

A RECONSIDERATION OF
WALT WHITMAN'S AMERICAN WEST

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text and notes to denote Whitman's works.

- Corr.* *Correspondence of Walt Whitman*, ed. by Edwin H. Miller, 7 vols. (1961-2004)
- CPCP* *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. by Justin Kaplan (1982)
- DBN* *Daybooks and Notebooks*, ed. by William White, vol. 3 (1978)
- EPF* *The Early Poems and Fiction*, ed. by Thomas L. Brasher (1963)
- GF* *The Gathering of the Forces*, ed. by Cleveland Rogers and John Black, 2 vols. (1920)
- LG* *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. by Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (1965)
- LGV* *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, ed. by Sculley Bradley, Harold W. Blodgett, Arthur Golden, and William White, 3 vols. (1980)
- NUPM* *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. by Edward F. Grier, 6 vols. (1984)
- UPP* *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman: With Various Early Manuscripts*, ed. by Emory Holloway, 2 vols. (1921)
- WWC* Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, Vol. 2. (1961); Vol. 4, ed. by Sculley Bradley (1959); Vol. 5, ed. by Gertrude Traubel (1964)

Introduction

Walt Whitman (1819-92) is one of the most beloved of the nineteenth-century American poets. His poetry embodies the spirit of America itself in that chaotic century, in which territorial and racial disputes arose in the name of Manifest Destiny (the belief that the American people had the right and duty to take land in North America from other countries and peoples in God's name); as Ezra Pound (1885-1972) says, "[Whitman] *is* America. His crudity is an exceeding great stench, but it *is* America. He is the hollow place in the rock that echoes with his time" (*Selected Prose* 115; italics original). Whitman was also conscious of the role he was to play as a foundational American poet. In the preface of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, he says:

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. (*CPCP* 6-7; ellipsis in original)

Whitman was keenly aware that his role as an American bard was to build an equal relationship with the American people. It is noteworthy that he claimed that one part of the

bard's mission was to incarnate the geography of "his" country. As if putting his words here into action, Whitman described the diverse landscapes of the American continent in *Leaves of Grass*. He enumerated various regions just after the above-quoted passage, as follows:

"Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into [the bard] . . ." (*CPCP* 7). Similar descriptions are common in Whitman's "catalog" poems, and embody a major aspect of his poetics.

There remains an unsettled question: What is the relation between those lines "[An American bard's] spirit responds to his country's spirit" and "he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes?" The exact connection between the response and incarnation is never explicitly stated. However, it is possible to come to the following hypothesis: The poet might see his "country's spirit" in its "geography."

As an American bard, Whitman explored an "autochthonic verse" of the new land.¹ The autochthonic verse sought the modality of a new literature written from an American perspective. In *Democratic Vistas* (1871), Whitman discusses "a very grand one, good theology, good art, or good literature" and claims it has two aspects:

. . . a very grand one, good theology, good art, or good literature, has certain features shared in common. The combination fraternizes, ties the races—is, in

many particulars, under laws applicable indifferently to all, irrespective of climate or date, and, from whatever source, appeals to emotions, pride, love, spirituality, common to humankind. Nevertheless, they touch a man closest, (perhaps only actually touch him,) even in these, in their expression through autochthonic lights and shades, flavors, fondnesses, aversions, specific incidents, illustrations, out of his own nationality, geography, surroundings, antecedents, &c. (*CPCP* 978)

He claims that the good ones have a universality that appeals to everyone and an individuality that belongs to the author's nationality and time. The "man closest" would be the author of the good theology, art, or literature. Whitman points out the necessity of the author's autochthonic sense for good theology, art or literature. Here again, the word "geography" is used. He thought such "autochthonic lights and shades" of various "historical" events that happened in the land were connected to the "geography." His autochthonic verse embodies this kind of sense. In "A Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads" (1888) Whitman repeats the same arguments on "an American perspective" and its relation with *Leaves of Grass*:

Given the Nineteenth Century, with the United States, and what they furnish as area and points of view, "Leaves of Grass" is, or seeks to be, simply a faithful and doubtless self-will'd record. In the midst of all, it gives one man's—the author's—identity, ardors, observations, faiths, and thoughts, color'd hardly at

all with any decided coloring from other faiths or other identities. Plenty of songs had been sung—beautiful, matchless songs—adjusted to other lands than these—another spirit and stage of evolution; but I would sing, and leave out or put in, quite solely with reference to America and to-day. Modern science and democracy seem'd to be throwing out their challenge to poetry to put them in its statements in contradistinction to the songs and myths of the past. (*CPCP* 658)

Considering the differences in other countries' literature, Whitman sought for his autochthonic verse of "the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater" (*CPCP* 664);² "as long as the States continue to absorb and be dominated by the poetry of the Old World, and remain unsupplied with autochthonous song, to express, vitalize and give color to and define their material and political success, and minister to them distinctively, so long will they stop short of first-class Nationality and remain defective" (*CPCP* 671). The above statements provide us with Whitman's perspectives on the nineteenth-century United States: American literature had not yet been established in its own right but remained under the influence of other countries. Therefore, the nation or his ideal democratic nation had not yet established. That was one of the poet's frustrations, from which his verse stemmed. Whitman associated his country's spirit with its geography and continued to write poems on the lands of the American continent

as *topos*.³

The purpose of this thesis is to reconsider Whitman's American West as *topos*. A great deal of attention has been paid to Whitman's early works on the West in relation to Thomas Jefferson's (1743-1826) agrarian myth and Manifest Destiny.⁴ Sparse critical attention, however, has been given to Whitman's later poems of the West. Critics believe that Whitman "optimistically" praised stories of pioneers and their masculinity and described the West as a "free and democratic" place. I take a similar view regarding Whitman's antebellum works. However, descriptions on the West in his postbellum works are more complex. One could argue more specifically the following. While the unity of the nation had reached a crisis stage during the Civil War, Whitman wrote that much of the West and its democratic purification was effected by nature. In his later years, the West was idealized in contrast with the East: the former had nature, and the latter had civilization. Whitman was disappointed at "the business materialism of the current age" without the spirituality and morality that prevailed in cities in his later years (*CPCP* 937, 986). On this topic, he stated, "In a few years the dominion-heart of America will be far inland, toward the West" in *Democratic Vistas* (*CPCP* 951). However, the poet faced a problem of representation when he described one aspect of the West in his poems: the existence of Native Americans. Though he took a strong interest in and idealized them as "the aborigines" who had survived the American continent, the curious thing is that they were absent in the descriptions of the West. This absence indicates that the poet could

not or did not depict their figures in the West, because when he attempted to describe his ideal America, the existence of “actual” Native Americans undermined the ideal. This distress of the poet can be seen in his poems where Native Americans appear.

This thesis will demonstrate the arguments above by analyzing the poems published after 1860 and examining the process by which the West was idealized in Whitman’s work. Chapter I surveys Whitman’s representations of American geography to illustrate this process of idealization. In the West, two particular places will be covered—a novel approach, since particular places in the West, as distinct from a generic West, are seldom examined in Whitman’s work. Chapter II analyzes images of California, and Chapter III focuses on the Prairies and the Great Plains. Both places have special significance for Whitman, and his poems on them clarify his motivations for idealizing the West as a whole. Chapter IV looks at images of Native Americans in Whitman’s writing, which show his ambivalence and introspection in relation to the Westward Expansion.

Whitman had only been to Denver, Colorado, in his lifetime (Allen, *The Solitary Singer* 487). He traveled west in 1879 to accept an invitation from “Colonel John W. Forney, publisher of the Philadelphia *Press*, and the Old Settlers of Kansas Committee” to “the Kansas Quarter Centennial Celebration” held in Lawrence, Kansas, which the poet eventually did not attend (Allen 486-87).⁵ Therefore, his descriptions of the West were nearly all developed in his imagination. However, his descriptions of the West still managed to embody

the spirit of the American nation in the nineteenth century.

To support my ideas that Whitman idealized the West as a place where his ideal America should be established, two articles of the period in particular should be cited. The first is “Indian Life and Customs—A true Subject for American Antiquarian Research,” published in *the Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 7, 1846. In this article, Whitman searches for a fitting theme for American writers and proposes “the stories of the settlers, and the remnants of Indian legends” in the frontiers “of the west and north” (*The Journalism 2*: 109). Additionally, he claimed that their stories “would be the true and legitimate romance of this continent” (*The Journalism 2*:109). Thus, Whitman asserted that American writers should record the stories of not only the Native Americans but also the American white settlers who lived and persevered amid the challenging natural conditions of the American continent.

Whitman came to insist on the importance of the West during the Civil War. In an article in the *New York Times* dated Sunday, October 4, 1863, Whitman mentions the need to discuss transferring the nation’s capital city: “None sees that the locale of America’s Government must be permanently founded far West before many years” (*UPP 2*: 35). He continues: “How can the prairie America, the boundless and teeming West, the region of the Mississippi, the California, Idaho and Colorado regions (two-thirds of our territory lies west of the Mississippi River) be content to have its Government lop-sided over on the Atlantic, far, far from itself—the trunk, the real genuine America?” in “the Atlantic thin

strip—commercial, financial, with European proclivities . . .” (*UPP* 2: 35). Whitman wrote the article in Washington, seeing “[*t*]he figure of Liberty Over the Capitol” and watching the march of Union armies (*UPP* 2: 29, 33; italics original). He envisioned America’s future capitol, and saw different systems emerging in the West from the ones of the East. Given the above article of 1846, “the trunk” would also mean the lives of Native Americans and the western settlers living close to nature. Theirs, thought Whitman, were the authentic indigenous ways of life on the American continent. Taken together, these two articles show how much Whitman revered the American West, and also how his views of its importance have been intensified by 1863, compared to 1846. His writing in 1863 is politically charged, and takes on a tone of urgency. In this context, Whitman searched in the American landscape, especially the West, for an autochthonic verse and modality of democracy, which would be different from the East’s “European proclivities” (*UPP* 2: 35). His idealization of the West is a frustrated one, however, since the establishment of an ideal democracy had been deferred so long. He does not directly show his frustrations on the surface of his poems. The stronger the feeling was, the more proudly he prophesied the future of the nation and its success in his writing.

Whitman attempted to write stories on the frontiers to show how old and ideal ways of life in the American continent was a topic American writers should cover. Therefore, the American West had a special meaning for him, where uncultivated nature spread and its

system was maintained while urbanization progressed. In the antebellum days, the stories were optimistically romanticized. However, his works in the postbellum days indicate the idealization had negative legacies of strife and discord with Native Americans. In his later years, Whitman saw the West not as a safe haven but a home to settle in and confronted the reality of plundering the lands Native Americans lived on and of their removal from the “free” lands to reservations. His poems in his later years describe the gap between the ideal and reality.

Chapter I: Descriptions of American Geography in Whitman's Writings

This chapter surveys representations of American landscapes in Whitman's writings.

These descriptions can be classified into three main groups. The first and foremost are various landscapes of the American continent enumerated in his "catalog" poems, like section 33 of "Song of Myself" (1855) in which the diversity and vastness of the continent is emphasized. Next, the geographies of particular places are described, as in "Song of the Redwood-Tree" (1874) and "The Prairie States" (1880). Only in the final group was the American continent placed in relation to world geographies, as in "Salut au Monde!" (1856) and "Passage to India" (1871). Whitman attempted to excavate and present an American history and art, neglected by European countries, from the great diversity of the continent, as his contemporary visual artists from the Hudson River School and the Transcendentalists did. He engaged in the poetic experiment of situating the New World in the context of world geography in order to announce the global singularity and significance of America as a democratic country. In this chapter, poems in the first group and prose works in the second are examined. Poems in the second group are analyzed in Chapters II and III.

Basil de Selincourt argues that the geographical descriptions in Whitman's catalog poems demonstrate the vastness of the American continent and emphasize its unity (295).

Whitman certainly described world geography, the past achievements of various people, and

maps America spatially and historically in his poems. Eric Wertheimer analyzed them in the light of “geohistory,” or the rhetorical idea that the New World’s history was embodied in the continent (161-62, 172).⁶ It is worthwhile to examine this subject in light of the “geologic history” and “divine Mother” that Whitman mentions in *Democratic Vistas* (CPCP 984, 994). The following chapters examine this connection in more detail and this chapter surveys the process by which the West was idealized in Whitman. First, section 33 of “Song of Myself” and sections three and four of “Starting from Paumanok” (1860) are analyzed to show their connections with the trends in visual art of the nineteenth century. Next, section fourteen of “Starting from Paumanok” and “Our Old Feuillage” (1860) are examined in relation to the Westward Movement and the Civil War to show that Whitman’s frustrated idealization of the West started gathering momentum around 1860. Last, some articles from *Specimen Days* (1882) are surveyed to confirm the idealization process.

In the beginning of his career as a poet, Whitman emphasized the vastness of the American continent and its huge diversity. He seemed to map out a whole picture of the continent, and the West was not always a focus. Section 33 of “Song of Myself” describes the diversity of American geography. The speaker walks all over the country, observing and singing the flora, fauna, and people. An overwhelming majority of the lines in the section showcase the size and diversity of the continent. The lives of its denizens are presented, in a sense, as a kind of American art. Consider the following example:

I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lumbermen,

Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,

Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips, crossing

savannas, trailing in forests,

Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase,

Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the shallow river,

Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the buck turns

furiously at the hunter,

Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter is

feeding on fish,

Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,

Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver pats the

mud with his paddle-shaped tail;

Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over the rice in

its low moist field,

Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots

from the gutters,

Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over the delicate
 blue-flower flax,

Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there with the
 rest. . . . (CPCP 219-20)

Section 33 of “Song of Myself” consists of 160 lines, the largest number of any poem in *Leaves of Grass*. Maire Mullins points out Whitman’s democratic rhetoric in this section: “The catalogues sections [sections 15 and 33 of “Song of Myself”] not only mirror America’s geography and people by capturing their diversity, but also emphasize their unity in nationhood” (27).⁷ Though this assertion is plausible, the multiplicity of the landscapes in this section complicates it somewhat—though they are without administrative boundaries, with the exception of “Manhattan” (CPCP 221), “Niagara” (CPCP 221) and “Broadway” (CPCP 222). Instead, they get physically oriented descriptions: “the dry gulch and rivulet bed” (718),⁸ which seem to be the Yosemite in the Sierra Nevada; the “savannas” (720) spread in the Southeast; “the hot sand” which might be in the Great Basin between the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains (721); “the growing sugar” (726) and “the yellow-flower’d cotton plant” (726) that inhabit the South; “the western persimmon” (728) that ranges from New England to Kansas. The geographical diversity was emphasized much more in the 1855 edition than “their unity in nationhood” that Mullins referred to (27).

Whitman became more aware of that national unity in the third edition of *Leaves of*

Grass in 1860. “Starting from Paumanok,” first published in the third edition, depicts American Westward Expansion and the growth of the national territory. The speaker embodies the lands of the West in sections three and four of the poem. Moreover, the names of some States are given here:

Chants of the prairies,
 Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea,
 Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota,
 Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant,
 Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North,
 Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own offspring . . .

(*CPCP* 177)

“Chants” give way to “my leaves,” the poems the speaker asks America to receive. The places given in the “Chants” are mainly the frontiers to the west of the Mississippi, and it is declared that the poems embody American landscapes, especially the ones of the West, and that they are American “offspring.” “America” here might be a goddess Columbia-like figure, or the “divine Mother” who leads her children toward Manifest Destiny. In his later poems in

Leaves of Grass, the divine Mother, who is roughly synonymous with America in “Starting from Paumanok,” appears as a figure involved with the law of nature (*CPCP* 994). Reflecting Whitman’s claim that an American bard “incarnates” American geography (*CPCP* 7), each of these landscapes is incarnated by being “chanted” here.

Some nineteenth century artists refuted the criticism that the United States was lacking tradition and history by taking advantage instead of the notion of “being discovered” as the New World. That is, they “discovered” the bountiful resources of the continent and its various landscapes and attempted to seek out and represent the nation’s history in and through them. Barbara Novak considers Thomas Cole (1801-48) to be a major figure in this regard, and describes the relations between painting and nature on the American continent as follows:

Cole’s career coincided with the discovery of the American landscape as an effective substitute for a missing national tradition. America was thus both new and old—new in that its undiscovered and unsettled territories were the proper habitat for that radical innocent, the noble savage celebrated by Rousseau and the Lake Poets; old in that these same forests and mountains spoke, as Chateaubriand suggested, of American’s most significant antiquity—one that registered more purely in its uncultivated state.

Once this landscape had become a repository of national pride, the cultivation of the landscape experience (even by challenging it through risk

and danger) was one of the key preoccupations of the age. (18)

Artists such as Cole, Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), and Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) saw the natural features of the American continent as characteristic of the American nation, and found a missing national tradition there. Whitman shared their intention when he enumerated a variety of landscapes and identified them with his poems.

Charles Olson (1910-70) discussed *Moby-Dick* (1851) and got to the heart of the matter of geography, space, and history on the American continent in the following lines from *Call Me Ishmael* (1947):

I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America. . . . Large, and
without mercy. It is geography at bottom, a hell of wide land from the
beginning. That made the first American story (Parkman's): exploration. (11)

Olson further suggested that Herman Melville (1819-91) “turned time into space” (14). Thus Olson described an American consciousness of its history and the land. Whitman also turned time into space by discovering, through the American continent, a missing national tradition in its diverse geography.

Whitman's geographical descriptions became closely connected to nationality around 1860.⁹ The Westward territorial expansion after the Louisiana Purchase (1803) might have inspired the poet's interest in the connection between nationhood and the land. “Starting from Paumanok” described various American landscapes and incorporated certain “manmade”

place names as seen above. Section 14 depicted the changes in the landscapes due to Westward Expansion and clearly asserted that the American continent was “Democracy’s lands” (*CPCP* 184).

Interlink’d, food-yielding lands!

Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar, rice!

Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of the apple and the
grape!

Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land of those
sweet-air’d interminable plateaus!

Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!

Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the south-west
Colorado winds!

Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!

Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!

Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of Vermont and
Connecticut!

.....

Far breath’d land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez’d! the diverse! the compact!

The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!

O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at any rate include
 you all with perfect love! (194-210)¹⁰

The character of each place is enumerated here as in section 33 of “Song of Myself,” and the fertility and natural riches of the lands are described. However, differences between the sections of the two poems can also be noted. In section 14 of “Starting from Paumanok,” proper names are used. The use of proper names is characteristically observed in the poems of the third edition. The other difference is that the idea of territorial expansion is expressed. In the last four lines of section 14, the speaker describes Westward Expansionism. The diverse geographies were made into “the compact” with the “perfect love” of the speaker. He continues:

Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming every new
 brother,

Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour they unite with
 the old ones,

Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and equal, coming
 personally to you now,

Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me. (225-28)

The line “sailing to other shores to annex the same” clearly portrays the territorial expansion of the nation. The speaker as a national bard moves with the gradually expanding territories

of the nation and sings of their places. It is interesting that the speaker's visit to new shores is done "personally," and that the mooted companionship and equality will likewise be accomplished after interaction between the speaker and "you," "every new brother," "personally." This is not a political movement but the establishment of an intimate relationship, "welcoming every new brother" and "applying these leaves [his poems] to the new ones," uniting the lands and the peoples. Whitman's distrust in politics, which led to his becoming a poet, can be found here.¹¹

The reason why the American continent was referred to as "Democracy's lands" can also be seen in the lines above. The diversity and democratic potential of the land spring from its diverse geography, which gave everyone opportunities to live and earn a living on its "food-yielding lands." The riches of the lands gave the people assurance; in these lands intimate relationships among people could be nurtured, communities could prosper, and individual equality could be fulfilled. Section 14 of "Starting from Paumanok" thus described how the lands of the American continent were to be "Democratic lands" in relation to the Westward Expansion.

The discussion above offers Whitman's perspective on the lands of the American continent, which had been picked up by Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) in his "frontier theory" which proposed that the natural resources of the West were inexhaustible and the lands were open to anyone who wanted to go. According to Turner, the frontier was

originally “democratic,” however, the kind of democracy on the frontier had changed over time. Turner saw antiestablishment airs on the frontier, which were against the authoritative and normative existing social systems (e.g., Puritanism) in the East, as follows:

The most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. . . . [T]he frontier is productive of individualism. Complex society is precipitated by the wilderness into a kind of primitive organization based on the family. The tendency is anti-social. It produces antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control. (30)

This was the traditional American “pioneer spirit” that Whitman was engrossed in. It was under President Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) that American democracy was expanded (Turner 31). Whatever past the pioneers had, once they came to the “free lands” of the frontier, they had to struggle with the land, and these kinds of experiences gave the nation new systems and laws (239-40). Thus, the “free land” supported the establishment of a “democratic” system on the frontier. According to Turner, “So long as free land exists, the opportunity for a competency exists, and economic power secures political power” (32); “Not the constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people, made the democratic type of society in America for three centuries while it occupied its empire” (293); “To both the labor theorist and the practical pioneer [under the Jackson government], the existence of what seemed inexhaustible cheap land and unpossessed

resources was the condition of democracy” (303). Turner also claimed the development of the Midwest, which he called the “prairie states,” had important implications for American democracy and for the fertile lands where “corn and wheat” grew where the pioneers had come (128, 149, 153-55, 237, 341-42). The development of the Midwest after the Civil War proves that “Democracy and capitalistic development did not seem antagonistic” (305). Turner also emphasized the social structure of the frontier around 1850, which consisted of people from different cultures such as the North Atlantic, the American South, or of German, Irish, or Scandinavian heritage. On the frontier, the settlers were not controlled under an established ruling order as they would have been in New England, but instead, each group was able to contribute to the construction of a new society and social order. This fundamentally diverse and open social structure would lead to “the large immigrations of the eighties” (350-51).

The idea of the “free” and “fertile” frontier was inherited from Jefferson’s agrarian myth and John O’Sullivan’s concept of Manifest Destiny. Robert Frost (1874-1963) criticized this kind of unconsciousness, which he conveyed through the following lines of his poem, ‘The Gift Outright:’ “The land was ours before we were the land’s. / She was our land more than a hundred years / Before we were her people” (316). The lands of the American continent spread out before Whitman as a God-given gift in 1860.

The last four lines of section 14 of “Starting from Paumanok” imply the speaker’s desire for the harmonious unity of the nation. His desire is displayed prominently in “Our Old

Feuillage.” Various regions of the American continent are listed in the poem, as in “Song of Myself” and “Starting from Paumanok:”

Always our old feuillage!

Always Florida’s green peninsula—always the priceless delta of

Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas

Always California’s golden hills and hollows, and the silver mountains of New

Mexico—always soft-breath’d Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain’d by the Southern sea, inseparable with the slopes

drain’d by the Eastern and Western seas,

The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a half millions of

square miles,

The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main, the thirty

thousand miles of river navigation,

The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of

dwelling—always these, and more, branching forth into numberless

branches,

Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of Democracy;

Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers, Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing the huge

oval lakes;

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing density there, the

habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East—all deeds, promiscuously done at all times,

All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,

Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering; . . . (1-11)¹²

The places are called “leaves”—in French, *feuillage*—here again.¹³ The speaker gives the names of the states and places and creates a map of the American continent in words. The bard walks around each place in his mind as he moves through the Manhattan streets. The repetitions of the words “always” and “all” express the poet’s desire for the unity of the continent, as do the words “ever-united lands” (77) and “ONE IDENTITY” (77).

The huge space of the American continent is what makes the “ONE IDENTITY” possible: “The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity, / In space the sporades, the scatter’d islands, the stars—on the firm earth, the lands, my lands” (66-67). The “sporades, the scatter’d islands, the stars” can be read as the states, and the spatial hugeness is highlighted. Steven Olson notes the importance of space as a trope for Whitman:

He conceives of it [space] as geographical, extraterrestrial, inner or psychological, and as three-dimensional physical space. These different spaces often carry symbolic significance, ranging from the social and political union

of the United States, to global unity, to spiritual fulfillment, to transcendence of death, and to divinity. (“Space” 672-73)

As Olson stated, Whitman explored various possibilities for personal identities or political unities in an imagined space rooted in literal geographical space. The cartographical effect of the passage above shows his attraction to and confidence in space and in the vastness of the American continent. John Rennie Short observes the relation between geographical mapping and matters of nationhood and national import:

. . . the mapping of the national territory, especially at a time of geopolitical flux in the Far West, was also loaded with political significance as well as geographical science. . . . The geographies and maps both described and celebrated the extension of the national territory toward the Pacific, the intensification of settlement and the westward movement of the frontier. . . . [T]he geographies not only described and mapped national space, but they also sought to promote spatial unification. This unification was concerned with economic and political unity. (15)

Whitman’s geographical descriptions in his catalog poems, as discussed previously, were representative of the concept of “spatial unification” and were concerned not only with economic and political unity, but also, more closely, with democratic and artistic unity.

However, behind Whitman’s emphasis on unity, was a sense of the danger or crisis of

unity. Warnings about dangerous situations are issued in “Our Old Feuillage.” Another line, “There are the negroes at work in good health” (35) implies the existence of African Americans in bad health and in exploitative working conditions. That unsettled atmosphere urged Whitman to write about the unity of the continent. He felt threatened by the rise of tensions as the Civil War loomed nearer. When Whitman associated the vast space of the American continent with the unity of the nation, it suggested that he had absolute confidence in the idea that the grounds of the New World were open to anybody. Meanwhile, it also indicates his disturbing undercurrent toward the divisive atmosphere in the nation.

As seen in the article published on October 4, 1863 in the *New York Times* cited in the introduction of this thesis, Whitman began to claim the American right to the West during the Civil War. He placed “the trunk, the real genuine America” (*UPP* 2: 35) there, not in the East, and idealized the frontier. After the war, Whitman further developed his stance on American geography in *Specimen Days*,¹⁴ where he insisted on the following three points: the uniqueness and variety of American geography, the affinity between the geography and his poetry (“An Egotistical ‘Find’” *CPCP* 855), and that the geography would serve as “New Themes Entered Upon” in American poetry (*CPCP* 780-81).

Various landscapes of the West appeared under the aegis of those ideas in *Specimen Days*: the mountains in “America’s Back-Bone” (*CPCP* 857-58), the basins and parks of Colorado in “The Parks” (*CPCP* 858), and the Arkansas River in “Unfulfill’d Wants—The

Arkansas River” (*CPCP* 861-62). Additionally, “An Egotistical ‘Find’” describes the scenery Whitman saw from the train window when he traveled from Denver to Leadville, Colorado, by the South Park Railroad during his trip to the West in 1879 (Eitner 56-60). This work contains copious descriptions of the prairies.

Meanwhile, Whitman seldom wrote about geography in his later poems in *Leaves of Grass*. “Mississippi Valley Literature,” in *Specimen Days*, gives a reason:

I stopp’d and laid down the book, and ponder’d the thought of a poetry that should in due time express and supply the teeming region I was in the midst of, and have briefly touch’d upon. . . . The pure breath, primitiveness, boundless prodigality and amplitude, strange mixture of delicacy and power, of continence, of real and ideal, and of all original and first-class elements, of these prairies, the Rocky mountains, and of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers—will they ever appear in, and in some sort form a standard for our poetry and art? (*CPCP* 866-67)

Whitman passed through Missouri on his trip to the West and pondered “a poetry of . . . the teeming region” called the Mississippi. The end of the quoted passage above indicates that he felt that such poetry had not yet been adequately fashioned. His phrase here is notable: “the teeming region I . . . have briefly touch’d upon.” This seems to imply that his descriptions of the region did not meet his standards. He acknowledged the limitations of his poetry and

continued to explore a new mode of American poetry that depicted nature on the American continent.

“Art Features,” in *Specimen Days*, focuses on a specific feature of the landscape, “*Mountain streams* The shapes that element takes in the shows of the globe cannot be fully understood by an artist until he has studied these unique rivulets” (*CPCP* 858-59; italics original). The streams shaped the landscape; it is worth noting in this regard Whitman’s assertion that the streams needed to be “studied,” not just “briefly touched upon,” to write poetry about American geography. These words were prophetic of later generations: William Carlos Williams’ (1883-1963) *Paterson* (1946-58), Charles Olson’s *The Maximus Poems* (1953-75), Gary Snyder’s (1930-) *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996), and others have studied and written poetry about local places and the workings of nature in them in relation to their histories and daily lives.

Next, I would like to consider why the West was idealized by Whitman. In

Democratic Vistas, he says:

In a few years the dominion-heart of America will be far inland, toward the West. Our future national capital may not be where the present one is. It is possible, nay likely, that in less than fifty years, it will migrate a thousand or two miles, will be re-founded, and every thing belonging to it made on a different plan, original, far more superb. The main social, political,

spine-character of the States will probably run along the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi rivers, and west and north of them, including Canada. (*CPCP* 951-52)

In this way, Whitman sought to build a new nation centered in the West. The settlement in the regions of “the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi rivers” was accelerating in 1871 when this prose work was published. The main factors involved were legal changes to the land system. When the secession of the South left Congress, northern Republicans changed the land system to fulfill the demands of northern capitalists who were pursuing Jefferson’s agrarian myth. Three bills were passed in 1862: the Homestead Act, the Pacific Railroad Grant, and the Morrill Act (White 142). The first Act granted 160 acres of the public domains to settlers to make them “independent landowners in the West” (White 142). The second one “was to tie the Pacific Coast to the Union” and give the settlers or farmers ways to access to markets (White 142). The last one was to give “land grants to the states” to establish universities to nurture competent farmers (White 142). After the bills were passed, the settlers rushed into the West to pursue the old myth. The land rush drove the establishment of new settlements in the West. Whitman insisted on such opinions on the West as those cited above, probably focusing on social trends.

When Whitman asserted the American right to the West, he also seemed to share the idea that the lands of the West were undeveloped, and the law of nature ruled. The newly

discovered journalistic series by Whitman, *Manly Health and Training*, published in the *New York Atlas* in 1858 under the pseudonym of Mose Velsor, clearly shows this.¹⁵ In this series, Whitman stresses on the importance of physical exercises to maintain good health in modern society. He believed that “a man has a moral, affectional, and mental nature which must also be developed; but we say that, at present, the whole tendency of things is to *over-develop* [sic] those parts, while the physical is cramped and dwindled away” (Velsor 187). The writer further argues that based on his “observation in New York, Brooklyn, and other cities,” if only superiority of the mind is valued, then “that would make virtuous bloodless phantoms of our young men” (190). These remarks reflect the spread of moral education in cities at that time. According to him, instead of moral education, focusing on “principle exercises” (191), such as running, leaping, and wrestling will lead to “the best material humanity” (196). He reports that a chaotic city lifestyle causes the spread of diseases, such as “[c]onsumption, dyspepsia, rheumatism, chills and fever, and bilious attacks” (209). A diet that consisted of “[s]imple and hearty food, and no condiments” was recommended (212; italics original) and the necessity of “going forth into the open air” was repeatedly emphasized (216). The writer also focuses on changing the nature of jobs, such as “labor-saving machinery, the mechanical arts, and . . . in-door employments,” which were increasing in modern society (218). Thus, the object of the articles was to suggest changes in the lifestyle and habits of people living in urban cities. Whitman was concerned about the negative influences of modern life on the

physical and mental health of people, and he explored healthy ways of living in modern society.

In his articles, Whitman described the West as a place where mental and physical health is preserved. Below is an excerpt from his article:

As to the point of physical degeneracy here in the United States, we do not, upon the whole, make much account of it. The nation is passing through several important physiological processes and combinations. To a great degree, it is yet getting acclimated—especially in the West, and on the Pacific coast, which latter is destined to have a huge influence on the future physique of America. In its dry, wholesome, life-giving and life-preserving atmosphere, the human form, it may be, is destined to attain its grandest proportions, clearness, and longevity. We allude to California and Oregon, and indeed the immense inland stretch from Kansas down through Utah and Arizonia [sic], to the borders of Mexico. Here the air is dry and antiseptic—everything grows to a size, strength, and expanse, unknown in the Northern and Eastern States. Nature is on a large scale; and here, in time to come, will be found a wonderful race of men. (262)

This excerpt shows that Whitman related human health to civilization and observed the beneficial effects of nature on human health. Considering the time at which these articles

were published, it can be concluded that Whitman was interested in the link between environment and health before the Civil War. The Westward expansion was described in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and I believe that the contents reflect the danger to the unity of the nation and the possibility of the Civil War. They also emphasized Whitman's concerns about the health of people. Whitman perceived expansionism in a favorable light. His work was influenced by Jeffersonian ideology and his concern about the impact of the Western environment on human health.

