

The **American**
“**RENAISSANCE**”

1830s to *c.* 1880 (?)

UNITARIANISM:

Its Origin and History.

A COURSE OF SIXTEEN LECTURES, DELIVERED
IN CHANNING HALL, BOSTON, 1888-89.

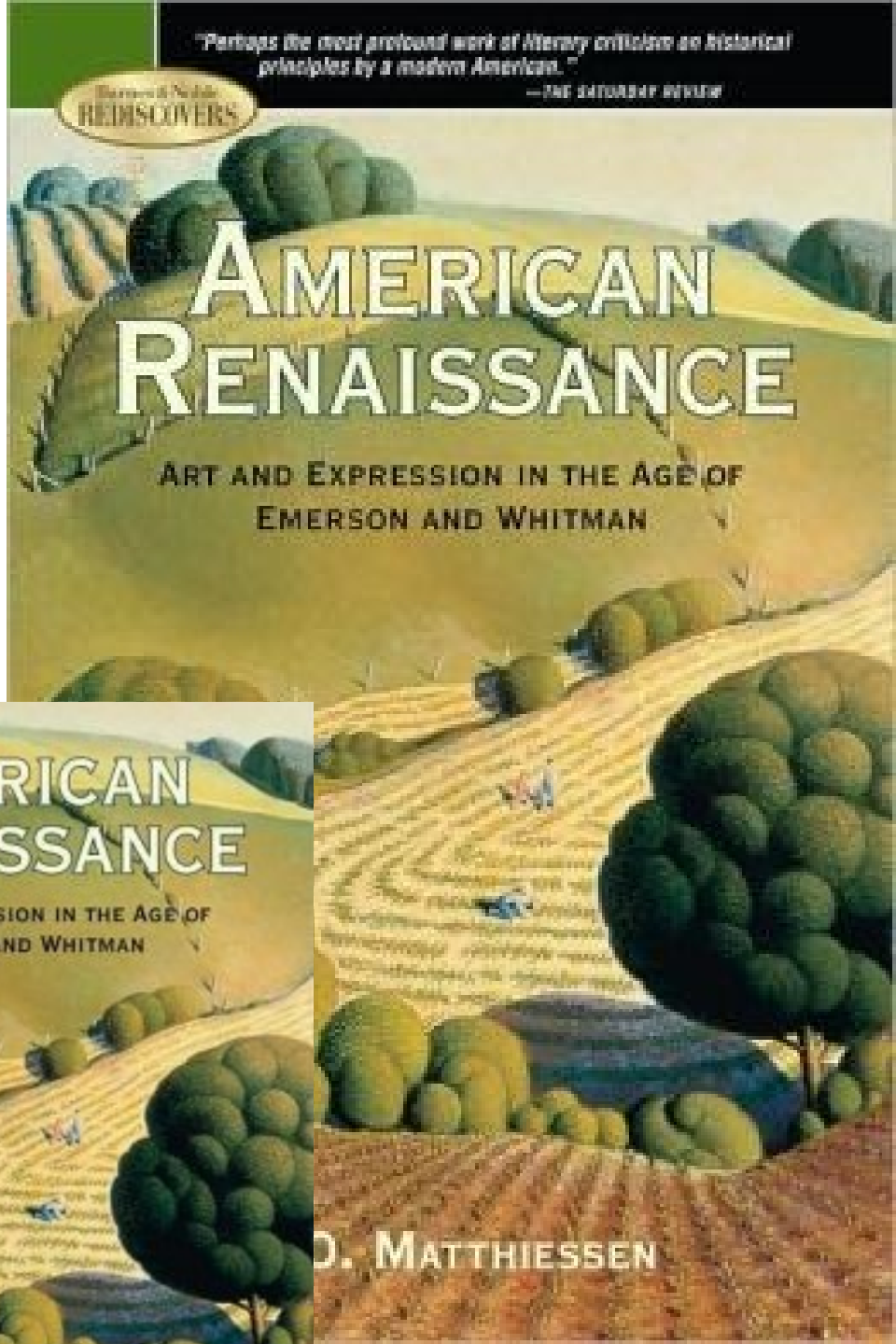
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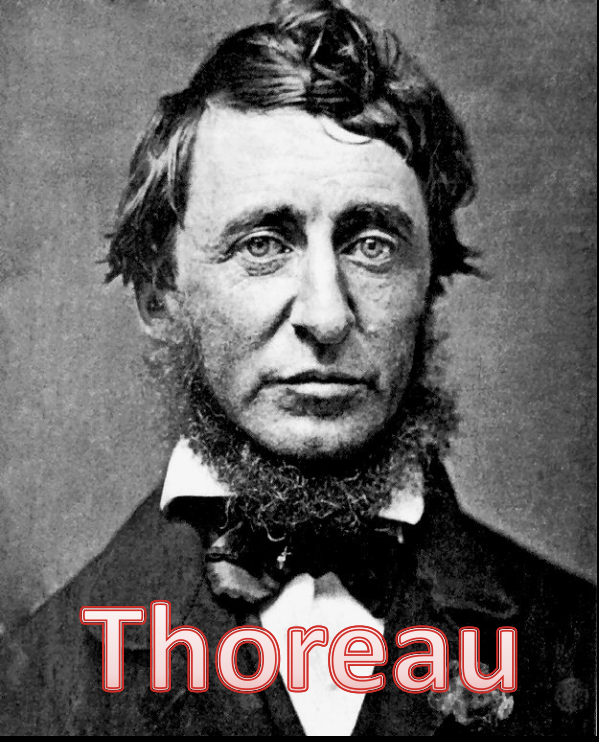
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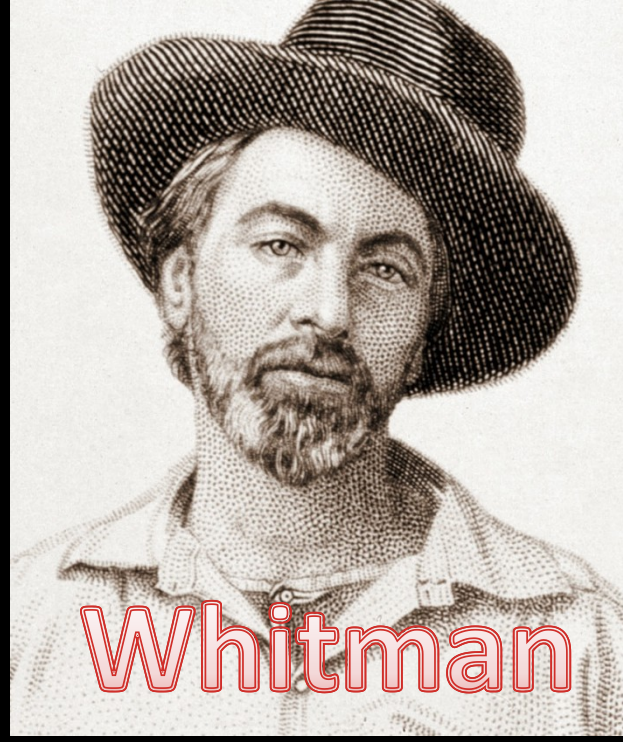
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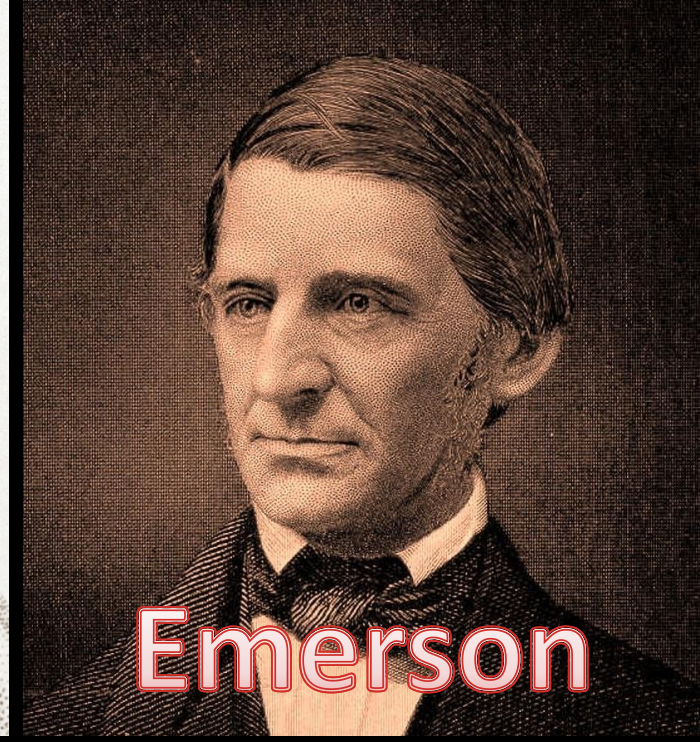




