### Class 1: Diagnosing Vision and H.D.’s Trilogy

#### Learning Objectives
- To identify the ways in which scientific developments have reshaped attitudes towards religious phenomena.
- To evaluate the ways in which poetry has responded to and interpreted attitudinal shifts towards religious phenomena.

#### Class Readings


**Part 1 addresses:** *To identify the ways in which scientific developments have reshaped attitudes towards religious phenomena.*

Open class with a slide displaying the following pictures:

The first image is of a Christian saint in a state of ecstasy. The second is a photograph of a patient taken in Jean-Martin Charcot’s hospital. The patient had been diagnosed with hysteria; she was in the ‘ecstasy’ stage of the disorder.

What are the similarities between the two images? What is important about the context of both images (What were they produced for? How were they intended to be used?)

How does the photograph interpret the oil painting? How are the viewer’s attitude/assumptions about the first painting changed by the existence of the second image?

Class teacher now asks the students to share their insights from the secondary reading: *Modernism and Religion*. The teacher may wish to pre-circulate the discussion questions. The discussion is informed by Jeffery Kripal’s observation that twentieth-century psychology facilitated the ‘transit of the sacred out of a traditional religious register and into a new scientific one’ (Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 40.

Based on your reading of Chapter 2, what was Charcot attempting to do with images like image 2? How did these images contribute to the emerging sense of the secular? How and in what ways does Charcot’s project and/or the photograph challenge ecclesial authority and to what end? If the audience of the oil painting was happy using a religious register and discussing prayer, the soul, and God, what terms would the audience of the photograph use instead? Why is this shift significant?
**Part 2: To evaluate the ways in which poetry has responded to and interpreted attitudinal shifts towards religious phenomena.**

Class teacher now turns to the primary text: H.D.’s *Trilogy* and focuses on the later sections of ‘The Flowering of the Rood’ read in advance of class. The teacher will note here that the two major figures are Mary (a composite of all the New Testament Marys, but particularly Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary) and Kaspar (a magus, but more merchant than king). Over the course of the poem, Kaspar meets Mary and is unsettled by her and goes on to have a vision inspired by her. The teacher may wish to share this summary with the students in advance of the class to help situate the reading.

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<tr>
<th>The teacher/ class read <em>Trilogy</em>, pp. 155-57 aloud and begin a discussion based on the questions in the second column.</th>
<th>What do you notice about the register / vocabulary used to describe the vision? What are the key features of this vision in terms of location and time? What is the significance of the vision to Kaspar’s relationship with Mary as a woman? To what extent does the vision challenge Kaspar’s understanding of femininity? Where might you be likely to find this kind of vocabulary? In what ways is this vocabulary similar to or different than the visual language of the oil painting discussed at the start of the course?</th>
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<td>The teacher/ class read <em>Trilogy</em>, pp. 165-67 aloud and begin a discussion based on the questions in the second column.</td>
<td>How does this passage challenge the status of the vision? What verbal patterns do you notice? Where would you place these patterns on a scale from very poetic to very prosaic? To what extent is the register / vocabulary of this section close to or different from the photograph we looked at the outset?</td>
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<td>The teacher draws together insights from discussions of <em>Modernism and Religion</em> and <em>Trilogy</em> with a discussion based on the questions in the second column.</td>
<td>Why does H.D. include both visionary and sceptical passages / registers in her poem? What does it suggest about the way in which H.D. as a writer engaged with vision? How according to H.D. are visions experienced / what emotions do they call forth? How is this different from the ways in which visions might have been experienced in the Middle Ages or in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? What does this poetic account suggest about the religious subject in the</td>
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Development and/ or Further Reading

As this is a retelling of the magi story, ‘The Flowering of the Rood’ works well with


There is also ample scope for a comparison with other biblical retellings:


Two critical essays/ chapters also particularly relevant here: