

Martin Itzkowitz

Dear Walt,

When I came to you in Camden,  
To a frail house in a rotting street  
Near a spoiled river,  
A sleepy porter let me in--  
For a quarter.

Your puny bed was much too small,  
Even for your final shrivelling,  
And every jot and scribbling neatly framed  
Beyond all order you had ever known,  
Hat and shoes preserved in glass, past use--  
He might have told me you were not at home.

We laughed together when we met outside--  
You, doubtless, at my gloomy face,  
I, for seeing you at all,  
And at myself for having missed the place.  
There, in the cracked walk, a clump of grass  
Waved heartily, as if to say "Come in."  
I spent a quarter hour in talk, and went away  
Knowing where to find you when I came again.