

WALT WHITMAN'S LEAVES OF GRASS

FOR KOREAN STUDENTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF

ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

PAL KHN CHON, B. A.

DENTON, TEXAS

JANUARY 1969

Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

January 19 69

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under
our supervision by Pal Khn Chon
entitled "Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass for
Korean Students"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts.

Committee:

Antony Nell Wiley
Chairman
Gladys Maddox
Levon B. Fulwiler

Accepted:

J. L. Morrison
Dean of Graduate Studies

PREFACE

Before I came to the United States, I had several preconceptions of America, which seemed to be formulated in my mind unconsciously from mass-media, such as magazines, newspapers, radio, movies, and television. Frankly speaking, I was rather indifferent to the United States until my fatherland suffered a crisis in the tragic and historical Civil War of Korea in 1945. When I saw the gigantic movement of the American Government with troops coming to my country as the savior of the twentieth century, I, for the first time, turned my eyes--with admiration, gratitude, and curiosity--to this country across the Pacific Ocean.

Once some Western people believed the Oriental countries were glittering with inexhaustible gold. On the contrary, nowadays, some Oriental people think America is a material Utopia. In general, America is thought to be a center of materialistic civilization, machinery, individualism, democracy, freedom, and all sorts of pleasures. Foreigners who intend to visit this country have, at least, such preconceptions, and I am not the exception.

What is America? If somebody had asked me this question before I came to this country, I would have given him a huge watermelon and said, "Just look at this watermelon."

Now, what is it?" He would have described the watermelon, drawing upon all that he knew from his reading. He would have known himself, however, that he was not qualified to tell about the watermelon before he had actually tasted it. To know what a watermelon is, we must cut it into pieces, must eat it, and must taste it. To know America we must come to America, and we must see every part of it and hear the sounds of the land and the voices of the people.

From time to time, after a year in this country as a recipient of a scholarship from the Rotary International Foundation, I realize that I have brought with me half understanding and some misunderstanding of America from my country. I could have learned about the states and the people from American literature, but in my country nobody told me to read American literature. In fact, I paid little heed to American literature. Some of my people think American literature is a part of English literature, and English literature is studied. I had not any intention of studying American literature deeply, even though I spent my leisure time reading the most popular American writers in my country, such as Poe, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Hemingway, and Pearl Buck, the famous woman novelist who received the Nobel prize in literature in 1938. I am wondering now, however, how many people among the readers in Korea distinguish between English literature and American literature.

In lists of popular and favorite American writers, the name of Walt Whitman rarely occurs. His literary achievements are rarely introduced to the people in general. I wonder, in fact, how many Korean students majoring in English are familiar with Whitman's Leaves of Grass. In my search for knowledge about the United States, I think it is my great fortune to be introduced to the poet of America, Walt Whitman, who believed in America and wrote about America a great deal more than any other author did. In his unique, impassioned, and exclamatory style, free from all traditional restraint, he chanted poems about his land, the people, democracy, philosophy, and individualism.

Whitman talked to his own countrymen, to aliens, men and women, young and old, aristocrats and common people, farmers and business men. Like a bird in nature, he freely chanted, sang, and caroled about God, nature, and his country. He wanted the people to hear and see what he was singing about. Not only for a native but for an alien, his Leaves of Grass is a treasure. Through Leaves of Grass the native gains a new understanding of the greatness of his country, and the alien can hear the sound of the land of America and the voice of America.

To me Whitman is great for two contributions that he made. One is, as I have already mentioned, that he is the great poet who represents America best. The other is that he sings with a universal awareness. He hates limitations,

gaps, restraints, barriers which separate people and the nations of the world. His mind is an ocean; his zeal is for the unification of the people, of the East and the West, of the New and the Old World. He is the man who gave his hearty admiration to the Western world--the New World--for its great mechanical achievement; and at the same time, he wishes for the spiritual return of the people to the old world, the source of spiritual birth, Asia, celebrated in the "Passage to India." For these reasons, Whitman is one of my great new friends: he tells me about his country in passionate tones. This is why I have chosen Walt Whitman to study and to write about in my thesis.

In order to know Whitman, his thought, faith, emotion, philosophy, and life, I found it best to study Leaves of Grass. Mainly and mostly, Leaves of Grass is the source of my ideas about Whitman as I have presented them in my thesis. As Whitman said, Leaves of Grass is not merely a book but a man, or the life of a man. I think if I had lived when the poet lived, I might have been one of his admirers in conventional society, the majority of which attacked him severely for what they believed to be the formlessness of his work and for his over-frankness in describing sex in Leaves of Grass. Despite all the severe criticism and misunderstanding from the majority, the unaccepted singer kept writing--growing his leaves of grass, which suffered from the heavy

frost, until he rooted them deeply under ground and made them spread in leaf broadly in the world. I will take Whitman with me to my country also and let him sing among my folk freely.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my hearty gratitude to Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley for her constant encouragement and painstaking instructions throughout my study. All my understanding and knowledge of Whitman, I owe to her untiring guidance. My thanks go also to Dr. Gladys Maddocks, for my conferences with her and for her reading of my thesis; to Mrs. Lavon B. Fulwiler, for her reading of my thesis; to the Rotary International Foundation, for the scholarship enabling me to come to the United States for a year's study; and to my family, for their assistance which made it possible for me to complete my studies leading to the Master of Arts degree in English at the Texas Woman's University.

Pal Khn Chon

24 January 1969

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iii
 Chapter	
I. <u>ORIENTALISM IN LEAVES OF GRASS</u>	
The Unanswered Question.	1
My recognition of something familiar in <u>Leaves of Grass</u>	1
My search for information in answer to my question	1
The unanswered question: Did Whitman read Oriental literature?	3
The conclusion: whether Whitman read Oriental poems or not, Whitman expressed and interpreted Eastern thought.	3
The Self Related to Buddhist Thought	3
My discovery of Whitman's self in <u>Leaves of Grass</u>	3
My recognition of Buddhist thought and expression in Whitman.	3
Whitman's Belief in the Self	4
The superiority of the self	4
The self as the center of Whitman's poems.	4
Whitman's Self Identified with the Self of Others	5
Whitman's self embracing the self of the objective world.	5

The active approach of Whitman's self to the self of others	6
Oriental Philosophy in Whitman's Poetry. .	6
Transmigration in his poetry.	6
The expansion of the self to the self of animals	7
Whitman's optimistic attitude	7
Whitman's self and Oriental transcendentalism.	9
The Enlightenment of the Self.	9
The recovery of the original wisdom of the self.	9
The discovery of the immortality of the self	9
The Cosmic Self.	10
The free journey of the self.	10
The continual expanding of the self into the cosmic self	11
The identification of Whitman's self with the self of the universe.	11
The free flight of the cosmic self over the universe.	12

II. AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IN LEAVES OF GRASS

Introduction: Walt Whitman as the American Poet of Democracy.	14
His declaration regarding human companionship and democracy.	14
The phrase "the love for comrade" as the basis for Whitman's interpreta- tion of democracy.	15
His belief in equality.	16
His love of people.	16

The active approach of Whitman's self to the self of others	6
Oriental Philosophy in Whitman's Poetry. .	6
Transmigration in his poetry.	6
The expansion of the self to the self of animals	7
Whitman's optimistic attitude	7
Whitman's self and Oriental transcendentalism.	9
The Enlightenment of the Self.	9
The recovery of the original wisdom of the self.	9
The discovery of the immortality of the self	9
The Cosmic Self.	10
The free journey of the self.	10
The continual expanding of the self into the cosmic self	11
The identification of Whitman's self with the self of the universe. . . .	11
The free flight of the cosmic self over the universe.	12
II. AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IN <u>LEAVES OF GRASS</u>	
Introduction: Walt Whitman as the American Poet of Democracy.	14
His declaration regarding human companionship and democracy.	14
The phrase "the love for comrade" as the basis for Whitman's interpreta- tion of democracy.	15
His belief in equality.	16
His love of people.	16

Whitman's Compassion	17
His self-sacrificing devotion	17
His compassion compared to the love of a mother and of the sages	18
His friendship with people of all kinds.	19
Whitman's songs of pleasure for his comrade.	20
The Two Wheels of American Democracy: the Individuals and the Masses.	21
The bond of love.	21
Whitman's emphasis on individuality	21
Whitman's emphasis on equality.	22
The real defender of equality	23
Whitman's faith in democracy.	24
Whitman's dream	25

III. THE SOUL AND THE BODY IN LEAVES OF GRASS

Whitman's Conception of the Soul and the Body.	27
The seen and the unseen in the universe	27
The equality of the soul and the body	28
Whitman's declaration	29
The oneness of the soul and the body.	29
Whitman's Observation of the Body.	29
His admiration and love for the body.	29
His recognition of the loveliness of the human body	31
Divine beauty of the female body.	31

Mystic quality of the female body . . .	32
Whitman's disapproval of the concealment of the body.	32
Whitman's Discovery of the Divine Value of the Human Body	33
The body as the divine temple of the soul	33
The body as the communicator of the divine soul.	33
Whitman's religious feeling for the human body	34
Whitman's Belief in the Absoluteness of the Soul and the Body	34
His mystic, divine experience of God in his soul and body	34
His recognition of the perfectness of the original Soul and Body . . .	34
The identification of the wholesome individual body with the universal body	35
Whitman's belief in the immortality of the soul and the body	35
Whitman's Acceptance of Materialism and Spiritualism.	36
Whitman's belief in the physical world as the expression of the spiritual .	36
Whitman's belief in the manifestation of the soul through the material . .	36
The desirable attitude of America toward materialism and spiritualism.	37
Conclusion: oneness, parallelism, and identity of Soul and Body, the everlasting truth.	38

	Page
APPENDICES: TO MY STUDENTS	39
APPENDIX A. WHITMAN'S JOURNEYS.	40
APPENDIX B. "PASSAGE TO INDIA".	56
APPENDIX C. DIALOGUE BETWEEN A TEACHER AND A STUDENT.	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	72

CHAPTER I

ORIENTALISM IN LEAVES OF GRASS

Upon first reading Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, I felt constantly some unexpected intimacy which had rarely happened to me before in reading foreign literature. I imagined an eastern soul incarnated in a western body. For example, Whitman's ruling question in "Song of Myself" in Leaves of Grass sounded to me as if it came out of an eastern Buddhist monastery: "What is a man anyhow? What am I? What are you?" It sounded like a question being asked by a Buddhist novice who was in meditation searching for the right answer to this profound question or like a cross-question being asked by a triumphant Buddhist master who had finally reached his goal.

