

PERSONAE

OF

EZRA POUND

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

MCMIX

"Make-strong old dreams lest this our world lose heart."

THIS BOOK IS FOR

MARY MOORE

OF TRENTON, IF SHE WANTS IT

CONTENTS GRACE BEFORE SONG LA FRAISNE CINO NA

AUDIART VILLONAUD FOR THIS YULE A VILLONAUD: BALLAD OF
THE GIBBET MESMERISM FIFINE ANSWERS IN TEMPORE
SENECTUTIS FAMAM LIBROSQUE CANO SCRIPTOR
IGNOTUS PRAISE OF YSOLT CAMARADERIE MASKS TALLY-
O BALLAD FOR GLOOM FOR E. Mc C AT THE HEART O'
ME XENIA OCCIDIT SEARCH AN IDYL FOR GLAUCUS IN
DURANCE GUILLAUME DE LORRIS BELATED IN THE OLD AGE OF
THE SOUL ALBA BELINGALIS FROM SYRIA FROM THE
SADDLE MARVOIL REVOLT AND THUS IN NINEVEH THE WHITE
STAG PICCADILLY NOTES

PERSONAE

Grace before Song

Lord God of heaven that with mercy dight Th' alternate prayer-
wheel of the night and light Eternal hath to thee, and in whose
sight Our days as rain drops in the sea surge fall, As bright
white drops upon a leaden sea Grant so my songs to this grey folk
may be: As drops that dream and gleam and falling catch the
sun, Evan'scent mirrors every opal one Of such his splendour as
their compass is, So, bold My Songs, seek ye such death as this.

La Fraisine^[1]

SCENE: *The Ash Wood of Malvern.*

For I was a gaunt, grave councillor Being in all things wise, and
very old, But I have put aside this folly and the cold That old

age weareth for a cloak. I was quite strong—at least they said so— The young men at the sword-play; But I have put aside this folly, being gay In another fashion that more suiteth me. I have curled mid the boles of the ash wood, I have hidden my face where the oak Spread his leaves over me, and the yoke Of the old ways of men have I cast aside. By the still pool of Mar-nan-otha Have I found me a bride That was a dog-wood tree some syne. She hath called me from mine old ways She hath hushed my rancour of council, Bidding me praise Naught but the wind that flutters in the leaves. She hath drawn me from mine old ways, Till men say that I am mad; But I have seen the sorrow of men, and am glad, For I know that the wailing and bitterness are a folly. And I? I have put aside all folly and all grief. I wrapped my tears in an ellum leaf And left them under a stone And now men call me mad because I have thrown All folly from me, putting it aside To leave the old barren ways of men, Because my bride Is a pool of the wood, and Though all men say that I am mad It is only that I am glad, Very glad, for my bride hath toward me a great love That is sweeter than the love of women That plague and burn and drive one away. Aie-e! 'Tis true that I am gay Quite gay, for I have her alone here And no man troubleth us. Once when I was among the young men... And they said I was quite strong, among the young men. Once there was a woman... but I forget... she was.... I hope she will not come again. I do not remember.... I think she hurt me once, but.... That was very long ago. I do not like to remember things any more. I like one little band of winds that blow In the ash trees here: For we are quite alone Here mid the ash trees.

[1]

Prefatory note at end of volume.

Cino

Italian Campagna 1309, the open road.

