1945

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Recommended Citation
A COMPARISON OF WALT WHITMAN AND CARL SANDBURG

by

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A. B., University of Richmond, 1941

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Richmond
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
Richmond, Virginia
1945
It is strange that two men of different centuries, from different parts of the country, with different motivating forces can approach the same problems with the same sort of vigor and often come to the same conclusions. Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg loom high on the horizon of independent thinking, shouting with great vigor directions for a world of equality, justice, and spiritual freedom. Both rail against the petty, tradition-blessed stumbling blocks in the path of the progress of mankind. They view their day with realistic eyes, coolly at times, then with a burning passion. Life is a struggle — glorious, joyous, breath-taking; but life is also a struggle — debasing, treacherous, heart-breaking.

Life, strangely enough, equipped each in much the same way for his career. Much of their writing is taken up with the problems of the laborer, the working man. Walt Whitman was born into a family whose father made his living at the carpenter's trade. Until shortly before his death the elder Whitman built strong, unimaginative houses. The Whitman tribe moved from house to house as mortgage after mortgage fell due. He was never quite a success. The records show that he was a dour man, never drawing close to his wife and children. Finances were always a problem, for he had a large family to feed.

Carl Sandburg came from the family of a railroad construction man, a big Swede who bent his back to keep the railroad beds smooth. August Sandburg was one of the thousands of unskilled laborers of the throbbing industrial America. The elder Sandburg never was able to speak English without a strong accent, and he made his "mark" on official papers. But there was a joy in his soul of hard work well done. Often on the summer nights he would gather his seven children around him and play his accordion. The Sandburg family had financial difficulties too. The illiterate father bought
a house only to find through some legal twist the house was not his. With dogged determination he bought the house again with savings from a wage of fourteen cents an hour. Then he bought a lot, and with the help of his sons he built a home for his family, a good, strong, safe home which was really theirs. There was bitterness in August Sandburg, but there was joy too.

In both homes there were hard-working, illiterate, beloved mothers. Louise Whitman never understood her big, hulking, unpredictable Walt, but he was her favorite and her comfort through her comfortless days. Walt, in his Washington days, wrote his soul out to his mother, knowing she would understand. She couldn't see what he was driving at in his LEAVES OF GRASS, but she loved him. At the time of Lincoln's death they were together and shared their deep sorrow. One of the things which troubled Whitman most during his own illness was that his mother was ill also. He would not be able to see her. His dream was to buy a little home for her and his feeble-minded brother, Edward.

Mrs. Sandburg had attended school for two months but was never able to read or write. She was a tiny woman. Into this new world with its strange language and customs she came with her husband. Here she raised her seven children and lived to see one famous. Sandburg dedicated his first published book of poems, IN RECKLESS ECSTASY: "To one who has kept a serene soul in a life of stress, wrested beauty from the commonplace, and scattered good without stint or measure: My Mother."¹ In 1927 Sandburg wrote to

¹ Karl Detzer, CARL SANDBURG, A STUDY IN PERSONALITY AND BACKGROUND, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941, page 53.

Alfred Harcourt, "Rode back from Santa Fe a thousand miles to Illinois to bury the mother. She looked beautiful - and stately - if there are Pearly Gates they wouldn't dare to stop her. She looked ready for flight."²
Because of the ever present buraboo of finance both boys went to work early. Walt Whitman left the class room when he was twelve. I think he was glad to be away from the regimentation. Now he had time to do the thing he wanted - loaf and invite his soul. Probably he didn't call it by so magnificent a title at that time. Then began his real education. He was apprenticed to a printer and got there his first transfusion of printer's ink, which was to make up a great deal of his literary blood. He became friendly and curious about the drivers of the horse cars in the city, and the pilots of the ferries; he taught school in the little towns around Brooklyn; he spent summers on the farms from which his parents and their parents came. He had a deep hunger to know people. Through the people with whom he talked and lived and worked, he learned much of the gospel of social and economic and spiritual equality he preached. His education did not end here, however. He read everything he could lay his hands on, with an emphasis on Scott and Shakespeare and the Bible. Homer and Virgil he read in translation. He was growing, absorbing, working the soil over and over for his LEAVES OF GRASS.

The public schools of Galesburg, Illinois, did not enroll Carl Sandburg after he was thirteen. His first job was driving a milk wagon with Fatty Hart. From that time on his jobs shifted rapidly for very often he felt the urge to be elsewhere. But he too was learning and absorbing and knowing people. The little people, the misunderstood people, the people who were so often "done" by the bigger people, were his friends. He became a hobo, a stagehand, took up railroad construction as his father had done, but he was
always moving. Then came the Spanish-American War. Carl Sandburg, along with the rest of the young bloods of Galesburg, enlisted in Company C. And he was a good soldier. So he learned more about his little people in the crisis of war. Then he came back to Galesburg with his mustering-out pay and entered Lombard College. He steered clear of mathematics and leaned to history, English, public speaking and dramatics. But at the end of his

four years, in the spring, he heard the call elsewhere, and he left without his diploma. Then he started to live and work and write among his little people.

After college Sandburg put in two more years of wandering, hunting, and finding jobs, learning the smell of printer’s ink, trying desperately to write the thoughts that were stirring in him, rubbing elbows with hobos and bums, listening, always listening to the slow, sober voice of the prairie states.

Amy Lowell says of the young Sandburg:

When he was seventeen, Carl Sandburg went West, for Illinois is east if we halve the continent. Here he worked at his father’s old trade of railroad construction, but left it to wash dishes in hotels in Denver and Omaha, bursting out of doors to pitch wheat in Kansas. These were the poet’s Wanderjaher, a sort appropriate to a big industrial democracy.

The Sandburg and the Whitman families could have compared notes on sons. Neither boy seemed ready to settle down. Walt Whitman was always shifting jobs for no reason. Of course, the unpleasant neighbors said he was lazy, for didn’t he spend whole days just riding the ferry and lying around under the trees? Carl Sandburg’s brother, Martin, asked him when he
would settle down. But he didn't have time to answer - he was off again on some new ramble to some new place. The families worried, and then resigned themselves to the fate of having shiftless sons.

The love of poetry, grand and full of noise, filled each of the boys. Walt Whitman used to like to sit on the top of a horse car and shout above the rumble of traffic some sonorous passage from *Julius Caesar*. Carl Sandburg used to recite, no doubt to the astonishment of the milk wagon horses, passages from *Gray's Elegy*. They both liked to recite from the Bible, and Carl Sandburg admits that for his part the recitation from the Love Chapter of First Corinthians was for the sound of the words and not so much for the spiritual uplift.

The newspaper bug bit them both early with a lasting effect. The same type of bug bit them. They were both interested in politics - Whitman in the Barnburner element of the Democratic Party and Carl Sandburg in the Social-Democrats. Strangely enough these parties were passing political breezes soon to be no more. There was vigor, earnest desire when Whitman edited the *Brooklyn Eagle* and Carl Sandburg wrote for the *Day Book*. What is more, each wrote what he wished regardless of the popular, powerful opinions of the day. Neither got over the surge of the crusading spirit. They were ever ready to lead the way to new reforms.

War with its horror, its dissipation of progressive energy had a telling effect on the lives of both. The Civil War was the turning point of Whitman's career. Then in the hospital tents he learned the tenderness and the brotherhood and the great eternal ideas which a poet may learn from a conflict which tore his beloved America apart. He knew what blood, agony, and death were from the bedside of soldiers, Southern and Northern. Carl Sandburg learned about war during the Spanish-American War. In Company C he too learned what it meant to die, to be wounded far away from home. In the First World War he became a correspondent in Sweden and learned something of
the Russians. During the present war he has written much, felt much, and tried to make his America conscious of the principles for which the youthful soldiers are dying far away from home. Each came to conclusions and wrote these thoughts down in their poetry. Their poetry is a thing that breathes the breath of life - peaceful, warring, exalted, debased.

Life became to each not a mere existence to be experienced, but a symbol of the divine, spiritual nature of man. Spiritual and divine are not theological terms to these men. Divine expresses certainly an aspect of God, but not a God interpreted by any denomination or creed. Spiritual does not have to do with the sermons preached with smugness in tall pulpits. Spirit is a live, pulsating forward drive - guiding even the lowest (in conventional terms) to great heights of soul attainment. Religion is vital, but - Whitman and Sandburg think that they can be their own priests and churches.

John Burroughs, the great friend of Walt Whitman, says of his life:

It was a poet's life from first to last - free, unhampered, unworldly, unconventional, picturesque, simple, untouched by the craze of money getting, unselfish, devoted to others, and was, on the whole, joyfully and contentedly lived. It was a pleased and interested saunter through the world - no hurry, no fever, no stir, hence no bitterness, no depletion, no wasted energies.


Poetry had to come out of these two men - it surged, pushed within them, had to make itself manifest. And so, they wrote poetry not to please the ear and the eye, but poetry with a message, an urgent message which would not be denied.
A COMPARISON OF POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

It has been said that Walt Whitman is the father of modern American poetry. In a more particular sense he is the inspiration of Carl Sandburg's verse. In Sandburg's early days he delivered an address on Whitman on a Chautauqua circuit. Whitman always did excite him.

Poetry is a means to an end and not an end itself. This was the main artistic idea of the two poets. Bailly says that Whitman does so little for his subjects that they do not appear to become poetry at all. His notion that all exact metrical form was what he called "lilt," and had become unnecessary now that poetry is no longer written to be sung aloud, but to be read silently from a printed page, was partly responsible for this...He justly said to Edward Carpenter that "thought" was "the first thing" necessary to poetry; but he knew so little of his art that he forced it to be not only the first, but the only thing necessary to it. "The two things being equal I should prefer to have the lilt present with the idea; but if I got down my thought and the rhythm was not there I should not work to secure it...I take a good deal of trouble with words, but what I am after is the content not the music."

8 John Bailly, WALT WHITMAN, Macmillian Company, New York, pages 69,70.

Although Whitman did strive for meaning rather than music, he does, at times, develop great beauty in his lines. The thesis of his poetry can be found in many places in his work. In the poem, Starting from Paumanok he says:

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,
I will train the whole geography of the globe and salute
courteously every city large and small,
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is
heroism upon land and sea,
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.
I will sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alons must finally compact These,
I believe These are to found their own ideal of manly love,
indicating it in me,
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that
were threatening to consume,
I will lift what has too long kept down those smoldering fires,
I will give them complete abandonment,
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow
and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?
Here we see that he plans to encompass the entire world, geographically and spiritually. He is to tell the world of the love which will unite all men in brotherhood. He will tell of the occupations of the world, occupations humble and great, of which no worker should be ashamed. He will tell the world of these things, of the heroism of the common man, from the American point of view. The world has too long tried to keep the glorification of the common man down, but he, Walt Whitman, will sing of the common man with a full throated shout. He will write the "evangel-poem." All of Walt Whitman's poems have that evangelistic tone, for he feels that he is coming to the world with a vital message.

You might say that he had, in fact, all through his life three subjects, himself, the average man, and the universe... The most essential article in the creed of poetry is faith in the ultimate unity of the whole. That faith was the very essence of the Spirit of Whitman - faith in the oneness of the universe.

Whitman writes:

Swiftly 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,
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, mullin and poke-weed.

"Mossy scabs," "elder, stones, mullin and poke-weed" are not poetic in the conventional sense, but they carried Whitman's point, and that was what
he was after. Whitman felt that all things of life should be included in poetry. Poetry was to carry a message, and if poetry did not include the words of life, both beautiful and ugly, then it was not worthy of existing. Emerson at one time tried to get Whitman to leave some of the objectionable words from his poems. Whitman said he could not take away any part of his poetry, although he could offer no reasons for his decision. Emerson admired his position, and they went off arm in arm to eat a hearty dinner. Whitman often did not have reasons for what he did, but he felt, and that was all that mattered to him.

What made him the man and poet he became was not following any hero or master, but his own peculiar genius which enabled him to observe, absorb, and even love all sorts and conditions of things and people, human, animal and vegetable, in that hurrying and already crowded life of New York and its neighborhood. And not merely absorb. There was in his genius resistance as well as adaptability, and in spite of his universal interests and sympathies he remained an individual, a heretic, a rebel; in a word, himself. ¹²

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One of Whitman's rebel ideas was that anything that he called poetry became poetry just because he said it was. He could use any language - it would still be poetry.

Poetry, unlike ordinary conversation or a paragraph in a newspaper, has as its business to appeal to the imagination and the emotions. Language which leaves them dry and cold may do very well for the giving of information, for the transaction of trade, or the inquiries of science; but it will not do for poetry.

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¹³ Ibid., page 84.

An example of this is part of Salut au Monde:

I am a real Parisian,
I am a habitant of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburg, Limerick,
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence; I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward to Christiania or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in some street in Iceland; I descend upon all those cities and rise from them again.

