

## H. D.: “beauty without strength, chokes out life” (14)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, Fun Stuff, Gadfly's posts, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) April 12, 2019

*(14th in a series of posts on H.D.)*

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

*The next event in this year-long series is a panel discussion on “H.D. and the Natural World,” Tuesday, April 16, 6:30-8:00pm at the Bethlehem Area Public Library.*

### Sheltered Garden: <https://youtu.be/RORt9hoohe0>

I have had enough.  
I gasp for breath.  
Every way ends, every road,  
every foot-path leads at last  
to the hill-crest—  
then you retrace your steps,  
or find the same slope on the other side,  
precipitate.  
I have had enough—  
border-pinks, clove-pinks, wax-lilies,  
herbs, sweet-cress.  
O for some sharp swish of a branch—  
there is no scent of resin  
in this place,  
no taste of bark, of coarse weeds,  
aromatic, astringent—  
only border on border of scented pinks.  
Have you seen fruit under cover  
that wanted light—  
pears wadded in cloth,  
protected from the frost,  
melons, almost ripe,  
smothered in straw?  
Why not let the pears cling  
to the empty branch?  
All your coaxing will only make  
a bitter fruit—

let them cling, ripen of themselves,  
test their own worth,  
nipped, shrivelled by the frost,  
to fall at last but fair  
with a russet coat.  
Or the melon—  
let it bleach yellow  
in the winter light,  
even tart to the taste—  
it is better to taste of frost—  
the exquisite frost—  
than of wadding and of dead grass.  
For this beauty,  
beauty without strength,  
chokes out life.  
I want wind to break,  
scatter these pink-stalks,  
snap off their spiced heads,  
fling them about with dead leaves—  
spread the paths with twigs,  
limbs broken off,  
trail great pine branches,  
hurled from some far wood  
right across the melon-patch,  
break pear and quince—  
leave half-trees, torn, twisted  
but showing the fight was valiant.  
O to blot out this garden  
to forget, to find a new beauty  
in some terrible  
wind-tortured place.

“A revolt against the traditional image of femininity.” Sirma Soran  
Gumpert

“H. D.’s polemic against the wadding that, in the name of protecting  
(particularly) women from life, chokes life out of them.” Adalaide Kirby  
Morris

“The need for fearlessness. . . . a courage that fears stagnation and suffocation more than failure itself.” Maria Stadter Fox

“The poem promotes a renewal of the concept of beauty; beauty ‘without strength’, she writes, ‘chokes out life’.” Elizabeth O’Connor

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Be there!*