

# WALT WHITMAN'S WORKSHOP.

A COLLECTION  
OF UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS.

*Whitman, Walt*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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## II

### ANTI-SLAVERY NOTES.

 HERE is a sin of omission often laid at Whitman's door by ardent humanitarians. "How is it," they say, "that a poet of democracy and humanitarianism did not express himself on the subjects of abolition, ill treatment of slaves, the Missouri Compromise, and the national issues leading up to the Civil War?" It is not surprising that the impression should have got abroad that Whitman was indifferent to these matters, considering the almost total omission of the subject from his published works. In a paper read before a meeting of the Whitman Fellowship in Boston in 1897, he was openly reproached with the charge that he had not left "at least one stinging philippic against his country's shame." <sup>71</sup>

There are other reasons besides the seeming neglect of the subject of anti-slavery agitation in his poems, which have strengthened the opinion that Whitman was not in sympathy with Abolitionists. It is well known that the serious misunderstanding which led to final estrangement between Whitman and his warm friend and ardent admirer, William Douglas O'Connor (the originator of the phrase "the Good Gray Poet") arose from Whitman's unwillingness to go as far as O'Connor in demonstration of violent Abolitionist sympathies. Of his own attitude in this unfortunate affair, Whitman has this to say: "O'Connor was a thorough-going anti-slavery believer and writer (doctrinaire), and though I took a fancy to him from the first, I remember I feared his ardent abolitionism, — was afraid it would probably keep us apart. (I was a decided and out-spoken anti-slavery believer myself, then and always; but shied from the extremists, the red-hot fellows of those times.)" <sup>72</sup>

Whitman was connected with many different newspapers, both as contributor and editor, all through the years preceding the outbreak of

the Civil War, yet the newspaper articles or printed reports of speeches by him which have been published in collections of his journalistic writings have only remote bearing upon his attitude toward abolition. In the lack of much positive evidence to the contrary, there has seemed to be good ground for the generally accepted opinion that Whitman, perhaps a trifle phlegmatic in political and public affairs, as one biographer observes, evinced "an evident detachment from the pressing concerns of American life."<sup>73</sup> Fortunately for his reputation as a public-spirited citizen, there have come to light among the notebooks and manuscripts in the Library of Congress a considerable quantity of notes occasioned by the Missouri Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Law, in which Whitman comments upon the contemporary situation at white heat. The general effect of these notes is to show that his attitude was anything but "an evident detachment."

It is uncertain what purpose these notes may have been designed for primarily. They may have been set down as grist for some of the various newspapers with which Whitman was connected. They may even more probably have been intended for working up lectures on the subject. This conjecture would seem to receive considerable support from the oratorical style of some of the notes, which may doubtless have served their purpose on some occasion such as Whitman had in mind when he set down this vivid snapshot of himself on the firing-line, in his notebook marked "Orator." "Having been engaged to deliver one of the 'Lessons' to an Anti-Slavery Meeting — he does not go, smiling and shaking hands, waiting on the platform with the rest — but punctual to the hour, appears at the platform-steps with a friend, and ascends the platform, silent, rapid, stern, almost fierce — and delivers an oration of liberty — up-braiding, full of invective — with enthusiasm." One wonders, when surveying this vivid word picture, whether it was drawn from experience in just such gripping situations of actual public appearance, or whether its realism may have been due largely to the dramatic imagination and emotional intensity of the poet latent within the would-be lecturer. There can be no doubt that Whitman did formulate

material for anti-slavery speeches, whether they were ever delivered or not. Here is a specimen notation.

*for oration*

must we be unchecked, unmastered — what real Americans can be made out of slaves? What real Americans can be made out of the masters of slaves?

Whatever may have been the initial impetus for the prose jottings on the subject of slavery, there can be no doubt that the torsos of poems which emerge at intervals from the medley of this material were spontaneous outbursts of genuine feeling on the part of the author. There is almost fierce exultation in anticipation of meeting Apollyon.

I welcome this menace — I welcome thee with joy,  
Why now I shall know whether there is anything in you,  
Libertad.<sup>74</sup>

The threatening undertone of approaching conflict is clearly discerned and tossed into groping lines that yearn toward rhythms not yet realized.

