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The influence of the civil war on Walt Whitman the man and writer

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR ON
WALT WHITMAN THE MAN AND WRITER

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
EMMA OPHELIA WEATHERS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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The Civil War brings a more serious Whitman, with a deeper note in his writing.

...Whitman mellowed under the influence of the Civil War.

Such statements as these concerning Walt Whitman are frequently made by authorities—all agreeing that the Civil War did enrichen and mellow him as man and writer; but nowhere, so far as the present writer knows, has any author developed and shown that these statements are really true. Therefore, it will be the purpose of this thesis to study the life and works of Walt Whitman in order to establish or to disprove the truth of these statements.

It will be noted that in this study greater attention was paid to Whitman the poet than to Whitman the prose writer because of the well established fact that his literary fame rests more upon his poetry than upon his prose. Nevertheless, Whitman's prose works are important; for they present both his literary theories that he practiced in his poetry and his social, political, religious, and moral ideas. For this reason, the present thesis, despite the emphasis put on his poetry, represents a study of all the prose and poetic works of Walt Whitman that were available in the Atlanta University Library, together with what books that could be borrowed from the libraries of Columbia, Emory, and Duke Universities. Other works of Whitman like Calamus, Letters to Anne Gilchrist, the Camden Edition of his Complete Works, the earliest editions of Leaves of Grass, and certain periodicals like The Galaxy, The Harvard Monthly,

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The Dial, The Poet Lore, and The Critic were not consulted because the Atlanta University Library neither owned nor was able to borrow them. But the amount of available material did yield substantial data to warrant this thesis which was developed in the light of the following objectives:

1. To investigate and discuss Whitman's life and works from 1819-1860 with the hope of discovering the nature of the foundation of his character, interests, and ideas.

2. To present the facts in Whitman's life from 1861 to 1873 in order to ascertain both his real connection with the Civil War and the range of his interests and activities during and immediately following the War period.

3. To compare and contrast Whitman's works written during and immediately after the War with those composed before its incipiency. In this way, with the assistance of the two foregoing objectives, a sound and convincing answer may be worked out for the question: How much did the Civil War influence Whitman the man and writer?

4. To study thoroughly Whitman's life and works from 1873 to 1892 with the view of completing the investigation of the effect of the Civil War on him as man and writer.

These general objectives are developed in four chapters; and in the summary and conclusion of this study will be found an attempt to measure, in the light of the evidence given in the preceding chapters, the exact influence of the Civil War on Whitman.
CHAPTER I
The Life and Works of Walt Whitman from 1819 to 1860

Leaves of Grass is Whitman's personal record. It is a subtle and profound autobiography.1

So writes Oscar L. Triggs, a Whitman scholar and anthologist, in the introduction of his little book, Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Walt Whitman. Trigg's statement, however, is not very different from those of many other authors, and, therefore, it is common consent that Whitman's works are explicitly and implicitly autobiographical. For this reason, he must be studied, if he is to be studied at all, in the light of those outer and inner forces which are partly or greatly responsible for his development. Consequently a study of Whitman's life is important to this thesis in order to show how certain forces contributed to the shaping of his career and ideas as a writer. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to present and to interpret the facts and main influences in Whitman's life and works prior to 1860. His life and works as discussed in this thesis are divided into three periods, namely, the ante-bellum period (1819-1860), the Civil War period (1861-1873), the post-bellum period (1873-1892).


3 Authors have divided Whitman's life in different ways: John Bailey divides Whitman's life as follows: 1819 to 1848; 1848 to 1873; and 1873 to 1892. See John Bailey, Walt Whitman, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1926, p. 9. Bliss Perry makes the following divisions: 1818 to 1839; 1839 to 1855; 1855 to 1861; 1861 to 1865; 1865 to 1873; 1873 to 1892. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., Table of Contents.
This seems pertinent, for by it one might effectively answer the basic question of this thesis: what effect did the Civil War have on Walt Whitman as man and writer?

1 Walt Whitman, born on May 31, 1819, came from an ancestry that was mixed, sturdy, and proletarian. The Whitmans were of English stock having, probably, descended directly from Zechariah Whitman, who, coming from England in 1635, settled at Milford, Connecticut. Zechariah and his progeny were not prominent and distinguished, but they were simple men of the soil, hearty, strong, firm, and phlegmatic. Indeed, as Maurice Bucke, writer of the first full Whitman biography, characterized Whitman's ancestry, it was a "still, solid, tall, strong-framed, long-lived race of men, moderate of speech, friendly, fond of their land and of horses and cattle, sluggish in their passions, but fearful when once started."

1

The Poet was called Walt to distinguish him from his father. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 8.

2 Emory Holloway, The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman, New York, Peter Smith, 1932, I, Introduction, p. xxiii ff. Hereafter this book, with its volume number, will be referred to as Uncollected Poetry and Prose. See also Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 10; Basil de Selincourt, op. cit., p. 10.


4 Walt Whitman, Prose Works, Philadelphia, David McKay, [n. d.], p. 9. Hereafter this volume, unless otherwise stated, will be used, and will be referred to as Prose Works. Zechariah Whitman was an independent clergyman and an ordained teacher. Even though Whitman is certain that he was a descendant of Zechariah, Bliss Perry states that Zechariah died without leaving any ancestors and that Walt is a descendant of Joseph Whitman. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., n. 2, p. 2. See also George Carpenter, Walt Whitman, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 4.

5 Their character was so firm that it verged upon hardness. See Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 13.

It seems, on the other hand, that Whitman's maternal ancestors, the Van Velsors, were characterized more by their "abundant vitality and joviality" than by any sluggish and massive strength as was true of the Whitmans. They, however, like the Whitmans, were struggling farmers, and in addition, they were stock raisers, artisans, and sailors. Like the Whitmans, also, the family could boast of no eminent son or daughter worthy of particular study. Thus both the Van Velsor and Whitman genealogies are known only because of their celebrated offspring, Walt Whitman. The Van Velsors were pure Dutch, but Cornelius Van Velsor, Whitman's grandfather, married Naomi Williams, a Welsh descendant, and a Quaker in religious beliefs. In 1795, Whitman's mother, Louisa Van Velsor, was born to this couple. In her veins, therefore, flowed Dutch and Welsh blood. Many writers would attribute her passions for cleanliness, her endurance, practicality, sanity, thrift, excessive neatness, purity of person, patience, slowness of movement and religious toleration to her Dutch ancestry, and her lofty spiritual insight and firm Christian faith to her Quaker inheritance. It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate whether these so-called national and religious traits can be inherited, but it is significant, however, to point out that Louisa Van Velsor, possessing the foregoing traits, was a wife and mother of exceptional character; a wife and

1 Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 13. Walt Whitman later recalled the "jovial, red, stout...physiognomy" of his grandfather who was regarded by his neighbors as the best of men. See Prose Works, p. 11.
2 See Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xvii; Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 6; and Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 13.
3 See H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 4; Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 5.
5 W. S. Kennedy, "Quaker Traits of Walt Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 213.
mother who was strong, active, industrious, pretty, sweet-tempered, sympathetic, and optimistic. Dignified and frank in speech, she was "the dearest mother" to the poet and to her other eight children. Moreover, though illiterate, she possessed deep spiritual qualities. She was, in truth, a typical example of those "powerful, uneducated persons" whom her son was to exalt as

...the most perfect and magnetic character, the rarest combination of practical, moral and spiritual, and the least selfish, of all and any I have ever known...

These words, perhaps written under the hypnotic charm of fond memories and heightened by filial adoration, are suggestive of not only the characteristics of Louisa Van Velor's personality, but of Whitman's esteem of her. The poet, however, does not write so glowingly of his father, nor does he often mention him in his reminiscences. Nevertheless we do know that Whitman's father, the son of Jesse and Hannah Whitman, both of English descent, was a big boned, sturdy, quiet, serious, practical man and was, like his ancestors, reserved, slow of speech, kindly but obstinate, rigid and firm, and though usually calm and easy going, was capable of passion.

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1 See Gabriel Sarrasin, "Walt Whitman", in Re Walt Whitman, p. 186; H. B. Bimms, op. cit., p. 6; and Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xvii.

2 Prose Works, p. 11.

3 It is worthy to note that among the nine children, seven of whom were boys, two of them were mentally weak: the eldest brother died insane, and the youngest brother was an imbecile. Furthermore, some authorities like George Carpenter, a very good friend of Whitman, tend to attribute some of Whitman's eccentricities and peculiarities to inherited family weaknesses. "It may be", writes Carpenter, "that he inherited an abnormal or perhaps rather supernormal nervous and emotional activity". See George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 50.

4 Thomas B. Harned, "The Poet of Immortality", in Re Walt Whitman, p. 353. She was not an ardent church goer, though she believed in the Quaker doctrine of Elias Hicks. See H. B. Bimms, op. cit., p. 14.

5 Thomas B. Harned, "The Poet of Immortality", in Re Walt Whitman, p. 353.

6 Prose Works, n., p. 282.

7 George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
when aroused. He was an inefficient business man, for though a conscientious, reliable and busy workman, he was always poor, and at death left no home for his family and nothing to posterity for having been respected, not so much as a leader in his community but as a good citizen, worker, neighbor, and parent.

When Walter Whitman, the carpenter, married Louisa Van Velsor, the Friend, a union of two families that represented the absolute common, simple, American rural stock was realized. Both husband and wife were simple, illiterate, industrious people, whose religion consisted chiefly in living right, in being friendly and kind, but whose home, in the light of modern educational standards, was not a model for strict discipline, intellectual curiosity, and business like responsibility. In a home in which the Bible was the main source of information and inspiration, there could not be, of necessity, a wide knowledge of the best that has been said and done in literature, history, and science. In such a home, also, controlled by an indulgent mother and a slow-witted father, who was more concerned in building houses than in training his children, there could not of necessity be instilled in the children sound principles of restraint, industry, and punctuality. It is not surprising that Whitman's good friend, John Burroughs, could write that

5 Emory Holloway, *Whitman An Interpretation In Narrative*, p. 4.
7 Emory Holloway, *Whitman An Interpretation In Narrative*, p. 4.
Whitman was

... not a stirring and punctual man... not prompt at dinner; always has ample time, and will not be hurried...

Even George Whitman, Walt's brother, gives similar testimony:

If we had dinner at one, like as not he would come at three: always late. Just as we were fixing things on the table he would get up and go round the block. He was always so. He would come to breakfast when he got ready. If he wished to go out he would go--go where he was of a mind to--and come back in his own time.

And Edward Carpenter, an English writer who visited Whitman in 1877, tells the following experience with his easy-going host:

When we reached the Ferry on our return [to Camden from Philadelphia] the last bell was ringing—we might have caught the boat, but Whitman seemed not to think of hurrying. The boat went, and he sat down to enjoy life waiting for the next.

Such was, in part, the most distinguished link in the family chain of the Whitman and Van Velsor families, which, together, combined the hearty English, Welsh, and Dutch peasant blood. A child, born in a home conspicuous in its laxity and freedom, and conscientious in its practice of Christian ideals of love and brotherhood and sympathy, Walt Whitman, child of a race of ordinary manual labourers, farmers, sailors, and soldiers, a descendant of a strong, energetic, nervous and simple race of men, but not a race of men singularly noted for outstanding leadership, seemed almost predestined by inheritance, by habits, and by the freedom encouraged in his home to be America's greatest democrat. That he was proud and conscious of his inher-

1 John Burroughs, op. cit., p. 27.
2 Recorded by Horace L. Traubel in "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman, 1893: Mostly in His Own Words", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 36.
4 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 6.
5 Ibid., p. 47. See also Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 185.
itance and the part it played in the shaping of his character can be seen in
these lines:

His own parents,
He that had father'd him, and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb,
and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that; 1
They gave him afterward every day—they became part of him.

If the weight of authority means anything, Whitman does not exaggerate the effect that his inheritance had on him, for W. S. Kennedy, a Whitman scholar and author of Reminiscences of Walt Whitman, and The Fight of a Book for the World, like many other distinguished scholars, believes that Whitman's endurance, seriousness, and silence were inherited Dutch traits; Oscar L. Triggs points out that Whitman's "placidity, sincerity, self-respect, dislike of debate, strife, and war" were traditional Quaker traits; while Emory Holloway, one of Whitman's most scholarly biographers, believes that Whitman's tenacity and mysticism are traits of his English ancestors.

It would be absurd, however, to think that Whitman's ancestry and immediate parents were the sole molders of his character and interests. Nature played a great part, for though Whitman's parents moved to an urban center, Brooklyn, when the poet was only four, most of Whitman's summers from 1823 to 1839, were spent with his grand parents in West Hills, Long Island, his birth place. West Hills, with its rolling hills, orchards, farms, hedges,

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1 Walt Whitman, "There Was A Child Went Forth", Leaves of Grass, Philadelphia, David McKay, [1900], p. 235. Hereafter, all poems will be taken from this edition unless otherwise stated, and only the title of the poem will be given.
2 W. S. Kennedy, "Dutch Traits of Walt Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 198.
4 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, Introduction, p. xxiii.
5 Floyd Stovall, op. cit., Introduction, p. xvii.
6 H. B. Bimis, op. cit., p. 9. It was thus that Whitman came to know his grand parents, the Van Velsors and the Whitmans, as well as West Hills, where much of his time was spent exploring the country and the borders of the sea around him. Therefore, during the most tender years of his life, Whitman was being taught by nature.
towering trees, streams, birds, insects, and flowers, must have been especially rich in natural scenery and beauty when Whitman was a boy. This beauty and richness are clearly described by H. B. Binns, an eminent biographer of Walt Whitman, and a visitor to Whitman's birth place.

On an autumn day one finds the way bordered by huckleberries and tall evening primroses, yellow toad-flax, blue chickory and corn-flowers, and sturdy forests of golden-rod among the briars and bushes. In the rough hedgerows are red sumachs, oaks, chestnuts and tall cedars, locusts and hickories; the gateways open on to broad fields full of picturesque cabbages, or the plumed regiments of the tall green Indian corn. It is a farming country, and a country rich in game--foxes and quails and partridges--and populous now with all kinds of chirping insects, with frogs and with mosquitoes. The wooded hills themselves are full of birds; beyond them there are vineyards.¹

This vivid description stresses only the arboreal richness, the fertility of the soil, and the abundance of wild game and insects to be found in West Hills. But the community is strategically located near the sea, and is, therefore, rich in another kind of natural phenomenon. Léon Basalgette graphically describes its proximity to the disputatious and mysterious sea and, incidentally, refers to other topographical characteristics of West Hills, which

...is near enough to the sea for its confused noises to be heard; especially on peaceful nights, after a storm, the muffled and distant rumbling of the waves produce a marvellous effect. Walt always kept the echo of the "mystic surfbeat of the sea". Very near the farm is the elevation, Jaynes Hill, the culminating point of the island. From this height, which is perhaps but a hundred yards [from the sea], a marvellous panorama of fields, wood, hills, bounded by the waters of the sound on one side, by the ocean on the other, surrounds and subdues you.²

In such natural setting, "In the midst of a sturdy agricultural community,

¹
Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²
Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 25.
and in association with farmers, pilots, and fishermen" Whitman spent many of his memorable days with trees, flowers, birds, the sea, and the common working man. These days, indeed, impressed themselves so indelibly upon the memory of the poet that long after he had left the rural scenes of West Hills and lived and worked as a busy journalist in the throbbering cities of Brooklyn and New York, and even after accumulating experiences of a different sort, he could write "In there was a Child Went Forth" verses both suggestive of the influence of nature on him and reminiscent of his happy youthful days in West Hills:

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morning-glories,
And white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs, and the cow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barn-yard, or by the mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there—and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads—all became part of him.

Childhood reminiscences of his life in West Hills can also be found in many of his other works like "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" in which he fondly states:

For once, and more than once, dimly, down
to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair, listen'd long and long.

1 Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxii. "Whitman", adds Triggs referring to the poet's youthful summers at West Hills, "spent thus much of his youth. He enjoyed the freedom of life in the open air." Ibid.
3 "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking", p. 405.
Moreover, not only did the "Winter grains sprout", "the light-yellow corn", "the apple tree", "the wood berries", and "the commonest weeds of the roads", "gray and sterile hills", "the stately grove of tall, vigorous black walnuts", and "the famous apple orchard" impress themselves on Whitman's mind, but the mysterious music and chant of the sea. In "Elemental Drifts" one finds what must have been the effect of the sea on young Whitman.

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I, too, but signify, at the utmost, a little wash'd-updrift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now, that, amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me, I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my insolvent poems the real Me stands yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.

Now I perceive I have not understood anything—not a single object—and that no man ever can.
I perceive Nature, here in sight of the sea, is taking advantage of me, to dart upon me, and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth, to sing at all.

The foregoing verses lack the depth of thought and power of language of the best reflective nature poetry, but they certainly show a mind and soul profoundly touched by the infinite truth, power, and beauty of nature and the sea. Not at all times, however, did the sea serve the poet as a stimulus for

1 "There Was a Child Went Forth", p. 235.
2 Prose Works, p. 10.
deep reflective musings. As a boy he sometimes, in winter, enjoyed fishing
in the frozen parts of shallow bays; in the summer, gathering sea-gull's eggs.

Even after the passing of many years he could write with relish:

...the whole experience comes back to me after the lapse of
forty and more years—the soothing rustle of the waves,
and the saline smell—boyhood's times, the clam-digging,
barefoot, and with trousers roll'd up—hauling down the creek—
the perfume of the sedge-meadows—the hay-boat, and the
chowder and fishing excursions..."...

How memorable these days were! For, again, Whitman tells of the jolly times
he had at West Hills:

Inside the outer bars or beach this south bay is ever-
where comparatively shallow; of cold winters all thick
ice on the surface. As a boy I often went forth with
a chum or two, on those frozen fields, with hand-sled,
axe and eel-spear, after masses of eels. We would cut
holes in the ice, sometimes striking quite an eel-bonanza,
and filling our baskets with great, fat, sweet, white-
meated fellows. The scenes, the ice, drawing the hand-
sled, cutting holes, spearing the eels, &c., were of
course just such fun as is dearest to boyhood. The shores
of this bay, winter and summer, and my doings there in
early life, are woven all through L. of G. [Leaves of
Grass]. One sport I was very fond of was to go on a bay-
party in summer to gather sea-gull's eggs.

Regardless of the fact that Whitman was prone to exaggerate for effect and
regardless of the fact that a modern scholar, in a well documented magazine
article, has flayed Whitman for his mendacity, these words, undoubtedly,
suggestive of the enjoyment which Whitman experienced in his contact with
nature, are strong testimonials that the poet was not only exposed to rich
natural scenery but reacted to it sensitively. Besides these associations
with rural scenery and the nature of his family background, there were
several other forces in his early life that are important to this study, if
we are to have a complete understanding of Whitman's development in this first

3 Harvey O' Higgins, "Alias Walt Whitman", Harper's Magazine, CLVIII (May, 1929),
pp. 698-707.
period. We must know the extent of his education, his experiences as a teacher, the extent of his experiences as a journalist prior to the Civil War, his contact with both the working class and the literary men and atmosphere of his day, his enjoyment of the theatre and his association with politicians.

Whitman's formal education was scanty, having been limited to the very inadequate school system of Brooklyn. The inadequacy of this school system, especially in the light of modern day standards, can be seen in the meager curriculum which consisted of a smattering of grammar and arithmetic, and which was in the hands of poorly trained teachers. Indeed, his education was to come, not from books and the school room, but from life, from man and nature.

After having spent only six years of life in school, Whitman's formal training came to an end. At the early age of eleven, he soon was employed as an errand boy in a lawyer's office. This occupation proved to be an important step in his education, for it was at this time that his employer introduced him to the mysteries of writing and composition and secured for Whitman a subscription to a large circulating library. Introduced, now, to the world of books, he eagerly read the Arabian Nights and the works of Sir Walter Scott.

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1 Gerald Bullett, op. cit., p. 11.
3 Ibid., p. 459; See also Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
4 The first teacher-training classes were established in New York State in 1834. See Paul Monroe, op. cit., IV, p. 462.
5 Whitman could not have been very much impressed by his schools and teachers, for in all his works there is not one mention made of them. But, incidentally, he does recall an explosion of the frigate Fulton in the nearby Navy Yard, perhaps, because he was more interested in the dynamic life outside the classroom than the static one found in it. See Uncollected Poetry and Prose, II, p. 265.
6 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 51. He withdrew in 1830. See Prose Works, p. 15.
7 Gerald Bullett, op. cit., p. 11.
8 Prose Works, p. 16; see also Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 14.
Whitman soon left this employment, however, to become an errand boy in a doctor's office where he remained until 1831, when he received his first opportunity to work in the printing office of the Long Island Patriot. At last, he had found his life's work, for through all the vicissitudes of his many-sided life, it was writing that remained his life's principal vocation. Indeed, by 1846 Whitman's journalistic experiences were abundant and kaleidoscopic. Sometimes working as paper boy or printer, sometimes as editor, manager, or contributor, he somewhat restlessly and frequently gave up one employment for another, never remaining more than a few months with any. In fifteen years, from 1831 to 1846, he was connected in one way or another with The Patriot, The Long Island Star, The Long Islander, The Aurora, The Democratic Review, The New York Sun, The Tatler, The Statesman, The Columbian Magazine, The American Review, The Broadway Journal, and The Brooklyn Eagle. It is interesting to note that his literary apprenticeship and introduction to the literary world was mainly in prose, not poetry, even though during this period he wrote such poems as "The Dough Face Song" and "The Death of the Nature Lover". This period of apprenticeship though producing no works of great literary merit, proved beneficial to Whitman as a period of learning and consumption. He read such outstanding authors as Dickens, Scott, Dante, Shakespeare, Emerson, Carlyle, Bryant, Poe, Longfellow, Whittier, and

1 Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 32.
2 Floyd Stovall, op. cit., Introduction, p. lxi.
3 See the following sources for facts relative to Whitman's journalistic career prior to the Civil War: Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, Introduction, p. xxix; Prose Works, p. 16; Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 36; Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 19; Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 23; George Carpenter, op. cit., II, p. 29; R. B. Bins, op. cit., pp. 32-33.
5 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, p. 7.
Hawthorne; and read the current topics discussed in newspapers, magazines, and reviews. His connection with the journalistic world also gave him an opportunity to visit freely the opera, the theatre, and other public places.

Though his pen was exceedingly busy from 1841 to 1846, Whitman never lost his interest in people and in crowds. The seething life and colorful sights of Broadway, the ferry boats, plying their way through one of the most picturesque harbors in the world, and the noisy omnibuses are all vividly and enthusiastically described in Specimen Days. Hour after hour, day after day, and year after year, Whitman sat in the pilot houses of the ferry boats with his pilot friends, whom he recalled intimately by name:

...the Balsirs, Johnny Cole, Ira Smith, William White, and my young ferry friend, Tom Gere...

On the omnibuses he would ride "the whole length of Broadway" to listen to some yarn, or would, himself declaim some passage from Julius Caesar or Richard. And though he saw on the avenue such notables as Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Seward, Martin Van Buren, filibuster Walker, Kossuth, Bryant, the Prince of Wales, and Charles Dickens, with what relish, rather, he recalled the names of his omnibus pals like

Broadway Jack, Dressmaker, Balky Bill, George Storms, Old Elephant...Tippy, Pop

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2 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 34.
4 Prose Works, pp. 16, 18.
5 Ibid., p. 17.
6 Ibid., p. 18. Whitman does not say definitely to which one of the Richards he referred, but in all probability he meant Richard III, for it is known that he was acquainted with this play. See Ibid., p. 20.
7 Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxv.
Rice, Big Frank...Patsy Dee, and dozens more.

The ferry boats and the omnibuses did not alone enable Whitman to fraternize with the people, but the theatre also played an important part in quickening both his appreciation of the fine arts and of the common man. He visited the Old Park theatre, the Bowery, the Broadway, and Chatham Square theatres, where he saw Henry Placide and Fanny Kemble, Ellen Fee, Booth, Forrest, Charlotte Cushman, the younger Kean, Macready, and many other actors, who were, then, outstanding in their professions.

Whitman's interests did not confine themselves alone to an assortment of people and the fine arts, but included oriental history and archaeology, oratory, and political propaganda, himself, at one time campaigning for Polk. He missed nothing; he attended the fairs; he enjoyed the public baths; he visited the hospitals and the asylums; he went on picnics and on excursions; he gazed at the great city fires, and watched the many ferries; he knew the police courts and visited the slums.

1 Prose Works, p. 18.
2 The Gathering of the Forces, II, pp. 345-365. It was in these days that Whitman saw and heard all the Italian operas then in vogue, as rendered by Alboni, Crisi, Mario, and Badiali. See Prose Works, p. 19.
3 Ibid.
4 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 38.
5 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 142-143.
6 The Gathering of the Forces, II, pp. 201-207.
8 Oscar L. Trigge, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxv.
9 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 118-121; 154-156; 164-166.
10 Ibid., II, pp. 10-12.
Wherever human life was moving in crowds, he was there to see, to feel, and to absorb it. While Whitman was leisurely observing and absorbing life about him in 1846, he became the editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. This position brought him back to Brooklyn, where, when he was not with his mother and father on Myrtle Street or at the office, he took long strolls or went swimming. Indulgence in such enjoyments perhaps best explains why his editorials at this time eulogized fresh air, cleanliness, and the beauties of nature; and why the vigour of his mind enabled him to write fiery articles against slavery, capital punishment, against the usurpation of the rights of the common man and woman, on education, on patriotism, and on government. He remained with the Eagle until early in 1848, when a significant coincidence occurred while he was walking in the lobby of the old Broadway theatre, between acts, one evening. He met a Southerner, who, himself interested in journalism, persuaded Whitman to go South to help in starting the Crescent, a daily paper in New Orleans. Two days after the interview, Whitman started south with his fifteen year old brother Jeff. On February 26, 1848, they

2. Ibid.
3. Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 117; 113-114; 208-209; 254-255.
6. Ibid., p. 51-147.
9. Gerald Bullett, op. cit., p. 15; see also Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 73; Prose Works, p. 20.
arrived in New Orleans, and immediately set to work with Walt as editor and
Jeff as printer of the Crescent. The first issue of the Crescent came out on
March 6, but Whitman and his brother gave up their work toward the end of May.
Despite his short stay in New Orleans, Whitman made good use of the three
months, and with characteristic curiosity and interest in the moving scene,
visited the levees, bar-rooms, French markets, Cathedrals, hotels; he met
varied types of men like General Taylor, future President of the United States,
stevedores, and boatmen; he conversed with young and old, rich and poor, black
and white.

His stay, however, was not too short to prevent his allegedly be-

1
They travelled leisurely across Pennsylvania, over the Alleghanies to
Wheeling. From there they came down the Ohio and through the newly opened
land of the Central States of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois. They
went down the Mississippi to New Orleans. See Richard M. Bucke, Walt
Whitman, p. 23; Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 186-190; Léon Bazalgette,
op. cit., p. 78.
2
H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 50. It seems that Whitman because of not comport-
ing with the policies of the owners of the Crescent was forced to sever
his relations with the paper. See Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation
In Narrative, pp. 64-65.
3
Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 185, 221-224.
4
Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 79.
5
H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 49.
6
Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 79.
coming involved in a love experience. The usual story of this liaison as told by Holloway is as follows:

A young man of fine personal presence...was seen by a Southern woman of high social standing, for whom to see him was to love him. This attachment, the chief responsibility for which... is usually placed at the lady's door, in time bore fruit; but an obstacle to an open marriage with the middle-class Northern journalist had been encountered in the pride of her family. Accordingly some versions of the story suppose that there was a secret marriage (... despite the evidence of Whitman's letter to Symonds), and that the young husband was bound for life by a pledge of secrecy concerning the whole affair.

Many writers have pointed out that this love affair deepened...
Whitman's passion and affection, opening his eyes to a different kind of love and sympathy from that which he had known. However true this might be, the trip to New Orleans and back made him fully aware, not only of the expansiveness of his country, but of its political wealth and power, of the necessity of an indestructible union, and of the importance of the slave question. He became more conscious than ever before of the fact that human justice and liberty are not limited to one sect and color; moreover, in returning home by way of the northwest, he observed the fresh, virile, frontier democracy of the new territory and must have been impressed, as his writings show, with its difference from the aristocratic East.

After returning to New York, Whitman busied himself with journalism, politics, and lecturing. Thereafter, one hears nothing of the poet until 1850, when he commenced the publication of the Daily Freeman, an organ of the Free Soil party. When the Freeman failed in 1851, the poet relieved his father, who was in poor health, from his business. Undisciplined and impractical as a business man, and unable to maintain a flourishing business, he finally gave up carpentry for good in 1854. Facts concerning his occupations for the next

2 Ibid., pp. 159-162.
3 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 79.
4 The return journey was made by Chicago, the Great Lakes, Niagara Falls, and down the Hudson River, Uncolected Poetry and Prose, I, Introduction, p. liii.
5 Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, pp. 78-79.
6 Recorded by Horace L. Traubel in "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 36.
7 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 20.
8 Ibid., p. 34. Whitman's father died in 1855.
9 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 88.
five years of his life are scanty, but as to his daily life it is known that he continued his visits with the workmen, read many books and magazines, took long jaunts over the countryside, bathed in the sea, took notes for his poems, and visited the theatre and opera. It was during this period that he joined the Bohemians, a group of lesser journalists, that regularly met at Pfaff's restaurant. Perhaps, it was these attractions that helped to lure Whitman away from his carpentry. At any rate, he was unable to find peace and happiness in this occupation, though it too, helped, as did his other attempts and failures, in the education of the poet. In fact, in this study we have seen that already, at the age of twenty-eight, Whitman had passed a part of his life as manual laborer, as printer, teacher, carpenter, editor, printer, paper-boy, traveller, and politician. These years of toying with various kinds of occupations have been his education. Nevertheless, these years found him without a unified purpose, without a truly high seriousness. Hence, he seemed obsessed with what Irving Babbitt in his Rousseau and Romanticism calls "a romantic restlessness". Moreover, he was interested in everything and in everybody. He visited hospitals, alm-houses, prisons and slums. He attended lectures, debates, visited museums and political meetings. He made himself familiar with all kinds of employments, learned to know laborers, business men, merchants, sailors, ferrymen, omnibus drivers, as well as men of letters. He constantly attended opera houses and theatres. But it is interesting to note that with the exception of the doubtful and questionable love affair in New Orleans, Whitman associated only with men, and,

1 George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 34-55.
2 Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, pp. 19-22.
his mother excepted, he showed no particular interest in women. Such were
the extent, limitations, and quality of Whitman’s experience and influences.
But what effect did they have on him? How did he grow under them?

