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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

DEMOCRACY IN THE POETRY OF LOWELL AND WHITMAN

Submitted by

Grace Webster Heartz
(A.B., Boston University, 1900)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts
1919

Democracy in the Poetry
of
Lowell and Whitman

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Democracy in the Poetry
of
Lowell and Whitman

The year 1919, the centenary of the birth of two of America's best known poets, James Russell Lowell and Walt Whitman, is a fitting occasion to consider their position in literature. From a perspective of almost thirty years since their death, it is possible to estimate with some degree of fairness their true worth as writers and their real influence on American thought. This year also marks the end of a war which America entered because her democratic ideal was challenged. At such a time it is worth while to determine whether these men helped, through their poetry, to educate the public opinion of America to its present conception of democracy. A consideration of this point is the object of this paper.

That our present democratic state did not burst into existence a full grown American institution at the time of the formulation of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 or of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States in 1783 needs to be stated at the outset. Even one hundred years ago our democracy was not what it is today. Only gradually, after a long period of controversy and civil war, did state independence lose itself in national union. Problems of reconstruction which followed the close of the war in 1865 demanded as broad statesmanship and vision as they do in 1919. Through all the storm and stress of our national life, however, able leaders have always risen to champion the cause of democracy.

Mention of national leadership brings to mind orators like Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner or statesmen like Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln. It does not recall these writers of highest rank, Hawthorne and Poe. Hawthorne lived apart from the vital movements of his age. Poe might as well have lived in

England during the period of his greatest literary activity. Without disparaging their achievement, one looks in vain for any influence on public opinion through their works. Mention of Longfellow and Whittier, especially of Whittier, suggests championship of the cause of the union against slavery. In a yet larger sense, however, the name of James Russell Lowell is linked with our great Americans as a champion of a larger democracy. Here is one of America's greatest men of letters who at the same time may truly be called a leader of democracy. The nature of his influence can best be interpreted after an examination of his life and his works.

From his early environment, we may ask, could one expect Lowell to be a leader of Democracy? He was the eighth in direct line from the first Lowell who settled in Massachusetts in 1639. The first four Lowells had not been especially conspicuous in public life, but the

fifth was a Harvard graduate and a clergyman of some local distinction. The sixth, Lowell's grandfather, also a Harvard graduate studied law and was prominent in the affairs of the Commonwealth, serving as representative to the General Court, and as an active Revolutionary leader. Charles Lowell, the poet's father, followed the Harvard tradition, and after trying the law for two years, decided to enter the ministry. He had the advantage of three years' study abroad, chiefly under Dugald Stewart. In 1815 he became minister of the West Church of Boston, where he was admired and loved by his parishioners. His sympathies in politics were largely conservative and reactionary. Abolition seemed to him an "eccentric crusade".

From his mother, Harriet Traill Spence, of Orkney descent, and indirectly connected with the Lowell family, the poet inherited a "dreamful languor in the blood that blent quietly with the characteristic Lowell effectiveness". The "Spence negligence" accounted for the boy's

habit of leaving undone many things that he ought to have done. Still the Spences were even more conservative than the Lowells for they were Tories and Episcopalians. From his ancestry, then, one could hardly expect Lowell to be markedly democratic.

At an early age, Lowell began to make the acquaintance of books as companions. At nine, when he was reading Scott's novels, his real education began, for he was transferred from a "dame school" to Mr. Wells' boarding and day school to prepare for Harvard College. His college course was marked by "exuberance of intellectual curiosity" and "fervid and tempestuous sentiment". Still the "Spence negligence" showed itself occasionally, causing him at the end of his Senior year to be rusticated for two months. The class poem, which he was not allowed to read but had privately printed for distribution, is in no sense democratic, but rather aristocratic and conservative in its satire. Emerson and Transcendentalism, Carlyle, Abolitionists, Temperance and

Woman's Rights Agitators all receive the scorn of youth. A plea for the ill-treated Indian alone gives a hint of the sympathy which later characterized him so deeply. If intellectual training had thus far hardly begun to arouse his sympathies, it is evident that some new influence must come into his life to broaden his interests.

Such an influence is generally attributed to Maria White, the brilliant sister of a college classmate whom he married in 1844. Yet in 1839, shortly before he met her, while he was studying law and indulging his literary taste, he wrote to his friend Loring, "I am fast becoming ultra-democratic", and "The abolitionists are the only ones with whom I sympathize of the present extant parties". Through Miss White he was introduced to a group of young people who called themselves "the Band". To Lowell this group was especially helpful in that it afforded him an appreciative audience for both his wit and his literary plans. By association

With these young enthusiasts, he could not help deepening his humanitarian impulses. In 1840 he became a member of the Chardon Street Anti-Slavery Convention. It took high courage indeed for a cultured Harvard man to become an Abolitionist, a name in his time as ugly as that of Bolshevist today. Such democratic sympathies as well as the character of his new friends were separating him slowly from the "Brahmin" caste to which by inheritance he belonged.

In 1840 Lowell was admitted to the bar, though he gave less time to law than to literature. In 1842 his withdrawal from the legal profession was followed by his becoming editor and proprietor with Robert Carter of a magazine called "The Pioneer". This venture was shortlived and generally unfortunate except for the opportunity it gave Lowell to enlarge the circle of his literary friends. Having already contributed some poetry to periodicals, Lowell now thought the time ripe for the publication of his first series of poems. This

volume contained several from the collection called "A Year's Life" which had appeared in 1840 as a tribute to Maria White. While the 1843 series contains some poems of purely poetic inspiration, there is a prevalence of those dealing with the moral and political issues of the day. His voice was beginning to be heard for Truth and Freedom, even as he describes Wordsworth in this volume,

"And he more keenly feels the glorious duty
Of serving Truth, despised and crucified"

or Milton,

"A man not second among those who lived
To show us that the poet's lyre demands
An arm of tougher sinew than the sword".

Lowell's "tough sinew" was plainly shown to the public during the next four years. The Texas controversy needed a spokesman, and Lowell was not found wanting. From the viewpoint of 1919, it may seem surprising that there could be two sides to the question among New Englanders. Yet the conservative classes did

not at that time wish to quarrel with the South on the question of slavery. To them the anti-slavery propaganda had three objectionable features. It meant an attack on property. It proposed a violation of the Constitution. It threatened to abandon womanhood to brutal lust. By three such charges the inhumanity of traffic in men was not then overbalanced. Truly public opinion needed to be improved, and Lowell did not withhold the truth in the "Present Crisis".

"Once to every man and nation comes the
 moment to decide,
 In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for
 the good or evil side;
 Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
 offering each the bloom or blight,
 Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the
 sheep upon the right,
 And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that
 darkness and that light."

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's
 pages but record
 One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt
 old systems of the Word;
 Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong for-
 ever on the throne, --
 Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, be-
 hind the dim unknown,
 Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
 watch above his own."

For twenty years the solemn majesty of this

poem re-echoed in public halls, often from the lips of such an orator as Wendell Phillips. The influence of this one poem alone it would be impossible to estimate.

The "Present Crisis" was published in Lowell's second series of poems dated 1848. This was indeed a remarkable year for poetic achievement, for before it was ended, "The Fable for Critics", "Vision of Sir Launfal", and "Biglow Papers" were also published. The first of the three interests us only because of the poet's half serious description of himself:

"There is Lowell who's striving Parnassus
to climb
With a whole ball of isms tied together
with rhyme.
The top of this hill he will ne'er come
nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt
singing and preaching."

The "Vision of Sir Launfal" may truly be called a sermon on the text, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." One of his most humanitarian poems in tone, this fable of beau-

tiful charity was inspired by the same zeal which attacked slavery in the "Biglow Papers." This group of poems marks the crisis of the poet's early career.

The remarkable success of the "Biglow Papers" was a complete surprise to Lowell himself. By chance he had conceived an idea, the development of which gave him the open-minded American public for an eager audience. In June 1846, he had sent one day to the "Boston Courier" a letter purporting to be from Mr. Ezekiel Biglow of Jaalam to the editor, enclosing for publication a poem written by his son, Hosea. Dialect poems were no new ideas, but the Yankee wrath and humor which Lowell gave to Hosea Biglow was decidedly new. Lowell had written the poem as a revolt against slavery and the war into which it was dragging the nation. His description of war immediately became a slogan for the opponents of slavery,

"Ez fer war, I call it murder, -
 There you hev it plain an' flat;
 I don't want to go no furdur
 Than my Testyment fer that;

God hez sed so plump an' fairly,
 It's ez long ez it is broad,
 An' you've gut to git up airly
 Ef you want to take in God."

while the people of Massachusetts were spurred
 to a decision by the indirect challenge to
 their old ideals:

"Massachusetts, God forgive her,
 She's akneelin' with the rest,
 She, thet ough' to ha' clung ferever
 In her grand old eagle-nest;
 She thet ough' to stand so fearless
 While the wracks are round her hurled,
 Holdin' up a beacon peerless
 To the oppressed of all the world!"

Lowell's own words best describe the
 seriousness of his purpose in the poems which
 followed. "The success of my experiment",
 he wrote, "soon began not only to astonish
 me, but to make me feel the responsibility of
 knowing that I held in my hand a weapon, in-
 stead of the mere fencing stick I had supposed.
 ----- If I put on the cap and bells and made
 myself one of the court fools of King Demos,
 it was less to make his Majesty laugh than to
 win a passage to his royal ears for certain
 serious things which I had deeply at heart."

The possibility of lack of variety in the "Papers" was prevented by the introduction of a second character. One third of the nine poems are letters from Birdofredum Sawin put into verse by Hosea Biglow. Through his homely Yankee satire, the fraud of public leaders was not only exposed but more plainly grasped than it would be through the headlines of a newspaper.

It is difficult to decide which poem had most influence on public opinion, but surely "What Mr. Robinson Thinks" is among the first in such an influence. Honorable John P. Robinson of Lowell had gone over to the Democratic party on the principle "My country, right or wrong".

"The side of our country must ollers be
 took,
 An' Presidunt Polk, you know, he is
 our country.
 An' the angel thet writes all our sins
 in a book
 Puts the debit to him, an' to us the
 per contry;
 An' John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez this is his view o' the thing
 to a T."

This gave Lowell occasion to denounce such "per-

nicious sentiment", not only in the keen satire of the poem, but also through the voice of Parson Wilbur, Hosea's sponsor. "It is an abuse of language to call a certain portion of land, much more, certain personages, elevated for the time being to high station, our country. Our true country is that ideal realm which we represent to ourselves under the names of religion, duty, and the like. Our true country is bounded on the north and the south, on the east and on the west, by Justice."

Understanding as we do that the deepest principles of democracy were at stake in the slavery issue, we can best understand Lowell's aid to the cause of democracy by noting the influence of the "Biglow Papers". "The force which he displayed in these satires made his book at once a powerful ally of a sentiment which had hitherto been ridiculed; it turned the tables and put Anti-slavery, which had been fighting sturdily on foot with pikes, into the saddle, and gave it a flashing sabre. For Lowell himself it was an accolade from King Demos. He rose

up a knight, and thenceforth possessed a freedom which was a freedom of nature, not a simple badge of service in a single cause". (Scudder).

The sword which Lowell took up in the decade from 1840 - 1850 he never laid down. The death of his wife in 1853, the acceptance of the Smith Professorship at Harvard in 1855, a year of study abroad, and his position as editor-in-chief of the "Atlantic" from 1857 - 1861 prevented intensive production of poetry during the next decade. His contributions in prose at this time were more important than those in poetry. His political essays "stung the irresolute and time-serving, while they inspired the ardent lovers of truth and liberty". With the outbreak of the Civil War, however, poetry served him again to aid the national cause. His poems of the war period are indeed more important than those of any other American poet except perhaps Whitman.

Although the burden of the first series of "Biglow Papers" had been a plea for peace rather

than unrighteous war, the poems of the war period plead for war rather than unrighteous peace. In the "Washers of the Shroud", we have the best illustration of this sentiment. Written in a week of sharp anxiety for his beloved nephews at the front, it breathes the full depth of Lowell's patriotic passion. "In its sonorous penultimate stanza we see how wholly he was wrapt by the stern aspiration of the war."

"God, give us peace! not such as lulls
to sleep
But sword on thigh, and brow with pur-
pose knit!
And let our Ship of State to harbor
sweep,
Her ports all up, her battle-lanterns
lit,
And her leashed thunders gathering for
their leap!"

The publication of the second series of "Biglow Papers" marks another great public service on the part of Lowell. When England became involved with the United States through the Mason and Slidell affair, Lowell's good sense did not second the hot-headed impulse of some Northerners to rush to arms. In the

Long'z them things last, (an' I don't
 see no gret signs of improvin')
 I sha'n't up stakes, not hardly yit, nor 't
 would n't pay for movin';"

That Lowell saw some of the dangers of democ-
 racy is plain from a stanza of "The Latest Views
 of Hosea Biglow".

"Democ'acy gives every man
 The right to be his own oppressor;
 But a loose Gov'ment ain't the plan,
 Helpless ez spilled beans on a dresser:
 I tell ye one thing we might larn
 From them smart critters, the Seced-
 ers, -
 Ef bein' right's the fust consarn,
 The 'fore-the-fust's cast-iron leaders."

Just before the war ended appeared "Mr. Hosea
 Biglow to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly."
 For beauty of lyric effect, this poem is not
 surpassed by any other in the group. It is a
 heart-felt cry for Peace, wrung by the sorrow
 for loved ones killed in battle.

"Come, Peace! not like a mourner bowed
 For honor lost an' dear ones wasted,
 But proud, to meet a people proud,
 With eyes thet tell o' triumph tasted!
 Come, with han' grippin' on the hilt,
 An' step thet proves ye Victory's
 daughter!
 Longin' for you, our sperits wilt
 Like shipwrecked men's on raf's for
 water."

What could be more fitting than that the poet whose pen had served the nation so loyally during the war should be the first to whom his Alma Mater turned to commemorate in song her sons who had fallen during the long struggle? Although written for an occasion, the "Commemoration Ode" is Lowell's most sublime achievement. The theme of the poem is democracy in a larger sense than Lowell had before had opportunity to give it expression, - it is whole-hearted Americanism. One proof of this feeling is found in his faith in his fellow Americans.