This is a mighty array of cities of Europe which Whitman knew only through the geography books. They, placed one after another in lines similar to those of poetry, does not mean that they are poetry. It looks as if Whitman went through a geography, listing a number of cities which happened to catch his eye. Some of the cities probably mean more to us - Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Moscow, Cracow, Berlin, London, Manchester, Brussels, Berne - they are the names from the frequent communiques which flashed across our newspapers in the last year. There is to us the grim satisfaction of a victory won - at gigantic cost, materially and physically - there is the inspiration of heroic deeds done without hesitation - but to Whitman they were no more than the names of cities out of a geography. There were none of the things he himself insisted on for poetry in those lines and many other lines. In the Preface to the 1855 edition of LEAVES OF GRASS Whitman says:

The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet - he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson...he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions...he finally ascends and finishes all...he exhibits the pinnales that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond...he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown...by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make application of morals...he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as
its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The immost secrets of art sleep in the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.


Here we see that Whitman felt that poetry ought to have a definite emotional value. The poet ought to tell his readers the eternal verities of life. In the section from Salut au Monde Whitman did nothing of the sort.

Whitman can be criticized much, but also there is much praise which must be given to him. Say what we may about the lack of artistry in some of his work, the crudities of his expression, the arrogant egotism, the ever present 'I,' all these cannot detract from the powerful effect he has had upon poets, the thoughts he has generated. Whitman says again in his 1865 Preface:

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are not better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there are unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another ... and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of nature and passion and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

16 Ibid., page 352.

Whitman succeeded in his efforts. When he came closest to his definition of the greatest poet, he wrote the greatest poetry. He in his best
passages felt unafraid of life, he teaches that all men are of equal worth. Whitman does become master of all which surrounds him. The famous and lovely passage from the SONG OF MYSELF:

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.
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 remembrance designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name somewhere in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?
Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.
Or I 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.
Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring,
taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.
This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colourless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.
O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.
I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.
They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward to life and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appear'd.
All goes onward and outward nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier. 17

17 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 33, 34.

Whitman has included in this passage the things which make life a challenge - childhood and its wonder, God and the message of omnipresence, universal brotherhood and its implications, death and its universality, and finally a great burst of faith - "To die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier." Here we see that Whitman did come close to his definition of a great poet, for he is writing vital messages to men and women. Whitman further expresses his poetic ideas in the 1855 Edition Preface:

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity...nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulation are powers neither common or very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the prefect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of the trees in the woods and grass by the road side is the flawless triumph of art. 18

18 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 254.

This he achieved in a masterly fashion. He spoke of the simple things - the grass, the child, the mother and her baby, the old man's white beards - these are the everyday things of life. Walt Whitman made them into great poetry.

Henry Seidel Canby says of the language which Whitman used to make the poems of simple, every day life:

The old poetic language would not say what he wanted to say, and the old metres would not carry. This he says explicitly later, telling how hard he worked to get literary convention out of his poems before he was ready to publish. He was to be indirect, suggestive, symbolic (though he would not have used that word.) He was to make his poems be something as well as say something. And he was to do this by projecting
himself as a simple, separate person, who nevertheless is representative and can identify with all of you or any man or woman. It must have been very difficult and confusing for a good journalist accustomed to say what he meant simply, clearly. Now it is what he substantially is, or what his soul is, that is demanding words, and that soul has dilated until it desires to speak for America.


Other critics have voiced their opinions. Havelock Ellis says:

Whitman represents, for the first time since Christianity swept over the world, the re-integration, in a sane and wholehearted form, of the instincts of the entire man, and therefore he has a significance which we can scarcely over-estimate.


John Bailey says:

Simplicity, universality, vitality, those were the very notes which he thought he was now striking as no one had ever struck them before; and what better emblem could be found of one and all of them than just the grass of the fields?

21 John Bailey, op. cit., page 134.

Burroughs said of his art:

Art is commensurate with the human spirit. Art has one principle, one aim...To produce an impression, a powerful impression, no matter by what means, or if it be by reversing all the cannon of taste and criticism...He would give us more of the man, a fuller measure of personal, concrete, human qualities, than any poet before him. He strips away the artificial wrappings and illusions usual in poetry and relies entirely upon the native and intrinsic...Whitman's relation to art, then, is primary, and fundamental, just as his relations to religion, to culture, to politics, to democracy, are primary and fundamental - through his emotions, his soul, and not merely through his tools, his intellect.


All of these authorities agree that Walt Whitman was writing emotionally
for the fundamental things of life. He felt that man was the greatest thing in the world. His emphasis was on humanity and not on the metre or rhythm of his poetry. Technique was not so important as the message.

There have been long and heated discussions of Whitman's rhythm, rhyme, and metre. Some say he hasn't any; others say that he makes up for it all in his style and his message. It all depends on what you are looking for. Whitman wanted to write a new literature for a new country. He was democratic to the extent that he thought poetry should be freed from foreign domination, and therefore from the old, established metres. He was not writing to fulfill technical poetic standards; his were poems dealing with matters of the soul.

Whitman found the poetry of America in almost universal bondage to certain too popular metres, generally inherited from England. He began by writing in them himself and wrote nothing of the smallest value. Then he swept forward to his sudden and complete deliverance.23

23 John Bailey, op. cit., page 95.

The rhythm of Whitman is "highly individual, yet it is clearly related to other well-recognized modes of impassioned literary expression."24 It is


thought that one of the most important influences on the rhythm of Whitman was the Bible. The Bible was the poetry of the common people in Whitman's day, and unconsciously he used these ancient verse forms to express his new literature.

He dismissed without ceremony all the orthodox accoutrements, traps, verbal haberdashery, "feet," and the entire stock in trade of rhyme-talking heroes and heroines and all the love-sick plots of customary poetry, and constructs his verse in a loose and free metre of his own, of an irregular length of lines, apparently lawless at first perusal, although on closer examination a certain regularity appears, like the recurrence of lesser and larger waves on the sea-shore, rolling in without intermission, and fitfully rising and falling.25
Canby says that Whitman used "emotionalized speech." Certainly we feel the surge of power in his lines and feel the poetry. Perhaps the word, feel is the essence of Whitman's poetry (or lack of poetry, depending on which side of the fence your literary mind may be). In the Song of the Answerer Whitman gives his poetic credo:

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,
The words of true poems do not merely please,
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august masters of beauty;
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers and fathers,
The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health,
rudeness of body, withdrawnness,
Gaiety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are the words of poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer,
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist, all these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions,
politics, war, peace, behavior, histories, essays,
daily life, and every thing else.

They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,
longing, fain, love-sick,
They prepare for death, yet they are not the finish, but rather the contact,
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and full,
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of stars, to learn one of the meanings,
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.

The task which Whitman gives to all poets and to himself is an immense one. However, Whitman does not shirk it. Even though we sometimes see ludicrous examples of his trying to encompass this task, all in all Whitman succeeds very well. Certainly there is poetry and inspiration in the lines: "Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of stars, to learn one of the meanings, to launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the ceaseless rings and never be quiet again."

The First Edition of LEAVES OF GRASS was published in 1855. Carl Sandburg published his first poetic volume in 1904. Nearly fifty years makes a great difference in a rapidly expanding country. Whitman published his poems with no name on the frontispiece. Sandburg's IN RECKLESS ESCATASY was published in the basement printing-shop of his English professor. The book of verse was not really important, but it was a beginning. This professor was Philip Green Wright, and he says:

I do not remember that there was anything particularly distinguished in his appearance; anything, that is, to suggest incipient genius. He looked like one of the "proletariats" rather than one of the "intellectuals"...If I may use the two terms with which our socialist friends assume to pigeonhole all their fellow men...just a rough featured, healthy boy, possessed of indomitable energy and buoyancy of spirit. But it is just these rough featured boys whose faces take on with the years the impress of that indefinable quality we call character. I suppose the "god within" can achieve more lasting results with granite and bronze than with clay and putty.28

28 Karl Detzer, op. cit., pages 54, 55.

The first effort of a poet is no standard by which to judge his later work. So we cannot pause too long with this first volume, but it is an awkward, earnest Sandburg grasping for ideas, feeling, for words, seeking a cure for the injustices his eyes had seen in his hobo wanderings. It is a Sandburg with an unsteady, untrained, but lusty voice, shouting his hope for a better life in a better world for all mankind.29

29 Ibid., page 63.
At the beginning of his career Carl Sandburg stated his poetic ideas, and he has continued to follow that course. A number of critics bewail his crude realism. Among them is Amy Lowell. She says:

Judged from the standard of pure art, it is a pity that so much of Mr. Sandburg's work concerns itself with entirely ephemeral phenomena. The problems of posterity will be other than those which claim our attention.

I would like to interrupt Miss Lowell here to say that to my way of thinking Sandburg is not writing for posterity; his is an urgent message which cannot wait for posterity.

Art, nature, humanity, are eternal. But the minimum wage [which is very important if man is to live to enjoy poetry] will probably matter as little to the twenty-second century as it did to the thirteenth, although for different reasons...

He is a lyric poet, but the lyricist in him has a hard time to make itself heard above the brawling of the market place...

It is dangerous to give a final verdict on contemporary art. All that one can safely say of Mr. Sandburg's work is that he contains touches of great and original beauty, and whatever posterity may feel about it taken merely as poetry, it cannot fail to hold its place to students of this period as a necessary link in an endless chain.


Let Carl Sandburg tell you what he is not in his Sketch of a Poet in GOOD MORNING AMERICA:

He wastes time walking and telling the air, "I am superior even to the wind."

On several proud days he has addressed the wide circumambient atmosphere, "I am the wind myself."

He has poet's license 4-11-44; he got it even before writing of those "silver bugs that come on the sky without warning every evening."

He stops for the buzzing of bumblebees on bright Tuesdays in any summer month; he performs with a pencil all alone among dune oat-tails, amid climbing juniper bushes, notations, rivaling the foot tracks of anxious spiders; he finds mice homes under beach logs in the sand and pursues inquiries on how the mice have one room for bedroom, dining-room, sitting-room and how they have no front porch where they sit publically and watch passers-by.
He asks himself, "Who else is the emperor of such elegant English? Who else has slipped so often on perilous banana peels and yet lived to put praise of banana peels on sonorous pages?"

One minute he accuses God of having started the world on a shoestring; the next minute he executes a simple twist of the wrist and a slight motion of the hand and insinuates those bones will rise again.

Yet he wastes time walking and telling the air, "I am superior to the wind." or on proud days, "I am the wind myself." 31


We see that Sandburg speaks in the language of the common man just as Whitman. Perhaps Sandburg is truer to the vernacular than Whitman, because we find none of the "allons" and "respondez vouse" with which Whitman sometimes clutters his verse. Sandburg says "damn" and "hell" and "ain't" and "gink" however - He speaks of "bums," though, and "con men" and "bunkshooters."

This is no pose. He uses the words because they reflect his frame of mind and mirror his hatred of pretense and his impatience with artiness. No matter how many millions of books he sells, to Sandburg a bum will always be a bum, a hobo remain a hobo, never becomes even for poetry's sake a "vagabond." 33

33 Karl Detzer, op. cit., page 24.

Carl Sandburg is interested in helping young poets. In a letter to a young poet we have seen the things he considered necessary to poetry.

In the poetry game you throw a mean ball. At your best you ain't afraid of wild riding...You go your own way. You ride whatever horses you want to. You will go here and there and see what the best and the worst have in style and technic, themes;...and after that you go your own way. You will be in danger very likely at any time you listen seriously to das, does and dem, saying you must looksee about dis or dat. Listen, yes, and listen again and do a lot of listening and rebuke yourself about your listening and pray often that you may be a better listener. You may be advised you must not for instance, listen to shadows, for how can shadows speak? This is where the eyes must join the ears for listening, for the
eyes father the pantomimes of the shadows and there have rolling thunders issues for a few crooks and crosses of singing fingers. And anyhow and anyhoo shadows deal in whispers. Successful contradictions of this thesis cannot be maintained. The fact stands. And the fact is immeasurably important can it be verified. On this the poets and politicians can have a bowl of chili in peace and understanding. Shadows deal in whispers. Bluebirds burnish their wings with worms they eat. Poets cry their hearts out. If they don't they ain't poets. Subsistence won from sharing grief is what? Sorrows they blend themselves with, sorrows and wryly and bitterly shoot the works of sorrow. Out of it once in a while some music, companionship, stately consolations. Every good Bach listener is a minature Bach. Else Bach couldn't get by. You have much to go on. You are licensed to the latest slang, "is everything under control?" Beware of proud words, sweet gal. On this road you go on lonely and at cost. My prayers are that many strengths be yours, new and harder things for the old always.

34 Ibid., pages 149, 150.

Here we see that Sandburg thought that poetry is a thing to be lived as well as felt. Poetry is not an intangible theoretical thing. At the beginning of the volume GOOD MORNING, AMERICA, Sandburg has listed Definitions of Poetry.

Poetry is an art practiced with the terribly plastic material of human language.