It will now be the purpose to examine Whitman’s character traits
in the light of his inheritance and experiences. In this respect it is in-
teresting to note that Whitman himself felt that some of the more important
phases of his personality were influenced by his hereditary background and
natural environment. In Specimen Days he frankly wrote:

...I estimate three leading sources and formative stamps to
my own character, now solidified for good or bad, and its
subsequent literary and other outgrowth—the maternal
nativity—stock brought hither from far-away Netherlands,
for one, (doubtless the best)—the subterranean tenacity
and central bony structure (obstinacy, wilfulness) which I
got from my paternal English elements, for another—and the
combination of my Long Island birthspot, sea-shores, child-
hood’s scenes, absorptions, with teeming Brooklyn and New
York...2

This is not merely sentimental reverie or inverted eulogy, but it
is a fact that can be substantiated almost anywhere in Whitman’s biographies
and works. But Whitman in the foregoing quotations does not reveal all
there is to be known about his personality as it was influenced by nature,
his family background, his lack of formal education, and his experiences
as a newspaper man and theatre-goer.

Having been born a son of the soil, having been reared in a demo-
ocratic home, having spent much of his time in direct contact with nature,

1 Harvey O’ Higgins, in his challenging article in Harper’s Magazine, stated
that Whitman never had a love affair in New Orleans; but that Whitman verged
on being homosexual. O’Higgins bases his evidence on the fact that most of
Whitman’s friends were men; that George Whitman assures one that Whitman was
never attracted to women; and on the fact that the poet himself would never
give any proof of his having had relationships with women. See Harvey O’Higgins,
op. cit., pp. 704-706.
having had no disciplined school training, and having early begun his association with teeming cities and moving crowds, it is not surprising that Walt Whitman developed an appreciation for common things and for common people. The spirit that flows through every page of his works is the spirit of the unlettered common man. He never stood apart from the proletariat, but saw himself in them, and themselves in him. As a result he early developed a thoroughgoing democratic philosophy; and like his philosophy, his personality was at once democratic, unconventional, and independent.

Independence and self-sufficiency seemed fundamental to both the Whitman and the Van Velsor families; it was no less strong when the two families were united, and Walt Whitman, an offspring of the union, early exhibited an instinct for independence. This instinct was encouraged and developed under the influence of a home especially noted for its freedom and lack of restraint. As a boy, for instance, he was allowed to wander about at will. Alone, he made tours on the ferry or to the sea-shore where he watched the passing ships. In later years the home exerted little influence in curbing his wayward, stubborn, independent nature. Even his brother George recognized this independence, for he told Horace L. Traubel, the editor of The Conservator, that Walt

...got offers of literary work—good offers; and we thought he had chances to make money. Yet he would refuse to do anything except at his own notion—most likely when advised would say: "We won't talk about that!" or anything else to pass the matter off. I can give you a case. Some of the proprietors of the Eagle talked in a way not to suit him, and he straightway started up and left them.... He always had his

1 John Burroughs, op. cit., p. 63.
3 Ibid.
This independent trait, this love and practice of self reliance followed him all through his life, for after the publication of the first volume of Leaves of Grass, John Burroughs wrote:

There are no more precious and tonic pages in history than the records of men who have faced unpopularity, odium, hatred, ridicule, detraction, in obedience to an inward voice, and never lost courage or good-nature. Whitman's is the most striking case in our literary annals...The inward voice alone was the oracle he obeyed...

Even when pressure was brought upon him by the press, by his friends, and by Emerson, to change or omit his poems on sex from Leaves of Grass, he retained his usual independent spirit. After Emerson had reasoned with Whitman for hours to omit the sex poems, Whitman replied in his characteristic independent manner

...I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakable conviction to disobey all, and pursue my own way.

Besides being independent, Whitman was of the very essence of democracy in his love and sympathy for others. This trait was also characteristic of his mother for whom he always showed the greatest filial admiration. Furthermore, in his early youth his mother read the Bible to him and taught him the Christian principles of brotherly love, service, and loyalty. These

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1 Recorded by Horace L. Traubel in "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 53. Singularly this estimate isv expressed in similar words by John Burroughs. cf: "He never counsels with anyone, and is utterly indifferent to what people may say or think." See John Burroughs, op. cit., p. 27.
2 Ibid., p. 86.
3 Prose Works, p. 191.
4 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p.21.
5 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p.55.
lessons went through life with him, quickening his appreciation of the spiritual value of man's body. During the Civil War when he was asked by a soldier to read something from the New Testament, he read one of his favourite chapters, that describing the latter hours of Christ, the scenes of the Crucifixion, and the story of Christ's resurrection. With the lessons of the Bible ingrained in him, it was easy for Whitman to drive, without pecuniary compensation, a Broadway stage during an entire winter in order that the family of a disabled driver might not suffer. Besides serving his needy companions as well as he could, he preferred their company to all others.

Having been born in lowly circumstances and having lived in the midst of wild nature and simple folk, Whitman, no doubt, was early influenced to dislike show and finery. Just how much of this dislike was not genuine no one can measure. But when one continually meets expressions as the following in Whitman's works, he is at least impressed by Whitman's democratic obsession, if not by his sincerity.

"It seems a strange thing to me, this love of gilt and upholstery among the Americans—that people leading a free natural open-air life should, directly they make a little money, want to go in for sofas, expensively furnished rooms, dress, and the like; yet it seems to be a law, a kind of necessity, that they should do so."  

To get away from this show, finery, and money getting mania, Whitman often sought out nature where he saw his ideals of democracy expressed in the fullest degree. In fact, he believed that he could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd;  

4. "Walt Whitman", p. 62. In some editions of Leaves of Grass, like that edited in 1924 by Emory Holloway, this poem is entitled "Song of Myself". Hereafter, this poem will be referred to as "Song of Myself".
and that he could "stand and look at them long and long", for

They do not sweat and whine about their conditions;
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;
Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented with the mania of owning things;
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth
So they show their relations to me, and I accept them;
They bring me tokens of myself—they evince them plainly in their possessions.

Here in nature he saw none of the conventions that he detested so much in society. It is true, however, that Whitman was not always unconventional in his attitude toward society, for in his dress he once imitated that of the 2 politician and journalist; in fact, George Whitman states that his brother, 3 Walt, was rather "stylish" when he was young and that his new style of dress began somewhere between 1850-55. It was during this early period of Whitman's life that he began showing his dire dislike for conventional dress, gestures, 4 manners, and speech. His unconventional proclivities are not only manifested in his cool, deliberate, and original way of speech and in his later mode of dress, but in his attitude to what others thought of him. He wrote:

1 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
2 He assumed the role of a "dandy", wearing a high hat, a frock coat, a boutoniere, and carrying a cane—the typical attire of the mid-nineteenth century second-rate politician and dandy. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 23-24.
3 After Whitman's return from New Orleans, his dress became quite simple; "he was never seen except clad in an unchangeable suit of gray cloth or serge" and a big-brimmed hat. His collar was nearly always open. See Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 96.
4 John Burroughs, op. cit., p. 27.
...conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd;  
I wear my hat as I please, indoors or out.  
Why should I pray? Why should I venerate  
and be ceremonious?

It is only natural that Walt should have this attitude toward conformity in any form, for in the mid-nineteenth century when going to church was a mark of respectability, the Whitman's remained at home and worshipped in their own way. Still they were Christians, whose religion consisted in living the Christ-like way. His unconventionality was not only influenced by his home training and by his association with rough and uncouth bus drivers, ferry pilots, and printers, but by nature in which he saw "freedom" and declared that:

From this hour I ordain myself loose'd of  
limits and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master, total  
and absolute,  
Listening to others, and considering well  
what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

Most Whitman authorities in writing of Whitman's democratic, unconventional, and independent tendencies have written favourably of them. These authorities have explicitly and implicitly pointed to them as being desirable American traits. But Whitman did have some undesirable tendencies, not even to be found in his family tree. An inkling of this can be found in the statement of his brother George:

...we could not understand him— we gave him up.

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1 "Song of Myself", p. 50.
2 Emory Holloway, Whitman an Interpretation in Narrative, p. 4.
3 "Song of the Open Road", p. 171.
4 See Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 23; and George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 39.
5 Recorded by Horace L. Traubel in "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 35.
and again,

I don't think his \[Walt's\] father ever had an idea what Walt was up to, what he meant. To him, like to all the rest, Walt was a mystery.\footnote{Ibid., p. 34.}

Furthermore he said:

I don't say...that we thought Walt greater than the rest, but different.\footnote{Ibid., p. 38.}

It is readily admitted and generally known that although Whitman inherited certain traits from his Van Velsor, Williams, and Whitman ancestry,\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.} he was different from them in not only possessing greater imaginative powers\footnote{Harvey O'Higgins has tried to prove that Whitman was a cheat, motivated by anxiety to bolster up his own sense of inferiority. O'Higgins points out that Whitman boasted and lied with easy conscience at the outset of his career by writing reviews of his own books in order to give himself publicity; that Whitman coined the phrase "The Good Gray Poet" as a title for O'Connor's defense of his character and writings; that Whitman did not scruple to use in advertising himself a quotation from a private letter that Emerson had kindly written him, and that he did allow the world to believe that Burroughs had written a book about him which was really almost entirely his own composition. O'Higgins also points out that the man who "never dressed in black" is the Walt Whitman of the frock coat and high hat and that the man who is "never on the platform amid the crowds of clergymen", is the Democratic politician of the Freeman and the public lecturer. See Harvey O'Higgins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 703.} but in being frequently egotistic, sensational, and deceptive.

His egotism was early manifested. In his youth he was particularly conceited over his well-developed body, and in middle life he could boast\footnote{H.B. Binns, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 68, 69.} that he had never been sick. This egotism is again shown in his own statement written anonymously just before he produced the first volume of \textit{Leaves of Grass}. He wrote:

Very devilish to some, and very divine to some, will appear the poet of these new poems, the "Leaves of Grass"...\footnote{Walt Whitman, "Leaves of Grass: A Volume of Poems Just Published by Walt Whitman", \textit{In Re Walt Whitman}, p. 23. This is the first time that this article has appeared under the name of the author, a permission granted before Whitman died.}
Because of this quality of egotism in Whitman, Harvey O'Higgins, who might be too vitriolic in regards to Whitman, calls him "an introvert", "a Narcissus", and an "egoist".

Closely related to Whitman's egotism is his sensationalism which is evident whenever he describes his physique and dress. He loved to picture himself as being "Of pure American breed, large and lusty--age thirty-six, (1855)--never once using medicine." That he was sensational and was proud of it can be seen in his own description of his personal appearance:

...never dressed in black, always dressed freely and clean in strong clothes--neck open, shirt collar flat and broad, countenance tawny transparent red, beard well-mottled with white, hair like hay after it has been mowed in the field and lies tossed and streaked--his physiology corroborating a rugged phrenology--a person singularly beloved and looked toward, especially by young men and the illiterate--one who has firm attachments there, and associates there.  

Such were the varied personal traits of Walt Whitman, being on the one hand, independent, democratic, and unconventional; and, on the other hand, often egotistic, boastful, sensational, and deceptive. Exactly how and why these latter characteristics developed in Whitman can not be convincingly explained, except, possibly on the grounds that being basically imaginative, and innately equalitarian, and having been early thrust out into the world with all sorts of men and under all sorts of conditions, he imitated and learned by heart not only the more meritorious ways of the common people, but the deceptive tricks of the politician, the egotistic boast of the sailor, the theatrical mannerisms of the actor, and the fanciful yarns of the bus driver. This personality has been written in Whitman's works and, as has been stated in previous pages, these works are autobiographical, a characteristic that is

1 Harvey O'Higgins, op.cit., p. 704.
2 Walt Whitman, "A Volume of Poems Just Published", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 25.
3 Ibid.
seen no less in the works of his early apprenticeship, from 1841 to 1850, when his writings, like the man, conformed to certain conventions, than in the later apprenticeship, from 1850 to 1860, when the works, as was true of the writer, showed a definite defiance to conventional modes and writings. That this is true will be seen from the following discussion of his early poetry and prose which will be discussed as to subject matter and style.

From their subject matter Whitman's prose works which, for the most part, were newspaper articles, might be classified as social, political, intellectual, and religious. In these articles in which one sees Whitman's continued interest in man, it is evident that he was interested in the foregoing institutions only as they affected man. Hence, his newspaper articles were written with an effort to reform. Sometimes they are articles arguing against capital punishment; sometimes they argue for higher wages for working women; others inveigh against the slave trade. Sometimes he wrote on the political affairs of the nation, attacking the inconsistencies of American democracy; sometimes his articles campaigned against a candidate for office. Sometimes he turned critic and examined the works of Byron, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth; at another time he wrote on education, advocating a reform for the entire educational system. Then, again, though not a church goer himself, he

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1 George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
2 Ibid., pp. 38-39.
5 Ibid., I, p. 137.
7 Ibid., pp. 108-110.
8 Ibid., pp. 160-162; see also The Gathering of the Forces, II, pp. 3-45.
9 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 121-123; 125-126.
10 Ibid., pp. 220-221; 144-146.
recommended a large attendance at church and also advised the building of more houses of worship.

Such were the topics that Whitman discussed in his prose writings from 1841 to 1848. But there is nothing unusual about these articles, as they show, first, that in them Whitman was a conventional writer, and second, that these were the topics that the public expected newspaper editors to comment on and reporters to feature in the news. Being conventional in his writing at this time he had nothing original and nothing different to say; he lacked power and forcefulness. Another conventional trait is the too obviously didactic element. But the aims of reform element are to be expected in the works of a writer so possessed of the humanitarian and democratic principles as was Whitman.

In attempting to classify Whitman's prose according to style and form one finds the news-story, editorials, the novel, and the sketch—all of which are of little literary value. Though Whitman says the poet is a person gifted with the divine power of using words correctly and simply, he himself often used words and idioms that were not grammatically correct. Examples of these are "myself and Colby sprang", "learning him to read", "ain't", "with I and my companion". This unliterary, uncultured diction was due, perhaps, to the influence of his early unliterary associations, who must have been partly responsible for his frequent use of such barbarisms as:

1 Ibid., pp. 221-222.
2 Ibid., p. 141.
3 Whitman at this time poorly imitated the sentimental and humanitarian mood of Poe, Hawthorne, and Dickens. See George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 27-28; also Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 67-72.
5 Uncollected Poetry and Prose, II, p. 121.
"doff my beaver", "some pumpkin", and "a gone hoss". Included in his sketches are "The Tomb-Blossoms" a mawkish tale in which an immigrant widow mourns beside her husband's grave; "The Little Sleighers", a tender sketch spoiled by a superfluous moral ending; and "Tear Down and Build Over Again", a sentimental plea for the preservation of historic old buildings; "Boz and Democracy", in which the author stated the humanitarian opportunities of the democratic writer, and in which Whitman acknowledged his indebtedness to Dickens for some elements of Franklin Evans.

Franklin Evans or the Inebriate, Whitman's only novel, was a loosely constructed, didactic, and highly sentimental tale, in which a country lad, ruined by drink, sinks lower and lower in vice and crime, until at last, without a struggle, he signs the pledge of total abstinence. Whitman's failure as a novelist is due not only to the loosely constructed plot, but also to his inability to delineate character. The truth, however, is that he was more interested in the moral than in plots or characterization. As H. B. Binns observed:

Whitman's moral consciousness was still predominant: he was an advocate of "causes". But his morality sprang out of a real passion for humanity, which took the form of sentiment; a sentiment which was thoroughly genuine at bottom, but which in its expression at this time, became false and stilted enough to bear the reproach of sentimentality.  

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1 These incorrect expressions are liberally used throughout the two volumes of Uncollected Poetry and Prose, especially volume one. See Ibid., I, pp. 44, 115, 148, 183, 216, 253.
2 Ibid., pp. 60-67.
3 Ibid., pp. 90-92.
4 Ibid., pp. 92-97.
5 Ibid., pp. 67-72.
6 Ibid., II, pp. 103-221.
Truly, had Whitman died in 1850, he would have left nothing to earn him distinction and public acclaim, and one would not be studying him today, since nothing is more conventional, more mediocre, and more banal than these sentimental sketches and stories.

So it was with the majority of his writings during this period of apprenticeship, a period of necessary but unsuccessful experiments in fiction, in the news story, in sketches, and in editorials. A poor imitator, he tried to follow in the paths of others both as prose writer and as poet.

As for the poems of this period they were likewise poor, amateurish, moralizing productions. Being wholly conventional and imitative, his early poems bore little or no relation to the originality of Leaves of Grass. They made use of stereotyped subject-matter, common place ideas, and orthodox poetic diction and style. These poems like those of Bryant and Longfellow, mused didactically about the mysteries of life and death. The first of these was "Our Future Lot", which is written in the simple and popular ballad stanza as is seen in these lines:

This breast which now alternate burns
      With flashing hope, and gloomy fear,
Where beats a heart that knows the hue,
      Which aching bosoms wear;

This curious frame of human mold,
      Where craving wants unceasing play--
The troubled heart and wondrous form
      Must both alike decay.

In this poem faulty rhymes abound such as: fear-wear, torn-burn, majesty-eye.

1 Later in life Whitman laughed at these crude and boyish pieces of sentimentalism, a brief examination of which will explain why he was reluctant about publishing them. See Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 48; See also Horace L. Traubel in "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 39.
2 George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 29-30; See also Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 50.
Besides the rhyme, one readily notices the conventional poetic diction: "ev'n", "the oil of life", "ere", "dust", and "flickering tapers". The Whitman of this period is even guilty of following Eighteenth century traditions in personifying abstractions such as Plenty, Benevolence, and Happiness; Oblivion, Glory and Fancy. These characteristics are still evident in "My Departure", a poem on death; "The Inca's Daughter", a ballad picturing the self-destruction of a proud captive maiden; "We Shall Rest At Last", a reflection on death, and the "Spanish Lady", a ballad dealing with a tragic story.

In "The Love That Is Hereafter", in which he contrasted the peace and harmony of nature with the unsatisfied hope of mankind, Whitman tried a new verse form, using quintets of iambic tetrameter closed by an iambic trimeter, and rhyming a,a,b,b,c.

O, Beauteous is the earthl and fair
The splendors of Creation are:
Nature's green robe, the shining sky
The winds that through the tree-tops sigh,
All speak a bounteous God.

This experimentation in new forms of versification continued, for in "The Columbian's Song", a patriotic poem which is Whitman's first outburst of national pride, he used four stanzas, irregular in rhyme and length, an example of which is

1 Ibid.
2 "Young Grimes", Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 2-3.
3 "Fame's Vanity", Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 4-5.
4 "My Departure", Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 5-6.
6 "We Shall Rest At Last", Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, pp. 10-11.
What a fair and happy place
Is the one where Freedom lives,
And the knowledge that our arm is strong,
A haughty bearing gives!
For each sun that gilds the east,
When at dawn it first doth rise,
Sets at night
Red and bright,
On a people where the prize
Which millions in the battle fight
Have sought with hope forlorn,
Grows brighter every hour,
In strength, and grace, and power,
And the sun this land doth leave
Mightier at filmy eve,
Than when it first arose, in the morn.

And in "The Punishment of Pride", Whitman used another form: a seven line stanza, all of which are iambic tetrameter except the third and fifth, and of which the rhyme scheme is a, a, b, c, d, d, as is seen in the following:

Years, thus he swayed the things of earth--
O'er human crime and human worth--
Haughty, and high, and stern;
Nor ever, at sweet Mercy's call,
His white neck would turn;
But listening not to frailty's plea,
Launched forth each just yet stern decree.

In the foregoing poem the poet shows marked development in diction, phrasing, and versification, but the vocabulary is still, more or less, conventional. The poet, still writing on the mysteries of life and death, continued his experiments, and soon published his next poem, "Ambition", which was written in blank verse. It was not a long step from blank verse to free verse; therefore soon after the publication of "Ambition", he produced "The House of Friends", "Blood Money", and "Resurgamus"—all of which are written without

1 "The Columbian's Song", Uncollected Poetry and Prose, I, p. 15.
5 "Blood Money", pp. 542-543.
meter and rhyme, a style of the verse of 1855, as can be seen from the following comparison of the 1850 "Resurgemus" with a later version that was included in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The 1850 poem reads:

Suddenly, out of its state and drowsy air, the air of slaves,
Like lightning Europe leapt forth,
Sombre, superb and terrible,
As Ahimoth, brother of Death.
God, 'twas delicious!
That brief, tight, glorious grip
Upon the throats of kings.
You liars paid to defile the People...

while the 1855 version is:

Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,
Like lightning Europe leapt forth... half startled at itself,
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags.... Its hands tight
on the throats of kings.
O hope and faith! O aching close of lives! O many a
sickened heart!
Turn back unto this day, and make yourselves afresh.

A comparison of the two versions of the poem is of great importance, since "Resurgemus" is the only poem in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* known to have been published in 1850, during Whitman's apprenticeship. The chief difference between the poems, it will be seen, is not so much in the diction as in the length of the line, in the originality of theme, and in the subject matter. The style in the later version is more coherent and the movement from one line to the other is much smoother than in the original poem. The original version is important, however, because it was the first evidence that Whitman had begun to break away from the conventional style and themes and had begun to write in an original mode.

The publication of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 marks the true beginning of Whitman's literary life and fame. Indeed, the Whitman of this work was

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2 *Ibid.*, The poem is now entitled "Europe, the 72'd and 73'd Years of These States", as may be found in editions since 1860. *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 27.
not the Whitman of the short stories, the politician and journalist, who, in living a conventionally busy life, had expressed himself in levelling traditional patterns. He had changed completely both as man and writer. This change seemingly began in 1848, soon after his return from New Orleans.

George Whitman said that in outward appearance, his brother Walt came back from the South looking "older and wiser". Surely, if he did have an unfortunate love affair in New Orleans, the experience might have contributed to his change. Even such an authority as Binns thinks that the sex experience had revealed to Whitman the presence in his nature of those profound emotional depths of which he had always been dimly conscious since the hours on Long Island beach:

The whole crisis had made him realise more fully than ever the solemnity and mysterious purpose of life. It had not satisfied him; it had roused in him many perplexities, and had entailed what was probably the first great sacrifice of his life. In a word, this obscure and mysterious page in his story prepared him who read it for a further emotional revelation....

Whitman suddenly realized the meaning of his life; he became a divinely inspired poet. The long period of imitation and restlessness was at last over. He was at peace. "It was the new birth of his soul, and properly speaking, the commencement of his manhood."

2 Recorded by Horace L. Traubel, "Notes from Conversations with George Whitman", In Re Walt Whitman, p. 35.
5 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 72.
Along with self-realization came his deeper understanding of the world. He felt that the people of the village, the stage drivers, the boatmen, travellers, and men on the street were of the same divine nature as the new-born life within him; he felt that love ruled the universe and that everything was divine, even the leaves of grass. In his enthusiasm he believed that everything in the universe was one and that the law of the world was love. Rank and order vanished; the lowest and the highest were equal; all were to be understood only by love. Under the spell of this new ecstacy, he produced Leaves of Grass.

The 1855 Leaves of Grass was a tall, thin quarto of ninety pages, bound in green cloth and decorated with flowers and leaves. The title page bore neither Whitman's name nor that of a publisher's.

What a symbolic and pertinent title, Leaves of Grass! For is not grass

...the humblest, the most universal, the least noticed, the most down-trodden of plants; grass which feeds the beasts and men who trample it under their feet; grass which has little form and no stiffness or rigidity at all, but yields and bows itself to every passing gust of wind; which lives best in the shade, loves obscurity and shuns the blaze of the midday sun.

Indeed, the poems in this queer book were meant to grow in the minds of everybody, everywhere—even as grass grows everywhere.

The volume contained a long preface in which the author gave the poet's function in America. It is the duty of the American poet, he

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1. Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 117.
2. Ibid., p. 131. Opposite the title page there was an engraving of Whitman in working clothes; see also Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 117.
said, to put into songs, not imitated from other countries, the beauties of his own country. The poet is a unifier and the lover of the universe. Past and future are present to him, for he is a seer. To him, the soul is eternal and universal; therefore, his readers are a part of him, are his equal, and have the right to know his secrets and the truth of all things. Such a poet is the true American poet who must be a messenger of American Democracy and Ideals. Believing himself to be the poet of Democracy, Whitman gave the world a book in which he was the hero and in which he discussed his observations, ideals, and thoughts. He, like Emerson, rebelled against anything that tasted of old world imitation and conventions and encouraged rugged individualism and independence. Hence, he abandoned the conventional themes, the stock ornamentation, abstract personification, legends, myths, romances, euphemisms, and rhyme that were used by other American and English writers. He made every line from his pen tell the story of his break with

1 Ibid., pp. 263-264.
2 Ibid., p. 265.
3 Ibid., pp. 267-269.
4 Ibid., p. 275.
5 It is common knowledge that Whitman was significantly influenced by Emerson, the American philosopher of self-reliance. A glance at some of the main passages of the better known essays of Emerson and of the prefaces and poems of Whitman will convince one of the parallel thinking of the two men and of Whitman's possible indebtedness to the Concord sage. For example, compare Emerson's statement, "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close." (R. W. Emerson, "The American Scholar", Prose Works, Boston, James R. Osgood and Company, 1875, vol. 1, p. 45.) with Whitman's, "...America...must, for her purpose, cease to recognize a theory of character...formed by merely literary standards...and must sternly promulgate her own new standard. ("Democratic Vistas", Prose Works, p. 237.) Or compare, "The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is...that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" (R. W. Emerson, "The Over-soul", Prose Works, Vol. 1, p. 358) with

In all people I see myself—none more, and not a barley-corn less;
And the good or bad I say of myself, I say of them. ("Song of Myself", p. 50.)

6 "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", Leaves of Grass, p. 547.
The volume in which Whitman propounded his philosophy of religion, democracy, individuality, and his love of nature, opened with the celebrated "Song of Myself". In the opening lines of the "Song of Myself", sometimes edited as "Walt Whitman", Whitman made known the essence of his religion, his firm belief in the oneness of man:

I celebrate myself;
And what I shall assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me, as good
belongs to you.

To him religion means immortal love, and a sprig of grass is full of suggestions of love and of eternal life:

Tenderly will I use you, curling grass;
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men;
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them;
It may be you are from old people, and from women, and from offspring taken soon out of their mother's laps; and here you are the mother's laps.

Not only did religion mean immortal love, but it also meant immortality of the soul, the soul which he believed that he could see and touch.

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1 The volume contained twelve untitled poem which were later titled: "Song of Myself", "A Song For Occupations", "To Think of Time", "The Sleepers", "I Sing the Body Electric", "Faces", "Song of the Answerer", "Europe", "A Boston Ballad", "A Child Went Forth", "Who Learns My Lesson", "Great are the Myths". See George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 56.

2 In comparing "Song of Myself" with Wordsworth's Ode On Intimations of Immortality, John Bailey writes: "As everything of Wordsworth is summed up in the Ode On Intimations of Immortality, so everything of Whitman is to be found in the Song of Myself. See John Bailey, op. cit., p. 140.

3 "Song of Myself", p. 31.

4 Ibid., p. 36.
Do you see, 0 my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—
it is eternal life—it is Happiness.1

That his faith was strong in the immortality of man is again expressed in
these words:

2

I know I am deathless.

Besides his optimistic belief in immortality, Whitman also believed that
every living detail of the world contained God and therefore had a soul:

(...) having look'd at the objects of the universe,
I find there is no one, nor any particle of one,
but has reference to the soul.)3

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,
and each moment then;
In the faces of men and women I see God, and
in my own face in the glass;
I find letters from God dropt in the street—and
every one is sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I
know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come forever and ever.4

Yet, his God is not a God to be feared:

I hear and behold God in every object, yet
understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who thee can be more
wonderful than myself.5

If God is in every object, there must be no evil; therefore Whitman ex-
claimed that he was

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1
Ibid., p. 22.
2
Ibid., p. 50.
3
Ibid., p. 24.
4
Ibid., pp. 90-91.
5
Ibid., p. 90.
6
Of. Thomas B. Harned, "Whitman and the Future", The Conservator. Philadel-
phia, vol. 6, no. 4 (June, 1895), pp. 54-55.
...not the poet of goodness only--I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

In strict conformity with his optimism is his idealism. Whitman, believing that because a perfect God made the world, was convinced that the world is perfect and is as it will always be:

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now;
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.2

According to this philosophy, therefore, Whitman left little or no place for improvement and development, which were necessary elements in his perfect Democracy.

The extracts that have been quoted in illustrating Whitman's views of the universe should leave no doubt as to his ideas of democracy. Walt Whitman was in the highest sense a believer in democracy:

I speak the pass-word primeval--I give the sign of democracy;
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.3

This is his declaration of independence, justice, freedom, and equality.

With this conception of equality, he wrote:

I pass death with the dying, and birth
with the new-wash'd babe, and am not contain'd between my hat and boots;
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike, and every one good;
The earth good, and the stars good, and theirs adjuncts all good.4

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1 Ibid., p. 52.
2 Ibid., p. 52.
3 Ibid., p. 55.
4 Ibid., p. 37.
And again:

I am the mate and companion of people...

He continued:

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise;
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
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 Great Nation, 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; 2
A prisoner, a fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

He was:

The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat;
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck--the murderous buckshot and the bullets....

This identification includes the beast, none of whom is unworthy:

And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else;
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut,
Yet trills pretty well to me;
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me. 3

His equalitarianism was sometimes fused with a type of mysticism 4
which transcended the boundaries of race, creed, color, and sex as in:

\[ \text{Ibid.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., pp. 46-47.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., p. 42.} \]

\[ \text{Ibid. of Kelly Miller, "What Walt Whitman Means to the Negro", The Conservator (July, 1895) vol. 6, No. 5, pp. 70-73. Kelly Miller states that in his attitude toward the Negro, Whitman is quite different from Lowell, Whittier and Longfellow—all of whom wrote of the Negro slave in patronizing and apologetic tones. Whitman, on the other hand, wrote of the Negro slave as if the slave were his equal.} \]
I know that the hand of God is the promise of
my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my
own;
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,
And the women my sisters and lovers;
And that a Kelson of the creation is love:

He continued:

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt
outside;
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of
the woodpile;
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen
I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log, and led him
in and assured him,
And brought water, and fill'd a tub for his
sweated body and bruise'd feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own,
and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eye
and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck
and ankles;
He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated and
pass'd north;
(I had him sit next me at table—my fire-lock lean'd
in the corner.)

