Spring 1991

Canto Spring 1991

Kent State University - Stark Campus

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CANTO

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V O L U M E 3  1 9 9 1

SPECIAL POETRY ISSUE

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Then

When we are dead, even then, people will still care; we will wait in our poems.
When we are dead, even then, we will still be listening to our words passed on to others.
We will still be making poems for people - out of silence.
Silence will be falling into that silence, it is building into the music of the universe.
...And Still I Chase The Night With Words

To spill the ink, the wine, the blood of our misgiving and this pen burns like a scar on my hand.

She flaunted ambiguity and gestured with the stroke of a cruel blade — disarming with her stern beauty.

This mocking darkness cries the greed of lovers lost and too late with words.

She could paint shadows on the world and still brighten my face to a smile. Perhaps her laughter was sincere, perhaps the stars did not stray from her callous eyes ...

Like stone silence this pen falls to the page of empty white frustration

fearful of words and darkness
Chaos Wind

To write the words
to shatter the shell
that smothers breath
and sacred sight

to capture the moments
of silent screaming
with ink and concrete
chaos

And I have learned to prey

The wind cuts the corners
of the house in strained whispers.
Her voice cannot hear me
but her eyes stare at the sacred skin
gauntly stretched beneath
this ashen light

Should I tell her
Should I speak the rhymes
that haunt the nights
of this cruel wind

She would listen
for awhile
Haven

Finally
alone, Total
absence

These gun-metal plated
walls hold no raving
eyes to fixate upon the
capacious aperture that
rides my breast

No student patricide No
asphyxiating associates

The Door --
impervious, a bolted
rock guarded by a
rolling stone --
This is my haven,
there are photographs to
remind me of when
labors were virtuous and
an ashtray to
remind me life is
brief
Elegiac

If the dead are usually vulnerable, 
dependent on our love, then 
to be empty of them is to be cramped 
& panicked, perhaps unbearably.

Perhaps not. From moment to moment 
a flame swings in my throat, 
huge latitudes open in my chest, 
your face stands in quiet distance,

staring, tenuous. Often I guess 
you’re drifting toward me, carrying 
your bag of thunderous ripples, & 
my inability to conceive of you,

to profit by your pointlessness. 
For hours I have sat here, watching 
your light, your ground under 
your feet. All’s real. Nothing lasts.
Codas of speech, uneven names, hunched outlines under sheets that hold whatever is left of pasts I never regretted, a perfect ribbon that I follow, both hands calmly passing a rope around my waist in readiness.

Of the perceptions staggering toward me, for which do I plead? Air, fury, grief, the one I return to my lungs as final, the drop on my father’s lips, above his chin, the day before I left? The light each morning seems the same. Trees hover like clouds at the back of a pond or a child touching its mouth.

What I hold in hand is the shell of everything, & everything within the shell, spikes of feeling high as minarets, crazy dances of the pulse. I open a palm, they fall away; I close, they gather again.

I can feed the bear my own way. Soul is the one reality. Toward the darkness of this world I press my face.
To The Sun

Why does this gray day seem so appropriate?
You would've wasted energy this morning.
I wouldn't have wanted to see you rising in the color of a heartbeat in the wake of yesterday.

Yes, yesterday
I had faith - or something like it counterfeiting,
counter - acting,
and anti-depressant a manic promise rushing on ahead to the end of the book,
skipping the struggles in between. The chapters, factors only in the filling - so many pages required, a fleshy manuscript.

So here is how it will be - I knew - and didn't doubt my destination or the awkward explanation of the planetary hoop-la, the hype of benchmark markings, record breaking, record takings.
Yes, pictures were taken,
dates were written down
and it all led to this.
Me, not new anymore
all these dark distorted
details -

the scar above the right
corner of my mouth
another,
where the ten pound baby came out ...

And the high swing low -
like now -
I see I never saw at all.
Even these blackened clouds
have a purpose
(as unsubstantial as they are)
if they would touch the ground
I'd walk right through them
like something super-human.
They disguise the fact
that you are always here
illuminating the flaws of our world.

You and your Stoic philosophy,
with your starched white light
as you startle us awake.
This dawn will not be broken
by your sour yellow face.
You, who say each day is here
you make each yesterday.
Golden one, regulator
you, that keep us all alive
until we die.
Ha - this time the rain clouds
hide you as you
climb the sky
beaming like a liar.
Remembering Gina, While Hearing The Blues

What was once
is something else again -
like the blues without
my little sister singing -
and something in the color
of the music being more
than blue tonight....

We sit at a table
in the sidelines
and smoke falls flat
against the muraled walls.
Relativity revolves around
our own art's eye, I know
and the lost will leave
a vacancy that art
attempts to fill.

What is it that we layer
upon layer, wrapping
around us like a shroud
covering the eggshell skin
that tries to keep the yellow
yolk from seeping through
and spilling to the ground?
Veils we wear to shield ourselves will soon be stripped away. We’re all naked really, and alone against the elements we shake. But outside tonight the sky is clear and full of stars and free of heaven—and being free of heaven free from death.

An artist’s hand prepares to save the grace for future study, connects the dots between the light of an instant and the eyes of a day yet to come.

Brushing the hands that held on tightly just before they waved good-bye with the color that the leaves were yesterday before they fell. Forming the shape of the voice that sang so low so long ago, transparently, an echo grayed and gold.

A slight distortion of what really was, something that never quite happened, that is happening now, that will happen again. One smile that’s almost holy like the faces of the dead, painted with the music like the dreams we will almost remember tomorrow.
Woman As Art

You’ve acquired quite a large collection.
But what mad artist made each masterpiece?
If what you say we are is true, my curator,
who created us and what are you?

You pat me on the back and usher me
inside your mausoleum. Your capped-gap teeth
dismiss my questions with a grin. You point
a crooked finger at the wall.

Look, a fine line drawing, clear and colorless,
refined - and empty - but that’s what you like
the best. No clutter here, the image pure
precise defined - minimalist,

not like those new abstractions you’ve seen out there
on the street. Black lips, red eye-lids, dead white
skin, you don’t understand that purple hair.
Just give you a classic anytime.

A sculpted Venus complete with no arms.
Someone who would have to depend on you.
Oh, she would inspire you I guess, as long
as she still has her breasts.

What about the Mona Lisa - her closed mouth
modesty, that smile? She must be a quiet
woman. Someone who doesn’t talk back. What -
there is no sex appeal there?
Of course you’d rather have a nude. One of Renoir’s bathers. You could picnic underneath a tree while she reclined on shore, her big toe dipping in the water. A border-line whore.

But not those boozing burlesque bitches, too loose inside their tacky dance hall dress. You’re frightened of their wizened cherub smirks that smack your frown, their restlessness.

Now you lead me down a corridor lit calmly, where Madonna and Child variations are displayed, row after row strictly aligned, their halos on straight their expressions resigned.