In his later years, he often referred to the law of nature. In *Democratic Vistas*, he referred to "Nature's laws" (CPCP 942) and explained them in relation to democracy as follows:

Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind. Many suppose, (and often in its own ranks the error,) that it means a throwing aside of law, and running riot. But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever; and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one. (CPCP 948)

Bruce Piasecki explains the rhetoric of *Democratic Vistas* in detail and suggests that Whitman had much faith in the succession of nature as a "law of laws," which would prove that "all

feudal points of view” had been supplanted by “the democratic principle” (105). As Piasecki suggests, Whitman in *Democratic Vistas* sought his ideal democracy in relation to nature.

Indeed, the introduction clearly shows it: “As the greatest lessons of Nature through the universe are perhaps the lessons of variety and freedom, the same present the greatest lessons also in New World politics and progress” (*CPCP* 929). Whitman saw this law of succession as being embodied in the nature of the West and necessary for democracy.

In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman contrasted nature with civilization; the former was praised while the latter was criticized in harsher-than-usual tones:

For my part, I would alarm and caution even the political and business reader, and to the utmost extent, against the prevailing delusion that the establishment of free political institutions, and plentiful intellectual smartness, with general good order, physical plenty, industry, &c., (desirable and precious advantages as they all are,) do, of themselves, determine and yield to our experiment of democracy the fruitage of success. With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possess'd—the Union just issued, victorious, from the struggle with the only foes it need ever fear, (namely, those within itself, the interior ones,) and with unprecedented materialistic advancement—society, in these States, is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor, the element

of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to State or man,
 seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown. (*CPCP*
 936-37)

Whitman continued, “[T]he struggle with the only foes it need ever fear” was the Civil War
 where “[t]he people, of their own choice, fighting, dying for their own idea, insolently
 attack’d by the secession-slave-power, and its very existence imperil’d” (*CPCP* 944). The
 society ruled by man-made law was “rotten,” as if it was close to death. His criticism toward
 the material prosperity of the nation did not stop, and was further developed throughout

Democratic Vistas:

Are there, indeed, *men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there
 perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a
 pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths,
 and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is
 there a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great
 material one? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon
 humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with
 petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics.
 (*CPCP* 939; italics original)

All the answers to his questions are of course no. Whitman lamented the conditions people

abandoned themselves to in order to experience the pleasures and indulgences of city life.

The “malformations” and “phantoms” are definitely such city dwellers. These images of city dwellers overlapped in Whitman’s mind with the wounded he saw in the hospitals in

Washington:

The wound, the amputation, the shatter’d face or limb, the slow hot fever, long impatient anchorage in bed, and all the forms of maiming, operation, and disease. Alas! America have we seen, though only in her early youth, already to hospital brought. (*CPCP* 945)

In this way, the nation after the war was, for Whitman, sick due to the many “phantoms” living in prominent, commercial cities, while the “phantoms” of the war victims had ingrained themselves in his memory.

Meanwhile, according to Whitman, nature could heal the “wounds” of the nation through “the law of successions,” described as follows:

And as, by virtue of its kosmical, antiseptic power, Nature’s stomach is fully strong enough not only to digest the morbid matter always presented, not to be turn’d aside, and perhaps, indeed, intuitively gravitating thither—but even to change such contributions into nutriment for highest use and life—so American democracy’s. (*CPCP* 949)

These statements are in reference to the ecosystem. Images representing the purifying power

of nature were developed in the poems “This Compost” (1856) and “The Return of the Heroes” (1867). These poems are examined further in Chapter III. The last words display his hope that “so American democracy’s [stomach]” is as “Nature’s stomach.” Additionally, in *Specimen Days*, Whitman refers to the law of nature. “Nature and Democracy—Morality” talks about the essential role of nature in keeping democracy in good health: “Democracy most of all affiliates with the open air, is sunny and hardy and sane only with Nature—just as much as Art is. Something is required to temper both to—check them, restrain them from excess, morbidity” (*CPCP* 925). He also claimed that without nature, American democracy “will certainly dwindle and pale” (*CPCP* 926). Norman Foerster claims that Whitman’s works contain many descriptions of nature as being healthy, sane, and calm and transfer this energy to the readers:

He [Whitman] had it [the energy], also, with a freedom from the morbidity of the period that is almost unexampled . . . breathing into our literature the sanity of nature like no one else since Wordsworth. His poems have the medical wholesomeness of the meadows and woods and ocean, a quality transferable, and accountable for much of his vogue. (219)

As Foerster says, Whitman wrote on “the sanity of nature.” The tendency becomes stronger in his later works, as can be seen from Whitman’s attachment to the law of nature. To summarize his claims on the law of nature: nature scrutinizes a series of events that results in

human society and restores it to a healthy state when it falls into a critical situation.¹⁶

Whitman called this process the law of nature. The law is not enacted where the function and power of nature, the ecosystem, is lost like in the city. He recommended “going forth into the open air,” not staying indoors (Velsor 216). This means that it is in the open air that the law functions. The reason Whitman idealized the West was, thus, that the unexploited nature remained there and the ecosystem worked well.

It is worthwhile to examine what Whitman called “the lessons of variety and freedom” in nature. First, I would like to consider the variety. As we have seen in this chapter, Whitman presented not only various American regions and landscapes like “the dry gulch and rivulet bed,” “savannas,” “forests” but also various species of creatures, as in the following lines in section 33 of “Song of Myself:”

. . . the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the buck turns

furiously at the hunter,

Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter is

feeding on fish,

Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,

Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver pats the

mud with his paddle-shaped tail (*CPCP* 219-20)

The lines cited above describe each creature living in its own place. They depict what

Whitman called nature's variety. Gary Snyder refers to what Whitman called "the lessons of variety and freedom" in "Walt Whitman's Old 'New World'" as follows:

At the opening of the essay [*Democratic Vistas*] Whitman invokes the great lessons of nature, which are, he says, "variety" and "freedom." Take variety. (Today a common term for the natural variety of plant and animal species is *biodiversity*.) . . . Oddly enough, there is little grasp of the issues concerning wild nature in Whitman's rhetoric. . . . In his essay he finds nature either "healthy or happy" or finally "nothing in itself" and "serviceable." Whitman is unexcelled in his attribution of a kind of divinity to ordinary (white) men and women. However, the respect and authenticity he gives to human beings is not extended to nonhuman creatures. . . . As a vernacular community-based ecologist, I would suggest that we must imaginatively transform democracy into a trans-species exercise, not merely an in-house human-species political practice. (215-16)

Snyder presents a pessimistic view of Whitman's human-centered democracy. Moreover, he stresses the need for transformation of the present (Whitman's) "democracy" into a trans-species (deep ecological) exercise. These comments highlight an aspect of Whitman's nature-based poetry. I agree with Snyder's comments. Whitman was no deep ecologist, as Snyder suggested, even though he idealized the place of nature within American society and

hoped for a deeper integration and coexistence of nature and the American people in the future. Biodiversity is a concept derived from an idea of deep ecology which advocates the rights of both “human and nonhuman life on Earth” (Naess 14). This deep ecological movement promotes the empowerment of nonhuman life, which receives little attention, for “the usefulness . . . for human purposes” (Naess 14). The descriptions above by Whitman were presented as the variety of nature the New World democracy should imitate. Though it is certain that Whitman recognized individual variability in each species within a large context of biology and wrote about it in his poems, his descriptions were not described from the viewpoint of the equality between human and nonhuman life.

On the other hand, the interpretation of the concept of freedom in nature that Whitman described is ambiguous. I would like to show two possibilities of interpretation. One possibility is that he was referring to the freedom that people feel when they are immersed in nature. The other possibility is that each creature has its own independent place within nature. The former possibility can be seen throughout his works. The latter can be mainly found in his later works, especially in *Specimen Days*. Section 1 of “Song of Myself” clearly shows an example of the former:

I loafe and invite my soul,

I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

.....

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,

Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,

Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,

Nature without check with original energy. (*CPCP* 188)

The narrator comes into contact with “a spear of summer grass” and identifies himself as “I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health.” “Nature,” here, is inherent in the narrator himself. He observes “a spear of summer grass” and perceives “Nature” within himself. Things like the “Creeds and schools” of human beings are “in abeyance” in nature. At the end of this section of the poem, the speaker declares that he sings his songs “freely” regardless of anything else. This freedom, which people could feel by coming into direct contact with nature, is described often in “Song of Myself,” such as in the following lines: “I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked / I am mad for it to be in contact with me” (*CPCP* 189); “The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections, / They scorn the best I can do to relate them” (*CPCP* 200). The relationship between the speaker, “I,” and the earth is nurtured with “affections” and is in no way harmful.

Given the examination in this chapter, freedom is for Whitman inherent in the lands of

the American continent as the lines in “Our Old Feuillage” cited above show: “The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity, / In space the sporades, the scatter’d islands, the stars—on the firm earth, the lands, my lands” (321). Moreover, it was to be obtained through contact with nature. It is the variety and the freedom that prove the American continent to be “Democracy’s lands” (*CPCP* 184). In this sense, both are the most essential ingredients in the New World.

Was Whitman unable to depart from such a human-centered view on nature? I would like to consider another possibility here: freedom under the law of nature. Freedom and “Nature’s laws,” although they seemingly sound contradictory, do not contradict each other in terms of biodiversity. Let us examine “Bumble-Bees” in *Specimen Days*. This is the note written during the days Whitman enjoyed observing physical, natural things in Timber Creek:

As I jot this paragraph [of “Bumble-Bees”], I am out just after sunrise, and down towards the creek. The lights, perfumes, melodies—the blue birds, grass birds and robins, in every direction—the noisy, vocal, natural concert. For undertones, a neighboring wood-pecker tapping his tree, and the distant clarion of chanticleer. Then the fresh earth smells—the colors, the delicate drabs and thin blues of the perspective. The bright green of the grass has receiv’d an added tinge from the last two days’ mildness and moisture. How the sun silently mounts in the broad clear sky, on his day’s journey! How the

warm beams bathe all, and come streaming kissingly and almost hot on my
face. (*CPCP* 783)

Descriptions of nature's displays fill Whitman's catalog poems. Whitman admired the various songs of the birds, the atmosphere of the creek, and the variety of colors that was displayed.

He enjoyed an intimate relationship with the sun as seen in "Song of Myself." In such an environment, as described in "Bumble-Bees," Whitman noted the nature of bees:

Large and vivacious and swift, with wonderful momentum and a loud swelling
perpetual hum, varied now and then by something almost like a shriek, they
dart to and fro, in rapid flashes, chasing each other, and (little things as they
are,) conveying to me a new and pronounc'd sense of strength, beauty, vitality
and movement. Are they in their mating season? or what is the meaning of this
plenitude, swiftness, eagerness, display? As I walk'd, I thought I was follow'd
by a particular swarm, but upon observation I saw that it was a rapid
succession of changing swarms, one after another. (*CPCP* 784)

Through the observation of the bees, Whitman understood them as falling under "Nature's laws." William Major explains that the lines above convey Whitman's non-humanistic perspective (92-93).¹⁷ From an ecological perspective, the diversity described complements and proves the freedom of each living creature. In "Bumble-Bees," Whitman observed each creature, however, he did not relate their characteristics to those of human beings. To be exact,

he failed in this and saw only the nature of the bees.

In *Democratic Vistas*, when Whitman considered “American independence,” he defined “independence” as “Freedom from all laws or bonds except those of one’s own being, control’d by the universal ones” (*CPCP* 978). Independence and freedom seem to be interchangeable. Two possibilities of the interpretation of “freedom” in nature can be placed within the framework of the definition above: that each creature, including human beings, lives independently under the law of nature is freedom for Whitman.

Thus, nature was a key concept in the frustrated idealization of the West.¹⁸ When Whitman spoke of nature in his later works, he was simultaneously describing what the nation should be.¹⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan pointed out the topophilia²⁰ of the American continent and stated that “The dominant myths of America are nonurban” (193). He says that there is a deep-rooted myth of the “vanishing” frontier in the United States. As the development of the American continent progressed, the wilderness of the frontier became a place of democracy in comparison with the cities, whose lifestyle stood for human downfall and decay (193). This is a countervailing “democratic” discourse that has its roots in the American Revolutionary War. Erick Kaufmann explains two aspects of American geographical nationalism: “the nationalization of nature” like Manifest Destiny and the Westward Expansion; “the naturalization of the nation,” which praised “the uncivilized, primeval quality of untamed nature and stress[ed] its regenerative effect upon civilization” (666-68).

The Hudson River School of artists, including Cole, and the Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), and Horace Greeley (1811-72) are listed as the first naturalists (671-72). The remarks of Tuan and Kaufmann above are just as valid for Whitman. Whitman in his later years was a member of the naturalist movement as well.

Betsy Erkkila claims that “Whitman moves his narrative directly from the tragedy of the war to the restoration of an eternalized nature that bears no sign of political struggle and the wounds of history” in *Specimen Days* (Whitman 295). Given the examination in this chapter, Whitman’s nature nevertheless bolsters his democratic theory after the war. Such an association of nature and democracy occurred alongside his increasing awareness of the crisis of capitalism and the sickness of the nation and its people. This counter-narrative and criticism of the nation can be interpreted as the “naturalization of the nation.” Before the Civil War, nature and the nation were in complete accord for Whitman. He could connect the two easily and positively describe the diverse landscapes to show the nation’s history. However, his observations were superficial; the descriptions were chosen and arranged too intentionally, albeit “freely.” After the war, the nation no longer coincided with nature for Whitman. To establish a foundation for a new nation, order under the law of nature became paramount for him. Under such circumstances, Whitman confronted the problem of representation and sought for a new prosody. The following chapters examine this further.

Chapter II: California

This chapter examines the imagery of California in *Leaves of Grass* and reveals the importance and symbolic value Whitman placed on California, focusing on Manifest Destiny, the Gold Rush, and the nation's future. California occupied an important place for Whitman, because of the geography of its westernmost lands and its richness in natural resources. In the antebellum days, he shared the idea of Manifest Destiny: the place should have been acquired to prove American democracy. His newspaper articles and two poems on California published in 1860, "A Promise to California" and "Facing West from California's Shores," show this. On the other hand, in a postbellum poem, "Song of the Redwood-Tree" published in 1874, the spirit of Manifest Destiny was implicitly criticized in relation to civilization and capitalism. The introspection by the poet made for a frustrated idealization of California.

California has various and contested histories because of its geographic location and bountiful resources: those of Native Americans, European voyagers and conquerors, American pioneers, etc. These histories are not separate but mixed. A heterogeneous California was built under the dynamics of conflict and harmony, assimilation and removal, and defeat and victory. Within this rich historical context, the era of the Gold Rush was a particularly meaningful one.²¹ While the cities and regions of the East coast were built mostly by the Puritans, those on the West coast were first established by mountain men,

miners, and pioneers. When Whitman contrasted the East and West and their cultural differences, however, he was using his mind's eye: as stated above, Whitman only traveled as far west as Denver in his lifetime. The Mexican War, the Gold Rush, and the Westward Expansion were, however, contemporary events of great symbolic power. With that said, what did Whitman find in the imagery of California?

Whitman wrote some newspaper articles referring to California in 1846 during the Mexican War. He claimed California should be annexed to the United States. His critical eye was directed to the “undemocratic” situation of Mexico. One article published on May 6 conveyed and criticized the political and social conditions in Mexico. According to Richard White, President James Polk (1795-1849) “in April 1846 received news that the Mexicans had refused to receive the American minister, John Slidell, [and] he decided on war” (78). After this news, Polk provided a false report to Congress that American troops had been killed on the north of the Rio Grande and the declaration of war was approved (78). Whitman reported this fact in the article. First, the article conveyed that the Mexican President Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga (1797-1849) was preparing for battle with the United States: “The preparations of Paredes look as much to the return of Santa Anna, (a bloody monster, and cowardly as he is bloody,) as to any trouble with the United States” (*The Journalism* 1: 349). Whitman claimed that though the United States was attempting to build a “friendly” relationship with Mexico, Mexico refused this friendship and preferred to go to war. He

opposed the war, despite claiming in advance the victory of the United States (349). Whitman said:

The sure result of a war, if once entered into by our people, and their heart committed to it, would be the further 'annexation' of all California, and very likely plant the banner of the United States upon Cape Catoche on the east and St. Lucas on the west, with its rule over the sweep of territory within them.

(The Journalism 1: 349)

Whitman saw the war with Mexico and its internal circumstances as a matter of democracy, and seemed to be implying that the U. S. was superior to Mexico as a republic, where there were no governors like Paredes and Antonio López de Santa Anna (1794-1876): "Though Mexico is called a republic, the inhabitants have neither the real possession of true liberty, or any tangible idea of it. As a people, their character has little or nothing of the noble attributes of the Anglo-Saxon race" (*The Journalism 1: 349*). Whitman's beliefs surrounding Mexican people and their supposed characteristics are noteworthy. He further stated:

Never developing the sturdy independence of an English freeman, their Spanish and mulatto ancestors have sent them craft, subtlety, passionate spite, deceit and voluptuousness enough—but no high patriotism, no dauntless devotion to great truths, no energy to overcome obstacles, no lusty independence, preferring a home in the wild to giving up even a trifling

principle. The Mexicans are hybridous [sic] race, withal.—Only a small proportion are of purely Spanish, or any other European extraction.

Nine-tenths of the population are made up of various intermixtures formed from white, Indian, and black parentage, in all its mottled varieties (*The Journalism* 1: 349).

This article refers to the heterogeneous society of Mexico and displays Whitman's belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Mexicans were alluring but idle savages, according to his description. Therefore, they needed to become civilized. A similar rhetoric to that of Manifest Destiny is found here. At the start of the war, the nation was split into supporting and opposing groups: "northern and southern expansionists backed the president [Polk]. Only in New England and New York was there immediate strong opposition" (White 78). The former group sought for "Jefferson's old vision of an 'empire of liberty.'" (74) They believed that "[e]xpansion . . . would provide the key to economic stability and prosperity while simultaneously cooling sectional conflict by solving the dispute over slavery" (74). The latter group was concerned that a new slave territory would be added to the Union (78). Though the article above did not refer specifically to the issue of slavery, it can be stated that Whitman shared the beliefs of the expansionists.

Whitman's other article on the war, entitled "Annexation," published after the war started on June 6, 1846, reported that there were ruptures between the "Yucatecos," called

“the best and most industrious citizens in Mexico,” and the central power and authority of Mexico (*The Journalism* 1: 403-04). Moreover, Whitman predicted that California and Santa Fe would become part of the United States again (*Journalism* 1: 404). “Yucatecos” is the plural form of “Yucateco,” which the *OED* lists as “Yucatec,” which is “[a]n American Indian of the Yucatán Peninsula in eastern Mexico; such Indians collectively” (“Yucatec, n” def. a). Whitman described the conflicts around 1846 that occurred in Yucatán: the declaration of independence of Yucatán in 1845 and the declaration of the reincorporation of Yucatán into Mexico by the Yucatecan congress in 1846 (Richmond 23). According to Douglas W. Richmond, Domingo Barret raised an objection to the reincorporation and took political control in January 1847. Barret was starting a negotiation of the annexation with President Polk (23-24). The article also presented Whitman’s view of the annexation and territorial expansion of the United States as follows:

We have no ambition for the mere physical grandeur of this republic. Such grandeur is idle and deceptive enough. Or at least it is only desirable as an aid to reach the truer good, the good of the whole body of the people. (*Journalism* 1: 404)

Though it seems to be an argument to justify the annexation, or a description of the Mexican War spoken from the viewpoint of an expansionist, this “aid to reach the truer good” was

Whitman's basic stance on the annexation. He claimed that the annexation was not for the cause of national advance but for the American people.

In an article of June 16, 1846, Whitman offered a settlement of the war justifying it: "If the war continues any great length of time, we shall get California and Santa Fe without bothering through a diplomatic treaty. We would, however, very, *very* much prefer them in a quiet, peaceable manner . . ." (*The Journalism* 1: 425; italics original). He also conveyed that there had been a lot of discussion about "the subject of 'annexation'" in the nation (*The Journalism* 1: 425). In an article published about a month later, on July 7, 1846, Whitman revealed his expansionist sentiments once again:

We love to indulge in thoughts of the future extent and power of this republic—because all its increase is the increase of human happiness and liberty.—Therefore hope we that the U. S. will keep a fast grip on California. . . . Be it ours to roll down all of the upstart leaven of old despotism, that comes in our way! (*The Journalism* 1: 454-55)

Mexico was regarded with hostility for preventing the fulfillment of democracy. An article of August 7, 1846 conveyed rumors of negotiations for peace between Mexico and the U. S. government, and that the Mexican Congress proposed to cede "the whole of California and Santa Fe to the United States" (*The Journalism* 2: 7-8). An article of September 2, 1846 reported that Santa Anna was back in power. Whitman declared that the expansion of the

territory of the nation was not for “the vulgar spirit of conquest and acquisition” but for “exulting pride in the spread of man’s rights” (*The Journalism 2*: 42).

In an article of August 29, 1846, Whitman described his impressions of California: “the beautiful shores of California,” “the fertility of that soil,” the “wholesomeness of the air, and the facilities there for trade” (*The Journalism 2*: 37). This was written after his visit to Governor’s Island on the 28th and what he called “the California regiment,” which was probably the first Regiment of New York Volunteers for service in California and the Mexican War. He continued:

The daring, burrowing energies of the nation will never rest till the whole of this northern section of the Great West World is circled in the mighty Republic—there’s no denying that fact!—And the new states that will rise on the Pacific must play an important part in our national destinies. Colonies will tend that way. Instalments from the Atlantic country and from far beyond the Atlantic—hundreds and thousands, before whom the wide world is spread, as a map, whereon they feel equally at home, on any ‘unappropriated’ part—the Yankees—sturdy Irish and German immigrants—daring young ‘natives’ from the middle states, too—the Mormons—the sinewy hunter and adventurer from the valley of the Mississippi—these are they who will form the elements out of which the now Dim Majesty of the Pacific states, will take form and be a

tangible reality. From their loins will spring a race, noble haply as our earlier freemen. For of such crude, turbulent, and unhewn energies, the grandest empires have evolved themselves—such as Rome, the olden time. (*The Journalism 2: 37-38*)

This utterance shows the heart of Manifest Destiny. Whitman dared to write a brief history of settlement in the American Continent as a prophecy, which leads to Turner's reevaluation of the frontiers. He claimed that the annexation of California would make "the Great West World" of the United States empire equivalent to that of Rome, and the great road of the nation was paved by the tireless energies of "the Yankees," and the "sturdy Irish and German immigrants" and so on. Thus, as explained above, it was necessary for the U.S. to acquire California for Whitman to prove not only the wholeness of the nation and its greatness but also its democratic progress, or "a tangible reality" of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Whitman presented another view of California in a paper written in the 1850s, as follows: "California is sown thick with the names of all the little and big saints. Chase them away and substitute aboriginal names" (*An American Primer 29-30*). According to White, Spanish sailors first visited Alta California, the northern part of present Baja California in as early as 1542. The Yumas who were living there welcomed the Franciscan missionaries who built a distinct lifestyle from any other neighboring regions like Texas and New Mexico.

However, when the cattle of the missionaries ruined the ecosystem of the area, the Yumas began resisting the Spanish; this rebellion, however, was subdued. The Franciscan mission that started in San Diego in 1769 had a lasting influence on their lifestyles. Barry M. Pritzker raises two changes: one was habitat change and the other was personal change. Since the missionaries arrived, “European grasses and weeds replaced the original seed-food grasses; overgrazing accelerated erosion and diminished the amount of much wild game and marine food was reduced” (114). The ecosystem and environment in California were changed. In addition to that, according to Pritzker, a cultural genocide reduced the Indian populations under the influence of Catholicism because of “disease, torture, overwork, and malnourishment” (114). The missions converted nearly 54,000 Indians to Catholicism and “controlled land, livestock, and labor” through education (White 33). As a result, “Indian weavers, brick makers, blacksmiths, farmers, shepherds, and vaqueros—cattle drovers—created the Californian economy, and the missions prospered on their labor” (White 33). When Mexico became independent from Spain, California was included in its territory. The standard of living of its Indian population was deteriorating. They repeatedly struggled with Mexican colonists and expanding poverty (Pritzker 114). As a result, “[m]any Indian groups, particularly in the Sacramento Valley, abandoned their once-peaceful ways and turned to raiding and guerrilla warfare. . . . Some Indians also fought with the Yankees in the Mexican War” (114). Given the series of remarks on California by Whitman, he may have

had such undemocratic conditions in the region in mind. In addition, he criticized the Spanish for invading, clearing out, and assimilating the aboriginal peoples and suggested the necessity to (re)replace Spanish saints' names with aboriginal ones.

Whitman showed a great interest in Native American words and referred to the need to preserve them.²² In "Slang in America" (1885), he praised them as "often perfect" (*CPCP* 1169) and tried to make a collection of them.²³ Aboriginal place names particularly interested him. As Allen Walker Read suggests, two place names are particularly notable in Whitman's poems (190): "Paumanok," modern day Long Island, and "Mannahatta," modern day Manhattan. Though he argued for the need to use aboriginal place names, the ones in California were not mentioned in *Leaves of Grass*. According to Rand Richards, about "fifty-three major cultural groups speaking up to ninety different languages" lived in the regions of California before the Spanish arrived (2). It is no wonder that Whitman used them if he had some information on them, given the examples of "Paumanok" and "Mannahatta."

As seen above, at the center of Whitman's descriptions on California in his journalist days, is the concept of expansion of the republic. This idea informed his antebellum poems in *Leaves of Grass*. California, in his catalog poems, is associated with the Gold Rush. The word "California" appears 16 times in the poems. The quality of the people and the land is summed up. In "Starting from Paumanok," the speaker is "a miner in California" (*CPCP* 176). "Our Old Feuillage" has two descriptions of California: "California's golden hills and

hollows” (*CPCP* 318); “California life, the miner, bearded, dress’d in his rude costume, the stanch California friendship” (*CPCP* 321). “Song of the Exposition” has a line that describes “the crude ores of California” becoming “bullion” (*CPCP* 345). “[T]he wool of California” is also seen in “The Return of the Heroes” (*CPCP* 491). These images are all related to the Gold Rush or the produce of the land. James Marshall found gold in the American River on January 24, 1848, and miners began surging in from all over the world. According to White, the non-Indian population of California “increased from about 14,000 in 1848 to 223,856 in 1852” (191). Historian Kevin Starr asserts that “[California] was linked imaginatively with the most compelling of American myths, the pursuit of happiness” by “a legacy of the Gold Rush” (*Americans and the California Dream* 68). Whitman’s descriptions clearly conveyed this optimistic sense of enthusiasm.

In 1860, Whitman wrote two California poems, “A Promise to California” and “Facing West from California’s Shores.” Both reflect his idea of expansionism continued since his journalist days. The former is spoken by an elated pioneer who embodied the spirit of Manifest Destiny, while the latter shows the difficulty of realizing the poet’s ideal in relation to the event. First, let us look at “A Promise to California,” which has seldom been discussed in detail.

A Promise to California,

Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound and Oregon;

Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you, to remain, to teach

robust American love,

For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you, inland, and

along the Western sea;

For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea, and I will also.

(*CPCP* 282-83)

As seen in section 14 of “Starting from Paumanok,” the speaker in “A Promise to California” identifies himself with “these States” or “the continued westward expansion of the nation” (Albin 533). The second line, “Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound and Oregon” evokes the famous route called the Oregon Trail, created in the 1830s. The speaker in this poem follows the trail. Whitman might have heard descriptions of the trail from Thomas Jefferson Farnham (1804-48) and his wife Eliza W. Farnham (1815-64) who traveled it, as Whitman reviewed Thomas Farnham’s book in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on October 12, 1846 (*Journalism* 2: 85). The unpublished notes on the South and the West written around 1857 are considered to rely on the works of W. H. Emory and Eliza W. Farnham (*NUPM* 5: 1945, 1949).²⁴ The speaker in the poem leaves the East for California as a pioneer in the advancing Westward migration.

The word “promise” evidently evokes Manifest Destiny, which is the “mission” of the United States “to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of

our yearly multiplying millions” (O’Sullivan 5). A promise made in this poem is “to remain, to teach robust American love.” In the article “Annexation” cited above, Whitman claimed the aim of Manifest Destiny was “to reach the truer good, the good of the whole body of the people” (*Journalism* 1: 404). Moreover, as the phrase “to teach robust American love” demonstrates, the aim of expansion was also to build a relationship between the people and the speaker-poet, as described in section 14 of “Starting from Paumanok.”²⁵ The importance of the public role of poetry was claimed here again, as in “Starting from Paumanok.” To achieve American democracy, not only Westward Expansion, the speaker-poet, “I,” who teaches “robust American love,” also needs to go to the West. This is because, although “robust American love” belongs “inland, and along the Western sea,” the existence of this love is unnoticed in these places, and the speaker is eager to “teach” it.

That “robust American love” is a love embodied by pioneers who had “robust” bodies, which were needed to survive in the wild lands of the frontier. Charles M. Oliver makes an outline of this poem and mentions that “Robust was a term the poet used most often in referring to homosexual love” (160). As Oliver suggests, in the poem “Behold This Swarthy Face,” “robust love” implies a homosexual love:

Behold this swarthy face, these gray eyes,

This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,

My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;

Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me lightly on the lips

with robust love,

And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck give a kiss in return,

We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,

We are those two natural and nonchalant persons. (*CPCP* 279)

Oliver's claim is valid for this poem. The kiss between "a Manhattanese" and "I" refers to a homosexual one. In Manhattan, the speaker has a swarthy face and brown hands, which evokes the image of a manual laborer. The "Manhattanese" that he refers to would also be a worker, an "American comrade." The intimate relationship that these people have is the "robust love" he refers to. They were described as "natural and nonchalant persons." They were free spirits and representative of the democratic people Whitman had in mind. They are robust. Therefore, their love is robust. Thus, in this poem, the "robust love" evokes a homoerotic comradeship nurtured by the democratic and free will of the people.

It is not clear whether the "robust American love" in "A Promise to California" was of a homosexual nature or not. However, the love belonged to the democratic people as in "Behold This Swarthy Face." The speaker-poet, "I," in "A Promise to California" was a pioneer who traveled along the Oregon Trail and was also in a "robust" condition. The love nurtured by such healthy and vigorous common people who wrestled with the lands was referred to as "robust American love." The word "robust" in this poem echoes the word

“stanch” in the description of California in “Our Old Feuillage,” cited above: “California life, the miner, bearded, dress’d in his rude costume, the stanch California friendship” (*CPCP* 321). As Edwin Fussell, M. Wynn Thomas, and Chris Packard have claimed (Fussell 398; Thomas 137; Packard 75), Whitman praised the frontier spirits and described the speaker “I” as one of the people who could teach and embody this love.

California occupied an important place within Westward Expansionism for two reasons. One was the role of San Francisco Bay in developing the Asian trade.²⁶ The other was the fertile lands into which pioneers and settlers poured to chase the “California Dream,” in the name of Manifest Destiny. “A Promise to California” seems to sponsor the latter occupation and offers a glimpse of the justification for both Westward Expansion and the Mexican War.

The other poem of 1860 evokes the period after an imagined arrival in California; in “Facing West from California’s Shores,” the speaker strangely laments his loss of destination. This poem is narrated by a pioneer who has arrived in California and shows a subtle criticism of the Westward Movement.

