

**FEMINISM, WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY,
HELEN, MULTI-ETHNICITY:
THE WOVEN FABRIC OF MY PERSPECTIVE
ON ANCIENT GREEK DRAMA, LITERATURE,
AND CULTURE**

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Helen, you always were . . . the weaving tree and
Mother of the people.

Judy Grahn, "Helen you always were / the factory,"
Queen of Wands

In her collection of poems entitled *Queen of Wands*, Judy Grahn weaves together the ancient meanings and modern influences of the ancient figure of Helen: her roles as an icon of beauty and erotic desire in ancient Troy and as a counterpart to Marilyn Monroe today; her creative impulses as weaver, storyteller, poet; and her spiritual energy manifest as divine loveliness and as an animating Tree of Life. Here, Grahn, following in the footsteps of H.D. and others, evocatively interprets through poetic images features of ancient literary works from a modern perspective, rather than academically through scholarly elaboration. While some scholars might dismiss these interpretations as poetic fancies lacking the rigors of detailed scholarly examination,¹ surely the impulses leading to both the poetic and scholarly interpretations flow from the same wellspring: the realm of insight into the ancient world that engenders contemporary meanings.

1 Although , unlike H.D., Grahn did not study Greek, like her imagist forebear, she has extensively read the scholarship on ancient Greece and Mesopotamia.

Nevertheless, even though poets and scholars may be propelled by similar forces, they diverge sharply in the ways they articulate and elaborate their insights. This common wellspring, as I see it, is the source for another scholarly impulse, one that appears no less suspect to many scholars than the notion of poetic interpretation, that of the personal voice. In this paper, I will reflect upon the value that writing in the personal voice has in the scholarly interpretation of the ancient world.

When visions of Helen first started coming to me, I can no longer recall, other than that it was during my graduate studies. I do recall more specifically the occasions of other visionary appearances: those of Demeter, during my first year of graduate school. To understand why Demeter appeared, and what these appearances meant, I need to recall the different paths that had brought me to that moment: studying classics as a graduate student at Stanford University. This autobiographical overview is intended to show how family circumstances, cultural and religious heritage, frequent geographical relocations, and being a woman and a feminist all contributed to my standpoint as “the Other” in numerous ways, critically shaping my intellectual and epistemological development.

FROM JEWISH REFUGEE IMMIGRANT TO THE STUDY OF CLASSICS

Coming to America at four and a half years of age, I was raised a daughter of Holocaust survivors in a community of survivors, “*greene*,” in Atlanta, Georgia. Orthodox among mostly conservative, reform, or non-observant Jews, I grew up in a deeply alienating environment, the very white, Anglo, actively racist, anti-Semitic South of the 1950s. Since I was cast almost entirely with the children of the immigrant survivors’ community, I felt that my olive skin and family experiences allied me with the blacks I was not supposed to meet. However, my European background determined that I was sent to white schools, where I was always keenly conscious of my differences from all others, including American Jews. Excelling in school became my way in and up.

I grew up in the deep South before and during the changes wrought by Woolworth’s lunch counter sit-downs and open seating on buses. I witnessed and was a part of both, though I was too young to understand fully either what was happening or the magnitude of my action when I simply sat down next to a black-skinned person in the front of the bus. Following in the wake of Little Rock school integration, Atlanta integrated its schools, public

transportation, workplaces, and public offices rather peacefully. But under the “New South” veneer of Atlanta, old, deeply rooted hostilities continued to fester. In the summer of 1964, my family happened to meet and talk with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family. They were enjoying a Sunday afternoon outing, as we were, at the Lakewood Amusement Park in southeast Atlanta. I happened to be wearing my UCLA sweatshirt, where Dr. King had spoken the previous June, so we exchanged pleasantries about UCLA and college. Since Dr. King’s national fame and stature were well established (he was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1964), the occasion was one of great honor for my family and myself. And yet, this was not a hospitable environment for the Kings on a sunny Southern summer afternoon. After our families parted, the whites around us in the park cut us down with dagger eyes; as they say, if looks could kill . . . The incident seared into my memory: the Other, Blacks and Jews, both objectified, ostracized, made the outsider by Anglo culture, both struggling to find a place within the framework of that dominant society.