I was so deeply impressed by Whitman's Oriental thinking and feeling that I wondered whether or not his American readers had recognized his Orientalism. In the works of the leading American authority on Whitman, Gay Wilson Allen, I found a summary of what scholars had observed before 1955, when Professor Allen published his biography of Whitman, The Solitary Singer. The most diligent search of scholars, said Professor Allen, had not

determined whether or not Whitman had read Oriental literature.¹ Professor Allen cited Thoreau's remark upon reading the first edition of Leaves of Grass, "Wonderfully like the Orientals," and Whitman's reply to Thoreau when he asked him whether or not he had read them: "No: tell me about them."² Professor Allen added his observation: "But this may have been disingenuous, or it could have been modesty before a man who obviously knew a great deal about Oriental scriptures."³ Thoreau said that Whitman's poems reminded him of the writings of the Oriental sages.⁴ In 1965, Mr. V. K. Chari, the author of Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism, also quoted Thoreau's comment on Whitman's poems in 1856, a year after the publication of the first edition of Leaves of Grass, "Wonderfully like the Orientals." Mr. Chari said that Thoreau meant Hindoo poems which Thoreau knew in translation (French, German, and English).⁵

¹The Solitary Singer (New York: The Grove Press, 1955), p. 141.

²Ibid. Cited by Allen from Henry D. Thoreau, Letters to Various Persons (Boston, 1865), p. 148.

³The Solitary Singer, p. 141.

⁴V. K. Chari, Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. vii.

⁵Ibid.

Throughout my study of Leaves of Grass I have continued wondering whether Whitman had read any Oriental literature, and my unanswered question remains with me. No scholars studying Whitman seem to present the decisive answers. Both Allen and Chari have cited Thoreau, but they have been unable to give the information that I would like to have.

Whether Whitman had read or had not read the "ancient Hindoo poems" or other Oriental literature in preparation for Leaves of Grass, he is an amazingly energetic and successful interpreter of eastern thoughts which are mostly founded upon the mystic, metaphysical inner world. His excellent ability to comprehend abstract eastern philosophy must have something to do with his innate meditative disposition which is mostly seen in Oriental people.

It does not seem that Whitman made any attempt to formulate a philosophy, but his writings spring from a "unity" of poetic experience. He seems to have centered his whole poetic efforts in the exploration of the nature of self. The concept of self runs throughout the volume of Leaves of Grass as a pervasive theme.

Whitman must have had a philosophic basis for the questions that he asked, for an adequate question indicates an adequate understanding. Whitman's questions which I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter--"What is a man anyhow? What am I? What are you?"--show his awareness of

self, and to his questions he gives the ambiguous and indirect answers which remind me of the Buddhist mystic question-answer form of discourse between a master and his followers. Whitman describes himself in this form:

. . . conformity goes to the fourth-removed,
 I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.
 Why should I pray? Why should I venerate and
 be ceremonious?
 ("Song of Myself," p. 64)⁶

Both statements seem to express the arrogance of Whitman. However, here his arrogance is not meant to be an expression of superiority. It is meant to be a declaration of his recognition of the absoluteness of the Self. It reminds me of the story of Gautama Buddha, who, when he was born, took seven steps to the east, seven steps to the west, seven to the south, and seven to the north, pointing to heaven and to the earth, and declaring: "There is nobody to surpass Me in the universe." We realize that He did not express by His announcement His personal superiority to others but the absoluteness of the Dharma, the Law or Truth in the universe, which he embodied.

Whitman believes in freedom of self. Nothing stands above his "self" giving an order to his "self." He finds "no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones." He tries to

⁶All my quotations from Leaves of Grass are from the ninth edition as given in the text of the Signet Classic edition published by the New American Library, 1958. Since the lines are not numbered in this text, I have indicated the page on which the quoted lines occur.

find his faith, his greatness, his morality in his own self, in the inner world.

He makes it clear that his poems have emanated from the "dilation" and pride of his own self. He muses thus:

I musing late in the autumn day, gazing
 off southward,
 Held by this electric self out of the
 pride of which I utter poems.
 ("As I Ebb'd with the Ocean
 of Life," pp. 214-215)

Whitman's entire experiences outward and inward permeate the whole volume of Leaves of Grass, as he says when he addresses his readers:

Camerado: this is no book,
 Who touches this touches a man.
 ("So Long," p. 384)

And its center is the self.

As Whitman's individualism is dependent upon the perfect equality of individuals, so the real quality of the self will be found in embracing others--the objective world--in an inclusive conception of self. Whitman's self loses its meaning without identification with the objective world. The self identifies its own world with the worlds of others negating the opposition of "the me and not-me." With all people he identifies his self:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one
 a barley-corn less,
 And good or bad I say of myself I say of them.
 ("Song of Myself," p. 64)

Whitman's self is not passive but active, calling upon "you," upon "Strangers," suggesting identification:

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak
to me, why should you not speak to me?
And why should I not speak to you?

("To You," p. 39)

Really, why should we not? Whitman's self has enough room to embrace all beings.

Whitman again addresses "Strangers," this time suggesting his mystic self experience in a more emotional tone:

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly
I look upon you,
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was
seeking, (it comes to me as of a dream,)
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with
you,
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid,
affectionate, chaste, matured,
You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a
girl with me,
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has
become not yours only nor left my body mine
only,
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face,
flesh, as we pass, you take of my beard,
breast, hands, in return.

("To a Stranger," p. 122)

In these lines Whitman touches Samsara, the transmigration of the soul or the cycle of life. If he really had not read Oriental books, he must have had a "life" of an Oriental philosopher in his former lives. According to this philosophy, we have no strangers, no enemies, no hatred. You, for example, are now my antagonist. But who knows? You

might have been my dearest friend. Even the dog playing at my feet--what was he in his former life? No living thing can escape from the old law of transmigration except the enlightened, such as Buddha and Christ. Whitman says: "I see in them and myself the same old Law" ("Song of Myself," p. 58).

Whitman's self expands not only to people but also to animals, and his penetrating eyes see into the nature of their "self" with which he can identify his "self":

I think I could turn and live with animals,
they are so placid and self-contain'd
I stand and look at them long and long.

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented
with the mania of owning things.
("Song of Myself," p. 73)

Contentment, satisfaction, and an optimistic attitude are symptomatic of a healthy spirit. Whitman's optimistic and satisfied attitude and his keeping cheerful all the time⁷ in his domestic or social difficulties are the outcome of his transcendental healthy spirit. Originally, he was a very fortunate man in health, both in soul and body, and we can understand how much he loved his healthy body as well as his soul. The lines,

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect
health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.
("Song of Myself," p. 49)

⁷The Solitary Singer, p. 260.

show his hope and his grateful attitude regarding his own health. Though he lost his valuable physical health in his later life, a loss which, he said, was caused by overworking and devoted nursing at the hospital during the Civil War,⁸ he never lost the spiritual health which made up for the growing weakness of his body. As the animals "do not sweat and whine about their condition" ("Song of Myself," p. 73), so Whitman's self never lost the self-satisfied attitude. His self does not care about nor complain about the world's carelessness about him. The self quietly keeps Whitman's self in contentment:

I exist as I am, that is enough,
 If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
 And if each and all be aware I sit content.
("Song of Myself," p. 20)

In these lines, I see one of the facets of the traditional Oriental sages and saints to whom all worldly honor and possessions were nothing but annoyances which would disturb the perfectness of the self. Their only pleasures were to keep the original perfect self. The self was unaffected by the conditions outside. The self was sufficient by itself. I find in Whitman a similar poetical and keen sensitivity in his identification of his self with the animals:

⁸It was the general opinion that Whitman's illness was caused by the poison he had absorbed in the military hospitals. But once Whitman said that Doctor Drinkard was right: an emotional disturbance was the cause of his illness. See The Solitary Singer, p. 449.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,
 They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them
 plainly in their possession.

("Song of Myself," p. 73)

Contentment and self-satisfaction give the self a transcendental peace and serenity. Worldly fame, property, and glory have no more influence upon the self. As the result of the serenity of the soul, the self recovers the original brightness of wisdom which has been covered by the dark clouds of worldly desires. Wisdom, the unseen treasure of human beings, stands above everything. It is not merely knowledge, and it is not taken away by force. Whitman says:

Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,
 Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having
 it to another not having it,
 Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible
 of proof, is its own proof,
 Applies to all stages and objects and
 qualities and is content.

("Song of the Open Road," p. 138)

With wisdom the self is supremely great.

It is not the earth, it is not America who
 is so great,
 It is I who am great or to be great, it is
 You up there, or any one.

("Memories of President
 Lincoln," p. 282)

The self faces the ultimate problem of birth and death, and with the enlightened wisdom of the soul, the self finds the immortality of self and declares in confidence:

"I know I am deathless" ("Song of Myself," p. 64). And when

he sees the smallest sprout of grass, Whitman's faith in the immortality of self is strengthened:

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
 And if ever there was it led forward life,
 and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
 And ceas'd the moment life appeared.
 All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
 And to die is different from what anyone
 supposed, and luckier.

("Song of Myself," p. 54)

Death is not the collapse or the end of the self but a temporary change. The sunset does not mean the end of the sunrise. It is a temporary phenomenon which appears in the course of the turning of the Universe. The sunset of today means the sunrise of tomorrow. The Oriental sage taught us: "That which has a form can not escape change." To Whitman to "die" is to enter a new life joyously, because it is a moment in a new experience of the universal principle.

Now the self liberated from all worldly bonds, the restriction of the finite material world, or released from the fear of death, freely sets out upon "the open road." The world is his own self; he who gained his self gains the whole world. The whole world is opened widely before him. Nothing can prevent his free choice of a path. No obstacles, no barriers can impede his course. Whitman sings:

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
 Healthy, free, the world before me,
 The long brown path before me leading wherever
 I choose.

("Song of the Open Road," p. 136)

His self continues its journey:

Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning
 Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
 I tread day and night such roads.
 ("Song of Myself," p. 77)

His self-confidence and self-sufficiency are growing stronger:

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am
 good-fortune,
 Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more,
 need nothing,
 Done with indoor complaints, libraries,
 querulous criticisms,
 Strong and content I travel the open road.
 ("Song of the Open Road," p. 136)

The self, who is now "my own master total and absolute," "listens to others" and considers well "what they say," "pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating." He denies nothing, abuses nothing. The self continues growing and expanding, "always expanding/ outward and outward and forever outward until a Giant Self was born calling himself I, Walt Whitman, a Kosmos."