Then:

I do not ask who you are—-that is not so important
to me;5

In the dualism of the body and soul, he believed that the body is
of equal rank and honor with the soul and warned the soul that the body must
not be abased to it:

I believe in you, my Soul—the other I am must not
abase itself to you;
And you must not be abased to the other.
Loafe with me on the grass—loose the stop
from your throat;

1
"Song of Myself", p. 35.
2 Ibid., p. 40.
3 Ibid., p. 78
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.¹

Whitman's democracy breaks down the segregation of good and evil:

This is the meal equally set—this is 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 invited²...

Thus, Walt Whitman wrote of those things which he considered to be the essence of a perfect democracy. In this democracy, he thought the individual must stand alone. He must be able to say of himself:

Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.³

In his inspired enthusiasm he carried the idea of individuality to the extreme:

...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; And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is...

for

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from; The scent of these arm-pits, aroma finer than prayer; This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 34.
² Ibid., p. 49.
³ Ibid., p. 90.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., p. 55.
But, to be divine he believed that the body must be strong and pure; he called himself "the teacher of Athletes", and praised the young mechanic, the woodman, the farmboy, the soldier at camp, the hunter, and sexual relationship.

Besides propounding Whitman's basic ideas, the, "Song of Myself" vividly describes the bustle and dramatic life of New York:

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bed-room;
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair— I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, the tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders;
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor;
The snow-sleighs, the clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls;
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs;
The flap of curtain'd litter, a sick man inside, borne to the hospital;
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall;
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star, quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd;
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes;
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sun-struck, or in fits;
What exclamations of women taken suddenly, who hurry home and give birth to babes;
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here—what howls restrain'd by decorum;
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips;
I mind them or the show or resonance of them— I come, and I depart.4

With the exception, perhaps, of "I Sing of the Body Electric" most of the other poems in this first edition of Leaves of Grass and of the other

1 Ibid., p. 88.
2 Ibid., p. 89.
3 Ibid., p. 85.
4 Ibid., p. 38.
two volumes that were published within the next five years, repeat or reinforce Whitman's doctrine of the oneness of man, democracy, immortality, and sanctity of body and soul. In "I Sing of the Body Electric" Whitman propounded more clearly his belief in the need of healthy sex relations:

This is the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, the man is born of woman;
This is the bath of birth—this is the merge of small and large, and the outlet again.

Be not ashamed, women—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.

He further believed that

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 beautiful as the most beautiful face.

That is Whitman! a firm believer in strong, healthy individuals, the champion of democracy, equality, and comradeship—all of which he thought were necessary to American progress. The poet of democracy must be a man among men—not in company with a certain literary class, not at elegant dinner parties, or great banquets, but down on the wharf with the pilot, or riding on a Broadway omnibus, or watching the throngs of human life on the ferries, or alone with the afflicted and dying, the commoner, the criminal, the mechanic, the trapper, the hunter, or finding contentment and consolation in the miracles of nature. Leaves of Grass frankly expresses the vital and intimate experiences of a commanding personality.

But, what kind of reception and recognition did Whitman's book re-

1 "I Sing the Body Electric", p. 102.
2 Ibid., p. 105.
Although eight hundred copies of *Leaves of Grass* were printed, only a few were sold. This is not strange, however, for at this time the public cared little for a novel "barbaric yawping". Even Whitman's own family did not appreciate his poems. "I saw the book--didn't read it all--didn't think it worth reading--fingerprinted it a little. Mother thought as I did--did not know what to make of it...I remember mother comparing *Hiawatha* to Walt's, and the one seemed to us pretty much the same muddle as the other. Mother said that if *Hiawatha* was poetry, perhaps Walt's was.

Illiterate as Whitman's family was, its reaction to *Leaves of Grass* may not be significant, but to know that Whittier threw his gift copy into the fire and that other eminent literary men branded the book as "muck" and "obscene", "egotistic" and "vulgar" and called it "the work of a lunatic" is to know that literary America did not look with favor upon Whitman's creation, a creation which glorified the common man, which spoke frankly on matters of sex in an age of prudery and moral conservatism, and which used an unconventional poetic style.

This unconventional poetic style, better known today as free verse, a style, perhaps, best fitted for a poet of Whitman's pretensions, sometimes is hardly distinguishable from prose and is as banal and common place as

1 George Carpenter, op.cit., p. 61.
2 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p.140.
3 "Hiawatha" was published in 1855.
5 Emory Holloway, *Whitman an Interpretation in Narrative*, p. 133.
6 George Carpenter, op.cit., p.62; see also Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 100.
7 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 146.
8 John Bailey, op.cit., p. 70.
Whitman's essays and editorials. It lacks the tune, the regularity of rhythm, the conventional poetic devices and diction to which the majority of American poets of Whitman's day were accustomed. These poets had had little training in listening to eccentric lines like the following

1
Allons! from all formules!
Men enfant! I give you my hand!2
No dainty dolce affettuoso I.3

And, Whitman's habit of cataloguing names of people, places, and things, as in the following examples, proved to be an easy target for his critics:

Wait at their moorings at Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Galveston, San Francisco.5

Okomee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela,
Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh,
Walla-Walla...6

However, in spite of these obvious weaknesses in Whitman's poetic method there were a few critics and writers who favourably received the book. In the North American Review Edward Everett Hale, a noted litterateur of Whitman's day, and author of The Man Without A Country, spoke, according to George Carpenter, of "the freshness, simplicity, and reality of the book" and of "the wonderful sharpness and distinctness" of the author's imagination.7

1 "Song of the Open Road", p. 175.
2 Ibid., p. 179.
3 "Starting from Paumanok", p. 27.
4 cf. John Bailey wrote that Whitman's poems are "full of absurd lists of peoples, mountains, rivers, ports, and other items which a child may get out of a geography book." See John Bailey, op. cit., p. 99.
5 "Salut Au Monde", p. 143.
6 "Starting from Paumanok", p. 28.
7 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 64, quoting Edward Everett Hale from his article in the North American Review.
W. J. Stillman, a Whitman scholar, accepted "the wonderful vigour of thought and intensity of purpose" of the book. But most important of all, Emerson, the leading literary figure of his day, recognized the worth of *Leaves of Grass* in what is now a famous letter. Emerson said to a Concord visitor, "Americans abroad may now come home: unto us a man is born."

Even though Whitman's first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was not enthusiastically accepted he was not discouraged; but in the summer of 1856 he published a new and much enlarged edition. Twenty new poems were added.

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1. Ibid., quoting W. J. Stillman from the Crayon.

2. Emerson sent Whitman the following letter:


   Dear Sir,—I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seems the sterile and stingy Nature, as if too much handiwork or too much lymph in the temperament were making our Western wits fat and mean. I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things, said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

   I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreboding somewhere, for such a start, I rubbed my eyes a little to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging....

   I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks, and visiting New York to pay you my respects.

   R. W. Emerson.


4. The new poems that were added were "Unfolded Out of the Folds"; "Salut Au Monde"; "Song of the Broadaxe"; "By Blue Ontarios Shore"; "This Compost"; "To You"; "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"; "Song of the Open Road"; "A Woman Waits for Me"; "Song of Prudence"; "On the Beach at Night Alone"; "Eloelsior"; "Song of the Answerer"; "Assurances"; "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire"; "As I Sat Alone by Blue Ontario's Shore"; "Miracles"; "Spontaneous Me"; "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness"; "Song of the Rolling Earth". See W. S. Kennedy, *The Fight of a Book for the World*, pp. 205-224.
In "Unfolded" and "A Woman Waits For Me" Whitman continued his praise of American women who must be strong and worthy in order to produce strong men, for:

Unfolded out of the folds of the woman, man comes unfoldéd, and is always to come unfolded;
Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth,
is to come the superbest man of the earth...

In "Salut Au Monde", however, he eulogized the sounds, rivers, deserts, seas, empires, waterways, railways, battlefields, temples, cities, and populations of the world which is God's and to which God gives freely:

O take my hand, Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next!
Each answering all--each sharing the earth
with all.3

In answer to the question he answered:

What do you see, Walt Whitman?

I see plenteous waters;
I see mountain peaks--I see the sierras of Andes and Alleghanies, where they range;
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shaha, Altaya, Ghauts...

Likewise, in the "Song of the Broadaxes" and in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" the same panorama of life is given. In the "Song of the Open Road" he invites one to the open air where he can think his deepest thoughts on life, death, nature, and philosophy:

Mom enfant! I give you my hand!
I give you my love, more precious than money,
I give you myself, before preaching or law;

2 "Unfolded", p. 30.
3 "Salut Au Monde", p. 139.
4 Ibid., p. 141.
5 Ibid.
Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me? Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

"To You", a very brief poem, expresses again the poet's democratic spirit:

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?

While in "Miracles" he is still as amazed at his surroundings as he was in 1855:

Why! who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,
Or stand under trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with anyone I love—or sleep in the bed at night with anyone I love,
Or sit at table at dinner with my mother,
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car....
.................................................................
These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles.

The foregoing extracts are fair representatives of the material included in the second edition, the style of which is not superior to that of the first edition. Even though it was received with no more enthusiasm than its predecessor, it brought the poet a few more literary friends among whom were Thoreau, Alcott, Conway, William Cullen Bryant, Henry Ward Beecher, and Lord Houghton.

Nevertheless, these literary friends did not mean so much to Whit-

man as did the common man with whom he spent the next four years, during

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1 "Song of the Open Road", p. 179.
2 "To You", p. 31.
3 "Miracles", p. 428.
4 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 119.
5 Léon Basalgette, op. cit., p. 150.
which time he was making memoranda of themes, words, and poetic devices that he could use in future poems. In the meantime, Whitman satisfied his old desire for lecturing. But before he delivered the lectures, he published the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, with Thayer and Eldridge of Boston as publishers. In Boston, to supervise the publication, Whitman made many warm friends, among whom were C. W. Eldridge, W. D. O'Connor, both of whom he was to know later in Washington, and J. T. Trowbridge, a story writer and poet. It was at this time that he met his great literary benefactor, R. W. Emerson.

The 1860-61 edition was a large and substantial volume, crowded with old and new poems. The volume showed many revisions in thought and form. According to George Carpenter

> The poet has ceased to wonder anew at the miracle of his own being; he has almost passed beyond his preoccupation with the stimuli of sex.... The message of equality... though similarly confirmed, is scarcely so much stressed as in the previous poems, and though his mind runs much on the career of America and the proud democracy of labour which she is developing, his real thought lies deeper still. He announces a new religion of affectionate comradeship—a spiritual fellowship without which political and industrial and physical democracy is of no avail....

With America's future democracy in mind Whitman wrote:

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6. Ibid., pp. 85-86.
I DREAM'D in a dream, I saw a city invincible
   to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth;
I dream'd that was the new City of Friends;
Nothing was greater there than the quality
   of robust love—it led the rest;
It was seen every hour in the actions of
   the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words. 1

Not only is the subject matter new, but the style and diction of
this poem are much more poetic than the long lines of catalogues and banal
words that are characteristic of the poems of the first two editions. The
remaining extracts from the 1860 volume should be noticed for their im-
proved style as much as for their ideas.

Whitman's poems showing the relationship of man to man were in-
troduced into this edition under the group entitled Calamus. Moreover,
another group of poems showing the healthy relationship of man to woman
was incorporated for the first time under the title Children of Adam.

Calamus and Children of Adam are not very long sections. The
basic message of these are of comradeship and friendship. But one does find
a few nature poems like "Spontaneous Me" in which Whitman seemed sensitive
to small sights and sounds:

The wet of woods through the early hours,
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they
   sleep...
The smell of apples,2 aromas from crush'd sage-plant,
   mint, birch-bark...

The longest of these poems "I Sing the Body Electric", begins with
the fundamental thought of the other poems of the "Adam" group:

        I sing the Body electric;
The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth
   them;
They will not let me off till I go with them,
   respond to them,

1  "I Dream'd in a Dream", p. 136.
And dis corrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the Soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?
And if the body does not do as much as the Soul?
And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul?

Other poems of this group are "Native Moments", "One Hour To Madness and Joy" and "Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City", which in themselves are superior in style and diction to the usual poems in earlier editions. Note the lines of the following:

Once I pass'd through a populous city, imprinting my brain, for future use, with its shows, architecture, customs, and traditions;
Yet now, of all that city, I remember only a woman I casually met there, who detain'd me for love of me;
Day by day and night by night we were together,-- All else has long been forgotten by me;
I remember, I say, only that woman who passionately clung to me;
Again we wander--we love--we separate again;
Again she holds me by the hand--I must not go! I see her close beside me, with silent lips, sad and tremulous.  

This poem written, no doubt, at a time when the poet's emotions were deeply touched, possesses the restraint and rhythm that were not frequently found in the poems of this early period.

In the "Calamus" group Whitman wrote his philosophy of friendship and comradeship:

These, I, singing in spring, collect for lovers, (For who but I should understand lovers, and all their sorrow and joy? And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)  

1 "I Sing the Body Electric", p. 98.
2 "Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City", p. 114.
3 "These I Singing in the Spring", p. 121.
He believed that the philosophers of the past were great because of their love for mankind:

I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all--Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see--and underneath
Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade--the attraction of friend to friend.

This feeling of comradeship found varied utterances in the other poems such as "Recorders Ages Hence", and "When I Heard at the Close of Day".

However, it is not to be thought that Whitman wrote only on the two subjects of sex and comradeship in this edition, for "Poem of Joys" shows that he had his old interest in physical health:

0 to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along shore!
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep--to race naked along the shore.

And again in "A Hand Mirror":

Hold it up sternly! See this it sends back! (Who is it? Is it you?)
Outside fair costumes--within ashes and filth,
No more a flashing eye--no more a sonorous voice or springy step;
Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerable's flesh,
Lungs rotting away piece meal, stomach sour and cankerous,
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,
Words babble, hearing and touch callous
No brain, no heart left--no magnetism of sex;

1 "The Base of All Metaphysics", p. 125.
2 "Recorders Ages Hence", p. 128.
3 "When I Heard at the Close of Day", p. 126.
Such, from one look in this looking-glass are you go hence,  
Such a result so soon--and from such a beginning!

From democracy and equalitarianism Whitman's interest never waned  
but was as evident in the 1860 edition as it was in the edition of 1855:

Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and  
choked;  
Beneath this face that appears so impassive, hell's  
tides continually run;  
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me;  
I walk with delinquents with passionate love;  
I feel I am of them--I belong to those convicts and  
prostitutes myself,  
And henceforth I will not deny them--for how  
can I deny myself?

This same spirit is found in "To a Common Prostitute":

Be composed--be at ease with me--I am Walt Whitman,  
liberal and lusty as Nature;  
Not till the sun excludes you, do I exclude you....

But his democracy is never expressed more fervently and more ardently than  
in "I Was Looking A Long While" in which he wrote:

I was looking a long while for a clue to the history  
of the past for myself, and for these chants--  
and now I have found it;  
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them  
I neither accept nor reject;)  
It is no more in the legends than in all else;  
It is in the present--it is this earth to-day;  
It is in Democracy--(the purport and aim of all  
the past;)  
It is the life of one man or one woman today--the  
average man of today;  
It is in languages, social customs, literatures,  
arts;  
It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships,  
machinery, politics, creeds, modern improvements,  
and the interchange of nations,  
All for the average man of to-day.

While carrying forward his democratic idea, this poem also embodies his

1  "Hand Mirror", p. 325.  
2  "You Felons On Trial in Courts", p. 238.  
3  "To A Common Prostitute", p. 238.  
4  "I Was Looking A Long While", p. 239.
faith and his dream for American progress. This faith and dream can easily be understood when one recalls Whitman's deeply rooted faith in democracy, in nature, in independence, and in his equalitarian philosophy.

Such an understanding, this chapter has endeavoured to give by tracing the main facts in Whitman's life from 1819 to 1860. In the discussion it was pointed out that several forces like his ancestry, environment, lack of education, and contact with men were largely instrumental in the shaping of Whitman's ideas and character; that so closely related were the circumstance of his life, his ideas, and his character to his works, that Whitman really wrote an autobiography in the body of his prose and poetry. In the light of the autobiographical and personal nature of his works one can readily understand his remark concerning Leaves of Grass:

Camarado! This is no book; 1
Whoever touches this touches a man.

Moreover, this chapter attempted to answer not only the question, what did Whitman's experience do to him? but also, what did Whitman do with his experiences? That Whitman had learned a great deal from his varied and assorted experiences and that he was conscious of what he had learned can be seen in this line,

...Wait, you contain enough, why don't you let it out, then?

But an examination of these experiences will show that they were the ordinary experiences of a man externally interested in busy, bustling, varied life. They contained no profound, tragic circumstance, no soul-stirring event, no

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1 "So Long", p. 345.
2 "Song of Myself", p. 57.
serious conflicts, suspenses, and problems. Nothing really happened to make Whitman feel, as well as realize, that life was real and earnest. It is not surprising, then, to note that the light-hearted Whitman between 1841-1850 was more the restless play-boy than the sober but defiant philosopher that he became between 1850-1860. Before 1850, he was so unstable and irresponsible that his spasmodic attempts at manual labor, printing, carpentering, journalism, teaching, and hack-writing were, in fact, failures. Similarly, this period of his life, a period of restless apprenticeship in writing and observing, did not, as it has been pointed out, produce any works or ideas beyond the conventional patterns and neophyte level. Often poor, these works brought him no distinction, no public acclaim. In fact, had he died in 1846, one would not study him today, and his bibliography, if any, would be the scantiest, not, as it is, one of the most extensive in American Literature. Nevertheless, this period in Whitman's life is important, for it gave him three great opportunities which helped to make his later works possible. It gave him an opportunity to read extensively, to fill up the gaps which his meager education and his unliterary home environment left yawning. He read the outstanding English authors like Dickens, Scott, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare; American authors like Emerson, Thoreau, Cooper, Poe, and Hawthorne. Not a wide reading range, to be sure, but remarkable enough for a man who had not even a good elementary education. Besides the works of these men, he read and kept up with the current topics discussed in newspapers, magazines, and reviews. This period also gave him an opportunity to meet and know not only the omnibus drivers and pilots but the great literary and political figures of the day like Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Charles Dickens, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allen Poe. These men, for better or for worse, wielded tremendous influence on him. In this period, moreover, he regularly attended the theatres and public programs. The eloquence and the bombast characteristic of mid-nineteenth
century oratory and the color, the drama, the music, and passion of the opera must have opened Whitman's eyes to the possibilities of rhythmical speech in expressing the depth, beauty, and power of human passion. These opportunities, however, were not fully realized and put to the best use in his works prior to 1855, for Whitman's slowly working mind and lazy body had to digest and assimilate them with characteristic leisure; hence this period ended just as it had begun, with Whitman leisurely observing and absorbing life about him, not seriously, but for the mere pleasure it afforded him and for the satisfaction of his ego. However, sometime between 1850 and 1860, the poet underwent a radical emotional change, which affected his dress, his works, and his attitude. It is at this time that he became conscious of his mission as a poet of democracy and ceased to imitate the works and style of conventional and contemporary writers. Now, he spurned the dress of the dilettante and chose, instead, the garb of the common working-man. His attitude toward the pageantry of the busy moving world still possessed and gave him joy, but now, it was a mellow, even a profound joy; the joy of a pensive, eccentric, defiant humanitarian. He was slowly but surely being transformed into a new Whitman. Something solicited all his strength, all his thought, all the instinct of his life. He was gradually changing from the nonchalant, swaggering, sauntering individual of 1841-1850, to a more serene man about to see life seriously and as a whole. And as his outer life was being lavishly enriched by contacts and varied employments, Whitman's inner life was rapidly approaching maturity by 1860 when a terrible crisis occurred to give it a needed enrichening and mellowing stimulus.
CHAPTER II
The Life and Activities of Walt Whitman from 1861 to 1873

On April 12, 1861, with the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the Civil War began. On April 15, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling "forth the militia of the several states of the Union". New York immediately called for volunteers, and George Whitman, unlike his brother Walt, enlisted. 1

Walt remained at home until George was wounded in the terrible battle of Fredricksburg on December 13, 1862. Then he left for the front where he had many grave experiences which he has recorded in "Memoranda of the War", Drum Taps and The Wound Dresser. These works show unmistakably the extent and quality of the influence of Whitman's Civil War experience on him as man and writer.

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3 George Whitman enlisted in the 51st New York Volunteers. See H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 178. Just why Walt did not volunteer for service is not definitely known, but whatever the reason, this seeming cowardice has been the basis for many conflicting theories, conclusions, and explanations. Bliss Perry stated that Walt's unwarlike nature kept him from shouldering a musket. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 154. Leon Bazalgette believed that Whitman did not enlist because the "inner call" did not bid him go. See Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 173. George Carpenter stated that Whitman's "slow ways and his unique individuality made him ill suited for the discipline of camp and battle". See George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 89. John Bailey, believing similarly, stated that "He [Whitman] was at all times, by temperament and by principle...extremely averse to regularity and discipline. He even entertained a foolish notion that discipline, and the subordination which it involves, could be modified or displaced in an army of free Americans". See John Bailey, op. cit., p. 31.
4 Prose Works, p. 21.
5 These Memoranda now form the first section of "Specimen Days". See Prose Works, pp. 26-31.
6 These poems are now included in Leaves of Grass, pp. 240-281.
7 The Wound Dresser is the name given to a collection of letters that Whitman wrote to his mother during the war. They were compiled by Richard M. Bucke.
However, before one can know and appreciate the effect of the Civil War on Whitman the writer, he must be thoroughly acquainted with the facts in the poet's life and career at this time. This chapter is designed to give these facts.

Arriving in Washington penniless, Whitman anxiously searched all the Washington hospitals for his brother. Then, not finding him in Washington, he made his way to the front where he found George already recovered from a wound which had not been serious. Once in camp, he found himself face to face with the cruel realities of war—amputated feet, legs, arms, and hands; the sick and wounded, the dying and the dead. Becoming greatly interested in the sick and wounded, Whitman decided to remain in camp for a few days. A glimpse of what he saw and experienced might be seen in this extract taken from his record of hospital visits written on December 21, 1862.

1 Walt's pockets were picked in Philadelphia. Bliss Perry states that William O'Connor, Whitman's friend, on hearing of the incident, cheerfully remarked that "a pick-pocket who couldn't rob Walt ought to be ashamed of himself". Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 134-135. However, Mrs. Ellen Calder (formerly Mrs. William O'Connor) states that Eldridge made this remark. See Ellen Calder, "Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman", Atlantic Monthly (June, 1907), Vol. XCIX, p. 526. Whitman was supplied with funds by O'Connor and Eldridge, whom he had already known in Boston. O'Connor, now in the Treasury Department at Washington, was also a writer and a strict abolitionist. Indeed, it was the subject of slavery that caused an estrangement between Whitman and O'Connor. However, in later years, the friendship between them was restored.

2 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 90.

3 The Wound Dresser, p. 46.

4 How long Walt Whitman remained at the front is not definitely known; for in his Memoranda of the War he states that he spent only eight or nine days at the battlefield, but in a letter written to his friends, Fred and Nat Gray, on March 19, 1863, he speaks of having been down at the front "a good part of the winter, commencing time of the battle of Fredricksburg". See The Wound Dresser, p. 46; also Emory Holloway, Whitman an Interpretation in Narrative, p. 200.
three days after he reached camp:

Spent a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahamock, immediately opposite Fredericksburg.... Several dead bodies lie near, each covered with its brown woolen blanket. In the dooryard, toward the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel staves or broken board, stuck in the dirt....

The house is quite crowded, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody....

I went through the rooms, downstairs and up. Some of the men were dying. I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers etc. also talked to three or four who seemed most susceptible to it and needing it.1

On December 22 to 31, he wrote:

Am among the regimental brigade and division hospitals somewhat. Few at home realize that these are merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded lying on the ground, lucky if their blanket is spread on a layer of pine or hemlock twigs, or some leaves. No cots; seldom even a mattress on the ground. It is pretty cold.... I do not see that I can do any good, but I cannot leave them. Once in a while some youngster holds on to me convulsively, and I do what I can for him; at any rate stop with him, and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it.2

From the foregoing excerpts, one may observe: that to some extent the army was inadequately prepared to take humane care of its wounded; that the wounded soldiers were greatly attached to Whitman; and that these human casualties of war and the pitiful helplessness of the soldiers touched the sympathetic nature of Whitman. In fact, so profoundly was Whitman affected by his camp experiences that on returning to Washington in January, 1863 he decided to remain in the city where he could be of service to the wounded

1 He reached camp on December 19, 1862. See The Wound Dresser, p. 47.
2 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
3 Ibid., p. 23.
soldiers brought back from the front.

Beginning his work as a sort of self-appointed nurse in the hospitals in January, 1863, Whitman first visited the wounded and sick "Brooklyn boys", many of whom he already knew. His interest in the wounded continued to grow and soon he became a frequent visitor to the hospitals in Washington, especially

Great, indeed, was his opportunity for service, for Washington was full of sick and wounded soldiers who occupied the Patent Office. (See E. B. Bixes, op. cit., p. 194); and part of the Capitol. (See Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 136). The situation was, evidently, appalling, for even though the nursing was in charge of the government, there was need for more help which was supplied by the Sanitary Service and Christian Commission, or by volunteers, among whom was Walt Whitman. See William Barton, Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1928, p. 87.

In an article written in 1863, for the March (19th) issue of the Brooklyn Eagle, Whitman made the following statement: "Beginning at first with casual visits to these establishments to see some of the Brooklyn men, wounded or sick, here, I became by degrees more and more drawn in, until I have now been for many weeks quite a devotee to the business—a regular self-appointed missionary to these sick young men, here, left upon Government hands, many of them languishing, many of them dying. I am not connected with any society, but go on my own individual account, and to the work that appears to be called for". See The Wound Dresser, p. 12. Despite this statement from the poet, there are those who believe that Whitman's work was not that of a self-appointed missionary, but that he was connected with and supported by some humanitarian society. For example, William E. Barton states that he has found among Whitman's war records in the Congressional Library, a book of directions given by the Christian Commission to its employees. Barton uses this evidence as a basis for his belief that Whitman was not working as a "Self-appointed missionary", but was employed by this humanitarian society. See William Barton, op. cit., pp. 58-61. On the other hand, there are those who accept Whitman's statement and believe that he was self-appointed. Among these are Emory Holloway and Charles Glicksberg, who in his scholarly study, "Walt Whitman and the Civil War, has searched in vain the Philadelphia files of the Christian Commission for some mention or record of Walt Whitman. See Walt Whitman and The Civil War, ed. Charles Glicksberg, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933, pp. 5-6. (Hereafter, references to statements made by Charles Glicksberg will be referred to as Charles Glicksberg, op. cit.; when statements are taken from Whitman's works which Charles Glicksberg has compiled, they will be referred to as Walt Whitman and the Civil War.) But since it is not the purpose of this thesis to prove whether Whitman was or was not paid for his service, his statement will be accepted with the belief that if he were connected with the Commission, it was only for a short time, in view of the fact that his statement was made a few months after his arrival in Washington. See Wound Dresser, pp. 11-12.
to those hospitals where the most severe cases were found and where the other
1 nurses seldom went.

Already accustomed to nursing disabled stage drivers and visiting 2 the sick and wounded soldiers in the Broadway Hospital in New York, before he left for the front in 1862, Whitman soon acquired some skill in comforting and handling the unfortunate victims of the Civil War. His simple methods of nursing were very characteristic and indigenous to the man. Discovering that 3 he helped most "in the simple matter of personal presence", he made a special effort to look his best and freshest for these visits. Consequently, dressed in clean clothes, and wearing a cheerful smile, he was everywhere welcome. His simple principles of nursing he described as...

...conscientious personal investigation of cases, each for itself; with sharp, critical faculties, but in the fullest spirit of human sympathy and boundless love.5

In the following passage Whitman further described his methods of nursing:

My custom is to go through a ward, or a collection of wards, endeavouring to give some trifle to each, without missing any. Even a sweet biscuit, a sheet of paper, or a passing word of friendliness, or but a look or nod, if no more. In this way I go through large numbers without delaying, yet do not hurry. I find out the general mood of the ward at the time; sometimes see that there is a heavy weight of listlessness prevailing, and the whole ward wants cheering up. I perhaps read to the men, to break the spell, calling them around me, careful to set away from the cot of any who is very bad with sickness or wounds. Also I find out, by going through in this way, the cases that need special attention, and can then devote proper time to them. Of course I am very cautious, among the patients, in giving them food. I always confer with the doctor, or find out from the nurse or ward-master about a new case. But I soon get sufficiently familiar with what is to be avoided, and

1 Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 206.
2 Charles Glicksberg, op. cit., p. 17.
4 George R. Carpenter, op. cit., p. 92; See also Edith Wyatt, op. cit., p. 243.
5 The Wound Dresser, p. 33.
learn also to judge almost intuitively what is best.

This elucidates very clearly Whitman's methods of nursing, and his hospital activities. But John Swinton, a well-known correspondent of the New York Herald, and a friend of Whitman, throws, even more light upon the effect and nature of Whitman's hospital work:

Never shall I forget one night when I accompanied him on his round through a hospital, filled with those wounded young Americans whose heroism he has sung in deathless numbers. There were three rows of cots, and each cot bore its man. When he appeared, in passing along, there was a smile of affection and welcome on every face, however wan, and his presence seemed to light up the place as it might be lighted by the presence of the God of Love. From cot to cot they called him, often in tremulous tones or in whispers; they embraced him; they touched his hand; they gazed at him. To one he gave a few words of cheer; for another he wrote a letter home; to others he gave an orange, a few comforts, a cigar, a pipe and tobacco, a sheet of paper or a postage-stamp, all of which and many other things were in his capacious haversack. From another he would receive a dying message for mother, wife, or sweetheart; for another he would promise to go an errand; to another, some special friend very low, he would give a manly farewell kiss. He did the things for them no nurse or doctor could do, and he seemed to leave a benediction at every cot as he passed along. The lights had gleamed for hours in the hospital that night before he left it, and, as he took his way towards the door, you could hear the voices of many a stricken hero calling, 'Walt, Walt, Walt! come again! come again!'

