

POET'S THEATRE SERIES NO. 9 / PRODUCER: SCOTTI D'ARCY / FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9727

PRAYERS FROM THE ARK / PRIERES DANS L'ARCHE BY CARMEN BERNOS DE GASZTOLD

Read in French and English by Marian Seldes / Translated by Rumer Godden



PZ
8.3
B482
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MUSIC LP

CONTENTS:

1 sound disc
Biographical notes and
text (8 p.)

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SIDE I
PRIERES DANS L'ARCHE
by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold

SIDE II
PRAYERS FROM THE ARK
by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold
(Translated by Rumer Godden)

PRAYERS FROM
THE ARK

PRIERES DANS
L'ARCHE

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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PRAYERS FROM THE ARK / PRIERES DANS L'ARCHE

BY CARMEN BERNOS DE GASZTOLD

TRANSLATED BY RUMER GODDEN

READ BY MARIAN SELDES

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Marian Seldes

Marian Seldes made her first Broadway appearance with Judith Anderson in "Medea." Since then she has appeared in "Crime and Punishment," "That Lady," "Tower Beyond Tragedy," "Come of Age," "Ondine," "The Chalk Garden," "The Wall," "A Gift of Time," and "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More." Off-Broadway she has played in Eugene O'Neill's "Diff'rent" and "The Ginger Man." She will be seen in the role of Herodias in the forthcoming George Stevens film "The Greatest Story Ever Told."

Miss Seldes other Folkways Albums are Roan Stallion by Robinson Jeffers - (FL 9766) Tower Beyond Tragedy by Robinson Jeffers - (FL 9767) and Making of Americans by Gertrude Stein - (FL 9742).

PRIERE DE NOE

Seigneur,
quelle menagerie!
Entre Votre deluge et ces cris d'animaux
on ne s'entend plus!
Le temps est long.
Toute cette eau me noie le coeur!
Quand pourrai-je marcher d'un pied ferme?
Le temps est long.
Maitre corbeau n'est pas revenu.
Voici Votre colombe.
Trouveratelle un rameau d'esperance?
Le temps est long.
Seigneur,
menez Votrearchea la certitude,
au sommet du repos,
et que l'onen sorte en fin
de cette servitude animale!
Le temps est long.
Seigneur,
conduisez-moi jusqu'au rivage de Votre alliance.
Ainsi soit-il!

NOAH'S PRAYER

Lord,
what a menagerie!
Between Your downpour and these animal cries
one cannot hear oneself think!
The days are long,
Lord.



All this water makes my heart sink.
When will the ground cease to rock under my feet?
The days are long.
Master Raven has not come back.
Here is Your dove.
Will she find us a twig of hope?
The days are long,
Lord.
Guide Your Ark to safety,
some zenith of rest,
where we can escape at last
from this brute slavery.
The days are long,
Lord.
Lead me until I reach the shore of Your covenant.
Amen

PRIERE DU COQ

N'oubliez pas, Seigneur,
que je fais lever le soleil!
Je suis Votre serviteur...
Mais la dignite de mon role
me force a quelques fanfreluches et mondanites.
Noblesse oblige...
Malgre tout,
je suis Votre serviteur...
N'oubliez pas, Seigneur,
que je fais lever le soleil!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE COCK

Do not forget, Lord,
it is I who make the sun rise.
I am Your servant
but, with the dignity of my calling,
I need some glitter and ostentation.
Noblesse oblige...
All the same,
I am Your servant,
only...do not forget, Lord,
I make the sun rise.
Amen

PRIERE DU CHIEN

Seigneur
je veille!
Si je n'etais pas la,
qui garderait leur maison?

