The poetic faith in nature perhaps nowhere appears more fullblown than in the poems of Whitman. Nowhere perhaps in English poetry is nature more confidently, called to support and inspire the spirit. Whitman may be regarded as in some ways marking the culminating point in the romantic concept of nature. His temperamental optimum was supported by the teachings of Emerson and by what he could assimilate of German Idealism - especially that of Hegel - which assured him of the identity of objective nature, with the divine, creative process of thoughts. Whitman carried further than any other poet the logic of transcendentalism - that if the divine principle is immanent in all things, there is nothing that is not holy. This accorded with his democratic sentiment, and made it possible for him to celebrate the body equally with the spirit and to include evil and death in his "lesson of acceptance"; it made him seem more naturalistic than he was.

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the soul;

The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains

of hell are with me,

The first I graft and increase upon myself, the

latter translate into a new tongue (1)

And:
I am not the poet of goodness only,

I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand
Indifferent,
My gait is fault finder's or rejoicer's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown. (2)

Whitman's frank glorification of the body and his daring discussion of sex made him unpopular with some people. Whitman was of the view that no subject in human life can be excluded from the realm of poetry. He disclaimed any distinction of importance between body and soul and found unity in their mutual dependence. To him there was no distinction or cause for shame between one function of the body and another, or between the exercise of one sense or another, and all parts of the human anatomy were equally decent, since the whole body must be in harmony with itself before the soul can dwell in it.

The "Enfants d'Adam" poems have this as the dominant theme; that is the lauding of the body and of love.

I sing the body electric,
The armies of those I love engirth me and
I engirth them. (3)

One passage of Whitman's that has evoked censure is this:
I am he that aches with amorous love;
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter,
aching, attract all matter?
So the body of me to all I meet or know. (4)

Due to this glorification of sex, this passage causes irritation to a reader but a study of the whole of Whitman's poetry shows that he was not just lauding
the pleasure of the senses, but singing of the real life. He did not love body in physical sense, rather claimed its identity through the act of observing, loving and absorbing concrete objects:

And if the body were not the soul,

what is the soul? (5)

Whitman is able to observe closely the particularities of nature and "to translate man into nature". But Whitman's observation of things is likely to be second hand or, as Thoreau complained, mere "brick", unless they are transfigured by a vision which makes them items in eternity, or forms fresh from the unconscious. Whitman's peculiar genius in translating man into nature applied only to his elegiac mood, his sense of annihilation and death. In a broad sense he translates nature into man, he makes nature dance to the tune of the human spirit. For him, as Quentia Anderson says of Emerson, "nature was a set of correspondences exemplifying our nature, not its own" (7). Whitman's view of nature is profoundly equivocal or, to put it positively, it is interesting, contradictory and vital. His work SPECIMEN DAYS is distinguished from his other works, in that he treats nature more imaginatively, he quickly falls back on purely conventional and "literary" figures. Roosters are "Chanticleers" a bird is a "feather's recluse", the hills are "swathed with verdures", the dawn is "Venus heralded", butterflies are "beautiful, spiritual insects: straw - color'd Psyches" and here one recalls the photograph, Whitman liked so much, taken in his later years and showing him with pensively extended forefingers, to which is tied, with a barely perceptible thread, a cardboard butterfly.

But Whitman differs in his views about man and nature from both Rousseau and Wordsworth. If Whitman's attitude towards nature is considerably at variation from that of Wordsworth, it is because of the influence of science and materialism. To Wordsworth Nature is a guide, nurse and guardian; but
Whitman's nature includes both body and soul, both atom and God. Whitman denies the existence of neither God nor atom but he challenges the assumption that the truth of our being can be explained in terms of only God or only the atom. He sees that every being, every particular object in this Universe is made up either of body or of soul but there is inter-relationship between body - soul and atom - God. Whitman thinks we cannot ignore either the body or the soul in the search for what is permanent and immutable about ourselves. The divine for Whitman is immanent in the body and soul of humanity, as in nature, of which they are both a part; it is indeed in everything, all pervasive. In order to understand the relation between body and soul which lies at the heart of Whitman's theory of nature, it is essential to recognise that for Whitman the soul is immanent. For him, body and soul are not just inseparable; they are inextricable. There is nothing low or base in nature, only laws and customs have created such notions in the minds of the people. In section 5 of "Song of Myself" he shows how he treats the body and soul on an equal footing, with neither subordinated to the other.

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not

abase itself to you,

And you must not be abased to other,

Loaf 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,

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 - strip heart . . . (8)

Whitman revels in the primordial purity of natural experiences. Everything in nature speaks and signifies to him meanings which are unintelligible to the common man. The symbols of the elements, i.e. sea and earth are immanent in all romantic nature poetry. Wordsworth and Shelley and Goethe have given in their own way a visionary expression to their consciousness of these two forces. Their responses to, and experiences of the sea and the earth, are different from those of the purely descriptive poets and painters. They are interested not in merely looking at them and enjoying the sight of a flower and rhythm of a wave. They find that the soul of nature expressed in a vista of beauty and charm, gives the soul of the poet visions beyond words. Here Whitman can be compared to Shelley as, in Shelley’s “Ode to the Westwind” the picture of the blue Medditerranean, lulled to sleep by the coil of his crystalline streams and awakened by the West wind, is remarkable.