The poem has often been discussed in conjunction with “Passage to India.” Henry Nash Smith argues that the poem shows the march of American imperialism toward Asia, as does “Passage to India” (45-46). Hsuan L. Hsu illuminates Whitman’s desire for the globalism of an “Orbic Literature,” which inspired “Passage to India” (142-43). On the other

hand, Erkkila claims that the poem suggests the failure of the territorial expansion movement, which had “not advanced either civilization or democracy” (*Whitman* 178). She says, “. . . the poet’s mythical representation of the West as [a] new-world garden is undercut by the historical formation of America. By 1860, the American West had, in effect, closed.” This speculation resulted in “the flight into spiritual seas” that was indicated in “Passage to India” (178). In this way, “Facing West from California’s Shores” is considered to lead to “Passage to India.” “Facing West from California’s Shores” can be interpreted as a poem that showed Whitman’s inclination toward world literature or American globalism, given “Passage to India,” as previous scholars have claimed. Therefore, I would like to examine “Facing West from California’s Shores” in relation to “A Promise to California.” This will aid in clarifying Whitman’s view on Westward Expansionism. As we have seen in “A Promise to California,” the poet contemplated the social role of the poet and poetry here again:

Facing west from California’s shores,

Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,

I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the land of
migrations, look afar,

Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;

For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,

From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,

From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,

Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,

Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,

(But where is what I started for so long ago?

And why is it yet unfound?) (*CPCP* 266-67)

After a long voyage, the speaker “look[s] afar” at the Pacific Ocean and “the circle almost circled.” The speaker is “I, a child, very old.” He is a kind of American Adam,²⁷ a representative of numberless immigrants who came to North America by sea. Having arrived at his destination, California, he is ostensibly “very pleas'd and joyous.”

The speaker “[f]acing west from California’s shores” is “very pleas'd and joyous,” which means he accepts this movement with joy. The destination for this speaker, who is a pioneer, an American Adam—“I, a child, very old”—is really a utopia, either the American continent in general or the virgin land of California in particular. Meanwhile, the lines “(But where is what I started for so long ago? / And why is it yet unfound?)” imply the difficulty of achieving his goal to “teach robust American love” that Erkkila calls “civilization or democracy” (*Whitman* 178). In the article “Annexation,” Whitman claims the annexation was not for the cause of national advance but for the people (*Journalism* 1: 404). This argument is repeated here again. The word “unfound” used twice emphasizes that the goal will never be fulfilled easily. The parenthetical status, of course, weakens the sentiment. Thus, on the

whole, the territorial expansion and the Westward Movement are viewed positively in this poem as well as in “A Promise to California.” In slight contrast, “Facing West from California’s Shores” represents an introspective and subtle criticism of Westward Expansionism.

Though Whitman seems to express a crucial insight here into the nature of the movement—the way that the unsatisfied desire caused by the loss of destination paradoxically made the movement advance and fostered globalism—, it is uncertain that this desire directly lead to the globalism in the context of the representation of California. Rather, we can find that unfulfilled desire is one of the driving forces that inspires the poet to write the poem. His desire “to teach robust American love” cannot be fulfilled simply by his arrival at the west end of the American continent, California. As claimed in “Annexation,” “the mere physical grandeur of this republic . . . is idle and deceptive enough” (*Journalism* 1: 404). Therefore, he conceived of his role as a poet “to reach the truer good, the good of the whole body of the people” (*Journalism* 1: 404) and to build an intimate personal relationship between the speaker-poet and the people, in “Facing West from California’s Shores.” Overall, the two 1860 poems describe a pretext and a reality of the Westward Expansion. The speaker, “I,” who is robust and actively working in teaching and traveling, is a key figure in both poems.

Whitman's view of California is summarized in "Song of the Redwood-Tree," which relates the history of the state. Unlike the other two poems, "A Promise to California" and "Facing West from California's Shores," in "The Redwood-Tree," the voice of the land in "Mendocino country," appears in the poem and tells its story. Instead of the speaker, "I," who appears in the other two poems on California, the Redwood-Tree itself becomes the narrator of the poem and delivers an impassioned speech of the ideal situation of the nation and democracy on the American continent. The Redwood-Tree is "the trunk, the real genuine America" Whitman mentioned in the article of 1863 (*UPP* 2: 35). The giant tree, as an "autochthonous" plant of the region, represents an unspoiled, ideal ecosystem of the continent. The appearance of the Redwood-Tree, however, exposes the contradictions of Manifest Destiny. Under the movement, California was seen as a mythical place, a virgin land where the American Dream would be fulfilled, but only through an advancing exploitation. Because of this exploitation, the redwood trees were disappearing. Thus, "Song of the Redwood-Tree" focuses on California and presents it as *topos*.

The logging of redwoods began early in the nineteenth century. At first, it took a long time to cut them down due to a lack of "suitable equipment." Loggers used "hand axes," "hardwood wedges and ironbound wooden mallets. . . . After the Civil War, adequate saws were available for felling and bucking redwood trees into logs." As a result, the ecosystem of the redwood forests was being devastated (Save-the-Redwoods League, *The Redwood Forest*

27). As large-scale logging advanced, the redwoods came to be known by the public and the preservation movement developed. In the 1850s:

. . . two magnificent 100-m-high giant sequoias in the Calaveras Grove of Big Trees were cut down to create traveling exhibits. The bark from the second tree—the ‘Mother of the Forest’—was stripped off, shipped east, and then reassembled to form an imposing 10-m-diameter, 37-m-high display in the Crystal Palace exhibition hall in New York City. The exhibit was later moved to the Crystal Palace in London, England, where it remained on display until 1866. (Save-the-Redwoods League, *The Redwood Forest* 34)

Moreover, “President Abraham Lincoln signed congressional legislation that established the world’s first redwood forest preserve for giant sequoia” in June 1864 (Save-the-Redwoods League, *The Redwood Forest* 34).²⁸ In the midst of such enthusiasm for the Californian redwoods, Whitman’s “Song of the Redwood-Trees” was written.

Whitman commented on the poem in a letter to Rudolf Schmidt²⁹ in Denmark on March 4, 1874, as follows: “I have written [“Song of the Redwood-Tree”] to idealize our great Pacific half of America, (the future *better half*)” (*Corr.* 2: 282; italics original). In another letter to Schmidt on July 28, 1874, as a response to criticism of the poem, the poet also suggested:

I myself have *pleased myself* more fully with *Redwood Tree* than any of my pieces of late years. But it is generally thought wild & cloudy here—(the *Columbus*³⁰ is more popular far)—I suppose it is hardly necessary to tell you that I have *pitched* and *keyed* my pieces more with reference to fifty years hence, & how they will stand mellowed and toned *then*—than to pleasing & tickling the immediate impressions of the present hour. (*Corr.* 2: 309-10; italics original)

These comments demonstrate that Whitman wrote the poem looking fifty years ahead. The West was connected by Whitman with the future of the nation and called “the future *better half*.” By the other half, Whitman was referring to the Atlantic or the East, which, he was implying, represented America’s past. After all, California was the destination of the Westward Movement and the place where his ideal democracy was to be achieved. He talked about it “here,” Camden, New Jersey, in the East, where “Song of the Redwood-Tree” was not appreciated. In response, he declared the poem to be a kind of prophecy.

“Song of the Redwood-Tree” has been critically discussed by several previous studies in relation to Westward Expansionism and Manifest Destiny, with the associated issues of civilization, industrialization, and environmentalism. Steven Olson claims that “Song of the Redwood-Tree” praised a theory of human evolution widely shared in the nineteenth century, as did “Song of the Broad-Axe,” and “Song of the Exposition” (“Song of the Redwood-Tree”

664). Charles M. Oliver says this poem represents Whitman's ideal society, in which nature and human beings would build a new society together (199-200). David Reynolds also saw in Whitman's vision that "the new America will be planted in the Far West, away from the East and its problems," and represented the hope for an unindustrialized utopia (512-13). Jimmie M. Killingsworth argues from an ecocritical perspective that this poem uses "old mythological conventions and traditional poetic language," and that the personified Redwood-Tree is only "an abstraction . . . the poet inhabits" to justify the exploitation of nature (69). James Perrin Warren also claims the poem is written in a noncritical tone ("Contexts for Reading" 175). On the other hand, Steven Blakemore and Jon Noble maintain that the voices of Native Americans echo in the "Voice of a mighty dying tree" (*CPCP* 351).

Though "Song of the Redwood-Tree" sought a hitherto unrealized democratic society that the American people, as heirs of the Redwood-Tree, would build in the future, it is first necessary to consider the years in which the poem was written and published in order to fully understand this argument. In 1873 and 1874, the post-war Reconstruction was in full swing, and the Centennial was two years away. Gay Wilson Allen sees the frustration expressed in the death-chant of the Redwood-Tree as emerging from "Whitman's loneliness and near despair during the fall and winter of 1873-1874," and claims this poem is not an elegy but a recurrence of "his old theme (as in 'Pioneers ! O Pioneers!') of the past preparing for the future," and its as of yet unfulfilled promise (*The Solitary Singer* 457-58).³¹ The years of

1873 and 1874 were difficult years for Whitman. On January 23, 1873, he had a stroke caused by an emotional disturbance and became paralyzed on his left side. On May 23, 1873, his mother passed away. Allen said his loneliness was the most severe at the beginning of 1874. From late January, 1874, he devoted himself to recording his memories of the Civil War (*The Solitary Singer* 449-50, 456-57). It was for Whitman the time to organize his thoughts and rebuild his narrative of the time. Linda Furgerson Selzer analyzed “Song of the Redwood-Tree” and “September Mendocino,” which was a response poem written by Clarence Major (1936-), and suggests that “[a]fter the horrors of the Civil War had scarred the Eastern landscape, Whitman relocated his millennial hopes for the nation’s future to the California West” (160). I agree with her in this respect. Meanwhile, she also agrees with previous scholars that Whitman wrote the poem without reflecting on the logging operations that were then decimating the redwoods (163). In this regard, I do not agree with her. Given the environment surrounding the redwood tree as mentioned above, this poem expressed a definite unease about the disappearing trees. The last one standing and the danger of extinction relates the risk posed by Westward Expansionism and the spread of capitalism. This thesis now seeks to elaborate on Allen’s claim and further explore Whitman’s despair and frustration with American society, as reflected in “Song of the Redwood-Tree.”³²

The poem consists of three sections. In the first, the dying Redwood-Tree and the speaker, who “heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting,” speak alternately. The second

section relates a brief history of California, concentrating on the Gold Rush. In the third section, “a grander future” is predicted (*CPCP* 355). Each section can be summarized in more detail as follows, with a focus on the poet’s critical eye.

The composition of the first section is where three characters appear: the speaker, the choppers, and the Redwood-Tree. The first section begins with the voice of the speaker: “A California song / A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe as air” (*CPCP* 351). The song is the “Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense,” not heard by anybody except “I,” the speaker (*CPCP* 351): “I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting. / The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not, / The quick-ear’d teamsters and chain and jack-screw men heard not” (*CPCP* 351). Because nobody else hears the song, the speaker feels the need to convey it.

The “murmuring, fateful, giant voice” of the “Redwood-Tree” sings “That chant of seasons and time, chant not of the past only but the future” (*CPCP* 351)—a farewell and prophecy. The tree talks of its own life and how it has survived in this place:

You untold life of me,

And all you venerable and innocent joys,

Perennial hardy life of me with joys ’mid rain and many a summer sun,

And the white snows and night and the wild winds;

*O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd by man,
 (For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have consciousness, identity,
 And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)
 Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,
 Our time, our term has come.*

Nor yield we mournfully, majestic brothers,

*We who have grandly fill'd our time; (CPCP 351-52; italics original here and
 subsequently in this poem)*

The Redwood-Tree introduces its own ecology. The Redwood-Tree has grown up under harsh circumstances in nature, over a long period of time, living with joy. According to the Save-the-Redwoods League, the coastal redwood is the tallest tree on the earth. It is “more than 320 feet” in length and “more than 27 feet wide.” The tree can live to be “more than 2000 years” old. “The first redwood fossils date back more than 200 million years to the Jurassic period.” They originally grew wild in “an estimated 2 million acres . . . along California’s coast from south of Big Sur to just over the Oregon border,” before the commercial logging started in the 1850s. Driven by the Gold Rush, people crowded California and logged redwoods extensively “for lumber and resources.” “Today, only 5 percent of the original old-growth coast redwood forest remains, along a 450-mile coastal

strip” (“Coast Redwoods”). The long lifespan of the tree is expressed as “Perennial hardy life” in the poem. Whitman here praised the redwood, which had adapted itself to the local environment a long time before the people arrived.

The joys for survival are expressed in many ways: “venerable and innocent joys,” “the great patient rugged joys,” “my soul’s strong joys unreck’d by man,” and “joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine.” Much of this joy is the source of the tree’s vitality to survive in the harsh environment. Additionally, the strong, persistent vitality conditioned by the natural environment keeps the speaker-poet’s attention.

The Redwood-Tree sings the story of his life dramatically, and then talks about “*them*,” who have been “*predicted long*” (CPCP 352). The dying tree says that “*we*” “*leave the field for them.*”

With Nature’s calm content, with tacit huge delight,

We welcome what we wrought for through the past,

And leave the field for them.

For them predicted long,

For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,

For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!

In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta, Nevadas,

These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys, far Yosemite,

To be in them absorb'd, assimilated. (CPCP 352)

The “they” the speaker refers to here are of course the human beings, who will come to the redwood forest to clear and cultivate it. The words “*abdicate*,” “*absorb'd*,” and “*assimilated*” leave no doubt about the fate of the throne of the “*forest kings*;” “*they*” are their successors. The tree is marking the end of the old era. Blakemore and Noble interpreted the redwood as representing the “Indians:” “The Redwood’s reddish bark and heartwood make it analogous to the Indians’ ‘red skin,’ and there was a series of tribes denominated ‘Redwood Indians’ that inhabited the northern coast of California. . . . Through the 1870s, California tribes took up the famous Ghost Dance” and in 1873, from April to June, the Modoc War occurred (110-11). Moreover, they claimed, “The Lone Redwood represents the anachronistic Indian race soon-to-be displaced by the ‘superber’ white race” (113). Their interpretation of the redwood is acceptable, however, I am opposed to their taking of the word “superber” at face value. The words “*absorb'd*” and “*assimilated*” indicate that the transfer of power from the “*forest kings*” to “*a superber race*” will be held violently. The lines cited above show that the immense power of the forest kings will be seized by human beings, while the word “superber” emphasizes the violence and sounds ironic. The Redwood-Tree addresses the kings’ “majestic brother” to accept the absorption and assimilation for “the future.” The future is depicted in section 3 of this poem. I suggest that the descriptions of the huge, spatial world of nature in

California as being “*absorb’d, assimilated*” into the kingdom of human beings indicates that the exploitation of the land was advancing and the area of the redwoods was becoming narrower as “[a] prophecy and indirection.”

The stage direction follows: “Then to a loftier strain, / Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant, / As if the heirs, the deities of the West, / Joining with master-tongue bore part” (CPCP 352). It can be stated that this poem is another version of “I Hear America Singing” (1860). The Redwood-Tree plays a melody part and others, such as the skies, airs, mountain peaks, precipitous cliffs, and valleys join the chorus.

The prophetic Redwood-Tree, at risk of disappearing, must say the coronation will be held without violence and announces the arrival of the long-awaited person:

Not wan from Asia’s fetiches,

Nor red from Europe’s old dynastic slaughter-house,

(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and scaffolds

everywhere,)

But come from Nature’s long and harmless throes, peacefully builded thence,

These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,

To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,

You promis’d long, we pledge, we dedicate. (CPCP 352)

Because the coronation was one of the historical facts that would occur not in Asia nor in Europe, but on the American continent, Whitman could not avoid writing about the incident. It was emphasized that the secession would be held without violence, by referring to the bloody revolutions of Europe. Since a lot of violence was already happening there, the peacefulness of the place had to be emphasized, as in the following lines: “[Nature’s] *harmless throes*,” “*peacefully*,” and “*These virgin lands*.” Moreover, “*the new culminating man*,” one of “*them*” appears as a man who succeeds the throne. The rhetoric of the descriptions above is as follows: though the new race of human beings, including the choppers, teamsters, and jack-screw men who had already arrived in the redwood forest, the long-awaited person had not yet come. Therefore, the speaker-poet allowed the Redwood-Tree to address the man or the reader as “*to you, the empire new*” and called him to the “*lands of the Western shore*.” It shows the poet’s critical eye on the conditions the choppers, the teamsters, and the jack-screw men, who did not hear the voice of the dying tree. In the letter, Whitman explained that this poem was an idealization of “our great Pacific half of America, (the future *better half*)” (*Corr.* 2: 282). This idealization occurred because his ideal had not yet been realized. In the rhetoric of idealization, the current conditions are treated critically, although implicitly.

As the stage direction shows, the strain of the Redwood-Tree reached a peak. The “*You*” the speaker was addressing here was described with the striking terms “occult deep volitions,” “vital, universal, deathless germs.”

You occult deep volitions,

*You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on yourself, giving not
taking law,*

*You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life and love and
aught that comes from life and love,*

*You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America, (age upon age
working in death the same as life,)*

*You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and mould the New
World, adjusting it to Time and Space,*

You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd but ever alert,

*You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be unconscious of
yourselves,*

Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;

*You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts, statutes,
literatures,*

Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas entire, lands of the

Western shore,

We pledge, we dedicate to you. (CPCP 353)

Though the land where “*the empire new*” will be built by “*the new culminating man*” is bequeathed to “*them,*” the will to construct this new New World stays silenced by the noise and activity of the redwood logging, as described at the beginning of the first section. The Redwood-Tree tried to revive the volitions with its grievous cry. It is the readers’ volitions for democracy that the poet was attempting to rouse. In the second and third lines, “manhood” and “womanhood” are addressed by the Redwood-Tree. The “manhood” is described as “*average spiritual,*” “*pois’d on yourself,*” and “*giving not taking law*” in the second line. The “average” means the “manhood” does not belong to any class and remains impartial. The phrases “*pois’d on yourself*” and “*giving not taking law*” mean “self-discipline” and “self-control.” The term “womanhood” in the third line is described as the source of the cycle of life on the earth, which has been repeated peacefully with “*love.*” “Manhood” and “womanhood” are two aspects of human nature and the parentage of the volitions toward democracy. Because both have been lost or invisible, he was eager to announce their existences loudly. Here is precisely the point of this poem. Whitman saw the lack of this volition, the manhood and the womanhood, as the causes of the democratic country remaining unbuilt. He was waiting for the coming of the “you” who had them. The volitions

are restated as “*unseen moral essence*” and “*hidden national will*.” Moreover, the volitions are called as “*vital, universal, deathless germs*.” Whitman would see the volitions for democracy as the psyche of the nation that had been passed down through the minds of the American people. The “*occult deep volitions*” were not seen, ostensibly “*conceal’d*” under “*all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface*.” These errors may certainly have evoked the confusions from the Civil War and Reconstruction, given the year this poem was published. Moreover, the activities of the settlers who failed in communicating with the tree were also included in the errors.

This address of the Redwood-Tree can be seen as coming almost directly from Whitman himself, though he lets the tree speak, and not the “I” voice as seen in his earlier poems. The poet criticized the “choppers,” and the “quick-ear’d teamsters and jack-screw men,” who worked without hearing the voice of the tree and seeing their own “*occult deep volitions*.” For this reason, I cannot bring myself to accept the argument of Selzer described above. In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman was deeply concerned at “an atmosphere of hypocrisy” in postwar American society, whose aim was “pecuniary gain” (CPCP 937). He was apprehensive about the way people built superficial relationships with one another and the results: although “materialistic development” was achieved, “really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results” were not produced (CPCP 938). “In vain have we annex’d Texas, California, Alaska, and reach north for Canada and south for Cuba. It is as if we were

somehow being endow'd with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul" (CPCP 938).³³ By criticizing the "atmosphere of hypocrisy," which pursued "pecuniary gain" without spirituality, where people could not communicate with one another, the poet spoke through the tree in order to awaken the "*occult deep volitions*" and encourage people to build "*the empire new*" in California.

At end of the prophecy by the Redwood-Tree, the empire was restated as "*homes for good*" where "*the new culminating man*" lived under the law of nature.

For man of you, your characteristic race,

Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower proportionate to Nature,

Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by wall or roof,

Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,

Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,) here fill his

time,

To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,

To disappear, to serve. (CPCP 353)

This was his hope for mankind. Given the examination above, the long-awaited man, "*he*," included everybody who had not lost their volitions for democracy. This was a recommendation for the settlement of the people who would continue to move across the American continent. He recommended that they build "*homes*" in the lands of the West coast.

The repetition of the word “*Here*” expressed the importance of the place for the people or “*man of you.*” Why did Whitman place so much emphasis on California? It was because nature remained unspoiled there and the lands were at the end of the American continent. The last prophecy by the Redwood-Tree ends with the description of “*he,*” the man living in the “*lands of the Western shore.*” The poet finds “*joy*” in the life there. The life was described as to “*climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck’d by wall or roof*” and “*laugh with storm or sun.*” The vast, unwalled spaces in California made the men free from “*all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface*” and gave them the wisdom and experience necessary to live in that environment. The “*pois’d on yourself*” and “*giving not taking law*” are restated as “*patiently inure*” and “*heed himself*” here. The poet was saying that man would learn to live in harmony with nature. The last depictions of “*unfold himself, (not others’ formulas heed,) here fill his time, / To duly fall, to aid, unreck’d at last, / To disappear, to serve,*” described the life of a human as one of a plant. The deathless seed comes into bud, grows, lives out its days, becomes dust and then retreats into the soil, and another seed follows this cycle. We can see the poet seeking a way of living that is rooted in the lands of the American continent under the law of nature. He saw its model in the life of the redwood. In this way, the poet described both the reality and the ideal and praised the life of the redwood in the first section. The prophetic voice of the Redwood-Tree becomes “the muffled shriek, the groan” (CPCP 353). The situation in which the redwoods got mercilessly

killed by the “choppers’ axes” was criticized by the poet. What he lamented most was the situation to make exclusive communication with the others and also their inner lives: “I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting. / The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not, / The quick-ear’d teamsters and chain and jack-screw men heard not” (*CPCP* 351).

In this first section, the storyteller was the Redwood-Tree, which had long inhabited the place. Whitman’s dilemma to represent his ideal and reality can be found here. He could not speak through the talkative and confident “I” as seen in his earlier poems. At the end of the prophecy of the Redwood-Tree, the phrases “*unfold himself, (not others’ formulas heed)*” (*CPCP* 353) were written. This was a statement on the principle of freedom of expression.

While he sought fitting expression of his changing times, he used the voice of the Redwood-Tree to serve as an intermediate.

The second section depicts the contrast between California before and after the Gold Rush. It seems to be written in an objective tone; however, a critical look at the historical event should also be taken:

The flashing and golden pageant of California,

The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands,

The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado south,

Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and mountain cliffs,

The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent, cyclic chemistry

The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface ripening, the rich

ores forming beneath;

At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,

A swarming and busy race settling and organizing everywhere,

Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to the whole

world,

To India and China and Australia and the thousand island paradises of the

Pacific,

Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the rivers, the railroads,

with many a thrifty farm, with machinery,

And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow gold.

(*CPCP354*)

The first half of the second section describes the workings of nature before the Gold Rush.

The “rich ores” were being formed beneath the “ample lands” of California, over great

reaches of time as if the lands had conceived and carefully nurtured a baby. The latter half

depicts California after the event. We see the arrival of the “forty-niners,” demanding gold,

and of the settlers who established communities. The forty-niners were “assuming” and

“taking possession.” This description shows Whitman’s critical eye. They are described as

persons who act as if they own the place. According to Starr, the Gold Rush of 1848

encouraged both internal and international migration to California. A total of 308 ships had come to San Francisco Bay by October 1849, and 635 by June 1850 (*California* 80, 82). As a result of this influx of people, cities were constructed and “the steamers on the rivers, the railroads” were developed. One of the cities created by the California Gold Rush was San Francisco. There was an explosive rise in the population as a result of it. There was also a mix of languages and cultures, and the price of land rose. Entertainment such as gambling started. Men without their families gathered there and the number of restaurants increased. Prostitution did also (Richards 57, 62). In the descriptions above, while the natural time before the Gold Rush was “slow and steady,” the influx of people made it “busy;” not only the landscape but the very flow of time had been altered, and a new phase in the history of the region had begun. Richards claims that the Gold Rush changed the lifestyle of California. The Indians or first inhabitants of the area, the Spanish and the Californios of cattle baronies in the Mexican era worked “long hours for low pay in a dull, subsistence level jobs” (64-65). On the other hand, the Gold Rush gave ordinary Americans the promise to “become wealthy virtually overnight” (65). They no longer had to work long hours (65). The promise later became the American Dream. Whitman would take notice of the Gold Rush, focusing on the drastic change in both the lands of California and the lifestyle of ordinary people there. When comparing section one and section two of this poem, his question about the dramatic change through Westward Expansion becomes visible. It was the volitions that were nurtured in the

soil of California in the first section, the rich ores in the second section. The former has been lost in the first section. However, the Redwood-Tree did not mention the Gold Rush. The event serves as a trigger to the loss of volitions in this poem. The rich ores are also the thing nurtured in the law of nature over a long period time. “[T]he New” arrive there and take them from the lands by force. Whitman mockingly describes the men such as forty-niners who were dazzled by the lure of money greed as “assuming” and “taking possession.” “[T]he New” echoes “*the new culminating man*” (CPCP 352) in the first section of this poem. Whitman lamented that such long-awaited men had lost control and plundered the rich ores and fruits of the place.

The third section is a prophecy of the appearance of “the true America,” “a grander future” (CPCP 355) built by “you,” “the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal” (CPCP 354). The speaker is the poet who appeared in the first section of this poem. This is a Whitmanesque encouragement for people to see their volitions and pursue the ideal of the construction of a democratic nation or “*homes for good*” (CPCP 353), as exemplified by the following lines:

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,

(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)

I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of years, till now

deferr’d,

Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,

In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart trees imperial,

In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,

I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,

Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir of the past so

grand,

To build a grander future. (*CPCP* 354-55)

The speaker-poet repeatedly addressed “you” and claimed, “our common kind, the race” is in “you.” It is stated that “our common kind, the race” is a goal of democracy to be fulfilled. In section one of “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” the Redwood talks of the ideal situation of America; Americans should have “*average spiritual manhood*” and “*womanhood divine . . . whence life and love and aught that comes from life and love*” with vitality and spirituality (*CPCP* 352-53). People who have those kinds of ideal democratic qualities are restated here as “our common kind, the race.” Moreover, the speaker-poet suggested that such people build “a new world indeed,” or “the true America.” Meanwhile, both “our common kind, the race”

and “the true America” have not yet come as the phrases “till now deferr’d,” “promis’d to be fulfill’d” and “yet long prepared” indicate. Therefore, the speaker-poet addresses and encourages “you” to stare at the ideal inherent in him/herself or themselves.

Meanwhile, the end of the era of the “Redwood-Tree” and nature and their reduction to instrumentality are proclaimed: “lands of the Western shore, / (These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,).” The “lands of the Western shore” is restated as “the standing-ground,” which means that the lands are at the end of the American continent and ever await the coming of inhabitants, or “you.” It is the place where people should come and stand, and build “[t]he new society.” On the other hand, “a new world,” “the true America” that will supplant the former era, has not been built yet. The speaker waits for the “child” who will come and build it. As Steven Olson claims, “the culmination of humankind” in the concept of evolutionary development is found here (“Song of the Redwood-Tree” 664). However, nature is still highly appreciated. “The new society” should be “proportionate to Nature,” whose empire the speaker calls “the past so grand.” “[M]ountain peaks or stalwart trees” are imperial and air is vital, even if they would be owned by “you.” Some people see a contradiction in the rhetoric, or a humanistic view.

Erkkila evaluates Whitman’s poetics after the Civil War as follows:

Accepting the conflict between the ideals of the republic and the reality of Gilded Age America as a given, Whitman dedicates himself to creating an

imaginary United States. It is in the gap between ideology and reality—in the absence of his true America of the mind—that Whitman found his poetic siting in the postwar period. Rather than singing an already existing world, he would sing America into being. (*Whitman* 277)

Erkkilä's meaning is evident in "Song of the Redwood-Tree." The reason why the poem was written relates to the following lines: "a new world indeed," "the true America," is "yet long prepared." That frustration appears prominently in the lines "lands of the Western shore, / (These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground)." At the end of the poem, the "lands of the Western shore" are not things to live together with, but rather objects for the use of "you," human beings. The introspection of "(But where is what I started for so long ago? / And why is it yet unfound?)" (*CPCP* 267) in "Facing West from California's Shores" is emphasized here, as it appears in parentheses.

The Gold Rush was behind the remarks on the instrumentality of nature and the frustration of the poet. Though the American dream seems to be the even distribution of opportunity for people in a democracy, making an instant fortune became the only goal and their essential volitions of the human condition were lost. Whitman was concerned about the spread of "an atmosphere of hypocrisy" (*CPCP* 937). As mentioned in this poem, the settlement of California developed on a large scale, triggered by the Gold Rush, and the ecosystem of the redwood forests was devastated. Despite this fact, the narrator

“Redwood-Tree” did not refer to the Gold Rush in the first section. The West coast was first developed by mountain men, miners, and pioneers. Whitman praised their pioneering spirit. Instead of criticizing such a reality on the Gold Rush, the poet proposed a new way of settlement in this poem, that is, a disciplined life under the law of nature, as described at the end of the first section as follows: “*Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure, / Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others’ formulas heed,) here fill his time, / To duly fall, to aid, unreck’d at last, / To disappear, to serve*” (CPCP 353). Whitman could only imply the contradiction of the development of California, because if he wrote about it directly, it would destroy his ideal.

“Song of the Redwood-Tree” is an experimental poem that delineates a kind of natural history of California from various perspectives and mixes the past, present, and future. The first section is related by the Redwood-Tree, who has inhabited California since before the founding of the United States. This poem expounds the “geologic history” Whitman mentioned in *Democratic Vistas* (CPCP 984), while the voice of the Redwood-Tree also embodies Whitman’s subtle criticism of the depressed national mood under the Reconstruction, in which people destined to be pioneers could not hear the voice of the tree and “the true America, heir of the past so grand” was not yet being established. Though Whitman seemed to justify the Gold Rush and Westward Expansion by having the Redwood-Tree, the voice of the land, praise the coming of people to California, it was

actually his doubts about the influx of people into the land that drove him to write this poem.

Whitman's unsatisfied desire for settlement was thus reflected in both the introspection of "Facing West from California's Shores" and the frustration of "Song of the Redwood-Tree." The reason the poet asked for "the true America" to make its appearance in California is that there still remained the possibility for the fulfillment of this vision of America. Nature assumed a key role in this process, though the lands of the Western shore were called merely "the means, the implements, the standing-ground."

Chapter III: The Prairies and the Great Plains

This chapter examines Whitman's images of the Prairies and the Great Plains and shows that he placed a high priority on the very regions where his ideal nation should be established in the post-Civil War period. The Prairies spread between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. The area in the Mississippi River valley is a major agricultural zone. The region to the east of the Rocky Mountains, spanning from the Mackenzie River Valley in Oregon to southern Texas, is called the Great Plains. The development of the vast prairie lands acquired through the Northwest Ordinance (1787) and the Louisiana Purchase (1803) was a symbol of American growth. The Homestead Act of 1862 accelerated the settlement in the Prairies (Horton and Edwards 130; Sayre 16).

Whitman saw the Great Plains twice (Folsom, "Walt Whitman's Prairie Paradise" 47; Allen, *The Solitary Singer* 486-89): first when he visited New Orleans in 1848, and second when he took a trip West, from September 1879 to January 1880. He described his impressions of this trip in *Specimen Days*. According to one of the memorial pieces "The Prairies and Great Plains in Poetry," he actually saw the prairie in "Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado" (*CPCP* 863) during the trip. Whitman obtained some information about the Prairies from Mrs. Farnham. He recommended her *Life in Prairie Land* (1846), which is a record of her six years spent in Illinois, as a school text-book, on May 22, 1846 in the

Brooklyn Eagle (*The Journalism* 1: 375).

