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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THREE CANTOS

II

Leave Casella.

Send out your thought upon the Mantuan palace—
Drear waste, great halls,
Silk tatters still in the frame, Gonzaga's splendor
Alight with phantoms! What have we of them,
Or much or little?
Where do we come upon the ancient people?
"All that I know is that a certain star"—
All that I know of one, Joios, Tolosan,
Is that in middle May, going along
A scarce discerned path, turning aside,
In level poplar lands, he found a flower, and wept.
"*Y a la primera flor,*" he wrote,
"*Qu'ieu trobei, tornei em plor.*"
There's the one stave, and all the rest forgotten.
I've lost the copy I had of it in Paris,
Out of the blue and gilded manuscript
Decked out with Couci's rabbits,
And the pictures, twined with the capitals,
Purporting to be Arnaut and the authors.
Joios we have. By such a margent stream,
He strayed in the field, wept for a flare of color,
When Coeur de Lion was before Chalus.
Or there's En Arnaut's score of songs, two tunes;
The rose-leaf casts her dew on the ringing glass,

Three Cantos

Dolmetsch will build our age in witching music.
Viols da Gamba, tabors, tympanons:

“Yin-yo laps in the reeds, my guest departs,
The maple leaves blot up their shadows,
The sky is full of autumn,
We drink our parting in saki.
Out of the night comes troubling lute music,
And we cry out, asking the singer’s name,
And get this answer:

“ ‘Many a one
Brought me rich presents; my hair was full of jade,
And my slashed skirts, drenched in expensive dyes,
Were dipped in crimson, sprinkled with rare wines.
I was well taught my arts at Ga-ma-río,
And then one year I faded out and married.’
The lute-bowl hid her face.

“We heard her weeping.”

Society, her sparrows, Venus’ sparrows, and Catullus
Hung on the phrase (played with it as Mallarmé
Played for a fan, “*Rêveuse pour que je plonge*,”);
Wrote out his crib from Sappho:
“God’s peer that man is in my sight—
Yea, and the very gods are under him,
Who sits opposite thee, facing thee, near thee,
Gazing his fill and hearing thee,
And thou smilest. Woe to me, with

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Quenched senses, for when I look upon thee, Lesbia,
There is nothing above me
And my tongue is heavy, and along my veins
Runs the slow fire, and resonant
Thunders surge in behind my ears,
And the night is thrust down upon me."

That was the way of love, *flamma dimanat*.
And in a year, "I love her as a father";
And scarce a year, "Your words are written in water";
And in ten moons, "*Caelius, Lesbia illa*—
That Lesbia, Caelius, our Lesbia, that Lesbia
Whom Catullus once loved more
Than his own soul and all his friends,
Is now the drab of every lousy Roman."
So much for him who puts his trust in woman.
So the murk opens.

Dordogne! When I was there,
There came a centaur, spying the land,
And there were nymphs behind him.
Or going on the road by Salisbury
Procession on procession—
For that road was full of peoples,
Ancient in various days, long years between them.
Ply over ply of life still wraps the earth here.
Catch at Dordogne.

Viscount St. Antoni
In the warm damp of spring,

Three Cantos

Feeling the night air full of subtle hands,
Plucks at a viol, singing:

“As the rose—
Si com, si com”—they all begin “*si com*.”
“For as the rose in trellis
Winds in and through and over,
So is your beauty in my heart, that is bound through and over.
So lay Queen Venus in her house of glass,
The pool of worth thou art,

Flood-land of pleasure.”

But the Viscount Pena
Went making war into an hostile country
Where he was wounded:
“The news held him dead.”
St. Antoni in favor, and the lady
Ready to hold his hands—
This last report upset the whole convention.
She rushes off to church, sets up a gross of candles,
Pays masses for the soul of Viscount Pena.

Thus St. Circ has the story:
“That sire Raimon Jordans, of land near Caortz,
Lord of St. Antoni, loved this Viscountess of Pena
‘Gentle’ and ‘highly prized.’
And he was good at arms and *bos trobair*,
And they were taken with love beyond all measure,”
And then her husband was reported dead,
“And at this news she had great grief and sorrow,”

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And gave the church such wax for his recovery,
That he recovered, and
"At this news she had great grief and teen,"
And fell to moping, dismissed St. Antoni;
"Thus was there more than one in deep distress."

So ends that novel. And the blue Dordogne
Stretches between white cliffs,
Pale as the background of a Leonardo.
"As rose in trellis, that is bound over and over,"
A wasted song?