We turn the corner and I see the twisted women, hanging in a gallery of hate. Custom designed by someone once, then altered. Picasso blue and Andy Warhol green,

Screaming silent from the holes of flat black mouths, looking out through melting butter yellow eyes, all elbows high-heeled shoes and bloody noses. They clutch orange roses.

Wombs that own no faces walk through marketplaces selling souls on strings like bright balloons. The darkness pictured leaks its lies from countless pairs of anonymous eyes.

Untitled portraits of tortured saints, their silver auras, shattered slivers in the sun - are crushed crowns on the bird’s-nest hair, tied back tightly in a bun.
And over there, a tree with women’s hands
that grab the sun and bloody roots that rearrange
the ground, throws tears the size of apples
on the head of purple science,

while it sleeps and dreams of gravity
and goddesses and nature’s laws.
What goes up (you tell me) must come
down, down, down.

We step outside. You tilt my head to catch
the light just right. But mister don’t
you look at me like that. I’m not another
thing that you can nail to the wall.

I’ll be out of here so fast, a blur -
a string of dirty words. I’m spiral spray-
can spittle, a flash of self created free.
You can’t own me.

You’ll never be my master.
I’ll run from you forever.
Fast graffiti on an alabaster wall.
Sojourn Into Womanhood

for my daughter, Candy

Another decade
seals itself
inside the wooden picture frames
randomly arranged
across my plastered walls;

As I stared at your photograph
memory fragments escaped
into the darkened room
and for a few brief moments
I relived
the life decisions
that shattered our girl scout images;
you erected scaffolding and leaped
youth walls into womanhood
while I sought freedom
from a materialistic existence;
many times
our sojourn changed
but in all moments
we were one.
Morning Coffee

Sunlight penetrates
the still darkness
as I wake
to an empty house,
and stand, bare,
like a soldier
out of uniform.

I make coffee,
pouring two cups,
slowly sipping mine
while yours chills
to the silence
of terminated love.
ANA PINE

Womanfriend

I watch
intimate details of
our lives unravel,
spread out before us
like a campaign map--
my problems, yours,
shared secrets only
women tell. As the facets
of our personalities are
revealed, I feel a certain
kinship and am filled with
joyful anticipation.
Words Unspoken

We lay like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, pressed together—interlocking side by side on crisp scented sheets, our bodies damp from the heat of our love. Your breath on my neck labors into the rhythm of sleep.
Domesticity

I

She, next to her husband driving
I-71 from a Bob Evans they didn’t
eat in because of the smoke
and his asthma,
put on her lipstick, threw
blotted hearts
out the window. Two hours
later his heart stopped.

II

For months her children wore
the wedding bands and she did
laundry: rubbed detergent into stains,
bleached her husband’s cotton shirts,
watched them turn on the line
as she folded sweaters into boxes,
gave it all to the Salvation Army.
III

After Christmas he began to fade and she believed it was winter air, not his breath upon her neck, sliding that icy run of fear down her spine. To keep warm, she carpeted the house, put up new walls with vegetable-print paper, cleaned the closets.

IV

It seemed the hangers hadn’t stopped moving before another man’s clothes were on them and his scent cluttered the bathroom. The eldest daughter when she set the table made three placements, moved her father’s chair somewhere else and made the stranger sit on a broken chair.

V

Years later, when her boyfriend walks away, the daughter hangs socks on the line while her stepfather piles the dry clothes in a basket.
Crimson From The Wind

I can see us
three years ago at Mentor
Headlands, sitting on red
rocks, talking about whether
or not we could ever
offend each other,
though neither of us
wanted to try. With confidence, I
touched your hand,
crimson from the wind, as though it were
your heart, quietly said, "You wouldn't;
I know you
wouldn't." You seemed
offended by my brazen
trust, confused by the words in my thick, visible
breath in that October air -- words that filled
every pore of your skin
with my warmth. What I chose
not to say then is that every day I
give you more power than those forceful
white waves to break
my heart. I believe
you never will.
Memory Under A Dispassionate Half Moon

On a cruise in the West Bay, a woman leaves the salt-burned Hell-rock of Grand Cayman -- staghorn corals, shells melded by lime and a slight acid rain. Tonight on the Bridge, she stands at the rail looking at a dispassionate half moon, Caribbean whitecaps turning over. She tries remembering lyrics playing in the background from a night now vague as the moon's dark side and as the kiss of her lover from years ago -- if only because one midnight he broke her key ring with its shells and glitter-sand inside glass while trying to lock her keys in the car so she would stay; he would tell her he loves her. After all this time -- after only once he lost the words and she, sailing north, still carries the chain -- their love may truly be dead, but poetry convinces us the dead are still in love, refusing to quietly settle like seashells on the ocean floor.
Undercurrent

Fragments of thoughts flicker
half flashes of memories
through the lattice of my mind,
without any purpose, except
perhaps to stir the anima of the soul.
Soon I am caught in this array
of mental kindling and taken in
by these disquieting remembrances.
Reluctantly, I reflect on a time past,
a limited span when being mindful
was much easier and less grave;
when feeling everything
that could be felt and seeing
everything that could be seen
was the limit of my life:
Consciousness exposed me to existence
and absorption overruled thought.
And now this perforated business
which surrounds me
has changed its tune, yet
these things that exist
are in no way different; no, its
just this extra skin that
I wake up wearing and the way
in which there is always a
finer place to be and
a better way to do things.
Grocery Run

Regardful yet distant, heedless of marbled face obstacles
Caring not about now; life had stopped already, somewhere not here—in
some other country, some other time
Replaced now by a brown paper bag walk. Senses rubber and eyes glass,
feeling that his mind must now be covered with the same thick, white skin that numbs
fingertips, the same smoothly worn membrane now allowing this dry bag a serpent smooth escape from white knuckled grip
Blood seldom surfaces
to flush pallid face
and redden white ears,
or to show itself
through narrowed veins,
causing the feverish color
that once could not
hide the
life
inside
That Winter

That winter
when you cut the fingers
from my gloves,
the ache ran through
my children's arms
while silver tears
froze to my cheeks.

But still I stayed
and cleared the path.

Then when the way was wide,
I stepped aside
and sent the long dream
on ahead.
Franklin, Pennsylvania - 1968
for Brenda and Tammy

How many nights did we spend
in that car, three good girls,
roaming the block from Elk
to Liberty and back, green lights
precious as the boys following us --

like Jim Gracy, the first human being
out of whose mouth I heard
the word "groovy." How he glittered
in his chrome-encrusted Chevy, this boy
none of us would have brought home
on a bet.

We circled the planet
with attendant moons, rode
the curves of that particular orbit
as though the length of one millennium
were nothing, as though we didn’t have to be in
by midnight.