Bah! I have sung women in three cities, But it is all the same; And I will sing of the sun. Lips, words, and you snare them, Dreams, words, and they are as jewels, Strange spells of old deity, Ravens, nights, allurements: And they are not; Having become the souls of song. Eyes, dreams, lips, and the night goes. Being upon the road once more, They are not. Forgetful in their towers of our tuning Once for Wind-runeing They dream us-toward and Sighing, say, "Would Cino, Passionate Cino, of the wrinkling eyes, Gay Cino, of quick laughter, Cino, of the dare, the jibe, Frail Cino, strongest of his tribe That tramp old ways beneath the sun-light, Would Cino of the Luth were here!" Once, twice, a year— Vaguely thus word they: "Cino?" "Oh, eh, Cino Polnesi The singer is't you mean?" "Ah yes, passed once our way, A saucy fellow, but.... (Oh they are all one these vagabonds), Peste! 'tis his own songs? Or some other's that he sings? But *you*, My Lord, how with your city? But you "My Lord," God's pity! And all I knew were out, My Lord, you Were Lack-land Cino, e'en as I am, O Sinistro. I have sung women in three cities. But it is all one. I will sing of the sun. eh?.... they mostly had grey eyes, But it is all one, I will sing of the sun. "'Pollo Phoibee, old tin pan, you Glory to Zeus' aegis-day, Shield o' steel-blue, th' heaven o'er us Hath for boss thy lustre gay! 'Pollo Phoibee, to our way-fare Make thy laugh our wander-ried; Bid thy 'fulgence bear away care. Cloud and rain-tears pass they fleet! Seeking e'er the new-laid rast-way To the gardens of the sun.... * * * * *
* * * * * I have sung women in three cities But it is all one. I will sing of the white birds In the blue waters of heaven, The clouds that are spray to its sea.

Na Audiart

Que be-m vols mal.

NOTE: Any one who has read anything of the troubadours knows well the tale of Bertran of Born and My Lady Maent of Montaignac, and knows also the song he made when she would none of him, the song wherein he, seeking to find or make her equal, begs of each preeminent lady of Langue d'Oc some trait or some fair semblance: thus of Cembelins her "esgart amoros" to wit, her love-lit glance, of Aelis her speech free-running, of the Vicomptess of Chales her throat and her two hands, at Roacoart of Anhes her hair golden as Iseult's; and even in this fashion of Lady Audiart "although she would that ill come unto him" he sought and praised the lineaments of the torse. And all this to make "Una dompna soiseubuda" a borrowed lady or as the Italians translated it "Una donna ideale."

Though thou well dost wish me ill Audiart, Audiart, Where thy bodice laces start As ivy fingers clutching through Its crevices, Audiart, Audiart, Stately, tall and lovely tender Who shall render Audiart, Audiart Praises meet unto thy fashion? Here a word kiss! Pass I on Unto Lady "Miels-de-Ben," Having praised thy girdle's scope How the stays ply back from it; I breathe no hope That thou shouldst... Nay no whit Bespeak thyself for anything. Just a word in thy praise, girl, Just for the swirl Thy satins make upon the stair, 'Cause never a flaw was there Where thy torse and limbs are met: Though thou hate me, read it set In rose and gold.^[2] Or when the minstrel, tale half told, Shall burst to liting at the phrase "Audiart, Audiart"... Bertrands, master of his lays, Bertrands of Aultaforte thy praise Sets forth, and though thou hate me well, Yea though thou wish me ill Audiart, Audiart. Thy loveliness is here writ till, Audiart, Oh, till thou come again.^[3] And being bent and wrinkled, in a form That hath

no perfect limning, when the warm Youth dew is cold Upon thy hands, and thy old soul Scorning a new, wry'd casement Churlish at seemed misplacement Finds the earth as bitter As now seems it sweet, Being so young and fair As then only in dreams, Being then young and wry'd, Broken of ancient pride, Thou shalt then soften, Knowing I know not how Thou wert once she Audiart, Audiart For whose fairness one forgave Audiart, Audiart Que be-m vols mal.

[2]

I.e. in illumed manuscript.

[3]

Reincarnate.

Villonaud for this Yule

Towards the Noel that morte saison (*Christ make the shepherds' homage dear!*) Then when the grey wolves everychone Drink of the winds their chill small-beer And lap o' the snows food's gueredon Then makyth my heart his yule-tide cheer (Skoal! with the dregs if the clear be gone!) Wineing the ghosts of yester-year. Ask ye what ghosts I dream upon? (*What of the magians' scented gear?*) The ghosts of dead loves everyone That make the stark winds reek with fear Lest love return with the foison sun And slay the memories that me cheer (Such as I drink to mine fashion) Wineing the ghosts of yester-year. Where are the joys my heart had won? (*Saturn and Mars to Zeus drawn near!*)^[4] Where are the lips mine lay upon, Aye! where are the glances feat and clear That bade my heart his valour don? I skoal to the eyes as grey-blown mere (Who knows whose was that paragon?) Wineing the ghosts of yester-year. Prince: ask me not what I have done Nor what God hath that can me cheer But ye ask first where the winds are gone Wineing the

ghosts of yester-year.

