



Collected Poems, 1912-1944

H.D. , Louis L. Martz (Editor)

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Of special significance are the "Uncollected and Unpublished Poems (1912-1944)," the third section of the book, written mainly in the 1930s, during H. D.'s supposed "fallow" period. As these pages reveal, she was in fact writing a great deal of important poetry at the time, although publishing only a small part of it. The later, wartime poems in this section form an essential prologue to her magnificent Trilogy (1944), the fourth and culminating part of this book. Born in Pennsylvania in 1886, Hilda Doolittle moved to London in 1911 in the footsteps of her friend and one-time fiancé Ezra Pound. Indeed it was Pound, acting as the London scout for Poetry magazine, who helped her begin her extraordinary career, penning the words "H. D., Imagiste" to a group of six poems and sending them on to editor Harriet Monroe in Chicago. The Collected Poems 1912-1944 traces the continual expansion of H. D.'s work from her early imagistic mode to the prophetic style of her "hidden" years in the 1930s, climaxing in the broader, mature accomplishment of Trilogy. The book is edited by Professor Louis L. Martz of Yale, who supplies valuable textual notes and an introductory essay that relates the significance of H. D.'s life to her equally remarkable literary achievement.

Collected Poems, 1912-1944 Details

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Paloma Etienne says

I will never forget Sea Garden, it freed me. After reading H.D. love feels like an emptied word. Once you read about sea violets and sea roses and sea gardens you realise that what you believed about love was too artificial. You really crave the thought after that that maybe flowers are just better, better than love, than the word love. Maybe it's all about flowers and sea gardens. H.D. has broken down my defences and I feel my imagery has been ambushed by the lack of hers in my own mind. It would be unfair if it wasn't because this is a new creative lifestyle of feelings, a force of nature that drives you to give in to the flooding.

Rachel says

Sea Garden = <3. Just read "The God" series to write a paper. She might be a genius. Will work my way through Trilogy another time.

Aya says

Reading HD or reading so much HD in a series of days the classical imagery is really what sticks with you. But also I enjoyed how effectively she used repetitions and a kind of fearless approach to length that I think more recent poets don't always have. reading HD is kind of like reading a lot of Sappho or Sappho poem fanfiction ... Partially because of the brief heartbreak and partially because of the Greek references and also probably because I am in the middle of reading the Anne Carson translations of Sappho. I don't mean HD is unoriginal I don't think anyone who reads Trilogy could think that. Reading her work however is a certain experience and if I were to make one complaint about the text: more notes would have been helpful. If I hadn't just come from reading Ovid and Homer I probably would have wanted to look some names up. Trilogy which I was really really looking forward to reading ends up being a completely different poem than anyone could have prepared me for. A kind of dream essay that takes the fall of Troy and the burning of London and the birth of Christ and the character of Mary Magdalene and ends up with a poem. That is such a brief summary of events. I don't know what to say. Almost I am not really done with these poems.

Armand says

Just three of my favorites from the uncollected and unpublished section of this book:

P338

The Gift

Ardent

yet chill and formal,

how I ache

to tempt a chisel

as a sculptor, take

this one,
replacing this and this and this
for some defect
of point, of blade, of hilt;

in answer to my thwarted fingers, make
as from the clear edge of some glacier-drift,
a slim amphora,
a most gracious vase;

instead of ranging
from your shoulders' straight
clear line, uninterrupted stretch
of snow, with light
of some dawn-cloud on it,
I'd clam my hands
against this priceless thing,
chisel it, circumscribe
set pattern, formal-wise,
inset with stiff acanthus leaves and bays;

and where some boulder
shelves out in some place
where ice curves back
like sea-waves with the crest
of each green ripple
frozen marble wise,
under that rock that holds
the first swift kiss
of the spring-sun's white, incandescent breath,
I'd seek
you flowers:
(ah flowers
that sweetly fall and rest
softly and smoothly
on and icy bed,
the cyclamen white and red,
how sweet, how fiery,
lovers could only know,
bled in some ice of fire,
or fire of snow);

so I might set
about the Parian throat,
delicate tendrils
of the scented host,
slight fronds
with iridescent shell-like grace,
smooth like the alabaster,
thin and rare.

