

Elliot Richman

TO MY HEAD EXPANDER, NOT MY SHRINK

Dear Walt Whitman, I wish you could be my psychiatrist
instead of this fellow here,
lapping at my mind with his drooling Freudian tongue.

You, Walt Whitman, would say enough of this crap, enough
of this analysis,
this talk of this and that,
childhood,
mothers,
reaction formations,
come with me, let us escape, explore, enjoy.

As the therapist continues attempting to unravel
my mind as it were a hunk of thread twisted
into knots by rabid kittens,
I see a figure outside the window,
smiling at me with broad knowing,
beard blowing,
beckoning,
eyes brighter than insight,
more alive than theory.

Come, the figure says, Join me. There are things to do.
Enough of this. I will cure you.
I will place my mouth against your skull and suck
the poison out.

I will wrap a tourniquet of dandelions
to stop the bleeding behind your eyes.

I will hold your hand and soothe you like I did the dying
boys in Washington.

I will assist the surgeon as he takes the shrapnel
from your mind,
the grapeshot and miniballs locked in your guts.

I am a good one with gore, you know.
I am not afraid of the bayonet slashes of your fantasy,
or the trench shovel gashes of your anger.

I will take you to the Mississippi and wrestle
with you there,
the Great River will clean your wounds.

I will then stroll with you through the high-grassed Plains,
trillions of blades of grass, stretching,
the unbarriered wind soothing,

And eventually we will stand at the end of America
and stare at the Pacific.

We will strip off our clothes and plunge
into the salt sea,
where I will bandage you in waves
until you are healed.

