

Nathaniel Philbrick

WALT WHITMAN AT EDGAR ALLAN POE'S FUNERAL

He sighs through soft white fur
And stands beside the grave in the rain.
The drops run off his hat brim,
The mourners are few and want to leave,
But Walt, the faithful lover, remains.

Twice-buried Poe would be the last
To appreciate the scene:
Black wet trees, low gray clouds—
His nervous beauty somehow grown serene.

Macushla Nugent

WHITMAN COMES TO BALTIMORE

Whitman reached the city from the south, by train,
not many miles from the capital to come,
but he was an old man then,
come to honor Edgar Poe.
Poe, dead some twenty-six years,
was about to receive a gift.
The school children of Baltimore
had saved pennies so
no more would grass alone mark Poe's grave.

As you sat before his tomb,
how did you see his frozen tableaux of horrors,
feel his mystic and his leaden powers,
recognize those distances you might have ciphered for yourself?

Somber, silent, white of beard and hair,
you present a gentle esteem, an unsought eulogy.