Both Whitman and Sandburg thought that the language of poetry ought to be the language of the people. Of course this idea can be carried to the extreme, carried to the point where there is no longer any poetry and only the words of average man talking of trivial things. Whitman expresses the idea at its best in a very pleasing way in I Hear America Singing:

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belong to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands.
The woodcutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown. The delicious singing of the mother or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing, each singing what belongs to the day - at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

35 Walt Whitman, _op. cit._, page 11.

Here Whitman covers every type of man and woman, and each is singing the song which belongs to his work or station. Sandburg writes perhaps more in the language of the common man:

```plaintext
aw nuts aw go peddle yer papers
where did ja cop dat monkeyface
jeez ja see dat' skirt
did ja glom dat moll
who was tellin you we was brudders
how come ya get on dis side deh street
go home and tell yer mudder she want yuh
chase yer shadder aroun deh corner
yuh come to me wid a lot uh arkykakarky
a bing in the bean fer you heah
how come ya get on dis side deh street
go home and get yer umbreller washed
den get yer face lifted
dis corner is mine - see - dis corner is mine
gwan ja tink ya gonna get dis f'm me fer muttin
nobody gets muttin fer muttin
gwan monkeyface peddle yer papers
yer can't kiss yerself in here dis is all fixed
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This is not the America we like to think about speaking, but it is a part, a vital part of our country. Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg think that nothing in the way of language ought to be excluded from poetry just because it is unbeautiful. They believe that beautiful language is of no consequence in poetry unless that language carries with it a message. The language of the man of the streets, of the mechanic, of the young mother has its place in poetry because that language carries with it a message, it must be included in the "terribly plastic material of human language."
Poetry is the report of a nuance between two moments, when the people say "listen!" and "did you see it?" "Did you hear it?" "What was it?"

Poetry to both these men must answer questions about life, reasons for man, Why, For What Reason? In THE PEOPLE, YES, Sandburg says:

The people is a lighted believer and hoper - and is this to be held against them?
The panders and cheaters are to have their way in trading on these lights of the people?
Not always, no, not always, for the people is a knower, too.

The people a knower whose knowing grows by what it feeds on
The people wanting to know more, wanting.
The birds of the air and the fish of the sea leave off where man begins.

The people learn, unlearn, learn,
a builder, a wrecker, a builder again,
a juggler of shifting puppets.
In so few eyeblinks
In transition lightning streaks,
the people project midgets into giants,
the people shrink titans into dwarfs. 37

37 Ibid., page 223.

The people, says Sandburg, are trampled down by bullies, by the bigger people trying to get something for nothing. But the people have hope, they are a "lighted believer." They will not always be cheated, for they are a "knower" too. They have to learn the lessons of life through destruction, but it is only the people who can make giants of small ones among them, and only the people who can shrink the big ones into midgets.

Walt Whitman in By Blue Ontario's Shores asks questions of his people. He tries to awake them to the knowledge that they must learn the lessons of life from living courageously. People should not be content to know what has been known before. They should "leap from their seats and contend for their lives." They should find the answers to questions not by looking in books, but by searching for them.
Piety and conformity to them that like,
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue,
questioning every one I meet,
Who are you that wanted to be told what you knew before?
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense?

(With pangs and cries as thine own 0 bearer of many
children,
These clamors wild to a race of pride, I give.)

O lands, would be freer than all that has ever been
before?
If you would be freer than all that has been before,
come listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicacies,
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,
Beware of the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of
states and men.

38 Walt Whi'tman, op- cit., pages 348, 349.

Poetry is not just to be beautiful then, it is to carry a message to the
people about themselves.

Poetry is the tracing the trajectories of a finite
sound to the infinite points of its echoes.

This definition follows closely the definition quoted above. Man is a
finite thing if we just take his physical being, but when we consider the
soul element, the spiritual element, then we get into the realm of the in-
finite. Music is finite in the sense that the notes are written on paper,
but the spirit of music knows no boundaries. Sandburg expresses this idea.
in THE PEOPLE, YES, in this way:

The police and constables holding everyone of them either
as lawbreaker or lawabiding.
The fingerprint expert swears no one of them ever has
finger linings and circlings the same.
The handwriting expert swears no one of them ever writes
his name twice the same way.
To the grocer and the banker they are customers, depositors,
investors.
The politician counts them as voters, the newspaper editor as readers, the gambler as suckers.
The priest holds each one as an immortal soul in the care of Almighty God.
Who do you think you are and where do you think you came from?
From toenails to the hair of your head you are mixed of the earth, of the air,
Of compounds equal to the burning gold and amethyst lights of the Mountains of the Blood of Christ at Santa Fe.
...............
You are a walking drug store and also a cosmos and a phantasmagoria treading a lonesome valley, one of the people, one of the minions and myrmidons who would like an answer to the question, "Who and what are you?"

39 Carl Sandburg, op. cit., page 61.

Whitman gives his poetic answer too. In To You he says:

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet and hands,
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,
Your true soul and body appear before me
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops, work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering, dying.

40 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 241.

To both poets man is more than meets the eye. Life is finite—and infinite.
Often we do not know what goes on around us. We ask questions about life.
Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman think that the business of the poet is to help search for the answers.

Poetry is a series of explanations of life fading off into horizons too swift for explanations.

Although Whitman and Sandburg undertook to explain life, there were things which they could not explain. Poetry was to them the attempt to put these unexplainables into verse so that those who read the poems might attempt to understand. Carl Sandburg expresses some of the mysteries about life, man, unexplainables this way. He calls the poem Precious Moments:
Bright vocabularies are transient as rainbows,
Speech requires blood and air to make it.
Before the word comes off the end of the tongue,
While the diaphragms of flesh negotiate the word,
In the moment of doom when the word forms
It is born, alive, registering an imprint -
Afterward it is a mummy, a dry fact, done and gone.
The warning holds yet: Speak now or forever hold
your peace.
Ecco homo had meanings: Behold the Man! Look at Him!
Dying he lives and speaks!41

41 Carl Sandburg, GOOD MORNING, AMERICA, page 239.

Whitman in Beginners follows the same idea:

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing in
intervals.)
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,
How they inure to themselves as much as to any - what a
paradox appears their age,
How people respond to them, yet know them not,
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation
and reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for
the same great purchase.

42 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 8.

Poets are to explain - but there are some things which defy explanation.

Poetry then becomes the medium through which men and poets try to catch a
glare of meaning. It may be just a glimmer far away; nevertheless, poetry
is there mapping the way.

Poetry is any page from a sketchbook of outlines of a door-
knob with thumb-prints of dust, blood, dreams.

All of these definitions point the fact that poetry is a living thing -
ever just a technique of expression alone. Whitman and Sandburg put into
their poems all the sweat, blood, and tears which life presented to them.
The wars of their lives have colored red many of their verses. Man's effort
to earn his bread has given the smell of sweat to their work. The dreams of
mankind which lead to an upward path to final glory have added the sheen of
moonlight. These three - dust, blood, dreams - may be found over and over in the poems. Flip through LEAVES OF GRASS to the Wound-Dresser:

Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with sweat and dust,
In the nick of time, I come, plunge into the fight,
Loudly shouting in the rush of successful charge,
Enter the captur'd works - yet lo, like a swift running river they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade - I dwell not on soldiers' perils or joys,
(Both I remember well - many of the hardships, few of the joys, yet I was content.)
But in silence, in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for you up there,
Whoe'er you are, follow without noise and be of strong heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass on the ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return,
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and fill'd again.43

43 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 317, 318.

Whitman has given us here a graphic picture of the horrors of war. But with it he has given also the picture of tenderness with which he tended his wounded. War was never a thing to be glorified. But the great dreams go on. The doorknob has thumbprints of sweat and blood - but dreams too. Carl Sandburg writes Among the Red Guns "After waking at dawn one morning when the wind sang low among dry leaves in an elm."
Among the red guns,
In the hearts of soldiers
Running free blood
After the long, long campaign:
Dreams go on.

Among the leather saddles,
In the heads of soldiers
Heavy in the wrecks and kills
Of all straight fighting:
Dreams go on.

Among the hot muzzles,
In the hands of soldiers
Brought from flesh-folds of women -
Soft amid the blood and crying -
In all your hearts and heads
Among the guns and saddles and muzzles:

Dreams,
Dreams go on,
Out of the dead on their backs,
Broken and no use any more;
Dreams of the way and the end go on.

These men found their poetry would be nothing unless they put into it all the feelings, the emotions of their times - and they included everything pleasant or unpleasant, elevating or degrading, which made up their times.

Poetry is a type-font design of an alphabet of fun, hate, love, death.

The word Life has been used many times in this discussion, but that attribute of life-likeness is the constant object of striving of Whitman and Sandburg. Unless the words and the thoughts were breathing the breath of life, they could not be used in poetry. "Fun, Hate, Love, Death" - all are the words of life. They are the hallmarks of life. The idea that "poetry is a type-font" appeals to both of these newspaper men.

Poetry is the silence and speech between a wet struggling root of a flower and a sunlit blossom of that flower.

It has been said that Whitman chose LEAVES OF GRASS for his title of his book because grass was the symbol of many things for which he stood.
Graea was common, humble, and grew in the yards of everyone, whether they were rich or poor, whether they were black or white. The grass had not beauty as did the brilliant flowers, it was retiring, without pretense. Its roots went deep in almost any kind of soil. It spread under almost any conditions. So he used it as the name of his book. Carl Sandburg is interested in the symbolism of grass also. He uses grass as the genius of a number of his poems. Both of these men saw that out of the ugly comes the beautiful.

Without evil there is no good, and there is no evil without good. There can be no flowers without wet, ungainly, slimy roots. Poetry is the mysterious communication of the root and the flower. The roots take the sap from the dirt, and finally after its journey through the stalk it becomes a lovely rose or an ordinary dandelion. No matter which, the mystery is still as great and glorious. Poetry can start too from dark roots taking nourishment from dark things—wars, suffering, and coming at last to the blossoming of powerful ideas, "the great idea" of equality as Whitman calls it.

Poetry is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it.

Death had a fascination for both men. Whitman called it "lovely, soothing death." Carl Sandburg said that it was "a nurse mother with big arms."

There is no terror in death. There is glory in birth. The earth is always here, silent witness to both. It turns on its axis, the stars still run their courses, men are born from the earth and die back into it again—Mother Earth. Poetry is the achievement of the balance between the two.

Sandburg and Whitman stand undisturbed in the face of each. Death is the outset of another beginning. Everything is a going forward. Carl Sandburg writes in Between Worlds:

And he said to himself
in a sunken morning moon
between two pines,
between lost gold and lingering green;
I believe I will count up my worlds.
There seem to me to be three.
There is a world I came from, which is Number One.
There is a world I am in now, which is Number Two.
There is a world I go to next, which is Number Three.

There was the seed pouch, the place I lay dark in, nursed
and shaped in a warm, red, wet, cuddling place;
if I tugged at a latchstring or doubled a dimpled
fist or twitched a leg or a foot, only the Mother
knew.

There is the place I am in now, where I look back and
look ahead, and dream and wonder.

There is the next place -

And he took a look out of a window
at a sunken morning moon
between two pines,
between lost gold and lingering green.  

45 Carl Sandburg, GOOD MORNING, AMERICA, Page 137.

Walt Whitman carries this idea forth in his lyric "Come Lovely Soothing Death."
He calls death not only "a strong deliveress" but also "fathomless universe,"
dark mother."

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.

Praid'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love - but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come,
come unfalteringly.

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

46 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 341, 342.
Poetry was a paradox - so was life - but both were sure and certain for Whitman and Sandburg. The earth cradled life and then after a time entombed it. We are "between worlds" - we may not know where, but we are on our way.

Poetry is the arithmetic of the easiest way and the primrose path, matched with foam-flanked horses, bloody knuckles, and bones, on the hard way to the stars.

There is a way to the stars - of this Whitman and Sandburg are certain.

Whitman says in THE SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD:

Listen! I will be honest with you, I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes, These are the days that must happen to you; You shall not heap up what is call'd riches, You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve, You but arrive at the city to which you were destined, you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart, You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mocking of those who remain behind you, What beckonings of love you received you shall only answer with passionate kisses of perting, You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands toward you.

Whitman says you cannot stay and be content. You are on the hard way to the stars. Sandburg talks about the journey to the stars in a light but sure way in Baby Toes:

There is a blue star, Janet, Fifteen years' ride from us, If we ride a hundred miles an hour.

There is a white star, Janet, Forty years’ ride from us, If we ride a hundred miles an hour.

Shall we ride To the blue star Or to the white star?
These poets know the way to the stars is a long, hard, bloody trip. But they are sure that mankind must embark for the stars, whether they choose the blue star or the white star. They must face the mocking scorn of those who remain at home in ease. The salvation of mankind lies on the journey to the stars.

One of the more famous definitions of poetry which Sandburg has listed is:

Poetry is the achievement of the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits.

Hyacinths and biscuits - both good, one commonplace, one unusual; both smelling good, but in different ways; both appealing to senses, but different ones - their synthesis makes poetry. The commonplace and the unusual - food for the body and food for the soul - all this adds to poetry and to the definition for which the poets worked. In that little poem Fog, Sandburg has made that synthesis:

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Fog is a common enough thing on the shores of Lake Michigan, but out of it and poetry Sandburg made a lovely thing which school children like to memorize. I have quoted from the Song of Myself, "A child said What is the grass?" Grass and children are common in our world, but Whitman and poetry made out of them one of his greatest lyrics.
Two men, one from the 19th century and one from the 20th century, have met in the highway of poetry and there have joined hands. Both believe poetry should be in the language of the people. No high sounding, artificial words for them. Poetry is not to please but to carry a message, to do something to the person who is reading. Poetry does not necessarily have to have rhyme, metre, or rhythm - Whitman was not worried about "lilt" and Carl Sandburg said, "If it jells into free verse, all right. If it jells into rhyme, all right." The poetry they wrote had to represent the people, and most par-

50 Karl Detzer, op. cit., page 148.

ticularly the people of America. Man was a thing divine, and all the low life of humanity cannot disprove this fact. Brotherhood and universal love is the key to the solution of the trouble, the wars of the world. Death is not to be feared - to be expected and welcomed. A man may be of a different color, speak a different language, but he is still a man. Life goes on, man may muddle things, but he cannot stop the ongoing of the world.

Two men from different centuries have written fearlessly, vigorously, forcefully, dramatically, imaginatively so that poetry has become no longer a Victorian parlor game but a voice shouting directions to a confused world of great little people.
DEMOCRACY

Democracy is not just a word to be bantered back and forth by politicians. To Sandburg and Whitman democracy was a living, glowing ideal which must be made reality. Walt Whitman in his LEAVES OF GRASS had as one of his avowed aims to make democracy a goal for the people of so-called democratic America.

John Bailey says:

With his voice as with his pen he wanted to preach his new religion of democracy; equality, and the average man... His book was to be, and he gradually came to see it was, his only means of saying what he wanted to say.


To Walt Whitman democracy was not only an American product, but a universal idea. In his Starting from Paumanok he says:

I will make the true poem of riches,
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres
and goes forward and is not dropt by death;
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all,
and I will be the bard of personality,
And I will show of male and female that either
is but the equal of the other,
And I will show that whatever happens
to any body it may be turn'd to beautiful results,
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,
And I will thread a thread through my poems
that time and events are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles,
each as profound as any.

52 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 31, 32.

Democracy then is the real essence of wealth. It is the underpinning of all life. Body and mind are common to all mankind, and these elements of humanity are not dropt at death - they go on in other men and women. Sex does not stand as a barrier for democracy. Men and women are equal miracles. There is no imperfection in the past or the present. War, conflict of ideas...
and ideals, social injustice may occur, but with his vast faith in the future Walt Whitman will show "That whatever happens to any body it may be turn'd to beautiful results." The most democratic fact of life is death. It is the most beautiful thing which can happen to man. Death comes to every person - that adds to its beauty. Beauty to Whitman is not daintiness or effeminacy. The beauty of death is challenging, mystic. The entire universe is a miracle - from the smallest blade of grass to the mightiest waves of the sea. This is the theme of universal democracy which runs all through Whitman's poetry. To Whitman, however, the great miracle was the common man. John Burroughs says:

Walt Whitman was of the people, the common people, and always gave out their quality and atmosphere. His commonness, his nearness, as of the things you have always known - the day, the sky, the soil, your own parents - where in no way veiled or kept in abeyance, by his culture or poetic gifts...His commonness rose into the uncommon, the extraordinary, but without any hint of the exclusive or specially favored. He was indeed "no sentimentalist, no stander above men and women, or apart from them."

53 John Burroughs, op. cit., pages 62, 63.

Walt Whitman was "no stander above men and women." He was a poet, yes, but that fact made it even more imperative for him to express the poetry of the common man. In his poem To a Common Prostitute he says:

Be composed - be at ease with me - I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature,
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves to rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle for you.

My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you that you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come.

Til then I salute you with a significant look that you do not forget me.

54 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 394, 395.
Democracy is a glorious idea, and Whitman carried it to its ultimate conclusions. The prostitute was an individual and therefore had the right to be considered equal to anyone else. "I am Walt Whitman" is no idle statement. He meant that he would stand for the equality of each individual.

Edmond Holmes says:

The cardinal doctrine of Democracy is that all men are equal. Whitman pushes this doctrine to its extreme limits, and follows it out into all its consequences. His defi-
nation of the "average man" is of course, mathematically speaking, absurd. An average is struck among unequals, not among equals. If all things were equal, the notion of an average would never have been generated. But though Whitman, having adopted a technical term, has deliberately ignored its technical meaning, to criticize his poetry from a mathematical standpoint would be scarcely fair and would certainly be futile. An "average" is an entirely different thing from a "common factor"; but whenever Whitman uses the former term it is quite clear (from the context) that he is intending to use the latter, that he has in his mind some "common factor" of man's being, some common element, in human nature, the possession of which lifts the lowest of men to the level of the highest. 55

55 Edmond Holmes, WALT WHITMAN'S POETRY, John Lane, the Bodley Head, London, 1902, pages 15,16.

Democracy is an emotional experience. There must be deep feelings involved in our democratic outlook on life. Without deep feelings nothing will be done to improve the status of democracy. H. S. Canby says:

A fraternal love, or at least affection, must be the cement of democracy. And this, of course, harmonizes with Whit-
man's ideas of self-development. The individual for whom democracy is conducted must know how to love and be loved, or the house of the state is built on sterile sands. What literature claims for the heroes and great lovers, Whitman demands as an idea for the common man. There can be no enduring democracy without emotional freedom, which should be added to the four freedoms of President Roosevelt. For the man and woman emotionally free and fully developed will be easily directed toward love rather than hate for his fellow creatures. The need of love, like the need of political freedom, must be satisfied by a successful democracy. 56

56 H. S. Canby, op. cit., pages 265.
Walt Whitman looked upon strangers and loved them. Each person in a democracy is worthy of his love. Love was the cure—all of the evils of our society. And Walt Whitman tried to live his doctrine. Some of his best friends were of the uneducated, the great unwashed. Peter Doyle was a street car driver. He had had very little education. Peter Doyle admitted that he could not understand what Whitman was driving at, but there was a love between them which was the practical application of Whitman's democracy.

Democracy was the very essence of Walt Whitman's poetry. And being the essence of his poetry, it naturally follows that it was the essence of his life as well. John Burroughs says:

In him the new spirit of democracy first completely knows itself, is proud of itself, has faith and joy in itself, is fearless, tolerant, religious, aggressive, triumphant, and bestows itself lavishly upon all sides. It is tentative, doubtful, hesitating no longer. It is at ease in the world, it takes possession, it fears no rival, it advances with confident step. Whitman's democracy is the breath of his nostrils, the light of his eyes, the blood of his veins....He is a great poet and prophet, speaking through the average man, speaking as one of the people, and interpreting life from the point of view of absolute democracy.

57 John Burroughs, op. cit., page 243.

"Absolute democracy" - no half-way measures - hence Walt Whitman can say and is eager to say to the lowest out-cast of society, "Not until the sun excludes you do I exclude you."

Carl Sandburg believes in "absolute democracy" too. He writes of "the dream that holds us," the democratic dream:

Personal freedom, a wide range of individual expression, a complete respect for the human mind and the human personality - that is the ideal of the democratic system.

Charles H. Compton says of Sandburg's poetry and its democratic emphasis:

Sandburg's poetry goes down deep into the life of this twentieth century of which he is a part - of which I am a part. It is a life I understand. At those ugly things in life at which he rebels - at those things I rebel. Of all the poets I know, not excepting Walt Whitman, Sandburg is not excelled in his sympathy with the common and even the lowest of humanity, with the great unwashed, with boobs and the flappers, with the seventy five percent of our population whom the intelligence testers set down as morons. Sandburg understands them all. He interprets them and draws from them the beauty hidden away in the dark recesses of their outwardly unlovely exteriors.

Carl Sandburg lived among his common little people and from them learned many lessons. These he put into his poetry so that all who read his poems may learn the same lessons. No matter what name a man may have, no matter what address he may give, no matter what kind of job at which he may work, no matter what kind of education he may have had, no matter who his mother and father were, no matter the kind of English he speaks - he is still a man and that is the sobering, important thing. In Masses Carl Sandburg says:

Among the mountains I wandered and saw blue haze and red crag and was amazed; On the beach where the long push under the endless tide maneuvers, I stood silent; Under the stars on the prairie watching the Dipper slant over the horizon's grass, I was full of thoughts. Great men, pageants of war and labor, soldiers and workers, mothers lifting their children - these all I touched, and felt the solemn thrill of them. And then one day I got a true look at the Poor, millions of the Poor, patient and toiling; more patient than crags, tides, and stars; innumerable, patient as the darkness of night - and all broken, humble ruins of nations.

Here we see that Carl Sandburg's democracy extends beyond the boundaries of The United States. He sees the masses of people. Democracy is the hope for
which the people live, the hope for better things to come. Sandburg does not find that any person is beneath his notice. He writes of them all. In *Harrison Street Court* he, like Whitman, writes of a prostitute:

In heard a woman's lips
Speaking to a companion
Saying these words:

"A woman what hustles
Never keeps nothin'
For all her hustlin'
Somebody always gets
What she goes on the street for.
If it ain't a pimp
It's a bull what gets it.
I been hustlin' now
Til I ain't much good any more.
I got nothin' to show for it.
Some man got it all,
Every night's hustlin' I ever did."

61 Carl Sandburg, *CHICAGO POEMS*, page 162.

There is no condemnation, no superior attitude in those lines. There is pathos, sympathy, and understanding. Carl Sandburg could not exclude her. A life has been spoiled, but no accusing fingers are pointed in scorn.

Democracy is equality, justice. Democracy calls for daring. In *The People*, yes Carl Sandburg tells a fable:

Is the story true or a make-believe?
In an ancient clan the elders found one of the younger, a man of dreaminess, writing a scroll and record.
Where he had picked up letters and the forbidden art of putting down one word after another so as to make sense, they didn't know and he refused to tell.
On sheets to be read long after by other generations he was doing an eye-witness tale of their good and evil doings.
And he swore to them: "I will be the word of the people! Mine is the bleeding mouth from which the gag is snatched!"
So they took and killed him and set his bloody head on a pike for public gaze. Who had asked him to be the word of the people? When they wanted a history written they would elect someone to write it as they would have it written.
This is more than just a tale of a brave person who stood for the ideal he thought worthy of sacrifice. This is the tale of all those evangelists of democracy who would point the way to a people, smugly content with things as they are. Martin Luther, Spinoza, Savonarola have pointed the way. They were tortured, burned, persecuted. But this is a gentler world. Now the people just laugh or ignore, overlook those things which make demands of their democratic ideals. Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg could not see that democracy would tolerate such attitudes. Carl Sandburg has a powerful tenderness for the great unwashed, and a searing bitterness toward the people who are content to let the world jog along. In Onion Days he says:

Mrs. Gabrielle Giovannitti comes along Peoria Street every morning at nine o'clock. With kindling wood piled on top of her head, her eyes looking straight ahead to find the way for her old feet.

Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti, whose husband was killed in a tunnel explosion through the negligence of a fellow-servant, works ten hours a day, sometimes twelve, picking onions for Jasper on the Bowmanville road. She takes a street car at half-past five in the morning, Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti does, and gets back from Jasper with cash for her day's work between nine and ten o'clock at night.

Last week she got eight cents a box, Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti picking onions for Jasper. But this week, Jasper dropped the pay to six cents a box because so many women and girls were answering the ad in the Daily News. Jasper belongs to an Episcopal Church in Ravenwood and on certain Sundays he enjoys chanting the Nicene creed with his daughters on each side of him, joining their voices with his. If the preacher repeats old sermons of a Sunday, Jasper's mind wanders to his 700-acre farm and how he can make it produce more efficiently. And sometimes he speculates on whether he could word an ad in the Daily News so it would bring more women and girls out to his farm and reduce operating costs.
Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti is far from desperate about life; her joy is in a child she knows will arrive to her in three months.

And now while these are the pictures for today there are other pictures of the Giovannitti people I could give you for tomorrow.

And how some of them go to the county agent on winter mornings with their baskets of beans and cornmeal and molasses.

I listen to fellows saying here's good stuff for a novel or it might be worked up into a good play.

I say there's no dramatist living can put old Mrs. Gabrielle Giovannitti into a play with that kindling wood piled on top of her head coming along Peoria Street nine o'clock in the morning.

Onion Days might be called a negative lesson in democracy, what democracy is not. Be that as it may, it is a powerful indictment of a social evil. Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti, made a widow because of negligence, working ten to twelve hours a day, and Jasper, speculating how to increase the productiveness of his 700-acre farm, form a contrast too great to be called democratic. But they exist in a democracy. Carl Sandburg is drawing a vivid picture so that the people who read will see to it that the contrast will be not quite too sharp. Perhaps Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti's son and Jasper's son will find a more equitable meeting ground socially, economically, religiously, and educationally than did their parents. Perhaps their parents did not think about the wide breach between them, perhaps they accepted it as a matter of course. Carl Sandburg does not think that such a situation should be the accepted democratic standard of this or any other country. In his The People, Yes he talks about the free man:

The free man willing to pay and struggle and die for the freedom for himself and others
Knowing how far to subject himself to discipline and obedience for the sake of an ordered society free from tyrants, exploiters and legalized frauds —
This free man is a rare bird and when you meet him take a good look at him and try to figure him out because
