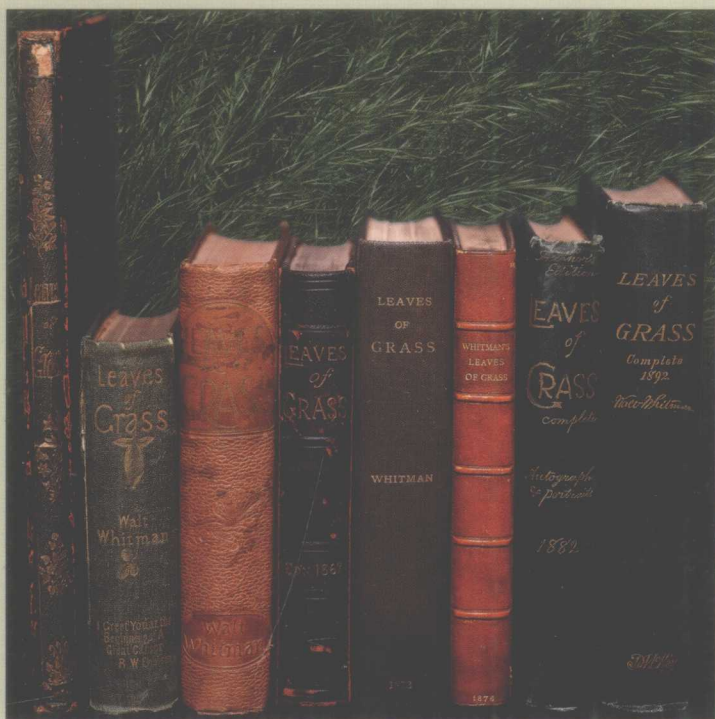


LEAVES OF GRASS

and Other Writings

WALT WHITMAN



EDITED BY MICHAEL MOON

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Walt Whitman
LEAVES OF GRASS
AND OTHER WRITINGS



AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS
OTHER POETRY AND PROSE
CRITICISM

Edited by

MICHAEL MOON

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

*An expanded and revised edition based on the
Norton Critical Edition of Leaves of Grass, edited by*

SCULLEY BRADLEY and HAROLD W. BLODGETT
LATE OF THE UNIVERSITY LATE OF UNION COLLEGE
OF PENNSYLVANIA

W • W • NORTON & COMPANY • New York • London

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Printed in the United States of America.

The text of this book is composed in Fairfield Medium
with the display set in Bernhard Modern.

Composition by PennSet, Inc.

Manufacturing by Courier.

Book design by Antonina Krass.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Whitman, Walt, 1819–1892.

[Selections. 2001]

Leaves of grass and other writings : authoritative texts, prefaces, Whitman on
his art, criticism / Walt Whitman ; edited by Michael Moon.
p. cm.— (A Norton critical edition)

“An expanded and revised edition based on the Norton critical edition of *Leaves
of grass* edited by Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett.”

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-393-97496-0 (pbk.)

I. Moon, Michael. II. Bradley, Sculley, 1897– III. Blodgett, Harold William,
1900– IV. Title.

PS3204 2001

811'.3—dc21

2001045248

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110
www.wwnorton.com

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House, 75/76 Wells Street,
London W1T 3QT

6 7 8 9 0

Preface

This volume represents a revision of Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett's venerable 1973 Norton Critical Edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, which was in turn based on the last (1891–92) issue of the book published in the poet's lifetime. The present editor has made no changes in the body of the poetic text, which remains Bradley and Blodgett's "Reader's Edition," based on their still-definitive *Leaves of Grass* variorum. Owing to changes in printing technology, it has not always been possible to preserve the previous edition's strict adherence to the breaking of the run-on lines precisely as they appeared in the 1891–92 *Leaves of Grass*; interested scholars should consult the *Variorum*. I have, with a sparing hand, updated some of the footnotes, revising and expanding them in view of the massive amount of scholarship on Whitman's book and its contexts that has emerged in the past thirty years.

The debt of much of this scholarship to Bradley and Blodgett's editorial labors is incalculably large. Whitman continued to rewrite and move poems around in *Leaves of Grass* throughout his life, and it was Bradley and Blodgett who first made it possible for the interested reader to compare several different versions of a Whitman poem with ease and convenience. Before the appearance of their Variorum Edition from New York University Press in 1965, only a handful of professional scholars who enjoyed the rare privilege of examining copies of early editions of *Leaves of Grass* had the means of making the kinds of discoveries that have repeatedly arisen as Whitman's genius for revision has become more widely recognized.