I heard & yet hear, angry thunder — O sailors! O ships!  
make a quick preparation!  
O from his masterful sweep, the warning cry of the eagle!  
—Give way there all! it is useless — give up your spoils!<sup>82</sup>

There seems to be no logical explanation as to the motive which restrained Whitman from bringing these fragmentary chronicles of one of the most stirring periods of American history to a state of complete articulation, and welding them into unequivocal testimony of his feeling of identity with the struggle to abolish human slavery, along with his carefully prepared pictures of the “shows I knew of crimson war.” Only in the poetically negligible “Boston Ballad (1854)” is there a specific attempt to record this phase of his life. May it be that he felt too personally the bitterness of the ante-bellum spiritual conflict before the actual physical struggle was precipitated, to care to perpetuate it in his poems? Or did his eventual sympathy with the South conduce to silence on the subject?<sup>75</sup>



## ANTI-SLAVERY NOTES.

As of the orator advancing

As, for example, having been engaged to deliver one of the "Lessons" to an Anti Slavery Meeting — he does not go, smiling and shaking hands, waiting on the platform with the rest — but punctual to the hour, appears at the platform-steps with a friend, and ascends the platform, silent, rapid, stern, almost fierce — and delivers an oration of liberty — up-braiding, full of invective — with enthusiasm.

Every one that speaks his word for slavery, is himself the worst slave — the spirit of a freeman is not light enough in him to show that all the fatness of the earth were bitter to a bonded neck. — When out of a feast, I eat corn and roast potatoes for my dinner, through my own voluntary choice it is very well and I much content, but if some arrogant head of the table prevent me by force from touching anything but corn and potatoes then is my anger roused.<sup>307</sup>

*for oration*

must we be unchecked, unmastered — what real Americans can be made out of slaves? What real Americans can be made out of the masters of slaves? <sup>76</sup>

in dim outline we see

picture of strong Imperial stern Democracy its attitude & gesture toward the south, toward this hot rebellious rise we call the south — If then you will not own your fate but dare to lift the knife to

plunge it at my breast, learn what it is to rouse the devil. — on your head be the red blood, and on your children's heads, for whether now or ten or twenty years, these must & shall yield place, curious as it seems, to prisoners in war clothes, with wretched blankets, marched to prison, surrounded by armed guards <sup>77</sup> — must yield to the poor boys, faint & sick in hospitals, without grace, have not an eye for pictures, have not read the elder poets, but have amputated limbs.

If one compromise is not too good to be broken neither is another — Lay not the flattering unction to your souls that you can play at this game and not we. You believe, or affect to believe the Missouri bargain unconstitutional. We believe it damnable. It is forbidden and overridden by twenty other specific guarantees of the Constitution; if we are cornered so tightly to a choice whether we obey the twenty palpable requirements of freedom, or the one inconsistent compromise for delivering fugitive slaves —

Let no one scorn this band because they are few. — A few, resolute and enthusiastic are more than a match for thousands. — The hearts of men who believe in the inalienable right of every human being to his life, his liberty and his rational pursuit of happiness.

What, this little thing, this just perceptible nerve — so much hubbub about this? It is a just perceptible nerve. — But its soreness makes the tooth ache, and then the torment of the damned runs through the giant's whole body.

I know its preamble or head is comprised in small space, but with it as with a human being, all the rest though ever so big, is noth-

ing at all without the brains at the top. In this case, too, the rest are the belly and legs and arms, serviceable in just so far as they obey the sound brains.

If things go on at this rate, an amazing prospect opens before us, the Union is threatened with a destiny horrible as it is altogether a novelty, something that never happened to any nation before — it is likely to be saved to death. — Our country was born in a manner out of all precedent, if - - - - - have their swing much longer, it will thus go off as no other nation ever went off from the earth before — it will expire from being too affectionately preserved. I think it is already growing a little stale for that.

When the packets arrive in port, they break up the steerage bunks, and build them over again out of new boards.

If I cannot make the harbor and the landing I want, then I sail forever on the seas.