Someday when the United States of the Earth gets going and runs smooth and pretty there will be more of him than we have now.

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.
There are men who can't be bought.
The fireborn are at home in fire.
The stars make no noise
You can't hinder the wind from blowing.
Time is a great teacher.
Who can live without hope?

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.

In the night and overhead a shovel of stars for keeps the people march:
"Where to? What next?"

Democracy cannot be confined by geography. Carl Sandburg wants to see a United States of the Earth, where that "rarebird," the free man, will not be an uncommon sight, where we can have some of the answers to "Where to? What next?"

Walt Whitman says that democracy cannot be confined. In a Song For Occupations he writes:

Neither a servant nor a master I,
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have my own whoever enjoys me,
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as high as the highest in the same shop,
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend,
If your lover, husband, or wife, is welcome by day or night, I must be personally as welcome,
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake,
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?

If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of the table,
If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her, why I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser
than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were drunk, or a
thief,
Or that you are diseased, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar
and never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

65 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 218, 219.

There are no strata of society, there are no levels of education for
Walt Whitman. What you insist for yourself I insist for myself. Your faults
are my faults. You in your workoeles and drunkeness are just as immortal
as I am. Walt Whitman embraces all humanity, he sees no barriers, he knows
no limits, democracy has a leavening and a leveling quality. But neither
Sandburg nor Whitman wants that level to be a low one. Democracy is an ex-
alted thing to which all must aspire.

Carl Sandburg says in The People, Yes:

The people is Everyman, everybody,
Everybody is you and me and all others,
What everybody says is what we all say.
And what is it we all say?

When shall we all speak the same language?
And do we want to have all the same language?
Are we learning a few great signs and passwords?
What should Everyman be lost for words?
Two countries with two flags
are nevertheless one land, one blood, one people -
can this be so?
And the earth belongs to the family of man?
can this be so?  


In a Song of Occupations Walt Whitman says:
Is it you that thought the President greater than you? Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were drunk, or a thief, Or that you are diseased, or rheumatic, or a prostitute, Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar and never saw your name in print, Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

There are no strata of society, there are no levels of education for Walt Whitman. What you insist for yourself I insist for myself. Your faults are my faults. You in your workolotches and drunkenness are just as immortal as I am. Walt Whitman embraces all humanity, he sees no barriers, he knows no limits, democracy has a leavening and a leveling quality. But neither Sandburg nor Whitman wants that level to be a low one. Democracy is an exalted thing to which all must aspire.

Carl Sandburg says in The People, Yes:

The people is Everyman, everybody, Everybody is you and me and all others, What everybody says is what we all say. And what is it we all say?

\[\text{.........................}\]
When shall we all speak the same language? And do we want to have all the same language? Are we learning a few great signs and passwords? What should Everyman be lost for words? Two countries with two flags are nevertheless one land, one blood, one people - can this be so? And the earth belongs to the family of man? can this be so?

In a Song of Occupations Walt Whitman says:

65 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 218, 219.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver
that carved the supporting desk,
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day,
and when they touch my body back again,
When a university course convinces like a slumbering
woman and child convince,
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-
watchman's daughter,
When warrantee deeds loaf in chairs opposite and are my
friendly companions,
I intend to reach them my hand and make as much of them
as I do of men and women like you.67

67 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 226.

These two men say that some day we shall have democracy. Some day
Everyman will not be lost for words, and we shall speak the same language,
think the same thoughts, find that gold and warrantee deeds are not the im-
portant things of life. We shall know more of the great passwords to de-
mocracy, passwords which sound clearly through the disappearing fog of un-
certainty, suspicion, and doubt.
AMERICANISM

The democracy which Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg love so much is a direct outgrowth of their love for America. They have an ideal for their country—a democratic ideal, and they use poetry to make that ideal come to realization. America is an object of great devotion, but that devotion is not a blind one. They see the faults of America. Nevertheless, they feel that America is the hope of mankind, politically, creatively, scientifically, educationally. Frances Winwar says of Walt Whitman:

"Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you." I give you back the brave dreamer who saw his vision in young manhood and had the courage to pursue it to the end against reviling and misunderstanding. I give you the man of generous life, the comrade of the open road, the free companion of men and women, the peace loving Quaker and the mighty fighter for principles. I give you the wound dresser of the battlefield, the Answerer in the conflict of life. I give you the symbol of America, Walt Whitman.68

68 Frances Winwar, AMERICAN GIANT, WALT WHITMAN AND HIS TIMES, Harper Brothers, 1941, page xiii.

Whitman would have been greatly flattered by the words of Frances Winwar. He considered himself to be the voice of the America which was to be the hope of the world, the America which was branching out to the West, the America which would lead the world into the paths of peace, higher learning, final glory.

Walt Whitman was firmly convinced that in a few years America would be the center of the literary world. He thought that one of the chief aims of his poetry was to liberate the American literary mind from the chains which bound European literature. He felt that all of the literary fountains of Europe had dried and that now in America the world would find fresh springs from which to drink. In Song of the Exposition Walt Whitman calls for the classic Muse to immigrate to America.
Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia.
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas'.
Odysseus' wanderings,
Placard "removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy
Parnassus,
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's
gates and on Mount Moriah,
The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish
castles, and Italian collections,
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, un-
tried domain awaits, demands you.

Responsive to our summons,
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,
I mark her step divine, her curious eye a-turning, rolling.
Upon this very scene.

............... 
I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious
emigre
(Having it is true in her day, although the same,
 chang'd, journey'd considerable,)
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing
a path for herself, striding through the confusion,
By the thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipes, gasometres, artificial
fertilizers,
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

69 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 202, 204.

Walt Whitman believes that poetry can be found anywhere in his beloved
America, even "amid the kitchen ware." Emerson found this new, liberating
aspect of Whitman's writing invigorating. Edgar Lee Masters says this about
Whitman's Americanism:
Whitman could not rest while trying to put all of America
into poetry. He was driven into catalogues, which are a
way of presenting to the eye of the imagination the con-
tent of a vision. Above this, Whitman knew that the
Revolution, which he had related to him by eye-witnesses,
was not a mere strife between England and the colonies
over the matter of tea, or even over the right to set up
a new government, but that it was an historical struggle
at one of those appointed times in the history of mankind
when liberal forces take their stand against a conserva-
tive past. He knew that the new day required poetry to
to express it and to carry it forward... He prophesied an ever-growing land and he wanted to give it song by which to steady and advance its steps. It was this vision of Whitman that made him a great poet; it was not his poetical skill, not artistry, not even his own successful achievement.

Carl Sandburg has tried to bring new ideas into American literature also. Some have said that Sandburg, because of his Swedish parentage, is not truly American in his point of view. Karl Detzer says, however,

Carl Sandburg is no Swede. He is thoroughly American. There is so much plain Midwest in him, so much small town, so much prairie soil and prairie wind, so much cornfield and corner barbership, that the accident of Swedish blood is smothered in environment. Pride in his humble American background shows all through Prairie which begins:

"I was born in the prairie, and the milk of its wheat, the red of its clover, the eyes of its women, gave me a song and a slogan."

Later in the same poem we have the recurring theme.

"The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and I know in the night I rest easy in the prairie arms, in the prairie heart."

That’s an American singing, not a Swede.

Amy Lowell has her ideas about Carl Sandburg’s Americanism. She says:

Mr. Sandburg, although intellectually and poetically in the second state of our movement, belongs to the new America which I have called multi-racial. He springs from the strong immigrant class which comes yearly in boat-loads to our shores. It is he and his ilk who are moving us away from our Anglo-Saxon inheritance. It is he and his ilk who bring us to the points of view which are working so surely, so insidiously, upon the whole body of the people.

Some day, America will be a nation; some day we shall have a national character. Now, our population is a crazy quilt of racial samples. But how strong is that Anglo-Saxon ground work which holds them all firmly together to its shape, if no longer to its color.
Miss Lowell shows here the very thing in which Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg were so interested - getting away from the Anglo-Saxon traditions and launching out and building for America her own traditions, building her own national character. America is a new country. She ought to have new ideas to guide her. There is no use in going in the old time-tested ways. They lead only to old mistakes. Now is the time for America to break new paths and find new mistakes, new cures for the old. Carl Sandburg expresses this idea in Good Morning, America:

Nations begin young the same as babies. They suckle and struggle; they grow up; They toil, fight, laugh, suffer, die. They obey the traced circles of the moon. They follow the ordained times of night, morning, afternoon, evening, and night again.

They stand up and have their day in the pavilion of the Four Winds. The night sky of stars watches them begin, wear out, and fade away before newcomers, before silence, before empty pavilion. They leave flags, slogans, alphabets, numbers, tools, tales of flaming performances; they leave moths, manuscripts, memories.

And so, to the pavilion of the Four Winds came the little one they called America, one that suckled, struggled, toiled, laughed, grew, America began young the same as a baby. The new little republic had its swaddling clothes, its child shirt, its tussle to knit long bone joints. And who can read the circles of its moons now? And who shall tell beforehand the secrets of its salts and blood?

America is new. These men write for America. This literature for America is more than just a literature for a new country, but it is a faith in the future of that country, a faith in the progress it will make in the family of nations. Their Americanism does not mean that they are isolationists.
They wish the whole world to follow the example of the America which "started young the same as a baby."

Alfred Kazin says in the New Republic:

Whitman is the poet of the American dream, which is a real dream and not a political slogan - that dream of existence as a positive good in itself, of life as a process that will somehow, by magical sweetness and incantation of solidarity, justify itself. What moves us in Whitman is never the fact that we have arrived at a definite understanding, but the interior recognition with which we join in his interior escape - so that we are always drifting with him toward possible universals...

The identity of Walt Whitman was not only a balance between the positive and the dominant in his sexual nature; it was the dreaminess at the pitch of genius, with which he personified the American's search for the meaning of his existence. There is an American Whitman - not because he created an American myth for the world, but because he exalted us so honestly, without ever really teaching us.74


Walt Whitman talks about the future of America in Starting from Paumanok:

Expanding and swift, henceforth,
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick,
and audacious,
A world primal again, vistas, of glory incessant and branching,
A new race dominating previous ones and
grander far, with new contests,
New politics, new literature and religions, new
inventions and arts,
These my voice announcing - I will sleep no
more but arise,
You oceans that have been calm within me!
how I feel you, fathomless, stirring,
preparing unprecedented waves and storms.75

75 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 23.

America was a pioneer country. Both Whitman and Sandburg had their imaginations touched with the fearlessness of the pioneers of our West.

Their was a spirit which the poets wanted the country to make a part of the national heritage, a sort of legacy handed from generation to generation.

Carl Sandburg writes in Good Morning, America:
First came the pioneers, hungry, fierce, dirty.
They wrangle and battle with the elements,
They gamble on crops, chills, ague, rheumatism.
They fight wars and put a nation on the map.
They battle with blizzards, lice, wolves.
They go on a fighting trail
To break sod for unnumbered millions to come.

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Let us make pioneer prayers.
Let working clothes be sacred.

Pioneers without fear in the face of the unknown, pioneers breaking sod for
millions to follow, pioneers in working clothes - these are the examples
which Carl Sandburg would have his America follow. Walt Whitman writes of
pioneers in Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Come my tan-faoed children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march, my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

O you youths, Western Youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the
foremost,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there
beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and
the march,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways.
Pioneers! O Pioneers!
In America lies the hope of the future. The older races are weary of the load of civilization. The new, strong America must take the running of things. Fresh and strong, America faces the unknown - unafraid. This is the ideal which Whitman and Sandburg have for their country.

The ideal American of these two poets was Abraham Lincoln. Carl Sandburg has written perhaps the most extensive biography of Lincoln to be compiled. Walt Whitman lived in Washington during the Lincoln administration. It is said that once Lincoln saw Whitman walking down the street and commented, "There goes a man!" Be that as it may, the loveliest poetry of Whitman was written after the death of his president. *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* is more than an elegy mourning the death of President Lincoln. In it Whitman included the lyric "Come Lovely and Soothing Death."

The universality of death becomes his theme as the poem progresses. He mourns the passing of the coffin from Washington to Springfield. The poem begins:

> When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
> And the great star early droop'd in the western sky
> in the night,
> I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

> Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
> Lilacs blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
> And thought of him I love.

> 0 powerful western fallen star!
> 0 shades of night - 0 moody tearful night!
> 0 great star disappear'd - 0 the black murk that hides
