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THE AMERICAN DREAM AND ITS CULMINATION IN WALT WHITMAN

by

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of English of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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A NOTE ON SOURCES

Examining the American Dream in relation to Walt Whitman, I have found the following texts very helpful.

James E. Miller, Jr.'s Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, with its biographical and critical introduction and glossary, is used as the text of Whitman's major poetry. Facsimilies of the first editions of Leaves of Grass supplement this text. The texts of Whitman's essays, fiction, minor poetry, and correspondence are examined in the various volumes of the Collected Writings of Walt Whitman published by New York University Press.

Gay Wilson Allen's Solitary Singer. A Critical Biography is a major scholarly biography. His Walt Whitman Handbook provides an excellent survey of the major critical questions and opinions concerning the poet. James E. Miller, Jr., is a major scholar of Whitman's biography and of the readings of the poetry. His Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass gives a thorough analysis of the structure and content of the poetry. His Song of Myself is a helpful collection of critical essays on the development and meaning of the poetry. Emory Holloway is another important biographer. His Whitman. An Interpretation in Narrative is a major biography which deals with the various influences at work on Whitman. His Free and Lonesome Heart is a reasoned speculation on the possibility that Whitman had a son. Richard Chase is a major scholar of the readings of the poetry. His Walt Whitman Reconsidered emphasizes "Song of Myself" as the key work and examines the biography of the poet. His pamphlet, Walt Whitman, is a good, brief analysis of Whitman as a man and artist. Thomas Crowley's Structure of Leaves of Grass presents the evolution of the various

early editions of the poetry into one unified epic.

Henry Canby's Walt Whitman, an American presents the biography and interprets it in relation to the poetry. Canby's focus is Whitman as the bard of democracy. Roger Asselineau is a noted foreign critic and biographer. His two volume Evolution of Walt Whitman presents a psychoanalytic and critical correlation of the life and works, and presents the development of Whitman's personality and poetry. Newton Arvin's Whitman is a socialistic view of the social and political attitudes of the poet and relates the poet's works to French rationalism and German romanticism.

F. O. Matthiessen's chapter on Whitman in the American Renaissance is an important modern interpretation of Whitman as an expressor of the thoughts and feelings of his time in American history. D. H. Lawrence's essay on Whitman in Studies in Classical American Literature reflects the fascination and repulsion which Lawrence felt for the poet. Both writers held similar ideas of bodily divinity.

Concerning Whitman's mysticism, the following authoritative texts are helpful: Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism, Rudolf Otto's Mysticism East and West, Ronald Knox's Enthusiasm, and William James' The Varieties of Religious Experience. These works can be complemented by V. K. Chari's Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism which is a correlation of the aspects of Indian mysticism with Whitman's personality and works.

Concerning Whitman's concepts of the American Dream and New Eden, two works are helpful. The chapter on Whitman in R. W. Lewis' American Adam briefly examines the poetry as an example of the Adamic American man naming the new American garden and

seeking innocence in the New World. Frederic I. Carpenter's American Literature and the Dream is a brief but interesting presentation of the historical developments of the basic beliefs behind the migrations to America.

Introduction:

The Serpent and the Garden

With more conviction than any other author, Walt Whitman expressed what is probably the most enthusiastic and optimistic statement of the promise of the American utopia. Therefore his mystical belief in the spiritual brotherhood of the ideal democracy is examined in this discussion in order to help define his idealistic understanding of what has come to be called the American Dream.

The five basic themes with which Whitman expressed his utopian belief concerning modern man in the New World are as follows. First, the idea that America is the new Promised Land of regenerated men free of the perverse conventions which had come about with the decay of civilization. Second, the idea that while man must become initiated to the evil of that corrupted civilization, he must avoid cynicism and gain an experienced idealism; he must attain an attitude which can distinguish the disillusioning worldly appearances and distractions of that civilization from the ideal Edenic harmony of man in concord with creation and Creator. Third, the idea that man, the idealistic initiate, must attain a communion with Nature and gain self-reliance in harmony with the Over-Soul; this concord results in the fulfillment of man's mind, body, and soul through a purposeful life, and thus prepares him for a meaningful death; such a death is an entrance into union with the Creator. Fourth, the idea that love is a stronger power than is law for both microcosm and macrocosm, that the soul and the body of man must resolve their ancient discord by working in a union of love, and that all common men must live in a brotherhood based on this love. Fifth, the idea that both the grossness and the pettiness of materialism pervert the true Dream of the utopia

and set up a false Dream of greed and vain worldly wisdom.

In his expression of the themes, Whitman engaged in a poetic search for innocence in which he hoped to realize his sometimes naive but always earnest desire to attain the vision of the future New Eden in America. This mystique of the search seems to focus the five themes into a unified examination of the origin, nature, and future of the modern common man and the possibility of his creating the ideal amative democracy of utopian America. In his meditations on his themes, Whitman, as it were, asked himself, "What is it about America that makes this New Eden possible?" From this pondering came his evolving epic, and it is this pondering that will be discussed in order to understand his concepts of man, America, democracy, and the future evolution of all of these into the utopia of the Dream.

The broad backgrounds of the utopian concepts can be briefly observed in order to gain a general understanding of where these ideas came from and how they evolved before they appeared in Whitman's works. For the early American explorers and settlers, the whole idea of discovering and entering a new virgin world had a mystery about it the likes of which will not be felt again till man finally sets down on another planet as hospitable to him as is Earth. This concept of entering a New World had a deeply stimulating effect on and meaning for the sophisticated, class-heavy, and war-weary Old World: the New World seemed to be a place where the destiny of man could be rebuilt; and America was looked upon as a New Eden, a new garden in which the ancient evil serpent could be cast out of man and where the primeval innocence of the elect or chosen people could be restored. These ideas developed

into the mystique of a pilgrimage from the depravity of the Old World, associated with the ancient serpent, to the Promised Land in the garden of the New World. This mystique gradually blended into the various utopian beliefs which were involved with the theocracy of the Puritan "elect" in New England, the Nature cult of the "Noble Savage" in English Romanticism, and the intuitional faith of individualism in the Transcendental Movement; because of these diverse influences, the pilgrimage of the mystique took on the aura of an occult or mystical experience, that of man becoming regenerated in the Eden of the New World. America seemed to be the fitting place for the fulfillment of man's ancient broken covenant with God and for the final evolution from the Old Eden of the fallen Old World into the glorious New Eden of the New World.

Beginning in the Renaissance, continuing through the colonial era, and climaxing in the revolutionary and republican periods, a reaction against the corrupted absolutism of church and government took place in both the Old and New Worlds. Absolutism was beginning to weaken as individualism and the rights of man began to take hold in the minds of men. Men began to search for their individual meanings of life and their own personal God; they did this searching directly, without the mediation of formal religions, philosophies, or institutions. The pessimistic Puritans dreamed of a society free of the Old World pomp and decay, and the optimistic Romantics and Transcendentalists desired a natural way of life which would do away with the institutionalism of Europe. Thus both pessimists and optimists expected great things of the New World. The Dream was therefore of a better life, either for the chosen few of the Puritans, or for the regenerated

masses of the natural utopia.

According to the Puritans, no matter what man did, the lower nature or the evil serpent in man would predominate because of original sin; only through God's grace could the elect be saved. In contrast, according to the Romanticists and Transcendentalists, man fulfilled his true self only when he acted according to his higher nature, the vestiges of the garden in man; and God acted through the works of all men, not an elect few. This difference in attitude concerning man caused the great tension in American thought and literature: on one side is the Calvinistic idea of absolute restraint concerning the inhumane vice, hate, and vengefulness of the depraved side of man, the selfish pride and vanity that divided men and which is identified with the Old World; on the other side is the Romantic idea of natural primitivism concerning the humane and innate virtue, love, and forgiveness of the spiritual side of man, the bond of brotherhood which is identified with the New World. The Calvinistic attitude is associated with the false or Materialistic Dream which equates worldly possessions with divine blessings and virtues and which tends to generate a caste system according to the "Protestant Ethic." The Romantic attitude is associated with the true Idealistic Dream which has an outlook of brotherhood that recognizes no value other than human dignity. Because of the American sense of either total depravity according to the Puritans or regeneration according to the Romanticists and Transcendentalists, the choice between the two attitudes is more vivid than in any other literature.

The pessimists and authoritarians among the Neo-Classicalists and Puritans believed that man is a brutish creature needing

severe religious and social restraints; the optimists and primitivists among the Romanticists and Transcendentalists believed that man is a moral creature who is naturally good if left to communicate by himself with Nature and God. The essential question involved in this conflict of beliefs was "What is man? Is he the selfish beast needing the cage of society or the benevolent soul needing escape from stifling society?" The answer which won out and which has influenced much of American thought and literature is the latter: the authoritarian Neo-Classic idea of man's weakness without society and the pessimistic Puritan idea of man's total depravity were countered by the Romantic and Transcendental ideas of civilization's corruption and of man's divinity free of society. The tide turned from the cynical concept that man requires absolutistic restraint toward the ideal Dream of individualistic and natural democracy. Included in this gradual transition was a build up of the hopes for the ages of gold, that mythic utopian age when religion, government, and civilization were pure and natural expressions of the people, not the twisted concoctions of hypocrisy, greed, and tyranny.

Nothing but misery had come from the absolutistic monarchies and dictatorships which were the foundations of the stale Old World civilization. The Romanticists placed the guilt for man's evil on that civilization which the Neo-Classicists thought to be man's protection and salvation; the Romanticists looked to the free, primitivistic state for man's regeneration. In the New World, as in the Old, authoritarian tyranny was crumbling under the weight of the belief in man's natural rights. Moreover, the frontier atmosphere of America was at work on the settlers and helped

to destroy their concepts of the Old World's caste system by developing a spirit of rugged individualism. The puritanical idea of the elect few faded into the romantic belief in the brotherhood of the individual common men. Free of European conventions and institutions, the builders of the New World society could presumably attain naturally to the primal harmony which was lost in the original Eden. In the wilderness, man might independently find himself and his individual purpose in life; he could thus create the New Eden in his soul and then expand this interior harmony out to the whole external world. In the light of this idealistic concept, America's savage wilderness was imaginatively transformed into romantic Edenic Nature, a New World to which man could flee in order to escape the savage corruption of civilization.

All of this reaction against institutionality and conventionality reached its crest during the period of the American and French Revolutions with the full burst of the Romantic Age and the establishment of the ideals of the American republic. Something new seemed to have been stirring in the minds of men ever since the discovery and settlement of America, and this stirring reached its height when the New World's Revolution broke out: ideally, the revolutionists were filled with justified moral indignation at the age-old perversions of human dignity; they were therefore fighting for the cause of all reasonable human beings, for the fulfillment of humanity's destiny. They were evidently striving for a new sense of individual identity, that godly quality within each soul which is capable of banding all souls into a divine equality. Thus, while the American Revolution was a rational solution by

practical men to concrete problems, it also took on a utopian spirit, the romantic spirit for the regeneration of man in an apocalyptic recreation of Eden. The American Experiment, as formalized in the documents and rhetoric of the Revolution, was the opposite of Old World absolutism since it held that rule must be by just cause and consent of the governed, that all men are created equal by the Deity and are naturally entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; all of these concepts helped to form the utopian American Dream. The thinking of the Revolution caused men to ask themselves why any man should be exalted above others as a king was. Since all men were equal creations of Deity, they should all live in a classless brotherhood which could eventually develop into the harmony of mankind befitting the original Eden. This belief is what had driven men away from the crowded civilization of the Old World toward the simple and natural primitivism of the New. This belief enforced the idea that in America the ancient serpent was to be cast out of the soul of man so that the primal garden could be created.

The utopian Dream concerned the idea that all men were able to fulfill their individual destinies while working together in a brotherhood with a dignity due to their divine origin. This was the concept of union amidst diversity which was expressed in the idealistic motto E Pluribus Unum. This melting pot unity was the foundation of American democracy which the revolutionists strove for. The nascent Dream that had been stated in the Declaration of 1776 expressed the spiritual drive behind the American desire for independence, a spirit which carried on long after the end of the Revolution. This spirit was the desire for freedom from the

Old World both socially and mentally. The war itself fulfilled the desire for social and political independence; but for many years afterwards, especially in the Transcendental movement, there was a desire for intellectual independence. This desire was even more important, for it was the only stable foundation on which social and political independence could rest. In the socio-political and in the intellectual revolutions the people of the New World were creating precedents, not following them.

Since America appeared to be something new not only in history but also in evolution, the thinkers of America and especially the Transcendentalist writers undertook an exploration of the spiritual foundations and implications of democracy in the New World. The central belief behind this examination was that through the innate intuitive inner light, each individual could learn from Nature how to discover divine truth for himself without the aid of traditional outside authority. This concept was the mystical or spiritual foundation of the democracy in which each man was free to be his own best connection with eternal truth, his own Moses on the way to the New Promised Land. This idea became all the more firmly established when the common man of Jacksonian Democracy became the hero of the Dream. The common man was a unique individual, but, at the same time, he was a necessary part of the great whole of humanity's organic and mystical body. His individuality and human dignity allowed him first to define his identity or Self and then to transcend this Self by recognizing the individual dignity of all other common men. In this manner the Self became aware of its unique independence as a distinct part of humanity, and yet also sensed its oneness with the rest of

humanity.

Long before the Gilded Age, which was the triumph of the greed of the false Dream, the Transcendentalists saw the danger of the materialistic Dream, and it was their vision of the true Dream which greatly inspired Whitman. Emerson, Thoreau, and other Transcendentalists were convinced that the purest soul was not to be found in the man who amassed possessions. They preached against the uninspiring distractions of materialism which they considered to be the disease of their industrialized century. Influenced by these thoughts and beliefs, Whitman pondered the question of whether man is the foolish, weak, and depraved beast as the pessimistic Neo-Classicalists, Calvinists, and Puritans believed, or the godlike mortal divine as the optimistic Romantics and Transcendentalists believed. Pessimists such as Hawthorne and Melville believed that in America man would merely become all the more lost and ungodly as he became selfish and imperiously greedy in the false or Materialistic Dream, the reinstatement of the Old World corruption. Optimists such as Emerson and Thoreau believed that in America man could fulfill his godly Edenic destiny, the true Idealistic Dream. The tension of belief concerning man in America was something which Whitman tried to resolve in his writings. As poet of the New World, Whitman felt that he had to make man wake up to the great potentials of America. In order to do this he undertook his epical examination of the possibilities of the New Eden in America, an examination which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 1

Whitman Before the War: The Inexperienced Idealist

This chapter will examine the untested optimism with which Whitman expressed the streams of political, social, and religious thought and feeling which were alive in the booming young America before the Civil War. The biographical facts of Whitman's life should be briefly reviewed before beginning the examination of the poetry which expresses his prewar inexperienced idealism.¹

The poet, born on Long Island in 1819, reacted ambivalently toward his domineering father while feeling an intense devotion to his simple-minded mother. Both parents instilled in him their strong beliefs in the individualism of Jacksonian "common man" democracy, and their Quaker spirit of religious universality which was opposed to the institutionalized narrowness of the "elect."

The Whitmans moved from home to home in and around Brooklyn (1823-30), and Whitman worked in printing offices (1831-32, 1835) around New York City and taught in various schools in the area (1836-38, 1839-41). He also worked as an editor for various

¹The established biographical facts can be found in the major biographies of the poet. Of major importance is Gay Wilson Allen's The Solitary Singer. A Critical Biography. This can be usefully supplemented by Allen's Walt Whitman Handbook. Also of importance is James E. Miller Jr.'s A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass which can be supplemented by his Walt Whitman and Whitman's "Song of Myself"--Origin, Growth, Meaning. Emory Holloway's Whitman. An Interpretation in Narrative is another important work, and it can be supplemented by Holloway's speculations on the possibility that Whitman had a son in Free and Lonesome Heart. Richard Chase also provides important information in his Walt Whitman Reconsidered. Further works to supplement these are Newton Arvin's Whitman, Henry Seidel Canby's Walt Whitman, an American. A Study in Biography, Roger Asselineau's two volumes on The Evolution of Walt Whitman, Geoffrey Dutton's Whitman, and Edward Haviland Miller's Walt Whitman's Poetry: A Psychological Journey.

local newspapers (1838, 1842-44, 1846-49). As he lived and worked in the hectic, sprawling middle Atlantic region, he saw America budding into what many people of his time hoped would be an ideal democracy based on the brotherhood of all common men. He reviewed and editorialized upon many contemporary romantic, transcendental, and mystical writings and on many of the main streams of thought in the eighteen-thirties and forties.

Whitman was filled with vigorous health, but his brothers and sisters were not nearly as healthy as he was. In their lives he felt a sense of the miseries and vices of the lower side of man's duality: one brother was an idiot, one went insane, another died of a cancerous throat infection, and a sister was afflicted with an exhausting nervous disorder. The poet lived with his idiot brother, Jeff. One of the trips which the two brothers took was an extended tour in 1848, involved with a short-lived newspaper job, to New Orleans and the Great Lake cities. The poet became fascinated by his young country's undeveloped possibilities which he saw on the rugged frontier. Some biographers conjecture that Whitman felt some violent enlightenment amidst the unpuritanical romanticism of New Orleans: some believe he experienced an intense homosexual love, while others (chiefly Holloway) think he had an invigorating heterosexual romance and begot an illegitimate son. They seem to think that such experience awakened a powerful poetic drive within him which enabled him to begin writing Leaves of Grass in the eighteen-fifties.

After returning from the trip he worked at his father's profession, carpentering (1851-54). About July 4, 1855, he published the first edition of Leaves; his father died and Emer-

son acknowledged Whitman as a poet within the same month. The second edition appeared in 1856, and the third, greatly expanded version in 1860. The epic was quickly evolving out of whatever secret experience the poet had undergone in the turbulent late forties and early fifties. All through the eighteen-fifties the civil and social controversies over slavery were brewing. Physical slavery degraded the divine soul and degenerated the divinely created body of man, and mental slavery--the slavery of narrow social casts, party divisions, and bigotry--further demoralized the young democracy; Emerson and Thoreau detested both forms of slavery and Whitman shared their disgust.

In 1861, the Civil War broke out and Whitman sensed that the great fire test of America had come: the evolving democracy would either be strengthened or shattered by the terrible conflict. In 1862 the poet's brother George was listed as wounded at the battle of Fredericksberg. Whitman went to the battlefield to see him. George's wound was minor, but the poet was struck by the ugly scenes of battlefield hospitals. The aging poet, childless and wifeless, desired to ease the agonies of those whom he considered to be the young sons of democracy. He became an unofficial hospital visitor in Washington (1863-65). The exhausting hospital work and the accompanying emotional strain caused a physical breakdown in 1864. During this same period his poetry was misunderstood and rejected as immoral by many people, and Lincoln, whom the poet viewed as the true regenerated man of the democracy, was destroyed soon after the war's blood bath (1865). Without Lincoln's great compassion and understanding, the nation drifted into the sordid, materialistic Gilded Age. War had not destroyed America, but the

danger of spiritual depravity could have caused the false Dream to be victorious. Apparently Whitman's poetic optimism had not been justified. Perhaps he thought his poetry was a failure; he had to rethink his concepts of the true Dream.

The poet's health was breaking down as he produced the fourth (1867) and fifth (1871) editions which expressed his thoughts on the war and its aftermath. In 1873 he suffered a paralytic stroke, and lost a sister and his beloved mother. In 1876 the sixth edition appeared and two years later his health improved enough for him to take short trips. In 1879 and 1880 he made a journey to the western states and was impressed by the grandeur of the scenery and by the surging pioneer life. In 1881 another edition was published. In 1885 and again in 1888 he suffered strokes and had to be confined as a cripple in his Camden house. Late in 1891 he took pneumonia and died after the tenth edition was prepared early in 1892.

With this biographical sketch in mind it is now possible to trace the development of Whitman's five themes² in an attempt to

²As mentioned in the introduction, the five themes are as follows. First, the idea that America is the new Promised Land of regenerated men, the new hope and last hope of decayed civilization. Second, the idea of man's initiation into the evil of the corrupted civilization, and the warning that the initiate must avoid cynicism and gain an experienced idealism: an attitude which can distinguish disillusioning worldly appearances from the ideal Edenic harmony of man in communication with Nature and the Over-Soul. Third, the idea that man, the idealistic initiate, gains self-reliance in harmony with the Over-Soul, and finds a union with Nature; this is a harmony and unity which result in the fulfillment of man's mind and soul through a purposeful life, and thus prepares him for a meaningful death; such a death is viewed as an entrance into union with the Creator. Fourth, the idea that love is a stronger power than is law both for microcosm and macrocosm, that the soul and body of man must work in a union of love and not in discord, and that all common men must live in a brotherhood based on that love. Fifth, the idea that both the grossness and the pettiness of materialism destroy the Dream and set up a false ideal of worldly wisdom, a perversion of the true Dream.

analyze the culminating expression of the American Dream throughout his works. In this way the evolution of Whitman from naive optimist into experienced idealist can be observed according to the ritual of the Dream. This mystique is the concept of a pilgrimage away from the depravity of the Old World to the Promised Land of the New World; this ritualistic experience is a strange search to regain innocence, a search in which man hopes to become regenerated through his naive but earnest attempt to create a New Eden in the New World. This evolving mystique of the Dream seems to focus the five themes of Leaves of Grass into one unified examination of the nature of man and the possibility of his creating the New Eden in the ideal amative democracy of America.

All the themes and ideas related to Whitman's true Dream of the future regeneration of mankind in the amative democracy can be found in crude form in his early poems, short stories, and novel. These works are like uninspired sermons which merely mouth the themes he was pondering in a very mundane fashion. These early works are immature expressions of half-formed ideas or naive journalistic attempts to present morality, topical ideas, and editorial thought in the form of doggerel rhymes and sentimental fiction. Published in the newspapers and magazines for which Whitman wrote, the poems are lightly humorous, conventional, or hollow; the stories nearly always end with unsubtle moralizing or are contrived as clumsy parables worthy of grade school text books (perhaps influenced by Whitman's work as a school teacher). Yet the themes of some of the early works foreshadow the ideas of his mature works in Leaves.

In "Our Future Lot" (Long Island Democrat; Oct. 31, 1838)³ the poet looks beyond what appears to be a meaningless life and death. He is awed by the "common doom--to die!" He asks mortal man if his "swelling soul" lives only in "this earthly cage of care, and tears, and strife." He answers "Not so." Man's immortal soul is evolved and tested in the mortal body and then both body and soul shall rise "re-purified" in robes of divine beauty. This early expression of regeneration is the basic image of the mystique of Whitman's Dream: the pilgrimage to find a purpose for mortal life and then to attain a meaningful transcendence beyond life. In "Young Grimes" (Ibid.; Jan. 1, 1840) the poet tells his reader to leave the meaningless materialism of corrupted civilization--the distracting materialism which blinds man to his ultimate goal beyond life--and to find refuge in a return to the Edenic beauty of Nature. The "pomp, and tinsel, and parade" of corrupt civilization's "noisy din" do not fare well in comparison to Nature's tranquility which is "Unvexed by guilt or pain." The theme is similar to that found in "Song of Myself" and "Spontaneous Me" (1855, 1856), but unlike the flowing free verse of those later works, the meter bounces and the rhymes are conventional. In the companion poem "Old Grimes" the theme of the harmonious brotherhood of man is expressed in a humorous but immature fashion that is a far cry from the sublimities of Leaves:

³All quotations from Whitman's early poems, short stories, and the novel are taken from The Early Poems and Fiction, edited by Thomas L. Brasher in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: New York University Press, 1963), pp. 5 f., 12, 15, 17, 57, 80, 94, 118 f., 122, 148 f., 158, 221, 315 f.

He lived at peace with all mankind,
 In friendship he was true;
 His coat had pocket-holes behind,
 His pantaloons were blue.

The Noble Savage of the primitive New World revolts against the corruption of the Old World civilized tyranny in "The Inca's Daughter" (Ibid., May 5, 1840). The Inca is asked whether the daughter of a Peruvian monarch should become the "white lord's slave." The melodramatic answer is No: take her life instead. In "The Love That is Hereafter" (Ibid., May 19, 1840), Whitman says that life is a confusing and difficult pilgrimage, and that if man has not the interior peace to be able to "look above" life to a cosmic harmony after death, he will suffer a meaningless death in "dull despair." An early vision of the evolutionary future of the New World is observed beneath the sentimental moralizing of "The Columbian's Song" (Ibid., Oct. 27, 1840): America is the "fair and happy place" where Freedom lives; in the young democracy, men live with "upright brow" and thank God for their blessings because America's star will never fade. In "The Winding-Up" (Ibid., June 22, 1841), Whitman contrasts the insane and foolish materialism of the worldly false Dream with unearthly serenity of the cosmos; he tells the reader to "go view the solemn stars" in contrast to which all honors and especially the "bubble, Fame," are inconsequential. Whitman's prophetic strain is there, but it is marred by a sermonizing attitude. In "Each Has His Grief" (New World; Nov. 20, 1841), Whitman glibly says that all men have their troubles; more important, he apostrophizes meaningful death:

So, welcome death!...
 I'll yield without one pang of fear,
 Or sigh, or vain regret.
 But like unto a wearied child,

His pain and trouble o'er.

This attitude will become more fully developed in Leaves: man, weary of the corrupted world, finds Eden within his soul, lives a meaningful life, and then escapes the world in a celestial death. This idea is reinforced in "The Punishment of Pride" (Ibid., Dec. 18, 1841). An angel in all his innocent purity comes to the earth and is initiated to the evil of man's perverse lack of desire for divinity. The angel observes "That godlike thing, the human mind" which is like a "gem in black decay enshrined." The angel flees from such a world.

The mystique involving man's alienation from the corruption of loveless civilization and the search for innocence which causes man to flee from the world of tyranny finds expression in Whitman's short stories. In "Wild Frank's Return" (Democratic Review; Nov., 1841), Whitman moralizes on the lack of harmonious brotherly love, the love necessary if America is to become the true native democracy. Without "sweet affection, gentle forbearance, and brotherly faith," America would merely be an imitation of the Old World. Whitman desires that America's ideal democracy will be not only a new era of history but a new phase in man's evolution. In "Bervance: or Father and Son" (Ibid., Dec., 1841), Whitman refers to death as "that repose in the bosom of our great common mother, which I have so long and earnestly coveted..." In the story, a son is driven to madness by his loveless father. When love is absent, life and death are meaningless. In "Death in the School-Room" (The United States Magazine and Democratic Review; Aug., 1840), a beautiful, innocent boy is harassed by a domineering teacher who delights in punishment. The two characters can be interpreted as

representing the New and the Old Worlds. The teacher, thinking the boy is refusing to obey him, whips him: "Death was in the school-room, and Lugare had been flogging A CORPSE." Beneath the thick melodrama, the theme is that innocence flees from the world of tyranny. The end of man's long and strange journey through life from tyranny and toward death is discussed in "The Tomb Blossoms" (Voices from the Press; 1850). Whitman says that life is the running of "a most weary race..." He asks "Shall we fear the goal, merely because it is shrouded in a cloud?" In Leaves, Whitman often takes on this attitude of urging spathetic and worldly man to pick himself up out of the misty darkness and to move on towards the light. In "A Legend of Life and Love" (Democratic Review; July, 1842), an old man gives his two grandsons the cynical advice that love is useless and even dangerous in an evil world. One grandson's life becomes totally meaningless because he follows this advice, while the other finds true love and therefore discovers joy and purpose in life. The unsophisticated moral is that true love conquers the cynicism of the false Dream.

Franklin Evans (New World; Nov., 1842) is Whitman's novel of initiation to evil. Evans is degenerated by rum through a tempter called Colby. But Evans eventually is purged of the evil when he sees Colby in the grasp of the "devil's brew." Evans learns through initiation to look behind illusions, to see true ideals behind the confusion of corrupted worldly appearances. There is a dream sequence in which the hero is finally liberated from evil and comes into the light amidst celestial choruses of "Regenerated! Regenerated!"

