Matthew Baigell

WHITMAN AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN ART

During the first three decades of this century, Walt Whitman's name probably appeared more often in the art press than the name of any other literary figure. Art critics invoked his name when referring to the contemporary scene. And several artists mentioned his name in articles, diaries and interviews and also indicated that they had read at least some of his work. That he was an influence and a presence goes without saying, but the important question lies less in determining the extent of his influence and presence than in asking how his name was used. I think this is important for two reasons. First, and quite simply, his name was invoked for different reasons by different artists. Second, because he was so incredibly popular, particularly around 1920,[1] he was probably thought to have had more influence than he might actually have possessed, and he might also have been considered more the originator than the major representative of various trends in American culture.

Many would have agreed with Malcolm Cowley's assessment in the early 1920s that "before Walt Whitman America hardly existed; to him we owe the pioneers, the open spaces, in general the poetry of square miles."[2] Cowley meant that Whitman taught a generation how to read, to think and to view itself. Unquestionably, Whitman was then a lightning rod for various ongoing concerns in American intellectual history, but Cowley's remarks must be considered an overstatement on self-evident grounds.

Closer to our own time, Max Kozloff, in an article entitled "Whitman and American Art," indicated Whitman's still potent if not hegemonic significance by considering, in his view, the persistence of Whitmanian thought in Abstract Expressionism. As part of his argument he cited some passages from Whitman and found their echoes in the writings of Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Robert Motherwell, and David Smith. The passages are taken from different sections of "A Song of Joy:"

> O the joy of my soul leaning poised on itself, receiving identity through materials and loving them, observing characters and absorbing them.

The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses
and flesh, . . .
To be indeed a God.[3]

Kozloff argues that there could not be "anything more summary of the Olympian strain of this aesthetic than David Smith's pronouncement: 'I feel no tradition. I feel great space. I feel my own time. I am disconnected. I belong to no mores—no party—no religion—no school of thought—no institution. I feel raw freedom and my own identity.'"[4]

Whitman's lines as well as David Smith's reflect a point of view less Olympian than Adamic and belong to a tradition in American intellectual thought that I would term radical, disjunctive, and subversive. It includes figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and the historian George Bancroft and, among Abstract Expressionists, Jackson Pollock most of all. In this tradition, by no means a purely Whitmanian one, the individual re-invents himself unhindered and uninhibited by the past, and, by extension, contributes to nation-building equally unimpeded by the past.[5] On various occasions Whitman stated as much, perhaps nowhere more concisely than with these lines from "Song of the Open Road:"

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits
and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute.[6]

Before Whitman, Emerson wrote both about himself as an Adamic figure who names the beasts on earth and the gods in the heavens and about individuals who strive to discard inherited traditions in order to become free and independent. "No facts," he wrote in "Circles," "are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no past at my back."[7] Whitman's desire, then, to interact directly with things, materials and even ideas as a way to achieve self-definition was considered by Emerson in a previous generation and by David Smith in a subsequent one. All such passages, therefore, whether discussed in one way or another by the Malcolm Cowleys and the Max Kozloffs relate to something elemental in American intellectual history and cannot be traced to a single individual.

This, of course, does not deny Whitman's importance early in the century or even toward its midpoint. On the contrary, various ideas

about the self and about national identity that Emerson and Whitman held in common were probably learned from Whitman, at least in the early part of the century. But I do not think it to be sound scholarship to saddle Whitman with more than his fair share of responsibility.

A question: Why, early in the century, was Emerson considered a secondary figure even though most of the ideas that the early twentieth century found so seductive in Whitman can be traced directly to Emerson? After all, Emerson did have chronological primacy. Whitman helps us answer the question. In his essay, "Emerson's Books (The Shadow of Them)," Whitman wrote that Emerson was concerned only with the self, that he functioned best as a "critic and diagnoser" rather than as a seer or prophet, and that he lacked passion and imagination. Whitman found that a "cold and bloodless intellectuality dominates him."[8] These qualities, reiterated by early-twentieth century critics such as Norman Foerster, Waldo Frank, and Van Wyck Brooks, were not the qualities wanted by a generation seeking revitalization in American art and American life.[9] Rather, in Whitman they found the personification of what they were looking for—energy, emotional abundance, physicality, democratic rather than elitist interests, and a powerful concern for national identity.

