

## “H.D.’s roots go deep, deep, deep into the city” (2)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, Fun Stuff, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) February 5, 2019

*(2nd in a series of posts on H.D.)*

*“Of course, I do, I was born in Bethlehem.”*

*[H.D.’s answer to Freud, who was afraid she was becoming psychotic because she believed she was the founder of a new religion]*

*Finding H.D.: A Community Exploration of the Life and Work of Hilda Doolittle*

*The next event is “H.D.’s Moravian Roots in Bethlehem” by Moravian’s Craig Atwood, February 26, 6:30-8 at the Bethlehem Area Public Library*

Gadfly says let’s go a little deeper in our year-long community quest to find H.D., the Lehigh Valley’s most important literary figure.

Here’s another slice of Prof Seth Moglen’s January 30 lecture in the FINDING H.D. series, a brief overview summary of H.D.’s life and work (15 mins):

**AUDIO RECORDINGS UNAVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE**

### **Some memorable Seth sound bites:**

“Every major institution in the city of Bethlehem was something in which her family was involved.”

“The city exercised such a profound hold on her mind that in every phase of her career she wrote often quite obsessively in her journals and notebooks about the city of Bethlehem, and much of her most important work comes back to the city in a very, very deep way.”

“She was convinced that the mystery and the paradox posed by the city of Bethlehem could enable her to explain what seemed to be the unfolding catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

“Almost the whole of H.D.’s corpus is animated by an intense feminist commitment to the empowerment of women and to women claiming their voices in patriarchal culture which over centuries and millennia had silenced women.”

### **Key points from Seth’s talk:**

- Born in Bethlehem 1886, died in Zurich 1961



- City Hall built on the site of her family home
- Her family part of the Moravian community from the 1740s
- Her father and mother were leaders in the contemporary Moravian community
- Her uncle was founder of the Bach Choir
- Her father first professor of Astronomy at Lehigh
- Her uncle at the beginning of what would become Bethlehem Steel
- Left Bethlehem just shy of age 11
- Moved to Upper Darby
- Attends Bryn Mawr briefly
- To Europe at age 25, thenceforth an expatriate
- Leads an adventurous, bohemian life
- Married to poet Richard Aldington
- Lived unapologetic bisexual life
- Long-time companion, a woman, Bryher
- Extraordinarily prolific writer, first published volume 1916
- *The Gift* largely about her childhood in Bethlehem
- Love affair and intense relationship with poet Ezra Pound
- Was actress, pioneer of film studies
- poetry is associated with Imagism
- Compressed, highly musical poetry
- Learned in Greek and Roman mythology
- Interested in mystical tradition
- 1st woman awarded the medal of American Arts and Letters, 1961
- Buried in Nisky Hill, the grave usually covered with shells
- Influence on such poets as Adrienne Rich, Denise Levertov
- Denied honorary degree at Lehigh in 60s, awarded 2014



Remember: the next event in the year-long series is “H.D.’s Moravian Roots in Bethlehem” by Moravian’s Craig Atwood, February 26, 6:30-8 at the Bethlehem Area Public Library. Gadfly will remind you.

*Lecture photo by Jennie Gilrain, grave photo by Mark McKenna, courtesy of Jennie.*