May 3, 1970

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jan Bryan Lawson entitled "The Essential Unity of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, 1855: The Personality Projected." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

F. Wagner Mills
Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Lorraine Burghardt

Richard Kelly

Accepted for the Council:

Walter P. Smith
Vice Chancellor for
Graduate Studies and Research

THE ESSENTIAL UNITY OF WHITMAN'S LEAVES OF GRASS, 1855: THE PERSONALITY PROJECTED

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Jan Bryan Lawson

June 1970

ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper is that the essential unity of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, 1855 derives from the personality projected.

Up to the present, critics have failed to agree on any single principle of unity in the first poem of Leaves of Grass, 1855, or in the book as a whole. Yet Whitman himself indicated on various occasions over a long span of years that the projection of a personality was his intent. Further, he indicated that this personality could then be utilized for various purposes, most notably he could exploit it to "promulge" his philosophy.

The unity of the twelve Leaves in Leaves of Grass, 1855 is the psychological unity which comes from there being one speaker present throughout the twelve poems, who presents himself and his philosophy to a listener/reader much as he would to a confidante--his thoughts, ideas, visions tumble forth in a non-logical order.

The unity of the personality is shown by examining the speaker in the first Leaf in terms of ten significant personality facets, successively, each as through a filter. The first Leaf projects the basic personality which is then expanded and amplified in each of the other eleven Leaves, illuminating the psychological continuity ranging across the twelve poems. The person Whitman projected in the poems

913968

thinks, speaks, and acts consistently within the limits of a living personality's idiosyncratic nature and hence provides the essential unity of the book.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	WALT WHITMAN AND HIS PLAN: ILLUSTRATION OR MODEL	8
III.	THE PERSONALITY ILLUSTRATED IN THE FIRST LEAF OF GRASS	14
	The Ostensive Man	14
	The Sensualist	16
	The Sexualist	19
	The Naturalist	22
	The Lonely Man	24
	The Assimilator	26
	The Democrat	30
	The Philosopher	33
	The Celebrator	39
	The Poet	44
IV.	THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPED IN THE OTHER ELEVEN LEAVES OF GRASS	51
	Introduction	51
	The Second Leaf	52
	The Third Leaf	54
	The Fourth Leaf	56
	The Fifth Leaf	60
	The Sixth Leaf	62
	The Seventh Leaf	64

CHAPTER PAGE

The Eighth Leaf 65

The Ninth Leaf 67

The Tenth Leaf 68

The Eleventh Leaf 70

The Twelfth Leaf 71

V. WHITMAN'S PURPOSE LEADS ULTIMATELY TO EIDÓLONS 73

BIBLIOGRAPHY 81

VITA 83

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article summarizing the major critical positions taken toward the first Leaf[1] in Leaves of Grass, 1855, the poem now generally referred to as "Song of Myself," Ronald Beck has found little agreement as to any unity in the poem, or as to the existence of any logical structure.[2] He does not take up separately the question of the unity of the 1855 edition as a whole, but since critics have generally disagreed as to the nature of any unity in the first poem of Whitman's, it is safe to assume that none have found any essential unity for the twelve poems together which comprise the first edition, the last eleven usually being considered to be generally inferior to the first Leaf. Beck indicates that most critics, including several he discusses in some detail, "do not hold that the poem is without structure, but rather, that the structure is deeply flawed."[3] He goes on

---

[1]Whitman critics have been in error when they have stated that the twelve poems of the first edition have no titles; while this is true of the last six, each of the first six is individually titled "Leaves of Grass." Further references to the twelve poems of the first edition will be to the "first Leaf," the "second Leaf," etc.

[2]Ronald Beck, "The Structure of 'Song of Myself' and the Critics," Walt Whitman Review, XV, (March 1969), 35.

[3]Beck, p. 33.

to state that all these critics recognize that the first Leaf "has a unique structure, but they do not accept the poem on its own terms . . ." and none goes on to "explicate its structure."[4] Beck then makes a case for his concept of the focusing idea of the book, for what he calls the "divine unity" of theme, that of "the oneness of all being."[5] He approaches the crux of this paper when he asserts that this oneness is "always manifested in a physical entity,"[6] but he stops short od developing one line of reasoning this suggests. He does not examine the specific vehicle Whitman chose to present his philosophical theory--the personality projected--which provides the one all-pervading unity of both the first Leaf taken by itself and the twelve Leaves taken as a whole. The other eleven Leaves augment and expand the richness of the personality which is projected in the first poem; this provides the essential unity of the 1855 edition.

Two critics included in Beck's article will bear closer examination, the first because of his position of primacy as a Whitman critic and the haste with which he dismisses the problem. Gay Wilson Allen says in his Walt Whitman Handbook, "The structure of the poem is not primarily logical . . . ; neither thought nor emotion advances in orderly

---

[4]Beck, p. 34.

[5]Beck, p. 35.

[6]Beck, p. 35.

sequence."[7] He thus dismisses any further consideration of the problem of unity, not having discovered that in the very nature of Whitman's purpose it has to be so--that the personality in the poems, once created, could be expected to act in a non-logical pattern in his thinking and speaking, just as a living person does.

The second critic who deserves closer scrutiny is Malcolm Cowley, because of his special concern for the first edition of the Leaves of Grass. In the critical introduction to his 1960 facsimile edition (not photo-facsimile) of Leaves of Grass, 1855, Cowley makes one of the rare categorical statements on the matter of the unity of the whole book, but without, at the time, amplifying his remark: " . . . the first edition is a unified work . . . ."[8] In speaking of the first Leaf he later slightly amplifies this by saying that the "true structure of the poem is not primarily logical but psychological . . ."[9]; this comes closer to the heart of the matter. Cowley does not pursue the matter further, but he does remark:

> The hero . . . in the text of the first edition . . . has no local or family background, and he is deprived of strictly individual characteristics, with the exception of curiosity, boastfulness, and an abnormally developed sense of touch.[10]

---

[7](New York, 1962), p. 117. See also pp. 115-117.

[8]Facsimile edition (New York, 1960), p. x.

[9]Cowley, p. xvi.

[10]Cowley, p. xv.

Cowley does not go on to develop this line of thought, but allows that the poem has the unity of a "rhapsody or tone poem."[11] He closes out his argument by stating, "I do not see how any careful reader, unless blinded with preconceptions, could overlook the unity of the poem in tone and image and direction."[12] This paper will show that the unity of the poem and the book lies in its psychological unity--the presentation of the mind's workings as they might come to one person confiding in another. It will further demonstrate that the personality Whitman created is endowed with highly specific as well as generic characteristics; the speaker is represented as speaking to the listener/reader, in turn, of his experiences, assimilations, reflections, free associations, which come pouring out as a montage of thoughts, just as a living person's might. Chapters Two and Three of this paper will present a portrait of this speaker, emphasizing his individual as well as his generic traits.

A critic who escaped the scrutiny of Beck, R. W. B. Lewis, in The American Adam, comes closest to a full realization of the thesis of this paper, when he states:

> The fullest portrayal of the new world's representative man as a new, American Adam was given by Walt Whitman in Leaves of Grass--in the liberated, innocent, solitary, forward-thrusting personality

---

[11] Cowley, p. xvi.

[12] Cowley, p. xx.

that animates the whole of that long poem.[13]

The personality Whitman created assumes here a prime position. Lewis apparently sees that the first edition can be viewed as one long poem, a view this paper subscribes to. In addition, Lewis seems to imply a sense of unity for the twelve poems of the first edition, if not the whole of Whitman's canon. Latter in The American Adam, making reference to what is now called Section Four of the first Leaf, with adjectives supplied by the bard, Lewis creates a profile of the figure in the poem: "amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary; especially unitary . . . ."[14]

Lewis goes on to suggest that:

> With Whitman's help we could pile up further attributes, and the exhaustive portrait of Adam would be composed of a careful gloss on each one of them: hankering, gross, mystical, nude; turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, and breeding; no sentimentalist, no stander above men and women; no more modest than immodest; wearing his hat as he pleases indoors and out; never skulking or ducking or deprecating; adoring himself and adoring his comrades; afoot with his vision . . . ."[15]

Lewis then leaves off cataloging his Adamic man, turning his attention toward the frontispiece portrait, leaving for others any actual detailing--fleshing out--of this personality.

---

[13]The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1966), p. 28. Italics are this author's.

[14]Lewis, p. 47.

[15]Lewis, p. 47. This catalog, slanted by its curious ommissions, may be compared first with the one on page 8 of this study, then with "The Ostensive Man," beginning on page 14 of this paper.

In summary, critics either have failed, on the one hand, to recognize that either the first poem of Leaves of Grass, 1855, or the whole of the work has unity, or they fail to agree substantively on the nature of the unity. Though all the critics Beck cites recognize that the poem or the book has a "unique structure," none to date seems to have struck upon or analyzed in detail the one all-pervading unifier of the first Leaf taken individually as well as of the twelve Leaves taken as a whole: the personality brought to life. It is this personality which then proceeds psychologically--with the often non-logical organization of the human mind--to talk to the listener/reader. It is the very essence of Whitman's plan that this figure should take on the aura and appearance of being a living person. This speaker could then be utilized--exploited--to expound his philosophy. As will be shown, Whitman confirms this intent on more than one occasion.

But first, the thesis of this paper should be stated: it will be demonstrated that the personality which was created by Walt Whitman and projected first in the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass provides the book's essential unity. It further will be shown that this personality is replete with both specific, even unique, characteristics, as well as generic--cosmic--characteristics. This projection by its very nature will also present a statement of Whitman's purpose in publishing Leaves of Grass, at least the first edition of it.

The succeeding chapters will unfold in the following manner. Chapter II will be given over to an examination of various prose statements Whitman made concerning how he planned to utilize the book and portrait. Chapter III is a detailed examination of the personality as projected in the first Leaf of the 1855 edition, in terms of ten essential aspects of the personality. Each aspect will be examined as through a filter, so the reader may focus his attention on the one aspect under consideration. Chapter IV will be devoted to the other eleven Leaves, showing how each contributes toward the reader's comprehension of the personality as a whole. Chapter V will summarize the exposition of the rest of the paper and provide some insight into Whitman's purpose in projecting this personality.

CHAPTER II

WALT WHITMAN AND HIS PLAN: ILLUSTRATION OR MODEL

Whitman's purpose in creating a personality in the Leaves of Grass, 1855, may be revealed by having the bard himself discuss what he hoped to accomplish. That the creation of a specific personality was basic to his plan may be seen by examining various statements Whitman made from 1855 through 1889, spanning virtually his entire career as a poet. The exploitation of this personality, which begins with the publication of Leaves of Grass, continued throughout his life. Indeed, the very publication of his book was the beginning of this exploitation, which continued apace with the self-reviews he composed shortly after and tipped into various copies of the first edition which he then sent to friends and reviewers.

A little over two months after the appearance of Leaves of Grass a review entitled "Walt Whitman, A Brooklyn Boy," first appeared in the Brooklyn Daily Times. This review, which came from the hand of the bard himself,[16] pointedly states:

> To give judgement on real poems, one needs an account of the poet himself. Very devilish to some, and very divine to some, will appear these new poems, the Leaves of Grass; an attempt, as they are, of a

---

[16]Gay Wilson Allen, The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman (New York, 1967), p. 171.

> live, naieve [sic], masculine, tenderly affectionate, rowdyish, contemplative, sensual, moral, susceptible and imperious person, to cast into literature not only his own grit and arrogance, but his own flesh and form, undraped, regardless of foreign models, regardless of modesty or law . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> His whole work, his life, manners, friendships, writings all have among their leading purposes, an evident purpose, as open and avowed as any of the rest, to stamp a new type of character, namely his own, and indelibly fix it and publish it, not for a model but an illustration, for the present and future of American letters and young men . . . .[17]

Thus Whitman makes it quite clear that his plan was that his personality would not stand as an absolute model, but merely as an illustration. The model or representative poet that Whitman fervently hoped all could and would strive toward being he presented in the prose Preface to the 1855 edition, and later in Democratic Vistas. Having set down this personality, not as a three-dimensional form all should copy, but merely as one possible example, Whitman seems to have kept this view more or less in mind until the end of his career, for he reaffirmed this view in later years.

In an 1876 interview, looking back at the early editions, Whitman said:

> -- I set out to illustrate, without any flinching, actual humanity. I proposed to myself a series of compositions which would depict the physical, emotional, moral, intellectual and spiritual nature of a man.

---

[17]Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (New York, 1855), Facs. ed. (New York: Eakins Press, 1966), p. 99. The italics are this author's.

> -- That man being yourself?
>
> -- That man, for purposes of illustration being myself . . . You can see I had first to deal with the physical, the corporal, the amative business--that part of our nature which is developed so strongly between the ages of 22 and 35. It is that part of my endeavor which caused most of the harsh criticism, and prevented candid examination of the ensuing stages of the design.[18]

Twenty-one years after the first appearance of his book, Whitman here holds to his position that the personality presented is intended as a specific illustration, susceptible and fallible and thus very human. These two instances taken together indicate that Whitman did have an overall plan in mind, although the outlines of this plan were never firmly fixed and were modified through the years to keep pace with his evolving organic concept.

Furthermore, Whitman would have his readers believe that he personality projected was his own. When he came to set down the summary of his life's endeavors, "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," the Preface to the 1889 edition, he again emphasized that the prime purpose of his work was the expression of a personality, which he steadfastly main-

---

[18]Part of an interview of Whitman by J. B. S. in the New York World, May 21, 1876, entitled "Walt Whitman: The Athletic Bard Paralyzed and in a Rocking Chair," as quoted in The Evolution of Walt Whitman: The Creation of a Personality, Roger Asselineau (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), I, 9. Whether the ambiguous "series of compositions" refers only to the twelve poems of the 1855 edition or to the continuing series, Leaves of Grass, is unimportant here, for neither interpretation is detrimental to the position of this paper. Rather, the ambiguous phrase implies a unity in either case.

tained was his own. In this seemingly casual and fond glance over the shoulder, the bard dwells at length on the early growth of his Leaves:

> . . . a desire that had been flitting through my previous life, or hovering on the flanks, mostly indefinite hitherto, had steadily advanced to the front, defined itself, and finally dominated everything else. This was a feeling or ambition to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic Personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America--and to exploit that Personality, identified with place and date, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book.
>
> Perhaps this is in brief, or suggests, all I have sought to do. Given the Nineteenth Century, with the United States, and what they furnish as area and points of view, 'Leaves of Grass' is, or seeks to be, simply a faithful and doubtless self-will'd record. In the midst of all it gives one man's--the author's--identity, ardors, observations, faiths, and thoughts, color'd hardly at all with any decided coloring from other faiths or other identities.[19]

Whitman realized the efficacy of staying with the subject he knew best--himself--making use, as the artist ultimately does, of his own experiences, musings, dreams, and imaginings. Though it lies beyond the scope of this paper to determine definitively the relationship between the author and his work, it is possible to discern how Whitman planned to utilize, or as he put it, "to exploit," this personality, again by reference to his prose writings. In "A Backward

---

[19]Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition, eds. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York, 1965), p. 563. Hereafter it will be cited as LG:CRE.

Glance" he indicated that in looking ahead he determined that the personality would be "identified with place and date"; then he went on:

> I saw, from the time my enterprise and questionings positively shaped themselves (how best can I express my own distinctive era and surroundings, America, Democracy?) that the trunk and centre whence the answer was to radiate, and to which all should return from straying however far a distance, must be an identical body and soul, a personality--which personality, after many considerations and ponderings I deliberately settled should be myself--indeed could not be any other.[20]

As well as reiterating that the personality must be himself, Whitman makes special note that he will express democracy; succeeding chapters of this paper will show to what extent the concept of democracy dominates the thinking of the personality created.

Whitman wanted to capture as fully as humanly possible his times, and to project them for all times through the vehicle of an "identical body and soul," which he maintained tallied with himself. The acts and words of this projected personality would reflect an illustration of a man and through him his time, Whitman hoped. But, in addition, he had a purpose which was to extend beyond--to transcend--the merely personal and contemporary; he wished to project an illustration which each man of his era, and each man down through all future eras, could refer to, even relate to. This intent is made clear in the 1872 Preface, with its title

---

[20] LG:CRE, p. 569. Whitman was to again characteristically restate the general ideas of this section on p. 566 and pp. 573-574.

symbolizing his concept of Democracy, "As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free":

> Leaves of Grass, already published, is, in its intentions, the song of a great composite Democratic Individual, male or female.[21]

Paradoxically, his illustrative personality has taken on a bi-sexuality, but there is no swerving from his evolving intent, for in the 1876 Preface to Leaves of Grass and Two Rivulets he states:

> Then I meant Leaves of Grass, as published, to be the Poem of Identity, (of Yours, whoever you are, now reading these lines) . . . . . For genius must realize that, precious as it may be, there is something far more precious, namely, simple Identity, One's-self.[22]

The concept that is so important here, expressed so often in the poems, is that what holds for the personality projected, in a broad sense, holds true for each man for himself: each man tallies with the personality in its generic/cosmic aspects. As Whitman so aptly put it:

> To sing the Song of that divine law of Identity, and of Yourself, consistently with the Divine Law of the Universal, is a main intention of those Leaves.[23]

In this respect the personality and the book transcend time and specificity, to express Whitman's key philosophical concept--eidólons--beyond all appearance lies the reality and oneness of soul.

---

[21] LG:CRE, p. 743.

[22] LG:CRE, p. 750.

[23] LG:CRE, p. 751.

CHAPTER III

THE PERSONALITY ILLUSTRATED IN THE FIRST LEAF OF GRASS

The personality Whitman projected in the first Leaf may be most sharply delineated by examining in turn each of ten key facets as through a filter, proceeding roughly from the physical toward the transcendent. The first facet to be portrayed is that of the Ostensive Man, as the speaker himself says he would be seen.

1. THE OSTENSIVE MAN

The speaker sees himself as "stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical" (42).[24] He is an urban dweller (59), but an intimate of nature as well, with his foot pressed to the earth (246). Later he is to note that "This is the city .... and I am one of the citizens" (1070). He says he is aware of the events around him and is in contact with people, implying a rather normal relationship with the world (60-64). But, he says paradoxically, any part of himself

---

[24]Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (New York, 1855). All references to Leaves of Grass, 1855, will be to line numbers in the particular poems. These references will, of course, be appropriate to the various facsimile editions of Leaves of Grass, 1855, currently in print, such as Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (New York, 1855), facsim. edn. (New York: Eakins Press, 1966); or, the Leaves of Grass, 1855, facsimile reprint with an Introduction by Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1960). The latter has verses numbered. All unspaced periods are in original text.

seen in the above context is "not the Me myself . . . . what I am, / Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary" (65-67), but is "not contained between my hat and boots" (124). What he is, the reader comes to find out, is the soul which overlies the visible, physical man.

The speaker sees himself as "tenacious, acquisitive, tireless" (139), "hankering, gross, mystical, nude" (388). He claims that he is:

> A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,
> A novice beginning experient of myriads of seasons
> . . . . (341-342)

Then he lists a long series of persons he says he is and occupations he fills. But the reader will come to learn that much of what he is comes from his assimilations (see the section below on the Assimilator).

The speaker is a beef-eater (389). He is optimistic (393) and non-conforming: "I cock my hat as I please indoors or out" (397).

The poet of the body and soul (422-423) with "freckles and a bristling beard" (468), and "white locks" (1327), says he is:

> Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos,
> Disorderly fleshy and sensual .... eating drinking and breeding,
> No sentimentalist .... no stander above men and women or apart from them .... no more modest than immodest. (499-501)

He is blunt and frank (521-529), and keenly aware of his physical self--his bowels, armpits, skin, sexual parts, blood and sperm, breast and brains, and head, beard and brawn (522-

537). The sounds of his environment match the sounds anyone might hear; perhaps it is only that a poet's ear is differently, more finely, tuned to sensations: "I have instant conductors all over me" (614), he says.

"The friendly and flowing savage" (974), who speaks "words simple as grass" (980), goes with "uncombed head and laughter and naivete; / Slowstepping feet and the common features" (980-981) and "behavior lawless as snow-flakes" (980). He imagines himself speaking with "voice, orotund sweeping and final" (1051) of matters "refreshing and wicked and real" (1060). "I know perfectly well my own egotism" (1079), he says, with perfect equanimity:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then .... I contradict myself;
> I am large .... I contain multitudes. (1314-1316)

Defiantly, at the end of his song he says:

> I too am not a bit tamed .... I too am untranslatable.
> I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.
> (1322-1323)

2. THE SENSUALIST

The speaker has an acute awareness of his senses and of sensory impressions, as he shows almost immediately. He begins by evoking images of smell and taste (6-12); then the other senses come into play, though without neglecting taste and smell (13-21). When the Sensualist returns to the scene (140-159), sight and sound images tumble from his thoughts. The vignette of haying time (160-167) evokes through sight and kinesthesia a feeling of actual participation.

At the beginning of the longest tally[25] the Sensualist says:

> I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen,
> And accrue what I hear into myself .... and let
> sounds contribute toward me. (584-585)

His receptors bring him quiet sounds, brash sounds, harsh sounds and melodic sounds.

When the speaker says:

> Mine is no callous shell,
> I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass
> or stop,
> They seize every object and lead it harmlessly
> through me . . . (613-615)

he is concerned with another sense, that of touch. But it seems, from the intense reaction it causes, more than a mere contact. When he adds, "To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can stand" (617), this is more than the sense of touch, is intensified by more than the hint of sexual overtones. This is touch augmented by kinesthesia.

To return for a moment to an earlier part of the poem, the speaker seems to get sensual pleasure from the beating of his heart, the expansion of his lungs (15); speaking of the "bank by the wood" (11), he is "mad for it to be in contact" (12) with him. He derives sensory pleasure from the act of loafing (5), and observing a spear of grass (75). The muscular

---

[25]Throughout this paper this more dynamic term will be used to denote what is normally referred to as Whitman's catalogs. For a detailed discussion of the significance of this term see: F. DeWolfe Miller, "Whitman's Tally, Put at Random," Tennessee Studies in Literature: Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler, TSL Special Number (Knoxville, 1961), pp. 151-161.

tensions which a body sets up even in such a relaxed position as this stir him deeply enough for him to voice this pleasure. The speaker's finely developed tactile sense, then, seems closely tied to his sense of kinesthesia, for it is pressure and movement and tension that stir both sets of sensory nerves.

Returning to the section presently under discussion, when the Sensualist asks, "Is this then a touch? .... quivering me to a new identity" (618), he is indicating that this augmented sense of touch charges and changes him continually; kinesthesia makes the contact more intense. That this is so may be indicated when he gasps:

> You villain touch! what are you doing .... my breath is tight in its throat . . . (639)

The sensations have become too much for him; he begs for surcease. This is more than a sexual touch for it results in an acute stimulation of all his other senses as well, which continues through line 651. On another level the speaker who desperately wants to be in touch with humanity finds that during an orgasmic moment he loses control of his wits (637), but is rewarded with a "recompense richer afterward" (644). He stands on the "curb prolific and vital" (645), that is--energized. The panorama before him can be seen in all its glory.

Now the Sensualist stands front and center on the stage; for the next 250 lines images primarily of sight, but also of sounds, tastes, touches, smells, and kinesthesia run one after the other.

Two other examples of the Sensualist bear noting. First, so intensely can he feel the agonies of the sufferers and the martyrs who are tallied after line 827 that he says his face "is ash-colored, . . . sinews gnarl" (950), with the cholera patient.

Secondly, as the Answerer is about to address the crowd he likens the words he is holding back to music: he does not imagine he can hear them, but that he can "feel the thrum of their climax and close" (1055); the words agitate his muscle nerve endings, so deeply is he stirred. In this way the speaker is more in contact with his environment than the average person.

3. THE SEXUALIST

Almost immediately the speaker indicates that he has a heightened awareness of sex; his emphasis on erotic connotations is seen in his use of the words "perfumes," "fragrance," and "intoxicate" (6-8), followed by "The atmosphere . . . is for my mouth forever .... I am in love with it" (9-10). "Buzzed whispers .... loveroot, silkthread, crotch and vine" (14) add to the cumulative effect. He uses other words which refer to or connote sex or sex acts: "urge" and "procreant urge" (36-37), and "breed" (39), then the startling image of God as "a loving bedfellow" (52), which, coupled with the bulging baskets of the next line, presents an inescapable picture.

The speaker uses the terminology of sexual union to

evoke symbolically the union of the body and soul (78-81); the next line gives the fulfillment of that union, "peace and joy and knowledge" (82). Allegorically, lines 193-210 are the embodiment of a person filled with loneliness and desire, couched in frankly erotic terms: "An unseen hand . . . descended tremblingly" (206) down their torsos, then their contorting bodies.

Later, the climax of the speaker's love affair with the earth is presented in frank, sexual terms:

> Prodigal! you have given me love! .... therefore I to you give love!
> O unspeakable passionate love!
>
> Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight!
> We hurt each other as the bridegroom and the bride hurt each other. (447-450)

The earth becomes a voluptuous lover, a replenisher.

The sexuality of the speaker becomes again apparent when he states blandly, "Copulation is no more rank with me than death is" (523) and "I believe in the flesh and the appetites" (525).

The song's most erotic passage begins with "If I worship any particular thing it shall be some of the spread of my body" (530), and continues through line 544, though it vies in this respect with the "Song to Sunrise," with its rays of light as "libidinous prongs" (557), its "bright juice" (558), and "exuding" (555) as outright erotic imagery.

The sexual aspect of the speaker can next be heard in the following passage, when he exults, "I hear the trained soprano .... she convulses me like the climax of my love-grip"

(602), while "The orchestra . . . wrenches unnamable ardors from my breast " (603-604). Kinesthetic feelings would heighten this impression. In the line preceding this is another sexual image, oral-erotic in nature--the mighty tenor's voice filling a music hall and penetrating to one's inner being. So moved is he by the event that he cannot describe his emotions further. This is extraordinary imagery, perhaps the epitome of the speaker's extremely acute sensitivity.

The next use of erotic symbolism is the complex image of sensations touching the Assimilator and raping him (618-646). In contrast, when he turns to matter-of-fact examples of procreation in the rest of nature he speaks more calmly, "Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, and the stud to the mare, and the cock is treading the hen" (757). But the intensity returns as he even enters the bed of the bride; so acute are his senses he becomes the alter-bridegroom (814-815). The juxtaposition of the next vignette makes the situation more poignant, for this might be seen as the same woman losing her husband.

The speaker next uses an erotic image to convey how he implants knowledge:

> On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes,
> This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics. (1001-1002)

But his sexual imagery culminates in his vision of the people with whom he comes in contact as lovers crowding and accosting

him in the dark (1170-1178). Another aspect of the speaker, the Answerer, will return in like manner what he acquires here.

4. THE NATURALIST

The naturalistic bent of the speaker is at first seen negatively. Though perforce he must at times breathe the perfume of houses (6), he will not be seduced or overwhelmed by the fragrances (7-8). Rather he will absorb the clean air of the outdoors.

When a child brings him handfuls of grass, asking what are they, literally or figuratively, the speaker says, "How could I answer the child? .... I do not know what it is any more than he" (91). For an answer he must turn to transcendent philosophy.

The speaker finds pungent meaning in the eyes of an ox, the winging of a duck, song of a swamp bird (228-237); he says these are symbolic of all aspects of the natural scene. (He sees in them transcendent meaning.) He adds that the gander, moose, the house cat and turkey hen (237-244) all reflect to him the "same old law" (245). He is "enamored of growing outdoors" (248); he equates his purpose to the intricacy of April rain or mica-veined rock (382). He should astonish no more than daylight or a bird singing (384), ironically, for when analyzed these very manifestations of nature do astonish.

The speaker sings a love song to Nature, to the earth,

night and the sea (436-461), often considered the loveliest lyric in the poem, which is consummated in his integration, or union, with Nature (461). He reiterates his rapport with Nature when he finds that even a morning-glory at his window is significant (551). The truths of the natural scene penetrate deep into his soul like the "damp of the night" (653) and have more effect than "logic and sermons" (652).

This is followed by a tally solely of the affective aspects of nature. In lines 662-668 the speaker stresses the fact that the most miniscule members of nature's heirarchy have significance. By equating his uniquitous grass with the grandeur of the stars, he glorifies the small, the commonplace and the plebian in a startling series of images. He equates the plain with the beautiful and he would decorate the "parlors of heaven" with the "running blackberry" (665). None of the affective aspects of the natural scene can escape his ken; "I follow quickly" (683) he asserts. Then he tallies the attributes which the animals have which are superior to man's (684-691). These are the "tokens" which at some time man had lost sight of (692-695). The crescendo of this section of the poem culminates in the scene, couched in near sexual ecstasy, where the speaker celebrates his "brotherhood" with a glistening stallion (700-708).

The long tally which follows (715-865) intermingles natural impressions with images and vignettes of people, in both natural and man-made settings. The speaker, who depends on nature for much of his effective imagery, finally rejects

cities, buildings, and rooms, and embraces the natural world, both figuratively and literally. In turn, another aspect of the speaker, the Assimilator, depends heavily on the Naturalistic aspect of the speaker, for he has found a calmness and order in nature, which is to be admired; the animals bring him tokens of himself, truths he himself, in an earlier identity, may have lost.

5. THE LONELY MAN

Perhaps the most paradoxical aspect of the speaker is the Lonely Man, because, while on two occasions he expresses his loneliness in excrutiating terms, much of the time he is not lonely. At other times he seems to revel in his solitude. This aspect, as well, is enigmatic, for he expresses his separation from his fellowman allegorically.

At first there is the man of the city who likes its perfumed rooms (6-8). Yet almost immediately he indicates that he feels compelled to avoid the intoxications of the city. He contrasts this peopled-place where he is with where he desires to go, "to the bank by the wood" (11), seemingly isolated. Next he juxtaposes his "delight alone or in the rush of the streets" (20).

The speaker acknowledges his paradoxical nature when he suggests he is:

> Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it. (70)

But the most elusive, enigmatic, and troublesome lines of the

poem, which involve the Lonely Man, tell the allegory of the swimmer(s) (193-210), a symbol to which the speaker returns again and again. These lines are an expression of loneliness as well as desire, though it is by no means certain whose feelings are represented. If the "bank" in line 196 is related to the one in line 11, the images tend to reinforce this tone of loneliness. If in this episode at the beach the speaker is represented allegorically by the woman in the house, then he-she, with a hand which "descended tremblingly" (207), quenches his-her desire with physical contact.

Antithetically, at other times the speaker seems to glory in his separateness; "I cock my hat as I please indoors and out" (397), he says in strident tone.

On another occasion, this man who often chooses to loaf on a hill or to stand aloof in a crowd, comes to crave the sound of a human voice and cannot long deny himself contact with mankind, a contact where he may be consumed by a touch (618-642). The "headland" in this section carries some suggestion of the "bank" in the allegory mentioned above.

From this point the Lonely aspect of the speaker is suppressed; perhaps as he philosophizes he comes to realize he is never really alone, for he has his oneness with his God. Taking the first Leaf as a whole, the Lonely Man, who will appear again in later leaves, is rather unobtrusive.

6. THE ASSIMILATOR

The Assimilator gains his experiences through his varied senses; thus this aspect is an amalgam of the aspects previously discussed. And incorporated into the Assimilator are the related aspects of Observer, Absorber and Experiencer.

The speaker at first tries to portray himself as a relaxed, even dispassionate observer, calmly "observing a spear of summer grass" (5). However, it is soon apparent that this observer is seldom emotionally distant from the experiences he is collating in his mind. "To elaborate is no avail" (40); the minute impression can be as meaningful as any--this theme the speaker reiterates, again and again. He places himself, he says, "Apart from the pulling and hauling" (66) of daily life, in a spot where he can observe with a dissociated inner eye, yet because of this paradoxical element in his nature--the manner in which he tries to stand apart, yet is drawn in--the soprano's voice will agitate him to the depth of his being (602).

The speaker has an affinity for all men and women (85); all their voices are sounding a message, which is the timelessness of life (120). He merges with the people (136) so that he may better receive their impulses. But he need not be there in person; their vibrations (157) or resonances (159) will reach him.

For a long time the Assimilator is at work, earnestly

building his house of experiences, real or vicarious (140-192). And again (211-324), the "tenacious, acquisitive, tireless" (139) collector makes his rounds, soaking up a hundred experiences and more, ending with the key statement:

> And these one and all tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
> And such as it is to be of these more or less I am. (324-325)

His identity is developed and enriched by these assimilations. He sees himself as an Everyman, of all states and countries, "of old and young" (326), "a novice" (342), yet "a teacher of the thoughtfulest" (341).

In developing an understanding of the Assimilator, the sunrise he celebrates (552-561) takes on an added significance when he says:

> Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sunrise would kill me,
> If I could not now and always send sunrise out of me.
>
> We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
> We found our own my soul in the calm and cool of the daybreak. (562-565)

The dawning is symbolic of acquired knowledge; now all that he has assimilated he must let out of himself. And the speaker finds his voice asking him, "Walt, you understand enough .... why don't you let it out then?" (570). But he is not yet ready to speak to all (584), for he seems to have decided that he has not yet assimilated enough experiences--he has much tallying yet to do. His next thought, beginning the second half of the poem, is:

> I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen,

> And accrue what I hear into myself .... and let
> sounds contribute toward me. (584-585)

He will assimilate sounds: with his finely-tuned ear he will absorb "the bustle of growing wheat" (586), voices, city sounds, whistles and bells (587-594), all these and more. Then the speaker reaches a height of experiencing as his imagination turns to recall the effects of music, especially grand-opera, on his psyche (599). The vibrations and resonances of other experiences are minor when compared to the height to which he is stirred by the thrust of the orchestra. In decidedly sexual imagery he describes how he is stirred to the depths of his being.

After describing how he is able to absorb these myriad experiences through his extra-perceptive sensors (613-615), he dramatizes their sensitivity by telling of his rape by his tactile sense. But he is enriched by the rain of impressions which come afterward (644). This is followed by the unique tally of the small creatures and plants of the universe equated with its broadest sweep (662-673). From here the Assimilator sees himself ceaselessly striving:

> Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
> Gathering and showing more always . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . afoot with my vision. (696-697, 714)

This is followed by more than 100 examples of his assimilations (715-800), and the restatement of his desire to take in all knowledge (801-802). After this interjection, his fancy carries him adventuring again, experience-gathering (804-813).

Thus, for 150 lines the Assimilator walks abroad with his vision. Significantly or not, he starts out from the city, but his vision soon has carried him into the country side, and from one end of the country to the other, and abroad, while, in his mind's eye he assimilates all these multi-hued experiences, real or imagined. Soon the speaker begins to describe certain of his visions in more detail (after line 819). He--his vision--is present at a shipwreck (820-827); he savors the experience. Liking it he pours it into his melting pot of phenomena. Martyrs and sufferers, "All these I feel or am" (833), he says, then sweeps through the gamut of the agonized: "the hounded slave" (834), "the mashed fireman" (843), "an old artillerist" (853), the martyred 412 young men (867-899), rising to a crescendo of the vivid picture of the sea-fight (890-932). As the peak of sound slides away, with the "hiss" and "gnawing" of the surgeon's tools (930) followed by the sailor's "short wild scream" and "long dull tapering groan" (931), the speaker turns to still other sufferers--the tortured Indian (934-935), a dead president (936), occupants of prison hulks (937)--all of these he becomes. Yet he continues, "I become as much more as I like" (940), prisoner, mutineer, cholera patient, until he finds himself "replenished with supreme power" (964).

