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WHITMAN AND SANDBURG

by

Irene Kuzminski

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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in
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1943

FOREWORD TO MISS KUZMINSKI'S THESIS

NOTE BY EXAMINER

In the typing of this thesis, proper indentation of run-over lines in the inserted quotations of poetry was not observed. As a consequence, it is not readily apparent (especially in free-verse examples) where a line of verse, as written by the poet in his own text, begins and ends. The reader of this thesis is accordingly advised not to copy or use the poetry quotations given here without verifying them in the texts of Whitman and Sandburg, references to which are given in the accompanying footnotes.

Morton D. Zabel

December 15, 1943

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to make a comparison of the poets Whitman and Sandburg in regard to the similarity of qualities in their prose and poetry and the forces that were instrumental in producing these qualities. First, the outstanding incidents in their lives will be considered in order to explain the likenesses of their characters and the resulting effects on their works of art.

A comparative study of the economic and social aspects of their respective eras will reveal a similarity of purpose and attitude in the works of both poets.

After a thorough consideration of these external influences, the dominant themes, especially democracy and humanity, will be explained and illustrated by citing corresponding examples from the prose and poetry of the two poets.

In addition, the similarity of the style, form, and language of the two writers will be analyzed, conclusively proving that Sandburg is the only contemporary poet, who consistently expresses, more than any other modern poet, the older poet's ideas and conceptions of a native, American style and diction.

After a summarization of the above factors governing the poets' lives and works, the differentiating characteristics will be enumerated and exemplified. In conclusion, their contributions

to American culture and their positions in American literature will be discussed with a view toward the future growth and development of native poetry.

Contents

Chapter I

Introduction; the historical, economic, and social backgrounds of Whitman's and Sandburg's eras as they influenced their experience and thought; a comparison of their lives; the effect on the character and quality of their works. Page 1-14

Chapter II

A comparative evaluation of the works of the writers in literary values and aesthetic attributes; the importance of their contributions to American literature; an estimate of the position and relationships held by the two authors among American writers. Page 15-24

Chapter III

A study of the basic principles underlying their prose and poetry; the outstanding elements of humanity, democracy and Americanism in them; the differences of approach to these themes. Page 25-60

Chapter IV

A comparison of the technical qualities and aspects in the poetry of Whitman and Sandburg; their metres and forms; irregularities of language and grammar; peculiar verbal expressions; etc. Page 61-90

Chapter V

A summary of the similarities found in the prose and poetry of the writers; enumeration of their opposing traits; possible influences of their works as a basis for future American literature. Page 91-103

CHAPTER I

During the thirties and forties when Leaves of Grass (1855) was being shaped in Whitman's mind, great changes, economic, social, and psychological, were evolving in the everyday life of America. Large increases in population and the growth of industrialism, due to the invention of the machine, were instrumental in transforming communities that were primarily agricultural, into rapidly growing cities replete with countless factories and business firms. The construction of the transcontinental railroad and the increased use of lakes, rivers, and canals helped to develop the spreading nationalism of the nation.

Politically, the new period had its beginning in 1828, when the rough westerner Andrew Jackson replaced the cultured presidents of the preceding era and succeeded in bringing the common people into power. In one generation, from 1830 to 1870, the country had changed from a provincial English colony into a young nation with a decided native character of strong individualism and a new and freer democracy. Traditional conventions were being disregarded and a new "unlimited democracy"¹ was rising. Noticeable historic events that influenced this transformation are as follows: the settlement of the West, the

¹Vernon Parrington, First Century of American Literature
p.441

California gold rush of 1849, the Mexican War, the Mormon adventure, the continued economic and political differences of sectional interests, the significant incidents leading up to the Civil War, the war itself and its unfortunate aftermath.

Consequently, these physical changes were immediately followed by radical social and psychological changes. A small yet powerful group of industrialists soon seized control of the government, maintained a monopoly over the resources of the country, and, in due time, accumulated great wealth through means just or unjust at the expense of the impoverished people who kept growing more destitute.

By 1870, the States had become "a vast engulfing plutocracy"² instead of the just democracy they professed to be. During President Grant's administration, corruption and political bribery reached their peak: all this was accepted in the name of democracy and freedom. Urban materialism overwhelmed any romantic and rural philosophy that may have held sway before this time.

In protest against this sordid commercialism, Whitman in his work sounded the theme of true democracy and proclaimed the importance of humanity and its rights over all physical possessions. But his message was not recognized and his book

²Vernon Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, p. 257.

was regarded as an oddity. The poet in his Democratic Vistas (1871) realized the injustices and weaknesses of democracy, but he reaffirmed his faith in this form of government and declared America the hope of the world.

In addition to these important changes at home, Whitman was deeply influenced by the theory of transcendentalism which arose in England as a result of the romantic era. The sources of this belief could be traced to Coleridge's prose, Taylor's translations of the Neo-Platonist classics and the teachings of Wright and Lane, English mystics. Frothingham defines transcendentalism as

...presupposing the immanence of divinity in instinct the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind.³

It restated the Neo-Platonist belief in the ability of man to perceive, beyond the sensual and physical phenomena, that man is essentially divine - an assumption completed by a belief in the "oneness" of nature. Reason may be transcended by the disciplined mind, cleansed of materialistic tendencies, with the result that ideal truths may be comprehended. Man must be considered as an individual, as a single independent being struggling for knowledge of God.

³Octavius Frothingham, quoted in The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800 - 1860 by Vernon Parrington, p. 379.

John Livingston Lowes traces its origins from early times with the convergance of the "theosophic mysticism of the Orient, and the more esoteric tenets of Judaism and Christianity"⁴ with the Platonic philosophy. It is claimed that this thought was adopted by the transcendentalists because it suited their temper and their interests. They were expressing an exalted and insurgent individualism in their sublimation of instinct and their persistence in the tenet of man's identity with the universe. Stressing individualism in reaction to the fixed religious creeds and social caste systems of the times, the followers of this theory included the mystics who were the extreme individualists. In America, as well as in Europe, they hoped to emphasize the creative and humanitarian attributes of society in preference to the excessive materialistic and commercial dispositions. America's chief propagator of this doctrine was Emerson who attracted many followers, among whom was Whitman. The poet based the philosophical thought underlying all of his poetry on the conception of the transcendentalists. These beliefs will be discussed in another chapter. But the country was too well on its way to material prosperity to heed the warnings and admonitions of any humanitarian, and continued in the same trend of aggregating wealth.

⁴Fred Pattee, New American Literature, p. 277.

The closing nineteenth century had brought with it a new West, the Spanish-American War in which Sandburg served the uninterrupted rise of industrial aristocrats, new inventions like the automobile, airplane, phonograph, cinema and electricity. The success of the Exposition held in Chicago (1892) brought out the importance of that city as a center of western culture, representing the new idea of greater freedom in democracy and challenging the old order of the east.

Great strides were made in the discoveries of science in chemistry and physics, as well as in the biological and mechanical fields. Creating a novel and more intense intellectual attitude, science reduced man from his exalted position to a mere cog in the machinery of economics and business. European aristocracy had its counterpart in the large commercial utilities that had monopolized public and private industries. Uncontrolled and unhampered by any legislation, they were mercilessly exploiting humanity for tremendous pecuniary profits. The feeling was one of disillusionment and pessimism concerning the power of democracy. Among the writers who began to condemn these social conditions in their works was Carl Sandburg (1878).

Like Whitman, Sandburg censures the greedy and powerful, who cause suffering and injustice among the underprivileged. The social theme is common to both writers, but is characterized by

bitterness and irony in Sandburg. However, this splendid physical progress in no way helped to enrich the native culture of America. From 1830 until the Civil War, almost all American poetry displayed European characteristics and the poets, though American born, were considered English provincial poets.

At the end of the century, Whitman was still declaring that only a new literature based on native background and setting could express the American democracy. The modern poetic movement dates from October, 1912, the date of the first number of Harriet Monroe's Poetry, A Magazine of Verse. Some excellent poetry had been published before this time, but the magazine centralized all efforts, and answered a demand for a means of expression. Sandburg received recognition as an outstanding poet when the magazine published his Chicago poem (1914) for the first time.

Besides the momentous public movements, certain influences in both poets' backgrounds were shaping their character and attitude toward life. The Quaker traits, inherited from his mother, instilled in Whitman belief in the Inner Light, or the intuition of the soul, self-respect, respect for all people because they may be in direct communication with God. From these convictions was derived his creed of comradeship and equality. In both his speeches and his writings, he repeatedly credits his Dutch ancestry for his physical attributes and for

his Quaker attitude. His hereditary love of the sea from which he claims, he first felt the roll and beat of poetry, he draws from his English ancestry.

Born at West Hills, Long Island, in 1819, a place of superior natural beauty, Whitman was impressed with the landscape and says:

The shores of this bay, winter and
summer and my doings there in early
life are woven all through
Leaves of Grass...⁵

The beauty of the countryside and all connected with it is revealed in the following selection:

The early lilacs become 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
sow's pink faint litter and the
mare's foal and the cow's calf
And the noisy brood of the barnyard
or the mire of the pond-side...⁶

Likewise, Sandburg describes the rolling plains and verdant prairies of the middle-west country surrounding his birthplace, Galesburg, Illinois. He eulogizes the pictorial scenes of his

⁵Walt Whitman, "Specimen Days" in Prose Works, p.13.

⁶Walt Whitman, "There Was a Child Went Forth" in Leaves of Grass, p. 119.

childhood:

I was born on the prairie and the
milk of its wheat, the red of its
clover, the eyes of its women,
gave me a song and a slogan. The
prairie sings to me in the forenoon,
and I know in the night I rest easy
in the prairie arms, on the prairie
heart...⁷

He expresses his devotion to this particular rural district
in a lyric passage:

I am the prairie, mother of men,
waiting.
O prairie mother, I am one of your
boys.
I have loved the prairie as a man
with a heart shot full of pain over
love.
Here I know I will hanker after
nothing so much as one more sunrise
or a sky moon of fire doubled to a
river moon of water...⁸

Both poets, born of poor, hard-working, and unlearned
parents, were forced to leave school at an early age to earn
their own livelihoods. Whitman in New York and Sandburg in
Chicago consorted with the laboring classes, befriended them, and
sympathized with them in their misfortune and poverty. As a
result, the city, and life in all its aspects, is pictured vividly
and strikingly in their poems. Sandburg's volume Chicago Poems

⁷Carl Sandburg, "Prairie" in Cornhuskers p.3.

⁸Ibid

(1914) is devoted to descriptions of people and places, of experiences and observations in a great city. The opening selection discloses the inspiration felt by the poet of a brutal and grimy city:

Chicago

Hog Butcher for the World,
 Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
 Player with Railroads and the Nation's
 Freight Handler;
 Stormy, husky, brawling,
 City of the Big Shoulders...⁹

The writers mingled with mixed masses of humanity, and became convinced mankind must be united in brotherhood. This constant close relationship with the common people intensified their already present democratic tendencies.

In their western travels, they received the grandeur and beauty of the vast stretches of land, and reflected these impressions in their poetry.

The field of journalism appealed to them; Whitman edited newspapers at Huntington, Brooklyn, and New York; while Sandburg joined the editorial staff of Lombard College, and, later, of some Chicago and Milwaukee journals. As writers, they became interested in reform; Whitman's by-words were abolitionism and temperance; while Sandburg preached justice for the poverty-stricken and exploited masses of people who, he believed, were

⁹Carl Sandburg, "Chicago" in Chicago Poems, p. 3.

the victims of an unjust and biased economic system. As a member of the Socialist-Democratic party of Wisconsin, he made speeches and wrote pamphlets. In Egoism, he exhibits traces of his vehement individualistic philosophy:

I want the respect of intelligent men but I will choose for myself the intelligent. I love art but I decide for myself what is art. I adore beauty but only my own soul shall tell me what is beauty. I worship God but I define and describe God for myself. I am an individual. The pleasure of my own heart shall be first to inform me when I have done good work...¹⁰

Both Whitman and Sandburg lived through periods of war, which acted as a stimulus for the production of poetry in general. Though the younger poet objects strenuously to and ardently deplures human slaughter, portraying war only as a means to an end, Whitman, who as a hospital attendant in a Washington hospital for three years, witnessed bodily and mental suffering at their worst, overlooks the elements of suffering and distress and glories in the security of the Union. His experiences resulted in the publication of Drum - Taps (1866). He said:

Without those three or four years
and the experiences they gave,

¹⁰Carl Sandburg, as quoted in Tendencies in Modern American Poetry by Amy Lowell, pp. 209-10.

Leaves of Grass would not now be existing...^{10a}

But the younger poet, endowed with a greater realism, becomes bitter in his denunciation of war and offers no compromise in his war poems.

As newspaper writers, the poets gained a growing interest in social tendencies as well as in individual people. Sandburg was assigned to labor matters because of his thorough knowledge of conditions pertaining to them. He compiled a series of articles entitled Training Workers to Be Careful, including an investigation of safety appliances used by workers in factories. He held interviews with the employers of labor, and attended conferences between them and their employees. They appeared as the "millionaires" of his earliest poems in which he speaks of them with mixed feelings of disdain and resentment. His articles included comments on strikes, boycotts, and the various grievances of innumerable factory workers. Sympathetically inclined toward the oppressed, he investigated the local race riots and published a collection of observations under the name The Chicago Race Riots (1919).