[4]

Signum Nativitatis.

A Villonaud

Ballad of the Gibbet

Or the song of the sixth companion

SCENE: "*En cest bourdel ou tenoms nostr estat.*"

It being remembered that there were six of us with Master Villon, when that expecting presently to be hanged he writ a ballad whereof ye know: whereof ye know: "*Frères humains qui après nous vivez.*"

Drink ye a skoal for the gallows tree! Francois and Margot and thee and me, Drink we the comrades merrily That said us, "Till then" for the gallows tree! Fat Pierre with the hook gauchemain, Thomas Larron "Ear-the-less," Tybalde and that armouress Who gave this poignard its premier stain Pinning the Guise that had been fain To make him a mate of the "Haulte Noblesse" And bade her be out with ill address As a fool that mocketh his drue's disdeign. Drink we a skoal for the gallows tree! Francois and Margot and thee and me, Drink we to Marianne Ydole, That hell brenn not her o'er cruelly. Drink we the lusty robbers twain, Black is the pitch o' their wedding-dress,^[5] Lips shrunk back for the wind's caress As lips shrink back when we feel the strain Of love that loveth in hell's disdeign And sense the teeth through the lips that press 'Gainst our lips for the soul's distress That striveth to ours across the

pain. Drink we skoal to the gallows tree! Francois and Margot and thee and me, For Jehan and Raoul de Vallerie Whose frames have the night and its winds in fee. Maturin, Guillaume, Jacques d'Allmain, Culdou lacking a coat to bless One lean moiety of his nakedness That plundered St. Hubert back o' the fane: Aie! the lean bare tree is widowed again For Michault le Borgne that would confess In "faith and troth" to a traitoress, "Which of his brothers had he slain?" But drink we skoal to the gallows tree! Francois and Margot and thee and me: These that we loved shall God love less And smite alway at their faibleness? Skoal!! to the Gallows! and then pray we: God damn his hell out speedily And bring their souls to his "Haulte Citee."

[5]

Certain gibbeted corpses used to be coated with tar as a preservative; thus one scarecrow served as warning for considerable time. See Hugo "L'Homme qui Rit."

Mesmerism

"And a cat's in the water-butt."—ROBERT BROWNING.

Aye you're a man that! ye old mesmerizer Tyin' your meanin' in seventy swadelin's, One must of needs be a hang'd early riser To catch you at worm turning. Holy Odd's bodykins! "Cat's i' the water butt!" Thought's in your verse-barrel, Tell us this thing rather, then we'll believe you, You, Master Bob Browning, spite your apparel Jump to your sense and give praise as we'd lief do. You wheeze as a head-cold long-tonsilled Calliope, But God! what a sight you ha' got o' our in'ards, Mad as a hatter but surely no Myope, Broad as all ocean and leanin' man-kin'ards. Heart that was big as the bowels of Vesuvius, Words

that were wing'd as her sparks in eruption, Eagled and thundered
as Jupiter Pluvius, Sound in your wind past all signs o'
corruption. Here's to you, Old Hippetty-hop o' the
accents, True to the Truth's sake and crafty dissector, You
grabbed at the gold sure; had no need to pack cents Into your
versicles. Clear sight's elector!

Fifine Answers

"Why is it that, disgraced they seem to relish life the more?"—

FIFINE AT THE FAIR, VII, 5.