A cosmic self contains everything, even contradictions within the self: Whitman is

. . . of old and young, of the foolish as much as
 the wise,
 Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as
 a man,
 Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd
 with the stuff that is fine,
 One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest
 the same and the largest the same,
 of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and
 religion,

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor,
 quaker,
 Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician,
 priest.

I resist anything better than my own diversity.
 ("Song of Myself," pp. 61-62)

Whitman seems to have a strong feeling that he is identical with the universal movement outside. He thinks the cosmic being outside and the vivifying self within are one and the same. For his self is the pervading essence of the cosmic existence outside. His self is the self of all. "Every atom belongs to me as good belongs to you."

The expanded and enlarged giant, Whitman, stands in the center of the universe, being ready to embrace the cosmos: he believes in his limitlessness of spirit and superabundant energy as a cosmic self. In triumph he sings:

I inhale great draughts of space,
 The east and the west are mine, the north
 and the south are mine.
 ("Song of the Open Road," p. 138)

Now the cosmic self, satisfied with his unexpected power, exclaims in amazement:

I am larger, better than I thought,
 I did not know I held so much goodness.
 ("Song of the Open Road," p. 138)

When the "ties" and "ballasts" of the material world leave the self, the self is liberated from the bondage of time and

space. Thus free, the self enters the realm of "spiritual time and space":

Space and Time! now I see it is time, what
 I guess'd at,
 What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass.
 ("Song of Myself," p. 74)

His giant "elbows rest in sea-gaps" and he "skirts sierras"
 and his "palms cover continents," and the self keeps "going
 where he lists,"

Speeding through space, speeding through
 heaven and the stars,
 Speeding amid the seven satellites and the
 broad ring, and the diameter of eighty
 thousand miles.
 ("Song of Myself," p. 77)

In its flight across the world, the spiritual self feels no
 obstacles. His "course runs below the soundings of plummets."
 It has access to the "material and immaterial." Identified
 with this self, Whitman says: "No guard can shut me off,
 no law prevent me."

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IN LEAVES OF GRASS

If America has ever produced a man who celebrated the democracy of America through his poetry, it is Walt Whitman. He chanted his faith in democracy in the most virile, free, fresh, savage or unpolished, fluent, luxuriant, passionate tone. He spoke as neither a martial hero nor a dedicated statesman who fought for his beloved country against tyranny and injustice in his age. It might be said, however, that Whitman had a mightier power than the sword or statecraft to protect the democracy of his nation. With a pen in his hand, he kept singing freely what he believed most right--the equality of men.

Nobody can deny that Whitman was the poet of American democracy. His faith in democracy runs through almost the whole volume of Leaves of Grass. In the following, for example, we hear his impassioned song for democracy in which Whitman is declaring himself to be the poet of human companionship:

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun
 ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands, with the
 love of comrades, with the life-long
 love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees
 along all the rivers of America, and
 along the shores of the great lakes,
 and all over the prairies,
 I will make inseparable cities with their
 arms about each other's necks,
 By the love of comrades,
 By the manly love of comrades,
 For you, these from me, O Democracy, to
 serve you ma femme!
 For you, for you I am trilling these songs.
 ("For You O Democracy," p. 115)

Better than any other single phrase, perhaps, "the love of comrades" seems to express Whitman's concept of the true basis of democratic society. He opened his unselfish heart to men and women, young and old, high and low, rich and poor. He also aimed to embrace the whole human experience by means of sympathy which enabled him to identify himself with all sorts and conditions of men. In "Song of Myself" he sang:

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,
 Whatever interests the rest interests me,
 politics, wars, markets, newspapers,
 schools,
 The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steam-
 ships, factories, stocks, stores, real
 estate and personal estate.
 ("Song of Myself," p. 87)

He believed all to be equal. He said that America was "not the land for slaves, on any grounds," and that America was not the land for one hero or two heroes. Even after he had ceased to be an active participant in politics, everything that touched his nation affected him in his book.

Whitman was not merely the private citizen but the poet whose role is regarded as that of "Moses leading his children to the Promised Land."¹ In the land of democracy, the democratic poet is the most intimate bosom friend of the land. Whitman calls upon the people with fatherly affection:

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and
indicative hand?
Toward the male of the States, and toward the
female of the States,
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.
("Starting from Paumanok," p. 46)

His many acquaintances whom he had among the stage drivers or men manning Brooklyn ferryboats had affection for him, and each of them thought that Whitman belonged to only his own rank or to himself. They had no idea that Whitman was a writer of a great book and that he had very intimate friends among famous literary men. According to Winwar, "Burroughs wrote: 'I saw a soldier the other day stop in the street and kiss him. Whitman loves everything and everybody. He kisses me as if I were a girl.'"² Emerson disapproved of Whitman's indiscriminate companionship with

¹Gay Wilson Allen and Charles T. Davis, eds., Walt Whitman's Poems (New York: New York University Press, 1955), p. 222.

²Frances Winwar, American Giant (New York & London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 221.

unliterary fellows.³ This cosmic image of the poet in Leaves of Grass impresses every reader:

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
 And the soldiers suppose him to be a
 soldier, and the sailors that he has
 follow'd the sea,
 And the authors take him for an author, and
 the artist for an artist,
 And the laborers perceive he could labor
 with them and love them,
 No matter what the work is, that he is the
 one to follow it or has follow'd it,
 No matter what the nation, that he might
 find his brothers and sisters there.
 ("Song of the Answerer," p. 151)

Whitman's devotion to his needy fellows was passionate and strong. In wet or cold weather he used to sit on the top of the bus to make room in the bus for other customers. If one of his friends was ill, Walt would take his place behind the horses so that the man would not lose his wages. He loved also steering the Brooklyn ferryboats until, one night, while at the wheel, he nearly met with a bad accident. He manifested his compassionate nature toward not only the members of his own family but also the families of his fellows. He aided their needy families and attended funerals when they met with sudden death. At the New York Hospital, to which victims of bad accident cases were taken, he was well known to the surgeons whom he assisted in the dressing of wounds.⁴ His marvelous power to steel himself against the sight of

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 218.

blood and horrible injuries and his mysterious power to allay pain with a heartening word made the doctors speak of him among themselves as "the Saint."⁵ Whitman said: "I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person" ("Song of Myself," p. 79). His love for comrades did not mean giving "lectures" or a "little charity"; it meant giving "himself."

Of his work with soldiers, he said:

I onward go, I stop,
 With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
 I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet
 unavoidable,
 One turns to me his appealing eyes--poor boy! I
 never knew you,
 Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die
 for you if that would save you.

Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the
 hospitals,
 The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
 I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are
 so young,
 Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet
 and sad,
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have
 cross'd and rested,
 Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded
 lips.)

("The Wound-Dresser," pp. 253-254)

In the lines I see the image of the compassionate mother or father and the image of the old sages such as Christ or Buddha who devoted themselves to the sacred task as saviors of the suffering. There may be some difference between the love of a mother for her child and that of the enlightened.

⁵Ibid.

Mother's love is limited in her own child; whereas love of the sages is universal. Mother's love is instinctive; the love of the sages is the outcome of their enlightenment, their knowledge of the truth that all beings are united into one. Whitman seems to comprehend the truth that the old sages had already attained. Sometimes people were strongly impressed by Whitman's resemblance to an Oriental sage. For example, when Edmund Gosse visited Whitman in 1855, Whitman, in his passive dignity, reminded Gosse of "a great old grey Angora Tom," or an Oriental sage (The Solitary Singer, p. 521).

Few people seemed to understand how deeply Whitman enjoyed his brotherly love. The greatness of the democracy of the poet, Whitman, lies in this point: his democracy was based upon the "Love for comrades," the core of religion. As the love of Saints was inclusive, so was Whitman's love. His love was not restricted by the occupations of the people. He could approach the great, and he could form intimate friendships with common people. Whitman sang:

You natural persons old and young!
 You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!
 You twain! and all processions moving along
 the street!
 I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it
 common for you to walk hand in hand.
 ("A Leaf for Hand in Hand," p. 125)

Again, in "A Song for Occupations" he sang of his equal friendship with people of all kinds of occupations or characters:

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as
 nigh as the highest in the same shop,
 . . .
 If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then
 I become so for your sake,
 If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd
 deeds, do you think I cannot remember
 my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?
 ("A Song for Occupations," p. 184)

He wished to be with them all the time:

Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,
 All these I see, but neither and farther the
 same I see,
 None shall escape me and none shall wish to
 escape me.
 (p. 185)

Just as he sang for the suffering with fatherly
 and motherly affections, Whitman sang also of his delight in
 the joys and pleasures of comrades. The poet found his own
 pleasures in the joys of other people. Everybody had his
 own joy. The poet saw "the engineer's joys," "horseman's
 and horsewoman's joys," "the fireman's joys," "the joy of
 the strong-brawn'd fighter," "the mother's joys," "the whale-
 man's joys," "the orator's joys," "the farmer's joys."
 Observing these joys of his beloved comrades, the poet
 laughed and worked with them, and in joy he wrote:

O to make the most jubilant song!
 Full of music--full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
 Full of common employments--full of grain and trees.
 ("A Song of Joys," p. 158)

Whitman was confident that he should be the poet of comrades
 and that he understood "lovers and all their sorrow and joy."

His own joy and sorrow were identified with the joy and sorrow of other people.

In Leaves of Grass, Whitman made a synthesis of the masses and the individual, a synthesis which was his conception of true democracy. In "One's-self I Sing" (p. 31), he said:

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-
Masse.

He veered neither to one side nor to the other. These two important opposite principles, the individual and the masses, keep pace together in democracy. Then what is the tie in the United States? In Leaves of Grass Whitman said it is love or the "dear love of comrades." Love is at the heart of democracy as it is at the heart of religion.

