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Villon (Five Versions)

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‘Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis’
of c. 1460
by François Villon (Five Versions)

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY MARTIN SORRELL

I. TRANSITED

Flo, you know, Flo, the InterFlora girl, legs
Up to her armpits, had by all the dregs
Of Leytonstone. One fine night
Gets Aids and that is fucking that, right?
Only some infected loser busting his balls
For sweet revenge finds her little boy and scrawls
This message on him with a Stanley knife:
“Sic transit Floria Funtime” (tum), then “Such is life”
(Bum). That boy was brilliant, his mum a Queen.
Fucking nothing adds up, know what I mean?

Talking of queens, remember that tranny
Teacher out Walthamstow way, Her Majesty
Fanny The Fist? (Real name Dr Buridan,
Changed to Burton and gone for one
Ha bloody ha). A discharge of National Front
Effluent caught her (“Well if it ain’t that cunt
The Lady Professor!”) in the stands at Upton Park,
Wrapped her in a plastic sheet and (“a lark,
No harm done”) dropped her in the bleeding drink.
Her great big skirt saved her, she wouldn’t sink.

Know what happened to that Bertha (aka Beattie, Lil
The Plate, Blank Blanche, Hamburger Ali...), voice angels would kill
For? Sang in the bars round here for a while

luck-
love. While we're on the same tack
The queen who got Buridan in the sack
Which was dumped in the Seine, where's she now? On
High? Below? Where have all the flowers gone?

That white-as-a-lily-of-the-valley
Queen Blanche

(*widow?*)

Voice like a canary?

BIG
FOOT

-ed Bertha,

Beatrice,

Alice?

The countess who ran Maine, Haremburgis
(*Spelling!*

Again!),

and Good Joan of Lorraine

Burnt alive in Rouen by the English, chained

To a stake? Where do these people belong
Now they're dead? Where have all the flowers gone?

Not now, not in a week, not in a year,
Prince,

(*of where?*)

PLEASE DON'T ASK. You'll only hear

The regular refrain, the same old one,
Doesn't change: where have all the flowers gone?

3. CROSS STITCHED

Where's Flora now, lovely
 where of Rome?
 Where's ArchipiadEs,
 where heR
 nE
 A
 Relative Thaïs,
 Soul partnErs?
 Where's That super
 Human beauty
 Echo rising when rivers
 sang, when pondsSou
 Nded?
 Where's HelOise the wise
 Who's why
 Abelard waS deballed and made a monk
 O
 F?
 SimilarlY, where's the queen who ordered
 Buridan bE
 Sacked up and heaved
 in the Seine? Where's The WhiteWidow Queen
 voice of a sirEn?
 And
 BeRtha Big Foot, Beatrice, Alice,
 Erembourg, LandladY of Maine? Where's good Joan
 Of Lorraine the English burnt in Rouen?
 Prince, not this week, not lAter this year, refrain
 fRom asking the same question again and again!
 ?

4. REDUCED

Latin tart
 wherefore art
 and wherefore

Thais whore
of Baby
-I, and Archi?
Sweet Echo?
Where'd they go?

Helois?
(Poor nut-free
Abelard
took it hard).
Queen who land
-ed Bur'dan
in Seine flow?
Where'd they go?

Lilywhite
queen sing-bright?
Bertha, B
et Al? She
of Maine parks?
Joan of Arc
Slow flambeau?
Where'd they go?

Prince, desist.
Pointless. It's
Ever so:
Where'd they go?

5. RESTRAINED

Tell me, where, in what country
Is Flora, sinful beauty
From Rome? Archipiades
And sister in arms Thais?
Echo heard above the song
Of running rivers and ponds,
Lovelier than life, Echo?
Where are last year's falls of snow?

Where's worldly-wise Heloise
Who caused Abelard to be
Gelded then tonsured in Saint
Denis? Love's terrible fate.
Similarly where's the queen
Who plopped sacked Buridan in
The river Seine there below?
Where are last year's falls of snow?

Lily-lucent Dowager
Queen, the voice of a songster?
Beatrice, Flat Footed Ber-
Tha, Alice, and Erembourg
Who held the lands of Le Maine?
And good maid Joan of Lorraine
Burnt in Rouen by English foe?
Where are last year's falls of snow?

Not this week nor one year's time,
Prince, don't ask where you can find
Them. You'll get the usual *mot*:
Where are last year's falls of snow?