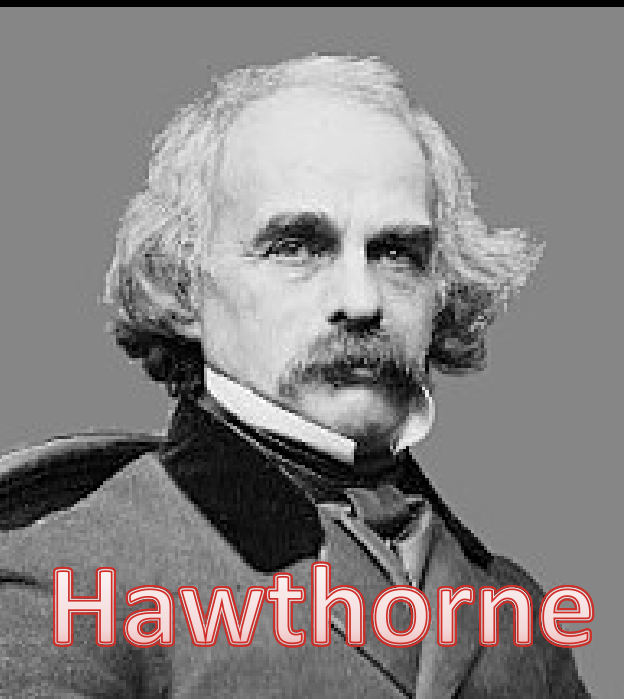
Thoreau



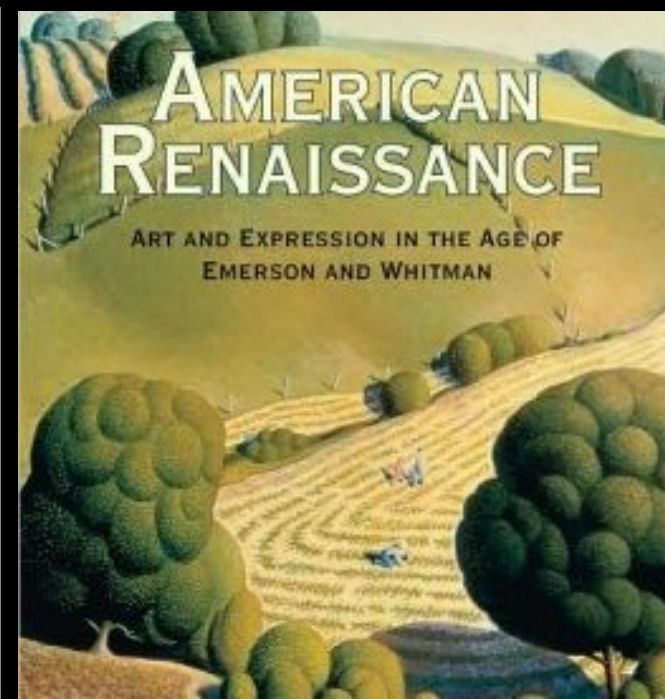
Whitman



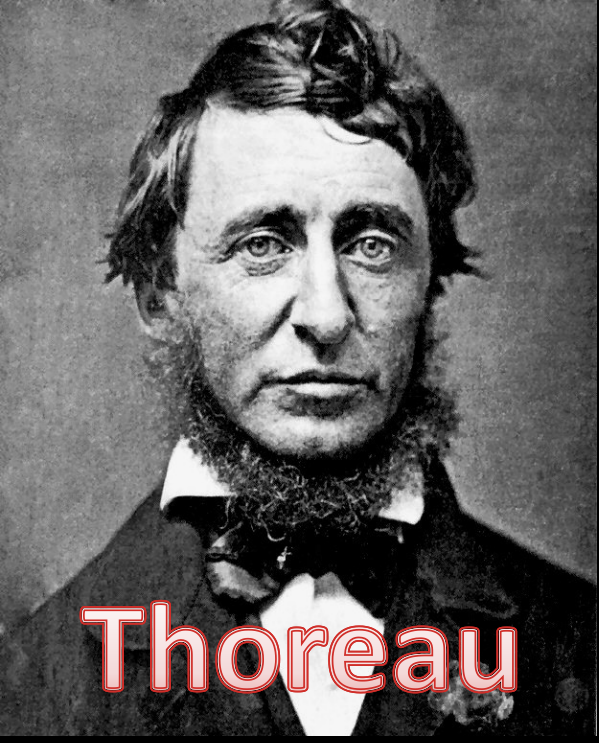
Emerson



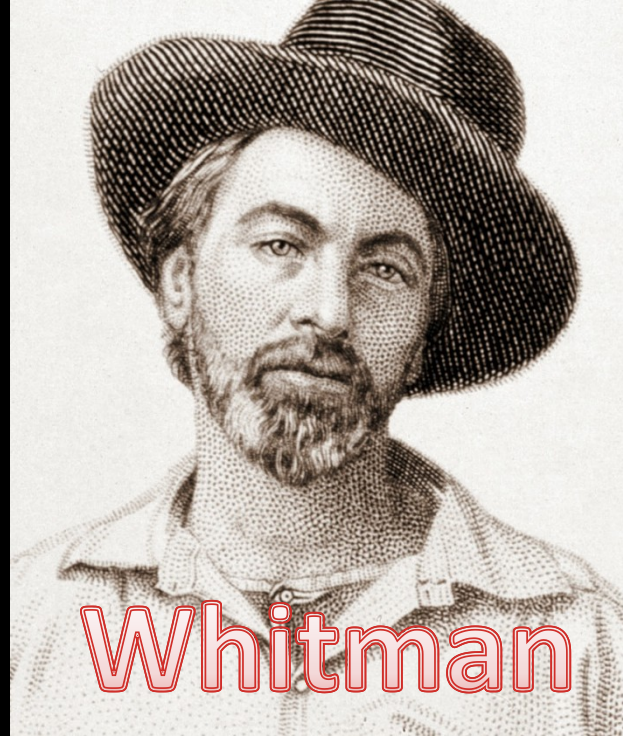
Hawthorne



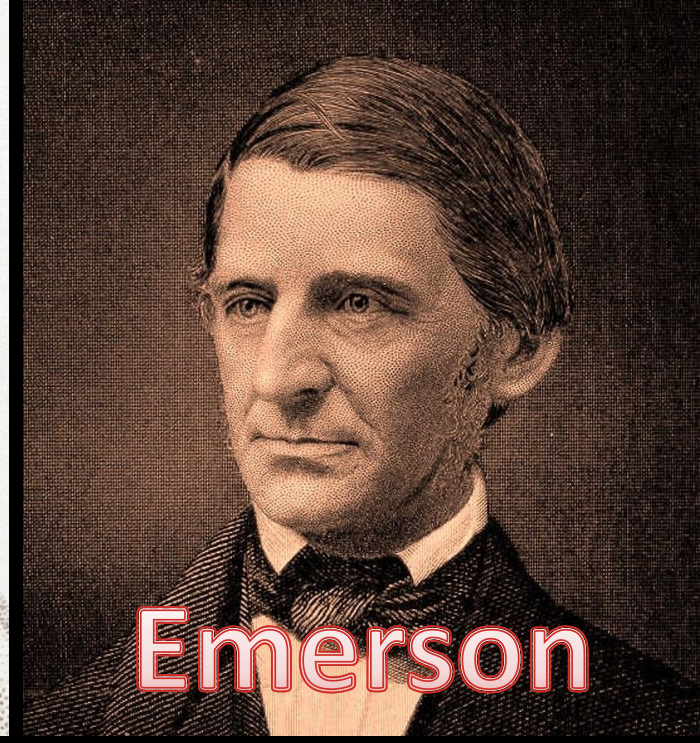
Melville



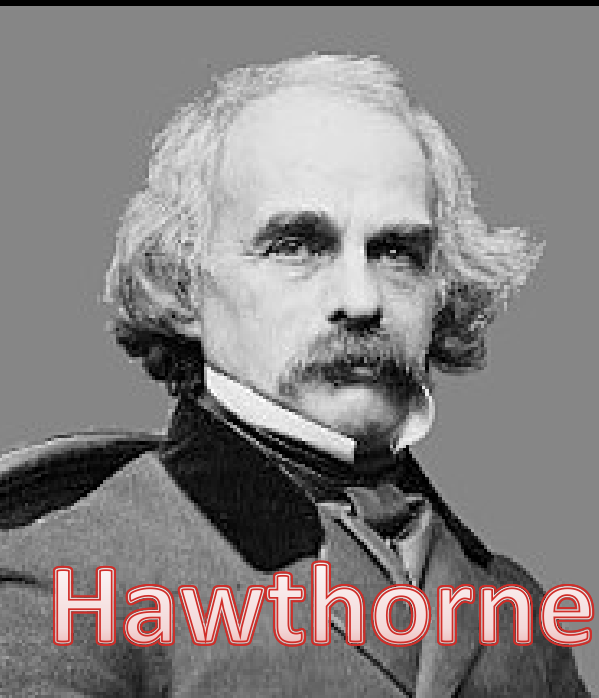
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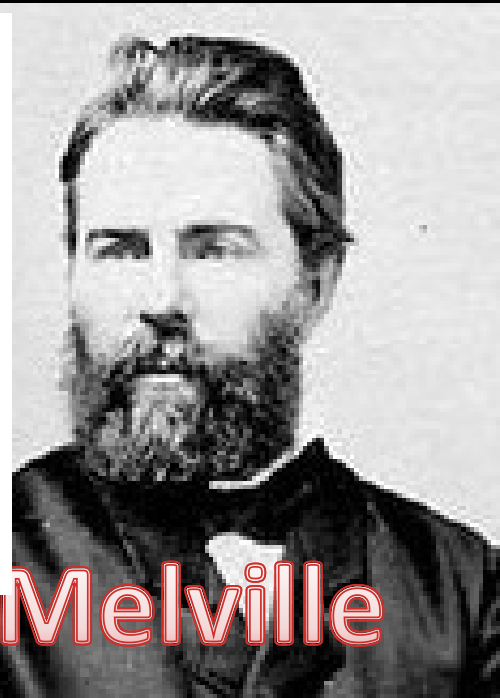
Whitman