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Medditerranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams. (9)

Grass is entirely the dominant symbol in his magnum opus Leaves of Grass. The poet does not initially understand the synthesis implicit in Leaves of Grass, its deeper significance leaves a child recoursing to a bit of guess work and discerns several possible interpretations.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition,

out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,

A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt. (10)

At first blush it is the expression of his own ‘disposition’, or it is the visible symbol of his self. As a ‘growth’ from the earth and a ‘gift’ dowered by God, it is
seen to connect the earth and the heaven, or the mundane and the divine. He goes on to say:

Or I guess the grass is itself a child,
the produced babe of the vegetation. (11)

Whitman’s earlier poetry is one of earthly joy and glory, even though these are seen as the manifestations of a higher spirit and in that sense vision of fecundity and fertility. Man survives by producing things out of the earth. Similarly grass is a ‘child’ of the earth showing man its illimitable fecundity. And thus the grass assumes a living human condition - ‘a child’ standing for the hope of the future and universal presence. Further he says:

Or guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad
zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them
the same, I receive them the same. (12)

Here the grass stands for all mankind and all ‘zones’ of the world, for it sprouts alike in all places. ‘The green grass’ does not distinguish between ‘black and white folks’, for Nature and God, of which the grass is the symbol, do not distinguish between men by their color or geographical habitation.

Similarly the child in “There was child Went Forth” is at first identified with ‘Nature’ exemplified in lilacs and grass, then with the living being, the lamb the foal and the calf, then the working people, the drunkard and the school mistress, which signifies his identity with the grown ups.

There was a child went forth everyday,
And the first object he look’d upon, the object he
became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a
certain part of the day,

The early lilacs became part of this child.
And grass and white and red morning-glories and
white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe
bird,
And the Third-month langs and the sow’s pink-paint
litter and the mare’s foal and the cow’s calf

And the school mistress that pass’d on her way to school,
And the friendly boys that pass’d and the quarrelsome
boys,
And the tidy and fresh-check’d girls, and the barefoot
negro boy and the girl. (13)

Wordsworth preferred grown ups and wrote about simple village folks -
"Solitary Reaper", "Leech Gatherer" etc.; but Whitman with his profound faith
in democratic principles and equality of all men takes up the self appointed task of
singing about them. He discards the traditional ‘class poetry’ and celebrates homo
sapiens in his longest poem "Song of Myself" which is considered the ‘epic of
America’, ‘the song of America’, ‘the Bible of Democracy’. Whitman’s love for
the average men permeates his entire poetry. In fact he loves raw humanity; high
and low, rich and poor, noble and vile, drunkard and prostitute. He chants of evil
and good alike, or rather acknowledges them alike, feeling that every thing which has the vitality to exist, has ipso-facto right to exist. He is ‘Kosmos’ and contains ‘multitudes’.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest is Me,
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my goodwill,
Scattering it freely for ever. (14)
Or he writes:
I am of the old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
Maternal as well paternal, a child as well as a man,
Stuff’d with the stuff that is coarse and stuff’d with the stuff that is fine;

A learner with the simplet, a teacher of thoughtfulest,
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest. (15)

However, it is not embracing them as brothers, nor giving them the poet’s identity, it is vesting them with their own individual identity. He has faith in his
capacity to transform the evil characters by the mere fact of his acceptance. Thus, in his famous preface to *Leaves of Grass* he says: “the greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breaks into anything that was before though small, it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer... he is individual... he is complete in himself... he is not one of the chorus... he does not stop for any regulations... he is the president of regulation”. (16)

Like Wordsworth, Whitman was a country lad before he became a young man of the streets. He loved the old agricultural order that he was bred in, he was never as deeply at home in the industrial world, and he hoped to see farming increase in America, as he wrote in one of his prose pieces “His gains are the only ones on which God seems to smile”. (17) His love for Nature was great. He first read the Iliad thoroughly in a sheltered hollow of the rocks, in the intimate environs of nature under the sun, with the wide landscape and vistas and the sea rolling in. As he read Dante in an old wood near the shore, and the sight of a ship that was passing under full sail awakened his first impulse to write in early boyhood and he longed to describe this ship exactly. The shore, where the water married the land, symbolised for him the blending of the real and the ideal, for each became part of the other on this wavering line, and he nurtured the feeling that he must write a book, expressing what he called, “This liquid mystic theme”. Whitman’s poems later abound in sea images, “leaves of salt lettuce” and “scales from shining rocks” and waves “reproachfully rolling sands and drift” while the rhythm of the sea pulsated in his blood. The poetic form that he gradually evolved was oceanic, with verses that recalled the waves, rising and falling, often sunny, now and then wild and stormy.

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving
In the day, in the night, to all, to each
Sooner or later delicate death. (18)

But later, in his poems and his prose alike, he dwelt on the soundness of the common people. Whitman spoke from intimate knowledge, for his real occupation for years was to mingle with crowds, especially the young, developing his gifts of sympathy and observation. Almost every day he crossed the East River on the Fulton Ferry, where he made himself at home in the pilot house, sometimes staying there half the day, his perceptions enhanced by the hurrying splashing tides and the throngs that poised on and off the beat. He got a full sweep there, of the bay and river scenery, the changing panorama of the passing steamers, the white sailed schooners and the sloops and skiffs and the majestic sound - boats that rounded the Battery in the evening sailing eastward. By his continuous watching of them, he realised that they were sensitive to motions and special water influences. They had the quality of all men made acute by long training in some special branch of labour. He happily watched masons and shipwright in action, carriage makers and foundrymen, admiring their craft and their pride in the day’s work.

