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Spitzer says of the poem's final title, which is also its opening line, "With its rocking rhythm, the line suggests the cradle of the infinite sea from which later, at the end of the poem, death will emerge. At this stage, however, death is already a part of the situation" (Spitzer, 1983: 220). According to Alfred H. Marks, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" deals with what Whitman felt to be the three pinnacles of human life: birth, love and death. Man progresses from one height to the next only by descent into a valley of loss and despair (Marks, 1987: 98). Death is not the last cycle in which a human being participates. Whitman's fusion of death with life is found also in most of his later poems, as in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", the thing which indicates a turning point in Whitman's spiritual growth in a stage when youth is gone, and love has gone, and what is left for the future is death.

In "Cradle" Whitman is once again the narrator. The poem is told through the eyes of a man who identifies himself as "I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter" (Whitman, 1982: 388).

The character is a grown man who remembers himself as a boy on the beach watching a pair of gulls building a nest. One day:

May'be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again. (Whitman, 1982: Cradle 45)

He imagines the gull left behind, hearing its voice calling, "O rising stars: / Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of them" (Whitman, 1982: Cradle 93-94). The gull's cry goes unanswered, however, and the boy, watching by the shore, hears a word echoed in the waves that will "never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before" (Whitman, 1982: Cradle 154). The word he hears is "the low and delicious word death, / And again death, death, death" (Whitman, 1982: Cradle 168-69).

For Whitman, this is not a mournful moment. The poem ends with the birth of the poet:

My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song of all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet.

(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, watched in sweet garments, bending aside)

The sea whisper'd me (Whitman, 1982: Cradle 178-83).

Whitman attributes to the memory of the mourning gull and the rhythm of the waves his urge to become a poet. Whicher writes, "The song releases...the song of love in his own heart, which he now realizes have long been ready and waiting for his moment; he awakens and ecstatically dedicates himself to this service" (Whicher, 1983: 287). In the boy's (Whitman's) awakening to this meaning of life, maintains Whicher, Whitman has "fused all his own awakenings together with the result that his poem moves in one night over a distance which he had taken forty years of life to cover" (Whicher, 1983: 287).

The narrator is again less a literally autobiographical figure than he seems to be at first. As Whicher observes, "The bird's story is Whitman's story, distanced and disguised, but it is also man's" (Whicher, 1983: (288)). Anne Gilchrist writes about reading the poem, "There is

such a weight of emotion, such a tension of the heart, that mine refuses to beat under it—stands quite still—and I am obliged to lay the book down for a while" (Gilchrist, 1983: 83).

Nevertheless, the bird's story with the emotional atmosphere of the poem is indeed a part of Whitman's "tragic awakening of 1859, that to live is to love and to love is to lose" (Whicher, 1983: 288).

In the face of death and loss, Whitman sees triumph and the continuation of an immortal cycle, "the cradle endlessly rocking". He does not have a morbid preoccupation with what will inevitable come. Instead, Whitman energetically embraces everything that every life offers, including death. Spitzer writes, "Whitman...will remain for us not the poet of death (although the idea of death may have perturbed him more than once), but the unique poet of American optimism and love of life, who has been able, naturally and naively, to unite what in other contemporary tends to fall apart, the life of man and that of nature" Spitzer, 1983: (225-26).

Randall Jarrell calls his study of Whitman, "He Had His Nerve". He suggests that this is an appropriate epitaph for one of America's greatest poetic voices. He concludes, almost in astonishment:

Whitman is epic, just as *Moby Dick* is, and it surprises us to be able to use truthfully his word we have misused so many times. Whitman is grand, and elevated, and comprehensive, and real with an astonishing reality and many other things...And the range of these qualities is the most extraordinary thing of all (Jarrell 1983: 242).

Walt Whitman brought to American poetry a unique and vibrant voice. Though the simple language and the impassioned style, the embraced and celebrated life of his fellow human beings. His embrace included every aspect of life, from the crudest to the most sublime. For him, death was as natural as any other part of the cycle. Death was an essential part of "Song of Myself" and the lullaby of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking". As he grew older and saw the approach of his own death, he hurried to put the finishing touches of the most important volume of his whole life's work, *Leaves of Grass*, whereby he turned his songs to a universal harmony. In effect, the "death-bed edition" stands as an enduring celebration of life itself.