I have added the full text of Whitman's first (1855) edition of *Leaves of Grass* to this volume so that students can compare the poet's relatively short first version of his book—one that contained only twelve poems—with the compendious final work that he left at the time of his death thirty-seven years later. For similar comparison, I have also added the text of "Live Oak, with Moss," the initial group of poems out of which Whitman developed the celebrated "Calamus" section of *Leaves of Grass*. I thank Professor Hershel Parker for permission to reprint in this volume the version of this poetic "cluster" (to use Whitman's term) that he edited for *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. I have also added substantial excerpts from Whitman's two great prose works, *Democratic Vistas* and *Specimen Days*.

The "Criticism" section of the volume has been thoroughly revised. The selections from Whitman's contemporaries have been supplemented with the responses of a number of writers who were either

known only to literary and cultural historians at the time Bradley and Blodgett made their selection of criticism but have since come to be recognized as important literary figures, such as Fanny Fern (Sara Willis Parton), or who were well known but whose provocative responses to Whitman's writing were long ignored, such as Thoreau or Henry James. The most extensive revisions in this volume have been made in the selection of more recent criticism; the group of articles provided in the previous edition barely reached 1960. For a further sampling of the many rich developments in Whitman criticism over the past forty years, the reader is referred to the "Selected Bibliography" at the end of the volume.

Scholars have done much in recent decades to increase our understanding of the sources and implications of Whitman's writing, exploring a wide range of questions, from the intimate meaning of the poet's avowed love for other men (including some he merely glimpsed in public places, and others to whom he devoted himself for years) to his experience of life as a young bohemian newspaperman in the burgeoning metropolis of 1850s New York City, as a visiting nurse to the great Civil War hospitals in Washington, D.C., or—later—as a poet gradually achieving an international reputation while living, often in poor health, in a working-class section of Camden, N.J. Whitman, who was often represented by earlier critics as an anomalous figure, a great poet who inexplicably arose from a humble, even vulgar, background, has, thanks to much fine historicist criticism of the past several decades, come to "make sense" as a product as well as a producer of the violently energetic urban culture of the United States of his time. Many critics have also come to accept the notion—fiercely resisted for a long time—that Whitman may have enacted in his life some version of the "fluid," "adhesive" sexuality he celebrates in his poetry.

In their original introduction to the Norton Critical Edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Bradley and Blodgett modestly stated that their intention was "only to show the honored text without interruption, for the satisfaction of the reader." It is my hope that this revised edition will provide a new generation of students with the "satisfactions" of the previous edition, while also serving to introduce them to the critical literature on the poet.

I wish to express my gratitude to three young Americanist scholars who each provided invaluable aid to me during successive phases of this project: John Vincent, Ada Norris, and Christopher Lukasik. Thanks also to Carol Bemis, Kate Lovelady, and Brian Baker at Norton for their patient good humor as well as for the high level of professional dedication they have brought to this project. Closer to home, Jonathan Goldberg provided unfailing support and editorial counsel, for which I thank him.

MICHAEL MOON

Abbreviations

AANC	<i>After All, Not to Create Only</i> (1871)
AL	<i>American Literature</i> , quarterly, Duke University Press
Allen	Gay Wilson Allen, <i>The Solitary Singer</i> (1955)
AS	<i>American Speech</i>
ASB	Whitman, <i>As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free and Other Poems</i> (1872)
Asselineau	Roger Asselineau, <i>L'Evolution de Walt Whitman</i> (1954)
Asselineau (2)	Roger Asselineau, <i>The Evolution of Walt Whitman</i> , Eng. tr. 2 vols. (1960, 1962)
Aurora	Jay Rubin and Charles H. Brown, eds., <i>Walt Whitman of the New York Aurora</i> (1950)
Barrett	Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia
Barrus	Clara Barrus, <i>Whitman and Burroughs, Comrades</i> (1931)
Bayley	William D. Bayley Collection, Ohio Wesleyan University
Berg	Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library
Blodgett	Harold Blodgett, <i>Walt Whitman in England</i> (1934)
Blue Copy	LG 1860 with WW's corrections, Lion Collection, New York Public Library
BNYPL	<i>Bulletin of the New York Public Library</i>
Bowers	Fredson Bowers, <i>Whitman's Manuscripts, Leaves of Grass 1860</i> (1955)
BPL	Boston Public Library
Brown	Brown University Library
Bucke	Richard Maurice Bucke, <i>Walt Whitman</i> (1883)
Calamus	<i>Calamus: A Series of Letters written during the Years 1868–1880 by Whitman to a Young Friend</i> (Peter Doyle), ed. by R. M. Bucke (1897)
Canby	Henry Seidel Canby, <i>Walt Whitman: An American</i> (1943)
Coll W	<i>Collected Writings of Walt Whitman</i> , 21 vols. (N.Y.U. Press, 1961–84)
Corr.	<i>Correspondence of Walt Whitman</i> , ed. by Edwin H. Miller, 6 vols. (1961–77); in <i>Coll W</i>
CPP	<i>Complete Poems & Prose of Walt Whitman, 1855–1888</i> (1888)

