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A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Walt Whitman
LEAVES OF GRASS
AND OTHER WRITINGS



AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS
OTHER POETRY AND PROSE

CRITICISM

Edited by

MICHAEL MOON

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

*An expanded and revised edition based on the
Norton Critical Edition of Leaves of Grass, edited by*

SCULLEY BRADLEY and HAROLD W. BLODGETT
LATE OF THE UNIVERSITY and LATE OF UNION COLLEGE
OF PENNSYLVANIA



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Prefaces

Preface 1855—*Leaves of Grass*, First Edition¹

America² does not repel the past or what it has³ produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions. . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough⁴ still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped⁵ heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations.⁶ Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast

1. Whitman has not generally been credited with having written prose of a power commensurate with his poetry. However, the preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* is prose of noteworthy power and intellectual persuasiveness, with a corresponding stylistic authority. It is in fact one of the important landmarks of American literary criticism and it has continued to exert an influence on modern literature. Further comment on this preface will be found in the introduction to this Norton Critical Edition. "Preface 1855" was collected with other prose works in *SDC* 1882, *CCP* 1888, and *CPW* 1892. The two London reprints of this preface (1868 and 1881) do not concern us here. The revisions, of which the bulk were made in *Specimen Days and Collect*, represented changes in Whitman's practices with respect to punctuation and other conventions, but a more important alteration was the cancellation of a number of passages that decreased the essay in bulk by about one-third. The shorter version of "Preface 1855" appears in *CPW*, and in *Coll W, Prose Works 1892*, II. The footnotes here, for the first edition, indicate passages canceled in later editions of the preface, including lines that were translated into certain new poems, principally in *LG* 1856 and *LG* 1860. Poems significantly affected by such transfers are "By Blue Ontario's Shore," the most noteworthy, and also "Song of Prudence," "Song of the Answerer," "To You, (whoever you are)," "Tests," "Perfections," "Says," and "A Child's Amaze." See also the footnotes for the texts of these poems. Phrases or ideas from twenty-two of the twenty-four original paragraphs of the "Preface 1855" appear in the poems.

2. Lines 1-11, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 51-57.

3. Later editions read: "what the past has."

4. Later editions read: "not impatient because the slough."

5. Later editions read: "well-shaped."

6. The sentence ending here was omitted in later editions.

masses.⁷ Here is the hospitality which forever⁸ indicates heroes. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves.⁹ Here the performance disdain the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance.¹ One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies. . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people.² Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, and sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul³ . . . their good temper and openhandedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness⁴ of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states⁵ nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No remissions may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the

7. Later editions omit "vast."

8. Later editions read "for ever."

9. This sentence was omitted in later editions.

1. Lines 12-27, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 58-65.

2. In the later editions the remainder of this paragraph is omitted, but the 1855 phrase "common people," was extended by the words: "south, north, west, east, in all its States, through all its mighty amplitude."

3. Lines 35-47, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 95-98.

4. Does not begin a paragraph in the later editions, but runs on without interruption after line 35, "common people," where the previous paragraph was cut; "of nature or" omitted in the later texts.

5. Later editions read: "Not swarming states."

subjects of poets.⁶—As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since⁷ in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleep-walking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of full-sized men⁸ or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets⁹ are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races.¹ 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. 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 him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast² stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and liveoak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon. . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebrake or swamp. . . . and forests coated with transparent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind. . . . and sides and peaks of mountains. . . . and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie. . . . with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard oriole and coot and

6. In the later editions the four following sentences ending "the middle ages!" (line 67) are between parentheses.

7. In later texts, "since" is cancelled.

8. Later texts read: "the sight and realization of full-sized men," etc.

9. Lines 72-81 and 105-6, 705-10, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 66-76.

1. In later texts the following forty-eight lines are omitted, ending at line 131, "lips cease."

2. Lines 89-131, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 77-94 and 99-106.

surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and qua-bird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution. . . . the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharf hem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the loghouses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers. . . . the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and golddigging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts. . . . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen. . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male. . . . the large amativeness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and of the northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression³ the American poet is to be transcendent and new.⁴ It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista.⁵ Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonecutters and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest.⁶ Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall.⁷ Of all mankind the great

3. In later texts, read: "The expression of."

4. Lines 133-40, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 119-26.

5. The passage that follows, originally 33 lines in length, ending "draw blood" (line 162), is omitted in later editions.