Whitman scholars have shown how the “grass” represents Whitman’s ideal, democratic America (Olson, *The Prairie* 131-32; Folsom, “Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise” 48). Olson mentioned that the words “prairie” and “prairies” were often used in “Drum-Taps” to “stress the importance of the Union” (138). His discussion centered on the symbolism of the grasslands: “[The prairies] symbolize the centrality of America to the world throughout a world history, and they symbolize the centrality of America to the cosmos and the spiritual realm” (158). Folsom suggested that Whitman saw “paradise” in the Prairies in his later days (“Paradise on the Prairies” 102). Though their arguments have merit, Whitman’s descriptions of the Prairies are not limited to this symbolism; the prairie was also the fertile land where “the law of successions” (*CPCP* 948) was observed and people actually settled and made their living. In the postbellum years, Whitman depicted the Prairies as a “home” for the American people that could help to heal the wounds inflicted by the Civil War by supporting the economy, serving as a destination of settlement, purifying “an atmosphere of hypocrisy” in American society, and producing an autochthonic verse. That is, he saw the unsoiled, original landscape of the American continent in the Prairies, where the ecosystem was balanced. His descriptions of the Prairies were inevitably linked with his vision of an ideal nation. The war gave him an opportunity to question the relationship between the Prairies and the people of the United States. Moreover, he was faced with the problem of representation:

the matter of how to recreate his verse and build a new America out of the devastation of the war. In the throes of the conflict, a new, unexplored topic emerged: Native Americans. As Richard Slotkin clarifies in detail in his book *Regeneration through Violence*, conflict with the Native Americans was always at the forefront of life on the frontier (5). Some tribes, often called the Plains Indians, inhabited the Prairies: the Arapaho, the Arikara, the Blackfoot, the Cheyenne, the Ponca, the Sioux, etc. (Waldman 182-97). In the nineteenth century, as Westward Expansion advanced, the Lakotas, Arapaho, and Cheyenne flourished in the northern part of the Great Plains, while the Comanches thrived in the southern plains (White 94-95). However, descriptions of the Plains Indians did not appear in Whitman's works on the Prairies. To further demonstrate the claims made above, "The Return of the Heroes" (1867), "Prairie States" (1880), and "A Prairie Sunset" (1888) and some memorial pieces in *Specimen Days* are examined in detail in this chapter.

In *Recovering the Prairie*, Robert F. Sayre summarizes representations of the Prairies as follows: "the prairies were just vast space, with a seemingly changeless and monotonous 'sea of grass.' They were, therefore, treated as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, on which settlers and farmers and the agents of American civilization could write their own character and destiny" (5). This is evident, for instance, in William Cullen Bryant's (1794-1876) "The Prairies" (1832). Bryant evokes "the distant past" of Native Americans, "the recent past" of roaming white hunters, and "a future of children" in the Prairies, which Sayre calls a "tabula

rasa” (26-27). The Regionalist artists of the 1920s and 1930s, like Grant Wood (1882-1942), Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1957), John Steuart Curry (1897-1946), and Joe Jones (1909-63), similarly depicted the Prairies as an American scene of idylls and “nostalgic or idealized pastoral scenes with more contemporary views of dust-bowl—or Depression-wrought devastation” (21). Whitman’s prairie poetry represents both aspects of the ideal and reality. The Prairies were a tabula rasa for his attempts to paint a picture of the ideal democracy, while the reality of the region existed there simultaneously.

Before the Civil War, Whitman represented the Prairies positively and somewhat optimistically as an ideal, democratic place. After the war, the Prairies were described as an arena for both people’s homes and their struggles. “The Prairie-Grass Dividing,” published as number 25 of the “Calamus” cluster of poems in the 1860 edition, shows both aspects. “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” took its final form in 1867. Three main changes occurred between the 1860 version and the 1867 one. The first change was to give it its current title, instead of simply “25,” of the “Calamus” cluster. The second change is mentioned later. The final version is cited below. In it, the “spiritual corresponding” between the “prairie-grass” and the speaker, “I,” is recounted as follows:

The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,

I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,

Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,

Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,

Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,

Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and command,

leading not following,

Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and lusty flesh clear of

taint,

Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and governors, as to say

Who are you?

Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never obedient,

Those of inland America. (*CPCP* 281; italics original)

The speaker, "I," repeatedly demands the "prairie-grass" for "the spiritual corresponding."

The first line, "The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing," means that the speaker

parts the "prairie-grass" and breathes in its scent. The second change is that the word "special"

in 1867 was modified from "own" in 1860: "The prairie-grass dividing—its own odor

breathing" (*Leaves of Grass, 1860* 368).³⁴ This description of 1860 gives an image of the

animated "prairie grass" swaying in the wind. By changing the word "own" to "special," an

image of the speaker, "I," marching into the Prairies is added. Moreover, the specialty of the

"odor" in the Prairies is emphasized by the modification; it shows that the poet values the

Prairies highly in comparison to other places. Given this change that occurred in 1867, it can

be proven that Whitman recognized the specialness of the Prairies after the Civil War. In the 1867 version of the poem, the acts of “dividing” “the prairie-grass” and “breathing” the odor are restated as “the spiritual corresponding.” The poet was contemplating the relationship between the Prairies and the “I,” a representative of the American people who came there.

The corresponding, for Whitman, was to be done spiritually. Because the “spiritual corresponding” had not yet been carried out, he wrote in this manner. A similar picture of the relationship between nature and the people developed in “Song of the Redwood-Tree” is also painted in this poem. However, a profound difference exists between “Song of the

Redwood-Tree” and this poem: the person who initiated the correspondence was the Redwood-Tree in “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” and the speaker, “I,” in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing,” where the talkative speaker reiterates his demands of the Prairies. The speaker “I” demands “the most copious and close companionship of men.” The [k] alliteration of c in “corresponding,” “copious,” “close,” and “companionship” suggests crisp footfalls of “men” shoving their way through the “prairie-grass.” The “blades” have “words, acts, beings.”

“Blades” is a metaphor for the democratic people who spoke and acted on their own initiative.

The speaker demands of “the prairie-grass” “the blades to rise.” Folsom claims Whitman

believed that the new Americans grew like the grass of the Prairies, in parallel with the

Republic, through the examination of the poem (“Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise” 49). I

agree with the point that Whitman saw the Prairies, not other places, as nurturing the growth

of the democratic people. The characters of “the blades” follow. The “blades,” or the democratic people, grew in “the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious” of the Prairies and had similar qualities to those of the Prairies. The “blades” walk with sure-footedness and erectness. At first glance, though the words “freedom and command” seem contradictory, “command” here refers to “self-command,” which would be accumulated through “the spiritual corresponding.” They were the people who thought and acted on their own initiative. Under the environment, those democratic people have high spirits and robust bodies, “clear of taint.” Thus, “[t]he poem celebrates the inhabitants of the prairies” (Schneider 539). Meanwhile, the repetitions of the word “demand” imply that those democratic inhabitants have not yet appeared. The situation is extremely tense (Schneider 539). Therefore, the speaker repeatedly demands the coming of the democratic inhabitants. The intimate relationship between the “prairie-grass” and “I” as a “spiritual corresponding,” sympathetic communication, produces the “earth-born passion.” The passion is a congener to the “occult deep volitions” (*CPCP* 353) of the American psyche, which is acquired through an encounter with the lands of the Prairies. The poet needs such a passion to build the new Republic of America. It can be said that the democratic people Whitman was describing here were farmers, because the “earth-born passion” was created from an active involvement or communing with the lands of the Prairies.

Before the Homestead Act (1862), ranchers settled the prairies. Farmers followed

them, and this Act drove their settlement (Merchant 103). This poem was published two years before the Homestead Act was ordained and while the number of settlers was not so large.

According to Clyde A. Milner II, there were 1.5 million farmers in 1850 and “only 119,000 were located beyond the Mississippi, most of them in the states along the river from Iowa to the Gulf” (Milner II et al. 279). According to *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, “In 1870 approximately 127,000 people lived in the Great Plains of the United States. The population grew rapidly over the next six decades” (Johnson, “Rural-Urban Population Change”).

Therefore, the poem describes the situation of the Prairies before much settlement or development had occurred, while the descriptions of the democratic inhabitants reflect Whitman’s ideal of democracy. The inhabitants were described as people who acted freely at their own discretion and did not submit to outside rules or authorities. Furthermore, Whitman assumed that the democratic people were farmers, as the poet wrote of the “earth-born passion” which came from interaction with the lands of the Prairies and their settlements. The poet calls for this kind of democratic people, who had not yet appeared.

Chris Packard sees “[b]udding male sexual arousal” and a homoerotic community nurtured by male settlers in the poem (77). He suggests that “Whitman celebrates ‘manly attachment’ . . . : youth, robust Western masculinity, animal appetites, and large-bodied, healthy men who refuse all doctrines except democracy” (73). “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” describes the intimate male relationships that “characterize citizenship in an ideal democracy”

(77) fostered in the Midwest. Given that the grass is a metaphor, this claim is acceptable.

Meanwhile, the poem shows Whitman's attachment to the prairies as Schneider and Folsom have maintained (Schneider 539; Folsom, "Walt Whitman's Prairie Paradise" 49). It was the Prairies that nurtured democratic people who spoke and worked freely, actively, and vigorously in the field, and their community of "the most copious and close companionship of men."

In "Song of the Redwood-Tree," Whitman cited "*average spiritual manhood*" (CPCP 353) as one of the democratic ideals. The people described in "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" embodied the "*average spiritual manhood.*" They did not belong to any class and "look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and governors, as to say *Who are you?*" (CPCP 281). In the poem, the poet did not show any doubt regarding the realization of democracy and the emergence of those democratic men.

"The Prairie-Grass Dividing" evokes Jefferson's agrarian myth, which aimed to maintain a society for "a rapidly growing population" and independence from Europe where "overpopulation, inequality, [and] decadence" were widespread (White 63). The agriculturalism was actually accompanied with commercialism. Richard White stated, "Agriculture and landownership insured independence and virtue. Commerce insured prosperity and progress" (63). To be a young, independent republican country, Jeffersonians attempted to build an "empire of the liberty" in the West (63), where a weak federal

government was originally intended. The Homestead Act supported such a traditional American idealism and encouraged people to cultivate the lands spontaneously. “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” supports Jeffersonian agriculturalism, although it does not refer to the aspect of commercialism.

“To the Leaven’d Soil They Trod” (1865-66), the last poem of the cluster of “Drum-Taps,” described the Prairies as a place where the settlements developed, which could heal the wounds of war. The speaker in the poem calls on the soil to integrate the broken states into one nation. The Prairies are representative of “the leaven’d soil of the general Western world to attest my songs” (*CPCP* 458):

To the leaven’d soil they trod calling I sing for the last,

 To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies spreading wide,
 To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane impalpable air;
 And responding they answer all, (but not in words,)
 The average earth, the witness of war and peace, acknowledges mutely,
 The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad the son . . . (*CPCP*
 458)

The speaker proclaims that the epic is developed in the Plains and the Prairies; “the blades” in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” or the democratic people would be the “heroes” here.

According to Walter Prescott Webb's *The Great Plains*, the Prairies have often been compared to the sea in American literature (486-89). The third line above describes the stretch of the Prairies blowing in the wind in the same fashion. The "average earth" of the plains and the Prairies witness "war and peace." This "war and peace" included all wars fought on the American continent and the periods of peace that followed them. Given that this poem belongs to the cluster "Drum-Taps," one such war is the Civil War. Considering the years of 1865-66 when this poem was written and published, the war evokes battles fought with Native Americans. There were many conflicts on the Prairies between the Plains Indians and the U. S. Army during and after the Civil War (Milner II et al. 179-80; Waldman 184-90). However, the poem did not refer directly to this matter. The earth does not take sides nor serve as a battlefield, but watches over the situation from the sidelines, remaining "sane," with an "impalpable air" in this poem. Therefore, the speaker, who has fought in the war, falls into the embrace of "the prairie" for healing.

Just after the above-cited description of the prairie, at the end of the poem, Whitman attempts to figuratively bind the nation together again by singing the geography of each of its sundered parts: "The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me to the end, / But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs" (*CPCP* 458). The "general Western world" spreads without belonging to either the North or the South. The Civil War was a battle between the North and the South, and Whitman presented the West as holding a neutral

position. Actually, the influence of the Civil War was felt in the West. According to Webb,

. . . a few cattle [of Texas] were delivered to the Confederate forces; but after the Mississippi River fell into the hands of the Union army this outlet for Texas cattle was closed, and the movement of Texas cattle to the Confederate army was stopped. (212)

White asserted that Texas was the only state that “joined the Confederacy,” while it was not certain that the federal government controlled western states and territories (170). That is, the West did not actually take a neutral position in the Civil War. To be more exact, in the poem Whitman referred to the neutrality of the earth in the American continent, which gave “everyone” a fair chance to succeed, as he called it “The average earth” in this poem. The geographical West represented such idealism. The poet attempted to unite the divided nation geographically. The soil leavened by people walking on it was ready and waiting for the farmers.

“[M]y songs” was mentioned twice in this poem. The songs were likened to seeds or fruits in the last line. In another line, the expression of “to attest my songs” was used. When the war was over, Whitman would have reconsidered his role as a poet, and chosen the West as a place to sing his songs. The poem ends with the image of the seeds of “my songs” (*CPCP* 458) that the poet sowed in the prairie of the West, which were nourished by “[t]he Northern ice and rain” and ripened by “the hot sun of the South.” Whitman wanted to present

his songs as a native product of the lands of the American continent to unite the nation. Here, he reaffirmed his role as a poet and how his songs should be.

All the themes described in “To the Leaven’d Soil They Trod” were rewritten in detail in “The Return of the Heroes,” first published as “A Carol of Harvest, for 1867” in the September issue of *Galaxy* in 1867. The poem was included in the fifth edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1871 and under a new title in 1881 (Oliver 164-65). In 1871, this poem was included in *Passage to India*, which was an annex to *Leaves of Grass*, along with a note:

In all History, antique or modern, the grandest achievement yet for political Humanity—grander even than the triumph of THIS UNION over Secession—was the return, disbanding, and peaceful disintegration from compact military organization, back into agricultural and civil employments, of the vast Armies, the two millions of embattled men of America—a problem reserved for Democracy, our day and land, to promptly solve. (*Passage to India* 87)

The employment and reintegration of the veterans was a problem “to promptly solve;” and so “The Return of the Heroes” sought new roles for them as farmers and praised the fertility and promise of the open fields to rebuild the nation. The Prairies appeared as a concrete example of this. As in “To the Leaven’d Soil They Trod,” the Prairies in “The Return of the Heroes” are a quiet place to take a circumspect view of war and peace on the American continent.

They were not only a healing place for war-worn veterans but also “the true arenas of my race” (*CPCP* 489), where people could go to move beyond the past and work as farmers. Moreover, the speaker-poet was eager to come back to life again and make his songs in the lands of the Prairies. Whitman emphasizes their geography as well as their productivity to unite the nation. As the original title of this poem indicates, this is a harvest poem or a prayer to the productive lands of the American continent. The characters include the speaker-poet, “Fecund America,” the soldiers in the Civil War, and farm implements. The following paragraphs survey each of the eight sections of this poem. In the first section, the speaker-poet talks about himself:

For the lands and for these passionate days and for myself,

Now I awhile retire to thee O soil of autumn fields,

Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee,

Answering the pulses of thy sane and equable heart,

Tuning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice, confide to me a voice,

O harvest of my lands—O boundless summer growths,

O lavish brown parturient earth—O infinite teeming womb,

A song to narrate thee. (*CPCP* 486)

The first stanza shows the composition of the poem: scenes of “the lands,” “these passionate

days” of the Civil War and “myself” were depicted in the following sections one after another.

The image of the speaker-poet reclining on the breast of the fields overlaps the following image in “To the Leaven’d Soil They Trod:” “The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad the son (*CPCP* 458).” After the “passionate days” of the Civil War, the speaker is held like a baby in the “infinite teeming womb” of the “soil of autumn fields,” and stores up the energy to sing an encomium “to narrate” “thee,” the “womb.” The speaker himself becomes a product of the fields and attempts to grow out of them again.

In the second section, some natural drama unfolds in the fields: “Gorgeous processions, songs of birds, / Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul, / The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical, strong waves, / . . . The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald meadows, / The shows of all the varied lands and all the growths and products” (*CPCP* 486-87). As seen in “To the Leaven’d Soil They Trod,” the Prairies were compared to the sea in this poem. “The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical, strong waves” describes the prairie grass swaying in the wind. These are peaceful natural dramas not seen on the battlefield. Thus, the Prairies were presented as one of “[t]he shows of all the varied lands.”

In the third section, the “soil of autumn fields” was also called “Fecund America” and “Prairie Dame,” who groans with birth pangs bringing forth joys. The speaker says a prayer to her repeatedly, which reflects his intense desire for the lands of the American continent to

be productive and fertile.

Fecund America—to-day,

Thou art all over set in births and joys!

Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a swathing-garment,

Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions,

A myriad-twinning life like interlacing vines binds all thy vast demesne,

As some huge ship freighted to water's edge thou ridest into port,

As rain falls from the heaven and vapors rise from earth, so have the precious

values fallen upon thee and risen out of thee;

Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!

Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty,

Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,

Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle and lookest out upon thy world,

and lookest East and lookest West,

Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles, a million farms, and

missest nothing,

Thou all-acceptress—thou hospitable, (thou only art hospitable as God is

hospitable.) (*CPCP* 487)

Erkkila describes Whitman's ambivalence on this material abundance: "Equating the Union

as Mother with a boundlessly fertile land, he celebrates the return to a peacetime order of fecund abundance. But the poet's vision of plenty is ambiguous: America groans under the weight of her 'great possessions,' entrapped and choked by the material wealth that is the source of her power. . ." (*Whitman* 244). She claimed that Whitman began to harbor suspicion of the "republican idealism" and the laissez-faire capitalist economy around the end of the Civil War (243). She sees his skepticism in the description of "Fecund America." Her perspective is acceptable because "Fecund America" was "bathed, choked, swimming in plenty," while her fertility was admired positively. "Fecund America" is restated as "Prairie Dame," who sits in the middle of the American continent and also of the world, in a way, like a goddess. The descriptions vividly evoke the Prairies, as they became the engine of the US economy after the Civil War—a process also poeticized by Whitman in "The Prairie States." Whitman emphasized a kind of unilateralness or austerity in the "Prairie Dame," which places this prayer section devoted to "Thou Prairie Dame" in a new light, where the speaker asks her to accept all and be "hospitable." The expectations of her to solve the nation's problems suggested in the note of 1871 are high.

The fourth section describes the "passionate days" of the Civil War. First, the images of the marching soldiers are developed. Then, the speaker declares, "now I sing not war" (*CPCP* 487), while the images of the soldiers haunt the speaker. The speaker-poet is introspective about his own actions of encouraging the soldiers.

When late I sang sad was my voice,

Sad were the shows around me with deafening noises of hatred and smoke of
war;

In the midst of the conflict, the heroes, I stood,

Or pass'd with slow step through the wounded and dying.

But now I sing not war,

Nor the measur'd march of soldiers, nor the tents of camps,

Nor the regiments hastily coming up deploying in line of battle;

No more the sad, unnatural shows of war.

Ask'd room those flush'd immortal ranks, the first forth-stepping armies?

Ask room alas the ghastly ranks, the armies dread that follow'd.

(Pass, pass, ye proud brigades, with your tramping sinewy legs,

With your shoulders young and strong, with your knapsacks and your
muskets;

How elate I stood and watch'd you, where starting off you march'd.

Pass—then rattle drums again,

 For an army heaves in sight, O another gathering army,

 Swarming, trailing on the rear, O you dread accruing army,

 O you regiments so piteous, with your mortal diarrhoea, with your fever,

 O my land's maim'd darlings, with the plenteous bloody bandage and the

 crutch,

 Lo, your pallid army follows.) (*CPCP* 487-88)

The speaker confesses his feelings of sadness when he speaks about the war. The second line depicts the speaker's figure that stands speechless in face of the war and is at the mercy of the situation at hand. The image of devastation in the war is reproduced with the heavy use of the [s] sound—"sand," "sad," "Sad," "smoke," "stood," "pass'd," "slow," and "step." Scenes of war follow, such as "the measur'd march of soldier," "the tents of camps," and "the regiments hastily coming up deploying in line of battle," while he declares that "But now I sing not war." Those images come back to haunt the speaker. Such a scene of war is called "the sad, unnatural shows of war." In contrast, farm labors are called "saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars" in section six of this poem (*CPCP* 489). The third stanza conveys the cruel nature of war: war casualties were growing as the war continued. First, the soldiers leave for the battlefield exaltedly. They do not ask room, which euphemistically describes the figures of the soldiers who engage in reckless acts of war. They, in turn, become "the ghastly ranks,

the armies dread” or the dead and the wounded and ask room for somewhere, which means that they were suffering from the aftereffects of the war. Garrett Peck claimed that by 1864, Whitman began to think the war should be stopped because of “the war’s human cost,” when he saw the soldiers in the hospitals in Washington, D.C. (94-95). In this way, Whitman came to understand the nature and cruelty of war. Therefore, he said, “now I sing not war,” though he sang the war in the past. The following lines in parentheses restate the third stanza in detail. The first three lines in parentheses depict soldiers marching vigorously, with “sinewy legs.” This is a scene of the departure of soldiers that the speaker observed exaltedly. The lines that follow describe wounded soldiers “with the plenteous bloody bandage and the crutch.” The speaker said “Pass” repeatedly to both healthy soldiers and wounded ones to stir their spirits. However, the number of marching soldiers grows, as portrayed in the lines “another gathering army” and “you dread accruing army.” He attempted to efface the images of the casualties stuck in his head by stating “Pass.” This section shows his remorse for having optimistically encouraged the soldiers at the beginning of the war.

After the war, while the recurring images continue, in the fifth section, the scene moves to “the far-stretching beauteous landscape.” The neutrality of the lands for everyone is discussed here. He saw “the roads and lanes, the high-piled farm-wagons, and the fruits and barns” in the landscape. Furthermore, he said, “Ah the dead to me mar not, they fit well in Nature, / They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and grass, / And along the edge

of the sky in the horizon's far margin" (*CPCP* 488). This means that in nature, not only the living but also the dead breathe in the landscape. The speaker-poet also restored his energy in nature like a baby "Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee, / Answering the pulse of thy sane and equable heart" as described in section one of this poem (*CPCP* 486). It is said here that all men, including the dead, are equal in the lands. Thus, the fifth section singing the lands of the American continent applies equally to everyone.

"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up" in *Specimen Days* conveys that the countless dead are buried "Unknown" (*CPCP* 777) in the fields across the nation:

. . . the land entire saturated, perfumed with their impalpable ashes' exhalation
 in Nature's chemistry distill'd, and shall be so forever, in every future grain of
 wheat and ear of corn, and every flower that grows, and every breath we
 draw)—not only Northern dead leavening Southern soil—thousands, aye tens
 of thousands, of Southerners, crumble to-day in Northern earth. (*CPCP* 777)

Section five in "The Return of the Heroes" advocates equality for everybody before the lands as observed above. The dead are said to "fit well in Nature, / They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and grass, / And along the edge of the sky in the horizon's far margin" surveyed above (*CPCP* 488). The line "The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up," refers to the soldiers buried in the fields and being decomposed by bacteria. Then, they become the compost where the trees and grass grow. These descriptions of "the dead" indicate that they

breathe on the fields under the ecosystem. One poem, “This Compost” (1856), also describes the earth’s “purification system.” The speaker in the poem is amazed by it, but at the same time, fearful toward it.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
 It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
 It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of
 diseas’d corpses,
 It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,
 It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,
 It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at
 last. (*CPCP* 496-97)

The earth in this image possesses in decomposition a system to “purify” corpses or excrement and make them into compost. Scholars have claimed that Whitman had a “belief that the universe ever progresses” (Griffin 68; Piasecki 105). That belief is based on the ecosystem.³⁵ Thus, it can be said that he paid much attention to the productive function of the earth. When the speaker-poet in “The Return of the Heroes” said, “they [the dead] fit well in Nature,” it indicates that the lands serve as a place to bury the dead, and there they return to the aegis of nature.

In section six, the memories of the war are retold at the beginning. Then the speaker

calls for the lands to follow as if they negate “the sad, unnatural shows of war” (*CPCP* 487).

I saw the day the return of the heroes,

(Yet the heroes never surpass’d shall never return,

Them that day I saw not.)

I saw the interminable corps, I saw the processions of armies,

I saw them approaching, defiling by with divisions,

Streaming northward, their work done, camping awhile in clusters of mighty
camps.

No holiday soldiers—youthful, yet veterans,

Worn, swart, handsome, strong, of the stock of homestead and workshop,

Harden’d of many a long campaign and sweaty march,

Inured on many a hard-fought bloody field.

A pause—the armies wait,

A million flush’d embattled conquerors wait,

The world too waits, then soft as breaking night and sure as dawn,

They melt, they disappear. (*CPCP* 488-89)

The lines above describe the return of the Union troops to Washington, D.C. Whitman actually saw them returning. He wrote his impression of the event in “The Armies Returning” in *Specimen Days*. Descriptions of the soldiers in “The Armies Returning” are as follows:

May 7.—Sunday.—To-day as I was walking a mile or two south of Alexandria, I fell in with several large squads of the returning Western army, (Sherman’s men as they call’d themselves) about a thousand in all, the largest portion of them half sick, some convalescents, on their way to a hospital camp. These fragmentary excerpts, with the unmistakable Western physiognomy and idioms, crawling along slowly—after a great campaign, blown this way, as it were, out of their latitude—I mark’d with curiosity, and talk’d with off and on for over an hour. Here and there was one very sick; but all were able to walk, except some of the last, who had given out, and were seated on the ground, faint and despondent. . . . (CPCP 768-69; italics original)

And he continues:

May 21.—Saw General Sheridan and his cavalry to-day; a strong, attractive sight; the men were mostly young, (a few middle-aged,) superb-looking fellows, brown, spare, keen, with well-worn clothing, many with pieces of water-proof cloth around their shoulders, hanging down. They dash’d along pretty fast, in wide close ranks, all spatter’d with mud; no holiday soldiers;

brigade after brigade. . . . *May 22.*—Have been taking a walk along Pennsylvania avenue and Seventh street north. The city is full of soldiers, running around loose. Officers everywhere, of all grades. All have the weather-beaten look of practical service. It is a sight I never tire of. All the armies are now here (or portions of them) for to-morrow's review. You see them swarming like bees everywhere. (*CPCP* 768-69; italics original)

According to Reynolds, from December 28 in 1862, Whitman stayed in Washington, D.C. for about ten years and visited war hospitals during the Civil War (411). He did “a part-time job as a copyist in the office of the army paymaster. . . . He supplemented his small salary by writing occasional war stories for newspapers. He worked only a few hours a day, spending much of his time in the Washington hospitals, of which there were around forty” (Reynolds 412). These passages describe the soldiers returning for the Grand Review of the Armies, which was the victory parade that took place in Washington on May 23 and May 24, 1865 (Reynolds 448; Morris 223-24; Peck 129). Whitman here wrote, “These fragmentary excerpts, with the unmistakable Western physiognomy and idioms.” They were the soldiers he called “Western Soldiers” “from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Iowa, and all the Western States” (*CPCP* 770). Whitman was fascinated by the soldiers from those states:

These Western soldiers are more slow in their movements, and in their intellectual quality also; have no extreme alertness. They are larger in size,

have a more serious physiognomy, are continually looking at you as they pass in the street. They are largely animal, and handsomely so. During the war I have been at times with the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth Corps. I always feel drawn toward the men, and like their personal contact when we are crowded close together, as frequently these days in the street-cars.

(*CPCP* 770)

Thus, Whitman paid special attention to the Western soldiers. The Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth Army Corps were famous for being led by General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-91) and having taken part in “March to the Sea” in 1864 (Arnold et al. 311). Whitman did not refer to that event. The same expression of “no holiday soldiers” was used in “The Return of the Heroes” (*CPCP* 489) and “The Armies Returning” (*CPCP* 769). This meant that the soldiers he saw fought through the battles and had strong bodies. It is noteworthy that he was attracted to the western soldiers. As cited above, White suggests that it is not certain whether the federal government controlled the “western states and territories” or not (170). Whitman described the westerners as Union soldiers.

In the poem “Virginia—The West,” which is thought to show Whitman’s “displeasure at Virginia on the state’s seceding from the Union” and “the loyalty of the states of the West which had remained with the Union,” (Oliver 229) in “Drum-Taps,” Whitman describes a soldier from the West as “[t]he noble son on sinewy feet advancing . . . out of the lands of

prairies, land of Ohio's waters and of Indiana" (*CPCP* 429). The West gives "his plenteous offspring, / Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their shoulders" (*CPCP* 429). The son reappears in "O Tan-Faced Prairie-Boy" in the same cluster. The "tan-faced-prairie-boy" gives the speaker a gift that is greater "than all the gifts of the world" (*CPCP* 453). The boy might be one of the "Western Soldiers" (*CPCP* 770) Whitman saw in Washington D.C., but also represented an incarnation of the prairie. The gift was a new hope and an ideal he had almost lost. Whitman saw the way for the nation to go forward in the "tan-faced prairie-boy" (*CPCP* 453).

Whitman wrote about his experiences of the war in *Specimen Days*. As seen above, his attention was drawn to the soldiers, as he said in "The Real War Will Never Get in the Books" in *Specimen Days*: "to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field" (*CPCP* 778). The descriptions of the soldiers above convey their characters, which would be lost in history. In "The Return of the Heroes," the soldiers dead or alive were called "the heroes." The "tan-faced prairie-boy" represented the heroes. That the armies were disbanded and "the heroes" came home at the end of war was described as "They melt, they disappear" (*CPCP* 489) in section six of "The Return of the Heroes."

Under the recurring images of the soldiers in the war, the speaker says it is not the Union nor the Secession but the "lands" that won the war, and the victory is demonstrated

“here and hence.” The victory of the Union and the defeat of the Secession are not mentioned here. Instead of “the sad, unnatural shows of war” (*CPCP* 487), work in the fields of “saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars” awaits the arrival of “ye armies,” the veterans. But, why are the lands victorious? The poem continues as follows:

Exult O lands! victorious lands!

Not there your victory on those red shuddering fields,

But here and hence your victory.

Melt, melt away ye armies—disperse ye blue-clad soldiers,

Resolve ye back again, give up for good your deadly arms,

Other the arms the fields henceforth for you, or South or North,

With saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars. (*CPCP* 489)

The “victory” would be proven “here and hence” by “saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars.” “[Y]e blue-clad soldiers” are those of the Union. The speaker urges them to “disperse” from the armies and engage in the “saner wars” of sowing seeds, growing crops, and harvesting them. The note of 1871 cited above presented the employment and reintegration of the veterans into civil life as a problem “to promptly solve” (*Passage to India* 87). Farming was presented as a means of solving the problem. The lands were victorious because they provided a place where the veterans could engage in the “saner wars.” Moreover, such

agricultural work would bring prosperity to the veterans. This prosperity was not only in the present but also in the period ahead, or “hence.” The lands gave people a place to live a life, cycle the dead into compost, and nurture new life. Thus, the prosperity of “hence” was produced.

While the speaker-poet urges the veterans or farmers to prove the victory by “other toils” of farming (*CPCP* 489), he encourages his own “throat” and “soul” to sing their songs, “[t]he chant of joy and power for boundless fertility” (*CPCP* 489) in the seventh section. The speaker-poet proclaims here the “joy and power for boundless fertility,” which was a new theme for his poetry instead of war. The joy and power existed as innate in human beings, which people could perceive through contact with the fertile lands. The speaker is eager to sing the communion between the workers and the lands.

