

Jim Cory

AT WHITMAN'S TOMB

I recognized the sepulchre
by its triangular
shape
deep in a hillside
layered with hair
of old ivy, vault
behind marble slab, door
guarded by wobbly black gate
fastened with links. I was
alone, so placed my pink
roses atop the tomb
& sprawled in the waxy leaves
awhile, studied
the thickening sky, recalled
the day I first read
Leaves, 15, shed
tears for their
forthright honest wisdom
& humanness.
Then from behind a pine
the bard appeared, gathered
between boots
& white mane, shirt
open at neck
beard flowing
freely over chest
tall, girth
broader than I'd
pictured.
He gazed a moment
strange
then glided
silently to where I lay, perched
in the vines beside me

2 comrades, he
stroked my arm addressed me
'son' spoke
sweetly of death
beyond corruption
or understanding. I
looked on content while he talked
gently shaking his head
his 'foolish' Greek dream
athletic democracy ruined
at the hands of politics
& greed
On a far lawn
littered with violets
a pair of robins
poked for grubs
in the moist May earth
beyond shrubs & cemetery
fence cars blasted
horns in Haddon Avenue
stalled-out traffic:
finished, the poet
kissed my forehead leaned
to my shoulder
mist-eyed, settled
his antique head on my lap we
rested at perfect ease I
could see
star-like his grayblue eyes
coarse yellowed
hair over lip, cheek-pores, veins
red & maplike broken
at the nose I
woke
rainsoaked, shivering
under the
thunder