In "One Wicked Impulse" (Democratic Review; July-August,

1845) an acquitted murderer is at last illuminated by a new morning. He wakes up to the meaning and beauty behind dull physical appearances and feels "how beautiful indeed God had made the earth" and that there is "wonderful sweetness in mere existence" amidst Nature's "Eden-like beauty." In the trees and flowers he senses some celestial forgiveness which he has not received from the "civilized" world. In "The Old Black Widow" (The Aristideau; Dec., 1845) the title character works to save a teenage girl from degradation. In this act, Whitman sees good proof for the rejection of cynical pessimists:

I do not know a better refutation of those scowling dogmatists who resolve the cause of all the actions of mankind into a gross motive of pleasing the abstract self.

Finally, in "Lingave's Temptation" (Collect) a poet is tempted to do something degrading for money. The poet is coaxed by the tempter, Ridman, "to inculcate what would lower the perfection of man." If any one man performs a degenerating act he retards the evolution of all mankind. The poet is thus given the choice of evolution or devolution. The spirit of poetry saves him and he refuses, thus becoming a true regenerated man aiding the evolution of man toward his destiny of democratic brotherhood: toward the harmony of all creation which was shattered in the Eden of old.

These early works thus indicate the ideals upon which the poet was meditating. But had he written only these works he would have been long forgotten. The turmoil which was building up toward the Civil War in the eighteen-forties and fifties caused the poet to reevaluate the glib ideas expressed in the five themes. The combination of his parents' beliefs and the surging life of

the growing republic probably led Whitman to believe that the common man was possessed of an inner light with which he could transcend his mortal limits and commune in democratic love with all fellow men and with the Over-Soul in all men. The divinity in each man--his transcendental intuition, Quaker inner light, or immortal soul--was the ultimate equalizer of all men, the only sure foundation of a true democracy. These concepts were to be pondered and repondered throughout the growing editions of Leaves of Grass. Whitman wondered about the nature of man and whether man was, in fact, capable of attaining the ideal amative democracy which he hoped could be created in America. Because of the influence of Transcendentalism and Quakerism on Whitman, he believed that all men share divinity; yet he saw men being corrupted by vain pride, divided by castes and by slavery, and falling into Civil War that shattered the very brotherhood which man was supposedly recreating in the New Eden of the New World. The mature poetry began to evolve out of his meditations on the paradoxes and mysteries of man: man has divinity within him, yet he has not the desire to transcend his mortal body.

In these meditations, the poet questions himself about life, love, death: What is life? What is man? Why does a soul love if love is destroyed by death? Is there something beyond death?

The poet also questions himself about America: Can man create the New Eden? Is America capable of becoming the true New Eden which mankind has dreamed of for so long? Is the brotherhood of democratic harmony a foolish dream? Can America's ideals, her impossible dreams, become realities?

And the poet questions himself about the destiny of America

and of man: Is the war an end of democracy? Is death an end of life?

In the face of such elemental questions the poet abandons the glib and uninspiring sermonlike attitude of his early poetry and fiction. Leaves of Grass is a gradually evolving expression of a deeply personal parable, a poetic biography of Whitman's metaphorical journey toward the ideal democracy in the future New Eden. The poet abandons the jingling or thumping rhymes in favor of straight-forward expressions of his fascination for and wonder at life, love, and death; he abandons hollow moralizing in favor of direct observations of the great mystery of life which becomes apparent to him as he ponders the future of strife-torn America and of inwardly divided man. During his work as a newspaper reviewer, he had become familiar with romantic and transcendental ideas of mysticism. He began to use the elements of mystical ritualistic experience to express his concepts and themes: he presents himself as the empathic poet-prophet, the mystic who caresses all life and who sends his soul on a journey; he sends his Self beyond himself into the currents of all souls to chart the flow of evolution, sends his spirit out to search for his own identity amidst the rising calamity of threatening war. He is seeking America's ideals beyond the worldly corruptions, and is searching for the meaning of life, love, and death. He ponders, agonizingly questions, proclaims answers, doubts the answers, and moves farther and farther into the mysteries. He expresses this metaphorical mystic quest in sweeping, flowing lines of unconventional free verse which seem to roll like the Long Island waves; in staccato questions and declarations; in lulled and muted hypnotic rhythms and repetitions

like litanies and chants; in simple contradictions which sway back and forth between the paradoxes of life and death; and in direct dialogues between himself and the reader, between himself and his body and soul, and between himself and the great unseen Life Force. Throughout the poetry, Whitman presents himself as moving toward death: this can be either a meaningless or purposeful death depending on whether he, as the prophetic representative of all men, can or cannot find the meaning of life. If he finds the meaning, then death is merely a transition into something beyond life. If not, he, and mankind, will remain in darkness, restless and unfulfilled. The poet must try to combat the false Dream by presenting the true ideal of American democracy in concrete images: in pictures of the great, surging potentials of the New World.

It will now be advantageous to go through Leaves of Grass⁴ examining Whitman's five themes and the most noteworthy expressions of Whitman's inexperienced idealism as he moved toward the shattering experience of the Civil War. Whitman's pondering about the meaning of life and his own identity is analyzed in Song of Myself; his meditation on love as the meaning of life and foundation of both identity and democracy is found in "Children of Adam" and "Calamus"; his contemplation about America as the evolving New

⁴The poetry written before the Civil War is examined in this chapter in the works of the 1855, 1856, and 1860 editions; the war poems in chapter two are those of the 1865 and 1865-66 editions; the postwar poems in chapter three are mainly those of the 1872, 1878, and 1881 editions. Most of the poetry is examined in the order that Whitman gave to the works in the "death bed" 1891-92 edition since he specifically arranged them in a particular sequence which evidently expressed the evolution of his ideas.

Eden of utopian democratic love is examined in "Salut au Monde," "Song of the Open Road," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Song of the Answerer," and other poems; and finally, the beginning of his anxious brooding on the Civil War's threat to America's ideals is discussed as it develops in a series of works including "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," "By the Roadside," "There Was a Child Went Forth," and "The Sleepers." This is the course of Whitman's prewar inexperienced idealism which will be traced in this chapter.

I. The Question: What is Life?

The "Grass" in the title of Whitman's epic is an eloquently simple universal image that the poet uses to help him ponder the questions about the meaning of life and the destiny of the common man of America. Grass is an ever-returning growth; it dies and grows again in endless cycles. The grass of the present comes from the "leaves" (the leavings) of many past deaths, and will become the compost of many future lives. The image focuses the great flux of life and death which the poet is contemplating. Grass is the most common vegetation of all, and it is very hardy if it is in good soil; likewise the common men are the hardest of mankind's vast array, if they are given the proper soil in which to evolve themselves. Whitman hoped that the proper soil would be found in the future amative democracy, the ideal society of the utopian Dream. In this one image of organic growth, Whitman focuses the endless cycles of life, death, rebirth; this one image is the symbol of the organic body of mankind (past, present, future) united in a cosmic harmony. The one vast field and the many

leaves of vegetation symbolize the One and the Many, the E Pluribus Unum of America and of the cosmos. If man can resolve his inward divisions between body and soul and his outward divisions between himself, fellow men, Nature, and the Over-Soul, then he can attain the inward and outward Edens of that ideal E Pluribus Unum. Whether these divisions can be resolved is the problem which Whitman will examine in his poetry.

Whitman sets forth on his metaphorical journey: he is "Starting from Paumanok." This is the beginning of Whitman's pilgrimage toward the New Promised Land; it is the beginning of mankind's journey into the new social and spiritual covenant of New Eden. Whitman, through his diverse catalogues and varying pictures of all life, is poetically unifying within his mind all men and women, past, present, future. In the person of the representative poet-prophet, all mankind is on its way back to the order of old Eden. In a characteristic expression of vigor and optimism, the poet writes, "I strike up for a New World." He is on the great pilgrimage; he is charting the further evolution of mankind toward its higher destiny: in him, mankind moves further through "Eternal progress, the kosmos..."⁵ The goal of this journey is the regaining of universal harmony, the cosmic brotherhood of all creation which was shattered in the old Eden. Whitman expresses the democracy as a brotherhood of

One form'd out of all,

⁵Walt Whitman, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, edited with an introduction and glossary by James E. Miller, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 15. In this discussion all quotations from Leaves are from the text with page numbers following in parentheses.

...One whose head is over all,
 ...One including and over all...(17)

He repeats and varies his idea of the One and Many, the American E Pluribus Unum. The motivating desire for this cosmic oneness is caused by the existence of the Over-Soul within all men and all creatures. Thus has the great American theme been introduced: the true Dream which Whitman is pondering is based on the "greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Religion." These three forces--Love, Democracy, Religion--are the three equalizing unities within all men which will bring about the "divine average." This "divine average" is the equality of earthly body and heavenly soul. The body and the soul of which Whitman sings are the two equal lovers that must work in concord to create the harmonious human being; the body and soul must work together in order to create the inward Eden which is necessary for the outward Eden of the democracy.

The thought of the two equal lovers causes Whitman to reminisce about the first time that he ever started thinking about life, love, death. He imagines that the mysteries first began to intrigue him when he saw two happy mockingbirds from Alabama mating by the Long Island shore. When the "she-bird" disappeared (probably killed) the joyful song of the "he-bird" turned into one of lonely longing for something beyond death. In this simple event, Whitman thinks he began to meditate for the first time on love, love lost, life, death, and what, if anything, is beyond death. Whitman, boy and man, would ponder these mysteries throughout his writings and especially in the masterpiece "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" which was published in 1860 on the eve of impending war. The sad male bird's cry for his lost mate seemed to

express the unfulfilled desire of all restless creatures to become part of something else, to merge physically and spiritually in that total love in and beyond life. This reminiscence causes the poet to realize that there is something more to know in life than the mere physical. The poet says that when he listened to the bird and when he still ponders that memory,

...it came to me that what he really sang for
 was not there only,
 Not for his mate nor himself only, nor all
 sent back by the echoes...

The sad song's meaning is "subtle, clandestine, away beyond" in a "charge transmuted and a gift occult..." (19) The wording is quiet and soft to express the mystery of the memory. Past and present flow together in this subdued line which the poet writes in meditating upon the mystery of joyful life and sorrowful death. There is something in front of us all, but it is something secret, "clandestine," hid from our eyes. Whatever it is, the haunting incident acts like an electric "charge" which compels the poet to delve the mystery. By recalling this simple incident early in the epic, the poet has planted in the reader's mind the questions which he is trying to answer: What is Life? What is Love? What is Death?

Having begun the pilgrimage and having planted the seeds of the mystery in the reader's mind, the poet makes one of the first of his democratic and personal invitations to the reader: "haste on with me." (24) The poet calls everyone to move with him beyond all barriers, through all times and places: by seeing all there is to see of creation on the open road of life, man can begin to see the characteristics of his Creator. In this evolving vision of Deity which Whitman will present, man supposedly can be purged of

his Old World degeneration and enter the New World of regeneration.

To be regenerated, man must be created anew. "Song of Myself" (originally titled "Walt Whitman") is the Genesis of the epic, the book in which Whitman sings about the identity of the New Man of the future New Eden; this small epic poem is a concentrated explanation of the meaning of life and of identity amid the booming life of the evolving democracy. The poet directly addresses his own soul, the reader, and all creation in an intensely democratic spirit of love, the spirit of regeneration which is the spirit of the New World. All things are alive, infused with the Life Force, transcending their own small mortal forms. The poet makes intimate invitations to his own soul and to the reader: "Stop this day and night with me," "Loafe with me on the grass...", "Undrape! you are not guilty to me..." (26-28) The meditation which the poet makes in his song of Self, of identity, and of the purpose of life, is stated so enthusiastically and realistically that it appeals to the reader by its simplicity: it is not philosophical pedantry nor sophisticated oratory; it is a series of chanted poetic proclamations as the poet seems to float like a clairvoyant in the mysterious ocean of existence. The poet does not talk of the past or future but of the present: "now... now...now...now...." (26) The past and future dissolve into the ever-present now of the poet's cosmic vision.

These meditations are expressed the way common people ponder the wonderings which scholars choose to call sociology (What is society, its culture and government?), philosophy (How do we know anything?), Psychology (What is man?), and theology (What is God?). The poet invites his soul and all souls to recline on the universal, ever-returning grass to ponder these old questions of life.

Nothing of the noisy, confusing world is heard. The secret communications of Whitman with his own soul and with the cosmos are expressed in subdued tones which tend to soothe the reader into a sort of trance: the sound is "Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice." (27) Whitman intends to attune the reader's soul to the higher frequencies, the silent intuitions and secrets of the spiritual world and of the divine cosmos to which man has been deaf and blind too long; this attunement is the first stage in the long pilgrimage toward the cosmic understanding and universal empathy necessary for the future utopian America.

We at last hear the ultimate question which is in the poet's mind. It is deceptively simple and is phrased by an innocent child who represents the Child Man of the future New Eden, the newborn innocent conceived by the regenerated body and soul of which Whitman sings. The question is "What is the grass?" (26) The question seems to sum up the whole of all philosophical inquiry since it apparently means "What is Man?" or "What is Life?" All flesh is like that symbolic grass of the title. All flesh is living, growing, dying. The body and soul, the mortal and the immortal elements of man, recline on that grass and ponder the secret energy that animates all creation. As Whitman lies there, he tells the reader that he begins to feel the "charge," (19) the occult illumination; this electrifying jolt of expanding awareness allows him to begin to see beyond the mortal mists:

Swiftly arouse and spread around me
the peace and knowledge that pass
all the argument of the earth...

He gains an elemental, untranslatable insight that transcends the barriers of time and space, and that transcends the mystery of death. In lines of biblical cadence which are intense, almost

breathless hypnotic litanies, the poet tries to express the inexpressible mystery which has come in his occult trance:

And I know that the hand of God is the
 promise of my own,
 And I know that the spirit of God is the
 brother of my own,
 And that all men ever born are also my
 brothers, and the women my sisters
 and lovers,
 And that a kelson of the creation is love,
 And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping
 in the fields...(28)

Life is seen as being limitless as all creation flows together in an illumination of democratic and cosmic consciousness. The poet is at the center of this illumination. He presents himself as being infused with a deific sense of purpose and identity: he is being regenerated. He no longer writes in the tone of the contrived melodrama in his early works; he has seen into the mystery and says he is held in the hand of God which is also his own. His blurred, mortal vision is being focused by this illumination; but, the cosmic vision is itself out of focus and the poet must go through a complex poetic analysis in order to understand it.

He is still not free of mortal limits and cannot see clearly enough to comprehend this vision beyond the mystery. To the child's question about the grass he can therefore only answer with other questions and with speculations:

How could I answer the child?
 I guess it must be a flag of my disposition,...
 Or I guess the grass itself is a child,...
 Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic...

But there is a clue: "that a kelson of the creation is love..."

(28) Even though confused man misunderstands the meaning of love, love is nevertheless the answer to the question of life. The full meaning of the answer will come to the poet and to all men

when they experience the love of the "divine average" (19), the love of the democratic, divine spirit existing in all men. When each man realizes that the Deity is in all men, then the true New Eden can begin to exist. When this love is realized, there will be no more questions: a new Genesis will take place as all mankind enters cosmic consciousness, the lost harmony of Eden; this consciousness brings about the vision of all things flowing into one loving center of existence.

Whitman asks where all men and women, all the youth and aged are. The poet says that they are alive, that the "smallest sprout shows there is really no death..." In this image of the ever-returning grass the poet sees immortality and evolution and knows that the Life Force is an unending power. With this in mind, he looks at things in a new way and says that it is lucky to be born. But, "it is just as lucky to die, and I know it." (29) The line is unusual yet simple in its offhanded, colloquial paradox. There is more to the miracle of existence than the strange interlude between birth and death. The poet has been newly baptized, has been reborn; he passes death and finds that it is not an end but a beginning. Meaningful Death is birth. The reader may be confused by the paradox, but, for that very reason, he is compelled to move on into the mystery with Whitman.

To reinforce the idea of the cosmic, democratic love of which he is singing, the poet takes the reader along with him to see the goodness of manifold creation, to find the Creator by studying his creation. Man will be shown all the good things of Eden to which he has been blinded because of the misty gaps between his body and soul and between the earth and the cosmos. The poet names all

things, all actions, all people in his catalogues. The images come undifferentiated, like journalistic accounts of anything and everything, all jammed together, as yet without interpretation. In part 8 of "Song of Myself," the poet begins to look at each separate microcosm, to name it or rebaptize it, and to move on to another: "I come and I depart." (30) He is elemental: he comes and he departs like life, love, death. He merely names, as Adam named in Eden, and then passes by, pondering what is behind all the names. The lines themselves become hypnotic rhythms or waves of each successive thought and name: the baby, the boy, the girl, the pavement, the bus, the sleigh, the crowd.

Now the poet recalls the yearning desire for unfilled merging with something; the sad bird's song is echoed. A woman is seen watching twenty-eight young men who are swimming naked in a stream near her home. She hides beneath heavy clothes and behind closed blinds. This is the paradox of life: she has a divine body but hides; she has lost harmony, and yet desires to merge with the naked men. Then the poet observes that she begins to move her soul secretly outward, to extend her hidden self toward the love she needs. Her soul and body are not two equal lovers for she is stifled under a heavy mask; therefore she expands her soul to other bodies. She splashes with the men in the water even though they do not see her: "They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch..." (32); the sounds here are full of erotic power. The driving power behind her need for love has enabled her to gain a spiritual and transcendental power. She, like the poet, can now move her spirit out into the flow of existence to satisfy the yearning; spiritual and physical drives are merged. The young

men, even though they are naked and free, are still bound in their bodies and do not sense her loving presence. On the other hand, even though her body is weighed down by conventional clothes, she is free to love with her spirit and bring back strength to her body. This is a vivid image of what the poet is doing on his spiritual pilgrimage toward New Eden and of what he is trying to teach all souls to do: to spiritually expand outward and meet all other souls in a democratic and cosmic love. In this way the ultimate mysterious longing can eventually be satisfied: the Over-Soul can be reached through all His created souls or forms.

All commonalities become part of the poet's evolving identity or Self: "What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me..." (33) The sense of universal equality and cosmic democracy here is intense and energetic. The empathic poet embodies All, just as America (the ideal New Eden for which he longs) embodies all the races and nations: America is "the Nation of many nations..." The poet seems to be a clairvoyant who spreads his spirit outward in widening circles and intersects with the souls of all other creatures. Whitman, the representative poet of America and of all common men, proclaims dramatically, "Of every hue and cast am I, of every rank and religion..." (36) With a Christlike attitude the poet makes "appointments with all" and says that he "will not have a single person slighted or left away..." (37) In effect he is saying this: I am a man; I have life; I meet and embrace all living, moving creatures; my democratic love reunites the cosmos.

The poet turns from his cosmic exploration and seems to stare the reader in the eye: "Who goes there?" He wonders who it is that is looking over his shoulder as he guides mankind on the pilgrimage.

In quick succession the poet speaks four words which crystalize and compress all the ideas of the epic: "hankering" (longing, desiring the ecstasy of fulfillment), "gross" (the en masse brotherhood of all men on the pilgrimage), "mystical" (spiritual and mysterious), "nude" (Edenic). Then in a strange line, the poet asks, "How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?" This is an image of what the poet's empathic soul is doing: it takes life into itself, examines it, digests it until all life turns into a pure dynamic energy surging through the poet's body. He presents himself as the divinizing center: all things are coming toward him and he absorbs all to try to find the meaning and essence. He asks the deceptively simple question in a new form: "What is man anyhow? What am I? What are you?" The poet answers: "I know I am deathless" and "I exist as I am..." The word "I," the key of identity and meaning, resounds through the poem as the poet absorbs all creatures into himself, and then examines himself to find out what all creation is about. He says: I know; I am; To me; I know; I am; I exist; I am. (38) The repetition echoes the only explanation which the Over-Soul ever gave of himself to men. God said "I Am Who AM": I am the eternal act of being. Whitman asks: What is the bird longing for? What is the woman longing for? What am I longing for? We all have life. What we want is life that is in harmony with the one pure eternal act of being. The quest for this democratic and cosmic act goes on.

Whitman declares his identity, his Self: "Walt Whitman, a kosmos..." The simple line expresses the complexity of the microcosm in democratic harmony with macrocosm. He is loud; he is soft; he hangs between all extremes. The energy of the pure act of ex-

istence flows through the poet: "Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index." The image is strong and erotic to express the divine love which should unify all creation. The great empathizer shouts his elemental, primitive song which is the "pass-word primeval..." He gives the "sign of democracy..." (41) The brotherhood and harmony lost so long ago in the garden is now to be regenerated in America. The poet is trying to remove the stifling veil from man's senses, to cut away conventions and outworn Old World traditions. Man must be able to send his rejuvenated soul outward and know that "Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles," that all of life is a miracle being enacted by God directly in front of men. Man must sense the equalizing divinity of Self, sense the divinity of all selves: "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from." (42) The sense of the divine equality of ideal democracy's brotherhood is powerful. Even a "mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillion of infidels." (46) Anything that moves is an extension of Deity: man cannot see wind, but he can see its effects on waving grass and rippling water; likewise life is an effect of the living but invisible breath of God. Man must wake up to this fact, must come out of his torpid sleep and see the new light. The poet says that to be able to do this man must live as deliberately as Nature, be freed of the materialistic and greedy corruption of the Old World.

The poet wishes that he could "turn and live with animals" because they are so serene and beautiful: they bring Whitman "tokens of myself..." (47) Every atom and form of creation brings the poet a token or image of the cosmic Self, the Over-Soul which he is seek-

ing. Each microcosm is a minute reflection or impression of the macrocosm. To emphasize this fact, the poet will now show the reader a sample of the infinite variety in God's plenitude: he will present another catalogue, a naming of all microcosms in an attempt to study the macrocosm and to discover the Creator behind all creation. Previously, in sections 7-9 of the poem, he had taken the reader along with him to "peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good..." (29) In this earlier naming, the images came undifferentiated, like monotonous journalistic accounts without interpretation. Now the mystical insight has become somewhat more clear to Whitman, and the catalogues will tend to be more charged with meaning; the images are not mere objective pictures or names of creation, but concentrated actions and experiences in which the poet imaginatively becomes the thing or person he names, and feels the person or thing intensely as a part of his evolving cosmic Self. Whitman sees, becomes, and poetically expresses all mankind and all things which he is seeing with his divine inner light. The catalogue of actions is dynamic and powerful as each image expands before the reader like swelling storm waves. The poet's initial illumination on the grass and on the sea shore is now filled out in greater detail: energetically, the poet says "now I see it is true, what I guessed at..." In section 33, he moves with the infinite speed and magnitude of his expanding imagination as his mortal "ties and ballasts" leave him: "I skirt Sierras, my palms cover continents, / I am afoot with my vision." (48) The catalogue builds up momentum as the poet moves back and forth between past and present, between earth and heaven. Eventually the poet pictures himself walking with the "beautiful gentle God" in

old Judea; he is the brother and fellow prophet of Jesus. Then he imagines himself speeding all across the universe with deific, all-inclusive actions:

Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
I tread day and night such roads.

He is "appearing and disappearing" like the cycles of life and death as mankind moves on its evolutionary path toward the cosmos. With his characteristic nonchalance and impetuosity he proclaims "I help myself to material and immaterial" as he combines both the usual and unusual in his absorbant imagination. He shouts "No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me." (50) He is like a cosmic force of Nature as he seeks to find the Over-Soul by taking all created souls within his evolving Self. The poet is not simply naming actions, but is experiencing them and divinizing them by his touch. He pushes ahead and allows no barriers to get in his way as he moves towards cosmic consciousness and democratic harmony. Like Christ, the pilgrim-poet says simply, yet eloquently, "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there." (51) This is the sum of man's life on earth: he receives breath, suffers through his strange interlude, and then moves on. "I am," "I was": past and present, life and death, all times and places melt into the poet's imagination. He is keenly sensitive to all life, good and bad:

Agonies are one of my changes of garments.
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels,
I myself become the wounded person...(52)

This cogent statement expresses Whitman's movement from soul to soul in a dramatic image: he puts on one image of Deity, feels what it is like, takes it off, moves on to the next. In his intense empathy, he suffers as Christ suffered in order to charge men full of

regeneration. The poet grabs the reader's attention: "Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity..." He is no slight actor of life who mouths sentimental moralisms. He has learned to take off the conventional mask of unnatural "civilization," to exist like Nature does, spontaneously and deliberately. He proclaims, like Christ, "I give myself" to anyone who is dying; and when the democratic poet-prophet comes, "Let the physician and the priest go home." These statements are simple and straightforward, and for that very reason they cut through all the shams which "civilization" has built around the soul of the reader. The poet gives empathic strength to all suffering humanity: "I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will..." The word "resistless" sums up the powerful force of Whitman's optimism, an optimism as yet untested by war and despair. The poet seeks to reinvigorate the divine breath which Adam received in Old Eden: "I dilate you with tremendous breath, I bouy you up..." (57) This is an effective image of the poet spiritually embracing man in an attitude of democratic love.

The poet is taking impressions of Deity, knowing the Over-Soul by all the earthly souls. Whitman finds hints of God everywhere and considers "a curl of smoke or a hair on the back of my hand" to be like natural miracles and revelations (58). He is receptive, empathic to the usual as well as to the unusual and he sees the mundane as miraculous. He notices what everyone else has taken for granted for centuries. He seems to feel that the occult vision or understanding that came to him as he loafed on the grass impels him to lead man along the open road into a new phase not only of history but also of evolution: the phase of the natural amative

democracy based on the love of Deity for all souls. Of his goal, the poet confidently writes:

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come
on perfect terms,
The great Camarado, the lover true for whom
I pine will be there. (63)

An intensely personal Deity awaits in the distant India, symbolic of New Eden. Whitman and the reader are on a pilgrimage toward that Over-Soul in that New Eden.

Whitman poetically envisions the future evolution of all men in a short dramatic dialogue between body and soul:

This day before dawn I ascended the hill and
look'd at the crowded heavens,
And I said to my spirit when we become the
enfolders of those orbs and the pleasure
and knowledge of every thing in them,
shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?

Again the reader is made to consider a question about life. The soul quickly replies "No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond." (64) There is more dawn to come; man has just begun to wake up to his true identity and destiny. Life is an endless cycle: it is not just that interlude between birth and death, nor is it merely the actions of a soul; it is the energy that goes beyond time and space, that survives all conventions and illusions, that never ceases. It had no beginning, is, was, is now beginning anew, has no end, will begin again. Birth is not merely a beginning and death is not merely an end. Birth and death are merging points of one circle. Life is a cyclic continuum which we recognize only as brief, separate moments; it is one ever-present moment.

Love or empathic understanding is the force or power behind cyclic life, and "whoever walks a furlong" without the divine love of democracy "walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud..."

This is the simple but gripping statement of Whitman's new insight into life: without love man is dead; without the empathy of soul for soul and body for body, man is isolated and mankind is shattered; without the harmony of Eden man might as well not exist. Whitman expresses graphically how each atom brings impressions of the loving Deity to him:

I hear and behold God in every object, yet
understand God not in the least.

...
Why should I wish to see God better than this
day?

I see something of God each hour of the
twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God,...
I find letters from God dropt in the street,
and every one is sign'd by God's
name... (66)

The democratic, equalizing God is everywhere and each object repeats the deific word. God is a powerful yet personal energy whom Whitman sees as a lover, a comrade, and a brother. The poet is metaphorically waking his reader up from torpor, urging man to become aware not only of God's presence but also of his presence within man. Man must understand his place in the great cyclic continuum of life; he must open his senses, and allow the immortal Life Force (which is stifled within him) to expand outward. Man must desire to revitalize the spontaneous harmony which he lost in Eden when his body and soul became divided. The soul regains its former deific strength by loving all the life around it, and then fuses itself back into equality and love with the body. Thus the old duality within man is destroyed (the inner Eden is created) and the divisions among men are melted away (the external Eden is begun).

Whitman has thus had intuitions of meaningful death, of the

final, complete merging with the cosmos; but neither the poet nor the reader will understand the intuitions till much later in "Whispers of Heavenly Death" (309). Whitman and his soul and his reader have been lying on the grass, strolling along the past, present, and future Long Island shore, wondering about life and America. The pondering has brought on the first illumination. Whitman has shown the reader "Outlines!" These are outlines of both the mystique of the epic and of the shape of the cosmos beyond man's mortal mist. Whitman has shown us that life is not "chaos or death--it is form, union, plan--it is eternal life--it is Happiness." (67) The lines almost stammer with the poet's feeble mortal attempt to describe the elemental, untranslatable secret. The poet has had his first misty sight of his goal, of the distant New Eden or India. Time melts away as he squeezes all possible essence out of life and into himself. He asks and answers his deceptively simple philosophical question about the paradox of life and of America:

Do I contradict myself?
 Very well then I contradict myself,
 (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Life is vast and hard to know and America is a paradox of noble ideals and disappointing realities. But Whitman, filled with the essences of all life, strides on with great, new-found power. He is filled with all the cryptic mysteries of life, love, death:

I too am not a bit tamed, I too
 am untranslatable,
 I sound my barbaric yawp over the
 roofs of the world. (68)

He is flamboyant and primeval; he sees things in their most simple and essential forms. The lines are purposefully jolting in order to wake the reader from all conventional thought and expression.

Whitman envisions his own future death when he will merge with the cosmos. He says he will die, but will be transmuted into that same fertile energy which brings back the ever-returning grass; he will die but he will be immortal. The idea sounds simple, but is so paradoxical that the reader is bound to follow Whitman. The reader will misunderstand, but Whitman is poetically calling the reader up through the mazes and cycles of life:

I stop somewhere waiting for you. (68)

As ever, the democratic invitation is intimate and remarkable. Until the reader becomes fully conscious, the poet will act as his eyes, ears, tongue. Thus ends the first major movement of the epic. The poet has pondered his questions and has had an insight into love, life, and the future. He waits for us to fulfill ourselves as he has begun to fulfill himself.

Life is a miracle: man is not clay; he has divinity within him. It is the evolutionary purpose of the true democracy to nurture the superb love worthy of his divinity. This, simply, is the message of the poet. Now he must meditate on his initial insight.

II. The First Answer: the Canticles of Love

"Children of Adam" and "Calamus" are the litanies of love and union. These are the songs of amativeness (womanly love) and adhesiveness (manly love): the two qualities needed for human fulfillment in the ideal democracy of the New Eden. Cosmic empathy is the clue to the meaning of life and the foundation of both man's identity and his democracy; these poems explain the poet's empathic sensitivity with which he views and interprets democracy in America, in the whole mortal world, and in the cosmos. His sen-

sitivity desires love and comradeship for the sake of recreating humanity's harmony.

The essential love credo of the true utopian Dream in its battle against the false materialistic Dream was stated simply in Whitman's first preface to his poetry:

This is what you shall do: Love the Earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, ... stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, ... read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your soul... (415 f.)

The essential belief and force of America must be Love. Whitman is telling the reader to revitalize and regenerate his spirit, to put off all sour conventions, and to see America in a new way. America inherits all the past and is the custodian of humanity's future. The democracy of love and brotherhood about which Whitman is singing is a "teeming nation of nations," the melting pot which evaporates all divisions and hatreds. The genius of the true Dream is not necessarily in its government or laws but "always most in the common people" who "never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors..." The Dream of utopian America with her regenerated common men of New Eden is "essentially the greatest poem." (411)

We have heard the first "yawn" of this poem of America. In "Children of Adam" Whitman sings the Adamic chants of regeneration in New Eden: "To the garden the world anew ascending..." Through the energy of sex, the New Adam will beget on the New Eve the "superb children" (69) of the future new Genesis. Since Whitman is able to see the spiritual forces acting behind the physical, he

proclaims that the sexual union becomes the "act divine..." (70) The ecstasy of this union is caused by the "electric" power of the body and soul working together in divine love. In a spirit of democratic love, life is like an electric current that flows throughout humanity. The reader must be electrified, like the poet, by the "charge transmitted and gift occult..." ("Starting from Paumanok," 19) Whitman declares that the "armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them..." (70) The word "armies" implies the strength of the unseen spiritual force which flows between all bodies and souls. In this impressive image of engirthing, each separate atom is pictured as erotically embracing and being embraced by all other atoms. The forceful feeling of union is expressed in this imagery of "I Sing the Body Electric." The poet feels that he must respond to all creatures with empathic love, must tell all creatures about the first answer which he has found: the superb love of the brotherhood caused by the presence of God in all men. The poet is metaphorically reforming all the forms with the charge of his initial insight: he will "discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the soul." The expression is exhilarating. The divine harmony that is needed between body and soul (the inner Eden) and between man and his fellow men (the outer Eden) is a love that is untranslatable and primeval, a love that "balks account." (71) Love, life, death, and America are mysteries to be delved.

"I Sing the Body Electric" is filled with a stimulating catalogue of actions and directions, one image following another, relentlessly dashing all the extensions of Deity in the reader's face. The poet is not merely seeing and naming things journal-

istically without interpretation; he is energized with the meaning and destiny of the things he sees. The poet metaphorically discorrupts all things by passing them through the purifying electricity of his soul. The poet moves like an electric current through all creation; he sees and loves all things: "Such-like I love--I loosen myself, pass freely..." (72) This is the universal love necessary for democracy.

In Whitman's idea of the future New Eden all men are brothers, all women sisters, no matter whether their Edenic naked bodies are "red, black, or white..." The evolution of all kindred creation toward destiny of the New Eden is imagined in the driving motion of the pilgrimage: "The universe is a procession with measured and perfect motion." Slavery, however, is the only real stain on the present which may prevent man from gaining the glorious future of cosmic concord. Slavery is the rankest perversion of man since it involves the sale of God's images, the bodies and souls of men and women. Dramatically, the poet calls attention to "a man's body at auction..." This divine image is a "wonder" for which "the globe lay preparing quintillions of years..." This is a concise statement of the whole flow of evolution. The woman's body is also seen at auction. She represents "not only herself, she is the teeming mother of mothers..." (74) She is the personification of America, the nation of nations. The insult of slavery to any body is an insult to America and to all other bodies; and since the body and the soul are one divine organism, the insult to the body is an insult to Deity. Thus a violation of democracy is a sin against the Over-Soul. Man must see the one God within all bodies, the One amidst the Many, the E Pluribus Unum of utopian America. In the New

World, man must develop a democratic love for all mankind which fulfills and surpasses all laws and conventions. All traditional concepts of man and Deity are henceforth antiquated, as are all traditional forms of verse. All mankind must be able to look at creation in a new way: in the mystical light of cosmic consciousness.

Whitman says he lives as deliberately as Nature; he is "Spontaneous." (78) He feels the "mystic deliria" (79) of love for all things. The words suggest a sublime intoxication which is gained in the sense of universal union of spirit and matter in the divine act of love. He has already said that he "could turn and live with animals" because they are "so placid and self-contained..." (47) Now he says he feels completely in tune with the vitalizing harmony of the cosmos:

Spontaneous men Nature,
The loving day, the mountain sun, the
friend I am happy with... (78)

All separations of distance and time collapse as the poet erotically embraces all souls in the naturally evolving democracy. In America, man and woman can be two equal Edenic creatures who are filled with the love which the poet sees as the basis of the ideal amative democracy. The man and woman are creating the future Eden as they are created by the past Eden. Whitman imagines that the innocent and naturally spontaneous urges of Eden are freed and set in motion through his songs: souls flow into souls, men flow into women, ceartion flows back into harmony. This is the "return to Paradise!" America can become "the new garden of the West..." (81) Man has circled the globe from old Eden to New Eden,

But where is what I started for so long ago?
And why is it yet unfounded?

The deceptively simple questions always return to subdue the unbounded optimism of the poetry. Man has circled the globe but he is still searching for the fulfillment of the New Eden; the pilgrimage still goes on. The new generation, the regeneration, will come, and as the New Adam embraces the New Eve, he whispers, "Be not afraid of my body." (83) The tone is both intimate and urgent with the desire for creating the purified mankind of the future democracy.

"Calamus" is another meditation on love, on the new law of the brotherhood of mankind; all the ancient divisions are to be destroyed and loneliness passes away. All men are to be united in the spiritual kinship, the "divine average" (19), of amative democracy. The poet pictures himself strolling leisurely through the new American garden in "paths untrodden"; he has apparently escaped from all the decayed conventions of the Old World which brought corruption, caste, and tyranny. Man can evolve back into the harmony lost in Eden through the stimulating strength of "manly attachment" and "athletic love..." This is no deterministic evolution of external forces acting blindly and irresistibly upon man: man must want to evolve himself; otherwise he will stay in his torpid Old World state. The grass, universal symbol of hardy, common mankind, now becomes the Calamus grass which grows in seclusion above graves. This indicates that brotherhood is a vital energy that goes beyond death; even death itself is "beautiful" (84) because it is the entrance to man's fulfillment beyond the physical limits of life. Democratic love gives man his fulfillment within the physical world, allows him to develop the cosmic consciousness vision, and prepares him to face death and to find spir-

itual fulfillment beyond death. These Calamus poems are songs of "immortal reverberations." (85) They set up a harmonious vibration with the concord of the celestial spheres. The poems are startlingly frank songs of the love which desires what is beyond death, songs of the intuitions of heavenly death:

O I think it is not for life I am
 chanting here my chants of lovers,
 I think it must be for death,
 For how calm, how solemn it grows to
 ascend to the atmosphere of lovers...(85)

Death itself is like a divine seed within man which eventually grows into immortality. Mortality is the seed of immortality; the paradox is impressive. The poet has reached a passive serenity; he has already described this as being imperturbable as he stands "at ease in Nature..." ("Me Imperturbe," 11) He connects past, present, future; he is the "acme of things accomplish'd" and the "encloser of things to be." He is at the highest stage of mankind's evolution which has yet been attained: he has reached the ideal brotherly love of comrades in America's utopian democracy. He strips away the known and mundane and guides all men and women "into the Unknown." (61 f.) He, as representative man, flows through all creation welcoming everything into a cosmic concord with his democratic empathy. The old duality between mortal body and immortal soul and between life and death is transcended; the poet says casually, "Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer..." The poet is trying to show the reader the one flowing cycle of life into death in order "to make death exhilarating." Whitman addresses death intimately in an unusual expression of the mystery of life, love, and death:

Give me your tone therefore, O death, that
 I may accord with it,

Give me yourself, for I see that you belong
to me now above all, and are folded
inseparably together, you love and
death are... (85)

This is a vivid image of life and death embracing in order to create the regenerated man beyond life and death.

When true amative democracy is created by brotherly harmony, then the utopian Dream will be realized in a world of "divine magnetic lands..." (87) This is a world drawn into unity by the divine equality of each soul. Love is the binding force of humanity, and the "dear love of comrades" is the new "institution" (94) of the New World, the new law of democracy. It is the only true institution and does away with all the corruption of Old World institutions. This democratic love will someday be realized in "the new city of Friends" (96) which America is to become; this love is "latent in all men," (97) and therefore needs but the nurturing of the true democracy to be realized. Though we all are mixed up in the confusing cycles of life and death, we are "Fast-anchor'd eternal" in love. While there is change, there is no change; while there is a "multitude," there is only "one." (98) Whitman makes one of his statements of intense democratic friendship: "Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)" (99) His empathy stretches across time and space to unite everything.

In the love of man for woman (amativeness), and in the friendship of man for man (adhesiveness), life is given meaning and the pilgrimage can move on toward the ideal democracy. Through the love of the New Adam and the New Eve, the New Eden can be created in America where mankind's hope is regenerated.

III. Songs of the Dream

The songs that follow are joyful expressions about the evolving utopian democracy of America, praises and insights as yet untested and purely optimistic. The poet continues his metaphorical pilgrimage looking at man and at America. He knows love is an answer; now he will try to determine how the attitude of democratic love can be applied to life in America.

Whitman has seen through the mortal mist, has found illumination in his intuition of love as the foundation, the "kelson" ("Song of Myself," 28) of life. He is filled with the joy of life and the strength of self-reliance; he feels that he is in harmony with Nature and sings the songs of democracy and the true Dream. He shows the reader all the sights that he sees on his representative pilgrimage toward the goal of life. He unifies all the persons, places, events, and things of the world within his own biography as pilgrim-poet.

In "Salut au Monde!" he sees and salutes all things in a spirit of amative democracy. He sees the potential concord of creation and describes it as all things being joined in "unending links, each hook'd to the next" and each "answering all, each sharing the earth with all." The many individuals and the one brotherhood, the "each" and the "all," must attain cosmic harmony. Within the representative man ("Walt Whitman, a kosmos," 41) all things merge; his pilgrimage is the evolutionary journey of creation. He looks at old and new Adam and Eve and writes "I see male and female everywhere" as they beget the future; he becomes one of the brothers of the comradeship necessary to the true Dream and writes "I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers"; he watches the evolutionary flow

of creation and writes "I see the constructiveness of my race"; he wanders amidst the brotherhood of world-wide amative democracy and writes "I see ranks, colors, barbarians, civilizations"; he goes amongst them and mixes "indiscriminately." He salutes humanity with the informal welcome of democracy:

I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.
Whoever you are! (105)

He gives his salute: "Health to you! good will..." He gives this salute "from me and America sent" to all creatures because they share in the divine breath and image which equalizes them all:

Each of us limitless--
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here. (106)

He senses the "divine rapport" of ideal democracy which "equalized" him with all his "equals and lovers." He raises his hand and makes "the signal" (107), a democratic blessing of peace and love to and for all. He welcomes all humanity to join him in the trek toward destiny as he searches for Eden or India.

In "Song of the Open Road" the world is envisioned with all its people on the path of life. The poet tells the reader to leave corrupt conformity and gain the adhesiveness of the New World. He makes his personal, democratic invitation: "None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me." (108) This is the ideal attitude of America. He presents himself as the poet who lives as deliberately and fully as Nature, as the New World prophet who will lead man along the open road out of the mortal mist into illumination; he simply says that he feels he could "stop here myself and do miracles..." (109) He feels he can set all souls in harmony by means of his democratic songs. He calls on man to make precedents, not to follow them; America is something

new, a second chance for man to fulfill himself in Eden. With quick pace and vigorous words, the poet sings of his evolution toward Eden or India:

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,...

The second line contains the rhyming harmony of democratic man in tune with everything, unbounded by anything: "Healthy, free, the world before me..." He sees much on the road of life, and yet he believes that "much unseen is also here." (108) The road of life moves beyond visible life into the unseen life beyond death. The bold poet strides on, absorbing all inhalations of birth and all exhalations of death. By absorbing all life and death into his cosmic consciousness, the poet knows all creation, and can therefore glean insights into the creator:

I am larger, better than I thought,
I did not know I held so much goodness.
All seems beautiful to me... (109)

On the free and open road of democratic America man finds the brotherhood he needs to regain Eden. In this democratic "adhesiveness" (110) the exhaling of one soul flows into the inhaling of another in endless, building waves of evolution. The outflow or "efflux" of the soul is ever longing for the wholeness of all other souls in democratic harmony. The soul is "ever provoking questions..." Again the poet makes the reader wonder about the questions of life, love, death: "These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness why are they?" The answer which the poet gives is an optimistic statement about the soul gaining its longed-for harmony in America:

The efflux of the soul is happiness,
here is happiness,
I think it pervades the open air,
waiting at all times,

Now it flows unto us, we are rightly
charged. (111)

Man is "charged" with the spontaneous electricity of his divine origin; he has only to realize this in order to establish the society of the true Dream.

Throughout "Song of the Open Road" Whitman repeats and varies a series of loud democratic invitations to the reader to travel on toward fulfillment: "Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!" (111-115) Ahead is the mysterious goal of Eden or India, "divine things well envelop'd..." (111) The poet energetically calls the reader to be the pioneer of this destiny and to travel on with "power, liberty," "defiance," and "self-esteem..." The poet's songs are not formal speeches and hollow sermons which "bat-eyed and materialistic priests" give and which lack conviction. His songs convince by their simple straightforward spontaneity. The poet grasps the reader and stares him hypnotically in the eye as he makes an intense direct address:

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer old smooth prizes, but
offer rough new prizes...

The evolution of America into the New Eden is no simple action. Man must suffer, gain experiences, become initiated to all life, and transcend all his sufferings. The poet calls the reader to follow the "great Companions" along the open road; these are the "swift and magnetic men" and the "greatest women" (112 f.), the citizens worthy of the Dream. The reader is called to stride on with all the energetic souls of the New World into regeneration which is "endless as it was beginningless..." (113) Over and over again the paradox is contemplated: as man evolves, birth is not a beginning and death is not an end. The poet does not know exactly

where evolution is moving but he is certain that it moves "toward the best--toward something great." (114) Whitman has given his poetic commands; the reader is impelled to wake his soul from the limits of the sleeping body. The poet tells the reader to move on along the open road with him in a spirit of democracy:

Camarado, I give you my hand!
 I give you my love more precious than money,
 I give you myself...
 Will you give me yourself?... (115)

The tone, as usual, is vigorously personal in the spirit of brotherhood.

Whitman has thus far given his democratic welcome to the whole world as he moves swiftly along the open road. Now it is time for a less boisterous, more meditative study of the flow of life. Throughout the epic, Whitman repeats and varies his quiet questionings and exultant insights about man and America. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" the pilgrimage moves on as the bard sings about the cycles and the union of all past, present, and future creation. He sees the one and the many, the change and no change of life, and says that all distances, obstacles, and times are mere illusions; love unites all existence. Here, in America, Whitman sees the melting pot of all the peoples of the earth; they live, the poet believes, under a system of government that seems to be the final culmination in the struggle of freedom-loving people. Standing on the deck of a common ferry boat, the poet sings of cyclic life and evolving mankind. We have heard the yawns and songs of the Dream; now we must reflect with Whitman and try to unify all the sights and sounds. On one voyage across the East River, the poet tries to explain his unexplainable intuition: the vision he had on the grass of the ever-present moment in which the

Great Unseen Presence is the one, continuous act of being. Whitman attempts to explain that sudden burst of awareness which vitalized him with his messianic cosmic consciousness. The poet looks "face to face" into the waves and watches the crowds of common people on the ferry's deck; he watches everything in the rather mundane scene and says "how curious you are to me!" Behind the visible physical world he sees the unusual and unseen spiritual cosmos. Dramatically, the poet addresses the reader, no matter when or where he exists, and merges him into the scene:

And you that shall cross from shore to
 shore years hence are more to me,
 and more in my meditations, than
 you might suppose.

The sounds are intimately hypnotic as the reader is empathically addressed across the barriers of space and time. All things are "disintegrated yet part of the scheme..." (116) Each individual atom is sustained in an ever-present moment by the Life Force. Each microcosm is an individual disintegrated entity with purpose and dignity, yet each is also integrating with and sustaining all other microcosms in the macrocosm; the one and many dissolve and flow through the "eternal float of solution" (119) in those cosmic cycles symbolized by the waves in the ever flowing East River. The poet's catalogues of repetition and variation are fluctuating images of the many individual extensions of the one Over-Soul:

The glories strung like beads on my
 smallest sights and hearings,
 on the walls in the street and
 the passage over the river,
 The current rushing so swiftly with
 me far away...

The vision is all-inclusive as the "life, love, sight, hearings of others" (116) are merged within the democratic poet.

The poet has been observing the present scene on the ferry; but he shifts tense to the future and sees all others who will see the harbor scene and the river. The poet crosses all barriers and sways back and forth between his own present and future time and the reader's past and present time:

Just as you feel..., so I felt,
 Just as you are one of a living crowd,
 I was one of a crowd,
 Just as you are refresh'd..., I was
 refresh'd,
 Just as you stand..., I stood...,
 Just as you look..., I look'd. (116 f.)

The repetitions and variations come in rhythmic cycles; traditional rhythm is not used, but the flowing lines are themselves units of chanting meter. The message of the poet in this song is that neither "time nor place [nor] distance avails..." Like Christ, he says "I am with you" (116) thereby indicating the great community of being of all who have had, have, and will have existence. He has already said, "Be not too certain but I am now with you." ("Full of Life Now," 99) Like the intimate God, Whitman stands close to the reader, democratically embracing the reader's body and soul with his own roving soul. In his one thought, all men think. Time and space are mere mortal blinders to the miracle of divine life. To emphasize this idea, Whitman asks, "What is it then between us?" He answers, "Whatever it is, it avails not-- distance avails not, and place avails not..." (118) Again and again we are forced to contemplate various forms of the child's question about the grass: What is Life? ("Song of Myself") What is love? ("Children of Adam" and "Calamus") What is between us that separates us? What is between us that draws us together? ("Crossing") We are all one existence, though we may be many.

What is it that makes us one, though many? It is that which "...fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you..." (119) It is love, the great uniter of divinely equal humanity; it is the "keelson" of creation (28).

This is the lesson of love which the poet is giving to America; this is the purpose of the utopian democracy which he is stating and restating. In this New World at last appears what the poet called, in his 1855 preface, the "one full sized man unconquerable and simple...." (412) This is the unconventional regenerated man who is seeking to attain the New Eden of brotherly cosmic harmony. This is the man who created free America, and it is for America to make precedents, not to obey them. It is this utopian America that democratically "rejects none...permits all...." (427) America is the melting pot, the nation of nations symbolized by the harbor scene which the poet sees from the ferry rail: "The flags of all nations..." (117)

The sunset seen in "Crossing" is the union of light and darkness, the two parts of life. The poet observes sea gulls "floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies..." Their swaying bodies unite the "glistening yellow" light and the "strong shadow..." The shadows are like the primeval darkness of the womb of creation, the womb which emanates and reabsorbs all creation in never ending, ever returning waves. The poet looks down into the waves spreading out from the ferry: he looks "at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water..." (117) The poet is held suspended at the center of the transcendental dissolving of all creation, the flowing together of the waves of past, present, and future. The insights

of heavenly death and immortality are pondered in these images of light fusing with darkness and in the lulling hypnotic roll of the cyclic waves.

Whitman has "felt the curious abrupt questioning within me..." (118) He has been forced to recognize and feel the spirit of God within himself and he has been impelled to try to understand that mystery of divine identity: "nothing, not God, is greater to me than one's self is..." He has heard and seen God "in every object," yet he understands God "not in the least..." (66) standing at the ferry boat rail, the poet tries to tell his countrymen--past, present, and future--to love God without mediator or veil, to become acquainted at first hand with Deity. The poet has forcefully grasped his reader across time and space to tell his message:

Who knows, for all the distance, but I
am as good as looking at you now,
for all you cannot see me?

...

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I
may not in unknown way be looking
upon you... (119)

The poet's eye reflects the eye of the reader back into itself in a perfect circle of harmony. The lines are surprising and intimate. The poet has moved into his vision of future America and looks back to the reader: "I stop somewhere waiting for you." ("Song of Myself," 68) The poet rhetorically asks, "We understand then do we not?" (119) We understand the message of democratic love that destroys all divisions and unites all men. Having been a school teacher Whitman knew that meaningful repetition is imperative to learning; therefore he keeps repeating his democratic and cosmic lessons, but each time he adds a little more into the in-

sights.

The poet again sees his face reflected in the waves, sees the rippling emanations flowing outward from him to all the rest of the "eternal float" of creation. For the present, mortal man is held in the twilight of "Appearances," the "necessary film" which envelops the immortal soul. But someday all mortal barriers will collapse and man will be impregnated with cosmic consciousness as he becomes regenerated. The City of Man is a stage in the evolutionary pilgrimage toward the New Eden or the City of God. The physical is a necessary support of the spiritual and furnishes its parts "toward eternity" and "toward the soul." (120) If man learns Whitman's lesson of democratic love, all parts of life will become purposeful as preparations for a meaningful death, a transfiguration into the divine democracy of cosmic concord.

"Song of the Answerer" answers the question about life and America by showing the purpose of each free, equal soul in the democracy. The American's love, like the poet's salute, is for the whole world: "His welcome is universal..." There is purpose and love in a life lived democratically; no matter what work he does, and no matter what nation he lives in, the reader finds his brothers and sisters in America (122). The poet is giving his answer about the purpose and meaning of life based on his "Divine instinct, breadth of vision..." (123) He has seen behind illusions and has recognized the brotherhood of divine creation. The answer rejects the corrupted cynicism of doubt and division; it is a poem that balances and unifies all "ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes..." (124) This universal vision is of the ideal harmony of the utopian Dream.

"Our Old Feuillage" restates the grass as the universal symbol of all united life. The poet shows the reader "the free range and divinity---...the continent of Democracy..." (125) Here is divine plenitude where all are accepted, none rejected. The purpose and goal of life will be realized when all people feel the cosmic consciousness of democratic, Edenic harmony. In democracy, the "American Soul" is "Encircling all" within "equal hemispheres, one Love.." (127) The poet sings the song of America, of "my ever-united lands---...ONE IDENTITY..." Once again the poet sees in the "old feuillage" of the ever-returning grass the "clew of the union... divine leaves..." The song is of transcendental equality of all mankind in democratic love: "Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that you also be eligible as I am?" (128) All men, having Deity within them, are eligible for the democratic merging in life and the cosmic merging beyond life; they have only to realize their eligibility, and that is why the poet keeps on singing his personal message to them.

The songs that follow now are the Psalms of the true utopian Dream; all of them sing of Whitman's first optimistic insight, of his inexperienced idealism before the war. "A Song of Joys" tells about what a glorious being is man. Whitman sings of "the joy of my spirit" because his spirit "is uncaged" (129), i.e., because his soul is set free from the corruptions and conventions of the Old World. He absorbs spirit and matter, and reintegrates every thing into democratic harmony. The poet urges all people to see beyond the illusions of mere matter devoid of spirit in the decayed Old World of division and disintegration. Man must transcend his material limits. The lines are enthusiastic with the drive of new,

regenerated life:

To leave you O solid motionless land,
and entering a ship,
To sail and sail and sail! (134)

Man's soul is a "divine ship" which sails out onto "divine seas" ("A Song of the Rolling Earth," 163; "One Thought Ever at the Fore," 386) toward the distant "mystic ocean" ("As Consequent," 253; "Two Rivulets," 407) in which the soul reunites with the cosmos. The imagery of sailing, walking, riding, and flying pervades the poetry to express Whitman's desire to move vigorously into the future.

"Song of the Broad-Axe" tells of the axe as a weapon with which to protect the ideal and as a tool with which to build the ideal. With the axe, New World man endeavors to build a "great city" which has "the greatest men and women..." (138) The new city is not one filled with supermen, but with common men fulfilling their destiny. The common people here come into their own, and all corrupt tyrants are stamped down. The new city is a place of faithful friends united in pure physical and spiritual love. Man is now building and evolving his cosmic spirit, and leaving the rank materialism of the false Dream behind: emphatically, the poet asks "What is your money-making now? What can it do now?" (139) The American axe of a strong democracy is contrasted to the Old World axe of tyranny. Whitman looks into the glorious future of democratic mankind and sees the European "headsman... become useless..." (140) Democracy rises like a "law of Nature" against all unnatural corruption, and "there is no law stronger than she is." (142)

In "A Song for Occupations" the poet tells the reader that

all jobs have "eternal meanings" because they give value and purpose to life and because they instill love for fellow workers. In the ideal democracy, a person is neither a slave nor master. Each soul is the result of a purposeful evolution of human dignity: the "gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach" is culminating "in you this hour..." (158) Whitman strikingly conveys the idea that each soul not only contains but is the evolutionary process, and there is more evolution to come. The future shall evolve from common, democratic workmen and workwomen, each with his or her "own divine and strong life..." (170)

In "A Song of the Rolling Earth" Whitman shows the reader that the earth is ashamed of no person or thing. The maternal earth goes ever forward through evolution and carries all creatures on toward the highest stage of evolution. All people are given the lively invitation to the democratic future:

Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd,
nothing losing,

...
The divine ship, sails the divine sea
Whoever you are!...
The divine ship sails the divine sea
for you.

...
For none more than you is immortality. (163)

If man's soul has found the interior Eden, his external world shall be "complete"; if he has not found his Eden, his world will be "jagged and broken." (164)

IV . Initiation, Purgation, and Illumination

The poet continues the songs of the Dream, but the tensions of good and evil are beginning to be felt. All through the eighteen-fifties the hostilities were building which finally broke

out into Civil War. The Union, last best hope of man to regain Eden, is threatened by division and corruption. Whitman begins to brood anxiously about the future. He hears the sounds of the battle for liberty in France: he sees "the divine infant" of democracy "where she woke mournfully wailing, amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts..." (172) The struggle for human dignity is not an easy one and it goes on and on. Now comes the "Year of Meteors (1859-60)," just on the horrible verge of a war between brothers. It is a "Brooding year" in which John Brown is executed and in which the nation is falling into splinters (174). It is a "year all mottled with evil and good--a year of forebodings!" (175)

It is in this time of initiation to doubt and rising despair that the poet has realized his mission to sing his lessons to the common people about their America. The poet therefore tries to think back once again to the time when he first began to ponder about love and when he was first initiated to the misery of death. He remembers that time when, as a boy, he saw the two birds on the seashore. In "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (originally titled "Word Out of the Sea") he reminisces about the tension between love and death. Ever since he saw the sadness of the male mockingbird he has been troubled by death as a destroyer of love. He has asked, What is life? He has answered that life attains meaning only through love, the love needed for the ideal democracy of the Dream. But what if death destroys love and ends life? And what if the coming turmoil destroys the ideal Dream of the Union? The poet must stop and ponder his initial optimism. He will not gain an experienced understanding of death and America until after he has gone through all the deaths of the war. For

the present, the brooding poet sings with his brother, the lonely bird: "my love soothes not me, not me." (181) On the verge of war, just as on the Long Island shore long ago, all Nature yearns with the agony of unfulfilled love:

Low hangs the moon,...

...
O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love. (182)

The tone is agonizingly heavy as the words express the desire of all things to be reunited in a harmony which has been shattered by lost love. As in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" the poet wanders back and forth through space and time, but unlike the joyful energy of "Crossing" the mood is pensive with the despair of frustrated desire. The poet takes the reader back to the Long Island shore to ponder about the joyful song of life and fulfilled love, and the sad song of death and shattered love which the male bird sang long ago. There is something in the bittersweet melodies, some cryptic clues of life, love, and death; this something is before all our eyes but we cannot see it while we are still in the mortal mist. The poet must continue his exploration through the mist.

The poet projects himself back to the past to begin his long pilgrimage anew wondering whether he missed something along the way. As he reclined on the grass in "Song of Myself" to contemplate life, now he lies down on the shore. The endless grains of sand are like the endless leaves of grass: they are like the vast number of evolutionary souls. The long waves move in and break diagonally along the beach; the waves resound in the long lines which perfectly combine the wondering with beautiful poetic expression. The song tells of the poet's memories of innocence

before that first mystical vision came on the grass. Now Whitman recognizes that first vision as a vision, remembers the bird's song as a long forgotten occult message, sees how his imperious will to express himself was begun. By becoming aware of the meaning of these insights he is preparing for his fuller illumination of life, love, and death. The true Dream takes shape in this fuller intuition of the divinity in all creation, the divinity in the waves, in the bird, in the poet.

It is midnight; the poet cannot now sleep, just as he could not sleep when he was a boy. He is terrified by the memory of the bird's mournful, mocking songs. The poet strips himself of all conventions; he feels the divine emanations of Nature which come up from "the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive..." The shadows of the twilight in "Crossing" are recalled "as if they were alive": he senses the Life Force in the fertile darkness but does not understand it completely. In muted, slow lines, the poet expresses the empathic sadness of all creation for the bird's unfulfilled love; the song flows sluggishly

From under that yellow half-moon late-risen
and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and
love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart
never to cease...

The boy and the man merge in the recurring thought of that sad song: "A man, yet by these tears a little boy again..." He sings of "pain and joys" and of "here and hereafter..."; the words heave and sigh as Whitman contemplates the past sorrow of the bird, the present turmoil of the Union, and the misty future of man and America. He is "confronting the waves," (180) challenging them to come toward him and tell of the Life Force which set them in

motion eons ago and which still acts within them.

He begins to explain what happened to him in that first initiation into life and death. He is "absorbing" and "translating" the words of love which the bird's song expressed before the death of its mate:

Two together!
 ...
...minding no time,
While we two keep together.

The bird's song indicates that there is no change as long as love is alive and steady. But the meditation is broken by staccato thoughts brought on by sudden separation:

Till of a sudden,
 May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate...

Then comes a monotony of unending melancholy echoed in dull sounds:

Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
 Nor ever appear'd again.

The cry of the bird and of the poet's soul comes in strong energetic and erotic bursts:

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds...;
I wait and I wait till you blow
my mate to me.

The poet says that he has "treasur'd every note..." (181) of the song. The word "note" recalls the notes or "letters from God" which Whitman finds everywhere ("Song of Myself," 66) The poet imagines that the bird calls to the sea to "Soothe! soothe! soothe!" with "embracing and lapping" waves. But these soft sounds are broken harshly by the division caused by death: "But my love soothes not me, not me." (181) All Nature is "heavy with love, with love." These erotic desires and needs must be express-

ed; if they do not physically flow from one equal lover to another, then they must at least come forth in the mysterious spiritual song. The bird makes one last try in a staccato call: "Hither my love! / Here I am! here!" (182) The line seems to express the poet's desire to find the divine love of God whose images and notes he has seen everywhere. But the bird and the poet are cut off from love and are in darkness. The "Song of Joy" is gone but is still remembered: "O past!...O songs of Joy!" The song of love is now in the past tense: "Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!" The joyful song "Two together!" has become the sad song "We two together no more." (183) The quickly, merging sounds of "Two together" are muted by the heavy "no more."

The maternal sea is the "fierce old mother" who is "incessantly moaning." Nature is mad with the shattered love of the bird, just as the poet is troubled by the approaching turmoil of war. But suddenly, Whitman is illuminated by the significance of all of this. He becomes "ecstatic." The bird, the sea, and the poet are "the trio" which is uttering the inexpressible mystery of life, love, and death. The poet understands that Nature is trying to communicate with him about the loving and equalizing Over-Soul. The poet says that "in a moment I know what I am for, I awake..." He understands the insights he received by the shore and on the grass. "For I, that was," "now I have," "I know," "I am," "I awake": the poet is filled with the words of Deity. "I am," "I am a man," "I am with you": these ideas recur throughout the poetry (27, 37 f., 51, 68, 99, 116, 161, 314, 349 f.). Whitman has found his poetic identity and must proclaim his divine and democratic love to all men. He will keep on singing as the war approaches. The "Never-

more" which formerly expressed the sorrow of lost love, now means that the poet will never cease to search for love. Formerly he had sung only of life's ecstasies. He has been initiated to the agonies of existence and will "Never again...be the peaceful child I was before..." He has heard the message which "arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within" and is the "unknown want, the destiny of me." (184) The poet can never again be that unthinking, child-like optimist. He has understood the longing questions of life and must suffer to gain an experienced answer.

The poet has sought for the "clue" to the answer but now realizes that the maternal sea has been "Whispering it...all the time..." The waves which symbolize the never-ending cycles of life and death, whisper of heavenly transfiguration beyond time and space. The sea has made what the poet later calls "whispers of heavenly death." She has "Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death..." The poet resounds the word: "Death, death, death, death, death." (184) The words imitate the sounds of the surf and waves. Previously the sound was of the lost love: "Loved!" (183) Now mortality merges with cosmic empathy through death to become immortality. The poet has caught the meaning of the connection between life and death.

But still the war is approaching. The poet must wander and examine again. The reader has reclined with the poet on the sand as previously he reclined on the grass; now the reader journeys along the shore observing all the waves and grains of sand in "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean Life." The "fierce old mother" cries for all her scattered and shattered souls. Love is the basis for harmonious life, but life is still not united in that divinizing

democratic love. The poet again feels the "charge," (19) the "electric" (70) energy which came with his earlier insights. He is "Held by this electric self," by the "spirit" which is in the maternal sea. He realizes now that he has "not once had the least idea who or what I am..." His "real Me" is still "altogether unreach'd..." (186) He has yet to attain the divine merging with the Over-Soul, and America has yet to attain the New Eden. He realizes that he has been expressing an untested optimism about man and America. He desires to "close with" Nature; to become a part of Nature, to end and to begin with Nature. He embraces creation and desires to know the full meanings of life, love, death, and America. He is still in doubt but is "Bouy'd" up by the cosmic ocean of life. (186)

In a group of poems which he later named "By the Roadside," the poet sits by the open road and watches all creation; he ponders the confusing maze of life as he sees America go by on its way either into war or into the New Eden. He is puzzled by the direction in which America and mankind are going. He wonders whether the Dream will be destroyed. He says simply, "I must stand and see the show." (192) At a time when the Union is growing weak, he looks back at the American Revolution, that great upheaval that resulted in the original gaining of American independence and of the Dream. Perhaps that initial triumph was, like Whitman's optimism, premature. In the Old World, the old struggle for independence and human dignity still goes on against tyranny. Despite the Machiavellian corruption of the Old World, the spirit of democratic liberty advances: "it stalks over the earth, whispering, counseling, cautioning." (194) The poet tells the reader that

each soul bears the misery and enjoys the ecstasy of all other souls (195). The mirror of one soul reflects the macrocosm: therefore the liberty or slavery of one soul reflects the condition of the cosmos. All creatures are "Germs" moving toward regeneration which is "yet to be supplied." (196) All around him, the poet sees the "sorrows of the world," the "oppression and the shame," the "secret convulsive sobs..." The receptive poet says only, "All these...I... / See, hear, and am silent." (197) As the storm of war rises, he sits quiet, trying to understand whether man is capable of attaining the New Eden in America.

In "By Blue Ontario's Shore," the poet takes another look at America as a society gradually finding its identity: "A Nation announcing itself..." Whitman proclaims "I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my forms." He no longer says that America accepts all, rejects none: now he himself has become one with America and the cosmos; he himself democratically rejects none, accepts all. He is the "kosmos" (41) who absorbs all America and the whole world into his own biography and then carries all creation within his mind as he gradually attains cosmic consciousness. If man continues his struggles with himself and with his fellow men, he will destroy himself since he will not have gained the inward and outward Eden: "If we are lost..., / It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night." (241) If man loses his second chance in Eden by destroying the Union, he will have no one to blame but himself. Everyone and all things must be united in the equality, the "divine average" (19), caused by every atom's participation in Deity. Whitman rejects cynicism about man and society. He warns against "the decay of the ruggedness of states and men." America

is a surging new nation, a new phase of evolution; it must not be stifled by worldly wisdom and the weariness of idle civilization which originally caused men to abandon the Old World for the New. In the Old World, man's life devolved from the primal innocence of the noble savage into depraved "civilization." Now, in America, the old chaos must be purged from man's soul and from his society. America is "the promise and reliance of the future." She is the "teeming Nation of nations" (243), the melting pot in which all divisions of races, religions, nationalities are dissolved as mankind moves upward towards higher evolution. The poet is the divinizing prophet of the New World Testament; he is "the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key, / He is the equalizer..." (245) He stands at the center of the rippling cycles of life and death and translates them into their cosmic meanings. He prophesies the future ideal democracy of "perfect and free individuals..." He rejects all tyrannical perversions and calls mankind into a future of human dignity and brotherhood. As he contemplates the ideal democracy, he "cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign despots." He sings of "the great Idea" (246), the utopian Dream of Edenic harmony. Like Moses he wishes to lead the common people out of bondage into the New Promised Land where none are rejected, all are permitted and loved. He is the man being regenerated. In this regeneration, each individual gains human dignity and finds a meaningful life; the "whole theory of the universe" is evolving "unerringly to one single individual--namely to you." Again the poet democratically makes his personal statement to each reader. The direct address startlingly focuses the entire epic upon the reader. The poet and the reader share an intense, democratic camaraderie, a pre-

figuring of the future brotherhood that must exist for all mankind: "O I see flashing that this America is only you and me..." Moreover, "Past, present, future, are you and me." (205) The en-
vigorating directness of the unusual statement forces the reader to contemplate Whitman's concepts of the brotherhood of man in America.

In "Reversals," the poet states the mysterious paradoxes of life: he who was first shall be last; he who was last shall be first (252). All tyranny is subjugated to the new rule of the common man. Sympathetic identification, the going out from the self to others in love, is the answer to all the questions and doubts which have plagued the poet. Man and woman must seek happiness in others to find happiness in Self. The interior Eden must exist in the soul before the external Eden can come about; the great paradox is that the one prerequisite of the interior Eden is the soul's desire to spread that Eden outward to all humanity.

The child who asked the question about grass and life, and the child who watched the mockingbirds by the Long Island Shore are really one child: the regenerated childlike man described in "There Was A Child Went Forth." This is the Christlike innocent who takes the burden of the world on his back and pulls all creation upward. After the initial insights into life which were gained while reclining on the grass and while confronting the waves, the child-man is like a blind and deaf person suddenly blessed with sight and hearing; he sees the miracles and ecstasies of existence with new eyes and hears the sounds of creation with new ears. This is the child-man who "went forth every day, / And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became..." This is the intensely em-

pathic child who was rocked in the cradle of Nature, who ebbed and flowed with all life, who heard the whisperings of the "old crone" (184), of the "fierce old mother." (186) This child embodies the loving spirit sent out by the lonely woman who found the ability to mix her soul with the lusty bodies of the naked swimmers (31 f.). The child is the soul of the poet, sent forth from the body to democratically invite all other souls and bodies into the harmonious merging with Deity. All creation "became part of him..." (258) In hypnotic litanies the poet sees with his new eyes and hears with his new ears all the things which he has become. The catalogue images roll in, each connected by "and," each a separate entity not caused by the preceding image nor causing the succeeding, not beginning, not ending. The images come like the ever-rolling waves and like the ever-returning grass.

The child-poet repeats all the deceptively simple but philosophical questions of the epic: "The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious whether and how..." The doubts center on one question: "Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?" (259) To answer the question, the child has absorbed the turbulent motion and the silent suspension of the "eternal float of solution..." (119) The poet expresses this mixture of contrasts in words that flow quickly but which roll out in long lines:

The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken
 crests, slapping,
 The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar
 of the maroon-tint away solitary by
 itself, the spread of purity it lies
 motionless in,

...

These became part of the child who went
 forth every day, and who now goes,
 and will always go forth every day. (259)

The deific words of creation are repeated and varied here: "there was," "he became," "that child who went forth," "who now goes," "will always go." The child is the poet's democratic spirit of empathy, the spirit of love which is the answer to all the questions. The child has the democratic ability to lose his Self in another Self and thus gain his true Self in a powerful concentration of love and understanding.

Despite the evils of slavery and of the threatening war, the earth still "grows such sweet things out of such corruption..." ("This Compost," 261) Man makes mistakes and hurts himself and others; but still the poet maintains his optimism about man's potential to bring forth the New World Eden from all the corruption of the Old World. Each soul must raise itself out of chaos and become "composed." The old duality between body and soul must be destroyed; the old duality between man and fellow creatures must be destroyed. Each soul must be "at ease with me--I am Walt Whitman liberal and lusty as Nature..." ("To A Common Prostitute," 273) Each soul must become "spontaneous" (78) and "electric" (70) in the poet's spirit of democratic friendship. The primal strength and innocence, that which has been soured so long by corrupted "civilization," must be regained in America. In the regenerated vision of cosmic consciousness, all parts of creation are seen as the "Miracles" that they are: "I know of nothing else but miracles." (274) As usual, the statement is deceptively simple. Life is a miracle, and its purpose is the wonderful puzzle of the epic. All creation is within the Over-Soul, and it is this simple fact which all blind and deaf men must realize to be equalized by their innate divinity. The Over-Soul is the "Kosmos" that "includes diver-

sity and its Nature..." In this "Kosmos" all things exist "inseparably together." (276 f.) The separation of the two birds is dissolved in the merging harmony which the poet expresses in a vivid image of harmonious celestial motion:

...that the moon spins round the earth and
 on with the earth, is equally wonderful,
 And that they balance themselves with the sea
 and stars is equally wonderful.
 ("Who Learns My Lesson Complete," 278)

All creation, from the commonest grass to the greatest star, is in one miraculous state of balance. Chaos is left behind.

There is a change of mood in "The Sleepers," an 1855 poem which Whitman moved farther and farther toward the end of the epic in the later editions. Whitman and the reader have been filled with a dizzying view of cosmic harmony; but they must again ponder the questions and answers, this time in the quiet meditation of night. The first title which Whitman gave the poem was "Night Poem" (1856) which set the tone of somber mystery in this strange catalogue of confusing life and death. The second title was "Sleep-Chasings" (1860) which indicated the restless torpor of sleeping humanity during the turbulent prelude to the nightmare of Civil War.

The poet's soul merges once again with all the sights in the "float." The mood is lulling with soft sounds as in a deceptively calm dream: "Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping and stopping..." The poet delves into the troubles which plague man even in his dreams. Whitman's boastful optimism is jostled by the groaning of man as he tries to attain something beyond his mortal self. Man is alone and feels the need to be part of something greater than himself, to be part of the earthly demo-

cratic brotherhood and the cosmic harmony. Whitman is meditative once again as he continues his pilgrimage: "Wandering and confused, lost to myself..." (297) The boastful Self has proclaimed "Very well I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" (68) That Self is now lost or confused and the boast must be reexamined amidst the "contradictory" life which Whitman recognizes in America: How can a nation have as its ideal that all men are created equal, and at the same time allow slavery and caste? America, in the decade before the war, is a paradox. Whitman wonders whether man is capable of attaining the New Eden in America. He wonders how the "ill-assorted" confusions of America can be regenerated into the amative brotherhood of utopian democracy. Again the poet loses himself in other souls, extends his Self to them in an attempt to define his own cosmic identity and the potentially democratic identity of America. Still seeking the meaning of life, he merges with all the births, loves, vices, agonies, and deaths of mankind as all of these are absorbed, through him, back into the sleep of the dark womb to be reborn: "the dying emerging from gates..." Death is the fertilizer of more life, and the poet can never stop wondering about this mystery.

All the people that Whitman has seen are now enfolded in sleep and are held in the trance of mortal darkness. The sleepers that fascinate the poet most are those who are the "worst-suffering and the most restless..." The poet tries to soothe them, but even in sleep they are still caught in the restless quest of life for something beyond the Self, the seemingly impossible quest for harmonious and cosmic love. Yet, in the midst of this uneasy night meditation, the poet senses once again an essential illumination: as

when the poet reclined on the grass, as when he meditated on the sunset from the ferry, and as when he pondered the mockingbird's bittersweet songs, his mystical insight is again stimulated.

Whitman says "Now I pierce the darkness": he impregnates his confused and wandering Self through the mortal mist and sees the passing beauty of the earth recede before the vision of the permanent beauty of cosmic harmony. He sees the "new beings appear..." (297) These are the regenerated men of the future who will attain cosmic concord. Whitman has metaphorically taken the burdens of sleeping creation on his back and has moved that torpid creation toward the new dawn. The sleepers must awake from illusory life to find their transcendental purpose in the democratic "divine average." (19)

With his democratic and mystic attitude, the poet moves "from bedside to bedside" and sleeps and dreams with each kindred soul. All the dreams of mankind are unified in the mind of the loving pilgrim-poet. In a catalogue of the dreams Whitman again speaks his deific words of cosmic awareness: I am, I see, I reckon, I am, I roll, I feel, I hear, It is I (298 f.) The reader is urged on by the ever-moving spirit: "Onward we move..." Man, resigned to the darkness, loves all creatures as mortal substitutes for "my lover," the great Deity. The darkness itself is like a phantom surrogate for the Over-Soul: the gloomy night pervades half the world, but it also seems to be an earthly symbol of the perversive cosmic harmony beyond mortality. The poet spreads his hands "in all directions," sensing all yearning earthly life (298). He passes his hands "soothingly to and fro" in a baptismal benediction over the restless souls of unfulfilled humanity (297). The night and the invisible loved one seem to be part of one Life

Force: the mysteries of love and death merge in the darkness. In a strange tone the poet personally addresses the night, the cosmic substitute for God: "Be careful darkness!" He both passionately desires and fears the discovery of the Over-Soul in the shadows of night which may be symbolic of the dark recesses of the poet's own soul. As when Whitman proclaimed his own Deific presence--"I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there" (51)--he now makes another statement of elemental existence as he sense the presence of the Life Force: "I hear the heart-beat, I follow, I fade away." (298) He is cyclic like life and death, coming and going, being born into the darkness and being transfigured into the light. He is part of the Over-Soul, yet he still has not yet completely understood how this is possible. He searches for the lover in the darkness of night and wonders if his own heart-beat is the throb of humanity and the pulse of Deity. In the 1855 and '56 versions of the poem the poet noted at this point that in life he is "ashamed to go naked about the world..." He means that being born into the decayed world of civilization stifles the strong Edenic spirit of the naked soul. That soul must be liberated so it can participate in the Over-Soul and become itself an oversoul.

In a bizarre image, the poet lovingly envelops the reader in the darkness of death to prepare him for waking to the light of the new dawn:

A shroud I see and I am a shroud, I wrap
 a body and lie in a coffin,
 It is dark here underground, it is not evil
 or pain here, it is blank here. (299)

The poet believes that he has attained cosmic harmony, but he stops here in the mortal tomb and waits for the rest of us to follow: "I stop somewhere waiting for you." (68) The darkness of mortal life

is like a blank trance or suspended animation which exists as a strange interlude between leaving and returning to the Over-Soul. The poet chants another of his monotonous, hypnotic catalogues which begins with the image of the soul struggling through life: this is the "swimmer naked" which flowed in the currents of "I Sing the Body Electric." (71) The Soul is "baffled, bang'd, bruis'd" by the turmoil of mortal life. But the soul then merges with the sea of death and is carried on toward the mystic ocean's distant shore. All of these strange images and thoughts are part of the poet's illumination; they give an insight into man's condition, but the mortal mist still pervades and weighs down upon the poet and reader:

I turn but do not extricate myself,
 Confused, a past-reading, another, but
 with darkness yet.

Each new poem or reading adds something to the insight, but still the gloom pervades. Behind the mist which still clouds the dawn, Whitman senses the coming turmoil of war. The beach on which he had confronted the mystic waves is now "cut by the razory ice-wind..." He hears the "wreck-guns sound" as the monotonous "tempest lulls" and the moon, which was swollen with heavy love before, now "comes floundering through the drifts." (299) Nature and humanity seem to be filled with grim mortal terror. The dark trinity of chaos (the waves, wind, and night) has destroyed the reveries of the former beach meditations.

The divine ship of the democracy is caught in this rising storm which prefigures the coming war. The vessel is helpless amidst the might of the storm. Whitman hears the "burst" as the ship strikes the rocks; this terrifying sound is followed by the

"howls of dismay" which "grow fainter and fainter" as the ship is swallowed up by chaos. The harmonious songs of the common people are shattered and die away. The poet stands on the icy shore and can do nothing to help; all he can do is wring his fingers and "rush to the surf and let it drench me and freeze upon me." He commiserates with the people suffering from the mortal turmoil and feels the frigidness of mortality in the night. All the souls are washed ashore in meaningless death. The illumination is blotted out just as at the beginning of the poem.

The thought of war and purposeless destruction brings other thoughts: memories of past defeats of life and past deaths in wars. The poet recalls the American Revolution and the "defeat at Brooklyn." Whitman watches Washington whose face is "cold and damp" with "weeping drops..." Then another memory comes to the poet. He thinks back to the time when an Indian girl came to visit his beloved mother. The "red squaw" was loved by his mother because of the Indian's "wonderful beauty and purity..." (300) The girl represents the clean and fresh innocence of the Noble Savage unsullied by decayed society. The strength and unspoiled grace of the girl are qualities which Whitman hoped to find in the new generation of common people in America; but the girl went away and "never came nor was heard of there again." In the tangle of America's prewar strife, the rugged and free spirit of New World society has been lost and Whitman is in a fit of gloom over this thought. In the 1855 and '56 versions, Whitman added one more thought to these somber memories. He says that "Now Lucifer was not dead....or if he was I am his sorrowful terrible heir..." Lucifer defiles the poet's empathic Self which contains the identity of the cosmic brother-

hood; in the decade before the war, America's identity is being soured and stifled. The poet must move on to seek the dawn.

Once again the poet begins to see his illumination in a "show of the summer softness..." He experiences "something unseen--an amour of the light and air..." He is seized with an ethereal vision or sense of his great lover in the darkness; God touches and breathes into man, but man is still in the mortal mist so God's presence is "something unseen..." The poet is jealous of the glorious light and the rarified air which are loved by God; but then the poet is himself "overwhelm'd with friendliness" and decides to "go gallivant with the light and air myself." The tone has changed abruptly as the words come quickly and softly, no longer heavily and somberly. Once more death is viewed as a happy transition, not as a frigid trap. The transfiguration of death is expressed with vigorous action words:

Elements merge in the night, ships make tacks
 in the dreams,
 The sailor sails, the exile returns home,
 The fugitive returns unharm'd...

All mortal souls are "outward bound," and yet, with the same motion, they are "homeward bound." The souls attain a meaningful death and are transported into the harmony of the cosmos. The poet tells the reader that in the sleeping transfiguration of death all souls attain that "divine average" (19) which recognizes no racial, religious, or national castes:

I swear they are averaged now--no one
 is better than the other,
 The night and sleep have liken'd them
 and restored them.

The "beautiful lost swimmer" (301) and all other restless souls will go into the ultimate sleep in which they will finally awake

from the nightmare of mortal strife and turmoil. Both the deliberateness and the spontaneity of Eden will be restored and man will be able to enter the consciousness of the cosmic harmony. The sense of the empathic brotherhood of the utopian democracy is thus regained by Whitman. In a rhapsody, the poet sings that man can attain this peaceful brotherhood which is "always beautiful" when he recognizes that the "universe is duly in order, every thing is in its place..." Whitman says that "Peace is always beautiful..." He believes that he has attained a serenity above the mortal turmoil of the war's prelude. He says that the "diverse shall be no less diverse, but they flow and unite--they unite now." (302) That is, the many individuals still retain their meaningful identities while merging into the greater one of cosmic concord in the "eternal float of solution." ("Crossing," 119) The souls awake from illusory life to find purpose beyond death in the mystic merging with the Over-Soul.

In the last movement of the poem, Whitman summarizes his insights as he views the sleepers no longer as fitful sufferers but as souls realizing their innate Edenic glory: "The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed..." All the races and nations are seen "hand in hand" as are the "Learn'd and unlearn'd" and "male and female..." All are uniting as they "press close without lust..." They are filled with "measureless love..." Even the "call of the slave is one with the master's call, and the master salutes the slave..." (302) Whitman imagines that all of these souls who were enfolded in fitful, nightmarish sleep are now invigorated with the conscious desire for brotherhood and are opposed to the outworn castes which have soured America's ideals.

The "sweatings and fevers stop..." as the souls leave the restlessness of the gloomy darkness, pass through the "invigoration" of the sleeping night, and begin to see the dawn. The poet says that he too passes beyond the night, but he will "return to you again and love you." He will return to the serenity of the night and to the love of his great but unseen lover. He will impregnate himself into the maternal womb of the new meaningful night and will be yielded from the mortal source into the immortal source. Once more the poet's early optimism about death has been rejuvenated.

The poet has lingered long enough in his cyclic wanderings. He moves on toward India or Eden. Again, as after "By Blue Ontario's Shore," the poet states the paradoxes or "Transpositions" (303) of life: let the first be last, let the last be first. When everyone and everything have changed places, have mixed and merged, the empathic democracy can be understood. In "To Think of Time," the poet reflects once more on the passage of time and of evolution. He tells the reader that existence is eternal, that past, present, and future are all one ever-present moment; time and space are mere illusory divisions between all souls. By realizing this fact of the divine equality of all things, all souls can become regenerated and attain New Eden. The multitude of Selves have meaning and immortality in their equal divinity:

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather
 certainly and safely around yourselves,
 Yourself! yourself! yourself, for ever and
 ever! (306)

The reader is urged to recognize the divinity at the center of his Self. The torpid sleep of mortal life must be startled to wake into immortal cosmic consciousness. Whitman says that the "purpose and essence of the known life, the transcendent" prepares the

way for the "Unknown life, the permanent." All parts of existence are thus seen as connecting phases of evolution. As the poet and reader move on toward Eden, the poet says that he does not know exactly in what direction he and humanity are headed, but he is certain that "it is good." (307) All existence has equal divinity and immortality:

I swear I think now that every thing
without exception has an eternal soul!

...
I swear I think there is nothing but
immortality!

...
And all preparation is for it--and identity
is for it--and life and materials are
altogether for it! (308)

The emphatic lines roll like one wave of life and death upon another in the great flow of creation.

And yet, man is still troubled in "Downcast Hours" which press him down like "Weights of lead" because of the limits of his mortal body. (311) The swift motion is again impeded as the poet ebbs and flows in his moods of optimism and meditation. This heavy feeling comes from the cynical materialism of the false Dream; this pessimism cries, "Matter is conquerer--matter, triumphant only, continues onward." This powerful but depressing line is heard on the dark verge of the war in which materialism and greed threaten to destroy the spiritual brotherhood necessary to the amative democracy. The poet wonders "Shall I not escape?" Again he is questioning and wondering: Is death a trap? Is the end of mortal life the everlasting end? But in "As If a Phantom Caress'd Me," he counters this cynical depression with another regeneration of his deific optimism: "I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore..." He feels a caress from "one I loved..." If man has the spirit of

democratic love within his soul, the division within himself and his separation from the cosmos is dissolved in a sense of divine equality and comradeship: matter is not all that there is in the universe; there is a brotherhood, a union, which flows through all souls and bouys them up above the illusory divisions of mortal life. Whitman thus gives "Assurances"; the word itself seems to breathe with new life. These assurances indicate that there is more to existence than what meets the mortal eye. The poet creates a striking image of all the past existing in secret communication with the future in the ever-present moment:

I do not doubt that from under the feet
and beside the hands and face I am
cognizant of, are now looking faces
I am not cognizant of, calm and
actual faces...

Mortal man must realize this mysterious fact of cosmic life and gain an attitude of cosmic concord: "I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless..." (312) Material life seems stable and permanent, "so well provided for..." Yet Death is "the purpose of all Life..." Triumphant matter is but a mere illusion; life is simply a prelude to the regaining of cosmic harmony. All creatures are called into the democracy of this harmony; Whitman says, "I believe Heavenly Death provides for all."

The poet hears the "unceasing, unbeginning" music of the spheres, the harmony of all things in future democratic balance ("That Music Always Round Me"). Whitman energetically calls the reader to move on with him toward destiny: "Here, sailor! here, ship! take aboard the most perfect pilot..." ("What Ship Puzzled At Sea," 313). In "To One Shortly To Die" the poet pronounces a baptismal benediction over the reader and again expresses his in-

tense democratic comradeship with the reader: "I absolve you from all except yourself spiritual bodily, that is eternal..." He says that the new dawn "bursts through in unlook'd-for directions..." The unseen is there before us if we are but receptive to it. And, as ever, the empathic poet says "I am with you..." As he has often done before, the poet makes an impressive direct statement to the reader who, like all men, is "One Shortly to Die." The statement is bold, spoken emphatically, yet simply to the reader: "I single you out having a message for you, / You are to die---..." The question of the reader is whether he shall, in fact, find that heavenly death of which the poet has been continually shouting. Whitman minces no words: "I cannot prevaricate." The poet is like the puritan God and like death: "I am exact and merciless..." Yet he is also like Christ: "but I love you" and "I am with you..." There is no escaping death; every man is under the sentence. But mortality is given immortal purpose through the divinizing and equalizing love of Whitman for all creatures, a love indicative of the personal God who democratically embraces the whole universe. The poet says "There is no escape for you"; yet "you...will surely escape." In these simple words is stated the paradox that the poet has been pondering with the reader all along: birth is not a beginning; death is not an end; death is birth. Man fears he cannot escape death, and yet death itself is the escape into the cosmos. The regenerated spiritual body will move on to a new phase of evolution and the "corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious." (314)

The poet has said that "it is just as lucky to die" as to be born, and that "I pass death..." (29) In the end is the beginning:

birth and death are not two extreme ends of a long line, but the connecting points of a circle. The "excrementitious" (314) body left by the regenerated spiritual body is "good manure" (67) or fertilizer for the cycles of creatures who are still flowing forth from the womb, who have yet to gain cosmic harmony. With such thoughts the reader forgets he is "sick" or mortal. The poet has seen life and death in the new light of the sun which "bursts through, in unlooked-for directions"; he gives his bizarre statement of joyful benediction: "I do not commiserate, I congratulate you." (314)

All along the way the democratic poet has spoken the deific words of harmonious cosmic life: "I am" (27); "I make appointments with all, / I will not have a single person slighted or left away" (37); "In all people I see myself, ... I know I am deathless... I exist as I am" (38); "I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul, ... I am the poet of the woman the same as the man" (39); "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there" (51); "Spontaneous me" (78); "I give you my hand" (115); "I am as good as looking at you now..." (119) Now he again gives the loving message of cosmic democracy: "I am with you." (314) When all men are regenerated in the cosmic consciousness of this divine love, they will attain the mystical body, the unity of the utopian democracy of New Eden.

But in "Thought," again the old cynical materialism of the false Dream intrudes: "Is only matter triumphant?" (316) The poet has still not purged himself and his reader of doubt; the pilgrimage must go on. The basis of democracy and the basis of union in cosmic consciousness are one in the same: the divinity in all common men. And the democratic, cosmic poet has "gone forth among other

Gods, these men and women I love" ("Song At Sunset"). He is trying to spread his message of divine equality and love through the repetitions and variations of his biographical epic. Once more the poet watches the sunset as he did long ago on the Brooklyn Ferry. The sun's radiation compels man to wake to the fuller daylight. Night comes but then again the dawn; each cycle of day and night hastens man further on toward death and the transfiguring dawn when the ultimate divine democracy will be achieved. Before the war, the poet placed this "Song at Sunset" near the beginning of Leaves; yet ultimately he set it near the conclusion as he drew toward the end of his epic pilgrimage. He sings once more in spirant words about the cosmic float which merges all times and places into one mystical body:

Splendor of ending day floating and
 filling me,
 Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,
 Inflating my throat, you divine average,
 You earth and life till the last ray
 gleams I sing. (343)

From the beginning, Whitman has sung of the "equalities! O divine average!" (19) He sings now of his cosmic consciousness: "Eyes of my soul seeing perfection..." Every atom is a miracle. There is "Good in all." Dawn, noon, and starry night--all the ages of man and of the world are divinely destined and full of purpose. Every part of life and every time of life give joy if understood: "Wonderful to depart! / Wonderful to be here!" Existence in all its motions and actions is wonderful as it seeks to love something beyond itself: "to seize something by the hand!" The body and soul are infused in erotic love, and all the senses are charged up to be receptive to the divinity inside and outside man. The poet expresses the actions of Deity in each moving object in dynamic ex-

clamations:

How the water sports and sings! (surely
it is alive!)
How the trees rise and stand up, with strong
trunks, with branches and leaves!
(Surely there is something more in each of
the trees, some living soul.) (343)

The poet notices and enjoys everything that indicates its participation in Deity, anything that moves or breathes. In America, Whitman sees the fullest evolution thus far of the great empathic "spirituality of things!" which is like a harmonious musical strain "flowing through ages and continents, now reaching me and America!" Whitman is the poetic sounding board of all these celestial rhythms, and he passes the harmonious song of democracy on to the future. He sings of the democratic, divine average and of the endless ends, the eternal goals of all life: "I sing to the last the equalities modern or old, / I sing the endless finalés of things..." (344) He enlightens all things which are in the sunset of life, on the verge of the new dawn. The poet feels the sun's radiations which evaporate the mortal mist in order to allow man to continue on his upward evolutionary spiral. Each new sunset brings man closer to his final twilight of life, closer to his last exhalation; each new sunrise brings man closer to the full morning of consciousness, closer to his being inhaled back into the cosmos.

As the poet informally bids "So Long!" he recalls his prophecies of "justice triumphant" in America, of "uncompromising liberty and equality," of the "Union more and more compact, indissoluble," of "adhesiveness." Whitman tells the seeking soul of man that "you shall yet find the friend you were looking for." (348) The soul will yet find the democratic harmony with its brother souls and its ultimate fulfillment in the Over-Soul.

But still E Pluribus Unum is shattering. The glorious optimism of the concluding line of the 1860 edition--"I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead" (350)--seems premature. There is a wrestling within the spirit of man which goes on within Whitman, the representative man. To express this tension, the poet has played upon two notes: the note of mortal turmoil and doubt, and the note of immortal serenity and understanding of God. Moreover, the whole struggle and evolution of humanity is within each man; the poet realizes that, like the democratic Over-Soul, he must love each man as if he were the only man, and at the same time he must empathize with all mankind. He must love the one and the many; this is the equalizing divine love of the utopian brotherhood. The poetry before the war which threatens to shatter that brotherhood is constantly shifting back and forth between the two notes of doubt and understanding. The next chapter will examine the poetry written during and immediately after the war in an attempt to show the further developments and expressions of Whitman's concept of man in America.

Chapter 2

Struggling for New Eden: The Great Experience

Whitman seemed to view the outbreak of the Civil War as the ultimate testing of the amative utopia based on the true Dream. The war was a gruesome experience which forced him to try to reconcile mass conflict and malice with his idea of the American Dream. The war was not only a struggle between brothers but it was also the first war in history fought with the support of sophisticated industry; it was in every sense a complete perversion of the evolving democracy and grand progress of the New World. An examination of any of the prose which the poet wrote during the last few years of uneasy peace before the war reveals that Whitman believed that those people who are enslaved to social division and bigotry "are emasculating society..."¹ The strength of the New World democracy was being drained by the Old World corruptions of slavery and caste. The turmoils and doubts in America and in the mind of the poet were turning points both for the democracy and for the bard of democracy. He himself admitted that "Without those three or four years and the experience they gave, 'Leaves of Grass' would not now be existing."² It is not necessary to look for the full enlightenment of the poet in some secret experience which he may have undergone in New Orleans. The surging life of the young democracy had always inspired Whitman; in the late eighteen-fifties he saw the utopian Dream in

¹Whitman, in an 1857 editorial, in I Sit and Look Out. Editorials from the Brooklyn Daily Times, selected and edited by Emory Holloway and Vernolian Schwarz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 172.

²Whitman, Collect and Other Prose, Vol. II of Prose Works, 1892, edited by Floyd Stovall in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 724.

danger of a threatening suicidal war which could result in the final perversion of human dignity and the loss of the symbolic New Eden. His poetic and messianic vision of the future New Eden was both clouded and illuminated by the terrible experiences of the prelude and actual outbreak of war. Whitman believed that the destiny of his own soul was connected with the destiny of man in America; therefore he, as representative democratic man, had to live through and express America's great life struggle. He noted that the Civil War and its foreshadowing had been the "distinguishing event" of his life.³

As was indicated in the close of the last chapter, Whitman's optimism about the Dream of New Eden in America was often shaken in the early editions of Leaves by the building hostilities which caused him to fear the approach of war. In "On the Beach at Night" (1856 edition) Whitman had pictured a small girl frightened by the threatening storm. Perhaps this child represented that same childlike spirit of Whitman's soul which had asked "What is the grass?" (1855 edition). In this vignette the child weeps because the clouds of the storm "lower victorious soon to devour all..." But the child's father says that the "ravening clouds shall not long be victorious..." The celestial light of the stars is blotted out "only in apparition"; all the stars of America's destiny "shall shine out again" because "they endure..." (188) The father says that despite the rising storm there is something "more immortal even than the stars..." (189); that something is the immor-

³Whitman, Specimen Days, Vol I of Prose Works, 1892, edited by Floyd Stovall, in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: New York University Press, 1963), p. 114.

tal soul of man which must weather the storm in order to attain the true Dream. On the eve of war, in the 1860 "Thought," the poet said, "I stand aloof and look" at the common men of America "following the lead of those who do not believe in men"; thus he felt that the en masse of democracy was being betrayed by the cynicism of the materialistic false Dream which rejects human dignity and equality (199). In "To the States," an 1860 poem which Whitman later chose to precede the war poems, the poet realized that he had to attain the full meaning of his early insights above and beyond the "filthy Presidentiad" which threatened to tear the union apart. He was no longer sure of those early glib ideas on life in America since his inexperienced idealism was faltering in the face of division and hatred. Bewildered, he asked about his identity and the purpose of torpid life: "why myself and all drowsing?" Man was on the verge of the nightmare of fratricidal annihilation; but Whitman was still able to believe that there was a meaning for his early illuminations and that America would "surely awake" to that meaning (200).

Now that the war has come, the poet, like that child in the 1855 and 1856 editions, appears to be increasingly disturbed by the question of life's purpose which is raised by the impending cataclysm. In "O Me! O Life!" Whitman asks another of his recurring questions: "What good amid these, O me, O life?" This 1867 poem originally appeared near the end of the war poems; however Whitman finally placed it just before those poems since it creates a mood of quiet and tense wonder typical of many of the meditations about the war and its effects on the poet. In the attitude which he gained from his early cosmic insights in "Song of Myself," "Cross-

ing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle," and "As I Ebb'd," Whitman tries to communicate with Nature as he observes the stars of America's destiny which are being blotted out by the storm. He is still wondering about man and America: What is man? What is life? Can man attain the New Eden in America? The answer comes in an indirect form which casually expresses a stoical serenity in the face of what appeared to Whitman to be cosmic catastrophe:

That you are here--that life exists
and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and
you may contribute a verse. (197)

In other words, whether or not man sees his goal, he still has a purpose amid the onrushing darkness; he feels that he must vigorously drive ahead to seek the dawn of New Eden. The poem "O Me! O Life!" will become even more meaningful during the Gilded Age, discussed in the next chapter.

As Whitman watched the union sink into the war which shattered fraternal brotherhood, he expressed his feelings and thoughts in Drum Taps (1865) and its sequel (1865-6) which greatly expanded the 1867 edition of Leaves. This meandering cluster of war poems oscillates in tone: the poet senses an exhilaration, epitomized by "Pioneers! O Pioneers," which gives an excited feeling that the war will embolden the ideal brotherhood of common men; he also senses a perturbation, evident in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak," which is an intense brooding fear that the war would kill the society of the true Dream and thus pervert man's evolution. These tones then blend into a meditation about the details of the war and a yearning to discover whether the war is really a fire test or a deathblow for democracy; this meditation is expressed in a series of vivid scenes depicted in "The Wound Dresser," "Vigil Strange,"

and "A Sight in Camp at Day." Eventually, from these complex thoughts, the poet moves toward a climactic resolution that includes "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic A Voice," "Reconciliation," and "Turn O Libertad," and that culminates in the poems in memory of Lincoln.

I. Exhilaration and Perturbation

Viewing the war as the ennobling fire test of brotherhood, Whitman begins the cluster in a tone of exhilaration with "First Songs for a Prelude" (originally "Drum Taps").⁴ After the "shock electric" of the first guns firing on Fort Sumter, America's young blood is stirred for war in "the hour of danger, in crisis!" Whitman observes that Manhattan is filled with the sounds of "pride and joy" as America faces her heroic contest; the excited poet hopes she will become "strongest...O truer than steel!" He indicates that it is a good thing that America's long sought ideals are in danger because without the vigorous dynamism of struggle those ideals could be taken for granted and then decay on a dusty pedestal. The tone of this opening poem is both enthusiastic and urgent, combining the conflicting feelings of the poet; the words come short and quick, running or beating with the drums of war and the excited pulse of the nation. Whitman is glad to see how America's young men "sprang" to counter the threat and "threw off the costumes of peace with indifferent hand..." The expression is vigorous as Whitman prepares to watch the struggle. As usual there

⁴In most cases, the poems of Drum Taps are discussed in the order given them by the poet in the 1865 and 1865-6 editions. These poems were examined in facsimiles of the first editions.

is a catalogue to describe all the exciting bustle as the war gets underway: "Outdoors arming, indoor arming..." (221) The poet observes the troops and proclaims "How I love them!" Whitman believes that these are the strong young men of the growing democracy; they are the heroic warriors of which future generations will sing and be proud. The poet shouts that the "blood of the city [is_] up--arm'd! Arm'd!..." He is glad that the "unpent enthusiasm" has been openly proclaimed as a "welcome for battle..." Now there is "no turning away..." The Union must be defended at all costs and the city is "exulting" with overwhelming joy (202).

Earlier the poet wrote about the innocent child frightened by the approach of storm clouds and about the father's comforting words that the stars of immortality and destiny would again appear. Now, in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak," the energetic tone of the opening war poem is continued; but the poet also begins to express the child's fear of destruction in a tone of tense anxiety as the poet's nervous concern for the union builds. The exhilaration is tempered by perturbation. The poem begins as "a new song, a free song" that is sung patriotically "in the open air..." The air vibrates with the rousing sounds of bugles and drums and guns. But the sounds are harsh and startling as the poet tries to make divided man aware of the great "idea of all" (204) which is the unifying divine essence common to all men. The poet shouts urgently, "Arouse and beware! Beware and arouse!" All lulling meditation is shattered for the time being as the great testing of man and of America begins. That innocent child who feared the tempest now looks to the sky for immortal peace above the earthly storm while the father becomes blinded to the stars of immortality. The father

no longer comforts; he tells the child to look not at the sky but at the "dazzling things in the houses," and to see the great materialistic hustle of the "money-shops..." The spirit of the father has been perverted and soured by physical things which are described by him as "valued and toil'd for... / How envied by all the earth." Thus the parent tries to subvert the child's idealism with that false Dream materialism which Whitman views as a cause of the war. The poet watches this little dramatic episode and then sees the "banner and pennant." (205) This is the flag of America which displays the stars of mankind's evolution and destiny almost as if they were a new constellation of the Zodiac. The child, not fooled by the father's materialistic cynicism, sees in this banner a mystical something in the sky; the banner seems to represent the harmony of peace above and beyond the war and the false Dream. The child tells the father that the banner of the cosmic brotherhood "is alive--it is full of people..." The banner of universal democracy is "so broad [that] it covers the whole sky." But the father, sullied by the false Dream, hisses "Cease, cease, my foolish baby." The father is not interested in the stars of the flag but is only concerned with the "well-prepared pavements" and the "solid-walled houses." The poet discounts this narrow vision caused by the false Dream and tells the child "I hear Liberty!" (206) Whitman is attempting to indicate that the ideal brotherhood or "Identity" of America seems to speak to the poet telling him to proclaim to all mankind that the utopian society is not "riches and peace alone..." (207) Whitman, pondering the dialogue of child and father during this crisis in America, cries that his "theme is clear at last..." He rejects the vapid progress and stifling caste system of the false Dream and sings of the human

evolution into the true Dream. The stars of the flag seem to shine through the storm of war; the light of the stars is "Passionately seen and yearn'd for" by both the child and the poet (208). The child is the innocent soul of the New World searching for the light of symbolic India or Eden; in the person of the child, the poet is seeking to cut across all decayed contrivances and outworn traditions which have stifled man for so long and is trying to find the Eden of the Dream.

The poet's pilgrimage toward New Eden now becomes part of the plodding journey of the slow-moving Army with which the poet travels in spirit. Amidst the darkness described in "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame," Whitman pictures soldiers sitting around a campfire as they ponder the old mysteries of love, life, and death. The elusiveness of these mysteries is symbolized by the ghostly flickering light:

The darkness lit by spots of kindled
fire, the silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occa-
sional figure moving... (216)

The tone of the scene is somber and gripping; the enthusiasm for the war is now fading as the terrors and sufferings become more apparent. The poet's idealistic sense of the ennobling struggle is lessening as he begins to experience the real miseries of the divided world. He must learn about life, suffering, and death in all the agonies he sees and endures as he travels through the oppressive night. The poet is strongly effected by the deaths of America's young men. His attitude toward these sons of democracy is one of strong empathy befitting the utopian brotherhood.

The confusion of conflicting attitudes is expressed in "Eighteen Sixty-One" when the poet refers to the first year of war as a

"terrible year," a "robust year," a "hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year." (203) The words express the noise and chaos of war which get mixed up in Whitman's enthusiastic hopes and doubting fears. Whitman seems to believe that America's struggle for life is the world's struggle for liberty, and the Civil War is merely part of the greater battle against tyranny begun in America during the Revolution. "The Centenarian's Story" serves to unite the past and present struggles as parts of one vast evolutionary struggle for brotherhood (214); the past and present causes of wars are one giant violation of brotherhood.

The energetic tone is recalled in "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" which the poet later grouped with "Birds of Passage." The conflict seems like an invigorating challenge to a great heroic combat in order to prove the strength of the new man of the New World. The poet exhilaratingly calls the young men of America to the task of building and defending the democracy: "come my tan-faced children, / Follow well in order, get your weapons ready..." The poet says that the young soldiers and pioneers "cannot tarry" but that they must march onward and "bear the brunt of danger..." All the rest of mankind depends on America's "youthful sinewy races" who are "full of action, full of manly pride and friendship..." The maintenance of the ideal brotherhood is the "task eternal" for which the young men strive. They rise on the progress of the past and evolve toward "a newer mightier world..." A catalogue lists the mighty actions of the pioneers as they move across the continent building the utopia (168). These new men of the New World are the "resistless restless race" that the poet loves. The words "resistless restless" express Whitman's sense of man's continuous progress toward New Eden. The evolution of all mankind is

steadily progressing "with the Western movement..." (169)

But this exhilaration is quelled by "Quicksand Years" which later appeared in "Whispers of Heavenly Death," and will again be referred to in chapter three. The poet says that the constantly changing tumult and destructive actions of the war "whirl me I know not whither..."; the complexity and confusion "mock and elude" Whitman. All that the poet can do is sing of "One's-Self," the inward Identity which must survive against the illusions of the materialistic cloying world. This Identity is the Self of which Whitman has continually been singing, the meaning of man and of America.

II. The Mystique

In a series of dramatic vignettes which are paced and structured by statements of progressively fuller insight into what is happening to America and to himself, Whitman thrashes out that Identity or Self. He is attempting to rejuvenate his belief in America by reconciling the war with the Dream of Eden. He must go through the mystique of the ritualistic pilgrimage away from the depravity of the false Dream toward the Promised Land of the New World. He is searching for innocence, a search in which he hopes to become regenerated and through which he hopes he can proclaim the true Dream to America.

The poet has been vacillating back and forth between optimism and disillusionment concerning the severe testing of the Dream. He has been thinking about his own identity and about the future identity of America which he has been trying to prophesy throughout his poetry. He has entered a state of intense brooding and

now will begin a long process of fuller illumination which will eventually bring him into what seems to be a fulfilling resolution of all his doubts and fears about war. The preparation for this resolution begins when the poet assumes his role as "The Wound Dresser." He will attempt to give the "answer to the children" (220): to the child who asked "What is the grass?" (28) and to the child who wondered about the peace above the earth but who was rebuffed by a worldly-minded father (205). He gives the answer by trying to show each man that he is divine and equal with all other divine men; only when man recognizes his cosmic brotherhood will all war cease and the true democracy be attained. As in "The Sleepers" when the poet moved from one restless sleeper to another, he now pictures himself moving from one wounded boy to another in an attitude of powerful democratic empathy. These young men are suffering and dying for the ideal of America's true Dream; the brotherhood which Whitman had glibly prophesied is being both severely tested and magnificently defended in this war of shattered brotherhood. The poet must wander amidst the agonizing struggle in order to examine his prophecies in the face of harsh reality.

When the conflict broke out the poet thought he would beat alarms of glorious "relentless war," but now all he can do is sit with each wounded boy and soothe him or keep a silent vigil with the dead. Whitman views each one as a son or martyr of democracy. In their agonies the soldiers have attained the ideal "divine average" (19) which Whitman has contemplated for so long: "unsurpassed heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was equally brave;)...". Time washes souls away like ebbing waves dissolving

"imprints off the sand" into the mystic ocean; Whitman has to wonder about the meaning and the destiny of all that he sees because, in the middle of war, life appears to be a mere transient suffering with no purpose. Whitman is caught up in the "silence, in dreams' projections" of the hospitals as he keeps his vigil of democratic comradeship. The false Dream's "world of gain and appearance and mirth" passes from view as the poet contemplates the old mysteries of life, love, and death in the gloom of the true Dream's uncertain destiny.

The old man plods along with heavy strides through the hospitals: "Bearing the bandages, water and sponges..." But the magnetism of love propels the soul of the old man: "Straight and swift to my wounded I go..." The lines plod and speed with the poet. The boys are "my wounded": they are the suffering sons of America and of her representative poet-prophet; the expression is striking as it expresses Whitman's strange idea that he is the father and democracy is the mother of the future cosmic concord. As he moves from one boy to the next he says "not one do I miss..."; this simple phrase indicates his powerful spirit of messianic brotherhood. In a moving scene, his cosmic love goes out to one boy:

One turns to me his appealing eyes--
 poor boy! I never knew you,
 Yet I think I could not refuse this
 moment to die for you, if that
 would save you. (221)

The choice of the word "save" expresses the poet's apparent desire to assume Christ's mission to die for humanity. Whitman wishes to act as a catalyst sending humanity into a higher phase of evolution, a phase in which the democratic love of brotherhood is a stronger force than division, caste, and hatred. The poet's soul

is opening to mortality and immortality in a progressing awareness of the continuous evolutionary flow of life into death: "On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospitals doors!)"... The war hospitals are the centers of the great mysteries which the poet continues to ponder: the hospitals are the schools of birth and the schools of death. The strange interlude of man's existence on earth is tied up in these hospitals which the "wound-dresser" visits; the poet is gaining a fuller understanding that "beautiful death" is a rest, a mysterious entrance into cosmic peace. This whole experience of watching the testing of the Dream is so powerful that it causes Whitman to feel that the wound in the side of one boy is the wound in his own side and in America's side. The unusual experience is both "sweet and sad," combining the two moods of joy and doubt which have been playing on the poet's mind. In a tone of muted intensity, the poet is receptively calm on the surface, but one agony after another clothes his soul, dressing and undressing his wounded spirit: "deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame."

The poet continues on his terrible pilgrimage through the storm. He can never abandon his trek; he must be ever "Returning resuming" as he empathizes with one soldier after another in one hospital after another. He must watch and see the outcome of the struggle which, he believes, will determine the evolution or devolution of humanity. And when he is not with the soldiers he ponders his memories of "Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck" and "Many a soldier's kiss..." (222) Amidst the darkness of the war his only peace comes from the realization of this spirit of amative brotherhood which is needed for the utopian democracy

of the true Dream.

From this pondering on comradeship the poet is able to renew his belief in the evolution of the New Eden which he expresses in the title of "Rise O Days From Your Fathomless Deeps"; this poem reinforces the poet's belief that a greater future is continually unfolding out of the past and present. The poet presents himself as wandering throughout the continent as he hears the "continuous thunder" of the war. He watches life in America with his complex attitudes of "wonder, yet pensive." He is still invigorated by the thought of the future but must continually think about the dangers along the way. The poet describes the evil decay of the false Dream which caused the war as "all the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me..." (209) But he vigorously urges the childlike spirit of the true Dream to fight back until it reaches victory: "Thunder on! stride on, Democracy!" (210) The terrifying thunder of the war is matched by the powerful thundering sound of the en masse of common men as they move on toward the attainment of the democracy of the true Dream. The lines are strong with the poet's aroused emotions as he watches the great fire test of the New World.

The poet's thoughts return to the wounded boys as the "Wound Dresser" meditation is taken up again in "Vigil Strange I Kept On the Field One Night." The poet finds one "dear comrade" in "death so cold..." He promises to keep a "Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet" in the cold darkness of the conflict (217). Despite the separations and miseries, the poet maintains his powerful spirit of brotherly comradeship and keeps a "Vigil of silence, love, and death" as he sits with the young soldiers pondering the old

mysteries. The poet passes "sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours" with his "dearest comrade..." in the middle of an oppressive night filled with deaths and suffering; the words express the poet's personal intensity and deep compassion in a love that crosses the border between life and death. The childless poet seems to have found his heirs, the brave, young Americans who indicate the strength of the future Dream. He looks toward the goal of the pilgrimage, the cosmic brotherhood beyond life and death, and simply says to the dead soldier "I think we shall surely meet again..." Life is not all, and death is not all; there is more day to dawn. The poet wraps the dead boy in his shroud and lowers the body into the ground; both the poet and the soldier are "bathed by the rising sun" which comes like a resurrection on the horizon of mortal life. This warfilled mortal night is a "Vigil for comrade swiftly slain" which the poet will never forget; the love which he has attained for the boy will sustain him to go on toward the true Dream through both the blood bath and the Gilded Age.

