

Kathryn H. Greenwood

A SYMPOSIUM ON WHITMAN 4 BLOCKS FROM HIS HOME

Six scholars heard your voice today, Dear Walt
They pranced pompously, dissected you, loved you,
ate your flesh, sucked on your bones, paid
you homage, burped after the buffet and
stumbled blindly over the rainbows in your
Leaves of Grass

It was a treat during the break
to trot to your Mickle Street home,
wink back at your photos and
finger the clock whose painted cherries
were plucked by the beak of the stuffed parrot
who sits on the corner shelf
At least they were real

Did you know, as an historian you were faulty -
that you arrogantly gave us
a false notion of idealism
that we are not gods,
individually or collectively!

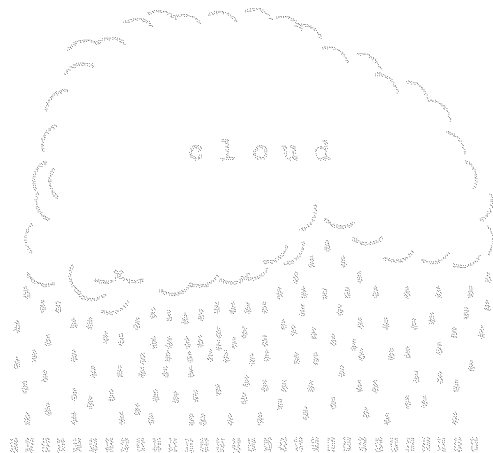
Their scholarly chantings ticked off your failings
one by one, warming the heart of Plato.

I couldn't help it, the constant prattle of
their hypothetical rhetoric made my eyes wander
over the sea of scripted academia
until two eyes peered back
then crinkled at their outer rims
And together we ran dancing and laughing
along the beach

keeping stride with the twenty-ninth bather,
diving deep below the brine
celebrating our bodies to the ebb and flow
of waving sea lettuce
surfacing to the silence of Sirius,
the scent of lilacs, and the
trusting faces of dandelions

Today there was a symposium held in Camden, Dear Walt
Six scholars heard your voice
Two poets heard your song

John Rothfork



loafe with me on the grass
each is not for its own sake
I exist as I am