

Night Journey 81: Pop Quiz: The Age of Idolatry When the Stars No Longer Shine On America

*Long, too long America,
Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys and prosperity only,
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing, grappling with direst fate and
recoiling not,
And now to conceive and show to the world what your children en-masse really are,
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children en-masse really are?)*

-Walt Whitman

Whitman's words laud American courage and resilience in shouldering selfless and righteous burdens in the face of crisis to preserve the humanitarian qualities of which our democracy and its constitution are comprised. Today, would Whitman be able to recognize the America he once professed to know?

Who we Americans are now has taken a 180 degree turn. Through our country's economic and militaristic actions, along with its chosen political and economic leaders, we have shown the world that we are no longer a beacon of freedom standing for opportunity and equality. Instead, we have come to be known for our self-interests, our nationalism, and our racism. We no longer possess the courage to face and surmount crises; instead, we have become the crisis – one that is not too dissimilar to the crises of Walt Whitman's time.

Night Journey 81: Pop Quiz, is a humorous slight to individuals who place self and nationalist interest over humanitarian interests. There are individuals like the Koch brothers, who use their wealth to influence and change laws to their benefit. Their bequests are received by compliant politicians like Ryan and McConnell, who legislate for the wealthy at the expense of their constituents. As well, there are those like Trump, who knowingly break laws to create actions and policies that reflect their own prejudices and personal greed.