In order to further develop these meditations the poet next presents himself as walking along with the army in "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest." The way is no longer along the open road but on "the road unknown" and "in darkness..." The regiments have been decimated with the "loss severe" and the "sullen remnant" retreats through the night. The poet evidently feels the discouragement of the soldiers. The army stops at a church by a crossroads after midnight, and the sanctuary becomes a hospital surrounded by "Shadows of deepest, deepest black..." (218); the words seem to imitate the heavy sighs which the poet hears from

suffering young men. The poet moves in spirit from one wounded boy to another; then he stands at the center of the sanctuary and watches the whole nightmare: "I sweep my eye o'er the scene fair to absorb it all..." He takes the whole army of suffering and dying boys within himself to see if he can find a purpose for what is happening. As the army is called to move on through the night the poet's eye is caught by the smile of one dying boy; then the poet turns away and marches on with the soldiers: "I speed forth to the darkness...ever in darkness marching...The unknown road still marching." (219) The poet continues to wonder about the destination of the soldiers and the destiny of America as she moves on through her time of trial.

In "Long, Too Long America" the poet reinforces the lesson he is trying to convey when he says that America has travelled too long on the seemingly peaceful roads of empty joy and gross prosperity (222). Such open roads were mere illusions. The real open road will be found only when the true Eden is rediscovered within the soul. America must now learn her true purpose, to "conceive and show to the world what your children en masse really are..." (233) These children have become apparent to Whitman in the hospitals. The childless poet's sense of the love needed for the unity of all mankind must have been powerfully stimulated when he, as hospital visitor, was embraced by the wounded soldiers. Seeing the rows of wounded boys on the battlefield or in the hospitals caused him to painfully ask, "O heavens, what scene is this?--is this indeed humanity...?" The question indicates that he is still wondering whether a nation torn by such a horrible strife can ever evolve into the New Eden. Among the wounded he

believed that he had found the men of the true Dream whom he lovingly called "specimens of unworldliness, disinterestedness, and animal purity and heroism...--on whose birth the calmness of heaven seems to have descended..." This vision of the greatness of America of en masse common men appeared to Whitman in the darkness of war and he wrote that it "fell upon me like a great awe."⁵ His soul was torn between the sight of the true democratic men and the realization that the true democracy was in mortal danger. He wrote to his mother "how contemptible all the usual little worldly prides & vanities & strivings after appearances, seem in the midst of such scenes as these..."⁶ These lines indicate that the optimist is greatly shaken by the deaths, but that he also finds strength amidst the turmoil. America has been so long in coming; surely, the poet believes, she cannot die now.

"A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim" brings the meditations to a peak. The soldiers are viewed by the poet as the divine brothers of all men, the kindred of Christ himself. In a very moving vignette, the poet walks slowly through a silent hospital tent and finds three forms on stretchers covered by a "gray and heavy" shroud. The poet lifts the covering of the first and asks with great compassion, "Who are you my dear comrade?" He goes to the second and wonders "Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?" He doesn't know these sons of democracy; but then he comes to the third almost as if he were approaching the third

⁵Specimen Days, pp. 33, 46, 67 f.

⁶The Correspondence of Walt Whitman, Vol. I: 1842-1867, edited by Edwin Haveland Miller in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 138.

cross on Calvary. The vivid expression of his overpowering recognition of God in all these boys is remarkable:

Then to the third--a face nor child nor
 old, very calm, as of beautiful
 yellow-white ivory;
 Young man I think I know you--I think
 this face is the face of the Christ
 himself,
 Dead and divine and brother of all, and
 here again he lies. (219)

The glibness with which Whitman observed death in his early poems and stories is drained away in this sublimely simple scene. These boys and men keep alive Whitman's belief in the true Dream. With this belief reinvigorated the poet develops his thoughts in "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun." He says that he desires the "primal sanities" of Nature so that he may reaffirm his own interior Eden. He is "tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife..." (223) The exuberance of the early war poems has faded and has been replaced by the intense desire for a new dawn so that the poet may regain his vision of man's future regeneration beyond the chaotic division of strife.

In "Over the Carnage Prophetic a Voice," the culminating illumination of the war poems begins. Whitman dramatically gives a strong statement of his belief in the future as he tries to bolster the soldiers' spirits as well as his own:

Be not disheartened, affection shall
 solve the problems of freedom yet,
 Those who love each other shall become
 invincible...

The divine love of the cosmic brotherhood is a force stronger than hatred. Whitman believes that the sons of democracy, the "Sons of the Mother of All," shall yet be victorious. Amative democracy will yet conquer the false Dream, and all creatures "shall be

friends triune..." (225) Their true Dream comaraderie will be more precious to each of them than all the materialism of the Old World and all the progress of the false Dream in the New World. The lulling, drawn out stillness of the hospital scenes is broken by staccato exclamations of newly found optimism amid the darkness: "I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you." (226) He shouts that the future democracy will depend on the love of divinely equal comrades. The war has brought forth the full prophetic voice of the democratic bard. The war has focused the poet's attention on this love which he formerly took for granted.

In a series of short poems the poet builds the illumination as he moves toward a climactic resolution. In the poem "Reconciliation" Whitman fully recognizes the divine equality which he has been pondering all along. In the middle of war the ideal democratic spirit dissolves hatred and division. The poet comes upon the body of a Confederate soldier and observes that "my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself dead..." (229) The spirit of the "divine average" (19) cuts across all barriers to unify the spirit of Deity in all creatures. In "How Solemn As One by One" the poet writes that this divine spirit not only unifies living men but joins life with the cosmos beyond death because bullets can never kill "what you really are, dear friend..." The real essence of each man is the soul which is "great as any, good as the best..." (229) The immortal soul of divine equality transcends fratricidal conflict, political divisions, and mortal life itself. In "Lo, Victress On the Peaks" the poet indicates that the war will end, but the evolutionary struggle for Liberty will

go on: eventually Liberty, the foundation of the true Dream's human dignity and purpose, will be "Dominant" and be surrounded by the "dazzling sun" of the new dawn. The poet urges the reader and every soul to move ahead though the destination is still misty, even though victory or defeat is still undecided. In "To a Certain Civilian" (a poem added at this point in the 1867 edition) Whitman recognizes that his identity as the seeker and bard of democracy has been brought about by this gruelling struggle for human dignity: "I have been born of the same as the war was born..."

(230) Considering the horrors which surround the compassionate and anxious poet, this line is certainly striking; it indicates that Whitman came to realize how the war itself crystalized his ideas and ideals concerning America and the destiny of man.

With these thoughts running through his mind, the poet, in "Turn O Libertad," proclaims that Liberty will be "doubting no more, resolute sweeping the world..." (231) The words are strong with the rejuvenating power of the poet's evolving idealism. The words "resolute sweeping" surge on without a pause indicating the poet's belief that the amative democracy seems destined and the "future, greater than all the past" is "swiftly, surely preparing" for the utopia (232). In one of the last of the 1865 war poems, "Bivouac on a Mountain Side," the poet dramatically points upward at the "eternal stars." (215) Again he is thinking of the unsullied idealism of the child who looked up at the banner of stars above and beyond the earthly conflict. It is this childlike idealism that must survive the conflict in order to be transformed into an experienced idealism of the true Dream in America. If idealism dies, the cynicism and greed of the false Dream will have conquered America. The poet has moved through

his poetic mystique in order to demonstrate the regeneration of his own idealism.

III. Resolution

Throughout the war poems the poet has been observing the chaos which overtook the Dream. "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd" was the first and title work of the 1865-6 sequel poems: in this beautiful elegy, a harmonious trinity gradually appears to counteract the chaos of wind, waves, and night. This new trinity includes the star of light, of Lincoln, of democratic brotherhood; the flower of death and rebirth; and the bird representing the spirit of the singing poet who is caught between joy and melancholy. Whitman considered Lincoln to be a true regenerated man of democracy, a prototype for the New Adam of the New Eden. The President embodied the spirit of compassion and brotherly union, the spirit of the future amative democracy. With his belief in Lincoln and with his love for the young soldiers, Whitman was gradually able to overcome the darkness of war and to attain a resolution of his fears and doubts about the Dream in America.

As the lilacs bloom, spring returns after the war and after death. Lincoln has gone to a meaningful "sane and sacred death" (243): a rest from life's agony and an entrance into cosmic harmony. But the poet must meditate on this at length before he can be sure about life and death. The war has had a strangulating effect on the poet's beliefs and emotions; the easy and boisterous optimism of the immature poems and of the prewar editions of Leaves has boiled away, and the poet must try to rejuvenate or

replace his early idealism. In Lincoln's death the poet feels the overpowering sense of shattered love which the male mockingbird felt along the Long Island shore. This death combines and culminates the agonies and horrors of all the war deaths. When Whitman contemplated the ever-returning grass in "Song of Myself" he was filled with an ecstatic sense of life; but now death has come and is deeply personal. Whitman thought he had found the answer of love for the child's simple question; but now his love is taken from him. There is still something that he must discover and understand. In "Out of the Cradle," the mockingbird sang "Loved!" and "Death" (183 f.) and these memories now mix into one climactic meditation. The war is over, but the violation of brotherhood goes on. The sun rises, the spring and lilacs return from the death of winter; yet the poet sighs with the ever-returning agony as he is continually reminded of Lincoln's death. This one loss epitomises all the sorrows of the war and all the agonies of common mankind.

Whitman stands at the dooryard gate and looks to the place where Lincoln's star was; but it is clouded over. He feels like that child who saw the coming clouds of war as they blotted out the heavens. A litany of longing is sung as the poet tries to express his grief but finds that he can only sing a series of exclamations:

O powerful western fallen star!
 O shades of night--O moody, tearful night!
 O great star disappear'd--O the black
 murk that hides the star!
 ...O helpless soul of me!
 O harsh surrounding cloud that will not
 free my soul. (232)

The anguish which seemed relatively controlled and artistically

subdued in Drum-Taps now flows unchecked in the stammered lines. The poet continues his pilgrimage by passing through the dooryard gate into the folds of maternal Nature and finds the living flower. The lilac bush is tall like Lincoln, compassionate with heart-shaped leaves like the poet's heart, erotically pointed with miraculous life: "every leaf a miracle..." The poet breaks off a sprig of lilac and, with the dying flower in his hands, he ponders life and death once again. The shape of the lilac leaf and blossom reminds him of the fertile but secluded Calamus, the grass of universal common love and democratic empathy.

Now Whitman hears the melancholy cry of the "shy and hidden bird" who is singing in the Calamus swamp's "secluded recesses" which perhaps are symbolic of the shadowy womb-like subconscious of the brooding poet. The thrush sings to the poet of joy and sorrow, the conflicting life emotions of which the mockingbird sang long ago. The song is "Death's outlet, song of life..." It is a paradoxical bittersweet blending of the great mysteries which have haunted Whitman. The song must assuage the sorrow by allowing the soul to channel off its bursting sadness. But as yet the poet does not heed the thrush; he must allow the horrible sadness to fade before he can attempt to expiate it and rid himself of his terrifying thought of death. The thought of mortality is not yet balanced by the full knowledge of mortality's transfiguration into immortality (233).

Into the seclusion of this meditation comes another rhythm, the deep thudding sound of Lincoln's slow funeral train. The poet must see the train go by in an attempt to be regenerated by the passing soul of Lincoln. The powerful thrusting sounds of the

locomotive seem to give strength to the poet as it passes through the "endless years" of all evolving common men, passes "the yellow-speared wheat, every grain from its shroud...uprisen..." The erect, healthy wheat is a powerful image of new life pouring forth even after the ravages of winter and war: the seeds and grains of life are resurrected from their living shrouds; the train is carrying the corpse which is itself a potent but shrouded seed of the future democracy. The poet's pilgrimage is now caught up in long processions as the common people come to see and pray for their common-man President. The darkness and cold of night and death are pierced by these processions of life. The poet goes to the tracks and feels the thudding heart of the engine as it passes. He gives Lincoln the lilac sprig, gives a token of dying life to a soul that has gained the cosmic brotherhood. All flesh is as the grass: it dies, yet the grass and the Calamus and the lilac are ever-returning in their own compost. The poet tries to express the complex series of sounds he hears to transfix the reader in this dramatic scene: the thumping of the engine, the "thousand voices rising strong and solemn," the tolling of the train bells and all the church bells, the "mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin," and the "shuddering" of the church organs. The reverberations are intriguing and hypnotic.

Whitman recalls the lessons of the hospitals: death is a rest, a transfiguration into cosmic harmony. The poet addresses death as "you O sane and sacred death." The striking statement compels the reader to ponder the old paradox of life and death: life is insane and profane; death is sane and sacred. The poet gathers sprig upon sprig of roses, lilacs, and lilies and erotically pours these living seeds forth on the war graves and on Lincoln's cof-

fin:

With loaded arms I come, pouring for
 you,
 For you and the coffin all of you
 O death. (234)

Only a month ago Lincoln was radiating brotherly charity to all in order to quell the horrible malice that was stirred up by the war. Lincoln's spirit of sensitive democracy could have regenerated the Dream after the nightmare. His sinking star was an omen amidst the darkness: an omen of his death but also an omen of love transcending death. Lincoln's grave lies under the flowing winds; the currents of air are drawn magnetically from both east and west and they mix together in a symbolic unity above the great savior of the Union.

Whitman wishes to project images of life into the stone walls of the tomb; he imaginatively engraves the ever-returning energies of life into cold, hard death. The full ripeness of day bathes the tomb just as it flooded over Whitman on the Brooklyn ferry and in the "Song at Sunset." The catalogue is full of images of light and of life: "pictures of growing spring," "the fresh sweet herbage under foot," "pale green leaves of the trees prolific." Nature is regenerated and budding with fertile new life; the dense cities are bulging with new energetic progress and "all the scenes of life..." (235) The national continent is reunited; it is the "varied and ample land..." The poet looks in amazement at his new vision of life bubbling up through the rivers, spreading over the grassy land, engulfing the crowds of common men and the progressive cities. The poet writes, "Lo, body and soul--this land..." The land is alive with the two equal lovers: the body and soul, the physical and the spiritual elements of brotherhood personified

within Whitman. Cosmic democratic harmony may yet be achieved.

The darkness is no longer darkness since the poet's soul is connected beyond death with the souls of the dead soldiers and Lincoln; the evening is "delicious" with "the welcome night and the stars...enveloping men and land." But the thrush still sings with "uttermost woe." The bird beckons the poet into an intoxicating love of agony, sadness, and mourning. But still the poet is held by the mystery of the haunting breath of life and beam of light: "yet the star holds me,... / Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me." The star has descended into twilight, yet the morning star is ever-returning as are the grass, the lilacs, and the spring. The terror of the night has dissipated. The dawn of "violet and purple morn," the midday's "miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon," and the "coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars"--all times and all the ages of men are seen as one full movement which is toward heavenly death: "In the heavenly aerial beauty..." The "perturb'd winds and the storms" are left far behind on the battlefields and in the hospitals. As life goes on in the teeming nation, Whitman quietly tells his reader "And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death." (236) The terrifying thought of loss and decayed mortality is balanced by the full understanding of transfiguration into higher evolution: death is rebirth, the great paradox.

Death has literally come to life as the mystic trinity of star, flower, and thrush is matched by the mortal trio of the poet, "knowledge of death," and "thought of death...": like the personal Deity, these two companions hold onto the poet; with these two comrades, the poet goes down to the secluded Calamus lagoon to try to finally resolve his confusing thoughts and feel-

ings about life, love, and death. In the shadows of sturdy cedars and "ghostly" pines, the three companions of mortality recline on the grass and hear the thrush sing a "carol of death" for Lincoln. Whitman translates this mysterious carol for all common men to hear:

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.

The words seem to ebb and flow smoothly with the cycles of life and death: "In the day, in the night, to all, to each, / Sooner or later..." The song now becomes a sweeping, stately hymn to the great float of existence, to the great mystic ocean, and especially to its culmination in heavenly 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. (237)

The cycle is now complete: "Loved!" (183), "Death!" (184), "Praise!" (237) The connections between all things in the universe and between mysterious life and death are becoming clear to the poet after the severe test of war and the loss of Lincoln. The poet and all souls are enfolded back into the primeval folds of the cosmic womb. That womb, that night, is no longer the "moody, tearful night" (233) in which the poet's soul choked and had to let the bird sing for him. Night is now flowing over "life and the fields"; night is now "huge and thoughtful." Night is all-enveloping and cosmic; it flows with the emanating thoughts of all those--the dead soldiers and the divine Lincoln--who are beyond death and

who transcend the gulf of heavenly death.

The maternal source, "Dark mother," is "always gliding near...": the cosmic float is always near, ready to dissolve everything into the one democratic mystical body. The thrush begs the fecund maternal source to come and absorb him and Lincoln and the poet:

Approach strong deliveress,
 ...when thou hast taken them I
 joyously sing the dead,
 Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
 Laved in the flood of thy bliss
 O death. (237)

The sounds are lulling as the maternal source and death merge into one personification which the poet lovingly addresses through the song of the thrush. The origin and the end of life are no longer viewed as two ends of a long line but as the connecting points of a circle. As when Whitman contemplated the grass in "Song of Myself" and as when he confronted the waves on the shore in "Out of the Cradle" and "As I Ebb'd," he is once again filled with visions: all his memories of the war's deaths and sufferings flood in on him. But instead of the noise and moans of war, all comes in silence. He sees torn battle flags on their broken staffs which are symbols of the shattered brotherhood. But the soldiers and Lincoln have transcended the war; the poet sees them in a new way: "They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not..." The poet observes the mothers, wives, and friends who are left behind by the dead soldiers and realizes that life is the real dying and suffering. Life is the struggle and death is what is struggled for: death is the enfolding back into the empathic Over-Soul. This experienced understanding is the mysterious something for which Whitman has been searching. What he hoped was true is true: life

is not merely a beginning and death is not merely an end.

The pilgrimage toward the New Promised Land of symbolic India or the New Eden of the Dream can go on now. The poet is "Passing the visions, passing the night..." He lets go of the hands of his two mortal companions, and the "thought" and "knowledge" of death dissolve back into the darkness as Whitman leaves the Calamus lagoon. He has combined the thought and the understanding of mortality with his fuller illumination of immortality and can now be free of his terror and doubt. He moves quickly, filled with new life, new purpose, and new "bursting" joy (238). The joy or interior Eden is now in the poet's soul and it spreads out to everything in empathic currents of love seeking to create the external Eden of the utopian Dream: "Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven..." He ceases his sadness, physically leaves the trio of flower, bird, and star. Yet he carries the seeds of the flower, the song of the bird, and the light of the star with him in his rejuvenated songs: "Yet each to keep and all, retrievments out of the night..." The poet carries the memories of this strange, bittersweet spring in his mind just as he had carried the memories of the mockingbird and all his strolls along the shore and in the sunset. These new mystical memories have created this masterpiece poem after the war and have resolved Whitman in his task to sing the ideal of the Dream in "the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul..." From beyond death, the soul of Lincoln, the "dear father," guides Whitman on down the open road and pilots Whitman's divine ship on toward the mystic ocean (239). The poet believes that he has retrieved his optimism out of the inferno of initiation; he has begun to gain experienced idealism and

apparently can be truly imperturbable for the first time.

After the cold, dark night of war, spring returns; and the flower of regeneration is in the seed, ready to bloom. Lincoln, like the dead young men, has gone beyond the mortal mists into the mystic merging with the Over-Soul: "no more for him life's stormy conflicts..." Lincoln saw the "foulest crime in history...": he saw the physical bondage of slaves, the desecration of divine bodies, and the spiritual bondage of those who perpetuated slavery, the desecration of divine souls; he saw the corruption of the Old World and of the false Dream, and through his life and death "the Union of these States" was saved (240). Lincoln is dead but his shrouded seed of brotherhood will help to harvest the future of the utopian American Dream. This is the climactic thought of the war experiences. The poet has gone through a devastating inferno and has been purged of his fears about the Dream through his brooding upon the soldiers, Lincoln, and what is beyond death. The evolution toward the ideal society of the Dream can go on as the cosmic vision of universal brotherhood returns to the poet's weary mind.

In "Chanting the Square Deific" the poet sums up the philosophy and theology which have come out of these war experiences and which underlie the entire epic. The democratic Deity exists in all men and is the vitalizing power of the amative brotherhood which Whitman hopes will appear after the war. This loving Creator includes the strict justice of the Puritan God who says "Relentless I forgive no man--whoever sins dies"; the mercy and love of the universal Christ who is always ready with "the kiss of affection" and whose "charity has no death"; the depravity of man which is the absence (a sort of negative presence) of God and which

is embodied in the "Defiant, I, Satan" who proclaims that he is "warlike, equal with any"; and the harmonizing Life Force. This last element in the mystical body of the Square Deific is the Over-Soul which unites all the rest; it is "Santa Spirita" which includes "all life on earth, touching, including God, including saviour and Satan, / Ethereal, pervading all..." This cosmic power of concord is the "Essence" or the "life of the real identities, permanent, positive..." It is the "Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the general soul..." (331) The cosmic spirit which incorporates all creation is the true identity within each creature. This idea is what Whitman has been trying to express throughout the war poems: the cosmic spirit is the only remedy for war and hatred. When this cosmic identity is recognized, the true Dream can come into existence: life becomes purposeful; the interior Eden of human dignity and unity of body and soul is established; the interior Eden is projected outward to create the harmonious brotherhood and divine equality of the external Eden; and death is viewed not as a trap or termination but as a transfiguration of mortal man into the cosmic concord of immortality. This universal "Santa Spirita" is the basis of Whitman's five themes and of the utopian American Dream. This is the ultimate unification of the cosmos in Whitman's poetry. The breathing sounds of "Deific" and "Santa Spirita" express the continuing exhalations of God into the evolving generation of men, and also the sighs of relief as Whitman seems to approach the end of his pilgrimage.

With the strength gained in the experiences described in "The Wound Dresser" and "Lilacs," and with the philosophical reso-

lution expressed in "Chanting the Square Deific," the poet can now attempt to go on to complete his metaphysical pilgrimage toward symbolic India, the utopia of the Dream.

Chapter 3

Whitman After the War:
The Experienced Idealist

In his ponderings about life and America, Whitman focused on three related topics: the origin, the nature, and the future of man. Thus far he has expressed himself extensively on the first two points; the third is involved in the remaining works of his epic. He has received and developed his poetic illuminations about man and the utopia of the Dream; now he must try to understand his idealistic insights about the future more clearly in relation to the realities which he witnesses after the war so that he can express what he called "the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth..." ("Song of Myself," 28) This awareness of the reality in contrast to the ideal of America is expressed as Whitman presents one more great lesson after the war: the lesson that future American progress must be much more than the mere physical and economic growth evident in the Gilded Age, that it must be complemented and even exceeded by the future social and spiritual evolution of amative democracy in order to prevent the decay of the true Dream. This lesson is an attempt to resolve the great spiritual conflict which still remained in America after the cessation of the Civil War.

After having gone through the terrible experiences of the war and all of its deaths, Whitman gradually began to reattain his sense of optimistic belief in the true Dream. But this was no longer the glib and naive optimism which he had expressed in his early poems, stories, and, to a certain extent, in his poetry of the prewar decade. It was a mature, experienced idealism. In the light of the bloody war's fire test the poet observed America and hoped that the utopian brotherhood would begin to appear. However, with the loss of Lincoln's magnanimous sense of charity

and religious belief in the union, the nation's wounds were not quickly healed. The great physical testing of the union had been passed, but now the nation entered a period of laxity and outright corruption which is usually referred to as Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. The poet watched while the physical turmoil was succeeded by a spiritual turmoil as the true Dream was threatened with the blatant social perversions caused by the false Dream's greed and materialistic opportunism. The poet had to face this further testing of the Dream with all the strength which he had gained in the war poems and especially in "Lilacs." By undauntingly confronting the false Dream with his developing experienced idealism he could attempt to illuminate the corrupt society with the ideal of the true Dream. This attempt can be found in the major prose and poetry which appeared after the war cluster.¹

The major prose of the postwar period is Democratic Vistas which presents Whitman's thoughts concerning the false Dream of the Gilded Age. The salient poems of the postwar development include "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," "The Base of All Metaphysics," "Song of the Red-Wood Tree," "Tears," "Hast Never Come to Thee an Hour," and "As Consequent," poems that express the painful brooding on the Gilded Age which forms an overture to the final poetic illumination; "Proud Music of the Storms," "Passage to India," and "Prayer of Columbus" which present the concluding and ultimate insight of the epic; and "Whis-

¹The poems are mainly those of the 1872, 1876, and 1881 editions of Leaves of Grass. Since Whitman placed them in a special order in the "death bed" edition of 1891-92, most of the poems will be examined according to that final arrangement.

pers of Heavenly Death" and "A Noiseless Patient Spider" which sum up the ideas of the poetry.

I. Brooding: the Old Ideals vs. the False Dream

In an attempt to counter the decay of the Reconstruction Era and the Gilded Age, Whitman vigorously calls America back to her old ideals of human dignity and universal brotherhood; he does this in order that the common people of America may have a chance to attain the New Eden or India of divinized democracy. In Democratic Vistas (1871) the poet recognizes that America is at her social and spiritual crossroads and he writes that she is "destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time." This statement alone indicates that the poet is not the completely naive optimist that he is often made out to be; the evolution of America parallels the evolution of his own realism and wisdom as he develops his experienced idealism. As he observes postwar America, he broods on the unsavory thought that he might die without seeing America regenerate her noble ideals and move on to the destiny of New Eden. The deaths of his mother and sister, and his own stroke intensified his anxiety about the moribund society of the Gilded Age. He therefore thought that he could not emphasize too strongly that amative democracy must draw out and develop that something in man which he and Christ sought to reach: that essence which is "so transcendent" that it places "all beings on a common level..." This cosmic democracy alone can bind all men and nations "into a brotherhood, a family." In "Notes Left Over" (1883) Whitman described the desire of free common men for the harmonious New Eden as being vigor-

ously strong: "unspeakably great...is the will! the Free Soul of man!"² The poet believed that this fulfillment of the common man must take place in America because she is the "last resource and general house of all..." She is the universal "mother of strangers and exiles, all nations..."³

Whitman knew the false mask of hollow, grossly materialistic society, as he noted when he wrote

Through the windows of two or three
of the richest carriages [in New
York City] I saw faces almost
corpse-like, as ashy and listless...
[They] are ill at ease, much too
conscious, cased in too many
cerements, and far from happy...⁴

This and other observations of the effects of the false Dream led him to write

...never was there, perhaps, more
hollowness at heart than at present,
and here in the United States....
The underlying principles of the
States are not believed in...nor is
humanity itself believed in.

It is obvious from these strongly worded statements that Whitman recognized that materialism and uncontrolled progress were impeding the development of the social ideals of America. He asked, "Is there a great moral and religious civilization? the only justifica-

²Whitman, Collect and Other Prose, Vol. II of Prose Works, 1892, edited by Floyd Stovall in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 363, 380 f., 538.

³Whitman, Specimen Days, Vol. I of Prose Works, 1892, edited by Floyd Stovall in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman (New York: University Press, 1963). P. 93.

⁴Ibid., p. 199.

tion of a great material one."⁵ He was intensely aware of the social dangers which were being fostered as well as hidden by the economic boom; he knew that political and economic progress was worthless if it was not paralleled by social progress.

In Democratic Vistas he was warning against the "civilizee" (480): the man who imitates all the degenerative outworn conventions of the Old World. The New World could give man a second chance in Eden if man would only realize the possibility of his regeneration; the New World could become the New Eden, Whitman believed, if only he could call man's attention to America's spiritual implications which transcended her material prosperity. This seems to be the overriding purpose which motivated him to write the poetry which completed the epic.

