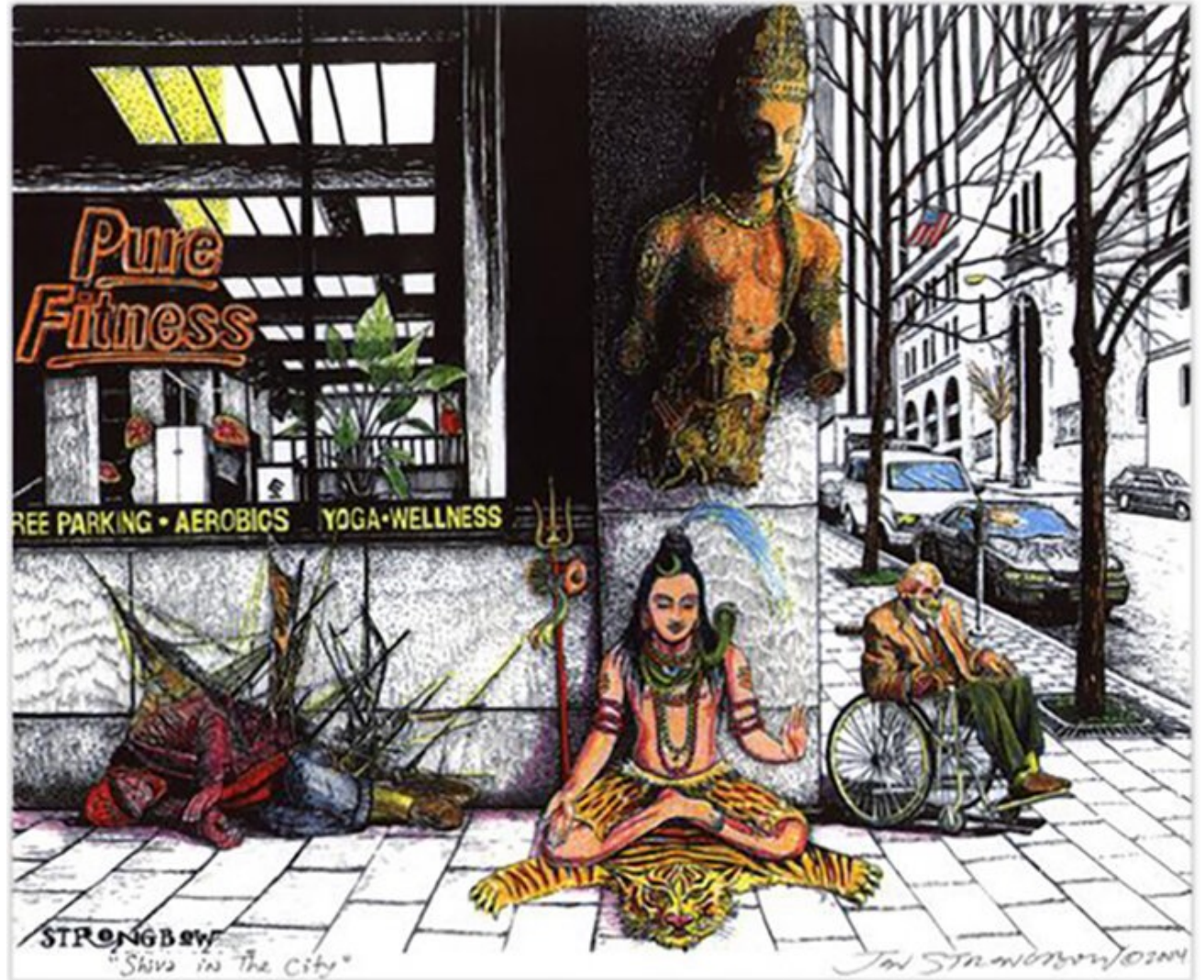


## Passages to India

India and the US literary imagination in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries

Buddhism, Hinduism, and the US literary imagination in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries.





Jeremy Thomas & Francis Bonygues  
präsentieren  
einen Bernardo Bertolucci Film

# LITTLE BUDDHA

Eine magische Reise zu einem mystischen Ort



DVD

MCA  
HOME ENTERTAINMENT







1993

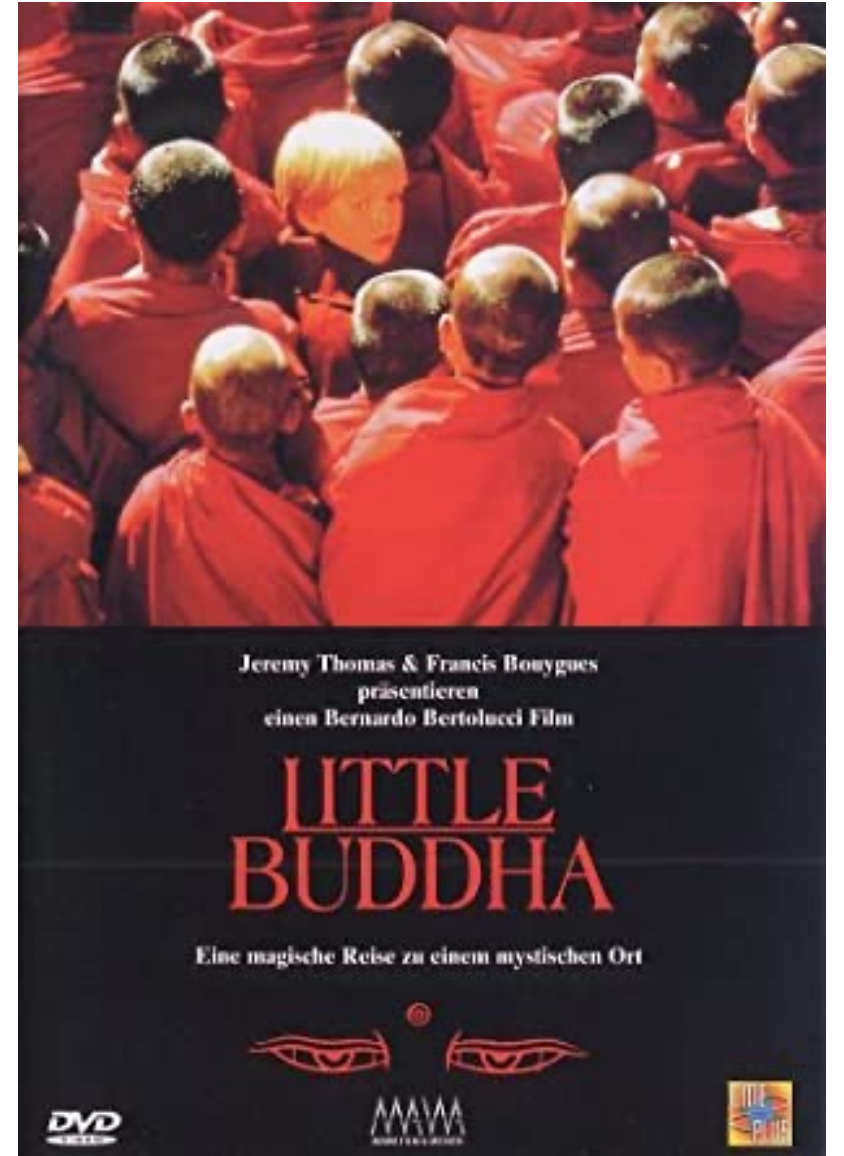


Jeremy Thomas & Francis Bouygues  
präsentieren  
einen Bernardo Bertolucci Film

# LITTLE BUDDHA

Eine magische Reise zu einem mystischen Ort





# The Beat Generation



**Allen Ginsberg**  
1922-1997



**Jack Kerouac**  
1922-1969

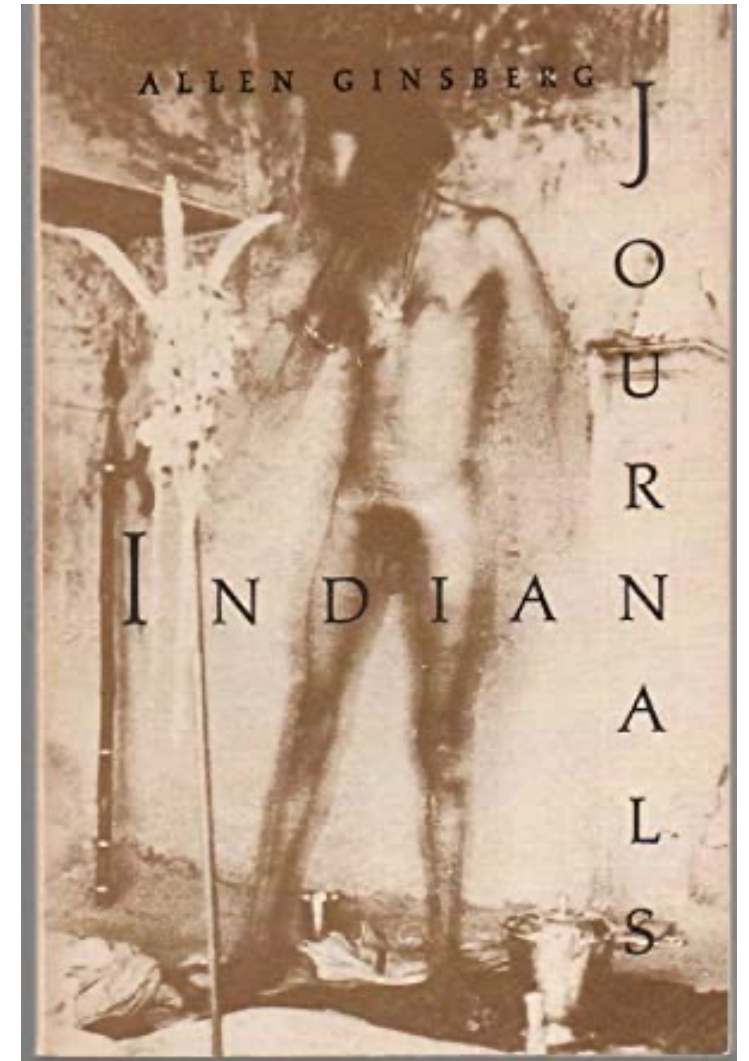


**Gary Snyder**  
1930

As lying there in my familiar body, a subtle detachment took place as usual and I lay outside my fleeting life surveying its twinkling away — that now more and more as this life approaches its meridian of 37 years and being half gone by becomes more sure of its mortalism, the chance of the life tho marked by shows and pageants, poetical & airborne — consisting in sexualities & all sorts of fame — as it were — were not much to go by. [...]

An open closet door — I'll return to the States, take an apartment — where with thinning hair & more tentative soul, arrange my possessions, type up my notes, discharge them for posterities, place my statues in order — one Japanese scroll of medium quality, one Korean print of an awakening Roshi, several cheap Nepalese tantric small figures, Tara, Avaloketesvara, the 1000 armed Destroyer of Death, Ganesha with a red belly button, Hanuman Pious & praying, Krishna fluting, Shiva whirling his arms & dancing, Kali with a necklace of skulls on Shiva's belly astride — an orange wool Tibetan Blanket, a few Amazon cloths & pipes, a Mexican basket, a straw hat and whatever other Persian type miniatures I collect — and that's the accomplishment of a life searching and travel wherever I can go on my earth.

Kali, Durga, Ram, Hari, Krishna, Brahma, Buddha, Allah, Jaweh, Christ, Mazda, Coyote, hear my plea!  
Avaloketesvara, Maitreya, St. John, Ho-Tei, Kuan-Yin, Satan, Dipankara, Padma Sambava — whoever there is — is there ever anyone but me?



1970

[...]

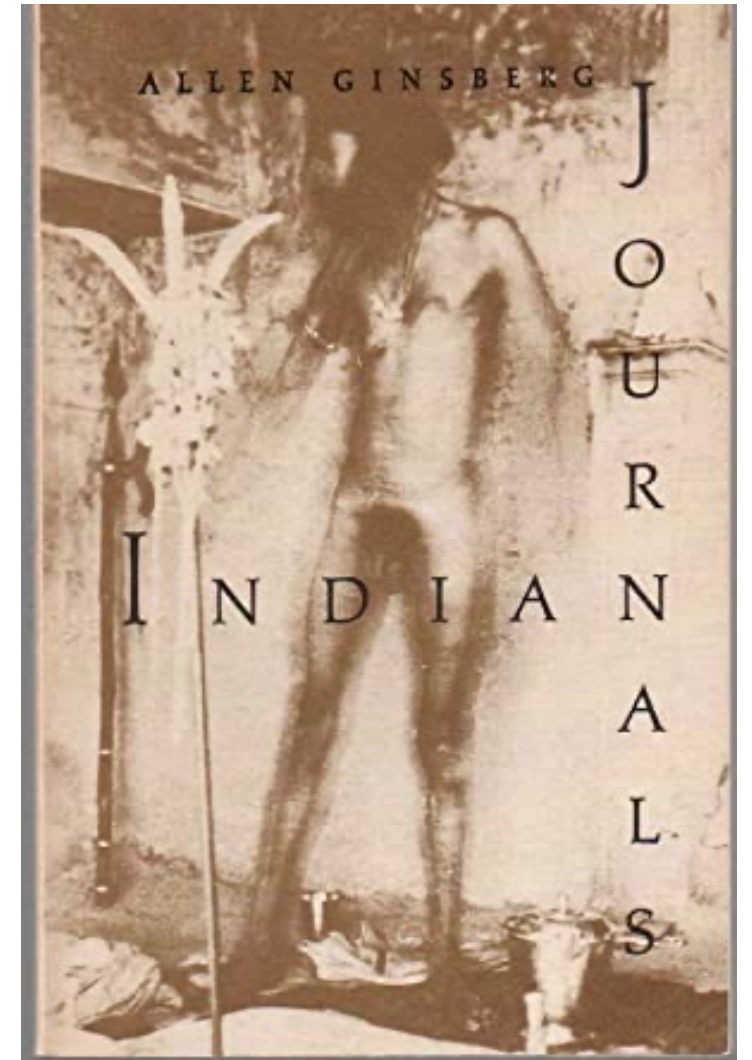
And if it is a matter of Karma and reincarnation, when will I ever learn? All the saints like Shivananda handing me rupees & books of yoga and I'm no good. My hair getting long, wearing a huge thin silk shirt, useless to perfect my conscience. A smoking habit my worst Karma to overcome.