Here the Assimilator leaves off, surfeited; the "acme" (1148) has been reached. This aspect may represent the key to the paradox centering around the Lonely Man, for the contacts with people (as well as with animals, places and

things), through assimilation, produce his identity (618). All these infused images contribute to the last three aspects of the speaker--the Philosopher, the Celebrator, and the Answerer. Before turning to them, however, one other aspect, the Democrat, will be considered.

7. THE DEMOCRAT

The Democrat may also be referred to as the Egalitarian; indeed, the former seldom exists without a large measure of the latter; the speaker seems convinced of this.

After the seeming arrogance of the speaker's first outburst, he immediately tempers it with the democratic statement:

> And what I assume you shall assume,
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (2-3)

The moderating effect of these words is easily lost, however, in the sheer audacity of the opening line, and under the weight of other egotistical statements yet to come.

The speaker next evinces his democratic bent when he says, "all the men ever born are also my brothers .... and the women my sisters and lovers" (85). He returns again and again to restatements of this basic idea; the continued use of the symbolism of grass is a good example.

Unobtrusively the speaker's key symbol of democracy, "a spear of summer grass" (5), makes its appearance; the same is true when it appears again (75). The casual grass takes on much greater significance when it becomes "a uniform

hieroglyphic" (97). Because of the emphasis the speaker places here on this "handkerchief of the Lord" (93), it may be relevant to sum up how often these *gramineae*--wheat, rice, oats, barley, sugarcane, sorghum, corn (maize), millet, timothy, and even bamboo--are on his mind. A list of all the times he thinks of grasses, the most ubiquitous and prevelant vegetation on earth, and thus the most democratic living symbol possible, would include more than thirty-five in the first poem alone; but more importantly, on three occasions a grass metaphor encompasses a whole passage of the poem. Grass, as a token of equality pervades the Egalitarian's mind.

This revelation is followed by the first long tally--a representative listing of those the Democrat envisions as occupants of his land of liberty--which culmimates with the speaker saying he is all of these, and is equal with all of these. Recalling his token of grass, the Egalitarian says that the thought of, or knowledge of, the democratic identity is "the tasteless water of souls . . . the true sustenance" (361). He continues, "I play not a march for victors only .... I play great marches for conquered and slain persons" (366). He sees all people as so exactly equal that he can state with perfect equanimity:

> In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barleycorn less,
> And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.
> (401-402)

Here the Egotist and the Humanist (see The Celebrator, Section Nine, below) are juxtaposed; the speaker sees himself

the equal of the exalted, but also of the lowest; the seed of one of the grasses emphasized the exact evenness. Then for a reversal of his normal thinking, he turns the tables and imputes his vices and virtues to the rest of humanity.

After announcing himself publicly, democratically removing the locks and even the doors from his symbolic dwelling (502-503), he shouts, no doubt in his orotund voice:

> I speak the password primeval .... I give the sign of democracy;
> By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms. (507-508)

This is followed by the tally of the voices of those the Democrat will accept and represent: those who have been unheard down through the ages, all the oppressed, downtrodden, and heretofore considered sinful voices, these the speaker will stand up for (509-520).

The Democratic aspect of the speaker is next encountered at the end of the second long tally, where, as he did at the end of the first, he equates himself with all, "[I am] one of an average unending procession" (964). Untiringly, he reiterates his philosophy of equality:

> I do not ask who you are .... that is not important to me,
> You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you. (997-998)

No matter what the depths of one's sin, deprivation, error, he will include each in his scheme of things. Although he is primarily concerned with those at the lower end of the scale at this point, by implication he accepts all.

After expounding on his philosophy at some length, the Democrat, metaphorically comparing the floundering of his listeners to that of a whale, exclaims knowingly, "How the flukes splash!" (1112); but as the doubters squirm and worry, he reassures them that all may go forward with him and be saved (1123-1132).

At this point, as the speaker's philosophical outpouring approaches a climax, the Egalitarian is merged with the Philosopher for the remainder of the poem.

8. THE PHILOSOPHER

To trace the next aspect of the speaker, it is necessary to return to the beginning of the first Leaf. The Philosopher-Missionary-Mystic-Pantheist first comes into view in a manner calculated to create a shock wave--he derogatorily addresses the listener, admonishing him for his complacency (22-24). Then, having gotten the listener's attention, in a somewhat gentler tone he makes his barker's pitch to him--with the Philosopher's help and guidelines anyone will be able to assimilate the necessary knowledge to go forward (25-29). The Philosopher preferring to unfold it bit by bit does not at this point tell his listener the whole story. The barker-missionary would seduce the listener to come into his tent of learning, and leave whole, with the "good of the earth and sun" (26). Now, once he has captured the listener's attention, as a builder would, he begins to frame his structure. He is concerned not with the beginning and

the end; there is only the "now" (32). The "urge" (36) is a desire to create, to give birth to a poem, a philosophy, and a system. But he can give only the basic structure; "To elaborate is no avail" (40). Next the Philosopher begins to expound his pantheism, to show he is a believer in the synthesis of all religions and philosophies into one. First there is the "now" which is equal to the always (32-35). Inherent in these lines is the belief that one can always start over; the beginning can be now. This is perhaps the most optimistic philosophy a man can conceive of: no matter how low he has fallen, he may always turn toward salvation--now. The identity--the individual and the way he conducts himself at the moment--is all-important. The speaker feels that his knowledge is basic and certain; "Clear and sweet is my soul .... and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul " (44). The paradox of the "mystery" (43) is resolved by the idea that "the unseen is proved by seen" (45); the existence of the soul is proven by the reality of the body. The speaker's pantheism takes in God, who is merged in his mind, leaving him with an overflowing of knowledge (53) which he is hesitant to deal with at the moment (54-57). Next the speaker addresses his soul, giving it equality with his body (73-74) and asks that the soul sing to him (77). Then in one of his characteristic sexual images he recalls the union of his body and soul, when he acquired "peace and joy and knowledge" (82). He acknowledges God as the originator of his body and his soul (83-84), then into this union

he transcendentally ties all men and women (85). As his philosophy expands, grass becomes a symbol embodying hope (92), a remembrancer from God (93-94). Grass is a child of nature (96); therefore hope is a child of nature. "The smallest sprout shows there is really no death" (117); there is always grass, more grass. The speaker states his categorical belief in immortality; one is as lucky to die as he is to be born (122-123).

"Every caste and religion" (343) go to make up the speaker's pantheism. After his blunt statement that, "[I] am not stuck up, and am in my place" (349), the speaker quickly transcends the narrowness of this view by stating that all are in their places; from the individual on out to the distant planetary systems there is a unity to the universe (350-352).

Next, with distinctly biblical allusions, the philosopher offers his figurative meal, knowledge, "the meat and drink for natural hunger" (372), to the listener. Then to this solitary listener he begins confidentially to unfold his philosophy (386-387); he will astonish, if natural phenomena astonish (383-385). He will describe the "I am" (413) so that the listener will better comprehend himself (391-392). The Philosopher hammers home his certainty of immortality again, adding to his symbolic image of building a house (407, 419-421). He proclaims himself poet of the sensual world (body) and of the spiritual world (soul), and interpreter of the two (422-425). Speaking positively, not finding fault,

he will examine the world for its own value, standing indifferent (470).

The dwelling which is his philosophical house is not made up of scientific facts (488-494); it is made up of life (495). (This dwelling is in one sense himself; his soul is the major tenant).

Then the Philosopher dramatically reveals himself as:

> Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos, (499)

who inspired and conceived of this philosophy of the house of life (506). The voice of the weak and the oppressed will speak through him (509-520), for he epitomizes the divinity of the individual (526).

From the crescendo of ecstasy in music he makes a transcendental shift to the philosophic question of being, employing the sense of touch (kinesthesia) to drive home his point: there is truth hidden in even the slightest contact (618-652). With his basically optimistic outlook the speaker looks ahead and sees men and women "become lovers and lamps" (657) of knowledge.

Some 300 lines later, as he completes the roll of the agonized the speaker sees himself in a whirl, on the "verge of the usual mistake" (957), the error of being self-centered, of feeling that suffering or pain is only one's own province; then he is swept back into the agony of Christ, the ultimate martyr, on the cross, whose grave is equated with the many (958-962). This revelation leads to a symbolic resurrection

of his own soul (with overtones of Christ's) as he shouts, "I troop forth replenished with supreme power" (964). Seeing his pupils, the people arrive (969); he fancies they have acquired an understanding of him as he has of them (979).

Lines 988-1133 are an introduction to the grand finale; the speaker will address the people gathered. He begins by saying, "What I give I give out of myself" (992), not something fabricated, not words only, but experience (992). He tells how he will reinforce the weak (993-995), accept the poor and unfortunate (999), give the dying, life (1003-1014), aid the sick (1015), and the well, who need help more than the sick (1016), so that in the morning, which is the rebirth, all will rise with knowledge (1014).

"Magnifying" all that he has assimilated, he begins "applying" (1020) his knowledge to those gathered. His philosophy absorbs all religions, he tells them "Honestly taking them all from what they are worth, and not a cent more" (1028), but finding as much in the experiences of this era as in the past (1032-1049). This thought is reiterated in lines 1082-1106.

After reassuring the doubters that:

> I do not know what is untried and afterward,
> But I know it is sure and alive and sufficient (1120-1121),

the speaker steps bravely forward toward the unknown (1134). Seeing eternity reflected in the mirror behind and the future shining ahead like a beacon (1135-1138), he asks the oppressed to forget their troubles and go forward (1145-1147). He tells

how he believes his psyche evolved form the "huge first Nothing" (1153); it is now a compendium of all that has taken place up to the present (1166-1167), all of which will in turn be part of what comes after (1180). He tells of gazing out at night at the stars, which lead him to contemplate with ever expanding vision the sheer enormity of the universe and to make a transcendent leap to the infinity of eternity (1182-1196). Paradoxically, at the end of this "limitless space" and "limitless time" (1195-1196), God is waiting (1197). But the mentor here will only point out the way forward (1206), for each must travel the road for himself (1208). He tells those he confronts of asking his spirit if he would find fulfillment in heaven. His spirit answered no, there would be a continuing quest (1218-1219), seemingly an extension of the one on earth. Beyond this, each must find the answer for himself (1221). But sit and partake of sustenance, which is knowledge and spirit, he tells the traveler, to gather strength for the journey (1222-1230).

After divulging these tantalizing clues, the speaker begins a summary of much of what he has been saying:

> I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
> And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
> And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's-self is,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . any man or woman shall stand cool and supercilious before a million universes. (1262-1264, 1270)

Live, see God today, for manifestations of him are everywhere (1276-1280).

At the end is "a word unsaid" (1302), but the speaker changes his mind and tells those gathered the word; that "it is form and union and plan .... it is eternal life .... it is happiness" (1308).

With line 1308 the speaker's address to the people ends; from here he is alone, except for his God, preparing to pass on to his "next fold of the future" (1310). He admits his contradictions (1315), for he is made up of an infinity of shadings (1316). The physical aspect of the speaker, having fulfilled his destiny here on earth, figuratively returns to the dust (1329), performing his last temporal service by mingling with the earth; as he does so he returns to his great democratic symbol--grass (1329). But expect to find him on ahead; "I stop some where waiting for you" (1336), he ends, optimistically.

The optimistic Philosopher believes that the individual, who is the dominant entity in the universe, next to God, may have a spiritual rebirth at any time--at any moment he may begin again. But he must construct the house of his rebirth himself. The speaker likewise believes in the dominant importance of the present, and that every moment must be dazzling. He has a strong conviction in immortality, which is not a state man should wait for; he must strive with body and soul on this earth.