Despite his fondness for the phrase "en-masse," however, Whitman exalted the individual. To him the individual was supreme. He chanted: "All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me/ Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul" ("Song of Myself," p. 90). He sang again:

All is eligible to all
All is for individuals, all is for you.
("By Blue Ontario's Shore," p. 274)

There is nothing greater than the individual. The whole is for him:

Underneath all, individuals,
 I swear nothing is good to me now that
 ignores individuals,
 The American compact is altogether with
 individuals
 The only government is that which makes
 minute of individuals,
 The whole theory of the universe is directed
 unerringly to one single individual--
 namely to you.
 ("By Blue Ontario's Shore," p. 282)

He said: "I have laid the stress of my poems from beginning to end to bear upon American individuality and assist it not only because that is a great lesson in Nature, amid all her generalizing laws, but as counterpoise to the leveling tendencies of democracy--while the ambitious thought of my song is to help the forming of a great aggregate nation, it is, perhaps, altogether through the forming of myriads of fully developed and enclosing individuals."⁶

Against individuality stands equality which Whitman equally emphasized. In Leaves of Grass Whitman listed in his varied catalogues such elements of democracy as "ensemble," "evolution," "love," "freedom," "equality," and "liberty." Of this number "equality" and "freedom or liberty" are especially related to democracy. Whitman recognized individual worth but believed in the quality of all human beings. He accepted everyone. He said American genius lies not in its leaders or in an elite group but always in the common people. He set the meal equally for the wicked and the

⁶Cited by Arthur E. Briggs, Walt Whitman: Thinker and Artist (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 274.

righteous:

This is the meal equally set, this the meat
 for natural hunger;
 It is for the wicked just the same as the
 righteous, I make appointments with all,
 I will not have a single person slighted or
 left away,
 The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby
 invited,
 The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the
 venerealee is invited;
 There shall be no difference between them and
 the rest.

("Song of Myself," p. 63)

This is the democratic assertion that man shall have an equal chance for the good of life and spiritual improvement.

Whitman constantly attempted to elevate the lowly to the height of personality, to the true dignity of man. He was not merely sitting or observing to accept passively the wrong as equal with the right, but was encouraging action to raise the level of all men to the best that was in them. He was the real defender of equality in freedom. To the "human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenance of brutes," he said: "You will come forward in due time to my side" ("Salut au Monde," p. 135). For the social outcast and criminals he declared:

Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,

 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning
 assumes to rule me,
 equal with any, real as any.
 ("Chanting the Square Deific," p. 344)

And to the diseased, he said:

But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases,
 and surmount them all,
 Whatever they are to-day and whatever through
 time they may be,
 They each and all shall lift and pass away and
 cease from thee.

("Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood," p. 354)

To the dictators and all of the proud elite, he said:

Have you thought there could be but a single
 supreme?

There can be any number of supremes.

("By Blue Ontario's Shore," p. 273)

Whitman, however, saw himself in those people. He sang:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one
 a barley-corn less,

And good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

("Song of Myself," p. 64)

Standing in the discouraging period of his beloved country, Whitman rooted his philosophy in democracy in Leaves of Grass. He was keenly conscious of the political imperfections, the failures, and the emergencies of his country in his age, but he recognized the natural advantages and resources of America and the phenomenal success of her pioneering spirit in all that concerns material civilization. He called upon the people, as a prophet and a leader, through Leaves of Grass, saying democracy is the torch to light the people on their way to their perpetual bliss. He was not a cheap optimist.

Let the reformers descend from the stands where
 they are forever bawling--let an idiot or
 insane person appear on each of the stands;
 Let judges and criminals be transposed--let the
 prison-keepers be put in prison--let those
 that were prisoners take the keys;
 Let them that distrust birth and death lead the
 rest.

("Transpositions," p. 337)

His consciousness of imperfection drove him to think
 of the future of his land, the future of his people. He
 dreamed of the land on which individuals would be celebrating
 the prosperity of democracy, a democratic community where men
 never "deserted, never despair'd and never abandon'd the
 faith." It has been almost eighty years since the democratic
 morning star, the bard of American democracy, passed from
 among his people, his land, and his country which he cele-
 brated for thirty-five years with his love songs. The man
 passed, but his song, the song of his soul, is still ringing
 in this country, the center and the mother of Democracy,
 America. I hear Whitman singing, America singing:

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
 Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it
 should be blithe and strong,
 The carpenter singing his as he measures his
 plank or beam,
 The mason singing his as he makes ready for work,
 or leaves off work,
 The boatman singing what belongs to him in his
 boat, the deck-hand singing on the steam-
 boat deck,
 The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench,
 the hatter singing as he stands,
 The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his
 way in the morning, or at noon intermission
 or at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the
 young wife at work, or of the girl sewing
 or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to
 none else,
The day what belongs to the day--at night the
 party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious
 songs.

("I Hear America Singing," p. 38)

CHAPTER III

THE SOUL AND THE BODY IN LEAVES OF GRASS

In Leaves of Grass the traditional concept that the soul of man is something superior to and above the flesh was completely broken by Whitman. His bold and consistent assertion of a parallelism, a unity and oneness of Soul and Body, might have been somewhat shocking to one having a traditional religious faith in the soul and a traditional moral conception of the body. On the other hand, however, Whitman's revolutionary conception might have been refreshing to those who had tired of the stereotyped conception of the soul and the body, the belief that our final bliss or triumph in this life would be achieved by the liberation of the divine soul from the sinful body. Whitman, who seemed to have experienced the feeling of universal oneness, did not hesitate to present his conception of the relationship between Soul and Body in his Leaves of Grass.

Whitman believed that, as the universe is both spiritual and physical, so our individual self, the microcosm, is a harmonized unity of soul and body. The healthy and perfect world is represented by the perfect integration of "the seen" and "the unseen." The universal phenomena are

the embodiment of the unseen, the hidden power of law, the omnipresent universal truth. As Whitman said in his "Song of Myself," the material and the spiritual--the body and the soul--should keep pace together like the two wheels on both sides of a cart. The wheels on both sides are supporting each other by doing their parts. It is unreasonable to value the one side more than the other side. Whitman said,

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved
by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof
in its turn.

("Song of Myself," p. 51)

It seems to me that one of the outstanding signs of the greatness of Whitman is his recognition of this truth, the equality of the soul and the body, and his courage to proclaim this equality. Superficially his belief seemed heretical to men who held the traditional moral and religious beliefs of the nineteenth century. Even Emerson, whom Whitman once called "master," and Melville still insisted upon the "superiority" of the soul.¹ In "Song of Myself," Whitman declared his faith in both the soul and the body:

I have said that the soul is not more than
the body,
And I have said that the body is not more
than the soul.

(p. 48)

¹D. H. Lawrence, "Whitman," Whitman: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 18.

This equilibrium he emphasized even more strongly in "I Sing the Body Electric": "And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?" At the same time he declared himself to be the poet of the body and the soul:

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet
of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the
pains of hell are with me.
("Song of Myself," p. 65)

And he was always the poet of both.

It is not clear to me why Whitman used sexual connotation to show the complete unity, the oneness or fusion, of soul and body. But it must have been the poet's most natural mode of thinking to make his imagery of the union of soul and body most effective. In "Song of Myself" the poet gave a vivid description of his mystical and ecstatic experience acquired through the imaginary marriage of Body and Soul:

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop
from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not
custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your
valved voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent
summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips
and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and
plunged your tongue to my bare-stript
heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and
reach'd till you held my feet.
(p. 52)

Here he suggested that the senses of the body were to have a significant part in the approaching union with the soul. The normal belief that the mystical experience or state was achieved only through a mortification or annihilation of, or escape from, the senses had nothing to do with this poet's mystical experience. The soul not only accepted the invitation but also consummated a union with the poet: and when the soul parted the shirt from his bosom-bone, and plunged his tongue to the "bare-stript heart" of the poet, the senses were not humbled any more but celebrated and glorified. From the beard to the feet, the body was held in the grip of the soul, and body and soul became one: the complete fusion was achieved. In this state of perfect oneness, the soul and body needed no more "words," not "music or rhyme," not worldly "custom" or formal "lecture," not "even the best." In ecstasy and pleasure the poet sang:

O you and me at last, and us two only.
 O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!
 O something ecstatic and undemonstrable!
 O music wild!
 O now I triumph--and you shall also;
 O hand in hand--O wholesome pleasure--O one
 more desirer and lover!
 O to haste firm holding--to haste, haste on
 with me.

 ("Starting from Paumanok," p. 49)

In a union that is beautiful and sweet, the poet celebrated again the marriage of soul and body: "Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul" ("Song of Myself," p. 51).

Whitman did not seem to hesitate to express his frank admiration and love for the body. In an exuberant texture and tone he glorified the body. In "I Sing the Body Electric," he said:

To be surrounded by beautiful, curious,
breathing, laughing flesh is enough.

I do not ask any more delight, I swim in
it as in a sea.

(pp. 100-101)

His penetrating sensitive eyes caught all of the loveliness of the human body, male and female, and of the beauty of all its functions. In every part of the human body he found its beauty:

The love of the body of man or woman balks accounts,
the body itself balks account,
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female
is perfect.

But the expression of a well-made man appears not
only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously
in the joints of his hips and wrists,
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the
flex of his waist and knees, dress does not
hide him.

("I Sing the Body Electric," p. 99)

In admiration for the female body, he was further impassioned. It was not a sensual beauty but a divine beauty of the female body that attracted the poet:

This is the female form,
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,

It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,
 I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than
 a helpless vapor . . .
 ("I Sing the Body Electric," p. 101)

Whitman admitted that there was a mystic quality of the female body beyond its beauty and delightfulness. He urged womankind to be confidently aware of woman's role in nature:

Be not ashamed woman, your privilege encloses the
 rest, and is the exit of the rest,
 You are the gates of the body, and you are the
 gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,
 She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,
 She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive
 and active,
 She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and
 sons as well as daughters.
 ("I Sing the Body Electric," p. 101)

Finally, Whitman began wondering why this beautiful human body should be concealed, and he inveighed against "those who corrupted their own bodies" by concealment--against the pruriency of clothes which defile the pure and vivid body. He asked:

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,
 And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of
 manhood untainted,
 And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred
 body, is more beautiful than the most
 beautiful face.
 Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own
 live body? or the fool that corrupted her
 own live body?
 For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot
 conceal themselves.
 ("I Sing the Body Electric," pp. 103-104)

It seems that Whitman hoped to make the body not only beautiful and delightful but also truly wholesome, sane, and religious. The poet's keen eyes saw the sublime and divine soul all the time behind the human form. The body was the divine temple of the soul. The soul was enmeshed inextricably with the body:

Behold the body includes and is the meaning, the
 main concern, and includes and is the soul;
 Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is
 your body, or any part of it!
 ("Starting from Paumanok," p. 46)

Whitman believed that the body including the soul formed the channel of communication between his soul and outer things. The body communicates what the soul informs, and whatever is done in the body redounds to the advantage or disadvantage of the soul. The human body is the most eloquent spokesman of the soul. The poet listened to the voiceless eloquence of the body, and in his poems the eloquence "re-appears." He said:

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,
 (In the best poems re-appears the body, man's
 or woman's well shaped, natural, gay,
 Every part able, active, receptive, without
 shame or the need of shame.)
 ("A Song of the Rolling Earth," p. 190)

And he heard the soul's confession through the body:

I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
 That I was I knew was of my body, and what I
 should be I knew I should be of my body.
 ("Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," p. 147)

The body had, therefore, a mystic value for the poet, not merely because it is exceedingly beautiful and delightful, but also because it is verily the temple of the divinest of all things we know, the human soul. His religious feeling for the human body pervaded Leaves of Grass: "If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my own body, or any part of it" ("Song of Myself," p. 68). Again he said: "If anything is sacred the human body is sacred" ("I Sing the Body Electric," p. 103).