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The facts are useful and real... and they are not my dwelling...

I enter them in an area of the dwelling (Whitman, 440-42. 1855).

In the revised edition, he still appreciates (their) work, but he distances himself from it more explicitly:

Gentleman, to you the first honors always!

Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwellings.

But I enter by them to an area of my dwelling (Whitman, 440-42.1855).

He goes on to rewrite, "I am less the reminder of property or qualities, and more the reminder of life, And go on the square for my own sake and other sakes" (Whitman, 493-94. 1855-60) to read "Less the reminders of properties told my words, / And mothe reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and extrication" (Whitman, 23, 493-94. 1891-92). He sees his work as going beyond facts and science. Whitman is much more concerned with "life untold," and the "freedom and extrication" he speaks of include the freedom from the material reality that death offers to the individual being.

One of the most frequently quoted passages in these sections is his description of himself. Originally, he wrote of "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos, / Disorderly fleshly and sensual" (Whitman, 497-98. 1855-60), continuing without revision. Thirty-six years later, he made some subtle but important alterations:

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,

Turbulent, fleshly, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding

No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them.

No more modest than immodest. (Whitman, 24, 497-95. 1891-92)

Spitzer writes, "Walt Whitman felt impelled to include in his poetry his own self (with all his faults) as the representative of American democracy undertaking this worldly voyage of exploration" (Spitzer, 1983: 219). Interestingly, however, this only seems to be an accurate self-portrait. This is Whitman as he wants the world to see him, particularly "breeding", which continues his public lie about his homosexuality. Even at the end of his life as he embraces death, he still cares about his public image.

Although Whitman's use of first-person narrative gives his writing a striking immediacy, he does not intend to be literally autobiographical. Through all his revisions, the narrator of "Song of Myself" stays 37 years old. Even in his last incarnation, his final edition, revised as death draws near, this alter ego remains "in perfect health begin, / Hoping to cease not till death" (Whitman, 11, 9-10. 1981-91). The real Whitman, however, continued to age and eventually to realize that he would not live to see the next century. Whitman celebrated life through his poetry. However, he was not trying to put his own specific experiences into "Song of Myself". He had a more important purpose in mind. He tried to make his writings speak for the universal truths of all human experience. As he wrote in his preface to the first edition and continued to believe throughout his life, "Past and Present and Future are not disjointed but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is" (Bradley, 1973: 712).

James observes that Whitman's use of the first-person singular allows him to speak "Vicariouly for all men, so that a passionate and mystic...emotion suffuses his words, and ends by persuading the reader that men and women, life and death, and all things are divinely good" (Bradley, 1973: 189). The "Walt Whitman" of the poem stands in for all human beings. As Spitzer explains: "He felt himself to be a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm" (Spitzer, 1983: 219), or as he himself writes, "Whoever degrades another degrades me, / And whatever is done or said returns at last to me" (Whitman, 24, 50-34. 1891-92).

The remaining revisions to these sections are minor, yet they do affect the tone as it becomes soft and smooth; the meaning also is changed to be more acceptable and to reflect a new gentle and tender mode. Whitman removed the redundant "And whatever I do or say I also return" (Whitman, 503. 1855). He added "prisoners" and took out "prostitutes" and "deformed persons" from his list (Whitman, 24, 509-14. 1891-92), eliminated "That I eat and drink is spectacle enough for the great authors and schools" (Whitman, 544. 1855-60), and rewrote the passage "Your noisiest talk by looking toward you" (Whitman, 578. 1855) to read "Your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you" (Whitman, 25, 578. 1891-92). Throughout "Song of Myself" Whitman treats death as part of the whole experience of life. He does not glorify it or romanticize it. He also does not address it specifically, but instead implies throughout that death is part of the little dramas he sketches of Patriarchs and Presidents and runaway slaves and bride and singers and children receiving their first baptism. He says, "Copulation is not more rank to me than death is" (Whitman, 24, 521. 191-92). The universal stories he tells make clear his vision of death as part of the whole fabric of experience.

Whitman believed that "the strongest and sweetest songs have yet to be sung" (Whitman, 1982: 672). He despaired of ever being able to write these songs himself, especially as he saw his death approaching. But in "Song of Myself" he reached for the individual reader's heart: "Mortal I have ever touch'd, it shall be you" (Whitman, 24, 543. 1891-92). With his words, he sought to embrace the common elements in all human experience. For Whitman, this included the end of each individual life and the necessity of going on in the face of death.

Whitman deals more specifically with death in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking". He uses the sea as an image of death in both poems, what Stephen E. Whicher calls "the deep ocean of life and death that rolls through all things" (Whicher, 1969: 290). In "Song of Myself", the poet speaks of the "sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves" (Whitman, 22, 456.1891-92). He describes his early years near the sea reading books "in the full presence of Nature, under the sun, with the far-spreading landscape and vistas, or the sea rolling in" (Whitman, 1982: 655).

Through his contemplation of the sea, Whitman sometimes talks of death directly. In "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," originally titled "A Child's Reminiscence" and then "A Word Out of the Sea", he uses his seaside memories to consider death more directly. Jerome Loving calls this poem "the ultimate vocation of the poet: to celebrate and lament at once the fusion of Love and Death" (Loving, 1983: 13).

make them more "poetic"; "keyed" becomes "key'd", for instance. He put some phrases into parentheses, such as "(there are millions of shuns left)" (Whitman, 2, 34. 1891-92), which clarified his meaning. He trimmed out some repetitious phrases. Some of his versions subtly simplified his language: "I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen" (Whitman, 1. 1855-60) becomes "Now I will do nothing but listen" (Whitman, 24, 1. 1892-92); "It wrenches such ardors from me that I did not know I possess'd them" (Whitman, 26, 605. 1892-92).

However, some of his revisions are more significant. They reflect a man learning from living a rich, full life and contemplating its inevitable end. Cowley designates sections 20-25 "the poet in person" (265). Studying the revisions between the first and the last version of these sections offers a glimpse into Whitman's growth as an artist and a man.

First, he trims his descriptions of the way too many cynics look at the world, taking out their belief "That life is a suck and a sell, and nothing remains at the end but threadbare crape and tears" (Whitman, 394-95. 1855-56). He does not share this belief anymore, so he cannot bring himself to keep it in the poem. Whitman knows that the end of life promises much more than "crape and tears," and he removes the line because it offends his embracing optimism.

He makes the question, "Shall I pray? Shall I venerate and be ceremonious?" (Whitman, 398. 1855-56) more defiant: "Why should I pray? Why should I venerate and be ceremonious?" (Whitman, 20, 398. 1891-92). He directly questions organized religion and ritual. Stovall writes of Whitman's religious beliefs in "Walt Whitman and the American Tradition": "He shared the evangelical faith in the power of the individual to establish an effective relationship with God without the intermediation of the institutional church, and he shared the missionary spirit of Evangelicalism" (Stovall, 1983: 247).

Some critics suggest that Whitman's beliefs could best be described as pagan: advocating a primitive, free-wheeling abandonment. However, William James argues that he was not the pagan he was often branded. Instead he believes that he was much more dangerous: "He is more than your mere animal man who has not tasted of the tree of good and evil. He is aware enough of sin for a swagger to be present in his indifference towards it, a conscious pride in his freedom" (James, 1983: 189). Cowley offers a third opinion about Whitman's religious beliefs:

Whitman cannot be called a Christian heretic, for the simple reason that he was not a Christian at any stage of his career, early or late... He approached the Christian notion of a personal God, whom he invoked as the Elder Brother... [but] in "Song of Myself" as originally written, God is neither a person nor, in the strict sense, even a being; God is an abstract principle of energy that is manifested in every living creature (Cowley, 1983: 261).