CPSP	<i>Complete Poetry and Selected Prose and Letters</i> , Nonesuch Edition, ed. by Emory Holloway (1938)
CPW	Whitman, <i>Complete Prose Works</i> (1892)
CW	<i>Complete Writings of Walt Whitman</i> , ed. by R. M. Bucke and others, 10 vols. (1902)
DAB	<i>Dictionary of American Biography</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> (British)
Doheny	Estelle Doheny Collection, Doheny Memorial Library, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California
Donaldson	Thomas Donaldson, <i>Walt Whitman the Man</i> (1896)
DT	Whitman, <i>Drum-Taps</i> (1865–66)
Duke	Library of Duke University: Trent Collection
DV	Whitman, <i>Democratic Vistas</i> (1871)
EA	<i>Etudes Anglaises</i>
EJ	<i>English Journal</i>
ELH	<i>Journal of English Literary History</i>
ESQ	<i>Emerson Society Quarterly</i>
Expli	<i>Explicator</i>
Faner	Robert D. Faner, <i>Walt Whitman and Opera</i> (1951)
FBW	William Sloane Kennedy, <i>The Fight of a Book for the World</i> (1926)
FCI	<i>Faint Clews and Indirections</i> (Trent ms Collection), ed. by Clarence Gohdes and Rollo G. Silver (1949)
Feinberg	Charles E. Feinberg Collection
Furness	Clifton J. Furness, <i>Walt Whitman's Workshop</i> (1928)
GBF	Whitman, <i>Good-Bye My Fancy</i> (1891)
GF	<i>Gathering of the Forces</i> , ed. by Cleveland Rogers and John Black, 2 vols. (1920)
Gilchrist	Herbert H. Gilchrist, <i>Anne Gilchrist: Her Life and Writings</i> (1887)
Glicksberg	Charles I. Glicksberg, <i>Walt Whitman and the Civil War</i> (1933)
Handbook	Gay Wilson Allen, <i>Walt Whitman Handbook</i> (1946)
Hanley	T. E. Hanley Collection, University of Texas
Harned	<i>The Letters of Anne Gilchrist and Walt Whitman</i> , ed. by Thomas B. Harned (1918)
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
Holloway	Emory Holloway, <i>Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative</i> (1926)
Houghton	Houghton Library, Harvard University
Huntington	Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California
Imprints	<i>Leaves of Grass Imprints</i> (1860)
Inclusive LG	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> , Inclusive Edition, ed. by Emory Holloway (1924 <i>et seq.</i>)
In Re	<i>In Re Walt Whitman</i> , ed. by Horace L. Traubel, R. M. Bucke, T. B. Harned (1893)
ISL	<i>I Sit and Look Out</i> , ed. by Emory Holloway and Vernolian Schwartz (1932)

Kennedy	William Sloan Kennedy, <i>Reminiscences of Walt Whitman</i> (1896)
LC	Library of Congress
LC <i>Whitman</i>	<i>Walt Whitman: Catalog Based upon the Collections of the Library of Congress</i> (1955)
LG	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> (LG, LG 1860, etc.)
Lion	Oscar Lion Collection, New York Public Library
Livezey	Livezey Collection, University of California
<i>Memoranda</i>	Whitman, <i>Memoranda During the War</i> (1875)
Miller	James E. Miller, Jr., <i>A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass</i> (1957)
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
Morgan	Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
Mott	Frank Luther Mott, <i>A History of American Magazines</i> , 4 vols.
MP	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>N and F</i>	<i>Notes and Fragments</i> , ed. by R. M. Bucke (1899): republished, CW, Vol. IX
NB	Whitman, <i>November Boughs</i> (1888)
NED	<i>New English Dictionary</i>
NEQ	<i>New England Quarterly</i>
NYD	<i>New York Dissected</i> , ed. Emory Holloway and Ralph Adimari (1936)
NYPL	New York Public Library; See Berg, See Lion
PBSA	<i>Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>
Pennsylvania	University of Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia
Perry	Bliss Perry, <i>Walt Whitman</i> (1906)
PI	Whitman, <i>Passage to India</i> (1871)
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Ass'n</i>
PT	Partial text
SB	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
SDC	Whitman, <i>Specimen Days & Collect</i> (1882)
Texas	Library of the University of Texas: Hanley
Traubel	Horace Traubel, <i>With Walt Whitman in Camden</i> , 3 vols. (1906–1914); Vol. IV, ed. by Sculley Bradley (1953); Vol. V, ed. by Gertrude Traubel (1964)
TR	Whitman, <i>Two Rivulets</i> (1876)
Trent	Trent Memorial Collection; cf. Duke
TSE	<i>Tulane Studies in English</i>
UPP	<i>The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman</i> , 2 vols. ed. by Emory Holloway (1921)
Va.	Library of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville
<i>Visits</i>	<i>Visits to Walt Whitman in 1890–1891 by two Lancashire Friends</i> , John Johnston and J. W. Wallace (London, 1917; New York, 1918)
WD	Whitman, <i>The Wound Dresser</i> , ed. by R. M. Bucke (1898)
WDC	Whitman, <i>Walt Whitman's Diary in Canada</i> , ed. by William Sloane Kennedy (1904)