P412

Sigil

X

Let me be
a splinter in your side
or a bride,

eventually,
I will go
from the red,
red,
red fire-lily,
back
to the snow.

XI

If you take the moon in your hands
and turn it round
(heavy, slightly tarnished platter)
you're there;

if you pull dry sea-weed from the sand
and turn it round
and wonder at the underside's bright amber,
your eyes

look out as they did here,
(you don't remember)
when my soul turned round,

perceiving the other-side of everything,
mullein-leaf, dog-wood leaf, moth-wing
and dandelion-seed under the ground.

Antonio Delgado says

H.D. is one of the best Modernist writers. Unfortunately her work is not known as well as other writers, maybe because she is a poet who explores the world weakness and fragility of patriarchy. Her approach to the classics emphasizes female characters, which expose the patriarchal-made-word-world that still lingers until these days. Passing from her brief imagist poems through "A Dead Priestess Speaks," a series of strong poems in the same category of her well known Trilogy, the reader cannot help but read and reread her archaeological work.

Annette Boehm says

H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) was an important figure in Modernism, one of the first Imagists, friends with Ezra Pound, Sigmund Freud, and D.H. Lawrence, and in this collection -- though it contains by no means all of her writing -- you can sense the influence and synergy from all of these interactions.

I'm giving it 4 out of 5 stars because I personally am not a big fan of poetry that relies heavily on the reader's knowledge of classical / Greek drama, and a good part of the poems in this collection heavily reference that stuff. However, the other poetry really drew me in. The book traces H.D.'s development as a writer over the course of 30+ years, a period in time that encompasses both World Wars and had a major impact on her.

For a more in-depth discussion and sample bits and pieces, you can visit my blog:

<http://outsideofacat.wordpress.com/2014/12/30/you-are-even-a-world-a-planet-h-d-s-collected-poems-1912-44/>

J. Alfred says

I think that most of the anthologies in which I've seen HD have been fixated on her relation to the broader twentieth century story in her "imagiste" role, and have thus included such things as "Pear Tree" and "Oread," neither of which are anywhere close to her best work.

Reading her Collected Poems, having not had much prior acquaintance, was a 600-odd page pleasant surprise for me. If you can imagine someone who focuses on the 'thingness' of the world like Robinson Jeffers but without the melodrama, while at the same time being a good deal more classical than the early Pound but without the goofiness, you might have an idea of her style. What you wouldn't have would be her sort of impassioned calm, her constant generative allusiveness, her non-facile concern with our well being. HD will very much repay study. She's also totally unanthologizable, so you better find her in one of her single-author books. Look up "The Mysteries" for a good example of her longer poems.

Diana says

H. D. is my poetic inspiration - she is an amazing poet. A Modernist, a feminist, and a brave, audacious writer in the face of her many critics. I love reading and re-reading her poetry: aggressive, fierce, visceral, but so lyrical, evocative, and full of passion. I can't get enough of her poetry. Combined with Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* and Luce Irigaray's analysis of the Mother-Daughter relationship in the Demeter-Persephone myth, Doolittle's poetry inspires and encourages my own work-in-progress poetry collection.

Alejandro Teruel says

Louis L. Martz meticulously put together this exhaustive collection of H. D.'s published and unpublished poetry written between 1912 and 1944, along with a very interesting and rewarding 27 page introduction. The first part of the book consists of published books of verse in chronological order; the second part of the book consists of her unpublished poetry and of the poetry she published in magazines but never collected in book form, in chronological order, as far as Martz could reconstruct such an order; the third part of the book consists of a trilogy of long poems originally published separately in booklet form. As Martz himself takes pains to point out in his preface he does not include H. D.'s verse drama (*Hippolytus Temporizes*, 1927), her translation of *Ion* or poems "...scattered through her prose works [...] since these poems are best read in their

prose context.”