As Whitman revised his poem, he did appear to move a little away from his abstract idea in on way. He capitalized the name "God" throughout, rather than just in some sections. However, he also capitalized concepts such as "Death" (Whitman, 32, 824. 1891-92), "Time" (Whitman, 23, 980. 1891-92), and "Reality" (Whitman, 23, 483. 1891-92) where he wishes to emphasize the words, so "God" remains somewhat abstract. Whitman certainly does not

portray him as any sort of kindly father figure.

Next, Whitman removed two lines: "Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight! / We hurt each other as the bridegroom and bride hurt each other" (Whitman, 447. 1855-60). This may signify a kind of moral growth or consciousness, or he may have felt that these lines were not effective as an ending couplet for section 21. He may also have decided to take them out because they spelled out his homosexuality too plainly. Whitman fought to keep much of the sexual imagery in his poetry that made nineteenth-century critics uncomfortable. Nevertheless, he deliberately avoided admitting his sexual orientation in public; he even invented stories of illegitimate children he was supposed to have fathered. Whitman felt that being homosexual in his society was dangerous and uncomfortable. He did not deal with the subject head-on even as he confronted other issues in his advancing years.

Continuing to revise, he edited out two descriptions of himself, an expansive one, "I am the poet of commonsense and of the demonstrable and of immortality" (Whitman, 463. 1855), and a specific one, "Washes and razors for fofoos... for me freckles and a bristling beard" (Whitman, 463. 1855); the ellipses in all quotes are Whitman's and appear primarily in the first edition). He streamlined the language in his discussion of celestial laws and the natural balance of nature, removing "I step up to say what we do is right and what we affirm is right...and some is only the ore of right, / Witnesses of us" (Whitman, 470. 1855-60). These (edits) help the poet speak more clearly in the poem, as he learns from his experience and looks toward his own death.

In the earlier version, his contemplation of time read, "one time is as good as another time...here or henceforward it is all the same to me" (Whitman, 480. 1855). As he draws closer to the end of his life, he finds his view of time becoming more expansive and all-embracing:

Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all, That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all. (Whitman, 23, 480-82. 1891-92).

His own time is running out. Instead of being depressed by this, Whitman embraces the idea. As Stovall puts it, "The body, which must abide by the laws that govern the progress of this world, lags behind. Thus death is for the soul a joyful release...frequently compared by Whitman to...a long-awaited voyage to some wonderful unknown land" ("Main Drifts" Stovall, 1987:15). Spitzer sees this preoccupation with "that mystic baffling wonders" as a distinct hallmark of the poet: "He shares with Dante the conviction that the Here and the Hereafter collaborates toward his poetry, and as with Dante this attitude is not one of boastfulness" (Spitzer, 1983: 219).

Whitman also accepts the real world more specifically in his revisions. The first edition speaks of "A world of reality" (Whitman, 483. 1855), but by the final version he affirms, "I accept reality and dare not question it" (Whitman, 23, 483. 1892-92).

He salutes the scientists, map makers, and others who chart and manipulate the material world. In the first version, he writes:

Gentlemen I receive you, and attach and clasp hands with you.

Introduction:

Death, with all its obscurity, religious and spiritual consciousness, has a great mystic appeal to almost every poet. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, the two great nineteenth century American poets, wrote a lot about death, especially Emily Dickinson. Yet each had a totally different conception of death. While Whitman saw death as a vital force that was a part of the cycle of life, death was a subject for her doubts. Unlike Whitman, who tended to have a more confirmative and Christian-like attitude towards death and immortality as he grew older, Emily's doubts of immortality seem to have been increasing, especially with the successive deaths of her relatives or friends. Actually, Emily Dickinson spent all her life struggling to understand the nature of death and immortality; her desperate tone when speaking about death contrasts with Whitman's assertive belief in immortality and his hope in the future generations as if he still would be alive among them.