> the star!
> 0 cruel hands that hold me powerless - 0 helpless soul
> of me!
> 0 harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.
The poem tells of the sorrow which gripped the United States. He uses figures of speech - the lilac, the star, and the hermit thrush singing. He finds peace in the song of the bird, in the knowledge that death is not the end. He finishes his poem with:

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,
Communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
And the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand hearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands - and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim. 79

79 Ibid., page 344.

Cameron Rogers says of Whitman's attachment to Lincoln:

He recalled the Lincoln of the day of inauguration and his own impressions, written afterward. He had "looked very much worn and tired; the lines, indeed, of vast responsibilities intricate questions, and demands of life and death cut deeper than ever upon his dark brown face; yet all the old goodness, tenderness, sadness and canny shrewdness, underneath the furrows. I never see that man without feeling that he is one to become personally attach'd to, for his combination of purest, heartest tenderness, and native Western form of manliness." 80


Carl Sandburg, perhaps, knew Lincoln even better than Whitman, although Whitman saw Lincoln often. Sandburg has the perspective which Whitman never could have had. And Sandburg has had access to all the records. Karl Detzer says that when Sandburg was writing his biography of Lincoln that "up
in the garret, day and night, the typewriter rumbled and the words fell out
and Abraham Lincoln came alive again, a human Lincoln of flesh and blood,
not a mystic symbol, not a saint in stained glass. 81

81 Karl Detzer, op. cit., page 203.

In his *The People, Yes* Carl Sandburg expresses his ideas about Lincoln
in poetry. He says:

Lincoln?
He was a mystery in smoke and flags
Saying yes to the smoke, yes to the flags,
Yes to the paradox of democracy,
Yes to the hopes of government
of the people by the people for the people,
no to debauching of the public mind,
yes to the Constitution when a help,
no to the Constitution when a hindrance,
yes to man as a struggle amid illusions,
each man fated to answer for himself:
Which of the faiths and illusions of mankind
must I choose for my own sustaining light
to bring me beyond the present wilderness?

Death was in the air.
so was birth,
What was dying few could say.
What was being born none could know.

He took the wheel in a lashing roaring hurricane.
And by what compass did he steer the course of the ship?
"My policy is to have no policy," he said in the early months
And three years later, "I have been controlled by events." 82

82 Carl Sandburg, *THE PEOPLE, YES*, page 134.

Lincoln was the great symbol of America at its best, America in a time of
trial, facing events as they came with calmness, having hope always.

The America Whitman and Sandburg know is exciting, pulsating, materialis-
tic. The titles of Sandburg's volumes speak of industrialism - SMOKE AND
STEEL, CHICAGO POEMS. The American scene may not always be beautiful, but
it is always proud and lusty. Carl Sandburg writes of the almost primitive pride of Chicago in the poem by the same name.

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the gunmen kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city and I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

..............................

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads, and Freight Handler to the Nation.

83 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, Page 3.

There is arrogance in those lines, there is no taming of that spirit.
America to Carl Sandburg is a vital thing. Chicago was the symbol of the pulsating life which swelled through his country. Walt Whitman had his city to love, his city to symbolize the rest of America - New York. In his poem Mannahatta he writes:

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city, Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.
Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-sufficient, I see that the word of my city is that word from of old, Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb, Rich, hemmed thick all around with sailships and steam-ships, an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded, Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender, strong, light splendidly uprising toward clear skies, Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown, The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger ad-joining islands, the heights, the villas, Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week, The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses, the brown-faced sailors. The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes, Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops and shows, A million people - manners free and superb - open voices - hospitality - the most courageous and friendly young men, City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts! City nested in bays! my city! 84

84 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 478, 479.

New York was a teeming city, full of immigrants, mechanics, "a city of hurried and sparkling waters," a city typical of America. Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman did not confine themselves to the cities however. They encompassed the entire continent. In The People, Yes, Carl Sandburg writes of the Mississippi River:

Six feet six was Davy Tipton and he had the proportions as king pin Mississippi River pilot nearly filling the pilothouse as he took the wheel with a laugh: "Big rivers ought to have big men." 85


Then Carl Sandburg writes of Texas:
The wind brings a "norther" to the long flat panhandle and in the shivering cold they say: "Between Armarilla and the North Pole is only a barb wire fence." which they give a twist: "Out here the only windbreak is the North Star." 86

**Sandburg writes of the Prairie:**

I am here when the cities are gone,
I am here before the cities come.
I nourished the lonely man on horses.
I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.
I am dust of men.

Oklahoma and Kansas City, Minneapolis and St. Paul, sisters in a house together, throwing slang, growing up.

Town in the Ozarks, Dakota wheat towns, Wichita, Peoria, Buffalo, sisters throwing slang, growing up.

Out of prairie-brown grass crossed with a streamer of wigwam smoke - out of a smoke pillar, a blue promise - out of wild ducks woven in greens and purples -

Here I saw a city rise and say to the peoples round world: Listen, I am strong, I know what I want.

Out of log houses and stumps - canoes stripped from tree sides - flatboats coaxed with an axe from the timber claims - in the years when the red and the white men met - the houses and streets rose.

O prairie mother, I am one of your boys.
I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of pain over love.

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sunrise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.

I speak of new cities and new people.
I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down, a sun dropped in the west.
I tell you there is nothing in the world only an ocean of tomorrows, a sky of tomorrows.

I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say:

Tomorrow is a day.
The wind brings a "norther" to the long flat panhandle
and in the shivering cold they say:
"Between Armarilla and the North Pole
is only a barb wire fence."
which they give a twist:
"Out here the only windbreak
is the North Star." 86

86 Ibid., page 6.

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Listen, I am strong, I know what I want.

Out of log houses and stumps - canoes stripped from tree
sides - flatboats coaxed with an axe from the timber
claims - in the years when the red and the white
men met - the houses and streets rose.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

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* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

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I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
a sun dropped in the west.
I tell you there is nothing in the world
only an ocean of tomorrows,
a sky of tomorrows.
I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say
at sundown:
Tomorrow is a day. 87
Walt Whitman, in *Our Old Feuillage*, writes of the different parts of America.

All sights, South, North, East - all deeds, promiscuously done at all times,
All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,
Through Manhattan's streets I walking, these things gathering,
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steamboats wooding up,
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roanoke and Delaware.

The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around;
California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume, the staunch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves one in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path;
Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers driving mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on banks and wharves;
Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American soul with equal hemisphere, one Love, one Dilation or Pride.

America is a spiritual as well as a geographic fact to Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman. They do not condone its materialism, its false social standards, its political weaknesses. They insist that in America lies the hope of the world, that the rugged, pioneering spirit is the solution to our problems. Theirs is a faith in the unknown, a faith which is unwavering.

Walt Whitman speaks of his faith in *Starting from Paumanok*:

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, the modern reports.

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.
How curious! How real!
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

With firm and regular step, they wend, they never stop,
Successions of men, Americans, a hundred millions,
Our generation playing its part and passing on,
Another generation playing its part and passing on
in its turn,
With faces turn'd sideways or backward toward me to
listen,
With eyes retrospective towards me.

And Carl Sandburg speaks of his faith in The People, Yes:

One of the early Chicago poets
One of the slouching underslung Chicago poets,
Having only the savvy God gave him,
Lacking a gun, lacking brass knuckles,
Having one lead pencil to spare, wrote:
"I am credulous about the destiny of man,
And I believe more than I can ever prove
in the future of the human race
and the importance of illusions,
the value of great expectations,
I would like to be at the same moment
an earthworm (which I am) and
a rider to the moon (which I am.)"

And man the stumbler and finder, goes on
man the dreamer of deep dreams,
man the shaper and maker,
man the answerer.
RELIGION

Religion plays a large part in the writings of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg. However, religion must be defined. Theirs is not an originary conception of that frequently used word. Walt Whitman states his credo in the Preface to his 1855 Edition of LEAVES OF GRASS:

Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young men and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of the year of your life, reexamine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body.91

91 Ibid., page 256.

This is the religion, this the way of life for Walt Whitman. Religion ought to mean the way of life, not just a Sunday suit of morals which can be put on each week-end. Walt Whitman tried to live this religion. He loved the earth and sun. When he was stricken with paralysis, he went back to the sun and earth and there was partly cured. He stood up for the stupid and the crazy. His income was never large, but he gave freely of that to the wounded men in Washington. He did not question concerning God. He had the faith which accepts Divinity without fear. Frances Winwar says of Whitman's religion:

Vaguely at first with a child's understanding, he apprehended what every good Quaker should believe - that the inner Deity is a surer guide than churches, doctrines or even the teaching of the Bible. In a sense therefore, every man is holy, and every body is sacred for being the lamp through which the Inner Light may burn. All are sharers in the common divinity, the poor, the ignorant, for there is no
vessel so mean that it may not receive the divine Host, and speak for him.  

92 Frances Winsor, op. cit., page 24.

Harrison S. Morris says:

This, in brief, is his scheme; he deals with the forbidden, and makes it sacred; death is as sweet as life; religion is not a vain creed, it is the revelation of divine law in the universe; miracles are not the exclusive property of ecclesiastics; miracles lie about us in the simplest growth of Nature:

"A mouse is miracle enough to stagger six-
tillions of infidels."  


But not to quote from other authorities, let us turn to LEAVES OF GRASS and to the Song of Myself. Here Whitman tells us what he believes about God.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,  
and each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that whereas'er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.  
And as to you Death, and your bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.  

94 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 90.

He saw the good and the inspiration in powerful uneducated people. I have already spoken of his friendship with Peter Doyle, the Washington street car driver. But there were many more. The drivers of the cars in New York knew him by name. It is said that once he drove the car for a driver who was ill
and thus saved his job. Walt Whitman saw that religion had to be a practical thing. He had no loyalty to any denomination, to any creed - save that of justice, equality, humility. Again in the Song of Myself he says:

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern,
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,
Making a fetish of the first rock or stump, powowering with sticks in the circle of obis,
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admiral
minding the Koran,
Walking the toekallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,
knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew,
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit arouses me,
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and land,
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

95 Ibid., page 81

Religion does not belong to any one nation. No one shall say that there is any one way to worship - but there must be worship. The important thing to Walt Whitman is that he joins in the fellowship of faith, "my faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths." John Burroughs writes of the religion of Walt Whitman:

The old religion, the religion of our father, was founded on a curse. Sin, repentance, fear, Satan, hell, play important parts... He sings a new song, he tastes a new joy in life. The earth is as divine as the heaven, and there is no god more sacred than yourself... We have absolute faith and acceptance in place of fear and repentance of the old creeds... Carried out in practice this democratic religion will not beget priests, or churches, or creeds,
or rituals, but a life cheerful and full on all sides, helpful, loving, unworldly, tolerant, open-souled, temperate, fearless, free, and contemplating with pleasure, rather than alarm, the "exquisite transition of death." 96

96 John Burroughs, op. cit., pages 261, 265.

Whitman and Sandburg resent anyone telling them how to worship. Their religion is a personal, private matter. Whitman predicted that there would be no need for priests in America. In the Preface to the 1855 Edition of LEAVES OF GRASS, Whitman says:

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile... perhaps a generation or two... dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man and every man shall be his own priest... They shall find their ideal in real objects today, symptoms of the past, and future... They shall not deign to define immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth. 97

97 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 257.

Each man shall be his own priest. There shall be no quibbling over theological terms. Religion will not be a fearful thing, but an experience of joy and intellectual progress. Mankind all over the world shall look to America for their religious example. Here they shall find freedom of worship in its largest sense.

Carl Sandburg writes in A Contemporary Bunkshooter of the type of preaching which fills him with indignation. He pictures the minister preaching the religion of fear. Sandburg feels that religion is a practical thing, an experience of emotional and intellectual satisfaction. "I won't take my religion from any man who never works except with his mouth and never cherishes any memory except the face of the woman on the American silver dollar." This is what Sandburg scathingly calls a "bunkshooter": 
You come along...tearing your shirt...yelling about Jesus.
Where do you get that stuff?
What do you know about Jesus?

Jesus had a way of talking soft and outside of a few bankers and higher-ups among the men of Jerusalem everybody liked to have this Jesus around because he never made any false passes and everything he said went and he helped the sick and gave the people hope.