You have learned that the only safe law for religious sects is equal and universal toleration to all of whatever numbers, ages, hues, or language or belief. — Learn that still below this law there lies one larger and more vital to our safety, every one of us; that of the uniform and inherent right of every man and woman to life and liberty, which as no power can take away from an innocent man without outrage, so every such person on whom that outrage is attempted has the inalienable right to defend himself. — As to assisting such a person, it is not likely I shall ever have the privilege, but if I can do it, whether he be black or whether he be white, whether he be an Irish fugitive or an Italian or German or Carolina fugitive, whether he come over sea or over land, if he comes to

me he gets what I can do for him. — He may be coarse fanatical, and a nigger, he may have shown bad judgment, but while he has committed no crime further than seeking his liberty and defending it, as the Lord God liveth, I would help him and be proud of it, and protect him if I could. —

We are all ready enough to make ovations for the great refugees who come with banners flying and the sound of trumpets and drums. — Then we go with the crowd, most men from motives that are creditable to them — a few suckers to make a show and lay traps for votes. — But if some poor Cudjo dodges this way, with the marshal of the United States on his track, and the police to aid in the hunt, that's a different affair. An abolitionist or two may bandy words with the court; but in the main we join against the man and the few who stand up for him. —

I hear much said about the supremacy of law, and that the one citizen submits to the decisions of the constituted tribunals of the law, whatever they may be. — This is a good doctrine and in the main correct. — In the ninety nine hundredths of legislation and judicature respecting taxes, property, tariffs, elections, trade, banking, naturalization and all the decisions of local government — this is a sound rule to go by, and most of us will doubtless pass our lives without controverting it. — But the true American free-man holds in reserve, forever, a stern power, which though it lie asleep for scores and fifties of years because no occasion compels it, must never be given up altogether. — If you want to know what it is I tell you in plain terms. It is the iron arm of rebellion. — I say that the Congress of these states has no right either law

constitution, compact, or any other source whatever, to the unparalleled audacity of intruding in the midst of our local communities anywhere, north or south, ruffians who at their pleasure and on the most flimsy grounds, and in the most summary manner deprive of liberty and carry off one of my countrymen, an American born, an innocent and un-criminal man. — (Is this nothing to me, because it is never likely to be applied to me myself?) It is a direct surcingle on the strongest guarantees of the Constitution, violates the compact of the Declaration of Independence, whose averments and promises the delegates from the colonies pledged their lives fortunes and honor to sustain and those pledges were distinctly ratified by the colonies afterward, and read to the army and sworn to with naked sword. — I say that the power to send among us on authority of the President emissaries unaccountable to our own free laws, to seize with violence on what those only recognize as peaceful Americans, white or black, who have made themselves amenable to no hurt or punishment whatever under our statutes or customs, was never delegated to any man or body of men — that it violates every atom of the theory of state rights — and that we would be no true American freemen, if, whenever it be tried on, it do not wake among us the voice of defiance — aye that iron arm of rebellion which I spoke of, and which we keep for time of need. — Is this a small matter? — The matter of tea and writing paper was smaller. — Why what was it — that little thing that made the rebellion of '76 — a little question of tea and writing paper only great because it involved a great principle. But this is in every way a large question — because among other points it involves the large principle whether we or a power for-

eign to us shall be master of our own special and acknowledged ground. The constitution covenant that the free states shall give up runaway servants — that we all know. — But by the letter and spirit of its most important provisions, we hold the right to decide how to do it, who the runaway servants are, and to perform the whole obligation as we perform any other obligation by one process of law and without any violent intrusion from abroad. — The paltry lawyer's quibble that this section of the Constitution justifies such an unlawful violation of all other rights and covenants of the Constitution does not avail a straw in this infinitely superior question. Every American is proud or may honestly be proud of independent republican institutions — more free, more flexible, more careful of particulars as well as aggregates, than any political practice on a large scale known elsewhere now or that we read of in the past. — Well I say that an American who understands these truths ought to use his voice, not in the snivel of prayer-meetings, or the genteel moderation of a northern congressman, but stern and strong. — Something of this sort is his proper style — What do you want in my free city of the North? The question of respect for the rights of the blacks I defer for the present. — This is purely a question of my own rights, immunities and dignities.<sup>78</sup> — These streets are mine — there are my officers, my courts, my laws. — At the Capitol is my legislature. — The warrant you bring with you, we know it not; it is foreign to my usages as to my eyes and ears. — Go back to the power that sent you. — Tell it that having delegated to it certain important functions, and having entered into certain important engagements with our brother states, we like all the rest have re-



served more important functions, embody our vilest rights exclusively to ourselves. — For such intrusion upon those vital rights you well deserve the penalty of all hired minions of tyrants and the penalty which the proud Athenians and the stern souled Spartans visited upon the officers that came from the haughty power of Persian royalty with insulting attempts upon their rights. — This one time go in peace. — But come no more with demands of this sort in my proud cities of the North, or my teeming county towns, or along my rivers or sea shore.<sup>79</sup> —

