CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In his craving for knowledge of things, human and divine, Whitman packs up his mind with almost limitless acquisition of material following uncertainly—
a faint, new, and inner rhythm, as it were that of his own pulses: "Urge and urge and urge."\(^1\) His words are but the crude and outward symbols of that inner language, that subtle play of mental imagery, that unusual and individual combination of percepts which is his real distinction:

To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow.\(^2\)

He therefore shuns the "endless unfolding of words of ages"\(^3\) and talks of "word of the faint that never balks"\(^4\). It is so because:

2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
4. Ibid., p. 42.
It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all. Hence his remark:

I accept Reality and dare not question it. 2

He proceeds with the presumption that "Reality" is "Endless" 3 and "unfolding" 4. He therefore accepts "Time" 5 absolutely. It creates in the heart of man "the faith that never balks" 6. He accepts the facts of life too which are "useful" 7 but they are not his "dwellings" 8. He hopes to enter by them to "an area" 9 of his "dwellings" 10. They are simply "reminders" 11 of "life untold" 12 and of "freedom and extrication" 13.

His mysticism is nowhere seen more forcefully expressed than in the following lines:

2. Ibid., p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
4. Ibid., p. 42.
5. Ibid., p. 42.
6. Ibid., p. 42.
7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. Ibid., p. 42.
9. Ibid., p. 42.
10. Ibid., p. 42.
11. Ibid., p. 42.
12. Ibid., p. 42.
13. Ibid., p. 42.
Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy
Whatever I touch or am touched from.¹

Whitman, at times, seems to pass beyond himself and
the pressing actualities of life into a state of ecstatic
contemplation, in which the whole universe is apparently
revealed to his eyes under a new and glorious aspect, in
the light of which he seems to live and act. That Whitman
must be considered as a mystic becomes immediately apparent
when we examine the writings of mystics—oriental or occidental,
medieval or modern. As a mystic Whitman has the sense of
special knowledge. In his mood, in his vision, he sees—he knows not how—the greater scheme of creation and his
own relation to it; but this knowledge is ineffable: it
can not be uttered; it may only be adumbrated or symbolized.
It is, moreover, a state that brings "peace and knowledge
that pass all the argument of the earth"². The light
breaks in upon and pervades his entire inner being. The
whole universe opens before him. He sees all and is all.

1. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 44.
2. Ibid., p. 27.
There is no beginning or end to what he sees; cause and effect are identical: the spirit of the universe is one, and that spirit is love. This state of feeling is cosmic consciousness, and it is the highest step in the same slow evolution that ripens the impersonal consciousness of the animal into the self-conscious spirit of man:

O take my hand Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.¹

The poet finds "a great round wonder rolling through space"². The "curious rapid change of the light and shade"³, the "plenteous waters"⁴, the "mountain peaks"⁵ and the "sail and steamships of the world"⁶ are all guided by the same divine spirit. He finds

¹. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 108.
². Ibid., p. 110.
³. Ibid., p. 110.
⁴. Ibid., p. 110.
⁵. Ibid., p. 110.
⁶. Ibid., p. 110.
''distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them'' as his ''land'' is to him. So huge a generalization may well stagger the cautious critic, but it serves to indicate the nature and extent of the mystic's experience.

Mystic experience is most often produced by long and solitary meditation, in which the attention is intently fixed on a single object until the sense of self-hood broadens enormously and the spirit seems suddenly to cross the threshold of nature, and the finite self to rejoin the soul of the universe in order to ''feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion'' The ''boundless vista'' and the ''horizon far and dim'' are all here to indicate that ''I'' and ''mine'' are ultimately merged in the ''spirit'' and as ''a wheel on its axis turns'' the

