

## SYMBOLIC HISTORY Through Sight and Sound

### 30. O Western Star (Whitman's America)

- a1) Double: Engravings of [A] Thoreau and [B] Whitman (from 1855 Leaves)*  
*V61) Again engraving of Whitman, whole*  
*1) Brady(?), called 1849-50, Photograph of Whitman (Black coat and holding hat); first, video detail*

Music: Beethoven, 1812, from 7th Symphony, 1st Movement, opening, (Toscanini) V.LM - 6901 (9)

"Eastward I go by force," said Thoreau, "but Westward I go free." What deepening eddies mark the westering stream. (music) From Beethoven's Third to his Ninth (here the Seventh) the wave of I AM sucks up more and more of earth-silt and man's negation. (fade 7th) Advancing through the mass of Schubert's great C Major.

Music: Schubert fin. 1828, Symphony No.9, 4th Mov. close Col. ML 5619

So in the immediacy of Brady's 1850 photograph, "Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son," enfleshes Schleiermacher's 1799 creed:

In the midst of the finite to grow to the infinite, to be eternal at every moment, that is the immortality religion offers.

(Schubert continues)

- a2) American, c. 1855, Photograph of Emerson, Antiquarian Society, Concord, Massachusetts*  
*2) Mathew Brady, c. 1862, Photograph of Whitman (white shirt, open collar)*  
*2a) Mathew Brady, 1862, Whitman with hat (age 43), New York Public Library*  
*V26) Mathew Brady, 1867, Whitman with arms crossed, National Archive*

"I was simmering and simmering," said Whitman; "it was Emerson brought me to boil." Emerson, dropping from "the great Stoic motto" its Pythian "Nothing in excess," turned that warning "Know thyself!" about-face:

currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God...

(close of Schubert)

While from Schubert to Bruckner the yea-saying downs huge draughts of raw matter, Wagner's passion, Whitman's concrete —

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude —

crushing "a simple separate person" with the Demos godhead of space and time: "I moisten the roots of all that has grown."

Music: Bruckner, 1881-3, Symphony No. 7., close of last mov., Nonesuch H-1139

I celebrate myself...  
I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass...

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlaque cut with a burnt stick at night...

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer.  
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds ...

(close of Bruckner)

- a3) *Thomas Cole, 1833, Schroon Mountain, Cleveland Museum of Art*
- b3) *Peter Birmann, c. 1800(?), View of the Rhine near Basel, Kunstmuseum, Basel*
- c3) *Thomas Cole, 1846, The Oxbow, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*
- 3) *Thomas Cole, 1833-36, The Savage State, New York Historical Society, New York City*
- 3a) *Thomas Cole, 1846-47, Prometheus Bound, Philadelphia Museum of Art*
- 3b) *Thomas Cole, 1833-36, Fall of Empire, New York Historical Society, New York City*
- 3c) *Again 3, Savage State, detail*

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains,  
 esculent roots,  
 And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over...

my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
 I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents...

Music: Beethoven, 1804, Waldstein Sonata, Op.53, opening, (Schnabel)  
 Angel, COLH 59

*Waldstein.* The Faust-search of that Germany set seed in America: to hold Emersonian good through "all terrible balks and ebullitions." If music and even art trail the god-grapplings of the word, those landscapes that fan out from the Hudson River to the Mississippi, Rockies, Andes, have not neglected Whitman's "Spirit that form'd this scene." In Cole's 1833 "Savage State," the first of five depictions of the same scene through the rise and fall of empire, the mountain reared over the harbor from wild through culture to moonlight and ruins speaks the titan identification for which Cole, in a later picture, stretched a nude Prometheus on a snowier crag. "Be it life or death," said Thoreau, "we seek only reality." But which would it be? Emerson's "In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through man"; or Melville's "as ever all clouds choose the loftiest peaks to pile themselves upon." Why not, as in Cole and Beethoven, both in one?

(fade Waldstein)

4) *Robert Feke, 1745, Reverend Thomas Hiscox, The Breakers, Newport, R.I.;  
 + V details*

How Feke's Reverend Hiscox, of 1745, would have frowned on either arrogation.

If West is the open and exploratory, future and transcendental Now, the forest of intuitive morality and dissolving shorelessness, its quest is in a space somehow round, as Emerson, for all his optimism, saw in "Uriel":

In vain produced, all rays return;  
Evil will bless and ice will burn...

Wherefore, as with other titans,

A sad self-knowledge, withering, fell  
On the beauty of Uriel.

The ultimate Westward sail — "All bound as is befitting each, all surely going somewhere" — must veer again East to authority, limit, past, the moral prison of the Scarlet Letter.

In the time of this preacher Hiscox, Jonathan Edwards reverted from Berkeleian speculation: "Bodies have no existence of their own... all is mental," to an absolute Calvinism: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

5) *English, c. 1670, Portrait of John Clark (Fortune, July '42, p. 85)*

And from a century earlier, the free humanity portrayed in John Clarke, tolerant Puritan, and voiced by Hooker or Roger Williams:

The Sovereigne origin and foundation of civill power lies in the  
People... (who) may elect and establish what forme of Government  
seemes to them most meete for their civill condition —

that Anne Hutchinson covenant of Grace

*2nd 4 and for 2nd 5)*

*English, c. 1640, John Winthrop, American Antiquarian Soc.; first, V detail*

was always eddying to reaction — Winthrop:

We see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercise  
beside what authority hath already set up...

To whom Emerson:

...not for all his faith can see  
Would I that cowléd churchman be.

And Whitman, fierce as Blake:

Allons! from all formules!  
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

- 6) *John Greenwood, c. 1757-58, Yankee Captains Carouse in Surinam; Art Museum, St. Louis; + two V details*
- 6a) *Thomas Nast, 1879, A Dead Failure, lithograph*

On one side vision stiffens to rigor; on the other, slides toward that May-pole Merrymount Bradford called "beastly practices of the mad Bacchanalians". Within a hundred years, the sea-captain descendents of stern Bradford and the rest were painted at carouse in Surinam, swilling punch, one spilling it onto a sleeper's head, while another pukes in his pocket. So Rembrandt's burghers decline to the Rake's Progress of Hogarth, and after another century to the aged Hollow Men of Hawthorne's Custom House:

They spent a good deal of time, also, asleep in their accustomed corners, with their chairs tilted back against the wall; awaking, however, once or twice in a forenoon, to bore one another with the several thousandth repetition of old sea-stories, and mouldy jokes, that had grown to be passwords and countersigns among them.

So the zeal of Revolution would wane to Whitman's Gilded Age:

the surfeit of prosperity, the demonism of greed, the hell of passion,  
the decay of faith, the long postponement, the fossil-like lethargy,

7) *Colonial, c. 1770-90(?), State House, Annapolis, Maryland (CGB '60)*

the ceaseless need of revolutions, prophets, thunder-storms, deaths,  
births, new projections and invigorations of ideas and men...

And wherever the great buildings of civic virtue arose, in Boston, Philadelphia, this Annapolis State House, where Washington surrendered his command (the dome erected soon after), one had always to inquire how far the persons investing those noble shells

8) *John Copley, 1764, Nathaniel Sparhawk, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

8a) *John Copley, 1775, Mr. and Mrs. Izard, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

might be defecting to outward form: Copley's Sparhawk, like Franklin, a shrewd Yankee Whig in the mantling robes of Europe. Franklin brought it off; but Tom Brainless in Trumbull's Progress of Dulness. is refined at college from a farm boor to a city fop.

And would not Whitman, a century later, "look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease"?

Are there, indeed, men here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance?... Are there crops of fine youths and majestic old persons?... These cities, crowded with petty grotesques... playing meaningless antics.

9) *Copley, 1765-70, Paul Revere, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; + V detail*

Music: Wm. Billings, c. 1776, Chester, Col. MS 7277 (from 2nd stanza on)

On the tide that rose toward Revolution — this Billings marching tune — Copley's Paul Revere puts off lace and columns, unfallen man claiming freedom for good laws and a good life.

So Crèvecoeur, French aristocrat. who came to the colonies in 1754, saw the Frontier as a land of spirit, shaping the new American:

An European... no sooner breathes our air than he... begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection... he begins to forget his former servitude... his heart involuntarily swells and glows; this first swell inspires him with those new thoughts which constitute an American.

(end Billings)

10) *J.S. Copley, 1785, Youngest Daughters of George III, Royal Collection*

But neither Crèvecoeur nor Copley could sustain the war of values, the crassness and menace of patriot mobs. Copley fled to England, painted the royal children; Crèvecoeur, in France, damned the outcome of the liberating dream:

worship the demon of the times, trample on every law, break every duty, neglect every bond... become a clamorous American, a modern Whig, and offer every night incense to the God Arimanes.

It was the reversal Lenau would experience a generation later:

For 2nd 9) *John Copley, 1770, Eleazer Tyng, National Gallery, Washington D.C.*

On the 8th of October I first put foot on American soil... Bruder, diese Amerikaner sind himmelanstinkende Krämerseelen — Brother. these Americans stink to heaven. They are shopkeepers, nothing but shopkeepers. No souls. Dead to the life of the spirit. Dog-dead...

2nd 10) *Again, Copley, King's daughters, detail*

it seems of the deepest significance that America has no nightingale. It is a poetic curse...

Va11) *Claude Lorrain, 1636, Seaport; Uffizi, Florence*

11) *Same, Lorrain's Seaport, detail*

Music: John Jenkins, c. 1640(?), close of a Fancy for 5 parts and organ, in C Minor, Argo RG 73, Side A, No.3

Drab terminus of the utopian call of sea and setting sun, Claude's 1638 Harbor, with a Jenkins fantasy, and Marvell's Pilgrim settlers, "Safe from storms and prelate's rage": (c.1654?)

Where the remote Bermudas ride,  
 In the ocean's bosom unespied,  
 From a small boat. that rowed along,  
 The listening winds received this song:

"What should we do but sing His praise,  
 That led us through the watery maze,  
 Unto an isle so long unknown,  
 And yet far kinder than our own?..."

Thus sung they, in the English boat,  
 An holy and a cheerful note;  
 And all the way, to guide their chime,  
 With falling oars they kept the time.

(close of Jenkins)

12) *William Hodges, 1775, Tahiti Revisited; National Museum, Greenwich, England*

12a) *Same, Tahiti, detail; + another V detail (cf. V126)*

We have skipped Marvell's description of the bounteous isle, where God has provided "all foison":

He hangs in shades the orange bright,  
 Like Golden lamps in a green night,  
 And does in the pomegranates close  
 Jewels more rich than Ormus shows...

Music: Mozart, 1791, "Ein Vogelfänger" from The Magic Flute, Deutsche Gram. 2709 017

A sea-girt paradise, to revive again and again, this Hodges "Tahiti Revisited" of 1775 (time of Mozart) from which Melville, if he had not experienced the actuality, might almost have taken the valley-pool of Typee:

All around its banks waved luxuriant masses of tropical foliage, soaring high above which were to be seen, here and there, the symmetrical shafts of the coconut trees... so many waving ostrich plumes... The maidens of the valley... darted through the water, revealing glimpses of their forms... some of the young men... brought... a canoe from the sea... Fayaway... with a wild exclamation of delight disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa... shielding her

from the sun, and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe.

(fade Mozart)

In Moby Dick that verdant land is set in appalling ocean:

Music: Beethoven, c. 1803, Sonata 17, D Min., Opus 31, No. 2, "Tempest" (Brendel), opening, Murray Hill S-34564

So in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy,

- a13) *Turner, c. 1840(?), Waves Breaking Against the Wind; Tate Gallery, London*  
 13) *Copley, 1778, Watson and the Shark; Fine Arts Museum, Boston [There is another version in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.]*  
 13a) *Double: [A] Goya 1799, The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters; Prado, Madrid; and [B] Blake, 1805-10, Book of Job: Behold now Behemoth; Morgan Library, New York City*

but encompassed by all the horrors of the half-known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!

But what choice has the heroic soul?

as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as god — so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety... 0 Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy ocean perishing — straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!

(fade Tempest)

Copley's dramatization of Watson and the Shark is a quarter of a century before Beethoven's Tempest, and three quarters before Melville. But one who had felt the New World harden around him was on the titan track where Lenau, sailing west in 1832, would chant:

Fly with the white clouds through the wide sky, white ship...  
 Foam behind me all the gray abyss  
 That holds the heart from freedom, its desire;

and returning, from cities and a frontier "dog-dead to the spirit", would see a youth swept overboard and drowned:

And the murderous old ocean smiled  
At the sky, oblivious of wrong.

Had not Copley's contemporaries, Goya and Blake, glimpsed Melville's "gliding great demon of the seas of life"?

*Va14) Middle Rhine, c. 1410, Paradise Garden; Stäedelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt*

*14) Same, Paradise Garden, detail left*

Music: Oswald von Wolkenstein, c. 1410-20(?) Sag an Herzlieb, close, Archiv 3033

The paradise of the Middle Ages had been the *hortus conclusus* of the Song of Songs, "my Love is a Garden enclosed." In that walled grace, where the resolving chords are still the earthless fifths and octaves, pure as the art colors — ruby, gold, cerulean — there is no moody filling in of romantic wish and pain. (end v. Wolkenstein)

*15) Thomas Birch, c. 1830(?), The Delaware near Philadelphia, Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C.; + V detail, ships, right (V15a)*

Music: Beethoven, 1816, from An die Ferne Geliebte, "Ewiglich" etc., LHMV-1046

But when conscious paradise has touched the shores of old world and new, so that Thomas Birch fills an outing on the Delaware with the time-fruit of Beethoven and Schelling —

The birth of Spirit is the realm of history,  
as the birth of light is the realm of nature —,

then soul is vulnerable. Wordsworth suffers in the sea-drowning of his brother not only grief but the shock of moral betrayal:

I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

Now "a power is gone, which nothing can restore."

(fade "klagt ihr Vöglein")

16) *C. D. Friedrich, 1821, The Wreck of the Hope, Kunsthalle, Hamburg*

He sees:

That hulk, which labors in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

Even Caspar David Friedrich, celebrant of earth-soul, painted in 1821 "The Wreck of the Hope," in the stark geometry of "ice, mast-high, came floating by,/ As green as emerald." Goethe had lived with the demonic; but the anguish of 1830 bodies forth the lost illusion. Leopardi fears "the hideous power" of nature, "Mother in birth, stepmother in desire" ("Madre in parto ed in voler matrigna"); De Vigny asked never to be left alone with that goddess he knew too well not to fear ("Car je la connais trop, pour n'en pas avoir peur.")

*For 2nd 15)*

*Thomas Cole, 1839, Notch of the White Mountains; National Gallery, Washington D.C.*

And still Emerson would go on writing (1836):

Nature stretches out her arms to embrace man... a virtuous man is in  
unison with all her works...

*For 2nd 16)*

*John Martin, 1852, The Great Day of His Wrath; Tate Gallery, London*

Until the bitter wave breaks in Melville with his white symbol of "the demonism of the world":

all deified nature absolutely paints like the harlot. whose allurements  
cover nothing but the charnel house within... The palsied universe lies  
before us like a leper.

17) *T. Gericault, 1818, Raft of the Medusa; Louvre, Paris; first, video detail; then, upper right (sail), from the Louvre oil sketch; while video, after '96,*

*shows a clearer sail (V17a) from the Louvre oil, then V17b, the whole Louvre sketch*

Music: Chopin 1842, Ballade #4, Op.52, close, Rubinstein, Vic. LSC-2370

Emerson's euphoria ("sins and the like are the soul's mumps and measles") turned the battle of affirmation against dire fact to a time-drama in America ("he must make his optimism good somehow against the eternal hell itself," said Melville). But in art and music (here Chopin's 4th Ballade), the outcry punctuates the century. Gericault's 1818 Raft of the Medusa, from real disaster and shipwrecked France, verges, with Byron's castaways, on metaphysical pain: Pierre: "Explain this darkness, exorcise this devil, ye cannot." Yet a sail is on the horizon; the derelicts are saved. (**close Ballade**) As from the Brontës to Dostoevsky, torment sounds the chords of regeneration. How else could that arrogation of torment be borne?

18) *Giovanni di Paolo, c. 1440, Creation and Expulsion; Lehmann, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*

Expulsion was the creed account — Giovanni di Paolo's 15th-century depiction, where God's creation of the circling universe caps a banishment which (like Moonshine in the lantern) belongs in that wheel. All validities of nature and man hang in a bright inconsequence of jewelled details stretching symbolic space.

19) *Thomas Cole, 1828, Expulsion from Eden, Fine Arts Museum, Boston; + V detail, right*

19a) *Same, Cole Expulsion, detail left; + V return to the whole*

But for Cole in 1828, symbols have assumed the body of the dimensional world. The landscape of exile frames the contrast American writers would debate through the century. Emerson faces the sunlit valley of Eden:

Standing on the bare ground — my head bathed by the blithe air and  
uplifted into infinite space all mean egotism vanishes... The standard  
of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms.

It is what Lenau thought to find at the headwaters of the Ohio. But what he describes, this Adam and Eve enter outside the rock-gate:

The red light of evening filters dimly

Into the terrible reaches of the forest,  
 Where life and death have fought hushed together  
 A thousand years their ultimate grim wager...  
 In vain life stirs, in vain seeks some cranny,  
 Through stems of rot and mould, death's choking fingers.

Over four centuries, the attempt to realize God's kingdom in the mastered here and now, had raised recurrent doubt how satanically flawed the achievement must be.

20) *Jean Fouquet, c. 1453-55, St. Margaret, Hours of Etienne Chevalier; Louvre, Paris*

In Fouquet, the pastoral and human blend in Gothic acceptance, so calm an earth-possession, one might not guess that the meeting of the haloed Shepherdess, St. Margaret, with the Roman prefect, initiates her martyrdom.

If Renaissance so suspends reason's claim,

21) *El Greco, c. 1610, Laocoon, detail, National Gallery, Washington D.C. (CGB '60)*

those fierce breaks back (or forward) to apocalyptic dread, when "very force entangles/ Itself with strength" and the outward "rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct/ As water is in water" (the Shakespeare Melville would take up so overwhelmingly:

Now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief... Toward thee I roll, thou all destroying but unconquering whale... Thus I give up the spear!)

those Judgment breaks, as in El Greco, 1610, attend the culminant throes

22) *Jan Both, c. 1645, Italian Landscape; Wallace Collection, London*

22a) *Inness, 1865, Peace and Plenty, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*

22b) *Cuyp, c. 1660(?), A Road near a River, Dulwich Picture Gallery*

of the temporal formulation itself — the 17th century conscious grasp (as in this Both, inspirer of Cuyp) of a now light-ordered and light-transfigured phenomenal realm — a rallying point for later America, as when Inness irradiates the close of the Civil War in "Peace and Plenty". In such spirit Emerson and Thoreau quote Herbert:

Man is all symmetry  
 Full of proportions, one limb to another  
 And all to all the world besides...  
 Music and light attend our head...

Traherne's 1670 Christian mysticism is pre-Transcendental:

That all the earth is one continued globe,  
 And that all men therein are living treasures.  
 That fields and meadows are a glorious robe  
 Adorning it with smooth and heavenly pleasures.

That all we see is ours... each one most blest...

- 23) *Magnasco, c. 1720-30, Storm with Fleeing Monks, detail, Brera, Milan; + V detail*

Yet the turn to the next, and Swiftian, century can wrench "all that's kind to our mortalities," as in reason's shipwreck, to the Magnasco storm and night-lighted barefoot friars groping for the refuge of the old religious cave — like Faust's pious couple with their chapel bell's "eternal bim-bam-bimmel."

Is it some "love of rags and cult of the wound" that sends Hester back to the penance of the Scarlet Letter, or Hilda searching crypts and Dark Age towers in The Marble Faun?

- 24) *Constable, 1828 version of 1802 sketch (in Victoria and Albert Museum), The Vale of Dedham; National Gallery, Edinburgh; + V detail*

But Enlightenment pressed on with our title to the fruitful earth. Even the Romantic unrest is quietly domesticated in Old Crome, this Constable, Cotman, early Turner — builds a free-brush doctrine of Lake-School good:

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host of golden daffodils...

Experience garnered for later pensive moods:

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

25) *Durand, 1849, Kindred Spirits, Public Library, NYC (video uses V25)*

The American affinity is more with the Germans — or, in Wordsworth, with the pantheism of 1798:

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

In Durand's "Kindred Spirits" these affirmers of the ideal forest are Cole and Bryant ("To him who in the love of Nature holds/ Communion with her visible forms....," Tintern-Abbey blank verse; "Whither, midst falling dew," Lyrical-Ballad); but they might almost be Emerson and Thoreau:

The very globe continually transcends and translates itself, and  
becomes winged in its orbit...

And if Emerson should squeeze in a word or two:

I yield myself to the perfect whole...

it would be Thoreau again, speaking of the beautiful bug which hatched out of the dry leaf of an old table, "to enjoy its perfect summer life at last."

a26) *Washington Allston, 1818, Elijah in the Desert fed by the Ravens, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

26) *Allston, before 1837, Ship in a Squall; Fogg, Cambridge*

V26a) *Allston, 1804, Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

But from before 1820, Washington Allston, steeped in the alienation of baroque Rome, had taken the other tack — like Gothic Poe:

Mountains toppling evermore  
Into seas without a shore;  
Seas that restlessly aspire,  
Surging unto skies of fire...

or the Poe Whitman dreamed, on "a vessel... torn sails and broken spars," through such a storm as the "gallant ship" Melville saw painted in Father Mapple's church, "beating... off a lee coast of black rocks and snowy breakers" — or the storm where Ahab candles the sky's fire.

Toqueville called realism the American mode. But in the antinomy of the century, which is always realism against transcendental and romantic, it is the Americans who (as Thackery would say) espouse dream, the English, beef and ale. Though dreams have to seem real. As Stuart joked, "Nobody could beat Mr. Allston in making water." But what Allston mostly made was symbol: "I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee."

- a27) *John Quidor, 1829, Rip van Winkle, National Gallery, Washington D.C.*
- 27) *John Quidor, 1832, The Money Diggers, Brooklyn Museum, New York City; first, video detail, V627*
- 27a) *Mathew Brady, 1845, Andrew Jackson, Brady-Handy Collection*

Music: Gottschalk, 1859, from Marche des Gibaros, Mus. Her. Soc. 3135

In music, Creole Gottschalk would exploit that vein — such chiaroscuro as Quidor had drawn from Irving's Headless Horseman, Rip van Winkle, or the story illustrated here, when a buccaneer's ghost (top right) scares night thieves from pirate gold. Though the master scene of fire- and moonlit weird is Poe's of digging by lantern at a point extrapolated from where the Goldbug fell through the eye of a tree-nailed skull — the kind of grotesquery Tom Sawyer would delight in. While for Hawthorne those devils Goethe thought the New World could be spared are real. The Witches' Sabbath seen by Goodman Brown taints Faith and virtue everywhere. Thus, under the surface de Toqueville staked out for the democratic arts, a ghostly battle is waged, of Transcendental hope and demonic possession: "I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil."  
(fade Gottschalk)

- 28) *George Bingham, 1851, Daniel Boone leads Pioneers through the Cumberland Gap, City Museum, Saint Louis, MO*
- 28a) *American, 1846, The Murder of Jane McCrea, Historical Association of Cooperstown, New York City*
- 28b) *Again, 28, Boone and Pioneers, detail*

28c) *American, c. 1858, The Railsplitter (Abe Lincoln), Historical Society, Chicago; first, V detail*

Emersonian promise goes West, as auspiciously as Dan Boone, in the painting by Bingham of Missouri, leads settlers to the "Dark and Bloody Ground." But all those earth-grabs have been claimed for Satan in "Young Goodman Brown":

I helped your grandfather the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman... I brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village...

Thus Boone was lawyered out of his holdings, and ended his life an embittered semi-squatter. Toqueville:

Nothing can offer a more miserable aspect than these isolated dwellings... An ark of civilization amid an ocean of foliage...

How depressing to the poet Lenau, as he wrote from Ohio:

You see no courageous dogs here, no fiery horses, no men of real passion... It is sad to observe these burnt-out creatures in their burnt-out woods.

Yet Lincoln was growing up among them; in a few years Thoreau would build such a shack by Walden Pond.

- a29) *C.G. Bingham, c. 1855(?), A Verdict of the People, detail, City Art Museum, St. Louis*
- 29) *Bingham, c. 1851, The Country Election, also City Art Museum, St. Louis (video shows 29 first, then a29, returning to a detail of 29)*

That epic of Dan Boone sowed the Mississippi valley with the Jacksonian towns Mark Twain would romanticize, and Toqueville study "to learn what we have to fear or hope" from a revolution "which possesses all the characteristics of a Divine decree." But what he found was not unrelated to Lenau's experience in a Baltimore boarding house:

They clang a great glutton's bell, and a hundred Americans throw themselves into the room... each falls into a seat, bolts down his food, springs up throwing back the chair, and rushes out to make dollars —  
*eilt davon, dollars zu verdienen...*

This Bingham County Election ties the representational confidence of The Federalist Papers ("reserved to the people of this country to decide... whether societies of men are really capable"),

- 30) *Hogarth, c. 1754, Election Series, Chairing the Member, Soane Museum, London (video shows details only)*

to the event Pap describes for Huck: "I was just about to go and vote myself, if I warn't too drunk to get there." If one falls back on Whitman's election poem of 1884:

The heart of it not in the chosen — the act itself the main, the  
quadrennial choosing —

it is remembering that, in the century before, Hogarth had illustrated the electoral process in four brawling pictures (this Chairing the Member, the last), about the time Sam Johnson was writing:

Our supple tribes repress their patriot throats  
And ask no question but the price of votes;  
With weekly libels and septennial ale,  
Their wish is full to riot and to rail.