Introduction

The Growth of "Leaves of Grass"

In the Variorum Edition,¹ which presents for the first time all the poems of *Leaves of Grass* in chronological order, a full analysis is made of the almost incessant revision, reordering, and augmentation that culminated in the final 1881 arrangement. It is pertinent here briefly to characterize and outline this process, which has often been described by mutually exclusive images—a cathedral constructed from a blueprint in the poet's mind, or a tree growing from year to year, its rings marking the successive editions. A better image is one the poet used in a postcard to his friend William Douglas O'Connor, March 5, 1889, upon sending him the 1888 one-volume *Complete Poems & Prose*: "I can hardly tell why, but feel very positively that if anything can justify my revolutionary attempts & utterances, it is such *ensemble*—like a great city to modern civilization & a whole combined clustering paradoxical identity a man, a woman . . ."

Actually the successive nine editions of the poet's lifetime grew out of his vivid sense of endless materials, a creative pressure welling from profound depths, and a boundless acceptance which expressed itself in an urgent inclusiveness rather than in the artful limits of deliberate design. In franker moments the poet recognized this. In a very late note, December 6, 1891, he speaks of "hackling" at *Leaves of Grass* for *thirty-six* years, of its "cumulous" character, even its "jaggedness." And more than once he testified to his intuitive approach. "I do not suppose," he said, "that I shall ever again have the *afflatus* I had in writing the first *Leaves of Grass*," and he spoke of his experiment as a radical utterance out of the abysses of the Soul. In such phrases Whitman was describing the workings of the creative mind, which plans and constructs indeed with the impassioned power of discovery.

The poet was receptive to its promptings. He had to wait upon the event, and in his case, the event was the whole life of his nation. So Whitman was surely justified in insisting upon identifying the growth of his *Leaves* with the growth of his country. He had new things to say, new approaches, shifts of insight and mood as he and his land developed: "as I have lived in fresh lands, inchoate, and in a revolutionary age, future-founding," he wrote in his 1876 Preface, "I have felt to identify the points of that age, these lands, in my recitatives

1. Sculley Bradley, Harold W. Blodgett, Arthur Golden, and William White, eds., *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, 3 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1965).

. . . Within my time the United States have emerg'd from nebulous vagueness and suspense, to full orbic, (though varied) decision . . . Out of that stretch of time . . . my Poems too have found genesis."

Here, in outline summary, is the record: The twelve poems of *LG* 1855, in which the introductory poem, to be called "Song of Myself," is longer than the other eleven poems taken together, boldly eschew all distinction of title, and indeed the whole design seems to emphasize the singleness of the poet's song—variations upon one utterance. In the second edition, *LG* 1856, Whitman began to count his poems. He added twenty—among them some of his best—and in his exuberant letter to Emerson, really his 1856 Preface, he boasts that he will keep on until he has made a hundred and then several hundred, perhaps a thousand! He also fashioned titles, some absurdly long, some reduced to a syllable—"Clef Poem," or "Bunch Poem." It was an odd and yet arresting table of contents from a writer uncommitted to a pattern.

Within the next four years his now intense creative energy produced no less than 124 poems for his third edition, *LG* 1860, making 156 in all; and yet at the same time he was hopefully pondering, as a kind of "wander-teacher," a program of lectures corresponding with his *Leaves*, to reach his countrymen if his poems should not. *LG* 1860 was the first to display a group arrangement of sorts, emphasized by eccentric typography; and yet an examination of his manuscripts shows (*vide* Bowers) that probably as late as 1859 Whitman had had no decisive intention whatever of dividing his poems into groups. The compelling factor was his sudden focusing upon two special themes, and later a third: the celebration of comradeship in "Calamus," of procreation in "Children of Adam," and of the nation at war in *Drum-Taps*. Such new demands led the poet to observe (in the *Saturday Press*, January 7, 1860) that *Leaves of Grass* had not yet really been published at all—he was slowly trying his hand at the structure he had undertaken. And these three groups did possess a homogeneity so vital that through all succeeding editions they remained essentially undisturbed by the considerable shifting to which the poet subjected them—so considerable, indeed, that only thirty-eight of the seventy-one pieces in the 1865–66 *Drum-Taps* and "Sequel to *Drum-Taps*" were held in place, thirty-three poems being eventually dispersed into no less than nine other groups. To return to the third edition, its remaining clusters—the remarkable "Chants Democratic," the numbered "Leaves of Grass," and the "Messenger Leaves" demonstrated no survival value *as groups*, and so disappeared. The poet had no certain structural plan, and this uncertainty, deepening under the perturbation of a personal crisis, even led him, in three of the 1860 poems, to question whether he should go on.