[...]

Self Conscious, I have nowhere to go. Maybe might as well leave it at that, continue to travel and die as I am when I die.

Avaloketesvara, Kuan Yin, Jaweh, Saints, Saddhus, Rishis, benevolent ones, Compassionate Superconscious ones, etc, what can you do for me now? What's to be done with my life which has lost its idea?

[...]



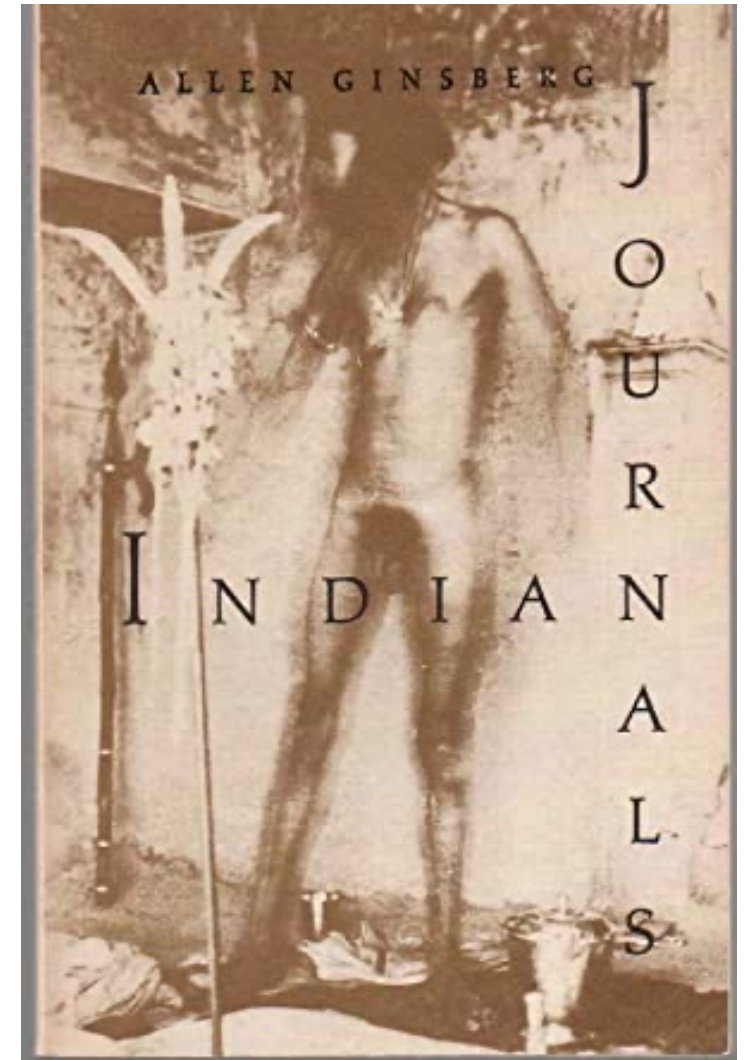
I still am loaded with Karma of many letters & unfinished correspondence. I wanted to be a saint. But suffer for what? Illusions? The rain, were it to rustle the leaves, would seem more friendly than before & more reminiscent of an old dream.

[...]

Next the rest of India & Japan, and I suppose later a trip: England, Denmark, Sweden & Norway, Germany, Poland, Russia, China & then back home again. And that'll be the end of that world, I'll be about 50, the relatives'll al be dead by then, old ties with the boys of yore be loosed or burnt, unfaithful, in so many decades it's best to let it all go.

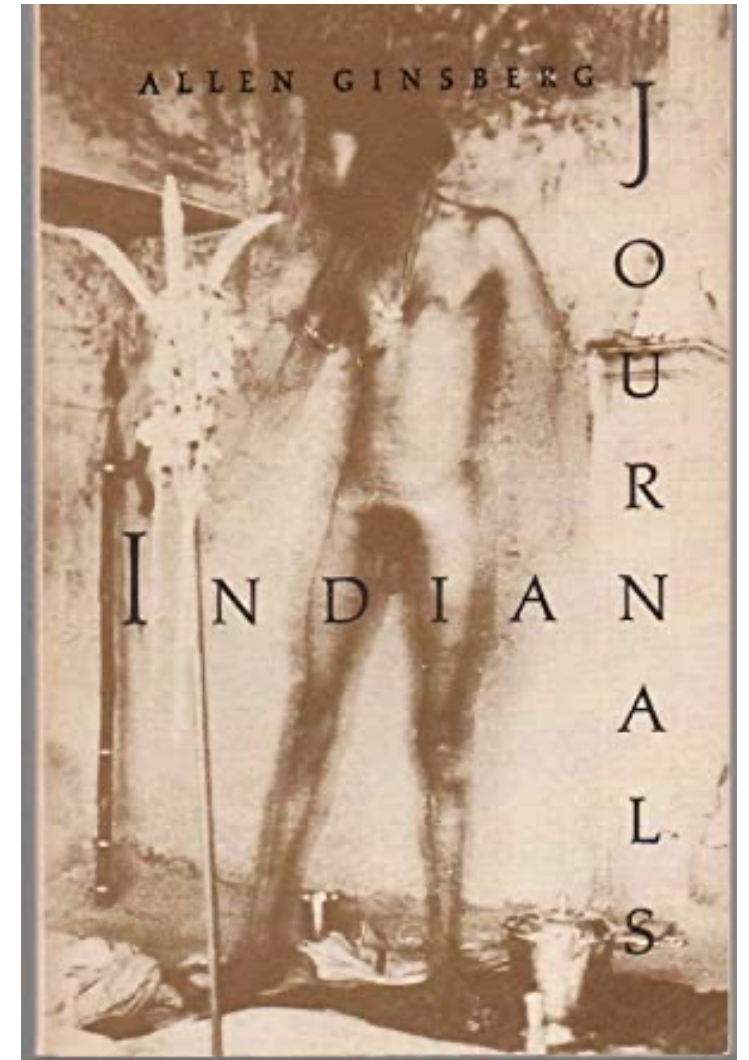
[...]

