

#16 Simple Gifts



'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be
free,

'Tis a gift to come down where we
ought to be,

And when we find ourselves in the
place just right,

'Twill be in the valley of love and
delight.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be
ashamed.

To turn, turn will be our delight,
'Til by turning, turning we come 'round
right.

Body and Soul

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

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.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the
argument of the earth,
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.

28 Young Men



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 beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair,
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

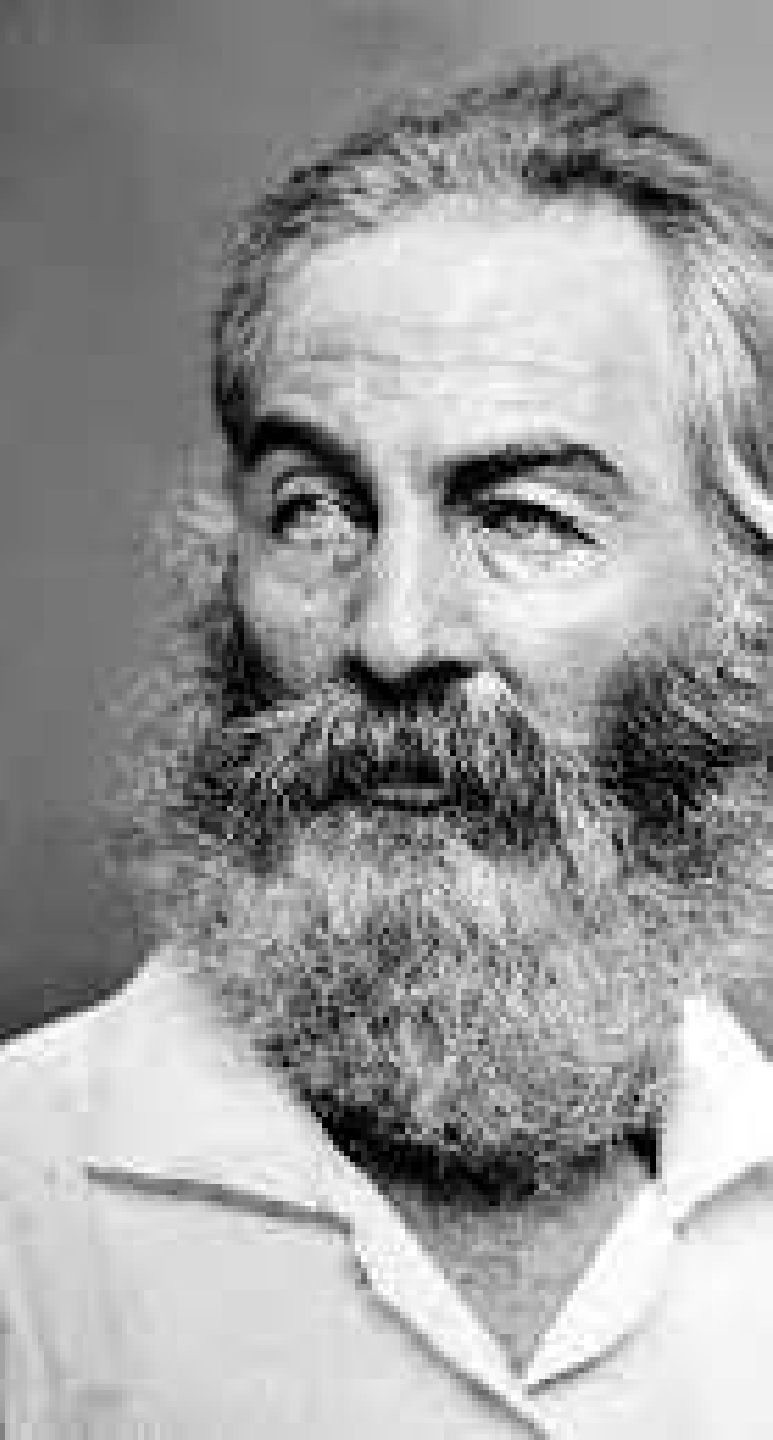
An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge 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.