But of course he was bound to go on, and plans multiplied. Late in 1860 his Boston publisher announced a separate volume, *Banner at Daybreak*, but it never appeared. In an ms draft of an unpublished preface originally dated May 31, 1861, the poet complained, "the paths to the house are made, but where is the house itself?" But when presently the poems of *Drum-Taps* began to form under the immediate

stress of war, the poet grew in confidence. “I *must* be continually bringing out poems—now is the hey day,” he wrote on November 17, 1863, to his publisher, Eldrige, and much of his creative concentration may be sensed from the annotations that crowd the pages of his third edition toward his next. Fortunately these annotations are extant in the LG 1860 “Blue Copy,” now in the Lion Collection—the very volume, WW averred (Traubel, III, 474), which James Harlan, secretary of the Interior, had surreptitiously examined before he dismissed the poet from his Washington clerkship. “Transfer to Drum-Taps?” the poet questions at the top of a page, or “Out—out altogether” he scrawls in the margin of others, and some annotations indicate that he was pondering still other volumes or groupings under such titles as “Leaves-Droppings” or “Pioneers.”

The book *Drum-Taps* (1865), turning upon the pivotal issue of the Civil War, was very important to the poet both as document and as art, and with its “Sequel” (1865–66), he began the practice of developing supplements with their own pagination, to be bound up with the parent volume or issued separately. In August, 1866, he wrote to Abby Price of going to New York to bring out a new and much better edition of *Leaves of Grass*—“that unkillable work.” This was to be the fourth edition of 1867, which he designated in the Bucke biography as beginning the order and classification eventually settled upon. Yet this order, more flexible than in LG 1860, is notably casual, and not so much an advance in thematic sequence as in variety of content. The supplements—now augmented by “Songs Before Parting”—were so variously combined with the major text that LG 1867 exists in four different forms. Of the various groupings, only “Calamus” and “Children of Adam” were “clusters” in Whitman’s sense of that word: only these fifty-six poems, exclusive of the supplements, possessed an unmistakable consistency of theme. Seventy-six of the other poems were distributed among untitled groups, and the remaining twenty-six were arranged in a series of four “Leaves of Grass” groups and one group of “Thoughts,” carried over intact from the “Thoughts” of 1860. No patent unity of theme distinguished the “Leaves of Grass” groups—the title being a mere convenience—and in later editions the poems comprising them were thoroughly scattered.

With all its supplements, LG 1867 included 236 poems, only 57 short of the 293 which were to compose the final arrangement of 1881. And very soon—as early as May 1869—Whitman began to hint of his final edition, and of turning to religious themes. These speculations occupied his thoughts in both the 1872 and 1876 Prefaces: *Leaves of Grass* he felt to be as complete as he could make it, and its “surplusage” might become a supplementary volume, the voice—as he wrote in 1872—of “a composite, electric, democratic personality,” or—as he put it in 1876—“of those convictions which make the unseen Soul govern absolutely at last.”

These aims, really explicit from the first, were purposefully stressed in later poems—superbly so in “Passage to India”—but the structural problem was not solved. Indeed it could not be. Instead there was the

improvising of an arrangement for a body of work already largely complete. The 1871 *Leaves of Grass*, with only nine new poems, was formed into twenty-two groups, sixteen of them titled—some simply as “Leaves of Grass”—and the other six untitled. The 1871 pamphlet *Passage to India*, with only twenty-two of its seventy-four poems new, was formed into six titled groups and three untitled, the poet at once binding it in as a supplement in LG 1872.

Five years after the 1871 edition appeared LG 1876, identical except for a few intercalations. Its companion volume, *Two Rivulets*, was a medley of prose, fourteen new poems under the “Two Rivulets” title, four “Centennial Songs,” seven poems under the title piece, “As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free,” and the 1871 collection, *Passage to India*. Undoubtedly Whitman had made a practical solution of the problem of arranging a two-volume edition to signalize the centennial year, but his perplexity had been pressing. A notebook belonging to the mid-1870s addresses questions to himself: “Qu—whether to make a new Vol of these pieces including *Whispers of Heavenly Death*?—qu—whether to finish up *Leaves of Grass* in one Vol—*Drum-Taps* in another . . .—*Whispers* etc in another.”