As a motion picture critic for a Chicago newspaper, he had the opportunity to study the psychological effect of the cinema

^{10a}Walt Whitman quoted in American Literature Since 1870 by Fred Pattee, p. 181.

on the public mind. Again as a reporter for the stockyards district of Chicago, he saw the poverty and the almost inhuman conditions under which forgotten masses of people lived. He said:

I was told that seven times as many children die in the stockyards district as in Hyde Park, a little more than a mile away. I seemed to feel that I had the sort of authentic incident that Poe might have made use of. Out of that idea. I wrote:
The Right to Grief...¹¹

In this poem, he chooses to weep over the dead child of a stockyards hunkie rather than the dead daughter of a millionaire:

He ends:

I have a right to feel my throat
choke about this.
You take your grief and I mine -see?
Tomorrow there is no funeral and the
hunkie goes back to his job sweeping
blood off the floor at a dollar
seventy cents a day.
All he does all day long is keep on
shoving hog blood ahead of him with
a broom...¹²

The two poets were deeply affected by the personality of Lincoln. At his death, Whitman composed four beautiful odes,

¹¹Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits, p. 49.

¹²Carl Sandburg, "The Right to Grief" in Chicago Poems
p. 26.

eulogizing the Great Emancipator: "Oh Captain! My Captain!" is familiar to every school child. The Lincoln Burial Hymn, "When Lilacs Last in the Door - Yard Bloom'd" represents the poet in his best form. "Hushed Be the Camps To-night" possesses beauty and force in perfect balance. "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" reveals the master poet with the power to fortify and inspire, rarely found in other poetry.

For Sandburg, Lincoln is symbolic of the new America, and especially of the Middle West. The foremost biography of Lincoln, The Prairie Years (1926), The War Years (1941), and Storm Over the Land (1942), represent years of investigation, and of the gathering of direct information and historical data from sources authoritative and unauthoritative. The poet's individual technique, his casual manner in relating incidents, his presentation of people, including the martyred president, with their weaknesses and faults serve to make the book the best biography ever written of the great democrat.

Numerous biographies have been composed about Whitman, many of which are prejudiced in his favor and do not reveal the true man. He conceded having written much material, later published under the names of his loyal and faithful friends, who were impressed by and remained under the influence of his magnetic personality.

The incidents in his life, preceding the first issue of

Leaves of Grass, have been carefully omitted. In his later years, he spoke freely of his life to his editors, but little is divulged of the really significant periods. Fond of publicity, he managed to with-hold personal facts, imparting only those that appeared suitable to him. No explanation can be produced for the transition from ordinary poems and stories to an outstanding piece of literature. This problem is considered as "most baffling and the most fascinating"¹³ in American literature. An example of this veiled secrecy is his intimation in a letter that he was the father of six children, none of whom were ever seen, even by his closest friends. Urged for an explanation, he promised to offer facts, but died before he ever kept his promise.

Conclusively, Whitman and Sandburg respond in the same manner to the powerful ever-changing forces about them. The influences in their lives, strangely alike as to background and experience, served to mold their characters and their future writings. In an America of competitive industry and physical values, the two men have united in laying the foundation for a native American culture.

¹³Fred Pattee, A History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 166.

CHAPTER II

Up to the Civil War, American poetry, modelled after English forms, exhibited no native characteristics. The war stirred the national consciousness, and created a new American spirit which the poets, trained in the European tradition, failed to understand and found impossible to express. The literature was dominated by a limited group of New England college men, who spent much of their time in libraries or in Europe translating old classics. Only after Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad was published, was Europe abandoned as the center of American culture. The soft sentimentalism, characteristic of the writings of the period, appeared totally inadequate as a means of expression for the new and lusty country's needs. The war and the post-war period created a greater democratic attitude. Congress, by appropriating land in every state to establish colleges, extended education to the masses of people, who were the real representatives of the American nation. The previously segregated sections of the land revealed strange people and manners, vastly different from the New England type. Whitman, the prophet, alone voiced the spirit of the new country, even before the war, in his Leaves of Grass. Emerson proclaimed the book as prophetic, and in a letter to the poet called it "the most extraordinary piece of wit and

wisdom"...¹⁴ but the press received it with stern comment and criticism. The people for whom it was written would not read it. Whitman, to-day, is the most stimulating influence in contemporary poetry. Yet Lowell, an exemplary American critic, confessed that, though he read the book three times, he couldn't see anything in it. Only recently has this change in attitude taken place, occurring contemporaneously with the revival of American poetry.

Perhaps the strongest detriment that thwarted American writers from expressing themselves freely was the deeply-rooted New England puritanism. This rigid insistence on pure, moral standards developed first into a "religious tyranny, then into a literary dictatorship and finally into the orgies of a virulent and inhibiting comstockery..."¹⁵ a state that, only now, are we relinquishing. This continual sermonizing and moralizing prevented any men of talent from perceiving life in its natural setting with its disturbances and reactions, thereby establishing false standards and destroying the real values of truth and actual fact. Overcoming this handicap, Whitman freed the long-

¹⁴Walt Whitman quoted in In Re Walt Whitman ed by Horace Traubel et al. p. 188.

¹⁵Louis Untermeyer, The New Era in American Poetry, p. 7.

stifled emotions, and began the trend toward unconfined expression of things American by a method realistic yet imaginative. He liberated the American poet from an enforced submissiveness to a traditional culture and from a fervent regard for a superficial poetic past. He constructed a vigorous human world, as against an artificial world. By doing this, he started a whole line of modern American poets. His aim was to write of all things pertaining to humanity in large rhythms reminiscent of the powerful forces of nature rather than in artificial metrics.

As a result, American poetry became more national and is now becoming international in scope. In a land, where practicality and scientific materialism in the mind have united to crush any human aspirations, Whitman recalls the cosmic wonder and superior majesty of the universe and the eternal mysteries of life and death. He was able to take the ordinary and common place and, with his touch of bright personality, add grandeur and meaning to whatever he chose to write about. Due to Whitman, American poetry has swung back to reality, vigor and strength and has become democratic for the first time. Appreciated and encouraged by small groups of art patrons up to this time, it finally began to express itself in democratic language and form. This principle unites all the American poets who followed Whitman. This democratic spirit and thought required verse

forms adequate for its varying tempo of strong emotion. The old poet is credited with starting the recent free verse movement, considered by many to be his first and most obvious contribution to poetic art. He searched for a personal rhythm for the expression of his democratic thoughts.

Another service was his rejection of clichés, including antiquated diction and poetic phrasing. But his spiritual service to art was his reaffirmation of the ancient notion of the poet as prophet, and of poetry as a religion expressing rapturous faith.

Much of the pleasure derived from reading modern poetry is due to the fact, that the old poet encouraged the use of the most effective of languages for the interpretation of poetic thoughts, namely, the language of the people. There is beauty in the casual and the occasional when comprehended with natural fervor and original ability. The poet challenged the insufferable prudery of the puritans, and astounded the classicists of his era by adopting themes from the crudities and raw experiences of the common people. For the first time, a poet voiced the emotions of an enormous and heterogenous mass of races. In the American Primer, in which he explains his purpose in writing Leaves of Grass, and also clarifies some beliefs about himself, he maintains that the book was, primarily, a tremendous language experiment in the direction of democratic poetry. He said,

It is an attempt to give the spirit,
 the body and the man, new words,
 new potentialities of speech - an
 American, a cosmopolitan (for the
 best of America is the best
 cosmopolitanism) range of expres-
 sion...¹⁶

He added:

The Americans are going to be the
 most fluent and melodious-voiced
 people in the world - the most
 perfect users of words... The new
 times, the new people, the new
 vista need a tongue according -
 yes, and what is more they will
 have such a tongue...¹⁷

Whitman's use of expressions, appropriately suited to his thoughts, resulted in a great power, and it is due to him that the modern poet has been liberated and encouraged to follow his own initiative in the mode of conveying his sentiments. In general, the modern poet is free to respond and react to the miraculous world about him. The conglomerate mixture of races, the wonders of countless scientific discoveries, the advance of unrestricted thought, and the difficulties on the way to a perfect democracy, with the beauty and brutality of the present-day world, stimulate him and mold his poetry into novel forms with hitherto unknown thought processes and ideas. The poet of today, even though he

¹⁶Walt Whitman quoted in The New Era in American Poetry by Louis Untermeyer, p. 13.

¹⁷Ibid.

attempts to reproduce some formulated, lyrical poetry of the classical age, finds it increasingly difficult to escape the influences of his times. Yet these poets have no desire to escape, and find the world fascinating, even though disgusting and offensive, at times.

The representative poet of today and the chief figure in mid-western poetry is Carl Sandburg. Uniting the interests and characteristics of many writers of the present era, he is regarded by many critics as the chief figure in American poetry since Whitman. That Whitman is his master is corroborated in Sandburg's estimate of him:

Walt Whitman is the only established epic poet of America. He is the single American figure that both American and European artists and critics most often put in a class with Shakespeare, Dante and Homer. He is the one American writer that Emerson, Burroughs, John Muir, Edward Carpenter and similar observers enter in their lists as having a size in history and an importance of utterance that places him with Socrates, Confucius, Lao Tse and the silver-grey men of the half-worlds who left the Bhagavad Gita and writings known most often as sacred... Leaves of Grass is a book to be owned, kept, loaned, fought over, and read till it is dog-eared all over...¹⁸

Rough, class conscious, and impetuously humanitarian yet

¹⁸Carl Sandburg, "Walt Whitman" in World Review Vol. III (1926) p. 57.

kindly and sensitive, he follows the old poet's suggestion as to choice of theme and form. He creates colorful and fanciful clear-cut pictures of Chicago scenes, ranging from the lovely descriptions of lake Michigan to the grim, harsh shadows of steel factories. He perfects the beauty of the lake with:

The living lighted skyscrapers
stand
Spotting the blue dusk with
checkers of yellow...¹⁹

He meditates casually in "Washington Monument!"

The stone goes straight
A lean swimmer dives into night sky,
Into half-moon mist.

Two trees are coal black.
This is a great white ghost between.
It is cool to look at.
Strong men, strong, women, come here.

Eight years is a long time
To be fighting all the time.

The republic is a dream
Nothing happens unless first a dream.²⁰

Contrasting this tranquil mood, he changes to a barbaric attitude in "Wilderness"²¹ where he enumerates the animals in his breast, and ends with:

¹⁹Carl Sandburg, "The Windy City" in Slabs of the Sunburnt West p. 3.

²⁰Op. cit., p. 18.

²¹Carl Sandburg, "Wilderness" in Cornhuskers, p. 40.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie
 inside my ribs under my long head,
 under my red-valve heart... and I
 got something else: it is a man-child
 heart, a woman-child heart: it is a
 father and mother and lover: it came
 from God-knows-where; it is going to
 God-knows-where - For I am the keeper
 of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing
 and kill and work: I am a pal of the
 world: I came from the wilderness...

In "Galoots"²² he practices Whitman's precepts, yet with a
 harsh crudity unlike the Whitman spirit:

Galoots, you hairy, hankering,
 Snousle on the bones you eat, chew
 at the gristle and lick the last of
 it.
 Grab off the bones in the paws of
 other galoots... hook your claws in
 their sleazy mouths - snap and run...

Galoots fat with too much, galoots
 lean with too little, galoot
 millions and millions, snousle and
 snicker on, plug your exhausts, hunt
 your snacks of fat and lean, grab
 off yours...

Nothing in Whitman reflects the class hatred of the younger
 poet expressed in such denunciatory terms: his democracy had a
 more rational and better balanced attitude. "Gargoyle"²³
 displays Sandburg's radical tendency and his antipathy towards
 capitalists:

²²Ibid., p. 27

²³Ibid., p. 128

I saw a mouth jeering. A smile of
melted red iron ran over it. Its
laugh was full of nails rattling.
It was a child's dream of a mouth...

However, like Whitman, the poet is sensitive to spiritual feelings, to reflections on mysticism, and to the strong forces in nature. But the rise of the Middle West in American literature means the addition of vigor, vitality, and strength, due to the brutal realities of common themes. Secondly, it means the growth of uncultured and rough Americanism. The new poets, intent on establishing a modern industrial democracy in which tolerance and justice are supreme, emphasize the America of the common man, whose cause must be recognized, if the greatness of the country is to endure. Morally, the poets desire greater freedom. The poetry is virile, human, and national, yet some of it is harsh, aspiring, and revolutionary. In the adulation of force, and the appeal of might and power, in the ardent desire for a righteous democracy, whether social or economic, the new poetry finds its outlet. The literature will be greater when the crudities and the vehement language have time to settle down to a more controlled and refined expression.

In conclusion, the force and meaning of Leaves of Grass and of the majority of Sandburg's works are obvious and their influence on American literature is apparent, but it is difficult to ascribe any final positions to the two poets. Whether they are pioneer writers in a new field, whether they are among the

greatest poets of all time, or whether they picture their times, are questions of impossible solution at the present time. The future will give the poets their deserved positions. With the years, respect for Whitman grows and he is being better understood and appreciated; the same may be true of Sandburg.

The increase of interest in poetry, and its enormous revival may be preparing the way for the master poet. The form may become freer by introducing a greater variety in the number and length of syllables in the foot, in rhythmic phrasing, in tempo, in movement, and the many requisites of poetry. Scientific research is taking place in the laboratories of the nation's universities to discover new possibilities in speech rhythms, and to transform poetry into a scientific art. But the results of mechanizing poetry seem very doubtful because scientific treatment of man's expression of his inner emotions must be a failure.

