THE AMERICA OF

WHITMAN AND TOCQUEVILLE

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in English

by

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ABSTRACT

THE AMERICA OF
WHITMAN AND TOCQUEVILLE

by
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors
in English

Walt Whitman and Alexis de Tocqueville recorded their impressions of American democracy in the nineteenth century. The purpose of this paper is to discover the nature of the genius and soul of American democracy as it is recorded in the writings of the two observers. There are striking parallels in the ideas of Whitman and Tocqueville, especially as they concern the fundamental principles of American democracy. Equality is shown to be the primary element in American democracy. It is further shown that, unless equality is given focus and direction by morality and religion, it can be self-destroying. Tocqueville's means of instilling morality into the people is through their elected officials, while Whitman's method is through literature. Whitman was confident of man's perfectability, and
Tocqueville observed that this same confidence is basic to the American character. The paper concludes by pointing out the fundamental optimism that both writers had in America and its future.
Introduction

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, America was a phenomenon being watched by the civilized world. It was a "great experiment" to determine whether or not the average man could be trusted to govern himself. Some spectators watched out of the corners of their eyes lest they betray an unseemly interest in the events across the ocean. Others observed with great interest, keenly aware of the stakes involved. Among the latter group was Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman and member of the lesser nobility. The newspaper account of the arrival of Tocqueville and his friend, Gustave de Beaumont, "announced that 'two young magistrates... have arrived... sent here by order of the Minister of the Interior, to examine the various prisons in our country, and make a report on their return to France.'" Tocqueville had managed to persuade his government to send him to America on this mission since the American prison system was of interest to France. However, Tocqueville's real purpose was to observe, at first hand, democracy as it was evolving in America. He believed that the emerging democracies in Europe could learn important lessons from America, lessons that would help them make the transition from feudalism to democracy.
Living among the American people at that time was a poet only fourteen years younger than Tocqueville. Walt Whitman set out to record the genius and soul of the American people as only a poet could do, and more especially, as only an American poet could do.

The precise and objective observation of Tocqueville made his *Democracy In America* one of the most valuable commentaries we have on the nature of American democracy in the nineteenth century. There are striking parallels between Tocqueville's ideas and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The purpose of this paper is to discover the nature of the genius and soul of American democracy as it has been recorded in the works of two of its greatest observers. Certainly, much could be said that is beyond the scope of a paper of this extent. I have attempted here, only to reveal what I feel are the most fundamental ideas in the works of the two writers.

Tocqueville revealed the purpose of his work in a letter to a friend. A paragraph of that letter provides a useful frame for this discussion and summarizes what Tocqueville and Whitman both felt were essential qualities that a democratic people must possess and both felt were those which made the American experiment successful:

I wished to show what a democratic people really was in our day; and by a rigorously accurate picture to produce a double effect on the men of
my day. To those who have fancied an ideal democracy, a brilliant and easily realized dream, I endeavored to show that they had clothed the picture in false colors; that the republican government which they extol, even though it may bestow substantial benefits on a people that can bear it, has none of the elevated features with which their imagination would endow it, and moreover that such a government cannot be maintained without certain conditions of intelligence, of private morality, and of religious belief that we, as a nation, have not reached, and that we must labor to attain before grasping their political results.2
Chapter 1
"The Democratic Average":
The Political Foundation

"The democratic average" is Whitman's term. It includes several notions. One is that the greatness of democracy does not lie among the wealthy or intellectual groups in society but among those of average means and average intelligence. A second implication is that even though democracy is built on the average man, the very poor and the very rich are also included in the tally. The very idea of an average necessarily includes the extreme ends. The third implication is that the ends and the middle are all equal. Of course, they are not equal in wealth, intelligence, or other social standards of measurement. The meaning is that they are all equal under law. Tocqueville notes, "So the more I studied American society, the more clearly I saw equality of conditions as the creative element from which each particular fact derived, and all my observations constantly returned to this nodal point." Tocqueville often brings democracy into fuller relief by comparison with aristocracy. In aristocracies the ruling classes maintain their positions and power by political privilege. This political privilege is cemented by differing standards of right and wrong, of honor and shame for
each class. The true "manly confidence" extolled by Whitman as one of the characteristics of free men cannot exist under such conditions. The idea of political equality is the basis of democracy. Freedom is impossible without it. From "Salut Au Monde" we read:

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

The Non-Conformists and Separatists in England must have felt a similar spirit. Andrew C. McLaughlin in Foundations of American Constitutionalism gives evidence of how deeply the ideas of freedom and equality were rooted in the consciences of the men and women who migrated to the shores of the New World. These religious groups dared to advance the idea that men, of their own wills, could form a church:

We find, therefore, fundamental principles plainly stated: the separation of the church and state; the independent gathering of a few believers into a self-governing body relying upon the scriptures as their guide; the covenant with God to abide by his laws and follow his ways.