After the war the poet added a number of "Inscriptions" in which all of his themes concerning the Dream are intermixed and blended into a meandering preface to the epic. The culmination of America's evolution, of the poet's identity, and of all his concepts about the American Dream is "The Modern Man." This is the common-man hero of the epic who was described in the 1867 poem, "One's-Self I Sing" (5), which Whitman eventually chose to open Leaves of Grass. This hero is the promethean man who becomes capable of creating the New World Eden of regeneration by living according to new, cosmic laws, not following the decayed Old World conventions which nurtured the war. This childlike New World man must be imperturbable and in harmony with mankind, with Nature, and with God.

⁵Collect and Other Prose, pp. 369, 371.

Whitman evidently believed that the attaining of the amative democracy of the Dream could prepare the modern man for the cosmic brotherhood beyond death. This is the mystique of man's attempt to gain the future New Eden of earthly unity and cosmic concord; this is the old ideal to which Whitman wants to call America's wandering attention. In the 1872 poem "To Thee Old Cause" Whitman refers to America's evolutionary drive as the "old cause" which has been "Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands..." (7) This idea of mankind's continued evolving toward the future Eden pervades the epic. Perhaps the most mystical and poetic expression of this is the image of a "divine ship" which sails through the "divine sea" of life, never ceasing to seek its final Edenic and transcendental shore beyond the "mystic ocean"; the concept appears in "Eidólons," "A Song of the Rolling Earth," "As Consequent," "Sail Out for Good, Eidólon Yacht," "One Thought Ever at the Fore," and "Two Rivulets." The entire cosmos is viewed by Whitman as a vast fleet of common souls sailing through the "float" of existence toward their destined utopia. When each individual and the en masse of common men realize their own true identities and the true identity of their democracy, they will all recognize their true purpose in life. Then the utopian Dream of the ideal empathic democracy can be established; then the vast fleet of souls can move on to India, symbolic of the New Eden of the true Dream. And when all life becomes purposeful in the evolution of the democratic brotherhood, then death becomes meaningful since it is seen as the ultimate empathic merging with all and God in all.

"The Base of All Metaphysics," an 1872 Calamus addition, is merely one of the later poems in which Whitman expresses the

spirit of equalizing divine love that is the basis of all purposeful life and of the true utopia. In his prophetic or gospel style, he writes that he is giving the "word" which he wishes will "remain in your memories and minds." He is proclaiming the one thing really needed after the war and during Reconstruction and the the Gilded Age: this one thing is empathic love which is both "base and finalè," both foundation and goal, of man's utopian search for life's meaning; this overpowering sense of love is the summarizing concept of the old poet-prophet's "crowded course" of life. As representative man he has inquired into all history, philosophy, and thought in order to learn the essential ideal and purpose of human life: he has searched the "new and antique," the authoritarian logic of contemporary "Germanic systems" as well as the graceful hedonism of ancient Greek democracy. He says that beneath the culminating ideas of Socrates and Christ he can "clearly see" the "divine"; this ultimate sacrament and goal of existence is stated concretely and concisely in the following simple lesson:

The dear love of man for his comrade, the
 attention of friend to friend,
 Of the well-married husband and wife, of
 children and parents,
 Of city for city and land for land. (89)

This is the basic tenet which underlies everything Whitman has tried to express in his many stories, essays, and poems: unifying and divinizing empathy is the one truth and purpose beyond all the illusions and corruptions evident in disheartened society. This empathic, vigorous love of amative democracy is the only true ideal to which America and the common people can turn during the Gilded Age.

It is revealing to relate this summation at the "close of his

crowded course" to what Whitman implies about man's outlook on life in "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (added to the text in 1867). He finds that the various "proofs...figures...charts and diagrams" of the astronomer's formal learning are not very convincing concerning the mystery of creation. He listens to the great applause of worldly glory which is given to the astronomer and finds it "unaccountable" and meaningless as he becomes "tired and sick." He is induced into worldly weariness and pessimism by the many doubts which are raised by man's limited knowledge. But then, "rising and gliding" as if supernaturally drawn out of the stifling lecture hall, he wanders into the "mystical moist night air" to be "by myself." He is rejecting the mundane mortal viewpoint and is trying once again to delve into the "kosmos" of the Self to find the true essence of existence; he is throwing off the illusions and worries of worldly knowledge in order to gain mystical understanding and serenity. Instead of listening to the erroneous theories and distracting voices of theoreticians, he goes out to look "in perfect silence at the stars." (196) The meaning of this little vignette seems to be that the ultimate truth or essence of life must be gained by returning to the natural ideal: man must not be fooled by abstractions and twisted philosophies; to counteract the confusing and divisive effects of war, Reconstruction, and the Gilded Age, man must reestablish his vital connections with Nature, fellow man, and Creator. Love is the ennobling emotion which is the foundation and ultimate goal of these cosmic connections simply because love stimulates the divinity within mankind. Whitman believes that the nurturing of this powerful emotion will bring about the ideal democracy and will culminate all philosophy and theology since it is based on the "dear love of man for his

comrade..." Democracy is built on the unitive "attraction of friend to friend..." ("The Base of All Metaphysics," 89). This is the love which Whitman has come to recognize as the key to the understanding of Self and of all that is not the Self because it is the only element common to all of divine creation; Whitman foresaw this love in "Song of Myself" as the "kelson" (28) or unifying foundation of not only the earthly democracy but also the immortal brotherhood of all creation.

In "Song of the Redwood-Tree" (1876) Whitman reinforces these thoughts by reminding the common people of America about their natural ideal and grand destiny; he proclaims that their westward evolution is toward the New Promised Land. With his usual directness, the poet tells each reader that this magnificent evolution is toward "the new culminating man, to you..." The seeds of cosmic democracy are within the soul of each man; the poet believes that these divine seeds of equality are "vital, universal, deathless germs..." (152) which cannot be stamped out by greed, tyranny, or war. In America, the New Adam is evolving:

Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic, grow,
 here tower proportionate to Nature,
 Here climb...unconfined, uncheck'd...

...
 At last the New arriving, assuming, taking
 possession... (153)

The words are energetic as they express the poet's sense of the power of the utopia. America is the "heir of the past so grand" and is building "a grander future." (154)

Several poems reflect Whitman's mood as he observed the Gilded Age and contrasted it against the glorious idea of the New Adam in the New Promised Land; these poems include "Tears," "To the Man-of-War-Bird," "Quicksand Years," "Ah Poverties, Wincings, and

sulky Retreats," "O Star of France," and "Spain." The poems express Whitman's thoughts concerning the struggle for the utopia in America and abroad: he meditates about America's national attrition and decay, the international state of affairs concerning the rights of man, and the possibility of mankind's attaining the ideal democracy.

As he observed the approaching storm of war in the 1860 poem "As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life," Whitman wondered if life was random and meaningless or if there was some essential purpose to existence. In a mood of depression he said that after all his self-searching "the real Me stands yet...altogether unreach'd" and that he had "not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that no man ever can..." (185) Now, after the war, he contemplates the national situation and perceives another storm, the spiritual conflict of the Gilded Age. In "Tears" (the 1867 poem which follows "As I Ebb'd" in the final arrangement) he weeps for America's plight. He feels the misery of the world lost in darkness with "not a star shining, all dark and desolate." This image recalls "On the Beach at Night" (1856) and "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" (1860-61) in which the poet watched the war clouds blotting out the stars of America's destiny. He sees himself as lying on the shore as he had often done before; but now he seems to be a "shapeless lump" who is "choked with wild cries." The "night storm" is "wild and dismal" and the calm and fresh sea breezes of earlier poems have now become the "belching and desperate" wind of the tempest.

He then ponders the strength needed to go through the storm in the next poem in the sequence of the final edition, "To the Man-of-War-Bird" (1881). The poet observes that the bird has woken

up "renew'd" after sleeping all night through the storm; the bird ascends powerfully above the storm and has "rested on the sky." Though the bird, like the poet, appears to be merely a "speck...on the world's floating vast," it has the power of Nature "to match the gale." Thus the poet realizes that he must have the strength and faith never to give up and to move "untired and onward" toward the ideal of America's destiny (187).

In Democratic Vistas he admitted that he had nearly given up hope in prewar America; he wrote "Once, before the war (alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was fill'd with doubt and gloom." He realized that America was, in the words of a foreigner to which he spoke, "honey-comb'd from top to toe with infidelism..." (472) In the 1867 poem "O Me! O Life," his prewar doubts are reiterated and he still wonders if there is any purpose for the Self and for life in America; he is still plagued by the old "question of these recurring" doubts amid the "endless trains of the faithless" and the "cities fill'd with the foolish" which he sees around him. He is filled with cynicism and rejects both his Self and the life around him since the Gilded Age appears to be an overpowering mass of "objects mean...poor results...plodding and sordid crowds..." In desperation he asks "What good amid these, O me, O life?" There is an abrupt pause in the dirge-like mood of despair as the poet receives an indirect but hopeful answer to his haunting questions:

That you are here--that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may
contribute a verse.

He realizes that life exists so that man can work toward fuller identity and destiny. He understands that he must forge ahead des-

pite his gloom to seek the light amid the Gilded Age of "empty and useless years." (197)

Whitman repeated his meditations on the tension between despair and hope in several other poems. "Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours" is a prewar (1860) poem which Whitman later chose to succeed the joyful illuminations found in "Passage to India" and "Chanting the Square Deific." This placement may indicate that he never really ceased wondering about the outcome of the battle between the false Dream and the true Dream since his life was so full of the traumas of war and corruption. In the poem he reveals that his nagging doubts and fears about the utopia hang upon him like "Weights of lead" which "clog and cling" (311), impeding the progress of his Self and his nation toward New Eden. The whole world appears to be transformed by his anxiety into a "chamber of mourning" as he is tormented by "Despairing cries":

Matter is conqueror--matter, triumphant
only, continues onward.

He fears that all spiritual knowledge is being destroyed by materialism, ambition, and greed, the old forces of division which are perverting the true Dream of America. He wonders whether creation is evolving or devolving and asks Nature to "tell me where I am speeding, tell me my destination." He is trying to find out in what direction his Self, his nation, and mankind are moving. He hears the voice of humanity asking "Shall I not escape?" (132) The mood seems genuinely anguished.

In the final edition, this note of gloom is succeeded by the optimism of the 1856 poem, "Assurance." However that poem is in turn followed by the 1867 "Quicksand Years" which again returns the tone to one of trepidation. He feels whirled about and does

not know where he is going. He is sickened by the national atrocity of the Gilded Age and complains that "schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances mock and elude me..." He finds that his Self is the only certainty amid the confusion and declaims that "One's-self must never give way--that is the final substance..." (313) He indicates that all false appearances and illusions are nothing if he can retain the integrity and dignity of his soul or Self. He reinforces his idea in the 1867 work, "Ah Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky Retreats." He realizes that his doubts about the utopia are like "foes that in conflict have overcome me..." He says that mortal life is an "incessant war" between hopeful ideals and despairing fears. If man has not attained the internal Eden of his own soul then the external world appears to be filled with "degradations," "Smarts from dissatisfied friendship," "meanesses," "shallow tongue-talks," "broken resolutions," "racking angers," and "smother'd ennuis!" (332 f.) The words themselves seem to imitate the harsh sounds which the poet has heard around him since the dark days just before the war began. But the poet has experienced these things several times already: he is becoming experienced and yet is still able to retain some form of his early idealism. He is no longer fooled by the fearful shows of more experience and he begins to find assurance in the fact that America and her poet are not laid low by mortal corruptions.

The true amative democracy of the Dream is still evolving, and America's unsullied soul "has yet to come forth" through experience after experience; that soul or sense of cosmic unity with all creation for which Whitman has been searching throughout the poetry is his own "real self," the ever evolving "kosmos" which "shall yet

stand up the soldier of ultimate victory" (333). The post-prophet believes that the common people will yet attain the cosmic brotherhood of the true Dream which he has been preaching and analyzing; thus the optimism of "Mediums" (an 1860 poem which follows "Ah Poverties" in the final edition) is reaffirmed with a sense of experienced idealism: the people of the true Dream "shall illustrate Democracy and the kosmos..." (333) They will attain the earthly democracy and the cosmic brotherhood, both of which are the result of the "divine average..." ("Starting from Paumanok," 19 ; "As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days," 337). Evidently he has reestablished his belief in the strength of the people to go on toward their ultimate destiny.

The poems discussed thus far in this section deal with the national situation; three other poems reveal Whitman's views of the continual struggle for democratic dignity and fulfillment on an international scale. "Old Ireland" (1867) describes an old woman who can perhaps be taken as representing the common poor people of the world; she is "full of sorrow," despairing at the perversion of mankind's human dignity, and her sorrow is all the more intense because she is so "full of love" for fallen humanity. But the poet interjects "Yet a word"; characteristically he prophesies his word or gospel just as he did in "The Base of All Metaphysics." He tells the woman that humanity is not dead, that dignity is not perverted; and in order to emphasize his point he uses the biblical expression, "The Lord is not dead, he is risen..." Since this poem follows "There Was a Child Went Forth" in the final arrangement, the risen Lord and the empathic child of innocence may be taken as one in the same: the spirit of human brotherhood is resurrected as a young child in order to counteract

tyranny and depravity all over the world. This is the same child who long ago asked "What is the grass?" ("Song of Myself," 28); the child has now become the experienced idealist after his long and extremely involved attempts to answer that ancient question about the meaning of existence. The reborn child "is risen again young and strong in another country...with rosy and new blood..."

(259) Therefore, the young child represents not only the regenerated idealism of the poet but also the evolving utopia of America; Whitman's idealized nation is the new hope of human dignity and destiny despite all of the corruptions evident during the postwar era. In America can be realized the spirit of cosmic harmony and divine unity, the ideal social condition which Whitman has taken so many pains to prophecy and analyze.

"O Star of France (1870-71)" is an 1876 addition in which the poet contemplates the possibility of the future realization of such cosmic democracy. The star of France is compared to a ship in a storm; thus the familiar images of the blotted out stars of destiny and the divine ship on its long journey are repeated. In the endangered democracy of France, the common people appear to be "teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds" and destiny is but a "Dim smitten star..." But once again the poet sees beyond the present confusion and boldly states that that star of destiny is a symbol of the "dearest hopes" of his own soul. He senses the "rage divine" which all mankind feels for liberty and dignity. This drive for human fulfillment is a "terror to the tyrant and the priest," the representatives of all outworn absolutism and corrupt authority. Whitman explains that all the setbacks and decays of democracy are merely "woes and pangs" which are something like birth pains; once democ-

racy has experienced the catharsis of rebirth, human society will be "sacred." Like the "Man-of-War-Bird," France will beat back the gale to fulfill the "rage divine for liberty." Democracy will not sell her ideals "however great the price" to a Gilded Age corruption. Whitman culminates these energetic thoughts by saying that the ship of democracy continues to sail on as France drives further toward destiny; the struggle of any one man or nation effects the evolution or devolution of all creation, and the poet vigorously proclaims,

Bear up O smitten orb! O ship continue on!
Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself... (279)

In another 1876 addition, "Spain, 1873-74," Whitman enforces this idea of democracy becoming regenerated when he declares that out of decadence and tyranny, freedom still struggles onward. He observes the "feudal wrecks...heap'd-up skeletons of kings...that old entire European debris...crumbled palaces, tombs of priests..." Despite the ghosts of all these ancient dictatorships, Whitman sees the face of Freedom as it looks "fresh undimm'd" over the whole world. The old order is dead in Spain and the new order has been born; in this fact, Whitman says that he finds "sure proof" that utopian democracy is a strong enough drive within humanity that it will eventually surround the globe (334).

These poems give evidence that Whitman is rising above his dejection as he rejects all anxieties due to the foulness of Gilded Age corruptions. "Nay, Tell Me Not To-Day the Publish'd Shame," a posthumous addition to the text which was composed in 1873, seems to sum up Whitman's attitude after he had overcome his postwar disillusionment. He definitively states that he no longer wants to hear or read about the "publish'd shame" in the "guilty

column" of the "journal's crowded page"; he is not ignoring reality, but rather is seeking a deeper reality than the various petty scandals and foolish gossip stories of decadent society. He wishes to turn from these moribund fallacies of an atrophied civilization toward the essential truth or meaning of natural life; thus he rejects the sights of ephemeral luxury which are so evident during an economic boom, and desires rather to contemplate the "vital visions" of healthy existence. These visions are of "quiet ways, ... honest farms, [and a] million untold manly healthy lives..." These are the "never-ceasing virtues" which, unlike the much-publicized rumors and shames, are "Unpublish'd, unreported." (387) Whitman therefore desires to reveal the healthy goodness which exists unnoticed behind the social decay; he wants to point the way back to the old but still vigorous ideal of democratic dignity and unity which can bring about the future New Eden of the true Dream.

As was noted previously, Whitman admitted in Democratic Vistas that he had been filled with "doubt and gloom" concerning the possibility of realizing the democratic utopia. He had pondered the numerous faults of postwar America and had admitted them to be "Sad, serious, deep truths." But he can now proclaim emphatically that there are "other, still deeper, amply confronting, dominating truths." In his typical direct and concrete form, he states these ultimate truths:

Over these politicians and great and little rings, and over all their insolence and wiles, and over the powerfulest parties, looms a power, too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decisions and decrees in hand, ready, with stern process, to execute them as soon as plainly needed--and at times, indeed, summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of their pride....The average man of a land at last only is important. He, in these States, remains immortal owner and boss...at the idea of this mass of men, so

fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a
singular awe falls upon me...(473 f.)

The average man and the mass of common people are the "divine average" and the power of the true utopia. It is the common people who must attain the empathic democracy which is based on their common brotherhood and their equal dignity and divinity; they must do this in order to realize the cosmic harmony of the New Eden.

This concept is the one essential truth which Whitman has continually been trying to prove and to teach throughout his epic analysis of life and America. By successfully coming through his agonizing state of disillusionment he has been able to transcend the national and international attrition of ideals and has seen through the illusion of the cynical false Dream. In 1861, the poet added "Hast Never Come to Thee an Hour" just before the war cluster. By asking a series of rhetorical questions, he indicates that he has received an insight of a "sudden gleam divine" which "is bursting all the bubbles" of the false Dream (200). He perhaps is suggesting that he may be coming to a mystical imperturbability as he surmounts both the horrors of the war and the perversions of the postwar period. He evidently has moved toward the fuller illumination and serenity which he describes in Passage to India.

Throughout his contemplation about life in America he has emphasized the fact that the strength of democracy is decayed by slavery, caste, and greedy opportunism because these false Dream motivations divide one divine brother from another. This kind of perversion of society is what had finally brought the violent reaction of the American and French Revolutions which Whitman described vividly and earnestly in 1880:

...the long precedent crushing of
the masses of a heroic people into
the earth...--every right de-

nied...--Yet Nature's force, titanic here, the stronger and hardier for that repression--waiting terrible to break forth revengeful--... and the bursting at last.⁶

In the Civil War and in the Gilded Age the modern man was in like manner being crushed down by the weight of both the physical and spiritual slavery which could destroy the utopian democracy. Whitman believed that it was the mission of "true poets" to look back to man's old but essential ideals and to demand a remedy for man's social and spiritual ills; as he put it, the true poet must try to bring man back from his "persistent straying and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine..."⁷ The poet felt he must make man recognize the "divine average" caused by the presence of Deity in all men; therefore the democratic poet must act as the guide and guardian of the common masses. As visionary of man's future democratic evolution, Whitman wrote emphatically that on every page of his works could be inscribed the personal salute of amative welcome: "GOODWILL BETWEEN THE COMMON PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS."⁸

The brotherhood of common men is the unifying power of the world which destroys the Old World law of proud and ambitious tyranny; that love which draws humanity together and which is as universal and as common as the grass must become the new law of the future democracy. The poet therefore presents his unconventional epic as a proclamation of the future to the world: in the preface

⁶ Specimen Days, p. 268.

⁷ Ibid., p. 292.

⁸ Collect and Other Prose, p. 598.

of the 1876 edition he wrote that his purpose was to lead "still-to-be-form'd America" away from the "stifling antidemocratic authorities" of the Old World. His great motive was to "make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last." (436 f.) His words express his intense sense of messianic or promethean mission in the face of the false Dream perversions. The caste systems of slavery, bigotry, and greedy opportunism which separate the brothers of cosmic democracy are all dissolved in the poet's mind into "utter nothingness" ("Hast Never Come," 200) by the vision of the future Eden.

"Autumn Rivulets" is a postwar grouping of pre- and postwar poems in which the poet applies his evolving optimism to life during the Gilded Age so that he can counteract the cynicism of the greedy false Dream. The abused earth of war has begun to heal as has the poet's spirit. The harvest of new life and of the new experienced idealism seems to pour forth from the poet who wants to inspire his nation with his ideal. In "As Consequent" the poet appears to be staring directly in the reader's eyes in order to make him an organic part of the complex evolution which has been observed thus far:

In you who'er you are my book perusing,
 In I myself, in all the world, these
 currents flowing
 All, all toward the mystic ocean tending.

The universe is seen in one vast connecting vision of the sea, including everything from the chaotic "abyssmic waves" up to the calm shore of mystical India. The poet imaginatively absorbs all things and moves them on toward the mystical merging with Deity: "collecting vasting all, I bring..." There is no pause between "collecting" and "vasting": the poet thus sees himself as holding and crush-

ing, receiving and purifying; in one act the other is performed, in birth is death, in death is rebirth, in autumn is spring. Once again Whitman presents himself as walking along the shore. He finds sea shells and hears the sounds of all creation in them. He hears the "whisper'd reverberations" of "eternity's music..." (253) These whisperings or insights have been heard throughout the epic, yet they are always new and elemental. Each time they bring a little more understanding of the mystery of the heavenly death. Whitman hopes that the harvested resurrection of New Eden is about to occur, and the Indian shore, symbolic of cosmic reunion and Edenic concord, seems at last to be just a short distance away.

In Autumn, in the midst of a cankered society, the aging and ill poet looks back to Spring and sees the "lilac-time" of Lincoln's death which he describes in a "Warble for Lilac-Time." (268) That sorrow of the war and of the loss of Lincoln is now being transmuted into joy in the knowledge that life and death are more purposeful than anyone ever thought them to be: they are connecting movements in man's great passage from the mortal world of division and confusion into the immortal concord of divine brotherhood. Whitman drives home his lesson that man must come "Out from Behind this Mask" of gilded corruption and torpor; man must wake up to his true destiny, and, in opening his eyes, see the whole cosmos in harmony. Then is the interior Eden found; the exterior Eden follows naturally. The pilgrim-poet insistently calls man to "travel travel on." (270) In the final arrangement, Whitman placed these post-war "Autumn Rivulets" before the 1860 poem "I Was Looking A Long While"; apparently the sturdy but untested optimism of that prewar poem has been justified: Whitman has found the "clue" of all evolution; he has found the meaning of life in the purpose and digni-

ried equality of all men caused by the divinity within them. Democracy evolves this divinity within man and sends it into its fullest destiny: "It is in Democracy--(the purport and aim of all the past,)... " (273) Even during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, the poet's experienced idealism remains vigorous in his progressing rebirth of faith in America's potential.

At last the long awaited serenity of Eden begins to come in a final, full illumination as the poet pictures himself coming through the mortal mist toward the new day. He attains the "dazzling sun" of Liberty of which he saw glimpses in "Low, Victress on the Peaks" during the war (230). Now he is "Wandering at Morn" out of the "evil times" of the "craft and black dismay,...every meanness, treason" which have infiltrated America (281). Whitman at last begins to see the mystical India which is symbolic of the New Eden that he has desired for so long. In "The Prairie States" he sees the "newer garden of Creation..." This is the "crown and teeming paradise" of man's long evolution (282). This is man's second and final chance in Eden. The tone is one of expectant culmination.

II. Eden and the Cosmic Vision

"Proud Music of the Storm" prepares for the final illumination after Whitman's long poetic pilgrimage. The "Storm" no longer represents the war which was the blind destroyer consisting of wind, waves, and night; the storm now symbolizes the strong Life Force within man's divine soul which drives his Self outward to seek the kindred divinity in all creation. Man's inner power seeks to blend in harmony with "Nature's rhythmus...": the interi-

of Eden seeks to expand itself in an attitude of universal empathy in order to create the harmonious external Eden. By means of this democratic expansion, man can regain his long lost brotherhood which involves the harmony of soul with body, and of man with fellow man, with Nature, and with God.

The lines sweep along in a "festival song" which is a paradoxical blend of joys and agonies, those old conflicting moods of existence which have played upon the poet's mind since he heard the mockingbird (283). The poet seems to hear the harmonious music of the spheres as if in a dream; this is the "new composite orchestra" of united creation as it returns to the "Paradise" after the "separation long"; now man is "with Nature fused again." All songs of all lands come to Whitman in his dream and blend in union (284). The harmony is real when the poet wakes to his ultimate insight, and he calls the reader to go with him "refresh'd...Nourished henceforth by our celestial dream." Whitman's poems are now being unified into one long biographical song "bridging the way from Life to Death..." (287) At last he feels certain that death is a passage for himself and all men into cosmic concord, into the brotherhood in the New Eden of the utopian Dream.

Whitman's presentation of evolution involves going back to the primal origin of man, of religion, and of all thought. In the "Passage to India" he finally focuses all his beliefs, concepts, and themes into one culminating pilgrimage to the origin of humanity in the original Eden. The past and present currents of existence are observed as they flow on into the future; all manner of things become resolved and purposeful in this ultimate vision of the passage toward destiny. The doubts about evolution and the

fears of devolution are dissolved in this final regeneration of Whitman's belief in man. The enthusiastic poet emphatically sings that he is

...first to sound, and ever sound,
 the cry with thee O soul,
 The Past! the Past! the Past!
 The Past--the dark unfathom'd retrospect!
 The teeming gulf--the sleepers and the
 shadows!

The tone is vigorous as the mystical vision of deific evolution is expressed:

Passage O soul to India!
 ...
 Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose
 from the first?

Whitman has been wondering about the purpose of the Creator in all the teeming life and history which he has empathically observed for so long. Again the reader is forced to contemplate the destiny of creation. Whitman's offhanded question "seest thou not God's purpose from the first?" implies that the goal has been there all along though man has not yet had the expanded vision to see it. Whitman indicates that God's purpose is that the earth is to be "spann'd, connected by network," that all races, nations, and peoples are "to be welded together." This reunion of all kindred creation is the ideal of the true Edenic Dream.

Whitman has pondered the meaning of life on the grass; he has heard the bird's mocking song of lost life and love; he himself has felt the loss of love during and after the war. Now at last he finally seems completely ready to fully expand his developing Self out to touch the mysterious something behind existence which can give both life and death a total organic meaning in a universal divine love. The empathizing identity-seeking soul is at last reach-

ing that distant shore or horizon toward which it began to search ever since it was initiated to the mysteries of life, love, and death. "Passage to India" is presented as the climactic aria, the completely optimistic song of what a wonderful being the common man is when he is connected in the cosmic democracy with all creation and with God in all creation.

The ideas which came as the poet was crossing on Brooklyn ferry are now expanded to cover not just a river but the "eternal float" of all oceans and to bridge the vast gulfs of time and space. The Old and New Worlds and the past and present are unified in the cosmic vision of divine democracy. The poet sees not merely the present, for the present is an illusion created by the blinder of time. All times are observed as one ever-present act of Deity in which mankind is being led out of the darkness of alienation and division into the enlightened brotherhood of the New Eden. The "dark unfathom'd retrospect" (288) of the "fathomless universe" ("Lilacs," 237) is now to be fathomed in the climactic illumination. Man has been lost in the torpor which the poet described in "The Sleepers." Even though the sleepers are not yet completely conscious of the part they play in evolution, they are preparing for the future. In order to enlighten the sleepers, the poet asks his question about life and answers it in the same breath: "For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?" The child's question about life is answered: life is one never beginning, never ending action of divine evolution given from one generation to another. This dynamic concept of the great upward progression of existence is expressed in kenetic imagery:

As a projectile form'd, impell'd,
passing a certain line, still

keeps on,
 So the present, utterly form'd,
 impell'd by the past.

Man's progress is drawing all lands and seas into one united earth; the spiritual purpose behind material progress is becoming more apparent.