These highly alienating early experiences were not atypical for survivors’ children growing up in the South, as I learned some years later from Helen Epstein’s book, *Children of the Holocaust*. But my experiences were somewhat mitigated when I was fifteen and my family moved to Los Angeles. Now attending Fairfax High, 98 percent Jewish instead of the 98 percent WASP to which I had become accustomed, I at least had a choice of friends and was placed in an academic track. Though I was an excellent student, my high school counselor in Atlanta, who was also my algebra teacher—and I was a math major!—had steered me into a secretarial track!!! I sometimes wonder, if we had not moved to Los Angeles, what I would now be doing.

But moving to New York when I turned twenty-one was like coming home: a truly multi-ethnic environment, however fraught with difficulties, where I could be Jewish and engage with people from various backgrounds. I loved it. In New York, I eventually returned to school, after being a 1960s college dropout for five years. Now, after years of fighting with my father about even going to college, the completion of a bachelor’s degree in Comparative Literature, with an emphasis in French drama, at Columbia University, on the way to fully-funded graduate work in classics at Stanford University, appeared the height of attainment for this Jewish immigrant girl.

Why classics? It was the culmination of diverse personal experiences and convictions. Academically, my study of comparative literature

convinced me of the need to know the ancient in order to understand the modern. Linguistically, in retrospect, I trace my interest in languages to having been born in a displaced persons (refugee) camp where I heard countless languages in my infancy and spoke two, possibly three, before ever learning English at four and a half: Yiddish, Spanish, and very likely French. My study, therefore, of the Greek language and literature was also a continuation of my childhood experience and intellectually exciting, opening the proverbial new vistas of ideas.

I had studied acting upon first moving to New York, which played an important role in drawing me both to my drama concentration for my B.A. and to classics. It was, in fact, a class I took in ancient Greek and Roman drama at Barnard College with Professor Helen Bacon that inspired me to enroll in ancient Greek the summer before my senior year and to focus on ancient Greek drama for my senior thesis. Moreover, my acting and Greek language interests converged in graduate school, enabling me to perform roles in ancient Greek and to become involved in both community and professional theater.

Also important was my budding feminism. I was attracted to something that emanated from women's roles in ancient Greece, a pulsating vibrancy that I could hardly intuit then, but have come to articulate in various ways in the years since. Combining these experientially based interests—dramatic, linguistic, and feminist—I focused on women's roles in Aeschylean drama for my senior thesis and my dissertation, and I have explored diverse aspects of women's roles and images in ancient Greek drama and culture throughout my research.

One more force was at play in my choice to study classics: I perceived the field as being very WASP, and, ever since my youth, I had viewed success as inseparable from the WASP world. So despite the fact that New York felt like home, to succeed I had to venture into the territory that I believed signified success. After New York, attending Stanford produced intense culture shock. Since leaving the South, I had never been so conscious of being Jewish in a WASP environment. Moreover, now I was among upper class, educated, elite, WASP individuals studying an erudite, elite, WASP field. I was definitely not in my milieu. But although I felt estranged, I was determined to succeed because this career path I had chosen for myself—studying classics at Stanford—was the shape of success, and I believed I could be part of it.

FEMINISM, SPIRITUALITY, AND GREECE

In that first year of graduate study, a time when my intellectual pursuits intensified and were sharpened, I also felt the first stirrings of my spiritual awakening. Although numerous personal and academic forces had led to my choice to study classics, it was the field that now provided me with images my psyche desperately needed. In my moments of loneliness and shock that first year, visions of Demeter began to appear to me. While I recognized her, and her presence comforted me, I regarded her as a poetic creation that I had imagined into being, something like the conventional poetic muse. A few years later, reading the poetry of H.D. and Denise Levertov, whose muses are dynamic beings vehemently propelling these poets into their writing, I came to appreciate a very different conception of the muse—one who is not a mere poetic fiction, but who appears as a potent, independent entity, the source of great and deep inspiration.

Over time, Demeter and other ancient deities, mostly female but occasionally male, became more substantial. My year in Greece² was filled with profound spiritual experiences and numerous *déjà-vus*. These encounters began with feeling deeply the presence of the Great Mothers of Samothrace when visiting that island home of the great ancient mysteries. I likewise felt the presence of other ancient deities, Demeter and Aphrodite, for example, at numerous sites of their ancient worship. Artemis I first encountered at her northern rock sanctuary of Philippi. There I lost a favorite earring, which I considered an offering to her. In exchange, the following spring at Ephesos, I felt her elemental power at her Ionian sanctuary flooded by the winter rains. Subsequently, her rising full moon protected me against bayoneted Turkish soldiers as circumstances resulted in my walking alone in the gathering dusk along an isolated road to the Turkish/Greek border.