In 1616, we find that the people forming a church, standing together, joined hands, and solemnly covenanted with one another in the presence of Almighty God, "to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances, according as he had already revealed, or should further make them known to them." The people thus covenanted came mainly from the middle class, but had there been aristocrats among them, class distinctions would surely have lessened.
as they joined hands in a circle and made their covenants with God. This concept of the covenant and the further notion that men ought to be free to make such contracts as equals was naturally suppressed in aristocratic societies. Europe did not offer a place where this idea could be tried, and the idea had to be taken to a place where its suppressors would be reluctant to follow.

The relationship between equality and freedom, however, is not guaranteed. Both Whitman and Tocqueville warn that once political equality is achieved, it can also lead to servitude. Concerning this, Tocqueville states:

There is indeed a manly and legitimate passion for equality which rouses in all men a desire to be strong and respected. This passion tends to elevate the little man to the rank of the great. But the human heart also nourishes a debased taste for equality, which leads the weak to want to drag the strong down to their level and which induces men to prefer equality in servitude to inequality in freedom.5

Whitman calls equality the first principle of political democracy. He recognized that freedom is, in fact, a dichotomy and requires a counter-balancing principle if it is to be retained. In Whitman's words:

For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, surely joined another principle....This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself—identity—personalism. Whatever the name, its acceptance and thorough infusions through the organizations of political commonality now shooting Aurora-like about the world, are of utmost importance, as the principle itself is
needed for very life's sake. It forms, in a sort, or is to form, the compensating balance-wheel of the successful working machinery of aggregate America.6

Whitman's answer to the leveling tendency of democracy is a strong, healthy identity. Anyone who has read the opening lines of "Song of Myself" begins to feel the strength of that identity:

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

This second principle of individualism also needs to be considered with other elements of the political foundation. Tocqueville observed the practical nature of Americans and found that this practicality could further virtue. In discussing what he calls "the doctrine of self-interest properly understood," Tocqueville tries to determine how individualism and self-interest have been restrained in a democratic situation. He concludes:

The doctrine of self-interest properly understood does not inspire great sacrifices, but every day it prompts some small ones; by itself it cannot make a man virtuous, but its discipline shapes a lot of orderly, temperate, moderate, careful, and self-controlled citizens. If it does not lead the will directly to virtue, it establishes habits which unconsciously turn it that way.

On the other hand, i.c. citizens, attaining equality, were to remain ignorant and coarse, it would be difficult to foresee any limit to the stupid excesses into which their selfishness might lead them, and no one could foretell into what shameful troubles they might plunge themselves for fear of sacri-
facing some of their own well-being for the prosperity of their fellow men.7

Because they have been educated to accept this doctrine of "self-interest properly understood... every American has the sense to sacrifice some of his private interests to save the rest."8 This is the same common sense that is implicit in all of Whitman's poetry. Even though Whitman's individual is confidently independent, he is ever aware that "every atom belonging to me belongs as good to you." Americans are at one and the same time independent and members of society.

Tocqueville also noted that Americans are forever forming associations of one kind or another.9 This results from the fact that they are free to do so and from another consequence of equality—weakness:

The citizen of a democracy comparing himself with the others feels proud of his equality with each. But when he compares himself with all his fellows and measures himself against this vast entity, he is overwhelmed by a sense of his insignificance and weakness.

The same equality which makes him independent of each separate citizen leaves him isolated and defenseless in the face of the majority.10

Forming associations has been one way by which Americans have compensated for this inherent weakness. If a citizen finds himself in a minority, he is free to search for others with similar ideas in order to strengthen his position. A citizen may desire to undertake a project—perhaps to build a theater or a hospital—but lacks the funds. He may advertise his inten-
tions and attract others who wish to cooperate with him in the project. The association has been one of the most significant elements of democracy and one which Americans have made full use of. Tocqueville noted that, in addition to compensating for the inherent weakness of democratic citizens, the association also reminds them of their reliance on others in society, thus alleviating the anarchic tendency of democratic individualism.