6. Lines 141-43, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 132-33.

7. Lines 141-62, and 139-48, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 137-53.

poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land. . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, freetrade, intertravel by land and sea. . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him—recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates.⁸ Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith⁹ . . . he spreads out his dishes . . . he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer . . . he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent. He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement. . . . he sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul . . . it pervades the common people and preserves them . . . they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist. . . .¹ The power to destroy or remould is freely used by him² but never the power³ of attack. What is past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is

8. Later texts read: "the great poet never."

9. Later texts omit "his." The passage following, ending "dreams or dots" (line 178), is omitted in the later editions.

1. In later texts a new paragraph begins here.

2. In later texts, read: "by the greatest poet."

3. In later texts, read: "seldom the power."

not what is wanted. The presence of the greatest poet conquers . . . not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell. . . . and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.⁴

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing⁵ that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer. . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself. . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus. . . . he does not stop for any regulation . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves,⁶ but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvellous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls.⁷ Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight.

4. No paragraph break occurs here in later texts (cf. line 184, note).

5. In later texts, read: "anything."

6. Lines 203–11, cf. "Tests," 4–5.

7. Lines 212–41, cf. "Song of the Answerer" (the poet) who serves others by indicating "the path between reality and their souls." Lines transferred from the present essay are found in the second canto of the poem: see notes below to lines 397, 406, 737. Further detail on "the Answerer" appears in the note to that poem.

The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses⁸ on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatneses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do:⁹ Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life,¹ re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always ready ploughed² and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks³ or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene⁴ of the winter woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and

8. In later texts, read: "and roses."

9. Lines 242-60, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 235-47.

1. The preceding clause is omitted from the later editions.

2. In later editions, read: "already plough'd."

3. In later editions, read "balks"; both spellings are correct.

4. In later editions, read: "the scenes."

the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition⁵ of his love and of all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss⁶ . . . it is inevitable⁷ as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight⁸ proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond perfections⁹ not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth or sea² without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another. The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound.³

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to complete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . .

5. Erroneously printed "he is the fruition," in SDC 1882 and later editions.

6. In later texts read: "miss or hit."

7. Later editions read: "is as inevitable."

8. Lines 281-84, cf. "Assurances," 7.

9. The poem "Perfections," an epigram, reflects the idea at large in lines 285-97 and 318-24. This sentence was omitted in later texts.

1. The preceding clause was omitted in later texts.

2. Later texts read "earth and sea," (note added comma).

3. Later texts omit "and similes."

he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterward for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own.⁴ But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance⁵ of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest⁶ poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or sooth⁷ I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint.⁸ A heroic person walks at his ease

4. In later texts, "lessons or deductions but." Lines 320–24, cf. "Song of Prudence," 43–45, a direct borrowing; cf. note on "perfections," line 285. See line 615 note for all borrowings in "Prudence."

5. In later texts, correctly spelled, "insouciance."

6. In later texts, "great."

7. Spelled correctly, "soothe," in the later editions. Lines 349–56 parallel the idea of "Song of Myself." Section 19, lines 382–88.

8. Lines 355–56 and 360–64, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 221–23.

through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers⁹ savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour,¹ the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever² who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets³ to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then⁴ can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose,⁵ What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme?⁶ We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms⁷ and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl⁸ on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of⁹ all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors . . . They shall be kosmos¹ . . . without monopoly or secrecy² . . . glad to pass any thing³ to any one . . . hungry for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and privilege . . . they shall be riches and privilege . . . they shall perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the stronger wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most . . . and not be for the eastern states more

9. In later texts, "of first class writers," (note comma). In his revisions, WW restored some of the commas experimentally excluded in his earlier prose.

1. Spelled "behavior" in later editions; both are correct.

2. In later editions, "for ever and ever."

3. In later texts, "great poems."

4. In 1882, read "only." The capital letter beginning each of a succession of clauses was an early experiment. In 1881 Whitman restored the small initial letter in most cases.

5. In later texts, spelled "inclose."

6. Lines 368–73, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 25–26.

7. Lines 373–81, cf. "To You, (whoever you are)," 42–43. The entire poem is motivated by this paragraph—see lines 6–17 and 33–38.

8. In later texts, "whirl."

9. In later texts, "death, and."

1. In later texts, "Kosmos," but WW was not consistent in capitalizing this word.

2. Correctly spelled as "secrecy" in later texts.

3. In later texts, read: "anything."

than the western or the northern states more than the southern.⁴
 Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on
 the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The
 outset and remembrance are there . . . there the arms that lifted
 him first and brace him⁵ best . . . there he returns after all his
 goings and comings. The sailor and traveler⁶ . . . the anatomist,
 chemist, astronomer, geologist, phrenologist, spiritualist, math-
 ematician, historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they
 are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the
 structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is ut-
 tered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . . of them and
 by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their
 fatherstuff⁷ must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. If there
 shall be love and content between the father and the son⁸ and
 if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the
 father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demon-
 strable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft⁹ and
 final applause of science.

