

## Tony Cosier

### DISTANCES

#### I.

She taught me there are distances in lives,  
A working girl hardly five feet tall  
With quiet shoulders that I went to touch  
To give, though far from strong myself in heart  
That time, whatever strength I could impart  
With pressure through the arm and hand, or such  
As could be given through the fingertips  
So light as to be scarce a touch at all,  
To help her meet whatever trial she faced.

#### II.

Although I sensed the thing she faced,  
Although I felt that I could understand,  
I never touched her with my hand,  
Nor did I brush her with my fingertips.

#### III.

If Walt Whitman never called to mind  
The image of a handshake over the span  
Of his wide nation, it is something that  
That ragged, rawtongued bard of sorts would sing.  
Wrapped tight as a fist those hands would be,  
Pulsing with the reckless throb of hearts  
Vaster than depth between suns, salt as froth  
Of seas, an image bold and tight as flesh.  
I would have my hand cross my country.  
And surely as I know I breathe, I know  
That distances of heart can be put by  
As easily as differences of miles,  
If care and will and need are strong enough.  
I would have my hand cross my country  
Not with force to clasp a pumping hand,  
But with a careful brush of palm both firm

And light enough to keep from frightening  
The girl I saw less than a minute's time,  
A month ago, three thousand miles away.  
Whoever she is, I would have her know  
All that my heart gained from knowing her.



**Kaviraj George Dowden**

## I LAY IN WHITMAN'S DEATHBED

*The smallest sprout shows there is really  
no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life,  
and does not wait at the end to arrest it  
And ceased the moment life appeared.*

Through the eternal black slum byways of Camden America,  
330 Mickle Street my pilgrimage

Walt's house, his hat he doffed to no man, his cane, his knap-  
sack, his rocking chair, his books, his letters, his photos, his  
dictionary, his parrot (stuffed) who pecked the berries of the  
clock, his outhouse, his bathtub, the very bed in which he  
lay in poverty and stroke and died to live deathless in his  
*Leaves, I will make the poems of materials, for I think they  
are to be the most spiritual poems*

A billion Suns and Moons and stars and galaxies, skies, trees,  
seas, savannahs, sierras, pioneers, workers, captains,  
heroes, trolley-men, mothers, fathers, young girls,  
whitehaired grandmothers, grandfathers, prostitutes,  
madmen, criminals, swimmers, buffaloes, eagles, ants,  
insects, everything, everybody, and the grass — such a  
small bed to hold Walt's myriad and luscious body!

Soul is also flesh and bone and blood, only through the finite  
does Man step into infinity, from between the corpse's eyes  
there springs a tiny bud, a flower, a blade of grass, a demi-  
god, a poet