



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

JUNE, 1917

THREE CANTOS

I



ANG it all, there can be but one *Sordello*!
But say I want to, say I take your whole bag
of tricks,
Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say the
thing's an art-form,
Your *Sordello*, and that the modern world
Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in ;
Say that I dump my catch, shiny and silvery
As fresh sardines flapping and slipping on the marginal
cobble?
(I stand before the booth, the speech ; but the truth
Is inside this discourse—this booth is full of the marrow of
wisdom.)
Give up th' intaglio method.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Tower by tower
Red-brown the rounded bases, and the plan
Follows the builder's whim. Beaucaire's slim gray
Leaps from the stubby base of Altaforte—
Mohammed's windows, for the Alcazar
Has such a garden, split by a tame small stream.
The moat is ten yards wide, the inner court-yard
Half a-swim with mire.
Trunk hose?

There are not. The rough men swarm out
In robes that are half Roman, half like the Knave of Hearts;
And I discern your story:

Peire Cardinal
Was half forerunner of Dante. Arnaut's that trick
Of the unfinished address,
And half your dates are out, you mix your eras;
For that great font Sordello sat beside—
'Tis an immortal passage, but the font?—
Is some two centuries outside the picture.
Does it matter?

Not in the least. Ghosts move about me
Patched with histories. You had your business:
To set out so much thought, so much emotion;
To paint, more real than any dead Sordello,
The half or third of your intensest life
And call that third *Sordello*;
And you'll say, "No, not your life,

Three Cantos

He never showed himself."
Is't worth the evasion, what were the use
Of setting figures up and breathing life upon them,
Were 't not *our* life, your life, my life, extended?
I walk Verona. (I am here in England.)
I see Can Grande. (Can see whom you will.)
 You had one whole man?
And I have many fragments, less worth? Less worth?
Ah, had you quite my age, quite such a beastly and can-
 tankerous age?
You had some basis, had some set belief.
Am I let preach? Has it a place in music?

 I walk the airy street,
See the small cobbles flare with the poppy spoil.
'Tis your "great day," the Corpus Domini,
And all my chosen and peninsular village
Has made one glorious blaze of all its lanes—
Oh, before I was up—with poppy flowers.
Mid-June: some old god eats the smoke, 'tis not the saints;
And up and out to the half-ruined chapel—
Not the old place at the height of the rocks,
But that splay, barn-like church the Renaissance
Had never quite got into trim again.
As well begin here. Began our Catullus:
"Home to sweet rest, and to the waves' deep laughter,"
The laugh they wake amid the border rushes.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

This is our home, the trees are full of laughter,
And the storms laugh loud, breaking the riven waves
On "north-most rocks"; and here the sunlight
Glints on the shaken waters, and the rain
Comes forth with delicate tread, walking from Isola Garda—

Lo soleils plovil,

As Arnaut had it in th' inextricable song.
The very sun rains and a spatter of fire
Darts from the "Lydian" ripples; "*locus undae*," as Catullus,
"*Lydiae*,"

And the place is full of spirits.
Not *lemures*, not dark and shadowy ghosts,
But the ancient living, wood-white,
Smooth as the inner bark, and firm of aspect,
And all agleam with colors—no, not agleam,
But colored like the lake and like the olive leaves,
Glaukopos, clothed like the poppies, wearing golden greaves,
Light on the air.

Are they Etruscan gods?
The air is solid sunlight, *apricus*,
Sun-fed we dwell there (we in England now);
It's your way of talk, we can be where we will be,
Sirmio serves my will better than your Asolo
Which I have never seen.

Your "palace step"?

My stone seat was the Dogana's curb,
And there were not "those girls," there was one flare, one
face.

Three Cantos

'Twas all I ever saw, but it was real. . . .
And I can no more say what shape it was . . .
But she was young, too young.