" 'Tis no Man we celebrate,
 By his country's victories great,
 A hero half, and half the whim of Fate,
 But the pith and marrow of a Nation
 Drawing force from all her men,
 Highest, humblest, weakest, all,
 For her time of need, and then
 Pulsing it again through them,
 Till the basest can no longer cower,
 Feeling his soul spring up divinely tall,
 Touched but in passing by her mantlehem."

The best proof, however, of his perfect understanding of the real spirit of American democracy is found in his recognition of Lincoln.

"Nature, they say, doth dote,
 And cannot make a man
 Save on some worn-out plan,
 Repeating us by rote:
 For him her Old-World moulds aside
 she threw,
 And, choosing sweet clay from the
 breast
 Of the unexhausted West,
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero
 new,
 Wise; steadfast in the strength of
 God, and true.

Nothing of Europe here,
 Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward
 still,
 Ere any names of Serf and Peer
 Could Nature's equal scheme deface
 And thwart her genial will;
 Here was a type of the true elder
 race,
 And one of Plutarch's men talked with
 us face to face.
 The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing
 man,
 New birth of our new soil, the first
 American."

The end of the war caused no cessation in Lowell's interest in public affairs. As editor of the "North American Review," from 1864 to 1872, he was active in suggestions for the solution of problems of reconstruction. Corruption in politics he could not brook, and so when he read in Florence of the scandals of American political life during Grant's admin-

istration, he could not forbear denouncing

"Office made vile to bribe unwor-
thiness,
And all the unwholesome mess,
The Land of Honest Abraham serves of late
To teach the Old World how to wait."
("Agassiz")

While party presses denounced him in reply as un-American, lovers of truth and freedom called on him to be their spokesman on great occasions. Had he not entered our diplomatic service, and served as minister to Spain and Great Britain from 1877 to 1885, our poetry might have been richer by more of these stirring American poems.

The three centennial or "memorial" poems complete our study of Lowell's poetry of democracy. Each is characteristic of a man surcharged with love of country and of fellow-man. In the "Concord Anniversary Hymn", he makes Freedom utter her warning to the men of the present.

"Be therefore timely wise,
Nor laugh when this one steals, and that
one lies,
As if your luck could cheat those sleep-
less spies,
Till the deaf Fury comes your house to
sweep!"

In "Under the Old Elm", he not only pays tribute

to Washington, but stretches out his hand to
erring Virginia.

"If ever with distempered voice or pen
We have misdeemed thee, here we take it
back,
And for the dead of both don common
black.
Be to us evermore as thou wast then,
As we forget thou has not always been,
Mother of States and unpolluted men,
Virginia, fitly named from England's
manly queen!"

The "Centennial Ode" lets his high faith in
man ring out.

"I ask no drowsy opiate
To dull my vision of that only state
Founded on faith in man, and therefore
sure to last."

The poems of Lowell in which we have
discovered the democratic spirit are a mere
handful among the three hundred numbers in-
cluded in the final edition of his poems.
Of these not more than one-third, according
to Ferris Greenslet, leave any trace on the
memory, and less than one-fifth have any
vivid poetic life. Included in the latter
group are all of the poems which we have
considered in this paper, together with
such lyrics as "My Love", "In Absence",

"To the Dandelion", "The Changeling", "The First Snow-Fall", "An Ember Picture", "Death of Queen Mercedes", and "Turner's Old Temeraire". What qualities, we may ask, make the fifty poems great?

Lowell's nature accounts for this inability to make the majority of his poems immortal. There were constant struggles, Barrett Wendell explains, in his nature between pure taste and perverse extravagance. He recognized his own failing, but was unable to rectify it. He could not help expressing his opinions, and so in his works there is constant conflict between poet and preacher. Whimsical would well describe his nature, but he is at the same time manly and intensely human. It is not surprising therefore that in the majority of his poems, the greatest merit lies in single phrases or verses.

The enduring qualities of his poetry are not far to seek. His best poetry is marked by a sincerity, an intellectual power, a

spiritual depth, a love of nature which when combined with his best poetic style make him a great poet. With the exception of a love of nature, a quality prevented by the subjects, themselves, these characteristics are marked in the poems of democracy. Lowell more truly expressed himself in these occasional poems than in others where he labored to express himself. In estimating, therefore, his position as a poet, the "Commemoration Ode", the "Centennial Odes", and the war poems are of great importance in giving Lowell his place in literature.

Of yet more significance, however, are the "Biglow Papers". In satire, where the struggle between poetic taste and pure extravagance needed no concealment, Lowell reached the height of his achievement. "In Variety, quotability, ethical earnestness, humor, wit, fun, even in pure poetry and pathos, the "Biglow Papers" stand quite by themselves in American Literature. Criticism

cannot touch them, for they are not only the whole quality of a true man, but the patriotic emotion of a true people. Though the political allusions grow more misty with years, their deep emotional quality, their literary salt, their tough homespun texture, will keep them from dusty corruption".