2. Ibid., p. 110.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. Ibid., p. 5.
6. Ibid., p. 6.
7. Ibid., p. 6.
8. Ibid., p. 6.
9. Ibid., p. 6.
"spirit" goes back to "thee". Whitman has ecstatic experiences in which he receives revelations and is subject to recurrences of an extreme state of mystical consciousness. In *Eidosons* he finds "All space all time/the stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns/Swelling, collapsing, ending serving their longer, shorter use". Likewise the "noiseless myriads/the infinite oceans where the rivers empty/the separate countless free identities like eyesight", provide him the glimpse of "true realities". He passes at times into a sort of waking trance:

Unfixed yet fixed,  
Ever shall be, ever have been and are,  
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,

It is in this state of awakened consciousness that he addresses his soul:

2. Ibid., p. 7.  
3. Ibid., p. 8.  
4. Ibid., p. 8.  
5. Ibid., p. 8.
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Unfixed yet fixed,  
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It is in this state of awakened consciousness that he addresses his soul:

It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder associated with absolute clearness of mind. The poet finds himself undisturbed while "standing at ease in Nature". He is the "Master of all". He is "aplomb in the midst of irrational things/imbued as they, passive receptive, silent as they". The traces of Whitman's first remarkable mystic experience can be seen in the following passage:

I believe in you, my soul, the other I am must not a base itself to you, And you must not be abased to the other, Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat, Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best, Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

The poet decides to dwell in a state of highly developed mystical consciousness:

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2. Ibid., p. 10.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 27.
I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.
Swifly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
That pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love.

The Leaves of Grass is a fine repository of his own means of freeing himself from the outward and understandable world and of precipitating himself into the mood of ecstasy. Its characteristics are two. First, the universe appears one: all things reveal themselves to him simultaneously, as they are, and on the same plane, as if space and time have been annihilated. Second, the law of this world is love. Rank and order vanish the lowest and the highest are equal; all are to be comprehended only by affection.

In the light of this ecstasy, now brightening, now growing dim he strikes up for "a New World"¹ full of "victory"² and "Eternal progress"³:

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.⁴

Henceforward he is the poet of the vision - the vision of the world as love. He, thus, seems to "inaugurate a religion"⁵ which is undoubtedly "great"⁶. His theme is the mood of ecstasy and understanding, which he reaches through the contemplation of nature. The secret is that man and the world are good, are clean and holy, are to be accepted with joy and trustfully. They reflect "The greatness of Love"⁷ and "the greatness of Religion"⁸.

⁴ Ibid., p. 14.
⁵ Ibid., p. 17.
⁶ Ibid., p. 17.
⁷ Ibid., p. 18.
⁸ Ibid., p. 18.
The "divine average"1 with its "reckless and composite chords"2 is simply "illustrious"3. It points to a "world primal again"4 with "vistas of glory incessant and branching"5. It is "something ecstatic and un-demonstrable"6. It clears "one's path ahead endlessly"7. But it is most typical of the ceaselessly evolving universe, working out its gigantic law of transmutation.

Man, then, - actual, existing man, - "hankering, gross, mystical, nude",8, is the great type, the great reality. Man is deathless, august; he is himself of the very essence of being. He must then venerate himself, rather than the gods. It follows, then, that virtue and vice are, sub specie eternitatis, foolish words. Each plays its part in Nature's dualism:

2. Ibid., p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 19.
4. Ibid., p. 22.
5. Ibid., p. 22.
6. Ibid., p. 23.
7. Ibid., p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 39.
What blurt is this about virtue and about vice? Evil propels me, and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent. ¹

The universe holds its steady progress: shall man fear the outcome or dare to distinguish between God's instruments?:

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?²

Similarly, in man there can be no degradation or distinction:

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy;
By God! I will accept nothing which all can not have their counterpart of on the same terms.³

And as man is divine only as a perennial element in Nature, he is divine by virtue of his power of selfcontinuation, by

2. Ibid., p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 43.
virtue, that is, of his power of propagation. Hence, man's function of propagation and its instruments are, from that point of view, essential and noble.