In the labour of engines and trades and the labour of fields

I find the developments,

And find the eternal meanings. (19)

Wordsworth’s view of nature is one-sided, in that he deals with sober, calm, trim and well ordered nature as it is in the Lake District. But he has not one word to say about the malevolent aspect of nature, ‘red in tooth and claw’. As there is peace and harmony in nature, so also there is cruelty. Animals prey upon animals, birds prey upon birds. But Wordsworth glosses over this aspect of nature. Unlike Wordsworth Whitman loved both the gentler and the wilder aspects of nature. The quiet pastoral country of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania, and
the boundless prairies and mountains of the West were equally attractive to him. Born and bred on a large island, with clover and winding lanes and the moody ocean rolling its waves to the shore almost within hearing distance, he learned to love nature both pastoral and wild. The land undulating gently, or mountainous, is celebrated in *Leaves of Grass*, the sea unquestionably receives the chief emphasis and casts its spell over the whole book. "Not forgetting Longfellow and Swinburne, one may perhaps assert that among Anglo-Eaxon poets, Whitman stands foremost and well nigh alone as an ardent lover of ocean". (20)

The third poem of *Inscriptions* namely "In Cabin’d Ships at Sea" introduces the image of —

The boundless blue on every side expanding,

With whistling winds and music of waves,

the large imperious waves . . . . (21)

This image appears sporadically in song section of *Leaves*. It becomes dominant in the *Sea Drift* cluster. As the title implies, one attribute of the sea is emphasised - the refuse thrown up by the waves to the shallow waters of the sea-shore. The word 'drift' suggests the restlessness, which seems to define the poet's emotional state in the poems throughout the section. In "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" which is the first poem of this section, the only "dirft" cast up by the sea is "death".

But edging near as privately for me

rustling at my feet,

Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and

Leaving me softly all over

Death, death, death, death, death. (22)
Evidently the sea assumes the role of death here. In "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life", the central symbol is "the rim; the sediment that stands for all the water and all the land of the globe". Here the sea is described as "the fierce old mother" who "endlessly cries for herCo^-aways". As "In cabin'd ships at sea," the poet uses both land and sea as major symbols and where the sea-shore becomes the meeting ground for body and soul, life and death, it is a meeting-ground ambiguous in meaning because of the "tuffs of straw, sands, fragments". The poet acknowledges herein his origin in the world of spirit and his ultimate return to it. In "By Blue Ontario's Shore", a clear suggestion is to be found that the poet's spiritual insight is related to his position by the waters of Ontario.

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,
While the winds fann'd me and the
waves came trooping toward me,
I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the
charm of my theme was upon me,
Till the tissues that held me parted their
ties upon me. (23)

"Passage to India" also contains sea imagery. In it the poet pleads with his soul to venture forth on the voyage. Near the end the poet exclaims:

Sail forth - steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go. (24)
The place for which the poet and his soul are bound is, surely, the country of death - the realm of the spirit. Or, as the poet says a few lines later, "O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God". (25) Even as a boy, he says in Specimen Days, he desired to write a poem about the sea-shore, ocean appears and re-appears in scores of forms. There are mid-ocean poems, such as "In Cabin'd Ships at Sea", pictures of steamers leaving the docks, harbor poems on the foamy wake of ships, glimpses of Yankee clippers spending under sky-sails, of fleets, of ice boats; poems on ships wrecked at sea or on the rocks, retelling of old time, naval flights, a memory of the Great Eastern swimming up the bay, poems on Columbus, on fishermen fishing with nets, on calm diggers, on the view from Montank Point, on bathers at the shore, on wild storms, muttering and roaring and raging. Whitman's truest poetry is concerned in some way with the sea. He described the aspects and moods of the sea with rare vividness and sympathy. The long sailing expeditions of his boyhood and early manhood, the amorous bathing by the smooth seashore, calmly digging and fishing, the midnight rambles along the water, with its white gleams, fitfully leaping, all these recur in Leaves of Grass. Reminiscence, which Whitman indulged in less than his literary progenitors such as Rousseau and Wordsworth, brought in the sea and its shores and joys, no matter where he went.

Whitman's capacity for direct and close observation of nature is only intermittently in operation. His catalogues of natural objects often sound as if he had culled from books and newspapers rather than from nature, his nature scenes often give the impression of being observed at exhibition of paintings rather than in the countryside. Whitman's faculty for direct natural observation makes us doubt whether he was much of a nature poet. But it did give him one advantage - namely, that he was always discovering nature as if for the first time, and this enhanced that sense of novelty, the sense that there are new things under the sun,
which is one of Whitman's strong points. One of the charms of *Specimen Days* is the pleasure of beholding with Whitman things that he "he never noticed before" in his sixty-two years.

It might be well to emphasise again that Whitman is peculiarly urban in his mentality and that he looks at nature as a city man does. He speaks the plain truth near the end of *Specimen Days* when he says, "I find the human and objective atmosphere of New York City and Brooklyn more affiliative to me than any other" (26) And the carefully framed word-picture of himself as he sun-bathes by a stream in the country side near Camden - "Nude with straw hat and Portable Chair" is more akin to the sensibility of a painter than to that of a nature poet.

Whitman pays heed to human affairs equally and gives account of both—the country and city. In "Starting From Paumanok", the poet describes himself as a composite American imbued both with the city and frontier. He is not only the lover of populous pavements and the 'Dweller in Manhattan,' but also a 'miner in California' and a vagrant in 'Dakota's Woods'.