- 31) *George Catlin, 1832, Pigeon's Egg Head, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.*

- 31a) *Edward Hicks, c. 1845(?), Tolerant William Penn, detail, Philadelphia Museum?*
- 31b) *Jacob Miller, 1837, Fort Laramie, University of Oklahoma Press*

Catlin's depiction of the Yellowstone son of a chief before and after the corruption for which he was killed by his tribe, hints at the vastest abuse of all, which most Americans cloaked under "manifest destiny" — until the "Wounded Knee" soul-searchings of our time. De Toqueville:

The Lenapes. who received William Penn... have disappeared; and I myself met with the last of the Iroquois, who were begging alms...

At the end of the year 1831. while I was on the left bank of the Mississippi at a place named... Memphis, there arrived a numerous band of Choctaws... I saw them embark to pass the mighty river... All were silent. Their calamities were of ancient date and they knew them to be irremediable...

The ejectment of the Indians... takes place... in a regular, and, as it were a legal manner... It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws...

- 32) *H.F. Darby, 1845, Reverend John Atwood and Family, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; + V detail, and return to the whole*

The family of the Reverend Atwood, Baptist, by the boy-painter Darby, seems to exhibit, in Hawthorne's gloomy words: "the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle." It must have been for this preacher image (every member, as in Blake's Family of Job, with the open Book of Law) that Emerson left his church, saying: "Books are for the scholar's idle

times..." "How can he remember well his ignorance," says Thoreau, "which his growth requires...?"

It is hard to have a southern overseer; it is worse to have a northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

Of which Whitman concentrates the essence:

death under the breast-bones, hell under the skullbones... polite and bland in the parlors.

a33) *Thomas Cole, 1840, The Architect's Dream, upper detail; Museum of Art, Toledo, Canada*

33) *Same, Architect's Dream, whole*

33a) *Same, Architect's Dream, lower detail*

Music: Schumann, 1836, Fantasy, C Major, Op. 17, close of last mov., Richter, Angel 35679

Though de Toqueville did not find his way to Emerson's door, much less get on the track of Thoreau's lost hound, horse, and turtle-dove, he felt something astir, a "wild enthusiasm... for what is infinite":

I should be surprised if mysticism did not soon make some advance among a people solely engaged in promoting its own worldly welfare.

True, there were camp-meeting revivals; but the real break was the irradiation of the worldly itself: Thoreau's Now as immanent Coming:

God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages...

Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

This is a hybrid, a romantic mysticism, call to temporal possibility, as rooted in earth and history as Hegel, this Schumann, as Cole's Architect, commanding all styles from Pyramid to Gothic ("The passive master lent his hand/ To the vast soul that o'er him planned"). From such a column of the East and past, Emerson exhorts Westward:

- 34) *W.S. Mount, 1838, The Painter's Triumph, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; first, video detail (cf. Va34)*

We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe... We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

(fade Schumann at close)

In "A Painter's Triumph" Mount assumes the surface of the Dutch small masters — democratic realism reaffirming 17th-century space. But his magic light is his own. "A living dog," says Thoreau, "is better than a dead lion." And Whitman:

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by  
God's name...  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

- 35) *G. C. Bingham, c. 1845, Fur Traders descending the Missouri, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*  
35a) *Same, Fur Traders, detail; + another V detail*

Perhaps Bingham's "Fur Traders descending the Missouri" is the most luminous American picture: Thoreau: "Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere." Water is at the heart of it — Emerson's "Two Rivers" through which a deeper flows, "and ages drop in it like rain" — the symbol, above all, that drew Thoreau to Walden Pond:

the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself...  
earth is not continent but insular...

Time is the stream I go a-fishing in... I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars... I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapours I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

Bingham found the richest vein in the trading stream Mark Twain too would treat with religious awe.

- a36) *Allston, 1819, Moonlit Landscape, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*
- b36) *A.P. Ryder, 1890, Cove in the Moonlight, Phillips Gallery, Washington D.C.*
- Vc36) *T. Eakins, 1872-76, The Pair-Oared Shell, detail, Philadelphia Museum of Art*
- Vd36) *T. Eakins, 1873, The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake, left detail; Cleveland Art Museum*
- 36) *T. Eakins, 1871, Max Schmitt in a Single Scull, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*

So Hawthorne in The Scarlet Letter:

Letting the eyes follow along the course of the stream, they could catch the reflected light from its water... "I have a strange fancy... that this brook is the boundary between two worlds."

In Moby Dick the soul leans like Narcissus over the watery mirror, "the tormenting mild image... we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all."

Where but in literature is such an unfolding of soul-search, from the effusive benign of Emerson, heightened to mystery in Thoreau, through Hawthorne's knot of wrong and Melville's war of spirit — from which Whitman, grappling with bare hands and almost desperate hopes against the Grendel-Leviathan of the deep, welcomes every pustulence of flesh, all catalogued negation, into the immanence of a dark divinity called Light? In the art of the century, from Allston to Ryder, from Bingham to this transreal Eakins, the darks and lights of that drama seem variously shuffled.

- 37) *Altdorfer, 1510, Forest with St. George and the Dragon, Alte Pinakothek, Munich: + V detail*

Yet from Renaissance to Romantic there is the change Auden has traced in The Enchafed Flood. Consider the forest, Dante's *Selva Oscura*, Spenser's Wandering Wood: in Altdorfer's enshrouding Other, it is just the path to the civilized and open, which the great frog-mother dragon blocks for the battling St. George.

- 38) *A. B. Durand, 1855, In the Woods, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; video divides to upper and lower details*

For Durand the ancient wood of error is the place sought,  
the soul's home. Thoreau:

At the same time... we require... that land and sea be infinitely wild,  
unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable.

Hawthorne brings The Scarlet Letter to its climax by moving from the Puritan town to the intuitive forest:

"What hast thou to do with all these iron men?... There is happiness to be enjoyed..."

She undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and... threw it to a distance among the withered leaves... she took off the formal cap that confined her hair: and down it fell upon her shoulders... forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest...

The course of the little brook might be traced by its merry gleam afar into the wood's heart of mystery, which had become a mystery of joy.

- 39) *A.J. Miller, 1859-60 (sketched 1837), Indian girl Swinging; Walters, Baltimore*

Such was the sympathy of Nature — that wild heathen nature of the forest... with the bliss of these two spirits!

But Hawthorne had left Brook Farm with the cry that they did not know there was such a thing as sin in the world. What the Baltimore painter Miller caught in this sketch of an Indian girl, Hawthorne makes one pole of an inseparable pair: a region

unredeemed, unchristianized... never subjugated by human law, nor  
illuminated by higher truth...

40) *William Page, 1843, Cupid and Psyche, J.D. Rockefeller III, New York*

40a) *Same, Cupid and Psyche, detail*

— an ambivalence as dark as burning.

Music: Verdi, 1853, from Il Trovatore, close of Leonora solo, Act IV, i, ff.,  
RCA-V-LM-6008 (side 3 near end)

(No wonder the operatic cries of love and death in sensuous soaring sweep the age  
—

Once more La Traviata sighs/ Another sadder song:  
Once more Il Trovatore cries/ A tale of deeper wrong.)

So Page's Cupid and Psyche with its passionate oil-glazes, breaks on the nudes of classic  
ideality as suddenly as Hester floods the pagan forest with a "smile... gushing from the  
very heart of womanhood."

(Trovatore, side 4, "Ah, che la morte")

No golden light had ever been so precious as the gloom of this dark  
forest.

And then that prophetess of a new truth speaks the inner imperative:

"What we did had a consecration of its own... We said so to each  
other! Hast thou forgotten it?" "Hush, Hester!" said Arthur  
Dimmesdale, rising from the ground. "No; I have not forgotten!"

41) *Double: Julia M. Cameron, c. 1865-70, [A] Ellen Terry; and [B] the  
photographer herself; + video singles A and B*

(Trovatore cont., Miserere)

But the hope of love withers to the Puritan scaffold:

"Is not this better," murmured he, "than what we dreamed of in the  
forest?"

"I know not! ... Yea; so we may both die, and little Pearl die with us."

(Trovatore cont. "Riposa o madre")

As in the deepest record of Victorian personality, Julia Margaret Cameron's high-souled Madonnas, Echoes, Beatrices, complement the somber photographer herself; so the flood of sun and Pearl's redemption ("A spell was broken... her tears... were the pledge") ("**Ai nostri monti**") light Hester's return to the dark cottage of the Scarlet Letter, the symbol that closes the fable, engraved on her tomb:

one ever-glowing point of light gloomier than the shadow: "On a field, sable, the letter A, gules."