Again he rushes into tumultuous inventory of multitudinous aspects and instances of life, contemplating with ecstasy all the works of Nature, heroes and martyrs of all ages, man in his most ordinary or most picturesque occupations, even plants and beasts, - the running blackberry vine that 'would adorn the parlors of heaven'\(^1\), the animals that are 'so placid and selfcontained'\(^2\):

They do not sweat and whine about their condition; They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God, Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things, Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago, Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.\(^3\)

All life, then, he loves, and in a wonderful passage he announces himself, as the lover of the earth:

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night,
Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic
nourishing night!

Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.
Smile, O Voluptuous, cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just
tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and
clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your love comes.
Prodigal, you have given me lover—therefore I to you
give love!

O unspeakable passionate love.

Nay, more. So strongly does he feel this transcending
vitality which is his through his secret, that he would
share it with the weak and fainting spirit:

O despairer, here is my neck;
By God! you shall not go down! Hang your whole weight
upon me.

2. Ibid., p. 61.
He adds:

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.¹

He continues:

Sleep — I and they keep guard all night;
Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you;
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to
myself,
And when you rise in the morning you will find what
I tell you is so.²

The mystic note runs through his delineation of the
strength and might of man and woman. He does not talk either
of wife or mistress of his, but the women of America, the
women of the world, in whose physical keeping are the babes
of mankind:

². Ibid., p. 61.
The greater the reform needed, the greater the Personality you need to accomplish it.

Hence his advice:

Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence to-day, to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness, Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own personality.²

If women be not strong, where shall strength come to the race? If they be impassive and unworthy, prudish and cold-blooded, ill-natured and hysterical, what can come of it but a world of weaklings? For:

Unfolded out of the folds of the woman, man comes unfolded, and is always to come unfolded;
Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth, is to come the superbest man of the earth;
Unfolded out of the friendliest woman, is to come the friendliest man;

2. Ibid., p. 307.
Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman,
can a man be form'd of perfect body....
Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come all the
folds
of the man's brain, duly obedient,
Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice is
unfolded
Unfolded of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy;
A man is a great thing upon the earth, and through eternity
but every jot of the greatness of man is
unfolded out of woman;
First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then
be shaped in himself. 1

Song of The Open Road is one of the most haunting of all his
compositions. Starting from the highway which entices
one to push out boldly and carelessly into unknown unfamiliar
and unexplored regions with "old delicious burdens" 2, he
transfers his symbolism to the open road of thought and
feeling and action, urging his friends tenderly to throw
aside convention and conservatism and enter heartily upon
the journey of life questing for the unknown. It is in
a state of mystic trance:

2. Ibid., p. 117.
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, You hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart. 1

The quest for the unknown and the imperishable continues to inspire him to arrive at the ineffable reality:

Allons! after the great companions, and to belong to them! They too are on the road - they are the swift and majestic men-

They are the greatest women, ..... 2

He adds:

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion, He going with me must go well arm'd; He going with me goes often with spare diet, Poverty, angry, enemies, desertions. 3

He continues:

Allons! the road is before us! It is safe - I have tried it- My own feet have tried it well. 4

2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Ibid., p. 125.
4. Ibid., p. 125.
He further says:

Allons! be not detain'd!  
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! Let the money remain unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! Mind not the cry of the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! Let the lawyer plead in the court; and the judge expound the law.  

He contemplates:

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?

The message of equality, too, the mystic sympathy with all created things, though similarly confirmed, is scarcely so much stressed as in the previous poems, and though his mind runs much on the career of America and the proud democracy

The poetic faculty that enables Whitman to cast off his ties and ballasts and cover continent with his palms he later calls "fancy":

Good-bye my fancy - (I had a word to say, But 'tis not quite the time - the best of any man's word or say, Is when its proper place arrives - and for its meaning I keep mine till the last.)