PZ
8.3
B482
P949
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MUSIC LP

Qui garderait leurs moutons?
Qui leur serait fidele?
Il n'y a que Vous et moi
pour comprendre
ce que c'est que la fidelite!
Ils me disent: bon chien! brave chien!
Des mots...
Moi je prends leurs caresses
et les vieux os qu'ils me jettent,
et j'ai l'air content!
Ils croient tellement me faire plaisir!
Je prends aussi les coups de pied
qu'ils arrivent!
Tout cela n'a pas d'importance.
Moi, je veille!
Seigneur,
ne permettez pas que je meure
avant que, poureux,
tout danger soit carte!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE DOG

Lord,
I keep watch!
If I am not here
who will guard their house?
Watch over their sheep?
Be faithful?
No one but You and I
understands
what faithfulness is.
They call me, "Good dog! Nice dog!"
Words...
I take their pats
and the old bones they throw me
and I seem pleased.
They really believe they make me happy.
I take kicks too
when they come my way.
None of that matters.
I keep watch!
Lord,
do not let me die
until, for them,
all danger is driven away.
Amen

PRIERE D'UN PETIT OISEAU

Mon Dieu
je ne sais pas bien dire ma priere,
tout seul!
Mais, s'il Vous plait,
protegez de la pluie et du vent
mon petit nid.
Mettez beaucoup de rosee dans les fleurs
et de graines sur mon chemin.
Faites l'azur tres haut
et les branches tres souples.
Laissez tard, dans le ciel, Votre douce lumiere
et dans mon coeur, cette intarissable
musique,
afin que je puisse chanter, chanter,
chanter...
S'il Vous plait, mon Dieu,
ainsi soit-il.

THE PRAYER OF THE LITTLE BIRD

Dear God,
I don't know how to pray by myself
very well,
but will You please
protect my little nest from wind and rain?
Put a great deal of dew on the flowers,
many seeds in my way.
Make Your blue very high,

Your branches lissom;
let Your kind light stay late in the sky
and set my heart brimming with such music
that I must sing, sing, sing...
Please, Lord.
Amen

PRIERE DU PETIT POISSON ROUGE

Mon Dieu,
je tourne sans fin
autour de ce rocher transparent et dur
sans pouvoir trouver d'issue!
Seigneur,
delivrez-moi de l'etrottesse de cette eau
et de ces choses terrifiantes que je vois
au travers!
Rendez-moi la liberte de Vos torrents
et de Vos sources limpides.
Faites que je ne sois plus ce petit poisson
rouge
dans sa prison de verre,
mais un etincelle vivante
dans la douceur de Vos joncs...
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE GOLDFISH

O God,
forever I turn in this hard crystal,
so transparent, yet I can find no way out.
Lord,
deliver me from the cramp of this water
and these terrifying things I see through it.
Put me back in the play of Your torrents,
in Your limpid springs.
Let me no longer be a little goldfish
in its prison of glass,
but a living spark
in the gentleness of Your reeds.
Amen

PRIERE DU PETIT COCHON

Seigneur,
ils me font rire avec leur politesse!
Oui, je grogne!
Je grogne et je renifle!
Je grogne, parce que je grogne!
Et je renifle,
parce que je ne peux pas faire autrement!
Je ne vais tout de meme pas les remercier
de m'engraisser pour leur saloir?
Pourquoi m'avez-Vous fait si tendre?
Quelle destinee!
Seigneur,
apprenez-moi a dire:
ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE LITTLE PIG

Lord,
their politeness makes me laugh!
Yes, I grunt!
Grunt and snuffle!
I grunt because I grunt
and snuffle
because I cannot do anything else!
All the same, I am not going to thank them
for fattening me up to make bacon.
Why did You make me so tender?
What a fate!
Lord,
teach me how to say: Amen
Amen

PRIERE DES PETITS CANARDS

Mon Dieu, donnez-nous beaucoup d'eau.
Faites qu'il pleuve demain et toujours.
Donnez-nous beaucoup de petites limaces
et autres bonnes choses a manger.
Protégez le peuple nasillard
et tous ceux qui savent nager.
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE LITTLE DUCKS

Dear God,
give us a flood of water.
Let it rain tomorrow and always.
Give us plenty of little slugs
and other luscious things to eat.
Protect all folk who quack
and everyone who knows how to swim.
Amen