All knowledge seems to become enlightened and unified in the poet's illumination of the future. At last the poet is able to clearly express his earlier intuitions to himself and to his reader. Every bit of knowledge is included in the vision of the united past, present, and future. The "proud truths" of the modern world of science and industry blend in illuminated harmony with "myths and fables of old..." Whitman, as prophetic poet, seems to be forming every thought of mankind concerning God, life, love, death, and rebirth into one mystical understanding of the "far-darting beams of the spirit..." These beams are the transcendental intuitions of the inner light which exists in all mankind and which dissolves all separations and dualities. The beams are the "unloos'd dreams" of man's spirit as he is elevated above mortal limitations into that cosmic awareness which inspired the ancient "deep diving bibles and legends..." The stifling conventions of decayed civilization are lifted like a veil from sleeping man's eyes so that he can be newly inspired by those ancient insights. The connections between all things which were broken when man lost his vision of and interest in the Over-Soul are now fused in the poet's understanding. Each thought which enlightens the poet's mind builds on the one before it and helps him, as representative evolutionary man, to reach farther toward the intensely personal Deity who has stood near yet invisible throughout the

pilgrimage. Each thought is "eluding the hold of the known" mortal world and is "mounting to heaven." (288) Mortal man transcends himself in his dreams of immortal realities. These ennobling dreams are the key to man's progress which in turn is the key to evolution. But material progress, as great as it is, is not mere material progress; it is infused with the spirit of God which impels man's further spiritual progress: "not for trade or transportation only, / But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul."

Whitman metaphorically moves around the world and sings his culminating litanies in the aware voice of the Over-Soul: "I see... I mark...I pass...I see...I hear...I cross...I see...I scan...I see..." He recognizes that all the things which he observes in his evolving awareness are different; yet he knows that they are "all thine, O soul, the same..." (289) He is describing the intricate balance between the many and the one, between the microcosms and the macrocosm; this is the balance necessary for the ideal melting pot democracy. Whitman presents himself as the representative man who imaginatively absorbs the whole world into his mind in order to divinize it in the illumination of all these balancing connections which formerly appeared to be confusing divisions. With his divinized awareness of the balanced cosmos, Whitman believes that the achievements of material progress are symbolic of the unconquered soul of man who is "surmounting every barrier." The open road toward the utopia of the Dream is forever opening before the powerful soul of man which is energetic with life and evolution; the lines which express this are lively with dynamic vigor.

Whitman looks through the past and his eyes rest on Columbus; he was the man who conceived the circling of the globe, an action which Whitman perceives as a prelude to the unification of the

globe. The poet joyously addresses his brother explorer:

Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!
Centuries after thou are laid in thy
grave,
The shore thou foundest verifies thy
dream. (289)

From the grave, the bold spirit of Columbus' courage and foresight seems to pull men onward just as the spirit of Lincoln's democratic compassion does from his tomb. The one progressive action or "ceaseless thought" of deific evolution is seen by Whitman from the first Adam and Eve on down to the New World's Adam and Eve: "Thou born America, / For purpose vast..." The words are unmistakably enthusiastic. All souls are restless with the "inscrutable purpose" of moving back into an Edenic state of concord. All souls are desirous of the one great Camerado, the one democratic lover for them all. The poet says that these thoughts only now begin to span the "teeming spiritual darkness" of the mysteries which he has been seeking to understand all along. He sees the "vast Roundure" of the earth moving on toward the future New Eden of the Dream.

The poet still hears those old nagging questions which the mockingbird's song aroused in him long ago. These questions are a "sad incessant refrain" which asks "Wherefore unsatisfied soul? and Whither O mocking life?" These are the questions of "feverish" and "restless" man. As an answer, the poet says that perhaps even now "the time has arrived." He means that perhaps even now God's "first intent" is being fulfilled as the great evolutionary float of mortal life is poured back into the divine source of immortality. The rivulets of the past are "running, sinking down, and now again to the surface rising..." The networks of the organic whole

of evolutionary progress are seen rising out of the confusion of mortal life, and America appears to be the fullest fruition of man's ancient longings and dreams:

Lands found and nations born, thou born
 America,
 For purpose vast, man's long probation
 fill'd,
 Thou rondure of the world at last
 accomplish'd. (290)

Man's spirit has circled the earth and has created America. The democracy of America is viewed by Whitman as the preparation for man's entrance into the cosmic concord beyond death.

The poet raises his prophet voice and describes the progress of all the creation that man embraces and which is culminating in America:

All these separations and gaps shall be
 taken up and hook'd and link'd together,
 The whole earth, this cold, impassive,
 voiceless earth shall be completely
 justified... (291)

Earth, which appeared dormant, must be seen as being alive with divine motion and purpose. The poet is again telling the reader the message that he sang in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry": "It avails not, time nor place--distance avails not. / I am with you..."

(116) The poet forcefully tells the reader that "Nature and Men shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more..." Duality is dissolved; every soul has its equal lover in every other soul, and they all are absorbed in the average of divine empathic love. This concept is the illumination which the poet has been trying to understand and to convey to the torpid sleepers: "Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward..." Man's sleeping but restless soul is ever seeking and questioning as the child questioned long ago:

Doubts to be solved, the map incognita,
 blanks to be fill'd,

The foot of man unstay'd, the hands
 never at rest,
 Thyself O soul that will not brook a
 challenge. (291)

This thought of man's continuous quest for discovery, understanding, and Edenic regeneration causes the poet to look back again at Columbus. Whitman believes that a new spirit was implanted in the world in 1492: the spirit of the "Modern Man" ("One's Self I Sing," 5), the spirit of the regenerated man about whom Whitman has been singing. The soul and body of each creature longed to be clear of the mists that prevented the journey back into the harmony of Eden which the poet has referred to as the "mystic ocean" ("As Consequent," 253). According to Whitman, Columbus at last carried the spirit of the modern man into the unknown oceans. Thus Columbus expressed the restless spirit which was "Something swelling in humanity..." Columbus, like the poet, had the "majestic limbs" with which to step across all gulfs and the "pious beaming eyes" with which to recognize the destiny of man. Whitman recognizes that, like himself, Columbus too was subjected to both the glories and the agonies of the world. But from such complex struggles the earth is filled with "use and beauty." The earth is planted with the dreams of such men and "Uprisen in the night, it sprouts, blooms..." (292) The fertile earth is now waiting for the full dawn which Whitman believes he is witnessing.

The evolution of all souls is a "Passage indeed O soul to primal thought" and to the "realms of budding bibles." Whitman wishes to drive the soul forward into the fruitful Eden, the place of unclouded thought. The soul of man is "repressless." This one spirant word sums up the whole evolutionary biography of the poet: the restless spirit of man is repressless on its way toward

the utopian democracy. The soul seems to be drawn resistlessly back toward the Eden of "wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions" as it is regenerated "with fair creation." The soul is motivated by its own restlessness to create the long sought Dream of the New Eden. All souls experience this repressless urge, and the poet, as the representative of all humanity, energetically says that "we can wait no longer." The spirit of mankind must continue Columbus' voyage and fearlessly sail "for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy..." While Whitman's vision may appear bizarre, his earnest sincerity seems evident in the sheer strength of expression. The poet obviously feels exuberant with his vigorous sense of the destiny which is to be fulfilled in America; the poet now believes that in the New World, man's progress and evolution are culminating in the painful but steady building of the utopia of the true Dream. The poet says that his soul and body embrace in this desire for destiny: "thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul..." (292) The "thee" and "me" are in perfect harmony; the duality of man is apparently resolved in this rhyming expression of internal concord between body and soul.

Time, Space, and Death are merging "like waters flowing..." This is a constant image in the epic: the idea of winds and waves and peoples melting together into a cosmic democracy like that which originally existed in Eden. The poet expresses his desire to be baptized into the rejuvenated Edenic state:

Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

As the poet's insight becomes more fully developed in his mind, he attempts to describe God in biblical words of enthusiasm:

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and breath,

Light of the light, shedding
 forth universes, thou
 centre of them,
 Thou mightier centre of the true,
 the good, the loving...

Formerly the poet acted as the boasting divine center around which the currents of life moved like the ripples which he saw around his reflection as he stood on the Brooklyn Ferry. But now he recognizes Deity as the real center. God is being observed as the benevolent generating source and the absorbing receiver of all life:

"Thou moral, spiritual fountain--affection's source--thou reservoir..." The poet recognizes how souls flow forth from the Over-Soul as from a fountain and return in a perfect circle to Him as a reservoir. The connections between life and death are finally becoming completely clear in the poet's mind; the separations, agonies, and deaths which have filled his life are at last completely meaningful as the poet is illuminated with a full understanding of divine evolution. The poet sees how the soul is driven on by its own restlessness to drink from the divine sources:

O pensive soul of me--O thirst
 unsatisfied--waitest not there?
 Waitest not haply for us somewhere
 there the comrade perfect?

The lines indicate that the poet understands how the soul of man feels the empathizing power emanating from the great democratic Comrade who, like the personified America of Whitman's poetry, loves all and rejects none. This understanding is indicated in powerful lines which express an erotic image of God's love for His creation:

Thou pulse--thou motive of the stars,
 suns, systems,
 That, circling, move in order, safe
 harmonious,
 Athwart the shapeless vastness of
 space...

The round vowels and spirant sounds seem to imitate a gasping desire for God's democratic love:

How should I think, how breathe a
single breath, how speak,
if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those
superior universes?

Locked within mortal limits, the soul desires deific proportions but shrivels "at the thought of God" and of His vast creation. Yet, for the present, the soul still absorbs all the life around it and thus receives God through His creation: God is "Athwart" the universe and "fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of space." (293) The line expresses the nearly breathless sound of the soul locked in a spiritual yet erotic embrace with the Over-Soul.

In "Song of Myself" the soul and body discussed the longing for union in cosmic consciousness:

And I said to my spirit When we become
the enfolders of those orbs and
the pleasure and knowledge of
every thing in them, shall we be
fill'd and satisfied then?
And my spirit said No, we but level that
lift to pass and continue beyond. (64)

The body and soul of mortally limited man desire to be "Athwart" all creation, to feel all the pleasures and know all the thoughts of God's creatures, and thus to be filled with God; this is the only way for mortal man to know and ascend to God. The poet believes that in America man is moving from one phase of evolution to another: from narrow self-consciousness to the expansion of the Self into the fusion with God in all other Selves, an expansion brought about in cosmic consciousness. Man is turning his Self outward to all other Selves in an attitude of divine empathy, the attitude of brotherhood befitting the utopian democracy of the true Dream:

The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes,
 the voyage done,
 Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest,
 the aim attain'd,
 As fill'd with friendship, love complete,
 the Elder Brother found,
 The Younger melts in fondness in his arms. (293)

The image is exhilarating as the intimate Over-Soul who has stood so near for so long is now embraced by the soul in democratic friendship. Men have been questioning and seeking for so long to find the secrets of all the "aged fierce enigmas." The poet, as the representative man of America, can bid his personal farewell to the enigmas. He has mastered doubts and fears, those ancient "strangling problems!" He no longer suffocates, but breathes the divine breath just as Adam once did: he is being regenerated. The soul is ever repressless in ascending to its "Elder Brother." The poet shouts to the reader in a powerful command which expresses man's desire for the friendly, democratic Brother:

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns
 in my veins!
 Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
 Cut the hawsers--haul out--shake out every sail!
 Have we not stood here...long enough?

The direct address compels the reader with its beating consonants. Vigorously, the poet again commands:

O my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the
 seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail! (294)

Perhaps the huffing sounds of the repeated "farther" imitate the breath of mortal-immortal man as he evolves onward toward the utopian democracy of divine equality and human dignity.

There is no thought of slavery, caste, or materialistic ambition in all of this ecstatic singing. The poet has metaphorically journeyed to symbolic India to enlighten the present by seeing the

spiritual wholeness of man's existence: the All from which man comes (the past) and to which he returns (the future). The evolution of man has been westward from the original Eden, and will eventually return to Eden. By observing this movement back to India, the poet has demonstrated God's purpose of a united planet. The hollowness that divided each man's body and soul and which separated each man from all other men, from Nature, and from God is now filled with the energizing transcendental love of amative democracy. This is the great Dream of which Whitman sings. From one blade of grass to Deity, the universe is one living democracy which man must attempt to attain in his mortal life as a preparation for a meaningful death, a transfiguration into the cosmos. No man acts in isolation; all men either evolve or devolve together. The terrifying vastness of the macrocosm merges with the personal smallness of each individual microcosm as all duality is destroyed in the poet's cosmic vision. Whitman believes that the individual disintegrated man can find the meaning of his existence by recognizing his participation in the Over-Soul. Through this recognition, man can return to his primal garden of Edenic harmony and become regenerated in the attaining of cosmic consciousness. The society of the true Dream must be one of equality and organic unity caused by this consciousness. According to Whitman this is the only way that the social disharmony caused by the corrupted false Dream can be prevented.

The poet, as representative man and democratic bard, has found the identity for which he began searching in "Song of Myself." He has attained the consciousness that the cosmos is in the Self and that the Self is in the cosmos, the consciousness

which he had expressed in the line "Walt Whitman, a kosmos..."

(41) This is not the selfish boasting egotism which is often attributed to Whitman. The poet has come to understand that the Self unites the earthly body and the celestial animating spirit; the Self is thus the center of the cosmic mysteries of mortality and immortality. Whitman has realized that in order to fully understand anything about these mysteries, he must first understand the great secret locked within his Self; and to understand anything outside of himself he must expand his awareness by sending the Self outside of himself: the Self must merge in empathy with all creation and gain deific proportions. By absorbing all creation the Self absorbs God; it gains its harmonious participation in the Over-Soul by itself becoming an oversoul. All opposition between the Me and the not-Me is evaporated. Thus in Whitman's poetic vision an understanding of man's long-sought-for concord with Nature and the Over-Soul can be found.

A Canadian friend of the poet, Dr. Bucke, described this harmony of cosmic consciousness which Whitman attained and proclaimed as "a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, . . . a consciousness that he has it already." Bucke described the goal of future evolution in the style of Whitmanesque transcendentalism:

Religion will absolutely dominate the race....
The evidence of immortality will live in every heart as sight in every eye. Doubt of God and of eternal life will be as impossible as is now doubt of existence.../ All / intermediaries between the individual man and God will be permanently replaced by direct unmistakable intercourse.

⁹Richard Maurice Bucke, M.D. Cosmic Consciousness. A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind (New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books Inc., 1966), pp. 2 ff., 61, 63.

Whitman expressed his belief in this future utopia of the earthly democracy and of the immortal cosmic brotherhood by asking two questions:

If the spiritual is not behind
the material, to what purpose
is the material? What is the
world without a further Divine
purpose in it all?

Matter is not mere matter and man is not mere clay. There is a unifying divine spirit in everything if men but open their eyes to see it. And it is this divine spirit which is the only firm foundation for the utopian democracy of the New Eden in America. All the diverse rights of human dignity which are ideals of all American democracy can only be achieved if men recognize their mutual divinity and brotherhood. As Whitman put it, this recognition is the "intuitive blending of divine love and faith in human emotional character--blending for all, for the unlearn'd, the common, and the poor." This is the ideal of the true Dream of universal fraternal democracy which the poet described as follows:

...endless streams of living,
pulsating love and friend-
ship..., now and ever...this
universal democratic comrade-
ship--...so fitly emblematic
of America...¹⁰

In "Passage to India" the poet has presented the artistic and thematic culmination of his poetry in a beautiful vision of the united cosmos. The strident climax of the poem seems to make the poet dizzy and so once more he walks with the reader along the shore in quiet weariness and meditates on all that has been seen.

¹⁰Collect and Other Prose, pp. 471, 648, 687.

The poet has reached the climax but feels that he has still only begun. The soul and the body of mortal men, like Columbus, are weary with the as-yet-unfilled journey toward Deity. In "Prayer of Columbus," the soul reviews its long, searching biography; throughout the trek the soul never lost "faith nor ecstasy" in the emanations of God. The soul has accepted all joys and agonies "as duly come from Thee." As the soul wishes for heavenly death and transfiguration, the mood is one of quiet communication with God: "A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep..." Whitman, speaking as his brother explorer, Columbus, hopes that the life planted in the New World will transcend all the "brutish" life of the Old and will grow into a beautiful democracy worthy of the Creator (295). In the person of Columbus, Whitman stands on the New World shore and hears the sounds of the future and sees the promise of what is to come beyond the illusions of the present: "As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes..." (296). The tone is reverent: happy, but wearily longing for transfiguration.

Thus the poet has achieved and meditated upon the high point of his full poetic illumination. He has envisioned the passage into eternal life in which all things attain a fulfilling democratic brotherhood with Deity. Now in one concise poem Whitman concentrates all the beliefs of the epic. Preparing for his own merging with the cosmos, Whitman writes "Whispers of Heavenly Death." He describes such a death as footsteps "gently ascending" and as "mystical breezes." The mood is softly serene. Throughout the epic the poet has been trying to translate these occult whispers which have come at unexpected moments: while listening to the lone mockingbird, while reclining on the grass, while pondering the remembered song of the mockingbird, while standing by the ferryboat

rail, while meandering along the Long Island shore, while watching Lincoln's star and listening to the thrush, and while praising the worldwide achievements of man. The epic is paced by these songs of the soul longing to be exhaled back into the cosmic float. The poet has heard these whispered hints concerning the evolving democracy and the universal spiritual brotherhood in both the noise of mundane "Labial gossip" and in the soft sounds of celestial "sibilant chorals..." He has heard all of these complex and often confusing whisperings and has tried to understand them in order to resolve his questions and doubts. The reflection of the poet's face at the center of the waves by the ferryboat's bow has been for him a mystical indication of the "Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever flowing..." (309) This is an intriguing image of the infinite circles of mortal life and immortal death which emanate from the central Over-Soul. To be able to understand how these circles depart from and return to the Over-Soul is to be able to resolve the questions and doubts.

The mystical breezes also whisper to the poet about the sufferings of humanity which are caused by the agonizing, as-yet-unrealized desires for merging with the cosmos. All the sorrows are united in two simple questions: "is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human tears?" Whitman ends the first section of the poem on this note of sorrow because he thinks that the soft serenity of the whispers could be really just a deceptive facade for the agonizing sighing of sadness. The poet suffered his own tears of sadness as the wound-dresser and as the mourner for Lincoln. These old, gnawing griefs come back in dark clouds like those which covered the stars of America's destiny at the outbreak

of the Civil War. The poet sees these darkneses which periodically cover the "half-dimm'd far-off star, / Appearing and disappearing." The last two words, "Appearing and disappearing," express the old mysteries of life and death, the cycles of coming and going, of finding and losing, of birth and death. But the darkness does not endure since, in the final section of the poem, Whitman once again receives illumination. He realizes that those "measureless waters" of the tears of longing are not the tears of death but the glad tears of "Some parturition" as a "solemn immortal birth" goes beyond the "frontiers to eyes impenetrable..." Death is birth; this is the great paradox. The poet recognizes that in death "Some soul is passing over." (309) The spirant sounds are lulling as death is viewed as merely the sleep before the fuller dawn of the consciousness of cosmic concord.

In "A Noiseless Patient Spider" the poet describes himself in a concise image of the Self working toward both the enlightened imperturbability of self-identity in the interior Eden and the universal concord of cosmic brotherhood in the external Eden. The quiet, imperturbable spider is a symbol of the poet who has finally learned to attain an experienced calmness through the many trials and errors during the pilgrimage toward New Eden. The spider "launched forth filament, filament, filament out of itself..." Likewise, the soul of the poet is "ceaselessly...venturing,...seeking the spheres to connect..." The repetitions in "filament, filament, filament" seems to imitate the heavy breath of the loving but tired poet who has been trying for so long to resolve mankind's divisions by sending out beam after beam of his empathy. The repetitions are perhaps a play on the word "fulfillment." Throughout the epic the poet has tried to show man that through a divine spir-

it of democratic love a harmony can be achieved which can fill the "measureless oceans of space" that separate man from other souls and from the Over-Soul. At last the filament of love catches hold, and the complex maze of existence takes on full purpose and meaning (314).

III. "Who touches this touches a man..."

It seems evident from all that has gone before that Whitman believed that the fulfillment or failure of his own spirit was bound up in the destiny of man in America. His epic has been the biography of his spiritual destiny as the representative man and evolutionary poet-prophet. In the concluding portions of the biographical epic, the poet reviews the themes and lessons of the true Dream which he has been trying to teach. He always tends to feel that there is one more lesson to be learned, one more song to sing in order to inculcate the true love of amative democracy into mortal man; it was obvious from the human history of Whitman's time that this lesson could never be learned too well.

In a representative poem of the concluding works, he refers to democracy as "Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood." From the diversity of melting pot America comes "one identity..." Through the mystique of democratic and mystical union, the New World covenant of God and man is achieved as man is "justified" and "blended with God..." (317) America is the "Beautiful world of the superber birth" where the regeneration of New Eden is possible (318). The democracy is the "equitable, natural, mystical Union" which will "soar toward the fulfillment of the future" and evolve the "soul, its destinies." (320) Whitman foresees that the common people will yet attain the

democratic and cosmic brotherhoods, both of which are the result of the "divine average" ("Starting from Paumanok," 19; "As I Walk The Broad Majestic Days," 337). With this thought the poet moves into "A Clear Midnight" of his old age. Night is no longer fearful chaos; night is now the serene retreat of the soul as it soars in "free flight into the wordless"; this retreat is the peace beyond words in "Night, sleep, death, and the stars." (338) The thought is beautifully calm as the poet contemplates his attainment of that cosmic concord which he has thought and sung about for so long.

In the envisioned future of "Years of the Modern," an 1867 poem which Whitman finally placed near the end of the epic, the poet says that he sees Freedom forming a "stupendous trio" with Law and Peace in order to protect the New World. With this vision of the inexorable evolution and powerful foundation of the true Dream's utopia, Whitman believes that never before has each common man been "more energetic, more like a God..." (339) In "So Long!" an 1860 poem which Whitman used to conclude "Songs of Parting," the poet approaches his own grave and bequeaths his book to the common man who has been reading the poetry; the book is in reality the mystical biography of the representative man who takes creation on his back and climbs up along the evolutionary spiral:

Comerado, this is no book,
 Who touches this touches a man,
 ...
 It is I you hold and who holds you,
 I spring from the pages into your arms...(349)

The lines are surprising and mysterious. As the poet moves closer to paradise, he bids a democratic farewell to his reader; he seems to be mystically transfigured:

An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd,
 more direct, darts awakening rays about
 me, So long!

...
 I love you, I depart from materials,
 I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead. (350)

These were the words that closed the 1860 edition; they seemed premature before the war, but are now realistic and deific words which express mortal man's transcendental intuition that he will eventually attain the cosmic brotherhood of immortality. The poet has echoed such simple but eloquently mysterious words throughout the epic: "I make appointments with all," "I know I am deathless," "I exist as I am," "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there," "I give you my hand," "I am with you," "I am as good as looking at you now." ("Song of Myself," 37 f., 51; "Song of the Open Road," 115; "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," 116, 119) The reader holds the book, and the poet in turn holds the reader; they are poetically entwined in the democratic embrace of brotherly empathy. The biography of the poet's evolution into his divine identity is personally planted in the reader. In "From My Last Years" Whitman calls these biographical poems the "seeds" of the regenerated future which are enfolded into the reader's soul; each seed is waiting for "Time to germinate fully." (407) The divine equality which causes the earthly democracy and the cosmic democracy is the culminating purpose of all life; it is the full bloom of the germination. To the future regenerated man of the utopian democracy the poet has left his prophetic command:

Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,
 Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,
 The Past is also stored in thee,
 Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not
 the Western continent alone,
 Earth's resumé entire floats on thy keel O ship,
 is steadied by the spars,

Conclusion:

Whitman and the Dream

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Whitman and the Dream

Whitman's five themes have been traced through progressive editions of Leaves of Grass in order to indicate the gradual evolution of his idealism concerning the utopian democracy. This discussion of his meditations on the future of man, America, and democracy has revealed his understanding of what has come to be called the American Dream.

As a young newspaper writer and poet he expressed some glib notions about the glorious destiny of man in America and a few vague feelings about the promise of transfiguration beyond death. These attitudes were those of inexperienced idealism, attitudes which were severly shaken in the decade before the Civil War when Whitman began to see the great moral and social dangers of the democracy which he had thought to be the last best hope of mankind. As he became more experienced he began to recognize the severity of the evils involved in slavery and the caste system: these Old World evils were an unnatural violation of social harmony and of the divine dignity of body and soul; thus they alienated man from his fellow men, from Nature, and from God. As Whitman approached the fire test of war he began writing what would become his great epic examination of the modern man and the utopian democracy. He used the poetic mystique of a biographical journey toward the New Eden in order to focus his five themes into a symbolic search for regeneration in which his own identity and that of his nation would attain full meaning and purpose. The poetry written before and during the war became an attempt to resolve the struggle within the spirit of man between the earthly turmoil caused by divisive doubt and fear, and the immortal serenity which is attained in the consciousness that the Over-Soul exists within all

men; the poet realized that this consciousness was necessary for the existence of the divine equality in the American utopia. The Civil War was a terrible violation of brotherhood, but the experiences which Whitman underwent gave him a realistic sense of the strong brotherhood which would be essential for the ideal democracy. He felt that the brave young soldiers whom he loved like sons were suffering and dying to help bring about the utopian New Eden. Epitomizing the virtues of all the soldiers, Lincoln represented for Whitman the ideal regenerated man of the New World; but the loss of the benevolent guiding spirit of the great common-man President resulted in the perversion of the true Dream as the Gilded Age set in. This era of social and political corruption was an even greater spiritual testing of the nation after the physical contest had been passed; the depravity of the period troubled the poet since it was a violation of human dignity and of the spiritual brotherhood of common men.

Whitman's most mature writing developed from his recognition of the great contrast between the ideal of America and the reality of war and of the Gilded Age; his meditations on these paradoxes and mysteries of man in America resulted in the ultimate evolution of his experienced idealism. The poet had always taken pride in the grand material progress of the New World, but he came to realize that such progress was detrimental if it was not paralleled or excelled by social and spiritual progress. Whitman believed that the common men of democracy had to recognize and act according to their innate divinity; only through the stimulation of this interior participation of each soul in the Over-Soul could the evolution of humanity into an amative democracy be

achieved.

Ultimately Whitman was able to create a poetic vision in which the brotherhood of the individual soul and the Over-Soul in all men seemed to be attained. He believed that he had foreseen the future New Eden of the democratic "divine average" and that because of this he had been able to envision the harmony of a united cosmos; this is the cosmic consciousness or true Dream of universal spiritual brotherhood which he tried to express throughout his mature works. Whitman envisioned and expressed the Life Force within man which is ever seeking to fulfill itself, always dreaming of the destiny of regeneration. His final vision still remains the most optimistic and faithful statement of the Dream; this is why the true American Dream culminates in him, and why the modern world must look back to him in order to reclaim the original spirit of that Dream. In Whitman's epic, modern man searches for his ultimate destiny and modern America searches for her ideal democracy; the goal of both of these is the future integrity of soul which brings about the harmony of all men with themselves and with the cosmos. By achieving the inner serenity which is the long-lost Eden of the soul, man can begin to spread his enlightened spirit outward to recreate the earthly Eden; this is man's ultimate destiny in the world as a preparation for merging into the cosmos.

By looking back to Whitman, it is possible for modern man to extricate himself from the pettiness of the false Dream and to imagine the final realization of the true Dream: the Dream of purposeful evolution toward destiny for all men no matter of what race, religion, or national origin; the Dream as it was originally conceived during the early days of the republic when the common peo-

ple believed that they could come to a New World for a second chance in Eden; the Dream that each man has the opportunity to find his own dignified identity, and, in finding himself, to help the progression of all creation toward its goal. Nearly two hundred years ago, the true Dream of man in a New Promised Land was formalized in the beliefs of the American Revolution. One hundred years ago, the false Dream was triumphant in the Gilded Age; America entered the inferno and has been going through purgation ever since. Whitman, the prophetic bard of the Dream, wrote a hundred years ago that man should see in America the promethean possibility for the great second chance of mankind. His ecstatic cry faded for a time, but Whitman still remains the one great literary exponent of the American Dream.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Matthew F. Ignoffo, Jr., has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation, and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jan 15, 1972
Date

Agnes McMill Donohue
Signature of adviser
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