In harmony with both Whitman's and Swinton's testimony is that of an army surgeon, who, according to John Burroughs, watched Whitman's work with interest and curiosity and remarked that

1. Ibid., p. 28. He believed that the presence of a strong, generous, affectionate man or woman was better for the sick than even medicine:

   To many of the wounded and sick, especially the youngsters, there is something in personal love, caresses, and the magnetic flood of sympathy and friendship, that does in its way, more good than all the medicine in the world.... I believe that even the moving around among the men, or through the ward, of a hearty, healthy, clean, strong, generous-souled person, man or woman, full of humanity and love, sending out invisible, constant currents thereof, does immense good to the sick and wounded.


3. John Burroughs does not give the surgeon's name.
...his principles of operation, effective as they were, seemed strangely few, simple, and on a low key,—to act upon the appetite, to cheer by a healthy and fitly bracing appearance and demeanor; and to fill and satisfy in certain cases the affectional longings of the patients, was about all. He carried among them no sentimentalism nor moralizing; spoke not to any man of his "sins", but gave something good to eat, a buoying word, or a trifling gift and a look. He appeared with ruddy face, clean dress, with a flower or a green sprig in the lapel of his coat. Crossing the fields in summer, he would gather a great bunch of dandelion blossoms, and red and white clover, to bring and scatter on the cots, as reminders of outdoor air and sunshine.

When practicable, he came to the long and crowded wards of the maimed, the feeble, and the dying, only after preparations as for a festival,—strengthened by a good meal, rest, the bath, and fresh underclothes. He entered with a huge haversack slung over his shoulder, full of appropriate articles, with parcels under his arms, and protuberant pockets. He would sometimes come in summer with a good-sized basket filled with oranges, and would go round for hours paring and dividing them among the feverish and thirsty.1

Even William Barton, whose book Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman shows an antagonistic attitude toward Whitman, admits that during the war Whitman gave to the soldiers more valuable gifts than money. He states:

We have...little reason to suppose that he found it necessary to give any money of his own. It was not incumbent upon him to give money. He did not have it to give, but he had given what was much more valuable, sympathy and service.... What he gave to a sick soldier was the daily paper, a sweet cracker, an apple, a sheet of writing paper and a stamped envelope....

Nor were these gifts perfunctory. As Whitman went through the hospitals and saw the needs of "his boys", he made detailed memoranda on the spot. A few typical examples will not only illustrate Whitman's proficiency in this respect, but also the thoughtfulness with which he did his hospital work.

1Ibid., pp. 40-41.

2William Barton, op. cit., p. 65.
Thomas Butterworth, bed no. 2—something to read.

Henry Thurer, bed 2, Ward 6—Wants to see a German Lutheran Clergyman.


Llewellyn Woodin, (bed 14) sore throat, wants some candy. Co. # 145th Penn.

/ Bed 15—wants an orange.

/ Bed 59. (James) wants some liquorice.

/ 27 wants some figs and a book and some cakes—ginger.

/ 23 & 24 wants some horehound candy.


Besides attending these "special cases with their individual need of stamps, pens, envelopes, paper, newspapers, magazines, or tobacco," Whitman often provided a feast of ice-cream for a whole ward, distributed crates of oranges or lemons and sugar for the making of lemonade.

It was for such gifts as these and others of a similar kind that Whitman needed money which came, aside from the pay he earned in Major Gap's office and his newspaper work, from Emerson, James Redpath, organizer of the Redpath Lecture Bureau, Wendel Phillips, and other friends in Boston, New York, Brooklyn, Providence, and Salem. Though aid from these people was appreciated and did much toward helping Whitman carry on his work, it was not sufficient to meet the needs of all the soldiers. Consequently, Whitman thought again of lecturing, but being pressed for time, he was unable to carry out his plan.


While carrying on his hospital work, Whitman, reducing his own needs to an absolute minimum, received insufficient nourishment and rest, the two tools that he needed most to ward off disease germs, and to steel his nerves in his frequent presence at deaths and painful operations. Even though months passed before he began to feel the effects of self-denial, he early confessed to his mother that though he could "keep singularly cool" in the presence of wounds full of maggots and gloody operations, he felt sick and often trembled. But still he was determined to stay with "his boys", and when the wounded were brought in from the terrible battle of Chancellorsville, he was ready to minister to the wounded bodies that came in. He recorded:

As I write this, in May, 1863, the wounded have begun to arrive from Hooker's command, from bloody Chancellorsville. I was down among the first arrivals. The men in charge of them told me the bad cases were yet to come. If that is so, I pity them, for these are bad enough. You ought to see the scene of the wounded arriving at the landing here, foot of Sixth Street, at night. Two boat-loads came about half-past seven last night. A little after eight it rained, a long and violent shower. The poor, pale, helpless soldiers had been debarked, and lay around on the wharf and neighborhood, anywhere. The rain was, probably, grateful to them; at any rate they were exposed to it.

The soldiers are nearly all young men, and far more Americans than is generally supposed—I should say nine-tenths are native-born. Among the arrivals from Chancellorsville I find a large proportion of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois men. As usual, there are all sorts of wounds. Some of the men are fearfully burnt from the explosion of artillery caissons. One ward has a long row of officers, some with ugly hurts. Yesterday was perhaps worse than usual; amputations are going on; the attendants are dressing wounds. As you pass by you must be on your guard where you look. I saw, the other day, a gentleman, a visitor, apparently from curiosity, in one of the wards, stop and turn a moment to look at an awful wound they were probing, etc; he turned pale, and in a moment more he had fainted away and fallen on the floor. 

1 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 97.
3 Ibid., p. 29.
Nothing like this happened to Whitman. But later, as it will be seen in chapter four of this thesis, he paid dearly for such sights and experiences which brought him face to face with the folly and horrors of war. The following passage effectively suggests how Whitman's eyes, nerves and sympathy must have been taxed to the limit:

Many of the amputations have to be done over again. One new feature is that many of the poor afflicted young men are crazy: every ward has some in it that are wandering. They have suffered too much, and it is perhaps a privilege that they are out of their senses.¹

After reading this excerpt one is not surprised to find in Whitman's letters to his mother an occasional tone of despair and exhaustion. In one he complained:

Mother, it is most too much for a fellow, and I sometimes wish I was out of it—-but I suppose it is because I have not felt first rate myself.²

And in another he wrote:

Mother, it seems not men but a lot of devils and butchers, butchering each other.³

A week later, describing the sufferings of the soldiers, he exclaimed:

Oh, it is terrible, and getting worse, worse, worse.⁴

Soon afterwards he confided to his mother that he had "been in the midst of suffering and death for two months." ⁵

He continued his work through the summer heat, but finding himself considerably weakened by his arduous duties and the summer heat, he returned in October of 1863 to Brooklyn, where he remained for a month. Other reasons

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¹ Ibid., p. 194.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., pp. 156-157.
⁴ Ibid., p. 161.
⁵ Ibid., p. 160.
⁶ Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 215.
return were the severe illness of his brother Andrew, the tone of dissatisfaction found in his mother's letters, and his desire to arrange for the publication of a new edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

When Whitman returned to Washington in December, he resumed his work at the hospitals. But thinking that his service might be needed more on the actual scene of battle, he made, in February, 1864, his second and last visit to the army, then quartered at Culpeper, Virginia. However, he soon returned to Washington and resumed his visits to the hospitals, where the cases seemed to grow more and more desperate.

Other phases of the war with which Whitman was acquainted were the brutal system of punishing soldiers, the charlatanism among public officials, and the gross selfishness, chicanery, and tyranny existing everywhere. In "War Memoranda" he described the methods of punishing soldiers:

(April 7, 1763)

*Lewis K. Brown (Maryland but of Co. K. 1st N. Y. Artillery. Ward K. Armory--Punishment of soldiers besides putting a man in the guardhouse (sometimes for very trivial offences to be "bucked and gagged"--it is very common in the army (Lewis K. Brown of Co. K., of Furnell's legion, Maryland)--put a stick in his mouth (like a horse's bit), tie it with a knot behind the head--then they tie the hands behind him--L. K. B. tells me he has men to be gagged that way for six hours, as a punishment for running the guard and getting tight--one man (Maryland battery) was bucked and gagged for a most trivial offence, a female follower of the camp reported him for refusing to go after water for her)---Another punishment is to stand a man up on a barrel with a knapsack full of bricks on his shoulders--Another is to take a barrel with one head out,---cut a nine inch hole through the other, and drop it over the man's shoulder, and let him stand in---. Many of the young snips with commissions are of course very airish and full of petty tyranny, and harshness, punishing men for such things as forgetfulness not saluting them, & the like....*

In *The Wound Dresser* he wrote of the charlatanism, the brutality, and the

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2 Ibid.
3 Walt Whitman and the Civil War, p. 143.
tyranny of members on the hospital staff.

There are tyrants and shysters in all positions, and especially those dressed in subordinate authority. Some of the ward doctors are careless, rude, capricious, needlessly strict. One I found who prohibited the men from all enlivening amusements; I found him sending men to the guardhouse for the most trifling offence. In general, perhaps, the officials—especially the new ones, with their straps or badges—put on too many airs. Of all places in the world, the hospitals of American young men and soldiers, wounded in the volunteer service of their country, ought to be exempt from mere conventional military airs and etiquette of shoulder-straps. But they are not exempt.

In March 24, 1864, he wrote to his mother, deploring the mistreatment of the wounded soldiers:

Things get worse and worse...and as I have said before, those who have to do with them are getting more and more callous and indifferent. Mother, when I see the common soldiers, what they go through, and how everybody seems to try to pick upon them, and what humbug there is over them every hour, even the dying soldier's money stolen from his body by some scoundrel attendant, or from (the) sick one, even from under his head, which is a common thing, and then the agony I see every day?

With such events as these confronting him almost daily, he could hardly refrain from exclaiming, "I get almost frightened at the world".

Even though the tragedies of war had begun to unnerve him months before, Whitman continued his hospital visits until in June, 1864, when he became so ill that he was forced to give up his duties and return to his Brooklyn home, where he remained for six months. In January, 1864, he returned to Washington and immediately resumed his work among the soldiers. He had not been in Washington very long before he received word that George was a Com-

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2. Ibid., pp. 158-159.
3. Ibid., p. 159.
4. H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 203. Whitman tried hard to remain at work until the war ended for fear his brother George should be wounded again and brought in during his absence. See The Wound Dresser, p. 198.
federate prisoner at Petersburg, Virginia.

February must have been a happy month for Whitman, for just after George had been released from the Confederate camp, Walt received, what he had long hoped for, an appointment to a clerkship in the Indian Bureau in the Department of the Interior. However proud he was of his new office, he did not forget his hospital visits. Writing to his friend J. T. Trowbridge on February 6, 1865, he said that he was "back again in Washington, moving around regularly, but not to excess, among the hospitals". And a month later he wrote Trowbridge that he was "working a few hours a day, a sufficiently remunerative desk in the Indian office".

But Whitman's connection with the Indian Bureau was brief; for in June, 1865, the Secretary of Interior, James Harlan, learning that Whitman was the author of what Harlan called an immoral book, _Leaves of Grass_, notified Whitman on June 30, that his services would be dispensed with. No reason was given for the dismissal.

Whitman did not ask for reconsideration, "but his friends were indignant and were not disposed to let the matter drop". J. H. Ashton, then assistant United States Attorney, protested, but finding Secretary Harlan firm in his dismissal, secured the immediate transfer of Whitman to his own depart-

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1 Emory Holloway, _Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative_, p. 221. Early in February, Whitman sought to have George released. The application must have been successful, for George was exchanged in the same month and continued his brave work in the Union Army. See H. B. Binns, _op. cit._, pp. 209-210.

2 William Barton, _op. cit._, p. 74.

3 Walt Whitman _And the Civil War_, p. 99.


5 Clara Barrus, _op. cit._, p. 25.

6 With Walt Whitman in Camden, _III_, p. 471.

7 George Carpenter, _op. cit._, p. 107.
However, it is not to be thought that all of Whitman's time was devoted to the soldiers and to his work in the Interior Department, for even in the midst of these labours, his literary works, though now subordinated to his other interests, were not forgotten. On March 31, 1863, he wrote his mother to look carefully after his papers, "especially the copy of "Leaves of Grass" covered in blue paper, and the little M S. book "Drum Taps", and the M S. tied up in the square, spotted, (stone-paper) loose covers." And when he went to Brooklyn in 1863, he wrote to Eldridge:

I feel to devote myself more and more to the work of my life, which is making poems. I must bring out Drum Taps. I must be continually bringing out poems--now is the hay-day--I shall range along the high plateau of my life and capacity for a few years now, & then swiftly descend.

In this passage attention must be drawn to the statement, "Now is the hay-day." In this statement and in the one following it, is all the suggestion of how pregnant with thought, feeling and inspiration Whitman was at this time. For had he not witnessed enough to fire his imagination and passion! This imagination and this passion were inscribed in Drum Taps, a volume containing his war poetry. It is no wonder that despite his illness at this time, he wrote:

I intend to move heaven and earth to publish my Drum-Taps as soon as I am able to go around.

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1 From the contents of this excerpt, it is evident that Whitman had begun Drum Taps before he left Brooklyn in 1862.
2 The Wound Dresser, p. 61.
3 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 143. This is the first time that this letter has been printed. Ibid., p. 142.
4 Whitman had already read aloud from Drum Taps M S. to Trowbridge, who tried in vain to find a publisher for the volume. However, shortly after Lincoln's second inauguration, Whitman returned to Brooklyn to make final preparations to publish the poems at his own expense. See George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 99; H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 210.
5 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 149. This is the first time that this letter has been published. Ibid., n. 1.
About a year later, this inspired, determined Whitman was moved to
write one of his greatest poems. An unfortunate incident, somewhat directly
related to the Civil War, occurred. Lincoln was assassinated. This news came
to Whitman on April 15, 1865. Lilaos were in bloom in Brooklyn, "and the
sight and odor of the blossoms were at once and forever associated, in Whit-
man's mind", with the dark tragedy of Lincoln's death, and formed the back-
ground for his famous dirge, "When Lilaos Last in Dooryard Bloom'd", which
he wrote in 1865, while the first edition of Drum-Taps was already being
printed. This poem and "O Captain! My Captain!", which he also wrote in
memory of Lincoln, whom he "loved personally" formed with a few other less
notable verses, the Sequel to Drum-Taps, printed separately in 1865-66, but
later bound with the unsold copies of the first edition of Drum-Taps.

Even though Whitman considered Drum-Taps superior to Leaves of
Grass, he confessed that Leaves of Grass, which had been out of print since
1860, was dearest to him as his "first-born". Early in 1866, he was work-
ing hard to complete the very copy that had roused the wrath of Secretary
Harlan. In October, 1867, the new volume appeared, and aside from the many
alterations that were made, the volume, according to scholars of Whitman, con-
tained little that was new. Nevertheless, this edition proved an epoch mak-
ing volume for the poet: it brought him recognition in America and abroad.

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1 Ibid., p. 154.
2 Walt Whitman and the Civil War, p. 158. This statement has been the subject
of much controversy, for it is not definitely known whether or not Whitman and
Lincoln were personal friends. It is known, however, from Whitman's many ad-
mirable references to the President that Whitman had the highest regard for
Lincoln. Whitman, as is the consensus of opinion among most Whitman authorities,
and as Whitman himself often wrote, saw Lincoln pass many times in Washington,
was familiar with the character and achievements of the man, and felt a personal
love for him. See "Specimen Days", Prose Works, pp. 43-44.
3 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 154.
4 Ibid., p. 152, quoted by Bliss Perry from one of Whitman's letters.
5 See H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 221; Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 225. The
Atlanta University Library was not able to obtain the 1867 edition of Leaves of
Grass.
At home, Moncure Conway published in the Fortnightly Review for October 15, a laudatory article; The New York Times, published on December 2, O'Connor's review of the new edition; and The Galaxy printed on December 1 an enthusiastic review by John Burroughs. Among his admirers abroad was John Addington Symonds, a brilliant Oxford scholar, who was "thrilled to the very marrow of his bones" with this new edition of Leaves of Grass. Copies were sent to Ireland, where Edward Dowden and a few Irish scholars read it in Dublin; Swinburne and Rossetti read Leaves of Grass, Rossetti reacting by publishing an appreciative article in the London Chronicle, while Swinburne, in a critical study of William Blake, pointed out a spiritual kinship between William Blake and Walt Whitman. As if not satisfied alone with his newspaper

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1 Whitman biographers agree that the 1867 edition of Leaves of Grass brought recognition to the poet both at home and abroad. See Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 228; George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 130; Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 182-185; and Clara Barrus, op. cit., pp. 60-78.

2 John A. Symonds, according to Floyd Stovall, was the first writer to study Whitman philosophically and critically. See Floyd Stovall, op. cit., Introduction, p. lxi.

3 Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 59.

4 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 186.

5 A. C. Swinburne wrote: "The points of contact and sides of likeness between William Blake and Walt Whitman are so many and so grave, as to afford some ground of reason to those who preach the transition of souls or transfusion of spirits. The great American is not a more passionate preacher of sexual or political freedom than the English artist. To each the imperishable form of a possible and universal Republic is equally requisite and adorable as the temporal and spiritual queen of ages as of men. To each all sides and shapes of life are alike acceptable or endurable. From the fresh free ground of either workman nothing is excluded that is not exclusive.... They are both full of faith and passion, competent to love and to loathe, capable of contempt and of worship. Both are spiritual and both democratic.... Their outlooks and theories are evidently the same on all points, of intellectual and social life.... both these men, being poor in the sight and the sense of the world, have given what they had of time or of money, of labour or of love, to comfort and support all the suffering and sick, all the afflicted and misused, whom they had a chance or the right to succour and to serve." See Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Blake A Critical Essay, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1925, pp. 305-306.
article on Whitman, Rossetti published in 1868 a selection of poems from *Leaves of Grass*, titles *Poems of Walt Whitman*. But the recognition which must have pleased Whitman most was that which came from Anne Gilchrist, who later became his "noblest woman friend".

These recognitions gained for Whitman invitations to recite his poems at public meetings. The most important of these invitations was the one from the United Literary Societies of Dartmouth College, where he appeared in 1872, and recited "As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free".

Thus the 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass* had gained for him a wide and appreciative group of admirers. However, the next two years, 1868 to 1870, found Whitman as much interested in writing prose as in composing poems. *Democratic Vistas*, a political treatise dealing with his reactions to the national and social life in Washington during the Civil War period, became his first significant prose work. This treatise, along with the fifth edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which included *Drum-Taps* for the first time, was published in 1871. In addition to these works, he also published in the same year a group of poems entitled "Passage to India". Thus, from the time that Whitman actively resumed his literary works in 1866 to 1871 he had produced two new editions of *Leaves of Grass*, *Drum-Taps*, the Sequel to *Drum Taps*, *Democratic Vistas*, "Song of the Exposition", and "Passage to India".

In appreciating the amount of time, work, and energy that are necessary in revising and creating literary composition and in knowing how Whitman spent the greater part of the day working in the hospitals and in his government office, one would be prone to ask: Did Whitman have any leisure time? If so, what did he

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3 Whitman was also invited to recite at the annual exhibition of the American Institute; he recited his "Song of the Exposition", *Leaves of Grass*, pp. 441-451; See also H. B. Binns, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
do with it? Whitman did have a few leisure moments. These he spent in
characteristic manner—visiting museums, theatres, and libraries; reading
omnivorously; watching with enthusiasm and curiosity the street scenes;
communing with nature; fraternizing and socializing with different types of
men. One of his best friends in Washington at this time was William O'Connor.
O'Connor, it is important to note, was an ardent abolitionist, who showed his
abolitionism not only by praising John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry, but
also by writing an eloquent novel of the cause entitled Harrington. But
despite his stern, uncompromising views of slavery, O'Connor had a generous
nature and was very fond of Whitman, who lived, free of charge, with the
O'Connors until they gave up their apartment. Thereafter, Whitman lived in
one lodging house or another, always living near the O'Connors, where he was
a frequent visitor. In fact, O'Connor's home seemed to be the center for an
interesting group of intellectual men among whom were Charles Eldridge, pub-
lisher, E. C. Stedman, poet and journalist; John Burroughs, a naturalist and
journalist, and John H. Ashton, "a rising young lawyer"—all of whom became
Whitman's very good friends. These men chatted with Whitman at the O'Connor's
when the poet came in from his hospital duties past midnight and asked for supper.
Indeed, Whitman had a regular place at O'Connor's table; but when his hospital

1 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 159.
2 With Walt Whitman in Camden, III, p. 76.
3 Charles Eldridge, whose publishing company in Boston is said to have been
ruined by publishing the 1860 edition of Leaves of Grass, was now working as
a government clerk in Washington.
4 When John Burroughs first came to Washington he was very poor. In order to keep
down expenses he slept on an army cot in a store, washed his own socks and hand-
kercfiefs, and dined off a piece of pie. See Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 8.
5 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 192.
6 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 96.
duties became heavy, he dined with the O'Connors only on Sunday.

Not only did Whitman visit the O'Connors regularly, but by 1865 he also was frequenting the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Burroughs, with whom he stopped for Sunday breakfast while on his way to the hospitals. Mr. Burroughs recalled that to these breakfasts

Walt was usually late... and Ursula, (Mrs. Burroughs) who was as punctual as a clock, would get in a pucker. The coffee would boil, the griddle would smoke, and car after car would go jingling by, but no Walt. The situation at times verged on the tragic. But at last a car would stop, and Walt would roll off it and saunter up to the door—so cheery... that we soon forgot our ill-humour. He always said Ursula's pancakes and coffee couldn't be beat.2

Although Mrs. Burroughs did not particularly care for Whitman, "chiefly for his unpunctuality",

...she obligingly made his shirts. She was the only one, he said, who would make them loose enough to be comfortable. And she could sometimes be wheedled into making pies and doughnuts for his soldier boys.3

In striking contrast to these friendships was Whitman's association with Peter Doyle. This friendship began in 1866, when Doyle was only nineteen. As Whitman was returning from John Burrough's, one stormy night, in Doyle's horse car a sudden impulse led the young Irish conductor to sit down by his only passenger. Doyle himself tells the story in a way that reflects a naive and untrained mind:

Mrs. O'Connors always welcomed him and treated him as his mother would have done; even to mending his socks. See Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 159; also With Walt Whitman in Camden, III, p. 76.


In later years, after Whitman's first stroke of paralysis, Mrs. Burroughs "carried him delicacies, darned his socks, and took him for an occasional drive". Ibid., p. 21.

Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 237.

See Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 161; Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation In Narrative, p. 237; George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 115; Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 214.
I was a conductor. The night was very stormy—-he had been over to see Burroughs before he came down to take the car—-the storm was awful. Walt had his blanket—-it was thrown round his shoulders—-he seemed like an old sea-captain. He was the only passenger, it was a lonely night, so I thought I would go in and talk with him. Something in me made me do it and something in him drew me that way. He used to say there was something in me that had the same effect on him. Anyway, I went into the car. We were familiar at once—-I put my hand on his knee—we understood. He did not get out at the end of the trip—-in fact he went all the way back with me. I think the year...was 1866. From that time on we were the biggest sort of friends....Walt rode with me often—-often at noon, always at night.

What could possibly be the basis for such an unusual, yet such an enduring friendship? With Eldridge, or Burroughs, or Ashton, or O'Connor, Whitman had intellectual comradeship, the kind of close contacts that he did not have in his youth. But Doyle could tell Whitman nothing that he did not know and could not understand all that Whitman did know. Yet Whitman grew to love Doyle as a son, and the young man returned his affection. Was this love for Doyle compensation for strong, unrealized paternal desires? Did Whitman’s hospital experience among young soldiers heighten his interest in youths? or was Whitman by nature drawn to the illiterate and the common people whether old or young? Whatever the answer might be, an unusually strong tie of friendship existed between the two men, and during the rest of the time that 2 Whitman lived in Washington they were daily companions in leisure time. When Doyle’s work was done, for instance, he would come to the Treasury Building 3 and wait until Whitman was free. Then, together they would take long strolls 4 over the country roads. While on these hikes sometimes they said not a word;

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1 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 115, quoting Peter Doyle.
at other times Doyle would listen to Whitman talk about the stars, nature, life, death, or Shakespeare. When Whitman would leave Washington he wrote to Doyle as his "dear son", his "darling boy", his "loving brother", and his "dear comrade". These letters, now collected under the title Calamus, rival in purity, affection, tenderness and sincerity, the famous letters to his mother written during the Civil War days. These letters to his mother and to Doyle may be appropriately used to show that Whitman was capable of an unusually deep affection. And it seems important for one to keep this in mind if he is to understand fully the limitations of the influence which the Civil War had on Whitman. But it seems strange that Whitman's affectionate nature was exposed for the most part only to men, not to women. Doyle gives an explanation when he said that he

never knew a case of Walt's being bothered up by a woman. Woman in that sense never came into his head. Walt was too clean, he hated anything which was not clean. No trace of any kind of dissipation in him.  

This would suggest that Whitman regarded women as evil influences and that he consciously avoided contact with them. Yet this same Whitman preached in his poetry equalitarianism, democracy, and the glory of American womanhood! However, it is not within the province of this thesis to discover and expose all

1 He left Washington in August, 1869, to go to Brooklyn on a vacation. George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 128.
2 Ibid., p. 118.
3 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 162, quoting Peter Doyle. Similar testimony to this was given by George Whitman, who said: "Although I am asked that question, I am confident I never knew Walt to fall in love with young girls, or even to show them marked attention. He did not seem to affect the girls." See Horace Traubel, "Notes from Conversations With George Whitman", p. 34. From this testimony, it seems characteristic of Whitman to have a preference for the company of men, no matter where he went. Harvey O'Higgins speaks of Whitman as being "a man's man", and attempts to show that Whitman was "morbid, introverted and very near perversion". See Harvey O'Higgins, "Alias Walt Whitman", op. cit., pp. 704-705; p. 706.
the reasons why Whitman seemingly cared so little for women. But the facts disclosed so far in this chapter show that, first, very little, if any, of Whitman's leisure time was spent in association with women and, secondly, that with the exception of his mother, of Anne Gilchrist, and of the unconfirmed love affair in New Orleans, women played a small part in Whitman's life and career. Whitman's social contacts in Washington were with men. When he was not with them, he went to the opera, to the Smithsonian Institute, to the theatre, to the library of the Treasury, and other places of educational interest. Nor did he, in his leisure moments, forsake nature. In spring he enjoyed the flowers which abundantly grew along the banks of Rock Creek, a stream near the Treasury Building. If he was interested in gazing at nature, he was often held spell-bound by watching the soldiers on parade, by mixing with the busy life about him, and by listening to the heated debates in Congress.

But these interests of his leisure moments were wholly subordinated to his hospital work which he did so diligently and so regularly that the warnings from his doctor did not stop him, even though, from time to time, he

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1 However, it is stated that Mrs. Ellen M. Calder wrote in the original draft of "Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman", which she wrote for the Atlantic Monthly, June, 1907, that Whitman fell in love with a married woman, whom he would have married had the woman been free. "It was this lady", says Mrs. Calder, "for whom he wrote the little poem in 'Children of Adam' beginning: 'Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd', etc." See Uncollected Prose and Poetry, I, Introduction, n. 15, pp. lvi-lxiv.

2 Whitman first visited the Smithsonian Institute on April 17, 1863. He was so impressed with it that he determined to become more familiar with the contents of the Institute. See Walt Whitman and the Civil War, p. 132.

3 Prose Works, p. 310.

4 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 201, quoting from Dr. T. Proctor in Journal of Hygiene, Feb., 1898.

5 The Wound Dresser, p. 165.
complained of pains in the head and of dizziness. With the passing of the years these attacks became more frequent because he was never able to eliminate from his body the malarial germ with which he was infected during the war. He was marked as one of the war's victims, and on the night of January 23, 1873, he suffered a slight attack of paralysis, which yielded slowly to good treatment. In May, moreover, his mother, who was living with George at Camden, New Jersey, became seriously ill. Hastening to her bedside, Whitman arrived in time to be present at her death on May 23. With her death, sorrow claimed him. The light of his life seemed to have gone out. Even though he had lived in the midst of death for several years, "he was wholly unprepared for the death of his mother". Tragedy in his life during this period had struck its fullest note. Andrew had died on December 3, 1863; his brother Jeff had lost his wife, Martha, a favourite of Walt's, and now death had claimed his "dear, dear mother". His grief caused him to have another stroke of paralysis, which brought to an end his life at Washington and began his long stay at Camden, where he endured the only sedentary and invalid period of

1 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 129.
2 Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 240; Gerald Bullett, op. cit., p. 21; Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxxii; Charles Glicksberg, op. cit., n. 38, p. 118.
3 Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxxii.
4 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 249.
5 Walt Whitman and the Civil War, p. 139.
6 Ibid., p. 118.
7 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 130.
8 Oscar L. Triggs, op. cit., Introduction, p. xxxii.
his life, a great contrast to the Whitman described in the first chapter of this thesis. For in that chapter it was pointed out that Whitman's experiences, despite their variety and cosmopolitan nature during the first period of his life, mainly encompassed the more joyous, pleasant, and lighter phases of existence. Nothing in them tried the strength and depth of Whitman's character; and he appeared more as a play-boy than as a serious thinking young man. The facts of the present chapter reveal that, even if one considers Whitman's literary and office activities, his social contacts, his enjoyment of nature, his visits to the theatre, museums, libraries, and to Congress during the period from 1862-1873, most of Whitman's time and energy were spent among the wounded, disabled or dying soldiers in the hospitals and on the battlefields. Therefore, though he did not shoulder a musket in the great sectional struggle, nor was guilty of taking the life of any one, he was, nevertheless, intimately connected with the Civil War. This connection had a paradoxical effect on him. It was both salutary and debilitating. For did not his work among the unfortunate of war bring his indigenously sympathetic and democratic nature face to face with the sterner realities and tragedies of life? Is it not reasonable, then, to suppose that Whitman gained much good from these tragic experiences, despite their damaging effect upon his health? He himself recognized the value of his Civil War experiences to his development, for in later years he wrote:

Those three years I consider the greatest privilege and satisfaction... and, of course, the most profound lesson of my life.... It arous'd and brought out and decided undream'd-of depths of emotion.1

1 Prose Works, p. 78.
Even at the beginning of his hospital career, he was conscious of the enrichening effect of his war experiences; for in speaking of his work he remarked:

Nor do I find it ended by my doing some good to the sick and dying soldiers. They do me more good in return, more than I do them.¹

In the light of these experiences, Whitman's prose and poetry will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹ The Wound Dresser, p. 19.
CHAPTER III

The Works of Walt Whitman from 1861 to 1873.