The questions ended in mid-air, but the poet now resolved to end his problem by a thorough reshuffling of all his poems into the final arrangement of 1881, a process in which several group titles (some very good, for Whitman had a gift for titles) disappear, their contents absorbed into the surviving groups. The cluster “Inscriptions,” first faintly suggested in 1867, is an appropriate introduction, although certain announcement poems elsewhere are quite as inscriptive as these. Such groups as “Birds of Passage,” “By the Roadside,” “Autumn Rivulets,” and “From Noon to Starry Night” do possess a casual consonance of theme, but attempts to demonstrate a rule of logical continuity in them are embarrassed by too many exceptions. On the other hand, two of the groups carrying over from *Passage to India*—“Sea-Drift” (formerly “Sea-Shore Memories”) and “Whispers of Heavenly Death”—are very closely knit, and so is the final group “Songs of Parting,” sounding a farewell with poems that had appeared over a period of more than twenty years. The sense of departure had haunted Whitman’s pages ever since “So Long!” had closed the 1860 edition. For the rest, there are the three stalwarts—“Children of Adam,” “Calamus,” and “Drum-Taps,” together with the twenty-five major poems to which the poet gave the importance of standing by themselves. Perhaps it should be noted that in this whole process not only have groups constantly shifted, but also the poems within the groups, so that a given poem may have appeared in three or four different groups from 1860 to 1881. There was to be no more shifting, but there would be addition: the sixty-five poems of “Sands at Seventy,” first separately published in *November Boughs* (1888), and the thirty-one poems of “Good-Bye My Fancy,” first separately published in 1891. Both “annexes” were to round out the 1891–92 edition, the poet’s sole authorized text.

This is the poet’s structure—neither the “Leaves” in the order of

their growth nor the cathedral of prefigured design. These figures were ideals which gave solace and strength to a task which had often to face a bleak reality of contingency and crisis. Certain comment, arguing from the 1881 arrangement, has attributed to Whitman a prescience which robs him of his true stature. It is just as erroneous to argue, as some critics have, that the poet's constant revisions, shiftings, and insertions betray indecisiveness or uncertainty. There is never any doubt of a purpose kept consciously in view, an aim never deviated from; nor is there doubt that Whitman intended and achieved structure. Still, it was a structure that grew as the poet grew, that was adapted to the necessities he met and molded by the pressures his own life felt—its materials altered, added to, subtracted from, transposed as time and need required. And so it was alive. The construction of *Leaves of Grass* is best to be regarded, not as a hierarchic system of themes, but as resourceful editing by a man who was obliged to be his own publisher for most of his life, who serenely confronted a hostile literary market, who enjoyed little benefit of professional advice, and who nevertheless essentially achieved what he had set out to do. It took resolution—the resolution of the poet who told himself, “Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find.”

The Poems of the Canon

Yet in one's absorption with the tortuous process by which the poet arrived at his final structure—the preferred and authorized text of 1891–92—one should not fail to acknowledge the impressive and, on the whole, triumphal advance of the poet's genius in its hard-won path.

To begin in 1855 with “Song of Myself,” untitled and in no signal way distinguished from its accompanying eleven poems, was directly to assert without skirmish or equivocation the basic theme of this poet's creative intent: to improve and transform life (the poet as maker and reformer), to discern and set forth its miraculousness (the poet as celebrator), and to sing the transcendence of human love, envisioned as divine (the poet as lover). The companion poems of the first edition were—as in a sense were also the future poems of *Leaves of Grass*—an extension of the prime purpose, celebration of the individual, of the nation, and of spiritual possibility. So, for example, we have (employing the final titles) “A Song for Occupations,” the poem of daily work which in later editions was to undergo severe revision; “To Think of Time,” also to be much revised but even now strongly anticipating “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” in its poignant concern with time and death; “The Sleepers,” powerfully original in imaginative grasp—a twentieth century poem in its penetration into subconscious states; “I Sing the Body Electric,” an announcement poem, really, for what was to be one of the great groups of the third edition; “Faces,” of audacious imagery, limning both the victorious and the broken; “Song of the Answerer,” to be fused later with a kindred poem largely derived from the 1855 Preface; and “There was a Child Went Forth,” simple and profound in its Lockean grasp of the relation of experience to knowledge.

His ambition undaunted by massive indifference toward his first edition, the poet prefaced his second by the brash exuberance of his "Dear Master" letter to Emerson—a kind of *Democratic Vistas* in embryo, calling for identity, for national character, and individuality. He now had twenty new poems to strengthen his poetic evangelism, and remarkable poems some of them were, including the strange "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" (later "Respondez!"), which he was to exclude, retaining two passages as mementos of a passionate deviation into irony. Four of the poems derive much of their being from the poetic storehouse of the 1855 Preface—notably the somewhat confused "Poem of Many in One" ("By Blue Ontario's Shore"), which elaborates the thesis of the American Bard for America, an outburst to be greatly modified in later editions; and "Poem of the Last Explanations of Prudence" ("Song of Prudence"), an Emersonian meditation on value.