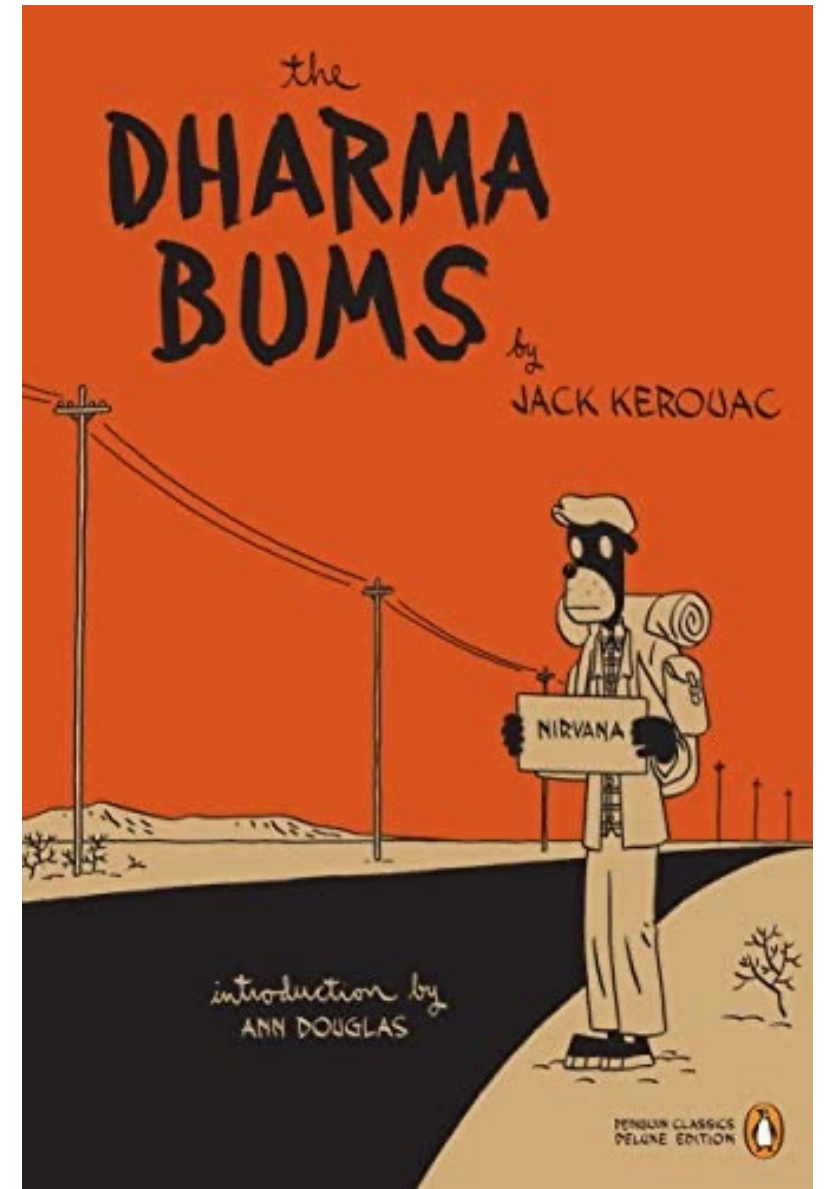
Anyway, who is that autobiography for? Young kids after the movies? I guess I have nothing to contribute to general edification by this vague haphazard slow motion death.



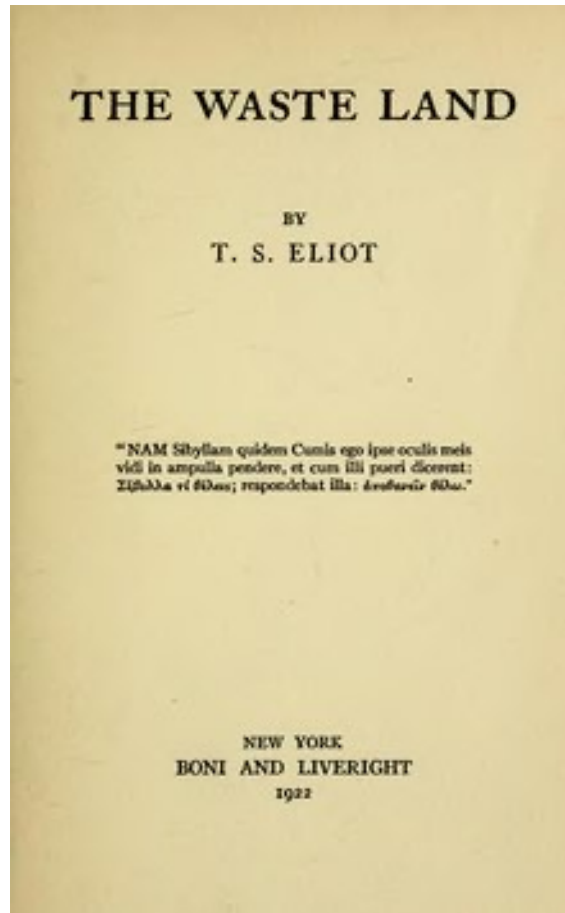
The skulls that hang on Kali's neck, Geo Washington with eyes rolled up & tongue hanging out of his mouth like a fish, N. Lenin upside down; Einstein's hairy white cranium. Hitler with his mustache grown walrus-droop over his lip, Roosevelt with grey eyeballs; Stalin grinning, Mussolini with a broken Jaw, Artaud big eared & toothless; the subtle body of Churchill's head transparent & babylike; an empty space for Truman, Mao Tze Tung & Chang Kai Shek shaking at the bottom of the chain, balls with eyes & noses jiggled in the Cosmic Dance;

The Chakra holding hand, like Whitman's goddess in the kitchen holding a railroad engine's giant wheel, hissing with escaping steam —  
The Vajra Hand balancing a high Rolls Royce on end, fenders sticking up into the empty night heavens —  
battleships dangling from an arm bent in the bow & arrow gesture — it appeared from nowhere as tho arm snaked into place in the aether —  
She leads a separate cultural life of her own, her left hand doesn't know what her right hand is doing  
(unbeknownst to each other they both juggle the bones of Sri Swami Bramachariananda)  
Rays of Schizophrenia streaming from her lousy forehead in every direction thru the myriad human worlds & looks like shocking pink in this;





1958



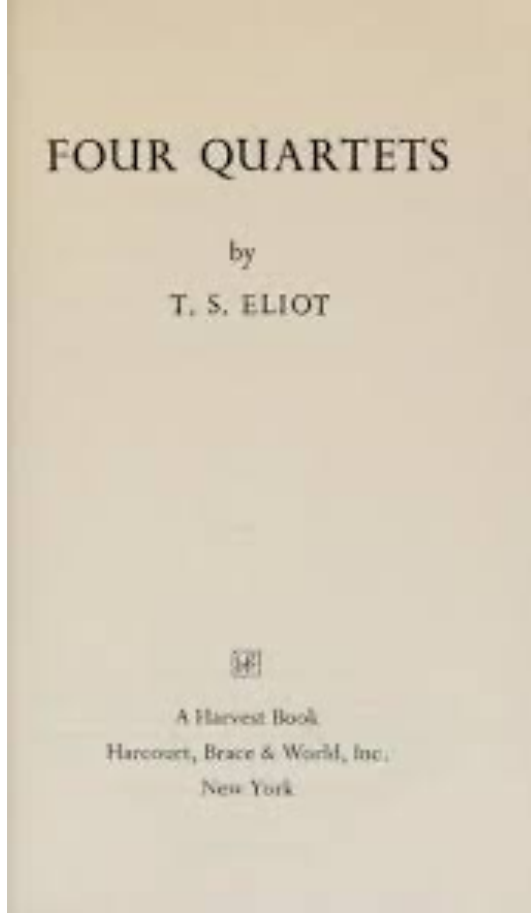
1922

These fragments I have shored against  
my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad  
again.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih.