In *Song of Myself* he speaks of himself, his physical self, and his "soul" which he seems to regard as the real "Me". The soul must be invited to "loafe" with him on the grass, to "loose the stop from her throat". After a soothing "Lull", the poet hears the "hum of your valved voice". He feels himself to be in rapport with his soul experiencing within the presence of "the

2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Ibid., p. 34.
4. Ibid., p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 27.
6. Ibid., p. 27.
7. Ibid., p. 27.
And deeper yet are mystical broodings. Just as formerly he pictures himself, as the type-man, as lover and husband and father, the incarnation of sex, so now he announces himself as the lover of his friend, yearning for his close companionship, for his kiss and his embrace:

Youth, large, lusty, loving — youth full of grace, force, fascination. 1

It is so because:

Love like the light silently wrapping all,
Nature's amelioration blessing all,
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening 2

The Anglo-Saxon, with his sense of physical aloofness, finds these sayings hard. Whitman himself falters and seems at times ill at ease, and declares that he shades his thought;

2. Ibid., p. 187.
but it is clear that we have here no abnormality or perversion of feeling. Since he perceives one picking him 'Cut by secret and divine signs'\(^1\). The poet is 'baffled'\(^2\) but 'that one is not'\(^3\) that one knows him. By some 'faint indications'\(^4\) he wants to be discovered:

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.\(^5\)

And deeper and more mystical still, a doctrine that as the love of sex is bound up with life, so this greater, more basic love is bound up with death. The former plays its part, fulfils its function, and has its end. The latter, less obvious in its aim, looks forward beyond the term of

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2. Ibid., p. 107.
3. Ibid., p. 107.
4. Ibid., p. 107.
5. Ibid., p. 107.
life for the fulfilment of its mysterious power. The
love of sex wanes with age and disappears with life,
but perhaps not so the other, which may somehow have the
same affinity for death that its predecessor has for life.
Whether Whitman is conscious of this inference is open to
doubt, but the ideas appear in close juxtaposition in
these poems, and seem to have in his mind a real connection.

It seems to resolve itself into an all-attracting
egotism— an eternal presence of the individual soul of
Walt Whitman in all things, yet in such way that this
one soul shall be presented as a type of all human souls
whatsoever. He goes forth into the world, passionately
identifies himself with all forms of being, sentient or
inanimates; sympathizes deeply with humanity; does not
have the most vicious or abandoned shut out from final
comfort and reconciliation; is delighted with Broadway,
New York, and equally in love with "chants of the prairies" ¹
"northerly wilds beasts of prey" ²; "gulls" ³ and the

2. Ibid., p. 138.
3. Ibid., p. 140.
"snowy herons"\textsuperscript{1}; perceives a "mystery"\textsuperscript{2} which is "divine"\textsuperscript{3}. He finds it wherever his feet conduct, or his thoughts transport him; and beholds all things tending toward the central and sovereign "Me"\textsuperscript{4}.

Other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, love, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident — and polish their work and come to conclusions, and satisfy the reader. The poet celebrates natural propensities in himself; and that is the way he celebrates all. He comes to no conclusions, and does not satisfy the reader. He certainly leaves him what the serpent left the woman and the man, the taste of the paradisaic tree of the knowledge of good and evil, never to be erased again.

Whitman sounds more like a God than a man, but through his art Whitman could perform some of the marvels,

\begin{enumerate}
\item Whitman, Walt, \textit{Leaves of Grass}, p. 140.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 26.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 79.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 11.
\end{enumerate}
as in *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*. Here, beginning on the factual, realistic level, the poet considers his ties with the "similitudes of the past and those of the future". As he thinks sympathetically of all the men and women who have crossed the river on the same ferry, he feels an identity, a oneness in spirit with them:

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose, And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.²

When he projects his thoughts into the future he feels the same identity with the generations to come who will share with him the same experience:

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt, Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd, Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd, Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried, Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.³

2. Ibid., p. 126.
3. Ibid., p. 127.
The poetic faculty that enables Whitman to cast off his ties and ballasts and cover continent with his palms he later calls "fancy":

Good-bye my fancy — (I had a word to say,
But 'tis not quite the time — the best of any man's word or say,
Is when its proper place arrives — and for its meaning I keep mine till the last.) 1