Another prospect faced by the individual who is equal with all others is isolation from his fellows. In comparing the aristocratic and democratic situations, Tocqueville observes, "Aristocracy links everybody, from peasant to king, in one long chain. Democracy breaks the chain and frees each link....Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart." The individual not only runs the risk of being tyrannized by the mass, but he also may find himself alone. The physical isolation brought about by the American wilderness, though significant, is less important than the spiritual isolation that Tocqueville saw. Alienation is the modern word for this kind of isolation. The sense of alienation was not invented by American democracy but was raised by it to the status of a national malady. Whitman instinctively tried to counteract this phenomenon in his poetry. The "Self"
who ordains himself "loos'd of limits and imaginary lines" does not ordain himself loosed from society. Whitman agrees that "no man is an island, entire of itself." The individual in a democracy discovers his true meaning through his relationships with his fellows. In an aristocracy his meaning is in large part determined by his position on the chain. In a democracy, he alone determines his worth. Whitman defines the relationship between the individual and the mass in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry":

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?

What is more subtile than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you? 12

There are other elements of the political foundation of American democracy, but those which we have discussed are the ones which Tocqueville and Whitman agree are the primary elements of that foundation.
Chapter 2

Yankee Clipper:
The American Character

Allons! we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores, however
convenient this dwelling we cannot remain here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm these
waters we must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us
we are permitted to receive it but a
little while.

You but arrive at the city to which you were
destin'd, you hardly settle yourself to
satisfaction before you are call'd by an
irresistible call to depart....
("Song of the Open Road," sec. 9, 11)

The political and physical conditions of America
combined to give its people many distinguishing charac-
teristics. I will focus on three that seem to be pro-
ninent in the writings of both authors. Each of these
traits has been condemned for various reasons, and yet
each trait has been indispensable to a people who have
felt they have a peculiar destiny to fulfill.

The restless spirit described in the lines
quoted from Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" is as
recognizable to Americans today as it was a century
ago. This phenomenon of mobility did not escape the
notice of Tocqueville: "I found in the United States
that restlessness of heart natural to men when all
conditions are almost equal and everyone sees the same
chance of rising." The proverbial "American success story" was not mere fable but a living potential. The success made possible by mobility is the positive side of American restlessness. On the negative side, this restlessness shades into another characteristic which Whitman describes with great distaste:

Behold through you as bad as the rest,
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping,
of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those
wash'd and trimm'd faces,
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright,
death under the breast-bones, hell under the
skull-bones,
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons
and artificial flowers,
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a
syllable of itself,
Speaking of anything else but never of itself.

("Song of the Open Road," sec. 13)

Tocqueville felt that "taste for physical pleasures
must be regarded as the first cause of this secret
restlessness" that the Americans exhibited, and that
the "constant strife between the desires inspired by
equality and the means it supplies to satisfy them
harasses and wearies the mind." It is natural for men
to want to improve their condition, and the combination
of political equality and a vast, fertile, and unused
continent gave Americans an opportunity to advance
materially which was unequaled in man's history. It was
disturbing to both observers—perhaps more so to
Whitman—that this "taste for physical pleasures" became so much a part of the American character. This was more disturbing to Whitman because he set the highest ideals for the American people: they were the most enlightened of any people that ever lived; they were the culmination of the long history of mankind and the beginning of a greater race of men; they were a nation of gods in embryo. That Americans were so intensely inclined toward materialism was a real discouragement to Whitman. The remedies Tocqueville and Whitman offer are discussed in the next two chapters.

The struggle to attain greater material comforts may weaken the fiber of a people, but it may also develop a more heroic quality in them. Tocqueville recognized in the restless materialism of Americans, elements of heroism. He notes in oceanic commerce that the European navigators demonstrated a more cautious attitude, but that

the American, neglecting...precautions, braves... dangers; he sets sail while the storm is still rumbling; by night as well as by day he spreads full sails to the wind; he repairs storm damage as he goes; and when at last he draws near the end of his voyage, he flies toward the coast as if he could already see the port.

The American is often shipwrecked, but no other sailor crosses the sea as fast as he. Doing what others do but in less time, he can do it at less expense.