PRIERE DU PETIT POULAIN

Mon Dieu, l'herbe est si jeune!
Mes sabots sont pleins de gambades,
alors,
pourquoi donc cette frayeur en moi?
Je cours
et ma crinière s'accroche au vent!
Je cours
et des parfums s'ecrasent a mon coeur!
Je cours
trebuchant sur ma joie,
et je suis prisonnier de mes yeux
de mes yeux trop larges
de mes yeux
trop vifs a saisir
L'inquietude eparse au monde...
Mon Dieu,
quand l'etrange nuit
rode aux confins du jour,
laissez-Vous emouvoir
par mon hennissement plaintif,
afin qu'une etoile survienne
et que ma peur se rassure.
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE FOAL

O God! the grass is so young!
My hooves are full of capers.
Then
why does this terror start up in me?
I race
and my mane catches the wind.
I race
and Your scents beat on my heart.
I race,
falling over my own feet in my joy,
because my eyes are too big
and I am their prisoner:
eyes too quick to seize
on the uneasiness that runs through the whole world.
Dear God,
when the strange night
prowls round the edge of day,
let Yourself be moved by my plaintive whinny;
set a star to watch over me
and hush my fear.
Amen

PRIERE DE L'ALOUETTE

Me voici, o mon Dieu,
me voici, me voici!
Vous m'arrachez de la terre
et je monte vers Vous
a cris eperdus,
jusqu'a ce point du ciel
ou Vous me crucifiez un instant.
Quand me garderez-Vous pour toujours?

Me laisserez-Vous sans fin
retomber au creux des sillons,
pauvre oiseau d'argile?
Ah! que du moins
ma jubilante pauvreté
s'elance vers la gloire de Votre misericorde,
avec la meme esperance,
jusqu'a la mort!

THE PRAYER OF THE LARK

I am here! O my God.
I am here, I am here!
You draw me away from earth,
and I climb to You
in a passion of shrilling,
to the dot in heaven
where, for an instant, You crucify me.
When will You keep me forever?
Must You always let me fall
back to the furrow's dip,
a poor bird of clay?
Oh, at least
let my exultant nothingness
soar to the glory of Your mercy,
in the same hope,
until death.
Amen

PRIERE DU PETIT ANE

Mon Dieu, qui m'avez cree
pour que je marche sur la route
toujours,
et que je porte de lourds fardeaux
toujours,
et que je sois battu,
toujours!
Donnez-moi beaucoup de courage et de
douceur.
Faites qu'un jour on me comprenne
et que je n'aie plus envie de pleurer,
parce que je m'exprime mal
et qu'on se moque de moi.
Faites que je trouve un beau chardon
et qu'on me laisse le temps de le cueillir.
Faites que je rejoigne un jour
mon petit frere de la Creche.

THE PRAYER OF THE DONKEY

O God, who made me
to trudge along the road
always,
to carry heavy loads
always,
and to be beaten
always!
Give me great courage and gentleness.
One day let somebody understand me -
that I may no longer want to weep
because I can never say what I mean
and they make fun of me.
Let me find a juicy thistle -
and make them give me time to pick it.
And, Lord, one day, let me find again
my little brother of the Christmas crib.
Amen

PRIERE DE L'ABEILLE

Ah! Seigneur,
ce n'est pas moi qui mepriserais Vos dons!
Beni soyez-Vous
qui deployez pour mon zele
la richesse de Vos suavites!
Je bois a toutes les fontaines de Votre amour.

Je puise, dans la fleur de Vos creations,
l'essence de la paix et de la joie.
Que ma petite parcelle d'ardente vie
se fonde dans la grande activite communautaire
pour que s'eleve, a Votre gloire,
ce temple de couceur,
cette citadelle d'encens,
ce grand cierge cloisonne
petri de Vos graces
et de mon obscur labeur!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE BEE

Lord,
I am not one to despise Your gifts.
May You be blessed
Who spread the riches of Your sweetness
for my zeal...
Let my small span of ardent life
melt into our great communal task;
to lift up to Your glory
this temple of sweetness,
a citadel of incense,
a holy candle, myriad-celled,
moulded of Your graces
and of my hidden work.
Amen

PRIERE DU SINGE

Mon Dieu,
pourquoi m'avez-Vous fait si laid?
A cause de ce ridicule visage,
l'humour veut que je fasse des grimaces.
Serai-je toujours
le clown de Votre creation?
Qui m'enlevera cette melancolie du coeur?
Ne permettez-Vous pas, un jour,
que quelqu'un me prenne au serieux, Seigneur?

