

Walt, for as long as my body shall live
so shall your spirit and struggle for libertad!
I swear it! here and now!
 on your grave!
 camerado!

Brian Carr

WALT WHITMAN, AUTUMN, 1987

Camden, Walt, is a star fallen from your Federal
morning sky. Don't fret, Campbell's Soup
is still afloat, and the University restores
whatever won't make a better parking lot.
I'm sorry, too, but these days you're just a long green
bridge to people, ninety lousy cents each way,
any day now a dollar. We'll cross if you'd like to stick your
finger in the crack
of the Liberty Bell, just for fun. I'd rather walk
the other way, hit a Boulevard
booze shop for a quart bottle of Bud, skip
the windowless white strip joint, and head
for the county park. The walk is a tribute to the dead
and dying, abandoned autos, broken glass on the sidewalk
where a round-faced black lady
watches strangers pass, her row home leaning left, patched
pants boys who will stare right through us as we weave
through the littered streets. We might have a quarter left
for the corner beggar who screams, 'I fought for this country,
they screwed me.' (If I have two, Walt, I'll give one
for you.) Weeds grow out through the shattered windows, knock
like dead friends on boarded doorways. It is the trees though
I want you to see, still standing together in the park,
except for a fat one I know fallen in the autumn sun
where we can rest our cheeks awhile, swill
some brew, and joke about Allen Ginsberg's pecker.