

CANTO ONE – July 1, 1959			
CARD 1	1	I was the shadow of the waxwing slain	10
	2	By the false azure in the windowpane;	
	3	I was the smudge of ashen fluff – and I	
	4	Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.	
	5	And from the inside, too, I'd duplicate	
	6	Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate:	
	7	Uncurtaining the night, I'd let dark glass	
	8	Hang all the furniture above the grass,	
	9	And how delightful when a fall of snow	
	10	Covered my glimpse of lawn and reached up so	
	11	As to make chair and bed exactly stand	
	12	Upon that snow, out in the crystal land!	
	13		
	14	Retake the falling snow: each drifting flake	

CARD 2	1	Shapeless and slow, unsteady and opaque,	20
	2	A dull dark white against the day's pale white	
	3	And abstract larches in the neutral light.	
	4	And then the gradual and dual blue	
	5	As night unites the viewer and the view,	
	6	And in the morning, diamonds of frost	
	7	Express amazement: Whose spurred feet have crossed	
	8	From left to right the blank page of the road?	
	9	Reading from left to right in winter's code:	
	10	A dot, an arrow pointing back; repeat:	
	11	Dot, arrow pointing back... A pheasant's feet	
	12	Torquated beauty, sublimated grouse,	
	13	Finding your China right behind my house.	
	14	Was he in <i>Sherlock Homes</i> , the fellow whose	

CARD 3	1	Tracks pointed back when he reversed his shoes?	30
	2		
	3	All colors made me happy: even gray.	
	4	My eyes were such that literally they	
	5	Took photographs. Whenever I'd permit	
	6	Or, with a silent shiver, order it,	
	7	Whatever in my field of vision dwelt –	
	8	An indoor scene, hickory leaves, the svelte	
	9	Stilettoes of a frozen stillicide –	
	10	Was printed on my eyelids' nether side	
	11	Where it would tarry for an hour or two,	
	12	And while this lasted all I had to do	
	13	Was close my eyes to reproduce the leaves,	
	14	Or indoor scene, or trophies of the eaves.	

CARD 4	1		
	2	I cannot understand why from the lake	
	3	I could make out our front porch when I'd take	
	4	Lake Road to school, whilst now, although no tree	
	5	Has intervened, I look but fail to see	
	6	Even the roof. Maybe some quirk in space	
	7	Has caused a fold or furrow to displace	
	8	The fragile vista, the frame house between	
	9	Goldsworth and Wordsmith on its square of green.	
	10		
	11	I had a favorite young shagbark there	
	12	With ample dark jade leaves and a black, spare,	50
	13	Vermiculated trunk. The setting sun	
	14	Bronzed the black bark, around which, like undone	

CARD 5	1	Garlands, the shadows of the foliage fell.	
	2	It is now stout and rough; it has done well.	
	3	White butterflies turn lavender as they	
	4	Pass through its shade where gently seems to sway	
	5	The phantom of my little daughter's swing.	
	6		
	7	The house itself is much the same. One wing	
	8	We've had revamped. There's a solarium. There's	
	9	A picture window flanked with fancy chairs.	60
	10	TV's huge paperclip now shines instead	
	11	Of the stiff vane so often visited	
	12	By the naïve, the gauzy mockingbird	
	13	Retelling all the programs she had heard;	
	14	Switching from <i>chippo-chippo</i> to a clear	

CARD 6	1	<i>To-wee, to-wee</i> ; then rasping out: <i>come here</i> ,	
	2	<i>Come here, come herrr</i> ; flirting her tail aloft,	
	3	Or gracefully indulging in a soft	
	4	Upward hop-flop, and instantly (<i>to-wee!</i>)	
	5	Returning to her perch – the new TV.	70
	6		
	7	I was an infant when my parents died.	
	8	They both were ornithologists. I've tried	
	9	So often to evoke them that today	
	10	I have a thousand parents. Sadly they	
	11	Dissolve in their own virtues and recede,	
	12	But certain words, chance words I hear or read,	
	13	Such as "bad heart" always to him refer,	
	14	And "cancer of the pancreas" to her.	