There were other reasons, as well, for Whitman's great popularity, perhaps not articulated at the time, but, in retrospect, quite evident. First, since in his writings Whitman associated himself so closely with the country, celebration of self meant celebration of country. For Whitman, America "was an idea and ideal that he strove to embody"—its personality, youth, rowdiness, revolutionary ideas in politics, life and art.[10] He also celebrated the very fact of being alive. For him, "human potential was released only through the act of relating to nature, to others and to one self."[11] He embodied a spiritually and physically reborn America that so gladdened the hearts of those trying to escape the inhibitions and conservative forces dominant around the turn of the century and in the years just afterward.

Second, compared to Emerson who defined nature in terms of spirit, Whitman did the reverse. He defined spirit in terms of nature. His "celebration of the body and its power," as one historian has suggested, "anticipates Freud's later descriptions of the somatic bases of libido."[12] (Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in English in 1913.)

Third, Whitman must also have touched the same nerve as the popular French philosopher Henri Bergson, whose books were translated into English early in the century and who lectured in the United States in 1913.[13] Whitman's sense of energy, his willingness to, as he wrote in his poetry, pour himself into other people and, in return, to respond in kind to them, and, perhaps most important, to trust his intuitions, link him to Bergson's concept of the *élan vital.* Since reality for Bergson resided in movement and also in intuition, along with a desire to participate in some kind of sympathetic communion with objects and people which encouraged a sense of endless creation, it is more than likely that lines such as these by Whitman, "Urge and urge and urge/ Always the procreant urge of the world," must have had an impact much stronger than we can imagine today.[14]

Fourth, in a period of international warfare and social dislocation and, by 1920, of modernist pessimism, Whitman's "greatest act of pioneering," one critic subsequently argued, "was in helping the modern sensibility feel at home in the natural world."[15] For Americans, not as overwhelmed by world events as were Europeans, Whitman became an inspirational force.

And fifth, as the only American figure in any of the arts equal to European artists, Whitman was the only real American vanguard artist about whom one could speak without embarrassment. Without Whitman, the art world could boast only of the Armory Show of 1913, a mere exhibition.

He became the point of reference and the point of departure. As the editors of the magazine *The Seven Arts* insisted, "The spirit of Walt Whitman stands behind THE SEVEN ARTS. What we are seeking, is what he sought."[16] I raise the questions: What did he seek? What were they seeking? Once again the questions revolve around how Whitman's name was used.

We can start with Robert Henri, who became familiar with Whitman's work in the 1890s.[17] Henri responded most profoundly to two aspects of Whitman's thought—the desire for self-identity and self-reliance on the one hand and the desire for connection to and reflection of community, the American community, on the other. The former aspect can easily be traced to Emerson, with whom Henri was familiar;[18] the latter, although considered by Emerson as well as other nineteenth-century Americans, might be more associated with Whitman

than with anybody else. But two points should be noted here. First, several writers addressed the question of national identity in the arts during the years Henri wrote about Whitman.[19] And second, artists like Henri might have absorbed some of their concern for community connection in a general, if not a specifically American, sense from the Frenchman Hippolyte Taine. Now it is true that the first *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1855 and Taine's work did not begin to appear in English translation until 1865, but I suspect that for the generation that came of age in the early twentieth century, Taine's influence was much more important than we have realized—both Whitman and Henri were familiar with Taine's writings—and that it permeated the art world through the 1930s. Taine believed that art is inextricably involved with the community in which it is produced, and to understand the one, study of the other is essential.[20] Henri, then, responding to the potentially antithetical interests of developing a sense of self and the sense of national identification then invigorating the American art world, found Whitman to be a profound source of inspiration, but certainly not the only one.