CHAPTER III

In stating his purpose in writing Leaves of Grass, Whitman proclaims, as his one and continuous theme, the religion of humanity - an ideal of fellowship among men, with no consideration for birth, class or education. Secondly, he states the destiny of "These States", the great republic which he predicts as coming to perfection in the future. Thirdly, he portrays a representative of this democracy in himself, as a poet with a deep sympathy for the condition of all mankind. Finally, he decides to lay a foundation for a new era in literature by introducing new forms and sources on which to construct this literature. Believing that great literature expresses the thought of a nation and is indicative of its era, and that, at the same time, it is dominated by a definite spiritual quality, Whitman, perceiving no representatives of such a poetry as he is describing in the American scene, attempted to be the first poet to write it. Whitman thus announced himself as not only a prophet of a new age of enlightenment and love, but a prophet of a new spirit and quality in poetry itself.

Sandburg is Whitman's disciple in following the leadership of these two principles. Like the old poet, he has developed contemporaneous American themes, that include the land human labor, great cities, powerful industries, and the ordeal and

aspirations of the common man. Both poets portray men and women as they are, realistically, with all their faults, virtues or weaknesses, without glorification of the privileged set, who wield power because of class and position. Both poets have dedicated themselves to developing, in its fullest sense and possibilities, the Art of Democracy. Democratic Art requires the following condition: it must have freedom of choice as to style, form and subject, observing the important principle that everything in nature and man is poetical when comprehended by an artist who can feel and interpret it.

The two poets have pursued this course in that they draw no lines and make no distinctions; the virtuous and the criminal, the wealthy and the impoverished, the exalted and the condemned are the objects of their attention. They found their material and their inspiration in the America with which they came in direct contact. The physical and social America is the background of their poetry. They record American life in all its forms and phases, including the many occupations, its desire for equality, the divinity of man, and the supremacy of native American traits. One of the chief reasons why they are universal in their sympathies is that they have assimilated within themselves a point of view concerning the cosmos that is so significant in giving a spiritual harmony to all the essential parts of the universe.

Regarding the personality of the author himself as the central unity of the book around whom is constructed a sequence of incidents, complete and incomplete, the poet endows it with the quality of mysticism. To him, the earth is celestial and all pertaining to it must be considered as such.

I believe a leaf of grass is no
less than the journey-work of the
stars,
And the pis-mire is equally
perfect, and a grain of sand, and
the egg of the wren,
And a tree toad is a chef-d'oeuvre
for the highest,
And the running blackberry would
adorn the parlors of heaven...²⁴

Whitman repeatedly identifies himself with all persons and things in his conception of unity of the universe.

Sandburg expresses this same thought when he says,

Child of water, child of air fin
thing and wing thing...I have lived
in many half worlds myself... and
so I know you...²⁵

His continued puzzled questioning reveals no feeling of security or positiveness. In Slabs of the Sunburnt West, he meditates on nature, God and man with wonder and awe but in the end, he remains uncertain, perplexed, and bewildered. The

²⁴Walt Whitman, "Walt Whitman" in Leaves of Grass, p. 39

²⁵Carl Sandburg, "Flying Fish" in Smoke and Steel, p. 189.

recognition of the divinity of all things causes Whitman to feel a deep sympathy for the lowest and the most destitute members of society, the poverty-stricken, the slaves, the diseased, and even the degraded: he invites all men to his feast:

I will not have a single person
 slighted or left away,
 The kept-woman, sponger, thief
 are hereby invited,
 The heavy lipp'd slave is invited,
 the venerealee is invited
 There shall be no difference be-
 tween them and the rest...²⁶

His friend shall be a condemned man:

He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate,
 he shall be one condemn'd by others
 for deeds done...²⁷

His compassion extends to his degraded friends with whom he identifies himself:

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...²⁸

In like manner, when he says,

Not till the sun excludes you do I
 exclude you...²⁹

²⁶Walt Whitman, "Walt Whitman" in Leaves of Grass, p. 25.

²⁷Ibid., p. 258

²⁸Ibid., p. 318

²⁹Ibid., p. 319

He includes the woman of the streets with sincere poetic sympathy.

True to his creed, he addresses the decent, rich people of the North when they approved the Fugitive Slave Law:

I am the hounded slave, I wince at
the bite of dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack
and again crack the marksmen...³⁰
and,

I do not ask the wounded person how
he feels, I myself become the
wounded person...³¹

Not only must man be treated as a brother but he must be given all the advantages of the arts and education. All ideas, poems, music are for him, the average man, portrayed by the poet's personality. The poet is convinced that in this life, the soul is connected with the body, so that it reflects the advantages or disadvantages of the body. In this life, it is the link between the soul and the outer world. The physical body is of mystic value to Whitman as the divine holder of the human soul. Deeply impressed by revealing scientific discoveries regarding the evolution of this earth, he concludes that man, of necessity, has within himself links of the outside world. He traces the development of man out of the elements in

³⁰Ibid., p. 48.

³¹Ibid., p. 49.

his poems. He bases his philosophical thought on the conception that a close relationship exists between personality and external objects. Far from being an egotist, Whitman is merely proclaiming the superiority of all humanity over all material substance when he sings the song of "Myself."

Whitman's religion and philosophy may be summarized by a study of his poem "Chanting the Square Deific"³², in which he analyzes the "Divine Ideal." The "Square Deific" is what the individual man thinks and feels, when proceeding from within the "I" of the poet's philosophy, thus forming his idea of the universal spirit. The poem is fundamental in comprehending the poet's beliefs. He considers four conceptions as vital to his "Divine Ideal." The first is that of relentless destiny and unavoidable truth. He says:

...I am Time modern as any,
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing
righteous judgments...³³

He reaffirms his beliefs in the conclusive results derived from the scientific investigation of matter and fact. The second side represents consolation and healing, best represented by the Lord Christ, Hermes and Hercules:

Many times have I been rejected
taunted, put in prison, and crucified,
and many times shall be again,

³²Walt Whitman, "The Square Deific" in Leaves of Grass, p.425.

³³Ibid.

All the world have I given up for
my dear brothers' and sisters' sake,
for the soul's sake...³⁴

His third conception represents revolt and evil as necessary and indispensable. The poet believes that dissension and misunderstanding are part of the fabric of the human soul; that Law founded on science, kindness, and evil are derived from an everlasting spiritual source, or "Santa Spirita". He draws the conclusion, that man, whether worthy or unworthy, is a part of the universe and, therefore, in his unrestricted and impassioned optimism, is to be regarded with love and admiration due to a divinity. He completes the square with the element of truth, "the solid, the most solid"³⁵ unifying all things and forming the basis for his three preceding conceptions. Thus the Square Deific constitutes his idea of religion, which is identified as "the Cosmic Enthusiasm, the day of a new spiritual day."³⁶

Confident and secure in his strict belief that man is linked to the universe in many different ways, Whitman philosophizes that nothing on earth is doomed to complete annihilation. He merely reiterates the great scientific truth of the present age, the Law of the Conservation of Energy,

³⁴Ibid., p. 426.

³⁵Ibid., p. 427.

³⁶John A. Symonds, Essays Speculative and Suggestive, p.48.

implying that the destruction of an atom of energy transforms it to another form, without loss. His optimistic attitude is apparent when he says:

I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time...³⁷

He repeats this thought of immortality, based on philosophical knowledge and scientific conviction, and, reinforced by his own personal faith, he rejoices in many of his poems at the prospect of death.

The "Death Carol"³⁸ in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd" typifies this delight of the poet at the approach of inevitable death:

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

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects
and knowledge curious.
And for love, sweet love - But praise!
praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-
enfolding Death.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves -
over the myriad fields, and the
prairies wide;

³⁷Walt Whitman, "Walt Whitman" in Leaves of Grass, p. 27

³⁸Ibid., p. 410.

Over the dense - pack'd cities all,
and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with
joy to thee, O Death!...

Sandburg discloses none of this cheerful philosophy. His outlook is pessimistic and he sees nothing beyond this life. All beauty, as well as life, is transient. The poet admits its certain destruction and reveals a feeling of sadness when he says:

...cried over beautiful things,
knowing no beautiful thing lasts...³⁹

But death fascinates him and is soothing and gratifying:

Death is a nurse mother with big arms.
'Twon't hurt you at all; its your
time now; you just need a long sleep,
child; what have you had anyhow
better than sleep?...⁴⁰

Yet, joy and happiness are attainable only on this earth when the common people become cognizant of the sacred duties of citizenship:

If the working people knew the platitudes of politics as they know the intricacies of base-ball, the kingdom of heaven would fall through the sky and settle impalpably on the earth like a vast airship...⁴¹

³⁹Carl Sandburg, "Autumn Movement" in Cornhuskers, p. 16.

⁴⁰Carl Sandburg, "Death Snips Proud Men" in Smoke and Steel., p. 60.

⁴¹Carl Sandburg quoted in Tendencies in Modern American Poetry by Amy Lowell, p. 210

The poet pictures a world in which materialistic forces and competitive business wield the supreme power over human souls, a condition which disturbs him deeply. In "Happiness"⁴² he proves that joy of life is unknown to learned men and famous executives, yet a few simple people at a picnic discern its character. In "Fellow-Citizens"⁴³ a maker of musical instruments "had it all over" Chicago's millionaires and boisterous politicians:

Anyway he is the only Chicago
citizen I was jealous of that day...

Thus is evolved the fundamental underlying principle of democracy in the works of both writers. While Whitman is convinced that humanity is sacred and must be regarded with respect and devotion, a doctrine proceeding from his belief in the unity of the universe, Sandburg concludes that democracy and humanitarianism must be practiced on this earth because of the futility of death. In this distinctive manner of pointing towards democracy through death, he conveys the thought that since all people are leveled by death, it would be sensible to practice kindness and democracy in life. He describes John Brown's grave as

⁴²Carl Sandburg, "Happiness" in Chicago Poems, p. 20

⁴³Ibid., p. 47.

Roam for Gettysburg, Wilderness
Chickamauga on a six foot stage of
dust...⁴⁴

Huntington, the deceased railroad magnate, "sleeps in a house six feet long..."⁴⁵ dreaming of ten thousand men saying, "Yes, sir;" while Blithery, one of the ten thousand, also sleeps in a similar house and dreams of answering, "Yes, sir" to Huntington. Rank and position hold no meaning in death.

The "Illinois Farmer"⁴⁶ must be buried with respect in the same prairie with whose winds he struggled so laboriously. He closes:

The same wind will now blow over the
place here where his hands must
dream of Illinois corn...

Each man must be valued as an individual, and each one must be acknowledged his place. Tombs hold the bodies of Lincoln, Grant, and even the beautiful Pocahontas yet

Take any streetful of people buy-
ing clothes and groceries, cheer-
ing a hero or throwing confetti
and blowing ten horns - tell me
if the lovers are losers - tell
me if any get more than the lovers-
in the dust - in the cool tombs.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Carl Sandburg, "Old Oswatomie" in Cornhuskers, p. 125.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 120

Aside from their humanitarian belief based on scientific deductions, the two poets display a deep sympathy for the poor and unfortunate. Whitman possessed an inherent love of man, while Sandburg writes so effectively of the difficult struggles of the lower classes with whom he mingled for many years. By definition, the true poet reflects the spiritual life of his times but, conscious of injustice and evil, he, at times, writes in protest against the cruelties of modern civilization. He feels pity for the laborer who toils daily with no other prospect except continuous work, filth, and privation. The harsh city with its brutal methods destroying beauty and crushing human souls saddens him. His sympathy includes the beggars, who find happiness in such little things, and, likewise, the profligate rich, who build useless palatial residences, organize powerful business corporations, and leave fortunes to be used for the care of their tombs. A fence is built around a stone house to ward off unwanted people, yet

Passing through the bars and over
the steel points will go nothing
except Death and the Rain and
To-morrow...⁴⁸

At times, Sandburg's feeling becomes so bitter at the unfairness of social conditions that his writings carry tones of satire and irony. Yet, he satirizes individuals only in their

⁴⁸Carl Sandburg, "The Fence" in Chicago Poems, p. 32.

official capacities, not as human beings. He employs violent slang in addressing a hypocritical evangelist, questioning his right to speak of Jesus:

You come along...tearing^{*} your shirt.-
yelling about Jesus
Where do you get that stuff?
What do you know about Jesus?⁴⁹

Describing the burial of the unknown soldier, he scorns and ridicules important officials and high-ranking personages.

Ironic scorn is revealed in "Soup"⁵⁰

I saw a famous man eating soup.
I say he was lifting a fat broth
Into his mouth with a spoon.
His name was in the newspaper
that day
Spelled out in tall black headlines
And thousands of people were talk-
ing about him.

When I saw him
He sat bending his head over a plate
Putting soup in his mouth with a
spoon...

The poet directs his social satire against communities as well as against individuals. Kalamazoo City represents the cities of the country, with all their coarseness and vulgarity.

The sins of Kalamazoo

...are neither scarlet nor crimson.
The sins of Kalamazoo are a convict

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 61

⁵⁰Carl Sandburg, "Soup" in Smoke and Steel, p. 35.

gray, a dishwater drab...⁵¹
 and
 Kalamazoo kisses a hand to some-
 thing far-off.
 We're here because we're here is
 the song of Kalamazoo...⁵²

is typical of a big city.