Emerson



Hawthorne



Melville



Douglass

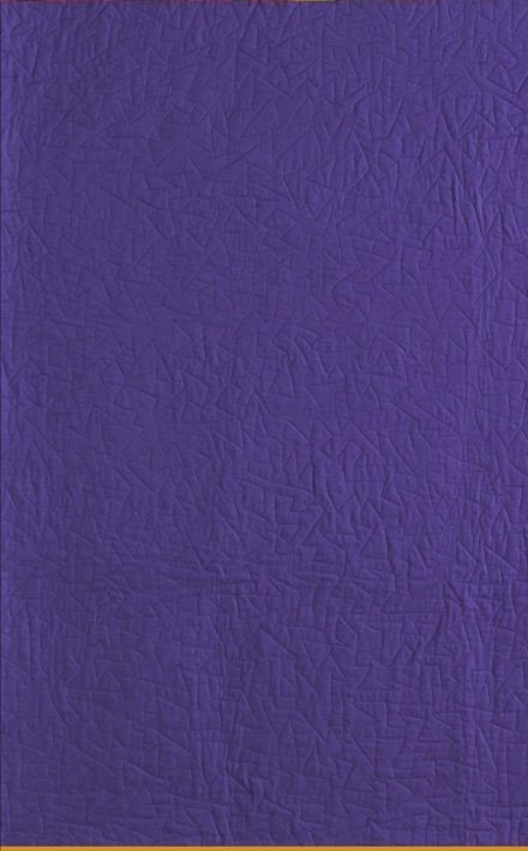


Stowe

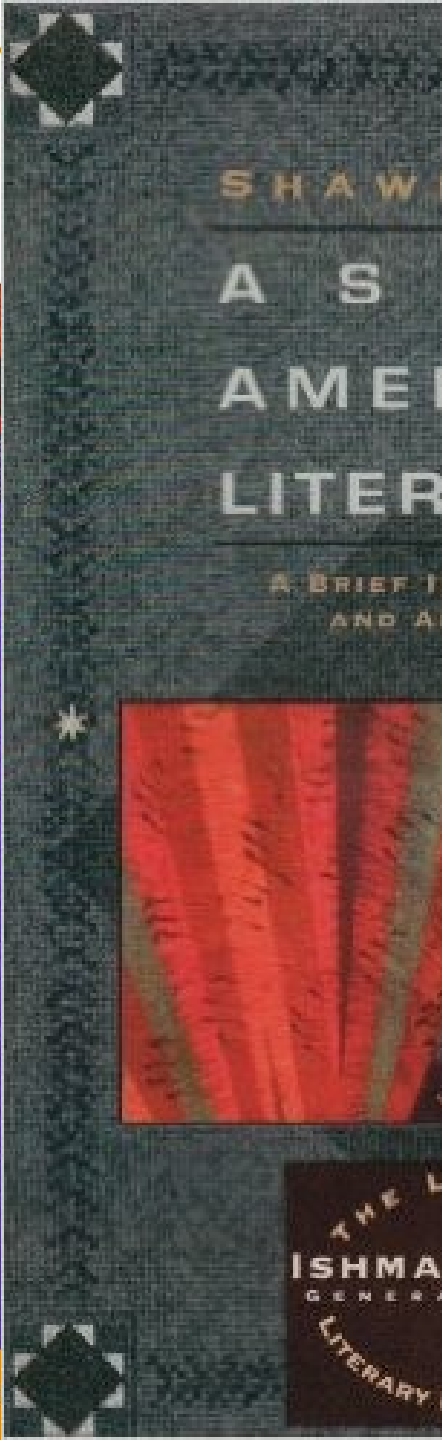
What is **AMERICAN** **LITERATURE?**

**IS THERE an AMERICAN
LITERATURE?**

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE



Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Vale



THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF LATINO LITERATURE



ILAN STAVANS
GENERAL EDITOR





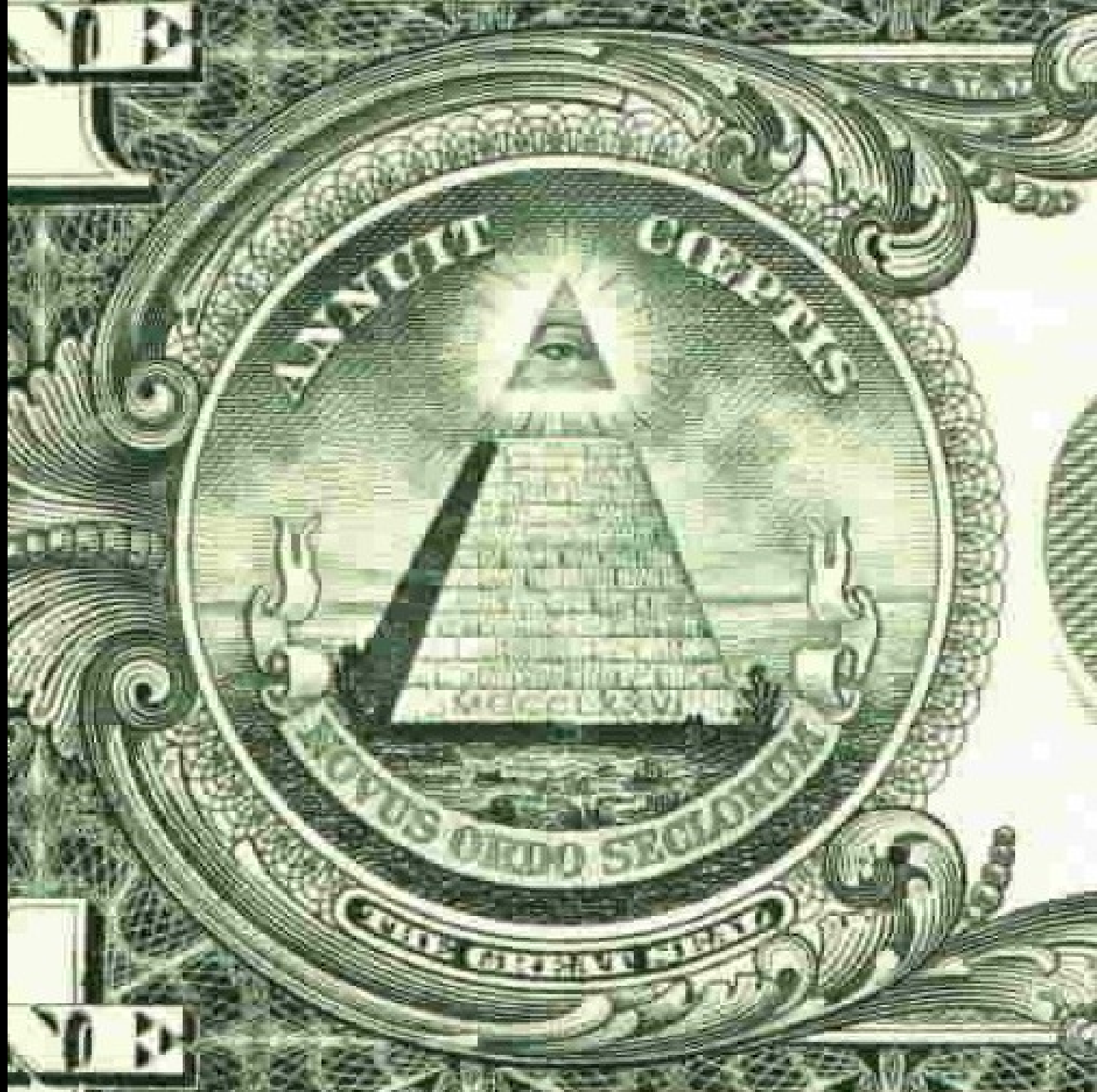


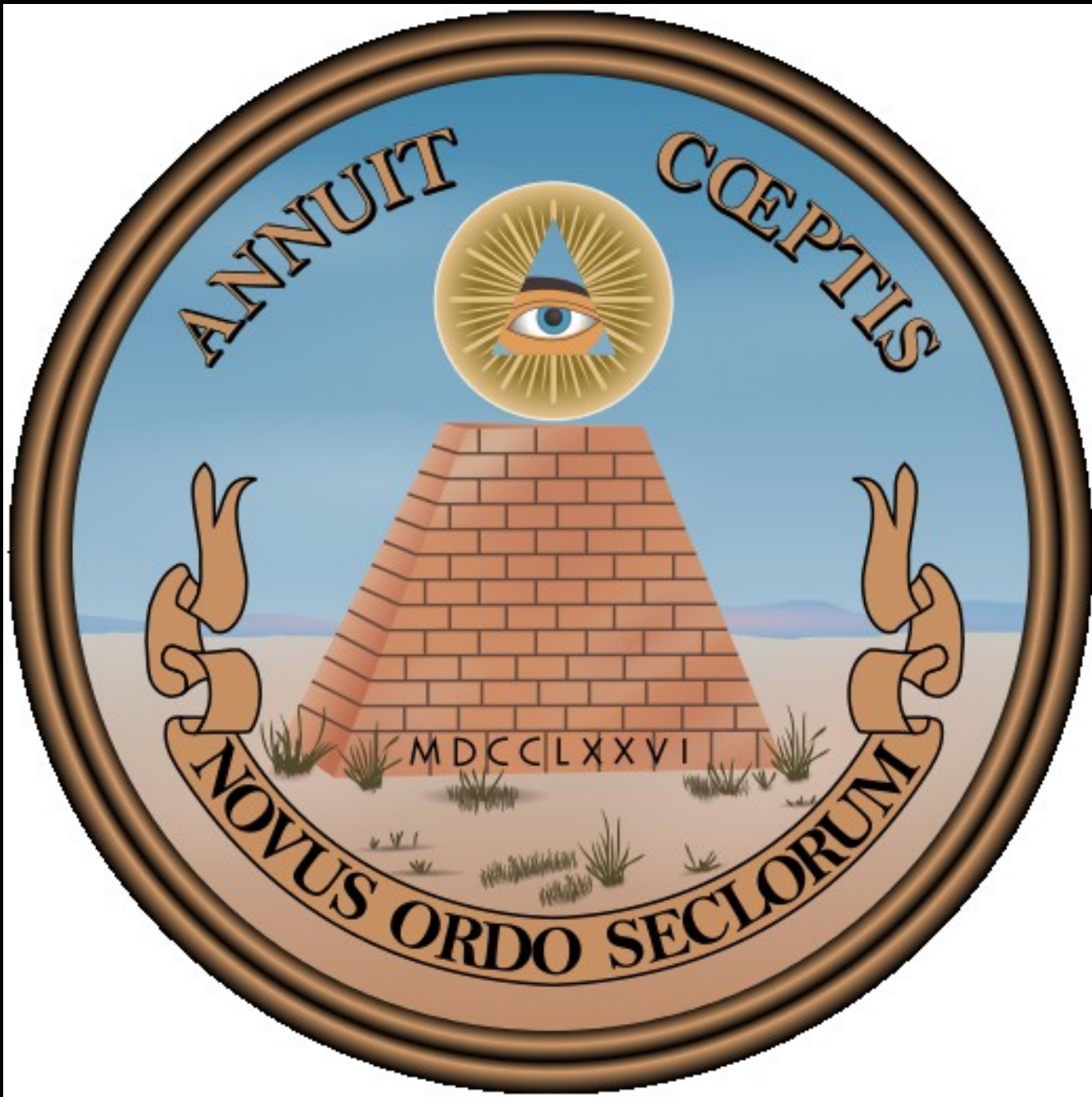
Neoclassicism



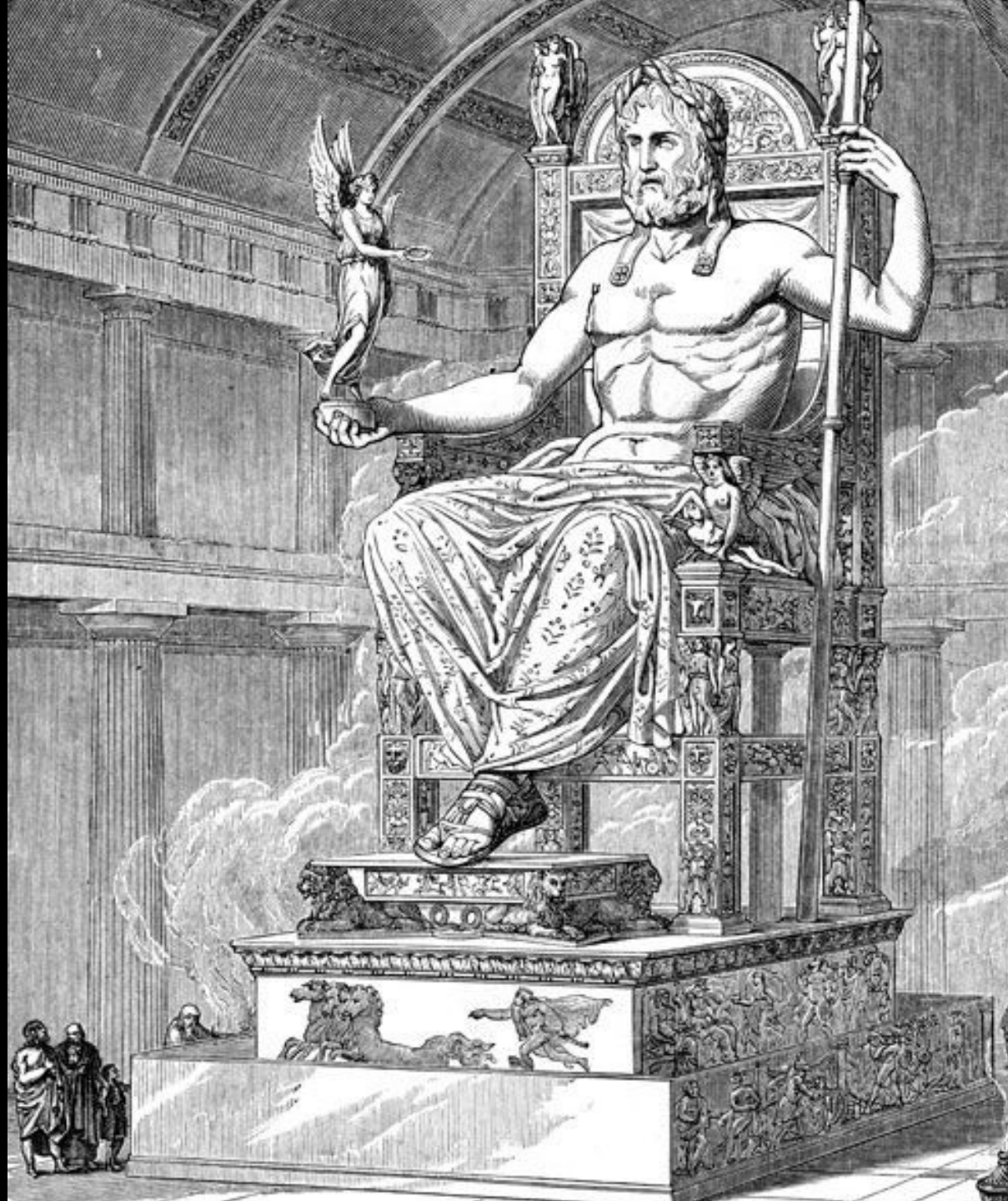
LIBERTY

1805











SACRED
to the Memory of
WASHINGTON,
On the Day After
his Death,
1799.



A. LINCOLN,
Died
April 15th 1865.

IN MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.
THE EDWARD OF THE JUST.

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM SMITH, MANAGER OF THE "NATIONAL STANDARD," PHILA.

“In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? Or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?”

American literature “is all imported.why should the Americans write books, when a six weeks' passage brings them, in their own tongue, our sense, science, and genius, in bales and hogsheads [barrels]?”

~ *The Edinburgh Review, 1819-20*

“Prairies, steamboats, grist-mills, are their natural objects for centuries to come. Then, when they have got to the Pacific Ocean — epic poems, plays, pleasures of memory, and all the elegant gratifications of an ancient people, who have tamed the wild earth, and set down to amuse themselves. — This is the natural march of human affairs.”

~ *The Edinburgh Review, 1819-20*

“There are no dramatic subjects in a country which has witnessed no great political catastrophes, and in which love invariably leads by a straight and easy road to matrimony. People who spend every day in the week in making money, and the Sunday in going to church, have nothing to invite the muse of Comedy.”

~ Alexis de Tocqueville, 1831 / 1840

W H Y
A NATIONAL LITERATURE
CANNOT FLOURISH

IN THE
UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA

BY
JOSEPH ROCCHIETTI

NEW YORK
PRINTED BY J. W. KELLEY, 424 BROADWAY

1845.

Various critics,

including many Americans, said:

- ✓ Americans are too busy with their practical concerns; it will be centuries before they're fully settled down and civilized
- ✓ A country in that condition produces no subject matter for great literature
- ✓ It's not "American literature" just because Americans write it
- ✓ The literature being produced in America is derivative, "retrospective," "second-hand"
- ✓ To have an American literature, "an original idea must animate this nation"

Various critics,

including many Americans, said:

- ✓ Americans must find a way to express their “national genius”

✓ A

Neoclassicism

✓ An

s”

Romanticism

Blake Shelley

Byron Wordsworth

Romanticism

Coleridge Pushkin

Novalis

Carlyle

Goethe

Literary

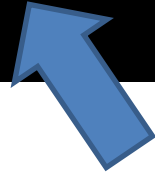


Romanticism



Religious

Literary



Transcendentalism



Religious

Literature

Literary
criticism

Experimental
schools

Social reform

Transcendentalism

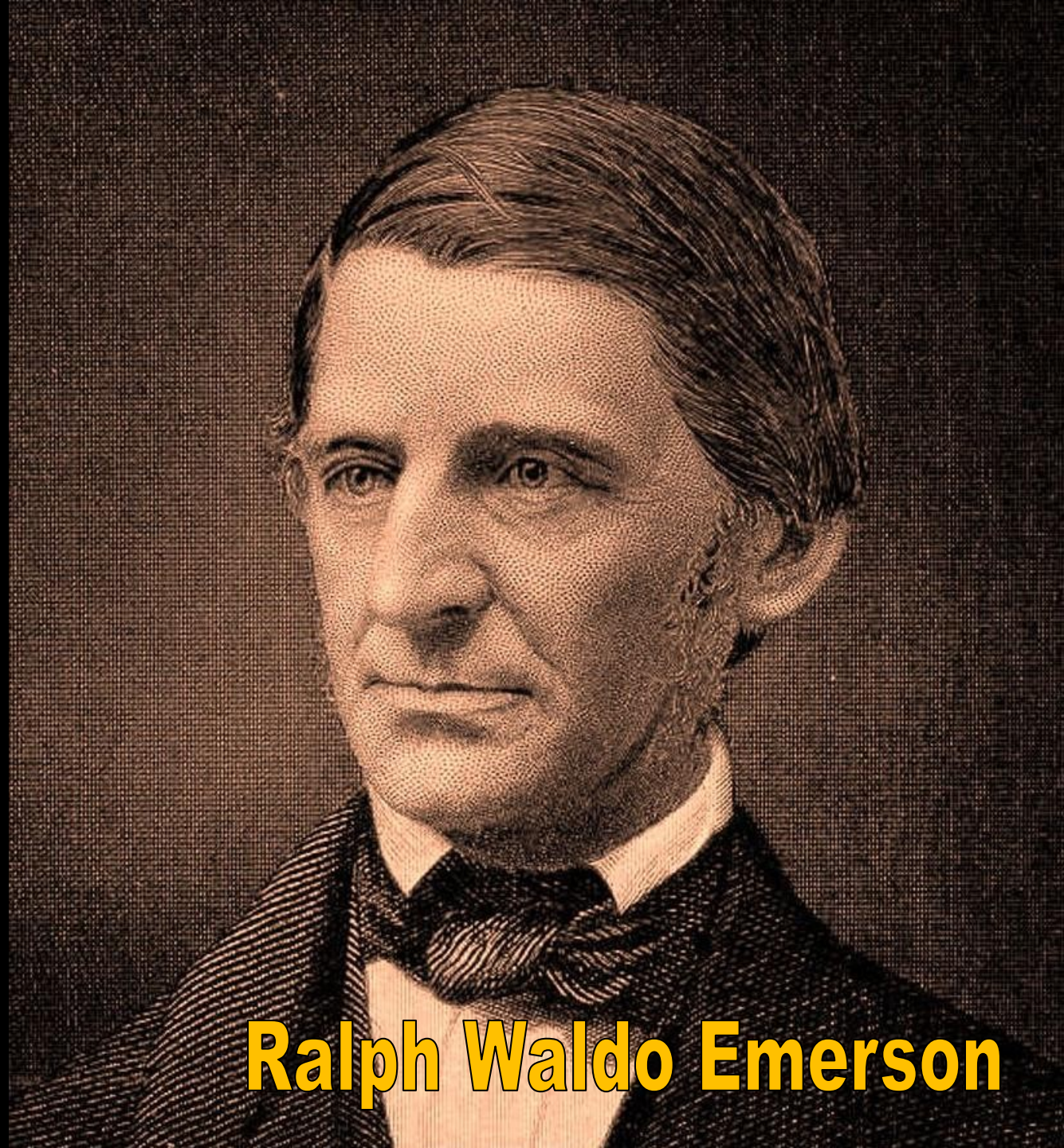
Communes,
alternative
lifestyles
feminism

Philosophy

**Church
reform**

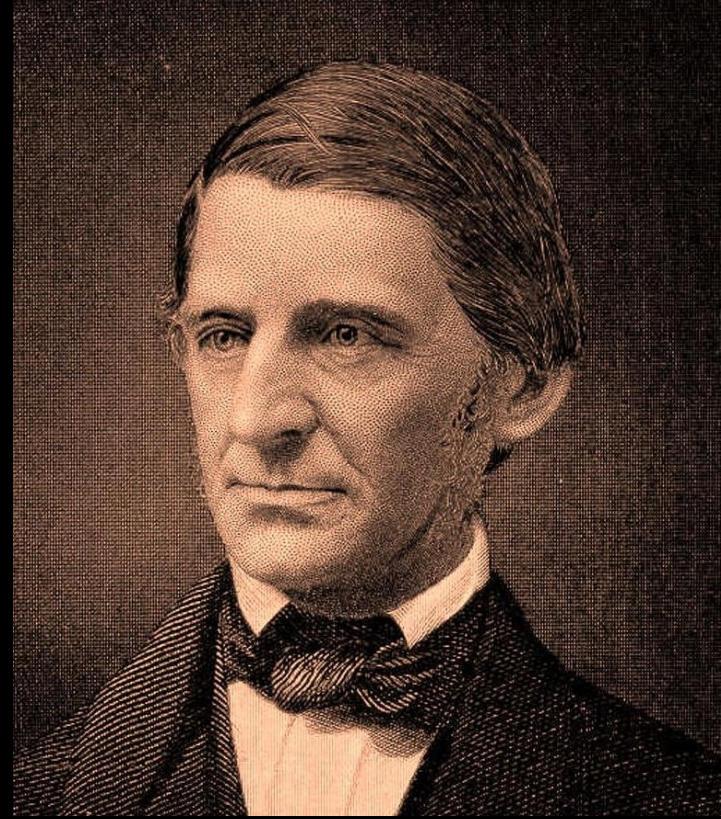
“We
have
listened
too long
to the
courtly
muses of
Europe.”

~ *“The American
Scholar”*



Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and [political] caucus ... are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, and the temple of Delphos, and are as swiftly passing away.

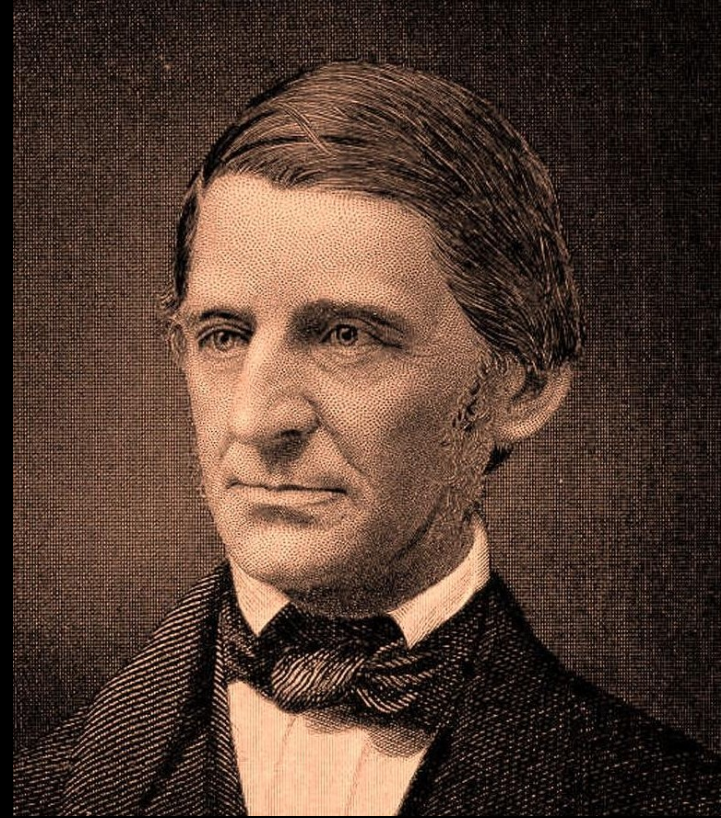


R. W. Emerson

“...the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon, and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes....”

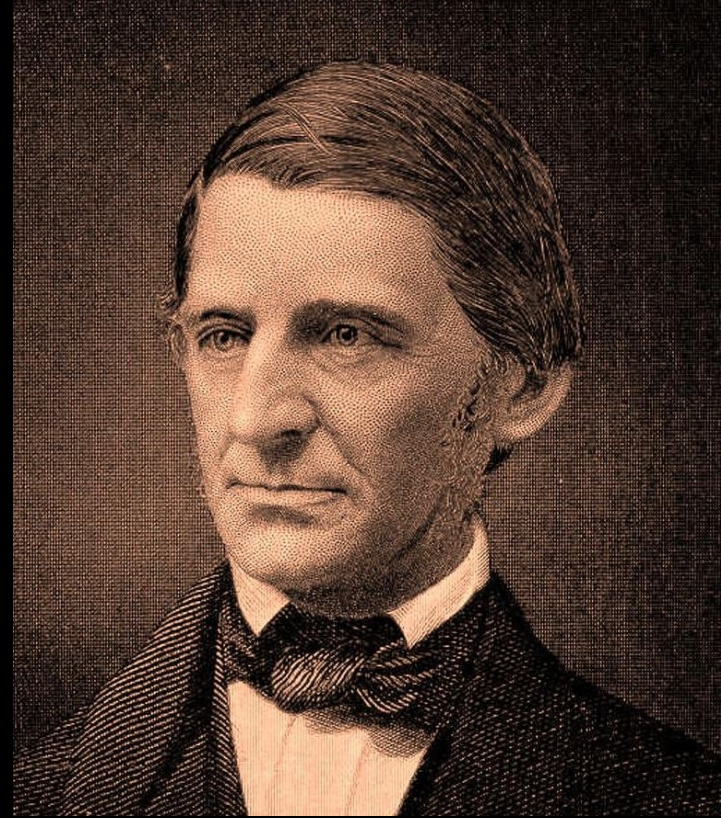
“We do not, with sufficient plainness, or sufficient profoundness, address ourselves to life, nor dare we chant our own times and social circumstance.

“....Time and nature yield us many gifts, but not yet the timely man, the new religion, the reconciler, whom all things await.”



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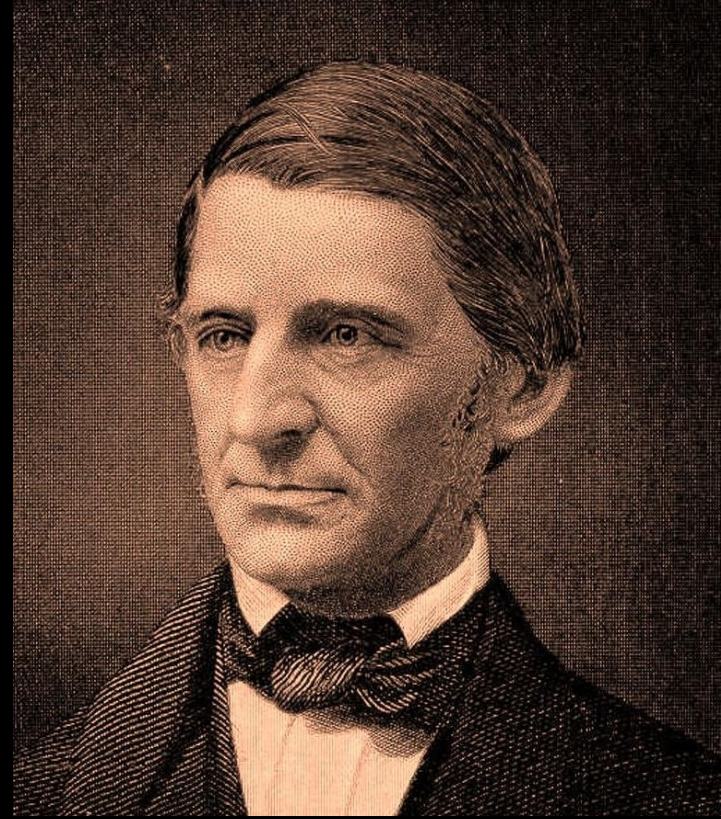


Poets are
“liberating
gods”

The “highest problem
of authorship”:

“We too must
write Bibles”

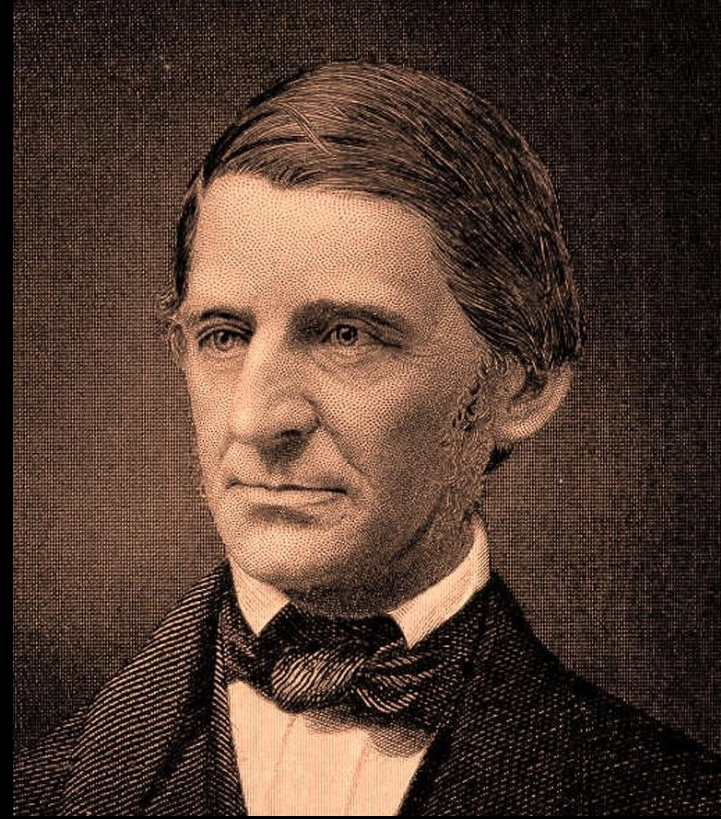
Needed: “not a dead letter,
but a perpetual Scripture”

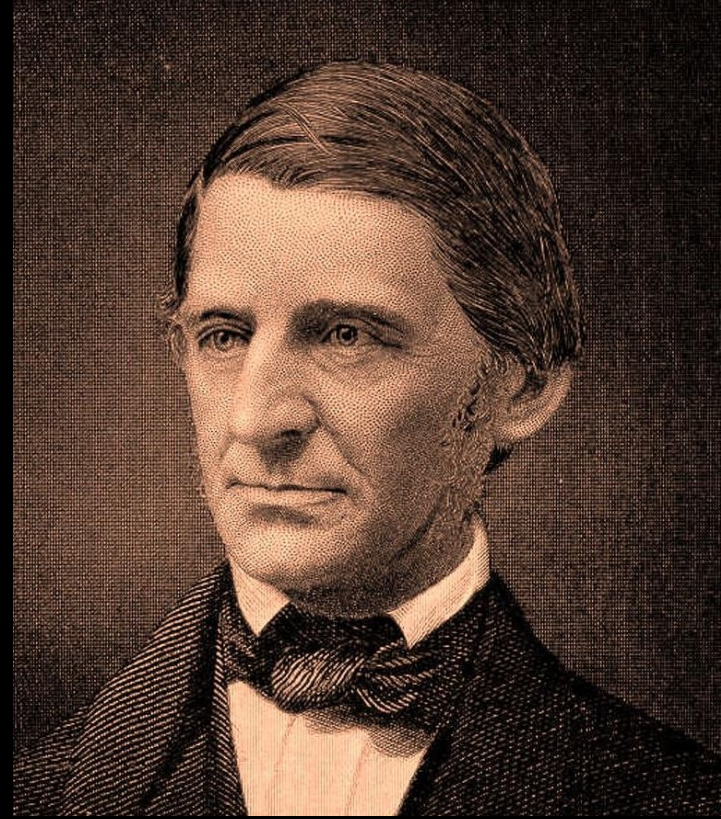


The “highest problem
of authorship”:

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Needed: “not a dead letter,
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“I look in vain for the
poet whom I describe.”