As Whitman, the poet, aged, he began to think about his own mortality. He began to revise his poems to reflect this thinking. For him, death was not a melancholy, romantic figure. He did not often address it as a separate issue; instead, he included death in all his writings about life. Death is more a part of the canvas of this self-portrait than a separate issue or personified meaning. The long poem, "Song of Myself", formed the centerpiece for the first edition of the volume *Leaves of Grass*. Published in 1855, which established Whitman's reputation immediately, and sparked considerable controversy, in part because Whitman seemed to reveal so much of himself in it. Sections 20-25 bring the reader closest to the poet himself; the changes Whitman made in these sections between the first version and the "death-bed edition" give insight into the poet's changing perspective as his own death approached. The second poem to be dealt with in this paper to trace these changes is "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" which appeared in the 1860 edition. It continues to be regarded as one of Whitman's greatest poems. Both works show the poet's striking skill with language.

Leo Spitzer describes Walt Whitman as "a nameless American boy, a solitary listener and singer on a little-known Long Island shore who, having met with nature and with his own heart, becomes the American National Poet" (Spitzer, 1983: 227). He was born in 1819 in West Hills on New York's Long Island. He published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* at his own expense in 1855. Ralph Waldo Emerson's enthusiastic letter on reading this collection of poems helped to establish Whitman as one of the most important modern American poets. Randall Jarrell calls him "the rashest, the most inexplicable and unlikely—the most impossible, one wants to say—of poets" (Jarrell, 1983: 242). "Song of Myself," the central poem of this first edition, offers a glimpse of this rash, inexplicable, unlikely, impossible mind.

Whitman continued to expand and revise new versions of *Leaves of Grass* throughout his life. He added "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" to the 1860 edition. He published the final edition in 1891-92, shortly before his death. A comparison of the earliest version of "Song" and the latest, as well as an understanding of "Cradle", offers insights into the poet's developing maturity as a man and as an artist. For this purpose, the edition of The Library of

America, *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, published in 1982 will be used in this study. It includes the entirety of the 1891-92 deathbed edition.

As Jarrell observes, "to show Whitman for what he is one does not need to praise or explain or argue, one needs simply to quote" (Jarrell, 1983:232). Whitman included his changing understanding of life and death clearly in his poetry.

Because Whitman did not die suddenly, his awareness of his own impending mortality affected his revisions, especially those made for what has become known as the "death-bed edition" of *Leaves of Grass*. In his eulogy for the poet, Robert G. Ingersoll wrote, "He was not afraid to live, not afraid to die. For many years he and death were near neighbors. He was always willing and ready to meet and greet his thing called death, and for many months he sat in the deepening twilight waiting for the night, waiting for the light" (Ingersoll, 1983: 161). The aging Whitman with his growing conventional belief in immortality of the soul and heavenly death is certainly different from the young Whitman rejoicing in nature with his comrade.

As he waited, he continued to revise his work and to consider his own mortality. These changes or successive revisions of *Leaves of Grass* initiated many controversial attitudes towards their improving effect. C. K. Williams (2010), in his book, *On Whitman*, refutes the assumption that the final edition should be authoritative, although "it was, after all, Whitman's last word, and in the vast majority of cases author's accumulated revisions are improvements and accepted as definitive. But for Whitman, this just isn't so" (Williams xxxi). He contends,

In my view, and in that of the poets I know, many of the changes Whitman made in later editions diluted and diffused his first brilliant inspiration. By the time of the deathbed edition, he had tinkered so much with some of the poems that though they're still recognizable, reading them beside the earlier versions can be disheartening, even shocking (Williams xiv).

Floyd Stovall (1987) in his analysis of the Main drifts in Whitman's Poetry, notes that Whitman before "he had written as one who mourns the death of a friend, but now he records the thoughts and feelings that arise from the anticipation of his own death" ("Main Drifts" Stovall, 1987: 13).

Malcolm Cowley has called "Songs of Myself" "Whitman's greatest work, perhaps his one completely realized work, and one of the great poems of modern times" (Cowley, 1983: 258). When he published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the poems were untitled. A major theme of these poems, according to Stephen E. Whicher, is the poet's victory over death, and the denial of the finality of death (Whicher, 1969: 287). Whitman's first, most significant revision of his substantial long poem was to give it a title and organize it into numbered sections. In the first version it began, "I celebrate myself" (Whicher, 1969: 1855-60). He rewrote this to read, "I celebrate myself, and sing myself" (Whitman, 1, 1. 1891-92). The song was always personal and Whitman's revisions made many of the personal moments clear.

