abyss of representation'.<sup>18</sup> H.D.'s landscape is fractured, deconstructed, considered in terms of colour and shape, but in many places it is also organic, detailed, and observant. 'Sea Rose', 'Sea Lily', 'Sea Poppies', 'Sea Violet', and 'Sea Iris' are all real species native to the East Coast landscape of Maine and Cape Cod where H.D. was born. 'Sea Lily' doubly refers to a native crinoid, a small marine animal, rather than a flower; H.D. describes it with the petals, stems and bark of a plant, and the scales of a fish. It is also the only flower of the group to be subsumed by seawater ('though it hiss | to cover you with froth'). The flowers are celebrated for their resilience and fragility in the face of their harsh environment, all made 'doubly rich' ('Sea Lily', l. 3). Their reward is beauty couched in terms of traditional poetics; fire, stars, frost. Naming and precision give power, strength, and reality to these overlooked parts of the landscape; their beauty is their real-life survival and acclimatisation to their harsh environments.

The precision, impersonality and brevity of the Imagist exercise offers H.D. a chance to enter into a littoral nature of renewed importance, and assert notions of her own selfhood bound up in the shoreline landscape. In redefining the features and beauty of flowers she removes them from shallow poetic associations and celebrates their real form directly. Her deconstruction of the flowers into abstract shapes parallels an almost scientific dissection of their physical forms; Imagism allows H.D. to draw littoral beauty with both the objective eye of a scientist and the creative vision of a poet. H.D. approaches the flowers as a naturalist explorer, differentiating violets, for instance, into their subspecies and habitats. There are 'wood-violets, stream-violets, | violets from a wet marsh', 'blue violets', 'yellow violets', violets 'like red ash', 'bird-foot violets', 'hyacinth-violets', violets whiter than the surf, all of which thrive in numerous different climates: violets from the hills, from the earth, from cracks between

<sup>17</sup> H.D., 'The Moment' (unpublished, 1926), Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Box 37, folder 978, p. 30).

<sup>18</sup> Hester Blum, 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 670–77 (p. 670).

rocks, from moss, cliffs, saltwater, and freshwater.<sup>19</sup> H.D.'s search for meaning in the myriad wildflowers and tiny creatures of the shore reveals a curiosity for living beings unnamed or invisible to the naked eye. She is furthermore detailed in her depiction of the wildflowers' survival mechanisms in a coastal climate. The violet is 'grasp[ing]' the 'edge of the sand-hill' (ll. 14–15), the roots of the iris are 'tangled' (l. 2) with the sand, and the stalk of the poppy 'has caught root | among wet pebbles' and shells (ll. 8–9). H.D. translates Pound's call that an image should be active rather than static into the flowers' activity, playing on the image of the flower as rooted in a landscape of volatile movement.

Critics have already established the influence of H.D.'s scientific family on her work, particularly her botanist grandfather and astronomer father. Adalaide Morris sees H.D. 'reproduce' her grandfather's 'delicate language, his transfixed, interrogating gaze, and his push for taxonomic precision'.<sup>20</sup> Charlotte Mandel, in her study of the influence of lens-vision on H.D., writes that H.D. was 'born at the full of the Victorian-style quest for scientific knowledge by personal diligent observation, collection, notation and classification', and that to a young H.D. her father and grandfather were 'awesome men who discovered living bodies in pondwater's green scum or kept long night watch to glean secrets of the heavens'.<sup>21</sup> Indeed it is possible to trace the influence of these men on conceptions of beauty and ugliness in *Sea Garden*. In *Sea Garden* there is a clear understanding of the shore as both an environmental reality and a system of potential signs and symbols, combining what may be traditionally seen as the interpretative and creative eye of the poet with the precise and analytical approach of the scientist. Through Imagism the two intersect; her poetry becomes the close and disciplined study of natural beauty that is not dissimilar from the beginnings of a scientific project, and even mimics the work of scientific research. H.D. describes her grandfather, an authority on freshwater algae, sharing his research with his grandchildren in her memoir *The Gift* (1943). She describes looking at the plants beneath his microscope with not only childhood curiosity but with the suggestion of the deconstruction of images in the Imagist exercise:

When Papalie lifted us, one by one in turn, to kneel on the chair by his worktable, we saw [...] that an empty drop of water spread out like branches, bright green or vermillion, in shape like a branch of a Christmas tree or in shape like a squashed peony or in shape like a lot of little green-glass beads, strung on a thick stem.<sup>22</sup>

The details that emerge from H.D.'s observation of the plants under the microscope is telling; shape, colour, and associational images become important

<sup>19</sup> H.D., 'Sea Gods', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 29–31.