You come along squirting words at us, slamming your fist and calling us all dam fools so fierce the froth slobbered over your lips...always blabbing we're all going to hell straight off and you know all about it.

..............
I don't want a lot of gab from a bunkshooter in my religion.
I won't take my religion from any man who never works except with his mouth and never cherishes any memory except the face of the woman on the American silver dollar.

I ask you to come through and show me where you're pouring out the blood of your life.

I've been to this suburb of Jerusalem they call Golgotha, where they nailed Him, and I know if the story is straight it was real blood ran from His hands and the nail-hole, and it was real blood spurted in red drops where the spear of the Roman soldier rammed in between the ribs of this Jesus of Nazareth. 98

98 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, page 61.

Religion to Carl Sandburg was a personal experience. His was an independent attitude. He would not have any one preaching to him what he could not accept. He finds religion is too great a thing in the life of man to be confined within any man-made limits. Religion is a universal thing. In Good Morning, America he writes of the universality of God and hence of religion:

I have looked over the earth and seen the swarming of different people to a different God -

White men with prayers to a white God, black men with prayers to a black God, yellow-faces before altars to a yellow-face God -

Amid burning fires they have pictured God with a naked skin, amid frozen rocks they have pictured God clothed and shaggy as a polar bear -

I have met stubs of men broken in the pain and mutilation of war saying God is forgetful and too far off, too far away -

I have met people saying they talk with God face to face; they tell God, hello God and how are you God;
they get familiar with God and hold intimate conversations—
Yet I have met other people saying they are afraid to
see God face to face for they would ask questions
even as God might ask them questions.
I have seen these facts of God and man and anxious
earthworms hunting for a home.

I have said, the priests of many new wings, many fresh
flights, many clean propellers, shall be on the
sky before we understand and the work of wings
and air.

99 Carl Sandburg, GOOD MORNING, AMERICA, page 6.

Sandburg finds God to be black to the black man and yellow for the yellow
man. God is what each man thinks he is. Of course that may not be the right
idea about God, but who has the right to say which idea is the true one?
There will be many new wings against the sky before we "understand God and
the work of wings and air." No man knows— but all have faith. In The People.
Yes:

Was he preaching or writing poetry or talking through
his hat?
He was a Chinaman saying, "The fishes though
deep in the water may be hooked. The birds
though high in the air may be shot. Man's
heart only is out of reach. The heavens may
be measured. The earth may be surveyed.
The heart of man alone is not to be known."100

100 Carl Sandburg, THE PEOPLE, YES, page 76.

There is a faith, a hope. Man is not left to walk the way alone. In one of
his poems Sandburg expresses it by saying that man has a "shovel of stars
for keeps." In the same poem he calls hope a "tattered flag":

Hope is a tattered flag and a dream out of time.
Hope is a heartspun word, the rainbow, the shadblow
in white,
The evening star inviolable over the coal mines,
The shimmer of northern lights across a bitter winter
night,
The blue hills beyond the smoke of the steel works,
The birds who go singing on to their mates in peace,
war, peace,
The ten-cent crocus bulb blooming in a used car salesroom,
The horseshoe over the door, the Luckpiece in the pocket,
The kiss and the comforting laugh and resolve — 101
Hope is an echo, hope ties itself yonder, yonder.

101 Ibid., page 29.

With the faith which these two have there can be no fear of death. Death, as John Burroughs said, is to be welcomed. In Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d Whitman has written his Lyric, "Come Lovely and Soothing Death." This lyric has been quoted before. In Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking Whitman tells of the sorrow of a bird at the loss of his mate. As a boy Whitman heard the song of the lonely bird by the seaside. Not only is he impressed with the beauty of the bird's song, but he learns not to fear death. He says:

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up - what is it? - I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time,
you sea-waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Where to answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near so privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping theme steady up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside.)
The sea whisper'd ns. 102

102 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 282.

Whitman says here that his whole poetic output is based on the love of death. He said that as a boy he heard the song of the sea and the song of the bird and there began his fascination with death. Certainly Whitman says over and over again that death is the ultimate result of life and therefore must be looked forward to as another beginning rather than an ending.

The same sort of expectance of death is expressed by Carl Sandburg. Here he pictures death as a welcome release after a well lived life. In the Junk Man he says:

I am glad God saw Death
And gave Death a job taking care of all who are tired of living:

When all the wheels in a clock are worn and slow and the connections loose
And the clock goes on ticking and telling the wrong time from hour to hour
And the people around the house joke about what a bum clock it is,
How glad the clock is when the big Junk Man drives his wagon Up to the house and puts his arms around the clock and says:
"You don't belong here,
You gotta come
Along with me,"
How glad the clock is then, when it feels the arms of the Junk Man close around it and carry it away. 103

103 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, page 181.

Death is the natural end of life, and also the beginning of something else. We don't know exactly what, but Sandburg and Whitman are not afraid. "Hope ties itself yonder, yonder." Immortality is not questioned - it is expected.

Religion, for Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman, was not apart from their lives, but a summation of their thoughts. All that they believed about
equality, justice, honor, evil, good, brotherhood - all these were a part of their religion. I am not trying to say that these men were fanatics religiously, but they did live their religion. There was an arrogance in this idea. They decided for themselves what was worthy of their worship. Carl Sandburg once said, "I want the respect of intellectual men but I will choose for myself the intelligent. I love art but I will decide for myself what is art. I adore beauty but only my own soul shall tell me what is beauty. I worship God but I define God for myself. I am an individual. The pleasure of my own heart shall be first to inform me when I have done good work." 104 For

104 Amy Lowell, op. cit., page 210

minds less sure of life and its meaning this is perhaps a dangerous doctrine. Whitman and Sandburg were rebels. They do not rebel senselessly, however. Theirs has been a thoughtful, planned rebellion against all conventional standards. They are not rebelling just because the standards are conventional, but because conventionality does not allow men to think, because conventionality would place each individual into a mold ages old. Carl Sandburg in Good Morning, America says:

Who put up that cage?  
Who hung it up with bars, doors?  
Why do those on the inside want to get out?  
Why do those outside want to get in?  
What is this crying inside and out all the time?  
What is this endless, useless beating of baffled wings at these bars, doors, this cage? 105

105 Carl Sandburg, GOOD MORNING, AMERICA, page 162.

Carl Sandburg calls this poem Money, Politics, Love, and Glory. Conventional aims, conventional desires, conventional standards of success. The religion of these men laughs at conventionality. Religion is as free as the wind, as unhampered with the doctrines of good and evil as the creatures of wood.
Good and evil are conventional terms, terms set up by society to judge the doings of its citizens. Whitman says of good and evil:

Omnes omnes I let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is — and I say there is in fact no evil,
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land or to me, as any thing else.)

106 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 18

Sandburg and Whitman want the truth in religion. They cannot believe that religion should be ruled by what society has said but by what one really experiences. In Sandburg's poem Child, he expresses the idea that no one but ourselves can answer our questions about religion. No dogma ought to guide us. This is an extremely personal matter.

The young child, Christ, is straight and wise
And asks questions of the old men, questions
Found under running water for all children
And found under shadows thrown on still waters
By tall trees looking downward, old and gnarled.
Found to the eyes of children alone, untold,
Singing a low song in the loneliness.
And the young child, Christ, goes on asking
And the old men answer nothing and only know love
For the young child, Christ, straight and wise.

107 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, page 140.

Religion was the basis of their careers. Religion, not in the conventional sense, was the genesis of their writing. They felt deeply about life, felt an urgency to write to benefit mankind morally, spiritually. All their poems take on a religious fervor, a note of evangelism. They preach — sometimes realistically, even crudely — but theirs is a message which cuts straight to the heart of modern civilization.
WORLD BROTHERHOOD

It is extremely difficult to cut any clear line of demarkation between the various topics discussed in this paper. So much of the work of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg contains all of the topics which have been called to your attention. Brotherhood is a topic which has been touched upon in practically all parts of the thesis. However, these two men wrote with such emphasis upon this theme that I think it would be wise to discuss it further.

John Burroughs, the close friend of Walt Whitman, wrote a summation of Whitman's ideas of brotherhood. He says:

Whitman made himself the brother and equal of all, not in word, but in very deed; he was in himself a comprehend of the people for which he spoke, and this breadth of sympathy and free giving of himself has resulted in an unexpected accession of power. 108


Walt Whitman grew into literary maturity during a time of war, hate, and misunderstanding. The Civil War not only was a military event but an era of extremely significant social importance. Naturally under a topic of brotherhood when the Civil War is mentioned one thinks immediately of the negro. As far as we know Whitman had very little contact with the negro as an individual. His championing of the cause of emancipation was due to the fact that he believed that no human being should be enslaved. In the Song of Myself he identified himself with the escaping negro slave:

The runaway slave came to my house and stop't outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated budy and bruis'd feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck.
and ankles;  
He staid with me a week before he recuperated and pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-look lean'd in the corner. 109

109 Walt Whitman, op. cit., pages 37, 38.

There is no record of Whitman having had such an experience, but in spirit he was willing to take the risk of harboring a run-away slave. Further on in the same poem the identification with himself becomes even more marked.

The hounded slave flags in the race, leans by the fence,  
blowing, cover'd with sweat,  
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,  
the murderous buckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore drips, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with whip-stocks. 110

110 Ibid., page 68.

This is brotherhood in the extreme. Slavery was not a mere political football to Walt Whitman. It was a matter of social importance, a matter concerning men - therefore of vital importance to him. John Bailey says of the slavery issue and Walt Whitman:

No political doubts, then, alter the fact that the slave issue was the dominant issue of Whitman's life. It gave him the only great and public opportunity of bringing his gospel of democracy, equality and the "divine average" to the test...The question of slavery on the other hand, was not so much political as personal, human, moral, and religious. It is issues of that sort which burn themselves into men's hearts and memories; and Lincoln will be always remembered as the Commander-in-Chief, and Whitman as the poet, of the war which killed slavery. 111

111 John Bailey, op. cit., pages 15, 16.
Whitman is all through his poems identifying himself with the social out-casts, the under dog. This feeling of union with the underprivileged makes the slavery issue even more important to Whitman.

Just as Whitman found the slavery issue in his time, Carl Sandburg finds the industrial slave in his time. Sandburg is scathing in his wrath against the people who make it possible for social injustice to be done. In one of his poems, Anna Imroth, he writes:

Cross the hands over the breast here - so.
Straighten the legs a little more - so.
And call for the wagon to come and take her home.
Her mother will cry some and so will her sisters
and brothers.
But all of the others got down and they are safe and
this is the only one of the factory girls who
wasn't lucky in making the jump when the fire
broke.
It is the hand of God and the lack of fire escapes.112

112 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, page 33.

In another poem, Child of the Romans, Carl Sandburg speaks of our economic slaves:

The dago shovelman sits by the railroad track
Eating a noon meal of bread and bologna.
A train whirls by, and men and women at tables
Alive with red roses and yellow jonquils,
Eat steaks running with brown gravy,
Strawberries and cream, eclairs and coffee.
The dago shovelman finishes the dry bread and bologna,
Washes it down with a dipper from the water-boy,
And goes back to the second half of a ten-hour day's
work,
Keeping the road-bed so the roses and jonquils
Shake hardly at all in the out glass vases
Standing slender on the tables in the dining car. 113

113 Carl Sandburg, CHICAGO POEMS, page 24.

Carl Sandburg has been called the poet of industrial America. Here we see that he fully qualifies for that title. The indignation he feels for the people who acquiesce in matters needing attention is brought out in the two poems quoted above. He does not preach against the out-right cruelty, but
the unconscious indifference toward a fellow human being.

Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman did not confine their feelings of brotherhood to the boundaries of the United States. Theirs is a world attitude. They feel that only through comradeship the world can learn to live together. Racial prejudice has no place in their scheme of world brotherhood. In The People, Yes Carl Sandburg says:

"When God finished making the world
He had a few stinking scraps of mud left over
and used it to make a yellow dog."
(and when they hate any race or nation
they name that race or nation in place of the yellow dog.)

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114 Carl Sandburg, THE PEOPLE, YES, page 116

In the same poem Sandburg talks about the love of fellowman, and he says of that love:

Love, a cough, an itch, or a fat pouch cannot be hid. Love, a cough, smoke, money or poverty is hard to hide.

115 Ibid., page 116.

If one has the feeling of brotherhood, love for the "yellow dog," to whatever nation he may belong, then that love cannot be hidden. It must express itself in some way. Carl Sandburg says of those people in the world to whom we feel superior in The People, Yes:

Naughts are naughts into riffraff,
Nothing plus nothing equals nothing.
Scum is scum and dregs are dregs.
"This flotsam and jetsam."

There is the House of Have and the House of Have-Not.
God named the Haves as caretakers of the Have-Not.
This shepherding is a divine decree laid on the betters.
"And surely you know when you are among your betters?"

Who were those editors picking the most detestable word in the English language and deciding the one word just a little worse than any other you can think of is "exclusive"?
Walt Whitman thought along these same lines. His was a feeling of brotherhood which encompassed the entire world. He did not know these people whom he was trying to bring into the reach of his love, but he was willing to include them all. In *Salut au Monde* he writes:

What do you see Walt Whitman?
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards,
factories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians,
Jails, tents of nomads upon the surface,
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping, and the sunlit side on the other side,
I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them as my land is to me.

..........................
Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless - each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allowed the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

..........................
My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth,
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in all lands.
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

..........................
Toward you all, in America's name,
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,
To remain after me insight forever,
For all the haunts and homes of men. 117

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117 Walt Whitman, *op. cit.*, page 141.
but was a fact to Walt Whitman. In Crossing Brooklyn Ferry he exults:

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sight and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

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,
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 in the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd. 118

Whitman not only identified himself with the people of his time, but with the generations yet to come. He feels as if he is part of all humanity.

To such men as Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman war was a great catastrophe.

Both feel that war is caused by the break-down of brotherhood. In The People, Carl Sandburg says of Hate:

Hate is a vapor fixed and mixed.
Hate is a vapor blown and thrown.
And the war lasts till the hate dies down
And the crazy Four Horsemen have handed the people
Hunger and filth and a stink too heavy to stand.
Then the earth sends forth bright new grass
And the land begins to breathe easy again
Though the hate of the people dies slow and hard.
Hate is a lingering heavy swamp mist. 119

118 Ibid., pages 163,164.
Walt Whitman could not hate even in a period of civil strife. War had come and had to be dealt with. Whitman found the horrors, the sorrows, hard to bear, but he found hope in the future. Robert Louis Stevenson writes of the effect of war on Whitman's writing:

Whitman's intense Americanism, his unlimited belief in the future of These States (as, with reverential capitals, he loves to call them), made the war a period of great trial to his soul. The new virtue, Unionism, of which he is the sole inventor, seemed to have fallen into premature unpopularity. All that he loved, hoped, or hated, hung in the balance. And the game of war was not only momentous in its issues; it sublimated his spirit by its heroic displays, and tortured him intimately by the spectacle of its horrors. It was a theatre, it was a place of education, it was like a season of religious revival. He watched Lincoln going daily to his work; he studied and fraternized with young soldiers passing to the front; above all, he walked the hospitals, reading the Bible, distributing clean clothes, or apples, or tobacco; a patient, helpful, reverend man, full of kind speeches.

Whitman felt that the cause of the Union was the one just cause. But he ministered to the Southern as well as the Northern soldier. John Bailey says of Whitman's poems which came out of the war:

The great poems of war can no more be written in the spirit of bellicose arrogance than they can in the still more ignoble spirit whose cry is "Anything better than war and any country in preference to my own." The fine quality of these poems of Whitman's depends partly on that gift of transcending and reconciling opposites which is found in so many of the great human utterances; in their strange harmonizing of the relentlessness of war with the uttermost tenderness of charity and peace.

In the Wound Dresser Walt Whitman speaks of the dual nature of war, the horror and the soul cleansing which war brings. He hated war, but he welcomed the awakening of purpose which he believed it gave his country.
Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad;
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have crossed and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

122 Walt Whitman, op. cit., page 319.

He hoped to see an America fully revived by the letting of the blood of her sons. In By Blue Ontario's Shore:

A Nation announcing itself,
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated,
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to objections,
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the variety of ourselves,
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,
We stand self-poised in the middle, branching thence over the world,
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to scorn.
Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves.
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.

123 Ibid., page 347.

After the war Whitman felt that America had come of age. Now she was able to take her place among the brotherhood of nations.

Carl Sandburg writes about war. He does not think that war has beneficial effects. Rather he thinks that wars are like growing pains of children. Perhaps after the world has let blood long enough, men will learn the lessons of cooperation. He says in The People, Yes:
The first world war came and its cost was laid on the people.
The second world war - the third - what will be the cost?
And will it repay the people for all that they pay?

And after the strife of war
begins the strife of peace.

The human race in misery snarls,
The writhing becomes a mob.
The mob is the beginning of something.
Perhaps the mournful beginning
Of a march out of darkness
Into a lesser darkness
And so on until
The domes of smooth shadows
Space themselves into tall triangles
And nations exchange oars and instead of gas, loot, and hot cargo.


Carl Sandburg has faith that the wars will cease. He pictures the hope of mankind for peace very charmingly. He shows us a little girl who lived during the time of restless peace between World War I and World War II.

In The People, Yes he has her say:

The little girl saw her first troop parade and asked
"What are these?"
"Soldiers."
"What are soldiers?"
"They are for war. They fight and each tries to kill as many of the other side as he can."
The girl held still and studied.
"Do you know...I know something?"
"Yes, what is it you know?"
"Sometimes they'll give a war and no body will come."125

125 Ibid., page 43.

Brotherhood which covers the world is the ultimate conclusion of the philosophy of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg. Their brotherhood was not an abstract thing. They put it into practice. Whitman worked in the hospital tents until his health was gone. Carl Sandburg grew up among his great little people, he knew them and loved them. Cameron Rogers says of the philosophy of Walt Whitman:
He conceived a friendship for mankind as candid and as confident as he possessed for men, friends of his intimate activities and interests... The prostitute and the thief hold in his open and unbarred consciousness equal shares of his sympathy and understanding with the individuals whose virtue or whose probity has achieved reward. Walt, preserving within himself the seeds of every human failing and felicity, utterly, abnormally, devoid of personal prejudice, was developing an attitude toward mankind which... bespoke a capacity of tolerant wisdom in general familiarly typical of but few men and in particular of only one.

Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg never lose faith in the ultimate triumph of the common man the world over. They find a hope beyond all the sordid, cynical, disbelieving philosophies of mankind. Theirs is not a blind faith - but it is an unshakeable one. Some day, somewhere, somehow, we shall have brotherhood with all of its implications. Why do they have this faith? They believe in the common man. Gamaliel Bradford says in his BIOGRAPHY AND THE HUMAN HEART:

And as this kindly, tranquil spirit looked out with confidence, from the bare refuge of his sunken age, upon the seething conflict of the political world about him, so his vision of the moral and spiritual world was joyous and serene. They asked him if anything had ever shaken his faith in humanity. "Never! Never! I trust humanity. Its instincts are in the main right." And again, "I never have any doubts of the future when I look at the common man"... His spiritual contentment is unlimited. He overrides the little ills of life, sees through them, sees beyond them, helps others to see beyond them. He drowns pettiness, meanness, decay, even disgust, which sometimes will peer out from dark corners, in a great security of joy.

Here we see the reason for Whitman's great faith in the future, his faith in the common man. Here he feels secure; the world is safe in the hands of the common man.
Carl Sandburg talks of his people, the common working man, the people on which his faith is built. In Work Songs he says:

A long way we come; a long way to go; long rests and long deep sniffs for our lungs on the way. Sleep is a belonging of all; even if all songs are old songs and the singing heart is snuffed out like a switchman's lantern with the oil gone, even if we forget our names and houses in the finish, the secret of sleep is left us, sleep belongs to all, sleep is the first and last and best of all.

People singing; people with song mouths connecting with song hearts; people who must sing or die; People whose song hearts break if there is no song mouth; these are my people. 128

128 Rebecca West, SELECTED POEMS, page 50.

These are Sandburg's people; people who can sing, whose hearts will break unless there is a song on their lips. This is the brotherhood to which Sandburg looks forward, a brotherhood of fearless, singing people.

He says in The People, Yes:

The sea has fish for every man,
Every blade of grass has its share of dew.
The longest day must have its end.
Man's life? A candle in the wind, hoar-frost on stone.
Nothing more certain than death and nothing more uncertain than the hour.
Man live like birds together in a wood; when the time comes each takes his flight.
As wave follows wave, so new men take old men's places. 129

129 Carl Sandburg, THE PEOPLE, YES, page 115

Men have all important things in common - death, birth, life. And who is any nation to arise and command another nation? What man has the right to tell another man what to do?

"Would you just as soon get off the earth?" holding ourselves aloof in pride of distinction saying to ourselves this costs us nothing as though hate has no cost as though hate ever grew anything worth growing.
Yes, we may say this trash is beneath our notice
or we may hold them in respect and affection
as fellow creepers on a commodious planet
saying "Yes you too are people." 130

That is the brotherhood toward which Carl Sandburg would have the family of
men strive. He feels the recognition of the common humanity of us all will
solve many of the problems of the world. The recognition of that fact may
do more for world peace than the United Nations Charter can ever hope to do.
The basis of peace, of world brotherhood lies in the hearts of men, not in
international treaties. Walt Whitman writes of the joy of brotherhood in
his The Mystic Trumpeter. Here he talks about the joy of merely existing,
the joy of being a part of the human race, and he speaks of a reborn race
ready to live together in peace:

Now, trumpeter, for thy close,
Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,
Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,
Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the
future,
Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song!
A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,
Marches of victory - man disenthral'd - the conqueror
at last,
Hymns to the universal God from universal man - all joy!
A reborn race appears - a perfect world, all joy!
Women and men in wisdom; innocence and health - all joy!
Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!
War, sorrow, suffering gone - the rank earth purged -
nothing but joy left!
The ocean fill'd with joy - the atmosphere all joy!
Joy! joy in freedom, worship, love! joy in the
ecstasy of life!
Enough to merely be! Enough to breathe!
Joy! Joy! all over joy! 131

"Enough to merely be! Enough to breathe!" Such is the hope of Walt Whitman.
The world is not perfect, man is not perfect, but both Carl Sandburg and
Walt Whitman have a faith in mankind the world over and in that faith they are strong. The recognition of the humanity of us all, whether it be in our own United States or on the universal scale, will carry us toward our goal. Carl Sandburg expresses the unity of mankind in a section of *The People, Yes*. He talks about an arch and the various stones which make the arch. He says:

The scaffolding holds the arch in place
till the keystone is put in to stay.
Then the scaffolding comes out.
Then the arch stands strong as all the massed pressing parts of the arch and loose as any say or spread failing of the builders' intention, hope.
"The arch never sleeps."

Living in union it holds.
So long as each pieces does its work the arch is alive, singing, a restless choral.

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The scaffolding of institutions, treaties, pacts, will some day be removed. The keystone will be put in to stay - the keystone of brotherhood. Then the arch of mankind will live together in union, each stone leaning on the others for support, for strength. And that arch will never sleep, but "living in union it holds."
SUMMARY

This study has grouped the poetry of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg under five different headings - A Comparison of Poetry and Philosophy, Democracy, Americanism, Religion, and World Brotherhood. All these topics overlap at some time through the paper. However, there are important considerations which made it necessary to divide the paper as it has been divided.

As we look over the lives and works of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg we find many similarities. Poetically they were in the same camp. To them poetry was to give a message to the people. If that message contained beauty of expression, all was very well. If that message was crude in the sense of literary nicety, or even social nicety, that made no difference to these men. Theirs was a message which could not be measured by literary or conventional standards of rhythm, rhyme, or metre. They were above all that. Theirs was a call beyond conventionality.

Democracy meant only one important thing to Sandburg and Whitman, and that was - all men and women are equally worthy of respect, love, and admiration. This conviction was carried to its ultimate conclusion by the two poets. They wrote poems which were intended to arouse the people to a consideration of their fellows. No person, no matter how low in the conventional scale of society, should be excluded from the blessings of democracy.

Naturally this extreme democratic feeling led to an exalted Americanism. America was the hope of the world as far as Whitman and Sandburg were concerned. They felt that in literature, educationally, socially, religiously, America was the hope of the nations. Here men were allowed to live freely, and here we were conducting the real experiments in democracy. Their love for their country did not make Whitman and Sandburg blind to her faults.
They often stood strongly against the evils of our materialistic society. They had a great faith in the future of America and found a satisfaction in writing toward that future.

Religiously they were rebels. Here again they revolted against the conventional standards of goodness, evil, and creed. They did not believe that death was the dreadful thing which was pictured from some pulpits. Death was to be welcomed as a beginning - it was never an end of life, but a new beginning of a new existence. Immortality was a matter of course, no questioning - their faith was large enough not to question but to accept and expect.

The world ought to be a large family of nations. War ought to be a thing of the past. Through war we may learn lessons, but war is a deadly thing. There was no martial, grim pleasure in war for Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg. They saw clearly that it was the people who pay for wars with suffering, crying, and death. Brotherhood will have to be built on love and not hate. Brotherly love, a real feeling of affection for all men, will be the solution of the world's ills.

Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg - two men from different sections of the country, from different centuries - have captured the heart of life. They have sung bravely the songs which guide men to the best life. They saw the good in the evil, and they were willing to accept the evil so that they might have its good. But they were not content to let the evil remain - the evil of man's inhumanity to man must be abolished. The two poets have taken the powerful medium of poetry and with steady words and strong sentences they have called man to his destiny.
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The author was born on June 1, 1920, in Richmond, Virginia. Her parents took her to Nigeria, West Africa, where they were missionaries. Her early childhood was spent in that part of the world. Her high school education was completed in Liberty, Missouri, at the Liberty High School. She enrolled as a freshman in William Jewell College in the fall of 1937. After completing her freshman year she transferred to Westhampton College in the fall of 1938. She was graduated from that institution in June, 1941. Since graduation she has taught in the public schools of Front Royal, Virginia, and Richmond, Virginia.