His article "Progress in Our National Art" is the best single source for study of his reading of Whitman.[21] The first sentence of the second paragraph reveals Henri's concerns precisely. "What is necessary for art in America, as in any land, is first an appreciation of the great ideas native to the country and then the achievement of a masterly freedom in expressing them." Whitman, too, often combined these two different notions—sometimes in the same sentence as did Henri—perhaps most succinctly in his essay, "nationality—(And Yet):" "What most needs fostering . . . in all parts of the United States . . . is this fused and fervent identity of the individual . . . with the idea and fact of AMERICAN TOTALITY."[22]

In his essay, Henri at first stressed connection to the totality. "For successful flowering [art] demands," Henri wrote, "deep roots, stretching far down into the soil of the nation, and in its growth showing, with whatever variation, inevitably the result of these conditions . . . But before art is possible to a land, the men who become artists must feel within themselves the need of expressing the virile ideas of their country; they must demand of themselves the most perfect means of so doing, and then, what they paint or compose or write will belong to their own land."

But then, Henri began to waffle. He continued in a still Whitmanian vein by seeking individual self-definition before public utterance could

take place. He wrote, using Whitman as his example, "it seems to me that before a man tries to express anything to the world he must recognize in himself an individual, a new one, very distinct from others. Walt Whitman did this, and that is why I think his name so often comes to me. The one great cry of Whitman was for a man to find himself, to understand the fine thing he really is if liberated." Henri then singled out Winslow Homer and John Twachtman, two very different figures as artists who found their distinctive voices. Then, retreating entirely from connections to community and becoming more Emersonian in the process, he concluded this section of the essay by saying, "Each man must take the material that he finds at hand, see that in it there are the big truths of life, the fundamentally big forces, and then express whichever is the cause of his pleasure in his art. It is not so much the actual place or the immediate environment; it is personal greatness and personal freedom which any nation demands for a final right art expression." Henri never quite resolved the paradox of seeking self-definition and community identity simultaneously. Later in his life, he gave up his nationalist concerns in his search for, as he called them, "my people," clearly giving himself over to his interest in self-definition. He might very well have come to regard Whitman in the same way, for in *The Art Spirit,* Henri said that Whitman's "work is an autobiography."[23] One might argue, as well, that Whitman never reconciled the paradox either and never did learn to merge his own identity with that of the group.[24]

Of the artists associated with Henri, only John Sloan's comments about Whitman have been recorded—and only on a single occasion. Certainly, Sloan's understanding of Whitman must have been similar to Henri's, but Sloan's recorded comments point us in a slightly different direction. Sloan seems to have particularly responded to "Whitman's love for all men, his beautiful attitude toward the physical, absence of prudishness . . . all this represented a force of freedom . . . I liked what resulted from his descriptive catalogues of life. They helped to interest me in the details of life around me."[25] From this single response, we can gather, first, that Sloan acknowledged Whitman's liberating attitude toward the body and, second, that by Whitman's example, Sloan was encouraged to explore to his heart's content contemporary life—that is, to indulge his proclivities as a means to artistic liberation and self-definition.

The liberating qualities of Whitman's writings about the body and its physical functions, often noted by literary critics,[26] entered in the late teens into the art criticism of at least one writer, Paul Rosenfeld. It is impossible to say, however, if knowledge of Freud made acceptance of Whitman's sense of physicality easier or if knowledge of Whitman made acceptance of Freud easier. Suffice it to say that all three, Whitman, Freud, and Rosenfeld, can be read in the context of the greater sexual frankness characteristic of the early years of the century. Be that as it may, Rosenfeld on one occasion praised Arthur Dove's nature paintings for their "chaste and robust animalism, [and] some solid feeling of the soil. Dove begins a sort of *Leaves of Grass* through pigment." Rosenfeld goes on to say that "Dove brings the beginning of an whole man to his art. He brings a spirit which does not separate any one function of life from the other. It does not know noble and ignoble organs."[27] Rosenfeld was certainly paraphrasing Whitman's lines from the first *Leaves of Grass* of 1855:

> Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean
> Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.[28]