“The priest
departs; the
divine literatus
comes”

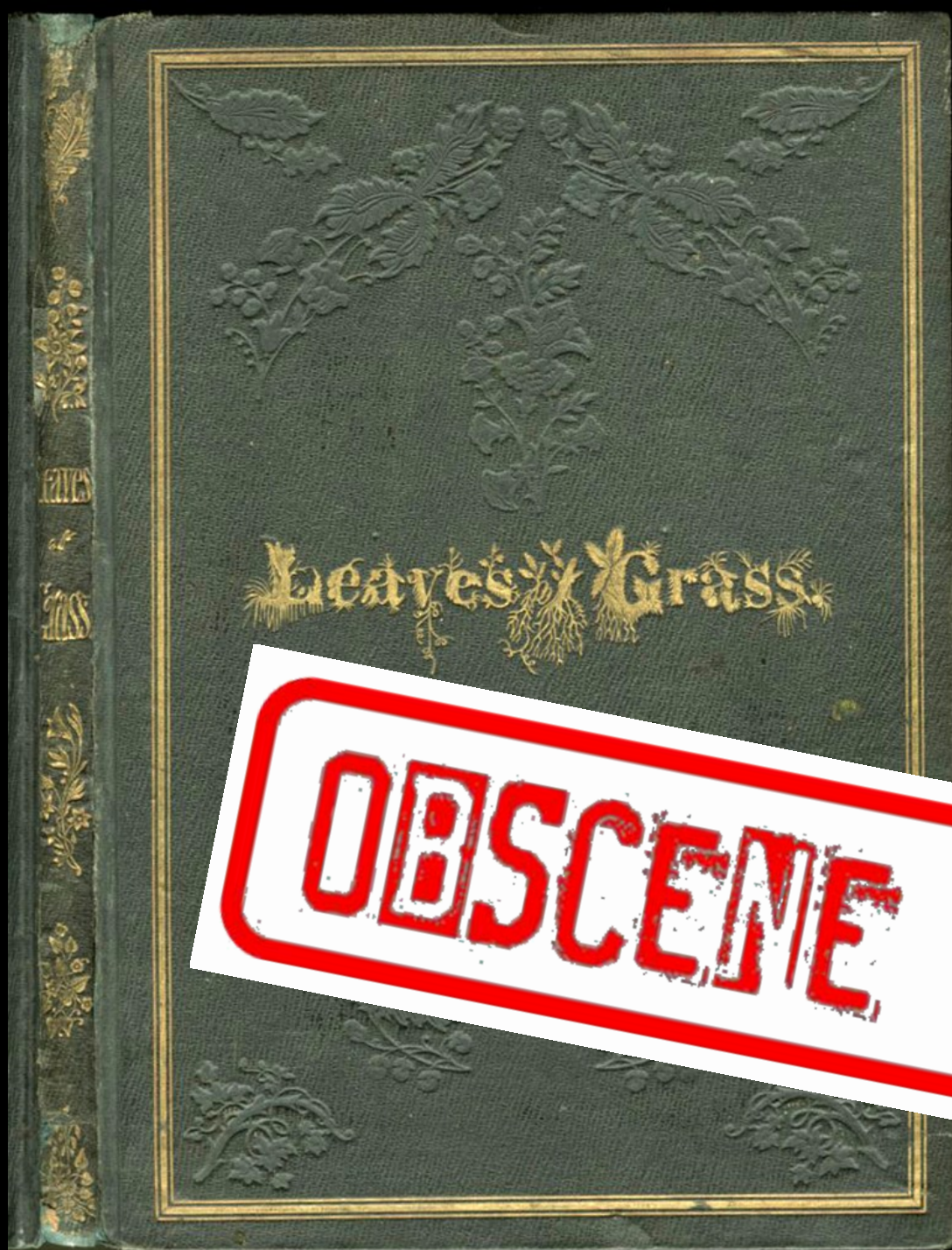


“I look in vain for the
poet whom I describe.”

“the true son of
God, the poet”



“the Great Construction
of a New Bible”



OBSCENE FILTH

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalm 23, King James Version (KJV)

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and let my cry come unto Thee.

{ Hide not Thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble;
incline Thine ear unto me.
In the day when I call, answer me speedily.

For my days are consumed like smoke, }
and my bones are burned as a hearth. }

My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.
By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

{ I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.
I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.

Mine enemies reproach me all the day,
and them that are mad against me are sworn against me.

Psalm 102

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great;
thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:
who maketh the clouds his chariot:
who walketh upon the wings of the wind:
Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:
Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.
Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment:
the waters stood above the mountains.

O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all:
the earth is full of thy riches.

So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable,
both small and great beasts.

There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.
These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.

Psalm 104

4

I loved well those cities;
I loved well the stately and rapid river;
The men and women I saw were all near to me;
Others the same—others who look back on me, because I look'd forward to them;
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it, then, between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not.

6

I too lived—Brooklyn, of ample hills, was mine;
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan Island, and bathed in the waters around it;
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day, among crowds of people, sometimes they came upon me, }
In my walks home late at night, or as I lay in my bed, they came upon me. }

Whitman, from “*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*”

Fecund America—today,

Thou art all over set in births and joys!

Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a swathing-garment,

Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions,

A myriad-twinning life like interlacing vines binds all thy vast demesne,

As some huge ship freighted to water's edge thou ridest into port,

As rain falls from the heaven and vapors rise from earth, so have

the precious values fallen upon thee and risen out of thee;

Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!

Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty,

Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,

Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle and lookest out upon

thy world, and lookest East and lookest West,

Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles, a million farms,

and missest nothing,

Thou all-acceptress—thou hospitable, (thou only art hospitable

as God is hospitable.)

Whitman, from “*The Return of the Heroes*”

See, mechanics, busy at their benches, with tools —
 See from among them, superior judges, philo-
 sophs, Presidents, emerge, dressed in working
 dresses;

See, lounging through the shops and fields of The
 States, me, well-beloved, close-held by day and
 night,

Hear the loud echo of my songs there! Read the
 hints come at last.

64. O my comrade!
 O you and me at last — and us two only;
 O power, liberty, eternity at last!
 O to be relieved of distinctions! to make as much
 of vices as virtues!
 O to level occupations and the sexes! O to bring
 all to common ground! O adhesiveness!
 O the pensive aching to be together — you know not
 why, and I know not why.
65. O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!
 O something extatic and undemonstrable! O music
 wild!
 O now I triumph — and you shall also;
 O hand in hand — O wholesome pleasure — O one
 more desirer and lover,
 O haste, firm holding — haste, haste on, with me.



WALT WHITMAN.



1. I CELEBRATE myself,
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs
 to you.
2. I loafe and invite my Soul,
 I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of
 summer grass.
3. Houses and rooms are full of perfumes — the shelves
 are crowded with perfumes,
 I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and
 like it,
 The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall
 not let it.
4. The atmosphere is not a perfume — it has no taste of
 the distillation, it is odorless,
 It is for my mouth forever — I am in love with it,
 I will go to the bank by the wood, and become
 undisguised and naked,
 I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,
I advance from the people in their own spirit,
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes ! omnes ! let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is — and I
say there is in fact no evil,
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land or
to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion,
I descend into the arena,
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the win-
ner's pealing shouts,
Who knows ? they may rise from me yet, and soar above every thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's
sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how cer-
tain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must
be their religion,
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur ;
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man ?
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours ?
These ostensible realities, politics, points ?
Your ambition or business whatever it may be ?

It is well — against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,
But behold ! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,
For not all matter is fuel to heat impalpable flame, the essential

9

What do you seek so pensive and silent ?
What do you need camerado ?
Dear son do you think it is love ?

Listen dear son — listen America, daughter or son,
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and yet it
satisfies, it is great,
But there is something else very great, it makes the whole coin-
cide,
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands sweeps
and provides for all.

10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater
religion,
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade !
For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising
inclusive and more resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Reli-
gion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me,
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that we
know not of,
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to him,
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual
world,
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes — equalities ! O divine average !
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or set-
ting,

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Any more than such are to religion.

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Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual
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After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes — equalities ! O divine average !
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or set-
ting,
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them, and
cheerfully pass them forward.

“...The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth, have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. ...

~ *Whitman, from the Preface to
Leaves of Grass, 1st ed. (1855)*

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“...of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall.”

~ *Whitman, from the Preface to
Leaves of Grass, 1st ed. (1855)*

Walt Whitman on....

...the American Civil War:

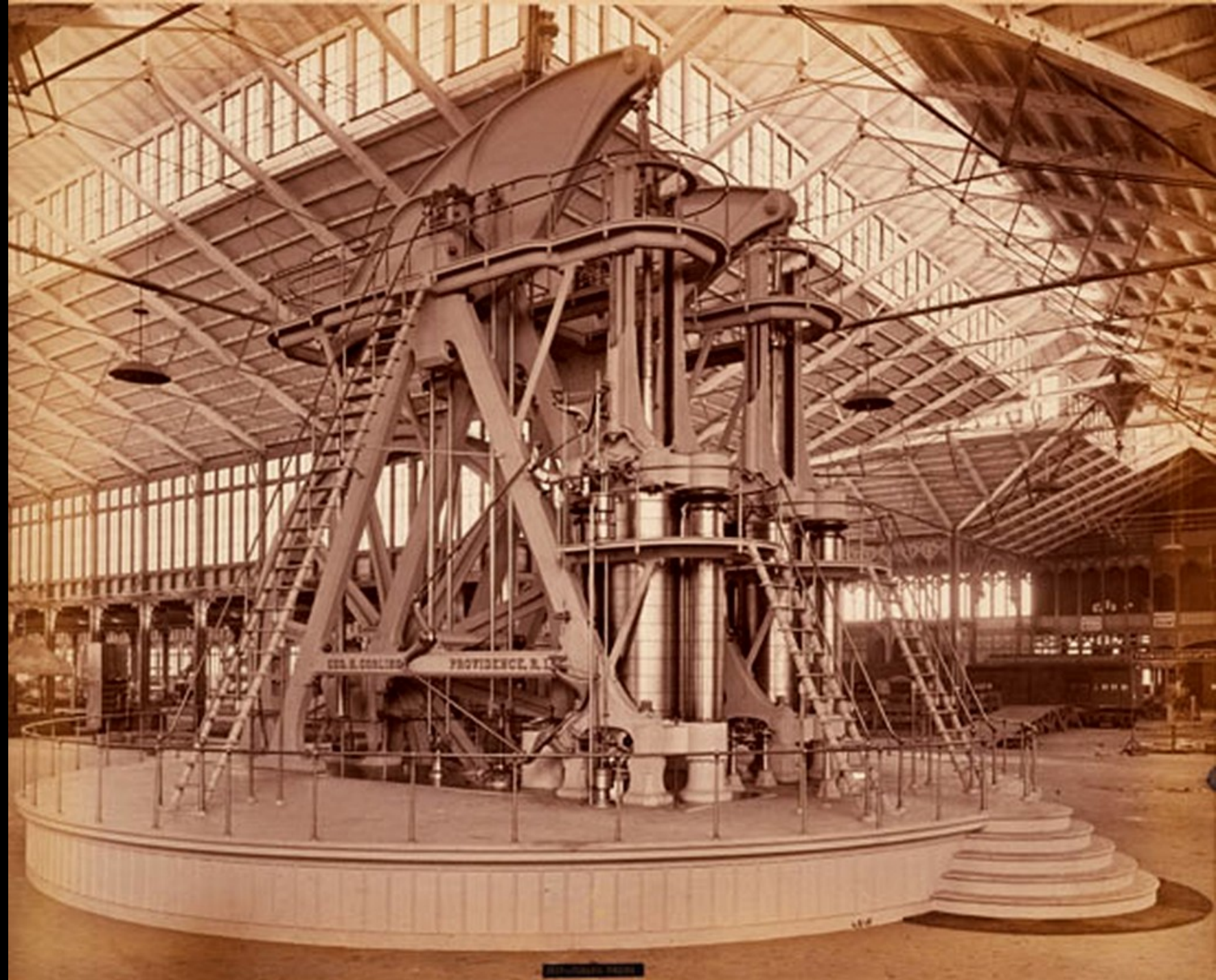
“A great literature will yet arise out of the era of those four years, those scenes ... an inexhaustible mine for the histories, drama, romance, and even philosophy, of peoples to come ... far more grand, in my opinion, to the hands capable of it, than Homer’s siege of Troy, or the French wars to Shakespeare.”