Proud To Be The Tenderest Lover

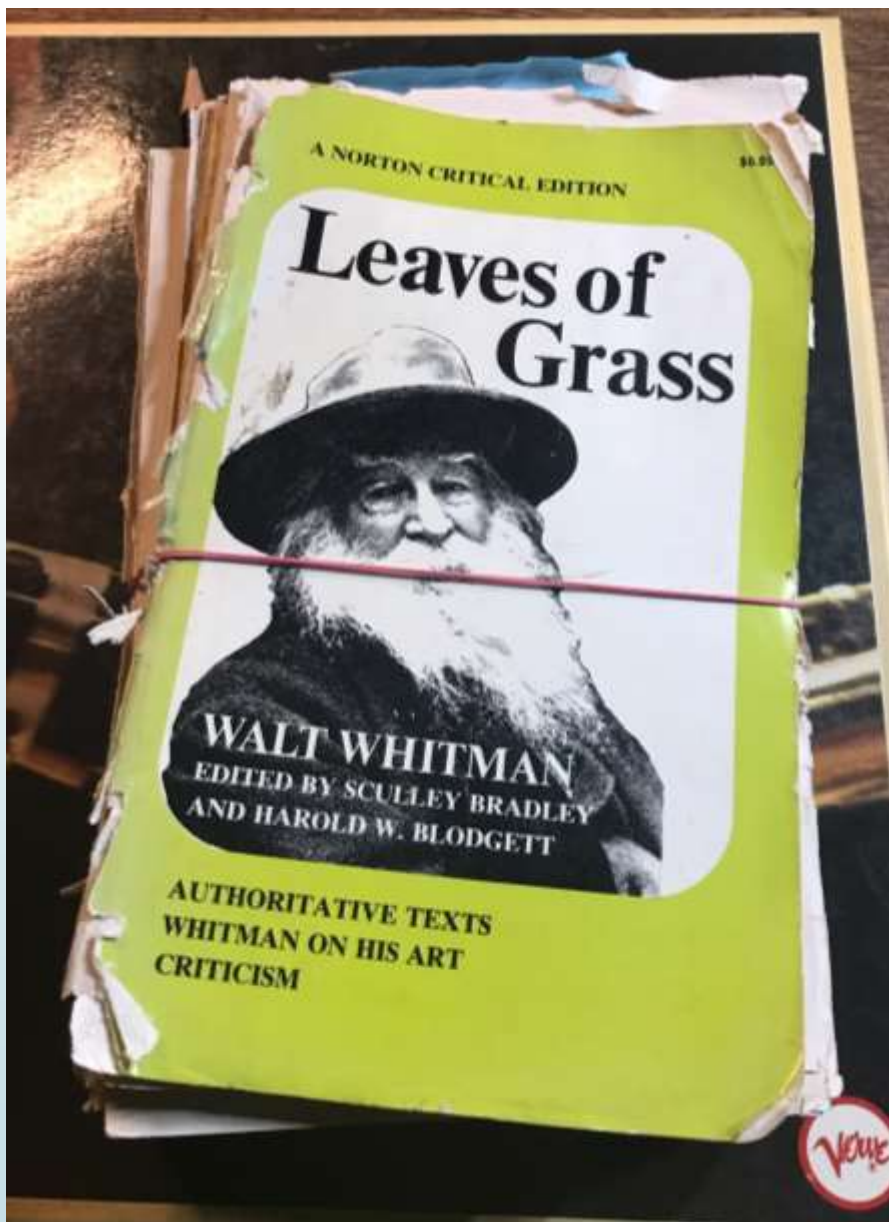
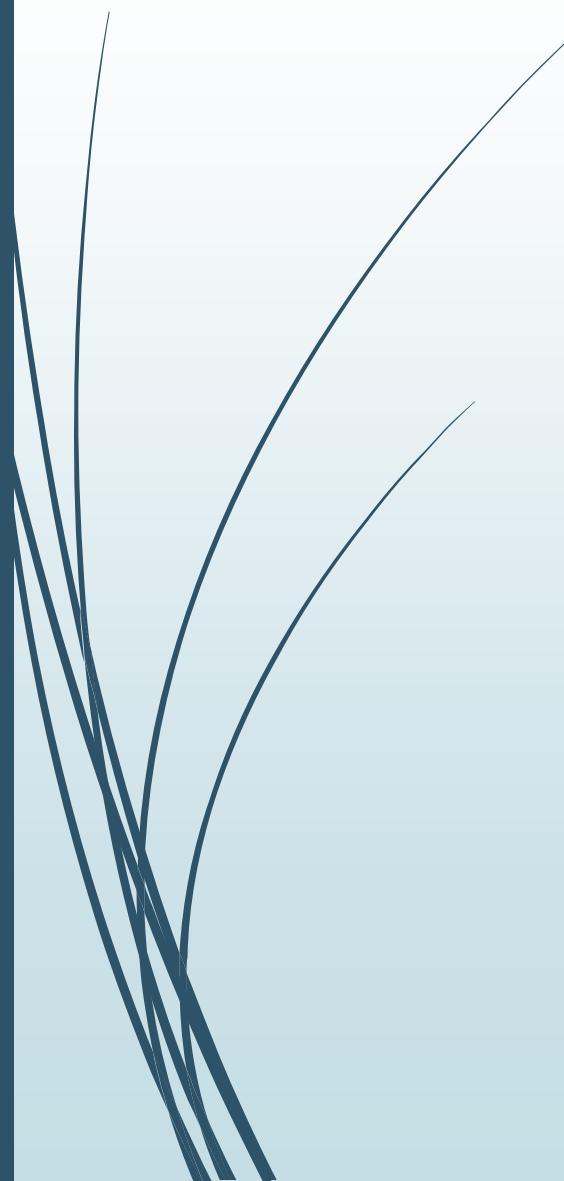