After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,

Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas

Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun,

or a miner in California,

Or nude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat,

my drink from the spring. (27)

The West signifies all the states to the poet, not the prairies or the Pacific Coast. Whitman has the genius to evoke economically, the busy, noisy city: "the clank of crowds', "the blab of the pave". In "Song of the Broad Axe", he
explains that the great city is not the place of stretched "wharfs, docks, manufacturers, deposits of produce merely" but rather the city which "stands with the browniest breed of orators and bards". "A Broadway Pageant" takes place when "million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her pavements". In "First O songs for a Prelude", the opening song of *Drum Taps*, Manhattan is personified in a dramatic scene.

Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her

incalculable wealth,

With her million children around her, suddenly,

At dead of night, at news from the south,

Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,

Till with minous hum our hive at
daybreak pour'd out its myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and

through all the doorways,

Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming:

In "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun", half the poem is devoted to the portrayal of the poet's beloved Manhattan, "People, endless streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants". In this poem the poet's theme is his preference for the populous city over the solitude of nature. Even in *Sands at Seventy* Whitman could depict the romance of the city with excitement:

Could but thy flags tones, curbs, facades,
tell their inimitable tales;
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels - thy side-walks wide". (29)

Wordsworth on the other hand was primarily concerned with rural folk. And it was Wordsworth's love for nature that led him to love simple human beings and to feel their feelings and passions his own. Wordsworth's greatest strength was in his power of making us feel "the simple primary human affections and duties", and it is noticeable that his poems of rural life generally deal with the simplest and most primary of all - the bond between parents and children. Wordsworth rarely wrote much about love between man and woman and when he did, it was often heart-breaking and unhappy. In "Michael" the theme is love of father for his son. The effect of "Michael" is not immediate. More prolonged acquaintance with the poem reveals it as the most characteristic Wordsworthian achievement — a poem where a long familiar emotion, that has been absorbed into personality and is no longer clamorous or unfortunate, is evenly diffused throughout. Its sublime or moving passages do not call attention to themselves and might easily pass unnoticed — for example the famous line describing how the old man broken by the absence and the failure of his son, went out to work on the sheepfold they had begun together, but had not the heart to add to it 'a single stone'.

"And never lifted up a single stone".

However, unlike Wordsworth, Whitman's great achievement lay in helping to make the modern perceptive faculty feel at home in the natural world. He had the capability for indicating the mutual interdependence of man and nature, since his "trinity" of symbols originated in the powers of the earth, not to speak of the spiritual implications to which they could rise in his hymn to rebirth through fertility. In the concluding lines of the poem the three symbols are taken up again, but now it is the poet's powerful psalm which surmounts all the others:

Lilac and star and bird twined with the
chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars
dusk and dim. (30)

Of Whitman’s senses only one was normal - the sense of taste. There is, to be sure, a juicy and flavorful blackberry, and casual reference to the task of fresh air, but the latter is not so much a matter of taste, as of pleasure in filling the lungs, and the former, a poor solitary berry, does not materially affect the assertion that the sense of taste plays no part in Whitman’s poetry. In his diary there is again only one instance of “the wild and fire and somewhat arid flavour of cedar fruit” Whitman had not the romantic desire to taste miscellaneous fruit and roots and berries, and took normal pleasure in the food and drink of civilisation.

Nonetheless, Whitman too is a votary of nature and nature plays a prominent part in all his poems. And there is no doubt that Whitman operates on the ordinary assumption of his time, that a poem expresses the self of the poet and reports facts from the world of nature. He also tends to think of language as expressing a dualistic universe, as when he says that ‘slang words’ being more poetic than other words unite “natural” and “spiritual”. It would, therefore, seem that a critical language involving myth, semantic meditation, mind vs. matter, abstract vs concrete, and so on, is adequate to a discussion of Whitman’s poetry. There is no doubt that Whitman has in abundance the symbol-seeing capacity of the puritan - transcendentalist mind.

Relatively speaking, one finds a large number of real roads in his imaginary garden, yet he cannot help seeing what he called in Democratic Vistas the manifestations of nature as well as raw nature itself. He often refers to natural objects as “words” or “thoughts” But his view of symbols is not confined to a semantic view; he is not contented to understand symbols as merely static. Words
are spontaneous creative agents. To set a word in motion, by putting it in a poem, is to embark it on a career of discovery and creation. Even before he wrote “Song of Myself” Whitman had jotted down in his note book that “from each word, as from a womb, spring babes that shall grow to giants and beget superber breeds upon the earth” (31). The spirit of his poetry, as he said is “the spirit of life in visible forms”.

One of the remarkable and problematic results of the absorption of the self and of nature into purely linguistic order of reality is of course the tendency of the symbolistic poet to abolish what has traditionally been understood as subject matters; the poem becomes a “drama of meaning”, whose plot is the gradual discovery of an inherent significance or is in some other way symbolisation of the poetic process. This effect is sometimes produced in Whitman’s poems; nearly all his best works insinuate that the poem has to do with the visionary search.