Oh, smell of gasoline! Oh, happiness!
luminous as the blue heron
on the banks of the Allegheny
as he lifts the metallic glint of his wings
and rows forward toward liberty.
I’m stuck. A large, a major, a jam-packed traffic backup stretches along I-77, going north. You know that stretch between Akron & Canton? That’s a little less than a break between industrial parks & warehouse parks?

Here I am stopped between two “Speed Limit 55” signs. I’m doing that slow burn thing that I do as I creep and stop, creep and stop, two lanes down to one, the one lone lane a funnel-like, a squeeze play, a stop, a stuck. And up ahead (this is unbelievable!), a car decides, just like that, to burst into flame, a burning buick, like, blocking the even one lane left. So I pass on the berm, only to wait again just past it. More of that slow burn thing that I do.

Beyond the brown windbent cornrows I see how the large yellow earthmovers are eating, contouring the rich, black farmland into fairways and greens. The wide sky is blue. The few clouds are white. The highway surface is a black band beaded with cars and trucks of varied hues, like a coat of many colors.

The sun is in my eyes. The shadow of my car which I can see in my rearview mirror stretches out long behind me.

For no reason I can recall, I recall two lines from Joyce’s Dubliners: “The snow is general all over Ireland,” and “Brown is everywhere.” And as uncertain as I am over why I remember...
these lines, I am equally uncertain, in between surety and intu-
ition, as to whether these lines are incorrect from my memory or
correct from the text.

Forcefully I shove a cassette into the tape player. Tchaikovsky's
"Winter Dreams" symphony, for no apparent reason.

Here's a season for you: winter.
Here's another: road construction.

And not on any endangered species list: orange
barrels.
What's moving: time.
What's not moving: traffic. Me.

In between the winter and the brown, between Akron & Canton,
between memory and text, between this and that, here and there,
I'm shifted into neutral, into a long, into a sort-of-quiet-yet-sort-
of-not idle, into stuck.
Groundhog

All summer from the porch, I've watched the rock in the back yard—the color and size of a groundhog—turn from facing east to south: appearing to be tracking the sun on its trek to lower latitudes.

When I went out to see what caused its movement, I found the rock—the groundhog—to be no more than a discarded chunk of turf collapsing under its own process of decay.
The Country Bastard Gives
A Lesson In Courtesy

Every night their goddam dog
would get into my garbage.
I'd find it strewn around the yard
eggs shells and milk cartons
cold wet tea bags
cellophane from Friday's chicken
crumpled Kleenexes
and scattered nearby
to smear my new boots
dog turds.

So last night I waited
down wind and out of sight
watching as he slowly approached
sniffed the can
then reared up beside it
and pushed with his paws
til over it went
and rancid trash tumbled out.

I waited as he ate
the strychnine-loaded meat
and even before he started to twitch
I gave him a shot
of old Dr. Twenty Gauge.

There was never a yelp.
He just dropped in a lump
right where he was
muzzle on a melon rind.
Then I dragged the sonofabitch across to my neighbors’ yard and left them a little reminder to take the time to tie up their dog and have some consideration.
What Can Drugs Do?

What can drugs do? They can get you on a high, but when the high is over you would wonder why.

What can drugs do? Drugs can mess up you and your family and if they know you are addicted, they will have nothing to do with you.

What can drugs do? They can hurt an unborn child. They can kill you. They can change your life into a bad life of crime and jail, but jail doesn't teach everybody well.

Now you see what drugs can do. I won't try them. How about you?
The Wave

It caught the shooting star as helium-rising. For when ashen creatures started to perpetuate through their callused barnacles and dervish themselves in Moorish contentment, they sunk into the seafoam of silver-lined clouds that spilled puddles beneath the new throngs of life.
Lake Glass
for Barbara Felt

_Not what we see but how we see it matters_
--John Ashbery

I have sent my sister down the beach
in search of buried treasure, and she
will find it. I know because I hid it
in well-marked mounds
and only just beneath the surface
(for she is little, and despair quickly) --
small caches of colored glass
the waves have polished on the sand
until each piece is finger-smooth and singular.
These for us are jewels, a fiction
she only half-believes
(but this is a time when half-believing
is sufficient), humorizing me
in return for my attention,
me allowing her to humor me
that I might please her.

While she is finishing breakfast,
I gather this booty for her
at the water's edge, where it gleams wetly
among pebbles and periwinkles
and stones just right for skipping,
until I have a rich handful. Then
I lose my find again for her amusement, for she is at that awkward stage (when does it end?) where joy gives way without apparent cause to petulance and glassy boredom. Hours later, when we leave the beach, tired and a little browner, perhaps she takes her plunder with her, perhaps it lies forgotten in the sand, changed once more into broken Coca-Cola bottles and other bits of washed-up flotsam.

But now she reappears to drop a delighted handful onto the blanket, then runs off in search of more, her bare feet leaving small depressions in her wake, her useless bikini top askew. The pile left behind is glitteringly beautiful—incandescent rounded scraps of an almost opaque emerald green that like these brown and amber shards (precious stones whose names we do not know) began as beer and soda bottles; small, glowing pearls from coffee cups and shattered dinner plates swept romantically enough maybe from the galleys of swamped schooners; translucent, deep blue sapphires (sapphires, we think, are such a shade of blue) the color of the bottle that holds milk of magnesia; pale green-white uncut diamonds that mottle as they dry; and best because the rarest, mysterious wave-shaved rubies, always tiny and of inexplicable origin.

* * * *
All this happened years ago, of course, when the wishes I was called upon to grant were modest, when pretty litter was all it took to charm my sister into pirate happiness. Now, although she may still find lake glass lovely, it casts no spell, and I must look elsewhere for the jetsam to lighten her boredom and transmute her grown sorrows into childly joy. These words are all I have, and they must do (they are no more specious than those gems were paste). And because neither of us cares much any more for hidden meanings, I will simply say to her, look here to find some waif reclaimed by happiness, a string of sunny, sandy afternoons, a hoard of closeness in day-bright open spaces. Redemption, after all, requires very little. Consider: in the Nazi deathcamps, so I've heard, one woman stayed alive because no one could believe her blue eyes Jewish. So take these gimcrack bits of glass, a bloodstone syllable or two, and leave this life awhile for the one you knew. There is nothing so small it does not matter, nor so marred it cannot charm. There is nothing so common it cannot save you.
HENRY HUGHES

Crane Moon

Five o'clock--
I see corn twisted like iron,
dry glazed oaks--
the sandhill cranes filling the fields
of northwest Indiana.

Beneath the broken clouds,
the washed lines of reddening light,
a pair leafs out
broadwinged against the sun
with long hollow bones, the upward flick
of a feathered wrist.

Rust-stained, they pick at the earth,
and dance,
bowing low and leaping
open-sailed
throwing leaves over their red crowns
bouncing like loose planets
beside the bleached grass.