Sharing his exile that hath borne the flame, Joining his freedom
that hath drunk the shame And known the torture of the Skull-
place hours Free and so bound, that mingled with the powers Of
air and sea and light his soul's far reach Yet strictured did the
body-lips beseech "To drink" "I thirst." And then the sponge of
gall. Wherefore we wastrels that the grey road's call Doth
master and make slaves and yet make free, Drink all of life and
quaffing lustily Take bitter with the sweet without
complain And sharers in his drink defy the pain That makes you
fearful to unfurl your souls. We claim no glory. If the tempest
rolls About us we have fear, and then Having so small a stake
grow bold again. We know not definitely even this But 'cause
some vague half knowing half doth miss Our consciousness and
leaves us feeling That somehow all is well, that sober,
reeling From the last carouse, or in what measure Of so called
right or so damned wrong our leisure Runs out uncounted sand
beneath the sun, That, spite your carping, still the thing is
done With some deep sanction, that, we know not how, Sans
thought gives us this feeling; you allow That this not need we
know our every thought Or see the work shop where each mask is
wrought Wherefrom we view the world of box and pit, Careless

of wear, just so the mask shall fit And serve our jape's turn for a night or two. Call! eh bye! the little door at twelve! I meet you there myself.

In Tempore Senectutis

"For we are old And the earth passion dieth; We have watched him die a thousand times, When he wanes an old wind crieth, For we are old And passion hath died for us a thousand times But we grew never weary. Memory faileth, as the lotus-loved chimes Sink into fluttering of wind, But we grow never weary For we are old. The strange night-wonder of your eyes Dies not, though passion flieth Along the star fields of Arcturus And is no more unto our hands; My lips are cold And yet we twain are never weary, And the strange night-wonder is upon us, The leaves hold our wonder in their flutterings, The wind fills our mouths with strange words For our wonder that grows not old. The moth-hour of our day is upon us Holding the dawn; There is strange Night-wonder in our eyes Because the Moth-Hour leadeth the dawn As a maiden, holding her fingers, The rosy, slender fingers of the dawn." He saith: "Red spears bore the warrior dawn Of old Strange! Love, hast thou forgotten The red spears of the dawn, The pennants of the morning?" She saith: "Nay, I remember, but now Cometh the Dawn, and the Moth-Hour Together with him; softly For we are old."

Famam Librosque Cano

Your songs? Oh! The little mothers Will sing them in the

twilight, And when the night Shrinketh the kiss of the
dawn That loves and kills, What time the swallow fills Her
note, the little rabbit folk That some call children, Such as are up
and wide Will laugh your verses to each other, Pulling on their
shoes for the day's business, Serious child business that the
world Laughs at, and grows stale; Such is the tale —Part of
it—of thy song-life Mine? A book is known by them that
read That same. Thy public in my screed Is listed. Well! Some
score years hence Behold mine audience, As we had seen him
yesterday. Scrawny, be-spectacled, out at heels, Such an one
as the world feels A sort of curse against its guzzling And its
age-lasting wallow for red greed And yet; full speed Though it
should run for its own getting, Will turn aside to sneer at 'Cause
he hath No coin, no will to snatch the aftermath Of
Mammon. Such an one as women draw away from For the
tobacco ashes scattered on his coat And sith his throat Show
razor's unfamiliarity And three days' beard: Such an one
picking a ragged Backless copy from the stall, Too cheap for
cataloguing, Loquitur, "Ah-eh! the strange rare name.... Ah-
eh! He must be rare if even *I* have not.... And lost mid-
page Such age As his pardons the habit, He analyzes form and
thought to see How I 'scaped immortality.

Scriptor Ignotus

Ferrara 1715

To K.R.H.