THE PRAYER OF THE MONKEY

Dear God,
why have You made me so ugly?
With this ridiculous face,
grimaces seem asked for!
Shall I always be
the clown of Your creation?
Oh, who will lift this melancholy from my heart?
Could You not, one day,
let someone take me seriously,
Lord?
Amen

PRIERE DU PAPILLON

Seigneur!
Ou en etais-je?
Ah! oui, cette fleur, ce soleil,
merci! Votre creation est belle!
Ce parfum de rose...
Ou en etais-je?
Une goutte de rosee
roule des feux de joie au coeur d'un lis.
Je devais aller...
Je ne sais plus!
Le vent a peint ses fantaisies sur mes ailes.
Des fantaisies...
Ou en etais-je?
Ah! oui, Seigneur,
j'avais quelque chose a Vous dire:
ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE BUTTERFLY

Lord!
Where was I?
Oh yes! This flower, this sun,

thank You! Your world is beautiful!
This scent of roses...
Where was I?
A drop of dew
rolls to sparkle in a lily's heart.
I have to go...
Where? I do not know!
The wind has painted fancies
on my wings.
Fancies...
Where was I?
Oh yes! Lord,
I had something to tell you:
Amen

PRIERE DE LA GIRAFE

Seigneur,
moi qui vois le monde de haut,
j'ai du mal a me faire a ses petitesesses!
J'ai oui dire
que Vous aimiez les humbles?
Potins de singes!
Il m'est plus facile
de croire a Votre grandeur!
Je me nourris de choses elevees...
J'aime assez me voir sie pres de Votre ciel!
L'humilite!
Potins de singes...
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE GIRAFFE

Lord,
I who see the world from above
find it hard to get used to its pettiness.
I have heard it said
You love humble creatures?
Chatter of apes!
It is easier for me
to believe in Your greatness.
I feed on exalted things
and I rather like
to see myself so close to Your heaven.
Humility!
Chatter of apes!
Amen

PRIERE DE LA CHOUETTE

Poussiere et cendre!
Seigneur,
je ne suis que poussiere et cendre!
Si ce n'est ces deux feux de position,
couleur de lune,
pendus au crochet de mon bec
et qui clignent doucement dans la nuit!
Je ne hais pas Votre lumiere,
Seigneur,
je gemis de ne pouvoir la comprendre,
ennemie de ce peuple des tenebres qui pille Vos moissons.
Mon ululement
eveille toutes les larmes des coeurs!
O mon Dieu,
n'veillera-t-il pas un jour
Votre compassion?
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE OWL

Dust and ashes!
Lord,
I am nothing but dust and ashes,
except for these two riding lights
that blink gently in the night,
colour of moons,
and hung on the hook of my beak.

It is not, Lord, that I hate Your light.
I wail because I cannot understand it,
enemy of the creatures of darkness
who pillage Your crops.
My hoo-hoo-hooooo
startles a depth of tears in every heart.
Dear God,
one day,
will it wake Your pity?
Amen

PRIERE DU GRILLON

Mon Dieu,
je suis tout petit et tres noir,
mais je Vous rends graces
d'avoir repandu,
sur l'humilite de ma vie,
la chaleur de Votre soleil
et l'or fremissant de Vos bles...
Recevez donc avec indulgence
le pauvre elan de mon amour:
cette note de musique
que Vous faites jaillir de mon coeur!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE CRICKET

O God,
I am little and very black,
but I thank You
for having shed
Your warm sun
and the quivering of Your golden corn
on my humble life.
Then take - but be forbearing, Lord -
this little impulse of my love:
this note of music
You have set thrilling in my heart.
Amen

