Two Poems for H. D. 1886/1986

Susan Howe
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Life is deep and swift—Spars without the Routes but the Billows designate.
What a Comrade is Human Thought!
The Circumstance you so sweetly recall, steals from my remembrance. . . (L1031)

Emily Dickinson wrote this in a letter shortly before her death. She died on May 15, 1886, in Amherst, Massachusetts. On September 10, 1886, Hilda Doolittle was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

I had accepted as part of my racial, my religious inheritance, the abstract idea of immortality, or of the personal soul’s existence in some form or other, after it has shed the outworn or outgrown body. (TF 43)

Thought is a thread leading back. Ariadne’s thread. Ecstasy is outside time. “Are we psychic coral-polyps? Do we build on one another?” H.D. asked in Tribute to Freud.
Yes we do build on one another.

I.
Site of old Shekomeko
Sledges set out to hew pine

Far back as human memory
a stoic assembly chanting

By degrees we first
penetrated these parts

Right fact and split sect

earlier ghost-lieutenant
Skin with a hero’s name
We say your name
Our ears enclose us

how intellect bends over mirrors

Recreation of a poor ghost
clinging to half face

On the path he met Wonder

Immaculate identical Newborn
A stone warns the traveler

What is harder than a stone
One wondertale smothers another

Isolation of selfsame children

The Frost the Sun the Wind
a true wondertale

II.
Cloud author evese

Out of deep sleep
Old to others yes

Rigmarole

scales of her ring
scales of herring

old nucleus Thought
storm-tossed innermost

fragment of a name
singing to figment
Bark leanto

silver in starlight
inhabited by Fire

Lady of the Forest
Fear has found you

Fear has found you
walking at evening

depthness to be It
and to be found

Rabbitrabbit

Walking and calling wild animals
together

all that will ever happen
Before and before

Shekomeko was an early Moravian-Indian settlement near what is now Sharon, Connecticut. It vanished long ago.

On the first of each month people in Pennsylvania and all over New England say "Rabbit rabbit" for luck. I don't know where or when the custom originated.