**Thomas S. Eliot**  
**1988-1965**



1943

“on whatever sphere of being  
The mind of a man may be intent  
At the time of death.”  
 (“The Dry Salvages”, III, 33-35)

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम्  
(भगवद्गीता, ८, ६)



# The Nineteenth century: Orientalism vs. Trascendentalism

## THE DIAL.

VOL. IV.

JANUARY, 1844.

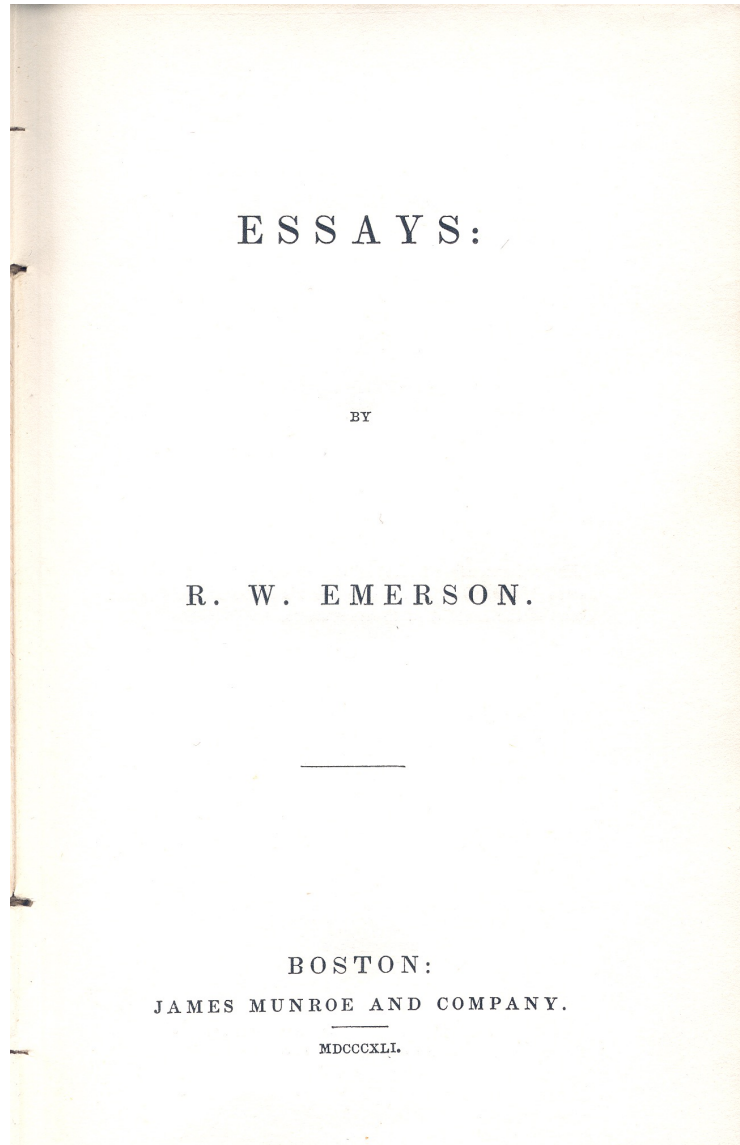
No. III.

### THE PREACHING OF BUDDHA.

The following fragments are extracts from one of the religious books of the Buddhists of Nepal, entitled the

“WHITE LOTUS OF THE GOOD LAW.”

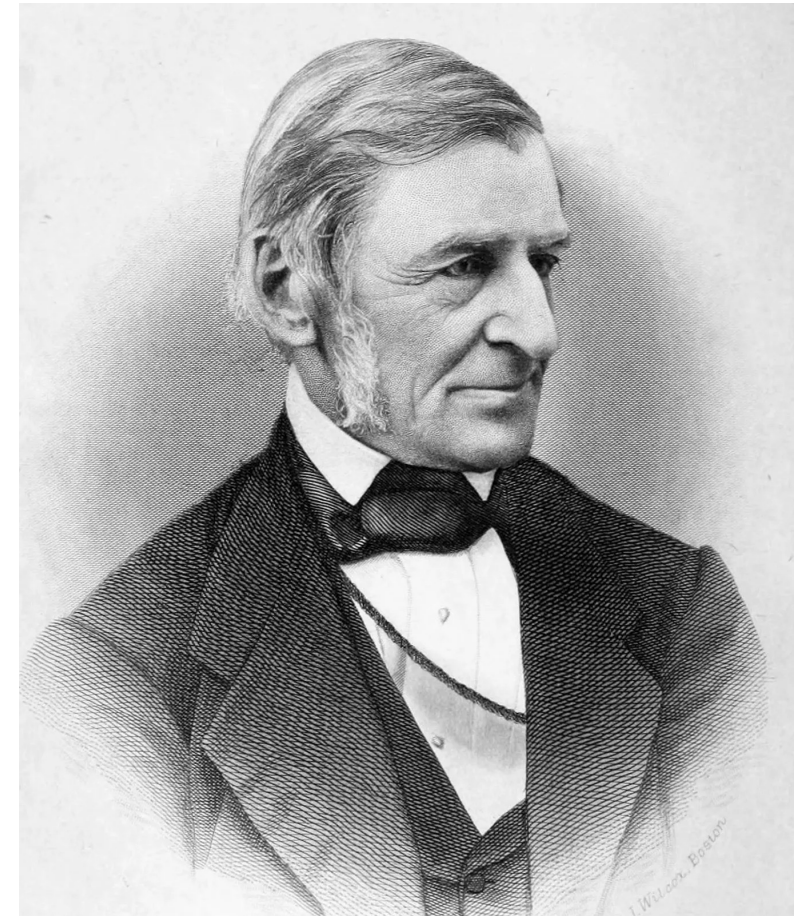
THE original work, which is written in Sanscrit, makes part of the numerous collection of Buddhist books, discovered by M. Hodgson, the English resident at the Court of Katmandou, and sent by him to the Asiatic Society of Paris. M. Burnouf examined, some years since, this collection, which includes a great part of the canonical books of the Buddhists, and of which translations are found in all the nations which are Buddhists, (the people of Thibet, China, and the Moguls.) The book, from which the following extracts are taken, is one of the most venerated, by all the nations which worship Buddha, and shows very clearly the method followed by the Sage who bears this name. The work is in prose and verse. The versified part is only the reproduction in a metrical rather than a poetical form of the part written in prose. We prefix an extract from the article of M. Eugene Burnouf, on the *origin* of Buddhism.