Rosenfeld continued by contrasting Dove's paintings with those of Albert Pinkham Ryder, suggesting that Ryder, a victim of the Puritan repression of physicality, revealed in his paintings not a whole person but rather a "duality between body and soul."[29] In what today seems a rather loopy critique of Ryder, Rosenfeld also argued that "sexual fear in particular speaks from [Ryder's] forms. For this reason, the lower parts of his paintings, corresponding to the lower parts of the body, were left relatively empty in comparison with the middle and upper parts which corresponded to the 'spiritual regions of the body.'"[30] The implication clearly was that Dove, by comparison, integrated his body with his soul and thus was able to integrate the lower and upper parts of his paintings. In fairness to Rosenfeld, it should be noted that these observations were also meant as a comment on the lack of cultural encouragement and fulfillment artists such as Ryder encountered in American life, but his use of language, I believe, is unthinkable without the example of Whitman and its recognition by such turn-of-the-century literary historians as John Macy and Hamilton Wright Mabie.[31]

During the years Rosenfeld wrote about Ryder and Dove, just before and after 1920, both literary and art critics were searching and calling for artists who could picture the nation's identity, personality

and character, to do for American art what Whitman had done for American literature. Perhaps the critics were responding to Whitman's own calls for great artists who would reflect an American identity in the arts and to Whitman's belief that through the arts, particularly through poetry, the nation could be fused into a single entity. He wrote in "Democratic Vistas" that two or three original poets or artists could provide the nation with "more compaction and more moral identity . . . than all its Constitutions, legislative and judicial ties, and all its hitherto political, warlike, or materialistic experiences."[32] Art critics like Rosenfeld, borne along by the nationalistic tide, began to believe that the nation's artists might be ready to "produce a great native expression."[33] One senses urgency in the voices of the art critics in part to find and to champion an artist the equal of Whitman and in part to associate American artists with the rising nationalism. But Rosenfeld and others thought that the great individual demanded by Whitman had not yet appeared, although Rosenfeld held out the possibility that Alfred Stieglitz might be that person.[34] An editorial in the magazine *The Arts* for November 1921 even upped the ante beyond native identity to global proportions when it asked rhetorically if its generation might "produce an artist capable of moulding the ideals of mankind, capable of winning man from the shams of modern life." The editorial then stated that in Whitman, American literature had "produced a man whose influence over human thought and feeling has spread over the earth." In conclusion the editorial asked its readers to "prepare for the time when an American painter or sculptor, who like a Phidias or a Giotto will have an influence that would dwarf that of Whitman."[35] Returning to Continental limits, art critic Henry McBride thought in 1922 that the nation had already begun to produce in Charles Demuth, Charles Burchfeld, and John Marin the "lusty" artists Whitman had prophesied.[36] But in 1925, the search for such an individual was still taking place. Art critic Thomas Craven in that year asked for an artist who like Whitman "with brains, energy and original vision . . . will convert the vast panorama of American life into living form."37

But even if no artist emerged either as Whitman's equal or as the major interpreter of American culture, several were praised for Whitmanesque qualities in their works. For example, Rosenfeld found Marin's work to be Whitmanesque "for its richness of touch, sensuality, crudeness and roughness."[38] Another critic pointed out resemblances between the paintings of George Luks and Whitman's poetry. "There are," the critic said, "the same unconventionabilities, the same felicity

of expression coupled with passages which are clumsily executed. There is the same downright sincerity."[39] I will grant that this last citation is a good example of early 1920s artbabble, but my point is that Whitman's name became a part of the art dialogue of the time and artists were measured in one way or another against it. Whitman, in effect, became the competition.

Surprisingly, several modernists disclosed a keen interest in Whitman, including Marsden Hartley, Stuart Davis, Joseph Stella, Maurice Sterne, and Abraham Walkowitz.[40] Of the modernists, only Hartley, like Henri, indicated a strong response to Whitman's desire for personal liberation and for an American identity. In 1918, during a period in which he was, as he said, "an American discovering America," he argued that an American art will emerge "only when there are artists big enough and really interested enough to comprehend the American scene. Whitman was a fine indication of promise and direction. It has not occurred since excepting in the local sense of poetry. . . ."[41] Hartley also acknowledged Whitman's importance for artistic emancipation, coupling him with Cézanne as having "done more . . . for the liberation of the artist, for the freeing of painting and poetry, than any other man of modern time."[42] Echoes of both Hartley's and Henri's readings of Whitman can even be found in the endorsement of the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. Henri-Pierre Roche, the French critic then living in New York City, wrote in an article in the Dada journal *The Blindman*: "May the spirit of Walt Whitman guide the Independents. Long live his memory; and long live the Independents."[43]