In Song of Myself he speaks of himself, his physical self, and his "soul"2 which he seems to regard as the real "Me"3. The soul must be invited to "loafe"4 with him on the grass, to "loose the stop from her throat"5. After a soothing "Lull"6, the poet hears the "hum of your valved voice"7. He feels himself to be in rapport with his soul experiencing within the presence of "the

1. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 413.
2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Ibid., p. 34.
4. Ibid., p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 27.
6. Ibid., p. 27.
7. Ibid., p. 27.
caresser of life'\(^1\). Doubtless, out of such mystical experiences Whitman derives many of the moods and convictions that permeated his earlier poems. But the soul does not in any sense write or dictate the poems.

The creative process of Whitman proceeds in two stages. First, the poet floods himself with his immediate age, with every variety of sensory stimuli. Second, he experiences an opening to eternity to "vast trackless spaces"\(^2\). Such experiences give similitude to all periods and locations, processes, animate and inanimate forms and are "projected through time"\(^3\). In simpler language, while in rapport with his soul Whitman learns this spiritual fact: "a keelson of the creation is love"\(^4\). Yet it is not the soul but the fancy that finds means for expressing this truth. Fancy is that wholly practical energy which describes the sensory stimuli and prepares for the spiritual perception by imposing upon varied physical experiences at least a rough and informal order.

In Whitman's early poetry the concept of the fancy remains rudimentary. In *Song of Myself* it functions with in the familiar dualism of body and spirit, which appears as "My tongue"¹ and "My soul"². The poet immerses himself completely in his physical existence, discovers the luxuriant richness of all his senses, and bids "welcome"³ to "every organ and attribute"⁴. Fancy creates artistic symbols that enable the human mind to comprehend the meaning and significance of the phenomenal world. "Tally"⁵ becomes loafe in *Song of Myself*, and it makes possible a listing of the details of the poet's origin and a catalogue of his body's sense impressions, ranging from primitive smell to the more complicated sight. 

The form of the creative process described in the preface appears here. At a point in the total intoxication with the vivid pleasures of the body, the experience of eternity

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comes, the "lull"\textsuperscript{1} followed by the "hum"\textsuperscript{2} that heralds the identification through the soul with God, and the perception of the body's fitness for the harmony of the divine whole. What is communicated in the poem is the sense of being uplifted or absorbed, into something than Whitman indicates by "float"\textsuperscript{3}. The opening to eternity occurs in its own time, uncontrolled, though sought by the poet.

Although the spiritual intimation the poet receives while loafing in the grass affirms the divine nature of the body and suggests a harmony extending beyond it, the spiritual meaning of "all else"\textsuperscript{4} – the world of things and persons that meets the eye, the ear, the hand, and the intelligence of the poet – requires a "tally"\textsuperscript{5}. The world – in – time proves itself equally as divine as the body, which touches it. Indeed, Whitman says:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Whitman, Walt, \textit{Leaves of Grass}, p. 27.
\item Ibid., p. 34.
\item Ibid., p. 128.
\item Ibid., p. 76.
\item Ibid., p. 45.
\end{enumerate}
All truths wait in all things,
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it.
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon. 1

Awareness of the facts of vegetable, animal, and human life
con may lead the poet to the opening to eternity. "Loafe" 2
is the principal descriptive term in Song of Myself for
the activity of fancy when the poet invites the mystic
union of body and soul. Several terms appear in "Song of
the Open Road" but the one that is employed with most
frequency is "traveling" 3, suggesting a more aggressive
role for fancy than tallying a loafing 4. The inducements
for the poet, "afoot and light hearted" 5 on the "open
road" 6, are more confidently anticipated; more positively
presented, than they are in Song of Myself, happiness for
the soul, the freshness and sweetness of man and woman,