Whitman saw no better or greater God than the soul and the body, the self. In this conception he showed his religion. He had seen and experienced the divinity, the sublimity, the mystic power, the pleasure of heaven, and the pain of hell in the soul and the body. The self--soul and body--was his own master. The soul and the body which fused it into one had the mystic power to create their own fate. In "Song of Myself," Whitman boldly said: "And nothing not God, is greater to one than one's self is" (p. 94).

Bliss and happiness are not gifts from God. They are from within the body and the soul. Whitman insisted that the soul was "beautiful" all the time and that the body was beautiful. He meant to say that our original soul and body were pure, beautiful, divine, and untainted. When this original soul flows out through the untainted body, bliss and happiness are created. Whitman said:

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is
 happiness,
 I think it pervades the open air, waiting at
 all times,
 Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.
 ("Song of the Open Road," p. 139)

The beautiful and untainted self means the healthy and wholesome body and soul. Whitman insisted upon the paramount importance of pure and wholesome manhood and womanhood, suggesting the identification of the wholesome individual body with the universal body, the world body. He said in "By Blue Ontario's Shore": "All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport with the universe" (p. 274).

The immortality of the soul is not a new concept, and the transiency of our body is a general belief. Whitman's firm belief in the immortality of both soul and body is natural in so far as he believed in the immortality of the soul. Soul and Body are one. In a higher sense, the body is not doomed to die.

Of your real body, and man's or woman's real
 body,
 Item for item, it will elude the hands of
 the corpse-cleaners and pass to fitting
 spheres,
 Carrying what has accrued to it from the
 moment of birth to the moment of death.
 ("Starting from Paumanok," p. 46)

Again in "Inscriptions," he said:

Thy body permanent,
 The body lurking there within thy body,
 The only purport of the form thou art,
 the real I myself,
 An image, an eidolon. (p. 35)

And in a question he re-affirmed the immortality of the body: "How can the real body ever die and be buried?"

("Starting from Paumanok," p. 46)

Whitman's acceptance of the body would naturally suggest his acceptance of the physical world or materialism. He believed in "the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or real." He said in "With Antecedents": "I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I reject no part" (p. 206). As this line shows, he believed in both spiritualism and materialism. The body for Whitman does not mean only the sensual body. It is not man's material eyes that finally see, or man's material body that finally loves. Whitman loved the body identified with the soul and the soul identified with materials.

The soul, also, Whitman believed, achieves its "identity" through the act of "observing," "loving," and "absorbing" concrete objects or materials, "the faithful solids and fluids." "The soul stays in the flesh, stays in the limbs and lips and in the belly, stays in the breast and womb. The soul is free but stays where it belongs and identifies with the object. It stays in the dark limbs of negroes and in the body of the prostitute. It stays in the marsh where the calamus grows."² We see the soul in our

²D. H. Lawrence, p. 18.

"shape" and "countenance," "persons," "substance," "beasts," "the trees," "the running rivers," "the rocks" and "sands" (Solitary Singer, p. 136). Whitman said repeatedly, "One deep purpose underlay the others--and there has been the religious purpose," and, "If the spiritual is not behind the material, to what purpose is the material?"³ The material ideality is also formulated in one of Whitman's notebooks: "Most writers have disclaimed the physical world and they have not over-estimated the other, or soul, but have underestimated the corporeal. How shall my eye separate the beauty of the blossoming buckwheat field from the stalks and heads of tangible matter? How shall I know what the life is except as I see it in the flesh? I will not praise one without the other or any more than the other."⁴

Thus in Leaves of Grass Whitman admitted, America herself admits, and the world admits that America occupies the center or the front line of the world with her flourishing material civilization. It is time for America, as Whitman announced, to recognize the truth of the oneness of spiritualism and materialism, the soul and the body. Otherwise, some people will make themselves slaves of the dazzling materials or the limitless desires of the body

³Cited by F. O. Matthiessen, "Only a Language Experiment," Whitman: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 73.

with their over "adhesiveness," their worship of the growing material civilization. On the other hand, some others will rather take the negative attitude toward the materialism without which we cannot survive. The material without the divine will lead to destruction, and the soul or spirit without the material can be compared to the driver without his car.

Oneness, parallelism, and identity of Soul and Body, which Whitman insisted upon through his poetic art, are facets of the everlasting truth which brings bliss and prosperity to individuals and the universe.

APPENDICES: TO MY STUDENTS

APPENDIX A

WHITMAN'S JOURNEYS

From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar to sing the idea
of all.
("From Paumanok Starting," p. 234)

As a traveler, Whitman made actual and spiritual journeys which began at his birthplace, Paumanok, and extended over the United States, the East and the West, the North and the South, into Canada and over the Universe. He was not a static observer but a most impassioned poet singing in Leaves of Grass what he had seen or experienced on his actual journeys and what he had perceived in his mystical experiences on spiritual journeys covering the universe. The universe itself was a road for his traveling souls:

To know the universe itself as a road, as many
roads, as roads for traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls.
("Song of the Open Road," p. 142)

Studying place-names in Leaves of Grass we find that Whitman's actual and mystical experiences in travel are poetically or oratorically interwoven.

His knowledge of American life was enlarged by his journeys over the United States, which he recorded faithfully

in his Leaves of Grass. It seems to me also that the more his knowledge of America enlarged, the more his love for America expanded. Tracing his journeys through Leaves of Grass, I have renewed my own experience of an unforgettable journey crossing two-thirds of this continent from California to Texas, thinking of Whitman, the traveling soul of America, who crossed the continent one hundred years ago. As Whitman did, I imprinted upon my memory the vastness, spaciousness, limitlessness, beauty, and power of this land in amazement. I think I can understand what Whitman understood about his own country when he said:

Only themselves understand themselves and the
 like of themselves,
 As souls only understand souls.
 ("Perfections," p. 227)

Strictly speaking, Whitman's travel started at the age of four, May 27, 1823, when his family moved to Brooklyn from West Hills on Long Island, or Paumanok, as Whitman loved to call it, using its ancient Indian name. This thirty-mile trip from the country to town became indelibly stamped on his infant consciousness because of two main reasons: one was the novelty of the trip and the other was that one of the most exciting horse races held in America up to that time was held that day. We also cannot ignore the little trips that Whitman took with his grandfather, the genial old Major, Cornelius Van Velsor. "For over forty years," Whitman said his grandfather "drove a stage and market wagon from his farm

to Brooklyn ferry, where he used to put up at Smith & Wood's old tavern on the west side of the street, near Fulton ferry.-- He was wonderfully regular in these weekly trips; and in those old fashioned times, people could almost tell the time of day, by his stage passing along the road--so punctual was he.--I have been up and down with him many times."¹ It seems to me that Whitman unconsciously expressed a philosophy of life in this passage: life like a seesaw is "up and down." Whether little Whitman had any philosophical feeling as he went up and down, it is hard to know now. Instead, I read in the following from the grown-up poet in Leaves of Grass:

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after
so many throes and convulsions.
("Starting from Paumanok," p. 40)

Walt loved Long Island and the surrounding ocean, and it was one of the reasons that he visited his grandparents at every opportunity in all seasons. The island was his kingdom, and he continued his trip to the eastern end of the island in his later boyhood. "Sometimes riding, sometimes boating, but generally afoot,"² all along the Island and its shores, Whitman spent parts of many years. Paumanok in Leaves of Grass is saturated through and through with recollections from his breezy birthplace. He sang:

¹Faint Clews & Indirections: Manuscripts of Walt Whitman and His Family, ed. Clarence Gohdes and Rollo G. Silver, Durham, N. C., 1949, p. 45, cited by Gay Wilson Allen, The Solitary Singer, p. 14.

²The Solitary Singer, p. 16.

Sea-beauty! stretch'd and basking!
 One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with
 copious commerce, steamers, sails,
 And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or
 gentle--mighty hulls dark-gliding in the
 distance.
 Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water--healthy
 air and soil!
 Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine!
 ("Paumanok," p. 385)

In 1833 when Walt was fifteen years old, the Whitman family moved back to the country, but Walt remained in Brooklyn. All the years of his young life, however, he could continue his trip to West Hills with Major Van Velsor, who was still making his weekly trip to Brooklyn. Until he reached the age of thirty years, Whitman had not the chance to expand his traveling; he was still confined to West Hills, Brooklyn, and New York City. During this time, however, just as he tramped Long Island in his boyhood, absorbing its healthy and pure nature into his own nature, he absorbed the whole life of New York and Brooklyn, exploring every quarter of the huge city, becoming acquainted with all trades, making friends with all classes and sorts of people. We cannot ignore the fact that much of his enormous variety of knowledge might have been acquired at this time. Whitman loved the ferryboat journey, and on the ferries that brought the traveler and the laborer to and fro across the North and East Rivers to Manhattan Island he pondered the question of life itself. The "countless crowds of passengers" were constantly coming and going, but from where and to where?

Like the ferryboat, the omnibuses on Broadway were not merely the methods of transportation but an epitome of life for him. In "Broadway" Whitman said:

What hurrying human tides, or day or night!
 What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!
 What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!
 What curious questioning glances--glints of love!
 Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!
 Thou portal--thou arena--thou of the myriad long-drawn lines and groups!
 (Could but thy flagstones, curbs, facades, tell their inimitable tales;
 Thy windows rich, and huge hotels--thy side-walks wide;)
 Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!
 Thou, like the parti-colored world itself--like infinite, teeming, mocking life!
 Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!
 (p. 393)

By 1847, Whitman had never been farther away from home than to the end of Long Island and New York, and a new division of Walt's life seemed to begin from the date 1848 when he chanced to travel, giving up his editorial work on the Brooklyn Eagle. During an intermission at the Broadway Theatre, Whitman happened to talk with J. E. McClure, a southerner who was planning to start a newspaper in New Orleans. McClure offered the editorial position on the Crescent to Whitman, and Whitman had nothing to lose and much to gain from accepting the offer and journeying to the South. Position and money were a secondary consideration with Whitman. What he welcomed was a good opportunity to see for himself the mighty land and people, the amplitude

of his beloved America, which he was preparing to celebrate in his book.