PRIERE DU CHAT

Seigneur
je suis le chat!
Ce n'est pas precisement
que j'aie quelque chose a Vous demander!
Non!
Je ne demande rien a personne!
Mais si Vous aviez, par hasard,
dans les greniers de Votre ciel,
une petite souris blanche,
ou une soucoupe de lait,
je connais du monde qui les apprecie...
Ne maudirez-Vous pas, un jour,
la race des chiens?
Car, en ce cas, je dirais:
ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE CAT

Lord,
I am the cat.
It is not, exactly, that I have something to ask of You!
No -
I ask nothing of anyone -
but,
if You have by some chance, in some celestial barn,
a little white mouse,
or a saucer of milk,
I know someone who would relish them.
Wouldn't You like someday
to put a curse on the whole race of dogs?
If so I should say,
Amen.

PRIERE DU VER LUISANT

Mon Dieu,
n'eloignerez-Vous pas un peu

de moi
Votre lumiere?
Je suis
comme un petit morceau
de cendre!
Ah! c'est Votre nuit
qu'il me faut!
Pour que mon coeur
ose trembler sa faible etoile d'esperance
et livre a d'autres coeurs
cette part de joie
que toute pauvreté recele...
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE GLOW-WORM

Dear God,
would You take Your light
a little farther away
from me?
I am like a morsel
of cinder
and need Your night
for my heart to dare
to flicker out its feeble star:
its hope, to give to other hearts,
what can be stolen from all poverty -
a gleam of joy.
Amen

PRIERE DE LA SOURIS

Je suis si grise,
o mon Dieu,
Vous souvenez-Vous de moi?
Toujours guetee,
toujours chassée,
je grignote petitement la vie.
On ne m'a jamais rien donne.
Pourquoi me reproche-t-on d'etre une souris?
N'etes-Vous pas mon Createur?
Je ne demande qu'a rester cachee.
Donnez-moi seulement la ration de ma faim
loin des griffes
de ce diable aux yeux verts.
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE MOUSE

I am so little and grey,
dear God,
how can You keep me in mind?
Always spied upon,
always chased.
Nobody ever gives me anything,
and I nibble meagrely at life.
Why do they reproach me with being a mouse?
Who made me but You?
I only ask to stay hidden.
Give me my hunger's pittance
safe from the claws
of that devil with green eyes.
Amen

PRIERE DE LA CHEVRE

Seigneur,
laissez-moi vivre a ma fantaisie!
Il me faut un peu de liberte sauvage,
un peu de vertige au coeur,
et cette saveur etrange de fleurs inconnues.
Pour qui seraient Vos montagnes
et ce vent de neige et de sources?
Les moutons ne comprennent rien!
Ils broutent, ils broutent,
tous et toujours dans le meme sens
et puis ruminent sans fin leur insipide routine...
Moi, j'aime bondir au coeur de Vos creations,
franchir Vos abimes,
et la bouche pleine d'herbes sans nom,

fremir d'aventureuse joie
a la cime d'un monde!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE GOAT

Lord,
let me live as I will!
I need a little wild freedom,
a little giddiness of heart,
the strange taste of unknown flowers.
For whom else are Your mountains?
Your snow wind? These springs?
The sheep do not understand.
They graze and graze,
all of them, and always in the same direction,
and then eternally
chew the cud of their insipid routine.
But I - I love to bound to the heart of all
Your marvels,
leap Your chasms,
and, my mouth stuffed with intoxicating grasses,
quiver with an adventurer's delight
on the summit of the world!
Amen

PRIERE DU GROS ELEPHANT

Mon Dieu,
c'est moi, l'elephant,
Votre creature,
qui Vous parle...
Je suis bien embarrasse de ma personne
et ce n'est vraiment pas de ma faute,
si j'aime un peu Votre jungle
avec mes grosses pattes...
Faites-moi agir avec prudence et sagacite
et donnez-moi de penser en philosophe,
afin que je conserve toujours
ma dignite et mon equilibre,
et jouisse en tous lieux de l'humour des
choses...
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE ELEPHANT

Dear God,
it is I, the elephant,
Your creature,
who is talking to You.
I am so embarrassed by my great self,
and truly it is not my fault
if I spoil Your jungle a little with my big feet.
Let me be careful and behave wisely,
always keeping my dignity and poise.
Give me such philosophic thoughts
that I can rejoice everywhere I go
in the lovable oddity of things.
Amen

PRIERE DU BOEUF

Mon Dieu, donnez-moi du temps.
Les hommes sont toujours presses!
Faites-leur comprendre que je ne peux
pas aller vite.
Donnez-moi le temps de manger.
Donnez-moi le temps de marcher.
Donnez-moi le temps de dormir.
Donnez-moi le temps de penser.
Ainsi soit-il!

