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Autobiography & Memoir

The Gift by H.D: The Complete Text
Jane Augustine
Jane Augustine, editor
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For those scholars, poets, students of feminist literature and other followers of Hilda Doolittle's poetry comes the definitive publication of her autobiographical work—finally available in its uncut, minimally revised form. The Gift includes such intimate views as H.D.'s family life, never-before-published pictures of her family and statements of her beliefs and innermost thoughts.

Written in WWII London during the Blitz, The Gift incorporates memory and spirituality with the mysticism of H.D.'s Moravian heritage to create a philosophically complex story by using the child-voice, flashbacks and stream-of-consciousness techniques reminiscent of Faulkner, Woolf and Stein.

Broken down into three distinct parts—stories about her mother, her grandmother and her own re-discovery of a hereditary spiritual "gift" —H.D. takes us on a journey of childhood remembrances that reveals this gift. The gift is, according to H.D.'s Moravian Christian belief, an eternal feminine spirit that manifests itself as a human bearer of peace to the world. Upon losing this spirit, the world finds itself in chaos—including evil deeds and warfare—until the gift is restored. Having repressed this gift since the age of ten, H.D. finds it again under the stress, pain and horrors of war; discovering in the process that though at times forgotten, the gift will never stay lost as long as the Spirit remains among people all around the world.

A few items to take note of: 24 pages of introduction by editor Jane Augustine give the reader background before being immersed in H.D.'s dream-like sequences of events; notes following the story written by H.D. herself—essential in clarifying passages that would otherwise remain confusing to the reader. The Gift is a scholarly achievement that is technically and philosophically hard to understand, but a deeply rewarding work for those interested in cultural, spiritual and psychological studies.

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