Walt Whitman on....

...the assassination of Lincoln:

“....the immeasurable value and meaning of that whole tragedy lies, to me, in senses finally dearest to a nation, (and here all our own)—the imaginative and artistic senses—the literary and dramatic ones.

.....Why, if the old Greeks had had this man, what trilogies of plays—what epics—would have been made out of him!”



“Song of the Exposition”

(1871, '76, '81)

1779 - MAIN BUILDING - SWEDEN

WELLS, JOHN H. MAKE

“Song of the Exposition”

.....

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia;
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy, and Achilles' wrath, and Eneas', Odysseus'
wanderings;
Placard “Removed” and “To Let” on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus;
Repeat at Jerusalem--place the notice high on Jaffa's gate, and on
Mount Moriah;
The same on the walls of your Gothic European Cathedrals, and German,
French and Spanish Castles;
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere--a wide, untried domain
awaits, demands you.

“Song of the Exposition”

Responsive to our summons,
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,

She comes! this famous Female--as was indeed to be expected;
(For who, so-ever youthful, [a]cute and handsome, would wish to stay in
mansions such as those,
When offer'd quarters with all the modern improvements,
With all the fun that's going--and all the best society?)

“Song of the Exposition”

She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown;
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance;
I mark her step divine--her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,
Upon this very scene.

The Dame of Dames! can I believe, then,
Those ancient temples classic, and castles strong and feudalistic,
could none of them restrain her?

“Song of the Exposition”

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see Her,

Making directly for this rendezvous--vigorously clearing a path for
herself--striding through the confusion,
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertilizers,
Smiling and pleased, with palpable intent to stay,
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

Walt Whitman

active (as a poet) 1855 - 1892

Exuberant, Public, Flamboyant,
Expansive, Explicit,
Easygoing, Footloose,
Attentive to history and politics



“Prophetic”

Anxious, Private, Reclusive,
Terse, Cryptic, Meditative,
Inward-looking, Homebound,
Attentive to immediate surroundings

Emily Dickinson

active 1850 (?) - 1886



unpublished “fascicles”



Emily Dickinson
active 1855 (?) - 1886

unpublished "fascicles"

We pray - in Heaven -

We pray - in Heaven -

Relate - when lightning strikes

At what o'clock is Heaven

they fall -

Who can them - Call them

My?

In Heaven a Place - a Sky -

a Tree?

Location's name way is the

Carroll.

Until the Cloud

There's no Geography -

Post-State - Internal - Focus.

Where - Omnipotence - My?

315

He fumbles at your Soul

As Players at the Keys

Before they drop full Music on -

He stuns you by degrees -

Prepares your brittle Nature

For the Ethereal Blow

By fainter Hammers -

further heard -

Then nearer - Then so slow

Your Breath has time

to straighten -

Your Brain - to bubble Cool -

Deals - One - imperial -

Thunderbolt -

That scalps your naked Soul -

When Winds take Forests in the
Paws -

The Universe - is still -

Who is “He”?

- ✓ God?
- ✓ A great preacher?
- ✓ A great poet,
like Keats or Shakespeare?
- ✓ Dickinson’s own “muse”
or poetic inspiration?
- ✓ A thunderstorm –
the power of nature?
- ✓ An epileptic seizure?
- ✓ A doctor administering ether
(= anaesthesia)?
- ✓ A violent or abusive man?

315

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full Music on –
He stuns you by degrees –
Prepares your brittle Nature
For the Ethereal Blow
By fainter Hammers –
further heard –
Then nearer – Then so slow
Your Breath has time
to straighten –
Your Brain – to bubble Cool –
Deals – One – imperial –
Thunderbolt –
That scalps your naked Soul –

When Winds take Forests in the
Paws –
The Universe – is still –

Why is he “fumbling”?

- ✓ Is he warming up?
- ✓ Does he play piano badly?
- ✓ Is he clumsy?
(is God clumsy?)
- ✓ Is he fumbling at something
else, like a locked door?
(a real door? a metaphor?)

Why “in the paws”?

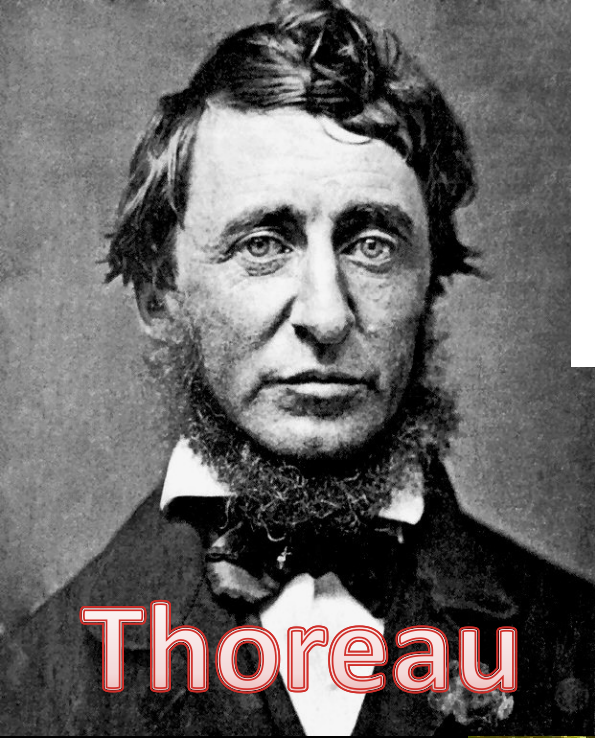
.....etc.

315

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full Music on —
He stuns you by degrees —
Prepares your brittle Nature
For the Ethereal Blow
By fainter Hammers —
further heard —
Then nearer — Then so slow
Your Breath has time
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Thunderbolt —
That scalps your naked Soul —

When Winds take Forests in the
Paws —
The Universe — is still —

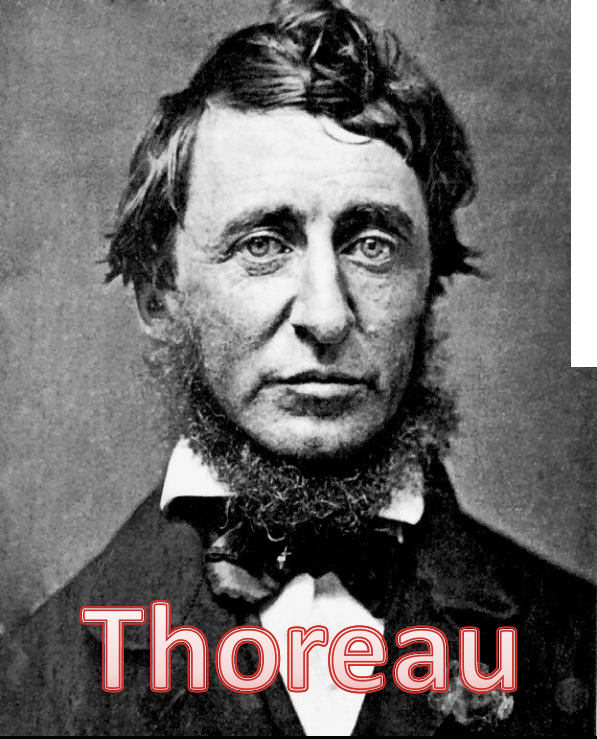
Walden:



Thoreau

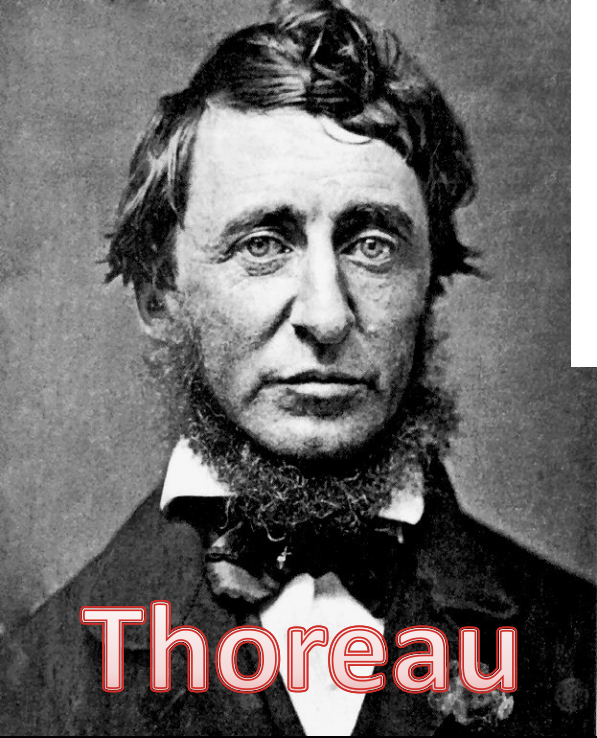


Or, Life
in the
Woods



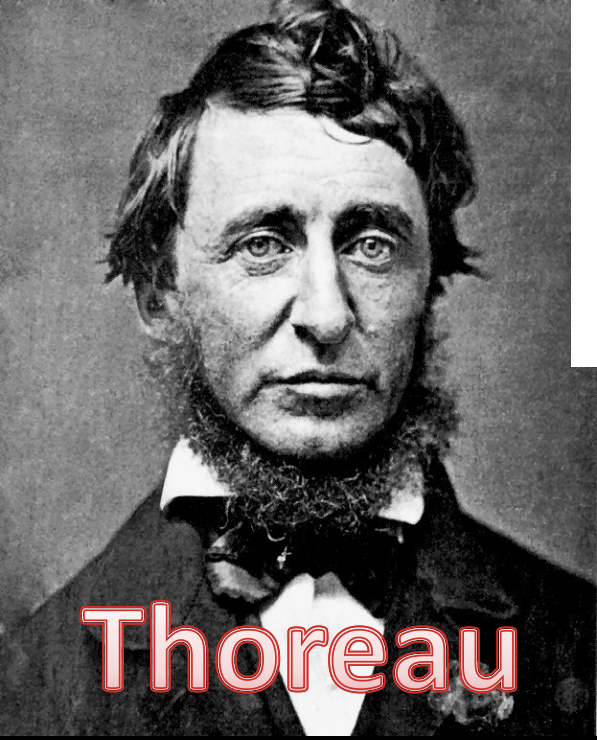
Walden:

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. ...we live meanly, like ants; ...Our life is frittered away by detail.



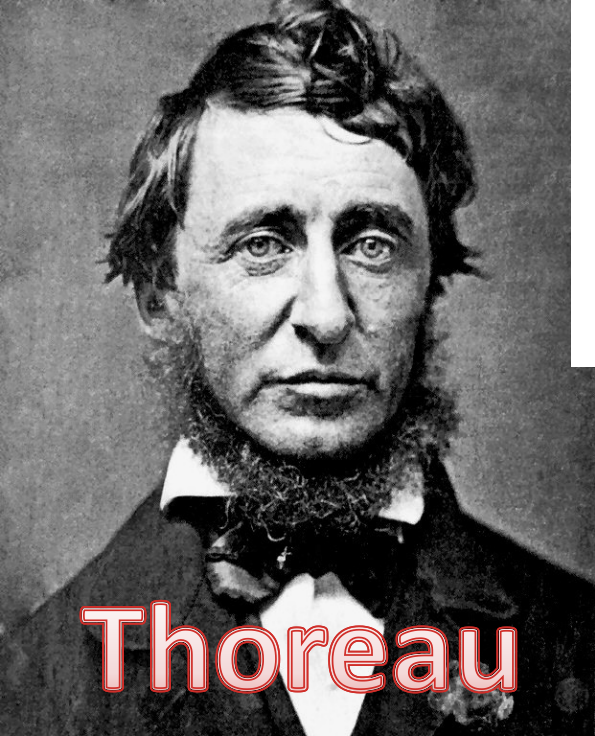
Walden:

“....there is not always a positive advance [with our “modern improvements”]. ...Our inventions are [likely] to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at....