Whitman’s “Song of Myself” like Leaves of Grass as a whole seems remarkably ironic, covert, and given to skipping back and forth between the personal and the generic, yet among Whitman’s confusing attempts to describe the subject of Leaves of Grass there is a recurring idea that has been mainly the outcropping of his own emotional beings; an attempt from first to last, to put a human being fully, freely and truly on record. But the comparison between “Song of Myself” and The Prelude reveals how scanty is the volume of the concrete natural and social particularity of the author’s life. Any one who has read the life of Whitman can make up a long catalogue of interesting particulars which the poet omits in his poetry. Modern readers who tend to chide Wordsworth for leaving sex out of The Prelude can have no complaints in this sense against Whitman. He candidly describes himself as semi-barbarous, semi-angelic singer of sensual pleasures. Sex was understood, in the days before him as something clandestine, surreptitious and morally forbidden. But Whitman repudiated this notion, because
for him, it was the life force, the very vitality of man’s existence. In “A Woman Waits for me”, Whitman extols amorous love and sings of the glory of sex, much to the disgust of many in whom the remnants of Puritan heritage still linger. But when Whitman spoke of the many women on whom “I graft the grafts of the best loved of me and America”. Whitman was definitely using figurative language. He himself was filled with revulsion when women took him literally and offered themselves as mothers of his perfect children. In the poems in the ‘Children of Adam’ Whitman draws upon images of procreation and sex with gay abandon. In “Native Moments” he writes:

“Give me now libidinous joys only,
Give me the drench of my passions, give me
life coarse and rank,
To-day I go consort with Nature’s darlings,
to-night too,
I am for those who believe in loose delights,

O you shunn’d persons, I at least do not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest” (32)

In Once “I Pass’d Through a Populous City”, he says:

Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman
I casually met there who detain’d me
for love of me,
Day by day and night by night we were together
all else has long been forgotten by me,
... I remember I say only that woman
Who passionately clung to me. (33)

"Spontaneous Me" is another interesting poem in the same sexual strain.
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor,
love-yielding, love-climbers, and the
climbing sap,
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic
thumb of love, breasts of love ... (34)

Wordsworth moves from the personal and the particular to the general,
with a massive inductive maneuver; Whitman leaps from the one to the other and
back again with the utmost agility. His native "humor", when it is not meditative
or elegiac, in "Song of Myself", is what Nietzsche praised as the "presto" style.
This comparison between The Prelude and "Song of Myself" leads to an
important distinction. In his presentation of the natural history of the self,
Wordsworth traces the passages of his individual life from innocence to
experience, from solitude to society. He tells us that the inevitable task of the
individual is to transcend, although not to abandon, his innocence under societal
influences. This attitude gives "Song of Myself" the alternately ecstatic and
gravely musing, pastoral, God-like stability, weaving the most astonishing fabric
of wit and lyric song.

Whitman's theory of nature manifests the sense of unity, when he looks
upon a vast panorama without denying existential reality to the particulars of the
objects of that landscape. Whitman obviously feels there is inescapable unity in
the universe, which is reflected in every particular object at all times. Whitman
recognises the presence of the universal within each particular object at every
moment in time and then especially in noble works of man or beautiful natural
scenes. Whitman wants us to be aware of it at every instant in every thing. He feels that a reader ought to look for universal themes not just in grand productions of man and nature, but in each and every aspect of daily routine of hum-drum existence.

This Printed and bound book - but the printer
and the printing-office boy?
The well-taken photographs - but your wife or friend
close and solid in your arms?
The black ship mail’d with iron, her mighty guns
in her turrets - but the pluck of the captain
and engineers?
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture
but the host and hostess, and look out of their eyes?
The sky up there - yet here or next door, or across
the way?
The saints and sages in history - but you
yourself? (35)

If an individual learns to recognise and understand the expression of universal unity within every particular object, only then he comes to a better sense of the human place in the universe, even of his immortality, than is possible through, scientists or priests. But whether individuals recognise and understand this relation or not, it is still the law of the universe, and of its inscrutable ways.

Wonder - reverie - love; these three words sum up the essence of Whitman’s relation to nature: He wrote a poem of pure order, entitled
"Miracles".

Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan . . .
To me every hour of the light and dark is a

miracle,

Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth
is spread with the same. (36)

The whole nature is suffused with the same wonderment. Wonder is momentary, however oft repeated, reverie is continuous. It may bring images not present in the visible scene, like those daydreams of Jean Jacques in the forest, radiant vision of Arcadian perfection and happiness, or it may find its substance in the visible scene itself, as in the case of Whitman. He does not dream of the remote or unreal, but of here and now, the common place in which he would lose himself.

In the teeming life of nature, he passed beyond the sense of wonder, which implies a certain aloofness from things - wonder at things - to the immediacy of reverie, making himself an integral part of the universe of things, drifting in the current of nature's life, wondering and saturating his soul.

Like Donne, Whitman does not hesitate to yoke together extremely divergent ideas and motives in the same vision of life. There is a look of cosmic inclusiveness in most of his poetry, as when Whitman says:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less

than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and
a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren

And the cow crunching with depress'd
head surpasses any statue
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger

Sextillions of infields. (37)

John Donne's poetry is the poetry of wit as it is the union of opposits. He proposes different ideas, which seem at first sight violently discordant but with his imagination he produces a more coherent and organic body of truth which is attainable only by the use of comparisons.

If they be two, they are two sofo
As Stiffetwin compasses are two,
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show.
And though it in the centre fit,
Yet when the other fab doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grow's erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou to mee, who must;
Like th' other foot, obliquely runne;
Thy firmness makes my circle just
And makes me end, where I begunne. (38)

His poetry is not only the yoking of dissimilar things but the 'sensuous apprehension of thought', a tendency to feel thought or to turn thought into
feeling, a poetic process best indicated, perhaps, by its opposite; the tendency of the nineteenth-century romantics to turn feeling into thought.