Congressmen make themselves merry over the supposition of a higher law. But I tell you Americans the earth holds on her huge bosom not a creature more base and abject than that man who takes all that is dictated to him by superior power, whatever it may be, and having no other text for his obedience than political laws, then obeys. It is a law of the soul wherever the rain falls or the hawk flies. The man that lays his beard in the dirt before absolute power is no less abject whether the power come from Washington or the Persian shah.

I say that there is no law nor shadow of law on which high officers of this confederation can claim to send their salaried constables through the separate states and without any trial by our juries or any of the wise checks and delays which we have found it necessary to plant along the road of our judicature, decide at their pleasure, or the pleasure of a petty commissioner, which man among us has right to his liberty and which has not. —

Some simple person or worse, asks how this degrades us. — *We* are not in personal danger of degradation. — Why, what can be a

greater meanness and degradation than for a proud and free community to have forced upon it from an outside power, officers who go at their pleasure and say to a man, come, this soil is no protection to you?

The theory of the American Confederation as outlined in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Constitution, and the harmonious workings of the several states, is the most perfect theory in the world, because it is the best in the world in practice. — He fails utterly of understanding its key, however, who supposes we have delegated to any portion of the government, either federal, state, or municipal or the courts any of the most important of our rights. — We have given to these just so much power.

The next worst thing to having such enormous outrages put into laws and acquiesced in by the people without any alarm, is to have them practically carried out. — Nations sink by stages, first one thing and then another.

It is not events of danger and threatening storms that I dread. Give us turbulence, give us excitement, give us the rage and disputes of hell, all this rather than this lethargy of death that spreads like a vapor of decaying corpses over our land. — Give us anything rather than this, beat the drums of war.

Our country seems to be threatened with a sort of ossification of the spirit. Amid all the advanced grandeurs of these times beyond any other of which we know — amid the never enough praised spread of common education and common newspapers and books — amid the universal accessibility of riches and personal comforts — the wonderful inventions — the cheap swift travel bring-

ing far nations together and all the extreme reforms and benevolent societies — the current that bears us is one broadly deeply materialistic and infidel. It is the very worst kind of infidelity because it suspects not itself but proceeds complacently onward and abounds in churches and all the days of its life solves never the simple riddle why it has not a good time. — For I do not believe the people of these days are happy. The public countenance lacks its bloom of love and its freshness of faith. — For want of these, it is cadaverous as a corpse.

I come not to flatter. I know that America is strong, and supple, and full of growth. — I know we are on good terms with the world, and on extra good terms with ourselves. Treaties we make with Europe. Steamships paddle the sea. Gold comes from California, and trade is brisk, and the jobbers are busy nailing up goods and sending them off to customers, and the railroads run loaded, and all goes thriftily. — These things I do not expect to see less but more, and if any one supposes I am at all alarmed about the prospects of business on this continent he misunderstands me, for I am not — no I see its way clear for a hundred years. — But with all such decking ourselves in the robes of safety and gain, there at the scales sits Mordecai the Jew and we know that either we are to have his life, or he is to have the best part of us on the gallows high. — What are all these business prospects, these steamships, these fat sub-treasuries and our profitable trade? I do not want those brave and large souled men, men if not without wickedness of some sorts yet looming up into fit proportions to a sublime land and its sublime beginnings.<sup>307</sup> — Folks talk of some model plantations where collected families of niggers

grow sleek and live easy with enough to eat, and no care only to obey a thriving owner, who makes a good thing out of them, and they out of him. — By God I sometimes think this whole land is becoming one vast model plantation thinking itself well off because it has wherewithal to wear and no bother about its pork.

flawless truth and put it in the windows of your trains

*A Man at Auction* <sup>80</sup>

How much for the man

He is of value

For him the earth lay preparing billions of years without  
one animal or plant.