I cannot express my thoughts better than saying that the Americans put something heroic into their way of trading.
Tocqueville admired the spirit of enterprise of the Americans. He noticed, too, that Americans considered all honest work honorable and points to this particular fact because of the aristocratic prejudice against work which was prominent in Europe. The nature of the American experience in building up a nation in the wilderness was also a factor in producing this spirit of enterprise in the American people. Tocqueville would appreciate these lines from Whitman's "Song of the Open Road":

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
We will sail pathless and wild seas,
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee Clipper speeds by under full sail.
("Song of the Open Road," sec. 10)
Chapter 3
"The Crowning Growth":
The Moral Foundation

In the preceding chapters we discussed the political foundation of the United States and found that equality was the primary element in that foundation. Then we observed three dominant American traits resulting from this condition of equality, a restless materialism being the most significant. Whitman, as well as Tocqueville, was aware of the problems arising from this materialism. In Democratic Vistas, Whitman suggests three "grand stages" in the evolution of American democracy which would eventually alleviate those problems. The first of these stages is "the political foundation rights of immense masses of people." This was achieved and "put on record" by the American Constitution. The second stage is material prosperity. From what evidence we have in Democracy, we know that this had also been achieved.

Whitman’s third stage, "rising out of the previous ones," is "a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command, dissolving the old, sloughing off surfaces, and from its own interior and vital principles, reconstructing, democratizing society." Elsewhere in Democratic Vistas Whitman adds that "a great moral and religious civilization" is the only justification of a great material one. His poetry is everywhere marked
with the idea that "the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic." His purpose for writing *Leaves of Grass* was to lead the movement toward the Religious Democracy he envisioned. In his mind, equality and morality were equated, and without the moral element, equality would be self-destroying. Whitman's concept of morality includes all the highest attributes of the human spirit and affirms that the "ripeness of Religion...is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve." 

Tocqueville also saw a direct relationship between these political and moral elements:

Freedom sees religion as the companion of its struggles and triumphs, the cradle of its infancy, and the divine source of its rights. Religion is considered as the guardian of mores, and mores are regarded as the guarantee of the laws and pledge for the maintenance of freedom itself.

This relationship was a part of the American credo from the beginning, a fact reinforced by Tocqueville's statement that "it was religion that gave birth to the English colonies in America." There are important practical reasons why freedom and religion were equated in the American mind from the very start. Tocqueville notes that while man takes delight in this proper and legitimate quest for prosperity, there is a danger that in the end he may lose the use of his sublimest faculties and that, bent on improving everything around him, he may at length degrade himself. That, and nothing else, is the peril.

This, then, is why equality can be self-destroying. The
dangers of unchecked materialism are self-evident and need not be reiterated here. As Tocqueville and Whitman conceive it, the role of religion is to turn man's eyes toward the future and upward toward higher purpose. Citizens of democracies tend to live for the pleasures of the day without much thought for what will happen tomorrow. By fixing their aim on an object farther and higher than the daily pursuit of pleasures, according to Tocqueville, Americans do not shift from day to day, chasing some new object of desire, but have settled designs which they never tire of pursuing. That is why religious nations have often accomplished such lasting achievements. For in thinking of the other world, they had found out the great secret of success in this.23

Out of this fortunate combination of equality and religion grew a fundamental American optimism which expressed itself in the idea that men are infinitely perfectable. This idea is the capstone for the moral foundation because it provides the faith needed to make the rest work. The future offers free men a promise of an even better life than they have, no matter how good that present one may be. Tocqueville was aware of this optimism and considered it peculiarly American:

All have a lively faith in human perfectability; they think that the spread of enlightenment must necessarily produce useful results and that ignorance must have fatal effects; all think of society as a body progressing; they see humanity as a changing picture in which nothing either is or ought to be fixed forever; and they admit that
what seems good to them today may be replaced tomorrow by something better that is still hidden. I do not assert that all these opinions are correct, but they are American.24

Whitman expressed this "lively faith" in the future and in the infinite perfectability of man throughout his work. From his vantage point in the nineteenth century, he did not feel that democracy had yet fully proven itself, but that the fruition and justification of democracy resided "altogether in the future."25 He was discouraged at the "hollowness of heart" that he saw around him, and the experience of the Civil War was difficult for him spiritually. He was confident, however, that these things would pass. "A Noiseless Patient Spider" expresses Whitman's faith in the spiritual evolution of free men. This poem is better understood by comparing the traditions in which Whitman and Tocqueville wrote. Tocqueville's ideas of human perfectability and human divinity are based in classical humanism where the standards by which man's potential is measured are cultural and centered around man himself. Tocqueville's concept of human potential is more limited than Whitman's. Whitman was a part of the Puritan tradition, and his concept of human divinity and perfectability arises out of the belief that man is made in God's image. In Whitman's view, therefore, man's potential is limitless:
A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of
space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking
the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere,
O my soul.
Chapter 4
"The Divine Literatus Comes": Democratic Literature