Our examination of the life and works of Lowell has clearly shown his influence on public opinion. Written for that express purpose by a sincere and gifted poet, such poetry could not fail of its desired effect. From the publication of the first of the "Biglow Papers" in 1840 till his death in 1891, he taught Americans to guide their steps by the great men and great ideas of the past. Liberty and equality, the principles on which our nation was founded, were at stake. By upholding the union, by declaring his faith not only in democracy as an American institution, but also in a democratic American manhood, Lowell helped to keep before the public the ideals which must always be those of our American democracy.

J

With the name of James Russell Lowell is so rarely associated that of Walt Whitman, the poet who proclaimed himself the prophet of democracy, that one is at first thought surprised to find that their lives were almost exactly contemporary. Two lives could hardly have been more different in outward condition. Lowell's ancestry, training, and social influences were of the best that America can boast, while Whitman's origin and life were humble to an extreme.

To even Whittier, another contemporary of equal humility of birth, Whitman shows no resemblance. The child of a Quaker family of New England farmers like Whittier, would be familiar with an atmosphere of high thinking hardly to be expected from the child of the artisan class near and in such a metropolis as Brooklyn. While Whittier showed the purpose of his life by dedicating himself to journalism at the age of twenty-one, Whitman's early youth and manhood were spent as chance

directed, either as printer, country school teacher, journalist, or carpenter. From such a seemingly aimless beginning, it is interesting to trace his growth into prominence among American writers.

A study of Whitman's life leads one to conclude that his visit to the South and Middle West in 1848 and 1849 furnished the inspiration which changed the course of his whole life. On his return, he conceived the idea of lecturing, hoping thereby for a personal impress of his nature on that of others. Nothing came of the project, however. For three years Whitman assisted his father in building houses, but his mind was on a greater work. In 1854, he hung up in his room the motto "Make the book". To carry out his purpose, he gave up housebuilding and became an "idle poetsmith", with the street, wharves, and ferry-boats, the seaside, and fields as his workshop. He wrote in churches, halls, theatres, and on the top of a Broadway bus.

In 1855 appeared the result of his thought - a large, thin volume of twelve poems, which he called "Leaves of Grass". This book marked the beginning of Walt Whitman's literary career.

The theory of Whitman's ideas of poetry was contained in the preface to "Leaves of Grass". He states his belief that the greatness of men and women in these democratic United States is the best subject for a poet to treat. He declares that literature fails to satisfy the modern American, and that it must therefore be re-created. A few extracts are suggestive in showing Whitman's idea of the mission he had as a poet.

"Other states indicate themselves in their deputies, but the genius of the United States is always most in the common people. The air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors - the fluency of their speech - their delight in music - the terrible significance of their elections - these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it."

"The poet is a seer - he is individual - he is complete in himself. The others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not." "The messages of great poets to men and women are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose, you enclose, What we enjoy, you may enjoy".

Although many a reader was willing to approach "Leaves of Grass" "on equal terms", he could understand neither the long preface nor the poems which it introduced, especially the principal poem, entitled "Poem of Walt Whitman, an American."

To comprehend this poem even slightly, one has to imagine himself the "ego". Walt Whitman is not merely himself, but, in a larger sense, the spirit of mankind, assuming every form of conscious humanity. He is man "deathless", "august", and as such he venerates himself. One who thinks only of Walt Whitman as he reads the poem accuses him of pride and egotism. These qualities the author expects everyone to possess. Who is not proud of his own divinity? Who is ashamed of himself? Why should the "happy personality not

exult? What immortal man has a right to
grovel? Man's soul is divine, and his
body is equally divine.

"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,
And whoever walks a furlong without
sympathy, walks to his own funer-
al, drest in his shroud,
And I or you, pocketless of a dime,
may purchase the pick of the
earth,
And to glance with an eye, or show
the bean in its pot, confounds the
learning of all time,
And there is no object so soft but it
makes a hub for a wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let
your soul stand cool and composed
before a million universes."

With the exception of the thought of the
first two lines of this stanza, other Transcen-
dentalists had enlarged the same ideas. Walt
Whitman re-iterates that he is the poet of
the body as well as the soul. He declares

"I believe in the flesh and the appe-
tites;
Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles,
and every part and tag of me is a
miracle."