It's dark now
under the crane moon.
There's nothing on the road south to Indianapolis.
And nothing in the car,
but a blue robe in a suitcase
and magazines full of shining animals.
Patton

The blood around men's heart
is their thinking
--Empedocles

He wakes in uniform,
Rommel's book on the night table.
The Tenth Panzer crawling south--
a great iron square in the black desert.
But Patton's too much in love
to mistake lightning go a lover.
He waits at the sand point--
Achilleus coveting Hektor's body,
stroking the place between shoulder and neck
where the spear drives.
And that spring his army finds the sea,
stopping where a centurion bent
to pull a tunic
from a broken Carthaginian.
I was here, he says.

Crossing this Jersey field
to my apartment
with milk and eggs for breakfast,
I remember my high school history class and the film.
He was there: Seventh Army, Sicily.
Nearing traffic and compressors
in the chuckholed street,
howitzers grubbing up hills,
a blast, recoiling into willow.
I am here, following him to that village outside Palermo. Patton, carefully tailored in a reddening halftrack, telling us again *Man is war, Goddamit, I love it.*

And now there is joy for me: a coward, slacker; afraid of dogs and carnival rides, sleeping Sundays on the couch.

Joy, now, from the turret of a fifty-ton Sherman half-way through the blue stone of a woman's kitchen. A green nimbus over the hot armor, over the turnip garden.
Lucky Partners

He was social by
temperament; she was looking for Mister
Wrong. They
married anyway, she and him.
Wore matching black
eyes to a dance once, over at the
Rotary Club. Last year it
was. Of
course it fascinated the neighbors, who
don’t realize slashes and
dots are the
morse code of love.
The Gardens of Babylon

The trees are miniatures and are cut and hurt where each branch would go its own way. Henceforth they grow not unto the sky but unto man, for such is the beauty of the gardens of Babylon.

The flowers are too, too, perfect betraying the prayers of plants -- in their countless rows perfected they are more like glass statues.

The fruit trees are always full of fruit, as soon as one withers, a gardener is dispatched, a replica replaces what has withered with what is perfect for man is perfect and man will make his will to be known as a perfecting will in the dust of the earth.

For there will be no sin in the garden, nor weeds, nor blight, nor any frail thing that may offend that artisan, Our Great King.
On a dreary Jena night,
when fog camped upon the university
and students were just packing up
their lecture notes on Hegel,
Schopenhauer and four students,
disciples with hopefully sufficient reason,
sought rest from Universal Will.
Schopenhauer, caustic, misogynist and bitter,
suggested Beethoven, specifically
The Emperor’s Concerto,
saying to his students --
“"In music, dear lads, you will find
a synthetic transportation of your
body and in that repose
rest for your soul
and all her karmic travail,
until it seems as if
your self’s annihilated,
a lost hieroglyph among the representations!"

In awe the four students followed Arthur
entering the beautiful hall
as if it were indeed the Christian Church.
And taking a seat not too far
from the conductor’s point of honor,
nor too close,
folded their hands and rested
from the angry libations of existence.
During the work as the joyous piano conjured up Augustus or Julian the Apostate, Schopenhauer envisaged his philosophy like a spear thrown into Hegel’s heart, and even all the students that came like ignorant rats to fill that lecture hall instead of Schopenhauer’s. By the end of the piece all this was forgotten utterly, and bitterness drained of all her gorgeous beauties left Arthur Wilhelm almost a youth, almost a boy.

He was elated when the crowd applauded and in an unthinking moment put his great arms on the shoulders of his two best students, and said, “Do you see what I mean Herr Richter, Herr Vogel how great music alone can quiet us?”

Indeed they saw and even felt what the Great Teacher was driving at -- but after they walked him to his flat they abandoned his philosophy and like any other good German rats sought solace in German beer and lovely German beer hall girls.
Ah, fellow comrade in uselessness!
We meet in the street
coming to a solicitous place of greeting
on the sandy concrete.
You detect in my eye
some strange lesion of the spirit,
the old inflammatory lesson
eating away at me
in, yes, a
celebration of angst.
In your ear a phrase leaks out
like a passport to a far country.
We sit down to examine our poems
and said to the left and the right --

It's not going well for you
in matters of women.
You're worried the window of nature
has slammed shut on
the possibility.
You mention in the same breath
the aged and fat squirrel
who comes daily to the red sill
of your garret window
and looks you matter of factly in the eye
and taps, then extending his
gray claws further, taps again.
We try to comfort ourselves from the presence of robots. We discuss the failure of R's book of poems: poetic vision turned a garish slave of sexual conquest.

You're off across the planet taking the fate of your success in a non-plussed stoical attitude, saying ironical Nietzschean prayers into the vortex.

I note the spot where we talked for, Mark, often what you tell me brings itself into my poems -- as cranes hoisting out a word or sometimes even as a spiritually-minded architect who tells me what it is I really mean to say.

Now that you're gone I find myself working in a "professional vacuum."

I picture you sometimes this August jogging across the Bay Area Bridge when the sun goes crucified through it -- or better yet, with a woman in your arms, the one you have built out of snow and blood and twigs.
Observations On Obstructed Thought Processes

THE ERIC GERLACH POEM OF INTRODUCTION

Hi!

THE ERIC GERLACH POEM OF POSSESSION

Mine.

THE POSSESSION POEM BY ERIC GERLACH AND FRIEND

Our.

THE POEM OF PLATO BY ERIC GERLACH

How clever, Socrates ...

THE POEM OF THE PAST TENSE BY ERIC GERLACH

Was.
THE PROCRASTINATION POEM BY ERIC GERLACH
Once ...

THE DUNE LITERARY ALLUSION POEM BY ERIC GERLACH
Sand ... Oasis ...

A TIME-LIFE POEM BY ERIC GERLACH
Dismissed as lightning.

THE AFFIRMATIVE POEM BY ERIC GERLACH
Yes.

THE READER ORIENTED POEM BY ERIC GERLACH
You.

THE POEM OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE BY ERIC GERLACH
It was a dark and stormy night. The dogs barked. A shot rang out and then there were three.
THE EXISTENTIAL LOVE SONG BY ERIC GERLACH

Green, not blue!

THE DEATH OF A COCKROACH BY ERIC GERLACH

Crunch!

THE "JAMES DEAN ENGLISH MAJOR" POEM BY ERIC GERLACH

A rebel without a clause.

THE POEM OF SEQUEL BY ERIC GERLACH

Part Two.
The Aardvark

Alphabetically speaking
The aardvark leads the procession
Of animals real and imagined
In the dictionary zoo, that is.

It may be he thinks his armor will protect him
From his impending demise
In this ephemeral parade
Of evolution.

So, he sticks valiantly to the front lines
Of our words, our symbols
Our imaginations, our explanations
Our rationalizations, our definitions.
The Big Hate

There is someone I hate--
out of space--
out of time.
Someone I hate
and it might not even be God.

He is little as a point,
as the center of a sphere,
as shriveled as an unconceived child.
He has no shape.
He has no color.
I don’t know whether he
is inside or outside me.
I don’t know whether he’s
at the top or the bottom of the world.
I only know he doesn’t sit on my shoulder.
And he started when I was sixteen.