It has been pointed out that Whitman's experiences during the Civil War period lacked the restless, kaleidoscopic character of his earlier life, but that they did bring him into direct contact with the more vital and profound aspects of life and national problems. It was natural, therefore, that Whitman's contact with both the sick and the well, the soldier and the civilian, the hospitals and the museums, philanthropic organizations and literary circles did much to temper and strengthen his character, reflections, and, correspondingly, his works of the 1861-1873 period.

In this chapter his works of the Civil War period will be discussed in the light of two questions: First, what effect did the Civil War and its concomitant circumstances have on Whitman as a writer? Secondly, what developments in his writings are not directly traceable to the Civil War? To meet the requirements of these two questions the plan is to discuss the themes and technical skill found in the 1867 and 1871 revised editions of Leaves of Grass and in such new works as Drum-Taps, Sequel to Drum-Taps, "Song of the Exposition", "Passage to India", "As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free", and Democratic Vistas; secondly, to compare and contrast Whitman's significant literary works of this period with those of the ante-bellum days; and, thirdly, to summarize and evaluate, in the light of the foregoing two points, the quality of Whitman's Civil War works.

"The real war will never get in the books", says Walt Whitman; yet his personal experiences in camp, on the battlefield, and in the war hospitals were vividly written into a little book of poems entitled Drum-Taps. In this volume the picture of the war, its tragedies, its tender scenes, its inspiring and patriotic pageantry of marching soldiers and martial airs are graphically portrayed. That Whitman not only reacted sensitively to these

1 Prose Works, p. 80.
war scenes, but was also conscious of the effect of them on him and his work can be seen in his letter to William O'Connor:

"...I am perhaps mainly satisfied with Drum Taps because it delivers my ambition of the task that has haunted me, namely, to express in a poem (and in the way I like, which is not at all by directly stating it), the pend- ing action of this Time and Land we swim in, with all their large conflicting fluctuations of despair and hope, the shiftings, masses, and the whirl and deafening din... with the unprecedented anguish of wounded and suffering, the beautiful young men in wholesale death and agony, everything, sometimes as if blood-color and dripping blood. The book is therefore unprecedentedly sad...

It is easy to agree with Whitman that Drum-Taps is "unprecedently sad", for into it Whitman poured the disappointments, the shattered hopes, and the touching sorrows of the soldiers and interpreted them with sincere understanding and sympathy. In addition, Drum-Taps shows the character of Whitman's war spirit, his faith and belief in the common man, his love of democracy and comradeship, and his affection for nature. Though Drum-Taps in no way justifies war as a method of settling disputes, Whitman readily caught the war and patriotic spirit when President Lincoln called for volunteers. The martial rhythm and the patriotic excitement of calling men to arms are found in "Beat! Beat Drums!"

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow! Through the windows—through doors—burst like ruthless force, Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation; Into the school where the scholar is studying; Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride; Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, plowing his field or gathering his grain;

---

Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 150-151. This is the first time that this letter has been printed. Ibid., n. 1, p. 149.
So fierce you whirr and pound, you drums—so
shril you bugles blow.¹

This poem, so full of enthusiasm and gusto, could easily be mistaken as an example of militarism in Whitman's war poetry, which, however, as Walter Fuller Taylor states, "contains no ringing calls to battle, no moving tales of heroic adventure." Whitman, like Lincoln, believed in fighting for the preservation of the Union—not for the sake of war or for the sake of imperialism. Therefore, he exultingly described how everyone—young men, mechanics, lawyers, wagon-drivers, and salesmen—was leaving his work to join the cause of the Union.

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming;
The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the blacksmith's hammer, test aside with precipitation;)
The lawyer's leaving his office, and arming—the judge leaving the court;
The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down, throwing the reins abruptly down on the horse's back;
The salesman leaving the store—the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving;
Squadsgather everywhere by common consent, and
arms;

¹"Beat! Beat! Drums!", p. 244.

²Walter Fuller Taylor, A History of American Letters, New York, American Book Company, 1936, p. 235. In addition, this authority says, "Whitman's experience had eventuated in a new type of war poetry.... Nothing is said of the glory of war, much is said of its gruesomeness". Ibid.

³Charles Glicksberg, op. cit., p. 10. Glicksberg, in referring to an article "Men and Memories" written by John Russel Young for The Evening Star of Philadelphia (Saturday, January 16, 1892), which was later incorporated in a book of reminiscences by the same title, points out that Mr. Young stresses that for "Whitman this was not, as it was for Garrison and Greeley and others, a war for emancipation to which every other issue was subordinated. For Whitman, the moral value of the war was the restoration of the Union." Ibid., n. 7, p. 184. That was Whitman's attitude, for he himself once said: "Not the negro... not the Negro. The negro was not the chief thing: the chief thing was to stick together." See With Walt Whitman in Camden, I, p. 13. This attitude of Whitman's toward the Civil War is remarkably similar to the attitude of Abraham Lincoln, who said: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and not either to save or to destroy slavery." See Speeches & Letters of Abraham Lincoln, 1832-1865., ed., Merwin Roe, New York, E. P. Sutton & Co., 1907, p. 194.
The new recruits, even boys—the old men show them how to wear their accoutrements—they buckle the straps carefully;

Out doors arming—indoors arming—the flash of the musket-barrels;
The white tents cluster in camps—the arm'd sentries around—the sunrise cannon, and again at sunset;

Arm'd regiments arrive everyday, pass through the city, and embark from the wharves;

(How good they look, as they tramp down to the river, sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders!)

How I love them! How I could hug them, with their brown faces, and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with dust!)

Though hating war as an institution the pacifist Whitman was favorably impressed by these war-like scenes. Upon the faces of these volunteer soldiers he saw the true meaning of America's children en masse. And these were the masses that he pictured in his sketches as he clearly and vividly described the army corps on the march, or the cavalry crossing the ford, or a bivouac on a mountain side.

However, the actual scenes of war, as the World War again proved, were not so inspiring and so pleasant as those presented by a marching army.

Seeing, as did Whitman, three dead men lying "each with a blanket spread over him"is not the same as seeing soldiers on parade when the bugles are blown.

That Whitman knew and profoundly felt the horrors of war can be seen in "A Sight in Camp in the Day-Break Grey and Dim".

A sight in camp in the day-break grey and dim,
As from my tent I emerge so early, sleepless,
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air, the path near by the hospital tent,
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought

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2 "Long, Too Long, O Land", p. 263.
4 "Cavalry Crossing a Ford", p. 253.
5 "Bivouac on a Mountain Side", p. 253.
out there, untended lying,
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish
woolen blanket,
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious, I halt, and silent stand;
Then with light fingers I from the face of the
nearest, the first, just lift the blanket:
Who are you, elderly man so gaunt and grim, with
well-grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken about
the eyes?

Who are you, my dear comrade?
Then to the second I step--And who are you,
my child and darling?

Who are you, sweet boy, with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third--a face nor child, nor old, very
calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;
Young man, I think I know you--I think this
face of yours is the face of the Christ himself;
Dead and divine, and brother of all, and here
again he lies. 

The tragedy of war--unwonted death to young and old alike--is here
expressed in tender and sympathetic tones. Moreover, the pathos of the poem
is deepened and strengthened by the spirit of comradeship which pervades it.

Similarly, the same spirit is found in the following poem:

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night:
When you, my son and my comrade, dropt at my side
that day,
One look I but gave, which your dear eyes return'd,
with a look I shall never forget;
One touch of your hand to mine, O boy, reach'd
up as you lay on the ground;
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested
battle;
Till late in the night relieve'd to the place
at last again I made my way;
Found you in death so cold, dear comrade--

1 "A Sight in Camp in the Day-Break Grey and Dim", pp. 258-259. This poem, as can
be seen from the following quotation is a counterpart of a prose description of
the same experience. "Sight at daybreak in camp in front of the hospital tent
Three dead men lying, each with a blanket spread over him--I lift up one and
look at the young man's face, calm and yellow. 'Tis strange! (Young man: I think
this face of yours the face of my dead Christ)". See Uncollected Poetry and
Prose, II, p. 93.
found your body, son of responding kisses,  
(never again on earth responding;)
Bared your face in the starlight—curious the    
scene—cool blew the moderate night-wind;  
Long there and then in vigil I stood,  
dimly around me the battlefield spreading. 1

But as he silently watched his dead comrades, not a tear-drop fell; for Whit-
man, with his everlasting faith in immortality, was certain that they would 2  
meet again. This strong belief in immortality he clearly expressed as he  
imagined a mother who silently mourned for her dead son:

You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground,  
with forehead between your knees...  
For know you, the one you mourn is not in that  
grave;
It was an illusion—the heir, the son you love,  
was not really dead;
The Lord is not dead—he is risen again, young  
and strong, in another country;
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp,  
by the grave,
What you wept for, was translated, pass'd from  
the grave,
The winds favor'd, and the sea sail'd it,  
And now with rosy and new blood,  
Moves to-day in a new country. 3

To muse on the question of immortality is a natural reaction for all  
those who are touched by the death of comrades, and relatives. And the Civil  
War gave Whitman a challenging opportunity to express deeply what he had always,  
but superficially, felt concerning immortality and humanity. It gave him a  
chance to put into full play that powerfully sympathetic nature which, as has  
been explained, he inherited and developed. He went impartially among the wounded

1 "Vigil Strange I kept on the Field One Night", p. 256.  
2 Ibid., See also "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing, I Heard the Mother of All", p. 366.  
3 "Old Ireland", p. 321.
soldiers, and, as the following illustrates, his humanitarian theories were tested:

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;
To the long rows of cots, up and down, each side,
I return,
To each and all, one after another, I draw near--
not one do I miss;
An attendant follows, holding a tray—he carries
a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood
emptied and fill'd again.

I onward go, I step,
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.)

I am faithful, I do not give out;
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in
the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand—
(Yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame.)¹

The constant and regular visits to the hospitals and the few horrible
and nerve-wrecking excursions to the battle front, already described, gave Whit-
man invaluable first hand experience with the horrors and suffering of war.
This experience, "sweet and sad", proved to be an important factor in the devel-
opment of Whitman, the man and writer. But despite the harrowing character of
his experience and the busy life he led, he still kept his old time interest in
nature. He said—perhaps as a relief from his strenuous duties:

Give me the splendid silent sun, with all his

¹ "The Dresser", pp. 261-262.
beams full-dazzling;
Give me juicy autumnal fruit, ripe and red
from the orchard;
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grown;
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape;
Give me fresh corn and wheat—give me
serene-moving animals, teaching content...

Give me solitude—give me Nature—give me
again, 0 Nature, your primal sanities! 1

And in a more solemn and humble tone he entreated the fair moon to

Look down... and bathe this scene;
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods, on
faces, ghastly, swollen, purple;
On the dead, on their backs, with their
arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon. 2

But it was characteristic of Whitman to pray for his comrades, those dead and
those alive, for he saw "behind each mask, that wonder, a kindred soul".

There in this line is Whitman, the humanitarian mystic, who went unbiasly
among the black and the white soldiers, the Southern and the Northern patriot,
the officers and the private. No where in his poems does he speak of the
Northern or the Southern soldier, nowhere does he mention cause or result,
slavery or freedom, state rights or sectionality. 4

1 "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun", p. 265.
2 "Look Down Fair Moon", p. 269.
3 "How Solemn, As One by One", p. 271.
4 In his non-sectional outlook, Whitman stands in striking contrast with such
writers as Henry Timrod, whose "Carolina"; and "A Cry to Arms" express the
spirit of the South; and similarly, Paul Hamilton Hayne, whose "The Black
Flag" did much for the cause of the Confederacy. On the other hand, however,
a similar contrast might be made between Whitman the Nationalist and Whittier
(whose "Massachusetts to Virginia", "The Crisis", and "Barbara Frietchie" were
songs expressive of Northern sentiment) the Northern sectionalist. See Edwin
Mims, "Poets of the Civil War II: The South", The Cambridge History of American
Literature, ed., William P. Trent, John Erskine, Stuart P. Sherman, Carl Van
William Morton Payne, "Whittier", The Cambridge History of American Literature,
Instead, he is full of hope and tenderness; and even in the midst of war, he saw that only fraternal love and relations would save the Union. He confidently prophesied that

...Affection shall solve the problems of Freedom yet; Those who love each other shall become invincible—they shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Moreover,

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see manly affection; The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly, The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers, The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and bind you stronger than hoops of iron?

Further, Whitman believed that only this tie of love would lead to inevitable reconciliation. So confident of this was he that he declared:

Word over all, beautiful as the sky! Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost; That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world; ...For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead; I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near; I bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

But probably the most diabolical aspect of war is its ruthless and unnecessary torturing and suffering of the non-combatants. Whitman, who wrote many such letters as the following poem refers to, had imagination and sympathy enough to describe with power and feeling the natural reactions to a death letter received by fond parents and relatives:

1 "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice", p. 266.
2 Ibid., p. 267.
3 "Reconciliation", p. 269.
Come up from the fields, father, here's a letter from our Pete;
And come to the front door, mother, here's a letter from thy dear son.

Open the envelope quickly;
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd;
O a strange hand writes for our dear son—0 stricken mother's soul!
All swims before her eyes—flashes with black—she catches the main words only;
Sentences broken—gun-shot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to the hospital,
At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah, now, the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio, with all its cities and farms,
Sickly white in the face, and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.

Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks through her sobs;
The little sisters huddle around, speechless and dismay'd;)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better, (nor maybe needs to be better, that brave and simple soul;)
While they stand at home at the door, he is dead already;
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better;
She, with thin form, presently drest in black;
By day her meals untouch'd—then at night fitfully sleeping, often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed—silent from life, escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.  
Whitman knew from first hand the torturing anguish of a mother on an occasion like the one just described. And, unlike the poems of Whitman's first period, the vivid realism in this poem reveals a stoical restraint, a profound pathos, and a deep insight into human passion. In fact, the other poems of Drum-Taps possess similar characteristics of restraint, pathos, and insight. "Unpretentious as these poems are", declares Walter Fuller Taylor, "they are realized with the vividness of great art, and over them all dwell a brooding pity and an ineffable sense of mystery which lend them the sense of profoundest, universal tragedy". This "vividness of great art" is chiefly dependent upon the effective brevity of the poems, the occasional use of rime and an infectious sonorous organic rhythm. "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors", for example, has five, three-line stanzas in which the second and third lines rime. Because its rhythm, like that of the biblical psalms, is under no control of mechanical metrical precision, "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" defies scansion but contains the harmonies of a sonorous chant:

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient, hardly human,
With your wooly-white and turban'd head,
and bare long feet?
Why, rising by the roadside here, do you the colors greet?

1 "Come Up From the Fields Father", pp. 254-256. William Barton, in referring to this poem, said: "We are not informed concerning the manner in which the mother of Walt Whitman received tidings that her son George was wounded.... But the letters Walt was later to write to the families of wounded men gave him a part of the material for his poem Come Up From the Fields, and some things he remembered about the manner in which his mother received the news presumably colored the picture." See William Barton, op. cit., p. 27. One would hardly disagree with Barton on this point, for the pathetic reality with which the poem is written is enough to show the reader that Whitman had embedded into the poem some soul-stirring experience which he had had as an amanuensis for the wounded and dying soldiers.

2 Walter Fuller Taylor, op. cit., p. 235.

3 "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors", p. 279.
Several other war poems bear similar testimony to Whitman's rhythmical chant, emotional power, and brevity. "Long, Too Long, O Land", "World Take Good Notice", "Thick-Sprinkled Bunting", "Dirge for Two Veterans", and "O Captain! My Captain!" are a few of the better known poems which illustrate Whitman's artistry at this time. "Dirge For Two Veterans" is a finely chisled poem of nine four-line stanzas, each following the pattern of this stanza:

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,
On the pavement here—and there beyond,
  it is looking,
Down a new made double grave.  

"O Captain! My Captain!" which consists of three, eight-line stanzas, has a definite stanza form, makes appropriate use of rime, and has a universal emotional appeal:

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won:
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.  

The rhythm of this stanza is so regular in its beats that the lines, when scanned, are in almost perfect iambic movement. Not so, however, with many of his war poems like "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest", and the "Road Unknown", "Not the Pilot", "The Artilleryman's Vision", "A Sight In Camp in the Day-Break Grey and Dim", and "Vigil Strange I Kept One Night". These poems

1 "Dirge For Two Veterans", p. 265.
2 "O Captain! My Captain!" p. 376.
3 For example: My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still; My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will; The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
written in free verse are important, nevertheless, for the realism, the organic rhythm, the restraint, the clearness of expression and for the careful selection of words which they employ. The following lines from "The Artilleryman's Vision" are typical illustrations of these traits that are more or less characteristic of most of the free-verse poems in Drum-Taps:

While my wife at my side lies slumbering,  
and the wars are ever long,  
And my head on the pillow rests at home, and  
the vacant midnight passes,  
And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear,  
just hear, the breath of my infant,  
There in the room, as I wake from sleep, this vision presses upon me:  
The engagement opens there and then, in fantasy unreal;  
The skirmishers begin--they crawl cautiously ahead--  
I hear the irregular snap! snap!  
I hear the sounds of the different misses--the short t-h-ti t-h-ti of the rifle balls....

These vivid, stirring lines are suggestive of how deeply the scenes of the battle-front impressed Whitman. Long after the war had ended, he recalled its incidents as vividly as if they had just happened. But despite the strength, the vivid imagery, the "lofty tragic sense of life" revealed in this and in the other poems of this group, probably none is so beautiful, so solemn, and so powerful as Whitman's threnody to Lincoln, "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd", which has a definite plan and is divided into several irregular stanzas. The lilacs that were blooming when Lincoln was assassinated, the star drooping in the west, and the hermit-thrush singing in the cedar swamp, are the three motifs of the dirge which begins with:

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,  
I mourn'd--and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

2 Swinburne called it "a sonorous nocturne"; and Walter Fuller Taylor unequivocally pronounces it "comparable to Milton's "Lycidas" and Shelley's "Adonais"." Walter Fuller Taylor, op. cit., p. 234. See Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 200; George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 105.
O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;
Lilacs blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.¹

The poem is not only significant because of its sustained lyrical quality, but in implication it transcends sectional barrier; for while written in memory of Lincoln, it is also in memory of all others whose lives were taken by or because of the war.

(Not for you, for one, alone;
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring:
For fresh as the morning—thus would I carol a song for you, O sane and sacred death.²

In the poem, death is both soothing and inevitable:

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving,
In the day, in the night to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death.³

The serenity, the effective hush and solemnity in these lines and in others of those poems inspired by the Civil War bespeak Whitman's growth in profundity of thought, felicity of expression, and in genuineness of universal emotion.

But Drum-Taps comprises only a small part of Whitman's literary output during the Civil War period. The poet worked assiduously on the revision of Leaves of Grass and in 1867 the fourth edition appeared. In this edition are found the contents of the 1860 volume. In re-arranging the contents, Whitman changed not only the grouping but the titles of some of the

¹ "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd", p. 367.
² Ibid., p. 369.
³ Ibid., p. 372.
⁴ Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 222.
poems. For example: "To My Soul" of 1860, became "As Nearing Departure" in 1867. "A Boston Ballad, The 78th year of These States" in 1860, was changed "To Get Betimes In Boston Town" in 1867. "Chants Democratic I" in 1860 was entitled as "I Sat Alone By Blue Ontario's Shore" in 1867. The present poem "For You O Democracy" was first published without a title in 1860; in 1867 it became "A Song". Likewise, the poem "Germs", without a title in 1860, was named "Forms, Qualities, Lives" in 1867. The same is true of "A Song For Occupations", which was unnamed in 1855, but which became in 1856 and 1860 "Poem of the Daily Work of the Workmen and Workwomen of These States", only to be changed again in 1867 to "Workingmen". "Chants Democratic, No. 20", of 1860 became "I Hear America Singing" in 1867 with the following internal revision: Line one in 1860 read "American mouth-songs!" The 1867 version reads "I hear America singing the varied carols I hear". In 1860 the poem closed with

Come! Some of you still be flooding
The states with hundreds and thousands
of mouth-songs, fit for the States only

a statement that was dropped in 1867. The poem now ends with these lines:

The day what belongs to the day--At night, the
party of young fellows, robust, friendly,

Since it was not possible to get the 1860 and 1867, as well as earlier editions of Leaves of Grass, it was necessary to rely on the variorums by Oscar L. Triggs found in Leaves of Grass, ed., Emory Holloway, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924, pp. 541-709. In addition to this, the variorum by W. S. Kennedy was also used (See W. S. Kennedy, The Fight of A Book For The World, pp. 227-235) as well as the variorum notes found in the volume of Leaves of Grass used in this thesis. Hereafter, these variorums will be referred to as "Variorum Readings" along with the author's name.

2 W. S. Kennedy, "Variorum Readings", pp. 228-229.
3 Ibid., pp. 229, 230, 252.
4 Oscar L. Triggs, "Variorum Readings", p. 545.
5 "I Hear America Singing", p. 195.
6 Ibid., and n. 1, p. 196.
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.

In the 1855 version of "Song of Myself" appeared this line:

As God comes a loving bed-fellow and
sleeps at my side all night and
close on the peep of the day?

In 1867 the line was made more effective by the following change:

As the hugging and loving Bed-fellow
sleeps at my side through the
night, and withdraws at the peep
of the day, with stealthy tread...

Other variorum readings show that "From Pent-Up Aching Rivers", for example, began with "From that of myself, without which I were nothing". Now it begins with the forceful line, "From pent-up, aching rivers". Likewise, the last line of the same poem which read in 1860, "Celebrate you, enfans prepared for", was changed in 1867 to "Celebrate you, act divine--and you, children prepared for....

Not only did Whitman conscientiously strive to improve his earlier works by removing, changing, or adding whole lines, but by also carefully sifting and selecting his words such as in the following examples: In 1867 "mon cher" in "To a Pupil" was changed to "dear friend"; "Poem" in "Carol of Occupations" in this line was changed to the more appropriate work "carol":

"This is the carol of occupations."

In order to add emphasis to this line, "Why this is a show!" Whitman in 1867,
added "indeed", making the line read "Why this is indeed a show!". For the same reason, no doubt, "and have pass'd" was added to "How they pass" in the poem "Thoughts". The line read in 1867:

How they pass and have pass'd, through convuls'd
pains as through parturitions...

as contrasted with:

How they pass through convuls'd as
through parturitions...

in 1860. Thus throughout the 1867 edition one finds similar revisions and excisions. Yet these, it must be admitted, were neither complete nor drastic, for Whitman, like Wordsworth, failed to scrap lines and poems which today make his poetry uneven and often wearisome. Excessive iterations, exclamations, and meaningless jargon he handed to posterity through the pages of Leaves of Grass. Beauty and the beast lie promiscuously together. Apt and beautiful pictures of grass as "the beautiful uncut hair of graves", and "the faint red roofs of mouths", are in close proximity to rubbish like, "I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord", "it must be the flag of my disposition", Kanuoh, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff". However with the addition of a few new poems and the re-arrangement and revision of the old ones, the 1867 edition of Leaves of Grass must have been superior to the earlier ones, especially since many former crudities and infelicities of expression were missing in this edition.

1 "A Boston Ballad", and n. 1, p. 227.
2 "Thoughts", and n. 2, p. 356.
3 "Song of Myself", pp. 35-36. In keeping with this criticism is John Bailey's statement that Whitman often "lapses into the garrulous prose which disfigures so much of his free verse", op. cit., p. 112.
4 "With the coming of the new phase of life inaugurated by the war", writes Thomas H. Dickinson, "Whitman no longer has his old joy in rolling words". See Thomas H. Dickinson, op. cit., p. 554.
5 The new poems that were added are: "Carol of Harvest", "Inscription", "Small is the Theme, etc", "One's Self I Sing", "Small the Theme", "A Song (For You, O Democracy)", "The Return of the Heroes", "Whispers of Heavenly Death". See W. S. Kennedy, "The Fight of a Book For the World", p. 205 ff.
In the beautiful lyric, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking", the following line which followed line two in 1860 was omitted in the revision of 1867:

Out of the boy's mother's womb, and from
the nipples of her breast

And in 1867, this verse appearing in "On the Beach at Night Alone" in 1856

I suppose the pink nipples of the breast of
women with whom I shall sleep will
taste the same to my lips....

was excised. As one carefully examines such changes as have been given, and as he notices the improved diction and expression, the apt titles, and the judicious excisions in the 1867 volume, he can better understand why this edition was greatly responsible for Whitman's growing recognition abroad and at home. There is, however, no conspicuous change in theme and subject matter. Democracy, nationalism, independence, death, and comradeship are still his chief interests and are like constant refrains throughout the volume. In the _Song of the Exposition_, for instance, the themes of nationalism and independence are apparent when he spurns antiquity and exhorts the muse to desert her ancient haunts, to leave her worn-out themes, to "placard" them "Removed" and "To Let", and to realize that there are fertile domains for her in the new world. Everything that was beautiful in the old world is now

Pass'd to its charnal vault—laid on the shelf—
coffin'd, with Crown and Armor on,
Blazon'd with Shakespeare's purple page,
and dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

---

1 Oscar L. Triggs, "Variorum Readings", p. 636.
2 Ibid., pp. 641-642.
3 H. B. Binns, _op. cit._, p. 221; Léon Bazalgette, _op. cit._, p. 224.
4 "Song of the Exposition", p. 441.
5 Ibid., p. 443.
The work of the muse is now with the democracy of the new world which is rich in
natural resources and in thriving cities. The poem further challenges the
muse to do away with war, with romance, novels, and plays of foreign courts,
and to establish in America songs that will sing of the American of today.
Though the "Song of the Exposition" gives its message in a clear and forceful
manner, some of its poetic power and charm are undoubtedly lost; however, by
Whitman's journalistic habit of cataloging. For example:

With many a squeak...From Boston, New York, Philadelphia, London....

But, if one begins to feel, for a moment, that Whitman's style has undergone
no change or improvement, he has but to turn to Passage to India, for it is in
this little group of poems that he will find Whitman at his highest level of
composition. "If one wishes to feel the purest exaltation of the aspiring soul",
writes Grant C. Knight, "let him read not Longfellow's puerile Excelsior but
Whitman's Passage to India". The poems in this group are, in the main, short
and highly musical; the rhythm is strong and marked, but subtle. They reflect
an active imagination and a readiness for mystic interpretations of contemporary
events. To Whitman the new arteries of commerce, the Suez Canal and the Conti-
nental Railway, symbolized the progress of man's soul toward the ideals of brother-
hood and perfect international relationship.

1  Ibid., p. 445.
2  Ibid., p. 446.
3  Ibid., p. 443.
4  "Passage to India" was issued in 1871 as a pamphlet, and was also incorporated
    into some copies of the 1871 edition of Leaves of Grass. See Bliss Perry, op.
cit., p. 194. "Passage to India" was suggested by the opening of the Suez Canal
    and the Continental Railway System. Ibid., pp. 194-195.
5  Grant C. Knight, American Literature and Culture, New York, Ray Long & Richard
6  One is not surprised that Whitman would be impressed by such an event which de-
    noted progress and expansion, for he was in favor of such movements; hence he
    was often ready to make use of current events in his poems.
Lo, souli seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by net-work,
The people to become brothers and sisters,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together.
(A worship new, I sing;
You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours!
You engineers! you architects, machinists, yours!)
You, not for trade or transportation only,
But in God's name, and for thy sake,
O soul)1

Here the past is joined with the present and the future. Whitman remembered the long line of adventurous spirits that had striven to break these barriers:
the ancient traders, the medieval navigators, the scientist, the inventor—2
a whole group of pioneers. But these are but symbols of the future adventures of the soul, of its continual flight in its passionate quest for God:

Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
(The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes,
the voyage done,)
Surrounded, opest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.3

The minor poems of the group, with the ship as a symbol of life,
sing of voyagers saying farewell before departing on a great quest.

Now finale to the shore!
Now, land and life, finale, and farewell!
Now Voyager depart! (much, much for thee is yet in store;)
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,
Cautiously cruising, studying the charts,
Duly again to port, and hawser's tie returning:
--But now obey, thy cherish'd secret wish,
Embrace thy friends--leave all in order;

1 "Passage to India", p. 347.
2 Ibid., pp. 348-351.
3 Ibid., p. 253.
To port, and hawser's tie, no more returning,
Depart upon thy endless cruise, old Sailor!  

In addition to these poems, there also appeared in 1871, a new and enlarged edition of Leaves of Grass. This edition showed many slight but interesting changes and improvements, similar to those made in the 1867 edition, as is shown in "One's Self I Sing" which was called "Inscriptions" in 1867. "The present poem", writes Emory Holloway, "is a variation of the 1867 "Inscriptions" which was without the following significant lines found in the 1871 version:

One's—Self I sing—a simple, separate Person;
Yet utter the word Democratic, the work En-Masse.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing."  

These lines are suggestive of Whitman's new understanding of the word "Democratic" and the "Modern Man". The war had shown him America "En-Masse", as he watched the soldiers marching and served the sick, wounded, and dying. The word "Democracy" took on a holy meaning to him, and he answered the questions,

...What singest thou?...
Know'st thou not, there is but one theme
forever enduring bards?
And that the theme of War, the
fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers?

in this manner:

Be it so...
I too, haughty Shade, also sing war--and a

---

1 "New Finale to the Shore", p. 490.
4 "One's-Self I Sing", p. 11.
longer and greater one than any.