Other salient—and successful—compositions are "Poem of Salutation" ("Salut au Monde!"), a vigorously expressive recognition of the peoples of the earth, their cultures and religions; the assuring and intimate "To You"; the buoyant "Poem of the Road" ("Song of the Open Road"), the most famous of the invitation poems; and "Broad-Axe Poem" ("Song of the Broad-Axe"), with its flawless opening lines and its evocation of the shapes of America, among which the poet at first included himself. Two of the bold new poems, "A Woman Waits for Me" and "Spontaneous Me," were to find their fitting place in the "Enfants d'Adam" of the third edition. But the most beautiful poem of the second edition was "Sun-Down Poem" ("Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"), with its descriptions of the "glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings," and its vision, penetrating beyond time and appearance to an eternal and changeless reality.

The thirty-two poems of the first two editions were a prelude to an extraordinary burst of creative energy in the next three years. Indeed by June 1857 (the date is surmised by Dr. Bucke), WW made a cryptic reference to "the three hundred and sixty-five" as the goal he had set himself for the "Great Construction of the New Bible" (*N and F*, 57). Whether the figure refers to poems or days, we do not know, but in a letter of the following July 20 he speaks of wanting to bring out a third edition, for which he already has a hundred poems. We know, too, from manuscript evidence that even before this date he was working on poems that were to appear in *LG* 1860. His failure to publish his third edition in 1857 may be attributed to a number of reasons—perhaps his absorption in the editorship of the *Brooklyn Times*, perhaps the difficulty of finding a publisher in a year of business depression, perhaps his own financial straits. At any rate it seems fortunate, in retrospect, that Thayer and Eldridge were not to make the enthusiastic offer that eventuated in the third edition until February 10, 1860, for early in 1859 the poet experienced another access of poetic energy whose source seems to be a profound need that changed the current of his important opening poem, "Proto-Leaf" ("Starting from Paumanok") and produced two great new clusters—"Calamus" and

"Enfans d'Adam." With the encouragement of publishers who believed in him and with 124 poems added to the existing 32, he was now for the first time to arrange his poems into a structural pattern which should emphasize the basic themes—as he announced them in "Proto-Leaf"—of "the greatness of Love and Democracy—and the greatness of Religion."

"Proto-Leaf" is not only an announcement of themes, but a moving declaration that the poet "will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love"; and this he does in the forty-five new poems of the "Calamus" cluster which in their sensibility and candor are art of a high order, superior in delicacy to the more literal-seeming "Enfans d'Adam," which WW was to defend in his famous talk with Emerson on Boston Common and also in his prose piece, "A Memorandum at a Venture." This group of fifteen poems, twelve of which were new, was introduced by the brilliant "To the Garden the World," evoking the figure of Adam, who with conscious art appears again in the final poem of the cluster.

The other clusters were less successful, and so did not survive. The twenty-one "Chants Democratic," advertising themselves in subtitle as "Native American," displayed a certain confident strength, derived in part from six poems of the earlier editions, and also one interesting failure, "Apostroph," a curious exercise in ecstatic exclamation. These poems were to be widely dispersed, as were those of the group of twenty-four simply titled "Leaves of Grass," which opened with a remarkable confession later to be called "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life." The poet, addressing the ocean as father and rejecting "all the blab whose echoes recoil upon me," avows in humility the terrible burden of trying to penetrate the meaning of existence. "O I perceive I have not understood anything—not a single object—and that no man ever can." One more cluster, "Messenger Leaves," does have a single theme to hold its fifteen poems together, in the sense that they are indeed all messages, beginning with the moving "To You" of the second edition, but their sequence was not to be maintained—the poet assuming in later editions, perhaps, that the whole of *Leaves of Grass* is a message, properly considered.

In comparative estimates, few would question that the finest single achievement of the third edition is "Out of the Cradle," first published as "A Child's Reminiscence" in the New York *Saturday Press*, December 24, 1859, and in *LG* 1860 as "A Word Out of the Sea." Its variants are worth special study, for the poet worked long on this poem, which has been characterized by D. H. Lawrence as "the perfect utterance of a concentrated, spontaneous soul." Whether or not the poet here sublimated a personal grief over the loss of a lover, it is certain that he revealed his own poetic birth. "My own songs awakened from that hour."

The 1860 edition closed, strangely for a poet scarcely turned forty, with a note of leave-taking: the seemingly casual "So Long!" which announces what shall come after him and ends with an exalted farewell: "Remember my words—I love you—I depart from materials, / I

am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead." Altogether, as Roy Harvey Pearce has declared in his facsimile edition, *LG* 1860 is a great book—he believes the poet's greatest. But Whitman's greatness was not yet expended.