Sweet sixteen and never been kissed.
Never even held hands.
Three times they took my number
    and three times they never called.
After the fourth—that’s when
    I started hating that little man.
And I told him, too.
At least once an hour.
So he wouldn’t forget,
so I wouldn’t forget,
so he’d see I wasn’t forgetting.
“I hate you,” I said.
As soft as I had to.
Under my breath.
But over my heartbeat.
I told him when I left the bed.
I told him when I left the room.
I told him when I left the house.
I told him when I left the streets.
I especially told him
ever time I was forced to laugh.

And I still tell him.
With all my might.
Grocery-shopping.
Thrift-shopping.
Singing.
Teaching.
Taking a shower.
Having a B. M.
Reading the baby a story.
Writing a poem.
Talking to myself.
Having a temper tantrum.
Just before an orgasm.
Just after an orgasm.
And munching mocha lentils.
Yes, I whisper with my mouth full.

I don’t tell my therapist about him.
I don’t tell my true-love about him.
I shouldn’t be writing about him.
Because maybe, he’ll go away.
And I need him.
With all my might.
He’s my answer to “Life goes on.”
He’s my answer to “The human spirit.”
He’s my answer to “You’re a strong woman.”
He’s my answer to the answers.
He’s my veto.
He’s my power.
He’s my NO.
The only NO I’ve got.

Some day, maybe, he’ll catch wise.
He’ll say “Of course you do, my dear.”
Or “The feeling’s mutual.”
Or “One more word outa you and I’ll
give you something to hate me for.”
Yes, someday, perhaps, he’ll have me.
But for now I have him.
For now he is mine.

Most times, understand, I am not like this.
Most times I am quite like you.
When I have enough dates.
When I have enough jobs.
When I have enough children.
Before multiple sclerosis.
Before three miscarriages.
Before chronic disruptive behavior.
Most times I smile, sing, and write;
and when I think about that little
man I nod or cringe.
Most times, understand, he does not exist.
But right now he does.
Right now he does.
JOANNE DENKO

Voyager Two

Four hours at the speed of light --
Too vast a time-space gulf
To grasp in miles in billions --
Four hours by signal
And cruising
Toward your last farewell.
On, Voyager, on!

Twelve years ago we wished you Godspeed,
Your twin already on her way
To Jupiter and Saturn,
Jupiter with Io
Spewing lava
In splendid view for Eartheyes,
Saturn with rings by thousands
Newly visible to us,
Rings twisted and braided,
Rings shepherded by tiny moons.
Your sister One, Voyager, fulfilled her missions,
Rendezvoused with those great planets,
Cheating you of close encounters,
Saving you for trysts more distant.

Slung from the sling of Saturn,
You, Voyager Two, met your first connection,
Uranus, the green planet,
Pointing her poles alternately at the Sun,
And beamed us news in binary:
She too is clad with necklaces.
Now, Voyager,
Approach and skirt Neptune,
Brushed an otherworldly blue
By methane crystals,
Kiss Triton,
Scarred from eons
Of her own evolution,
Born in a space nursery,
Swirling, simmering, freezing,
Maturing --
Maybe a bit lonely,
Welcoming you, her Earth-sent visitor
Before your final
Emancipation
Into deep black space.

On to the stars, Voyager!
If I Die First

If I die first
fly pastel poems to opal shores.
If I die first
sell my Chevy, buy a Harley,
raven ride it to the Grand Canyon’s floor,
cry my name loud as eagle’s soar,
if I die first.
Surrender

When you’re thirty-eight, guilt comes easy.  
Your daughter says, “Mom, can we go skating?”  
In the second grade, it’s a big deal,  
all her friends do it .... How to tell her  
“I can’t skate.”

At thirty-eight, failure tastes like bon-bons,  
afternoon soaps, and salty tears  
because you’re best friend is still size ten.  
So fearing failure, you pile four gigglers  
into your yellow hatchback and fake it.

The oak floor arena bruises knees, butts,  
and elbows equally. Cherry-slushed-face tots  
glide between sure-footed parents;  
mini green-blue-red lights point sneering  
fingers at your flying wheels,  
dull thuds sprawling pound when you fall.

Only the snack bar is friendly. Hot dogs  
cradle spin on carousels, daring one-armed  
pretzels smile crisp freckles, and popcorn  
kernels blow their breath while warm butter  
weeps on old maid buns.
At thirty-eight, you draw back. You can’t always give her your hand; you tighten her limp brown laces as best you can, give her push and a smile. Her jello legs tangle, crumple, and sink; her arms reach, stretch, and tug at raw, gritty unseen ropes.

After each spill, her rosy cheeks rise; her hokey-pokey face grins determination. In a butterfly net, she is your finest dream: catching radiant rhythms, leaning scrawny ponytails into the springtime shoulder of her own wind. And at thirty-eight, you split second realize it’s not planked oak that crushed your wings, not the pudgy falls that maimed your chalky life. It was the silent, endless, hypnotic waving of tiny white flags.
End of Shift

Just after fresh mint-green sheets
& lotioned backrubs, the floor
starts to disrobe as I make my rounds.
Warm & black the night’s King Kong arms
wrap endless across hospital windows;
lights twinkle through a breezeless town;
I think of other women--busy at home--
now nursing their infants, bathing
whiny children, or making love
to their factory-smelling husbands.
Pink-gray smoke settles heavy breath
from the mill’s coarse nostrils.
I shake tan water pitchers & wonder
how much life has been used up in 8 hours?
I slide fingered eyeglasses & denture cups
filled with staring teeth into overhead drawers.

Exquisite velvet quiet consumes the final
crumbs of day; and is shattered by an
occasional cough or bashful call light.
Brimming urine bags are deflated,
gastric machines are properly marked
for drainage, every orifice bleeds
its proper color; our aids & orderlies
tally I&O’s and give and give and give.
It's our cycle: huddled heads charting, 
patients' lives divided into blocked columns, 
ruled intersections, 
black lines, white spaces, numbers 
winding their way to medical-record catacombs. 
We douse our unperfect shift, drink 
forgotten cups of coffee that cling 
stubborn to our teeth and snuff 
out the day with our sore feet 
& scuffed soles.
Move

When she asked him to shave off the two-bit mustache, he declined and said he liked it and that she had better get used to it. She couldn’t; if he wanted to look like the cowboy in the cigarette advertisement, he’d need more than a mustache, she pointed out. But then she’d always asked him to call her Constance instead of Connie and had as much luck with it.

Most mornings -- this one no exception -- he slept through the bell on the alarm clock. His side of the bed. It was little things, she decided, reaching over him and flipping the “off” switch. They add up. But her dissatisfaction was vague, and she felt faintly guilty about it. “Hal.” She poked him. Perhaps she could poison his orange juice. Or something. Teach him a lesson. She slid out of bed and into slippers and his dark blue bathrobe, long and scented faintly with Old Spice. He didn’t like her wearing it.