All till'd and untill'd fields expand before me,

I see the true arenas of my race, or first or last,

Man's innocent and strong arenas.

I see the heroes at other toils,

I see well-wielded in their hands the better weapons.

I see where the Mother of All,

With full-spanning eye gazes forth, dwells long,

And counts the varied gathering of the products. (*CPCP* 489-90)

The “till’d and untill’d fields” where they lived and worked were called “the true arenas of my race” and “Man’s innocent and strong arenas.” The lands were presented as new fields for the men to engage in farm work instead of war. The arenas were “innocent” in comparison to the battlefields of “those red shuddering fields” (*CPCP* 489). Moreover, by referring to the strength of the arenas, the poet meant that they were tough to work. The “heroes at other toils” of farming now had “the better weapons” of farming tools. “I see” is repeatedly used. It means that the speaker-poet saw the figures of the farmers in his vision. Thus, Whitman wrote about what the nation should be. Here again, his agriculturalism without slaves rooted in Jefferson can be seen as in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing.” “Fecund America” in section three is saluted as “the Mother of All,” who inhabits the land and watches over the farmers. These scenes were presented as their ordinary lives after the war, which showed no signs of “the sad, unnatural shows of war.” Under the protection of “the Mother of All,” the veterans and farmers and the nation restore ordinary times. The speaker sees the rich blessings of nature in his vision:

Busy the far, the sunlit panorama,

Prairie, orchard, and yellow grain of the North,

Cotton and rice of the South and Louisianian cane,

Open unseeded fallows, rich fields of clover and timothy,

Kine and horses feeding, and droves of sheep and swine,
 And many a stately river flowing and many a jocund brook,
 And healthy uplands with herby-perfumed breezes,
 And the good green grass, that delicate miracle the ever-recurring grass.

(*CPCP* 490)

The lines above describe the geographically united nation. “[T]he far, the sunlit panorama” is filled with the plants and landscapes of the American continent. Here again, geographical diversity and equality are described. Who won the war, the North or South, means nothing to “the Mother of All.” Even if a war breaks out and the lands become the “red shuddering fields,” peace is restored there where not only the veterans or human beings but also various living things like plants, animals, and rivers live together harmoniously. The “Kine and horses [feed]” on the grass, the waters of “many a stately river flowing and many a jocund brook” water the grass, while the breezes waft in the fragrance of the grass. The last line of “the good green grass” is not a metaphor of democratic people as described in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” (*CPCP* 281). This “ever-recurring grass” is proof of the victory of the lands and the rebirth of life, which indicates the law of nature has been observed. The speaker’s eye moves from the macroscopic image of “the far, the sunlit panorama” to the microscopic one of “the good green grass.” In addition, the last sentence ends with an image of the grass, which shows “that delicate miracle” of the rebirth of life under the ecosystem

and full of liveliness as the alliteration of [g] shows. The Prairies are a part of the panorama and presented as a place where the ecosystem is balanced. It can be observed that the speaker in the poem also stands there because he smells the fragrance of the grass and watches it closely. The speaker-poet in “The Return of the Heroes” perceives his joy and power to create his verse through contact with the fertile lands of the Prairies.

“The Return of the Heroes” ends with a catalog of addresses to the heroes and a variety of regions on the American continent in the last section. Under the gaze of “the Mother of All,” the broken nation can be reunified. The nation’s ideal form after the Civil War is prophesied, as exemplified by the following lines:

Toil on heroes! harvest the products!

Not alone on those warlike fields the Mother of All,

With dilated form and lambent eyes watch’d you.

Toil on heroes! toil well! handle the weapons well!

The Mother of All, yet here as ever she watches you.

Well-pleased America thou beholdest,

Over the fields of the West those crawling monsters,

The human-divine inventions, the labor-saving implements;

Beholdest moving in every direction imbued as with life the revolving

hay-rakes,

The steam-power reaping-machines and the horse-power machines,

The engines, thrashers of grain and cleaners of grain, well separating the straw,

the nimble work of the patent pitchfork,

Beholdest the newer saw-mill, the southern cotton-gin, and the rice-cleanser.

Beneath thy look O Maternal,

With these and else and with their own strong hands the heroes harvest.

All gather and all harvest,

Yet but for thee O Powerful, not a scythe might swing as now in security,

Not a maize-stalk dangle as now its silken tassels in peace.

Under thee only they harvest, even but a wisp of hay under thy great face only,

Harvest the wheat of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, every barbed spear under thee,

Harvest the maize of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, each ear in its

light-green sheath,

Gather the hay to its myriad mows in the odorous tranquil barns,

Oats to their bins, the white potato, the buckwheat of Michigan, to theirs;

Gather the cotton in Mississippi or Alabama, dig and hoard the golden the
 sweet potato of Georgia and the Carolinas,
 Clip the wool of California or Pennsylvania,
 Cut the flax in the Middle States, or hemp or tobacco in the Borders,
 Pick the pea and the bean, or pull apples from the trees or bunches of grapes
 from the vines,
 Or aught that ripens in all these States or North or South,
 Under the beaming sun and under thee. (*CPCP* 490-91)

The speaker addresses the “heroes” or the veterans as farmers, as observed in lines such as “Toil on,” “harvest the products,” and “handle the weapons well!” and encourages them to engage in farm work. The figure of “the Mother of All,” which ever watches over the lands, is described with emphasis. During the war, “the Mother of All” was apprehensive, and anxiously observed her children’s behaviors as their mother. After the war, she still watches “you,” the children of the “heroes” and rejoices at their return to her.

The following descriptions of the agricultural machinery are controversial. Reynolds claims that “Whitman was coming to believe that the cultural unification he had been seeking might be achieved through the technological-industrial feasts Americans were celebrating,” which is evident in “Passage to India,” “The Return of the Heroes,” and “Song of the Exposition” (499). He gains insight into Whitman’s “uneasiness” toward the progress in

technology in “Passage to India:” “Whitman wants to exalt capitalistic America but also to escape it” (501). On the other hand, Reynolds claims the “uneasiness is less visible” in “The Return of the Heroes” and “Song of the Exposition,” while he cites the descriptions of farm machines in the last section of “The Return of the Heroes” cited above and does not clearly explain the ambivalence toward industrialism Whitman has. Reynolds emphasizes that Whitman accepts the progress of technology: “He [Whitman] is praising here the mechanization of agriculture that swelled the production of farm products after the war” (501). I partially agree with this view of Reynolds because the agricultural implements are described to move exaltedly “imbued as with life” like a living creature. “Well-pleased America” of “the Mother of All” watches the scene too. It can be stated that the machines are also a part of the ideal union that Whitman imagines. On the other hand, here I should note that Whitman prophetically remarks that farmers struggle with the machines that are a new opponent for them in the “arenas” of the fields. We cannot overlook the descriptions of “[t]he human-divine inventions” starting with the phrase of “those crawling monsters” (*CPCP* 490). This shows two aspects of the inventions: they are a credible threat to human beings as well as a revolutionary breakthrough. As the agricultural machinery is unfamiliar to Whitman, he calls them “monsters.” His surprise to witness them is reflected in the word.

The settlement of the Prairies was delayed by various geographical and climatic conditions: dry lands, low rainfall, lack of fuel or material, and shallow rivers. The area of the

Prairies, remaining a relatively unexplored region, was labeled as “the Great American Desert” on maps printed from 1820 until 1858. The development of barbed wire, agricultural implements and machinery, the railroad, and other technologies facilitated its settlement. A low supply of water in the area was the biggest problem when people were settling in. They searched for water constantly and experimented with well-making, windmills, irrigation, and dry farming. Those experiments began in earnest around 1870. The Industrial Revolution played a large role in settling the Prairies. It became a major agricultural area and supplied the markets of the East and Europe with crops. Cities were also established (Webb 140-204, 270-317, 319-82; Merchant 100-04; Andrews 76).

The development of agricultural implements in the United States won worldwide acclaim with a reaper demonstration by Cyrus Hall McCormick (1809-84) at the London Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 (Hounshell 153). Demands for agricultural machinery rapidly rose after the Civil War (161, 165). McCormick built, in 1866, an unprecedented 7,523 farm machines (161, 168). According to Webb, other laborsaving devices were developed after the reaper to reduce losses in harvest season. Various kinds of big-farm machinery like “the riding, or sulky, plow, the disk plow, the multiple plow, the one-row and two-row cultivators” were put in operational service. The greatest market for these machines was in the Great Plains (391). As a result, as Merchant points out, the inventions promoted settlements of cowboys and settlers in the Great Plains from the mid-nineteenth century to the

present: “Human production began to move away from subsistence-oriented homesteading and towards capitalist ranching and large-scale agribusiness. As corporate ranching took over the free range and absentee landowners bought out small farmers, attitudes toward nature became increasingly profit-oriented, managerial, and scientific. Nature was subdued by technology; an ethic of human domination controlled development” (104).

According to the *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, “In 1870 approximately 127,000 people lived in the Great Plains of the United States. The population grew rapidly over the next six decades. By 1930 more than 6.8 million people resided in the region” (Johnson, “Rural-Urban Population Change”). The number has been decreasing after peaking in 1930s. The settlers came to the Great Plains for agricultural opportunity in the region (“Rural-Urban Population Change”), and family farms were established (Opie, “Family Farm”). According to Milner II, “[t]he busiest homesteading areas of the nineteenth century were Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, where more than 430,000 settlers had filed homestead claims by the end of 1895” (Milner II et al. 290). This is where the most growth occurred on the Prairies, and it also happened to be where a large number of Plains Indians were living. Whitman must have witnessed a changing situation in the region.³⁶ The last section of “The Return of the Heroes” describes farm machines as “monsters” as well as “[t]he human-divine inventions” (*CPCP* 490). It represents the reality that the machines were becoming a big threat to human beings, even though the settlement in the Prairies could not have succeeded without them. At

first glance, Whitman praises the development of the implements. However, the machines are called “those crawling monsters.” They are presented as an opponent of “the heroes” or farmers. “[T]he Mother of All” watches such new wars. The heroes must have “strong hands” to control the machines. The speaker in the poem repeatedly addresses “the Mother of All.” It means that the “saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars” of farm work could not be successful without the Mother: “Under thee only they harvest, even but a wisp of hay under thy great face only” (*CPCP* 491). Whitman implies the hazardous nature of industrialism, which had the potential to make farmers into “monsters” unaware of the Mother’s presence and chase “pecuniary gain,” as he laments in *Democratic Vistas* as I mentioned in Chapter II (*CPCP* 937-38). The lines in the last section of “The Return of the Heroes” are a prayer to the Mother and the speaker-poet attempts to convey her significance to the heroes.

In this poem, “the Mother of All” refers to the earth itself or the Earth Mother in the American continent, as she is described as follows: “lavish brown parturient earth . . . infinite teeming womb” (*CPCP* 486); “Fecund America” (*CPCP* 487); “Thou Prairie Dame” (*CPCP* 487); “Dispensatress” (*CPCP* 487); “Thou all-acceptress—thou hospitable” (*CPCP* 487). Moreover, in the last section, she is called “Well-pleased America” and “Maternal.” This mother controls the law of nature and brings good harvests and prosperity to the nation, symbolized as the breadbasket of the Prairies.³⁷ Whitman refers to “The Muse of the Prairies, of California, Canada, Texas, and of the peaks of Colorado” (*CPCP* 1056) in his essay

“Ventures, on an Old Theme.” The Earth Mother as the Muse of the American continent is called “the Mother of All” in “The Return of the Heroes.”

Such a goddess figure is depicted many times in *Leaves of Grass*. She appears when Whitman questions the autochthony as an American artist. In “Starting from Paumanok,” the speaker in the poem addresses “America” and pleads with her to appreciate his poems: “Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North, / Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own offspring . . .” (*CPCP* 177). As I mentioned in Chapter I, “my leaves” refers to the poems in *Leaves of Grass*. The speaker-poet announces here that his poems belong to “America.” “America” also symbolizes the mother who gives birth to them. His address to “America” expresses the need for approval from his mother as an American poet who sings to her of her gifts, such as her fertile lands, in his poems.

In his later poems in *Leaves of Grass*, not only “The Return of the Heroes,” this “America” is clearly written as “Mother” and also called “Muse.” In “Song of the Exposition” (1871), America is an “eternal Muse” (*CPCP* 346), whose figure towers high:³⁸

And thou America,
 Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above all towering,
 With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;
 Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,
 Thee, ever thee, I sing. (*CPCP* 348)

The mother “America” here stands embodying Whitman’s ideal form of the nation. “America” is restated as “Union.” She is the only absolute and unifies all together with her “Law.” This poem was also written after the Civil War and was a prayer to the Mother once again, as in “The Return of the Heroes.” The Union here does not mean the North in the Civil War but the united nation or the American continent. Whitman continues as follows:

Thou, also thou, a World,
 With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,
 Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,
 One common indivisible destiny for All.

.....

We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! bulwark of all!

.....

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear Mother,

We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;

Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross or lucre—it is for
 thee, the soul in thee, electric, spiritual!

Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and States in thee!

Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee! (*CPCP* 348-50)

“Thou, also thou, a World” evokes the American continent as the New World³⁹ and is also the concept of an ideal form of the nation or a “Union.” It is found that the ideal nation Whitman assumes is the union under the American continent. Whitman saw the democratic conditions—“one common orbic language, / One common indivisible destiny for All”—in that people from all over the world gathered in the New World under this idealism.

This Mother as “a World” evokes the goddess “Columbia.” According to Thomas J. Schlereth, the allegorical “Columbia,” named after Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), symbolized “liberty and progress” (937). This female figure seems to have been first used by Massachusetts Chief Justice Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) in 1697 and was “a synonym for the New World” (939). Since 1792, the year of the Columbian tercentennial, the enthusiasm for Columbus has increased. Artists like African-American poet Phillis Wheatley (c.1753- 84), Philip Freneau (1752-1832), and Joel Barlow (1754-1812) used the word “Columbia” in their works. Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) first printed “Columbia” in 1787. An unofficial national anthem of Joseph Hopkinson’s (1770-1842) “Hail Columbia” appeared in 1798 (939). Schlereth claims, “At a time when British Americans sought political disassociation from Britannia, Columbus/Columbia provided a non-British European ancestor” (940). They sought for a missing history of America and made Columbus a hero as the discoverer of the New World. In this discourse, the goddess Columbia appeared. Her figure as “a symbol

newly created for a new republic” was established by 1780s, and she was thought of as the original American goddess (941). Before Columbia was created, “colonial America” was represented by the figure of a Native American princess. Columbia became the ideal republican mother (942).

Erkkila locates Whitman’s Columbian figure within a Revolutionary artist tradition, with an anonymous etching, “Liberty Conquers Tyranny,” (1775) and Philip Freneau’s “On Mr. Paine’s Rights of Man” (1795) as examples. She interprets the goddess Columbia as follows: “the new republican order represented by female liberty is presented as a pastoral world of abundance, fertility, and peace in which male and female dance in harmony.” Moreover, “Columbia” was “an emblem of the corporate identity of the colonies” (“The Federal Mother: Whitman as Revolutionary Son” 425). As described above, Erkkila sees this Columbia in “Fecund America” in “The Return of the Heroes:” “Equating the Union as Mother with a boundlessly fertile land, he celebrates the return to a peacetime order of fecund abundance” (*Whitman* 244).

It can be said that the goddess Columbia embodies the contradiction in the development of the American continent. She is the unified nation depicted as female liberty and the Earth Mother as a pastoral world at the same time. The cultivation of the frontiers proved her independence from the British, who threatened to destroy her fertility on the American continent. In this way, she became an original goddess and replaced the Native

American princess. However, the fertility aspect was emphasized when the goddess was depicted in artwork.

Given that the figure of the Columbia-like Mother frequently appears in Whitman's poems after the Civil War, it can be stated that the poet deemed not the Civil War but the farm labors of "saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars" (*CPCP* 489) to be equivalent to the American Revolutionary War and sought for a way to build a new republic. The Prairies were, for Whitman, the place the goddess inhabited.

As described above, Whitman expected the Prairies' natural healing force and fecundity to heal the nation and himself. The Prairies were the place where he and the nation could reestablish lost function and order. Not only the geography but also the productivity of the Prairies could (re)integrate the nation. The poet urged himself to create verse from the fertile lands of the Prairies in order to restore the nation to a healthy state, which had suffered from "the sad, unnatural shows of war" (*CPCP* 487) of the Civil War.

Whitman paid much attention to the Prairies and presented them as "arenas" where people engaged in farm work in the period following the Civil War. This idea is reflected in his later works, especially the ones in *Specimen Days*, which describe the memories of his trip West from September, 1879 to January, 1880 (Allen, *The Solitary Singer* 486-89). Many descriptions of the Prairies were recorded there. Needless to say, the Prairies made a considerable impression on Whitman, as evidenced by the following lines:

I have again been most impress'd, I say, and shall remain for the rest of my
 life most impress'd, with that feature of the topography of your western
 central world—that vast Something, stretching out on its own unbounded scale,
 unconfined, which there is in these prairies, combining the real and ideal, and
 beautiful as dreams. (*CPCP* 853)

This is a part of a speech Whitman intended to give in “the Kansas Quarter Centennial
 Celebration” held in Lawrence, Kansas, which he did not end up attending (Allen, *The
 Solitary Singer* 486-87). Although the Prairies might be exaggeratedly praised as words of
 congratulation, the poem directly expresses his attraction to their spatial vastness. Whitman
 goes on to talk of the brilliance and originality of the Prairies, and how important they are for
 the American people:

“I wonder indeed if the people of this continental inland West know how much
 of first-class *art* they have in these prairies—how original and all your
 own—how much of the influences of a character for your future humanity,
 broad, patriotic, heroic and new? how entirely they tally on land the grandeur
 and superb monotony of the skies of heaven, and the ocean with its waters?
 how freeing, soothing, nourishing they are to the soul?

“Then is it not subtly they who have given us our leading modern
 Americans, Lincoln and Grant?—vast-spread, average men—their

foregrounds of character altogether practical and real, yet (to those who have eyes to see) with finest backgrounds of the ideal, towering high as any. And do we not see, in them, foreshadowings of the future races that shall fill these prairies? . . . this favor'd central area of (in round numbers) two thousand miles square seems fated to be the home both of what I would call America's distinctive ideas and distinctive realities." (*CPCP* 853-54)

Whitman evaluated the Prairies as "first-class *art*." He repeatedly maintained in other parts of *Specimen Days* that the American art that would stem from the Prairies would be new and peculiar to the American continent (*CPCP* 858-59, 863). He saw the original landscape of the American continent in the Prairies and thought about what the landscape would bring to its inhabitants. It is stated that the vastness of the Prairies makes a "broad" humanity that embodies the vastness. Moreover, he prophesied that the Prairies would become "the home" of Americans and recommended their settlement to establish the "true" America. There is a contrast between the Prairies and the city behind the remarks above. As we have seen in Chapter I, life in the city and its dwellers were criticized in *Democratic Vistas* in that there were no "men here [in the city] worthy the name," no "fine youths, and majestic old persons," no "arts worthy freedom and a rich people," nor great moral and religious civilization (*CPCP* 939). In addition, Whitman states "these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics" (*CPCP* 939). He called such a city life "a sort of dry

and flat Sahara” (*CPCP* 939). In contrast, the Prairies, in the description above, are likened to the sea. Furthermore, he contrasts the Prairies and the city, and finds “freedom” in the former and a sense of stagnation and unproductiveness in the latter.

Whitman repeatedly tells how fascinated he was by the Prairies in *Specimen Days*, and elaborates his views on the geography, character, and diversity of the Prairies. In “Missouri State,” he stares out the window of the train and describes the climates of the Prairies (*CPCP* 851-52), paying attention to the nature of the soil there:

For over two hundred miles successive rolling prairies, agriculturally perfect view'd by Pennsylvania and New Jersey eyes, and dotted here and there with fine timber. Yet fine as the land is, it isn't the finest portion; (there is a bed of impervious clay and hard-pan beneath this section that holds water too firmly, 'drowns the land in wet weather, and bakes it in dry,' as a cynical farmer told me.) . . . I am clear, (now, and from what I have seen and learn'd since,) that Missouri, in climate, soil, relative situation, wheat, grass, mines, railroads, and every important materialistic respect, stands in the front rank of the Union.

(*CPCP* 852)

Because of this “impervious clay and hard-pan” that Whitman referred to, the area of the Prairies has been called “the Great American Desert” for a long time. Whitman here looked for a way to use the lands for agricultural purposes. He looked to the possibility of Missouri

becoming a productive agricultural area.

According to Richard N. L. Andrews, “[s]ystematic geographic and geological surveys of the western territories began in 1867” (103). The surveys were intended for mapping and investigating the actual conditions of the West, as more detailed information of the region was needed for people to settle in. Notable geological surveys of the West were conducted after the Civil War, such as Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden’s (1829-87) Geological Surveys of the Territories (Merrill 500), Clarence King’s (1842-1901) Geological Survey of the Fortieth Parallel (which researched “the character of the mineral resources of the country to be traversed by the Pacific Railroad”) (500, 530), John Wesley Powell’s (1834-1902) United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, and George Montague Wheeler’s (1842-1905) Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian (500). Wheeler presented the land capability classification of the West, such as lands appropriate for agriculture, forestry, pasturage, and arid lands. The geologists surveyed the western lands from the perspectives of “arable, irrigable, timbered at commercial values, coal-bearing, or related to town boundaries or private land claims” to meet Congress’ request (Andrews 103). On the other hand, Powell’s *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region* (1878) presented the method of land classification with “rainfall and resources” rather than with “arable farmlands and transportation” (103). In 1879, the U. S. Geological Survey was established. Since then, the scientific agency has provided “systematic topographic maps,

geological maps and reports, and eventually a broad range of environmental information”

(103). There was increasingly strong enthusiasm toward geological interests at that time. In

“America’s Back-Bone” in *Specimen Days*, Whitman refers to Hayden as follows: “We have no reach’d, penetrated the Rockies, (Hayden calls it the Front Range,) for a hundred miles or so . . .” (*CPCP* 857). This demonstrates that the poet was also interested in the geology of the West. His interests for it can be seen throughout *Specimen Days*.

“On to Denver—A Frontier Incident” also describes his impression of the Prairies and their fertility: “For a long distance we follow the line of the Kansas river, (I like better the old name, Kaw,) a stretch of very rich, dark soil, famed for its wheat, and call’d the Golden Belt—then plains and plains . . .” (*CPCP* 854). In “Prairie Analogies—The Tree Question,” the “matter of the cultivation and spread of forests” of “the prairie States” is referred to as a problem to solve (*CPCP* 866). Trees assume a crucial role in preserving the ecological system: they store water, prevent flooding, produce oxygen, and filter carbon dioxide.

Whitman took the Prairies seriously as agricultural lands and sought ways in which to realize this dream.

Whitman wrote two poems after returning from his trip to the West from 1879 to 1880. One is “The Prairie States” (1880) and the other is “A Prairie Sunset” (1888). “The Prairie States” describes the reclamation in progress on the Prairies and what they should be:

A newer garden of creation, no primal solitude,

Dense, joyous, modern, populous millions, cities and farms,
 With iron interlaced, composite, tied, many in one,
 By all the world contributed—freedom's and law's and thrift's society,
 The crown and teeming paradise, so far, of time's accumulations,
 To justify the past. (*CPCP* 524)

Folsom connects an incipient paradise to this “newer garden.” He says:

Whitman's Eden was the result of history, not the cause of it, the current
 culmination instead of the past inception. Instead of a linear history beginning
 with the expulsion from the garden and proceeding through the apocalypse,
 Whitman offered an alternative circular history, from one garden to a newer
 one, from an earthly paradise lost to an earthly paradise regained, built out of
 and onto the failures of the past. His new garden remained firmly planted in
 history. . . . (“Walt Whitman's Prairie Paradise” 52)

As Folsom claims, Whitman represented the prairies as “another” garden different from Eden
 and certainly offered “an alternative circular history.” However, I would like to claim that “A
 newer garden of creation” is created from not only human “history” but also “time's
 accumulations,” which refers to the geological formation of the Prairies. At first glance, this
 poem appears to recapitulate the history of the settlement. After the Homestead Act in 1862
 and the Industrial Revolution, the settlement of the Prairies began in earnest and cities were

established (Webb 140-204, 270-317, 319-82; Merchant 100-04). Folsom asserts that ‘iron’ was not the only commodity in high demand in the 1870’s—but barbed wire as well. (“Paradise on the Prairies” 103). From our perspective today, the brief history of the development of the Prairies seems to be recorded in this poem. Meanwhile, it can be also stated that the descriptions of “The Prairie States” were exaggerated. There were not so many people, cities, and farms as to call it “dense” even now. This exaggeration is then a kind of prophecy to emphasize the significance of the Prairies as “the home” of the American people and Whitman’s ideal America (*CPCP* 853-54).

The Prairies that Whitman actually saw were not developed as described in “The Prairie States.” *In Specimen Days*, in front of the undeveloped and wild prairies, he predicts their future as farmland:

Speaking generally as to the capacity and sure future destiny of that plain and prairie area (larger than any European kingdom) it is the inexhaustible land of wheat, maize, wool, flax, coal, iron, beef and pork, butter and cheese, apples and grapes—land of ten million virgin farms—to the eye at present wild and unproductive—yet experts say that upon it when irrigated may easily be grown enough wheat to feed the world. (*CPCP* 864)

Whitman forecasts that the “plains and prairie area” will develop as agricultural lands “to feed the world.” He refers to irrigation here. The area has been called “the Great American

Desert,” because of water scarcity. There has been always a water problem in the Prairies. The settlers have tried well-making, windmills, irrigation, and dry farming. In 1877, the Desert Land Act was enacted. The act “allowed claimants to purchase single claims of 640 acres of unsurveyed desert land at \$1.25 per acre, under the condition that they irrigate it within three years” (Andrews 102). The statements cited above show that Whitman’s interest is directed to how the Prairies could be transformed into farmlands.

Given the statements on the Prairies in *Specimen Days*, “A newer garden of creation” in “The Prairie States” was a miscellaneous society established by being intertwined with one another, and accordingly, various things such as crops were grown there from the fertile lands under the law of nature. This was an ideal situation of a democratic society for Whitman, where only “creation” happened and unnatural events did not.

Though Folsom suggests that “the past” refers to the Irish Potato Famine because of the note “for the Irish famine” in the manuscript of this poem (“Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise”⁵²), it also includes any past the inhabitants of the Prairies have. “[T]he past” evokes the Civil War, given the clear references to it in “The Return of the Heroes.” Furthermore, settlers were gathering in the Prairies when Whitman wrote the poem. Many immigrants, such as the Irish, were moving there. According to Milner II, Germans and Russian-Germans were the most successful settlers in the Great Plains (374). He says, “In addition to the Russian-Germans, the Great Plains provided a home for numerous other

religious-ethnic groups” (374). The immigrants who landed in large cities duplicated “their ancestral homes in Europe” and built their own traditional churches, while the ones on the Plains placed little emphasis on ethnic differences and made their common “ethnic church.” “The plains priest or pastor was always a community leader. The ethnic church played a crucial role in life on the Great Plains: it held the community together” (374). One can assume that the presence of the Plains Indians on the Prairies was a well-known fact to the settlers prior to their arrival in the region. They were viewed as opponents by the settlers. It can also be assumed that the settlers of the Prairies and the Great Plains were united in their common interest to make a living there in “the Great American Desert.” Through suffering such hardships, the immigrants or other settlers gathering there would become “an American nation,” free from the past by engaging in productive activities on the fertile lands of the region. Whitman prophesies what the American heterogeneous society is to become in the poem “The Prairie States.”

As seen above, Whitman wrote a lot of short essays on the Prairies, which were compiled in *Specimen Days*. However, the number of his poems about the Prairies is small. This might be because he searched for new prosody to represent the Prairies. In “The Prairie States,” the catalogs with long lines were not used and the speaker, who is not seen in the poem, is the storyteller of the Prairies. This is unusual for Whitman’s poetry. “A Prairie Sunset” is also a poem that sought for the new prosody. This is the last poem about the

Prairies in *Leaves of Grass* and depicts a sunset Whitman might have seen in his travel to the West. He said he saw “three beautiful sunsets” during the trip: “One in Illinois, west of Columbus; one at Tower ? Park, St Louis, and one crossing west Missouri. The golden & light blue clouds” (*NUPM* 3: 1039). A variety of colors are enumerated in the poem.

Shot gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver, emerald, fawn,

The earth’s whole amplitude and Nature’s multiform power consign’d for once
to colors;

The light, the general air possess’d by them—colors till now unknown,

No limit, confine—not the Western sky alone—the high meridian—North,

South, all,

Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the last. (*CPCP* 632)

The first line describes the colors of the light, grasses, and air seen momentarily at sunset.

The speaker-poet, watching the scene, is fascinated by the colors. The broad sweep of the Prairies reaches to the edge of the sky in all directions. Additionally, the speaker admires nature’s deft ability to change its facial expression every moment. Thus, the short-lived glow of the sunset and the shadows are depicted in the poem. This impressionistic poem praises that natural power and colorful diversity seen over the Prairies.

The speaker in the poem appears here in a way that is different from in the antebellum catalog poems. He is not the “I” who describes what he sees and is easily and

imaginatively integrated with the objects he sees, as witnessed in section 33 of “Song of Myself” and section 14 of “Starting from Paumanok.” Though the speaker as an observer in “A Prairie Sunset” evokes “a transparent eye-ball” (Emerson 10), he is not the one. Emerson says in *Nature* that “I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God” (Emerson 10). This is a scene of communion between the divine spirit, the Over-Soul, and the soul of “I,” a human being. A flash of enlightenment is described here. On the other hand, the speaker in “A Prairie Sunset” is an observer of the scene and sees each of the colors in the prairie sunset carefully and closely. He witnesses the law of nature as Emerson did; however, he does not merge with it. A different communion between the Prairies and the speaker is described in the poem.

As we have seen in Chapter I, Whitman sought the ideal democracy in relation to nature. He regards “variety and freedom” as the greatest lessons of nature in *Democratic Vistas* (CPCP 929). In “A Prairie Sunset,” the diversity of colors represents the “variety” of nature, and the vastness of the Prairies, which spread unboundedly, is the “freedom.” The various colors in the poem coexist independently in the vast space of the Prairies freely. Thus, Whitman saw the analogies between democracy, which includes the voices of many, and the sunset of the Prairies, and wrote about them in the poem.

Whitman expected that a democratic society would be realized on the Prairies as seen in “The Return of the Heroes” and “The Prairie States.” “A Prairie Sunset” also represents

this idea. In “The Prairies and Great Plains in Poetry (After traveling Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado)” in *Specimen Days*, Whitman describes the diversity he saw in the Prairies. He wrote part of the manuscript of the essay on “Friday Sep 19 '79” (*NUPM* 3: 1039-40). Here, he describes the Prairies as the “arena” for the postbellum American society and observes them closely.

Grand as the thought that doubtless the child is already born who will see a hundred millions of people, the most prosperous and advanc'd of the world, inhabiting these Prairies, the great Plains, and the valley of the Mississippi, I could not help thinking it would be grander still to see all those inimitable American areas fused in the alembic of a perfect poem, or other esthetic work, entirely western, fresh and limitless—altogether our own, without a trace or taste of Europe's soil, reminiscence, technical letter or spirit. (*CPCP* 863)

As I mentioned before, Whitman evaluated the Prairies as “first-class art” (*CPCP* 853) and suggested that the American art that would stem from the Prairies would be new and peculiar to the American continent (*CPCP* 858-59). A similar view is repeated here. Whitman seemed to believe that the Prairies were a vast, unused canvas for not only poetry but also art and sought for a new prosody to describe them. It can be stated that “A Prairie Sunset” has this intention in mind. The phrase of “the alembic of a perfect poem” reflects his idea on prosody. The phrase shows that although some images and words written in Whitman's poems appear

to be randomly selected at a glance, they were scrutinized before being put into his poems.