When the poet said of himself

"Walt Whitman am I, a Kosmos, of mighty
 Manhattan the son,
 Turbulent, fleshy and sensual, eating,
 drinking and breeding,
 No sentimentalist - no stander above
 men and women, or apart from
 them,
 No more modest than immodest."

he was condemned for grossness. Such lines cannot be judged except in their relation to the whole poem. Although the Bacchanal tone seems unduly emotional, they have their place in Whitman's message. Whitman's own statement as to the object of his poetry proves their reason for being. "One main object", he says, "I had from the first was to sing, and sing to the full, the ecstasy of simple, physiological Being. This, when fulldevelopment and balance combine in it, seemed, and yet seems, far beyond all outside pleasures, and when the moral element and an affinity with Nature in her Myriad exhibitions of day and night are found with it, makes the Happy Personality, the true and intended result of my poems".

Through him the world was to hear "forbidden voices:

Voices of sexes and lusts - voices
 veil'd, and I remove the veil,
 Voices indecent, by me clarified and
 transfigured".

As a poet of democracy, this was to be his special mission, the one on which he places emphasis in his first poems.

The storm of protest which greeted Whitman's first works, did not prevent him from including in his 1856 edition all the earlier poems that had been most objectionable to the public. In the new poems on this subject, one sees more plainly than in the first set, that "I" is not Walt Whitman, but man, and that the "Woman" who "Waits for me" is not one woman, but the women of America, of the world, who are to be the mothers of a strong race.

In stronger tone, the new poems proclaim the poet's love for man. In the "Salut au Monde", he greets the whole universe. That he has an all-embracing sympathy for past, present, and future generations is shown by his poem entitled "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry".

In "Song of the Broad-Ax", he lauds the city, great because it has the greatest man or woman, and welcomes all the "Shapes of Democracy". In the "Song of the Open Road", he extends his hand to his friends to follow him on the journey of life in search for the unknown.

"Allons! after the Great Companions! and
to belong to them;
They too are on the road! They are swift
and majestic men! they are the
greatest women.
Allons! through struggles and wars!
The goal that was named cannot be
countermanded!
Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe - I have tried it - my own
feet have tried it well.
Mon enfant! I give you my hand.
I give you my love, more precious than
money,
I give you myself, before preaching or
law.
Will you give me yourself? Will you
come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long
as we live?"

Whitman's own love for man is so great and passionate, that he urges every man to form a comradeship of men. His new message was contained in a name "Calamus", the Latin term for the root of a water-rush, which he

chose as the symbol of love. "It is by a fervent accepted development of comradeship", he explains, "the beautiful and sane affection of man for man, that the United States of the future are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated, annealed into a living union."

Mere personal comradeship for its own sake so beautifully described in the poem, "I saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" in the following lines

"Though the live oak glistens there in
Louisiana, solitary, in a wide
flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life,
without a friend, or lover,
near,
I know very well I could not."

becomes a social virtue when viewed in light of the larger purpose it is to serve.

"Only I will establish in Mannahatta,
and in every city of These States,
inland and seabound,
Without edifices, or rules, or trustees,
or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of
comrades."

Whitman, the prophet of comradeship, practiced his teachings most nobly during the Civil War by "resigning himself

To sit by the wounded and soothe them,
or silently watch the dead."

"Drum-Tops" published in 1865, contains the
record of this real comradeship. Of it he says

"The book is unprecedentedly sad, but
it has the blast of the trumpet and
the drum pounds and whirrs in it, and
then an undertone of the sweetest com-
radeship, and human love threads its
steady thread inside the chaos and is
heard at every hill and interstice
thereof. Truly also, it has clear
notes of faith and triumph."

A weaker man than Whitman would have felt
that his dream of human brotherhood had been
entirely crushed by civil strife in a demo-
cratic land, but he saw now fully realized his
longed-for ideal for America.

"I waited the bursting forth of the
pent fire - on the water and
air I waited long;
- But now I no longer wait - I am
fully satisfied - I am glutted;
I have lived to behold man burst
forth, and war-like America
rise;
Hence I will seek no more the food
of the northern solitary wilds,
No more on the mountains roam, or
sail the stormy sea."

His ideal of a better comradeship is well
illustrated in these lines:

"Long, too long, O land,
 Travelling roads all even and peaceful,
 you learn'd from joys and prosperity
 only;
 But now, ar now, to learn from crises of
 anguish -
 And now to conceive, and show to the
 world,
 (For who except myself has yet conceiv'd
 what your children en masse really
 are?)"

The war caused Whitman to lose faith in neither his fellow-man nor God. It tested not only his idea of comradeship and democracy, but also his idea of death and immortality. From this time his poems are permeated with the idea of death. In keeping with such a thought, he wrote at this time the last poem to be included in "Children of Adam", in which he sings his farewell to love.

The best example of his feeling for death is found in "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn".

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

Until his death, Whitman's poems show a man "purged as by fire". He leads us to expect

greater achievement by him. He says,

"My real self has yet to come forth,
It shall yet march forth o'er-master-
ing, till all lies beneath me;
It shall yet stand up the soldier of
unquestion'd victory."

As his first message had been "Dominion strong is the body's", now he established his belief "Dominion stronger the soul's". The struggle of the soul in the battle of life was one theme which he intended to develop.

