

Frank Allen

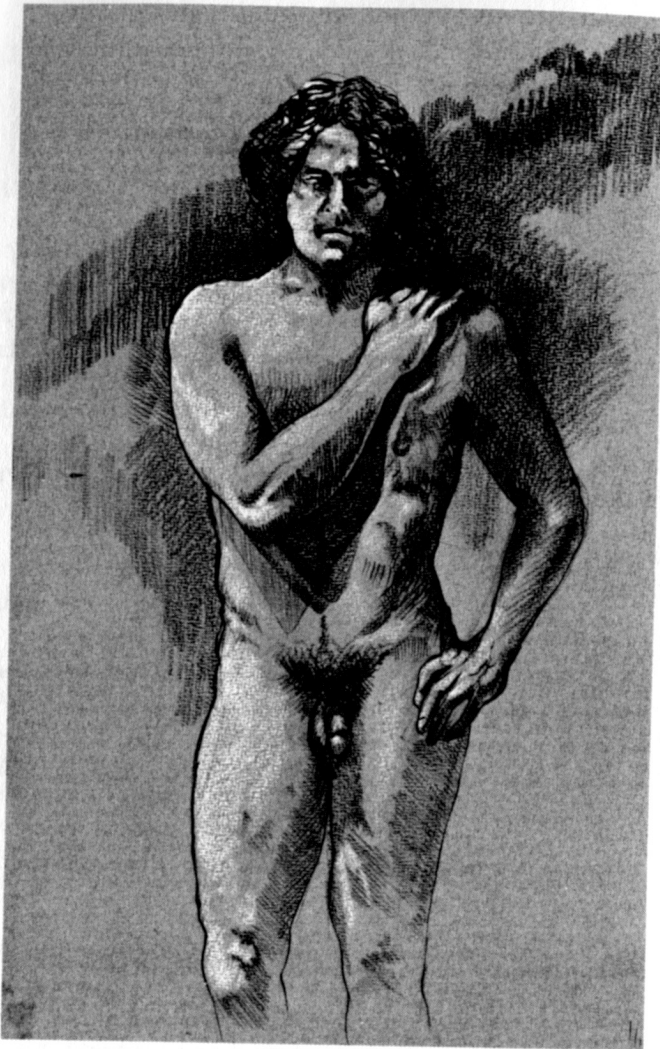
*Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and
patient,
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions...*

Walt Whitman
"This Compost"

NEW LEAVES

Oil slick turning rainbow under your feet
a nun browsing in Rite-Aid's antiseptic aisles
mold leader cradling a lunch-pail on swing shift with
his fellows
along corridor streets lovers linking hands, love
awakening dreams
children with lemon suckers, chasing sheath of
dandelion puffs,
a terrier yelping, odor of autumn bonfire
foreman, gantry boss, blackgang mate, stoker, mason
hearing a linnet after punching out,
father redressing his son, mother braiding the hair
of the daughter
before going to bed, a sleeping grandmother
pale hands folded one on top of the other
pigeons in eaves, chipmunks, moles, woolly bears, a
fawn
squandered by violence, overlooked--
heat lightning, conflagrations, lovecries, screams
of hurt joy
hooded faces, sarcasms, betrayal,
the waxing and bursting of pussy willow blossoms in
February frost
the heavy-set sergeant calling the men to attention
at sunrise
still sleepy awaiting orders before the barracks
the railroad switcher heaving coalcars in the beamyard
slag heaps and metallic sirens, a diesel on mountain
roads spraying exhaust
crowds spilling beyond sawhorses, beautifully washed,
anxious, potentialied

at each other's elbows
wanting to flee the city's crush and far-flungness
dogsboby, factotum, limestone-hauler, hobo
lifting their limbs, impressed as they come from
drained and foul work in hectic unfulfilled turn,
a girl's longing forbidden joints, playing a pick-up
game with the boys, eating pizza,
listening to records
a son's last glimpse a brother, mangled in a drunken
midnight cab
manhood, girlhood, puberty, the deathpang and after-
birth
the professor before proud-breasted coeds (do they
comprehend his priapic appetite?)
wives hanging out white T-shirts with clean wood pegs
dungarees, underwear, towels, bed sheets
unwrinkling in the sunlight before a trampled
garden
women turned to the back by lover or husband,
pondering, ravenous-eyed
drudge, metermaid, guard, mestizo, orderly
at trivial tasks
expendable, commanded, under thumb,
suicide and maniac whipsawed between irreparable
selves
unbequeathing, beaten like dust, even the dead earth
or water beneath you
knowing the foreign frightening odor of savage nature
the dead jumbled in cold parlors beside the road,
eloquent, listless,
disdainful of money, sex, alcohol
battalions turned into compost
as leaves lapse
fragil leaves unfolding into rotted compost
everywhere lapsing and swirling



drawing by John Giannotti

As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd
with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice,
approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand
to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.

Walt Whitman
"Children of Adam"