

Letter from Horace Traubel

New York, May 28th, 1916.

Dear Saunders,

When you meet Wednesday there as we are to do here to celebrate Walt we'll sort of question each other and answer each other in a fraternal union of hearts.

As we come to Walt free we must go from Walt free.

We've no more right to magnify him than to aggrandize ourselves.

Walt was not a leader or a follower but a comrade.

He was no more to be looked up to than to be looked down upon.

Some people get nearer their great men by getting farther away from the average man.

I say we can only get near the great and participate in that greatness by standing by the mob.

Walt didn't deliver us any tablets of masculating law from a mountain top in a blaze of light. He rather penetrates us in the silences and the shadows where our communion becomes an interior illumination.

Walt don't draw us away from ourselves. He drives us back upon ourselves.

He don't glorify the triumphs of the single man but the victories of the crowd.

Walt is often spoken of as the final individual man. But he was something unlike that. He was the final crowd man.

I know that you feel as I do, dear Saunders, that when we gather in his name, we really gather in our own names. There would be no excuse for his superiority in our abasement.

I feel that somehow on that day—three days from to-day—when you there and we here are lisping the still crude syllables of our far from complete democracy, we may remember his life without forgetting our own lives. For after all, we don't belong to Walt any more than he belongs to us. In the give and take of that relation which has become so beautiful as between him and us there's no measure by whose dicta anybody will be less or anybody will be more in our common love.

TRAUBEL.