<sup>20</sup> Adalaide Morris, 'Science and the Mythopoeic Mind: The Case of H.D.', in *Chaos and Order*, ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), pp. 195–220 (p. 199).

<sup>21</sup> Charlotte Mandel, 'Magical Lenses: Poet's Vision Beyond the Naked Eye', in *H.D. Woman and Poet*, ed. by Michael King (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1986), pp. 300–17 (p. 301).

<sup>22</sup> H.D., *The Gift*, ed. by Jane Augustine (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1969), p. 42.

identity markers, all vital to the construction of image. H.D.'s grandfather furthermore drew his own illustrations to accompany his research, which are also organized into governing groups of colour, shape, and habitat, anticipating H.D.'s own depiction of each flower.

H.D.'s wildflower poems rely on an interplay between scientific precision and artistic license; again, a binary merged within the image of land and sea. Whilst the flowers are observed from reality, they are also 'acrid fragrance hardened' ('Sea Rose', l. 15), 'fire upon leaf' ('Sea Poppies', l. 14), a star edged with frost ('Sea Violet', l. 17). For H.D., creativity, beauty, and the shore are intertwined. In the first half of 'Sea Iris', for instance, the flower is deconstructed into a sum of its composite parts; one petal, a shadow, yet its scent is lost with the smell of the sea, and its petals have become seashells:

Weed, moss-weed,  
root tangled in sand,  
sea-iris, brittle flower,  
one petal like a shell  
is broken,  
and you print a shadow  
like a thin twig.

sweet and salt — you are wind  
in our nostrils. (ll. 1–7, 12–13)

The second half of 'Sea Iris' enforces this sense of symbiosis between the image of the flower and its living existence in nature. The poem asks the flower 'do your roots drag up colour | from the sand?' (ll. 16–17) implying that the flower's aesthetic and, by extension, H.D.'s poetic debriefing of that aesthetic both come from the coastal soil. The in-between-ness of the shore allows H.D. to traverse the boundaries between masculine and feminine, wet and dry, observer and interpreter, and scientist and artist, to fully transcribe the beauty of a living thing. As opposed to the rose in the static garden which perishes as its beauty is written, these wildflowers survive as both images and natural objects. H.D. does not wish simply to transcribe the appearance and beauty of a landscape and flowers, but to fully explore their abstract and aesthetic significances, to decipher their cryptograms of both scientific and literary meaning.

As the boundaries between beauty and ugliness fall away and H.D. locates beauty in the tattered vegetation of her coastal wilderness, we come to understand the arbitrariness of such labels when they are so easily reversed. The strength and resilience of the wildflowers in the face of the harsh elements is conceived in imagery that is sensory and often overwhelmingly physical; whilst her flowers are being tested against the clash of opposing forces, there is a sense that so too is she, and so too are we. Margaret Cohen has written on the imaginary geographies of the sea as 'socio-ecosystems'; the shore, which Cohen points out as existing on a 'spatial scale' with the sea, materializes in H.D.'s imagination as both an intricate portrait of an environment and a theatre

of identity performance and artistic experimentation.<sup>23</sup> Landscape studies are neglected in H.D.'s work, but the natural landscapes of her poems provide a powerful metaphorical arena for the explorations of marginality, androgyny, and imaginative strangeness that characterize her work. The 'terrible wind-tortured place' where 'Sheltered Garden' finds a new beauty is the *Sea Garden* itself, a space framed as antithetical to human society, where the wildness of the sea and the poet overcomes the limitations of the orderly garden.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 657–62 (p. 658).