In Byzantine churches, I even felt the gentleness of the compassionate Greek Orthodox images of Jesus, but the god Apollo was more challenging. He twice broke my camera at Delphi and he hounded me out of Crete. I had gone to experience the ancient Minoan deities, but he made it known to me that it was his young, arrogant male essence that was now in charge. I finally made my peace with this young male god when I visited

2 During the 1976-77 academic year, I attended the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and traveled extensively on my own after completion of the school's formal program.

Delphi twenty years later and no longer felt the brashness of his being, but became aware of the new possibilities that his youthful maleness might offer.

My experiences with these mostly female Greek deities were later substantiated by my participation in women's spirituality rituals and by my growing awareness of feminist theology. The Goddesses, their essences, and who they were/are/represent to me as a woman grew more vivid and more alive. No longer poetic fictions, these deities became living, sentient beings, important for aspects of creation, for other qualities they represent in the divine and human worlds, and for providing women with crucial models of feminine divinity.

I was now perceiving the world consciously as a "woman-identified" woman, not through male-focused lenses. This gynocentric outlook provided me with unique new perspectives in my approach to the ancient material. Some of my earliest scholarly research presents woman-centered interpretations of the female figure in Minoan art, of the patriarchal transformations encroaching upon the goddesses in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and of the importance of female goddesses and of women's rituals for women in ancient Greece—all new ideas at the time.

HELEN AND CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP

It was at this time that I became conscious of Helen, felt her call to me, as Demeter had appeared to me a few years earlier. It began, perhaps, with my performing the role of Helen in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, in Greek. Our director, a Greek named Yannis Chioles, counseled me from the first reading to stress not Helen's beauty, which is known and understood, but her intelligence—a novel idea. (As a result, I have always felt that Cacoyannis's direction of Irene Pappas as Helen in his film version of the play could have benefited from this same direction.) And I began to think differently about Helen. What I subsequently learned about her transformed my view of the field of classics and how it transmits its "knowledge." I came to learn of Helen as the goddess worshipped in Sparta who oversaw the maturation rites of adolescent women into adulthood, a deity whom the mythology had demoted to the restricted boundaries of human status. I learned of Helen, the vegetative deity whose name in modern Greek means "comfrey," a powerful healing plant. I learned of Helen, daughter of the Indo-European sun deity, whose stories of abduction and rescue by her twin brothers are related in myths from ancient India to the central Russian steppes to the Baltic Sea. I

learned of Helen, associated with herbs and magic, which Homer relates she learned from an Egyptian priestess, thereby alluding to the “other Helen,” the one revealed in the poetry of Stesichoros, and Euripides, and H.D. This last modern poet, from the opening line of *Helen in Egypt*, conscientiously presents this “alternate” Helen to the modern world: “We all know the story of Helen of Troy but few of us have followed her to Egypt” (H.D. [Doolittle] 1961.1). I became aware of the Helen who wove, told stories, created poetry, and endured the dubious privilege of representing in mortal form divine concepts of female beauty and desire.³

This Helen, hidden in classical studies, whom even H.D. devotees did not know, this Helen let me know there was a whole other world of learning in classics that was not being revealed in my formal studies. It was this Helen whose image hung over my desk in Berkeley as I was writing my poetic and prose homages to her, commanding me to reveal her story, to no longer allow it to remain hidden or be possessed as hidden knowledge by only a scholarly elite—much as I had always been told by my father that the Kabbalah, the tradition of Jewish mystical lore, was only for the most devout rabbis to read. Years later I learned that the Kabbalah honors both female and male aspects of divinity, something not recognized by official patriarchal Judaism, and that Sephardic Jews regularly read from the Kabbalah on Friday night, the beginning of Sabbath, the time for welcoming the Sabbath bride.⁴ So much for esoteric knowledge, whether in religion or in the academy.