(fade "dormirò")

42) *Frederick Church, 1860, Twilight in the Wilderness, Museum of Art, Cleveland; + V detail (cf. V42, CGB '81)*

(Trovatore, cont. "T'arrendi — fuggi" & "Ha quest' infame")

As Thoreau observed in the agitations of Walden Pond, "the thrills of joy and thrills of pain are undistinguishable" — the thawing clay forms of his Spring:

These foliaceous heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace, showing that Nature is "in full blast" within...

So in Church's 1860 Wilderness, the winter twilight flames with affirmation. The devil in Hawthorne's inkstand, to be exorcised by penfuls, was the inseparability of opposites, the wild rose at the prison door. And when the black plummet of Hawthorne sounded the mind of Herman Melville, Emerson's: "The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world," turned to hideous and intolerable allegory:

(fade "O fuggi, fuggi")

Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright.

Va43) *Horatio Greenough, c. 1840(?), Washington, front view, waist-up; Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.*

43) *Same, Greenough's Washington, 3/4 view, detail; + V close detail*

The bare-chested Zeus-Washington Greenough carved in 1840, after absorbing in Rome the heroics of Canova and Thorvaldsen, oversteps the original in more than nudity — tells

the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea;  
while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the  
treacherous slavish shore.

The resolve to found New Jerusalem on man's earth, with all concomitant cults of  
nature, innate worth, freedom, progress and the eternal now, soars from Revolutionary  
Tom Paine:

All the great laws of society are laws of nature... When precedents  
fail... we must think as if we were the first men that thought...

through Emerson:

That which shows God in me, fortifies me. That which shows God out  
of me, makes me a wart and a wen;

or from Jefferson: "That government is best which governs the least," through Thoreau:  
"Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe — That government is best  
which governs not at all" — toward the titan overreach of Melville's mid-century:

- a44) Samuel Morse, 1812, Dying Hercules; Yale University Gallery, New Haven*  
*44) William Rimmer, c. 1869, The Fall of Day; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;*  
*+ V detail*

Is it I, God, or who that lifts this arm?

To which Starbuck has already answered:

God help thee, old man; thy thoughts have created a creature in thee:  
and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture  
feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature he creates.

**(Trovatore, cont. "Prima che d'altri", 2nd time)**

Did Rimmer, Boston sculptor-painter-doctor, whose work, shown in Paris, stirred  
Rodin, know of William Blake? Or did Michelangelo beget likes? From Morse's Dying  
Hercules, through Cole's Prometheus, to this Fall of Day, about 1867, the chord that  
resonates is of archangelic overthrow — Ahab-Lucifer:

(when) the step-mother world, so long cruel... did seem to joyously sob  
over him... Ahab's glance was averted; like a blighted fruit tree he  
shook, and cast his last, cindered apple to the soil.

("lo moro" and fade)

45) *Emanuel Leutze, 1851, Washington Crossing the Delaware, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*

45a) *Same, detail*

In 1851, as Melville was wrestling with his whale fable (like Delacroix's Jacob with the angel), Leutze, for German revolutionaries, painted Washington Crossing the Delaware. It too, over those 75 years, has become a god-wrestling — as when Ahab's ship is sinking and Tashtego is nailing the flag to the subsiding spar, and the sky-hawk intercepts his wing between the hammer and the wood, while the Indian freezes in death's etherial thrill:

(Trovatore finale, from "Sia tratto al ceppo!")

so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it...

For between Melville's Moby Dick and Rilling's Fall of Day, our history too had taken a tragic turn, and the celebrated war of freedom

("Egli era tuo fratello!")

a46) *Mathew Brady, 1863, Confederate Caisson, Brady-Handy Collection*

b46) *Alexander Gardner, 1864, Photograph of Walt Whitman, Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*

46) *Winslow Homer, 1866, Prisoners from the Front, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*

46a) *Same, Prisoners, detail*

had worn down to the bitter war of brothers. (close of Il Trovatore)

Melville, in neglect after Moby Dick, turned ironic verse:

Your arts advance in Faith's decay;  
You are but drilling the new Hun...

Whitman — that child who "went forth every day,/ And the first object he look'd upon,  
that object he became":

I... see myself in prison shaped like another man...  
I am the hounded slave... I wince at the bite of the dogs —

Whitman nursed the wounded; and against Emerson's "I grieve that grief can teach me  
nothing," he taught himself (and the painter Homer) to take up the whole crippling wrong  
as if love could right it:

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the hospital tent,

Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen blanket,  
Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I, from the face of the nearest, the first, just lift  
the blanket;  
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-gray'd hair, and  
flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
Who are you my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step — and who are you my child and darling?  
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third — a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of beautiful  
yellow-white ivory:  
Young man I think I know you — I think this face is the face of the  
Christ himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

47) *D. G. Blythe, 1863, Libby Prison; Fine Arts Museum, Boston; + V detail*

Now the painter Blythe, in poverty and drink, took on the anguish of Libby Prison.  
Melville hammers it too, like "a stake through the black heart of Andrew Jackson":

But all through the Seven Days' Fight,  
And deep in the Wilderness grim,  
And in the field-hospital tent,  
And Petersburg crater, and dim

Lean brooding in Libby, there came —  
Ah heaven! — what truth to him.

But Whitman —

tens and twenties of thousands of American young men... all sorts of wounds... diarrhoea languishing, dying with fever... body's tragedies bursting the petty bonds of art...

Whitman sees the new man "cool and unquestioned master above all pains and bloody mutilations."

*a48) Photo of Sojourner Truth, c. 1860-65*

*48) Alexander Gardner, April 9, 1865, Photograph of Lincoln, Meserve Collection*

The categorical right, which from Thoreau —

The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behaviour —

through Hawthorne: "The world's law was no law for her mind"; and Melville: "unless God does that beating... and not I" — would seize with fear and trembling on Huck Finn, when he has come clean and written the letter to give up Jim:

I studied... I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide forever betwixt two things... "all right, then, I'll go to hell" — and tore it up. It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said —

that crisis has graved its care on Lincoln's face ("like a Hoosier Michael Angelo," Whitman said — here in the last photograph, the day of the surrender at Appomattox, five days before he was shot) — this face the only artwork with the humanity of Whitman's war poems: "Reconciliation":

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly  
lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash  
again, and ever again, this soil'd world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin — I draw near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white  
face in the coffin.

- 49) *Greek Doric, late 5th cent. B.C.(?), Temple of Poseidon, Cape Sounion, Attica (CGB '77)*
- 49a) *Jefferson, completed 1824, University of Virginia, Lawn and Rotunda, Charlottesville (CGB '83)*

All over Europe, as Revolution rose and turned to Romantic, the columned image of Greece summoned to the free future from an ideal past. Hölderlin's "forests of pillars in the plain of the desert" loom like Promethean towers. In America, meeting houses, Andalusia, Mount Vernon, Jefferson's University,

Music: Songs of the Civil War, "All Quiet along the Potomac," from refrain, New World Records 202

the temples of Natchez and Louisiana, claim the mantle of Greece. (fade) Most of all with slave-holding apologists as the Civil War neared:

Music: Same, from "We are Coming Father Abraham," refrain

Fitzhugh, decrying the wage-bondage of the North: (fade)

- a50) *Ante Bellum Natchez, c. 1850(?), Dunleith (CGB '80)*
- 50) *Ante Bellum, 1861, ruins of "Windsor" near Port Gibson, Miss. (CGB '80)*
- V50a) *Same, "Windsor," another view (CGB '80)*

We need never have white slaves in the South, because we have black ones. Our citizens, like those of Rome and Athens are a privileged class... Slavery protects the infants, the aged, and the sick...

Music: Same, from "We are Coming from the Cotton Fields"

The Southerner is the Negro's friend, his only friend. Let no meddling abolitionist... dissolve the friendship.

(close)

Inviting the ruins under which the writers of the South have been reared —

Music: Same, from "Tenting tonight"

(fade)

though Windsor, near Port Gibson, Mississippi, like Faulkner's Sutpen's Hundred, was burned after the war.

51) *E. Johnson, 1859, Old Kentucky Home, New York Historical Society, New York City; + V detail (V51a)*

Music: Stephen Foster, 1854, Old Kentucky Home (flute), Col. M 32577

Fitzhugh's South smiles in this painting by Eastman Johnson, of New England — as in the songs of Southern sentiment Stephen Foster wrote before he travelled there. Though it took war and Reconstruction to draw the truth of Uncle Remus from Joel Chandler Harris's otherwise feeble reporting: (fade "Old Kentucky Home")

"Howdy, Sis Cow," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"W'y, howdy, Brer Rabbit," sez Miss Cow, sez she. "How you fine yo'self deze days, Sis Cow?" sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"I'm sorter toler'ble, Brer Rabbit; how you come on?" sez Miss Cow, sez she.