This is evident in the Prairie poems investigated in this chapter. Whitman wrote many works of prose on the Prairies, but few poems. The long-lined catalogs and the talkative but reflective speaker were not seen in these poems. This shows that the poet sought a new development of poetry in some ways. He must have thought the poetic method of catalog was not suitable for describing the Prairies. The reason he would think so is explored in the following statements. Whitman continues,

My days and nights, as I travel here—what an exhilaration!—not the air alone, and the sense of vastness, but every local sight and feature. Everywhere something characteristic—the cactuses, pinks, buffalo grass, wild sage—the receding perspective, and the far circle-line of the horizon all times of day, especially forenoon—the clear, pure, cool, rarefied nutriment for the lungs, previously quite unknown—the black patches and streaks left by surface-conflagrations—the deep-plough'd furrow of the “fire-guard”—the slanting snow-racks built all along to shield the railroad from winter drifts—the prairie-dogs and the herds of antelope—the curious “dry rivers”—occasionally a “dug-out” or corral—Fort Riley and Fort Wallace—those towns of the northern plains, (like ships on the sea,) Eagle-Tail, Coyote, Cheyenne, Agate, Monotony, Kit Carson⁴⁰—with ever the

ant-hill and the buffalo-wallow—ever the herds of cattle and the cow-boys
 (“cow-punchers”) to me a strangely interesting class, bright-eyed as hawks,
 with their swarthy complexions and their broad-brimm’d hats—apparently
 always on horseback, with loose arms slightly raised and swinging as they ride.

(*CPCP* 863)

Whitman pays attention to the natural and cultural diversity that existed on the Prairies here.

It is little wonder that those lines above are seen in *Leaves of Grass*. The references to Fort Riley, Fort Wallace, and cowboys deserve attention. According to Marvin H. Garfield, “Forts Riley, Harker, Hays, and Wallace stood guard over the Smoky Hill route to Denver” (51-52).

“Fort Riley was established in 1853 on the north bank of the Kansas river at the junction of the Smoky Hill and Republican forks. . . . Fort Riley’s chief function during that period [‘the great Indian wars of the sixties’] became one of organizing and drilling troops and as

headquarters for military supplies. Here the famous Seventh Cavalry was organized in the fall

of 1866” (Garfield 53). Fort Wallace was established in 1865. Garfield says, “Fort Wallace

was first called Camp Pond Creek. It was located near the western boundary of Kansas on

Pond creek, a tributary to the Smoky Hill. Wallace was the last and most western military

post of any permanency in Kansas. From 1865 to 1878 it bore the brunt of the contest with

the Indian tribes” (56). Forts in the West such as Fort Riley and Fort Wallace were built upon

settlers’ requests for protection from the Plains Indians and information about the route

(Milner II 171). During his trip West, Whitman passed Fort Riley by train and stayed at Wallace (Eitner 47). Walter H. Eitner refers to the possibility that Whitman saw the soldiers from Fort Wallace in his *Walt Whitman's Western Jaunt* (47). Then, Whitman implies the presence of Native Americans in "Fort Riley and Fort Wallace." The towns' names also evoke images of the Native Americans. In the manuscript of this essay, Whitman wrote, "Eagle Tail after a chief" (*NUPM* 3: 1040).

Eitner cites two episodes concerning Whitman meeting Native Americans during the trip in Topeka, Kansas on September 17. One is that Whitman and his party "took an omnibus from the Tefft House, and while crossing the bridge saw" a party of Potawatomi who were watering their ponies at the river (44). Whitman wrote the following notes: "Wapalingua Chief died 2 years ago 116 years of age a brave blind Indian never spoke English / The squad of Indians at Topeka / — Mr Smart on the Indians" (*NUPM* 3:1039). Eitner suggests that this event inspired Whitman to write the notes (44). The other event described is when Whitman and the company were invited by the sheriff of Topeka to the jail where there were "about twenty Indian prisoners in the jailyard [sic]" (44). It is said that although the Indians neglected the sheriff and other men in the party, the chief looked at Whitman, offered his hand and gave him a word of greeting, and the other Indians followed the chief (44). Thus, Whitman knew firsthand of the presence of Native Americans on the Prairies. However, he did not directly refer to them in his writings.

Another description worth noting is that he called the cowboys “a strangely interesting class.” He must have thought that they were a new class, which was not seen in the cities, and had adapted to the surrounding environment to survive there. Interestingly, these descriptions of the cowboys evoke stereotypical images of Plains Indians, even though they were white: “bright-eyed as hawks, with their swarthy complexions . . . always on horseback, with loose arms slightly raised and swinging as they ride” (*CPCP* 863). The images of the cowboys overlapped with the Indians who hunted buffalos. The strong physicality of the cowboys showed, for Whitman, that survival was possible on the Prairies, and thus, the possibility existed that his ideal democratic nation would be built.

Given “The Prairies and Great Plains in Poetry” cited above, “A Prairie Sunset” represents such various landscapes Whitman saw and the heterogeneous society he imagined the nation should be. Folsom interprets the colors as follows: “Pure luminous color” represents the new, western America with its cowboys, while “the silent shadows” represents the Europeanized, Eastern society and its conventions creeping into the Prairies. Both colors show the Prairies’ heterogeneity (“Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise” 58). However, in the prairie sunset, the color of Native Americans is “nowhere to be seen” (“Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise” 56). Folsom modifies this interpretation at the conclusion as follows: “Native Americans seemed to be disappearing into the shadows, just as African Americans were emerging from them” (“Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise” 58-59). I agree with Folsom

that the colors in the poem represent the heterogeneous society that Whitman thought would increasingly develop in the Prairies. However, it is not clear whether “the silent shadows” can be interpreted as the Europeanized Eastern society. Instead, I would like to suggest the possibility “the silent shadows” represents the Native Americans, as Whitman mentions “Fort Riley and Fort Wallace.” During the Reconstruction (1865-77), wars with Native Americans intensified. In 1871, the U.S. government declared that “no further treaties were to be signed” with them (Nies 279). This announcement aggravated relations between them. According to Judith Nies, “over four million buffalo were slaughtered” in two years from 1872 to 1874, which was a strategy to deprive Native Americans of their livelihood (279-80). In 1874, the government broke the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868), which prohibited intrusions into their hunting grounds, and war occurred (275, 281). In 1876, George Armstrong Custer (1839-76) was killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn (282-84). Whitman wrote a poem on the battle, “From Far Dakota’s Cañons” (*CPCP* 592-93), which describes Custer’s Last Stand in the foreground and “the dusky Sioux” in the background. The heroic death of Custer is highlighted in the poem. A series of battles between Native Americans and the U. S. troops eventually ended in the Battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota (1890). Thus, tensions between the Plains Indians and the settlers were high when Whitman visited the Prairies and wrote two Prairie poems. However, he did not directly refer to the problems in the poems nor prose works as seen above. Whitman did not directly depict the Native Americans in his

poems, but the negative legacy concerning them is reflected in the words “the silent shadows” in “A Prairie Sunset.” The shadows are silent. If the shadows represent the Eastern, Europeanized society, they would not be silent.

One of the reasons why there were few poems written about the Prairies is reflected in the words “the silent shadows.” Native Americans were always absent in Whitman’s poems and essays on the Prairies, although Whitman clearly knew of their existence. Instead, the poet wrote about the settlers and what the nation should be. Snyder also refers to the absence of Native Americans in Whitman’s writings, discussing *Democratic Vistas* as below:

In “Democratic Vistas” we miss the presence of people of color, of Native Americans, of wilderness, or even the plain landscape. . . . He celebrates industry, workers, action, and the relentless energy of Americans (who almost always are implicitly white) Whitman was clearly free of prejudice in his personal manners and values. But he assumed a kind of melting-pot future in which the other races and ethnic groups would eventually become one with the liberal Protestant metaphysic that lurks behind his dream. . . . [T]he years during which Whitman wrote “Democratic Vistas” (1868-70) were years of defeat and misery for Native Americans, and were the very years when the commercial destruction of the North American bison herd was fully under way.

(*A Place in Space* 215-17)

Snyder thus gives an interesting explanation for the absence of Native Americans in Whitman's works, linking it to a possible avoidance of unsavory events happening at the time on the plains, rather than personal bias. Errkila evaluates Whitman as a poet as follows: "Whitman positioned himself at the center of the diverse and contradictory energies of American culture, seeking through his poems to order and shape these energies into a harmonious democratic world" (*Whitman* 10). As she said, and as examined in this thesis, Whitman always wrote about an ideal state of the nation in his poems, such as in section 33 of "Song of Myself" and section 14 of "Starting from Paumanok," where there is harmony or unity and friction is hard to find. His poetic method of catalog was the best way to depict the diversity and unity of the nation. In short, Whitman could not describe the discord between Native Americans and the American nation in his poems. That is why he wrote few poems on the Prairies. On the other hand, as an American bard, he could not help but mention the people in his poems, and thus the line "the silent shadows" was written. "A Prairie Sunset" is a representation of the Prairies and his ideal vision of the nation. He could only write his poems in an impressionistic way to avoid any direct expression of the violent reality that undermined the realization of his democratic ideal. This topic of the representation of Native Americans is examined in further detail in the next chapter.

In sum, Whitman found a place or *topos* with the potential to unify the post-war nation in the Prairies and the Great Plains and described it as an arena where people could

engage in farm work and where his ideal democratic society could be established. This idea was based on the fertility of the Prairies and the Great Plains, where “the law of successions” (*CPCP* 948) was observed by the earth’s decomposition system to purify corpses or excrement and make them into compost, which made the renewal of things possible. In his attempts to describe the *topos*, Whitman faced the problem of the representation of Native Americans, and it is the reason why the number of his poems on the Prairies and the Great Plains is small. Whitman showed them not as a virgin land but an arena where war and peace were repeated, a home where his ideal nation should be built, and a place where people actually lived, although Whitman valued the Prairies and the Great Plains because there remained uncultivated soils there.

Chapter IV: Whitman's Hiawatha: "The Small Thin Indian Helmsman"

As we have seen in this thesis, Native Americans did not appear in the descriptions of the West by Whitman, but he had a strong interest in their existence. This shows he had difficulty in describing them in his poems. Whitman faced the problem of representation when faced with the reality that they were being excluded from the "open and free" fields of the American continent into closed reservations. This chapter examines images of Native Americans in Whitman's later works and shows how he depicted an image that was different from stereotypes in the nineteenth century. The image was of neither a noble savage nor a savage but of "the small thin Indian helmsman" (*CPCP* 617) in "The Pilot in the Mist" (1885).

In nineteenth-century American literature, stereotypical imagery representing Native Americans as a vanishing race of prehistoric noble savages was evident and widespread.⁴¹ Although the violent savagery of the "Indian" toward the whites as depicted in "captivity narratives" was a popular image, the idea of the noble savage informed many works as well, notably Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807-82) *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855). Thirty-eight thousand copies of Longfellow's poem were sold in the first year of publication, and the work is still regarded as the most famous poem depicting the noble but vanishing Native American people (Pearce 190, 194).

After the Civil War, the mythicizing of the West begun. Dime Westerns played a crucial role in this. According to Bill Brown's *Reading the West: An Anthology of Dime Westerns*, Ann Sophia Stephens' (1810-86) *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter* (1860) was the first dime Western to be published. It was a republication of an 1839 work and set in Catskill, New York. (15). About 300,000 copies were sold by the end of the century (15). They were sold as "National and American Romances" or "Purely American Novels" (21). Dime Westerns followed James Fenimore Cooper's (1789-1851) *Leather-Stocking Tales* (1823-41) and described the contact between civilization and the wilderness (3). Violence played a central role in the novels and attracted the attention of the public. The stereotypical savage Indians often appeared. The following is an example from *Malaeska*:

The whites returned their fire, and the sounds of murderous strife were indeed horrible. Sternly arose the white man's shout amid the blazing of guns and the whizzing of tomahawks, as they flashed though [sic] the air on their message of blood. Above all burst out the war-whoop of the savages, sometimes rising hoarse, and like the growling of a thousand bears; then, as the barking of as many wolves, and again, sharpening to the shrill, unearthly cry of a tribe of wild-cats. Oh, it was fearful, that scene of slaughter. Heart to heart, and muzzle to muzzle, the white and red man battled in horrid strife. The trees above them drooped under a cloud of smoke, and their trunks were scarred

with gashes, cut by the tomahawks which had missed their more deadly aim.

The ground was burdened with the dead, and yet the strife raged fiercer and

fiercer, till the going down of the sun. (Brown 80)

This is a scene of a surprise attack by the Indians and dreadful murder. Their savageness is emphasized by likening their cries to the calls of animals. Because of this kind of violent image, dime Westerns were accused of having adverse effects on children and abetting crimes (Brown 2-3). The novels became more popular as these technologies advanced: the wood pulp paper, the steam-powered cylinder press, the stereotyped plates, and transportation (20). They were mass-produced at a low price. Because of their compactness, they were sent to the soldiers in the field (31). Brown says, "While the frontier had offered actual escape from Eastern civilization (the Homestead Act of 1862 ceded 160 acres of government land to anyone who would cultivate it for five years), the dime novel offered imaginative escape from an increasingly urbanized East" (5). In this way, while the battles with Plains Indians became more serious, the mythologization of the West was progressing through the popularization of dime Westerns. Stereotypical images of Native Americans were widespread through the novels. The absence of Native Americans in the western landscapes in Whitman's writings seems to have gone against this kind of mythologization of the West.

Whitman had a considerable interest in Native Americans, and attempted to record some of their cultures and traditions. He worked as a clerk at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in

1865.⁴² He wrote that he personally “met with the Sioux chiefs in Washington” (*NUPM* 3: 1036) in a notebook.⁴³ It is said that the poet met a party of Potawatomi and “Indian prisoners” in Topeka in 1879 (Eitner 44). After his trip to the West, he visited an Ojibwe (called “Chippewa” in the United States) reserve⁴⁴ during his stay in Canada in 1880. The picture *Osceola*,⁴⁵ painted by George Catlin (1796-1872), hung on the wall of Whitman’s house in Camden, New Jersey (Johnston 34, 53-54). At the beginning of his career as a writer, Whitman called Native American stories “the true and legitimate romance of this [American] continent” (*The Journalism* 109);⁴⁶ and he attempted to show that these stories could be a fecund source of historical themes for American writers. With this intention, he wrote an early poem entitled “The Inca’s Daughter” (1840) and two short stories, “The Death of Wind-Foot” (1842) and “The Half-Breed: A Tale of the Western Frontier” (1845). Native Americans who died nobly were a frequent theme of his, appearing for instance in “A captive Indian maiden” (*EPF* 6), “Wind-Foot” (*EPF* 135), and “Arrow-Tip” (*EPF* 263). Imagery in the early works depicts Native Americans as a vanished or vanishing race. On the other hand, the number of the poems that describe Native Americans in *Leaves of Grass* is small. They are absent in the landscapes of the West as we have already observed in this thesis.

Several Whitman scholars have studied Native American imagery in his works, his attraction to their languages, and the similarities between Native American oral poetry and Whitman’s oratorical free verse poetry, the last in relation to performance art.⁴⁷ Folsom

researched this subject comprehensively for his paper “Whitman and American Indians,” which reveals an ambivalence that emerges in the poet’s works toward Native Americans. However, one of the later poems, “The Pilot in the Mist,” in which a “small thin Indian helmsman” (*CPCP* 617) appears, has not been covered by these scholars. Although Native Americans in the nineteenth century were usually depicted as strong and masculine, as in Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* or Whitman’s other works, here, “the small thin Indian helmsman” in “The Pilot in the Mist” is depicted differently—more like a ghost. This poem best shows the poet’s ambivalent attitude.

The image of “the small thin Indian helmsman” in “The Pilot in the Mist” reflects an American national guilt toward Native Americans and, ironically, serves as the basis for a model of a new America. Renée L. Bergland’s study of haunting Indian-figures in American literature from a post-colonial perspective argues that the nineteenth-century national discourse created Native American ghosts. She writes, “In American letters, and in the American imagination, Native American ghosts function both as representations of national guilt and as triumphant agents of Americanization” (4). Whitman’s “small thin Indian helmsman” exemplifies this literary theme. This Indian, idealized as one of the “American models” that Whitman tries to represent in his poems (*NUPM* 4:1588), haunts the speaker-poet.

This chapter mainly examines “The Pilot in the Mist,” and shows how Whitman

represented the white guilt and historical promise, embodied in the figure of Hiawatha, that it imparted to Native Americans within the framework of their representation. To consider how Whitman's views on the physicality and nobility of Native Americans as a "vanishing race" developed, a piece of his poetry—section ten of "Song of Myself"—and a piece of memoiristic writing—"An Indian Bureau Reminiscence"—follow the analysis of "The Pilot in the Mist." Then, "Red Jacket (from Aloft)" (1884), "Yonnonديو" (1887), and some poems in which place names of Native Americans are used are examined to reconsider his representation of Native Americans. As I said earlier, stereotypical images of Native Americans were widespread. In such circumstances, Whitman faced the problem of their representation in his "ideal" America.

Sparse critical attention has been given to "The Pilot in the Mist," which opens the sequence "Fancies at Navesink" in the annex to *Leaves of Grass*, "Sands at Seventy." In the eight poems that comprise the Navesink sequence, the speaker addresses the sea, the source of his imagination, which symbolizes the cycle of life (Stauffer 608). Geoffrey Sill argues that this sequence is the heart of the annex (189). In it, the poet recalls his old "Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas—scenes ephemeral, / The long past war, the battles, hospital sights, the wounded and the dead," and seeks the source of his poetic language, trying to recover its dynamism ("By That Long Scan of Waves," *CPCP* 620).

Gay Wilson Allen argues that the poem expresses Whitman's attraction to the sea

(*Walt Whitman Handbook* 224); however, it also describes Native Americans—the Indian-figure appears as the old navigator of Whitman’s poetic journey. It seems that the Indian-figure in “The Pilot in the Mist” contains imagery stemming from the Native Americans Whitman saw in Canada in 1880, the men on the Ojibwe reserve at Sarnia, and the imagery of Hiawatha. Whitman journeyed along the St. Lawrence River deep into Canada by ship. The manuscript of “The Pilot in the Mist” was written during his stay in Canada:

Again I steam over the Saguenay’s [sic] ~~bronze-black waters~~

~~I see~~ The bronze-black waters, and the thin streaks lines of white curd, and the

dazzling ~~silvery~~ sun-dash on the stream

~~The~~ The banks of grim-gray mountains and rocks, ~~are keep the banks~~

~~I see~~ The grim and savage scene (*DBN* 637; strikethroughs in original here and subsequently)

No Indian-figure is found here, but the beautiful Saguenay scenery is recorded in the manuscript.

The diminished figure in the poem, described as “the small thin Indian helmsman,” is quite different from the depictions of Native Americans as idealized noble savages. In fact, Whitman rarely used the words “Indian” or “savage.” He sometimes referred to Native Americans as “the aborigines” or by their tribal names. Elsewhere, Whitman acknowledged that “Indian” was a misnomer (Donaldson, *Walt Whitman* 264; *NUPM* 5: 1664), even though

he employs it here to rewrite an implanted image of an “Indian” with a masculine body.

The Pilot in the Mist

Steaming the northern rapids—(an old St. Lawrence reminiscence,

A sudden memory-flash comes back, I know not why,

Here waiting for the sunrise, gazing from this hill;)

Again 'tis just at morning—a heavy haze contends with daybreak,

Again the trembling, laboring vessel veers me—I press through foam-dash'd

rocks that almost touch me,

Again I mark where aft the small thin Indian helmsman

Looms in the mist, with brow elate and governing hand. (*CPCP* 617)

The narrator now is in Navesink, New Jersey,⁴⁸ but memories of “[s]teaming the northern

rapids” of the St. Lawrence by steamboat awake in him. The repetition of “again” shows that

memories stir and return repeatedly, one by one, to the speaker’s mind, without reason: “I

know not why.” The following phrases evoke the difficulties of the steamboat journey:

“rapids,” “a heavy haze,” “the trembling, laboring vessel,” and “I press through foam-dash'd

rocks.” The speaker loses his balance because of the swaying motion of the boat and turns his

eyes toward the stern. There he sees “the small thin Indian helmsman / [who] [l]ooms in the

mist” like a ghost. Though the Indian’s body is weak, he “with brow elate and governing

hand” controls the vessel. The Indian is “The Pilot in the Mist.”

Whitman described the inhabitants of the reserve, who were at a settlement that his notes say was at “Ah-me-je-wah-noon, (the Rapids)” (*DBN* 617). He records his impressions of the reserve and the Native Americans as follows:

. . . in fact nothing at all of aboriginal life or personality, . . . and this is the “reservation” set apart for these Chips. There are said to be 400 of them, but I ~~did~~ could not see evidences of one quarter that number. . . .

I saw and ~~talked~~ conversed with Wa-wa-nosh the interpreter, son of a former chief. He talks and writes as well as I do. In a nice cottage near by lived his mother, who dont [sic] speak any thing but Chippewa. There are no very old people. I saw one man of 30, in the last stages of consumption. This beautiful and ample tract, in its present undeveloped condition is quite an eyesore to the Sarnians. (*DBN* 617)

Whitman seems to have been troubled by the wretched situation of the indigenous people.

The chief’s toughness is highly praised, and another person he observes, “[o]ne of the red visitors—a wild, lean-looking Indian, the one in the black woolen wrapper—[who] has an empty buffalo head, with horns on, for his personal surmounting,” receives attention from the poet in “An Indian Bureau Reminiscence” (*CPCP* 1171). However, those tough “Native Americans” are not seen on the reserve; instead, the poet finds two mere “Indians,”

“Wa-wa-nosh the interpreter, son of a former chief” and “one man of 30, in the last stages of

consumption” who had lost his former “Native American” vitality. The gap between Whitman’s ideal image of the noble savage and the reality is reflected in the figure of “the small thin Indian helmsman” who features in “The Pilot in the Mist.”

During the trip, Whitman might have felt the presence of Hiawatha. The phrase “the Hiawatha” appears twice in his notebook: “we, and the Hiawatha went off without it [a music-band];” “this pleasant water-ride, ~~on the Hiawatha~~ which lasted till midnight” (*DNB* 615, 616). Whitman’s use of the term seems to refer to a boat used in his excursion up Lake Huron on the night of June 21. He writes, “by our steamer, after pressing through ~~the~~ currents of rapids for a mile along here, very dashy and inspiriting—and we were soon out on the wide ~~stretch~~ sea-room of the Lake” (*DNB* 616). Furthermore, the beautiful savagery of nature in Canada is repeatedly recorded in his notebook as “[t]he grim and savage scene” (*DNB* 637). He might have imagined “Hiawatha,” who once dwelled there, in the intact and “savage” scenery. This trip gave Whitman two Indian-figures: Hiawatha, the noble savage from the olden days, and the destitute natives Whitman saw in ruin. Both aspects combine in the figure of “the small thin Indian helmsman.”

Significantly, the motifs of “mist,” “Indian,” and “departure” in Whitman’s “The Pilot in the Mist” evoke “Hiawatha’s Departure,” the last chapter of Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*:

Westward, westward Hiawatha

Sailed into the fiery sunset,

Sailed into the purple vapors,

Sailed into the dusk of evening.

.....

Thus departed Hiawatha,

Hiawatha the Beloved,

In the glory of the sunset,

In the purple mists of evening,

To the regions of the home-wind,

Of the Northwest-Wind, Keewaydin,

To the Islands of the Blessed,

To the kingdom of Ponemah,

To the land of the Hereafter! (278-79)

The scene depicts Hiawatha's departure alone in the mist at dusk seeking the land of Heaven.

After the arrival of the new settlers, "the people with white faces" (271), Hiawatha realizes his role is over and he departs. Hiawatha is called "the Beloved" here since he is an inhabitant of the American continent, who has lived and coexisted with nature. He is also a symbolic figure of peaceful harmony between the Native Americans and the whites. The "purple mists of evening" depict the "last" stage of the Native American era; in the mist, Hiawatha becomes

a living ghost of American history.

In contrast, in “The Pilot in the Mist,” the speaker journeys with a “small thin Indian helmsman.” This kind of exploration was familiar up until the early nineteenth century, when explorers were guided through the American continent by Native Americans. As mentioned above, in the sequence that includes this poem, the speaker explores the sea, the source of his imagination. The tides have given him voice: “Only by law of you, your swell and ebb, enclosing me the same, / The brain that shapes, the voice that chants this song” (“Then Last of All,” *CPCP* 620). The law of the sea shapes the speaker’s verse. Though the body of the Indian helmsman is weak, his hands are steady and forceful, and he guides the vessel masterfully through the currents. It is his accumulated wisdom and knowledge, derived from nature, which the poet celebrates. The poem is set at daybreak (“’tis just at morning”), while the scene in “Hiawatha’s Departure” is set in the “evening.” “The Pilot in the Mist” thus celebrates the beginning of the explorers’ journey rather than its end. The pilot who lives in the speaker’s memory serves as his navigator, a model who might lead the poet to his ideal America.

Next I would like to consider the words “small” and “thin” regarding the representation of Native Americans. As described in Thomas Harriot’s *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590), the masculine bodies of male and female Native Americans were emphasized as a defining characteristic of them as racialized people.

Although period images of the savage exaggerate the threat posed by his or her body, noble savages are simultaneously praised for the masculine toughness by which they have survived on the American continent. This is evident in “Hiawatha:”

Swift of foot was Hiawatha;
 He could shoot an arrow from him,
 And run forward with such fleetness,
 That the arrow fell behind him!
 Strong of arm was Hiawatha;
 He could shoot ten arrows upward,
 Shoot them with such strength and swiftness,
 That the tenth had left the bow-string
 Ere the first to earth had fallen! (162)

This stanza describes the masculine figure of Hiawatha. The speed of his feet and strength of his arms, which show the hero’s physical ability, are compared with the speed and force of an arrow. His physical strength is a testament to his nobility.

Native American masculinity is also depicted in *Leaves of Grass*. The speaker in the poems recalls Native Americans and their way of life as “the true and legitimate romance of this continent” (*The Journalism* 109). An example is the scene of the marriage of a trapper to “a red girl” (*CPCP* 196) in section ten of “Song of Myself,” which was inspired by *The*

her native strength and nobility. In this way, the physical body and its nature of the impression it makes are a vital part of the romance; it is a fundamentally differentiated body that is captured by the speaker's gaze. In this way, in some of Whitman's works,⁴⁹ the romanticized figure of the Native American is captured by his or her physicality, which is exaggerated to represent Native American nobility, in a vividly positive way. This miscegenation is a typical subject of Westerns. Ann Sophia Stephens' first dime Western *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, for example, features it. The Indian wife is described as a noble savage and a culture bearer.⁵⁰ The marriage seems to have been a symbol of "harmonious" relationships between the Native Americans and the whites.

"An Indian Bureau Reminiscence" explains why Whitman praised and paid attention to the physicality of Native Americans. Their bodies, which tell the history of the American continent and its relationship with nature, must be sturdy:

the most wonderful proofs of what Nature can produce, (the survival of the fittest, no doubt—all the frailer samples dropt, sorted out by death)—as if to show how the earth and woods, the attrition of storms and elements, and the exigencies of life at first hand, can train and fashion men, indeed *chiefs*, in heroic massiveness, imperturbability, muscle, and that last and highest beauty consisting of strength. . . . (CPCP 1170-71; emphasis in original)

Whitman was fascinated by the leaders' strong and flexible bodies, which nature has

strengthened and hardened to survive the severity of existence on the American continent.

Folsom claims that Whitman thought “the Indians were doomed to extinction; if they were degraded and primitive, they would die out by the Darwinian law of the survival of the fittest; if they were themselves the fittest, they would die a noble and poignant death in the name of civilization” (“Whitman and American Indians” 92).⁵¹ The discussion above may seem to clearly support the latter interpretation; however, Whitman’s comments on the severity of the circumstances of contemporary Native Americans written in 1883 seem not to bear out Folsom’s claim that he was convinced they were doomed.

As to our aboriginal or Indian population—the Aztec in the South, and many a tribe in the North and West—I know *it seems to be agreed* that they must gradually dwindle as time rolls on, and in a few generations more leave only a reminiscence, a blank. *But I am not at all clear about that.* (CPCP 1147; emphasis added)

This passage shows the popularity of the attitude Folsom refers to, even while indicating Whitman’s departure from it.

Whitman’s impression of the Native Americans’ unique and noble physicality follows:

There is something about these aboriginal Americans, in their highest characteristic representations, essential traits, and the ensemble of their physique and physiognomy—something very remote, very lofty, arousing

comparisons with our own civilized ideals—something that our literature, portrait painting, etc., have never caught, and that will almost certainly never be transmitted to the future, even as a reminiscence. (*CPCP* 1172)

Whitman feels a mysterious but essential “something” about “these aboriginal Americans,” which their bodies show. It is this “something” that captures Whitman’s gaze, but of it he cannot capture even a trace of memory. This “something” may be the “soul” of the Native Americans: the soul that nature has created in the American continent over time. The “something,” the soul, is what proves the history of the place. Whitman laments the risk of the complete loss of this ancient soul—because of the vanishing of the original inhabitants of the land, “it will almost certainly never be transmitted to the future” (*CPCP* 1172).

Though the poet at first promoted Native American stories as “the true and legitimate romance of this continent,” he suggested they could not be described. Why did he claim this? A feeling of collective guilt informed his remarks, as shown by his reference to “our” ideals and arts. The poet adopted a group self-identity, “we whites,” and expressed the contemporary state of the Native Americans’ decline from this viewpoint; he seemed painfully aware that the whites created the situation.

In “The Pilot in the Mist,” the “Indian helmsman” who appears in the mind of the speaker is small and thin. Whitman’s view of contemporary Native Americans is reflected in this figure: they are isolated from nature, and their ancient soul, which contains the history of

the American continent, is vanishing. Just after the comments of 1883 quoted above, Whitman expresses a suspicion that while “the contributions” of “foreign lands” are cheerfully accepted, those of “our aboriginal or Indian” are rejected (*CPCP* 1147). In the face of that reality, the poet reconsidered the relationship between the whites and Native Americans, and “the small thin Indian helmsman” was created. This “small thin” body of the Native American in Whitman’s “The Pilot in the Mist” was a peculiar case in the context of the nineteenth century and the traditional images of the noble savage that were prevalent at that time.

Some of Whitman’s later poems on Native Americans were written in light of the reconsideration of the relationships between the whites and the Native Americans. In “Red Jacket (from Aloft)” (1884), Whitman observes the statue of “Red Jacket” and shows his two conflicting views on “Red Jacket:” a praise for Red Jacket and a criticism against the Native American re-burial movement (*CPCP* 622). Red Jacket (c.1758–1830) was a well-known Seneca orator who fostered a good relationship between his people and the U.S. government. He visited President George Washington (1732-99) in 1792 and got a silver medal for his eloquence. In the War of 1812, he encouraged his people to support the United States. His fame as an orator was widespread across the country after William Stone published his biography *Life and Times of Sa-go-ye-wat-ha, or Red Jacket* in 1866 (Johansen et al. 251; Conn 84-85). Red Jacket, on the other hand, was taunted as an inferior warrior in his tribe and

had a severe drinking problem in his later years. He had three names: “Otetiani,” “Sagoyewatha,” and “Red Jacket.” The English name “Red Jacket” came from a scarlet coat given to him by the British for fighting in the Revolutionary War (Johansen et al. 251-52). In Whitman’s poem, his English name was used.