He was to experience a great new source of poetic inspiration—the Civil War—of which the 1865 *Drum-Taps* and its 1865–66 "Sequel" were the consequence. Despite the circumstance that a number of these seventy-one poems were probably composed before the actual conflict, and that many of them were later dispersed into other groups, they derive their strength and centrality from the poet's total commitment to the tremendous crisis of his beloved democracy. He wrote them, as he put it, "on the field, in the hospitals, as I worked with the soldier boys . . .," and later he averred, "Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, *Leaves of Grass* would not now be existing." We cannot accept this statement in view of such achievements as "Song of Myself," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," but we see what the poet meant when we consider his equally remarkable statement in a letter on *Drum-Taps* to William Douglas O'Connor, January 6, 1865: "It is in my opinion superior to *Leaves of Grass*—certainly more perfect as a work of art . . ." He goes on to stress such qualities as proportion, control, and the removal of all verbal superfluity.

Drum-Taps, then, was a highly conscious achievement in craft. Working with great materials on a task that he said had haunted him—"the pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*"—Whitman found artistic resources in himself which were quite unrecognized in the poetic practices of the day, and, incidentally, unperceived by two young reviewers of *Drum-Taps*, William Dean Howells and Henry James, both of whom complained of the poet's lack of art. These resources manifested themselves in an ability at stark depiction of war scenes, whose realism in such poems as "A Sight in Camp . . ." or "The Wound-Dresser" look forward to the specificity of a Crane or a Hemingway; and in sharply etched vignettes such as "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" or "An Army Corps on the March," which reveal an artist's fascination with the sight and show of war. But even more than descriptive power or objective reporting, the poems evince another quality which informs their aesthetic sensibility—the compassion and love which, lifted above the desperation of some of the "Calamus" poems, animates the whole enterprise with a sympathetic imaginativeness whose richest expression is the great threnody, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"—"the most sweet and sonorous nocturne," exclaimed Swinburne, "ever chanted in the church of the world." Some critics consider this to be Whitman's greatest poem; some disagree, feeling a sense of artifice in its deployment of symbols; but certainly it may stand as the high point of the poet's personal engagement with war and with the issues of his nation, commemorating not alone the death of a great hero but the heroic and the truly great in humanity.

But if the Lincoln elegy is the high point, what is to be said of WW's poetic performance thereafter—the new verses of the six editions of

LG still to come, as well as certain poems in separate publication? It has become almost a cliché of one school of Whitman criticism to stress not only a falling-off of poetic energy (which was to be expected), but a regrettable change of intent, the complaint being that in later years Whitman the visionary was overtaken by Whitman the prophet—that the poet was conquered by the propagandist. There is directness in this charge, and some evidence to support it, but one should heed the poet's own insistence that he wanted a full, not a partial judgment upon his work—that he was not to be known as a piece of something but as a totality (Traubel, I, 272). When we consider Whitman's totality, we are persuaded of its genuineness and of its steady adherence to a crowning purpose, painstakingly detailed in "A Backward Glance . . .": to "formulate a poem whose every thought or fact should directly or indirectly be or connive at an implicit belief in the wisdom, health, mystery, beauty of every process, every concrete object, every human or other existence, not only consider'd from the point of view of all, but of each."

Let us briefly summarize the record from this point. After the *Drum-Taps* poems, and exclusive of the two annexes, "Sands at Seventy" and "Good-bye My Fancy," Whitman was to publish nearly ninety poems. It must be said that, taken together, they give an impression of appetite for life, of unwaning poetic interest, and a high degree of distinctive performance despite the hazards and disabilities of the oncoming years. More than a fourth of them are short lyrics of less than eight or ten lines, some of them designed for the introductory "Inscriptions" cluster; a number, such as "Outlines for a Tomb" or "O Star of France" are poems of occasion; several, of which the greatest is "The Return of the Heroes" (originally "A Carol of Harvest, for 1867"), deal with the still harrowing memory of the war and the crucial problems for democratic society left in its wake. In fact, the problems as well as the potentialities of democracy were to furnish the substance of three major poems that WW composed in response to public invitation, poems that furnished, too, a certain temptation for the poet to act as America's official voice. These were "Song of the Exposition" (American Institute, New York, 1871), "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood" (Dartmouth College, 1872), and "Song of the Universal" (Tufts College, 1874). Of these the last is the best, if only that in expressing his theme—the reaffirmation of his idealism—the poet uses a pattern that is direct, terse, almost epigrammatic. In the first, and to a lesser extent in the second of these public poems, the poet is occasionally betrayed into a Polonius-like sententiousness, so earnest a spokesman for America that he sounds at times more like her agent than her lover. Yet even here the bold, original image may be found. Who else could speak of installing the Muse among the kitchenware?

The most distinguished poem of the later period is *Passage to India*, first separately published in 1871, and then incorporated into LG 1872 and TR 1876. Writing with characteristic exultation in the achievement of three great advances in communication—the opening of the Suez Canal, the completion of the continental railway system in his