And so my endeavors to make visible what was hidden began. Two of my earliest publications, written under Greek and Hebrew-derived *noms de plume*, centered on and were dedicated to Helen: “Drawing from Mythology in Women’s Quests for Identity,” and “Paeon to Helen,” a lengthy poetic homage revealing, to the women’s community at least, the great complex

3 Principal works examining the figure of Helen include: in ritual: Wide 1893; Calame 1977, 1981, and 1994; Larson 1995. In mythology: Lindsay 1974, West 1975. In literature: Austin 1994, Clader 1976. In art: Ghali-Kahil 1955. Zweig 1998 provides an extensive overview of the ritual, mythological, and literary traditions of Helen, and Zweig 1999 a summary of the broad scope of the scholarly treatment of this complex figure.

4 Sephardic Jews are those from Spain, expelled in 1492, who then relocated to Holland and countries encircling the Mediterranean Sea. As Ashkenazi Jews, who migrated to eastern Europe from Germany in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, took with them their distinctive, Germanically-based language, Yiddish, the language of Sephardic Jews, Ladino, is based on medieval Spanish and preserves in its songs features of the Spanish of that period otherwise lost.

truth about ancient Helen.⁵ As I was preparing this poem for publication, Mt. St. Helens erupted in northern Oregon. I became acutely aware of the coincidence of names and found no small measure of meaning in this elemental manifestation of Helen's power, which I incorporated into the poem.

I realized that my woman-centered, spiritually-oriented perspectives were enabling me to perceive aspects of the ancient material that others were not seeing. The problem was that, because my ideas differed so radically from conventional, androcentric, and factually-oriented perspectives on classical antiquity, others were unwilling to validate my observations. This difficulty was exacerbated by the fact that there did not at that time exist the analytical and scholarly research that would enable me to place my ideas into a theoretical framework. Hence, my perspective and ideas appeared invalid in the eyes of my professors.

NATIVE AMERICAN CONTACTS AND INFLUENCES ON MY RESEARCH INTO CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

A truly monumental turning point in my graduate career came when the second complete draft of my dissertation was rejected. To hell with this I thought, I need a change, a break. I spent a year in meditation, acting, and teaching and writing about Helen. And in June 1980, I joined the Long Walk for Survival, a cross-country walk from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., led by Native American peoples and called a "Spiritual Walk for World Peace and the Preservation of Mother Earth." The impact this walk had on my life was beyond anything I had imagined.

I joined the Walk because of its spiritual emphasis and political support for native peoples. From the first day, my life was transformed. I learned immediately that Native American women are strong individuals who have a profound sense of self-confidence and belief in themselves as women, a self-respect that is validated by the whole culture. I learned, moreover, that, in Native American spiritual thought, women have inherent power through childbirth. Furthermore, menstruation, called "moontime," is considered a woman's most powerful, most sacred time, when Grandmother Moon purifies a woman so she can have healthy children. Because of their great power at this time of the month, women remove themselves from men

5 See Zweig (aka Debrida) 1981a and Zweig (aka bat Deborah) 1981b.

and their normal activities. They do so out of respect, concerned that men, who do not naturally possess this power but need to develop it spiritually through ceremonies, may suffer harm from being around a woman “on her moon.”⁶ Women, consequently, have a built-in holiday every month when they get to concentrate on their beading, poetry, or other artistic or meditative activities.

Within the first few days on the Walk, I observed men, young men, who in Anglo-American society are usually concerned only with themselves and pursuing their own goals, actively taking care of and being attentive to children, not only their own children, but all children. The often banal phrase, “women and children first,” took on real meaning as elders and women with children were fed first at mealtimes. I observed often sharp distinctions in gender-related work and social roles. However, these were not differentially valued for being distinct. To the contrary, both women’s and men’s roles were highly valued for their particular contributions to the whole community. If anything, for most Native American peoples, women’s roles are the most highly valued, central roles, for without the women the community could not exist, a sentiment I heard expressed repeatedly. I was later able to articulate this way of treating difference in terms of a complementary rather than a hierarchical ordering of difference, as Indo-Europeans and other nation-state cultures tend to do. Among native peoples, this concept of complementarity extends not only to gender distinctions, but to all types of difference in society, including personal, gender, belief, and other preferences. This notion of complementarity is certainly one from which we could well learn as we grapple, as a society, with embracing the various gender, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversities among us.

