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. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships-the freshness and candor of their physiognomy-the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom-their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean-the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states-the fierceness of their roused resentment-their curiosity and welcome of novelty-their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy-their susceptibility to a slight-the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors-the fluency of their speech-their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness-the terrible significance of their elections-the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him-these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.-As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States
leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and
all the magnitude of geography or shows the exterior victory to enjoy the breed of
fullsized men or one fullsized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them
a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as
contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit
responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers
and lakes. . . .

To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events of the enormous
diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines-the tribes of red aborigines-the
weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts-the first
settlements north or south-the rapid stature and muscle-the haughty defiance of '76, and
the war and peace and formation of the constitution . . . the union always surrounded by
blatherers and always calm and impregnable-the perpetual coming of immigrants-the
warfhem'd cities and superior marine-the unsurveyed interior-the loghouses and clearings
and wild animals and hunters and trappers . . . the free commerce-the fisheries and
whaling and gold-digging-the endless gestation of new states-the convening of Congress
every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts .
. . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and
workwomen . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise-the perfect equality
of the female with the male . . . the large amativeness-the fluid movement of the population-
the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery-the Yankee swap-the New-
York firemen and the target excursion-the southern plantation life-the character of the
northeast and of the northwest south-slavery and the tremulous spreading of
hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or
the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the
American poet is to be transcendent and new. It is to be indirect and not direct or
descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of
other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the
verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista.
Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonecutters and plans with decision and science
and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.