How is morality to be maintained in the midst of rampant materialism? Who has the responsibility of enlightening and spiritually training the "democratic averages"? Tocqueville would have the government assume the responsibility:

The first duty imposed on those who now direct society is to educate democracy; to put, if possible, new life into its beliefs; to purify its mores; to control its actions....

Men of education also share the responsibility "to make continual efforts to propagate throughout society a taste for the infinite, and appreciation of greatness, and a love of spiritual pleasures." We have discussed the potentially degrading effects of democracy on the human spirit. Tocqueville felt that the remedy was essentially a political one, relying on the elected officials to educate the masses in the manner he described above. As long as men of high character occupy the offices of government, there is a good chance that they would provide this kind of leadership. On the other hand, Tocqueville realized that periods of enlightened leadership in democracies are rare and that periods of mediocre leadership will be the general
Whitman also believed that the duty of government was greater than merely to provide for "the safety of life, property, and for the basic statute and common law." But he did not think it wise to leave the moral development of the people to the changeability of the political process. He felt that "the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature." The masses were to be educated, trained, and morally developed by a group of men who could more directly and effectively influence them. The Americans were a literate people. As long as the literature they consumed was suited to the moral development envisioned by Whitman and Tocqueville, success was a strong possibility. Tocqueville's appraisal of the characteristics of democratic literature, however, leaves this possibility in doubt. Tocqueville lists a number of literary characteristics of democracies, among which are the following: In contrast to aristocracies, whose literature will contain strict literary conventions and will be intended for a very small circle of highly educated readers, democratic literature will lack these strict conventions. This results from the fact that the readers of democratic literature will include the greater part of the society and that their level of education will be less elevated.
than that of an aristocracy.

2. Citizens in democracies, and especially as it existed in the United States, would only have "short, stolen hours for the pleasures of the mind." For this reason they will read more for "relaxation from the serious business of life...They like books which are easily got and quickly read, requiring no learned researches to understand them."

3. "They like facile forms of beauty, self-explanatory and immediately enjoyable."

4. They appreciate things which are "unexpected and new," which exhibit "vivid, lively emotions, sudden revelations, brilliant truths, or errors able to rouse them up and plunge them, almost by violence, into the middle of the subject." This results from the "monotonous struggle of practical life."

5. "Short works will be commoner than long books."

The success of the American short story seems to reflect the accuracy of the qualities that Tocqueville listed.

These are hardly literary qualities which would be likely to develop a nation morally and intellectually. There are, however, two characteristics which Tocqueville observed that would offer a little more hope to an idealist like Whitman. The first of these is the source from which a democratic literature must come:
In the long run...democracy turns man's imagination away from externals to concentrate it on himself alone. Democratic peoples may amuse themselves momentarily by looking at nature, but it is about themselves that they are really excited. Here, and here alone, are the true springs of poetry among them, and those poets...who will not draw inspiration from these springs will lose their hold....

Whitman openly announced such a new source of poetic inspiration as in his opening lines of *Leaves of Grass*:

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person, I celebrate myself, and sing myself.

"One's-Self I Sing"

Whitman declared that the time had come to create a literature which would be "a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People--of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades--with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur..." Democracy provided, in addition, a whole new range of social relationships hitherto untapped in the literature of any nation.

The "breadth of historic grandeur" mentioned by Whitman is a second characteristic of literature which, according to Tocqueville, becomes possible only in democratic society:

The existence of the entire human race, its vicissitudes and its future...becomes a fertile theme for poetry....Incidents in the life of a man or a people have made fine subjects for poetry in aristocratic ages, but none of their poets has
ever attempted to include the destiny of the whole human race in the scope of his work. That is a task which poets writing in democratic ages may be able to undertake.33

Whitman's life purpose was to introduce and stimulate a literature which would tap the source of the people he loved, and in which, he declares, "in the center of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, toward whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New."34 Only great spiritual and heroic literature could effect the moderating influence of morality on equality. "The ripeness of Religion is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve."35 It is a result that only a new race of poets could produce.