I quickly realized on the Walk that I had to discard everything I had ever learned in anthropology and other classes about women being physically unclean and ostracized during menstruation. I also realized immediately that I was in a radically different environment from any I had ever known, even though I had formerly considered my travels to Israel, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, and even to western Europe, as being foreign and thereby offering me insights into myself. But this was truly different: not western, European, Mediterranean, or Semitic, not even American, though deeply shaped by Euro-American values. Once again in my life my learning sensors perked up, keenly alert to the new messages I might receive.

6 See Zweig 1993 for a fuller discussion and references.

What I was learning about Native American women's sense of self, their view of their bodily functions, and the value given to women's and men's distinct roles in society deeply resonated for me as a Jewish woman. In the eastern European, Orthodox, tyrannically patriarchal form of Judaism I was raised with, I came to believe that women had little value compared to men, that women's important roles were only in the home, and that our monthly periods were sources of uncleanness. I now could view these cultural features from an entirely different perspective, recognizing the value, the complementarity, the source of power accorded women in Jewish tradition that had been so severely skewed in centuries and millennia of patriarchal distortions. In Jewish tradition, too, women are seen as having an inherent source of power, while men have to develop theirs through constant prayer and Torah study. Women's roles in the home are seen as being central to the well-being of the community, while men's duties are to provide the environment in which women can safely raise the children and to aid in child nurturance. In fact, Jewish tradition provided me a source for tapping into my worth as a woman—one which Hasidic Jews recognize within the limitations of a socially repressive environment. This valuing is one that the new movement of Jewish Renewal recognizes with full spiritual and social inclusiveness.⁷

On the Walk, I also observed an ongoing, living spirituality, where Mother Earth was a true living being, believed in and revered, as were other manifestations of living and cosmic essences. In comparison, the activities of the Women's Spirituality movement that I had participated in appeared contrived, as we, women and men, struggled to recreate, refashion, and "re-vision" concepts of the feminine and other aspects of the vast spirituality that exists. In contrast, here were people still practicing a living, breathing spirituality consecrating the Earth and other cosmic manifestations. I had been groping to find my appropriate form of spiritual expression. What I observed in daily prayers, reverence, and meditation, both from the Native peoples and from the Japanese Buddhist monks on the Walk, resonated with the spiritual stirrings within me and provided me a means for meaningfully expressing my own spirituality. And it permitted me to see as even more real the essences of the Greek goddesses I had been revering, for I came to appreciate in a more personal and immediate way the deep well of impulses

7 See, e.g., Adler 1998, Berman and Waskow 1996, Frankel 1996, Lerner 1994, Schachter-Shalomi 1991, and Waskow 1978, 1995, and 1996.

from which the particular goddess and god images sprang. And I also came to appreciate the value of having multiple deities to represent the multiple aspects of human emotions and endeavors and of cosmic forces, which the single, monotheistic, male deity of modern Judaism, Christianity, or Islam could not easily embrace.

Finally, and perhaps most startling to me, what I learned on the Walk influenced my studies of ancient Greece. For the first time, I had a model for what I had been trying to say about antiquity, but had not had the language to articulate. This model emerged from a culture radically different from the western European one often used as the “norm” in studies of classical antiquity. I found support for my intuitive perspectives on aspects of women’s lives, roles, images, and spirituality in ancient Greece, and I believed I would be able to use this cross-cultural evidence in my analyses. However, I was still casting about for the appropriate theoretical language with which to express my ideas, theoretical language that at first slowly, then explosively, emerged in anthropological, ethnic, literary, religious, and women’s studies scholarship.⁸

HELEN, DEMETER, WOMEN’S SPIRITUALITY, AND MY APPROACH TO CLASSICAL SCHOLARSHIP

My experiences, because they are uniquely my own, have led to my particular gynocentric, multi-cultural, multi-dimensional views on antiquity. This perspective has enabled me to appreciate aspects of ancient Greek life and literature that have always been there, but that have never been noted in quite the same way. My “Primal Mind” article (Zweig 1993) was, first of all, the culmination of more than a decade of thinking about these issues that finally