9. THE CELEBRATOR

I CELEBRATE myself . . .

begins the speaker of this song, the Celebrator, who comprises two polarized and seemingly paradoxical aspects, the Egotist and the Humanist. The speaker celebrates himself, he honors and commemorates himself. But in virtually the same breath he includes in his ritual the listener: "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (3). The poem quickly rises to its first crescendo of egotism (9-17), where the speaker almost writhes with the sensations he feels. Next the speaker celebrates the present time, the "now" (31-35); he proclaims a oneness of time, as he has also found a unity in people. The current (polarized current?) which can be seen running throughout the poem peaks again with the speaker's statement that "[I] . . . am not stuck up, and am in my place" (349); he exhibits a smug, supreme confidence in his knowledge and his plan, an egotism which is almost immediately tempered with the extension of this aptness of place to a universal level, all suns and systems (351). "In confidence" (386) this egotist will explain his "I am" (403), his selfness, to the listener. Again the purpose is that the listener might better know himself (391-392, 354). This "hankering, gross, mystical, nude" (388) ego, desirous of knowledge, coarse, yet mystical in his dissemination of it, opening his psyche to all, asks, "What is a man anyhow? What am I? and what are you?" (390). Then to answer his own question and show what he thinks men should be like, he replies, "I cock my hat as I please indoors or out" (397). But he has softened this egotism by asking the listener to match him with his

own experience and self (391). Optimism (393-395), a healthy outlook (396), and independence (397) are honored as vital parts of the psyche, both the speaker's and the listener's. Yet again he proclaims, "In all people I see myself" (401). This "solid and sound" (403) celebrator sees all the events of the universe "written to" (405) him; he "must get what the writing means" (405).

The egotist comes forward again; "I know I am august" (409). He feels his own majestic dignity; his own grandness is evident to him in the fact of his existence (413). He can ignore decay and death (420), for he comprehends infinity (421). The Celebrator sees himself as the poet, who celebrates all manifestations, here, above, or below (422-425). He sings of a swelling universal pride not only for himself (429). He praises all states of being, from hate to friendship, then from friendship to love (462). "This minute" (479) is celebrated as the equal of all the minutes that have passed (480, 486). Now the Celebrator names himself, Walt Whitman, and celebrates himself--a diamond in the rough, a kosmos (499-501),--then enlarges his song into a tally of all those parts of him to be celebrated (521-544). Since there is nothing he is afraid to talk about, there is no need to keep anything back; bowels, armpits, and head are equally worthy of celebration (522, 527-528).[26] The Egotist pushes

---

[26]The shock value of this attitude is comparable to the opening remarks of the Philosopher.

forth (526-528); this is followed by a celebration of self merging into a celebration of natural phenomena (529-544). His exclamations, "I dote on myself .... there is that lot of me, and all so luscious, / Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy" (545-546), are a positive ecstasy of self-love, another crescendo as in lines 9 through 17, which fades, as he considers with wonder routine physical acts, into an ode to sunrise, yet another ecstatic peak (552-561). The speaker proclaims his affinity with these natural processes (662-683). He celebrates animals and his oneness with them, for they bring him "tokens" of himself (684-708); he sees his relationship to them; he learns from them. In the vignette which ends this passage, the speaker celebrates man's kinship with nature by declaring his brotherhood with the stallion (700-708). This is followed by a tally commemorating the part these events had in forming his psyche (714-812). Then as the speaker lists the agonies of the martyrs (816-950), he is commemorating their part of the building of the nation as well as their share in what he himself is and in the message he has.

The egotist equates his realization of the significance of the martyrs and sufferers with God's martyrdom (958-960) and sees himself resurrected as God, or as God was (963). Then as he troops "forth replenished with supreme power" (964) --a Messiah--he ironically imagines that his students (the people) understand him (970). From line 974 to 1049 the egotist is expounding before the people gathered to listen. The Egotist

and perhaps the wistful, lonely man is speaking in these lines, for earth is awaiting his actions (986); "Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him" (978) he tells them; "You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you" (998).

As the speaker explains his philosophy, which includes all religions, with a supreme bit of ego, he takes them "all for what they are worth and not a cent more" (1028). He does not object to "special revelations" but he clearly sees them as of no more import than a "curl of smoke" (1034). "I know perfectly well my own egotism" (1079), he blandly states, but avows that he feels compelled to speak, for he is attempting to bring everyone up even with him (1079-1081). From his podium he says that:

> I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser of things to be. (1148)

He holds somehow all knowledge and control of the universe, which as the Humanist he proclaims he will use to help as much as and as long as he can on the journey (1214-1221), giving what food--knowledge--(1223) he can to aid the traveler. This contributes to his image as a christlike figure--a Messiah. The speaker says even he who surpasses him elates him, for though he himself is the teacher, the student passes him on his own merits (1233-1234). He is not concerned that people may not learn the first time; he will always be there to reiterate, to goad if necessary (1240-1242). And too, he is only speaking what all know deep down in their

own souls; he is only loosening the ties (1244-1245).

The speaker celebrates more than has been discussed in detail under this heading. For example, he honors sexual acts and unions, a topic which has already been discussed in Section Three. The speaker celebrates the man, the body, the soul, but especially the mind, for it can "call any thing close again when I desire it" (673), he says. As the Egotist he celebrates himself, but more than himself it is each individual self and soul (each part struck from the float), in the universe that he honors. There is an arrogance here, but it is an arrogance born of a feeling of certainty, of confidence in the value of the self; "And any man or woman shall stand cool and supercilious before a million universes" (1270), he concludes.

From a first reading an impression of the speaker's strong sense of egotism is sure to be carried away. But the speaker continually justifies his apparently egotistical stand by placing it in the context of humanity; he is saying to his listener/reader: I celebrate myself, but in doing so I honor you and all mankind. His egotism is balanced by its application to the breadth of humanity and to the universal. Thus the Egotist is balanced by the Humanist. But, transcending this level, even, the Celebrator is justified by the Philosopher's concept of eidolons.

10. THE POET

The Poet-Answerer, encompassing the Prophet, the Messianic

aspect, and the Sharer, finally enfolds all the other aspects of the speaker, a merging completed when the Poet[27] stands ready to speak to the crowd gathered before him.

In one respect it may be said that the Poetic aspect of the speaker is suggested in the first line, for if a celebration is a public honoring, then a poem is a traditional device for celebrating, be it a marriage, a country, a philosophy, or an individual. This poem may be said to honor all; the marriage of the body and soul, these democratic states, eidólons, and emphatically the self:

> I CELEBRATE myself . . . (1)

he begins.

The speaker next shows his concern with poetry when he asks:

> Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?
>
> Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems . . . . (24-25)

This is the first indication to the listener that from this knowledge, from this poem, he can get the answers: for the speaker will give to the listener "the good of the earth and the sun" (26). Ambiguously the speaker continues:

> You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself. (28)

After describing what he is not (58-65), the speaker gives the first direct indication of what he is: he is one who is standing aside, observing; this is the poet collecting and

---

[27]This examination of the Poetic aspect of the speaker is directly concerned not with Walt Whitman, the poet, but with the speaker as poet.

assimilating experiences. In a microcosmic view of a large portion of this long poem, the speaker sums up the activities of this aspect of himself, how the Poet-soul, apart, yet a part, stands aside from the physical world, yet observes it, absorbs it, meditates on it (66-70).

The Poet-Sharer says he is making himself ready to "bestow" (254) himself on others; he will give of himself, all that he has comprehended, freely, "Not asking the sky to come down to my goodwill, / Scattering it freely forever" (255-256). Once the poet has given his answer, it will be available for all time. Significantly, he makes this statement of intent just before the first long tally which through assimilation leads to the insight, which he will in turn give back to the listener.

After he has concluded the first long tally and said that these things, thoughts of them, make up his identity, he hints that therein lies the answer when he says, "If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing" (357); that they are the grass (359) and the "tasteless water of souls . . . the true sustenance" (361), all indirections for what will be his final answer. The Poet hungers to have any and all with him, to give to all his answer, which he calls, variously, meal or music (369-380). Next, he directly addresses the listener:

> Do you guess I have some intricate purpose? (381)

But in answer to this question he only says, for the moment, and again ambiguously, that his purpose is as intricate as

rain or mica (382)--he is not yet ready to divulge his answer.

He turns to other questions:

> What am I? and what are you? (390)

Most significant among his multiple answers may be:

> I am the poet of the body,
> And I am the poet of the soul. (422-423)

He is equally the poet of the spiritual world and the sensual world; he has acquired already the pleasures of the former; the latter he will "translate into a new tongue" (425). The Answerer is here hinting about his ultimate message. He will chant a new philosophy of equality and pride, man with man, man with woman (426-430); all may aspire to strive with him equally, and with pride. Then the Poet turns aside to sing a lovesong to the night and the earth and the sea (436-446); seemingly they are at one and the same time inspiration and replenishment.

The Poet next voices his sympathy for all, an expression made almost unnecessary by a close reading of his tallies, which attest to his overriding empathy for his fellow man. As the Poet-Messiah he has a Christ-like sense of identification with the lowly and the wicked. Just as he feels the agonies of the martyred, he later says he imagines the feelings of Christ at the time of the crucifixion (958-960).

To round out the first half of the poem, the Poet utters one of his "prophetical screams" (574)--that what man is searching for, or should be, is "Happiness" (577); for the first time the Poet has pointed to the apex of his philosophy,

but he is not yet ready to divulge his complete answer.

The Poet-Answerer next speaks after the longest of the tallies, now to a large crowd of followers which has gathered. He says that he penetrates deeper than sunlight, gets beneath the skin of the matter (984-985); he has empathy for those gathered and can penetrate to the heart of their generalities which will apply equally to all, however lowly; and he will give all of himself (988-1000). He broadens his scope to include all of the family of man; much as Jesus did he would greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. Continuing the biblical allusion the Answerer states that no man will be denied. Paradoxically, he will keep even the dead from dying; he will breathe new life into them--breath for the spirit (1003-1004). His ideas, his thoughts, like an "armed Force" (1010), will guard one's body and soul. All this the Answerer will do.

Now the Poet-Answerer says he is ready to speak to all. Perhaps he has needed to be asked before he could begin, hence the "call in the midst of the crowd" (1050). Or is it his own voice or that of his consciousness calling him to speak? He asks his "children" (1052) to gather round him, to hear the ultimate song; all else has been a "prelude," now the "chords" of the song reach a "climax" (1054-1055). The crowd surrounds the Poet-Answerer, but they are not all close to him. Some do not listen: gluttons, the greedy, the public-bilking merchants. Now the speaker's humanism shows through--he accepts and acknowledges that he sees reflections

of himself all around him, of his imperfections and failings (1057-1078). "I know perfectly well my own egotism" (1079), he openly acknowledges; and he realizes that his words are "omniverous" (1080); but he feels that it must be so. To balance this the Poet-Answerer would raise all to his level of comprehension (1081). After again stating in positive terms his certainty that immortality exists, the Poet-Answerer says:

> It is time to explain myself .... let us stand up. (1133)

As an opening to his talk he states that he is knowledgeable of all from the beginning of time (1153), carbon suggesting the Carboniferous Age (1156), the time of huge, misty swamps. He tells those gathered how "All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me" (1167); the speaker has assimilated all past experience, now here he stands. He wants to be seen as the embodiment of the eons past and the eons yet to come.

Now the Answerer begins to unfold his answer, first using the analogy of a road, which each must travel for himself (1207-1208). He offers to help, but says his spirit has told him that the essence of life may be obtained only by continual striving; once started there will be no turning back, hopefully (1218-1219). The listeners question him but he says:

> I answer that I cannot answer .... you must find out for yourself. (1221)

From the indescribable "that [which is] in me" (1299) which

the speaker has condensed from tortuous writhings of sleepless nights, he turns his still vague suggestions into somewhat more concrete form--the word is:

> . . . form and union and plan .... it is eternal life .... it is happiness. (1308)

This is his apexical answer for the listeners; he has left only an apologetic remark or two: the Answerer allows that at times he has been contradictory, but excuses this as being due to the vastness of his undertaking. Ultimately the Poet-Answerer has become the Sharer. For above all else the Poet wants to contribute his concept of soul.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPED IN THE OTHER ELEVEN *LEAVES OF GRASS*

1. INTRODUCTION

The personality projected by Whitman in the first of the twelve Leaves of his *Leaves of Grass*, 1855, has been delineated as through the ten successive filters in order to point out the essential unity of the poem. While this first Leaf is the major expression of his earliest edition, it does not stand alone. Indeed, the personality projected will be better understood in its totality as a result of a careful look at the succeeding eleven Leaves, in the light of the ten personality facets already delineated.