For him the things of the air, the earth and the sea

He is not only himself

He is the father of other men who shall be fathers in their  
turn

For him all sentiments

In his appointed day he becomes a God

In his appointed time he reaches his ecstasy

He is the one loved —

He is the master

Where others see a slave, a pariah, an emptier of privies, the Poet beholds what, when the days of the soul are accomplished, shall be the peer of God.

Where others are scornfully silent at some steerage passenger from a foreign land, or black, the poet says, "My brother! good day!"

And to the great king, "How are you friend?" <sup>308</sup>

The poet is a recruiter. He goes forth beating the drum. — O who will not join his troop? <sup>81</sup>

*O brood continental* <sup>82</sup>

O brood continental!

O you teeming cities! invincible, turbulent, proud!

O men of passion & the storm! O all you slumberers!

Arouse! arouse! the dawn-bird's throat sounds shrill!

Arouse! as I walk'd the beach, I heard the mournful notes  
foreboding a tempest!

The low, oft-repeated shriek of the diver, the long-lived  
loon, I heard;

I heard & yet hear, angry thunder, — O sailors! O ships!  
make a quick preparation!

O from his masterful sweep, the warning cry of the eagle!  
— Give way there all! it is useless — give up your spoils!

*Ship of Libertad* <sup>83</sup>

Blow mad winds!

Rage, boil, vex, yawn wide, yeasty waves,

Crash away —

Tug at the planks — make them groan — fall around,  
black clouds — clouds of death

Ship of the world, — ship of Humanity — Ship of the ages  
Ship that circlest the world

Ship of the hope of the world — Ship of Promise

Welcome the storm — welcome the trial

Why now I shall see what the old ship is made of

Anybody can sail with a fair wind, or a smooth sea

Come now we will see what stuff you are made of, Ship of  
Libertad

Let others tremble and turn pale

I welcome this menace — I welcome thee with joy

Why now I shall know whether there is any thing in you,  
Libertad,<sup>74</sup>

I shall see how much you can stand

Perhaps I shall see the crash — is all lost?

free life in the open air, plowing the fields, following the sea, striding westward, peopling new territories, crushing rebellions, etc. It is aristocratic to its very core. It means loafing on lounges, dallying with women, reading novels, high living, champagne, feather-beds, close rooms, tight boots, cities, exclusion from the sun and the air, *delicatess*. It means *ennui*, parlors, libraries, foreign importations, galleries of art, theatres, flower gardens, modern improvements and inventions. . . . Do not make the lounge more soft, sugar more sweet, and wine more intoxicating, but rather fill the lounge with thorns, the sugar with rock salt, and the wine with water from the brook. I would live so simple and free that the commonest, nearest objects, — the earth, air, sky, men, women, animals, the homely pursuits and trades would be a perpetual delight to me, and the smith at his forge, and the farm-girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking her short-cake would please me more than the romance in the books." They evidently discussed frequently the effects of mechanical civilization upon literature. Cf. p. 65 of text, "the great organizations of machinery . . . make men now (and current literature) deficient," etc., with Burroughs's notes in 1866: "Literature is an utterance of the mechanical spirit of the age — trade, machinery, commerce, steam, etc. have at last begotten their analogies in the soul — the accuracy, exactness, limit, so many feet long, so many wide, so many pounds avoirdupois — method, system, arrangement, the plumb-rule and the square — these things are reproduced in the mind of to-day. So that our literature does not represent the power of Nature, but the derivative power of mechanics." See also *N. & F.*, 104, for description of the poet like that on p. 66 of text; *Ibid.*, 160, "For a lecture on 'The Poet'" (featuring Chaucer!); *Ibid.*, 146, notes for lecture on Literature, with the characteristic admonition, "Bring in a sockdologer on the Dickens-fawners." The 1855 Preface (*Incl. Ed.*, 490) also develops this conception in great detail.

71. *Conservator*, VIII (1897), 37.