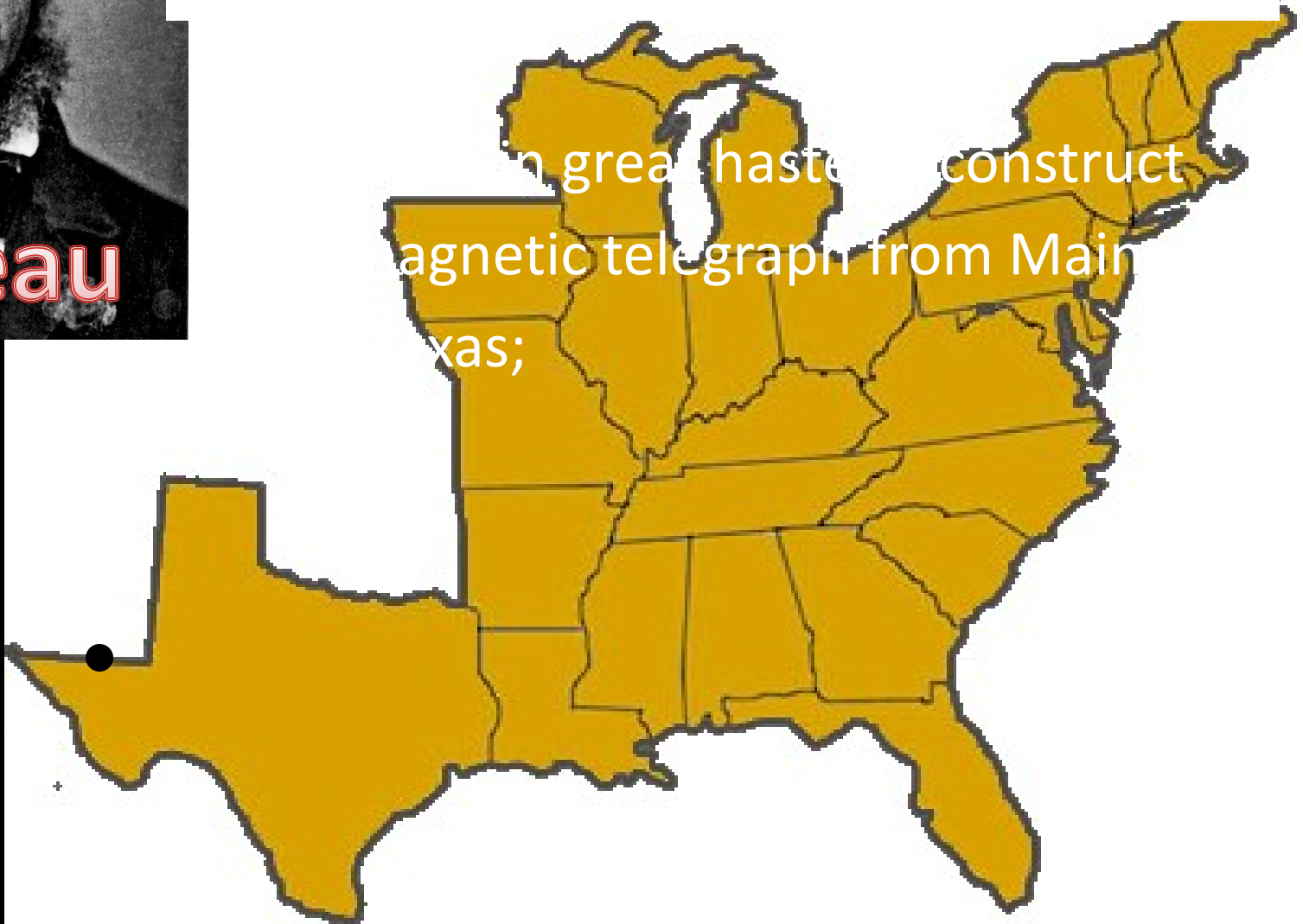
Walden:

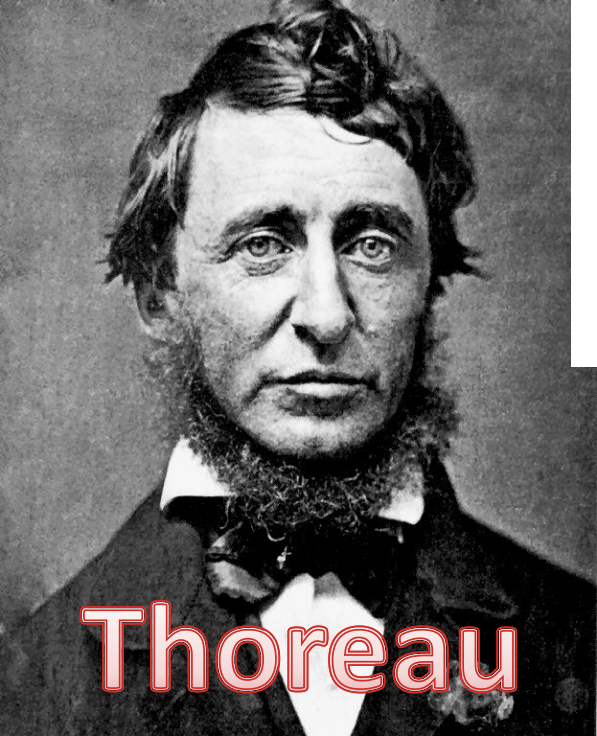
“We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas;



Thoreau

Walden:





Thoreau

Walden:

...in great haste to construct
magnetic telegraph from Maine
to Texas; but Maine and Texas,
I suppose, have nothing important
to communicate.As if the
object were to talk fast and
not to talk sensibly."



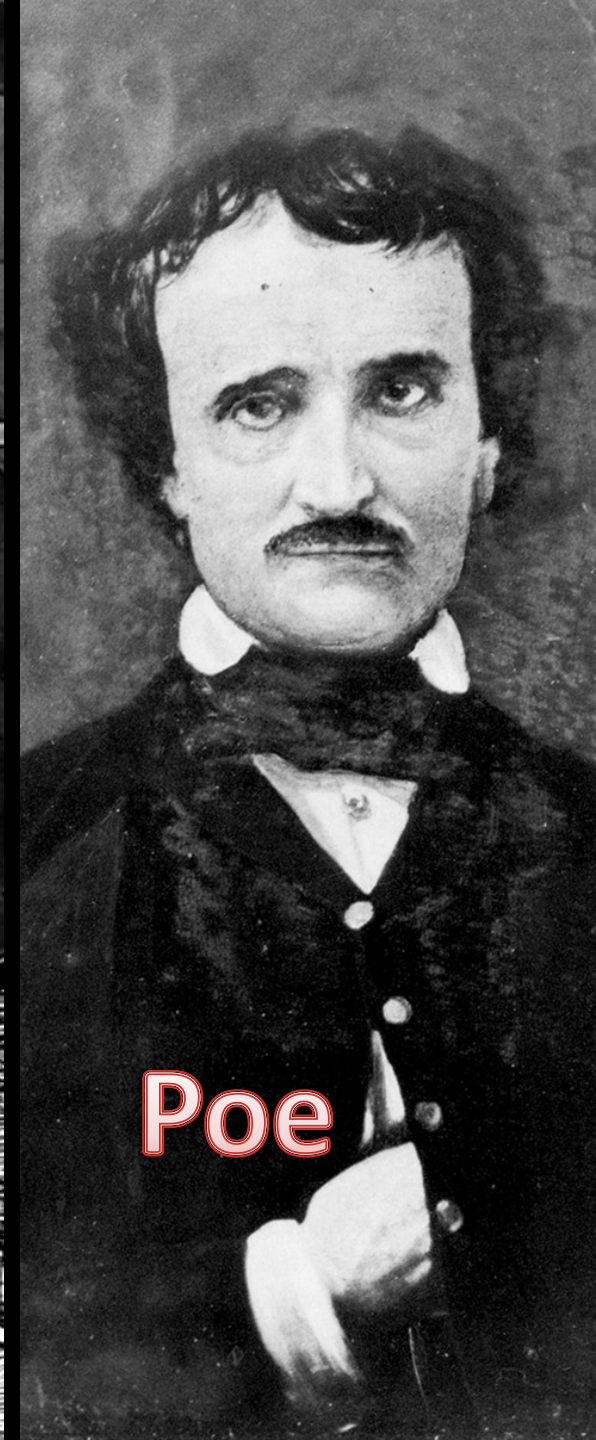


Hawthorne

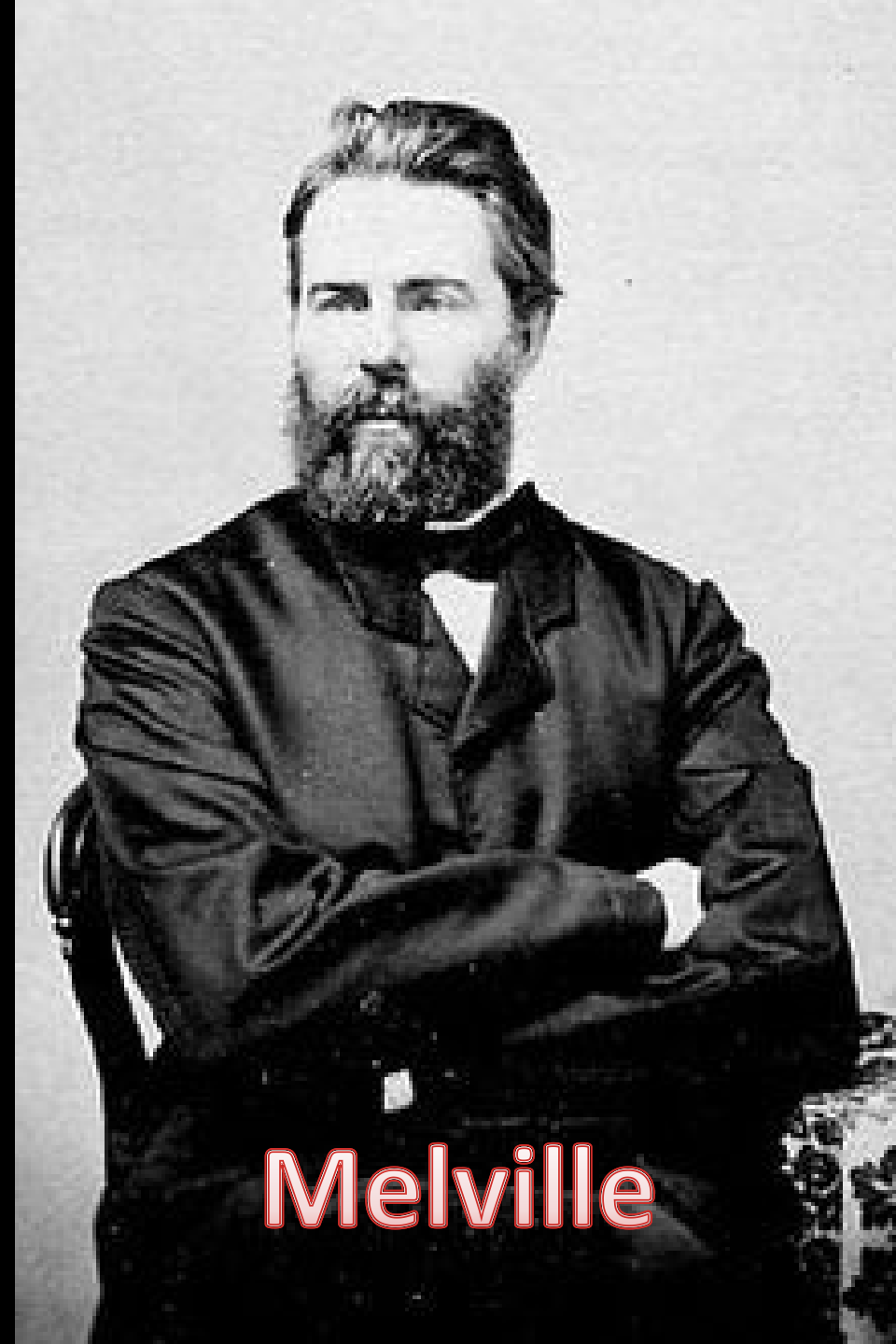
"Young Goodman Brown"