There is good in all the people who inhabit these great cities, the poet is certain. He cites the case of the professional dynamiter, with whom he dines, who never mentions his occupation, and who prefers to be remembered as a man loving children and laughter. He reveals the tragedy of a man whose official work is destroying his really human tendencies in "The Hangman at Home."⁵³

Bitterness is the keynote of a poem in which he chooses his right to grieve over the death of a child of a stockyard's hunky than over the death of a millionaire's child. He has been criticized for this attitude, and branded a propagandist for this biased position, but only an individual, who had experienced this hopeless poverty, dared speak in this manner. The poet explains:

...William Stanley Braithwaite
 talks about my propaganda. Even
 it were propaganda, could he not
 recognize the defeated artist soul
 crying out against these wrecks,

⁵¹Ibid., p. 49.

⁵²Ibid., p. 50

⁵³Ibid., p. 47

these misshapen hulks of houses;
 huge ugly buildings that he has to
 pass day by day, the output of a
 purely utilitarian age that has no
 beauty, no joy in it - buildings so
 hopeless that you have to see them
 only at dusk or by moonlight to get
 any poetry out of them...⁵⁴

His sympathy becomes more inclusive in his later book, The People Yes (1936). Now it is no longer individuals and communities, but whole masses of people on whom injustice is being inflicted:

The people, yes - sold and sold again
 for losses and regrets - for gains,
 for slow advances,
 for a dignity of deepening roots...⁵⁵

In characteristic violent language, he denounces the perpetrators of one kind of injustice:

What is to be said of those rare and
 suave swine who pay themselves a fat
 swag of higher salaries in the same
 year they pay stockholders nothing,
 cutting payrolls in wage reductions
 and layoffs?...⁵⁶

Man is entitled to earn his living, yet many men are deprived of the right to work because

Stocks are property, yes.
 Bonds are property, yes.

⁵⁴Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits, p. 51.

⁵⁵Carl Sandburg, The People Yes, p. 218.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 268.

Machines, land, buildings are
property, yes.
A job is property
no, nix, nah, nah...!57

In comparison, the difference between Leaves of Grass and
The People, Yes is

primarily a difference between a
visionary imagination and a realistic
one, between a prophet, who deals
in the racial and social aspects of
humanitarianism and a historian who
handles the specific facts of
industrial life and labor...58

Both poets extend their humanitarian element to wars.
Sandburg portrays the sufferings of soldiers wounded in battle
with an undercurrent of bitterness. The dying soldier is just
one of those

...Sixteen million men chosen for
shining teeth,
Sharp eyes, hard legs
And a running of young warm blood
in their wrists...59

whose fate the poet deploras. His "War Poems" (1914-15)
justify no war, and picture it as a means of slaughtering
innocent humanity. The unknown soldier is

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 77.

⁵⁸Morton D. Zabel, Literary Opinion in America, pp. 410-411.

⁵⁹Carl Sandburg, "Killers" in Chicago Poems, p. 85.

The boy nobody knows the name of -
 The buck private - the unknown
 soldier -
 The doughboy who dug under and died
 When they told him to - that's him.⁶⁰

Whitman spent three years as a hospital attendant, witnessing the agony of wounded and dying soldiers. During this time, he made six hundred visits or tours in the hospital camp, and comforted about 100,000 maimed and suffering men. Sometimes he slept or watched there several nights in succession, ministering to their spiritual and physical wants, serving Northerner as well as Southerner. Despite his direct contact with the horrors of war which he depicts in Specimen Days, he evinces no particular bitterness or partiality toward any class of people.

When a national monument had been erected at Salisbury, North Carolina, to mark the spot where about 12,000 soldiers were interred in trenches, he questions:

...but what visible monument can
 ever fittingly commemorate that
 spot?...⁶¹

Depressing as may be his heart-rending descriptions presented by the poet in his diary, military displays and rousing parades stir and inspire him. One of these demonstrations in Washington on June 29, 1863, he designates as "the most

⁶⁰Carl Sandburg, "And So Today," in Slabs of the Sunburnt West, p. 20.

⁶¹Walt Whitman, "Specimen Days" in Prose Works, p. 80.

inspiring of all war's shows...⁶²

Human suffering he minimizes for the sake of the future of "These States." Military power is a necessity for the greatness of the United States, but, he claims, that efficient organization by the government is still lacking. The poet contradicts himself when he fails to justify his acceptance of military might and prowess with the pitiful misery of the soldiers and the civilian population. Sandburg exhibits this inconsistency when he glories in man-made cities with their towering sky-scrappers, yet pities the lot of the poor masses who have made possible their existence. Fundamentally, the plight of suffering mankind affects both poets deeply, and they plead for brotherhood and equality which, they are confident, must come in the future. Social and economic ills will disappear when men regard each other as brothers and equals.

The destiny of America as a great nation depends not on material wealth but, necessarily, on the character of the people who constitute the nation. The people possess great power, but they do not realize this fact as yet. Temporarily swindled and exploited, they "move in a fine thin smoke, the people yes..."⁶³ Abolishment of class distinction, and the realization that men

⁶²Ibid., p. 39.

⁶³Carl Sandburg, The People Yes, p. 22.

are equal by God, and "belong to the same big family..."⁶⁴ will make the ideal nation. Sandburg employs God and Lincoln to disprove of class and race discrimination. Lincoln comprehended "the feel of the American dream"⁶⁵ and argues that, if God made one set of men to do all the eating, he would have given them only mouths. Another class, that did all the work, would possess only hands. But, all the people are made alike and are entitled to the same terms. Whitman professes this uniformity:

By God! I will accept nothing which
all cannot have their counterpart
of on the same terms..."⁶⁶

and Sandburg repeats in almost the same words:

What I ask for myself, I want you
to have on the same terms. We are
made of the same stuff. We are
going the same way..."⁶⁷

The great humanitarian Lincoln is revered by both writers. Whitman saw him in Washington and describes him "as the commonest man"⁶⁸ with a deep, latent sadness in the expression"⁶⁹

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 57.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 137

⁶⁶Walt Whitman, "Walt Whitman" in Leaves of Grass, p. 31.

⁶⁷Carl Sandburg, quoted in Tendencies in Modern American Poetry by Amy Lowell, p. 212.

⁶⁸Walt Whitman, "Specimen Days" in Prose Works, p. 43.

⁶⁹Ibid.

in his eyes. After his death, he offered some comments as to his personal estimate of the martyred president. He contended that, as a product for future American biography, he is "the greatest, best, most characteristic, artistic moral personality".⁷⁰ He was not faultless, however, but his character showed "honesty, goodness, shrewdness, conscience"⁷¹ and, an as yet hardly-known trait of Unionism. He predicted the immortality of his name as the saviour of the Union, and that respect for him will increase with time. All Americans, who venerate their country, will regard him as the ideal democrat. Unfortunately, the future of America is made secure through the death of people from all ranks of life, including that of the highest individual, the president. Quoting the opinion of a northern soldier, who was a personal friend of the president, he described him, "as the best, the fairest, the truest man in America,"⁷²

Sandburg responded to the older poet's prophesy by compiling the best biography of the president known in America. It is the epic poem of America, of the humble people who braved the wilderness, of the early settlers of the Middle West, of the first towns to be established in this industrial center of the country, and of the rough, crude, and

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 68.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 74.

almost barbaric, pioneers from which the great president rose. The setting is the physical America of Sandburg's midwest country, of its valleys, mountains, rivers and prairies. The later volumes, the War Years, depict real, genuine characters, who occupy official positions or hold no positions at all, and whose moral attributes are not of superior quality. Contrary to public opinion, the Great Emancipator was not without flaw, and is portrayed as human, indecisive, and wavering, during the first years of the war, and destitute of loyal friends and advisers.

The events in the biography are recorded in diary-like form and only in a limited number of places does the poet break through the narrative and soliloquize. One instance occurs after his Gettysburg address is conceded to have failed dismally in its purpose. Sandburg remains with the reader on the field of the dead and sings:

The blue haze of the Cumberland
Mountains dimmed till it was a blur
in a nocturne. The moon was up and
fell with a bland, golden benevolence
on the new-made graves of soldiers.⁷³

The result is considered the finest requiem for dead Union soldiers since Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd."

Both poets regard Lincoln as a symbol of the American

⁷³ Carl Sandburg The War Years, Vol. II, p. 476

Both poets regard Lincoln as a symbol of the American people, as representative of the democratic idea, a product of the American inheritance and environment, and typical of the western frontier. Sandburg pictures him as a great American democrat, reflecting the thoughts and emotions of the common people of the new nation. The poet reaffirms his faith in the people who produced Lincoln, and on whom rests the future of the American civilization. The real makers of history came from unknown places. The poet, himself, is a product of the same prairies as Lincoln, a fact that makes him competent and well-qualified to write about him. Both are champions of the common people.

Sandburg writes this history of the American people dramatically, simply, humanely, and devoid of the conventional technique of the fact-seeking historian, who uses foot-notes and sources. His purpose in writing the biography was not to describe proved and recorded incidents in the president's life, but to present him as he really was created in the changing American scene. He said:

I wanted to take Lincoln away from the religious bigots and the professional politicians and restore him to the common people, to whom he belongs...⁷⁴

⁷⁴Holger Lundbergh, "Carl Sandburg" in American - Scandinavian Review, Vol. XXVI (1938) p. 51.

Thus has Whitman's prophecy in regard to Lincoln been fulfilled. He, also, comprehended the president's most difficult predicament. Not acquainted with him personally, and having no direct contact with him, he, nevertheless, appreciated the democratic and humanitarian principles that influenced him in his great and momentous decisions and that guided the future destiny of the nation. Abandoned by his friends, even scorned and despised by many, alone in many instances of indetermination, vexed by petty politicians, who sought position and glory at his expense, the great man rose above all and triumphed in his final decision, true to his inherent convictions. Also with the years, his fame is becoming more universal. Not only is he regarded as a true American by Americans, but is looked upon as a symbol of humanity and democracy by the world and as the end or goal toward which all peoples are striving. Whitman could only mourn his passing, for the results of his labors were as yet unknown and not obvious. Bitterness of war feeling, and unsettled post-war conditions that existed for many years employed the energies of the people, so that only decades later could his motives be understood.

The element of interest in society leads the poets to paint vivid pictures of the common people in their various trades and professions. "Poem of Joys"⁷⁵ expresses Whitman's delight in

⁷⁵Walt Whitman, "Poem of Joys" in Leaves of Grass, p. 289

descriptions of the diversified occupations indulged in by workers. "The Sleepers"⁷⁶ extols the beauty of laborers in repose, whose souls are identical, although their occupational interests represent differing types. His examples are general, but Sandburg offers specific cases, delineating the conglomerate masses of humanity, living in a great city like Chicago. "A Jewish crier, who "dangles a herring", is "evincing a joy identical with that of Pavlowa dancing..."⁷⁷

He possesses the power to present what he has seen for the reader to interpret:

Twenty men stand watching the muckers
 Stabbing the sides of the ditch
 Where clay gleams yellow,
 Deeper and deeper for the new gas
 mains,
 Wiping sweat off their faces
 With red bandanas...⁷⁸

Even the smoky background of a steel factory forms a panorama of colorful scenes in which the workers mingle their blood into the making of steel. The poet is able to weave fantastic beauty into the steel smoke:

Smoke of the fields in spring is one,
 Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 90.

⁷⁷Carl Sandburg, "Fish Crier" in Chicago Poems, p. 18.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 21.

Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a
 battle-ship funnel,
 They all go up in a line with a
 smoke stack,
 Or they twist...in a slow twist...
 of the wind.
 If the north wind comes, they run
 to the south.
 If the west wind comes they run to
 the east.
 By this sign all smokes know each
 other.
 Smoke of the fields in spring and
 leaves in autumn,
 Smoke of the finished steel, chilled
 and blue,
 By the oath of work they swear. "I
 know you!".⁷⁹

A tragic note is introduced when he fuses human blood with
 the manufacture of steel:

A bar of steel-it is only
 Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and
 the blood of a man.
 A runner of fire ran in it, ran out,
 ran somewhere else,
 And left-smoke and the blood of a
 man
 And the finished steel, chilled and
 blue...⁸⁰

The poem ends in a lyric tone in which the wind attracts
 our attention to other fields. The love of humanity theme and
 the poet's artistic lyrical qualities unite to form one of his
 finest poems. The Mayor of Gary is wearing "cool cream pants...
 and white shoes, and a barber had fixed him up with a shampoo

⁷⁹Carl Sandburg, "Smoke and Steel" in Smoke and Steel, p.3.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 4.

and a shave and he was easy and imperturbable though the government weather bureau thermometer said 96 and children were soaking their heads at bubbling fountains on the street corners..."⁸¹

A few lines later, he employs his "deft use of contrast in picturing "workmen wearing leather shoes scuffed with fire and cinders, and pitted with little holes from running molten steel..."⁸² Both poets concur that social iniquities will be remedied when the people realize that they are supreme. The future of the nation depends on the people's power to control the unscrupulous and money-greedy members, who seek to despoil it. Their highest aspirations for world security are founded in America.