"When I see thee as some poor song-bird Battering its wings,
against this cage we Today, Then would I speak comfort unto
thee, From out the heights I dwell in, when That great sense of

power is upon me And I see my greater soul-self
bending Sibylwise with that great forty year epic That you know
of, yet unwrit But as some child's toy 'tween my fingers, And
see the sculptors of new ages carve me thus, And model with the
music of my couplets in their hearts: Surely if in the end the
epic And the small kind deed are one; If to God the child's toy
and the epic are the same, E'en so, did one make a child's
toy, He might wright it well And cunningly, that the child
might Keep it for his children's children And all have joy
thereof. Dear, an this dream come true, Then shall all men say
of thee "She 'twas that played him power at life's morn, And at
the twilight Evensong, And God's peace dwelt in the mingled
chords She drew from out the shadows of the past, And old
world melodies that else He had known only in his dreams Of
Iseult and of Beatrice. Dear, an this dream come true, I, who
being poet only, Can give thee poor words only, Add this one
poor other tribute, This thing men call immortality. A gift I give
thee even as Ronsard gave it. Seeing before time, one sweet face
grown old, And seeing the old eyes grow bright From out the
border of Her fire-lit wrinkles, As she should make boast unto her
maids "Ronsard hath sung the beauty, *my* beauty, Of the days
that I was fair." So hath the boon been given, by the poets of
old time (Dante to Beatrice,—an I profane not—) Yet with my
lesser power shall I not strive To give it thee? All ends of
things are with Him From whom are all things in their
essence. If my power be lesser Shall my striving be less
keen? But rather more! if I would reach the goal, Take then the
striving! "And if," for so the Florentine hath writ When having
put all his heart Into his "Youth's Dear Book" He yet strove to
do more honour To that lady dwelling in his inmost soul He
would wax yet greater To make her earthly glory more. Though
sight of hell and heaven were price thereof, If so it be His will,
with whom Are all things and through whom Are all things
good, Will I make for thee and for the beauty of thy music A
new thing As hath not heretofore been writ. Take then my

promise!

Praise of Ysolt

In vain have I striven to teach my heart to bow; In vain have I said to him "There be many singers greater than thou." But his answer cometh, as winds and as lutany. As a vague crying upon the night That leaveth me no rest, saying ever, "Song, a song." Their echoes play upon each other in the twilight Seeking ever a song. Lo, I am worn with travail And the wandering of many roads hath made my eyes As dark red circles filled with dust. Yet there is a trembling upon me in the twilight, And little red elf words crying "A song," Little grey elf words crying for a song, Little brown leaf words crying "A song," Little green leaf words crying for a song. The words are as leaves, old brown leaves in the spring time Blowing they know not whither, seeking a song. White words as snow flakes but they are cold Moss words, lip words, words of slow streams. In vain have I striven to teach my soul to bow, In vain have I pled with him, "There be greater souls than thou." For in the morn of my years there came a woman As moon light calling As the moon calleth the tides, "Song, a song." Wherefore I made her a song and she went from me As the moon doth from the sea, But still came the leaf words, little brown elf words Saying "The soul sendeth us." "A song, a song!" And in vain I cried unto them "I have no song For she I sang of hath gone from me." But my soul sent a woman, a woman of the wonder folk, A woman as fire upon the pine woods crying "Song, a song." As the flame crieth unto the sap. My song was ablaze with her and she went from me As flame leaveth the embers so went she unto new forests And the words were with me crying ever "Song, a song." And I "I have

no song," Till my soul sent a woman as the sun: Yea as the sun calleth to the seed, As the spring upon the bough So is she that cometh the song-drawer She that holdeth the wonder words within her eyes The words little elf words that call ever unto me "Song, a song." ENVOI In vain have I striven with my soul to teach my soul to bow. What soul boweth while in his heart art thou?

Camaraderie

"E tuttoque to fosse a la compagnia di molti, quanto alla vista."

Sometimes I feel thy cheek against my face Close-pressing, soft as is the South's first breath That all the subtle earth-things summoneth To spring in wood-land and in meadow space. Yea sometimes in a bustling man-filled place Me seemeth some-wise thy hair wandereth Across mine eyes, as mist that halloweth The air awhile and giveth all things grace. Or on still evenings when the rain falls close There comes a tremor in the drops, and fast My pulses run, knowing thy thought hath passed That beareth thee as doth the wind a rose.