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the inves-
 tigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and cir-
 cling here swells the soul of the poet yet it president¹ of itself
 always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The in-
 nocence and nakedness are resumed . . . they are neither modest
 nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural²
 and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a
 dream. What has ever happened . . . what happens and what-
 ever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all . . . they³
 are sufficient⁴ for any case and for all cases . . . none to be
 hurried or retarded . . . any miracle⁵ of affairs or persons in-
 admissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and
 every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and
 women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect mir-
 acles⁶ all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is
 also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there
 is anything in the known universe more divine than men and
 women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply⁷ to

4. In later texts, "Eastern," "Western," "Northern," and "Southern," and in general when sig-
 nifying a region.

5. In later texts, "braced him."

6. Lines 398-402, cf. "Song of the Answerer," 73-74.

7. The preceding phrase and the remainder of the sentence canceled in later texts.

8. Lines 405-9, cf. "Song of the Answerer," 69-70.

9. In later texts, "are henceforth the tuft."

1. Correctly, in later texts, "is president."

2. Later texts read: "The whole theory of the supernatural."

3. Later texts read: "inclose all. They."

4. Corrected in later texts: "sufficient."

5. Later texts read: "any special miracle."

6. Lines 418-25 (see also lines 288-91), cf. "Miracles," 15-20. The poem originally contained
 other lines from the same locations but these were excluded in 1881.

7. Later texts cancel "simply."

be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and
 present and future shall be unintermitted and shall be done with
 perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever look-
 ing toward the poet,⁸ ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all
 toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the
 senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward
 happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever
 comprehends less than that . . . whatever is less than the laws
 of light and of astronomical motion . . . or less than the laws
 that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard
 through this life and doubtless afterward . . . or less than
 vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the
 patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would
 put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against
 some being or influence is also of no account.⁹ Sanity and en-
 semble characterise the great master . . . spoilt in one principle
 all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles.
 He sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . he
 sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes
 common ground. To be under the general law is great for that
 is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably
 great and that all are unspeakably great . . . that nothing for
 instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up
 well . . . that to be¹ is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty
 is indispensable.² Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever
 men and women³ exist . . . but never takes any adherence or
 welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice
 and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand
 idea . . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing
 has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it.⁴ The
 attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots.
 The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of
 their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other.
 Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak or advise
 you shall learn the faithful American lesson.⁵ Liberty is poorly
 served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or
 two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indif-
 ference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of
 the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon
 or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one,

8. Later texts read "towards."

9. Lines 442-44, cf. "A Child's Amaze," 2-3.

1. In later texts, "be" (in italics).

2. Lines 454-61, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 154-56.

3. Later texts read: "man and woman."

4. The passage following, ending "part of the earth" (line 511), is omitted from the later texts,
 but thirty of the originally sixty-four lines were transposed; see following note 5.

5. Lines 461-82, revised and condensed, appear in the same order in "To A Foil'd European
 Revolutionaire," lines 1-8, 14-16, and 19-24. Lines 508-11 compare with the poem, lines
 25-26. Fifteen lines of the poem, most important the last eight, were new composition.

promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat . . . the enemy triumphs . . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work . . . the cause is asleep . . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood . . . the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other . . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second or third to go . . . it waits for all the rest to go . . . it is the last . . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away . . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators . . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead . . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people . . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves . . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the gripers or into any cruel inferiority . . . when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no . . . when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart . . . and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape . . . or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the real body and soul⁶ and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light . . . the daylight is lit with more volatile light . . . also the deep⁷ between

6. The later texts omit "and soul."

7. The later texts omit "also."

the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty . . . the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its . . . the hugehulled cleanshaped⁸ New-York clipper at sea under steam or full sail gleams with unmatched beauty . . . the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs . . . and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles. They are of use . . . they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library⁹ who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease¹ and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large . . . ² These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers,³ or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing⁴ to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies in a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous.⁵ Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed . . . but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament . . . Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day . . . Great genius and the people of these states⁶ must never be demeaned to romances.