72. W. D. O'Connor, *Three Tales*, Boston, 1892, pp. iii-iv. A good account of the misunderstanding between O'Connor and Whitman is given in Barrus, *Life and Letters of John Burroughs*, Boston, 1925, I, 132. Edward Carpenter reports conversations with Whitman in 1877 on the subject of abolition, in which Whitman says, "many people came to me at one time about slavery, and 'wondered' that I was so quiet about it," etc. (Carpenter, 26). He is also reported to have said, "I was in early life very bigotted in my anti-slavery . . . have always had a latent toleration for the people who choose the reactionary course" (*Gathering of Forces*, I, p. xlvi). "Whitman was an abolitionist. . . . He wrote, long before the war, as strong antislavery words as have ever been penned. Nor did he afterwards change his opinion. Still he was so moderate that he would never join himself to the extreme abolitionists, and he never adopted their methods or their doctrines" (Bucke, in *W. W. Fellowship Papers*, 1895, No. 9, p. 26).



73. Perry, 50. O'Connor, in his "Good Gray Poet," gives testimony to Whitman's intense interest in public and national affairs (Bucke, 104). While he was editor of the Brooklyn *Eagle*, Whitman wrote many vigorous editorials against the policy of slavery in the new territories, and against the renewal of the slave trade, which are reprinted in *Gathering of Forces*. The Brooklyn *Eagle*, "Walt Whitman Section," May 31, 1919, also reprints an old editorial on "Slavers and the Slave Trade." He here attacks the slave traffic, rather than slavery as an institution, however.

74. For Whitman's employment of words such as "Libertad," "Presidential," etc., see Louise Pound, "Walt Whitman's Neologisms," *American Mercury*, IV, 200. The idea that danger was a blessing in the life of a nation because it tested the virtue of its citizens appears again on p. 81 of text, and in the "Eighteenth Presidency" (pp. 58, 98 of text). Cf. also the same idea in relation to the individual and religion (p. 45 of text).

75. Whitman even went so far as to say, "I call myself a Southerner" (interview in *Philadelphia Press*, Nov. 6, 1881). In the Notes to *Memoranda During the War* (Camden, 1875-1876), 63 ff., he goes into detail as to why he censured the North more than the South for slavery. "I say Secession, below the surface, originated and was brought to maturity in the Free States"; "I predict that the South is yet to outstrip the North," etc. See also his view of "the South victorious after all" (*Prose*, 293). There is no doubt, of course, that Whitman despised the institution of slavery thoroughly. Some of his earliest poetry records this: e. g., "Blood Money" and "Wounded in the House of Friends" (*Prose*, 372 ff.). The latter had originally one more stanza, embodying Free-soil doctrines, which is dropped from the printed version (*Fight of a Book*, 10). This poem severed him from the Democratic party (Rossetti's *Selections*, 17). His personal convictions have been well summed up (*Gathering of Forces*, I, pp. xxvi-xxix; Thomson, 63 ff.; Holloway 83-84; *Fight of a Book*, 77-78). His almost complete reticence on the subject in later life has been attributed to affection for the South, and dislike of Abolitionists (Donaldson, 76). It seems logical to suggest that his chief reason for refraining from partisanship in the matter was that the fundamental principle which determined his views on all private or public matters of conduct was the *liberty of individual thought and action*, as opposed to government control. In this respect he remained a disciple of Jefferson, even when the national issue of slavery forced him into the ranks of a more strongly centralized political faction. He published his Jeffersonian platform under the title "The Principles We Fight For," in the Brooklyn *Eagle*, August 29, 1846: "The People — the only source of legitimate power. The absolute and lasting severance of Church from State. The freedom, sovereignty and independence of the respective States. The Union — a confederacy, a compact, neither a consolidation, nor a centralization. The Constitution of the Union — a special grant of power,

limited and definite. The civil paramount to the military power. The Representative to obey instructions of his constituents. Election free, and suffrage universal. No hereditary office, nor order, nor title. No taxation beyond the public wants. No national debt, if possible. No costly splendor of administration. No proscription of opinion, nor of public discussion. No unnecessary interference with individual conduct, property, or speech. No favored classes, and no monopolies. No public monies expended except by warrants or a specific appropriation. No mysteries in government inaccessible to the public eye. Public compensation for public services, moderate salaries, and strict accountability."

