1912

PORTRAIT D’UNE FEMME (From Ripostes)

Ezra Pound

Pound, Ezra (1885-1972) - Controversial American poet, editor, and critic who had a major influence on 20th century literature. After making hundreds of broadcasts for the Italian Fascist regime, he was tried for treason, judged insane, and held in a mental hospital for over ten years. Portrait D’une Femme (1912) From the collection, “Ripostes of Ezra Pound.” Opening lines: Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea, / London has swept about you this score years ...
PORTRAIT DUNE FEMME

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea, London has swept about you this score years And bright ships left you this or that in fee: Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things, Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.

Great minds have sought you- lacking someone else.

You have been second always. Tragical? No. You preferred it to the usual thing: One dull man, dulling and uxorious, One average mind- with one thought less, each year.

Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit Hours, where something might have floated up.

And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.

You are a person of some interest, one comes to you And takes strange gain away: Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion; Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale for two, Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else That might prove useful and yet never proves, That never fits a corner or shows use, Or finds its hour upon the loom of days: The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work; Idols and ambergris and rare inlays, These are your riches, your great store; and yet For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things, Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff: In the slow float of differing light and deep, No! there is nothing! In the whole and all, Nothing that’s quite your own.

Yet this is you.

THE END