...come, I will inform you who I was underneath
that impassive exterior—I will tell you what
to say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of
the tenderest lover,
The friend, the lover's portrait, of whom his friend,
his lover, was fondest,
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the
measureless ocean of love within him—and
freely poured it forth,
Who often walked lonesome walks thinking of his
dearest friends, his lovers,
Who pensive, away from one he loved, often lay
sleepless and dissatisfied at night,
Who, dreading lest the one he loved might after all
be indifferent to him, felt the sick feeling—
O sick! sick!
Whose happiest days were those, far away through
fields, in woods, on hills, he and another,
wandering hand in hand, they twain, apart
from other men.

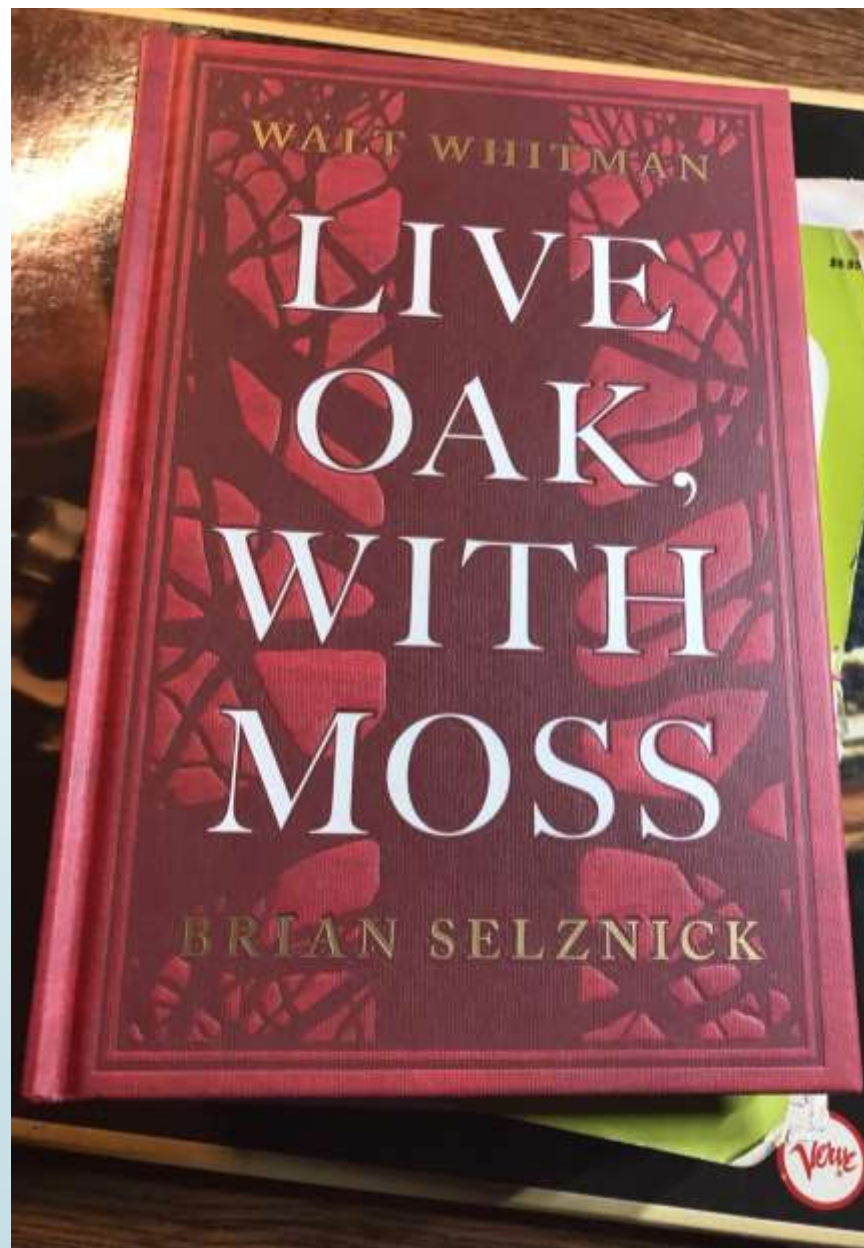
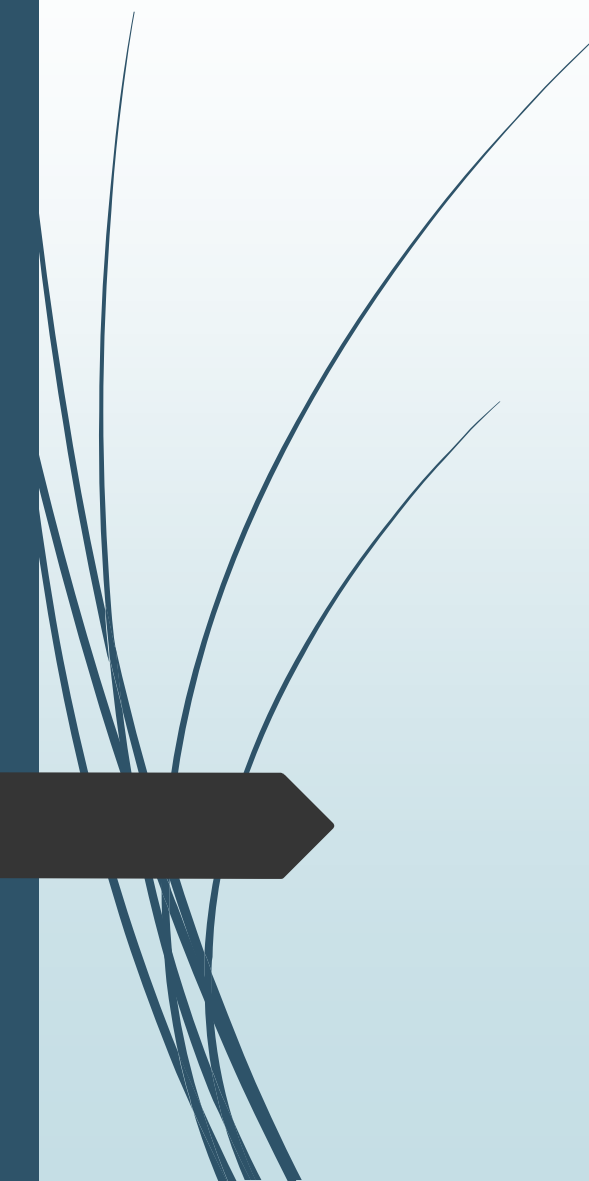