"I too also sing war - and a longer
and greater one than any,
-The field the world;
For life and death, - for the Body,
and for the Eternal Soul,
Lo! I too am come, chanting the chant
of battles,
I, above all, promote brave soldiers."

In this study of Whitman, we have noted the consecutive development of three distinct ideas in Whitman's poetry, first, his exaltation of the body, second, the call to comradeship, and third, the triumph of the spiritual over the carnal, of immortality over mortality. All these ideas are embraced in his ideal of Democracy. A great democratic nation needed strong fathers and mothers of the race. The love of man for man was to be the great leveller of aristocracy and the

foundation of democracy. The third and last idea, though difficult to explain in terms of democracy, is nevertheless to be included in it. As the love of sex is bound up in life, so love of comrades is bound up in death. The basis of democracy, love of man for man, is also the basis of immortality.

Whitman's conception of democracy, as we have explained it, concerns the individual entirely. The "full presentment of the natural man" he purposed, - "the song of a great composite individual, male or female".

"For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,
For that idea the Bard walks in advance,
leader of leaders".

Not to be separated from this idea is his ideal for "these States". For them he chants his songs so that

"No one State may under any circumstances be subjected to another state;
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night between all the States, and between any two of them."

What makes for the greatness of the state
shall be that which makes for the greatness
of the individual,-

"The greatness of Love and Democracy -
and the greatness of Religion".

The songs which he hears America singing weld
"these states" together into a genuine democra-
tic nationality.

"I hear America singing, the varied
carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing
his as it should be blithe
and strong,
The carpenter singing ^{his} as he measures
his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes
ready for wor, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to
him in his boat, the deckhand
singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on
his bench, the hatter singing
as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the plough-
boy's on his way in the morning,
or at noon intermission or at
sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother,
or of the young wife at work, or
of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or
her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day - at
night the party of young fellows,
robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong
melodious songs."

Whitman's claim to serving democracy is based on such enthusiastic portrayals of American life. In all his poems he shows, though often incoherently, sympathy for common humanity, especially the rough and uncultivated. He understands his fellowman, because he sees himself mirrored in his neighbor. Every honest workman is his brother. He scorns artificiality to such an extent that he sometimes gives one the impression that only the humble man is honest or trustworthy. That such men will make a great America he is convinced, because good comrades must make a good race.

His idea of an "aggregated, inseparable, unprecedented, vast, electric nationality" he intended to develop more fully than his life permitted him to do. The best expression of this thought is found in the poem read at the Commencement of Dartmouth College in 1872.

"Thou Mother with thy equal brood,
 Thou varied chain of different States,
 yet one identify only,
 A special song before I go I'd go I'd
 sing o'er all the rest,
 For thee, the future. -----

The conceits of the poets of other
lands I'd bring thee not,
Nor the compliments that have served
their turn so long,
Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor
perfume of foreign court or indoor
library;
But an odor I'd bring as from forests
of pine in Maine, or breath of
an Illinois prairie,
With open airs of Virginia or Georgia
or Tennessee, or from Texas uplands,
or Florida's glades, -----

And for thy subtler sense subtler re-
frains dread Mother,
Preludes of intellect tallying these
and thee, mind-formulas fitted
for thee,
Thou! mounting higher, diving deeper
than we knew, thou transcendental
Union!
By thee fact to be justified, blended
with thought,
Thought of man justified, blended with
God,
Through thy idea, lo, the immortal
reality!
Through thy reality, lo, the immortal
idea! -----

Sail, sailthy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy Freight, 'tis not the
Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee,
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself
alone, not of the Western continent
alone,
Earth's resume entirely floats on thy
keel O ship, is steadied by thy
spars,
With thee Time voyages in trust, the
antecedent nations sink or swim
with thee,

With all their ancient struggles,
 martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou
 bear'st the other continents,
 Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the
 destination-port triumphant;
 Steer then with good strong hand and
 wary eye O helmsman, thou carriest
 great companions,
 Venerable priestly Asia sails this day
 with thee,
 And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

 But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy
 diseases, and surmount them all,
 Whatever they are today and whatever
 through time they may be, -----
 While thou, Time's spirals rounding,
 out of thyself, thyself still
 extricating, fusing,
 Equable, natural, mystical Union thou
 (the mortal with immortal blent),
 Shalt soar toward the fulfilment of
 the future, the spirit of the
 body and the mind,
 The soul, its destinies. -----

Thou mental, moral orb - thou New,
 indeed new, Spiritual World!
 The Present holds thee not - for
 such vast growth as thine,
 For such unparallel'd flight as thine,
 such broods thine,
 The FUTURE only holds thee and can
 hold thee."