“It’s mine,” he always said.

“Get up first,” she said.

She stumbled over a doll in the hallway; its face had been colored with a blue marking pen. She sighed; “Those kids,” she said. They were even more troublesome than Hal, every morning except Saturday. She guessed she’d let them sleep for a few more minutes.

Once downstairs to the kitchen she turned the radio on and -- finding something she could hum along with -- up, and put the coffee pot on the stove. She let the dog out the back and told him to run, Prince. She monitored his progress with satisfaction as he trotted directly into the marked-for-sale yard next door: the Brewsters. They’d never been particularly fond of dogs, but they seemed to enjoy being tolerant. A neon orange sticker shouting Sold! had been pasted over the sign.
"Looks like they finally got rid of it."

The Brewsters set examples. They were in the PTA, the Kiwanis Club, even the Square Dance Society that met monthly ("In an actual barn. Really, Con. You and Hal ought to join us. It's such fun.") and still had time for their kids and lawn. They would be leaving soon, apparently.

"Thank God. I always feel like Brand X with them for neighbors." She wondered what they'd gotten for the place and who might move in next. "Bad Prince," she said when the dog had finished dampening the cardboard sign and trotted back, pleased with himself.

She let him back inside; dumped some Pet Pride into his dish. "Are you tired of your old car?" asked the radio. "Trade it in." A cheerful chorus sang a familiar song that had somehow acquired new verses about Buicks. "Best deals in town," urged a smooth voice. "Don't wait."


"Whatcha want?"

She sat down on the edge of the bed and sighed. What exactly was she after? "The same thing I want every morning at 7:15. I want you to carry me aloft to the heights of passion. Kiss me, fool," she said. A joke. Of course.

He opened an eye and glanced at the clock. "I'll be late for work."
So much for that approach. She shook him again. "Hal, guess what? The Brewsters have finally sold their house. There's a big sticker over the For Sale sign." She poked at him, still inert. "Hal, get up," and then waited until he'd crawled out from the blankets, yawned and stretched. He'd never worn pajamas; she would sometimes, whenever she was angry with him.

He noticed the bathrobe, opened his mouth but said nothing. He pulled socks and a clean shirt from the drawer and she examined him carefully – he hadn't changed perceptibly since the day before, or the day before, or the day before. Same thin, tall, reasonably handsome man. She knew she was reasonably pretty and supposed that they were well matched, but it occurred to her that it was she who'd always waited for him.

Downstairs she sipped at a cup of coffee and remembered their first date. High school, senior year. Could it have been nine years back? He'd been an hour late even then. They'd missed most of the movie but he bought tickets anyway and they headed for the balcony. His hands explored inside her blouse; she hadn't needed to ask him to kiss her then.

She could not remember the name of the picture. There was a lot of swordplay in it.

They'd argued long and hard about children, had two - a boy and a girl. Jonathan was seven and Patsy, five; both demanding. Hal had been promoted a year ago, "an asset to the firm," his boss had said. His boss also whispered to her more than once that she could call him if she wanted some action.

She stood at the window above the sink, compared their yard to the neighbors' and shook her head. The Brewsters, at least, would go. Perhaps they would take her dissatisfaction with them. Things would change. Hal could trim the hedge and cut the grass and she could - join something, maybe. A club.
When he joined her in the kitchen a few minutes later, he was grinning. "Connie, what was it you wanted me to do upstairs?"

She regarded him blankly. "Shave?" she said.

"Carry you somewhere."

Oh that. "Nothing. Nothing at all." He rested a gentle hand on the back of her neck and kissed her cheek. It was the right thing. "Hadn't you better get a move on?" she said after a minute, softly. "You're running late as it is."
Upon entering the village scene of "The Lottery", by Shirley
Jackson, one is struck by the peaceful and pastoral tone. While
walking over "grass richly green" and smelling "flowers...blossoming
profusely" (786), one meets villagers with pleasant and trustworthy
countenances. There is no hint of the horrifying and chilling
spectacle about to occur. And yet, this story provides a picture of
how a society can cruelly destroy its citizens when the power of
tradition overtakes it.

Where does this tradition begin? One is not specifically told
in this story the facts of the lottery tradition's genesis, but some­
where, in ages past - beyond this generation's memory - the tradition
was begun. It may have been associated with ancient fertility rites.
At this time of year - the beginning of summer - one would have a
need to be assured of good crops, plenty of rain, and an abundance
of clear, sunny days for a prolific yield. Even though one is not told
exactly, the tradition does seem to be associated with the work ethic
and a higher standard of living. "Old Man Warner snorted...'Next
thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves,
nobody work any more, live that way for a while. Used to be a saying
about "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon." First thing you know,
we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always
been a lottery..."' (791). It had been very effectively passed on until
it was unquestionably observed.

How is this tradition passed on from individual to individual
- gathering increasing power as it moves from generation to genera­
tion? Close observation of the story provides clues. One such clue
is the use of inanimate objects, namely, the box.
The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town was born. Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box. There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything’s being done. (788)

The box was used to hold the slips of paper for the lottery. The box was old, shabby and splintered badly. If the box would be replaced, however, its power could fade away. The age of this object contributed to its power. Change was allowed, but only within the context of tradition. For example, chips of wood had been replaced with slips of paper, and there was no longer a ritualistic chant or salute: “years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse” (789). One can compromise certain non-essential rituals, but at the core there must remain the primary symbol which, in this case, looks older and older each passing year revealing the staying power of the esteemed tradition.

Tradition can also be upheld by affirming works from someone who holds respect and credibility in the minds of the people: “He [Jack] blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head as several voices in the crowd said things like ‘Good fellow, Jack,’ and ‘Glad to see your mother’s got a man to do it’” (790). One can be assured these sympathetic words, given at the right time, gave Jack a feeling of
pride in himself, and at the same time carved a place of loyalty in his soul for the tradition. This social pressure may cause any resistance to crumble, and thus will place high value on societal norms.

Another method of upholding tradition is the diminution of the individual. A strong cord of community feeling ties the villagers together, eventually helping to provide the noose that chokes off Mrs. Hutchinson’s life. The men had power over their families, giving the women and children no voice of any consequence. The leaders of the village had power over the men. Mrs. Hutchinson tried to confer with her husband, but to no avail (792-793). Her husband and the village leader conferred regarding all of the tradition’s details leading to her death while she, ineffectively, fought for her life (792-793).

It would seem to follow that Mr. Summers, who with jovial face gave leadership to the “square dances, the teen-age club, [and] the Halloween program” (787), could be trusted with one’s life. His countenance gave an aura of goodwill to the individuals in the village. However, this same man presided over the destructive lottery. This representation of both good and evil seems to have blurred the vision of the villagers. If an authority figure, who one has come to trust, has diverted from the expected good, one may still choose to trust albeit blindly. It seems that the tradition of his office helped to make the villagers oblivious to, or at least, more accepting of their own destruction.

