

Robin Hiteshew

CAMDEN: A VISIT TO WHITMAN'S

finally got there, the light grey
wood framed house with brick sidewalk;
yellowed and stuffed with relics and images,
the good poet's home--
all the usual stories with cracks
where innocence squeezes and breaks through.

in the study a glass case,
filled with letters,
his cane, the soiled white felt hat;
in a corner a small joy, old
leather shoes, worn and quite forgotten.

upstairs, the bedroom,
the place where he died,
dead books lie on the shelves
neatly stacked in procession,
across the room, on another shelf
his knapsack,
black with cracked straps,
lying alone with the dust,
hidden from direct view.

a touch there, a connection
with him gone in the grave,
the poems kept there,
nursed, scorned, cherished
on rambles in the woods.
in the end, abandoned too,
to lie on a dusty shelf,
lifeless, dried and frayed.