The spiritual mission of the country is not based on ancient or foreign grandeurs but, as Whitman implies on "the grandeurs of thine own..."⁸³ But, though

Far, Far, indeed stretch our vistas!
How much is still to be disentangled,
freed...⁸⁴

⁸¹Ibid., p. 25.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Walt Whitman, "Song of the Universal," in Leaves of Grass p. 517.

⁸⁴Ibid.

The American destiny is the object and purpose of the writer's thought, and provides for the ultimate triumph of the democratic man. But there are many factors that are detrimental to this realization of a perfect democracy, one of which is the tyranny of surplus materialism. The industrialization of the nation had created an obnoxious fendal system between the barons of industry and the common people, a condition directly opposed to the ideal conception. Democratic Vistas (1871) deploras this growth of sordid materialism. The low moral tone, destroying the spiritual wealth of the country, was adding to the destruction of the democratic principle, but the poet refuses to surrender the ardent faith engendered in him during his early life and sang of America as the symbol of the visionary utopia. Likewise, Sandburg, especially in The People, Yes, claims that the entire world unrest and turmoil is caused by the continual duping of the masses by a privileged and powerful set of pillagers. He questions:

Can you bewilder men by the
millions with transfusions of your
own passions, mixed with lies and
half lies, texts torn from contexts
and then look for peace, quiet, good-
will between nation and nation, race
and race, between class and class?⁸⁵

In place of the ancient monarchs, "munitions and money kings the war lords and international bankers the transportation

⁸⁵Carl Sandburg, The People Yes, p. 273.

and credit kings the coal, the oil and the mining kings the price-fixing monopoly control kings"⁸⁶ assert authority. The poet is at a loss to explain this mania for physical possessions for it may result in degeneracy and "too much money has killed men and left them dead years before burial...⁸⁷

The brotherhood of man must become an actuality for the whole world. There should be "a United States of Europe and later a United States of the World..."⁸⁸ for the people will live as long as time.

In addition to themes involving social relations and influences, the two poets devote a considerable portion of their writings to pure lyricism. America's colorful natural setting is transformed into beautiful rhythmic poetry. Twice, Whitman traveled extensively; the first time to New Orleans, down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and back by the way of Chicago and Niagara, and the second time, when he spent sixteen weeks in ten thousand miles of western travel, including the Rocky Mountains. The sights and sounds of American cities, prairies and fields impressed themselves permanently on his mind. But most of all he was devoted to Long Island, his fish-shaped Paumanok and his

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 278.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 18.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 240.

birth-place, West Hills. He records his playful adventures along the sea-shore, clam-digging, bathing, eel-catching, gathering sea-gulls' eggs, sailing to the eastern end of the Island, where he spent many hours by an old lighthouse, viewing the Atlantic Ocean. He gained a "plentiful acquaintance"⁸⁹ with the hills, meadows and beaches. He transmits this familiarity with nature in Leaves of Grass. But his contact with the sea caused him to refer to it very frequently.

In the same strain, Sandburg born on the prairies of the great Middle West exalts the country of his birth throughout his poems. Wagons, plows, horses, wigwams, haystacks, and smoke-stacks, form the topics for much of his lyric poetry, portrayed realistically and authoritatively by the former prairie rambler. The sea also has a place in Sandburg's poetry, as exemplified by "North Atlantic"⁹⁰, but this aspect of nature does not appear as frequently as in Whitman, who can paint a farm picture as dextrously as the younger poet:

Through the ample open door of the
peaceful country barn,
A sunlit pasture field with cattle
and horses feeding,
And haze and vista, and the far
horizon fading away..."⁹¹

⁸⁹Walt Whitman, "Specimen Days", in Prose Works, p. 14.

⁹⁰Carl Sandburg, "North Atlantic" in Smoke and Steel, p.184.

⁹¹Walt Whitman, "A Farm Picture" in Leaves of Grass, p.360.

Unquestionably, however, the sea receives the most important emphasis and dominates all of Leaves of Grass. Even as a boy, the poet desired to write a poem about the sea-shore, "that suggesting, dividing line...blending the real and the ideal..."⁹² Later, when this inclination waned, he would take the sea not as a theme but as "an invisible influence, a pervading gauge and tally..."⁹³ He concluded telling of a memory that haunted him for years at intervals:

A stretch of interminable white-brown sand, hard and smooth and broad, with...
 the ocean perpetually, grandly, rolling in upon it with slow-measured sweep, with rustle and hiss and foam and many a thump as of low bass drums. This scene, this picture, I say, has risen before me at times for years. Sometimes I wake at night and can hear and see it plainly...⁹⁴

This is the "influence" in Leaves of Grass. It appears in various forms. There are pictures of steamers leaving the port, harbor poems like "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", and others of its kind, mid-ocean selections as "In Cabin'd Ships at Sea," inspired lines on the foamy trails of ships, descriptions of yankee

⁹²Walt Whitman, "Specimen Days" in Prose Works, p. 95

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

clippers racing under sky-sails, of sail-boat regattas on the bay, of fleets of ice-boats, fanciful takes of ships wrecked at sea or cast on the rocks, repetitions of old naval battles, a recollection of the Great Eastern swimming up the bay, poems on fishermen with their nets, on clam-diggers, on Columbus, on bathers at the sea-shore, on beautiful scenery from Montauk Point, and on the flash and thunder of violent ocean storms.

He wishes in "A Poem of Joys"⁹⁵

O to go back to the place where I was
born,
To hear the birds sing once more,
To ramble about the house and barn
and over the fields once more,
And through the orchard and along the
old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays,
lagoons, creeks or along the coast,
To continue and be employ'd there all
my life,
The briny and damp smell, the shores,
the salt weeds exposed at low water,
The work of fishermen, the work of
the eel-fisher and clam-fisher,

.....
In winter I take my eel-basket and
eel-spear and travel out on foot on
the ice...
Another time in warm weather out in a
boat, to lift the lobster-pots where
they are sunk with heavy stones (I
know the buoys)...
Another time mackerel-taking...
Another time fishing for rock-fish...

Practically all of Whitman's best poetry is concerned with

⁹⁵Walt Whitman, "A Song of Joys" in Leaves of Grass, p.291.

the sea in some way: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" are typical. He exhibits a profound understanding and knowledge of the contrasting moods of the sea. Even in his poems on comradeship, he uses the sea as the background for his ideal friendship. Elsewhere, he portrays America (Democracy) as a ship and President Lincoln as captain, (O Captain! My Captain!). More manifest and significant is Whitman's use of the sea to portray life after death in at least ten of his poems, including "Passage to India", "Joy, Shipmate Joy", "New Finale to the Shore.". The departure from life is illustrated by a ship:

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!⁹⁶

All nature appeared fascinating and mysterious to Whitman, but the sea, intangible, liquid, and vast intrigued him as much as life after death. Though nature in all her aspects is used as a theme by both poets, Whitman was the first poet who deliberately put the industrial city into poetry on the basis that all life is poetic. Whitman was as thoroughly familiar

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 490.

with New York as Sandburg is acquainted with Chicago. In "A Broadway Pageant," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", and "Mannahatta," the older poet attempts to picture the many-sided life of America's largest city. Sandburg has the same purpose in mind when he writes of "Chicago", "The Windy City", and "Smoke and Steel."

Many writers question the use of industrial life, machinery and factories as proper material for poetry. Others agree that, since the majority of the people live in towns, and that our civilization is industrial and is based largely on the intelligent use of machinery, the city theme must find expression in the poetry of the people. The greed, ugliness, and commercialism, of most large cities are to be deplored, though Sandburg uses these themes effectively. For both poets, everything in life is touched with beauty, and examples of sheer lyric beauty occur repeatedly throughout their works.

"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is soft, lilting, and dreamy; Sandburg pictures a tender day-dream in

Cover me over
 In dusk and dust and dreams
 Hear me and cover me
 Bringers of dusk and dust and
 dreams...⁹⁷

From the most trivial of objects, the poet derives an

⁹⁷Carl Sandburg, "Bringers" in Cornhuskers, p. 108.

ephemeral beauty:

Yellow dust on a bumble - bee's
wing,
Grey lights in a woman's asking
eyes,
Red ruins in the changing sun-
set embers;
I take you and pile high the
memories.
Death will break her claws on
some I keep...

His belief that ephemeral things are the only everlasting
things is repeated in "Windflower Leaf"

This flower is repeated
Out of old winds, out of
Old times
The wind repeats these, it
Must have these, over and
Over again.

Oh Windflower so fresh,
Oh beautiful leaves, here Now
again.
The domes over fall to pieces
The stones under fall to pieces
Rain and ice wrecks the works.

The wind keeps, the windflowers
keep, the leaves last,
The wind young and strong lets
these last longer than stones...⁹⁸

Sandburg's approach to the humanitarian theme is based on
his own daily experience in his contact with the sufferings of
the poor classes of people. He excels in this respect and in

⁹⁸Carl Sandburg quoted in First Impressions by Lelewellyn
Jones, pp. 62-3.

his individual use of coined and newly - accepted words and phrases, his retelling of American folk songs, and his thorough knowledge of social conditions. He is the outstanding representative of the modern life theme in native American poetry. On the other hand, Whitman refers to humanity in a general and abstract sense. Detailed and individual daily experiences do not interest him, but apostrophes, ejaculations, and exclamations to nature and the abstract theme of brotherhood abound in his writings. Yet the younger poet's deep sympathy and kindred feeling for the injustices of distressed mankind are so bound up in emotion that reason is overlooked, argument is avoided and no solution of the perplexing public problem is proposed or even hinted at. Strains of irony, humor, pity, love, and sarcasm mingle in his various poems as he cites individual examples of human greed, self-love and denial of justice, but never does he accept a concrete and responsible attitude in spite of his sincerity of purpose. His conclusion infers an endless faith in the power of the people and a hope that they will overcome all obstacles some time in the future. At times, he is confused and asks questions, but always concludes by affirming his honest belief in the potentialities of the public. Socialism is scorned as propaganda and a temporary fad and all the other "isms" have no place in his plan whatsoever. No concrete social belief forms a basis for his charge of social wrongs.

The humanity theme, first introduced by Whitman, affords immense possibilities for exploitation in the still unknown realms of poetry, but the new poet of humanitarianism will possess a rational view point in regard to the problems of society.

CHAPTER IV

Present-day poetry is not necessarily different from that of a century ago. There is a strong reaction against the poetic standards of the nineteenth century, but such reactions occur in poetry as well as in the other arts. The modern free verse movement has attracted many followers. The writers of free verse disregard meter, the accepted difference between poetry and prose. Rhythm is necessary but prose also has a rhythm which, at times, it is difficult to differentiate from that of poetry. Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle admitted that poetry differs from prose in another way besides meter. The prose poems of Ossian are the best known and most famous of the early examples of free verse. Dryden employs mixtures of trochaic, iambic, and anapestic feet in his ode almost as freely as Whitman and Sandburg do.

Long before Whitman, poets like Tennyson, Longfellow, and Lowell used alliteration in place of rhyme with no set number of syllables in each line. Rhyme is not found in classical Latin, and very rarely in English poetry until after 1066. Classical meters have been used since Elizabeth's time to avoid rhyme and the iambic stress. Longfellow's hexameter in Evangeline is based on the Latin and Greek conception that quantity and not accent is important, thus giving the effect of free verse. Just before

Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855), Matthew Arnold wrote rhymeless poems similar to free verse. Whitman, himself, used the rhythms of the English Bible of Ossian and William Blake. Blake believed that meter formed as much of a restriction as rhyme. He said,

I therefore produced a variety
in every line, both of cadences
and number of syllables. Every
word and every letter is studied
and put into its fit place; the
terrific numbers are reserved
for the terrific parts, and the
prosaic for inferior parts: all
are necessary to each other.
Poetry Fetter'd Fetters the
Human Race!...⁹⁹

But Blake's poetry received no recognition until fifty years after his death and then he was not credited as the originator of free verse. Whitman started the trend and popularized its usage. His new metrical feature was the rejecting of both meter and rhyme when the older poets discarded each separately. It is generally conceded that the reason for his rebellious reception was due to his use of strange and newly compounded language and not because of his disregard of meter and rhyme. Many critics condemned Whitman's poetry because their literary tastes were derived from and nurtured on the standards of Keats and Tennyson. A poem by Sandburg or Whitman would arouse their complacent senses and they would deny it a place in the poetical category.

⁹⁹William Blake quoted in An Introduction to Poetry by Jay Hubbell and John Beaty. P. 370 -371.

But, today, the two writers are acknowledged as leading poets even though they do not conform to set rules. Free verse is printed in the way it is to be read, and the sentences are divided so that the pauses come at the end of lines.

Bliss Perry¹⁰⁰ cites four prevalent types of free verse:

a) What is printed as free verse is only prose made up of rhythms that are heard when the poem is read aloud.

b) Sometimes prose rhythms prevail even though some recognized rhythms of verse are included. "Song of the Exposition" by Whitman is typical of this type.

c) Again verse rhythms are dominant and some metrical feet occur irregularly. Whitman's "Song of Myself" is constructed in this manner.

d) Finally, both verse rhythms and metres are used regularly in different combinations which conceal or disrupt the metrical scheme.

