

Walt Whitman In 1989

Walt Whitman has come down
today to the hospital room;
he rocks back and forth in the crisis;
he says it's good we haven't lost
our closeness, and cries
as each one is taken
He has written many lines
about these years: the disfigurement
of young men and the wars
of hard tongues and closed minds.
The body in pain will bear such nobility,
but words have the edge
of poison when spoken bitterly.
Now he takes a dying man
in his arms and tells him
how deeply flows the River
that takes the old man and his friends
this evening. It is the River
of dusk and lamentation.
"Flow." Walt says. "dear River,
I will carry this young man
to your bank. I'll put him myself
on one of your strong, flat boats,
and we'll sail together all the way
through evening."

- Perry Brass