*The Fall
of the
House of
Usher*

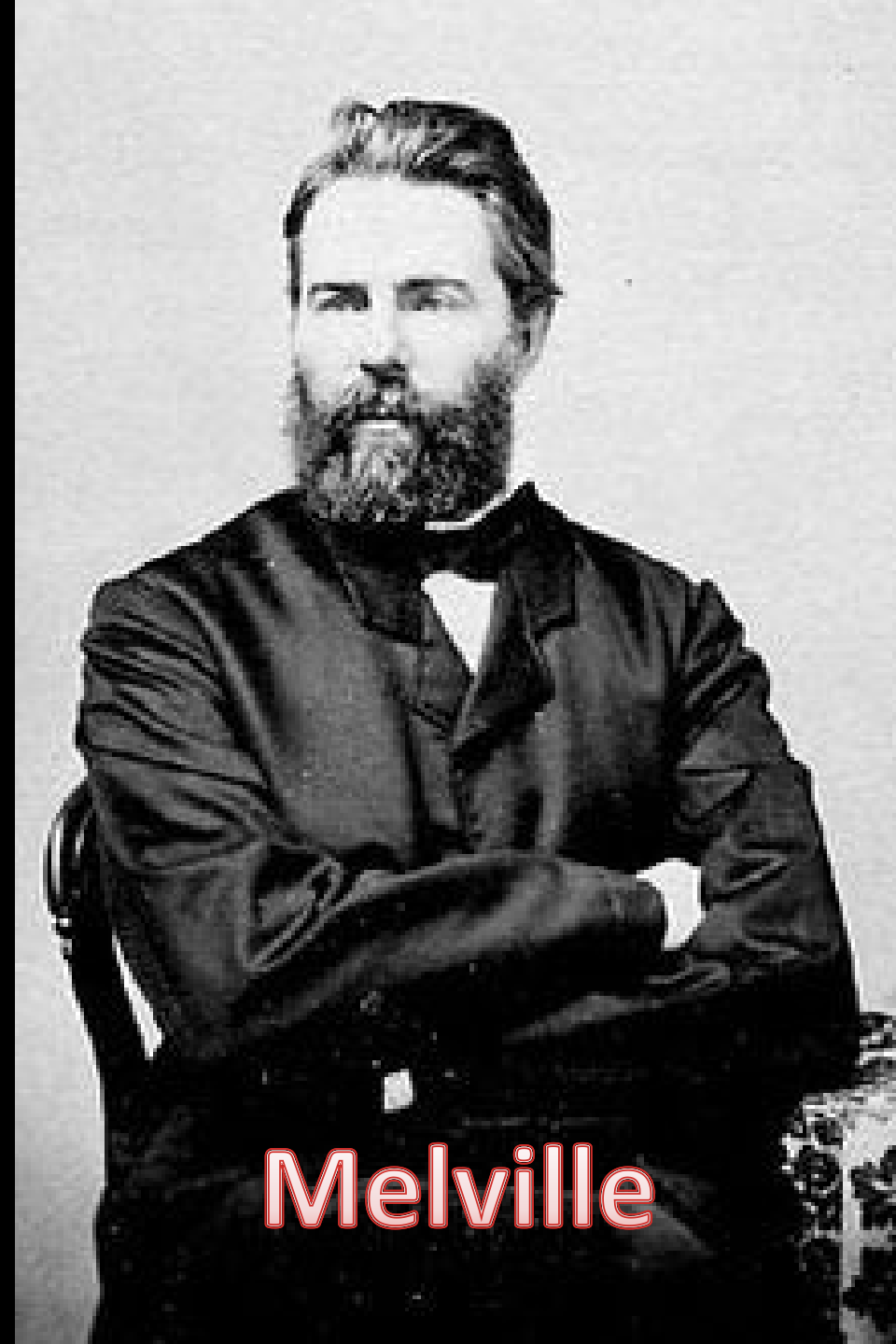


Poe



Melville

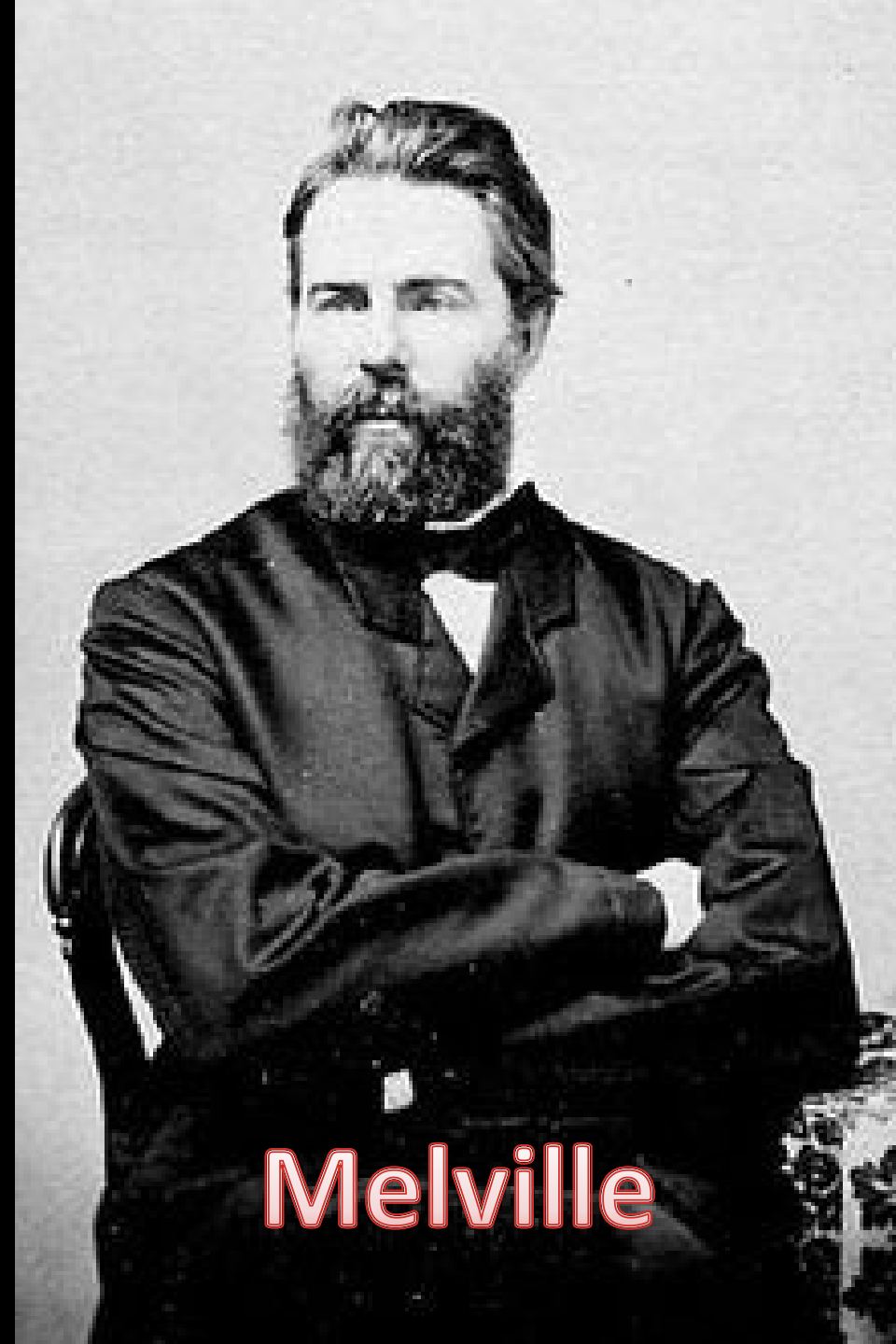
“Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare’s unapproachability, or [leave] the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American...?”



Melville

“Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare’s unapproachability, or [leave] the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American...? Believe me, my friends, that Shakespeares are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio” River.

Herman Melville, 1850



Melville

The very virtue of compassion in thee,
I have with such provision in mine art
So safely ordered, that there is no soul—
No, not so much perdition as an hair,
Betid to any creature in the vessel
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink. Sit
down;

For thou must now know further.

Mira. You have often
Begun to tell me what I am; but stopped
And left me to a bootless inquisition;
Concluding, *Stay, not yet.*—

Pro. The hour's now come;
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear;
Obey, and be attentive. Can'st thou remember
A time before we came into this cell?
I do not think thou can'st; for then thou wast not
Out¹ three years old.

Mira. Certainly, sir, I can.

Pro. By what? by any other house, or person?
Of any thing the image tell me, that
Hath kept with thy remembrance.

Mira. 'Tis far off;
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants: Had I not
Four or five women once, that tended me?

Pro. Thou had'st, and more, Miranda: But how
is it,
That this lives in thy mind? What seest thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time?
If thou remember'st aught, ere thou cam'st here,
How cam'st thou here, thou may'st.

Mira. But that I do not.

Pro. Twelve years since, Miranda, twelve years
since,
Thy father was the duke of Milan, and
A prince of power.

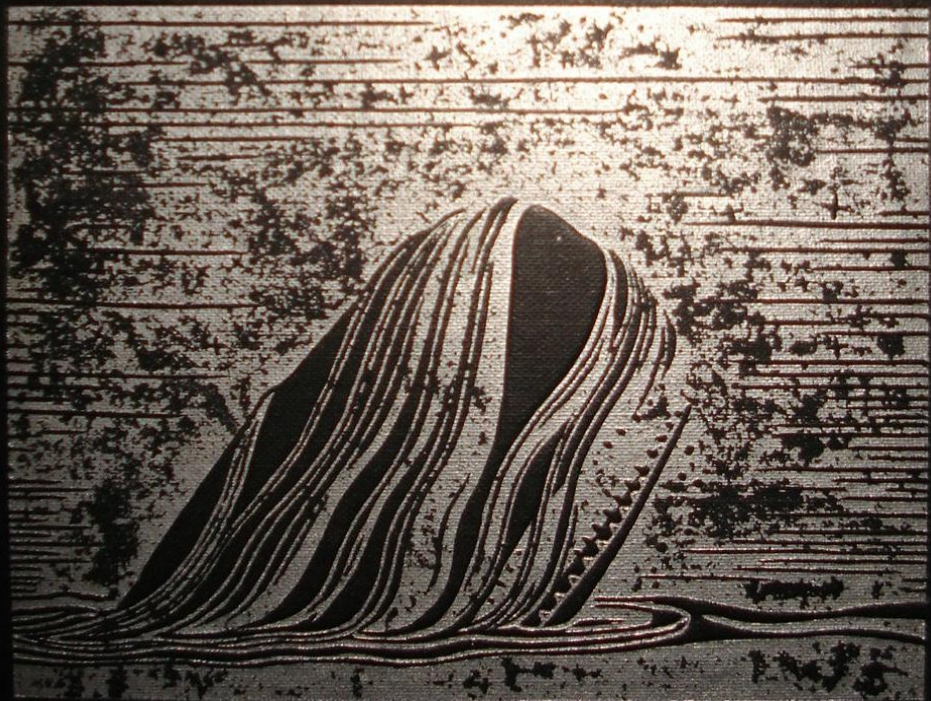
Mira. Sir, are not you my father?

¹ Entirely, quite.



Melville

MOBY DICK



Melville

MOBY DICK

**“an ill-compounded
mixture of romance
and matter-of-fact”**



Melville

AUTHOR MELVILLE GONE.

He Was Held by Cannibals, but He Made It Lucrative.

Herman Melville, author of some fifteen novels published about forty years ago, died on Sunday night at his home, No. 104 East Twenty-sixth street, aged seventy-three years.

He was born in this city on August 1, 1819. In 1837 he went to sea in a sailing vessel before the mast, but on account of harsh treatment he and a shipmate deserted and made their way to an island in the Marquesas group, where he was held in captivity by a tribe of cannibals called Typees. He remained in captivity for several years, but when he escaped and returned to this country he made the Typees the subject of his first novel, published in 1847. The [REDACTED] wide circulation, as did also [REDACTED]

Mr. Melville married a daughter of the late Chief Justice Shaw, of Boston. Two of his children are living. He has been a recluse for the past fifteen years, preferring his books and pictures to society.

The funeral services will be held at his late residence on Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock. The interment will be at Wood-



Melville

Herman Melville died yesterday at his residence, 104 East Twenty-sixth Street, this city, of heart failure, aged seventy-three years. He was the author of "Typee," "Omoo," [REDACTED] and other sea-faring tales, written in this city. He leaves a wife and two daughters, Mrs. M. B. Thomas and Miss Melville.

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK



MOBY DICK

Music Composed by CHRISTOPHER GORDON

































The PEQUOD sails from Nantucket, Christmas Day



The Pequod

The harpooners drink to the death of Moby Dick
That she blows

Towing the carcass

Starbuck's boat is manœuvred

Towing out blubber

The Proposal

The harpooners drink to the death of Moby Dick
That she blows

Towing the carcass

Starbuck's boat is manœuvred

Towing out blubber

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That she blows

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The Voyage of the PEQUOD from the Book

MOBY DICK by Herman Melville



FIRST DAY of chase. Moby Dick chases Capt. Ahab's boat

SECOND DAY of chase. Ahab's boat is rescued. The Pequot is lost. Ahab's ivory leg is broken

THIRD DAY of chase. Moby Dick sinks the Pequot

Ahah alone survives in the coffin casket

Portrait Map by *Samuel Murray*

Map Division
3-OCT 1957
Library of Congress

Printed in U.S.A. by the BARNES & NOBLE COMPANY











Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.

(Emerson, *Nature*)

Though but a point at best; whencesoe'er I came; wheresoe'er I go; yet while I earthly live, the queenly personality lives in me, and feels her royal rights.... Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee.

(Ahab, in *Moby-Dick*)

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(Ahab, in *Moby-Dick*)

QUESTIONS *for discussing the works:*

What is the work's "aesthetic"? Are there any traces of the neoclassical interest in balance, order, harmony, the greatness of the past, etc.? What values are replacing these – what effect(s) does the work aim to have, and by what literary techniques or devices? Where specifically do you see this happening? Do you think the effects and devices work well?

Is the work attempting to be specifically American, or to make use of "American" ideas, themes, materials and/or styles? Where and how? Do you notice any similarities with older or European works? Is this work in any way "appropriating" older ideas or elements, but putting them to new "American" uses?

QUESTIONS *for discussing the works:*

What problems does the writer see either with life in the modern, technical and scientific age, or with life in a democratic and/or commercial (as opposed to a traditional or aristocratic) nation, or with life in America specifically? In what ways do modern, democratic and/or American conditions resist being made literary or dramatic? On the other hand, what interesting new themes and possibilities for literary art does either America or modern life provide?

What's bad and what's good? Is the work optimistic? What does this writer seem to regard as evil or disturbing, and where does it come from? How do we avoid it? Is literature seen as helping us avoid it? In what sense is literature seen as serving more than a merely decorative purpose – a political, philosophical or religious purpose, for instance?

The
End