8. The later texts read "huge-hull'd clean-shap'd."

9. After "library" the later texts read: "(indeed he or she alone is owner,) who."

1. Later texts omit the next clause "and take . . . maternity."

2. Later texts begin a new paragraph here.

3. Later texts omit the next phrase: "or in . . . prints."

4. In later texts: "anything."

5. Lines 545–57, cf. "Says" ("Excluded Poems"), 8–14. Stanza 6 ("Says," line 15), based on the idea of the next paragraph (following line 557) praises social candor and truth as the necessary conditions for freedom; stanza 7 reflects a theme in the following text (after line 623): the social need for the prudent governance of the mind over human choice.

6. Later editions capitalize "States" whenever the word substitutes for "United States."

As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.⁷

The great poets are also to be known⁸ by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy⁹ and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised . . . and that the soul has never been once fooled¹ and never can be fooled . . . and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a foetid puff . . . and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite² or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life,³ nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality,⁴ nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.⁵

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs. . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen¹ was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family⁵ and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and

7. Later editions read: "told, no more need."

8. Later texts omit "also."

9. The later editions omit the two clauses beginning here and ending "beautiful is candor."

1. In later editions, "once been."

2. Later editions omit five phrases, beginning with "or star" and ending with "wet of the sea."

3. Later editions omit the clause which follows: "nor in . . . death."

4. Later texts omit "afterward."

5. Later texts read, "and for his family," (note comma).

of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot⁶ of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitessimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete,⁷ and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads with such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul. . .⁸ Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence.⁹ The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality.¹ What is wisdom² that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself³ . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence.⁴ Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . . not the privacy of the onanist . . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rumdrinkers . . . not peculation

6. A small parcel or allotment of land; not as in the vernacular sense, "a great deal."

7. Correctly in later texts, "naïveté"; immediately following, WW inserted new copy in parentheses: "(even if you have achieved a secure 10,000 a year, or election to Congress or the Governorship)."

8. In the later texts a new paragraph begins here, with change of the opening phrase to "Ever the right."

9. Lines 614–704, cf. "Song of Prudence," 3–56. Of the fifty-six lines of this poem, all but the first two are borrowed, with appropriate intensification, from the lines of the preface, in approximately the same order except that lines 43–45 of the poem reflect an earlier preface passage, lines 320–24 (see note, line 321). The other notes citing parallel passages occur below at lines 619, 624, 642, and 691.

1. Lines 615–19, cf. "Song of Prudence," 3–4. See also line 615, note.

2. In later editions, "the wisdom"; so also, "to wisdom" becomes "to the wisdom," later in this sentence (cf. line 620).

3. Lines 623–32, cf. "Song of Prudence," 5–13. See also line 615, note 9.

4. The four sentences following, originally twenty-five lines, ending "returned again" (line 644), are omitted in later editions.

or cunning or betrayal or murder . . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . . not the foolish yielding of women . . . not prostitution . . . not of any depravity of young men . . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . . not any nastiness of appetite . . . not any harshness of officers to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or of husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned,⁵ and that returned in further performances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be any thing⁶ else than the profoundest reason, whether it bring arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it forever.⁷ If the savage or felon is wise it is whole . . . if the greatest poet or savior is wise it is simply the same . . . if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . . if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more or less . . . if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The interest will come round . . . all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace . . . all help given to relatives and strangers and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons . . . all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves . . . all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats . . . all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake . . . all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbors . . . all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers . . . all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded . . . all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit . . . and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location . . . all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no . . . all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his great hands . . . and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe . . . or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here . . . or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you

5. Lines 642–88, cf. "Song of Prudence," 14–42. See also line 615, note 9.

6. In later editions, "anything."

7. The six sentences following, originally forty-three lines, ending "soul is truth" (line 686), omitted in later editions, were merged in "Song of Prudence" (see note 5 above).

whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure now and will always to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring . . . Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world does not so exist . . . no parts palpable or impalpable so exist . . . no result exists now without being from its long antecedent result, and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer the beginning than any other spot Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul,⁸ is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous,⁹ is satisfied with the present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows¹ no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement² . . . knows that the young man who composedly periled his life and lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the man who has not periled his life and retains it to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself worth mentioning . . . and that only that person has no great prudence to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him again—and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is today. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides³ and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits . . . and if he be not himself the age transfigured . . . and if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today,⁴ and is held by the ductile anchors of life,⁵ and makes the present spot the passage from what was to what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him

8. The following clause, "is not . . . to its ways," is omitted in the later editions.

9. Lines 691–703, cf. "Song of Prudence," 46–56. See also line 615, note 9 above.

1. In later texts, "and knows."

2. This ends the paragraph in later editions, when the passage following, originally thirteen lines ending "hurries or avoids death" (line 703), had been merged in "Song of Prudence."