Let I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
1 above all, promote brave soldiers.1

It was, indeed, of the great civil war within man himself that Whit-
2 man now sang, the war between the mortal body and the immortal soul. This
conflict is shown when, in 1870, he added these lines to the poem "Assurances":

(Did you think Life was so well provided for--and
Death, the purport of Life, is not well provided for?)3

Yet Whitman, like Tennyson, was trying to keep faith even though that "mocking
4 voice" told him that "Matter is conqueror--matter, triumphant only, continues
5 onward". He saw his "nearest lover" lying on the bed of death appealing to him
with a "mute inquiry":

Whither I go from the bed I recline on,

To which he could only reply:

I understand your anguish, but I cannot
help you?...

Still, if his personal knowledge failed him, his courage never did, for he went
on, facing the unknown, confident that the unknown would be good:

Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any

1 "As I Ponder'd in Silence", pp. 11-12.
2 Ibid., p. 12.
3 "Assurance", and n. 1, p. 397.
4 "Yet, Yet, Ye Down Cast Hours", p. 397.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 398.
7 Ibid.
path to follow?

No map, there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor
eyes, are in that land.¹

It is quickly seen that most of the new poems in the 1871 edition of
Leaves of Grass, despite occasional references to material subjects, are inter-
ested in the soul and are written with skill, depth of thought, and sincerity
of feeling. Such poems as "The Last Invocation" and "Whispers of Heavenly
Death" reveal Whitman at his highest lyrical attainment; for his words seem to
flow spontaneously from a heart that has been stirred by reflection born of the
real tragedies and comedies of life; a heart that seeks spiritual peace and
freedom. The "Invocation" expresses this well:

¹

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful, fortress'd house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks—from the
keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

2
Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with
a whisper,
Set ope the doors, O Soul!

3
Tenderly! be not impatient!
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh!
Strong is your hold, O love.)²

When one considers Whitman's busy and trying life in Washington during this
period, he has respect for the amount and quality of his poetic output and for
the prose which he wrote simultaneously with his poetry. Before he left
Brooklyn in 1862, he wrote for the Brooklyn Standard twenty-five historical

¹ "Darest Thou Now, O Soul", p. 395.
² "The Last Invocation", p. 400.
articles entitled *Brooklyniama*, and another group of articles to the *New York Leader*. These articles to the *Leader* in which Whitman discussed the Broadway Hospital in New York "reveal the interesting fact that he visited the sick and wounded" in the New York hospitals long before he left for Washington. However, it is true that in Washington he continued this habit on a much larger scale.

In referring to Whitman's work as a nurse Basil De Sélincourt wrote:

> It is beautiful that the poet should become a nurse; it is still more beautiful that the nurse should not forget he is a son.

Though extremely busy with his volunteer and professional work, he found time to write his mother often and regularly. These letters were compiled after his death and published under the title *The Wound Dresser*. This work, written in haste, in a homely, relaxed almost illiterate fashion, should be read, not for its literary value, but for the tenderness and devotion that its contents portray. For example:

> Dearest mother, I hope you will take things as easy as possible and try to keep a good heart. Matty, my dear sister, I have to inform you that I was treated to a splendid dish of ice cream Sunday night; I wished you was with me to have another.

Sometimes the letters stoically but sympathetically describe a tragic experience:

> Mother, I wrote to you about Erastus Haskell, Co. E. 111st. N. Y.—his father, poor old man, come on here to see him

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1 Charles Glicksberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 17.
2 Ibid., p. 17.
5 *The Wound Dresser*, p. 78.
and found him dead three days. He had the body embalmed and took home.¹

At other times they tell of trivial things:

It has been awful hot here now for twenty-one days; ain't that a spell of weather?²

But sometimes they either discuss financial difficulties in the family or explicitly show the distressing effect of the war on Whitman. This latter is seen in the following excerpt:

"Mother, one's heart grows sick of war, after all, when you see what it really is; every once in awhile I feel so horrified and disgusted—it seems to me like a great slaughter-house and the men mutually butchering each other..."

Not all of the prose of this period was written in this docile, and tender spirit, however; for in 1871 Whitman published a trenchant pamphlet entitled ⁴ Democratic Vistas, which might be called his first important prose work. This work treats his favourite theme: The justification of the new world by a new literature which should completely express the true temper and culture of the American race and the progress of the time. Beginning with a confession of the appalling dangers of universal suffrage, he asserted that the real problems of humanity are not only political, but social and religious. It is these problems that literature must confront:

I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly gives its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that...has been produced in the past, under opposite conditions.

¹ Ibid., p. 99.
² Ibid., p. 101.
³ Ibid., p. 111.
⁴ Democratic Vistas matched Thomas Carlyle's "Shooting Niagara; and After", a vitriolic attack upon democracy. See Louis Wann, op. cit., p. 765.
influences.\textsuperscript{1}

And throughout the entire treatise, Whitman rhapsodized in a tone and style suggestive of a writer like Carlyle, who persistently made similar criticisms of his England, believing that, while democracy had brought about a popular intellectuality, it had failed thus far in ministering to the deeper wants of the soul, an opinion that was substantiated by the greed, the riches, political corruption, low ideals, and vulgarity of manners that swept England and America before and after 1865. In the light of this political and social deterioration in the United States, the following summary statements of Lucy Lockwood Hazard, a conscientious student of American Literature, are very pertinent:

The aftermath of Appomattox is written in terms of grandiose schemes floated on preposterously inflated credits; of financial panics and political scandals; of gold conspiracies, Credit Mobiliers, and Tweed rings; of millionaires who began as messenger boys; of inventions that transform the egalitarian democracy of Jefferson into the mechanistic plutocracy of Jay Cooke; of wizards of finance who juggle with the resources and enterprises of the continent. Regional pioneering gives place to industrial pioneering\textsuperscript{2}.

With these conditions in mind, Whitman, in a tone of disgust, wrote the following:

\textsuperscript{1} "Democratic Vistas", Prose Works, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{2} "As fiercely as Carlyle", writes H. B. Binns, "Whitman"detests all the shams and hypocrisies of democratic government". See H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 236.
I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States.... The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men.¹

Such a reaction to real conditions is found in Whitman's major prose works of the Civil War period rather than in his poetry. In fact his war poems, as it has been shown, have little to do with the political and social conditions of the country. In his prose, he admits that man is not perfect, nor will he be until, through literature, he instills into his being a deep religious feeling which Whitman believed to be the only justification for a material being. Literature must recognize the people in their best self. It must teach them that religion stimulates both individualism and fraternalism. The great literatures, art creations, and lectures of other nations have preserved all the best experiences of the past. America must have her poets and seers to preserve hers and to teach her people the profounder meanings of the present day.

Such is the gist of the argument presented in a treatise that not only reminds one of Carlyle in subject matter, tone and ideas, but also in style; for as one reads through Whitman's Democratic Vistas, he reads sentences that are ejaculatory and confronts an abundance of coined works. Sometimes the sentences are hopelessly involved and the punctuation barbaric.

²Ibid., p. 206.
³Ibid., p. 214.
⁴Ibid., pp. 246-247.
⁵Such words as civilization, personalism, aplomb, eolat, and al fresco. Ibid., pp. 232, 233, 237, 248.
Indeed, Whitman’s prose, like his poetry, is often uneven and guilty of verbal superfluity. “It is often turgid and tiresomely diffuse”, as Frederick C. Prescott and Gerald D. Sanders state. However, to agree with these editors again, "when warmed by his emotion and enthusiasm, it becomes electric. Its style, though eccentric, is often extraordinarily expressive". All of these traits, the good and the bad, are found in the following passage in which Whitman vividly describes the loyalty and suffering of the Civil War soldiers:

We have seen the unequal docility and obedience of these soldiers. We have seen them tried long and long by hopelessness, mismanagement, and by defeat; have seen the incredible slaughter toward or through which the armies... still unhesitatingly obey’d orders to advance. We have seen them in trench, or crouching behind breastwork, or trampling in deep mud, or amid pouring rain or thick-falling snow, or under forced marches in hottest summer... vast suffocating swarms, divisions, corps, with every single man so grimed and black with sweat and dust, his own mother would not have known him...

But despite its unevenness in style, Democratic Vistas is provocative, powerfully prophetic, and everlastingly contemporary in message. Walter Fuller Taylor calls it "a harbinger of that critical realism which, within the last two generations, has played an increasingly important role in American letters." Louis Wann writes, "No fitter indictment of the "jazz age" of the 1920's themselves could be found than in Democratic Vistas".

The purpose thus far has been to discuss the themes and technical skill found in Whitman’s works from 1862 to 1873. These works were the 1867 and 1871 revised editions of Leaves of Grass, Drum-Taps, Sequel to Drum-Taps, "As A Strong Bird or Pinions Free", "Passage to India", "Song of the Exposition", Democratic Vistas, and The Wound Dresser. Now, it will be the purpose to compare and contrast Whitman’s literary works of this period with those of the ante-bellum period.

4 Louis Wann, op. cit., p. 5.
All his life Whitman had been a firm believer in democracy, but in
his youth he had supposed that the guardian of democracy was neither the
state nor the nation, but the individual, strong in self-esteem and personal-
ity, for whose convenience the state was created:

Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters
of cities, the going and coming of commerce
and mails, are all for you.1

Not only the state and the nation but

The President is there in the White House for you--
it is not you who are for him;
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you--not
you here for them;
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you.2

Thus, even in the latter part of his first period of writing, Whitman recog-
nized no leaders. When he heard America singing, he heard no unified, nation-
al song, but the carols of every individual, the song of the mechanic, the
3 carpenter, the mason, boatmen, and woodcutters. He believed that democracy
meant "each man to himself, and each woman to herself." He had sworn never to
be a tyrant or a slave but solemnly declared, "I speak the password primeval--
5 I give the sign of democracy." But during the Civil War he learned a deeper
meaning of democracy. Secession convinced him that if democracy was to sur-
vive in America, it must have the support of a strong national government;
therefore, when the war drums of 1861 called men to arms, Whitman soon joined

1 "Carol of Occupations", p. 203.
2 Ibid., pp. 202-203.
3 "I Hear America Singing", pp. 185-196.
4 "Carol of Words", p. 223.
5 "Song of Myself", p. 55.
in and called upon every citizen to forget his individual interest and devote
himself whole-heartedly to the cause of the Union and democracy:

Beati beati drumsi—Blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation;
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer;
Mind not the old man beseeching the young
man;
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the
mother's entreaties!

He was not now the poet singing of universal peace as he had done in "Broadway
Pageant" in which he stated:

And you, Libertad of the world!
You shall sit in the middle, well-poised,
    thousand of years;
As today, from one side, the nobles of Asia
come to you;
As to-morrow, from the other side, the Queen of England
sends her eldest son to you;

And in 1859 and 1860 when the Prince of Wales visited America, he wrote:

And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome
to you from me, sweet boy of England;
Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds, as
you pass'd with your cortege of nobles?

But he was now a poet of war—a war not of militarism, however, but of a
larger and holier unionism:

I chant and celebrate all that is yours—
yet peace no more;
In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine;
war, red war, is my song through your streets, 0 city.

To Whitman the victory of the war for the North over the South was the victory
of liberty over feudalism of the past. To this victory he cried out:

1  "Beati Beati Drumsi" p. 244.
3  "Year of Meteors", p. 229.
4  "City of Ships", p. 248.
Lo! Victress on the peaks!  
Where thou, with mighty brow, regarding the world,  
(The world, O Libertad, that vainly conspired  
against thee;)  
Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after  
thwarting them all;  
Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,  
Flauntest now unhar'm'd, in immortal  
soundness and bloom:...  

Thenceforth, with this regard for victory, he looked to the nation as well as to  
the individual to support the cause of democracy and warned the rest of the  
world that these American states are inviolable:  

World, take good notice, silver stars fading,  
Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,  
Coal thirty-eight, baleful and burning,  
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,  
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.²  

This new respect with which he regarded the American nation led him to call it  
by the sacred name of mother whose children are the states. Henceforth, in  
speaking of America he spoke of his "mighty Matron", his "sacred one", his  
³  "Mother". Thrilled with the growing attitude toward democracy on his native  
shores, he also dreamed of world democracy led to victory through the leader-  
ship of the United States:  

Thick-sprinkled bunting! Flag of stars!  
Long yet your road, fateful flag!—long  
 yet your road, and lined with bloody death!  
For the prize I see at issue, at last is the world!⁴  

Along with Whitman's maturer interpretation of democracy went a more spiritual  
conception of comradeship which was now no longer dependent, as formerly, on  
"amorous love" as in  

¹ "Lo! Victress on the Peaks", p. 280.  
² "World Take Good Notice", p. 281.  
³ "Delicate Clusters", p. 272.  
⁴ "Thick-Sprinkled Bunting", p. 281.
I am he that aches with amorous love;  
Does the earth gravitate? Does not all  
matter, aching, attract all matter?  
So the Body of me, to all I meet, or know.  

His altered view of comradeship, as found in "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic 
a Voice", now symbolized the soul of a nation. He wrote:

It shall be customary in the houses and streets 
to see manly affection; 
The most dauntless and rude shall touch 
face to face lightly... 
The continuance of Equality shall be 
comrades. 
These shall tie you and band you stronger than 
hoops of iron; 
I ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love 
of lovers tie you.  

But while his faith in democracy and comradeship became stronger and deeper, 
he saw with regret, the impracticableness of absolute freedom and uncompromising 
equality. In his altered view of the individual as a part of one harmonious 
whole, Whitman now realized that the individual in adjusting to the whole could 
not promiscuously assert his freedom by revolt and defiance. Before the war he 
had exalted this impetuous iconoclasm in Songs of Insurrection:

Revolt! and still revolt! revolt!  

He had sworn against tyrants: 

Revolt! and the downfall of tyrants! 

.......................... 

Revolt! and the bullet for tyrants! 

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1 "I Am He That Aches With Love", p. 116. 
2 "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic A Voice", p. 267. 
3 "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire", p. 326. 
4 Ibid., pp. 326-327.
During this early period of defiance when he spurned man-made laws, he urged the individual to "Resist much, obey little." After the war, however, experience taught him that law, peace, and freedom can be compatible. He saw freedom no longer shackled by law but

...completely arm'd and victorious,
And very haughty, with Law on one side,
and Peace on the other.²

He saw that nature herself, the greatest teacher of freedom, is ruled by many laws.

Closely related to his early conception of freedom was his interpretation of equity with which his poems rang with enthusiasm. In 1856 he shouted to every individual a challenge of equality, assuring the individual that he should say "indifferently and alike, How are you, friend? to the President at his levee", who is no more than "Cudgel that hoes in the sugar field". Every man should walk "with perfect ease in the Capitol", as well as walk among the Congress", while "one Representative says to another, Here is our equal"....

To Whitman in 1856 equality did not only apply to the relationship between man and man, but also to the relationship between man and woman. Believing this he wrote:

The wife--and she is not one jot less than the husband;
The daughter--and she is just as good as the son;
The mother--and she is every bit as much as the father.³

¹ "Walt Whitman's Caution", p. 331.
² "Years of the Modern", p. 335.
³ "The Answerer", p. 192.
⁴ "Carol of Occupations", p. 199.
It is true that just before the Civil War he was sometimes shocked by the
incompetence of elected officials and the indifference of the people as
they drifted toward disunion and Civil War. He could not help seeing that
the government at Washington seemed incapable and asleep in the presence of
the coming tragedy. But during the Civil War, his first-hand experience
with and knowledge of public affairs, the difference in intelligence, morality,
and outlook among public officials, and his contact with honest, strong,
public-spirited characters proved his doctrine of equalitarianism fallacious.
Furthermore he must have realized that equality did not necessitate conscious
and strident egotism; hence, instead of writing, as formerly, "I celebrate
myself", with humility he wrote:

I can not rest, O God--I can not eat or
drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more
to thee.3

Whitman himself draws a clear contrast between his ante-bellum poems and his
later ones when he reminiscently wrote in 1876 "In Former Songs":

In former songs Pride have I sung, and Love, and
passionate, joyful Life,
But here I twine the strands of Patriotism and Death".6

These lines suggest the serenity that possessed Whitman as his reflections on

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1 "To a President", pp. 239-240.
2 See "To the States", p. 240.
3 See "Origins of Attempted Secession", Prose Works, pp. 258-263; also "Democratic
Vistas", Prose Works, pp. 223-224.
4 "Song of Myself", p. 32.
5 "Prayer of Columbus", p. 472. This poem, though not included in the 1867 nor
1871 editions of Leaves of Grass, was written, nevertheless, in 1871 and pub-
lished in the March issue of Harper's magazine. Ibid.
6 "In Former Songs", p. 541.
life matured. This maturation seems to have come about very rapidly during the short and eventful span of the twelve years between 1861 and 1873. A daily witness of physical pain and agony, joy and sorrow, life and death, Whitman learned the deeper significance of life and death. In his early life when his mother and all about him were seething with life and vigor, what did he know of death about which he glibly wrote?

As to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.

................................................

And as to you, Corpse, I think you are good. manure but that does not offend me.

But during the war he experienced the serenity, the significance, mystery and power of death when his brother Andrew died in 1863, and when his mother passed away some ten years later! Moreover, had he not witnessed horrible deaths and maimed bodies in soldiers' hospitals! He now sang with the serene certitude, with the happy stoicism of one who courageously and confidently faced the inevitability of death. Still unafraid, though decidedly less arrogant and bold than he was in his 1855 poems, he exultingly welcomed the time when he would meet his Pilot face to face:

Joy! shipmate--joy!
(Pleas'd to my Soul at death I cry;)
Our life is closed--our life begins;
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last--she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore;
Joy! shipmate--joy! 2

Not only did Whitman regard death as a joy but as something sweet and merciful:

(Come, sweet death! be persuaded, O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.) 3

1 "Song of Myself", p. 91.
2 "Joy! Shipmate--Joy!" p. 492. In his acceptance and joyous welcome of death, Whitman expressed the same feeling that Tennyson did in "Crossing the Bar".
3 "The Dresser", p. 262.
With this view of death becoming more and more solid conviction, Whitman quite naturally saw the insignificance of man and his need of an All Powerful Spirit. As a result, unlike the poetry of many war poets, Whitman's poems of the Civil War period are heavily charged with a deeply religious tone. One of the first that he wrote was "Passage to India" in which he saw the soul made free from the body through a continued development which enabled it to unite with God:

O we can wait no longer!
We too take ship, 0 soul!
Joyous, we too launch out on trackless seas!
Fearless, for unknown shores, on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, 0 soul,)
Caroling free-singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

This declaration of the freedom of the everlasting soul from the mortal body in 1870 is in striking contrast with his youthful expression that "the soul is not more than the body". And when the waves of life buffeted him about, his religion enabled him to keep faith and to cling to God. This trust in and dependence on God gave him faith in immortality. He had always believed in immortality, but during the Civil War period this conviction was expressed with more humility and with greater understanding of the immensity and one-

1 In this respect Whitman was different from many contemporary war poets like William Gilmore Simms, James Randall, Sallie A. Brook, Henry Timrod, and Robert Hayne, for while these poets were bitter and belligerent, sectional and material, Whitman struck a deep, religious note in his writing--a note representative of "the purest exaltation of the aspiring soul". See Edwin Mims, "Poets of the Civil War II: The South", The Cambridge History of American Literature, ed., William P. Trent, John Erskine, Stuart P. Sherman, Carl Van Doren, Vol. II, pp. 288-295. See also Emory Holloway, "Whitman", The Cambridge History of American Literature, vol. II, pp. 266-274.

2 "Passage to India", p. 352.
3 "Song of Myself", p. 90.
4 See "Prayer of Columbus", p. 474.
ness of the universe than was true in his ante-bellum poems. In 1855 he flippantly and boastfully stated:

I am not an earth, nor an adjunct of an earth;
I am the mate and companion of people all just as immortal and fathomless as myself;
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)¹

But in 1865 he soberly suggested that through death man is finally absorbed by an infinite universe:

Absorb them well, O my earth... I charge you...
My dead absorb—my young men's beautiful bodies absorb—and their precious, precious, precious blood;
Which holding in trust for me, faithfully back again give me, many a year hence,
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries hence.²

Whitman possessed infinite faith in the powers of nature and just as he charged her to lose not an atom of the dead so did he often ask her, in 1867, for strength, happiness, and life.

But one is not to conclude from the foregoing discussion of Whitman's spiritual growth and mystical interpretation of life that he wholly became a transcendental escapist. He was indeed interested in the material affairs of his country, as Democratic Vistas shows. This deep-seated interest in material values and problems dates back to the works of his first period, as has been previously shown. However, in his poetry composed during the Civil War period, he translated these national problems and material trends in terms of spiritual values and saw in them a deep religious significance. This mellowing of soul and deepening of interpretation tremendously influenced

¹ "Song of Myself", p. 37.
² "Pensive On Her Dead Gazing, I Heed the Mother of All", p. 366; See also "Camps of Green", pp. 364—365.
³ See "A Carol of Harvest for 1867", p. 419; also "By Bread Potomac's Shore", p. 461.
the quality and style of his literary words. Indeed the frequent alterations in his style are a reflection of the maturation of his inner life and of the development of his artistic sense. It has already been intimated that there is hardly a single page of his pre-war poems that has not, from time to time, undergone numerous revisions. These often were made as corrections of faulty grammar but usually as the result of conscious polishing of form and aptness of expression and rhythm. Such changes, for the most part, exhibited a tempering of radical ideas, a subtle charm and wisdom, a judicious subordination of egotism and a removal of grossness, of indelicacy of expression, and of banalities. His poems written during and after the Civil War are almost entirely free from uncouth pedantry. His long poems "A Carol of Harvest, for 1867", "Song of the Exposition", and "As A Strong Bird on Finions Free", illustrate his growth in literary taste and judgment. Not only did he omit pedantic and foreign expressions from his later poems, but upon revising several of his early poems, he removed them entirely. In his revision of "Starting from Paumanok" he substituted "Dear Sir" for "Mon Cher". A similar change was made in "To A Historian" in which, after 1860, he wrote "habitan" instead of "habitus".

Another improvement in Whitman's diction was made by his growing use of strong and powerful imagery as in:

Fecund America! To-day,
Thou art all over set in births and joys!
Thou groan'st with riches: thy wealth clothes thee as with a swathing garment!

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1 In referring to this development, Amy Lowell states: "When his working over is followed into the text, the changes are usually happy. They are, on the whole, more effective and less brutal, or perhaps...vulgar; at any rate, less purely animal in connotation. "See Amy Lowell, "Walt Whitman and the New Poetry", Yale Review, Vol. XVI, (April, 1927), p. 503.

2 See "Starting from Paumanok", n. 1, p. 22.

Thou laughest loud with ache of great possession!
A myriad-twining life, like interlacing
vines, binds all thy vast demesne!

Indeed, no poem that Whitman wrote before the war quite equals his later works in imaginative power unless it be "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking". As Thomas H. Dickinson states, "After being the poet of body and birth, of the ego and democracy, Whitman in his later life becomes the poet of the liberated soul. The poems of the end of his life rise to purer heights than any he has known before". Furthermore he not only improved his old works by polishing the original lines or words, but also by interpolating new and more vigorous phrases and melodious statements. For instance, in 1860 this uncouth line in "Song of Myself" reading "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a Kosmos", was somewhat improved in 1867, "Walt Whitman, am I, a Kosmos, of mighty Manhattan the son."

Profiting, no doubt, by the severe criticism of his long lists or catalogues, Whitman struck out many of these after 1860, as the following illustration shows. In 1856 and 1860, a part of the sixth stanza of "By Blue Ontario's Shore" read as follows:

Mississippi with yearly freshlets and changing chutes—Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in him,
The blue breadth over the sea off Massachusetts and Maine, or over the Virginia and Maryland sea, or over inland Champlain, Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan, Superior, or over the Texan, Mexican, Cuban, Floridian seas, or over the seas of California and Oregon, not tallying the breadth of

1 "A Carol of Harvest, for 1867", p. 416.
3 "Song of Myself", and n. 4., p. 54.
4 Ibid.
above and below is tallied in him.

If the Atlantic coast stretch, or the Pacific coast stretch, he stretching with them North or South.¹

In striking contrast with this is the present reading:

Mississippi with yearly freshlets and changing chutes
Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in him,
If the Atlantic coast stretch, or the Pacific coast stretch, he stretching with them North or South.²

And in his later works and revisions, Whitman worked assiduously to shorten the long lines with their hanging indentions and blank spaces which were so characteristic of his early free verse. Thus, by 1865 his excessive verbosity disappeared almost entirely. In contrast with this line from "American Feuillage", so typical of Whitman's early works,

Late in the afternoon, the mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing in the Great Dismal Swamp—there are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous moss, the cypress tree, and the juniper tree.³

are these lines from "Passage to India" written in 1870:

Singing my days...
Singing the strong, light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)
In the Old world, the east, the Suez Canal...
I sound, to commence, the cry, with thee, O soul,
The Past! the Past! the Past!⁴

The characteristic verbosity of the earlier poems was absent in these lines; furthermore, no poem of the Civil War period was excessively long. No poem

¹ "By Blue Ontario's Shore", and n. 4., p. 294.
² Ibid.
⁴ "Passage to India", p. 346.
written in this period was equal in length to "Song of Myself", "Song of the Open Road", "Salut Au Monde", and "Carol of Occupations". Whitman seemingly was rapidly learning one of the essentials of good lyric poetry—appropriate unity and brevity. This brevity and unity can be readily seen in such poems as "Whispers of Heavenly Death", "Of Him I Love Day and Night", "Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours", "Pioneers! O Pioneers!", "Quicksand Years", and "Pensive and Faltering".

Before the Civil War, Whitman's poetry, with the exception of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking", lacked the charm, the lilt and feeling of the good lyric, but after the war most of his creations conveyed the true charm and flavor of genuine lyrics. When Whitman was under the spell of impelling inspiration and deep feeling, his free verse became almost metrical in pattern—so marked were the rhythm and organology. "In Midnight Sleep" thought and feeling combine with a subtle but marked rhythm to give the poem lyrical power and infectiousness:

1

In midnight sleep, of many a face of anguish,
Of the lock at first of the mortally wounded—of that indescribable look;
Of the dead on their backs, with arms extended wide,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

2

Of scenes of nature, fields and mountains;
Of skies, so beauteous after a storm—and at night the moon so unearthly bright,
Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the trenches and gather the heaps,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

3

Long, long have they pass'd—faces and trenches and fields;
Where through the carnage I moved with a callous composure—
or away from the fallen,
Onward I sped at the time—But how of their forms

---

at night,
I dream, I dream, I dream.¹

And in "Dirge for Two Veterans" there is the appropriate tone of sadness and a delicate lyrical touch. Though pastel in its coloring, the poem is really strong and striking. The first two stanzas will illustrate this:

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here—and there beyond, it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo! the moon ascending!
Up from the east, the silvery round moon;
Beautiful over the house tops, ghastly,
phantom moon;
Immense and silent moon.²

It will be noticed that in both "Dirge for Two Veterans" and "In Midnight Sleep", Whitman is almost conventional in his stanzaic divisions and pattern. This use of orthodox stanzaic pattern is very frequently found in his poems written after the war, and, as John Bailey says, "some of them are admittedly among the dozen or half-dozen finest things that he ever wrote". ²

Though the lines of these poems do not always conform to a regular metrical scheme, the stanzas have a design which fosters succinctness and depth of feeling. In some of these later poems Whitman, as has been shown, even resorted not only to the use of meter and other conventional poetical devices, but also to the use of rhyme. "O Captain! My Captain!" is the famous and favourite example of this occasional practice. But it is not to be thought that this use of rime and other poetic conventionalities is a convincing sign of Whitman's reversion to the technique of his earliest poetic efforts. While there is a superficial similarity, there is a profound difference. The later technique is rather a

¹ "In Midnight Sleep", pp. 363-364.
² "Dirge for Two Veterans", p. 265.
³ John Bailey, op. cit., p. 112.
sign of growth and development in taste, in sense of sound, form, and artistry. It is rather the answer of organized rhythm and music to the call of an inspired soul. Moreover, Whitman discovered that art cannot do without workmanship, even though one may have the ability to react spontaneously to the common place with a sense of freshness and surprise. Whitman's theory of poetry had formerly been based on the notion that "a poet can see things exactly as an ordinary man sees them, and describe them exactly as such a man describes them". Consequently, as his ante-bellum poetry shows, "he did not know the difference between art and photography, things wide asunder as the poles". But with the coming of a purer spirit and a more seasoned imagination and judgment came also an improved conception and creation of art. Like his poetry, Whitman's prose works of the war period show unmistakable signs of purer taste, better judgment, superior workmanship, and a deeper understanding of values than do the prose works of the period of 1838-1860.

At this time considering himself a reformer, he wrote criticisms of the press, education, literary works, religion, slavery, politics, sex, public health, and civic conditions. In the period from 1861 to 1873, it is interesting to note, his newspaper articles and other prose works were generally narrowed to the discussion of only the political set-up of the nation. He held this

\[1\]
Ibid., p. 83 ff.

\[2\]
As is true of many of his poems, Whitman's prose has many eccentricities among which, as it has been shown, are his unorthodox method of punctuation, his over-use of italics, and his passionate taste for bits of foreign phrases. Frederick C. Prescott and Gerald D. Sanders draw an interesting parallel between Whitman's prose and his poetry. They assert: "While Whitman was primarily a poet, he has probably been underestimated as a prose writer. His prose is about equal in extent to his poetry, and though naturally less rhapsodical and more reflective, it has similar character, merit, and interest. It preaches the same gospel of democracy and comradeship; it has the same endless concreteness and vitality; and it shows the same disregard for every convention of grammar and style". See Frederick C. Prescott and Gerald D. Sanders, op. cit., p. 547.
phase of modern society responsible for the social, religious, and educational
problems that existed in America; and in Democratic Vistas, as it has been seen, he presented a strong, formal, eloquent, and persuasive argument in favor of a truly practicable democracy. In The Wound Dresser, however, he conveyed to his mother intimate pictures, news, and impressions of his life and activities in Washington. It is lyrical in its subjectivity, spontaneity, and sweetness. Nevertheless, Whitman's prose works like Democratic Vistas and The Wound Dresser, despite their importance, are, according to common agreement among authorities and to the evidence already given in this thesis, admittedly inferior in thought, form, and effectiveness to his poems which have been discussed with respect to their thought, style, and themes in order to show the development of Whitman as a poet during the Civil War period. In the study of this development, one may observe (1) that Whitman's thought became deeper, maturer, and more spiritual than that expressed in his earlier works, (2) that the improvement in his style reflected a growing and mellowing mind and character, and (3) that there was not so much on extension of his interests and themes as there was on intensification of them. In the next chapter the continuity of Whitman's development as man and writer will be discussed in the light of the aftermath of the Civil War.