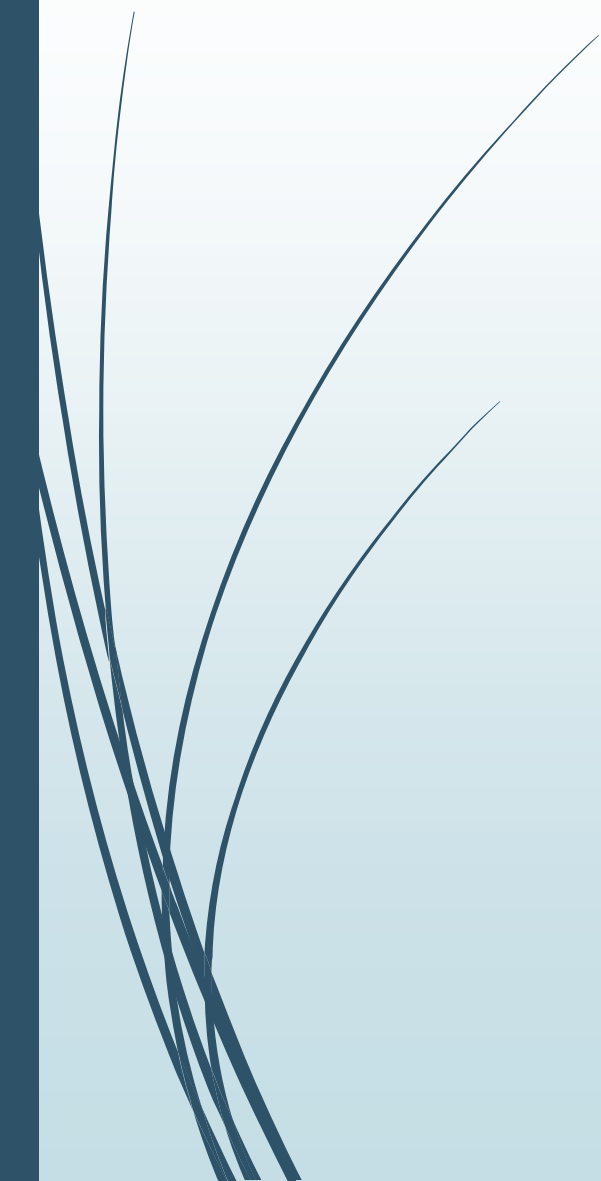
Walt Whitman

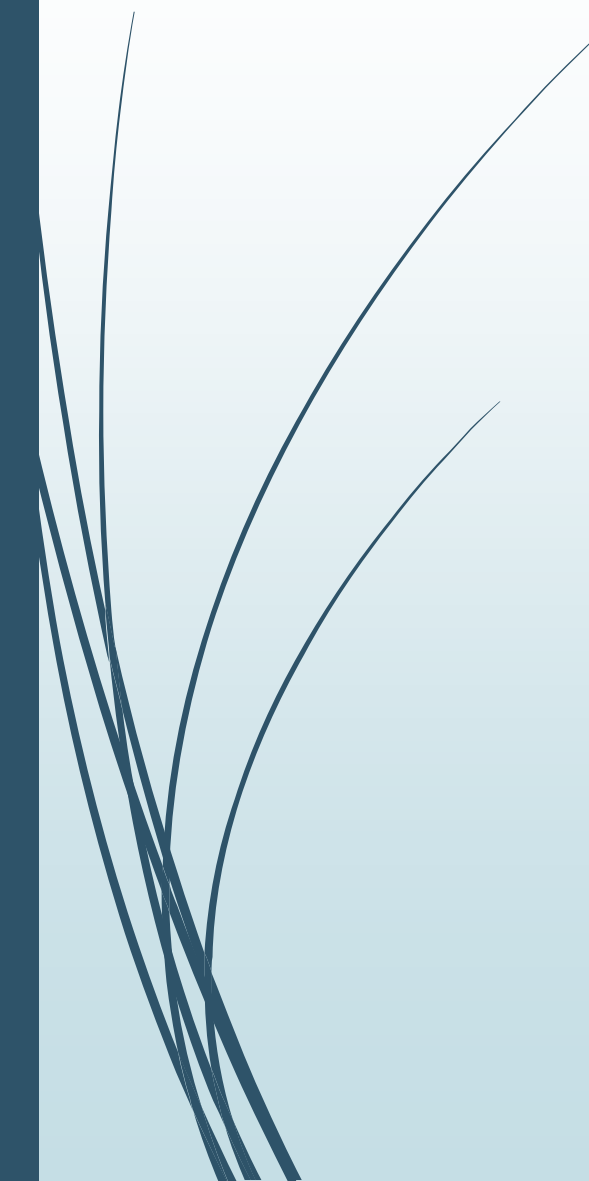
Gay Icon and American Visionary