The journey was a heavy undertaking in those days of rough conveyance. Walt and his brother Jeff left Brooklyn by train, reached Baltimore in a day, and changed trains for Cumberland, one hundred and seventy miles distant from Baltimore. Here they took a stage-coach for the hard trip over the Alleghenies. They passed Wheeling, West Virginia, where their Ohio steamboat was lying at the wharf waiting for them. The New Orleans experience was, on the whole, pleasant and at times exhilarating, but it was not without some mild shocks. The appearance of the Ohio River was Whitman's first shock: "In poetry and romance, three rivers are talked of as though they were clean streams; but it is astonishing what a difference is made by the simple fact they are always and altogether excessively muddy. . . . There is no romance in a mass of yellowish brown liquid."³ On the steamboat he was greatly impressed by the productiveness of his country and by its enormous "buying and selling." He was awakened to the tremendous size, capacity, variety, and fertility of the growing nation. We hear Whitman singing, celebrating the rich productiveness of his land:

³Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman, ed. Emory Holloway (New York, 1932), I, 187, cited by Allen in The Solitary Singer, p. 93.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!
Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land
of cotton, sugar, rice!
Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and
hemp! land of the apple and the grape!
("Starting from Paumanok," p. 46)

His celebration continues in "Song of the Broad-Axe":

Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,
Lands of iron--lands of the make of the axe.

(p. 164)

Most of the towns and occasional cities en route were uninteresting and did not particularly impress him, and at Cincinnati he thought the street was clumsy. He explored Louisville on foot and found it quieter and more "substantial" than Cincinnati. At Cairo, at the junction of the Mississippi, the muddy yellow Ohio poured its stream far down into the father of waters, the Mississippi River. When he "steam'd down the Mississippi," the "long-running Mississippi down to the Mexican sea" and "my ever running Mississippi," it seemed to Whitman "the very heart of the democratic empire of his dreams."⁴ After twelve exhausting days and nights from Wheeling, the Whitmans finally reached New Orleans.

Walt resigned the editorial position on the Crescent, a new daily paper, on May 24, and the brothers left New Orleans on May 27. They returned by way of the Mississippi

⁴Emory Holloway, Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 43.

and the Great Lakes to the North. They reached St. Louis and walked around the city for a few hours and went next to La Salle, where they transferred to a canal boat to Chicago. At Milwaukee, while anchored there, Walt took a good stroll around the town and was so much impressed that he wrote down: "It seems to me that if we should ever remove from Long Island, Wisconsin would be the proper place to come to."⁵ They continued sailing to Mackinaw, past Detroit, and reached Cleveland, and then went on to Buffalo. They finally caught a train for Niagara, of which Whitman said, "Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance" ("Song of Myself," p. 75), causing me to feel my own dampish countenance under the misty Niagara water spray. Whitman said elsewhere: "Long I roam'd the woods of the North, long I watch'd Niagara pouring" ("Rise O Days From Your Fathomless Deep," p. 240). They took a train again to Albany and made their final passage by boat down the Hudson River to New York. Such a survey of the country was what Whitman needed for the full fruition of his literary design. Through this journey to New Orleans, "Walt had seen more of America than he would see again until old age."⁶ Passing down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and through many of "These States," he took his reader:

⁵The Solitary Singer, p. 100.

⁶Ibid.

On journeys through the States we start,
We dwell a while in every city and town,
We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast
valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern
States,
We confer on equal terms with each of the States.
("On Journeys Through the States," pp. 36-37)

He continued singing his awareness of his land in "Starting from Paumanok":

Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt
and happy,
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri,
aware of mighty Niagara,
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the
hirsute and strong-breasted bull.

(p. 39)

Whitman, for many years, had cherished an ambition "to travel over America as a wandering orator, or teacher by word of mouth--not as a substitute for his role as poet but as a complement to it."⁷ In "Walt Whitman's Lectures" we read: "I desire to go by degrees through all these States, especially West and South, and through Kanada, lecturing . . ."⁸

On journeys through the States we start,
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and
lovers of all.
("On Journeys Through the States," p. 36)

It seems to me that the opportunity to travel came more frequently to Whitman with the growth of his Leaves of

⁷Ibid., pp. 218-219.

⁸Ibid., p. 219.

Grass. In 1860, he went up to Boston for the third edition of Leaves of Grass. His experience in Boston was pleasant. One of his important experiences there was apparently his conversation with Emerson under the Boston elms. Emerson called upon him immediately after Whitman's arrival and attempted to persuade him not to publish his "Children of Adam" poems. This Boston trip was taken twelve years after the trip to New Orleans.

In 1862, two years after his visit to Boston, Whitman unexpectedly went to Washington. His brother George had enlisted as an officer in the Fifty-first New York volunteers. News came that George had been seriously wounded at the first battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862. Walt hurried down to Virginia to be at his bedside. In those days there was no direct train connection between New York and Washington. Whitman took a ferry over the East River, crossed Manhattan, and took another ferry across the Hudson to Jersey City, where he caught a train to Philadelphia, and thence went by train to Washington. In Philadelphia, a pickpocket got all the money Walt carried. George was not badly wounded, but Walt saw that his duty lay in the hospitals and camps. Thus in Washington Whitman became a male nurse, a compassionate "Wound-Dresser":

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle
brought in,

Where their priceless blood reddens the grass
 the ground,
 Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under
 the roof'd hospital.
 ("The Wound-Dresser," p. 253)

Whitman lived for ten years in Washington. During that decade he devoted himself to the wounded and to his Leaves of Grass and continued trips to New York and to Brooklyn as occasion demanded. A crisis in his health made him unable to stay in Washington. He went to his brother, Colonel George, who had built a modest house in Camden, New Jersey, a town across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. Whitman had no intention of remaining in Camden permanently; but because he was dropped by a new Solicitor-general who came into office in 1874, Whitman could have no hope of returning to Washington to work.

On September 10, 1879, Whitman finally got his most exciting opportunity to travel to the great West of the United States, which he had dreamed of for many years. Colonel John W. Forney, publisher of the Philadelphia Press, and the Old Settlers of Kansas Committee invited him to be the guest of honor and visiting poet at the Kansas Quarter Centennial Celebration to be held in Lawrence, Kansas.⁹ On September 10, Whitman left West Philadelphia with several others by sleeping car. He was able to spend only one night with his brother Jeff in St. Louis before continuing the

⁹Robert Huback, Walt Whitman and the West (Indiana University, 1943), p. 10, referred to in The Solitary Singer, p. 486.

journey. A sleeping car afforded Whitman a new experience, of which he said, "They say the French Voltaire in his time designated the grand opera and a ship of war the most signal illustrations of the growth of humanity's and art's advance beyond primitive barbarism. Perhaps if the witty philosopher were here these days, and went in the same car with perfect bedding and food from New York to San Francisco, he would shift his type and sample to one of our American sleepers."¹⁰ He crossed Missouri in daylight, thinking that this state stood "in the front rank of the union."¹¹ With Missourians he talked about some social and political subjects, and he thought he could get along "safely and comfortably among the Missourians."¹²

At Kansas City they changed trains and went on to Lawrence, Kansas. Continuing his journey to Denver, he was completely captivated by the scenery. Platte Canyon deeply impressed him, and he said he had found in it "the law of his own poems."¹³

By the Rio Grande, Whitman left Denver and took the more southerly route for his return journey. At Pueblo, he boarded the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and

¹⁰The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman, ed. Richard Maurice Bucke and others (New York, 1902), IV, 253, cited in The Solitary Singer, p. 487.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

headed east, enjoying "every sight and feature" of the West, of which he had sung: "Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World" ("Starting from Paumanok," p. 40). Looking upon the prairies, the great plains, and the valley of the Mississippi, Whitman could not help thinking the promising future of this country. He was thinking that "it would be grander still to see all those inimitable American areas fused in the Alembic of a perfect poem, or other esthetic work, entirely Western, fresh and limitless--altogether our own, without a trace or taste of Europe's soil, reminiscence, technical letter or spirit."¹⁴ In Leaves of Grass he chanted his inspiration:

The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,
 I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
 Demand the most copious and close companionship of
 men,
 Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
 Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh,
 nutritious,
 Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with
 freedom and command, leading not following,
 Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet
 and lusty flesh clear of taint,
 Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents
 and governors, as to say Who are you?
 Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd,
 never obedient,
 Those of inland America.
 ("The Prairie-Grass Dividing," p. 123)

By the time the poet returned from his Western trip in January, 1880, he had in reality traversed two-thirds of the continent. In other words, he had covered over five thousand

¹⁴Ibid.

miles and seen what geographical scholars had called the "heartland of America."

The travel to the West was not his last big journey. Another thousand-mile trip was waiting for him after five months of rest in Camden. When Whitman felt in the mood for more travel, he decided to accept the invitation of Dr. Bucke, who had long been urging him to come to London, Ontario, for a long visit. On June 3, 1880, Whitman took a sleeper in Philadelphia on the Lehigh Valley Railroad. He stopped at Niagara; and from the suspension bridge, he saw again the falls, a view that deeply impressed him, although this was his second visit to Niagara. He filed the magnificent picture in his memory. Dr. Bucke took him on a short excursion on Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron, and after the excursion, the two made "a long, leisurely midsummer trip down the St. Lawrence, and up the Saguenay River, in the course of which they visited Montreal, Quebec, the Thousand Islands, Cape Eternity, Trinity Rock, and other historic points."¹⁵ It was the first of September when Whitman returned to Camden.

Thus far I have traced Whitman's main journey over mundane space. But the reader of Leaves of Grass will easily recognize the fact that Whitman's kaleidoscopic lists of objects, scenes, nations, and occupations referred to far more than the North American continent, two-thirds of which

¹⁵From Diary in Canada, p. 16, cited in The Solitary Singer, p. 490.

he actually had seen. His mystic journeys are by no means confined to "journeys through these states." He showed his insistent space-defying and time-defying attitude. He roamed and celebrated the nations of the world, and at times he tramped over the whole globe, the whole universe, as in "Salut au Monde!" in Leaves of Grass. In that poem he saw "the sierras of Andes," "the Himalayas," "the Alps," "the Pyrenees," "the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts," "the Arctic," "the waters of Hindustan," "the China Sea and gulf of Guinea," "Japan," "the Mediterranean," "the sea around Greenland," "the cape of Storms," "Great Britain," "Asia and Africa," "the Amazon and Paraguay," "Greece," "Assyria," and so on. Not only in "Salut au Monde!" but in numerous other poems in Leaves of Grass I feel the breath of this cosmic poet and traveler. I hear him singing:

Hurrying with the . . . crowd . . .
 Walking the old hills of Judaea . . .
 Speeding through space, speeding through
 heaven and the stars,
 Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-
 balls like the rest,
 Carrying the crescent child that carries its
 own full mother in its belly,
 I tread day and night such roads.
 I depart as air, I shake my white locks at
 the runaway sun,
 I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in
 lacy jags.
 ("Song of Myself," pp. 77 and 96)

In Leaves of Grass we still hear and will continue to hear the perpetual traveler tramping over the globe, as he declared in "Song of Myself": "I tramp a perpetual journey" (p. 91).