Because Whitman was the poet of American democracy, poetry itself had to be democratic, and rhyme and meter had to be discarded. The common people were to be the heroes of American poetry and these poems were to be written for them. Unfortunately, though his poetry was intended for the average man, it was only read by cultured Englishmen as typical of the new America. His popularity in foreign countries convinced the Americans that he must be recognized. Englishmen, like Swinburne and Rossetti, commended him as well as Emerson and Thoreau, who praised him.

To further understand the poet's treatment of form, his

¹⁰⁰Bliss Perry, Poetry in General, p. 207.

preface to Leaves of Grass (1876) offers an explanation when he says,

My form has strictly grown from my purports and facts, and is the analogy of them...¹⁰¹

and claims no artistic standard whatever. He wants to create an atmosphere and asserts that his goal is suggestiveness!

I round and finish little, if anything; and could not consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do as much as I have had mine...¹⁰²

His purpose has been

not to carry out in the approved style some choice plot of fortune or misfortune or fancy or fine thoughts or incidents or courtesies all of which has been done overwhelmingly and well probably never to be exceeded...but to conform with and build on the concrete realities and theories of the universe furnished by science and henceforth the only irrefragable basis for anything, verse included - to root both influences in the emotional and imaginative action of the modern time and dominate all that precedes or oppose them...¹⁰³

His plan of form so outlined he concludes:

¹⁰¹Walt Whitman, "Preface to Leaves of Grass" 1876 in Prose Works, p. 287.

¹⁰²Walt Whitman quoted in American Criticism by Norman Foerster, pp. 176-7.

¹⁰³Ibid.

No one will ever get at my verses, who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance or attempt at such performance or as aiming mainly toward art or estheticism...¹⁰⁴

In conformance with the above standards and ideas, Whitman becomes the most unique and original of American writers in form, in thought, and in expression. So fully assured is he of the American destiny and its importance in the field of literature as well as in other arts, that he formulates plans as to the future of American poetry and the poets who will compose it. He asserts that

the Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth, have probably the fullest poetical nature...¹⁰⁵

and that

the United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem...¹⁰⁶

The new American poets must break with all tradition and create new poetry based on American traits, and the common man is to be glorified replacing the aristocrat of the old world. The poet must be a lover of humanity, whom he will enshrine and extol

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Walt Whitman, "Preface to Leaves of Grass" (1855), p.263.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

in all his works with the "art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, simplicity..."¹⁰⁷

In the above discussion, I have attempted to give a general idea of Whitman's basic conception of form. Now his verse will be examined more specifically, and the various aspects of its mechanical qualities will be considered. But, before this is done, it will be interesting to note the strong influence, whether direct or indirect, Whitman exercised upon the contemporary writers of verse, especially Sandburg. In style and subject matter he has influenced almost all modern poets. He inspired them to write upon American themes in unconventional language. He demonstrated how industrial cities and modern life could be portrayed in poetry with beauty and interest, and how free verse could be used to the best advantage.

Sandburg uses free verse to the exclusion of the regular forms and is a propagandist for it. He says that it comes "natural to him" and is part of his nature, for, in this as well as in all other social subjects, he is receptive to new ideas and often has no use for old forms which have no place or meaning in modern affairs. Though he had read Keats, whom he admired above all other poets, and also Browning, whom he esteemed highly, they never influenced him in his thought or his work. The Greek and Latin classics, he studied superficially and his works bear no

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 268.

evidence of their influence. He explained that

he began to express himself naturally seeking for the right word diligently, with a feeling for its sound and its place in text, but it turned out that the words he hit on were never classical but seemed to come right out of the mouths of men, that an older less native symbol could not have held...¹⁰⁸

The poet has been acclaimed the most advanced poet in the field of free verse. In this respect, he follows Whitman closely. On its first appearance, free verse was attacked in universities and colleges as undesirable, and Sandburg tried to convince the professors and students of its worth-while qualities. He traveled over the country with his banjo, strumming out his irregular lines in his deep, resonant voice in the lecture rooms of numerous universities and winning more and more disciples to his cause. At the same time, he explained that native life and native characteristics required native language and that greater freedom of expression was an inherent necessity. His opponents were members of the classical school, who believed in the old poetry form and resented any innovations. Impressed by Sandburg's interpretation of his poetry with his emotional appeal, the majority have been convinced of its valuable attributes. In his propaganda speech for free verse, he can't understand why so-call-

¹⁰⁸Jones, Llewellyn, First Impressions, P.54.

ed American poets write of "Egyptian mysteries, Greek temples and Chinese dragons and many things European and Asiatic"¹⁰⁹ and "there may be found frequent delicate tributes to the gold-fish while the muskellunge is neglected...even though it has more color and form"¹¹⁰

He deplores the use of words that are inadequate or do not suit the requirements of the prairie nature. "Book language"¹¹¹ and "the verbiage of dead"¹¹² are extinct, and only the speech of present day people should be employed. The manner of life of these people, their experiences and environment are creating a new vocabulary and a new expression.

According to Sandburg, American women possess as much glamor as foreign women do; North Dakota prairie sunsets are just as colorful as those admired in Europe, and the Ozarks and the Rockies rate as high in beauty and majesty as any Swiss mountain. He concedes that this admiration for foreign natural beauty may be only temporary, and cites Whitman in his belief that the future will first prove the superiority of the American scene:

"Walt Whitman had a comment of his own on Leaves of Grass that's worth remembering - 'My book is a candidate for the

¹⁰⁹Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits, p. 61.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

future.' He had a sense of the world in flux, the hobo aversion to all things fixed and fastened down, a habit of thinking and dreaming more about tomorrow than yesterday. Ever notice how much there is in to-day's paper about to-morrow - the atmospheric weather, the political weather, the financial weather, the labor weather the war weather - to-morrow...? 113

Sandburg's arguments won him many followers but also some bitter critics. One line, especially, has been strongly condemned. The poet attempts to assert his condemnation of all things outmoded and of past tradition. Like Whitman, he believes in the "here and now" and the future; one must forget and destroy any connections with the past because they have no place in the new society being constructed in a new land. He expresses this sentiment in the line:

The past is a bucket of ashes... 114

Critics have cited the phrase, "ashes of the past", as an over-worked poetic phrase that once was considered poetical, but the use of the word, "bucket", was unforgivable because it has no poetry in it and is ugly enough to suggest a janitor's garbage can. It can be seen with what resentment the classicists treated any new forms, and how difficult it was for them to readjust their ancient codes to any modern changes. Other critics assert that

113 Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits, p. 62.

114 Carl Sandburg, "Prairie", in Cornhuskers, p. 11.

the poet does not break down the rules of meter and that he respects the restrictions of the older poets. They maintain that he regards form to a greater degree than a majority of the present-day writers, for these find their pattern already worked out for them and they construct accordingly, but Sandburg, refusing to follow the set designs, must be watchful every moment. This is difficult to concede, for the poet, like Whitman, has denied that he uses any form. They proceed to say that, from the mechanical point of view, he applies "the most pedantic contrivances of the English poets; the device of quantitative syllable rhythm..."¹¹⁵ The selection from "The Cool Tombs" is analyzed:

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a
 poplar, sweet as a red haw in
 November or a pawpaw in May--
 did she wonder? does she
 remember - in the dust - in
 the cool tombs...?¹¹⁶

The rhythm exists in the syllable lengths; stress or accent is not the basis of their particular swing. Since any rhythm in a Sandburg poem is revealed in its correct oral reading, each syllable must be given its proper length. Only by mastering the art of the correct reading of his poetry, that is, by giving certain syllables length and others brevity can the secret of his

¹¹⁵Jones, Llewellyn, First Impressions, p. 54.

¹¹⁶Carl Sandburg, "The Cool Tombs," Cornhuskers, p. 120.

form be disclosed. Inaccurately read, the phrases: "Did she wonder? - does she remember...?" would have "she" a short syllable in each case, but the real reading is:

Did she wonder?
Does she remember...?

The paragraph is divided into lines of two feet each, with the exception of the second "Sweet as a red haw in November..." which has four and the penultimate line of one "In the dust..."; the division of the last line being:

In the cool/tombs...

In order to effect a slow pace, the poet joins the long syllables, not two in one foot and spondees, but allows the syllables to run into each other, reducing the tempo to a greater extent. Perhaps Sandburg unconsciously employs this method, but it is a definite system or plan with resulting beauty and uniqueness in rhythm. Thus, one critic has attempted to explain the poet's masterful technique after a material investigation and analysis, but his free verse rhythms are his own and cannot be duplicated, even though each line has been physically broken down into its original elements. At times, he is boldly individual and speaks thoughts in an original language with the result of a confused mixture of harsh sounds, not at all soothing to his listeners. Yet an underlying beauty is discernible. In some poems, his verse rhythms are rough and boisterous as when he describes Chicago. In his war poems, his rhythms sound like

pounding guns, and when he answers Billy Sunday, he adopts the swing of heavy prose. Other movements swing to the other extreme becoming light, fanciful and delicate. His many purely lyric poems, some of which are "Beachy," "At a Window" "The Road and the End" have a primordial, basical, aesthetic quality, and sound "as of the ebb and flow of the tide"¹¹⁷.

His lyric poetry is constructed on a definite metrical pattern of either three time or four time accent, with the latter occurring more frequently with some spondaic values. Four long syllables in succession produce very expressive effects. He extends the laws of metre to include a greater number of syllables to the bar and a more frequent use of rests. In four time measures, contrasting effects are attained as staccato steps in "Gone", and a slow, plodding strain in "Our Prayer of Thanks." A slow four time beat is realized in "The Great Hunt" and changes to three time for the final stanza. A three time beat, almost straight iambic is the scheme followed in two poems of contrasting tempo "Bringers", and "Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind."

Sandburg has broadened "the rhythmic range of poetry"¹¹⁸ by carefully listening for his rhythms and accenting them with

¹¹⁷ Harriet Monroe "Carl Sandburg" in Poetry, Vol. XXIV (1924) p. 321.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

infinite care and solicitude. Yet some of his lines cannot be scanned at all, but they can be sung or chanted. Rupert Hughes has set three of his poems to music in his Free Verse Songs namely, "The Prayer of Steel," "Bricklayer Love," and "Lost." The last mentioned one possesses a melancholy, lyric pensiveness:

Desolate and alone,
 All night long on the lake,
 Where fog trails and mist creeps,
 The whistle of the boat
 Calls and cries unendingly,
 Like some lost child
 In tears and trouble
 Seeking the harbor's breast
 And the harbor's eyes...119

Whitman's form possesses traits almost identical with Sandburg's. Leaves of Grass contains many lines of prose in which no use of rhyme, stanza or any type of meter is apparent, although many passages fall into regular metrical beats. His poetry must also be read orally in order that the rhythm may be comprehended. Only a listener with a delicately attuned ear can appreciate and recognize the rhythmical modulations of the various lines. The rhythms are as mixed and varied as the modern poet's movements of verse.

In a self-criticism, Whitman admits that he will construct his verse on a meter, free and unhampered by any set rules and of an irregular length of lines. On closer examination, a certain regularity appears in the rise and fall of the lines. The poet

contested the traditional idea of a set standard of beauty in poetry. He was convinced that real poetry is not constructed on a carefully laid out diagram nor does it proceed from a pre-conceived design. The inner force of the poet regulates whatever form it considers appropriate for its expression. The value of a work of art cannot be determined by measuring and counting an equal number of beats in a line or lines in a stanza. Poetry, like his, may be difficult to understand, and he advises:

For to such as you anyhow such
 a poet as I?
 therefore leave my works,
 And go lull yourself with what
 you can understand and with
 piano tunes,
 For I lull nobody, and you will
 never understand me...¹²⁰

The poet's aim will be to convey his own thoughts and emotions by means of rhythmical expressions, no matter what form they may assume. Therefore, since his rhythms do convey the American spirit, the excitement and rush of great cities, they are at times loud and vehement.

His native aptitude for rhythm is powerful. He writes of the sea:

I behold from the beach your
 crooked inviting fingers...¹²¹

¹²⁰Walt Whitman, "To a Certain Civilian" in Leaves of Grass, p. 399.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 29.

e rhythmic effects occur frequently in Leaves of Grass easing and gratifying. In addition to the hexameter, couplet, and the common blank verse, even rhymes in Whitman's poetry, any form is correct when it is secondary to the feeling or emotion. He explains:

The words of the true poems
 give you more than poems...
 They do not seek beauty, they
 are sought
 Forever touching them or close
 upon them follows beauty,
 longing, fain, lovesick.¹²²

In all his poems, the determining structure of the form is this innate impulse. The poem, in Whitman's conception, is to be the declaration by the poet of the sentiments and emotions common to all people. These include many attributes as gentleness, bluntness, humility, sympathy, coarseness, typical of all man-kind. Sometimes the poet uses the Anglo-Saxon four-stressed alliterative verse:

Down-hearted doubters, dull
 and excluded...¹²³

The six-foot anapaest is represented by the following line:

And I know that the hand of
 God is the elder hand of my
 own...¹²⁴

¹²²Ibid., p. 282.

¹²³Ibid., p. 62

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 10

yet, the metrical arrangement is discerned not through reference to the single line but with reference to the entire paragraph of lines. A particular rhythm can be imparted only after page after page has been read orally. The true artist must create quickly with no discussion and with complete certainty. The form shall be what the impulse desires it to be. His syllables cannot be enumerated to reveal the mechanism, the music is present and unaccounted for. Like in Sandburg's case, analysts have dissected Whitman's lines to formulate some fundamental theories on which his form is based. They have devised a technical scheme that solves all difficulties and refutes Whitman's own statements that his form is innate and not to be measured. This is disclaimed, and the fact that he disclosed in his prefaces that he intended to mould his thoughts to the movement of his emotion in nature or in truth does not impress them in the least.