Whitman's attitude of the interested lover of everything helps the poet to establish a mystic relationship with everything in the universe. "Song Of Myself" is a dramatic representation. The climax of the mystical vision, which is central to the meaning of the poem, is stated in the opening lines:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good
belongs to you. (39)

He reiterates his belief in the equality of the body and the soul in section 48 of "Song of Myself":

I have said that the soul is not more than the body
And I here said that body is not more than soul. (40)

In a poem titled "I sing the Body Electric", the mystic celebrates the glory of the human body and human senses. "If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred".

All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the
belongings of my or your body, or of any one's body male or female, ...
The womb, the tears, nipples, breast-milk,
tears, laughter ... (41)

In "Passage to India" the soul is objectified and depicted as master of orbs, mate of time, which smiles at death. God is described as "Light of Light" pervading the universe. The true solemnity of visionary mysticism is embodied in
the following lines:

swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, Call to thee O Soul, though actual Me,
And to, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Though matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swel lest full vasteness of space. (42)

In dealing with humanity, Wordsworth is less concerned with individuals than with certain qualities common to mankind. He dwells on those primal qualities of humanity, innate in the shepherd and the peasant, and after them in ordinary men and women with ordinary joys and sorrows, Wordsworth chooses to deal with the more primal life of country places, where simple qualities of life are not untrammelled by artificial conventions. Ignoring the coarseness and lack of sophistication, he centers his attention upon these qualities of endurance, unaffected simplicity, courage and hope.

The pathetic figures of the aged Cumberland Beggar and the old Leech Gatherer enlist the reader's sympathies. He places each of these simple figures against the noble background of landscape and cloudscape until they are dignified by the spacious beauty of the earth.

Gray locks profusely round his temple hung
In clustering crisis like ivy which the bite
Of Winter cannot thin; the fresh air lodged
Within this cheek as light within a cloud. (43)

Sans the sanctifying touch of nature, men and women are poor creatures to
Wordsworth. In his Sonnet—"The World Is Too Much With Us"—he reflects that the farther man travels away from nature the more miserable he becomes.

But Whitman's ambit was not exclusively rural. He was the designer of hospitals, poorhouses, prisons. He passed freely in and about those parts of the city which were inhabited by the worst characters, he knew all its denizens and many of them knew him; he had learned to tolerate their squalor, vice and ignorance. He knew intimately the better-off and educated people, as well as the poorest and most ignorant. Merchants, lawyers, doctors, scholars and writers were among his friends. But the people he knew best and liked most were neither the rich and conventional, nor the worst and poorest, but middle class farmers, mechanics, carpenters, pilots, drivers, masons, printers, deck hands, teamsters the like. He made himself familiar with all kinds of employment, not by reading trade reports and statistics but by watching them at work. He visited the foundries, shipyards, wharves and the big carriage and cabinet shops and all kinds of merry making - races, weddings, sailing and bathing parties etc. Wherever the concourse of men was most vivid and significant, there Whitman betook himself habitually. He moved through life and among men with sovereign ease. He was "not different" and fraternised with everyone. He was not embarrassed with anyone and no one was embarrassed with him. He was the poet of American Democracy, democrat in its human application and universal implications. He did, indeed, identify democracy with poetry and art, believing them to be but different expression of the uncluttered life of free people. Whitman's book Democratic Vistas is an enduring document not only of ideal liberal democracy, but of its fundamental principles.

Indeed, the title of Whitman's celebrated Leaves of Grass, is in itself a testimony to the democratic spirit of the poet. In his poem "Song of Myself" Whitman writes:

"A child said what is the grass fetching
it to me with full hands,

How could I answer the child? I do not know

what it is any more than he.” (44)

But it is clear that in naming his book *Leaves of Grass* Whitman was exalting the humblest of created things as a symbol of his fierce and passionate belief in democracy. His choice of the title signifies that the humble people of the earth are fit subjects of poetry. Whitman’s ideal society is one where everyone is equal, where inequalities and social injustice do not exist. In one segment of “Song of Myself” Whitman expresses his admiration for animals, almost like Charles Lamb

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 thousand of years ago. (45)

In “Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood” he lauds democracy by saying:

Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,

Of value is thy freight, ’tis not the present only,

The past is also stored in thee,

Thou holdest not the venture of thy self alone,

not of the western continent alone ...

Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,

And royal Feudal Europe sails with thee. (46)
One of his short poem “For You O Democracy” is dedicated to democracy, in which he explains:

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun
ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades. (47)

The phrase “love of comrades” occurring again and again in the poetry of Whitman underlines an important tenet in Whitman’s political philosophy, that of mutual support and dependence among the members of democratic society. While zealously upholding autonomy of the individual, he ardently believes that isolation is something unnatural for a human being and that there is security only in co-operation among friends. In “A Noiseless Patient Spider” Whitman drew a fine analogy expressing this idea:

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark’d where on a little promontory it
stood isolated,
Mark’d how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It lanuch’d forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly spreading them
And you O my soul where you stand . . .

Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere
Democracy, he tells us in Specimen Days, has greatest affinity with the open air, is sunny and hardy and scenic, and reflects itself in art through its numerous manifestations— in factories, work-shops, stores, offices, through streets and cities and all their sophisticated life must be vitalised, by regular contact with farm-scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds; failing which it will seem pale and colourless.

Whitman sang about his countrymen in the totality of their lives. Unlike many poets of the past, who wrote about the romantic or the heroic, Whitman celebrated the common place and the earthy. To him the whole kosmos was beautiful. So he sang about the life of everyday Americans, their fields and their follies, their leaders and their lusts, their politics and their politeness, their lunatics and their "liferates".