8 See Zweig 1993 for a summary of the relevant literature to that date. A useful summation of the interweaving of the various strands of thought about women and ethnic identity is suggested by Friedman 1996. Friedman identifies six principal polyvocal strands in current feminist literary studies that reflect the variety of factors significant in shaping identity. These strands are: 1) multiple oppression—the differences *among* women (p. 16); 2) multiple subject positionality—the intersection of different and often competing cultural formations of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, etc. (p. 17); 3) contradictory subject positions—multiple subject positions may be in fundamental contradiction to one another (p. 18); 4) relationality—each subject position is in relation to others (p. 18); 5) situational—identity shifts fluidly from setting to setting within the contexts of postcoloniality, travel, and ethnography (p. 19); and 6) hybridity—the cultural grafting that results from geographical migration (p. 20).

found a voice through the development of these multiple analytical stances. It explicitly weaves together feminist, gynocentric, multi-ethnic analyses, garnered from both my personal experiences and from the scholarly literature, to present new models for viewing women's roles in ancient Greece. These models enable us to perceive ways in which women were valued contributors to their cultures, even within patriarchal social structures, and were not merely the oppressed drudges they are portrayed as being in much of classical scholarship.

We can more easily recognize the value assigned to ancient Greek women in their various roles if we begin by appreciating the importance of spirituality in the lives of all people everywhere and note, in particular, the significance of women's own spiritual lives and religious rituals in ancient Greece. It is also vital to be aware that there exist multiple spheres of activities for women and men, and that these spheres possess configurations and meanings often quite different from their counterparts in contemporary American and western European cultures. Moreover, it is necessary to affirm women's distinctive perspectives and their distinctive ways of expressing their perspectives and to understand that women's sense of self and self-confidence arise from assured knowledge of their own roles and perspectives, respected by men and validated by the culture. Finally, it is crucial to investigate the spiritual aspects of women's lives as they are portrayed in different works of ancient literature and to include them in our analyses in order to achieve what I believe to be a more genuine understanding of the ancient world.⁹ In this process, we may attain insights that are meaningful both for our appreciation of antiquity as well as for ourselves today.

In my continuing research, I have concentrated on showing the significance of ancient Greek women's ritual lives for women's identity and for their status and roles in the community. This has resulted in a close scholarly focus on the significance of Demeter's rituals and worship for women and the well-being of the community and on the meaning of Persephone's experiences in relation to female rites of initiation, articulated

9 Increasing appreciation of these areas has emerged recently in classical scholarship. For women's ritual roles, in addition to Calame 1977, 1994, and Larson 1995, see Cole 1984, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988. For the significance of women's ritual roles in literature, see Dobson 1992, Foley 1992, Vælle 1996, Zeitlin 1986, and Zweig 1999.

by me in numerous scholarly presentations and invited lectures. This exploration of the immense value of ancient Greek women's ritual lives then led me to examine in a comprehensive manner, not hitherto explored, the complex icon that Helen represents in ancient Greek culture. In my scholarship, I have subsequently explored the complex images of Helen presented in ancient Greek literature that result from the interweaving of her ritual, mythological, literary and cultural significances. My own background enabled me to perceive the interrelationships of these various aspects of Helen and to recognize how ancient authors—from Homer to Stesichoros to Sappho to Herodotos to Gorgias to Euripides to Aristophanes—were themselves keenly aware of this interwoven nexus of meanings informing the figure of Helen and how they pointedly used them to fashion their particular images of her in their works. A broader examination of this complex imaging of Helen in ancient Greek and modern poetry forms the subject of my current research.

I would like to conclude with some quotations, from Homer's *Iliad* and H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*. The poets of both these epic works, male and female, present a Helen who is aware of her complex role as a mortal embodying divine essences. In both, she frequently questions her role as human icon for super-human qualities. Furthermore, in both, she is keenly aware of her role in creating and perpetuating her own story. I would like to end with this evocation of Helen's story, ever written and rewritten anew, her story, women's story, presented as a question that elicits suggestive responses.

Us two, upon whom Zeus set a vile destiny,
So that we would be the subject of song for people in the
future.

Iliad 6.357–58

Helena, which was the dream,
which was the veil of Cytherea? . . .

was the dream, Helen upon the ramparts?
was the veil, Helen in Egypt?

I [Helen] wander alone and entranced
yet I wonder and ask numberless questions; . . .

how can you find the answer
in the oracles of Greece
or the hieroglyphs of Egypt? . . .

[Helen] would re-create the whole of the tragic scene.
Helen is the Greek drama . . . she herself is the writing.

H.D. (Doolittle) 1961.36, 82, 85, 91

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