He was fundamentally opposed to federal control or prohibition of any sort, except when inevitable. This was shown fully in an article by Whitman, "Sunday Restrictions. Memorial in behalf of a freer Municipal Government and against Sunday Restriction" (Brooklyn *Star*, Oct. 20, 1854). Part of this has been reprinted (Perry, 57-61). The following paragraph, omitted from that reprint, gives the gist of his views on all governmental matters, and shows plainly why he would have wished to avoid any permanent identification with such a movement as abolition, while at the same time he wished to stop the extension of slavery into new territory, and to allow the individual states to abolish slavery within their own boundaries when they saw fit. "The true American doctrine is not that the legislative assemblage of the city or state or nation is possessed of total wisdom and guardianship over the people, and can try it on just when and how they like. The office of Alderman or Mayor or Legislator is strictly the office of an agent. This agent is faithfully and industriously to perform a few plainly written and specified duties. He is not so continually to go meddling with the Master's affairs or morals. Such is the American doctrine and the doctrine of common sense."

76. Cf. one of the early passages prepared for *Leaves* (Holloway, 116). The more tolerant tone of that utterance would seem to indicate that this note *for oration* must date from a considerably earlier period.

77. This seems almost a prophecy of what Whitman later actually saw and recorded in his diary (in Library of Congress). "May 3, 1863. Saw the procession of rebel prisoners (about 100) march down Pennsylvania Avenue, under guard to the Capitol prison — We talk brave and get excited and indignant over the 'rebels' and drink perdition to them — but I realized how all anger sinks into nothing in sight of these young men, and standing close by them and seeing them pass. They were wretchedly dressed, very dirty and worthless in rig, but generally bright, goodlooking fellows — I felt they were my brothers, just about the same as the rest — I felt my heart full of compassion and brotherhood, and the irrepressible tears started in my eyes — these too are my brothers — it was in the look of them and in my heart." His change of attitude toward what he called "that hot and rebellious rise, the

South," is later summed up in "Origins of Attempted Secession" (*Prose*, 251). See also "The American War," *Examiner* (London), March 18, 1876, 317-318.

78. A variant reading of this passage appears in another MS. fragment: "The question of slavery I shall discuss with our confederate states at my leisure and as my tastes suit me. — But this is a direct question of my own rights, immunities and dignities — which I decide at once and without parley. — What, you say, is a nigger and a slave? "

79. Variant reading: "When the officers of Darius came with attempts far less degrading than this the free democracies of Athens and Sparta answered them with the terrible answer of death, though all their officers asked for was a little water and a handful of Grecian earth. — As for you, degenerate agents of — — — this time go in peace — What brings you here among my haughty and jealous democracies of the North?" Whitman's detailed reworking of this material shows how much he esteemed it.

80. The same MS. contains tentative beginnings of a corresponding piece, "Woman at Auction." These fragments later furnished the bases for strophes 7 and 8 of "I Sing the Body Electric." There survives an outline for "Poem of the black person" (*N. & F.*, 170). For Whitman's feeling about association with negroes, see his Boston diary (given under Note 309), where he says, "As for me, I am too much a citizen of the world to have the least compunction about it. The blacks here are . . . quite as good to have in contact with you as the average of 'our own colour.'" Cf. *Incl. Ed.*, 63, with the note "a slave, a pariah, an emptier of privies," on p. 83 of this volume.

81. A similar passage occurs in *N. & F.*, 179.

82. From a MS. in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Later incorporated in "Apostroph"; first published in 1860 edition but dropped thereafter, perhaps because Whitman did not care to retain souvenirs of the unhappy period which it commemorates. Yet even in the published form it lost its distinct and poignant reference to the impending conflict over slavery. (See *Incl. Ed.*, 473.)

83. This is a highly composite MS. in the Library of Congress. Only those portions which are worked to a fair degree of finality are reproduced here. This MS. is very important as indicating perhaps the first attempt of Whitman to experiment with the "Ship of State" metaphorical setting which was eventually to form the background for "O Captain! My Captain!"

84. A preliminary germ of this pamphlet: "The th Presidency. *Voice of Walt Whitman to the mechanics and farmers of These States, and to each American young man, north, south, east and west*" (*N. & F.*, 176). Then follows the introductory paragraph, in which he speaks of "more than five millions" of workingmen. This seems to indicate that the plan was originally conceived a good while before the campaign of 1856, since in the completed version the number has increased to "some six millions." The pamphlet was probably the