Old Man Warner seems especially effected by this phenomenon. He holds the place of the eldest in the village, and continually gives voice to his resistance of any change. Time and again he clearly held fast to the standards of the tradition, and in the end, urged the villagers toward a concerted effort in the culmination of the ritual. “‘Come on, come on, everyone, ‘...and then they were upon her” (794).

The most powerful and effective way to resist the death of tradition is to teach the children the rites of the tradition. Children
are exposed, in their innocence, to the world of their elders - a world steeped in tradition. The tradition was placed like a cloak upon their shoulders. "[L]ittle Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.... The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles" (793-794). The progression is here for all to see. One day, Davy will be older and will help to gather the stones prior to the lottery (787). If he lives long enough, he will even be in the lottery itself, the undisputed head of his family, obedient to the dictates of the village.

Every year one more individual was destroyed. Every year this tradition was settled in the villagers' consciousness. And so tradition comes full circle - from elder to child and back again. Each time round the tradition becomes more deeply ingrained.

It is in the nature of mankind to observe traditions. Many great societies in the world can attribute their life and growth to healthy traditions. Still others have fallen when their traditions were unhealthy, causing destruction and death. One must have courage to examine society's traditions. Are they providing a structure and a foundation that allow one to breathe and grow? Or are they oppressive, choking out life? It is a challenge to discern these differences - throwing off death and embracing life.
An Interview With Robert Flanagan

Robert Flanagan, a Toledo, Ohio native, is currently Professor of English and Creative Writing at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. As a result of his Midwest (Ohio) ties, his stories are often distinctly regional in setting, voice and feel.

Flanagan is the author of four books. His first, Maggot (Warner Books, 1971), is a novel about Marine Corps boot camp. He has published two short story collections: Three Times Three (Ithaca House, 1977) and Naked to Naked Goes (Scribners, 1986). Additionally, Flanagan’s stories have appeared in regional magazines (The Ohio Review), national magazines (The Kansas Quarterly), and in major anthologies (The Best American Short Stories, 1984).

This interview was conducted at Kent Stark when Robert Flanagan was the Fiction Presenter at the 1989 Midwest Writers’ Conference, discussing “The Voice of the Story.” Robert Miltner was the interviewer for CANTO.

Canto: What do you see as some of the stages a person goes through in his or her development as a writer?

Flanagan: I think there are stages in writing and a writer shouldn’t confuse them.

I think a lot of people write for therapy. It’s valuable, and I don’t have any disdain for it as some “professionals” do. I think it’s an important thing to do.

Therapeutic poetry is fine. I don’t think you should necessarily publish it, though. You keep it - it’s good to show it to friends, I mean. Writing, when we talk about writing, as though somehow this means one has
to go on and have a professional career in it, that it’s the logical end, and if not you’re a failure - I don’t think that’s the case. I don’t think that there’s anything wrong with writing as a relief.

The next thing, I think, is communication. Then you up the ante a bit. You start to be aware of the tradition of your genre. You may not have a genre, a form, maybe it’s just confessional. Then what do you want to do? Does this more naturally fit, for example, into poetry or short fiction? Is it dramatic? Is it lyrical? Is it going to be a play? Is it going to be a song, a poem, a story? And then you start to feel...you know.

Canto: How did this (these stages) work for you?

Flanagan: I started when I was a kid. The first kind of thing I did was to do cartoons. My balloons were always bigger than the pictures. And so, you know, you kind of grab and take the picture. But you decide what genre. That way, when you work in a genre, there are two things. First there’s the craft, then there’s the structure. If you’re going to make furniture, for example, you ought to know about tongue and groove and mortise and tenon because that’s the craft. You’ve got to know how to do it.

So you start to learn about craft. First you have this emotional end, this self end, and then you have craft, because it’s part of the communication, the tradition. Then you start to be aware.

Canto: How? How does a writer become aware? And aware of what?

Flanagan: Most writers write and then later they read. They start because they have a need to write. And then they start to read. They read the people in their area.
I never read Yeats until I started to read poetry, and then I started to read all these other people. A writer should go back and should know the history so they’re not always reinventing the wheel.

There is no sense starting to come up and discover the Variable Foot and having someone tell you “Oh, that was William Carlos Williams who did that.” Or you work like crazy and you don’t like the metric system, so you come up with Sprung Rhythm, and someone comes up and tells you Gerard Manly Hopkins already did it. You know, really, you ought to know this. I guess Elliot covers this in that essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”.

Canto: Is this the advice you would give to writers at all levels? Developing writers?

Flanagan: Sure. Yes. But back to young writers...I mean first it’s your personal emotion. You need this. You get it out, but then you get committed beyond the personal confessional. You get committed to the craft and the tradition, and then at that point, then I think you start knowing the craft and the tradition.

Canto: So what is the next step in this writing process?

Flanagan: Well, then you are ready for the third level, if you’re interested: “Can I compete at this level? Do I want to publish and you know, share just not my emotions, because I can send that in letters, but do I want to share with a larger audience? Have I achieved something?”

When you first start writing, it’s just personal. If you don’t just want to communicate with your friends, then you have to find some universal in order to communicate with other people. And the universal is
not just generalizing the story, but it’s also fitting into the tradition and respecting the craft. Then you can communicate with other people.

At the end of the process, you start to publish. But I don’t think everybody should feel the need to do that.

Canto: Are there born writers, or can writers be made?

Flanagan: I don’t know. I think that we’re all made. The question, I guess, is: when do you get made? At a certain point? I think growing up influences you a lot. I think that when you grow up in a suburb, and you’re very privileged, and you just watch T.V., and you don’t have anyone to say no to you, I guess you write books like Bright Lights, Big City (Jay McInerney) or Less Than Zero (Bret Easton Ellis).

Canto: From that kind of background?

Flanagan: Really! That’s what you get. I don’t think you’re going to get hardened artists.

I think that growing up where you’ve got some tension and you also have some sense of (in my case it was oral) story, or you read, gives you a sense of complexity.

I think the literature we’re getting out of the video culture shows that. It’s thinner. It doesn’t have a sense of character much; it’s all action and shock. So I don’t know on that. I don’t know about the being born.

I don’t think you can just come to writing because you’re going to read “Writer’s Digest” or take courses. If you don’t have any love for language or any sense of complexity of character, you’re not going to write
very good fiction. It's just not going to happen. It's not there.

Canto: So with "born writers" and "made writers", does this somehow generate levels of writing? Like, say, really good writing versus, say, merely acceptable writ­ing?

Flanagan: I guess I'll quote A. E. Houseman in the essay "The Name and Nature of Poetry" where he learned not to recite a line of really good poetry while he shaved because it made his skin goosepimply and he cut himself! And at that point, it's just visceral. I mean, acceptable - all the mechanics can be there.

