THE WALT WHITMAN SHOPPING CENTER

The Walt Whitman Shopping Center of Cold
Spring Harbor, New York (I can't rhyme your way)
is large, it contains multitudes, Salut!
You know, I think Old Walt would like it there,
or like a lot of it, anyway, Old
Walt would. I have not seen you, yet can say
that I have seen you, everywhere: Beirut,
Rome, Cairo, Tokyo, Delhi, everywhere,
or if not yet (Ya-honk! I sound my horn)
then soon you will be there, with catalogs
that show three hundred and sixty-five aisles,
in fifty-two departments: cosmetics,
dog food, insurance, hair cuts, Magic Mourn
Crematorium (O Lucky Death!), togs
for children, women's stuff (Clean, yes,
clean, I'll
say you are clean!), counter girls—dark-
haired spics—
you are clean, washed all over—Amigos!
Cleaner than the girls in the magazines,
certainly, and pickets, I adore you,
je me vous adore, marching forth and back.
At the OB/GYN sign I go
in, see sixth month women abort their genes
(that you would not like); next door, corpses
(new)
are laid out waiting paint, and the steel sack.
This, here, is the stronger stuff you said
you'd jet,
Walt, and you have stronger still within you
yet.

Michael Rumaker

YET ANOTHER POEM ADDRESSED TO WALT WHITMAN

For my father, who worked in it

Walt Whitman, as I ride over the bridge named for you
I wonder what you would think of this sprawl
with its acid stinks
I wonder what you would think of the buck twenty
they charge to cross over the bridge
that bears your name only
Even the birds have a feeble tweet
in this greasy air
and the few trees have a choked and stricken look
Walt Whitman, nearly everybody in Philadelphia
still reads the Bulletin
Just think of all those citizens
reading your poems instead
this couldn't have happened
and this poem wouldn't have had to happen
Imagine the citizens on either side of the Delaware
reading your poems
and rising up with such a cry of joy and rage
streaming out of the subway tunnels
tearing down the cracking plants of the refineries
dousing the oil waste torches that befoul the air
I think of the cold sparkling days
you rode the ferry back and forth
between Philly and Camden just for the happy hell of it
Now I can't see through the air
my eyes burn with chemicals