"O, I'm des toler'ble myse'f, Sis Cow; sorter linger'n twix' a bauk en a break-down," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"How yo fokes, Brer Rabbit?" sez she.

"Dey er des middlin', Sis Cow; how Brer Bull gittin' on?" sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

Music: Songs of the Civil War, from "Dixie," a phrase, chorus

"Sorter so-so," sez Miss Cow, sez she ...

52) *Winslow Homer, 1877, The Carnival, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; + V detail (V52a)* (fade Dixie)

Music: Leadbelly, rec.1939, "The Boll Weevil," Fantasy 24715

In the sketches from Winslow Homer's 1875 stay in Petersburg, Virginia, the old plantation sentiment has drained out and left the sharpness and color of Black rags and indomitable jazz and blues, that would take the world by storm — the under-life Faulkner would grope to in Dilsey's church or Nancy's cabin by the ditch in "That Evening Sun." Though the outward poverty might almost vindicate Fitzhugh's scorn of emancipation.

(fade Leadbelly)

- 53) *Currier & Ives, 1868, "Westward the course of Empire ..."; Roy King Collection, New York*
- 53a) *Erastus Field, 1875, Monument to the American Republic; Fine Arts Museum, Springfield, MA*
- 53b) *Currier & Ives, 1862, The Hunters' Stratagem*
- 53c) *Again 53, Westward..., detail to the right*

Music: Charles Ives, 1896-8, 1st Symphony, close, Col. D3S 783 (side 2)

But the Civil War was over: in the expansion which by 1900 would break in Charles Ives, "Walt Whitman of American music" — the booming nation left the broken South to nurse the first American experience of ruin. (close Ives) Currier and Ives titled the 1868 print which pursues the railroad from the East over plains to the Rockies: "Westward the course of Empire takes its way." Would the Concord rallying be reenacted — Thoreau: "Old deeds for old people and new deeds for new" — but forgetting Thoreau's "If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would the 'Mill dam' go to?"

Emerson had sounded the call:

Our log-rolling... and politics... fisheries, Negroes and Indians... are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes... and it will not wait long for metres.

No wonder he hailed Whitman's Leaves:

the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed... I give you joy of your free and brave thought...

Did not its ubiquitous self range the continent, "Prospecting, gold digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase"? Later chants lead westward:

I see... the Pacific railroad surmounting every barrier... I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world.

54) *American, 1870's, Reckless Driving (provenance unknown)*

In that homesteading rush, regional authors spring up everywhere, and their post-war life is humor — Mark Twain. Startling, against Melville, to trace the evolution of a comic genius: to see an author who starts in the easy journalist vein of this "Reckless Driving in Frontier America," with "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"

55) *Frank B. Mayer, 1858, Independence (Squire Jack Porter); Smithsonian, Washington D.C.*

— an author who absorbs (like Frank Mayer of Annapolis, in this 1858 portrait called Independence) the innate benign of Emerson,

We interfere with the optimism of nature:

Wordsworth's "That we can feed this mind of ours/ In a wise passiveness," descending through Thoreau's

I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie... I grew in those seasons like corn in the night,

and Whitman's "Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat," to Huck Finn's "drifting down the big still river, laying on our backs looking up at the stars" —

Va56) *Winslow Homer, c. 1872, The Nooning, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut*

56) *Same, Nooning, detail*

— that an author who could bring the Intimations of Wordsworthian childhood and Thoreau's "I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born" to bear on a boyhood fresh as in Winslow Homer's 1870 studies of country schools — turning Tom Paine's scorn of tradition governing beyond the grave: "It is the living who are to be accommodated," to Huck's defiant pragmatism:

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him: but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take no stock in dead people.

57) *Again from Bingham, c. 1845, Fur Traders, central detail; first, a video detail from slide 35*

— that an author, apt to intuitive nature, Paine's "Government like dress is the badge of lost innocence," and Thoreau's

I did not want to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary —

to keep soul in this earth-body, not shrink philosophy into a Stoic vault or Christian tomb — rather, as Huck, skeptical of prayer, "set down one time back in the woods, and had a long think about it" — to follow Thoreau at Walden pond past "an invisible boundary," to "live with the license of a higher order of beings," abandoning the pretense of church (those Kentucky feuders at the sermon with their guns), taking to the storm river, the sky "ever so deep when you lay down on your back in the moonshine"; to float with the riffling water: "You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft" —

58) *William Blake, c. 1806-09, Great Red Dragon and Woman; Museum, Brooklyn, New York*

58a) *Blake, 1795, Nebuchadnezzar; Tate Gallery, London*

how strange, in the mode of laughter which well-being

Music: Verdi, 1893, Falstaff, laughter, close of Act I, Col. M3S 750 (side 2)

shares with scorn,

Music: Verdi, 1886, Otello, Iago's laugh, Act 2, London OS.25701

that Mark Twain, heir to such Rousseauian goods — Emerson's pervasion of frontier and market place — would be seized, like Blake, with the specter of the winged Dragon harrying the woman clothed with the sun — Melville's "visible objects... are but as pasteboard masks." Is it a comic revelation that the maker of the Jumping Frog and Tom Sawyer should have closed his life in the solipsistic tortures of The Mysterious Stranger:

'It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream — a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought — a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!'

He vanished, and left me appalled; for I knew, and realized, that all he had said was true.

59) *Goya, 1791, The Little Giants, Tapestry Cartoon, Prado, Madrid*

Goya had run such a comic course almost a hundred years before — his opening jollity the court-play of the *ancien regime*: though among his tapestry designs, those of children remind us how far the loves of Tom and Becky in the Missouri school rested on Enlightenment, Emile, Goldsmith's village green, before the ideal village was deserted.

From that delight Goya weathered (also through war)

*Va60) Goya, 1820-23, Pilgrims of San Isidro, detail; Prado, Madrid*

*60) Same, Pilgrims, closer detail*

to the 1820 gall and heartburn of the Black Paintings on the walls of his own Quinta del Sordo near Madrid. If all comedy blends the bacchanal of good and the barbed castigation of wrong, no wonder if its masters slip to the lacerative side (Swift before, Chaplin in our time). Twain's comic peak in Huck Finn is inseparable from the tarred Duke and King, Buck shot down in the feud, Colonel Sherburn's diatribe on man:

I was born and raised in the South, and I've lived in the North; so I know the average all around. The average man's a coward... Now the thing for you to do is to droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole.

Though Huck can still go to the circus, steal under the tent and revel in those "sure-enough queens" — "a real bully circus."

*61) Goya, 1824-28, "Aun aprendo," black chalk drawing, Prado, Madrid*

*61a) Double: [A] photograph of Mark Twain, 1899; and [B] Eaton, painting of Melville (age c. 50) [video singles only]*

*61b) Again 61, Aun aprendo, detail*

Was it the Baroque heritage or his own resilience that brought Goya in his last years through the black pit to the laughing myth of "Aun aprendo", "I'm still learning"? And was it the vulnerability of Mark Twain himself or of romantic optimism that let him sink always deeper into the cruelty of God and man, whether in exploited Congo or in microscopic nightmare? Though his wit flashed to the end: "I came in with Halley's comet. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's comet." And he did — 1835 to 1910.

Whereas Melville, on tragic course, had already battled the worst, and in Billy Budd come through to a sacramental calm. As Auden wrote:

Toward the end he sailed into an extraordinary mildness...

Thus the hero is executed under the Blakean fatherhood of Starry Vere:

the vapoury fleece hanging low in the East, was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision; and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and ascending took the full rose of the dawn.

But if we are contrasting comic and tragic trajectories, what of Goya's "Aun Aprendo"?

62) *Winslow Homer, 1864, Croquet Scene; Art Institute, Chicago*

62a) *Winslow Homer, 1870, The Bathers, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC*

62b) *Homer, again Croquet Scene, center detail*

In America it is as if the specter of death under spangled robes had to be encountered again and again, each time with a New World surge of delight and shock of confrontation. How luminously Winslow Homer's (red, white, and blue) Croquet Game of 1864 affirms.

Against Emerson's soul, Whitman claimed to celebrate the common and tangible. And early James, turning from those Hawthorne visions he loved, would try to refine as observational a fiction as Howells could. No doubt symbols lurk at the core: it is the corrupt misreading of Daisy Miller's fresh light which makes Europeanized Winterbourne say after her death:

I was booked to make a mistake. I've lived too long in foreign parts.