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In regards to Whitman's attitude toward politics the following statement is illuminating: "The best politics that could happen for our republic would be the abolition of politics". With Walt Whitman in Camden, I, p. 15.
CHAPTER IV

The Life and Works of Walt Whitman from 1873 to 1892

Up to 1872 Walt Whitman had had many diverse experiences; but there was one experience which he had never had until 1873: that of personal infirmity and physical pain. From the time that he left Washington in 1873 until his death in 1892, he wavered between semi-invalidism and complete paralysis. Pertinent to the further development of this thesis, therefore, would be the questions: How did Whitman—the glorifier of healthy, athletic bodies, the poet of the body and of the soul—bear his period of confinement and invalidism? To what extent was the Civil War responsible for his physical infirmity? What effect did Reconstruction and the Post-Bellum days have on Whitman's writing and philosophy? To answer these questions it will be relevant to trace, first, the main and significant currents and cross currents in Whitman's life from 1873 to his death; and to discuss, secondly, his literary efforts of this period with the view of discovering what further influence, if any, the war and its results had on Whitman the man and writer.

It has already been stated that Whitman, himself just recovered from a minor attack of paralysis, was called in 1873 to the bedside of his dying mother, who was then living in Camden, New Jersey. After his mother's death, which gravely aggravated his own malady, he lived with his brother George, occupying the room in which their mother had died. Here he spent many months, taking

1 Leon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 247.
2 Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 46.
no medicine, but allowing nature to take her course. Throughout these inactive hours, Whitman never completely despaired, even though he was lonesome for companionship, as is revealed in this letter to his Washington friend, Peter Doyle:

"lots of R. R. [railroad] men living near, around here—if only I felt just a little better I should get acquainted with many of the men, which I could very easily do if I would. I should much like to go on the trips so handy and cheap, right as you might[say] from my door to Cape May, or to Long Branch, etc. If you was only here to convoy me—but I suppose no one is to have everything.

As this passage shows, Whitman's feeling of loneliness was probably due more to his physical incapacity than to the complete neglect of his friends; for he received letters from people like Mrs. O'Connor and occasional visits from friends like John Burroughs. However, it is true that distance caused him to lose their constant presence and comradeship. But Whitman, not giving up hope of recovery, believed that these companions would be restored whenever he was able to resume his duties in the Treasury office at Washington.

In September, 1873, George Whitman moved into a new and more spacious

2 Though George Whitman was very kind to his brother, there was no kindred bond of sympathy and understanding between them. Walt once said: "...George believes in pipes, not in poems". See With Walt Whitman in Camden, I, p. 227.
3 All brackets in this excerpt are in the original copy.
4 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 140., quoting from Calamus, a collection of letters that Whitman wrote to Peter Doyle.
5 But when Whitman could not return in the summer of 1874, he received his discharge. See Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman., p. 46. Up to this time he had paid for his board, having saved enough from his salary. (Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 215), but from this time on his financial position was precarious; for in addition to the loss of his position, the small amount of money received from the sale of his books had been swindled by his agents. See Richard M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 46; see also Prose Works, p. 316.
home where Walt chose a room on the top floor. At this time Walt, not wholly confined to his room, hobbled out with his cane on pleasant days and crossed the ferry to Philadelphia, where he spent a part of his afternoon in the Merchantile Library. It was on such trips as these that "the young men at the ferry, and the drivers and conductors on the cars came to know and like him". Indeed, he had not lost his power of making friends with the common man. However, despite the comfort and happiness that such contacts afforded him, Whitman, after a year's loneliness, began to show signs of despair. Once, in the summer of 1874, he wrote to Doyle:

"It seems clear enough that there is no substantial recovery probable..."

and again

"The time goes very tedious with me.... I get desperate at staying in—not a human soul for cheer, or sociability or fun, and this continued week after week, month after month."  

And at the end of 1875 he wrote:

"I have been very sick indeed, the feeling of death and dizziness, my head swimming a great deal of the time, turning like a wheel—with much distress in the left side which sometimes keeps me awake at night.... I have not been out for three weeks."  

Nevertheless the faith and strength that came with the passing of the years is quite different from the gloom depicted in the foregoing excerpts; for instead of weakening and giving up the fight to live, he said in 1888:

"I am of course only gradually though surely losing

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1 Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 274.
2 R. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 257; also Prose Works, p. 125.
3 Léon Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 252, quoting from Calamus.
5 Ibid.
strength, but the experiences going with this do not disturb me: no man housed up as I am could expect to hold his ground against old age. But I am convinced that I can at least off the end for a long time to come: I am not anxious to, only determined upon it.  

But Whitman had two afflictions—physical pain and spiritual anguish. He had not forgotten his mother's death. In a letter to Doyle he confessed:

"I can put up with all but the death of my mother—that is my great sorrow which sticks—affects me as much now, or more, than at the time it happened."

In spite of the sadness overshadowing this letter, Whitman's characteristic optimism is seen in the following passage:

But I shall get over it, however, dear son (that is likely of course, it is not sure).

His rugged optimism could not, however, effectually cure pain and paralysis; and, therefore, it is not surprising that only two poems—"The Song of the Universal", which was read in 1874 at the Commencement Exercise at Tufts College, Massachusetts, and "The Song of the Red Wood Tree"—came from his pen between 1873 and 1875.

This period (1873-1875) embraced the most lonely and miserable days of Whitman's life; for by the summer of 1876 not only did he begin to grow stronger but much of his old enthusiasm began to return, partly stimulated, no doubt, by his English friends who, stirred by Robert Buchanan's letter which appeared in the London News, March 13, 1876, came to his rescue in the spring.
of that year. In his letter, Buchanan accused the Americans of neglecting
Whitman, who, according to him, was old, ill, and in want. Very much con-
cerned, W. M. Rossetti wrote to Whitman for verification of Buchanan's state-
ment; and Whitman, with his usual simplicity, replied:

Though poor now, even to penury, I have not so far been
deprieved of any physical thing I need or wish whatever,
and I feel confident I shall not in the future. 2

Moreover, Whitman said that he would be grateful to his English friends for
their efforts in the sale of the Centennial Edition of Leaves of Grass and
his new volume entitled, Two Rivulets.

As a result of this correspondence, Rossetti prepared and dis-
tributed a circular in which he asked Whitman's admirers to subscribe for
the set of books, the price of which was ten dollars a set; but many, led by
Ruskin and Tennyson, paid "double or treble" the price. Such names as these
appeared on the long list of subscribers: Edward Carpenter, Edward Dowden, E.
Gosse, G. Saintsbury, Madox Brown, Lord Houghton, Mrs. Anne Gilchrist, M. C.
Conway, and W. J. Stillman. Encouraged by such an outburst of interest among

1 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 216.
2 Prose Works, p. 316.
3 Ibid.
4 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 142. In his Preface to the 1876 or Centennial
Edition of Leaves of Grass and Two Rivulets, Whitman explained the purpose and
title of Two Rivulets which was to "gather up the pieces of prose and poetry
left over since publishing, a while since... 'Leaves of Grass'". See Prose
Works, p. 280. Two Rivulets incorporated "Democratic Vistas", "As A Strong Bird
on Pinions Free", "Passage to India", the "Memoranda During the War", and a
group of Centennial Songs. See Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in
Narrative, p. 288.
5 With Walt Whitman In Camden, I, p. 459.
6 George Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 142-143.
7 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 217.
prominent scholars and writers, it is no wonder that Whitman again took an interest in life, an interest which he kept until the end.

It is not to be thought, however, that American writers let Buchanan's statement pass without resentment; for in Harper's Monthly (June, 1876) there appeared an article by George William Curtis entitled "Easy Chair", in which the writer stated:

Mr. Whitman has had the same opportunity that Mr. Bryant and Mr. Longfellow have had. His works have been very widely read and criticised. He has found a place in several of the chief magazines. He has had an enthusiastic and devoted body of admirers, who have extolled him as immeasurably superior to all other American authors. He has been in no sense neglected or obscure, but an unusual public curiosity has always attended him.

With this controversy Whitman was not concerned; but after his years of confinement, he was anxious to get in the open air and into the fields; therefore, early in May, 1876, he drove out to Whitehouse, New Jersey, a few miles from Camden. Here "domicil'd at the farm-house of [his] friends, the Staffords", he spent much of his time for the next few years.

After he had lived much in the outdoors at Timber Creek, nature finished the rejuvenation which his English friends had begun and, according to the poet himself, gave him his "second wind, or semi-renewal of the lease of life". In "a particularly secluded little dell off one side by [his] creek, originally a large dug-out marl-pit, now abandon'd, fill'd with bushes, grass, a group of willows, a straggling bank, and a spring of delicious water", Whitman surrendered himself completely to the exhilarating medicine of the open air

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2 H. B. Binns, op. cit., p. 259.
3 Prose Works, p. 81. See also George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 144.
4 "Specimen Days", Prose Works, p. 82.
5 Ibid., p. 103.
6 Ibid., pp. 103-104.
and exercise. For a few hours each day he basked in the sun, wrestled with the hickory saplings, walked "barefooted" in the mud of the creek, or bathed in the "crystal running waters". As the illness seemed to leave him, he grew increasingly happy as is evident from his diary kept during this period. With this partial restoration of health and happiness, it is no wonder that he should write:

Thanks, invisible physician for thy silent delicious medicine, thy day and night, thy waters and thy airs, the banks, the grass, the trees, and e'en the weeds!

As he regained his strength and as he realized his indebtedness to the healthful tonics of nature, Whitman also seemed to gain a finer and a deeper power for observing the ways of nature. Though gifted with a natural acuteness for sound and sight, Whitman in his youth had been only a superficial admirer of nature and of life; but now, after having lived close to nature and after having benefited from her healing powers, he became nature's profound interpreter just as he had become life's perspicacious interpreter after he had witnessed the horrible tragedies of the Civil War. Henceforth, he knew intimately her spiritual and physical powers. Often he sat by a stream of water at night and reflectively and broodingly watched the stars which furnished him food for his questing soul. It must have been at such a time as this that he wrote:

(I am convinced there are hours of Nature, especially of the atmosphere, mornings and evenings, address'd to the soul. Night transcends, for the purpose, what the proudest day can do.) Now, indeed, if never before, the heaven's declared the glory of God.

During this period of partially restored health, Whitman met many of

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1 Ibid., pp. 103-104.  
2 Ibid., p. 105.  
3 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 220.  
4 Prose Works, p. 118.
his admirers and made many new friends. In 1876 Mrs. Anne Gilchrist settled in Philadelphia for several years, and Whitman, who had already corresponded with her, became a frequent visitor to her house. On May 2, 1877, Edward Carpenter, an English admirer of Whitman, came for the first time to visit Whitman in Camden; in 1884 he made his second pilgrimage to Whitman's home. In the summer of 1877 came R. M. Bucke, a Canadian physician in charge of the insane asylum at London, Ontario. Whitman's magnetism of drawing men to him was unusual. Men like Edward Carpenter, R. M. Bucke, and many others were deeply and favorably impressed on first meeting him. Edward Carpenter recorded:

Meanwhile in that first ten minutes I was becoming conscious of an impression which subsequently grew even more marked—the impression, namely, of immense vista or background in his personality. If I had thought before (and I do not now that I had) that Whitman was eccentric, unbalanced, violent, my first interview certainly produced quite a contrary effect. No one could be more considerate, I may almost say courteous; no one could have more simplicity of manner and freedom from egotistic wriggling; and I never met anyone who gave me more the impression of knowing what he was doing than he did. Yet away and beyond all this I was aware of a certain radiant power in him, a large, benign effluence and inclusiveness, as of the sun which filled out the place where he was—yet with something of reserve and sadness in it too, and a sense of remoteness and inaccessibility.

While visiting in Camden, Edward Carpenter made several trips with Whitman to Philadelphia and to Whitman's "dear and valued friends", the Staffords. It

1  H. B. Binns, op. cit., pp. 262-263.
2  See Edward Carpenter, op. cit., p. 17; Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 137. Anne Gilchrist was the first English woman to acclaim publicly Walt Whitman's genius. Edward Carpenter, op. cit., p. 16.
3  Ibid., pp. 3, 35.
4  Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 167. Dr. Bucke later became Whitman's very close friend and biographer. Numbered among Whitman's great companions, Dr. Bucke attended Whitman in his dying days.
5  Edward Carpenter, op. cit., pp. 5-6. That others had the same feeling might be seen in Richard M. Bucke's Walt Whitman, pp. 49-50.
was on these trips that he had an opportunity to see how affectionately the people on the street, car conductors, porters, ferry men, and loafers all greeted Walt and received in return some friendly greeting from the poet.

Whitman was truly regaining his health as was indicated not only by these short trips to Philadelphia and to Whitehouse, but by his ability to travel even farther. On these longer trips, though still semi-invalid, he was as happy and as optimistic as if he had still the superb health of his youth. In February he went to New York, where he attended a banquet given in his honor and visited the scenes dear to him. On leaving New York, he went up the Hudson to visit his friend and comrade, John Burroughs. In 1878 he repeated his visit, and in the spring of 1879 he was able to deliver a memorial lecture on the anniversary of Lincoln's death. Moreover, in the autumn of 1889 he took his second long journey, going with friends as far west as Colorado and returning by the way of St. Louis, where he spent a few months with his

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1 Ibid., p. 8. Carpenter in speaking of Whitman's association with the common people stated that "an old Broadway stager" who "had not seen Walt for three or four years" came to speak to the poet. Carpenter noticed that there were tears in the old "stager's" eyes as he familiarly held Walt's hands. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

2 Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 294. The Camden Post for March 29, 1877 carried this headline: "Walt Whitman. He Visits New York After Five Years Absence--High-Tone Society now Takes Him to Its Bosom--Yet He Rides Again Atop of the Broadway Omnibuses and Fraternizes with Drivers and Boatmen". See R. M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 216.

3 Bliss Perry, op. cit., pp. 223-224.

4 Prose Works, pp. 129-130.

5 William Barton, op. cit., p. 216. Whitman delivered this lecture "each year for thirteen years". In 1886 and 1887, giving it as a benefit lecture in Philadelphia and New York, he received several hundred dollars. Though Andrew Carnegie sent Whitman a check for three hundred and fifty dollars for his box, Whitman must have appreciated far more the pertinent tribute of Edmund Stedman's little girl, who, appearing on the stage, presented the poet with a bouquet saying: "Mr. Whitman, here are some lilacs that in our dooryard bloom'd". See Emory Holloway, Whitman an Interpretation in Narrative, p. 297.
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brother Jeff. The trip West was uneventful, but it was significant in that it
both proved to Whitman his faith in the potentialities of the West and rein-
forced his faith in the future strength and meaning of America. This Western
span had never been adequately expressed in literature, he thought, but he did
regard his poems as a significant beginning in that direction. Thus as he
 glanced at the Rocky Mountain, he could exclaim "I have found the law of my
own poems".

In June he was off on another long jaunt, going by way of Niagara to
London, Ontario, where he was the guest of Richard M. Bucke, who accompanied
him through the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and on the Great Lakes. Here
he saw not only the beauties of nature but the wonderful works of man; for he
visited Bucke's asylum, where he was so deeply impressed by the Sunday service
for the insane that he found beneath the crazed faces

Nothing at all markedly repulsive or hideous... [but] the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

With Bucke as a companion, Whitman went up the "Savage Saguenay". Then, after
having spent a very happy summer, he returned to his home in Camden. Passing

1 Prose Works, p. 139 ff. The story of his travels, along with his Timber Creek
days, is written in Specimen Days.
2 Ibid., pp. 144-145. Whitman had always regarded the West as the future back-
bone of America, placing his faith in the strength of its men and women. On
this trip to the West if the men pleased him, the women did not, for he wrote:
"I am not so well satisfied with what I see of the women of the prairie cities."
Ibid., p. 153.
3 Ibid., pp. 151-152.
4 Ibid., p. 143.
5 Ibid., p. 161.
6 R. M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, p. 48.
7 Prose Works, p. 161. Perhaps it was because Whitman's own brother Jessie had
died in such a retreat several years before that caused Walt to take such a
special interest in these inmates of the Asylum. See H. E. Binns, op. cit.,
p. 274.
8 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 225.
the winter of 1880-1881 in Camden, Whitman made his second visit to Boston, where
he delivered his Lincoln address. Among the American friends whom he saw in
Boston was Longfellow, who had visited him in Camden. While in Massachusetts,
two indelible impressions were made on him: Quincey Shaw's collection of Millet's
picture and his visit to the Memorial Hall, Cambridge, where on the walls he
saw mural tablets bearing the names of the University students and graduates who
fell in the Civil War. He knew what those tablets symbolized.

This visit later proved important to Whitman; for soon after his re-
turn from Boston, he received a proposal from the firm of James R. Osgood and
Company, offering to publish a seventh edition of _Leaves of Grass_. Whitman re-
plied that he would be glad to have his book published and that he was prepar-
ing a new one volume edition of his poems. He also made it clear that he would
consent to no excisions. Upon the publisher's acceptance of these terms, Whit-
man returned to Boston for the last time. It was during this stay that he spent
"a long and blessed evening with Emerson", A. B. Alcott, and his daughter,
Louisa.

Having remained in Boston until November, Whitman returned to Camden,
where his happiness over the moderate sale of the Osgood edition was soon

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1 León Bazalgette, _op. cit._, p. 271.
3 George Carpenter, _op. cit._, p. 155. H. B. Binns notes that it was significant
that Whitman should recognize Millet as the painter of democracy just as Whit-
man recognized himself as the poet of democracy. See H. B. Binns, _op. cit._,
pp. 279-280.
4 Prose Works, p. 182.
5 It will be recalled that Whitman had had only one regular publisher up to this
time, the unlucky firm of Thayer and Eldridge. This firm went bankrupt prior
to the Civil War. León Bazalgette, _op. cit._, p. 272.
6 Emory Holloway, _Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative_, pp. 298-299.
7 Prose Works, p. 189.
crushed by the State Attorney-General, who notified Osgood and Company that *Leaves of Grass* was pornography and suggested its suppression. Whitman was willing to revise or excise what was considered "the offending lines", but when the Attorney suggested the omission of the entire poems "A Woman Waits for Me" and "To A Common Prostitute", Whitman refused to omit any line. Consequently Osgood turned over the plates to the author and gave up the publication. Whitman immediately transferred them to Rees, Welsh and Company of Philadelphia, who were soon succeeded by David McKay, who published an eighth edition in 1882-1883. Nothing very eventful occurred during this period, except the publication of Specimen Days and Collect, a volume which contained all of his prose writings, and the publication of R. M. Bucke's *Walt Whitman*, a biography. But when George Whitman left Camden in 1884, Walt moved to a simple and humble two-story cottage which with the aid of George W. Childs, a millionaire, he purchased for two thousand dollars. Thus with Mrs. Mary Davis as his housekeeper, Walt Whitman began another period of his long life. Here he lived "as a working-man... among working men", chatted with passers-by and fondly

2 Ibid. This act by Osgood called forth a letter of condemnation from William O'Connor, who had defended Whitman against Secretary Harlan in 1865-66. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-152.
4 Léon Bazalgette, *op. cit.*, p. 277. In the edition published by David McKay, neither a line nor a word was omitted. The attempted suppression seemed to bring about a contrary effect, for when the edition came off the press in the latter part of September, every copy was sold in one day. See R. M. Bucke, *Walt Whitman*, pp. 152-153.
5 George Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 156. Specimen Days and Collect was published in 1882; R. M. Bucke's biography, in 1883.
7 Mrs. Mary Davis was a poor cook and manager, but she was good-natured, faithful, and kind. It is said that she was fond of sewing lace collars on Whitman's shirts, a zeal which exceeded her interest in housekeeping. See Bliss Perry, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
watched the children who loved to play around him. But Whitman had other companions besides these. His old friends, O'Connor, with whom there had been a reconciliation, Peter Doyle, John Burroughs, and R. M. Bucke came to visit him. In addition, he had made, during his Camden days, the acquaintance of Horace Traubel, Thomas B. Harned, who, with R. M. Bucke, became his great companions and literary executers. Other friends were Thomas Eakins and Herbert Gilchrist, who painted Whitman's portrait, and Sidney Morse, the sculptor, who made busts of him—convincing evidences of the poet's growing reputation which was further proved by the many pilgrims who came to this Mickle Street cottage as though it were a shrine. During these years Whitman had written little, but in 1888 he published his November Boughs, which consisted of several new poems as well as prose articles on Elias Hicks and George Fox, both of whom seemed to have been Whitman's spiritual kinsmen. Whitman was fortunate to have Horace Traubel as an assistant in this effort. And it is to Traubel that the world is indebted for the publication of a diary which he kept of Whitman from 1888 to his death.

1 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 159. R. M. Bucke also testified to Whitman's fondness for children and of his special care for his little nephew, Walt, who died when he was less than a year old. See R. M. Bucke, Walt Whitman, n., p. 55.
2 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 237.
3 Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, pp. 310-311.
4 W. S. Kennedy, The Fight of a Book for the World, p. 87; see also Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 246; Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 311.
6 Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 276.
7 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 256.
9 This diary is now published in three volumes under the title With Walt Whitman in Camden.
After 1882 Whitman's strength began to fail noticeably. In 1885, suffering from a slight sunstroke, he began his last period of close confinement. As walking was now difficult for him, his American friends, anxious to help him just as his English friends had done in 1877, bought him a horse and buggy. This means of transportation enabled him to take long rides through the country until June, 1888, when, on driving along the Delaware River at sunset, he was so struck by the unusual splendour of the western horizon that he drove his horse out into the shallow river, and there, lost in the beauties of the sky and water, he became chilled and suffered another paralytic stroke. For several days it seemed as if he would not recover, but his strong will kept him alive. In the remaining years of his life, borne by his good spirits, he wrote and published his last poems Good-bye, My Fancy and Old Age Echoes, both of which were fitting titles for the group of poems that were printed just before the close of his life which ended, as it began, with confidence and an optimistic faith in eternal life.

Thus far the main facts in Whitman's life from 1873 to 1892 have been presented. These facts provide a rich background for several important observations and conclusions. In the first place, Whitman neither showed any vital interest nor took any active part in solving the pressing problems of the Re-

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2. Clara Barrus, op. cit., p. 235. It is said that Thomas Donaldson, given the idea by Mary Davis, set the idea going and soon had subscriptions enough with which to purchase the horse and buggy. Among the many who contributed were Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Mark Twain", Edwin Booth, and John O'Reilly. Ibid.
4. León Bazalgette, op. cit., p. 314.
construction period. However, one is not to think that Whitman was ignorant of these problems and conditions; for his *Democratic Vistas* shows that he was very much aware of the state of affairs in the United States; nevertheless, he was content to be an on-looker or a transcendental prophet rather than a participant. He himself said that he cared "less for politics and more for the people". He believed that "most all the practical politics... is practical villainy". With this belief Whitman consciously avoided participating in the political wrangle of the day. In the second place, one observes that Whitman still manifested his indigenous interest in the common man and in nature, as was seen by his constant companionship with the working men of Camden and his many observations of nature that he recorded in *Specimen Days*. In the third place, one may observe that Whitman numbered among his acquaintance and friends some of the greatest names in late nineteenth century English and American Literatures—names like Tennyson, Carlyle, Rossetti, Dowden, Joaquin Miller, Horace Traubel, Louisa Alcott, and many others. And, in the fourth place, one readily notices that despite his infirmity, Whitman was unusually active, mentally and physically, traveling as far west as Colorado, as far north as Ontario, Canada, and writing both prose and poetry. To examine Whitman's literary works of this last period in the light of these observations and with respect to the facts in his later life is to understand the significance of his post-bellum works and their relationship to the Civil War.

Despite Whitman's extreme physical weakness from 1873 to 1876, he found strength enough to write "The Song of the Universal", and "The Song of the Redwood Tree", both of which are notable for their nobility of feeling

2 Ibid.
and their freedom from long lines, cataloging, and other eccentricities of his earliest free verse. Indeed, in the regularity of their rhythmical design, they somewhat favor the conventional pattern which Whitman used before 1855. The "Song of the Redwood Tree", representing the song of the California tree in its praise of American territorial expansion, is especially lyrical:

Farewell, my brethren,  
Farewell, O earth and sky--farewell, ye neighboring waters;  
My time has ended, my time has come.  

These few lines are typical of the lilt that one finds in the entire poem. It is also representative of Whitman's war poetry in that the poem represents a union of the material and spiritual, a trait that is not found in his antebellum works.

Soon after the publication of these poems, the sixth or Centennial Edition of Leaves of Grass appeared in 1876. This Edition, as stated before, was in two volumes: Leaves of Grass, which was a reprint of the unsold 1871 copies, and Two Rivulets. In 1881-1882 Whitman published his seventh edition of Leaves of Grass, a volume made up of two hundred ninety-three distinct poems. This 1881 edition, like the 1876 edition, contained little that was new and little that has not already been discussed. It was important because of the carefully unified and logical arrangement which Whitman gave to it. It is a reprint of the 1860 edition to which were added his political, war, and death poems.

But Whitman did not stop with the creation of the foregoing poems and with the publication of the volumes just mentioned. He had so consecrated his whole life to writing that one may safely agree with George Carpenter that "he

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1 "Song of the Redwood Tree", p. 462.  
2 Bliss Perry, op. cit., p. 217.  
did not stop writing until he stopped living, though the volume of his productions... gradually diminished as his physical force abated". However, it is true that though Whitman, as he grew older and as he approached the end of his own life, showed more interest in immortality, he still maintained his basic interest in democracy, religion, nature, death, and love. In 1888, while very feeble, he wrote and saw published November Boughs, a publication that contained both prose and poetry. The poems of the new collection, grouped under the title "Sands at Seventy", are all very brief. Many of them are descriptive of nature such as "Paumanok", "The First Dandelion", and "A Prairie Sunset", the last of which reads in its entirety:

Shot gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver,
emerald, fawn,
The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's
multiform power consign'd for once to colors;
The light, the general air possess'd by them--
colors till now unknown,
No limit, confine--not the Western sky alone--
the high meridian--North, South, all,
Pure luminous color fighting the silent
shadows to the last.4

This poem, illustrative of Whitman's realism, is also characteristic of the brevity, the restraint, and simplicity of his later works. Not only this, but in the poems written during this period of serenity, one is impressed with his mellow thoughts. To him these last days of enforced solitude sometimes seemed to be the best, for he had learned in these halcyon days that

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor
victories of politics or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent
passions calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover

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1 George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 162.
2 John Bailey, op. cit., p. 42.
3 Emory Holloway, Walt Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 312.
4 "A Prairie Sunset", p. 510.
the evening sky,
As softness, fullness, rest, suffuse the
frame, like fresher, balmier air,
As the days take on a mellower light,
and the apple at last hangs really finish'd
and indolent--ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days
of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

No longer the defiant reformer of his youth, Whitman not only enjoyed the "blissful halcyon days" but accepted them as his instructor in his pursuit of spiritual wisdom and freedom. Happily and intimately he lived with his soul:

Did we count great, 0 soul, to penetrate
the themes of mighty books,
Absorbing deep and full from thoughts,
plays, speculations?
But now from thee to me, oaged bird, to
feel thy joyous warble
Filling the air, the lonesome room, the
long forenoon,
Is it not just as great, 0 soul? 2

One notices that a meditative tenderness permeates this poem, and, instead of sentences that leap and race along, one finds a quiet and peaceful note that shows no challenge, but acceptance and sincere gratitude as in the following poem:

Thanks in old age--thanks ere I go,
For health, the midday sun, the impalpable
air--for life, mere life,
For precious ever-lingering memories, (of you my
mother dear--you, father--you, brothers,
sisters, friend,)
For all my days--not those of peace alone--the
days of war the same,
For gentle words, caresses, gifts from foreign lands,
For shelter, wine and meat--for sweet appreciation,

Thanks--joyful thanks!--a soldier's, traveler's thanks. 3

And sometimes, but seldom, the physical suffering and ills impel him to write:

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,
Not my least burden is that dullness of the years, querilities

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1 "Halcyon Days", p. 497.
2 "My Canary Bird", p. 495.
3 "Thanks In Old Age", pp. 507-508.
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation, 
whispering ennui, 
May filter in my daily songs.¹

Perhaps it was during such hours of pain and discomfort that Whitman, looking 
back over his happy, healthy, younger days, exclaimed:

How sweet the silent backward tracings! 
The wanderings as in dreams--the 
meditation of all time resumed--their 
loves, joys, persons, voyages.²

The poems just quoted are not only typical of the themes, the attitude, 
and the style of the poems in Sands at Seventy but also of the poems in 1891, ³ 
entitled Good-Bye My Fancy. Just before these poems appeared, Whitman had 
published in 1889 a ninth edition of Leaves of Grass, which now included the ⁴ 
November Boughs poems under the title of Sands at Seventy. The poems of 
Good-Bye My Fancy are still in the vein of the November Boughs or the Sands at 
Seventy poems, in that they are poems of deep reflection and introspection, show-
ing the mellowing process of an aging and ailing author. Many of the poems an-
ticipate the future. "Long, Long Hence" illustrates this:

After a long, long course, hundreds of years, 
denials, 
Accumulations, rous'd love and joy and thought, 
Hopes, wishes, aspirations, ponderings, victories, 
myriads of readers, 
Coating, compassing, covering--after ages' and 
ages' enorustations, 
Then only may these songs reach fruition.⁵

And again in "Good-Bye My Fancy!", he wrote:

Good-bye my Fancy! 
Farewell dear mate, dear love! 
I'm going away, I know not where, 
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever 
see you again.

