

Poems Fasces Americae and Walt Whitman's House

by Fred Marchant



FRED MARCHANT, PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Fasces Americae

we are party to the sham, endless weather reports, each of us convinced no harm will come if only, if only, if only, and nothing too cruel or violent should ever touch us, not really, not here, not now, not in the midst of our land of good and plenty, yet as in the dry heat of this August afternoon, a moment's chill point penetrates, you feel it come in over the airwaves and settle in as if poison has found the place in the body it had been looking for all along, thus the heart seizes in on itself and the brain's own round of symmetry, reverts, descends into a series of crude punctuations, an exclamation now! like a stake in the heart ellipsis points that become . . . nothing but a trail down the wash leading nowhere, while the real questions sway before our eyes like snakes that refuse to be charmed ?? ? and are bound together around each other and under the honed head of an axe.

Walt Whitman's House

Camden

His last one, two floors, two granite slabs for his doorstep, empty lots and snowy vastness surrounding, rows of row-houses torn down.

Across the street the beige bricks of the jail, a bus-stop, a few metallic window-slots five or six floors up. I think mostly of his kind eyes,

how they would have taken in the jail, the jailers, the inmates, the friends and lovers at the bus-stop waiting for the bus, the snow falling, going home all.

How in their sleep he might visit, touch their lips and try to keep them warm with feelings no one, not even the poets of then or now, know the name of.

Outside his house in the white snow, on the drifts rising like waves frozen, a vast stone ship of state is lit up, its hold filled to the limit, and about to sink.

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