APPENDIX B

"PASSAGE TO INDIA"

I began my study of Whitman by spending several weeks on "Passage to India," reading the poem, studying all allusions and other aspects of the language, analyzing the structure of the poem and relating form to meaning, listening to recordings and reading the poem aloud, and reading some critical studies of the poem.

I realize now that "Passage to India" presents many problems to a foreign student who must master Whitman's vocabulary, Whitman's numerous allusions, and Whitman's poetic techniques while he is grasping the message of the poet: the union of the Old World and the New, the Orient and the Occident. Generally regarded as Whitman's greatest poem, "Passage to India" rewards any student who studies it.

"Passage to India" opens with a prologue, announcing Whitman's theme: out of material achievements occurring between 1866 and 1869 has come a union of the Old and the New. The poet had read about three great international events: the completion of the Suez Canal connecting Europe and Asia by water, the spanning of the American continent by railroads, and the linking of Europe and the United States

by the transatlantic cable. He was so inspired by his vision of what these events could lead to that he wrote this poem. In short, the poet responded to the three physical events which had occurred in his day, and he caused his readers to feel strongly what he felt by using the ways of a lyric poet, such as emotions, moving language, and rhythm, which includes extensive repetition.

The word "passage" itself has a rich connotation. It suggests messages sent by cable and a formal procession through the Suez Canal by means of ships and over the United States by means of railroads. It reminds us of expeditions in which people strove to reach fabled lands, and it suggests even more: "man's whole ceaseless exploration" since the dawn of human history. It is the "retrospect brought forward" ("Passage to India," p. 325), the Old and the New World joined in unification, and finally the voyage of the mind returning to original innocence and primitive power.¹

The symbol "India" begins by "being simply the geographic East, the East of Suez," and the "West" is that of the "mighty railroads." The East becomes the past of religions, bibles, legends, fables, and the garden from which man commenced his feverish exploration.² It is the

¹In this paragraph, as well as my entire essay, I am influenced by Gay Wilson Allen and Charles T. Davis, "Critical Note," Walt Whitman's Poems: Selections with Critical Aids, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Charles T. Davis (New York: New York University Press, 1955), pp. 242-248.

²Ibid.

area "in which man can recover original innocence" and can restore "primal thought."³ Thus "passage to India" symbolizes universal communication, geographical and spiritual travel, process and approach, promotion of friendships, and harmony among human beings. As a man of vision Whitman looks to the future, and he becomes a singer singing properly the real significance of the "achievement of the present --of these "modern wonders": the Suez Canal, the "mighty railroads" in the New World, and the Atlantic Cable, "eloquent gentle wires."⁴

Yet the poet, in celebrating present technology, would not neglect the past--the dark "unfathomed retrospect"--in favor of "strong light work"--the works of engineers. The essence of the past is India, with "myths Asiatic," "the primitive fables," all of which must be, to use Whitman's word, "eclaircised." Myths, fables, and truth are all associated with poetry and religion and are beautiful structures built from man's religious aspirations and his dreams. The poet welcomes the accomplishments of the past with the same joy with which he meets those of his own day. He also sings with joy upon seeing God's purpose at work in both. He can look to the future and be excited by the prospect of the earth "spanned, connected by network" and of lands "welded together." So "Passage to India" describes "a path

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

created anew by modern technology, which supplies a basis for new and more harmonious social relationships,"⁵ for mutual understanding, for friendship, and for a new religion. Thus Whitman says, "A worship new I sing."

The poet speaks of his soul as his most intimate companion who accompanies him everywhere he goes. The relationship between the poet, the "I" of the poem, and the soul is "neither perfunctory nor static, even at the beginning of the poem."⁶ The "I" found some joy in the Soul because, more strongly, perhaps, than many priests do, the "I" and the soul believe in God. The poet sings the mystic union of the soul with "God": "But in God's name, and for thy sake O Soul." It seems that the poet anticipates objections from the soul when there seems a chance for the past to be misunderstood and ignored: "Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O Soul."

Thus the poet, responding to three physical events, leads his readers to spiritual reality. The physical voyages and explorations that he speaks of are mere symbols of man's development, symbols of man's spiritual voyages and explorations.

The Korean student finds the vocabulary of "Passage to India" challenging because of allusions, polyglot borrowings, and archaisms. To an alien mind, a word that begins with a capital letter, which signifies a proper noun, is a confusing

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

problem. It is not unusual for a foreigner to take a place-name for a name of a man. Not a few foreign people seem to have experienced a momentary hesitation in discriminating between the two.

Throughout Leaves of Grass Whitman uses countless proper nouns. For example, in "Passage to India" I have come across several geographical and historical proper nouns, some of which are unfamiliar to me. Now, frequently, we can discriminate between a man's name and a place-name by observing the context of the sentence in which the proper noun occurs, but for our study some of Whitman's poems, such as "Passage to India," require more. Maps and encyclopedias are often essential for a study of the proper nouns which Whitman has mentioned. Without a correct knowledge of his proper nouns, the student fails to comprehend what Whitman intends to convey to the reader.

In "Passage to India," for example, the poet is telling about several places in the United States which arouse my interest and curiosity--the Platte, Laramie plains, the Wind river, the Wahsatch mountains, the Eagle's Nest, the Promontory, the Noble Elk mountain, the Humboldt range, and Lake Tahoe. I have, of course, read of places elsewhere, such as the Cape of Good Hope, the Adriatic, the Euphrates, and the Bay of Bengal, which Whitman does not hesitate to name in his poem celebrating the union of all people in places which he had only read of as well as places which he had seen.

Whitman, also, introduced some historical place-names. He imagined "the steamships, the Empress Eugenie's leading the van," on the Suez Canal at the formal opening of the canal in 1869. He also looked far back to refer to Aurungzebe, emperor of Hindustan, Tamerlane, Timour, the Mongol warrior, whose conquest extended from the Volga River to the Persian Gulf, Batouta the Moor, traveler in Asia and Africa, and Vasco de Gamma (Da Gamma), who discovered the water route to India around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. If I may add one word, let me ask, "How many foreign people can easily identify 'the Genoese' as the man who is widely known as Columbus?" Thus the interwoven geographical and historical proper nouns in "Passage to India" not only present problems of identification but also stimulate our imagination. According to C. Carroll Hollis, Whitman showed in much of his work a "passionate perceptivity to the aesthetic value of names."⁷ He found a strange charm in aboriginal names and insisted that Indian names were more appropriate to America than were European names. For example, he changed "New York" to "Manhattan Island" and "Mannahatta," and he said the St. Lawrence River should have been called the Niagara. He liked such names as Mississippi, Ohio, and Connecticut.

Besides his proper nouns, such as geographical and historical names, Whitman's use of foreign words and phrases

⁷"Names in Leaves of Grass," Names, V, No. 3 (September 1957), 130.

makes reading his poetry in Leaves of Grass difficult for a foreign student. His large polyglot borrowing is one of the noticeable features of his vocabulary.⁸ In "Passage to India," for example, we find French words in "Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fable" and in "O vast Rondure"; Latin in "Trinitas divine" and in "Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas"; Italian in "Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita" and in "down to the footlights walks in some great scena." Elsewhere borrowings from Spanish include libertad and Americano and from Greek, eidolons. Among the Romance languages, Whitman, most of all, liked to sprinkle his pages with borrowings from French. No doubt, says Gay Wilson Allen, Whitman's stay in New Orleans had much to do with his special liking for French and Spanish, and his degree of familiarity with French.⁹ His French display in Leaves of Grass is large, especially for an author who was not a direct student of the language and who had never been in France. For a poet who could read no foreign languages and who missed orthodox academic training,¹⁰ Whitman had unusual linguistic consciousness.

⁸Louise Pound, "Walt Whitman's Neologisms," American Mercury, IV (February 1925), 199.

⁹The Solitary Singer, p. 98.

¹⁰According to Allen in The Solitary Singer, pp. 9-10, Whitman attended only several Sunday schools at various times in his childhood and public school for six years.

Other features of Whitman's diction are his vernacular coinages or manipulations and archaic revivals. In "Passage to India," we find several examples of archaic expressions in "But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables," "Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain," and "Ye strangling problems!" and "Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave." The coinages include native words or loan words with suffixes, such as -est, -ness, and -less. The suffix -est is used in this poem no less than eighteen times. Some of the suffix coinages in the language frequently used by Whitman are greatness, grandest, foundest, darkness, countless, restless, formless, voiceless, freshness, repressless, trackless, fearless, pleasest, nameless, waitest, masterest, smilest, fillest, swellest, vastnesses, copest, frontest, yieldest, voyagest, and disportest. Of the prefix coinages Whitman used retrospect, enhuing, inlaid, unfathom'd, unloos'd, unspeakable, inscrutable, impassive, and diffuse.

When taken from their contexts, says Louise Pound, Whitman's words sometimes seem forced or absurd, but they are usually effective when and where they are used.¹¹ His colloquialisms do not occur in "Passage to India," but in other poems they include "so long!" for "farewell" and "yawp" for his oral messages to the world: "I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" (Leaves of Grass, p. 96). In "Passage to India" I am much impressed by his unusual but powerful language.

¹¹Pound, p. 199.

APPENDIX C

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A TEACHER AND A STUDENT

"Now, Miss Kim, let's change our way of studying 'Passage to India.' Yesterday we read my paper. Today we shall discuss the poem together, beginning with Section 3. Are you ready?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, I am ready. You told me that Whitman had never passed through the Suez Canal. I am wondering how he could write this poem so fascinatingly as if he had passed through the Canal and had seen it."

"The poem shows Whitman's excellent imaginative power as a poet, Miss Kim. It seems to me that his imagination is limitless. A talented poet has an ample imagination and knows how to express what he imagines. I dare say that in this poem Whitman reached the culmination of his career as a poet. Critics say that he never again experienced 'so exalted a mood' or attempted to handle 'so dramatic a situation' in his poetry. His remaining poems are anticlimactic and of diminishing aesthetic value."