3. In later editions the three following clauses are omitted, the present sentence continuing, "if he be not himself" (line 710). For "semitic muscle" (line 709) read "seminal muscle" as in "By Blue Ontario's Shore," line 8 of canto 6, which as a whole reflects the ideas of the present paragraph.

4. In later texts, "shapes."

5. Cf. "A Noiseless Patient Spider," line 9.

merge in the general run and wait his development. . . .
 Still the final test⁶ of poems or any character or work remains. 720
 The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead and judges
 performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live
 through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style
 and the direction of genius to similar points be satisfactory now?
 Has no new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes of 725
 thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or his so that
 either can be looked down upon?⁷ Have the marches of tens and
 hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the
 right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and
 long after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? 730
 and the young woman think often of him? and do the middle-
 aged⁸ and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all de-
 grees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a
 woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A 735
 great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a begin-
 ning.⁹ Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due
 authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be
 content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet
 bring . . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and 740
 ease. The touch of him tells¹ in action. Whom he takes he takes
 with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained . . .
 thenceforward is no rest . . . they see the space and ineffable
 sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums.² The
 companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and 745
 learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered
 out of tumult and chaos . . . the elder encourages the younger
 and shows him how . . . they two shall launch off fearlessly
 together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks un-
 abashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the 750
 ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests.³ Their work is done.⁴ They
 may wait awhile . . . perhaps a generation or two . . . dropping off
 by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . the gangs
 of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new 755
 order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every
 man shall be his own priest.⁵ The churches built under their
 umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the

6. In later editions this phrase begins a new paragraph.

7. The preceding sentence was omitted in later editions.

8. In later texts, read "middle-aged."

9. Lines 735-51, cf. "Song of the Answerer," 80-83.

1. In later editions, read: "of him; like Nature, tells."

2. Later editions omit the following sentence: "The companion . . . meanings."

3. Lines 752-61, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 226, and *cursim*, 224-30.

4. The two sentences following, "They may wait" through "take their place," are omitted in later editions.

5. The two sentences following, originally five lines ending "all events and things" (line 761), are omitted in the later editions.

divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of
 poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and 760
 things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today,
 symptoms of the past and future. . . . They shall not deign to
 defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty
 or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise
 in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth. 765

The English language befriends the grand American expres-
 sion . . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On
 the tough stock of a race who through all change of circum-
 stance was never without the idea of political liberty, which is
 the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier 770
 and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the pow-
 erful language of resistance . . . it is the dialect of common sense.
 It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all
 who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-
 esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence 775
 decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh ex-
 press the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory
 or social intercourse or household arrangements or public insti-
 tutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor exe-
 cutive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legis-
 lation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or
 amusements⁶ or the costumes of young men, can long elude the
 jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether
 or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, 785
 it throbs a live interrogation in every freeman's and freewoman's
 heart after that which passes by, or this built to remain. Is it
 uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious
 distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and
 lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models,⁷ gener-
 ous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of the
 fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know
 that what answers for me an American must⁸ answer for any
 individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does
 this answer?⁹ or is it without reference to universal needs? or 795
 sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special
 ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and
 forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute
 acknowledgment, and set slavery at nought for life and death?
 Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a 800
 woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve

6. The words that follow, "or the costumes of young men," are omitted from the later texts.

7. In later editions an added comma modifies the meaning: "well united, proud, beyond the old models" (cf. "well-united").

8. In later editions, read: "an American, in Texas, Ohio, Canada, must."

9. The eight clauses following, originally nine lines, ending "improve manners?" (line 802), are omitted in the later editions.

manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve¹ readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children?² Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and on those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own? 805

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away.³ The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance.⁴ America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not⁵ unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work.⁶ No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself⁷ will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets.⁸ The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it. 810 815 820 825

1. Cf. "dissolve," not present but inevitably suggested. In the context of the entire paragraph the solution in "the sweet milk . . . of the mother of many children" is the ideas of nature and liberty.
2. The six sentences following were omitted from the later texts—originally thirteen lines, including the first six lines of the new paragraph, ending "leave no remembrance" (line 813). But see following note 3.
3. Lines 809–27, cf. "By Blue Ontario's Shore," 213–19.
4. In the later texts, the last paragraph of the preface begins here; the earlier lines having been transferred (see preceding notes 2 and 3).
5. In later editions, "erudite, are not."
6. The sentence following is omitted from the later texts.
7. The preceding phrase in later editions reads: "Only toward the like of itself."
8. In the later editions, the preface ends here; the following four sentences were excluded.