

## 4:3 Walt Whitman: Great American Poet

### A. Overview

1. celebrated America as the great democracy where each individual, over time, could evolve to spiritual perfection
2. declared the human body to be equal to the soul
3. found truth in the light that came from his own soul rather than rational analysis

### B. Theory

1. reflects Emerson in the following respects:
  - a. poetry emerges as the fruit of poet's own growth
  - b. gets form not from traditional meters but from meter-making argument
  - c. finds its material in the everyday life of Americans

### C. Poetry

1. almost all of his poetry published in *Leaves of Grass*
  - a. published in nine successively larger volumes between 1855 and 1892
  - b. self-published and was criticized for sexual content and extensive use of free verse