

Paul Rice

MEETING THE GHOST OF WALT WHITMAN ON A SMALL  
STEAMY CREEK IN CENTRAL ALABAMA

No body  
electric  
this body of water,  
this stinking creek  
in this blackberry, brushridden America

where each man  
who tries to find the sleek  
ribbon of himself catches in the thorns  
and catches burrs in his manhood hair.

Almost no one is still singing  
in this America  
where fishing gets you  
carp and gar  
and hooks in the hair,  
where all roofs leak,  
where all the porches are rotten,  
where voodoo causes the melons to die.