Masks

These tales of old disguisings, are they not Strange myths of souls that found themselves among Unwonted folk that spake a hostile tongue, Some soul from all the rest who'd not forgot The star-span acres of a former lot Where boundless mid the clouds his course he swung, Or carnate with his elder brothers sung E'er ballad makers lisped of Camelot? Old singers half-forgetful of

their tunes, Old painters colour-blind come back once more, Old poets skillless in the wind-heart runes, Old wizards lacking in their wonder-lore: All they that with strange sadness in their eyes Ponder in silence o'er earth's queynt devyse?

Tally-O

What ho! the wind is up and eloquent. Through all the Winter's halls he crieth Spring. Now will I get me up unto mine own forests And behold their bourgeoning.

Ballad for Gloom

For God, our God, is a gallant foe That playeth behind the veil. I have loved my God as a child at heart That seeketh deep bosoms for rest, I have loved my God as maid to man But lo, this thing is best: To love your God as a gallant foe that plays behind the veil, To meet your God as the night winds meet beyond Arcturus' pale. I have played with God for a woman, I have staked with my God for truth, I have lost to my God as a man, clear eyed, His dice be not of ruth. For I am made as a naked blade But hear ye this thing in sooth: Who loseth to God as man to man Shall win at the turn of the game. I have drawn my blade where the lightnings meet But the ending is the same: Who loseth to God as the sword blades lose Shall win at the end of the game. For God, our God, is a gallant foe that playeth behind the veil, Whom God deigns not to overthrow Hath need of triple mail.

For E. Mc C

*That was my counter-blade under Leonardo Terrone, Master of
Fence.*

Gone while your tastes were keen to you, Gone where the grey
winds call to you, By that high fencer, even Death, Struck of the
blade that no man parrieth; Such is your fence, one saith, One
that hath known you. Drew you your sword most gallantly Made
you your pass most valiantly 'Gainst that grey fencer, even
Death. Gone as a gust of breath Faith! no man tarrieth, "*Se il
cor ti manca*" but it failed thee not! "*Non ti fidar*" it is the sword
that speaks "*In me.*"^[6] Thou trusted'st in thyself and met the
blade 'Thout mask or gauntlet, and art laid As memorable
broken blades that be Kept as bold trophies of old pageantry. As
old Toledos past their days of war Are kept mnemonic of the
strokes they bore, So art thou with us, being good to keep In our
heart's sword-rack, though thy sword-arm
sleep. ENVOI Struck of the blade that no man
parrieth Pierced of the point that toucheth lastly all, 'Gainst that
grey fencer, even Death, Behold the shield! He shall not take thee
all.

[6]

Sword-rune "If thy heart fail thee trust not in me."

At the Heart o' Me

A.D. 751

With ever one fear at the heart o' me Long by still sea-
coasts coursed my Grey-Falcon, And the twin delights of shore
and sea were mine, Sapphire and emerald with fine pearls

between. Through the pale courses of the land-caressing in-streams Glided my barge and the kindly strange peoples Gave to me laugh for laugh, and wine for my tales of wandering. And the cities gave me welcome and the fields free passage, With ever one fear at the heart o' me. An thou should'st grow weary ere my returning, An "*they*" should call to thee from out the borderland, What should avail me booty of whale-ways? What should avail me gold rings or the chain-mail? What should avail me the many-twined bracelets? What should avail me, O my beloved, Here in this "Middan-gard"^[7] what should avail me Out of the booty and gain of my goings?

[7]

Anglo Saxon "Earth".

Xenia

And Unto thine eyes my heart Sendeth old dreams of the spring-time, Yea of wood-ways my rime Found thee and flowers in and of all streams That sang low burthen, and of roses, That lost their dew-bowed petals for the dreams We scattered o'er them passing by.

Occidit

Autumnal breaks the flame upon the sun-set herds. The sheep on Gilead as tawn hair gleam Neath Mithra's dower and his slow departing, While in the sky a thousand fleece of gold Bear, each his tribute, to the waning god. Hung on the rafters of the

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