¹ "As I Sit Writing Here", p. 494. 
² "Memories", p. 496. 
³ George Carpenter, op. cit., p. 162. 
⁴ Emory Holloway, Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative, p. 312. 
So Good-bye my Fancy.¹

Some of the poems of this period, however, review the poet's past as does "Mirages", which is a memorial to his trip to the West. Others deal with current events and international affairs such as "Brave, Paris Exposition!" while another shows his never dying hope of brotherhood, and still others show his interest in nature as in "To the Sun-Set Breeze", which is considered the most important poem of the group.

Though Whitman was working on a ninth edition of *Leaves of Grass*, his final group of poems was *Old Age Echoes*, which included his last deliberate composition, "A Thought of Columbus". This edition, including this group of poems, was called the "deathbed" edition because it came off the press just before Whitman's death in 1892. The closing poem was "A Thought of Columbus", which ends with these lines:

(An added word yet to my song, for
Discoverer, as ne'er before sent back
to son of earth—
If still thou hearest, hear me,
Voicing as now—lands, races, arts, bravas to thee,
O'er the long backward path to thee—one vast consensus north, south, east, west,
Soul plaudits! acclamation! reverent echoes,
One manifold, huge memory to thee! oceans and lands!

⁵ "To The Sun-Set Breeze", *Leaves of Grass*, ed., Emory Holloway, p. 449.
In his period of affliction and old age, Whitman, who never felt that his poems had been fully recognized, often compared himself to Columbus, who, though pious and courageous, died "un recognized, neglected and in want". As Whitman grew more and more feeble and realized the futility of his efforts, it is no wonder that his thoughts of Columbus should find expression in his last poem.

But, as has already been pointed out, Whitman continued to write both poetry and prose during this period. Indeed, at this time he seems to have written more prose than verse, the most important of which were "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" and Specimen Days. As one reads these works, he is conscious of the fact that Whitman's sentences are still as long, rambling, involved, and awkward as they were in Democratic Vistas and the 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass. The prose of this period, like the prose of his earlier periods, is decorated with unnecessary italics and foreign phrases. Whitman never learned to write an effective literary prose style. However, the prose of his last period, like the poetry, shows not a defiant reformer, but a humble and kindly old man who looks upon himself and his works with detachment and mature insight.

In "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", Whitman's retrospective prose work, he very simply and humbly wrote:

...I have not gain'd the acceptance of my own time, but have fallen back on fond dreams of the future--anticipation.... That from a worldly and business point of view "Leaves of Grass" has been worse than a failure--that public criticism on the book and myself as author of it yet shows mark'd anger and contempt.

1 "A Thought of Columbus", Leaves of Grass, ed., Emory Holloway, p. 464.
2 "Prayer of Columbus", p. 472.
3 Since this work sums up Whitman's literary efforts as a poet, it is properly placed at the end of his poems in Leaves of Grass.
more than anything else.... And that solely for pub-
lishing it I have been the object of two or three
pretty serious special official buffettings—is all
probably no more than I ought to have expected.¹

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As one reads through this preface, however, he immediately sees that
Whitman has not wavered one bit from his earlier stand on democracy, from his
challenge to America "to come home in music, literature, and art", and from
his hatred of slavish imitation and dependence on old world ideals. In 1889,
for example, he could still write:

I say no land or people or circumstances ever existed
so needing a race of singers and poems differing from
all others, and rigidly their own, as the land and
people and circumstances of our United States....
Still further, as long as the States continue to absorb
and be dominated by the poetry of the Old World...
so long will they stop short of first-class Nationality
and remain defective.³

Quite different from this work is the part of Specimen Days, which describes
Whitman's Timber Creek Days. As Leaves of Grass is, from one point of view,
a picture of ideal health, so may this section of Specimen Days be received as
the picture of convalescence, as the following words from the poet himself will
show:

Dear, soothing, healthy, restoration-hours--
after three confining years of paralysis--
after the long strain of the war, and its
wounds and death. ⁴

Specimen Days is not important for its literary value; nevertheless, like The
Wound Dresser, it finds its permanency in the fact that it is a true and simple
record of the poet's life. But it is as much a riper and richer record than
The Wound Dresser as Whitman the invalid was a riper and richer personality than
Whitman the nurse. The Wound Dresser vividly describes his experiences in the

¹ "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", Leaves of Grass, pp. 545-546.
² This work was first published as the Preface to November Boughs.
³ "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", Leaves of Grass, pp. 558-559.
⁴ "Specimen Days", Prose Works, p. 82.
Civil War Days; but this section of Specimen Days describes how Whitman, with optimism, faith, and happiness, passed through grief, poverty, and great suffering. Never forgetful of others, he dedicated this record to the sick room or to the working man:

Who known... but the pages now ensuing may carry ray of sun, or smell of grass or corn, or call of bird, or gleam of stars by night, or snowflakes falling fresh and mystic, to denizen of heated city house, or tired workman or workwoman—or may be in sick-room or prison—to serve as cooling breeze, or Nature's aroma, to some fever'd mouth or latent pulse.

This work is different from Democratic Vistas and "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", in that the poet, after he has "exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, love, and so on", finds that nature remains; hence the book is an interpretative record of trees, birds, flowers, and other natural scenes and objects.

The foregoing discussion of Whitman's works has been given with the view of setting forth the important ideas and literary value peculiar to them. But the question might logically be asked: How do these ideas of Whitman compare with those found in his Civil War work? In other words, do Whitman's works of his last period reflect, as a whole, the further development of Whitman's understanding of life and literature?

This question must be answered in the affirmative; for even though his Civil War works manifested a vast improvement over his ante-bellum pro-

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1 The first section of Specimen Days is devoted to Whitman's "Memoranda of the War" while the remaining pages (from 82 to 200) are devoted to his Timber Creek days.
3 Ibid., note p. 82.
4 Ibid.
5 In addition to this, Whitman was also aware of the current literary happenings, as is shown by his essays like "In Memory of Thomas Paine", "Death of William Cullen Bryant", "The Death of Thomas Carlyle", and "Death of Longfellow". Ibid., pp. 96-97, 118-114, 168-170, 193-194.
ductions, it is nevertheless true that his war poetry, for instance, was subjected to the same type of deliberate and judicious excisions and revisions that were made on his ante-bellum works. Even the beautiful hymn on Lincoln, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", one of the poems on which the poet's fame rests, and which was first published in 1865, was revised with the view of improvement. To illustrate, the line reading:

And for love, sweet love—But praise!
O praise and praise.¹

in 1865 was changed in 1876 to the less verbose and more powerful line

And for love, sweet love—But praise! praise! praise!²

Likewise, this line in the 1865 version of the same poem

Approach encompassing Death—strong
Deliver...³

was made much more neat and direct in 1876 when it was changed to

Approach, strong Deliver...⁴

Passing on to improvements made in other war poems, one notices that this line in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" of 1867,

My limbs, my veins dilate, The blood of the world has fill'd me full; my theme is clear at last.

was made much more effective in 1881 in the following succinct line:

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear at last.⁵

² "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard and Bloom'd", p. 372.
⁴ "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", p. 373.
⁶ "Song of the Banner at Daybreak", Leaves of Grass, ed., Emory Holloway, p. 245.
And in the 1865 version of "The Artilleryman's Vision", this line

The engagement opens there in my busy brain

was changed in 1881 to the more imaginative and more poetical line

The engagement opens there and then in fantasy unreal.

Even in the challenging little verse, "Lo, Victress on the Peaks", Whitman found room for improvement. Consequently in place of the line which read

But a little book containing night's darkness
and blood-dripping wounds,

in 1867, he wrote

But a cluster containing night's darkness
and blood-dripping wounds.

Similar changes making for greater power and directness of expression were made in other poems. Even titles were made less wordy and more poignant. For example "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing" in 1881 was "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing, I Heard the Mother of All" in 1867; "Old War Dreams" in 1881 was "In Clouds Descending, In Midnight Sleep" in 1867; and "Weave In, My Hardy Life" in 1881 was "Weave In, Weave In, My Hardy Life" in 1865.

Moreover, the development of Whitman the poet is seen in the general superiority of his poems composed during his last period to those written during and immediately after the Civil War. The excitement of the war was

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1 Oscar L. Triggs, "Variorum Readings", p. 651.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 653. See also "Lo, Victress on the Peaks", Leaves of Grass, ed. Emory Holloway, p. 273.
4 Oscar L. Triggs, "Variorum Readings", p. 701.
5 Ibid., p. 696.
6 Ibid., p. 695.
passed; serenity and mellow reflections took its place. As a result, Whitman's new creations reflect a deeper understanding of his favorite themes--nationalism, unity, democracy, nature, and immortality. And life, he thought, could be worth while, only when it is in harmony with God's plan. This thought is expressed in these lines:

By that long scan of waves, myself call'd
back, resumed upon myself,
In every crest some undulating light or shade--
some retrospect,
Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas--
scenes ephemeral,
The long past war, the battles, hospital sights,
the wounded and the dead,
Myself through every by-gone phase--my idle
youth--old age at hand,
My three-score years of life summ'd up,
and more, and past,
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole
a nothing,
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's
ensemble--some wave, or part of wave,
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean.

Thus, as Whitman approached nearer and nearer the sunset of his own life, he was convinced that life is more spiritual than material. If the Civil War poetry shows the effective beginning and middle of his emancipation from the materialism of his first period, the poetic out-put of his last days reflects a complete emancipation. Hence instead of praising America for her material development as in "Song of the Exposition", he now warns her that with all her gifts, she lacks the greatest gifts of all--"beauty, health, completion". Indeed, as his own life waned, his interest in the moral and aesthetic values of life became keen and insistent. Consequently, his poems of this period reflect deeper thought, more mellow confidence, and greater Christian assurance than are found in his Civil War poetry. To understand this contrast between

1 "By That Long Scan of Waves", p. 499.
2 "With All Thy Gifts", p. 479.
the poetry of old age and the poetry of the Civil War, compare the following lines:

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form’d—till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

with

...and in the midst God's beautiful eternal right hand,
Thee, holiest minister of Heaven--thee, envoy, usherer, guide at last of all,
Rich, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,
Sweet, peaceful, welcome Death.

In the lines taken from "A Noiseless, Patient Spider", the significant words are "catch somewhere"; for these words connote the poet's uncertainty, and show him seeking for an understanding of the Soul and its immortality. In the lines from "Death's Valley", however, one does not find this suggestion of wavering doubt, but rather an absolute assurance and a deep faith in God and the after life. Indeed, in his old age Whitman had found this truth; in his middle age he had only sought it. Moreover, in his old age Whitman was in constant and direct contact with Nature; it was to her that he owed his partial recovery; and it was to her, no doubt, that he was partially responsible for the optimism that obsessed him at this time and which he expressed in these lines:

Nothing is ever really lost, or can be lost,
No birth, identity, form --no object of the world,
Nor life, nor force, nor any visible thing;
Appearance must not foil, nor shifted sphere confuse thy brain.

1 "A Noiseless Patient Spider", pp. 399-400.
2 "Death's Valley", Leaves of Grass, ed. Emory Holloway, p. 463.
Ample are time and space—ample the fields of Nature,
The body, sluggish, aged, cold—the embers left from earlier fires,
The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame again;
The sun now low in the west rises for mornings and for noons continual;
To frozen clods ever the spring’s invisible law returns,
With grass and flowers and summer fruits and corn.¹

Tracing Whitman’s development even further, one notices that the poems written after 1873 are, for the most part, much shorter than the bulk of those written during and immediately after the Civil War. Even though the Civil War poems are much shorter than the pre-war poems, it is strikingly noticeable that the majority of the post-war poems are truly epigrams, not clever and brilliant, however, like those of the Augustan wits but profound, searching, and terse like the inspired statements of the Hebrew prophets. Thus, by this terseness, Whitman could sustain throughout the poems, even more successfully than in many of his war verses, his melody, his power, and his enriched thought—traits that are characteristic in the little poem "Life and Death", which reads in its entirety:

The two old, simple problems ever intertwined,
Close home, elusive, present, baffled, grappled,
By each successive age insoluble, pass’d on,
To ours to-day—and we pass on the same.²

And again in the following concise poem which repeats a characteristic Whitmanesque theme, he wrote:

While not the past forgetting,
To-day, at least, contention sunk entire—peace, brotherhood uprisen;
For sign reciprocal our Northern, Southern hands,
Lay on the graves of all dead soldiers, North or South,
(Nor for the past alone—for meanings to the future.)

¹ "Continuities", p. 505.
² "Life and Death", p. 508.
Wreaths of roses and branches of palm.¹

In this little poem, so concise and yet so powerful in its scope and feeling, one becomes aware of the effect that such musings had on the poet, a fact that might also be seen in "A Carol Closing Sixty-Nine", in which he wrote:

A carol closing sixty-nine—a resume—a repetition,
My lines in joy and hope continuing on the same,
Of you, my Land—your rivers, prairies. States—
you, mottled Flag I love,
Your aggregate retain'd entire—Of north, south, east and west, your items all;
Of me myself—the jocund heart yet beating in my breast,
The body wreck'd, old, poor and paralyzed—
the strange inertia falling pall-like round me,
The burning fires down in my sluggish blood not yet extinct,
The undiminished faith—the groups of loving friends.²

This poem is not only typical of the poems of this period in length, but it is also typical of the reflective moments that Whitman spent while, in his mellowest and sweetest tones, he ruminated on his past and peered into the future. This looking before and after dominated both his poetry and prose from 1873 to 1892. However, though his prose, like his poetry, mellowed with the advancing years, Whitman, as it has been said, never became a distinguished writer of prose. Yet, because of the humility, sweetness, simplicity, and serenity found in a later work like "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" one, in a study like the present thesis, cannot help contrasting it with the bellicose Democratic Vistas. For example, contrast the tone, the flavor, the spirit of these statements from "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads":

Without stopping to qualify the averment,
the Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic

¹ "While Not the Past Forgetting", p. 509.
wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater. In the centre of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New.1

with these from Democratic Vistas:

The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration; and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scandalism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring modern word, business,) the one sole object is...pecuniary gain. The magician's serpent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master of the field. The best class we show, is but a mob of fashionable dress'd speculators and vulgarians.2

This is not Whitman at the zenith of his passionate denunciation of American materialism, graft, and want of soul. But it represents a spirit and attitude quite in contrast with the sweetness of temper found in "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads". The contrast is even more vivid and conspicuous when one realizes that at bottom the two prose works have the same theme, the same thesis, the same message—a challenge to America to be independent, brave, honest, and to hold high the ideals of democracy and Christianity.

Thus Whitman the prose writer, like Whitman the poet, did not extend the fundamental basis of his interests and ideals. Having treated, more or less

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1 "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads", Leaves of Grass, p. 552.
superficially, all of his themes in his "Song of Myself" in 1855, Whitman worked assiduously to intensify and mellow them. These themes, as it has been shown, were very largely the same during and after the War; but during the war period, he showed a deeper understanding of war, comradeship, democracy, love and death than he had shown before the conflict. Moreover, during the Civil War he developed from the Whitman who defied the world, who glorified individualism, who praised evil and good alike, and who preached rebellion, to the meditative poet who saw the world as less a challenge and more an associate and instructor. This attitude deepened and continued to Whitman's death; but while he was in good health, his writings expressed athletic vivacity and enthusiasm; in pain and sickness, in solitude and grief, he expressed the mellow musings of a poet grown rich by his vast and varied experiences and by the rapidly approaching close of a relatively long life. As Whitman became more reflective, more spiritual, and more mellow, so did his works; for during his last period he was not alone content with presenting themes and ideas. He was equally as interested in living the good Christian life. Therefore, Whitman's period of affliction was a continuation of the spiritual maturation that had begun during the Civil War period. In the case of Whitman, it is especially true that "style is the man".
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In their study of Whitman's works, many authorities either have shown that Whitman exhibited little or no steady development in his fifty years of literary efforts, or they have been conspicuously reticent on the matter. For example, Bliss Perry, whose reliable biography of Whitman was one of the main sources of information for this thesis, spends little or no time in tracing the poet's development as such; Leon Bazalgette, while giving a scholarly account of the poet's life and works during his several periods, is also reticent on the matter of the poet's development; and Emory Holloway in his Whitman An Interpretation in Narrative makes no mention of Whitman's development. Chief among those authorities who admit only a slight development in Whitman is John Bailey, who in his criticism of Whitman's poetry, stated that, "He himself and his poems were exactly the same at the end as they were at the beginning, with the single exception that his experiences in the war deepened and solemnized the human tenderness which had been from the first a marked feature of his character." Moreover, Fred Lewis Patee, in a statement that allows for no continuity of development, says that, "Criticism of Whitman must recognize always the fact that there were two distinct periods in the poet's life,--the period of youth and the period of age. There was no middle-age period."

Despite these statements and omissions of eminent critics and biographers, the evidence in this thesis shows that Whitman did pass through unbroken

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1 Floyd Stovall finally denounces this general belief among distinguished authorities when he states that, "It is an error all too common yet to suppose that Whitman did not grow". See Floyd Stovall, op. cit., n. 6, Introduction, p. XVII. For a fuller development of this point see Floyd Stovall, "Main Drifts in Whitman's Poetry". American Literature, vol. IV (March, 1932), pp. 3-21.


3 John Bailey, op. cit., p. 51.

4 Fred Lewis Patee, op. cit., p. 640.
and significant stages of development as man and writer. A summary of the leading points in the foregoing chapters will make this clear. It has been pointed out

(1) That Whitman's experiences up to 1848, though varied and relatively copious, failed to touch his deeper sensibilities. His works of this period, like the man, were neither original nor distinguished, neither promising nor substantial.

(2) That between 1848 and 1860 Whitman manifested definite signs of development, and intellectual seriousness, a definite stability and a budding maturity, despite the fact that these were still somewhat under the control of a youthful arrogance, a tactless defiance, a bold independence, a zealous iconoclasm, and an indiscriminate judgment. His 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass began the tradition that he is America's most outspoken and original poet. On the other hand, his works before 1855 are decidedly imitative, amateurish, and insignificant.

(3) That a pronounced materialism and equalitarianism with a noticeable touch of mysticism and transcendentalism permeated the first three editions of Leaves of Grass. Whitman was beginning seriously to explore and understand the physical and spiritual world, the outer and inner life.

It has been further shown and substantiated

(1) That though Whitman did not shoulder a musket, he was, nevertheless, intimately connected with an important phase of the Civil War—that of caring for the wounded and dying soldiers.

(2) That during the period from 1861 to 1873, he learned many valuable lessons about human nature, society, and politics. His soul was touched; his insight became more perspicacious; his former arrogance changed to humility, his defiance to reverence, his iconoclasm to intelligent obedience, his materialism to a higher pantheism, his sophistry to inspired wisdom. His innate capacity for sympathy, love, service, friendship, and
knowledge was developed by its exposure to dire and vital circumstances.

Moreover the discussion of Whitman's literary works from 1861 to 1873 revealed

(1) That his works, like the man, prominently show great spiritual growth and development. A conscientious comparison and contrast of his pre-Civil War works with those of the Civil War period will substantiate this.

(2) That though Whitman's range of interests did not widen (if anything, they narrowed), he learned more about the things he had already known and had previously discussed. As a result, he modified, subordinated, re-interpreted, tempered, and seasoned his former ideas and treatment by the aid of a richer imagination, a profounder thought, and a deeper spiritual experience. America, life, death, immortality—these were his favorite themes.

And the study of Whitman's life and works from 1873 to 1892 led to the conclusion

(1) That the development of Whitman the man and writer continued. In fact the older Whitman grew the more mellow he became. He continued his study of the spiritual values of life, and, despite his invalidism, was optimistic and profoundly happy. It was natural that his interpretation of life, of America, and of immortality would reach a depth not before reached in his previous thinking and creations.

(2) That though Whitman knew the contemporary developments in politics, industry, science, society, and discoveries current in the last period of his life, he did not develop an interest in new themes for his works, especially for his poetry, and consequently did not use them. Hence the possible reason why many writers have concluded that Whitman showed no development after the Civil War. But development may be in the direction of breadth or depth or both. Whitman's was in depth. Yet it was a kind
of breadth, too; for his profundity penetrated to the bed-rocks of human nature.

The foregoing summaries were given to clarify the nature of the gradual and unbroken continuity of Whitman's growth and development as man and writer. But these summaries have said nothing specifically concerning the part the Civil War played in this development. To measure the exact influence of the War on Whitman three steps will be taken: first, a discussion of Whitman's basic traits and of those sources, other than the Civil War, which were in some way responsible for his development; second, observations on some of the possible changes which the Civil War and its aftermath could have produced in Whitman but failed to do; third, a discussion of the exact effect of the War on Whitman.

A careful and extensive study of Whitman's life leads to the conclusion that one of the chief sources for Whitman's sympathy, independence, tenderness, and love of democracy was his family tree. These traits, as it has been seen, were early manifested in the young Whitman. And they were developed, molded, and given expression under the influence of an environment rich in natural scenery and wildness, of a home-life replete with laxity, and of an intimate association with all types of common people. Small wonder, then, that Whitman had an obsession against finery and formality, creeds and conventions. Instead, he loved simplicity, freedom, and democracy. In his early life this love complex expressed itself almost to a degree of fanaticism, and a youthful restlessness and curiosity resulted. Working as printer, reporter, editor, teacher, and journalist; riding in ferries and omnibuses, visiting shops, factories, taverns, museums, theatres, and lecture halls, young Whitman, though he could hardly have fully digested all of this kaleidoscopic experience immediately, was unconsciously laying a firm foundation for his unshakable interest in democracy, the common man, and America. In addition to this wide and
varied experience, there were other sources of powerful influence. Whitman read omnivorously the Bible, the classics and from many of the leading authors of his day. He himself admitted his discipleship of Emerson. "I was simmering, simmering, simmering. Emerson brought me to a boil", he used to say. And his biographers and critics never seem to tire of comparing and contrasting his Americanism, individualism, and mysticism with Emerson's, incidentally showing the influence of the master upon the pupil. Thus, with Emerson as his ideal, with his Bible as his guide, his contacts with the proletariat, his fundamental nature and training as his staff, and with democracy as his motto, Whitman, in the early period of his life, possessed such an unshakable interest in man, nature, life, and immortality, that even the Civil War and its concomitant effects did not radically change this interest.

The period of conflict certainly could have easily made him cynical and disillusioned. For, over and above the horrors of war was there not corruption in business and politics during and immediately following the War? Were not the sick, wounded, and dying soldiers who gave their all for the country often cruelly mistreated and neglected? Did not the government, after the death of Lincoln, fall into the hands of narrow-minded and inefficient men who ruthlessly raped the South and the nation as well? The nation was without a strong leader to guide it successfully through the labyrinthal problems of Reconstruction. Whitman saw all this and found, contrary to his earlier beliefs, that absolute equality was not a possibility in a world of inequality, chicanery, and folly. So appalling was the situation that one does not wonder when Whitman, always so hopeful for the equality of men, despairingly wrote that "society, in these States is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also."

But, knowing and admitting these stern universal realities, so contrary to his

idealism, did not make him cynical and disillusioned. In fact they could have made him intensely egoistic in attitude; could have made him unsympathetic; could have blinded him to the natural beauty and spiritual values of life and love; could have made him an impulsive radical or a smug conservative; or they could have made him an uncompromising sectional propagandist as was true of Timrod, Hayne, Simms, and Whittier. Furthermore, knowing the chicanery, the blunders, the gross materialism, the vice, and folly that existed in America during and after the Civil War, one would not wonder if Whitman's basic interest had become blighted and paralyzed, for these conditions could have made him stand coldly aloof from the affairs of man; or they could have moved him, as happened to so many of his contemporaries, to escape to foreign shores in utter disgust of the Gilded Age in America. Many things could have happened to Whitman the man and writer as a result of the Civil War and its aftermath. But from this study of his life and works, it has been seen that none of the foregoing possibilities happened to him. In fact, the trying circumstances left him more firmly concerned than ever before with his basic interest, more op-

1 Fred Lewis Pattee calls Whitman "the central figure of the later period, the voice in the wilderness that hailed its dim morning and the strong singer of its high noon". See Fred Lewis Pattee, American Literature since 1870, New York, the Century Company [1913], pp. 184-185.

2 It is well known that the excesses of the French Revolution were greatly responsible for Wordsworth's shift from republicanism to Toryism, from liberalism to conservatism. The excesses of the Civil War caused no such drastic shift of front in Whitman.

3 "The period immediately following 1865", writes Grant C. Knight, "was one of which we have least reason to be proud, flaunting, as it did, the injustices of reconstruction in the South, the unhappy corruptions of Grant's administrations, and the absorption in national rehabilitation that developed into ruthless competition, ending in monopolies for which the Standard Oil Company has always stood as the wicked symbol in popular resentment". This Gilded Age, "dedicated to all virtues, yet practicing few" and mingling "public idealism with private rapacity" caused "men with the urge to create to flee to Europe. William Hunt, John LaFarge, James McNeill Whistler went to Paris; Eastman Johnson to Germany and Holland. Elihu Vedder... and F. Marion Crawford took residence in Italy; Henry James found he could live only in the country houses of England. Bret Harte likewise settled in England..." See Grant C. Knight, op. cit., pp. 288-290.
timistic than ever in his belief of the perfectability of man.

Just as the Civil War brought no startling, abrupt revolutionary change in the man, so did it in some important respects leave him essentially unchanged as a writer. For instance, the Civil War, as it has been previously observed, gave Whitman no new themes. On first reading his war poems, one might be prone to discredit this statement—that Whitman had found no new themes; but a careful study of them will show that though they deal with beating drums, marching soldiers, death on the battlefield, unfortunate soldier boys, the death of Lincoln and other matters relative to war, Whitman's themes still dealt with America, man, nature, death, and immortality with the usual Whitmanesque love of democracy, patriotism, brotherhood, and the moving scene. Not only did Whitman use the same themes during and after the war that he had used before the war, but he still relied mainly upon free verse, as he had done in 1855, for poetic expression. In what ways, therefore, did the Civil and its resulting forces affect Whitman? They affected him in two ways—in thought and in feeling. These in turn influenced his style, both prose and poetry. The circumstances of the Civil War, during and after, so stirred Whitman's thought and feeling that in his poetry his free verse became deeply organizes in rhythm rich in imagery, symmetrical in pattern, and succinct in phrasing. Some of his poems, composed in the heat of inspiration and under emotional stress of the occasion, were written in regular meter and rime, and as if thought or feeling were a transient but sacred visitor, many of these poems are conspicuously short—even fragmentary as in “Good-Bye My

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In paraphrasing the words of John Cowper Powys, Grant C. Knight states: "Indeed, Whitman is one of the world's great optimists, superior to his contemporary, Browning, in that respect.... Browning had the good cheer of a red-blooded... successful bourgeois; Whitman the undismayed hopefulness of a lowly man-refuses to be cast down by mental and physical suffering".... Ibid., pp. 281-282. For further statements concerning Whitman's strong and unshakable optimism, see Walter Fuller Taylor, op. cit., p. 285; Basil De Selincourt, op. cit., p 222 ff.; John A. Symonds, op. cit., p. 92 ff.
In his prose works, he sometimes rose to the poetic eloquence and rhapsody of an inspired Hebrew prophet; and the spirit of this eloquence is indelibly written in the telling idioms, the vivid pictures, and the cleverly coined words of *Democratic Vistas*. With his impassioned and chastened expression came a less defiant attitude toward death and society and a more spiritual conception of the human soul than had been true of his ante-bellum point of view. Likewise, his attitude toward nature was somewhat altered during the Civil War period. Always a lover of nature, his earlier contacts with her were more like a selfish consumer than like a Christian interpreter. But, during the Civil War, he learned the sentiency of nature—her ability to teach, inspire, heal, and soothe.

However, though Whitman was basically the same democrat and nature lover in old age that he had been in his youth, many of his extreme ideals were strengthened and made more convincing by modification, subordination, and by a better sense of values. He, therefore, steadfastly, moved toward a kind of relativity and away from the absolutism of his 1850–1860 period. Consequently many of his ideas were altered and emphasis was shifted. For instance, he was convinced that law was necessary to the happiness of all; therefore, he no longer showed defiance to law, but knew that if democracy was to live, it must have a strong central government. With this altered attitude towards law, he called not for rebellion, but for the suppression of rebellion. Instead of urging the individual to live as a separate unit,
the Civil War taught him the necessity of living and working together. As he saw his fellowmen marching, fighting, and suffering together, he was deeply impressed with the unity of purpose and ideal which they represented. Hence Whitman, now seeing that absolute individualism could be an incumbrance to a practical democracy and to unity, taught nationalism instead.

Strengthening his faith in democracy, the Civil War also tremendously helped to strengthen his belief in the necessity of comradeship; and after the War, instead of the glorification of sexual relations, he glorified comradeship. The passion of man for woman now gave place to the passion of man for man, a passion which became both democratic and universal. Man not mere men was his study.

Moreover, in this thesis it has been observed that through suffering and self denial, Whitman learned the superiority of the spiritual to the material aspects of life. As a result, he no longer boastfully sang of himself, no longer was he arrogant and defiant, but in singing of the soul and of God, his life, as reflected in his writings, became chaste and sweet. Thus the Civil War and its horrible circumstances, in furnishing Whitman food for deep interpretation and in stirring his deep emotional nature, acted as agents which significantly hastened and mellowed his development and maturity. Due largely to these agents, Whitman finally evolved into a spiritually integrated personality and a more profound poet and writer of the soul. The facts and observations given in this thesis, therefore, seem to warrant the conclusion that the Civil War and its aftermath did not cause any radical change in the fundamental character of Whitman but were potent agents which helped to develop and mellow him as man and writer.

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1 It must not be forgotten that certain incidents and experiences concurrent with but not related to either the Civil War or to its effects played some part in the spiritual maturation of Whitman and in his deeper interpretation of life, literature, and relationships. The deaths of his brother, sister-in-law, and mother; his associations and correspondence with literary and brilliant men like William O'Connor, John Burroughs, John Huberly Ashton, Charles Eldridge, Alfred Tennyson, Algernon Swinburne, Edward Dowden, John A. Symonds, the two Rossetti's, and other distinguished English and American authors; his reading and the natural process of maturation irrespective of a great crisis--these inevitably played their parts too.
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