First, he did not discard the old devices of poetry namely, assonance, alliteration, stanza, refrain, return and at times, rhyme. His "revolution"¹²⁵ involved three facts: a new emphasis upon old refrain devices, like epanaphora, and epanalepsis; the construction of stanzas and larger units on the basis of "rhythmic balance"¹²⁶ and "parallelism";¹²⁷ his use of the old

¹²⁵S. Bradley "Fundamental Metrical Principle in Whitman's Poetry" in American Literature, Vol. X (1939) pp. 437-59.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 457.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 458.

English meter based on the rhythmic period between the stresses. But the author of the above study admits that in spite of his detailed technical study, his discovery would have little point but for Whitman's genius by which he was able to transfer his particular sense of rhythm into phrases that symbolized the emotion that he felt at the moment. Thus despite critical analyses and profound examinations of the works of both authors concerning the principles of their form, no definite conclusion can be reached. The only explanation inferred is that the inner surge of the creative genius of both artists dominates any form or meter, and that it is merely used as a means to an end.

Another mechanical peculiarity common to both authors is their similar attitude towards the use of language, grammar and especially individual words. Among Whitman's superior talents is his control of the music of words and his capacity to construe and compose phrases of beauty as well as meaning. In lines where he has tried to combine his thought with the formal method, the thought loses its desired and impressive meaning. His spontaneous feelings required a free flowing, and undisciplined language; he knew that the formal speech of the classicists could serve his purpose.

His objectives in style are as definite and clear as his form; he attempted to transcend the common language; to release human thought from the enforced restrictions of the accepted

terms of speech. Words mean nothing unless they proceed from the needs of the human mind:

Were you thinking that those
were the words, those upright
lines? those curves, angles,
dots?

No, those are not the words,
the substantial words are in
the ground and sea,
They are in the air, they are
in you...¹²⁸

Whitman was positive that language is derived from and is made by the every-day people:

Language is not an abstract
construction of the learned or
of dictionary makers, but is
something arising out of the
work needs, ties, joys,
affections, tastes of long
generations of humanity, and
has its bases broad and low,
close to the ground. Its
final decisions are made by the
masses, people nearest the con-
crete, having most to do with
actual land and sea...¹²⁹

He explains that the proper and accepted words of today were once slang, and lived on because they were necessary to the expression of the people. Because his poetry is so close to the people, he professes to use any words that will suit his fancy. Consequently, we have in Whitman a free and changeable language

¹²⁸Walt Whitman, "Carol of Words" in Leaves of Grass, p.216.

¹²⁹Walt Whitman, "Slang in America" in Prose Works, p. 405.

based on the theory that poetry for America must be appropriate and must follow the rules of simplicity. In addition to words from foreign languages like "camerado"¹³⁰ "libertad"¹³¹ "en-masse"¹³² "eidólons"¹³³ "résumé"¹³⁴ "exalté"¹³⁵ "Americanos"¹³⁶ "accouchez"¹³⁷ "respondez"¹³⁸ "allons"¹³⁹ "Salut au Monde"¹⁴⁰ many of which he uses incorrectly, and the use of slang, he coins queer words of his own devising, "dainty dolce affettuoso"¹⁴¹ "how

¹³⁰Walt Whitman, "To a Certain Civilian" in Leaves of Grass, p. 399.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 158.

¹³²Ibid., p. 431.

¹³³Ibid., p. 520.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 495.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 279.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 355.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 217.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 211.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 249.

plenteous"¹⁴² "how spiritual"¹⁴³ and "how résumé."¹⁴⁴

Sometimes he uses phrases that are neither poetical, grammatical or English:

City of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and
sung in your midst will one day
make you illustrious...¹⁴⁵

or

O you whom I often and silently
come, where you are that I may
be with you...¹⁴⁶

Whitman seems to have a satisfaction in opposing the traditional demands of convention. The catalogue violates all the rules of writing, but it is used by Whitman with great effect to signify the continuity and endlessness of things. In this respect, the catalogues have artistic importance as an expression of the poet's joy in the mere fact of existence. He not only attempts to overcome the trite use of words in order to present the truth; but the construction of many of his sentences and

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 326.

¹⁴³Ibid., p.326.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 281.

paragraphs, his odd and incorrect grammar, are due to his plan to keep words in a secondary place. The use of a detached string of participles is frequent, and, sometimes, he omits verbs entirely. In this way, he continually reminds the reader of the implications of speech. So firm was his desire to stress importance of thought, that he, himself, claims to have sat for hours over a completed piece of poetry, looking for cliché words and phrases replacing them with expressions of his own invention.

The old poet was hoping for possible protégées when he described Leaves of Grass as the beginning of something. Sandburg's specific characteristic of using correct words and slang, the mixing of cheapness and rich quality, would have satisfied Whitman. In the incomplete sketch for a projected lecture, he seemed to be soliciting poets of the Sandburg type. In An American Primer, he is convinced that, when a poet uses words, he uses things:

Words are magic...limber lasting
fierce words. Do you suppose
the liberties and the brawn of
These States have to do only with
delicate lady-words? with gloved
gentlemen-words?

What is the fitness-what the
strange charm of aboriginal names?
Monongahela - it rolls with
venison and richness upon the
palate...

...American writers will show far
more freedom in the use of names

...American writers will show far more freedom in the use of names. Ten thousand common, idiomatic words are growing and are today grown, out of which vast numbers could be used by American writers, with meaning and effect - words that would be welcomed by the nation, being of the national blood...¹⁴⁷

Sandburg uses diction to suit his mood. In "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter", the common man sneers at the hypocritical hysteria of a frenzied spell-binder speaking on religious themes.

Where do you get that stuff?...
Go ahead and bust all the chairs
you want to...¹⁴⁸

Assailing the town in "The Sins of Kalamazoo", he calls it "a loafer lagging along." Describing corruption in politics, the gangster says:

Nothin' ever sticks to my fingers,
nah, nah, nothin' like that,
But there ain't no law we got to
wear mittens - huh - is there?
Mittens, that's a good one -
mittens!
There oughta be a law everybody
wear mittens...¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷Walt Whitman, quoted in The New Era in American Poetry by Louis Untermeyer, p. 98.

¹⁴⁸Carl Sandburg, "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter" in Chicago Poems, p. 61.

¹⁴⁹Carl Sandburg, "Sins of Kalamazoo" in Smoke and Steel, p. 49.

The entire book The People, Yes (1936) over-flows with American words and phrases. Sandburg's power in word usage is a direct answer to Whitman's observance that, before the future poets could become strong, they must learn the use of puissant words; he believed that true artists should be simple and direct, devoid of politeness and obscurity. He respected forceful and vehement words and expressions.

Sandburg's language ranges from fine, pure speech of his lyrics to the rough, crude vernacular. Not satisfied with the common and tried language of the day, he prefers using words of his own making, yet he manages to give these expressions a true beauty and grace. He uses descriptive phrases as "big stuff",¹⁵⁰ and "red guts"¹⁵¹ which represent strength. He esteems the physical quality of strength very highly, as portrayed in "Killers" and "Fight". Both poets have experienced manual labor and their writings have profited. Their writings abound in sensuous experience. They are particularly sensitive to physical stimuli as well as to sounds, textures, scents, and especially colors. When they conceive their subjects ardently, their rhythms and tone quality are above the average; still, on occasion, they, can be clamorous as typified by Sandburg:

¹⁵⁰Carl Sandburg, "Killers" in Chicago Poems, p. 85.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

Drum on your drums, batter on
your banjos, sob on the long
cool winding saxaphones. Go
to it, O jazzmen...¹⁵²

and

Sling your knuckles on the
bottoms of the happy tin panams,
let your trombones ooze, and
go husha - husha - hush with
the slippery sand-paper...¹⁵³

Whitman:

Beat! beat! drums! - Blow!
bugles! blow!
Through the windows - through
doors - burst like a ruthless
force...¹⁵⁴

His musical rhythm excels in "Monotone":

The monotone of the rain is
beautiful
And the sudden rise and slow
relapse
Of the long multitudinous rain.
The sun on the hills is beautiful
Or, a captured sun-set sea
Bannered with fire and gold....

A face I know is beautiful
With fire and gold of sky and sea,
And the peace of long warm rain¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Carl Sandburg, "Jazz Fantasia" in Smoke and Steel, p. 63.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Walt Whitman, "Beat! Beat! Drums!" in Leaves of Grass,
364.

¹⁵⁵ Carl Sandburg, "Monotone" in Chicago : Poems, p. 118.

So Whitman offers in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" the same musical rhythm and beautiful words:

Shine! shine! shine!
 Pour down your warmth, great Sun!
 While we bask we two together...

Out of the cradle endlessly
 rocking,
 Out of the mocking-bird's throat,
 the musical shuttle,
 Out of the ninth month midnight,
 Over the sterile sands, and the
 fields' beyond where the child,
 leaving his bed, wander'd alone,
 bare-headed, barefoot...

Sandburg's poem "Fog" has become popular among grown-ups and children throughout the country for its picture, music, rhythm, and comparison:

The fog comes on little cat feet.
 It sits looking over harbor and
 city on silent haunches
 and then moves on...¹⁵⁶

Beauty of effect is attained by both writers in the use of words that involve the senses. The artists, very sensitive to their ever-changing surroundings whether nature or human-beings, were able to transfer these various sensations to their poetry by adequate words. Everywhere in their works are found the words representing sight and sound. In their catalogues, they list impressions received through the eye, ear, and the sense of touch. In his threnody on the death of President Lincoln, Whitman employs the three senses of smell, sight and hearing:

¹⁵⁶Ibid. p. 71

Lilac and star and bird twined
with the chant of my soul...¹⁵⁷

The fragrance of the lilac, the brilliance of a star, and the sweet song of a bird are used to advantage. Sometimes he deliberately mentions this effectual device as in "Salut au Monde":

Such gliding wonders! such sights
and sounds...!¹⁵⁸

After some lines, the question is asked "What do you hear, Walt Whitman?" In response, the poet answers with nineteen "I hear's." When asked what he sees, he answers with ninety-seven vivid descriptions of the same number of physical objects.

Color delights both poets, particularly the colors describing the sky both by night and by day. Pictorial beauty caught Whitman's eye:

As I slowly hobble up the lane
toward day close, an incomparable
sunset shooting in molten sapphire
and gold, shaft after shaft,
through the ranks of the long-
leaved corn, between me and the
west...¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd" in *Leaves of Grass*, p. 413.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁵⁹Walt Whitman, Specimen Days, p. 93.

In another place he attempts to differentiate between various shades of green:

The rich dark green of the tulip-trees and the oaks, the gray of the swamp willows, the dull hues of the sycamores and black-walnuts, the emerald of the cedars (after rain) and the light yellow of the beeches...160

Liver-color and amber were applied frequently. When watching the sea, he sees:

...the amber rolling waves, changing as the tide comes in to a transparent tea-color...161

The night revealed many hues and tints. Very often they are blue-black and starry. The moon is "a lady dressed in shimmering and shifting pellucid green and tawny vapor"¹⁶² or "a transparent blue-gray"¹⁶³ or "an aureole of tawny transparent brown"¹⁶⁴ and clear vapory light-green"¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

Words suggestive of sound appear next in frequency. The bumble-bee has "a loud swelling perpetual hum, varied now and then by something almost like a shriek..."¹⁶⁶

When birds migrate at night, he hears "a velvety rustle, long drawn out..."¹⁶⁷

As to the sense of smell, the poet could detect fragrance in almost everything. The odors of apples, of the cedar, and of Indian corn are described repeatedly. He learned to discern many odors by night: those of grass, moist air, milk, willows, dead leaves, swamps, green leaves, birch-bark, sea-rocks, shore mud.

Sandburg displays the same aptitude in his choice of sensuous words. In "Fall time", his use of color is discriminating:

Gold of a ripe oat straw, gold
of a southwest moon.
Canada thistle blue and flimmer-
ing larkspur blue...¹⁶⁸

He uses "cornflower yellow"¹⁶⁹ and "copper sunburned

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁶⁸Carl Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p. 17.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 16.

woman¹⁷⁰ as an autumn motif. "Pearl gray haystacks"¹⁷¹ and "sheet of red ember glow"¹⁷² describe the farm lands of the prairies.

A small bird "chitters"¹⁷³ on a stalk, jazz music is "now boom doom crashing angular, now tough monotonous tom tom..."¹⁷⁴ and prairie waters at night sound like "joined songs of day end, feathery throats and stormy waters, in a choir chanting new psalms..."¹⁷⁵

Odors are suggested by "pink peonies"¹⁷⁶ "red roses"¹⁷⁷ "sweet as a red haw"¹⁷⁸

As a result of the comparison of the technical trends of the two poets, the conclusion is that they, more than any other two poets, agree as to the kind of structure on which American poetry is to be formulated. Free verse, freedom of expression, new

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁷⁴Carl Sandburg, The People Yes, p. 24.