From these extracts one can see that the spirit-
 ual development of America is Whitman's true
 aspiration. He has faith in the future of

his country because he has faith in God. His belief that the future of the world is bound up in the future of America shows the integrity of his democracy. Though he has something of contempt for the Old World, he is convinced that all other nations will accept her leadership. In its contradiction of conceit and high idealism, such an idea is essentially characteristic of Whitman.

To express and extend the spirit of American democracy, Walt Whitman believed, was his special mission as a poet. We are now interested to consider the success of his effort. Could the representative of the people do other than make a deep impression on the people themselves? As prophets have often been without honor in their own countries, even so was Walt Whitman among his contemporaries. In his own day he did exert an influence on some intellectual Americans and on many Europeans but he did not reach the masses. His failure may be explained

by three causes: his eccentricity of form, his gospel of nudity, and the incompleteness of his message.

The form in which Whitman expressed himself did not accord with the popular conception of correct poetical style. Conservatives needed nothing further than his failure to use standard English verse to convince them that his boasted democracy was a pose. However the shock resulting from his originality has been lessened in the last fifty years by a wider familiarity with poetry which differs from traditional verse types. In 1850 the Psalms which are very similar to Whitman's verse were not considered poetry, but now their poetic principles are recognized. Although Whitman chose his form in revolt against "drawing-room" poetry, he succeeded in reproducing the rhythm of nature, resembling more than anything else the wave-beat of the sea. The effect of his rhythmical chant therefore justifies its use, even if it is not always smooth or skillful.

The second obstacle to popular acceptance of Whitman, his gospel of nudity, has also grown less with time. As deliberately as he chose his vehicle of expression, the rhapsodical chant, so deliberately did he chose and maintain the theory that the body is as divine as soul, and that one part of the body is as divine as the other. In his attempt to play the double role of priest and physiologist, he unquestionably gave offense to the fastidious. Yet he was, at the worst, immodest rather than indecent. "Though time has not yet vindicated the wisdom of his choice, it has absolved him from the charge of covert suggestion of evil".

In the third cause of Whitman's failure of popular acceptance, the incompleteness of his message, we find defects that time will not remedy. Taking as his theme modern man, typified by himself and placed in the United States of America, he teaches that clean, strong, brave, friendly persons are the test of a civilization,-

the units of democratic society. In passing, however, from the units or individuals to "these States", Whitman ignores the intermediate groups which mark the advance of man into a perfectly organized society. His mind passes directly from the individual to the mass. He rarely touches on home, family, church, or party, the chief forces of our common progress. Beyond the unit, he knows nothing more definite than the "divine average" till he comes to "these States".

Coincident with this defect in Whitman's message is his desire to glorify everything in democratic society equally. Though he may assert that one man is as good as another, the people themselves know better. Europeans welcomed this idea because they believed in an equality which considers all superiority a phase of evil. Americans had and still have too much common sense to condemn excellence, and therefore this phase of Whitman's message is distasteful to them.

What then does Whitman's message to humanity contain which has become a part of our modern conception of democracy? His ideal of the life of the United States in the relation of part to part, and of all to the world is wonderfully significant at this time. Indebted to the Past, and able to profit by it, these States should nevertheless be free and not bound to it. Devoid of sectionalism, united by fraternal faith and comradeship, led by the ideals of Love and Religion, these States may reach a higher civilization which shall contribute to the progress and freedom of the whole race. His "one heart to the globe" is our modern ideal of internationalism.

Even though Whitman had a message of lasting value to America, that message of itself would not assure for him his position as a poet. Even less does the fact that he wrote much make him worthy of note. Yet, though defective in his power of organizing

his wealth of material, he is endowed with an imagination possessed by no other American poet. As no other has done, he catches the sweep of the elemental life of America, with such force that occasionally he reaches heights of really great poetry. Such verse predicts the great poetry which some day will be written on this continent. Till that time comes, Whitman will be considered the distinctively American poet.

After a study of two poets as different in ancestry, training, and public careers as were James Russell Lowell, and Walt Whitman, points of contrast between them in their conception of Democracy are plainly seen. While Whitman found all his themes, and Lowell only a few, in the subject of Democracy, Whitman always speaks for only one plane of society, - the elemental. He set up the crude man in antagonism to the developed man. Lowell's ideal of Democracy, on the other hand, as he stated it in a speech on "Democracy" delivered in England in 1884, and as we have ^{discovered} _Λ

it in his poems, is the type "that lifts men up and does not pull them down". He realized the "nemesis of mediocrity" only too well, and therefore kept before the public the necessity of high-minded leaders and whole-hearted followers. Human sympathy and fellowship, love of man for man, is Whitman's foundation of a great democracy, while moral achievement, growing out of such sympathy, is Lowell's ideal. Whitman's method is that of the seer, Lowell's, that of the reformer. That both of these poets have had a message for America cannot be gainsaid. Properly interpreted, they will, for generations to come, inspire America to high ideals of Democracy.

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