PRAYER OF THE THE OX

Dear God, give me time.
Men are always so driven!
Make them understand that I can never hurry.
Give me time to eat.
Give me time to plod.
Give me time to sleep.
Give me time to think. Amen

PRIERE DE LA FOURMI

Seigneur,
on me donne toujours tort,
je suis la fable du monde!
Eh! bien oui, j'amasse
et je fais provisions!
N'ai-je pas droit
de jouir un peu du fruit de mon travail,
sans voir quelque chanteur de charme
devaliser mes greniers?
Il y a quelque chose dans Votre justice
que je ne comprends guere!
Quelque chose a reviser peut-etre,
si j'ose donner un conseil!
Je n'ai jamais pese sur personne,
et sans vanite,
me tire assez bien d'affaire!
Alors,
a cette incorrigible imprevoyance
de certains,
faudra-t-il redire eternellement:
ainsi soit-il?

THE PRAYER OF THE ANT

Lord,
I am always made out to be wrong;
a fable to the whole world.
Certainly I hoard
and make provision!
I have my rights!
And surely I can take a little joy
in the fruits of all my work
without some sob singer
coming to rob my store?
There is something in Your justice
that I scarcely understand,
and, if You would allow me to advise,
it might be thought over again.
I have never been a burden to anybody,
and, if I may say so,
I manage my own business very well.
Then,
to the incorrigible improvidence
of some people,
must I, for all eternity, say
Amen

PRIERE DE LA TORTUE

Un peu de patience,
mon Dieu,
j'arrive!
Il faut prendre la nature comme elle est!
Ce n'est pas moi qui l'ai faite!
Je n'ai pas l'intention de critiquer
cette maison sur mon dos:
elle a du bon!
Mais avouez, Seigneur,
qu'elle est bien lourde a porter!
Enfin,
souhaitons que la double cloture
de cette carapace et de mon coeur
ne Vous soit pas tout a fait fermee!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE TORTOISE

A little patience,
O God,
I am coming.
One must take nature as she is!
It was not I who made her!
I do not mean to criticize
this house on my back -
it has its points -
but You must admit, Lord,
it is heavy to carry!
Still,
let us hope that this double enclosure,
my shell and my heart,
will never be quite shut to You. Amen

PRIERE DU VIEUX CHEVAL

Voyez, Seigneur,
ma robe s'en va tout en lambeaux,
comme une vieille bure usee!
J'ai donne tout ce que j'avais de joie
et tout ce que j'avais de force,
dans un dur labeur.
Je n'ai rien reserve pour moi.
Et maintenant,
ma pauvre tete encense
toute la solitude de mon coeur!
Mon Dieu,
je me tiens devant Vous,
tout raide sur mes grosses pattes:
je suis Votre serviteur inutile!
Ah! que Votre bonte
me reserve une dounce mort!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE OLD HORSE

See, Lord,
my coat hangs in tatters,
like homespun, old, threadbare.
All that I had of zest,
all my strength,
I have given in hard work
and kept nothing back for myself.
Now
my poor head swings
to offer up all the loneliness of my heart.
Dear God,
stiff on my thickened legs
I stand here before You:
Your unprofitable servant.
Oh! of Your goodness,
give me a gentle death.
Amen