The twelve poems of the first edition can be divided conveniently into two groups: the first six are individually entitled "Leaves of Grass"; the second six lack titles. Whether this grouping was intentional on Whitman's part or merely careless has not been settled at this time, and may never be, but it is convenient division for the purposes of this study, for the first six Leaves, as a group and individually, more significantly contribute to the reader's knowledge of the speaker's personality than the second six Leaves do. However, each of the eleven augments the reader's grasp of at least one aspect of this personality.

2. THE SECOND LEAF

The second of the Leaves greatly expands the reader's understanding of the Democrat. The poem also makes pointed reference to the "answer," which also figures in the seventh poem.

There are several parallels between the first and second poems of Leaves of Grass, 1855. In the second, as in the first, the speaker is addressing his audience directly--those whom he calls here "lovers" (2), a term likewise used in the first song.

Also, the second poem opens with an invocation which echoes the section of the first where the crowd he is talking to pushes closer and almost overwhelms him. Both passages are sensual, even mildly sexual in their imagery.

In yet another aspect the second of the Leaves parallels the first: it broadens the speaker's democratic aspect, as he attempts to assimilate all. The servant or his master (13), those nearest to him--the working man and working woman (16)--these he accepts, indeed, welcomes enthusiastically and democratically, for around him in the America of the 1840's and 1850's which he describes in the Leaves of Grass, the speaker saw his democratic man--the working man and the working woman. He adds all criminals and those sick in mind or body to those he accepts and acclaims (paralleling numerous passages in the first Leaf). Addressing directly the souls of these men and women, he proclaims that he is not calling

to them, but to the agonized physical selves that have not risen to the level to which their souls can carry them. He says, "I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns" (30), referring to his certain knowledge of the transcendence of their souls. From this point the Egalitarian moves beyond the boundaries of the United States, taking in the "Esquimaux," the "Chinese," the "Bedowee," including all mankind in his sweep (32-35).

Another parallel worth noting is the use of a long tally of his assimilations, this time of the symbolic democrat--the working man and woman--which occupies his thoughts for some sixty lines.

Before and just after this tally lies the references to the "answer"--"happiness." Just as the speaker's references to "happiness" fall neatly at the end of each half of the first Leaf, considering the last twenty-seven lines as a coda, likewise in the second Leaf "happiness" is mentioned in the middle (58) and then at the end (169). Happiness is no simplistic statement for the speaker; its ultimate referent is to a state of the soul, which is not dependent on temporal affairs.[28] As he explains in this poem, happiness is "not in another place, but this place" (168). Happiness is really being alive in the present; it is working at whatever you are best at, be it garbage-collector or senator; it is loving those around you, and everywhere, these men and women he

---

[28]As the editors of LG:CRE put it, "behind all appearance is soul, the ultimate reality, eternal and changeless" (p. 5).

mentions repeatedly in this poem and the others; happiness is making fullest use of your identity, your soul.

3. THE THIRD LEAF

The third of the Leaves of Grass, like the second, is significant in that it expands the reader's knowledge of the speaker's philosophy and the portrait of his personality. It too, discusses the identity, in this case developing in some detail the speaker's ontological theory of the origin of being. The major message of this ontological poem is that in the face of overwhelming death the individual should not be daunted, that once one is born he will have and retain identity forever, his soul will retain its individuality--this in the face of all physical evidence to the contrary.

Returning to the first Leaf for a moment, in one of his typically indirect ways of divulging information, the speaker says:

> Clear and sweet is my soul .... and clear and sweet
> is all that is not my soul.
>
> Lack one lacks both .... and the unseen is proved by
> the seen,
> Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its
> turn. (44-46)

He is indicating that the absolute interdependence of the body and soul--panpsychism--precludes the solitary existence of either, and that this will be proven, for when the body dies its immortal aspect--soul--becomes apparent. Twice he reiterates that equality (73-74, 1262-1264), but he does not take up the way in which these two paradoxically become one,

how identity is achieved. This is the crux of the third Leaf.

The third Leaf expands the concept of the first to indicate that for the individual life on earth builds this identity, for, he says, "The earth is not an echo" (72). He continues:

> It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father--it is to identify you . . . . (75)

This disclosure of the ultimate purpose of this identity he leaves to the end of the poem.

At the beginning of the poem the sympathetic Celebrator philosophizes about time and death in a random way, then proceeds to a word portrait of one less abstract death, and completes his pattern with a dramatic portrait celebrating the funeral of an old stagedriver (32-52).[29] From this point on the speaker directs his attention more toward the listener and toward more sweeping implications of death.

The speaker has emphasized the utterly democratic nature of death. Now, using poetic techniques reminiscent of the first of the Leaves (1281-1298), he transcends this narrow view to give the listener his concept of the democratic quality of immortality. Using a tallying technique he indicates that all peoples of the earth, no matter what their present state, will gain immortality (90-101).

Next he reiterates the position he took in the first poem--that there is, paradoxically, perfection in evil and sin (95-101, 121-125).

---

[29]This whole section reads like a section extracted from the first Leaf, or an extension of one of its vignettes.

As the climax of the poem is reached the Philosopher-Mystic goes on to speak of "satisfaction," which he indicates is a fulfillment and completion--the arrival at a state of immortality. The close of the poem becomes an affirmation (mystically arrived at) of the speaker's firm conviction of the existence of immortality:

> I swear I see now that every thing has an eternal soul!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
> That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it,
> And all preparation is for it .. and identity is for it .. and life and death are for it.
> (131, 133-135)

4. THE FOURTH LEAF

The fourth poem begins:

> I wander all night in my vision,[30]

--the Assimilator at work again. As the speaker has stated in the first of the Leaves, "Speech is the twin of my vision" (568), and he must be forever collecting so that he may later disperse these thoughts. Virtually all the generalized persons he sees in his vision (through 45) have been mentioned already in the first Leaf, some expanded, some contracted.

At first the wanderer seems largely lonely, perhaps searching for friendship as the unknown person viewing the bather

---

[30] Cf. line 714 of the first Leaf.

in the first Leaf. But as he goes from one to the other in his imagination he gets closer and closer, until as he says:

. . . I become the other dreamers. (31)

This is reminiscent of lines 324-325 of the first poem.[31] The speaker becomes elated, "I am a dance .... Play up there! the fit is whirling me fast" (32). In this state he gives the reader a startling, enigmatic, and controversial dream-assimilation series. So emphatically and imaginatively presented are these vignettes that they have an air of having originated as real experiences. These longer vignettes too, could be viewed as extensions of the first poem.

Throughout the poem, after he has begun dreaming, or assimilating, the speaker is in a joyous mood; "I am the ever-laughing" (33), he says; though he goes with the spirits of the dead, all are gay (41); all in the "light and air ought to be happy" (79), recalling the ultimate message of the first of the Leaves--that happiness is the answer. This mood of joy is present in the face of numerous events portending physical disaster--the woman's lover leaves her (58); the old woman is always closer to death (73-74); the widow seems to have lost all that she deemed important (75-76)--thus echoing the like optimism in the third Leaf.

The Assimilator now recounts a series of disasters in more detail. A bold swimmer strives but fails; in the next vignette the ship is wrecked and lost with all hands; and

---

[31]See p. 27 of this paper.

only the great general's skill extricates the remnant of his army. Many of the sleepers are asleep in their graves, having passed from this earth; some come as spirits to lead him through the byways of dreamy sleep (34-41). Yet the speaker is undaunted, for night and sleep have "likened" and "averaged" them (160-161). In sleep, whether it be the sleep from which the body arises or not, the bodies are beautiful. Why? Because the soul survives, and "The soul is always beautiful" (172), eternal, immortal. Finally the poet's vision of individual deaths, echoing that of the last section before the coda of the first poem, is transcended and becomes a vision of the order of the universe (172-174)--soul, immortality, eidólons. The poem stands out as an affirmation of the poet's broadcast optimism. In several ways this poem can be seen to parallel the first, or can be seen as an extension of it. The optimistic viewpoint set forth in each has already been noted. Further, the total of all the striking resemblances should indicate that the speaker is the same in both instances.

For a further example, the Egalitarian deplores the effects of slavery (126-134); these verses seem a logical extension of the speaker's feelings about the runaway slave in the first Leaf (183-192). The fuller import of these passages will become more apparent as this study develops.

In both poems the speaker's thoughts are drawn to incidents centering around Indian squaws. While the first of the Leaves has two vignettes--a brief mention in the first long

tally (285), and a longer concerning the imminent marriage of a red girl to a trapper (179-182), in the poem now being considered the speaker muses about a squaw that his mother met and told him of (112-126). This parallel in itself is not of major importance; the point to be gained is that the reader may begin to see patterns in the speaker's thinking.

Similarly, in both poems there are noteworthy (if controversial and enigmatic) vignettes of swimmers. In the first Leaf there are two--the passage where the speaker expresses in his lovesong his desire to plunge into the sea (451-461), and the vision of desire and passion at the shore with the solitary watcher and the 28 young men (193-210).

For one last example one might consider the strikingly parallel way in which events can stir the speaker to an emotional crescendo: in this poem the peak he reaches as he is assimilating experiences in lines 28-32 is similar to the one reached in the first Leaf in the lovesong to earth, night and the sea (436-461) or the feeling generated by the grand-opera (599-610).

This poem touches on various aspects of the speaker seen in the first poem; the Egalitarian, the Lonely man, the Sexual and the Philosophic man. But more importantly, the fourth poem taken as a whole is a dramatic presentation of the speaker's assimilation, and of his sympathetic view of those tortured or physically damned. For each he holds out eidolons.

5. THE FIFTH LEAF

The fifth Leaf is the celebration of the body and of its sacredness as the house of the soul. The body's prime function is to be the "gates of the soul" (61), the source of the soul's identity. In addition, this poem is noteworthy for presenting the strongest evidence of the speaker's acute sense of kinesthesia.

Early in the poem he states his compulsion to be closely involved with the bodies around him, to respond to their touch. It is significant that generally, here, he is in contact with bodies in motion, not quiescent, or else the contact itself is one of movement: "to touch any one .... to rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment" (42). This experience so delights him he can exclaim in ecstacy, "I swim in it as in a sea" (43). He wants not only to observe, hear, smell, but to be in absolute physical contact with their movements: "The expression of the body of man or woman" (5) lies not only in outward manifestations, but "curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists, / . . . in his walk .. the carriage of his neck .. the flex of his waist and knees" (8-9). That this is so is reinforced by the tally which follows of people moving, bending, turning, marching (13-26). The Assimilator <u>feels</u> each muscle expand or contract, each tendon stress, as these people go about their activities. Because the speaker's kinesthetic sense is so keenly developed, it plays a key part in his

appreciation of those he comes in contact with.

As his assimilations continue the speaker summarizes:

> . . . I loosen myself and pass freely .... and
> am at the mother's breast with the
> little child,
> And swim with the swimmer, and wrestle with
> wrestlers, and march in line with
> the firemen, and pause and listen
> and count. (27-28)

The Sensual and Assimilating aspects of the speaker would be in touch with those he sees, yet the speaker transcends the merely physical:

> All things please the soul, but these please the
> soul well. (45)

Then without hesitation but with purpose he quickly passes to an erotic, moving description of the female, as he addresses all females:

> You are the gates of the body and you are the gates
> of soul. (61)

In this manner is each soul given identity, and in turn the body takes on increased dignity. The sensual and the physical have been quickly transcended.

