

# OMITTED PASSAGES FROM H.D.'S *THE FLOWERING OF THE ROD*, Transcribed from the Manuscript Notebook

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## INTRODUCTION

In this transcription I have attempted to reproduce as closely as possible certain pages from H.D.'s manuscript notebook of *The Flowering of the Rod*. The notebook as a whole is distinguished by being very close to the published version. Some passages, however, diverge widely from this version, and in each case it seems that H.D. deleted the passage before continuing in the manner that is close to the final version. It would seem clear, then, that she composed the poem in sequence and that the divergences represent false turnings as she was feeling her way to the concluding narrative of *Trilogy*. However, even as abandoned trails, these passages are interesting, for instance in showing her desire to use Biblical story, and in demonstrating her eventual abandonment of parable for a looser, more interpretative and possibly subversive use of Biblical "authority." As deletions, their significance lies both in their revelation of the author's half-formed intentions and, of course, in the author's decision not to reproduce them.

H.D. started composing the poem on December 18, 1944. The last marked date in the notebook is December 30. The message of hope is implicit in the poem's title, and in the Nativity story which she selected to end it. Some of the deleted sections make it more clear that this hope is rooted in the feelings of a post-D-Day Britain.

I would like to acknowledge the Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, for granting permission to reproduce these passages.

### KEY TO THE TRANSCRIPT

All clear misspellings have been retained, but those prepositions, pronouns, and occasional word endings that H.D. habitually represented with little more than a slash have been spelt (where distinguishable) in full, apart from the ampersand “&”.

Underlinings follow as closely as possible those indicated in the notebook. Lines and strokes that are apparently not deletions or underlinings have been indicated as accurately as possible: they seem to represent either emphasis or the intention of re-positioning.

H.D. would occasionally put strokes within a line to show where she wanted additional words to be put. According to the direction of the stroke, these have been represented as “/”, “|” or “\”.

All of those pages reproduced here were deleted or partly deleted by H.D. using a long diagonal slash. I have not reproduced this slash. Those passages that were not deleted are printed in italics.

### CONTEXT

The transcriptions published here are divided into four extracts. Extract one (pp. 15-19 of the notebook), composed on December 20, 1944, was replaced by section 12 in the final version (the section numbering was changed from Roman to Arabic numerals in the published version). Extract two (p. 23 of the Notebook), composed on December 23, is replaced by section 14 of the final version. Extract three (pp. 25-27 of the Notebook), dated December 27, comprises a deleted end of section 15 and a part that was replaced by section 16. Extract four (pp. 42-44 of the Notebook), composed on December 29, was replaced by section 27.

## XII

O how unfair the gifts of heaven are  
 think how he said  
 those there who toiled & laboured in the  
                   heat  
 received the same  
 as those who careless through the  
                   burning day,  
~~last &~~ gathered a few stray berries  
                   from the Tree  
 the vine-tree with it root & stock  
                   & shoot,

O how unfair the Heavenly blessings  
                   are  
 Think how the builders of the  
                   vineyard  
                   walls  
 the workers who dug deep & fed  
                   the roots  
                   all those who tied  
 The pruners & ~~the trimmers &~~  
                   the stalks  
 & trained the vines on lattices  
                   or staves

who trimmed the live-tree  
 to the fashioned lathe  
                   then     they ever  
 had not more/ nor will/ have

the those who singing in  
                   the evening shade  
 think, laughing for a joke,  
 let's foolow on - lets join the  
                   crowd

of folk who wait for something  
                   manor  
 by the ~~castle~~/ gate

what do they wait for?  
 O - the vigneron - these men  
                   who work  
 day in, day out & spade  
                   the ground in spring  
 & train the vine,  
 they wait their pay -

stand  
 come - lets ~~wait~~ in the line,  
 with these fine worthies  
 of these \ toilers have they even  
 tasted wine?

start us a song there for them,  
 while we wait

~~These~~ who have pruned the grape  
 but never tasted wine.