**Compensation (1841)**

**The Oversoul (1841)**

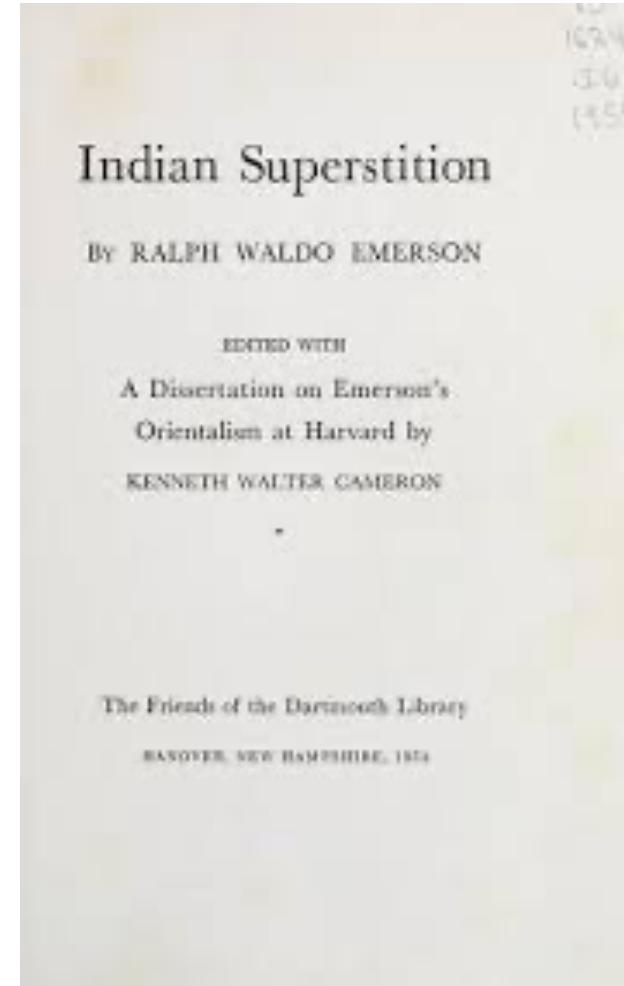
**Fate (1860)**



**Ralph Waldo Emerson**  
**1803-1882**



**Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888)**  
**“The Fate of the Forrests”**  
**1865**



**Ralph Waldo Emerson**  
**“Indian Superstition ”**  
**1821**

In such wild worship to mysterious powers  
The Indian stands in Ganges' holy bowers  
On the hot sands where human nature fails  
With Vishnu's aid he braves the fiery gales.  
His cany hut on beds of lotus reared,  
The groves of palm where Brahma was revered,  
Soft though they seem to fancy's cheated eye,—  
These yield no shelter to the brave that die.  
Bewildered fancies in his scriptures tell—  
'No faint oblations soothe the gods of hell,  
Go snuff the Dragon's breath, whose monstrous coil  
Girdles the world with everlasting toil;  
In the fierce ardour of the noon-tide sun  
Drink in the blast, for patient penance done,  
Else,—seek thy doom, and find it with the dead,  
And Yemen's vengeance revel on thy head!  
They sleep a sleep the thunder will not wake,  
They thirst with thirst which Ocean cannot slake,  
Not Brahma's self can quench the burning storm,  
And Seeva's red right hand our promise shall perform.'

[...]

How long shall anxious ages roll away,  
Unblest with promise of approaching day,  
Ere India's giant genius strongly wake,  
Stretched in dark slumber oer Oblivions lake,  
Snatch from his heaven, aspiring to be free,  
The crystal cup of Immortality?

Oh who can tell what joy creation owns  
Through all her myriad Powers on sunbright thrones,  
When crushed by all the plagues which blast the earth,  
A nation struggles into godlike birth.  
Such have been written on the page of time,  
And thou sad land mayst read the tale sublime,  
Once, wreathed in light, a peerless maiden shone,  
High on her mountain-girdled land, alone;  
Round the bright summit, in the distant sky  
The far clouds mustered, & the storm drew nigh.

East Indian Marine Society (1799)

American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (1812)

Cotton Mather, *India Christiana* (1721)

Caleb Wright, *India and Its Inhabitants* (1854)

Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)

Take up the White Man’s burden  
send forth the best ye breed  
go bind your sons to exile  
to serve your captives’ need;  
to wait in heavy harness,  
on fluttered folk and wild  
your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
half-devil and half-child.

*The Widow of Malabar* (1791)

*The Cataract of the Ganges* (1824)

- The good native (J.J. Rousseau's "noble savage")
- The bad native
- The Indian woman
- The Western man

1784: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta

1843: American Oriental Society

*Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1843-1900)

Transcendentalism

“Indian craze”

India in popular culture (freak shows)