No Elis, Lady of Montfort,
Wife of William à Gordon, heard of the song,
Sent him her mild advances.

Gordon? Or Gourdon

Juts into the sky

Like a thin spire,
Blue night's pulled down around it
Like tent flaps, or sails close hauled. When I was there,
La noche de San Juan, a score of players
Were walking about the streets in masquerade,
With pikes and paper helmets, and the booths,
Were scattered align, the rag ends of the fair.
False arms! True arms? You think a tale of lances . . .
A flood of people storming about Spain!

My cid rode up to Burgos,
Up to the studded gate between two towers,
Beat with his lance butt.

Three Cantos

A girl child of nine,
Comes to a little shrine-like platform in the wall,
Lisps out the words, a-whisper, the King's writ:
"Let no man speak to Diaz or give him help or food
On pain of death, his eyes torn out,
His heart upon a pike, his goods sequestered."
He from Bivar, cleaned out,
From empty perches of dispersed hawks,
From empty presses,
Came riding with his company up the great hill—
"*Afe Minaya!*"—

to Burgos in the spring,
And thence to fighting, to down-throw of Moors,
And to Valencia rode he, by the beard!—
Muy velida.

Of onrush of lances,
Of splintered staves, riven and broken casques,
Dismantled castles, of painted shields split up,
Blazons hacked off, piled men and bloody rivers;
Then "sombre light upon reflecting armor"
And portents in the wind, when De las Nieblas
Set out to sea-fight,
Y dar neuva lumbre las armas y hierros."
Full many a fathomed sea-change in the eyes
That sought with him the salt sea victories.
Another gate?

And Kumasaka's ghost come back to tell
The honor of the youth who'd slain him.

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Another gate.

The kernelled walls of Toro, *las almenas*;
Afield, a king come in an unjust cause.
Atween the chinks aloft flashes the armored figure,
Muy linda, a woman, Helen, a star,
Lights the king's features . . .

“No use, my liege—
She is your highness' sister,” breaks in Ancures;
“*Mal fuego s'enciende!*”
Such are the gestes of war “told over and over.”
And Ignez?

Was a queen's tire-woman,
Court sinecure, the court of Portugal;
And the young prince loved her—Pedro,
Later called the cruel. And other courtiers were jealous.
Two of them stabbed her with the king's connivance,
And he, the prince, kept quiet a space of years—

Uncommon the quiet.
And he came to reign, and had his will upon the daggers
players,
And held his court, a wedding ceremonial—
He and her dug-up corpse in cerements
Crowned with the crown and splendor of Portugal.
A quiet evening and a decorous procession;
Who winked at murder kisses the dead hand,
Does leal homage,
“*Que depois de ser morta foy Rainha.*”
Dig up Camoens, hear out his resonant bombast:

Three Cantos

"That among the flowers,

As once was Proserpine,
Gatheredst thy soul's light fruit and every blindness,
Thy Enn. a the flary mead-land of Mondego,
Long art thou sung by maidens in Mondego."
What have we now of her, his "*linda Ignez*"?
Houtmans in jail for debt in Lisbon—how long after?—
Contrives a company, the Dutch eat Portugal,
Follow her ship's tracks, Roemer Vischer's daughters,
Talking some Greek, dally with glass engraving;
Vondel, the Eglantine, Dutch Renaissance—
The old tale out of fashion, daggers gone;
And Gaby wears Braganza on her throat—
Commuted, say, another public pearl
Tied to a public gullet. Ah, *mon rêve*,
It happened; and now go think—
Another crown, thrown to another dancer, brings you to
modern times?

I knew a man, but where 'twas is no matter:
Born on a farm, he hankered after painting;
His father kept him at work;
No luck—he married and got four sons;
Three died, the fourth he sent to Paris—
Ten years of Julian's and the ateliers,
Ten years of life, his pictures in the salons,
Name coming in the press.

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And when I knew him,
Back once again, in middle Indiana,
Acting as usher in the theatre,
Painting the local drug-shop and soda bars,
The local doctor's fancy for the mantel-piece;
Sheep—jabbing the wool upon their flea-bit backs—
The local doctor's ewe-ish pastoral;
Adoring Puvis, giving his family back
What they had spent for him, talking Italian cities,
Local excellence at Perugia,
 dreaming his renaissance,
Take my Sordello!

Ezra Pound

(*To be concluded*)