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) was one of the co-founders of Imagism and her first book of verse, *Sea Garden* (1916) contains some of the finest examples of imagist poems written by any poet, as well as several poems which vividly and imaginatively recreated the world of ancient Greek seafarers. My review of this first book of verse can be found in <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

In *The God* (1917) and *Hymen* (1921) she continued to develop her characteristic and strikingly innovative perspectives for many mythical Ancient and Classical Greek figures (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>), this focus is carried over into *Heliodora and other poems* (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) in which her "Greek mask", as D. H. Lawrence rather critically called it, is no longer a conduit to inspiration but an obstacle. The poems become longer, but although a few shorter poems still sparkle and a few verses in the longer poems still glow, their Greek setting becomes increasingly laboured and stale. By this time roughly a third of the book is over and the reader has reached *Red Roses For Bronze* (1931). In my case, I was feeling saturated and just had to jump ahead to see whether she managed to paint herself out of her Greek corner. I confess I fast-forwarded over most of *Red Roses for Bronze* without glimpsing anything that caught my interest. After this book, comes the long section on unpublished and uncollected poetry from a period considered by many critics to be H. D.'s "fallow" period. By dint of uncovering all the poetry H. D. wrote during this period, Martz convincingly shows that she never stopped writing poetry, but, in my opinion, she had reached a dead end. Fortunately she underwent analysis with no lesser a figure than Sigmund Freud and produced a handful of longish poems (*The Magician, The Dancer, The Master, The Poet*) that bear all the hallmarks of cathartic works thrown up by the subconscious under psychoanalysis. In general this is not great poetry but, following Martz's suggestions, I found them impossible to resist as thinly veiled autobiographical material, which provided her, under Freud's direction, with key insights into what was impeding her further development. Of these poems, I found the last two the most interesting. *The Master* (1933), a tribute to Freud, starts off like a textbook case:

He was very beautiful,
the old man,
and knew wisdom, I found measureless truth
in his words,
his command was final;

leading, little by little up to key insights about herself and her worth:

I was angry at the old man,
I wanted an answer[...]
when I argued and said, "well tell me[...]
he said,
"you are a poet";
[...]
I was angry with the old man
with his talk of man-strength,
I was angry with his mysteries, his mysteries,
[...]
I could not accept from wisdom
what love taught
woman is perfect
[...]
And it was he himself, he who set me free
to prophesy

In *The Poet* (1935) she comes to a startling realization about how she differed, as a poet and a person, from her estranged friend D. H. Lawrence, when she compared him, of all things, to a snail and herself to a butterfly:

there was a singing snail,
(does a snail sing?)
a sort of tenuous wail
[...]
I believe that I have failed,
because I got out of the husk that was my husk,

and was butterfly

O snail,
I know that you are singing;
your husk is a skull,
your song is an echo,
your song is as infinite as the sea,
your song is nothing,
your song is the high-tide that washed away the old boat-keel
[...]
you are true
to your self, being true
to the irony
of your shell.

III.

Yes,
it is dangerous to get out,
and you shall not fail;
but it is also
dangerous to stay in,
unless one is a snail:

A butterfly has antennae,
is moral
and ironical too.

IV.

And your shell is a temple,
I see it at night-fall;
your small coptic temple
is left inland,
in spite of wind,
not yet buried
in sand-storm

One can only wish, Sylvia Plath had had a comparable epiphany about her relationship with Ted Hughes, for example. H. D. finally broken free of her “Greek mask”, only to find herself, at 54, living through the Battle of Britain. Her diction and her imagery are utterly changed -the Greek *distance* is gone as is the buzz of constant allusions. There remain only a few occasional, light, surefooted references, such as her references to weaving threads of life and crossing the Styx in *R.A.F.* (1941) in which her persona encounters a stammering

RAF pilot on a train after the Battle of Britain.

his flying-helmet,
and his cumbersome trappings

were unfamiliar
like a deep-sea diver
[...]
I remembered

how I had thought
this field, that meadow

is branded for eternity
(whatever becomes of our earth)

with the mark
of the new cross,

the flying shadow
of high wings,

moving
over the grass.
[...]