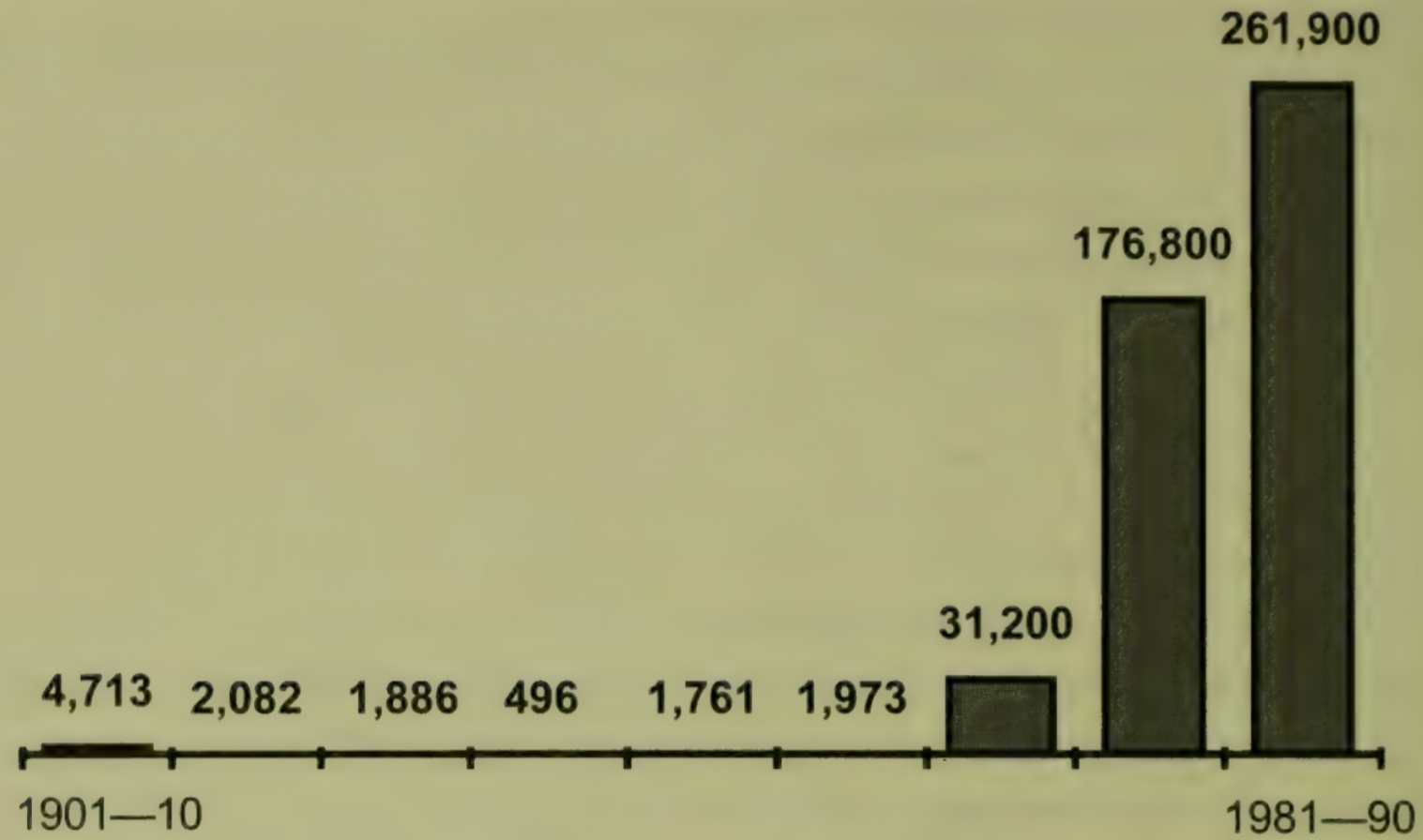
## Indian migration

NRI: 18 millions in late 20th century

19<sup>th</sup> century migration: colonial phase → middle-class Indian citizens

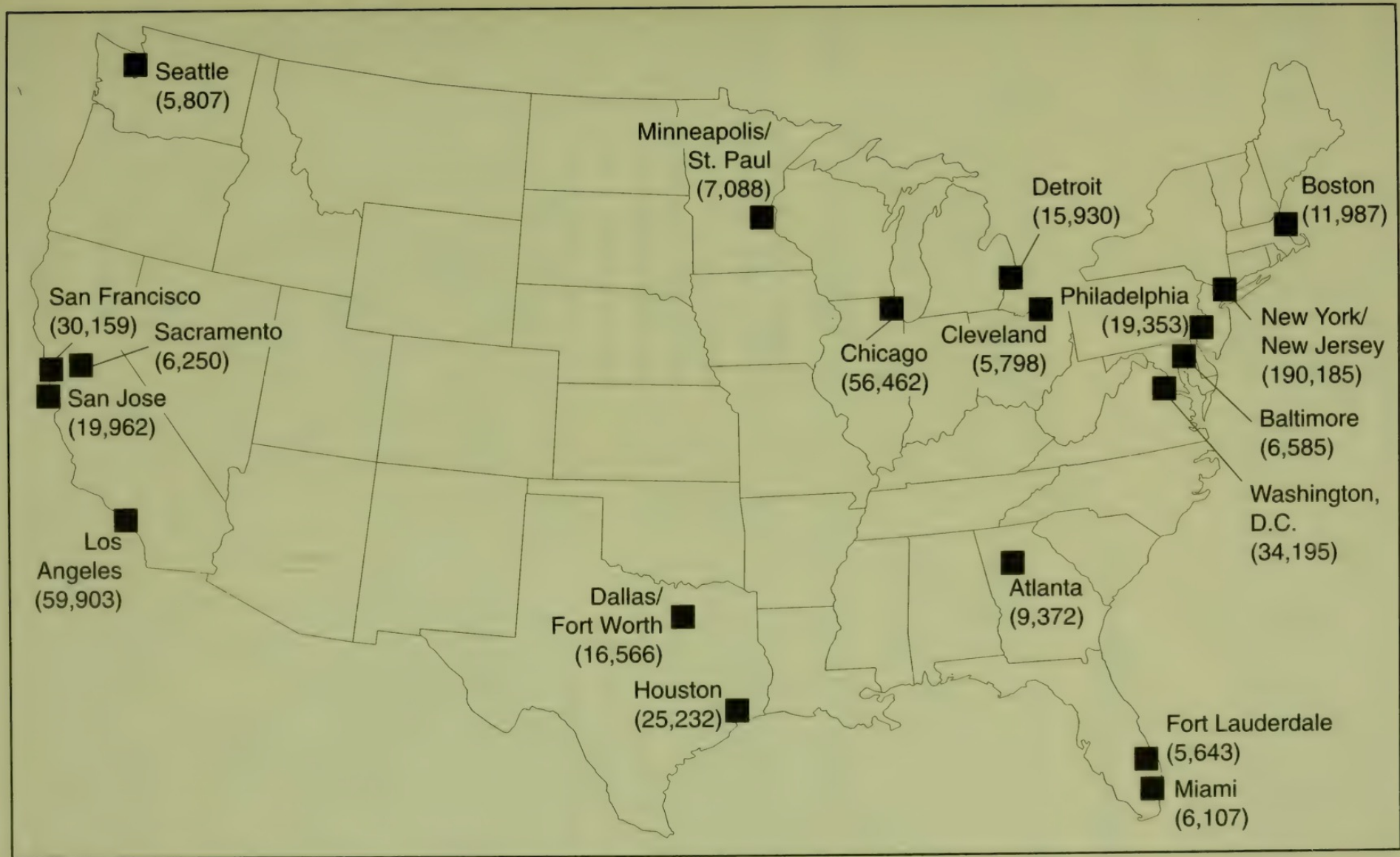
20<sup>th</sup> century migration: post-independence → unskilled workers