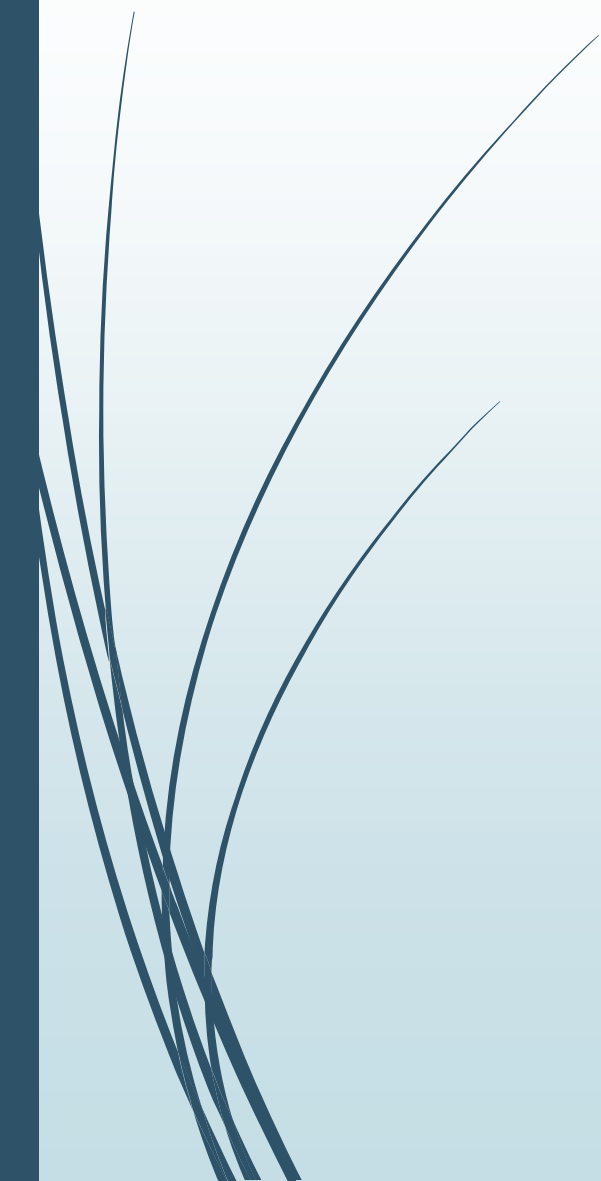


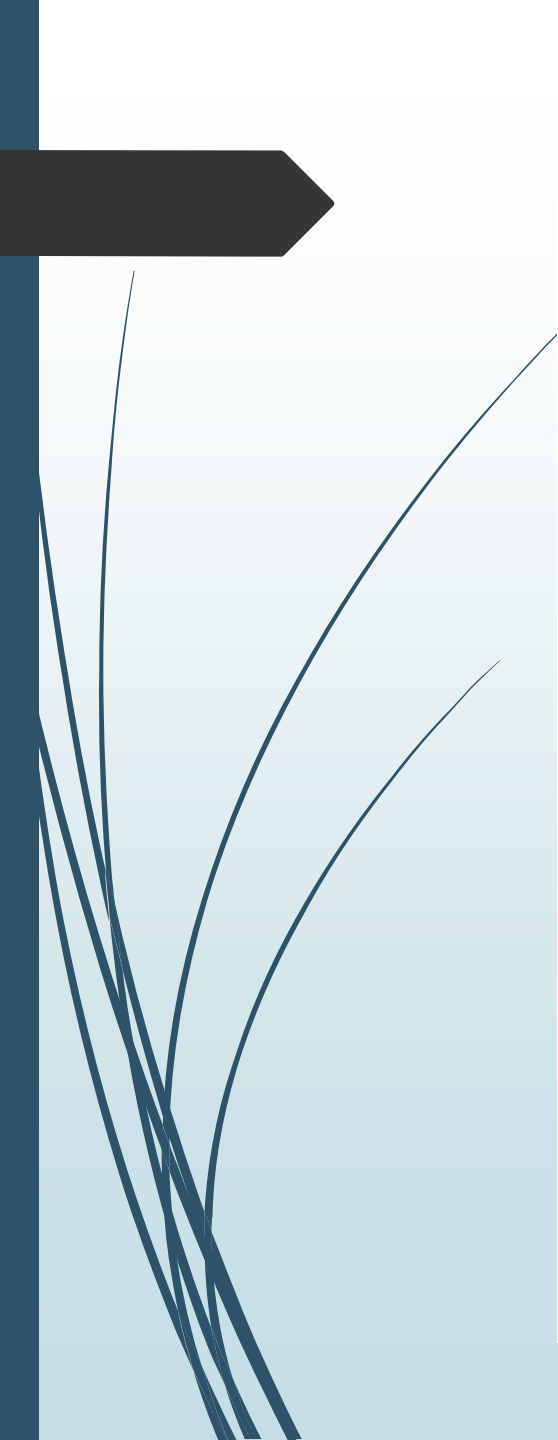












Whitman, like Prevost, found New York City an inspiring place to explore—and to explore himself. The notebooks he toted on his walks include lists of men's names, ages, addresses, and physical descriptions:

Tom Riley (handsome Irish fighter

John Kiernan (loafer, young saucy looking pretty goodlooking

Dave (rich, (white hat.) rides on Broadway

Jack (big young fellow sits corner Adams & Myrtle live 4th Ave

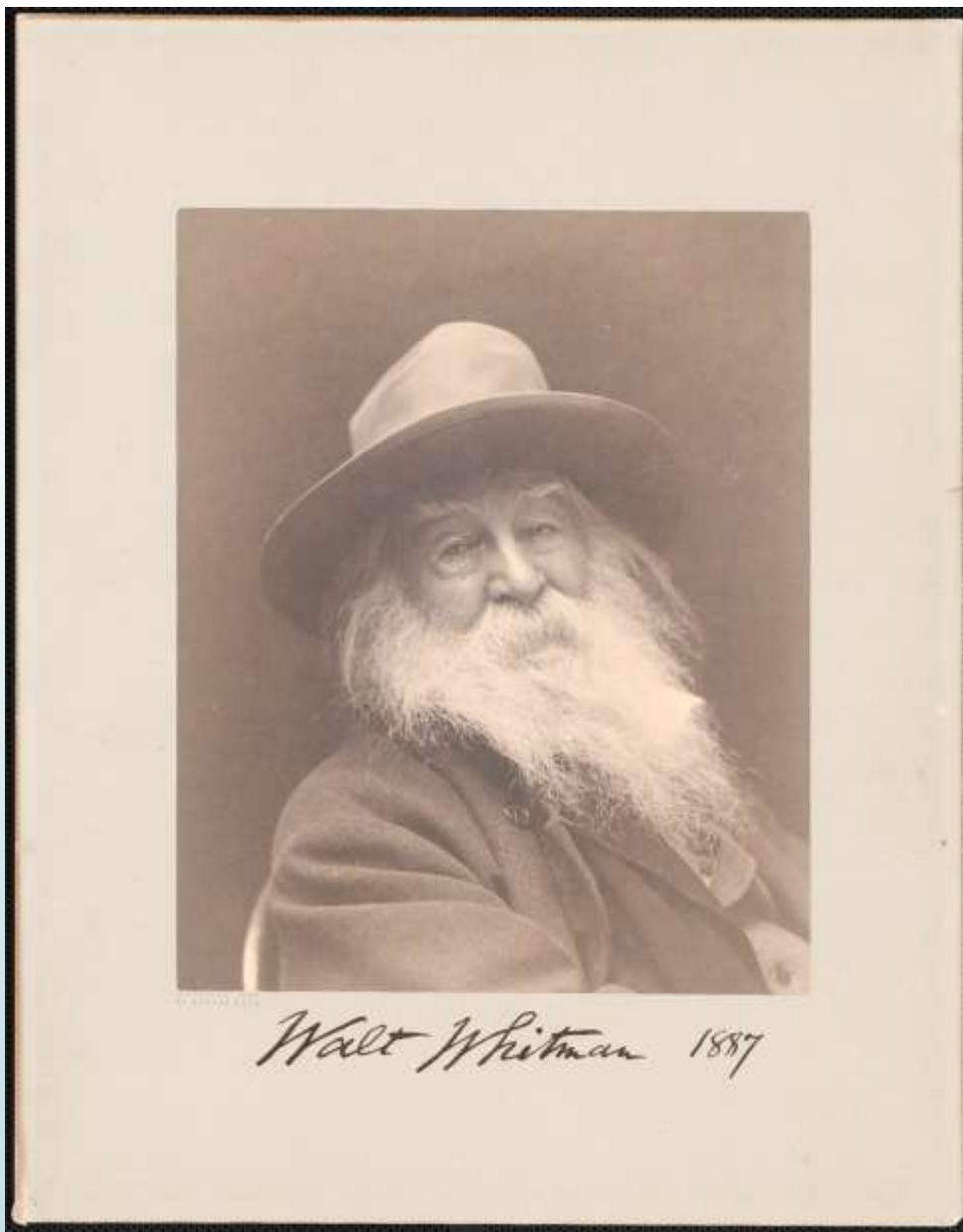
Arthur, big round sandy hair coarse, open

Peleg, round head & face young

Wallace, (sailor boy English was in Japan)

John Stoothoof, (police South ferry smallish sized)

Peter Dempster (Cor Kent & Myrtle open faced—gay)



Whitman aged 68.

Photograph by George C. Cox.

One of the poet's favorites. He called it "The Laughing Philosopher" and sent a copy to Tennyson.

*The signed copy in the
Feinberg Collection.*