PRIERE DU CORBEAU

Je crois,
Seigneur,
je crois!
C'est la foi qui sauve, Vous l'avez dit!
Je crois que le monde est fait pour moi,
car il meurt
et moi je m'en repais!
Ma tenue de fossoyeur
s'harmonise a mon vieux coeur cynique.
Ma corbeautiere est entre Vous
et cette vie, tout en bas, dont je guette la fin,
pour ma satisfaction personnelle!
Oh! moi je crie: Avant moi le deluge!
Quel festin!
Je ne reviendrai plus dans l'Arche!
Dans l'Arche...
Que meure en moi
cette horrible nostalgie.
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE RAVEN

I believe,
Lord,
I believe!
It is faith that saves us, You have said it!
I believe the world was made for me,
because as it dies
I thrive on it.
My undertaker's black
is in keeping with my cynical old heart.
Raven land is between You
and that life down there, for whose end I wait
to gratify myself.
"Aha!" I cry. "Avant moi le deluge!"
What a feast!
I shall never go back to the Ark!

To the Ark...
Oh! let it die in me -
this horrible nostalgia.
Amen

PRIERE DE LA COLOMBE

L'Arche attend,
Seigneur,
L'Arche attend Votre bon vouloir,
et le signe de Votre paix...
Je suis la simple colombe!
Simple,
comme la douceur qui vient de Vous!
L'Arche attend,
Seigneur!
Elle a souffert...
Laissez-moi lui porter
ce rameau d'esperance et de joie,
et poser au coeur de son abandon
la grace immaculee,
dont Votre amour m'a revetue!
Ainsi soit-il!

THE PRAYER OF THE DOVE

The Ark waits,
Lord,
the Ark waits on Your will,
and the sign of Your peace.
I am the dove,
simple
as the sweetness that comes from You.
The Ark waits,
Lord;
it has endured.
Let me carry it
a sprig of hope and joy,
and put, at the heart of its forsakenness,
this, in which Your love clothes me,
Grace immaculate.
Amen

PRAYERS FROM THE ARK

CARMEN BERNOS DE GASZTOLD

Translated By
RUMER GODDEN

Illustrations By
JEAN PRIMROSE

At the Cenacle Convent in London, while helping the nuns to clean out a cupboard, Rumer Godden recently came upon a little volume of poems written by the French poet Carmen Bernos de Gasztold and published in a small edition by the "Editions du Cloitre." She later found that this is the private press of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Louis du Temple at Limon-par-Igay, France, and that the poet lives and works there. She recognized the poems as a work of exceptional genius and exquisite charm, and immediately resolved to translate them. Rumer Godden says that she has seldom had more rewarding hours than those spent working over these poems, first at Stanbrook Abbey in England, and then with Carmen Bernos de Gasztold herself at the Benedictine Abbey in France.

The twenty-seven poems, each a simple prayer by one of the animals in Noah's Ark, are a rare combination of devotion, grace, and wit. In their unpretentious way they speak both touchingly and profoundly.

Rumer Godden's own gifts as a poet have been expressed in two well-loved narrative poems: In Noah's Ark, which the Saturday Review called "a small masterpiece -- stimulating, beautifully artistic, and wholly satisfying," and St. Jerome and the Lion, a story in verse for all ages. With the sympathy for animals, the wit and gentle irony which both these poems displayed, it is not surprising that Miss Godden felt a special affinity with the work of Carmen Bernos when she found it, and this fellow feeling illumines her translations, a work of genius in themselves. With the Jean Primrose illustrations they should enchant a great many readers.

CARMEN BERNOS DE GASZTOLD

was born in Arcachon, France, in a family of five children. A large part of her childhood was spent at the Jesuit College of Sainte Marie at Neuilly.

When she was sixteen her father died and she had to start earning a living. Through much of World War II she worked in a silk factory in Neuilly, helping to support her mother and enduring all the hardships of the German occupation. Yet it was during that time that she began to write the poems which form a part of Prayers from the Ark.

After the war years, Carmen's life became no easier. With the death of her mother, she found refuge for a time in the work she loved, teaching small children. During an illness that followed, she went to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Louis du Temple at Limonpar-Igny, and there, with the help and encouragement of the nuns, she regained her strength and once again began to write. Besides Prayers from the Ark she wrote other poems and several books for children at the Benedictine Abbey, where she still lives.

OTHER READINGS BY MARIAN SELDES

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