“The Red Jacket (from Aloft)” describes the “re-burial” of Red Jacket in Fort Lawn Cemetery. The head note of the poem says that it is an “impromptu” poem at the opening ceremony of the statue (*CPCP* 622). However, Whitman did not take part in the ceremony (*LGV* 3: 711; *LG* 519). According to Christopher Densmore, the remains of Red Jacket were held on the Cattaraugus Reservation after 1852. The plan of the reburial in the Forest Lawn Cemetery was examined around 1860. In 1876, William C. Bryant (1830-98), a lawyer and president of the Buffalo Historical Society, obtained permission from the Seneca Nation and the remains of Red Jacket and other Indians were reinterred at the cemetery on October 9, 1884. Representatives of the Six Nations and two grandchildren of Red Jacket attended the ceremony. The monument of Red Jacket was dedicated on June 22, 1892 (122-23). In 1884, when Whitman wrote this poem, the monument was not finished yet. This poem was first published in the *Philadelphian Press* on October 10, 1884. The day before, Whitman sent the copy of the poem to Talcott Williams (1849-1928), an editor of *Press* and asked him to “use it in to-morrow’s paper—(as the Red Jacket affair has come off today [October 9] at Buffalo)” (*Corr.* 3: 378). As Whitman’s remark shows, he had known the reburial was being held and

the monument was being made, and had prepared the poem in advance. Lauren Grewe cites “the September 27, 1884 issue of *The Critic*” as the supposed source of the information (51-52). After the publication of the poem, Bryant gave Whitman a letter about the poem and it was reprinted in *Transactions of the Buffalo Historical Society*, III (1885) (*Corr.* 3: 380; *LG* 519).

Whitman’s two different views on “Red Jacket” are seen in the poem. He casts a critical eye on the statue of Red Jacket, while he praises Red Jacket by comparing him with one of Ossian’s ghosts:⁵²

[Impromptu on Buffalo City’s monument to, and re-burial of the old Iroquois orator, October 9, 1884.]

Upon this scene, this show,

Yielded to-day by fashion, learning, wealth,

(Nor in caprice alone—some grains of deepest meaning,)

Haply, aloft, (who knows?) from distant sky-clouds’ blended shapes,

As some old tree, or rock or cliff, thrill’d with its soul,

Product of Nature’s sun, stars, earth direct—a towering human form,

In hunting-shirt of film, arm’d with the rifle, a half-ironical smile curving its

phantom lips,

Like one of Ossian's ghosts looks down. (*CPCP* 622)

The speaker-poet tries an impromptu song and thinks about what brings this "re-burial." He finds that it is brought by "fashion, learning, wealth." According to David Halliburton, there was a movement that transformed bad Indians into good Americans in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century (129). This event was part of this movement. The speaker calls this "re-burial" "caprice," and watches the ceremony with critical interest. On the other hand, he seeks the "deepest meaning" in it. Then, in front of the statue, the speaker feels that the spirit of Red Jacket (*The Red Jacket [from Aloft]*) looks down on the ceremony. Thus, this poem is described as an impromptu poem that the poet-speaker wrote, urged by the spirit.

Folsom suggests that the theme of the poem is the noble death of a hero ("Whitman and American Indian" 76). As he claims, the poem is an elegy for Red Jacket, however the poet casts doubt on the image of the Native American created by the whites. The seventh line, which depicts Red Jacket's monument, best describes the poet's critical eye. Whitman rewrites the famous image of Red Jacket in three points. Let us compare the monument of Red Jacket ("a towering human form") in this poem with the one in Fort Lawn Cemetery to consider the point. The statue of Red Jacket in the cemetery is a typical and well-known image of the person. The monument in Fort Lawn Cemetery wears his famous "red jacket." The symbolic coat of Red Jacket is changed into a shabby "hunting-shirt of film" in the poem. The monument in Fort Lawn Cemetery has a tomahawk, but the one in this poem has a rifle.

The latter is a weapon the Europeans brought to America. The former is a Native American invention. The monument in Fort Lawn Cemetery clamps its lips, and does not give “a half-ironical smile.” Thus, the poet stresses that the statue is a false image designed to meet the whites’ needs by changing three parts in this poem.

The red jacket, the tomahawk, and the valiant figure of Red Jacket were the symbols of the “good” Indian. They created a particular image of the noble savage of Red Jacket, who had forged a good relationship with the U. S. government. Whitman saw Red Jacket himself through the monument and attempted to write a real portrait of him, with a crafty and sly personality. Red Jacket in Whitman’s poem does not wear the jacket given to him by the British and he lays down his tribal weapon but still has a deadly rifle. Moreover, despite being known as a famous and skilled orator, Whitman does not use this image of Red Jacket. The “half-ironical smile curving its phantom lips” gives us a cunning image of Red Jacket. The statue seems to gaze sardonically at the reburial. Thus, Whitman describes other aspects of Red Jacket as a “good” Indian made by the opportunism to show his critical eye on the reburial movement and the false image.

As seen above, the poet criticized the movement that transformed bad Indians into good Americans and made them into characters of history. However, he attempts to find some “deepest meaning” in the “re-burial,” and sees the spirit of Red Jacket. The poet searched for the possibility that the reburial of Red Jacket would bring a new dimension to the

long-running conflict with the Native Americans. Considering the movement that inspired this poem, it is clear that Whitman was trying to write with the ‘deepest meaning,’ instead of simply praising the dead hero and ‘good’ Indian.

In “Yonnondio,” Whitman laments the word “Yonnondio,” and the fact that “the aborigines” who use the word are vanishing (*CPCP* 626). The poet imagines apparitions of the Iroquois and their landscape in the sound of the word “Yonnondio” and implies the necessity for preservation:

[The sense of the word is lament for the aborigines. It is an Iroquois term; and has been used for a personal name.]

A song, a poem of itself—the word itself a dirge,

Amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry night,

To me such misty, strange tableaux the syllables calling up;

Yonnondio—I see, far in the west or north, a limitless ravine, with plains and
mountains dark,

I see swarms of stalwart chieftains, medicine-men, and warriors,

As flitting by like clouds of ghosts, they pass and are gone in the twilight,

(Race of the woods, the landscapes free, and the falls!

No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future:)

Yonnondio! Yonnondio!—unlimn'd they disappear;

To-day gives place, and fades—the cities, farms, factories fade;

A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through the air for a
 moment,

Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost. (*CPCP* 626)

The note says this poem is a lament for the Iroquois and how the word “Yonnondio” has been used. According to William Smith, Garrangula, an Onondaga chief, used the word “Yonnondio” as a name for De la Barre, the French governor (58-61). Folsom suggests that the poet wrote this poem without having a clear understanding of the word (“Whitman and American Indian” 78). We can see that, however, the poet understood the use of the word from the note. That is, he used the word that was vanishing in new usage to preserve memories of “vanishing” Iroquois in this poem.

The speaker utters the word “Yonnondio” in “the wilds.” He examines the word, rephrases it in various ways, and basks in its afterglow. He sees the visions of the Iroquois people and their landscapes in the sound of the word. These visions disappear as the sound of the word fades. That the Iroquois disappears as the sound of the word fades means that the cultures of the people completely vanish when their word is lost. Whitman indicates that the word and its users, the Iroquois, share the same destiny. That is why the poet attempts to preserve the word in this poem.

Meanwhile, the speaker thinks about “No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future.” Whitman claims the same thing in “An Indian Bureau Reminiscence” as follows: “something [‘about these aboriginal Americans’] that our literature, portrait painting, etc., have never caught, and that will almost certainly never be transmitted to the future, even as a reminiscence” (*CPCP* 1172). He suggests that no one can describe the “vanishing” Native Americans anywhere. Therefore, he utters the word “Yonnonديو” and tries to record it to preserve their culture in this poem. It is one of the most effective means to preserve their cultures without violence or a unilateral approach.

This approach is similar to those of anthropologists. The study of their languages, beginning with Thomas Jefferson, was accepted by the American people with enthusiasm in the nineteenth century. Their eloquence, such as that of the Ojibwa chief Kah-ge-ga-goh-bouch’s and Chief Logan’s, was well-known (Conn 81-83). The ardor for their eloquence was considered as a “sense of national pride” and “a national cultural and intellectual inferiority” as a former colony (Conn 88). The studies were undertaken to show the richness of the Native American languages (Conn 88). Steven Conn explains the mood shift toward Native Americans before and after the Civil War as follows: “As the nineteenth century wore on, . . . the oratorical power of Indians grew to seem less impressive, and increasingly remote” (92); “After the Civil War, the study of Indian languages certainly did continue, but now as a subset of anthropological research, confined largely therefore to that

scholarly world and those who worked in it” (99). The geologist, Powell, mentioned above published his book *Introduction to the Study of Indian Languages* in 1877 and played a prominent role in standardizing the study of their languages (Conn 105). Conn claims that in this way, “Euro-Americans invented the silent Indian and . . . they have continued to prefer silent Indians” (80).

Whitman, however, showed a great interest in their words and referred to the need to preserve them, as we have seen in “Yonnonidio.” In “Slang in America,” he praised the words as being “often perfect” (*CPCP* 1169), and tried to make a collection of them (*WWC* 4: 324; *WWC* 5: 488). Their place names particularly attracted him. In *An American Primer*, he displays his views on them as follows:

All aboriginal names sound good. I was asking for something savage and luxuriant, and behold here are the aboriginal names. I see how they are being preserved. They are honest words—they give the true length, breadth, depth. They all fit. Mississippi!—the word winds with chutes—it rolls a stream three thousand miles long. Ohio, Connecticut, Ottawa, Monongahela, all fit. . . . California is sown thick with the names of all the little and big saints. Chase them away and substitute aboriginal names. (18, 29-30)

He saw their place names as perfect to describe American landscapes and even suggested replacing European names with them. His attraction to these place names is also found in

Leaves of Grass.

As Read suggests, two place names are particularly notable in his poems (190): “Paumanok,” now called Long Island, and “Mannahatta” or “Manhattan” now called New York. Whitman gives his view on the word “Paumanok” as follows: “This is a beautiful and appropriate signification, as the word itself is a pleasant one to the ear” (*UPP* 2: 274). His attraction to “Paumanok” is to the place itself, as well as to the name and its sound.

According to William Bright, “Paumanok,” the “Algonquian name, also written as <Paumanack> and <Pommanock>, is of unclear derivation” (373). Whitman shows his favorite definition of the word as follows: “the island with its breast long drawn out, and laid against the sea” (*UPP* 2: 274).

In *Leaves of Grass*, the word “Paumanok” is used 18 times (Southard 524), while “Long Island” never appears (Read 190). “Paumanok” was depicted as a spot where the poet starts his journey in some poems. He stands on the shore of the island in some and listens to the sound of the sea in others. “Paumanok” also plays two significant roles in his poems. The first is that it is used as the best name to describe various landscapes of the island. The second is that it fuses the poet with the island. The poem “Paumanok” (1888) describes local scenes of the island:

Sea-beauty! stretch'd and basking!

One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with copious commerce, steamers,

sails,

And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or gentle—mighty hulls

dark-gliding in the distance.

Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water—healthy air and soil!

Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine! (*CPCP* 613)

The speaker finds beauty in the shore, air, and soil of the island. In other words, he relates the beautiful landscapes of the island to the word “Paumanok:” the name reminds him of these scenes. “Paumanok” here is used as the name to describe the landscape of the island.

In “As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life” (1860), the poet shows his adherence to “Paumanok.” The stage of the poem is set there. The speaker “wended the shore” of “Paumanok,” which he addresses directly as “you” in the poem. The moment the ripples wash over the speaker, he and “Paumanok” touch each other and become one. The contact between the man and the island is represented in this phrase: “I too Paumanok” (*CPCP* 395). Moreover, the name “Paumanok” is used as the word that enables the poet to become one with the island. The poet's attitude to the name is beyond attraction; it is almost a fixation. “Paumanok” plays a role in describing the beauty of the island and also in integrating the poet with the place “Paumanok,” as we have seen above. Only the word “Paumanok” makes this possible, not “Long Island.”

In addition, Whitman preferred to use the name “Mannahatta” instead of New York

for two reasons. The first reason is that the word means “island.” The other is its sound. He heard the sound of waves in it and regarded it as the name that inhabited the city’s soil. In “New York—The Bay—The Old Name,” he gives his view on “Mannahatta,” as follows:

How fit a name for America’s great democratic island city! The word itself,
 how beautiful! How aboriginal! how it seems to rise with tall spires, glistening
 in sunshine, with such New World atmosphere, vista and action! (*CPCP* 1278)

Whitman thus regarded the name as the best one to describe the “democratic island city.” His strong appreciation is seen not only for the city, but also for the name itself.

The poet refers to the meaning of the word as follows:

Do you know what Mannahatta means? The Indians use the word to indicate a
 plot of ground, an island, about which the waters flow—keep up a devil of a
 swirl, whirl, ebullition—have a hell of a time. To me it is all meaning and
 music! (*WWC* 5: 470)

Whitman heard the roar of the waves around the island in the sound of the word. He was attracted not only to the meaning of the word but also by its sound. Read, on the other hand, suggests that Whitman’s use of the word was influenced by Washington Irving’s (1783-1859) *Knickerbocker’s History of New York* in 1809 (193).

The poet’s attraction to “Mannahatta” is also found in *Leaves of Grass*. That name is used 17 times (Southard 524), while “New York” is never found. In “Starting from Paumanok”

(CPCP 176) and “Our Old Feuillage” (CPCP 323), “Mannahatta” is described as the city the speaker-poet belongs to. In “First O Songs for a Prelude,” “Mannahatta” is apostrophized: “you Mannahatta” (CPCP 418). In the poem “Mannahatta” (1888), the poet calls the name “noble:”

My city’s fit and noble name resumed,
 Choice aboriginal name, with marvellous beauty, meaning,
*A rocky founded island—shores where ever gayly dash the coming, going,
 hurrying sea waves.* (CPCP 613; italics original)

He sees the name as fitting for the city and calls for its reinstatement in place of New York.

He refers again to the “sea weaves” here. Whitman takes interest not only in its meaning but also in its sound.

The poem “Mannahatta” (1860) depicts various scenes the poet sees in the name of his “democratic city.” The speaker regards the name as a “specific and perfect” one to describe the city. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker discusses how perfect “Mannahatta” is:

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, (1-5; *CPCP*

585)

The name is described as one that inhabits and takes root on the bay. The third line indicates the sound of the word. Again, he hears the sound of waves in it. The word “nested” shows how tightly the word adheres to the place. From the sixth line, the speaker enumerates what he sees in the name. The speaker enters “nests of water-bays:”

Rich, hemm’d thick all around with sailships and steamships, an island sixteen

miles long, solid-founded,

Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender, strong, light,

splendidly uprising toward clear skies, (6-7; *CPCP* 585)

He sees “sailships,” “steamships,” the island’s terrain, and skyscrapers in the word

“Mannahatta.” The speaker who lands on the island turns his eyes to New York Bay:

Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,

The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining islands, the heights,

the villas,

The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the

black sea-steamers well-model’d, (8-10; *CPCP* 585)

He sees “sea-currents,” the surrounding islands, Staten Island, Governors Island, and many kinds of ships. So the name “Mannahatta” contains even the surrounding landscape.

Subsequently, the speaker goes into the center of the city, walking around it: the people, the city’s climate, and various other things are illustrated; its houses, streets, immigrants, drivers, sailors, women, young men, a million people’s mannerisms and voices, the summer air, and the winter snow. The picture of a vibrant city continues (*CPCP* 585-86). Those descriptions are summed up in the last two lines: “City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts! City nested in bays! my city!” (19-20; *CPCP* 586). The lines refer to two things that sustain the city: the terrain and the economy. The former refers to the water that surrounds the city. The latter mentions the economy of the city, which is supported by shipping. The name “Mannahatta” conveys the history of the place. The poet sees it in the name. The meaning and the sound of the word inspire the poet to say that it is “specific and perfect.” He attaches a great importance to it as a name that inhabits the city’s soil.

Other place names, besides “Paumanok” and “Mannahatta,” are found throughout *Leaves of Grass*. Read demonstrates how the words are scattered throughout the book in detail. He mentions that “[t]he piling up of Indian names in numerous passages such as these is evidence of his overwhelming attraction to them” (202-03). This opinion is valid. Section 16 of “Starting from Paumanok” clearly demonstrates why the poet used Native American words in his poems. In this section, the speaker regards the names as ones that describe

products of nature. Native Americans are depicted as people of the past. He tries to preserve their words before they vanish completely:

On my way a moment I pause,
Here for you! and here for America!
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the
States I harbinge glad and sublime,
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red aborigines.
The red aborigines,
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds and
animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the water and the
land with names. (*CPCP* 186)

The speaker hears the sounds of nature in the names. He mentions that he pronounces them for the reason that “the red aborigines” disappeared and were a part of American history. We can find that he attempts to preserve their place names before they are lost completely and is attracted by the sounds of the words here again.

Let us examine the origins and the meanings of the above place names to consider how Whitman chose them. According to Bright, these origins and meanings are as follows:

“Okonee” is now spelled “Oconee.” It has two origins. One is from Muskogee written as “Oconi, Ekwoni” etc., meaning “place of springs.” The other is from the name of a Cherokee village (343). “Koosa,” now spelled “Coosa,” is from “Choctaw KQshak ‘cane’” (120).

“Ottawa” is “[t]he name of an Algonquin people, closely related to the Ojibwa people.” It is said to be from “to trade” or “to buy” (360). “Monongahela” is from “Unami Delaware,” and it means “the one that flows with banks that continually cave off” (296). “Sauk” is now spelled “Sac,” an Algonquin group (423). “Sac” is from “Ojibwa /osa:ki:/,” which means “person of the outlet” (412). “Natchez” is the same source of “Nache” (317). It is “the name of a Northern Paiute (Numic) leader in the nineteenth century” and means “a boy” (307).

“Chattahoochee” is from “Muskogee cato-hocce” and means “marked-rock” (89). “Kaqueta” is not recorded anywhere. “Oronoco” is “the Orinoco River in Venezuela.” The word seems to have become familiarized by the British play *Orinoko* published in 1696, based on the novel *Oroonoko* published in 1688 (356). “Wabash” means “it shines white,” “referring to the limestone bed of the stream’s middle course [of Wabash River]” (537). “Miami” is “named for the Miami/Illinois (Algonquian) people,” meaning “downstream person” (282). “Saginaw” is from “Ojibwa (Algonquian) /sa:ki:na:ŋ/ ‘in the Sauk country,’ referring to /osa:ki:/ ‘Sauk, people of the outlet’” (414-15). “Chippewa” is “[t]he name of a people from the Great Lakes

area, speaking a language of the Algonquian family.” It is rooted in “puckered up, referring to the form of Ojibwa moccasins,” or means “anishinaabe ‘original people’” (103). “Oshkosh” which means “claw,” is from “Menominee (Algonquian) oskas, the name of a leader who lived from 1795 to 1850” (357). “Walla-Walla” is “[f]rom Sahaptin /walawála/ ‘little rivers or streams’” (543). The families and meanings of the names are completely different as we can see above. Although some words describe streams or rivers, this rule does not apply to all. The above information shows that the poet used the names because he liked the way they sounded. Conn says that when Noah Webster (1758-1843) published the first edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1828, he collected only place names from Native American languages, “simply underscoring that Indians belonged properly to the natural world” (92). Whitman’s usage of their place names is similar to Webster’s, though it was intended positively in an anthropological way.

Whitman explored how he could preserve the cultural heritage of the “vanishing” Native Americans. He chose to preserve their words, especially place names, in his poems. In this regard, “Yonnonidio” is a little different from his other works because the word is a person’s name. Allen Ginsberg (1926-97) suggests that this poem is “an odd little political poem at the end, warning us of Black Mesa, of the Four Corners, of the civilization’s destruction of the land and the original natives there. . . . So he’s also saying as he dies, so may all the machinery of the civilization, so there’s nothing for anybody to get too high and

mighty about” (“Allen Ginsberg on Walt Whitman: Composed on the Tongue” 349).

Ginsberg interprets this poem as Whitman’s epigram for the destruction of the environment by civilization and the exploitation of the Native Americans by the whites. As mentioned above, the word “Yonnondio” was used by an Onondaga chief to call De la Barre, the French governor (Smith 58-61). That is, in the poem “Yonnondio,” the speaker-poet speaks for the “vanishing” Iroquois and bitterly complains to their ruler or the U. S. government about the policies that deprive them of lands and build “the cities, farms, factories” (*CPCP* 626). The publication year of “Yonnondio,” 1887, was the same year that the Dawes Act was adopted. The reservation system was broken up and tribal landholding was ended by this act (Nies 224). Given that Whitman was concerned about the control of California by the Spanish (*An American Primer* 29-30), it would not be surprising if he felt uneasy about a similar situation performed by his own government that could lead to the destruction of his ideal democracy. The poet laments the harsh conditions surrounding the Native Americans and democracy and utters the word “Yonnondio,” as he reconsiders his role as a poet.

The reason Whitman continued to use Native American words was that he hoped for a peaceful solution to the problems between the Native Americans and the whites. As we have seen above, there were no violent images in Whitman’s descriptions of Native Americans, even though both the real world and the fictional world of dime Westerns were full of violence. Between a sense of guilt and his ideal, the poet attempted to leave only the word

“Yonnonidio” in his poem to preserve their cultures with as little violence as possible. When compared to the description of the trapper’s bride in “Song of Myself,” written before the Civil War, as well as those written after the war, such as “The Pilot in the Mist,” “Red Jacket (from Aloft),” and “Yonnonidio,” it is clear that Whitman attempted to overcome the stereotypical images of Native Americans.

The presence of his contemporary Native Americans lies behind those poetic attempts as “The Pilot in the Mist” shows. Because vanished or vanishing Native Americans were ostensibly described in his poems, critics have missed the presence of contemporary Native Americans in the poems. His sense of guilt does not make him write about them as he says in “Yonnonidio,” “No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future” (*CPCP* 626) and in “An Indian Bureau Reminiscence,” “something [‘about these aboriginal Americans’] that our literature, portrait painting, etc., have never caught, and that will almost certainly never be transmitted to the future, even as a reminiscence” (*CPCP* 1172). In “Indian Life and Customs—A true Subject for American Antiquarian Research” published in *the Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 7, 1846, which I cited in the introduction of this paper, Whitman refers to his contemporary “Indian” as follows:

The weakened, degraded, and effeminate beings who prowl in our frontier towns, make the name of their forefathers synonymous with disgrace. *They* are no more representatives of the old vigor of their species, than the withered and

puny plant that sickens in a hothouse, of the healthy bloom of its parent, in
that parent's native plains. (*The Journalism 2*: 110; italics original)

The term "hothouse" is likely referring to a reservation. According to White, "[p]roposals for reservations appeared in several places during the late 1840s and early 1850s" (91). The reservations were known to be harsh environments because of the government's mismanagement (93). Whitman thought the reservation system did not work well and that it would prove that the "free" and "democratic" lands of the American continent that should be open for everybody without any exception were an illusion. Therefore, he could not describe such a reality in the descriptions of the West. Native Americans occupied a position between the reality and the ideal in Whitman's later works.

Conclusion

This paper examined how Whitman described the American West as *topos* in consideration of the changes before and after the Civil War. The West was always linked to his ideal vision of the democratic nation, while the matter of civilization and nature can be seen in his later poems. In the antebellum days, the West was described in relation to Manifest Destiny. The speaker, “I,” embodying the spirit of the movement, appeared and discussed American democracy positively. In the postbellum days, the speaker was less present, and the self-introspection and criticism toward the movement were seen. Whitman as a poet faced the problem of representing the existence of Native Americans and the violence inherit in the nation within the vision of his ideal democracy.

Constance Rourke suggests that the persona or the speaker-poet, “I,” of Whitman is “a generic and inclusive ‘I’ who embraces many minds and many experiences” (137). The persona is representative of people of all ages, while he is the nation itself. The abandonment of this “I” shows that the poet felt the limitations of this means of expression. The style and techniques in his later poems have been often critically discussed. James Perrin Warren asserts that “archaic forms of direct address” such as “thou” and “thee” are often seen; there are the addresses to “abstract, spiritualized entities” such as “democratic America” and “an idealized past;” the speaker is “less an active participant” and “more a passive receiver:”

short lyrics are increased (“Style and Technique(s)” 695-96). Warren claims those style changes are rooted in “Whitman’s life of illness, depression, and artistic isolation” (“Style and Technique(s)” 695). Warren later modified his evaluation on the later works as follows:

Whitman continued his poetic experiment after the war, though Warren highly evaluated prose works like *Democratic Vistas* (“Style” 387-90). This lack of visibility of the “I” persona in his later poems had two important implications: one is that there was, for Whitman, something impossible to represent as “his” mind and experience; the other is that he no longer felt able to merge with the nation state. The more he desired to write about his ideal in his poems, the more it became distanced from reality. This tendency is evident in poems on the West. Whitman saw his ideal nation being built in the Prairies in his mind. Therefore, he could not describe the reality surrounding the Native Americans that was going to destroy this ideal.

Chapter I surveyed the geographical descriptions in Whitman’s works and showed that the West was given a higher priority than other places. Throughout every edition of *Leaves of Grass* and his prose works, the diverse landscapes of the American continent are presented as American art and an embodiment of democracy. In the 1855 edition, the West was a part of various regions of the American continent. In the 1860 edition, Manifest Destiny came to be described. Beginning with Westward Expansion and before the Civil War, the nationality and unity of the nation came to issue. Certain “manmade” place names were

used in the third edition, and only several in the first edition. The speaker was merged with the expanding nation as if he embodied the spirit of the movement. The lands of the American continent as “Democracy’s lands” (*CPCP* 184) were open to everybody without exception. In this way, expansionism was positively described, while the importance of disseminating poetry to the public along with the movement was suggested. During and after the Civil War, Whitman talked about the significance of the geography of the West. He attempted to rebuild a divided nation geographically. The main reason the West was emphasized was that the law of nature worked. By contrasting the West with the East, Whitman showed that he was critical of the latter, where capitalism reigned and the city-dwellers were like phantoms. In the West, he saw the affinity of democracy and nature, which he described as “variety and freedom” (*CPCP* 929). He desired to build his nation in the West under the law of nature as *topos*.

Chapter II examined the images of California in Whitman’s writing. In his newspaper articles, California was described in relation to expansionism and was to be taken from Mexico by all means necessary because of its location at the west end of the American continent. His antebellum poems on California were also written in the same tone. The speaker-poet was one of pioneers who moved to the West and attempted “to teach robust American love” (*CPCP* 282). Along with the Westward Movement, the need to popularize poetry was suggested. In the catalog poems, California was associated with the Gold Rush.

On the other hand, the Redwood-Tree or the voice of the land appeared in “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” one of his postbellum poems. The tree spoke of what the nation should be, instead of the speaker “I” in “A Promise to California” and “Facing West from California’s Shores” written before the Civil War. Whitman felt the “atmosphere of hypocrisy” (*CPCP* 937) of capitalism and materialism in postwar society and indicated his suspicion of it. In “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” the Gold Rush was ambiguously described. In section two of the poem, the forty-niners were implicitly criticized. However, in section one, the Redwood-Tree of the storyteller said nothing about the Gold Rush, though the cutting down of the tree was caused by the influx of the people. Whitman had a pioneer’s spirit and could not deny Manifest Destiny completely and directly. If he had done so, he could not claim to represent his ideal America in the future.

Chapter III analyzed the descriptions of the Prairies and the Great Plains. In the postbellum period, they were at the center of representations of the West. Whitman sought the possibility that “the Great American Desert” would become the center of the new nation. Additionally, he explored a new style of writing about the Prairies and the Great Plains, which were described as the “arena” and “home” for the people and the nation, as we have seen in “The Return of the Heroes.” In the Prairies, the veterans of the Civil War were called “heroes” and the newly developed agricultural machinery, not the Plains Indians, “monsters.” “The Mother of All,” who in Whitman’s later works was the “Union” or the American

continent, watched the “new” battle between the heroes and the “monsters.” This framework of the poem indicates that Whitman was concerned that the existence of the Earth Mother was threatened by the influx of machinery. Therefore, he sang the harvest song to pray for a bountiful crop in America’s future to wipe out people’s fear and encourage the heroes. His idea that the new nation was to be built on agriculture can be found here. A similarity to Jefferson’s idea of the empire of liberty can also be seen. In Whitman’s depictions, the ecosystem of the fertile lands in the Prairies and the Great Plains made people equal in economic wealth. Another important point worth noting is that Native Americans were absent from his Prairie poems except in “From Far Dakota’s Cañons,” which described Custer’s Last Stand and “the dusky Sioux” in the background. Their absence in the poems demonstrated Whitman’s struggle to represent them in his ideal America. He could not describe the terrible reality of wars between the Native Americans and the government in the Prairies and the Great Plains as *topoi* for his ideal nation because this would expose the violent contradictions his ideal nation was potentially involved in.

Chapter IV explored the images of Native Americans by Whitman and compared them with the stereotypes of his time and showed how the poet represented the white guilt and historical promise that was imparted to the Native Americans: they embodied both American national guilt and also a model of a new America. Whitman considered them ideal persons who had survived the American continent and had perfect languages to describe its

diverse landscapes. The poet attempted to portray them in his poems before their cultures were completely lost. His later poems such as “The Pilot in the Mist,” “Red Jacket (from Aloft),” and “Yonnonديو” were written in reconsideration of the relationships between “we whites” and the Native Americans. In “The Pilot in the Mist,” “the small thin Indian helmsman” reflected two “Indian” figures Whitman acquired on his trip to Canada: Hiawatha, the noble savage who once lived there, and the destitute natives Whitman saw in ruin in the reserve. Whitman’s view of contemporary Native Americans is represented in the weak body of “the small thin Indian helmsman.” The nineteenth century was a perplexing time because the stereotypical images of Native Americans were fixed, while the battles between them and the U.S. government continued. In the images, the masculinity of their bodies was emphasized to make a distinction between Native Americans and the Anglo-Saxon race. They were imprisoned both in reservations and the stereotypes of the literary world, especially “captivity narratives” and dime Westerns. Whitman cast a critical eye on this undemocratic situation and reconsidered the relationship between the whites and Native Americans. “[T]he small thin Indian helmsman” in “The Pilot in the Mist” was created out of his struggle.

I would like to confirm the poetics in Whitman’s later works on the West. The West was described as a place where a new nation would be built. Therefore, the ideal nation was described in Whitman’s poems. The subtle criticism of the current conditions where civilization advanced and people indulged in vanity lay behind the rhetoric of his idealization.

This feeling of despair that Whitman revealed in *Democratic Vistas* was expressed indirectly in his later poems; for example, the first line of “Song of the Redwood-Tree” says the poem is “A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe as air” (CPCP 351). The “indirectness” was at the center of Whitman’s poetics in later years, when he became prone to introspection. Between the ideal and the reality, he faced the difficulty of representation. This is another feature of his later poems. The absence of Native Americans in his western poems showed it. In “Yonnonidio,” Whitman wrote that “the cities, farms, factories fade” (CPCP 626). These symbols of the progress of civilization were created by depriving the Native Americans of their lands. When Whitman sang about his ideal nation of the future, he could not write about the reality that the American continent was not a free land for everybody. In Whitman’s songs of the West, nature played a key role in the health of people. He criticized a physically weak person as a phantom detached from nature in *Democratic Vistas* and “The Pilot in the Mist.” Whitman believed that the deterioration in the health of the nation and its people advanced with the growth of urbanization and civilization. Therefore, he attempted to build a new nation in the West that was not completely urbanized yet. This showed the concept of traditional Westward Expansionism, where there is always a vast space where people can change their location easily, in Whitman’s mind. Whitman, in his later years, finally recommended making a “home” for a new nation and its people in the Prairies, where the ecosystem he espoused still worked.

Whitman's poetics of idealization and prophecy has been handed down to poets of later generations. *Walt Whitman: the Measure of His Song* contains 109 arguments and works on Whitman by 94 writers from Emerson to Rudolfo Anaya (1937-). The poets who followed Whitman evoked him when they observed the deplorable condition of civilization and comprehended that Whitman's prophecy has not been realized. As Folsom suggests, they have sought for "[Whitman's] definition of what the American poet should (and should not be" in his poems (Perlman et al. 22). As Pound suggested in "A Pact," Whitman is a father to them (*Poems and Translations* 269). "[T]he unique relationship" and dialogues between the father and each child make twentieth-century American poetry (Perlman et al. 22). This tradition is handed down to the twenty-first century.