Joseph Stella, who had read Whitman in Italy before emigrating to America in 1896 and who, by 1913, had become fully conversant with modernist styles, found Whitman useful in yet other ways. He associated the poet more with the development of a modern art in America than with a specifically American art derived from American experiences. In fact, he equated Whitman with futurist artists. By futurists, Stella did not mean the Italian Futurists but those who were intent upon destroying tradition in order to create a new language "to express the feelings and emotions of the modern artist." American artists, he believed, had not yet fully understood the importance of developing a new artistic language for a new age, but, as he said, "America which is so young and energetic and has the great futurist work first achieved by Walt Whitman," should follow the example of the Europeans by creating such a language.[44] It is no wonder, then, that when painting

the Brooklyn Bridge, the symbol of industrial modernity in America, Stella invoked Whitman's verse "soaring above as a white aeroplane of Help . . . leading the sails of my Art through the blue vastity of Phantasy . . . ."[45] Precisely which passages in Whitman's work helped Stella navigate the vastity of Phantasy is a mystery to me. But it is quite likely that Stella's understanding of Whitman's significance for modern art grew from conversations with Benjamin De Casseras. At least both published articles in 1913 which treated Whitman in a similarly visionary manner. De Casseras, a critic in the Stieglitz circle, believed that logic, rationality and causation did not apply to modern life. Instead, chance, intuition, and irrationality were governing modes of existence. Among the various figures he singled out from the ancient and modern worlds who acknowledged "the sense of the Irrational as [a] principle of existence" were Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. He called them "the three supreme Irrationalists of the age . . . for they reported what they *felt*, not what they *saw*." And because of their apparent dedication to the irrational, he considered them to be "fathers of the cubists and futurists."[46]

Unlike De Casseras and Stella who considered Whitman central to the development of the modern spirit, Stuart Davis found in Whitman a poet who explored the quotidian and the ordinary and who reveled in his wonder and love for America. Writing in his journal in 1921, around the time he was painting his "tobacco pictures," as he called them, he attacked European modernism, calling cubists good metaphysicians and Dadaists "jugglers with whom we have been acquainted in vaudeville for some years." By contrast he considered works such as *Lucky Strike* and *Sweet Caporal* to be original and without parallel. "In poetry," he wrote, we have [Vachel] Lindsay, [Edgar Lee] Masters, [Carl] Sandburg, and [William Carlos] Williams all in some direct way direct descendants of Whitman, our one big artist. I too feel the things Whitman felt—and I too will express it in pictures. America—the wonderful place we live in—I want direct simple pictures of classic beauty—expressing the immediate life of the day. I want this now, always have wanted it and always will want it."[47]

It is important to note here that Davis seems to have accepted Whitman as the master delineator of the American scene both in spirit and in content. Whitman had become, for Davis, institutionalized. Davis might even have thought that Whitman would have approved of the tobacco pictures, for they were original and, by implication, American in that the paintings expressed, as Davis conceived them,

"the immediate life of the day."

Until 1939, no artist to my knowledge illustrated specific passages in Whitman's poetry or prose. The only instance I know of, aside from book illustrations of his verse, are the 13 panels Ben Shahn and Bernarda Bryson Shahn painted for the Bronx Central Annex Post Office in 1939. These were inspired by the 18-line poem, "I Hear America Singing."[48] In the poem, Whitman wrote that he heard mechanics, carpenters, masons, boatmen, shoemakers, woodcutters, and women "each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else."[49] And in Whitman fashion, the Shahns presented in heroic scale various ordinary Americans going about their daily tasks. As Shahn said of these murals, "my idea was to show the people of the Bronx something about America outside New York."[50] Whitman is here used as a tour guide.