CARD 7	1		
	2	A preterist: one who collects cold nests.	
	3	Here was my bedroom, now reserved for guests.	80
	4	Here, tucked away by the Canadian maid,	
	5	I listened to the buss downstairs and prayed	
	6	For everybody to be always well,	
	7	Uncles and aunts, the maid, her niece Adèle	
	8	Who'd seen the Pope, people in books, and God.	
	9		
	10	I was brought up by dear bizarre Aunt Maud,	
	11	A poet and a painted with a taste	
	12	For realistic objects interlaced	
	13	With grotesque growths and images of doom.	
	14	She lived to her the next babe cry. Her room	90

CARD 8	1	We've kept intact. Its trivia create	
	2	A still life in her style: the paperweight	
	3	Of convex glass enclosing a lagoon,	
	4	The verse book open at the Index (Moon,	
	5	Moonrise, Moor, Moral), the forlorn guitar,	
	6	The human skull; and from the local <i>Star</i>	
	7	A curio: <i>Red Sox Beat Yanks 5-4</i>	
	8	<i>On Chapman's Homer</i> , thumbtacked to the door.	
	9		
	10	My God died young. Theolatriy I found	
	11	Degrading, and its premises, unsound.	100
	12	No free man needs a God; but was I free?	
	13	How fully I felt nature glued to me	
	14	And how my childish palate loved the taste	

CARD 9	1	Half-fish, half-honey of that golden paste!	
	2		
	3	My picture book was at an early age	
	4	The painted parchment papering our cage:	
	5	Mauve rings around the room; blood-orange sun	
	6	Twinned Iris; and that rare phenomenon	
	7	The iridule – when beautiful and strange,	
	8	In a bright sky above a mountain range	
	9	One opal cloudlet in an oval form	
	10	Reflects the rainbow of a thunderstorm	
	11	Which in a distant valet has been staged –	110
	12	For we are not artistically caged.	
	13		
	14	And there's the wall of sound: the nightly wall	

CARD 10	1	Raised by a trillion crickets in the fall.	120
	2	Impenetrable! Halfway up the hill	
	3	I'd pause in thrall of their delirious trill.	
	4	That's Dr. Sutton's light. That's the Great Bear.	
	5	A thousand years ago five minutes were	
	6	Equal to forty ounces of fine sand.	
	7	Outstare the stars. Infinite foretime and	
	8	Infinite aftertime: above your head	
	9	They close like giant wings, and you are dead.	
	10		
	11	The regular vulgarian, I daresay,	
	12	Is happier: he sees the Milky Way	
	13	Only when making water. Then as now	
	14	I walked at my own risk: whipped by the bough,	

CARD 11	1	Tripped by the stump. Asthmatic, lame and fat,	130
	2	I never bounced a ball or swung a bat.	
	3		
	4	I was the shadow of the waxwing slain	
	5	By feigned remoteness in the windowpane.	
	6	I had a brain, five senses (one unique);	
	7	But otherwise I was a cloutish freak.	
	8	In sleeping dreams I played with other chaps	
	9	But really envied nothing - save perhaps	
	10	The miracle of a lemniscate left	
	11	Upon wet sand by nonchalantly deft	
	12	Bicycle tires.	
	13		
	14	A thread of subtle pain,	

CARD 12	1	Tugged at by playful death, released again,	140
	2	But always present, ran through me. One day,	
	3	When I'd just turned eleven, as I lay	
	4	Prone on the floor and watched a clockwork toy -	
	5	A tin wheelbarrow pushed by a tin boy -	
	6	Bypass chair legs and stray beneath the bed,	
	7	There was a sudden sunburst in my head.	
	8		150
	9	And then black night. That blackness was sublime.	
	10	I felt distributed through space and time:	
	11	One foot upon a mountaintop, one hand	
	12	Under the pebbles of a panting strand	
	13	One ear in Italy, one eye in Spain,	
	14	In caves, my blood, and in the stars, my brain.	

CARD 13	1	There were dull throbs in my Triassic; green	160
	2	Optical spots in Upper Pleistocene,	
	3	An icy shiver down my Age of Stone,	
	4	And all tomorrows in my funnybone.	
	5		
	6	During one winter every afternoon	
	7	I'd sink into that momentary swoon.	
	8	And then it ceased. Its memory grew dim.	
	9	My health improved. I even learned to swim.	
	10	But like some little lad forced by a wench	
	11	With his pure tongue her abject thirst to quench,	
	12	I was corrupted, terrified, allured,	
	13	And though old doctor Colt pronounced me cured	
	14	Of what, he said, were mainly growing pains,	

CARD 14	1	The wonder lingers and the shame remains.	
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