Whitman summarizes the role of literature in democracy with this statement:

Viewed, today, from a point of view sufficiently over-arching, the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. The priest departs, the divine literatus comes.36
Chapter 5

"Thou Born America":

America's Future

Today, ahead, though dimly yet, we see, in vistas, a copious sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come. Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long, deferred, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance. Who else, indeed, except the United States, in history, so far, have accepted in unwitting faith, and, as we now see, stand, act upon, and go security for these things?37

In these words, Whitman expresses a sentiment felt by Americans from the arrival of the first Pilgrims, that this land and people had accepted a divine task to round out and fulfill the long history of mankind. For Americans, the concept of "manifest destiny" was not completed when they reached the western coast of the continent. Missionaries left the security of their homes and land to take the Gospel to every corner of the earth. American ships found their way to China and Japan and any area reachable by the vast oceans in fulfillment of Tocqueville's prediction that Americans would "become the leading naval power on the globe [and] are born to rule the seas, as the Romans were to conquer the world."38 The effects of American enterprise were
beginning to be felt far beyond its native borders. The phenomenal growth of the new republic strengthened this sense of divine destiny. Tocqueville was careful to point out that it was impossible for him to predict the final outcome of the infant democracy and whether or not equality was "to lead to servitude or freedom, knowledge or barbarism, prosperity or wretchedness." Nevertheless, he was prompted to make the following forecast of America's future:

So, then, it must not be thought possible to halt the impetus of the English race in the New World. The dismemberment of the Union, bringing war into the continent, or the abolition of the republic, bringing tyranny, might slow down, but cannot prevent the people ultimately fulfilling their inevitable destiny. No power on earth can shut out the immigrants from that fertile wilderness which on every side offers rewards to industry and a refuge from every affliction. Whatever the future may hold in store, it cannot deprive the Americans of their climate, their inland seas, their great rivers, or the fertility of their soil. Bad laws, revolutions, and anarchy cannot destroy their taste for well-being or that spirit of enterprise which seems the characteristic feature of their race; nor could such things utterly extinguish the lights of knowledge guiding them. 

I have attempted in this paper to present a picture of nineteenth century America as it was seen and felt by two of the foremost thinkers of that dynamic era, and to capture the mood of their works. Cynics of the present day may dismiss the overall optimism of Whitman and Tocqueville, point to the events that ended their century, and cite the current social and economic
troubles that swirl about us. Even if the future of America and the rest of the world for whom America has assumed responsibility contains "bad laws, revolutions, anarchy," and tyranny, perhaps it is, as Whitman believed, that "the throes of birth are upon us."\(^4^1\) The American Revolution made certain that men could never again feel the same about themselves. The seed of the worth of the single soul was firmly implanted in the hearts and minds of men and is the guiding light that Tocqueville believes can never be utterly extinguished. I believe this is the essence of Democracy In America and Leaves of Grass, and is summed up by Whitman in this statement from "Passage to India":

Passage to India!
Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,
Over my mood stealing and spreading they come,
Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the surface rising,
A ceaseless thought, a varied train--lo, soul, to thee, thy sight, they rise,
The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;
Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,
Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass, lands found and nations born, thou born America,
For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
Thou rondoire of the world at last accomplish'd.
Notes


2 Ibid., p.402


5 Democracy, tr. Lawrence, p.57.


7 Lawrence, p.527.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p.513.

10 Ibid., p.435.

11 Ibid., p.508.

12 Sections 1,8.

13 Lawrence, p.310.

14 Ibid., pp.536,7.

15 Ibid., pp.402,3.

16 Van Doren, pp.364,5.

17 Ibid., p.327

18 Ibid., p.310.

19 Ibid., p.352.

20 Lawrence, p.47.
21 Ibid., p.432.
22 Ibid., p.543.
23 Ibid., p.547.
24 Ibid., p.374.
25 Van Doren, p.345.
26 Lawrence, p.12.
27 Ibid., 543.
28 Van Doren, p.335.
29 Ibid., p.321.
30 Lawrence, p.473,4.
31 Ibid., p.485
32 Van Doren, p.332.
33 Lawrence, p.486.
34 Van Doren, p.304.
36 Ibid., pp.320.21.
37 Ibid., pp.317,18.
38 Lawrence, p.407.
39 Ibid., p.705.
40 Ibid., p.411.
41 Van Doren, p.345.
Bibliography