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics . . . ,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank as beam,
The mason singing . . . ,
The boatman singing . . . the deck hand singing . . . (49)

Whichever aspect of life he touched with the magic wand of his poetry, pulsated with the French Philosophes idea of liberty and fraternity. He shunned libraries and preferred the rude, bronzed, bearded face of the vagabond than the smooth shaven face of the city slicker.

I tramp a perpetual journey,
My signs are a rain-proof coat,
Among the various phases of nature lore, Whitman is most interested in birds. They outnumber the trees and flowers of *Leaves of Grass*; for no less than forty species appear in his catalogue or descriptive passages. Among them are such recondite creatures as the yellow-crowned heron, the snowy heron, the man-of-war bird, the red-start, the wood-duck and the razor-bulled auk.

Apart from his craving for companionship, he has great fondness for solitude. This love for solitude links Whitman with Wordsworth. Wordsworth finds great solace in the company of nature and finds life in the beautiful objects of nature. But Whitman in solitude seeks opportunity for meditation and for reading. In his reminiscences he says: “I used to go off, sometimes for weeks at a stretch, down in the country or to long Island’s sea shores - in the presence of out door influence. I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorb’d Shakespear, Ossian, the best translated versions I could get of Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, the Old German Nibelungen, the ancient Hindu poems and one or two other masterpieces of Dante’s among them”. (51) He passionately loves the country side and sometimes takes part in rural occupations, as a dilettante, for he is more a spectator than an actor. He takes part in fishing parties and spends whole days at the sea side.

He needs the open spaces of the American countryside in order to feel at ease and breathe freely. His vigorous body needs air and movement. In this sense he retains the tastes of the country boy, which he acquired in the childhood at West Hills. He is fully aware of this background and in one of the last poems of
the book he describes his youthful wonder before the constantly viewed beauty of all things that struck him as a child. The countryside, the home - 'all the changes of city and country wherever he went', they all become part of the child whose naïveté acts as an anodym in this real world. At moments, Whitman manages to invest this assimilation with real lyricism, the lines themselves seem to closely recreate the eye's wondering and delighted roving over the near and far off world.

The village on the highland seen from afar

at sunset, the river between,

Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on

roofs and gables of white or brown two miles off,

These became part of that child who went forth
everyday, and who now goes and will
always go forth every day. (52)

Whitman was a poet both of city and rural life, differing sharply in this respect from Wordsworth. The English romantics had nearly all fled from what they conceived as the sordidness and squalor of the rising coke towns. Whitman's confident vision led him to fulfil the most naive and therefore most natural kind of romanticism for America, the romanticism for the future. There was a urge in Whitman to project what he called 'stock personality' which could typify that all men his brothers. Other poets identified man with their professions, but to Whitman they simply represented the kaleidoscope of humanity.

Whitman's exclamation in 'The Mystic Trumpeter', 'Enough to merely be : enough to breath', reiterates the same idea which permeates Wordsworth's œuvre. Indeed, "There was a Child Went Forth" is virtually a variation on the theme of 'one impulse from a vernal wood'; and in turn, a line from "Song of Myself".
A morning glory at my window satisfied me more than the metaphysics of books. (53) might easily have gone on Wordsworth’s title page as an epigraph. But beyond any specific similarities, both exemplify the dominant trend of art during their age. They both represent man and nature as interrelated to each other, that is to say in symbiotic relation.

From the conception held by the scientists of the late seventeenth century that the universe was a mechanism, the conclusion had been drawn that man must have been introduced into it from outside and that he was wholly apart from nature and alien to it. But by the end of the eighteenth century a sensitive man like Wordsworth, stimulated by the newer associative psychology, had already come to feel the falsity of this assumption. He perceived the physical world to be an organism and he knew that man was integrally connected with what he saw, heard, and felt and he could not be separated from the impressions made by external nature upon his sensibility.

Belief in this intimate bond between the landscape and man’s emotions motivated all Wordsworth’s art, of which his Sonnet “To Toussant L’ Ouverture” was a cornerstone. However, such belief was not limited to the Lake Poets, since Wordsworth’s contemporary Turner built equally upon it and its implications were extended further by Bastien - Lepage and the Plein artists, and again by the impressionists. Moreover, what was envisioned as a romantic dream had been upheld by modern thought. Whitehead affirmed that human feelings and inanimate objects were interpenetrated, that Wordsworth was right in emphasizing ‘that nature can not be divorced from its aesthetic values’.

Wordsworth’s particular tendency was to represent people living close to nature and drinking in its healing power as a restorative to the soul-less life of
towns. Against any such limitation of range, Whitman stood strongly opposed, declaring that while other poets formed for themselves an idea apart from positive life, and disdainful of it but "for me I ask nothing better or more divine than the real life, here, now, yourself, your work, house - building, boating, or in factory". Again, in contrast with Wordsworth, Whitman was moving from transcendentalism back to a kind of materialism. In "Song of Myself" he writes:

I accept reality and dare not question it,

Materialism first and last imbuing. (54)

He insisted to the end that the complete meaning and value of this world lay in both the obvious surface and the latent mysterious suggestion. What he wanted his songs to convey was not the bare object alone, but the atmosphere that surrounded it or, as he said in his greatest poem, 'the winds that would perfume Lincoln's grave'. Whitman was capable of synthesizing in his language the concrete experience and its symbolic range.