XI
He could not know my thoughts,
but between us,

the shuttle sped,
passed back,

the invisible web,
bound us;

whatever we thought or said,
we were people who had crossed over,

we had already crashed,
we were already dead.

XII
If I dare recall
his last swift grave smile,

I award myself
some inch of ribbon

for valour,
such as he wore,

for I am stricken
as never before,

by the thought
of ineptitude, sloth, evil

that prosper,
while such as he fall.

Mark also the first delicate transitions to the world of Christianity, with its “new cross/the flying shadow”. In *May 1943*, she despairs of the terrible levelling power of war, as she compares people to rats in gutters:

we´ve grown alike, slithering,
slipping along with fish baskets,
grey faces, fish-faces, frog gait,
we slop, we hop,
we´re off to the bread queue,
the meat-shop, the grocery

before she brings to bear her own myth-making powers to turn, Goldie, a woman ambulance driver found dead at the wheel of her vehicle, into a pyrotechnic display of uplifting and converging mythical figures.

A trilogy of long poems *The Walls do not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels*, *The Flowering of the Rod* (1944) close the collection. In *The Walls do not Fall*, the ancient Egyptian ruins of Karnak and the modern blitzed out ruins of Londons are tellingly juxtaposed:

there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there, as here, there are no doors:

the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain fall, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures:

ruins everywhere, yet as the fallen roof
leaves the sealed room
open to the air
[...]
to another cellar, to another sliced wall
where poor utensils show
like rare objects in a museum

the fundamental ambivalence of gods is underlined

...but gods always face two-ways

as is man´s illusion of advance

and anyhow,
we have not crawled so very far

In one of her finest long poems, *The Flowering of the Rod* which is the last poem included in this collection, H. D. is in full syncretic flow as she boldly reinvents Mary Magdalene, weaving her life into that of a

stranger in the market place -or is it an old lover- from whom she obtains myrrh to anoint Christ's feet with, a stranger who could be an Arab or a Chaldean or a reflection of Abraham himself, but who is really the Magian Gaspar or Kaspar. The poem is rich in allusion and fusion and suggestive mythopoeia.

In her thirty two year journey from memorable stark images to prophesy and her own, sometimes dense myth-weaving, H. D.'s work reminds me of William Blake's thirty one year journey from *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and his later startling and inimitably memorable *The Tyger* and *The Sick Rose* to the final hermetic but intense personal "prophetic books" like *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Other near contemporaries of H. D. seem to have undergone comparable evolutions to her's -take the lesser English poet, novelist and critic Robert Graves' (1895-1985) journey from his 1918 *The Caterpillar*

When I'm old, tired, melancholy,
I'll build a leaf-green mausoleum
Close by, here on this lovely spray,
And die and dream the ages away.

through fictional retellings of classical history to his unconventional novel *King Jesus* (1946) and his curious hermeneutic *The White Goddess* (1948). Take T. S. Eliot's almost parallel evolution from the profane, secular world of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) to his final complex, mystical *Four Quartets* (1945). In Blake, H. D. and Eliot, we see poets grappling with disturbing, violent times and turning from uncommon acuity of eye to a profound, transcendent and intensely personal comprehension of the role and meanings of myth.

To wrap it all up, judged from the standpoint of the effort Martz put into including all of H. D.'s poetry written between 1912 and 1944, the collection deserves no less than four stars. The poetry included is very uneven and ranges all the way from one (and a half?) stars to five stars, so if you are looking for the best of H. D.'s poetry, there is plenty to skip, and it is in this sense that, after much internal debate, I somehow found it more convincing to stamp the book with only three stars.