A further question needs to be asked. Did any artist come close to capturing the aura of Whitman in his work? Some might say that Thomas Hart Benton did, but I would argue the opposite. Unfortunately, I cannot find in Benton's writings any direct references to Whitman, although they must exist, since Benton was well read and could hardly have missed Whitman.[51] In any event, there are several passages in Whitman that seem to describe Benton's attitudes toward American art and culture better than those of any other artist. For example, Whitman wrote that "the greatest writers only are pleased and at their ease among the unlearned,—are received by common men and women familiarly, do not hold out obscure, but come welcome to table, bed, leisure, by day or night."[52] It would seem that most of Benton's *An Artist in America* was written as an emendation to that thought, for Benton described in great and loving detail his contacts with common people in the South and Southwest.[53] Benton's desire to meet with such people was predicated on the beliefs that American art should not be derived from European art, that the American artist should, as Whitman said, "respond to his country's spirit," that the American artist should neither paint the elite nor paint for them, and that he should not prefer one region to another.[54] Further, Benton painted, as he often said, typical scenes and typical people engaged in typical tasks. All of these thoughts can be found throughout Whitman's prose and poetry, notably in the preface to *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of the Broadaxe," "Song of Myself," "By Blue Ontario's Shore," and "Democratic Vistas." Why, then, was Benton not considered the Whitman of American painting? I believe that Benton was rejected by

so many, even during the 1930s, because of his narrow, nationalistic reading of American art and culture. In place of Whitman's open expansiveness and quest for the ideal democratic individual in the entirety of America, Benton was instead exclusionary, hostile and ethnocentric. In the end, Benton violated Whitman's vision by substituting ideas of the *Volk* and appealing to history and tradition instead of honoring Whitman's endless chant to an America still in formation, still open to growth, change and new songs.

In seeking to assess Whitman's significance for American art early in the century, I have tried to take nothing for granted and have therefore remained as close to the evidence of the written word as possible rather than to assign overarching influences to Whitman. To do the latter would mean, I believe, assigning too much significance to one person without considering his influence within a context that would include the contributions of Emerson, William James and a host of others concerned with American art and life. Granted, Whitman was the representative figure for many, the person whose example was important, even primary, but he was not the only figure and we need to guard against such simplistic and one-dimensional thinking. Nor was there, as I have tried to suggest, a canonical Whitman. Certainly, he was the stellar example of an artist concerned with both self-definition and national identity. He was also a model for those waiting to document the contemporary scene, an aspect of the larger issue of national identity. And he was also mentioned in discussions of sexual liberation and as a visionary and forerunner of modern art. These various perceptions of Whitman are linked together by the implicit acknowledgment of his desire to break with the past, whether it be a European-influenced or a Puritan-influenced past. In this regard, he was recognized as the country's first vanguard artist, and, as such, artists and critics could find in his work and in his example whatever they were looking for. Or as Whitman wrote in "Song of Myself":

> Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems.
>
> . . . . .
>
> You shall listen to all sides and filter them for yourself.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you.
> You must travel it for yourself.[55]

NOTES

[1] Charles C. Alexander, *Here The Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth-Century America* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1980), p. 94.

[2] Malcolm Cowley, "Pascin's America," *Broom*, 4 (January 1923), 36.

[3] Max Kozloff, "Walt Whitman and American Art," in Edwin Haviland Miller (ed.), *The Artistic Legacy of Walt Whitman* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p. 38.

[5] This reading of Emerson is based on Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1987). For Bancroft, see R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 161-65.

[6] *Whitman*, p. 299.

[7] *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 412.

[8] *Whitman*, p. 1053.

[9] Norman Foerster, "Whitman and the Cult of Confusion," *North American Review*, 213 (June 1921), 800-801; Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), p. 71; and Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming of Age* (1915) in *Three Essays on America* (New York: Dutton, 1934), pp. 79-80.

[10] Robert F. Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," in James Olney, ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 160.

[11] Jeffrey Steele, *The Representation of the Self in the American Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 71.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[13] *An Introduction to Metaphysics* was published in English in 1903, *Time and Free Will* in 1910, and *Creative Evolution* in 1913.