### XIII

And mocking while they wait  
 & maybe singing  
 they gather from the walk  
 a few last sprays  
 or even wander, <sup>seeking</sup> | ~~sighing~~ in  
                   the shade | calling  
 how the fragrance of the  
 to a friend or lover,  
 or even make a game of it  
 and fill a basket or a pale  
           scattered  
 with ~~broken~~ leaves  
 or leaves pulled from the branch -

& say, but look this leaf  
 tinged at the edge with <sup>rust</sup>~~gold~~  
 is like a platter  
 & this curled up, half-gold  
 is like a cup,  
 there's one bunch there -  
 is full enough to cover up  
     the whole surface  
 of this narrow sack  
 you with the tray  
 you'll have more trouble there,  
 & so they laugh  
 with borrowed empty baskets  
 & strive to make the smallest  
     grape-bunch glow  
         on  
 the brighter ~~with~~ the background  
     plucked  
 of ~~piled~~ leaves,  
 & call the others - come let's  
     go together -



they had charms wrought upon them  
~~th~~ there were sigils & painted figures  
on all the jars;  
no one dismantled the tomb,  
it would be wickedness, but this he  
his own people for centuries &  
centuries  
has whispered the secret of the  
distillation,  
it was never written & this too they  
knew  
no secret was safe with a woman.  
so the women, perfumed though  
they were  
would never really understand  
never really know the worth  
of that half-grain more or less  
that flat platter open to the air  
or the ~~rim on~~ the bowl rim  
clamped down,  
in the intermediate processes;  
they could never know the value  
used & misused  
of what they/valued so lightly.



certain old Rabbis huddled over the Kabala  
scribbled later ~~prescribed~~ or forbidden  
book  
some say that old ~~prescribed~~ Rabbis  
said  
that the Arab was God.

XVI Dec.27. /

( What fragrance in the air,  
what balsam?  
this is the gate of paradise  
but through no tomb.  
  
what incense in the wind  
~~spices~~ clove-pink & of  
what scent of/vine-in-flower?  
  
this is the un-obtainable, never-to-be  
found  
  
search-forever fragrance  
of the immortal ~~Bloom~~ Tree;  
~~of~~  
I see no Tree, no tree in flower  
or bare,  
no ~~Tree set on the hill~~  
against the ~~glowering sky,~~  
not on the distant hill, no there,  
not here, or anywhere;

*Magdala - tower -  
shore of Sea of Galilee*

The Tree has made your bed

the Tree has framed your  
lintel,  
house.

of is

| The Tree has made that box  
dear  
where your few treasures are.)

XVIII

Luke 8.2.

Matt.19.49.

But Mary said, Sir, I am Mary  
of Magdalæe.

## XVI

Ordinary myrrh is not enough, she said  
of Egypt resin  
nor all the incense bark/ or fruit of  
Arabian  
spray from Arabian tree

I am not here to bargain with you  
over myrrh

or any price of incense; the  
almond-flower  
before the leaf, the spray of  
oleander  
the blossom of the frisia, or  
flower of myrtle

holds more enduring treasure  
than your sacred jars;

I do not plead for myrrh, she  
said,

I am not here to plead.

EXTRACT FOUR

42

XXVI

Although the somewhat  
                    Star  
                    unusual ~~star~~  
or conjunction of seven and of two  
took place, as they tell us,  
          almost two thousand years  
it is as well to know           ago  
that some such configuration  
          may happen again  
and this is where the mythical  
          birds  
that we mentioned may  
          serve to remind us  
that it is well to remember,  
          remember  
it is better to rediscover  
          the old tradition -  
for the old cycle repeats  
          itself  
& the birds over Atlantis  
          did not all droop  
          & flutter & die

from exhaustion  
some of them whelling out  
    of the cycle-of-time  
flutter back like the dove  
    to the Ark  
to say the waters are  
    receding,  
some of them flutter back  
    as in a dream  
in a dream; this is no  
    poetic phantasy  
but a reality; the stars  
    themselves  
swaying over the abyss  
serve to remind us,  
that this Atlantis our  
    planet  
this island inundated with  
    War  
need not utterly despair