True, it was Venice,
And at Florian's and under the north arcade
I have seen other faces, and had my rolls for breakfast, for
that matter;
So, for what it's worth, I have the background.
And you had a background,
Watched "the soul," Sordello's soul,
And saw it lap up life, and swell and burst—
"Into the empyrean?"
So you worked out new form, the meditative,
Semi-dramatic, semi-epic story,
And we will say: What's left for me to do?
Whom shall I conjure up; who's my Sordello,
My pre-Daun Chaucer, pre-Boccacio,
As you have done pre-Dante?
Whom shall I hang my shimmering garment on;
Who wear my feathery mantle, *hagoromo*;
Whom set to dazzle the serious future ages?
Not Arnaut, not De Born, not Uc St. Circ who has writ
out the stories.
Or shall I do your trick, the showman's booth, Bob Brown-
ing,
Turned at my will into the Agora,
Or into the old theatre at Arles,

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

And set the lot, my visions, to confounding
The wits that have survived your damn'd *Sordello*?
(Or sulk and leave the word to novelists?)
What a hodge-podge you have made there!—
Zanze and *swanzig*, of all opprobrious rhymes!
And you turn off whenever it suits your fancy,
Now at Verona, now with the early Christians,
Or now a-gabbling of the "Tyrrhene wheelk."
"The lyre should animate but not mislead the pen"—
That's Wordsworth, Mr. Browning. (What a phrase!—
That lyre, that pen, that bleating sheep, Will Wordsworth!)
That should have taught you avoid speech figurative

And set out your matter

As I do, in straight simple phrases:

Gods float in the azure air,
Bright gods, and Tuscan, back before dew was shed,
It is a world like Puvis'?

Never so pale, my friend,
'Tis the first light—not half light—Panisks
And oak-girls and the Maenads
Have all the wood. Our olive Sirmio
Lies in its burnished mirror, and the Mounts Balde and Riva
Are alive with song, and all the leaves are full of voices.
"*Non è fuggito.*"

"It is not gone." Metastasio
Is right—we have that world about us,
And the clouds bow above the lake, and there are folk upon
them

Three Cantos

Going their windy ways, moving by Riva,
By the western shore, far as Lonato,
And the water is full of silvery almond-white swimmers,
The silvery water glazes the up-turned nipple.
How shall we start hence, how begin the progress?
Pace naif Ficinus, say when Hotep-Hotep
Was a king in Egypt—

*When Atlas sat down with his astrolabe,
He, brother to Prometheus, physicist—*

Say it was Moses' birth-year?
Exult with Shang in squatness? The sea-monster
Bulges the squarish bronzes.
(Confucius later taught the world good manners,
Started with himself, built out perfection.)

With Egypt!

Daub out in blue of scarabs, and with that greeny turquoise?
Or with China, *O Virgilio mio*, and gray gradual steps
Lead up beneath flat sprays of heavy cedars,
Temple of teak wood, and the gilt-brown arches
Triple in tier, banners woven by wall,
Fine screens depicted, sea waves curled high,
Small boats with gods upon them,
Bright flame above the river! Kwannon
Footing a boat that's but one lotus petal,
With some proud four-spread genius
Leading along, one hand upraised for gladness,
Saying, "Tis she, his friend, the mighty goddess! Paean!

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Sing hymns ye reeds,
 and all ye roots and herons and swans be glad,
Ye gardens of the nymphs put forth your flowers."
What have I of this life,
 Or even of Guido?
 Sweet lie!—Was I there truly?
Did I know Or San Michele?
 Let's believe it.
Believe the tomb he leapt was Julia Laeta's?
Friend, I do not even—when he led that street charge—
I do not even know which sword he'd with him.
Sweet lie, "I lived!" Sweet lie, "I lived beside him."
And now it's all but truth and memory,
Dimmed only by the attritions of long time.

"But we forget not."

 No, take it all for lies.
I have but smelt this life, a whiff of it—
The box of scented wood
Recalls cathedrals. And shall I claim;
Confuse my own phantastikon,
Or say the filmy shell that circumscribes me
Contains the actual sun;
 confuse the thing I see
With actual gods behind me?
 Are they gods behind me?
How many worlds we have! If Botticelli

Three Cantos

Brings her ashore on that great cockle-shell—
His Venus (Simonetta?),
And Spring and Aufidus fill all the air
With their clear-outlined blossoms?
World enough. Behold, I say, she comes
“Apparelled like the spring, Graces her subjects,”
(That’s from *Pericles*).
Oh, we have worlds enough, and brave *décors*,
And from these like we guess a soul for man
And build him full of aery populations.
Mantegna a sterner line, and the new world about us:
Barred lights, great flares, new form, Picasso or Lewis.
If for a year man write to paint, and not to music—
O Casella!

Exra Pound

(To be continued)