William Carlos Williams was the first motivated poet who clung closely to the ground of the American continent in the same way that Whitman clung to his *topos*, and searched for what America was after Whitman. In the preface to *Paterson* (1946), Williams wrote as follows:

The rest have run out—
 after the rabbits.
 Only the lame stands—on
 three legs. Scratch front and back.
 Deceive and eat. Dig

a musty bone (*Paterson* 3)

The descriptions above convey Williams' resolve to inherit the creative field of the American continent from Whitman and create his own American poetry. The lame dog must remain in place and cannot follow the lead of the other dogs because of its bad leg. Benjamin Sankey interprets the lines above as follows: the lame dog is Williams; the rest of the dogs are his contemporary poets like T. S. Eliot and Pound, who left America to search for the "traditions and prestige offered by Europe" (28). As Sankey says, the lame dog is Williams himself, who remained in his country, America, and sought what American poetry should be. The injured leg indicates two things concerning the measure of American poetry: one is that the measure is different from fixed verse, and the other is that the measure has not been completed yet.

Williams explains this in "The American Idiom" as follows:

Be assured that measure in mathematics as in verse is inescapable; so in reply to the fixed foot of the ancient line, including the Elizabethans, we must have a reply: it is the variable foot which we are beginning to discover after

Whitman's advent. (*Interviews* 102)

The variable foot is what Williams called "a new measure" (*SL* 327), made from triadic stanzas "to represent more accurately the speech rhythms of the modern American idiom" ("Variable Foot" 1341).⁵³ He used it in his later works such as Book Two of *Paterson* (1948) and *The Desert Music* (1954). Williams continues, Whitman "proceeded instinctively by rule

of thumb and a tough head, correctly, in the construction of his verse. He knew nothing of the importance of what he had stumbled on and was unconscious of the concept of the variable foot” (*Interviews* 102). Williams here suggests that Whitman was not conscious of developing his groundbreaking prosody, free verse, into some more concentrated form of poetry and that Whitman’s poetry had room for improvement. The variable foot is a poetic experiment to create a new form of American poetry by Williams, who took over Whitman’s role as an American indigenous poet. With this intention, the dog desperately scratches the ground and attempts to find a beauty under the soil with his three legs.

Sankey asserted that “Williams seems to have intended a partial identification of Whitman and his giant Paterson” (201): After the preface, the first section of Book One of *Paterson* starts with the landscapes surrounding Paterson, New Jersey. The giant Paterson appears there:

Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls
 its spent water forming the outline of his back. He
 lies on his right side, head near the thunder
 of the waters filling his dreams! Eternally asleep,
 his dreams walk about the city where he persists
 incognito. Butterflies settle on his stone ear. (*Paterson* 6)

The Paterson definitely evokes Whitman, as Sankey suggests. The giant Paterson’s “dreams

walk” conjures Whitman as a loafer or a bard who looked about Manhattan and the whole country, and heard America singing. The line “Butterflies settle on his stone ear” evokes Whitman’s famous photograph from 1877, where Whitman is holding a fake butterfly in his hand. Whitman, the guardian spirit of American poets and the American continent, lies in Paterson, New Jersey. The description of butterflies symbolizes the harmonious and peaceful world Whitman envisioned in his mind. The giant Paterson appears again at the end of Book Four. The man who drifted to the sea after the quest for beauty was, as Williams explained “Odysseus . . . accompanied by his dog, [who] strikes inland again (toward Camden)” (*Paterson* 202, xiv). Whitman spent his final years in Camden. Odysseus, heading toward Camden, might be Whitman. That the giant Paterson snuggles up to the dog indicates that Williams was conscious of his close connection with Whitman as a pioneer of American poetry.

Williams evaluated Whitman’s poetics in “An Essay on *Leaves of Grass*” as follows:

Leaves of Grass! It was a good title for a book of poems, especially for a new book of American poems. It was a challenge to the entire concept of the poetic idea, and from a new viewpoint, a rebel viewpoint, an American viewpoint. In a word and at the beginning it enunciated a shocking truth, that the common ground is of itself a poetic source. (22)

Williams observed the use of “the autochthonic verse” in *Leaves of Grass* in the citation

above. Williams evaluated Whitman's poetic experiment to change the stereotypical image of the American continent as a paradise or a new garden into "the common ground" where people actually lived. Williams also values Whitman's poetic experiment with the "free verse" and "the American languages" (22-23), which he refers to as "a new order" and "a new language akin to the New World" (27) in his essay. These evaluations of Whitman were what Williams adhered to. Williams wanted to make different "autochthonic verse[s]" suited to his time using a "variable foot." Whitman mainly described the American continent as a whole as "the common ground" or *topos* throughout his career as a poet and as the West in his later years. Williams chose Paterson as his *topos*. Williams' *Paterson* settled on the subject matter of urbanization. Paterson evolved into the nation's largest city with a cotton industry by harnessing the waterpower of the Passaic Falls. Williams stated that Paterson was familiar to him and that the history of the city was "associated with the beginnings of the United States" (*Paterson* xiii). He described the specific topography and history of Paterson, the epitome of the nation, in his work. Whitman was torn between his ideal and the reality. Williams was not dragged into this ideal. His poetics starts with particular things around him, such as "the Passaic Falls" and "its spent waters," as the phrases "no ideas but in things" indicate (*Paterson* 6). Williams would not share Whitman's overly idealistic and highly future-centered mode. Additionally, he never praised the future of America aloud using long lines sonorously like Whitman. Williams wrote what Whitman did not write about directly in

his poems to avoid spoiling his ideal: the violent nature of the American people, as seen in the incident of William Dalzell on May 2, 1880 (*Paterson* 46).⁵⁴

Allen Ginsberg followed Williams. He started his career as a poet by realizing he was a child of Whitman of an American prophet. "A Supermarket in California" was written in Berkeley, California, in 1955, 100 years after the publication of *Leaves of Grass*. The poem was a response to Whitman's "Poets to Come" (1860). The speaker is wandering the streets of California at night and ruminating on Whitman and his songs. The poem is based on Whitman's "Facing West from California's Shores," which this paper analyzed in Chapter II. At the end of the poem, the speaker-poet is at a loss to reach his final destination: "(But where is what I started for so long ago? / And why is it yet unfound?)" (*CPCP* 267). The speaker in "A Supermarket in California" shares this feeling of uneasiness. The speaker feels sick because of "a headache self-conscious" (*CP* 136) caused by his huge ego. His ego is inflated because he thinks he is the poet Whitman prophesied of. Ginsberg ironically describes the supermarket that is open late in the night as "the lost America of love" (*CP* 136). Additionally, he laments that the America Whitman envisioned never came to pass, even after people followed Whitman's open road to the West and came to California.⁵⁵ The nation and the speaker-poet both lost their ways, as described in the following lines: "We [Whitman and the speaker poet] strode down the open corridors [of the supermarket]" (*CP* 136). The supermarket is open late and invites customers by seducing them with "the neon" and a lot of

manufactured goods that no one knows who made. This poem describes how people fall more deeply into exploitative conditions in a mass-consumption society. Given the situation, nobody except the speaker-poet hears the prophetic voice of Whitman, who raises an indirect alarm over the expansion of capitalism: “Who killed the pork chops? / What price bananas? Are you my Angel?” (*CP* 136). He repeatedly asks Whitman which direction to go in; however, Whitman’s answer is not heard. Though the speaker-poet is at a loss about what to do, he is acutely conscious of his connection to Whitman, as he calls Whitman “dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher” (*CP* 136).

The loneliness of Whitman is emphatically described in the poem. One of the reasons he is alone is that nobody except the speaker-poet listens to his words. The other is that he is “childless” (*CP* 136). This implies Whitman’s real-life childlessness and two other things. One is Whitman’s homosexuality. “Are you my Angel?” (*CP* 136) is written in Whitman’s voice, which conveys his loneliness as a gay-poet. “Angel” refers to a boy lover. Ginsberg regarded Whitman as a pioneer of gay poets and shared in his feeling that people would never understand their sexuality. The other reason for Whitman’s loneliness is that nobody inherits Whitman’s prosody of long lines and his prophetic voice. Ginsberg wrote, “Pound complains that Whitman was not interested enough in developing his line, I have tried to rescue long line for further use . . .” (*The Letters* 208) in a letter to John Hollander on September 7, 1958. Ginsberg puts his words into action in “Howl.”

“Howl” was written in San Francisco between 1955 and 1956 (CP 133). The first draft of the poem was written with Williams’ “variable foot” (*Howl* 12-21, 24-25). Ginsberg changed this into Whitmanesque long lines. He explained his choice as follows: “The poetry in Williams has depended a lot on little breath groups for its typographical organization, and in *Howl* an extension into longer breaths (which are more natural to me than Williams short simple talks) . . .” (*The Letters* 208). Ginsberg wrote the lines of “Howl” depending on the length of his breath. The first line of “Howl,” “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked” (CP 126), echoes Williams’ “The pure products of America / go crazy—” (CP 1: 217). “Moloch” (CP 131) in Part II of “Howl” is a Canaanite idol to whom children were sacrificed and the main cause of the best minds of Ginsberg’s generation going crazy. The Moloch, “the loveless” (CP 131), can be seen as America itself. Ginsberg describes the nation state of America, which achieved great wealth and political power, eating at the back of people’s minds like the Moloch. The long lines of the poem were the best way to express the Moloch enlarging its power. It was the same method that Whitman used to describe the diversity in the U.S. after it expanded its territories. In “Howl,” various hopeless wanderers move around the city aimlessly. They are a kind of phantoms who indulged in the pleasures of city life, which Whitman viewed critically in *Democratic Vistas* (CPCP 939). Whitman could not write about such figures in his poems directly. Ginsberg sang about those who were driven by madness with a loud voice. The

rhetoric of “Footnote to Howl” adheres to Whitman’s use of rhetoric. The repetition of “holy” expresses Ginsberg’s hope that “Everything is holy! everybody’s holy! everywhere is holy!” (*CP* 134). The speaker-poet is going to restore what is lacking in reality. The desire of the poet to bring the empty city life back to the way it was leads to the repetition of “holy.” The incantation of “holy” as a mantra is echoed in “Footnote to Howl.” In this way, the prophetic voice of the poet was conveyed by imitating Whitman’s voice, as seen in “The Return of the Heroes,” where the repeated word “Thou” (*CPCP* 487) was a prayer to the productive lands of the American continent, as we have seen in Chapter III in this thesis.

The Beat Generation gave its first cry in the Six Gallery in San Francisco on October 7, 1955 (*Charters* xxvii). Ginsberg read the first part of “Howl” from his draft there. Michael McClure (1932-), Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen (1923-2002), and Philip Lamantia (1927-2005) participated in the event. They needed their own voice and vision during the depressing days of the Cold War, the Korean War, and the spread of “capitalism, consumerism, the military-industrial complex, racism, and ecological destruction” (*Charters* xxx). The violent aspects of the nation that Whitman feared gradually showed up around 1955. The Beat poets restored the abandoned tradition—to convey the voice of the people—of poetry. Whitman lamented that the real human bodies of young soldiers who took part in the Civil War were hurt by the war (*CPCP* 945) and that the bodies of city dwellers grew weak and fell to “phantoms” (*CPCP* 939) in *Democratic Vistas*. At the same time, he

believed in the potential possibilities of their fragile flesh and heard them sing a song of their life. The poet was also one of these people. Whitman elaborated on this in “So Long!” (1860) as follows: “Camerado, this is no book / Who touches this touches a man” (*CPCP* 611). As I cited in the introduction to this thesis, Whitman claimed that an author’s autochthonic sense was needed for good theology, art, or literature (*CPCP* 978). The lines above imply that his poem was precisely of this category, as they conveyed that a poem is a voice emanating from a body. The Beat poets familiarized the public with such poems by conducting poetry reading sessions using their own voices. They were the poets whose advent Whitman had predicted.

Notes

¹ I borrowed the phrase “autochthonic verse” from Bruce Piasecki’s “Whitman’s ‘Estimate of Nature’ in *Democratic Vistas*” (109).

² In “A Backward Glance o’er Travel’d Roads,” Whitman lists specific people, namely William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), Ossian, Homer, Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), Sophocles (c. 496-406 B. C.), Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), as his precursors. He also mentions the Old and New Testaments, the Nibelungen and Hindoo poems (*CPCP* 665).

³ Here, I use the word to refer to a place that “include[s] standard metaphors and ‘topics’ such as the invocation of the Muse or the description of the ideal ‘pleasant place’ (locus amoenus)—e.g., Eden” (“Topos” 1294).

⁴ Robert R. Hubach’s *Walt Whitman and the West* is the acclaimed first study on this theme. Hubach said that “*Leaves of Grass* probably contains the most original descriptions of the West in all poetry. In his rough, free-verse lines Whitman accurately captured the vastness, varied moods, strong-hearted men, and underlying spirituality of the wilderness” (13).

Herbert Ben Nelson analyzed Whitman’s newspaper articles and editorials and illuminated his political stances on territorial expansion and slavery: “two things should be apparent about his political beliefs: first, his complete acceptance of the ideals of the Democratic Party in its application of the principle of Manifest Destiny to the Mexican War and the Oregon

boundary dispute; and, second, his complete break with the party over one question—that of extending slavery to the West” (155). Nelson noted how the West spreads out in *Leaves of Grass* as a boundlessly free (including free from slavery) and democratic place (135). Edwin Fussell surveyed each edition of *Leaves of Grass* as well as Whitman’s prose works and suggested that “Whitman was in these early years busy trying to prove himself a Westerner of sorts, and thus perhaps to ingratiate himself with the Young America wing of Knickerbocker literary influence . . .” (398). Fussell mainly discusses the earlier poems in *Leaves of Grass* and refers to Whitman’s view of the West: “The metaphorical West, the figurative frontier, which in 1855 and 1860 had informed and sustained his major poems, were long since gone, and had been replaced, in the minds of most Americans, by the literal West. Whitman no longer seemed to know the difference” (438). Fussell refers to the expressional changes in lines with the changing times and does not think much of the later works, as they lacked technical skills. Takeshi Narasaki analyzed the West in *Leaves of Grass* from a biographical perspective. He says that two trips to the West influenced Whitman’s poetics: in the first trip to New Orleans in 1848, Whitman saw the diversity of America and became a poet; in the second trip to Denver, Colorado, Whitman found the inspiration for his poetry in the American West (42).

Descriptions of the West in Whitman’s writings have often been discussed critically in terms of Manifest Destiny. Henry Nash Smith sees imperial elements of Manifest Destiny in

them (44-48), while Gay Wilson Allen criticizes them as optimistic and imperial, claiming that Whitman praised the movement of white settlers into the West and encouraged them to pioneer the new cultures that they as settlers would give rise to (“How Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman Viewed the ‘Frontier’” 123, 126-27). Betsy Erkkila cites the following comment of Whitman’s in her paper “Whitman and American Empire”: “It is for the interest of mankind that its power and territory should be extended—the farther the better. We claim those lands, thus, by a law superior to parchments and dry diplomatic rules” (*GF* 1: 266). She characterizes Whitman’s expansionist attitude as follows: “The Mexican War and the expansion of the American republic westward to the Pacific and southward to include the Mexican republic itself were, in Whitman’s view, justified by the superiority of both American republican institutions and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race” (“Whitman and American Empire” 59). Shoichiro Arai also surveyed Whitman’s imperialism and suggests that it could be seen from his journalist days to the 1860s. However, Whitman became suspicious of the concept due to his disappointment at the political, economic, and moral corruption in cities since the 1870s (168-78). M. Wynn Thomas also discusses Whitman’s idealized westerner critically, focusing on the “ax in his hands” in “Song of the Redwood-Tree” (1874) and “Song of the Broad-Axe” (1856). Thomas says that the ax was a “double-edged”: “The ax was quite literally the cutting edge of American capitalism, as it made capital out of, while simultaneously making a home in, the western wilderness,” while

“the mass murder of trees” took place alongside it (137-38). Recently, Chris Packard examined democratic and homoerotic societies on the frontier from the perspective of Queer studies. He asserts that Whitman saw a free spirit in “western men” such as white pioneers, cowboys, and miners (75) and argued more broadly that after the Civil War, not only Whitman but also writers such as Frank Harris (1856-1931) and Claude Hartland “developed a poetics of homoeroticism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and associated it with the American West” (71). Packard claims the writers sought for a new form of citizenship acquired through “male-male erotic practices” between the “western men” (92). As previous studies have stated, Whitman’s western descriptions are definitely related to his poetics and his view of ideal democracy in the future. The studies have shown how well Whitman embodied the spirit of “his” nation.

⁵ The Prairies—(And an Undelivered Speech)” in *Specimen Days* is what Whitman attempted to recite during the ceremony. He talked about his impression of the Prairies (*CPCP* 853-54).

⁶ This thesis also relied on the following studies for this part of its argument. Daniel P. Donaldson examines Whitman’s poetry based on four classifications of geography in literature: (1) “the spatial tradition,” (2) “the area studies tradition,” (3) “the human-environment interaction tradition,” and (4) “the earth science tradition” (26). He claims that *Leaves of Grass* shows all these phases except the fourth. Michael R. Dressman

mentions that the geography represented in “Starting from Paumanok” (1860), “Our Old Feuillage” (1860), and “O Magnet-South” (1860) were informed by Samuel Griswold Goodrich’s *The World As It Is, and As It Has Been; or a Comprehensive Geography and History Ancient and Modern* (1855) (64). Hsuan L. Hsu takes a broader, “planetary” perspective (134). Hsu calls Whitman’s poetics what Wertheimer calls “geohistory” (161-62, 172) or “cosmopolitan despair” and argues that it “is a response to the darker aspects of global unity: the uneven geographical development precipitated by imperialism and capital accumulation” (130-31).

⁷ Harold Aspiz and John B. Mason have focused on the expanding “self,” who includes all diversities in section 33 of “Song of Myself” (Aspiz, “Sexuality” 5; Mason 48).

⁸ The lines from section 33 of “Song of Myself” are cited from *CPCP* 219-26. The line numbers are provided. The numbers cited are from the consecutive numbering of “Song of Myself.”

⁹ Fussell names the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass* as “the Western edition” (416).

¹⁰ The lines from section fourteen of “Starting from Paumanok” are cited from *CPCP* 184-86. The line numbers are provided.

¹¹ For Whitman’s political activities in his journalist days and his political distrust, see Allen, *The Solitary Singer* 146-47; Erkkila, *Whitman* 53; Kaplan 134-35; Reynolds 127-33.

¹² The lines from “Our Old Feuillage” are cited from *CPCP* 318-23. The line numbers are provided.

¹³ Whitman often used foreign languages in his poetry. He thought that “[e]ach language is a living organism” and noted the history of the English language (*NUPM* 5: 1651). For Whitman’s use of and views on French, see *NUPM* 5: 1651-60; James Perrin Warren, *Walt Whitman’s Language Experiment* 45-46; K. H. Francis’ “Walt Whitman’s French.” Francis points out that Whitman used French words that “were already assimilated, or in process of assimilation, into the English vocabulary” (494). The poet would have used them to show the organic aspect of the English language, or its hybridity. Francis also notes the poet’s attraction to “[t]he rich sounds’ of French vowels” (499).

¹⁴ See “The Prairies: And an Undeliver’d Speech” (*CPCP* 853), “Art Features” (*CPCP* 858-59), “The Prairies and Great Plains in Poetry. (After Traveling Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado)” (*CPCP* 863), “America’s Characteristic Landscape” (*CPCP* 864-65), “Earth’s Most Important Stream” (*CPCP* 865), and “Mississippi Valley Literature” (*CPCP* 866-67).

¹⁵ Zachary Turpin discovered the journalistic series in summer 2015. In “Introduction to Walt Whitman’s ‘Manly Health and Training,’” Turpin gave an account of the discovery and briefly introduced the background of the articles.

¹⁶ Whitman’s views of nature indicate that he believed contemporary American

democracy to be in a pathological condition. James Bristol sees Whitman finds “the age to be sick” (17). Bristol suggests machine politics as one of the causes of the sickness (19). Major sees “the excesses of the Gilded Age” and “the seeming moral collapse of the country” like general indifference to the human body and its health as the causes of the unhealthy condition of the nation (81). Killingsworth claims Whitman found urban life, which expanded the gap between the rich and the poor, to be sick (169, 173).

¹⁷ As for the “Nature-notes” in *Specimen Days*, Harold Aspiz reveals Whitman’s therapeutic relationship with nature like a naked sunbath is affected by a hydropathic physician Dr. Russell Thacher Trall (1812-77) and his book *The Hygienic Hand-Book: Intended as a Practical Guide to the Sick-Room* (1872) (“Specimen Days” 48). Major discusses the “Nature-notes” in the context of “the health-reform movements of the day” (79) and its relation with the body politic in late nineteenth-century America (80). He says, “The contingency of disease and instability of the democracy seemed to necessitate that a set of visible signs be created to both reassure and guide those who were concerned with the nation’s health; in this way, nature becomes as much an ideological practice as a physical presence” (82). It is noteworthy Major examines the therapeutic relationship in the notes, compared with nature descriptions in *Democratic Vistas*, and draws a figure of the poet who escapes the humanistic view of nature and builds an empirically grounded relationship with it in Timber Creek (now called Laurel Springs), New Jersey. As seen in Major’s research,

“Nature-notes” have been studied in terms of nature writing. See Daniel J. Philippon’s paper “‘I only seek to put you in rapport:’ Message and Method in Walt Whitman’s Specimen Days” and Killingsworth 166-79. Glenn N. Cummings invokes Thoreau and claims that Whitman found “a new way of seeing, of interpreting his world’s convulsiveness . . . by observing, appreciating, and writing about Nature’s stability” in Timber Creek. Cummings calls this kind of relationship between nature and the poet a “distanced relationship” (Cummings).

¹⁸ “Whitman’s nature” is often discussed in terms of Emerson’s essay “Nature” (1836). A summary of his ideas on Nature is as follows: “1. Words are signs of natural facts. 2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts. 3. Nature is the symbol of spirit” (20). Emerson also talks about the need for immediate experience of the natural world so that one can see “the currents of the Universal Being” and “his own nature” (10). Martin K. Doudna notes Emerson’s influence on Whitman and asserts that Whitman’s writings on nature have two aspects: “as the material world of objects and phenomena (*natura naturata*) or as the force—usually personified as feminine—that pervades and controls that material world (*natura naturans*)” (451). Sean Ross Meehan examines the poetics of Emerson and Whitman from the perspective of “the physiology of digestion” (99). M. Wynn Thomas sees another aspect of Whitman’s nature, one related to individualism and society. He suggests that Whitman explores ways to establish a “new” individuality in nature, free from conformity to or care for the customs of existing society (124), and further suggests that the

ungrammatical lines in Whitman's poetry, as seen in "Protoleaf" [the first version of "Starting from Paumanok"], embody the law of nature (132). Christine Gerhardt introduces past research on the Natural World in Whitman's works (15-17) and reexamines it from the perspective of ecocriticism, compared with Emily Dickinson (1830-86).

¹⁹ Major has a similar view and refers to a subtle shift in Whitman's reading of nature over time, while discussing "Nature-notes" in *Specimen Days*: "Instead of a model to be dissected and emulated, nature becomes a counter-narrative to the country's bodily and political ills" (85). As Major said, Whitman described nature as a healer of the morbid state of the nation and its people and criticized the conditions of the developing nation. Tim Campbell claims that Whitman found a place of solace in American soil during the bloody time of war on the American continent. In the American soil, people lived daily lives and in the American continent, freedom and the nation's ideals were contested (Campbell).

²⁰ Tuan defines it as follows: "*Topophilia* is the affective bond between people and place or setting" (4; italics original).

²¹ See Starr, *California* 79-90.

²² See *NUPM* 5: 1672, *NUPM* 5: 1707, and a poem "Yonnonديو" (*CPCP* 626).

²³ "There is nothing in all language, ancient or modern, so significant—so individual—so of a class—as these names. I have often threatened myself to make a collection of them—I don't know for what purpose or if for any—but have never done so"

(*WWC* 5: 488). Whitman said something similar. See *WWC* 4: 324.

²⁴ Whitman talked with Mrs. Farnham and seems to have been fascinated with the physical “largeness” of California and the people’s free spirit: “Every thing [sic] seems to be generated and grow on a *large scale*—fruits, vegetables for cooking, trees, &c.— Humanity is also freer and grander—the children seem cast on a fuller pattern, grow better, breath more air, make the soul more clarified and apparent;—life seems more intense and determined;—there is more individuality and character” (*NUPM* 5: 1949; italics original). Mrs. Farnham lived in California from 1849 to 1856. Their conversation took place in November of 1857 (*NUPM* 5: 1949).

²⁵ Because of first being published as number 30 in the “Calamus” cluster in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, C. D. Albin says, the promise here is “to travel west and teach his fellow citizens about the vigorous camaraderie necessary for American democracy” (532).

²⁶ According to Starr, Daniel Webster (1782-1852) talked about the “great harbor at San Francisco, which would open the United States to the Pacific” in the Senate to accept the admission of California as a free state (*California* 96). Webster’s speech proves that the U. S. government had an eye on the good port in the San Francisco Bay.

²⁷ As for Whitman’s American Adam, see R.W.S. Lewis 28-53.

²⁸ I also referred to Merchant 147-48.

²⁹ Rudolf Schmidt was an editor of “the Scandinavian magazine *For Idé og*

Virkelighed (For Idea and Reality).” He is the author of the article “Walt Whitman: The Poet of American Democracy” published in the magazine in 1872. Then, their correspondence started (Allen and Folsom 357).

³⁰ “[T]he *Columbus*” mentioned in this letter is the poem “Prayer of Columbus.” Both “Song of the Redwood-Tree” and “Prayer of Columbus” were first published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in February 1874 (Olson, “Song of the Redwood-Tree” 664).

³¹ Thomas shares Allen’s biographical reading of this poem (140).

³² Warren suggests that Harvard botanist Asa Gray’s “Sequoia and its History” (1872) affected the poem (“Contexts for Reading” 169).

³³ Piasecki has a similar view of *Democratic Vistas* that shows Whitman attempting to find the modality of the “new” democracy, a desire coming out of his disappointment at not only the political failure of the existing democracy but also the people (103-04).

³⁴ The third modification occurred in the seventh line. In the 1860 version, the phrases “choice and chary of its love-power” follow “clear of taint” (*Leaves of Grass 1860*, 368). The phrases were deleted in 1867.

³⁵ As we have seen in Chapter I of this thesis, *Democratic Vistas* also referred to the ecosystem (*CPCP* 949).

³⁶ Whitman writes an impression on the western women he saw in Kansas City in “The Women of the West” in *Specimen Days*. He says, “They are ‘intellectual’ and

fashionable, but dyspeptic-looking and generally doll-like; their ambition evidently is to copy their eastern sisters. Something far different and in advance must appear, to tally and complete the superb masculinity of the West, and maintain and continue it" (*CPCP* 868). As seen in this claim, Whitman believed the West should have contrasted with the Eastern, civilized society.

³⁷ Doudna divides the descriptions of nature in Whitman's works into two groups: "the force" of nature or "*natura naturans*" "usually personified as feminine" and "the material world of objects and phenomena (*natura naturata*)" (451). The Mother could be interpreted as both "*natura naturans*" and "*natura naturata*" in "The Return of the Heroes," given the mother is the "Prairie Dame" (*CPCP* 487) as well.

³⁸ Andrew Vogel also sees Columbia in the muse in "Song of the Exposition" (3).

³⁹ In the poem, "America" (1888), America is again called a "Mother:" "Centre of equal daughters, equal sons, / All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old, / Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich, / Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love, / A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother, Chair'd in the adamant of Time" (*CPCP* 616).

⁴⁰ According to the editor's notes on the manuscript, Monotony and Eagle-Tail were "small towns on KPRR [Kansas Pacific Railroad] respectively 370 and 362 miles west of Topeka," and Agate is one of the "small towns in eastern Colorado" (*NUPM* 3: 1040).

⁴¹ The following examples, taken from Roy Harvey Pearce and from Steven Conn,

indicate the origins of these Native American stereotypes. Images or ideas of the prehistoric condition of Native Americans were sourced from the fields of archaeology and ethnology (Conn, "The Past is Underground: Archaeology and the Search for Indian History" 116-53). Anthropologists and philologists, too, popularized images of a vanishing race. See Conn's "Fade to Silence: Indians and the Study of Language" (79-115) and "The Art and Science of Describing and Classifying: The Triumph of Anthropology" (154-97). The testimony of soldiers played a big part specifically in the creation of the belief that Native Americans were savages, as did captivity narratives like that of Mary Rowlandson (1635-78) (Pearce 58). The image of the noble savage was incorporated into visual artworks by, inter alia, Benjamin West (1738-1820), Charles Bird King (1785-1862), George Catlin, Albert Bierstadt, and Elbridge Ayer Burbank (1858-1949); and literary works such as not only *The Song of Hiawatha* but also Cooper's *Leather-Stocking Tales* and others. See Pearce (169-251) and Conn, "Images of History: Indians in American Art" (35-78).

As first seen in the works of Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), John Dryden (1631-1700), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), and others, the noble savage represented nature and was used to criticize modern civilization. The connection of the noble savage idea to Native Americans remained strong in the nineteenth century, but there was also criticism of it, as seen in the essay "Noble Savage" (1853) written by Charles Dickens (1812-70).

⁴² Whitman explains the job in detail in his letter to his brother Jefferson, on Jan. 30,

1865 (*Corr.* 1: 250). James Harlan dismissed him for the author of *Leaves of Grass* (Reynolds 455).

⁴³ Martin Murray's "The Poet-Chief Greet the Sioux" investigates this matter of Whitman's personal relationship with the Native American chiefs.

⁴⁴ A Canadian "reserve" is the same as what Americans call a reservation.

⁴⁵ The precise date of the painting is unclear.

⁴⁶ The title of the article is "Indian Life and Customs—A True Subject for American Antiquarian Research." It was published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on November 7, 1846. I cited it in the introduction of this paper,

⁴⁷ See works from Leadie M. Clark, Edgeley Todd, David Reynolds, Ruth L. Bohan, Allen Walker Read, David Halliburton, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Martin Murray, Mary Austin, Maurice Kenny, Maurice Mendelsohn, Nicholas Soodik, Steven Blakemore and Jon Noble, Thomas Gannon, and Xilao Li.

⁴⁸ Whitman describes Navesink as follows: "a sea-side mountain, lower entrance of New York Bay" (*CPCP* 617).

⁴⁹ See the three early works mentioned before, section six of "The Sleepers" (*CPCP* 547), and "Our Old Feuillage" (*CPCP* 321).

⁵⁰ In *Malaeska*, the Indian wife's physical traits are emphasized: "She wore no paint—her cheek was round and smooth, and large gazelle-like eyes gave a soft brilliancy to

her countenance, beautiful beyond expression. . . . Even her hair, which all of her tribe wore laden with ornaments, and hanging down the back, was braided and wreathed in raven bands over her smooth forehead” (Brown 71-72).

⁵¹ Critics took a critical look at Whitman’s racial attitude, citing his words spoken to Horace Traubel on September 8, 1888: “The nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated” (WWC 2:283). However, George Hutchinson and David Drews pointed out that Whitman showed an ambiguous attitude toward racial matters (568). This thesis follows the latter claim.

⁵² Grewe shares this view of mine: Whitman took a critical look at “the commercialism of monuments,” while she did not highly appreciate the poem as “the spectral Indian narrative” (45).

⁵³ Williams explains the variable foot as “the measure under my breath” (*SL* 326) in a letter to Richard Eberhart dated May 23, 1954.

⁵⁴ According to Sankey, Williams quoted an article in *The Prospector* regarding the incident (76). A property owner, William Dalzell, shot John Joseph Van Houten because of his resentment against the German Singing Societies of Paterson, which had met on Garret Mountain and set foot on Dalzell’s grounds. The singers turned into a mob and attacked Dalzell.

⁵⁵ Folsom showed a similar view to mine (Perlman et al. 53).

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