2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Ibid., p. 121.
5. Ibid., p. 117.
6. Ibid., p. 117.
"divine things well enveloped"\textsuperscript{1} and "divine things more beautiful than words can tell"\textsuperscript{2}. Though travelling suggests the major activity of fancy, "sailing"\textsuperscript{3} and even "walking"\textsuperscript{4} also prove to be useful term. The relationship between fancy and soul in Song of Myself differs somewhat from their relationship in Song of the Open Road. In the former the soul is invited to join the body, to inspire physical reality, and it does so under compulsions that seem inherent in its own nature. In Song of the Open Road, the soul is a "traveling"\textsuperscript{5} companion in need of testing, or of being provoked\textsuperscript{6}:

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom can not be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;

\begin{enumerate}
\item Whitman, Walt, \textit{Leaves of Grass}, p. 121.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 121.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 327.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 21.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 121.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 120.
\end{enumerate}
Something there is in the float of the sight of things, that provokes it out of the soul.¹

The special faculty of the poet, fancy, acquires additional strength in Crossing Brooklyn Ferry where it gives meaning to the ferry ride from Brooklyn to New York, of the physical details - the river, the clouds at sunset, the tall masts of Manhattan, the hills of Brooklyn. Whitman says:

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers, we receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward, not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us, we use you, and do not cast you aside.....²

What use means here is the ability of fancy to dissolve reality, the particular facts of the crossing, and to reveal the "simple, compact, well-joined scheme"³ of which the poet and the ferry ride constitute a part.

1. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 120.
2. Ibid., p. 131.
3. Ibid., p. 126.
Fancy prepares for a perspective that can only come to
the poet from the wisdom of eternity:

It avails not, time nor place-distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation,
Or ever so many generations hence.¹

Whitman's fancy, like Coleridge's, has the ability
to leap beyond "fixities and definites".² In its power
to disintegrate the real world and to create a new and
ideal unity it resembles Coleridge's "secondary imagination".³
The mediating services of fancy are amply illustrated in
this poem; they join nature and man's physical existence to
eternity and the soul.

Passage to India uses one of the energetic verbs
of Songs of the Open Road sailing to describe the mediating
power of fancy. The poet accompanies the soul to India:

3. Ibid., p. 81.
Passage to more than India!
O secret of the earth and sky!
Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!
Of you O woods and fields! Of you strong mountains of my land!
Of you O prairies! Of you gray rocks!
O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!
O day and night, Passage to you! 1

As in Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, the peculiar function of the poet is wholly identified with the extraordinary ability of fancy. Here it absorbs the details of the westward movement of discovery, as well as the most recent developments in communication and transportation, and fits them into a clear and inevitable spiritual design:

Passage indeed a soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles.²

The purpose of the "return"³ is a grand union of nature and man which "shall be disjoined and diffused no more."⁴

2. Ibid., p. 326.
3. Ibid., p. 117.
4. Ibid., p. 325.
And there is a union in time as well, with the "retrospect brought forward"\(^1\) to the "year at whose wide-flung door I sing!"\(^2\). The reconciling agent is the "true son of God"\(^3\), the poet, who shall complete the "trinitas divine"\(^4\), against the backdrop of all time. The "sailing" of both the poet and the soul is toward eternity, and the journey is the justification of more material forms of circumnavigation. The voyage, too, suggests the condition of being suspended in the divine float:

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of time and space and Death, like waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite.\(^5\)

In *Good-Bye My Fancy* it seems to have the power not only to screen sense experience but even to remark physical reality. As the poet nears the end of his

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2. Ibid., p. 325.
3. Ibid., p. 324.
4. Ibid., p. 325.
5. Ibid., p. 327.
corporeal life, his faith in fancy is boundless and he wonders if death means only that fancy will usher him "to the true songs".\(^1\) Whitman's fancy has the general function of reconciling and unifying two opposing forces. One is, perhaps "myself"\(^2\) of Song of Myself but it extends to the whole organic world and is ultimately incorporated by the more corporated, by the more comprehensive category, Nature. The other is the soul, the real "Me"\(^3\) in Song of Myself always removed, unitary and complete. In a late poem, When the Full Grown Poet Came, Whitman personified this integration of Nature and Soul:

Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and took each by the hand; And today and ever so stands, as blender, uniter, tightly holding hands, Which he will never release until he reconciles the two, And wholly and joyously blends them.\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 423.  
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 27.  
\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 27.  
\(^{4}\) Ibid., p. 418.
The diplomatic power here is fancy, and the trinity of nature, soul, fancy, with its two passive elements and one aggressive agent, represents Whitman's mature conception of the poet's creative process.

*Song of Myself* has another voice that contrasts both with the formal, oratorical tone and with the rough and elemental. The third voice is heard in moments of intense spiritual excitement, when the diction becomes more euphonious and more obviously lyrical. In these instances the poet imposes a tight economy upon the elements of the physical scene, and these resolved details acquire mystical force. Almost inevitably associated with these qualities of sound and scene are the references to flight or soaring that describe the poet's sensations. There are at least three instances of these lyrical crescendos in the poem. One occurs when the body invites the soul to "loafe"¹... on the "grass"²... and, moved by its own sensitivity, the body receives on

intimation of its true value as a participating element in a comprehensive spiritual harmony when the poet is summoned by "the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all the art and argument of the earth...". Then follows the common place physical scene that has undergone mystical transformation:

And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields, And brown ants in the little wells beneath them, And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and pokeweeds.

Another lyrical moment succeeds the poet's statement that he is overwhelmed by the turbulent voices of human society - the noisy "orchestra" that whirls him "wider than uranus flies". And still another is provoked by the "whispering" "O stars of heaven":

2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 47.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
5. Ibid., p. 72.
6. Ibid., p. 72.
Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk.... toss on the black
Stems that decay in the muck,
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs,
I ascend from the moon.... I ascend from the night,
I perceive the ghastly glimmer is noon day sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.¹

Whitman sometimes uses musical language to describe or to announce the voices in his poems. This most harmonious voice of Whitman swells magnificently in the bird's song of Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking and in When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd. In the first poem, the mocking bird sings three times to the listening boy, who learns of earthly happiness and earthly tragedy by identifying himself with the bird. The most lengthy of the three areas is the lament, a "'despairing carols'"² of frustrated "'lonesome love'"³ which is sung against a background of the beach, the white spray, the "'low-hanging

¹ Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 72.
² Ibid., p. 205.
³ Ibid., p. 205.
moon's" and the "rising stars" and the whistling wind. The Song communicates the bird's grief directly to the boy, and it suggests, though the boy is not conscious of it, the force that will finally resolve the grief:

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,

He is overwhelmed by the sweet melodious notes of the bird's song. The entire atmosphere is charged with the melody:

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

In *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*, the poet hears the carol of the hermit thrush while he stands

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2. Ibid., p. 205.
3. Ibid., p. 204.
4. Ibid., p. 205.
in the deep '"secluded recesses'"¹ of '"shadowy cedars
and ghostly pines'"². This is a hymn to the beauty of
death, the '"Dark Mother'"³, who brings love's fulfilment
and final joy:

Approach strong deliveress,
when it is so, when thou hast taken them I
joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.⁴

"Thee for my recitative"⁵ is the initial line of
the poem To a Locomotive in Winter. What follows is a
series of parallel statements that describe the power, the
form, and the movement of the locomotive:

Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow,
the winter-day declining,
Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual
throbbbing and thy beat convulsive.⁶

2. Ibid., p. 264.
3. Ibid., p. 265.
4. Ibid., p. 265.
5. Ibid., p. 368.
6. Ibid., p. 369.
Leaves of Grass is hardly at all concerned with American nationalism, political democracy, contemporary progress or other social themes that are commonly associated with Whitman's works. The subject is mystical illumination the "illuminating fire" and the poem describes moments of ecstasy symbolising inverted mysticism.