¹⁷⁵Carl Sandburg, Cornhuskers, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 120.

words self-coined or otherwise, forceful descriptive words are the factors necessary for the release of native American thoughts and ideas. The restrictions of the classicists have no place in American literature. Of greatest importance is the innate creative impulse influenced by native surroundings. There are greater and more interesting possibilities in the American scene than have as yet been discovered. Whitman and Sandburg are the leading artists in the field. Form is secondary and is not to be regarded except that it be adaptable to the character of the poet's message.

No other contemporary poet has followed Whitman as closely as Sandburg whether in form or theme. At present, Sandburg is regarded as a true representative of American life in artistic form.

CHAPTER V

The similarity between the basic principles underlying the thought, theme, and form of the works of the two poets is significant. Sandburg is the answer to Whitman's appeal for a real American poet. The older poet is prophetic when he exclaims in "Poets to Come":

Poets to come! orators, singers,
musicians to come!
Not today is to justify me and
answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native,
athletic, continental, greater
than before known,
Arouse! for you must justify
me...¹⁷⁹

Tremendously influenced by Whitman, he, more than any other contemporary poet, fulfills and satisfies the demands and requirements stated by the older poet in the use of free techniques and novel democratic ideas in American poetry. In his use of free verse, in his American themes, and in his disregard of conventional poetic speech, Whitman was a forerunner of the new and modern poets. Both poets responded to the vast economic and social problems of their respective rapidly changing eras and were convinced that, as a result, all old ideas and traditional standards were doomed.

New movements in literature are characterized by a distinct

¹⁷⁹Walt Whitman, "Poets to Come," in Leaves of Grass, p. 236.

antipathy and a definite antagonism toward all the traditions and codes of their predecessors. Almost all of the New England poets made regular visits to Europe to translate manuscripts or remained in their libraries, entirely oblivious to the great changes taking place in the growth of a young nation. Science and invention were transforming the thought and the daily life of the people from the traditional design to a new and incomprehensible form. Whitman based his humanitarian principle on the scientific discovery of the oneness of the universe. The machine invention caused mass movements of people from the provincial areas to rapidly growing cities. Factories sprung up, and with them came the misery and wretchedness of the indigent. The modern age is but a continuation of the materialistic advances of former years. More factories, more inventions, great pecuniary riches, and fabulous wealth have been accumulated, but the creative impulses have been made subservient to industrial gains.

The two poets repeatedly protest against the commercial exploitation of human beings and the merciless attitude of big business. The future of the country does not depend on the success of mercantile establishments nor on the size of great cities but on the kind of people who live in the nation, and whose rights as individuals must be respected. Both poets agree that only belief in the creed and practice of brotherhood can a democratic nation be regarded as successful. The growth and in-

crease of tangible wealth in the nation has not helped the cause of native culture. The invention of modern conveniences certainly has not acted as a stimulus to the expression of natural talent. The imperfections of democracy still exist with injustices; therefore, disillusion and pessimism result from the existing conditions and greater realism is evident in Sandburg.

Whitman and Sandburg were born of poor, hard-working laborers. Their childhoods were spent in the country, which later each one pictured effectively in his poems. Leaving school at about the age of thirteen, both poets experienced lives of many and varied impressions. Both were born into conditions which kept them in close and vital contact with the kind of experiences, the social interests, and situations which they were able to interpret with genuine discernment, deep power and rare imagination. They were born in places that gave easy approach to open fields and prairies, to great cities, and that brought them in contact with the working classes of the American democracy. In Whitman, the Quaker tradition left a profound faith in human divinity and a free attitude toward religion. Sandburg's creed was formed by his daily contact with laboring people. The older poet's sympathy for humanity was so magnanimous that he bases his world on the elemental types, thus denying recognition to all men.

Whitman's followers have professed that delicacy and refinement are signs of weakness and have exalted the primitive forms

of strength. Yet, culture is the development of man's essential power and not the sublimation of the primordial instincts, even in a democracy. No literature becomes permanent by the "exaltation of the rough, the crude, the unclean, the physical..."¹⁸⁰

The poets were profoundly impressed by the America which they saw and with which they came in direct contact, the America of activity, of great energy, of the common people, and of the unconventional, friendly mode of life. Their extensive travels across the country, their daily association with various people from all walks of life, including those condemned as outcasts of society whom they encountered in their capacities as editors and reporters for large city newspapers, served to enrich their experience and later, to portray American life with great poetic force.

Their practice in journalism enabled them to present their material in a manner most effective and convincing for public perusal.

The humanitarian trait is fundamental in the books of both poets and implies their deep faith in democracy. The explanation to Whitman's attitude is found in the inscription in Leaves of Grass:

Nor cease at the theme of One's-
self. I speak the word of the

¹⁸⁰ Hamilton Mabie, Backgrounds of Literature, p. 220

modern, the word En-Masse...¹⁸¹

The word "En-Masse" for Whitman means "the divine average."
He desires his comrade to share "the greatness of Love and
Democracy - and the greatness of Religion..."¹⁸²

Thus democracy denotes the equal possession by all men and women of all things in life, whether they be physical or spiritual. It suggests that the simplest individual possesses attributes that are divine and beautiful and must be regarded as such. In Democratic Vistas, the poet discusses his views on the question of democracy and art in America. He indicates that despite rapid gains in material riches, America has not yet produced a national literature corresponding to a modern democracy. He maintains that European traditions still influence American institutions and that, unless they are replaced by native forms, democracy can never assert itself. It is difficult to obliterate the past and futile to escape hereditary and racial backgrounds, but democracy will produce a form of literature varying from the ancient feudal systems. Emancipated from the severe restrictions of the privileged class, informed by science, and convinced of the divinity of the individual, the poet may encounter a new world of nature and humanity which he may be able

¹⁸¹Walt Whitman, "Inscription" in Leaves of Grass, p. 431.

¹⁸²Ibid., p. 244.

to interpret. The lowest and most inconspicuous are given exalted meanings which the poet must approach with sincerity and simplicity, yet ever mindful of the truth. The class of humanity must include all groups of people, exclusive of the aristocrat, because of his anti-democratic principles - namely, the lack of regard for brotherly feeling, the excessive exploitation of the less fortunate, and his aversion to truth and morality. The democratic government, for Whitman, has only one significance, that is, the preservation of liberty for man that he may enjoy life and happiness. All public institutions are maintained for the individual's benefit. He describes an ideal democratic community where the citizen is the head and the officials perform their duties for remuneration. All are comrades, healthy fathers and mothers, and the children depend on themselves.

The two poets humanitarian characteristics were emphasized by the periods of war through which they lived, and which acted as a stimulus to the production of poetry in general. The older poet's service as a volunteer nurse in the army hospital molded and shaped the character of his future writings. He exercised his philosophical theories into practice and was able to put spiritual values into his raw material. However, in contrast to modern attitudes, he did not deplore or condemn the suffering and distress of humanity, but conceded that war was necessary to preserve the Union. Modern poets, including Sandburg, view war

realistically and fail to give any reason for its existence. They strive to destroy its glamor and prefer to portray it only as a means to an end.

Of Whitman it is said:

His realism, his concrete pictures, his swing and freedom, his Americanism, his insistence upon message, ethic purpose, absolute fidelity to the here and now rather than to books of the past - all have been enormously influential. He is the central figure of the later period, the voice in the wilderness that failed its dim morning and the strong singer of its high noon...¹⁸³

Sandburg reflects these same characteristics. "Fidelity to the here and now," "concrete pictures," "realism," "Americanism," "freedom," may be applied to both poets. They both wrote of plain, laboring, insignificant or prominent men; they were familiar with rural communities as well as with cities and towns, filled with vice and depravity. Their theme was American life, in its broadest sense. Both have vital feeling, lusty vigor; they are equally American. They chant of American cities, fields, and people in the accepted American phraseology.

The Whitman catalogue is identified in "Sins of

¹⁸³Fred Pattee quoted in "Whitman and Sandburg," English Journal, Vol. XVII (1928) pp. 549.

Kalamazoo:¹⁸⁴

Here I saw churches with steeples
like hat-pins,
Undertaking rooms with sample
coffins in the show window
And signs everywhere, signs
satisfaction is guaranteed,
Shooting galleries where men kill
imitation pigeons,
And there were doctors for the
sick,
And lawyers for people waiting in
jail,
A dog-catcher and a superintendent
of streets,
And telephones, water-works, trolley
cars,
And newspapers with a splatter of
telegrams from sister cities of
Kalamazoo the whole world over...

But the two poets differ in that Whitman displays a broad sweep of vision, while Sandburg singles out details and portrays definite units of thought. In Whitman, the vast panorama of the world passes before the mind, but Sandburg hesitates and contemplates "red barns and heifers that spot the green grass circles around Omaha,"¹⁸⁵ "the shanties that hang by an eyelash to the hill slants back around Omaha,"¹⁸⁶ "a span of steel that ties up the kin of Iowa and Nebraska across the yellow big-hooped Missouri River..."¹⁸⁷ While Whitman passes from one scene so

¹⁸⁴Carl Sandburg, "Sins of Kalamazoo," in Smoke and Steel p. 49.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.,
¹⁸⁷Ibid.

rapidly to another that the reader has little time to react fully to each picture, Sandburg pauses to dwell on the smallest particulars. The younger poet is also more subtle in his expression of love for humanity. He does not theatrically proclaim his affection for the common people, but he sketches scenes with great sympathy and compassion as

I wander down on Clinton street
south of Polk
And listen to the voices of
Italian children quarreling.
It is a cataract of coloratura
And I could sleep to their
musical threats and accusations.¹⁸⁸

Yet, although Whitman wrote poems for the man in the street, he has only been read by scholars, students and poets, because he did not use the language of the people. The younger poet has reached the masses of American people, and is eagerly read by them because of his use of midwest idioms, slang and colloquialisms in expressing the common emotions. He manifests a diverse selection of types, ranging from harsh realism to a tender feeling for natural beauty, and an uncertain attitude toward mystery similar to Whitman, yet his manner of presentation is simple, direct, and comprehensible by all. Both poets include poetry of much natural beauty of the traditional sort among their works. Fields, trees, birds, skyscrapers, steel mills and trains form

¹⁸⁸Ibid., p. 36.

subjects of much comment.

Sandburg's use of contrast is pleasing and effective.

Against "dust and thundering trucks, barrages of street wheels and lawless wind"¹⁸⁹ and factory smoke, he introduces clean white curtains: "Little white prayers at the windows..."¹⁹⁰

Whitman and Sandburg mark an advance in the history of American national poetry. The development of this art has been more difficult in America than in any other country. The United States, alone among nations, has been forced to withstand powerful dehumanizing agencies converging at one time, namely, pioneering, puritanism and industrialism. In addition, Americans expressed no great desire to cultivate their own experience and foreign culture was easily accessible for purchase and importation. The result was a halt in American emotional life and a worship of the mechanistic view of life with no artist capable to found the highest culture. Whitman founded and expressed the American conception of democracy, namely, that all humanity is a vast fraternal organization in which no class or distinction is recognized.

In his acceptance of science, his opposition to the classical and aristocratic ideals of the preceding age, he marked the

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 41.

rise of native American culture. It was necessary for Whitman to take democracy in its primitive form to prepare the way for the future poet whose thoughts and convictions will be identical with his own ideas, yet will be characterized by a finer selection and distinction in regard to spiritual and aesthetic values.

The future poet will commend the primitive powers of humanity and respect the individual but, as an ideal, he will set up a cultured man, disciplined and trained in his development. Whether Sandburg is the desired poet of the future is yet to be concluded, though he is, at present, regarded as the foremost American poet since Whitman. Vigorously opposed to the exploitation of the lower classes and indignant at the commercialism of the machine age which corrupts beauty and destroys happiness, Sandburg frequently vents his anger in sarcastic menacing and scornful utterances. This has led to his being branded as a propagandist by many critics who aim to detract from his quality as a poet. But Sandburg's accusations are never personal, and he is positive that all men desire equality and justice in their souls even though they perform deeds harmful to others outwardly.

From 1929 on to the war, the literature resulting from the depression intimates the fact, that the present economic system fails to meet the needs of humanity, and must be amended in many ways. The poetry of this period reveals a resentment and a revolt against the tremendous power of materialism over the real

and fundamental values of life. The modern poet influenced by the disillusionment and the pessimism of economic inadequacy, refuses to accept the way of life that has resulted in the great disaster of the depression. Therefore, since he cannot escape the forces of the man-made international economic and social influences of the present time, his main purpose is to participate in this extensive social conflict, and, consequently, politics becomes a fundamental theme in a dwindling world. Yet, it has been proved that this revolutionary propaganda may be portrayed artistically and skillfully.

How far this trend of thought of the 1930's will continue cannot be foreseen. The lot of humankind in general has been improved and more than that a false prosperity proceeding from the Second World War has lulled the writers into a satisfied and pleasing complacency. Anti-war protestations have ceased entirely, and all factions have united to wage a struggle for existence. The people feel that the war is being fought for freedom and individual rights, and everybody desires to destroy tyranny and mass oppression.

Perhaps the poetical idea of the 1940's will be the exaltation of American principles extolling the rights of the people and the condemnation of the fanatical conceptions of race superiority and totalitarianism. Since this war is a bitter contest for the rights of the common man, for whom the poets plead

so forcefully all over the world, the anti-war attitude of the 1930's will be replaced by a justification of the terrifying contest raging between the soul of humanity and the decadent forces of evil that seek to destroy it. The poets will express the spirit of world patriotism.

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