[14] From "Song of Myself," in *Whitman*, p. 190.

[15] F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 622. See also Steele, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

[16] "Editorial," *The Seven Arts*, (May 1917), vii.

[17] Joseph J. Kwiat, "Robert Henri and the Emerson-Whitman Tradition," *PMLA*, 71 (September, 1956), 618.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] See Matthew Baigell, "American Painting and National Identity: The 1920s," *Arts Magazine*, 61 (February 1987), 48-55.

[20] John Durand (trans. and intro.), *Lectures on Art by Hippolyte Taine* (New York: Henry Holt, 1883), p. 30.

[21] Robert Henri, "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring From the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School," *The Craftsman* 15 (January 1909), 387-401.

[22] *Whitman*, p. 1050.

[23] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1923), p. 80.

[24] Roger Asselineau, *The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 94.

[25] Kwiat, *op. cit.*, 620n. Sloan also mentioned that on May 16, 1909, and on May 31, 1910, he had read "Song of Myself" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," respectively, in Bruce St. John (ed.), *John Sloan's New York Scene* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 314, 428.

[26] Hamilton Wright Mabie, *Backgrounds of Literature* (1904), (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. 199-200; and John Macy, *The Spirit of American Literature* (1913), (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1969), pp. 223-225.

[27] Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), p. 169.

[28] *Whitman*, p. 29.

[29] Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15

[31] See end note 26.

[32] *Whitman*, p. 935. See also "Preface, Leaves of Grass" (1855), p. 7; and "By Blue Ontario's Shore," p. 474.

[33] Rosenfeld, "American Painting," *The Dial* 71 (December 1921), 669.

[34] *Ibid.*, 656. For Stieglitz, see "Stieglitz," *The Dial* 70 (April 1921), 406; and *Port of New York*, pp. 237-238.

[35] "Editorial," *The Arts* 2 (November 1921), 65.

[36] Daniel Catton Rich (ed.), *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticism of Henry McBride* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 165.

[37] Thomas Craven, "Men of Art American Style," *American Mercury* 6 (December 1925), 432.

[38] Rosenfeld, "The Water Colors of John Marin," *Vanity Fair* 18 (April 1922), 92.

[39] *The Arts*, 1 (February-March 1921), 34.

[40] For Sterne see Kent Blaser, "Walt Whitman and American Art," *Walt Whitman Review*, 24 (March 1978), 116. I want to thank Roberta Tarbell for bringing this reference to my attention. For Walkowitz, see "Interview with Abraham Walkowitz," *Journal of the Archives of American Art* 9 (January 1969), 15. For Hartley, Davis and Stella, see below.

[41] Marsden Hartley, "America as Landscape," *El Palacio* (December 1918), 341.

[42] *Adventures in the Arts* (1921), (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1972), p. 35.

[43] H[enri]-P[ierre] Roché, "The Blind Man," *The Blindman*, 1 (April 10, 1917), 6. See also Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), p. 54.

[44] Joseph Stella, "The New Art," *The Trend*, 5 (June 1913), 395.

[45] Cited in Irma Jaffe, *Joseph Stella* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 81, from Stella, "Brooklyn Bridge, A Page in My Life," *Transition*, 16-17 (Spring-Summer 1929), 86-88.

[46] Benjamin De Casseras, "The Renaissance of the Irrational," *Camera Work*, Special Issue (June 1913), 22, 23.

[47] Stuart Davis, "Journal 1920-1922." Entry under May 1921, collection of Wyatt H. Davis, microfilm courtesy of Robert Hunter.

[48] Bernarda Bryson Shahn, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Abrams, 1972), p. 288.

[49] *Whitman*, p. 174.

[50] *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Summer 1947, p. 23.

[51] I cannot find references in Benton's published writings nor in the Benton material in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[52] Walt Whitman, "An American Primer," *Atlantic Monthly*, 93 (April 1904), 465.

[53] Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America*, 4th ed. rev. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983).

[54] See especially "Democratic Vistas," in *Whitman*, p. 935.

[55] *Whitman*, pp. 189, 190, 241.