But the sunlit scene is actual — in The Portrait of A Lady, the ravishing Miss Archer's arrival on the Touchett's Tudor lawn.

63) *Winslow Homer, 1899, The Gulf Stream; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC*

63a) *Same, Gulf Stream, detail*

Music: Verdi, 1886, Otello, Act I, opening, London OS.25701

By 1899, Homer's realist surface buckles (as in Verdi's Otello) with the symbolic crisis Melville had faced fifty years before — that demonic ubiquity which brought Henry James to the close of "The Beast in the Jungle" —

he saw it... rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him.  
His eyes darkened — it was close; and instinctively turning, in his  
hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb. —

So too the "huge and monstrous" *alter ego* of "The Jolly Corner."

It was for such seizure of "villain touch... windpipe squeezed in the fakes of death," that Whitman haunted the opera (that 1863 letter from New York, of Medori pouring out song "like a raging river" in a scene of love and poison):

Comrades... this is in singing and music... on a big scale... sometimes  
the whole band and chorus all putting on the steam together... such  
singing and strong rich music always gives me the greatest pleasure —  
and so the opera is the only amusement I have gone to, for my own  
satisfaction for the last ten years.

(fade Otello)

a64) *J.M.W. Turner, 1805-10, On the Thames, National Gallery, London*

64) *J.M.W. Turner, 1840, Slave Ship, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

V64a) *Same, detail, corpses in the sea [added to video in '96]*

And Turner, who had begun before 1800 with the Thames, or Cromack Water, agleam, night or day, sun or shower, with transcended Claude, by 1840 (Melville returning from the South Seas, about to sail at once, like Bulkington, on the whaler Acushnet) — Turner's Slave Ship loads the carnivorous sea with such a charnel-house as would ravage again the wits of Black Pip, gone overboard:

Pip saw the multitudinous, God omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs...

*For 2nd 63) Winslow Homer, 1899, After the Hurricane — Bahamas; Art Institute, Chicago*

If Shakespearean tragedy arose on the climb from Medieval contempt of the world to the formulated command called Leibnizian reason, there is an inverse tragic motion down, as optimism transferred to romantic heart swirls once more in cosmic value-drowning: Russell:

That man is the product of forces which had no prevision of the end they were achieving... that all... are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system...

Iago's nihilist creed: "I believe in a cruel God":

Music: Verdi, 1886, Otello, "Credo in un Dio crudel," London OS 25701

*2nd 64) Turner, Slave Ship, detail (video takes detail from 1st 64)*

*65) J.M.W. Turner, 1836-7, Avalanche, Valley of Aosta, Art Institute of Chicago*

The destructive immersion had begun with the romantic itself — Turner's 1836 Avalanche in the Vale of Aosta — to peak by mid-century in Melville:

I feel now like a billow that's all one crested comb...

*66) A.P. Ryder, 1890, Jonah, Smithsonian, Washington D.C.; + V detail*

*66a) Anonymous, 1879, Photograph of Walt Whitman (age 60), NY Public Library*

And in American art about 1890 in the sea-allegories of Ryder, where habitable space reverts to devouring whirls.

Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides: then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.

(fade Otello)

But Whitman, also by 1871, had to rest the "soul's habitation" almost on Russell's "unyielding despair":

Democracy grows rankly up the thickest, noxious, deadliest plants and fruits of all... We sail a dangerous sea of seething currents, cross- and under-currents, vortices — all so dark, untried — and whither shall we turn?

67) *Winslow Homer, 1896, The Lookout — All's well, Fine Arts Museum, Boston*

67a) *Anon., 1882, Photograph of Walt Whitman (age 63), NY Public Library*

But as Homer's late works grip night and treacherous ocean in the near-abstract endurance of a Lookout's "All's Well," Melville framed Billy Budd's sacrifice in Hegelian history:

The opening proposition... rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs... Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer... the outcome of all... a political advance... for Europeans.

While Whitman bridled the leviathan of his Democratic Vistas:

Thought you greatness was to ripen for you like a pear?... you must pay... with a proportionate price.

In an Otello stripped of Shakespeare's vindicating universals, the murdering suicide's last gasp is harmony:

Music: Verdi, 1886, close of Otello, London OS.25701 (fade)

68) *J.M. Whistler, 1864, Symphony in White No. 2, Tate Gallery, London; + V detail*

68a) *Same, Symphony in White, closer detail*

Under the behemoth current West, it is curious to trace the eddies of eastward refinement — during the Civil War, but in Paris and England, Whistler's pre-Jamesian Portrait of a Lady, with its Hawthorne-sad reflection: while in Transcendental America, behind the hedge and brick of an Amherst house, such a mirrored brooder spoke in Emily Dickinson:

There's a certain slant of light,  
Winter afternoons,  
That oppresses, like the heft

Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference  
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it any:  
'Tis the seal, despair, —  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,  
Shadows hold their breath;  
When it goes 'tis like the distance  
On the look of death.

- 69) *Raphael Peale, 1823, After the Bath, Nelson-Atkins Gallery, Kansas City, MO*
- 69a) *A.U. Wertmüller, 1787, Danae and the Shower of Gold, National Museum, Stockholm*
- 69b) *Double: what the video separates as V69b and V69c, below*
- V69b) *J.S. Sargent, 1884, Madame X, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City*
- V69c) *Rembrandt, 1646, The French Bed (etching), Amsterdam*
- 69d) *Rodin, 1884, Eternal Springtime (bronze sculpture), Rodin Mus., Paris*
- 69e) *Again 69, Peale's Bath, detail*

Emily offended against verse form; Walt also against the content of Peale's 1823 Girl Drying her Hair:

Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

There had been Wertmüller's coital Danae modelled in Paris by court ladies and exhibited after 1806 in Philadelphia at 25 cents a head. There would be Sargent's Madame X with as much to cover as Chad's wonderful Comtesse in The Ambassadors. But these are Dwight's "foul harlot Europe" against "fair Columbia." If Bradford had confessed of Plymouth Colony:

not only incontinecie between persons unmaried... but some maried persons also; but that which is worse, even Sodomie and Bugarie (things fearful to name) have break forth in this land, oftener than once

---

Whitman was the first to celebrate

Breast that presses against other breasts...  
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me...

How Emerson overlooked that in the Leaves is not clear; but the "Children of Adam" brought it home:

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love,  
white-blow and delirious juice.

So the man who had written "I greet you at the beginning of a great career," backed off, until in 1865 he was quoted:

there is also Walt Whitman, but he belongs yet to the fire clubs, and  
has not got into the parlors.

As if the cry, "Undrape! you are not guilty to me," had torn the sheet off Peale's still-life nude.

70) *G. Courbet, 1866, Laziness and Sensuality, Petit Palais, Paris*

70a) *G. Courbet, 1866, Les deux amies ou La Reveil, private collection, Paris*

Exposing the lusts of France, Courbet's Lesbians. Was the Whitman shock in part of "things fearful to name" — his union of body and soul, a mystical oral tree:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
 How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over  
 upon me.  
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to  
 my bare-stript heart,  
 And reach'd till you felt my beard. and reach'd till you held my feet.

Though it was the "dear love of comrades" in Calamus that stirred British Symonds to the question, from which Whitman reeled, claiming mistresses and bastards. Whitman's loading of self, earth, and all with the lushness of either sex may remain mysterious; but what-ever he worshipped, "firm masculine colter" or "brown melons of breasts," it was not prurience:

everywhere an abnormal libidinousness... bad blood, the capacity for  
 good motherhood deceasing or deceas'd, shallow notions of beauty,  
 with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners (considering the  
 advantages enjoy'd), probably the meanest to be seen in the world...

- 71) *Thomas Eakins, 1883, Swimming Hole, Art Center, Fort Worth, Texas*
- 71a) *Thomas Eakins, 1880, Female Nude (drawing), Phila. Mus. of Art*
- 71b) *Again 71, Swimming Hole, detail*

Eakins held with Whitman to the "sanity of birth, Nature, and humanity":

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
 Twenty-eight young men, and all so friendly,  
 Twenty-eight years of womanly life, and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
 She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
 Ah, the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
 You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather.  
 The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies swell to the  
 sun... they do not ask who seizes fast to them.  
 They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending  
 arch.  
 They do not think whom they souse with spray.

a72) *Thomas Eakins, 1877, W. Rush Carving his Schuylkill River Allegorical Figure, Philadelphia Museum of Art*

72) *Thomas Eakins, 1908, William Rush and his Model, Acad. of Arts, Honolulu*

72a) *Thomas Eakins, 1877, Walt Whitman, Phila. Academy of Fine Arts*

When Eakins, at 66, took up the celebration which had cost him an academy post 30 years before, he resumed the subject of John Rush, Philadelphia sculptor of about 1800, who had carved a statue of the Schuylkill. But Rush here becomes the old Eakins, and the model, whom his touching chivalry aids from the pedestal (wonderfully plain and sexual, as far from classic marble as Whitman's prostitute: "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you") is the nude Pygmalion carved and Aphrodite turned to flesh. Whitman too had sacrificed to that flesh. As he wrote in 1872:

in the United states [neither]... the chief Literary persons or organs... admit Leaves of Grass as having any value, or recognize the author as a poet at all... he has indeed been ignominiously dismissed from a moderate government employment... for the sole and avowed reason that he was the writer of the book... no American publisher will publish it... many of the bookstores refuse to keep it for sale... and the position of the author both as to literary rank and worldly prosperity, in his own country, has been, and remains today, under a heavy and depressing cloud.