"Now, Miss Kim, can you tell me what Whitman calls the 'tableaus twain'? Let's think together, Miss Kim. The 'tableaus twain' are the detailed descriptions of two of the

three remarkable feats in transportation and communication that I have already referred to in my paper. One is the first passage through the Suez Canal and the other is 'Winding along the Platte,' crossing the Laramie plains, threading a valley in the Humboldt Range with the Union and Central Pacific Railroads. That is at line 50 in your volume."

"Oh, just a moment please, Miss Chon. Can you tell me about the Platte, the Laramie plains, and the Humboldt range?"

"You will see each one explained or identified in footnotes in your volume. I will find a map for you which will be helpful for your study. Now, can you give me any further comments on the 'tableaus', Miss Kim?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, I can say that both 'tableaus' are related to Columbus' dream."

"Yes. Columbus, when he discovered America, was seeking a passage to India. See lines 43-64: 'Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,/ The road between Europe and Asia.' Can you find the lines?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, and Whitman observes next in parentheses, as if he were dreaming of Columbus:

(Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!)
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.

How would Columbus have felt about these three great events of the nineteenth century? How wonderful it would have been if Columbus had composed poetry on his exploration!"

"That would have been wonderful. Now, what do we find in Section 4, Miss Kim? Can you tell me what Whitman mentions in it?"

"Yes, Miss Chon. In Section 4, I find Whitman's tribute to Western courage, endurance, and ingenuity which have enabled men to realize the 'purpose vast,' the 'rondure of the world at last accomplished.' That is at lines 79-80."

"I agree with you, Miss Kim. Don't you think the mastering of earth's roundness opened new vistas to the poet and ultimately to all men? What a sensitive man he is to appreciate the incredible beauty and power of the earth, the planet 'swimming in space,' and the varied and complex life that adheres to its round surface! It seems to me that this appreciation of his leads unfailingly to his identification with 'some hidden prophetic intention,' mentioned in line 86."

"Miss Chon, I gathered from my reading of Section 5 that the poet had been strongly inspired by a divine will. Whitman thinks a poet is the agent who should carry out the divine plan of fusing man's sad heritage with an unloving, impassive earth. But isn't it interesting that Whitman connected Adam and Eve with 'gardens of Asia,' not of Eden?"

"Yes, Miss Kim, since nobody knows exactly where Eden was, it is a unique and wonderful idea to connect Adam and Eve with the 'garden of Asia.' At this point, we can see Whitman's admiration for ancient Asia, again. Did you say that the agent who would achieve both tasks, soothing man and reconciling him with Nature, is the poet?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, because the poet is the true 'son of God.' Whitman said, 'Nature and man shall be disjoined and diffused no more,/ The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.'"

"That's right, Miss Kim. Don't you feel the humility as well as the pride which Whitman felt as a poet? He said unhesitatingly the poet is the true son of God. He thought the poet was the medium through whom God spoke.

"Now, Miss Kim, since 'Passage to India' refers to human achievements which inspired Whitman, what can you say about the relation between explorers and scientists and the poet?"

"Miss Chon, the explorers and scientists do great works materially, but the poet does spiritually what they have done materially. The poet, singing freely, will be linking 'the separations and gaps' of this earth, or, I would rather say, of the people's minds."

"Yes, I can understand what you mean. Indeed the poet, as a son of God, seeks to discover a spiritual India in which, as you have said before, 'Nature and man shall be disjoined and diffused no more.' Here man will recover the innocence and the purity of his intuitions and will be able to re-establish a primitive and harmonious relationship with nature.

"Miss Kim, don't you think Whitman is a bard who really had insight into nature? Even though he didn't claim

to return to nature openly as Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) did, we think of him as a man of nature. He seems to penetrate into the relationship between God and Nature. Do you remember the picture of Whitman lying on his back on the grass?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, that is one of my favorite pictures of Whitman which you have shown me. I imagine that Whitman, smelling the scent of grass or nature, admiring and examining the Creator's handiwork closely, used to meditate about the hidden purpose of the Creator. He chanted the 'high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above/ The manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees.' Miss Chon, these familiar phenomena of nature which I used to see now seem to impress me with new meaning when I read Whitman's poems."

"Miss Kim, we have already read that Whitman admired the scientific achievements of the New World, the Wonders of the World, which inspired him to write 'Passage to India.' But what we should know is that Whitman never thought of science as separated from nature and never thought of the New World as disconnected from the Old World. To him, science was rooted in nature and the New World was based upon the Old World, which he symbolized in the word India. Now, Miss Kim, I wonder whether you have had the same experience that I have had. Sometimes I feel that trees, grass, and clouds are talking with each other unheard. The chirping of the

birds and the sounds of the running rivulets seem to have some mystic meanings. Don't you think they are embodiments of some great Existence unseen and beyond our comprehension?"

"Miss Chon, I think I had that kind of inspiration. But, unfortunately, I have not often chanced to have the transcendental experiences which Whitman experienced. I am afraid I have been too much intoxicated by our dazzling modern material or mechanical civilization. Whitman unintentionally made me reflect on myself."

"Well, Miss Kim, you may be thinking of the spiritual meaning of 'Passage to India.' Please read lines 192-193: 'Bathe me O God in thee mounting to thee/ I and my soul to range in range of thee.' What do you feel?"

"Miss Chon, here I feel the anxious desire and effort of a man who longs for union with God. The poet 'can wait no longer' and joyously 'launches out' on a trackless sea to God. The poet is fearless, and he sails in ecstasy."

"Yes, Miss Kim, we know that the poet is spoken of as a son of God. God is his father. The poet's ultimate aim is to return to his Father, that is, to union with God. The poet wants to express his apprehension of the Deity. What language has the poet used to embody his idea?"

"Miss Chon, it seems to me that even Whitman could not find the most adequate word to express his apprehension of the Deity. I, myself, searched for the most adequate words but had to give up. I have realized the difficulty

of finding a metaphor to embody the idea of perfection.

The poet presented such words as these: 'Thou transcendant,' 'the fibre and the breath,' 'Light of the light,' 'Center of the Universe,' 'moral, spiritual fountain--affection's source--thou reservoir.'"

"I also have the same difficulty. Why don't you keep the problem in mind and keep trying to find the best word? Now, one thing more I must say is that these imaginative conceptions of God gave us more than the impression of the Deity. Did you recognize also Whitman's philosophical concepts of Time, Space, and Death? To begin, first of all, we must consider the soul, which the poet so often spoke of and presented as his companion. The poet says, 'I turning, call to thee O Soul; thou actual Me.' The actual poet is his soul. Now let's think about the relation between the soul and time, space, and death. Whitman culminated his philosophical thought on the soul, time, space and death in Section Eight in this poem. Now, Miss Kim, can you tell me why Whitman says to the Soul: 'Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,/ And fillest, swellest full the vastness of Space'?"

"Miss Chon, frankly, I must say Whitman's poem is most difficult for me to comprehend. I hope my answer to your question does not go astray from Whitman's original intention. Whitman believes that the soul is eternal and that time is eternal also. That is why the soul mates with

time, and because the soul is infinite, it swells 'full the vastness of space.' At this point we can say that the soul has become identical with time and space, or, in a sense, has become time and space. For this reason the poet's real self, his soul, may smile at 'Death.'"

"Now, again, Miss Kim, in Section 9, observe the poet's tone. Something different?"

"Yes, Miss Chon, I can easily point out that the poet becomes more fervent and his tone is more ecstatic on the 'trackless seas' of God. His pleading sounds to me like an ejaculation: 'Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins! / Away O Soul! hoist instantly the anchor!' This gives me a vivid image of the excited poet."

"That's right, Miss Kim. Notice again his final invocation that concludes the poem:

O my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the
 seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail!

Do you realize that his lines become shorter and his exclamations become more frequent as the poem closes, a manner which is effective in expressing his growing ecstasy and fervency? This elaborately repetitive style is original with Whitman and also characteristic of Whitman, as my teacher in the United States has shown."¹

¹Autrey Nell Wiley, "Reiterative Devices in Leaves of Grass," American Literature, I (May 1929), 161-170.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Gay Wilson. The Solitary Singer. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955.
- _____. Walt Whitman Handbook. Chicago: Packard and Company, 1946.
- _____, ed. Walt Whitman Abroad: Critical Essays from Germany, France, Scandinavia, Russia, Italy, Spain and Latin America, Israel, Japan, and India. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1955.
- _____ and Charles T. Davis, eds. Walt Whitman's Poems. New York: New York University Press, 1955.
- Arvin, Newton. Whitman. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938.
- Asselineau, Roger. The Evolution of Walt Whitman, Pt. 1 and Pt. 2. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Baker, Sheridan. The Complete Stylist. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966.
- Barrus, Clara. Whitman and Burroughs, Comrades. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931.
- Briggs, Arthur. Walt Whitman: Thinker and Artist. New York: Philosophical Library, 1952.
- Broderick, John E., ed. Whitman the Poet: Materials for Study. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1962.
- Brown, Clarence. "Walt Whitman and the 'New Poetry.'" American Literature, XXXIII, No. 1 (March 1961), 33-45.
- Canby, Henry. Walt Whitman. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943.

- Chari, V. K. Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964.
- Chase, Richard. Walt Whitman. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961.
- Coffman, Stanley K., Jr. "Form and Meaning in Whitman's 'Passage to India.'" Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, LXX, No. 3 (June 1955), 337-349.
- Faner, Robert D. Walt Whitman & Opera. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951.
- Foerster, Norman, and Robert P. Falk, eds. Eight American Writers: An Anthology of American Literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963.
- Hammerton, J. A. Wonders of the Past. Pt. 1. New York: Wise & Co., 1923.
- Hollis, C. Carroll. "Names in Leaves of Grass." Names, V, No. 3 (September 1957), 129-156.
- Holloway, Emory. Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.
- _____. "Whitman Pursued." American Literature, XXVII (March 1955-January 1956), 1-11.
- Marks, Alfred. "Whitman's Triadic Imagery." American Literature, XXIII (March 1951-January 1952), 99-126.
- Morris, Harrison. Walt Whitman: A Brief Biography with Reminiscences. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1929.
- Miller, James E., Jr. A Critical Guide to "Leaves of Grass". Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey, ed. Whitman: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962.
- Pound, Louise. "Walt Whitman and the French Language." American Speech, I (May 1926), 421-430.
- _____. "Walt Whitman's Neologisms." American Mercury, IV (February 1925), 199-201.