But acceptable: you have to have your mechanics and you have to have your basic skill. I think the simple thing is: are you willing to really care about your character? Are you willing to take the pain? Are you willing to get hooked on the character? If you write from a height, an Olympian height, just to judge people and point out the frailties of people, no one is going to be interested in you. John Barth did that and we don't need him again.

For me, Anne Beatty is an acceptable writer. I have never finished anything I've started of hers. She's professional. She's intelligent. She's skilled. I have no interest in it whatsoever. It's just there.

Canto: And good writing is....?

Flanagan: Really good writing is - like in some of those stories I judged (in the fiction competition at the Midwest Writers Conference). Some of them really grabbed me emotionally. I really felt for the people. There are some flaws in those stories, but I found some strong emotional hooks. The feel for the characters was so
real that I was just caught and carried along in it. And that's true.

Canto: How does that feel for a character work for you, as a writer?

Flanagan: Well, I frequently have failed in the other way. I have gotten so I get so structured that I forget the character, and the stories come back. I had three novels that I wrote that didn't get published, and that was the reason: I forgot the character.

Canto: So you have to be in it, to feel it?

Flanagan: Oh yeah. You have to feel the problems, which means you can't fake. I don't think you can write that. You can't be writing things like thrillers or detective novels if you disdain them. They don't come across. You have to feel that pain, that question, actually live the questions. And I think that's true in fiction - you have to live the conflicts.

Canto: What are you working on yourself right now?

Flanagan: I'm not writing fiction right now. I take time off. I'm working on screen plays now, just structural stuff. But I'm getting ready to go back into a novel and I feel like I'm sucking up big breaths to dive down again. Because writing's hard. I find it emotionally exhausting. But it's worth the work it takes.
M. R. Amos, an English major, has been active on the CANTO staff this year as an Assistant Editor. He has completed a chapbook of poems this spring and has journied to Martin’s Ferry, Ohio to meet poet Robert Bly. Matt will attend college this fall in Chicago.

Sandra Ballard is a Canton resident. Her work has appeared in SOLO FLYER.

Jeanne Bryner attends the Kent State Trumbull Campus where she is editor for the literary magazine ICON. She is the winner of the Wick Award (KSU English Department). Her work has also appeared recently in FOXTAIL.

Tim Calhoun of Cleveland, Ohio, publishes his poems in numerous area publications. He is active with the Poets League of Greater Cleveland and schedules readings at the Arabica Coffee House in Cleveland Heights.

C. H. Callahan, originally from the Dayton area, is a non-traditional student pursuing a degree from Ohio University. He is a long-time advocate for prisoner’s rights. His poems have appeared in a number of places, including the Poet’s Corner at St. John’s Cathedral in New York City.

Sharon Carson, Associate Professor of English at Kent Stark, teaches the popular Images of Women in Literature class. This is her first appearance in CANTO.

Marion Cohen’s work has appeared locally in SOLO FLYER.

Joanne Denko, from Rocky River, Ohio, is an M.D. and a practicing psychiatrist. Most of her poetry pertains to “the mother-daughter relationship with all its joys and sorrows, its poignancy and bitter-sweet tenderness, its triumphs and bitter disappointments, and its continuation to the following generation.” She also writes both professional journal and non-fiction articles.
Violet Dutcher, a sophomore at Kent Stark, is a non-traditional student pursuing a degree in Education with a major in Communications. Violet enjoys writing essays, free verse and amateur public speaking. This is her first published work.

Robert Flanagan writes novels, short stories and screenplays. He is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio.

Eric Gerlach, who may be either a philosophy or English major at Kent Stark, watches sci-fi movies on videocassette when he is not attending classes or writing down his brief existential encounters of the poetic kind.

Takenya Keir Hampton, age 12, will be in the seventh grade at Harford Junior High School in Canton this fall. Her interests include playing basketball and dancing with Myra Watkins' Modern African Dancers. "T.K." plans to major in Fine Arts when she attends college. This is her first published poem.

Brooke Horvath is an Assistant Professor of English at Kent Stark where, among other classes, he teaches Creative Writing and the Voices and Visions series. His poems have appeared in THE DENVER QUARTERLY and POETRY, and his reviews appear in THE REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION, where he is an Associate Editor.

Henry Hughes is the chief editor of SYCAMORE REVIEW, Purdue University's new literary journal. His poems have recently appeared in CAROLINA QUARTERLY, SOUTH COAST POETRY REVIEW, BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL, and MALAHAT REVIEW. Hughes also reviews books for NEW LETTERS and HARVARD BOOK REVIEW.

Gordon Keller is a Teaching Fellow in the English Department at Kent State University.
David McCoy, of Massillon, teaches social studies in the Jackson School system and edits SPARE CHANGE. His poems have appeared in FLIGHTS, LIGHT YEAR '86, RIVERRUN and others. A collection of his poems, RETROSPECTIVE, was published in 1988.

Kathleen Lee Mendel is the editor of Telestar Publishers in Parma, Ohio. Her poems and book reviews have appeared in numerous publications, and her first children’s book (GENERAL CHEW-WAGGLE) was just published this spring.

Robert Miltner, Developmental Education Coordinator at Kent Stark, advises CANTO. His poems have appeared recently in ALCHEMY, THE LISTENING EYE, and PLASTIC TOWER.

Neil Myers teaches English at Purdue University and is an advisory Editor for MODERN FICTION STUDIES. He has been actively involved in Zen Buddhism for the past ten years.

Ana Pine's work has appeared locally in SOLO FLYER.

Richard Sater lives in Peru, Indiana where he is a public affairs officer for the 930th Tactical Fighter Group (U.S. Air Force Reserve). Sater received his Masters from Purdue in 1988 in English/Fiction Writing. His interests include "photography, music (all kinds) and old movies."

Christine Singh attends Kent Stark where she is pursuing an Associate of Arts degree. She and her husband reside in North Canton. Her interests include writing poetry and playing piano.

Stephanie Space is a Senior at Kent, majoring in English and minoring in Art. She lives in Dover, Ohio with her three sons, where she owns The Enchanted Forest, which sells art work, gifts and books. A prolific poet starting to publish in local magazines, this is her first appearance in CANTO.
Tammy Stross of Parma, Ohio is a 1990 graduate with honors from Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, where she majored in English/Communications. While there, Tammy studied creative writing with Paula Rankin and was Editor for the B-W literary Magazine, THE MILL. Her poems have appeared in WHISKEY ISLAND and THE BLACK RIVER REVIEW.

Marilyn Tullys is a professional educator from Massillon, Ohio. Although this is her first appearance in CANTO, her daughter, Julie, had a poem in the first issue.

Matthew Van Scoder was enrolled in Dr. Horvath’s Poetry Workshop this past year. He lives in Massillon and attends Kent Stark.
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