The poet made considerable adjustments from edition to edition in the way that "Song of Myself" was laid out on the page. He removed almost all of the ellipses which had filled the first version. He changed the spelling of words to

مع اقتراب المنية: دراسة لنمو وتطور الوعي الروحي عند الشاعر والت ويطمان

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(قدم للنشر في ١٥ / ١ / ١٤٣٨ هـ؛ وقبل في ٢٣ / ٧ / ١٤٣٨ هـ)

الكلمات المفتاحية: والت ويطمان؛ ديوان أوراق العشب؛ قصيدة "أغنية نفسي"؛ قصيدة "خارج المهذ المهتز إلى ما لا نهاية"؛ "طبعة سرير الموت".

ملخص البحث: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تتبع التعديلات والتغيرات التي قام بها الشاعر الأمريكي والت ويطمان على ديوانه أوراق العشب، ويوجه خاص على قصيدة "أغنية نفسي" التي تمثل القصيدة الرئيسة للديوان في طبعته الأولى. كما تتناول الدراسة دلالات التغيير والتعديل التي أجراها ويطمان على قصيدة "خارج المهذ المهتز إلى ما لا نهاية" التي ظهرت في طبعة ١٨٦٠. وتكشف المقارنة بين النسخة أو الطبعة الأخيرة التي سُميت بـ "طبعة سرير الموت" وبين الطبعات السابقة عن نضج الشاعر كإنسان وفنان، وعن نظرتة الفلسفية والدينية للموت وللخلود.

When Death Approaches: A Study of Whitman's Growing Spiritual Consciousness

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(Received 15/1/1438H; Accepted for publication 23/7/1438H)

Keywords: Walt Whitman; "Song of Myself"; Leaves of Grass; "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"; Whitman's "death-bed -edition".

Abstract: This study traces the successive change and revisions Walt Whitman made in Sections 20-25 of the long poem, "Song of Myself" which formed the centerpiece for the first edition of the volume *Leaves of Grass*, Published in 1855. The changes Whitman made in these sections between the first version and the "death-bed edition" give insight into the poet's changing perspective as his own death approached. The second poem to be dealt with in this paper to trace these changes is "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" which appeared in the 1860 edition. The comparison between the "death-bed -edition" and the earlier editions reveals the poet's developing maturity as a man and as an artist, and his philosophical and religious views of death and immortality.

One simply cannot exclude Whitman without having to make a comment about his poetry - his art - he simply cannot be ignored, for he and his art does not allow that. The aim of our work is to analyze features of Walt Whitman's style. We will study his literary techniques, such as alliteration, anaphora, "free" verse etc. In our work we will try to show philosophical basics of his works. Our tasks are: - To investigate the uniqueness of his style - To analyze some of his works in order to characterize his poetic techniques - To conduct a detailed analysis of philosophical basics of his work

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13. To reach the workmen direct: Horace Traubel and the Work of the 1855 Edition of Leaves of Grass Matt Cohen Jay Grossman 15.
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- A Southerner as soon as a Northerner: Writing Walt Whitman's Biography Jerome Loving 17.
- Why I Write Cultural Biography: The Backgrounds of Walt Whitman's America David S. Reynolds 18.

Songs of Myself; or, Confessions of a Whitman Collector Joel Myers on 402-378-363. ix, 338 p. ; 25 cm. Provides critical analysis of Whitman's works. The first section gives a representative sampling of the controversy that swirled about him during the period when Leaves of Grass was a new book. Includes bibliographical references and index. Introduction -- Reviews and other early reactions -- Essays and other forms of criticism.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was an American poet, essayist, and journalist. A humanist, he was a part of the transition between transcendentalism and realism, incorporating both views in his works. Whitman is among the most influential poets in the American canon, often called the father of free verse. His work was controversial in its time, particularly his poetry collection Leaves of Grass, which was described as obscene for its overt sensuality. Whitman's own life came