To emphasize this belief the speaker turns to the most dramatic situation he can envision; he presents a slave auction. The Celebrator states categorically that even the slave, male or female, at auction has as much valid identity as anyone else. He celebrates the yet unborn offspring of this man or woman, or of any man or woman, asking what great heroes of their issue are yet to be given identity, a thought to give pause to anyone condoning slavery or any other form of tyranny. Next the Philosopher explains, once more, a concept

which has reverberated through the poems:

> The male is not less the soul, nor more .... he too is in his place . . . (66)

or, as he gives this idea its broadest and most dynamic significance:

> All is a procession,
> The universe is a procession with measured and beautiful motion. (78-79)

And the human body as well as the soul is part of this beautiful plan.

6. THE SIXTH LEAF

The sixth Leaf, the last one titled by the author "Leaves of Grass," is primarily a picture of the Assimilator at work, adding to his tally. It has affinities, then, with the other Leaves which show the Assimilator; the first,[32] fourth, and tenth, especially. He seeks out people and reads each and every message in each and every face, and tallies them. Then, characteristically addressing the listener/reader he indicates it would not satisfy him if he thought the life reflected in these faces were an end in itself (16). This should recall numerous thoughts in the third Leaf.

After adding to his tally various miserable, sick and evil faces, the Philosopher declares he will not be put off by these "mean disguises" (38). Behind the mask of each

---

[32]Again it is suggested that this Leaf could have been fitted into or taken out of the first Leaf.

face he sees the immortal soul.

Next the speaker turns, as he has often done in the other Leaves,[33] from the brief to the more detailed vignette, the most powerful, and in this case the most poignant, that he can conceive of. Using again the metaphor of the body as house for the soul, he indicates tha the face of his mentally-crippled brother masks an immortal soul, the "real landlord" (46), as does each and every body.

The speaker extends the house metaphor to encompass all races, all people, then turns to an ecstatic, erotic image of the "lily's face" (63), one of desire followed by satiation, then quickly passes to images of older, fulfilled women. The Philosopher again juxtaposes sexuality and sublimity, as he did in the last Leaf. This should recall to the reader's mind the woman ultimately glorified as the "gates" of the soul, and her role as celebrated in the other poems.

The sixth Leaf elatedly ends with an echo of the ultimate philosophical import of the first Leaf's "form and union and plan" (1308):

> The melodious character of the earth!
> The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not wish to go!
> The justified mother of men!

Ending on a note of glory for womanhood, the sixth Leaf as a whole shows the Assimilator collecting, amplifies the

---

[33] Cf. the passage in the previous Leaf beginning with line 66, from the generic person to the specific.

speaker's all-encompassing democratic-egalitarian philosophy, and augments the reader's sense of the speaker's acute sympathy for the weak, sick or the tyrannized.

7. THE SEVENTH LEAF

The seventh poem of Leaves of Grass is important as it clarifies the role of the Poet-Answerer as the amalgam of all the other aspects, but especially the close tie between the Assimilator and the Answerer: what the former takes in, the latter returns in better measure.

In reply to a young man's question as to how he will recognize the poet, the speaker answers with his characteristic indirectness, that all things are "for him if they are for any body" (15). The speaker says that he takes in "beautiful women, the haughtiest nations . . . the landscape, people and animals, . . . the unquiet ocean" (9-10). But he gives them back also, only better, for "he sees how they join" (31); because he has been everywhere and can go anywhere, he knows all there is to know of importance: he puts things in their places (18). As the speaker has not yet stated in so many words:

> He is the answerer,
> What can be answered he answers, and what cannot be answered he shows how it cannot be answered. (19-20)

Again, in his characteristic way the Egalitarian considers all persons as equals and calls them brothers and followers.[34]

---

[34]Cf. lines 1-5 of this poem, also the next poem, line 27,

He is at one with the soldier, the sailor, the "Cudge" hoeing in the fields, whom he calls brother, the lawgiver, the President (32-42). The speaker extends his oneness to all the nations and peoples of the world, giving his Egalitarian aspect the widest scope--he becomes democratic in the broadest sense. And all these people readily divulge their thoughts, secrets, elements of truths to him, for "he has the passkey of hearts" (26). (This line and the next explain how the visits to sleepers are accomplished in the fourth poem.) And as he makes his way throughout the land, across the world, he "strangely transmutes them" (49); their identities change as he provides them with the answer, "in him [they] perceive themselves as amid light" (7).[35]

8. THE EIGHTH LEAF

The eighth Leaf proclaims Liberty! Perhaps in no other poem does the Egalitarian-Democrat speak out with such a strident, sustained voice for liberty and in opposition to slavery and all tyranny.

In a perpetual warning to all tyrants the speaker imagines tht "out of its stale and drowsy lair" (1) a cave of subjugation, Europe leaps forth, seeking out the life pulse of

---

and the first Leaf lines 1308-1309, as he is addressing those gathered and is about to disclose his ultimate answer.

[35]The poem ends precipitously and weakly; in fact, it seems not so much to end as to trail off after a thought. Allen (WWH, p. 124) considers this poem, along with the five which follow it as "of no great importance."

tyrannizers. And as he has many times before, he holds out hope for the oppressed. There is a further warning addressed to both those who would be free and those who would be despots; for the former it is to tender mercy on those who would sacrifice freedom is a mistake, for the latter it is that mercy no longer ought to be available to them when they are tracked down and cornered.

The Egalitarian sees no end to those who advocate liberty. As the democratic voice of the speaker earlier uses the symbol of the ever-cyclic grass, in the first Leaf and elsewhere, in this Leaf he appropriately uses a related metaphor; the graves of freedom-lovers nurture seeds of the rebirth of liberty (29-30). They shall spring up broadcast. Closely tied with this is the speaker's analogy of Europe as a house shut up when Liberty has vacated it (34-36), which is singularly appropriate, for it equates the house (recalling body) with Liberty (recalling soul). He is saying that the soul of Liberty, like the soul of man, never dies. Those "murdered for Freedom" (29) nurtured seeds of liberty; like the grass they will spring up everywhere. The speaker has a fervent hope in the inevitable growth of his democratic ideals. This faith in the permanence of the spirit of liberty is borne out when he pictures:

> Not a disembodies spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
> But it stalks invisibly over the earth .. whispering counseling cautioning. (31-32)

And the poet's role is never to lose faith in the coming

resurgence of liberty, and to speak out for it.

The inclusion of this poem and next in the Leaves of Grass, as this study is an attempt to show, may be justified on this one basis alone: the emotional appeal for freedom, liberty, and equality which is embodied in them both surely follow from the character of the personality which is the subject of this study. The Democratic-Celebrator who sings of the equality of men and women, man and woman, the equality of body and soul, is compelled to sing out for liberty, for he who is not free is not equal to him who is. As Gay Wilson Allen indicates in The Solitary Singer, the various biblical allusions in this poem are evidence of the speaker's "feeling that the cause of Freedom was holy, and that its defenders were dedicated souls."[36]

9. THE NINTH LEAF

The ninth Leaf is another outcry for liberty, though this is not obvious without certain background information.[37] But for the purposes of this study-the delineation of a personality--though one might know nothing about the event which precipitated this outraged indignation of the speaker,

---

[36]Allen, Singer, p. 105.

[37]The editors of LG:CRE sum up the gist of the matter (p. 265): " . . . it was probably composed in June 1854, during the indignant public excitement at the arrest and trial in Boston of the fugitive slave, Anthony Burns . . . "; cf. Stephen D. Malin, "'A Boston Ballad' and the Boston Riot," WWR, IX (September 1963), 51-57.

his tirade is not inconsistent with the character of the subject of this study as it has been developed in the other poems. And when one acquires some understanding of the particular event which brought forth this bitter statement, it only makes more forceful the relation between this Leaf and others, especially those in which the speaker is concerned with liberty versus slavery.

The bitter attack shows a harsh, angry side of the Poet which nowhere else makes a more substantive appearance. But, as has been indicated above, without some ancilliary information the reader is at a loss to explain or understand the poem. All he can gather for certain is the scathing anger of the speaker caused by some public event, a parade of some sort. This it is; it is a parody of a mob's parade. By calling up the spirits of those who fought for liberty once the speaker voices his indignation in no uncertain terms. After hearing this indignant voice calling out, the reader should hardly be surprised when he discovers the cause--the same evil which stirred the Egalitarian previously, slavery and tyranny. The Democratic-Egalitarian is much afraid that something may still be amiss in his bastion of democracy; he is satirically cautioning America against losing its freedom through insolence, indolence, or neglect.

10. THE TENTH LEAF

The tenth Leaf makes two contributions to this study. First, it enlarges the reader's grasp of the Ostensive Man and his environment as a child; second, the poem vividly

portrays the young Assimilator developing his skill, and traces briefly how his environment stirred him to a deeper questioning.

All that the child saw he encompassed; flowers and birds, the farm life in all its fascinating details, the varied individuals of the community, at first a farming village, then seemingly a village (Brooklyn, of course) across the river from a great city with its bustling waterfront, all these he found his common ground. All these fascinated the child and absorbed his attention, while he was absorbing them.

In addition, he gives the reader a tantalizing glimpse of his home life:

> The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the suppertable,
> The mother with mild words .... clean her cap and gown .... a wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by:
> The father, strong, selfsufficient, manly, mean, angered, unjust,
> The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,
> The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture . . . . (14-18)

These candid remarks lead the speaker to a revelation of a key to his growth; behind the proto-Assimilator is a hint of the proto-Philosopher delving for solutions to his ontological questionings:

> . . . The sense of what is real .... the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
> The doubts of daytime and the doubts of nighttime ... the curious whether and how . . . . (19-20)

Dramatically presented, these are the first signs of a

development of an ontological mind and the derivation from it of a philosophy. In the end as he is wont to do the speaker transcends himself and extends the chain to include each and every self:

> And these become of him or her that peruses them now. (32)

Thus the speaker makes the great Chain of Being extend through his era to today; just as each vignette the Assimilator takes in becomes part of him, so in some degree it becomes a part of the reader now.

11. THE ELEVENTH LEAF

The penultimate Leaf is concerned with the Celebrator, who finds wonder in all he observes around him, in all he is or senses; these things he honors in turn contribute toward what he is. And the Mystic-Philosopher is here as well, once again stressing the balance of the one and the many, the self and other selves, and hinting at the message unsaid. As well, the poem contributes biographical data.

The speaker exclaims at the wonders of the world, and the universe, comparing it too with one of his favorite images, the building of a house (13-15). This leads him to proclaim the wonder of immortality, which he immediately balances with the wonderfulness of the self--from his eyesight, to his walking, to his knowledge of soul--but transcending the specific individual to the generic:

> Come I should like to hear you tell me what there is in yourself that is not just as wonderful . . . . (28)

The speaker has again balanced the universal with the particular, and vice versa.

The portrait of the Ostensive Man, formed from the other Leaves, is filled in with these details:

> . . . and was born on the last day of May 1819 . . .
> . . . I grew six feet high . . . I have become a man thirty-six years old in 1855 . . . (21-22)

which contribute additional specificity to this personality.

The reader who grasps the import of the speaker's words, the equating of the individual with the cosmic, the sense of immortality which he sees evidenced all about him, and what the speaker says he cannot communicate--that which is left unsaid, the mystically acquired knowledge--and the wonder of it all, has perhaps learned his lesson complete.

12. THE TWELFTH LEAF

In the final Leaf, a summation and celebration of greatnesses, the Answerer is attempting to recapitulate all that he admires, the well-spring of his philosophy.

Close to the beginning of this last poem, the Democrat places prominently and in juxtaposition the twin greatnesses which are the subject, with their antithesis, of the eighth and ninth Leaves, Liberty and equality. When he states "I am their follower" (4), it should come as no great surprise to the reader who has followed from the onset, these equal greatnesses being a main topic of the <u>Leaves of Grass</u> as a whole. The speaker visualizes the two as "Helmsmen of

nations" (5) and places his "absolute faith" in them (6).[38]

In summary, after liberty and equality he tallies honors for many things: today (his "now"); democracy; yourself, myself; then a series of contraries such as youth and old age, and day and night, which have reference to, as they do elsewhere, life and death (21-22), and transcendentally, physical wealth contrasted with the soul's. He goes on tallying, in quick succession: the greatness of the greatest nation (the reader can safely assume the United States); truth; languages, especially English speech; Law; Justice; then contraries again, goodness and wickedness; and balance and imbalance.

