

EZRA POUND



PERSONÆ

THE SHORTER POEMS

*A REVISED EDITION PREPARED BY  
LEA BAECHLER & A. WALTON LITZ*

P E R S O N Æ

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**THE SHORTER POEMS OF  
EZRA POUND**

A Revised Edition Prepared by  
Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz

**A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK**

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THIS BOOK IS FOR  
**MARY MOORE**  
OF TRENTON, IF SHE  
WANTS IT

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1908-1911

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## THE TREE

I stood still and was a tree amid the wood,  
Knowing the truth of things unseen before;  
Of Daphne and the laurel bow  
And that god-feasting couple old  
That grew elm-oak amid the wold.  
'Twas not until the gods had been  
Kindly entreated, and been brought within  
Unto the hearth of their heart's home  
That they might do this wonder thing;  
Nathless I have been a tree amid the wood  
And many a new thing understood  
That was rank folly to my head before.

## THRENOS

No more for us the little sighing.  
No more the winds at twilight trouble us.

Lo the fair dead!

No more do I burn.  
No more for us the fluttering of wings  
That whirred in the air above us.

Lo the fair dead!

No more desire flayeth me,  
No more for us the trembling  
At the meeting of hands.

Lo the fair dead!

No more for us the wine of the lips,  
No more for us the knowledge.

Lo the fair dead!

---

No more the torrent,  
No more for us the meeting-place  
(Lo the fair dead!)  
Tintagoel.

## LA FRAISNE

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-el!' 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.

## 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.

"Polio 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!

'Polio Phoibee, to our way-fare  
Make thy laugh our wander-lied;  
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: Anyone who has read anything of the troubadours knows well the tale of Bertran of Born and My Lady Maent of Montagnac, 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 Vicomtesse of Chalais her throat and her two hands, 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.<sup>1</sup>

Or when the minstrel, tale half told,

Shall burst to liling at the phrase

“Audiart, Audiart” ...

Bertrans, master of his lays,

Bertrans 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

---

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* In illumed manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> 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!)  
Wining 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)  
Wining the ghosts of yester-year.  
Where are the joys my heart had won?  
(*Saturn and Mars to Zeus drawn near!*)<sup>1</sup>  
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?)

Wining 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  
Wining the ghosts of yester-year.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Signum Nativitatis.*

## A VILLONAUD: BALLAD OF THE GIBBET

*Or the Song of the Sixth Companion*

SCENE: “*En ce bourdel où tenons nostre 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: “*Frères humains qui après nous vivez.*”

Drink ye a skoal for the gallows tree!  
François 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 gauche-main,  
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!  
François 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,<sup>1</sup>  
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!  
François 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!  
François 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."

---

<sup>1</sup> Certain gibbeted corpses used to be coated with tar as a preservative; thus one scarecrow served 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 Hippety-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!

## **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 times 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  
Shows 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 analyses form and thought to see  
How I 'scaped immortality.

**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 moonlight 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 wonderfolk,

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 mother of songs,

She that holdeth the wonder words within her eyes

The words, little elf words

that call ever unto me,

"Song, a song."

In vain have I striven with my soul

to teach my soul to bow.

What soul boweth

while in his heart art thou?

## DE ÆGYPTO

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads

Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I have beheld the Lady of Life,

I, even I, who fly with the swallows.

Green and gray is her raiment,

Trailing along the wind.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads

Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

Manus animam pinxit,

My pen is in my hand

To write the acceptable word....

My mouth to chant the pure singing!

Who hath the mouth to receive it,

The song of the Lotus of Kumi?



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