One gets frequent glimpse of his all embracing love for mankind. In Leaves of Grass Whitman announces, "I am he that aches with love". "He fed upon people", says Professors Triggs, "as bees upon flower". (55) But it is the boatmen, stage drivers, day labourers not the intellectual classes of whom he writes. Men of letters, learned men, professional men, he regards with a lurking suspicion even when they accept his gospel; his affection is by no means all-inclusive. Best of all he loves the uneducated persons whom he can hold by the hand or kiss on the cheek with his bearded lips. Whitman's magnetic power draws him close to persons of various classes. His power over the wounded soldiers in Washington Hospital was so invigorative that it caused the doctors to say sometimes: "Turn him over to Whitman perhaps he will save them".

Nature scenery abounds in Whitman's poetry, though not so directly
treated as in Wordsworth or in Shelley. It generally appears as the appropriate backdrop for man’s life and the means of manly virtue, or else it stands symbolically for the larger nature which includes everything and relates itself to the divine plan. A paragraph of Specimen Days shows how while travelling in the rocky mountain in 1868, he notes down the affinities of his poetry with wild nature.

I have found the law of my poems, was unspoken but more and more decided feeling that came to me as I passed, hour after hour, amid all this grim yet joyous elemental abandon — this plentitude of material, entire absence of art, untrammel’d play of primitive nature — the chasm, the gorge, the crystal mountain stream, repeated scores, hundreds of miles — the broad handling and absolute uncrampedness — the fantastic form . . . (56)

Whitman’s feeling for nature is profound, intense and intimate. He is the lover of solitary musing and observation, both as a young man and later as an invalid and broken old man. He is accustomed to taking long retreats to wild and secluded places. Many of his poems are written in sea-girt caves and rural dells of Long Island. Specimen Days is full of minute and loving notations on worldly life, insect life, on trees, the seasons and times of days, with their corresponding moods.

In general, however, his poems are significant revelations of nature and its relation to man. Every one remembers the grey-brown bird, the heart-shaped leaves, and the opening of “President Lincoln’s Burial Hymn”. The love of nature is reflected in:—

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections;
They scorn the best I can do to relate theme. (57)

But immediately a connection is made with those who don’t lead cribbed, cabined and confined life.

I am enamour’d of growing out-doors,

Of men that live among cattle, or taste of ocean or woods,

Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses

I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out. (58)

The nineteenth century doctrine “back to nature” is in full flow In many passages of Specimen Days, Whitman talks of getting “Close to Nature”. He rejoices in the freedom of nature - “no talk, no bonds, no dress, no books, no manners”. He represents nature like Wordsworth, as a cure for sick humanity and counterpoise to the morbid books.

Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling certain popular demand, with plenteous knowledge and verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and its very joy is morbid. It needs tally and express Nature and the spirit of Nature, and to know and to obey the standards”.(59)

Self-conscious may lay learn from contemplating a tree. Thus Whitman realises as vividly as Wordsworth the affinities of a man or woman with open air, trees and fields etc. He does not dwell so much on “forms of beauty” themselves, but gravitates from individual object or scene to a contemplation of the divine order of which it is a symbol. So it is nature that brings Whitman, as it brought
Wordsworth and Emerson, to the consciousness of the soul.

Whitman and Wordsworth also differ in their use of language. Wordsworth’s poetic language is merely a reaction against, and a criticism of, the ‘pseudo classical theory of poetic diction’. And moreover he is of the view that a poet is essentially a “man-speaking to men” and he must make use of language that is really used by men, but purified of its dross. He is to use distilled language of real men because the aim of a poet is to give pleasure whereas language of ordinary men or masses without selection causes disgust. On the other hand, Whitman’s habit to speak not merely for Americans, but for the workers of all lands, seems to have given impetus to his odd habit of introducing random words from other languages, to the point of talking about ‘the ouvrier class’. He takes from the Italian chiefly the terms of the opera, ‘viva’, ‘romanza’, and even ‘ambulanza’, from Spanish he borrows the orotund way of naming his country men ‘Americanos’, while the occasional circulation of Mexican dollars in the States during the eighteen forties may have given him his word ‘Liberated’. Inspite of all these borrowings his language is deeply ingrained with the habits of the educated middle class people, with a fierce emphasis on the importance of the written word.

Whitman refrains from direct opening of his diction as Thoreau did, but prefers the slow absorption through every pore of the folkways of a single spot of earth. He is attracted by the wider sweep of the city and though his language is a natural product, it is the natural product of the Brooklyn journalist of the eighteen forties who had previously been a country school teacher and a carpenter’s helper, and who finally felt an irresistible impulse to be a poet.

A belated voice of the romantic spirit of the early nineteenth century, Whitman spoke with impressive force and sanity to a generation and a country
beginning to question the life and literature of that "hysterical sick chamber", Europe and oppressed with conventionalism and materialism of unheroic ante-bellum America. To the pusillanimity and valetudinarianism of the epoch, *Leaves of Grass* came like a cleansing oceanic gale, sweeping away all meanness of body and soul and inaugurating a large free life in accordance with the dictates of the inner self. For many years, however, Whitman's barbaric yawp and immoderate celebrations of the body electric seemed repulsive to puritan readers and prevented him from attaining that commanding position which his disciples and the new time spirit have belatedly won for him. Yet from the beginning, men of discernment recognised that, a great poetic power had come into the world, bringing a fresh vision of nature and of man; and their symbiotic relations in many ways a vision strikingly similar to that of the New England Transcendentalists and in some respect as strikingly dissimilar.
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