The Celebrator, acknowledging these paradoxes, ends with another, culminating with what epitomizes greatness for him: life--the identity. This final paradox he leaves the reader:

> Great is life . . .
> Great is death . . .
> Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light, death is as great as life.
> (65-67)

This paradox is solved by the recollection of death as vincible by soul, the "merging" of death with life, for the optimistic last word is "life."

This last Leaf can be read as a summary tally with reference to virtually all--with two curious omissions, pride and sympathy--the speaker has confided to the reader of these poems, from which this study has gleaned a portrait and an understanding of that personality.

---

[38]Cf. the Eighth Leaf, line 33.

CHAPTER V

WHITMAN'S PURPOSE LEADS ULTIMATELY TO EIDÓLONS

It can be shown that Whitman's purpose leads from the self--the identity--to the role of the self as part of the whole and order of the universe, expressed as the kosmos; this unity Whitman represents with his key term "eidólons." For instance, it seems unlikely that it is a coincidence that, just as the primordial Leaf begins with "I" and ends with "you" (followed by no period, paradoxically, no ending), that the book as a whole begins with a celebration of self and transcendently ends with the merge of death with life and the affirmation of life. A closer look at the steps of this transcendence will follow a summary of this paper up to this point.

Chapter One contains a discussion of the major criticism concerning the unity of Leaves of Grass, 1855. It concludes by proposing that the essential unity of the book is the personality projected, which provides a psychological unity.

Chapter Three has presented a detailed portrait of the personality created in the first Leaf of Leaves of Grass, breaking the examination down into ten significant aspects. He is seen as the Ostensive Man; he is seen in his Sensual, Sexual, Naturalistic, and Lonely Aspects; he is seen as the Assimilator, the Democratic-Egalitarian, the Philosopher, incorporating the Missionary, Mystic, and the Pantheist, and

as the Celebrator, who encompasses the Egotist and the Humanist; finally he is examined as the Poet-Answerer, who enfolds the Messianic Aspect and the Sharer, and finally all the other aspects of the speaker.

After the first Leaf introduces and establishes the identity of the personality, making it believable through its individuality, and, paradoxically, making it relevant by presenting its cosmic significance, each of the eleven succeeding Leaves, as Chapter Four shows, expands, or in some way amplifies the reader's awareness of and appreciation of the personality presented in the first Leaf. The second Leaf, in celebrating the working man and the working woman, expands the reader's concept of the Democratic-Egalitarian and reiterates the word of the Answerer--Happiness. In the third Leaf the speaker expands and concentrates his concept of immortality and the origin of identity--the body. In the fourth Leaf the speaker tells of his ceaseless work in the night; tirelessly the Assimilator makes his rounds, collecting experiences which contribute toward his identity. Night, the great restorer, seems to emphasize the qualities of men's souls. The fifth Leaf sings the sacredness of the body as the house of the soul; the male and female, through their bodies bring forth new identity, housed in its temporal home. The sixth Leaf shows the Assimilator at work, this time collecting faces, which mirror souls. The Answerer speaks out in the seventh Leaf, telling how he derives the answer from his assimilations. The eighth and ninth Leaves

are cries of the Egalitarian against injustice and tyranny. In the tenth Leaf the speaker recalls his childhood; the proto-Assimilator is at work. The eleventh Leaf adds to the reader's knowledge of the Ostensive Man, and describes his wonder at the order of the universe. In the twelfth Leaf the speaker sings his song of all the greatnesses in the cosmos, a summary tally emphasizing the greatness of the soul. Thus, while each of the twelve Leaves can stand alone, each seen in the context of the psychological unity of the poem fulfills part of its function by contributing toward the book's unity.

The most easily demonstrable unity of the Leaves of Grass is that of the Ostensive Man: in the first Leaf he discloses his name as well as the fact that he has white locks. Then, as has been noted, in the sixth Leaf he mentions his mentally-ill brother, in the tenth Leaf he sketches some of his childhood, and briefly sketches his mother and father, while in the eleventh he enumerates the details of his birth date, age, and height. Finally he notes that it is, seemingly at the moment of composition, 1855.

But the more significant unity of Leaves of Grass, 1855, of the first poem alone and the twelve poems taken together, must be found in the light of its psychological structure. This psychological unity is parallel to the spontaneously organized process of an individual describing to a listener how the interweaving of various experiences and trains of thoughts brought him to his present state of mind or aware-

ness. Thus critics who have searched for a logical structure for the poem and book have failed to find it, for the actual structure is illogical, in the same way that the processes of the mind often are.

It is made evident in Chapter Two that Whitman felt that the most efficacious way to promulge and propagate his philosophy was to create a personality. He found need for a personality with both unique and generic characteristics: unique to individualize the personality so that each reader could readily visualize him and accept him as a real entity, and generic or cosmic so that he could represent aspects of all men as relating to Whitman's philosophy. Or, stated another way, Whitman had to create a believable individual, paradoxically balancing individual and illustrative traits, to present the universal application of his message. He hit upon the unique idea of having this personality project himself by speaking to a listener/reader, giving credence to his portrait by projecting himself, not in an orderly fashion, but in the psychological order of a mind arriving spontaneously and intuitively at glimpses of his philosophical system. As the speaker divulges--pours out--the successive stages of the unfolding of his mind, speaking his thoughts to the listener/reader, the latter acquires an awareness of the individuality of the speaker, as well as a grasp of the universal relevance of his theories.

But because the speaker is presented, not in a straight-forward manner, but in this complex and convoluted psychological

presentation, any consistency in the personality tends to be obscured. But the personality presented is composed of something more than a random or miscellaneous list of characteristics; it is a careful construct of certain essential elements interwoven. One purpose of this paper has been to break down the fabric of this interweaving so that the reader can better appreciate the extent to which Whitman has developed this personality in each of these aspects; for an essential part of the greatness of the poem is the skill with which the author has interwoven the highly developed traits of his creation. In effect this paper imposes a logical technique in order that the reader can visualize the unity of the personality from which is derived the unity of the book.

Whitman, having presented this illustrative personality, could then utilize him in various ways. As has been suggested, simultaneously with the presentation of the personality this exploitation begins, with the speaker projecting himself, all facets of his personality, not excluding even his innermost thoughts and his sexual fancies. The reader is given a detailed and vivid portrait of this illustrative and entire man in all his specificness as well as his more universal aspects.

Secondly, as Whitman said in his 1872 Preface, the personality projected could stand an a "composite Democratic Individual"; man is not only as individual but part of a kosmos, this would indicate. If Americans, and men

everywhere could realize this they would then grasp the full import of democratic equality. In some way then, the personality would act as an American conscience. This facet of the speaker requires analysis which lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Thirdly, the speaker is to announce Whitman's philosophy of the identity. Simultaneously with his appearance in the primordial Leaf the speaker begins to unfold his philosophy, sketchily at first, sometimes haltingly, sometimes in a great rush of emotion, often with beauty and dignity, but never really fully or in orderly fashion. But present it he does; thus all leads toward eidólons. As Whitman was to more clearly indicate in the third edition of Leaves of Grass, in a poem called "Proto-Leaf," which thereafter always precedes the first Leaf:

> And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has reference to the soul . . . .[39]

The over-riding purpose for the existence of the personality is the promulgation and propagation of eidólons--the ultimate reality of the soul.[40] After being given identity by the body, the body and soul together grow in stature and in depth through experiencing and assimilating. The personality portrayed evinces an exceptional, almost unique, ability to

---

[39]"Starting from Paumanok," LG:CRE, p. 23. l. 175.

[40]For the most pithy definition of Whitman's "eidólons" see the quotation on p. 5 of LG:CRE and p. 53 of this paper.

assimilate from all possible sources, and thus an almost unlimited capacity for growth, and an ability to synthesize from this a new, all-encompassing philosophy. Out of the Ostensive Man, and the other more earthy aspects, and out of the Assimilator, unfolds the elevated stature of the Poet, the Answerer. He becomes the holder of all knowledge; he will be the interpreter. And all the while, as the speaker is divulging the dramatic unfolding of his intuitive grasping of his philosophy, he is, as the Poet/Sharer, piece by piece presenting fragments of the puzzle. Ultimately it will be the Poet who gives the final Answer, after he has synthesized all he has assimilated. As the Vates-Poet incorporates all the other aspects of the personality he becomes the very essence of man. He indicates that soul prevades all; no working man or working woman, no slave, no prostitute, indeed no seemingly insignificant pismire, or wren, or blade of grass or grain of sand, is without some modicum of soul. The presentation of this ultimate message fulfills the purpose of the speaker. The epitome of this message is, as the Poet says in the third Leaf:

> I swear I see now that every thing has an eternal soul!
> The trees have, rooted in the ground .... the weeds of the sea have .... the animals.
> I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
> That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it,
> And all preparation is for it .. and identity is for it .. and life and death are for it. (131-135)

Perhaps the most significant point to be gained from this study is the pervasively transcendent quality of the speaker's

personality. A thought of death leads to an affirmation of immortality, a simple blade of grass becomes a symbol of the universality of democracy and equality, the self becomes metaphorically any self or many selves, the purpose of temporal existence projects to soul. The Poet transcends the specific, the local, the temporal, to approach all that is enduring: man transcends evil, he transcends wrong-doing, he transcends the past at any moment--now, today--and finally he transcends death and arrives at eidólons.

In summary the personality projected gives unity to the book by presenting Whitman's philosophy filtered through the mind of a believable, illustrative personality, who describes his philosophical journey to comprehension of the self's identity. In the end, for the reader he leaves a message, disarmingly simple: man must find Happiness, which is awareness of the self's role in the form and union and plan of the universe which rests on a bedrock of soul--eidólons.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Gay Wilson. *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman*. New York, 1967.

_____. *Walt Whitman Handbook*. New York, 1962.

Asselineau, Roger. *The Evolution of Walt Whitman: The Creation of a Personality*. 2 vols. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960-62.

Beck, Ronald. "The Structure of 'Song of Myself' and the Critics," *WWR*, XV (March 1969), 32-38.

Lewis, R. W. B. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, 1966.

Malin, Stephen D. "'A Boston Ballad' and the Boston Riot," *WWR*, IX (September 1963), 51-57.

Miller, F. DeWolfe. "Whitman's Tally, Put at Random," *Tennessee Studies in Literature: Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler*, Special Number. (Knoxville, 1961), pp. 151-161.

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Facsimile reprint with an Introduction by Malcolm Cowley. New York, 1960.

_____. *Leaves of Grass*. Facs. ed. New York: Eakins Press, 1966.

_____. *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*. Eds. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley. New York, 1965.

VITA

Jan Bryan Lawson was born in New Rochelle, New York, on July 10, 1931. He attended public schools in New York City and Warwick, Rhode Island. In September, 1950, he entered the University of Rhode Island and in June, 1954, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

Beginning in December, 1953, and continuing through June, 1956, he worked for two small, weekly newspapers and an automobile club magazine. In September, 1956, he moved to the San Francisco area where he was employed as a claim representative for the Insurance Company of North America. In September, 1958, he accepted a position with Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the University of California, La Jolla, California, where he worked for eight years as a Marine Technician. During his last 16 months there he acted as the first Resident Marine Technician, aboard the Research Vessel Argo. He took part in more than 40 cruises, 8 of them major expeditions.

He entered Graduate School at the University of Tennessee in September, 1966, and received his Master of Arts degree in English in June, 1970.

From September, 1968, through June, 1970, he taught at York College, York, Pennsylvania. He is currently teaching at the College of the Desert, Palm Desert, California.

He is married to the former Elizabeth L. Bailey of Knoxville, Tennessee, who received her B.S. degree in Home Economics from the University of Tennessee in June, 1962.