- a73) *Double: [A] Monet, 1875, Woman with Parasol, Nat. Gal., Wash. D.C.; and [B] Cezanne, 1900-5, Bathing Women, det., Phila. Mus. of Art*
- 73) *J.F. Millet, 1850, The Sower, Fine Arts Museum, Boston; + V detail*

Is America behind Europe, strangely neck and neck, or, as Whitman dreamed, searching somewhere in the van? Melville, Whitman, Homer, Eakins, Ryder, span the French modern from Monet through Cezanne. But their style affinities are back, as to the revolutionary commitment of mid-century — this Millet Sower, which Whitman would admire in Boston 30 years after:

a sublime murkiness and original pent fury... Will America ever have such an artist out of her own gestation, body, soul?

Whitman's "Years of the Modern" is as far from Impressionism as The Communist Manifesto:

I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions...  
 Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?...  
 The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in shadow behind me,  
 The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance. advance upon me.

- 74) *I. Repin, 1885, Ivan the Terrible and his Son, Tretyakov Gal., Moscow*
- 74a) *Double: Photographs of [A] Whitman and [B] Tolstoy*
- 74b) *Again 74, Ivan and Son, detail*

Music: Mussorgsky, 1868-72, Boris Godounov (end of Act II), "I am suffocating", beginning and ending (Chaliapin). Angel COLH 100

There are at present [wrote De Toqueville] two great nations in the world, which seem to tend toward the same end, although they started from different points: I allude to the Russians and the Americans... the principal instrument of the Anglo-Americans is freedom; of the Russians servitude... yet each of them seems to be marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.

And Whitman:

(without music)

You Russians and we Americans!... so unlike at first glance... yet... so resembling each other... the idea, perennial through the ages, that they both have their historic and divine mission...

(Mussorgsky, voice)

Like the Americans, Repin in his 1885 *Ivan the Terrible*, clings to realism, though with a violence which in Mussorgsky's *Boris* begins to disrupt the canons of the past, stripping (as no doubt Whitman's "barbaric yawp over the rooftops of the world" did) toward something elemental. But Whitman against *Boris* seems light against dark.

(close *Boris* aria)

75) *Edouard Manet, 1877, The Suicide, Emil Buehrle Collection, Zürich*

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has  
fallen.

Whitman saw the worst as clearly as Manet. He had shared a bed in the frame house in Brooklyn with a congenital idiot brother (the bed Thoreau found unmade on his visit and the chamber pot unemptied); there was the drunkard brother, married to a street-walker; and a third, "the venerealee," who died of softening of the brain. But against Manet's clever reporting (as Salvian said of the late Romans, "saturated with sardonic herbs"),

a76) *Cezanne, c. 1887, detail of Mt. Ste. Victoire; Courtland Collection, London*  
[while video uses Va76, Van Gogh, 1888, *The Sower*, Kröller-Müller,  
Otterlo]

76) *Van Gogh, The Sower, detail of the sun*

76a) *Again, Van Gogh, The Sower, whole (video: wider detail)*

Whitman's also factual revolt — "What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me," and "the truest and greatest Poetry... can never again, in the English language, be expressed in arbitrary and rhyming metre" — holds to its "wing'd purposes": "the moth and the fish-eggs are in their place."

"Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling" —

that from 1865; and from *The Song of Myself*:

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the daybreak.

It seems another style world, even from this of the prophetically seized Van Gogh — however Van Gogh's color-splash and Whitman's incantation ("Walt, you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?") press the God-rape on the immediate: "I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps" and "I effuse my flesh in eddies, I drift it in lacy jags." Van Gogh's advance is of the ruptured French Salon: technique, Rimbaud, Symbolist art. Whitman is oceans west — and east — of there:

And love and faith, like scented roses blooming.

- 77) *Chinese, Ma Yuan, c. 1190-1230, Walking on a Mountain Path in Spring, Ink and light colors on silk, Palace Museum Collection, Taichung; + V detail*  
 77a) *Frank Pearsall, 1869, Photograph of Walt Whitman, NY Public Library*

Music: Chinese classical from "Water and Clouds over the Rivers Hsiao and Hsian" (Ch'in), Everest 2427

From Emerson's "Brahma," "Find me and turn thy back on Heaven," through Thoreau's Kourou artist timelessly carving a perfect staff, to Whitman's merging self and all — as if, on thought's round globe, "facing West from California's shores" — in that America, the affinity with Eastern wisdom was clear. Yet we have only to admire a Sung landscape of such contemplation, this Ma Yuan, "Walking a Mountain Path in Spring," to sense how far, in leisured refinement of poet-sage and Ch'in-bearing attendant, its millennial evocation of distilled earth and body is from Walt's vulnerability of post-romantic universe and person: (fade Ch'in setting)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to  
 be...  
 My embryo has never been torpid...  
 For it the nebula cohered to an orb...  
 Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with  
 care...

- 78) *F.E. Church, c. 1860(?), Morning in the Tropics, National Gallery, Washington D.C.; first video detail (Va78)*  
 78a) *Same, Tropics, detail left; video, closer detail*  
 78b) *Same, Tropics, detail center*

Music: Wagner, 1870-4, *Götterdämmerung*, from Siegfried's Rhine Journey, Seraphim 60003

Whitman's "O my soul" finds its own in cosmic God-space:

To behold the day-break!  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows —

a mystery Church learned from Transcendental Cole and painted in smooth-brushed verisimilitude from the sunset Adirondacks to this Tropic Morning. If outwardness begins to dissolve, it is into the shimmering vapours of Wagner's Rhine:

Press close bare-bosom'd night...  
Night of south winds — night of the large few stars —

the landscape of mist in which Whitman's most moving lyrics swim, or drown — "Sea-Drift":

Out of the Ninth-month midnight...  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they  
were alive...

Music: Wagner, 1859, close of *Tristan*, instrumental coda; RCA-V-LM-1829 (or 6700)

Death. death, death. death, death, death...  
The word of the sweetest song and of all songs...  
The sea whisper'd me.

79) *Blakelock, c. 1885, Moonlight, Brooklyn Museum, NY*

79a) *Same, Moonlight, detail*

It is Tristan's tragic, infinite landscape (which Blakelock also moved toward, earth floating in water and moon) that the Memories of Lincoln require:

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky  
in the night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring...

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,

There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

(close of Tristan)

The affirmation of life, like everything transcendental, from Bach's songs of death-love to Mahler's Lied von der Erde,

Music: Mahler, 1908. Das Lied von der Erde, close: "Ewig," Seraphim 60191

is Nietzsche's joy, in love with eternity:

Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit,  
Will tiefe, tiefe, Ewigkeit.

- 80) Cox c. 1887, *Photo of Walt Whitman, "The Laughing Philosopher," Rutgers Univ, detail; + V whole (V80)*
- 80a) Thomas Eakins, 1891, *Photo of Walt Whitman (age 72), Philadelphia Museum of Art*
- 80b) *Photograph of Walt Whitman (age 35) c. 1854, Trent Collection, Duke University Library; + V detail*

As Thoreau answered on his deathbed, when asked "Have you made your peace with God?", "I never quarrelled with him" — so Melville, in the fever of Moby Dick, knew:

We were now in that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion... Even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself... still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy.

It was the seamarke to which Whitman sailed, from the 1868

Passage to more than India!...  
O darling joy! but safe! are not all the seas of God?

through Whispers of Heavenly Death,

Tenderly — be not impatient,  
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
Strong is your hold O love.)

to "Goodbye my Fancy" from his last years:

(close of Mahler)

Good-bye my Fancy!  
Farewell dear mate, dear love!...  
The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,  
Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.  
...Good-bye my Fancy.  
Yet let me not be too hasty...  
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs, (who  
knows?)  
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning — so now  
finally,  
Good-bye — and hail! my Fancy.

Where else had he been all along?

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women  
my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and  
poke-weed...

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love.  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another.  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.