Laura says

I remember my first semester at Temple when Rachel made us make a sound map of "red roses for bronze" so that we could see the sexy hidden poem inside. H.D. encoded her internal self in basic sounds in many of these poems. the attention to sound emerges in forests. small snapping branches under the waving breath of trees. the tension between her and nature, between her and her ungendered other is very personal territory that she turns into a completely new landscape that a reader occupies. not by emotional relation, but by actual hiking in the dense thrush that is the texture of someone's mind projected in thickened words.

Michael says

Statuesque and austere, H.D.'s poems hybridize the classical and the modern. Ancient forms fuse with the poet's unaffected language; Greco-Roman myths populate her poems' New England and wartime settings; her crisp images allude to obscure historical events or religious lore. Her early work revives the intimacy of Greek lyric, while her later work modernizes the sprawl of epic. Although not frequently taught or read, H.D.'s work has an astounding level of craft: her poetry often surpasses that of her more famous male contemporaries in terms of its complexity of thought and form.

Jeremy says

Sea Garden; The God; Translations; Hymen; Heliadora

Janet says

I had only recognized H.D. vaguely as a member of the Pound circle, until I'd heard a vintage recording of her reading one of her poems--about Helen and Achilles meeting in the afterlife-- on a Caedman tape with five other women poets. Had to RUN out and buy this. Beautiful, amazing poems mostly couched in the mythology of the Greeks--echoes in Anne Carson, who I also love, but these are short lined and precise, both fragile and passionate.

Jon Corelis says

Belongs in every poetry library

***** *A Five Star Poetry Book: Recommended for All Readers*

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) was a key poet in the modernist poetic revolution of the early twentieth century, and though she continued to produce excellent work throughout her life, she is still best remembered for the early lyrics which introduced a unique style and consciousness into modern poetry. Her work is severely elegant, and clearly attempts to re-create the austere, vivid effect of ancient Greek lyric, but in an unaffected, natural modern diction. She's sometimes criticized for having a limited technical and emotional range, and for not developing much during the course of her career, but be that as it may, at her best she created poems which you can read once and remember almost verbatim for the rest of your life.

Every reader of poetry should have her works.

There are also several Selected Works editions available, but all I have seen are lacking some of her best and most characteristic pieces, so since this Collected Works is only a few dollars more than the Selected ones, I'd recommend just getting this one. If you don't know about H.D., use the use an internet search engine to look for poems like The Helmsman, Helen, Lais, Holy Satyr, or The Islands, (I havne't checked, but I'm sure at least some of these are on line.) If you like those, you will certainly like the rest of her work.

Andee Schuck says

As I walked through the library during finals week, bored and re-looking for the misplaced version of my favorite copy of "The Complete Works of T.S. Eliot" I said to myself, "Andee, you can't find this copy because you can't keep reading Eliot over and over; read something else."

I browsed through the library's scant collection of postmodern poetry. I looked over some poems written in German. I eyed the contemporary section at a distance. Skimmed through the e.e. cummings collections. I

even sat on the floor and marveled at the images of Dante's Divine Comedy that I've been meaning to re-read.

Finally, I found a collection that held my interest; the pages cracked as I turned them, no one had even bothered to open this book before. I noticed the first collection of poems was written in 1916 and titled "Sea Garden". Having an obscure obsession with the ocean, flower gardens, and early-1900s poetry, I knew I had to read this.

And upon reading it I was quite impressed. I give her only four stars however because although Sea Garden was brilliant, the rest was rather unimpressive. (If you're into ancient Greek Mythology, however, you might get more out of it than I did.)

Since Ezra Pound read and edited her poems, I would assume she was part of the Imagist movement. (I have not done much biographical research on Doolittle. It really wasn't necessary to understand her poetry anyway.)

I will insert a teaser poem here, one that I believe sums up all her other poetry: beautiful, minimalistic, and metaphoric.

"Oread" (1915)

Whirl up, sea—

Whirl your pointed pines,

Splash your great pines

On our rocks,

Hurl your green over us—

Cover us with your pools of fir.

Bravo, Hilda.
