FEDERAL STREET AT NIGHT

Silver as a train at full throttle on a prairie in moonlight,
the locked diner. Inside, a waitress scrubs in bright light. Outside,
in the stopped air of the parking lot,
dangling from the rear-view mirror of her car,
a cross, greenish and milky, sad as the Southern Cross seen from a lifeboat adrift at night, the silent space of Camden, New Jersey all around us, Whitman's body buried very near here.

The sky is smoky - midnight, a dead town, and yet you can feel something pulling at you, as her powerful arm pulls the sponge across the table. From under the hard dark sea of this land, his bones glowing like whales' teeth in the rolling black, he is calling to us, he is calling us to come down into America.

WALT

Unconventional white bearded man,
A prophet, a demon--
An ungirdled wind.

Unquestionably great,
A pauper, a tycoon
Of understanding intense.

Witnessing shrouds
On the fields of brothers,
Unafraid, not horrified,
Experiencing nature.

Losing a comrade by the bullets' quick temper,
Grieving his loss for a common kinsman,
Dissolved now are earthly bonds,
Camaraderie unceasing.

His bodily existence, a close--
He seeks God not,
For he met Him everday,
In nature, in man, in every leaf of grass.