1965: Immigration and Nationality Act



**Fig. 4.** Indian Immigration to the United States by decade, 1901-1990

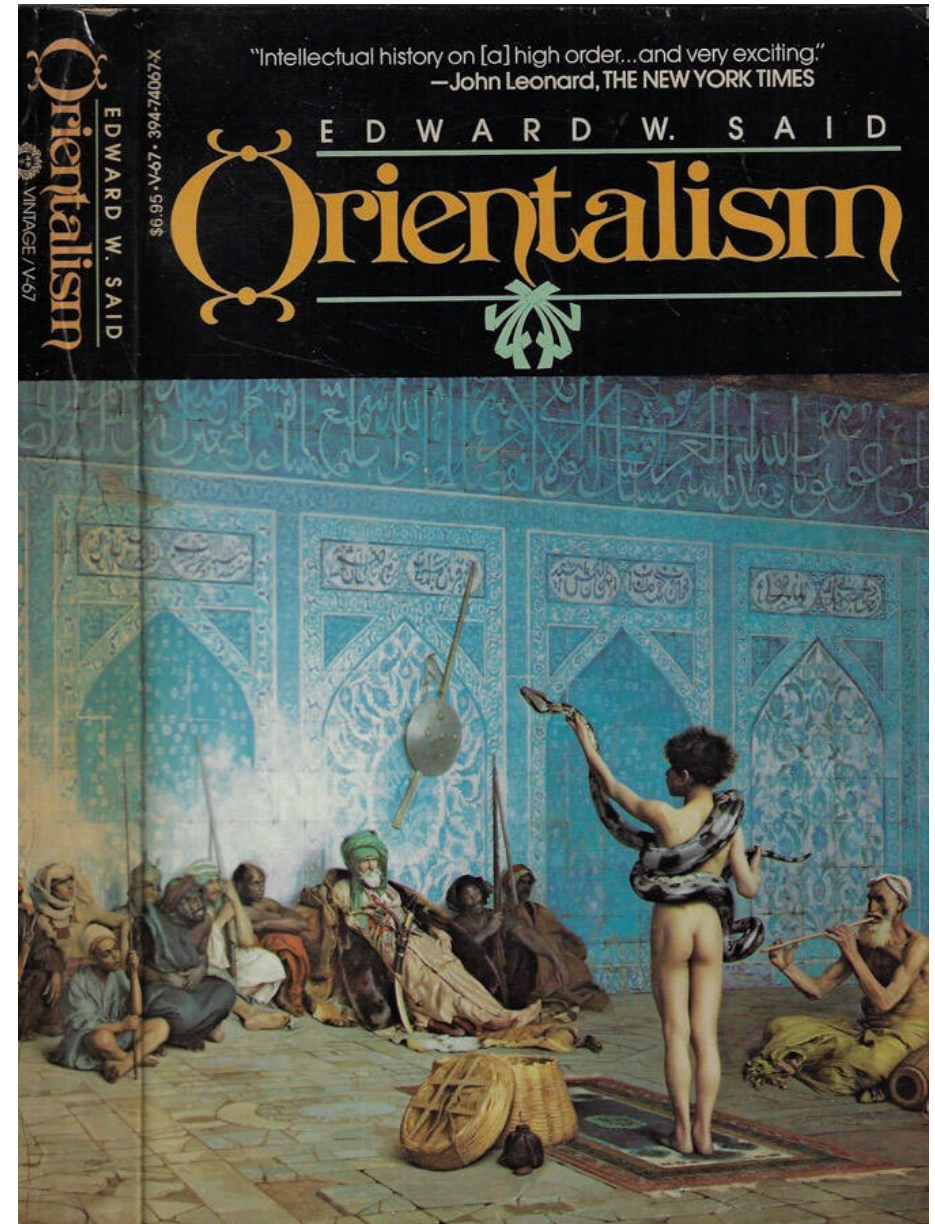
SOURCE: Immigration and Naturalization Service Annual Reports



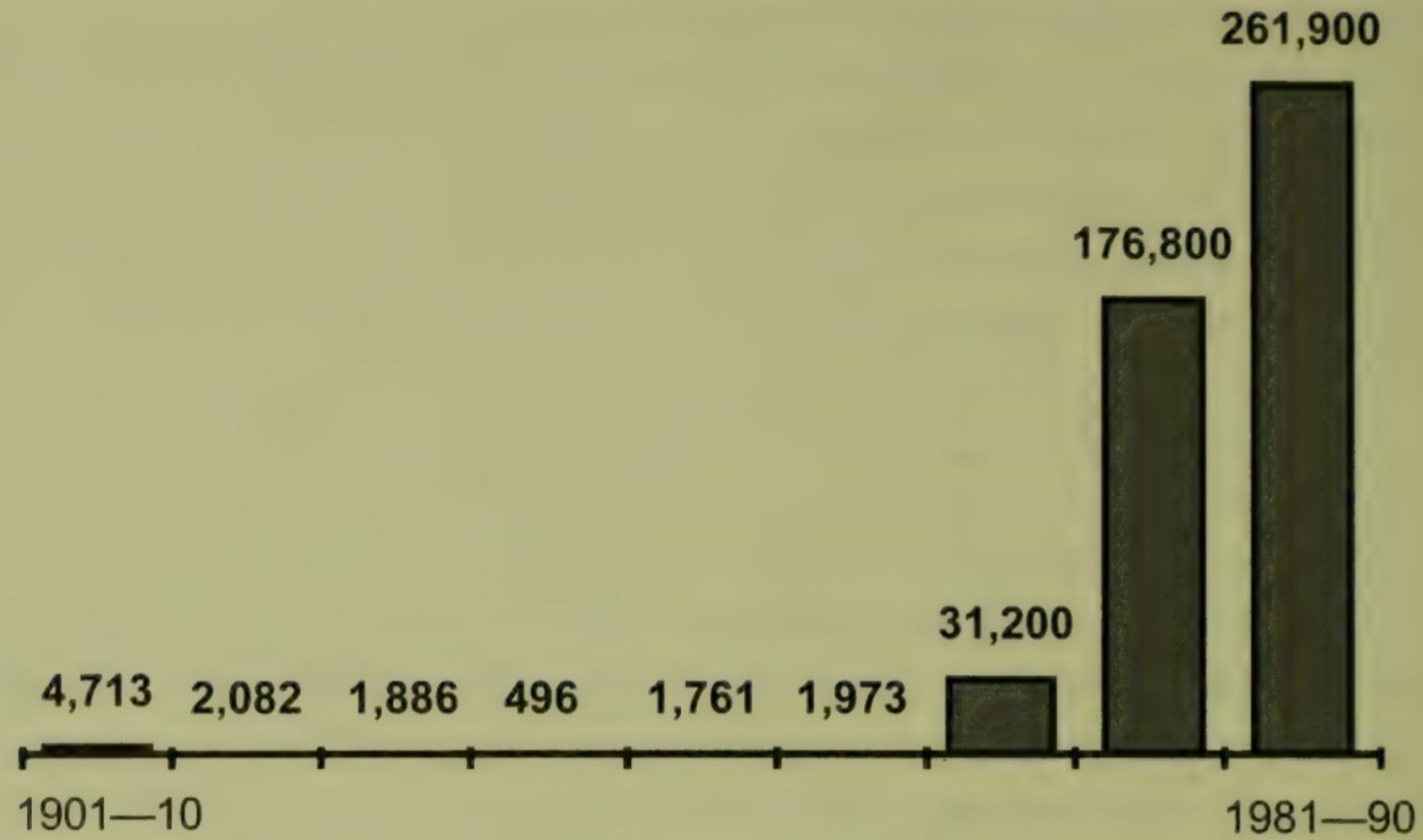
**Fig. 5.** Asian Indian population in the United States by major urbanized areas, 1990



Edward Said, Jerusalem 1935 – New York 2003

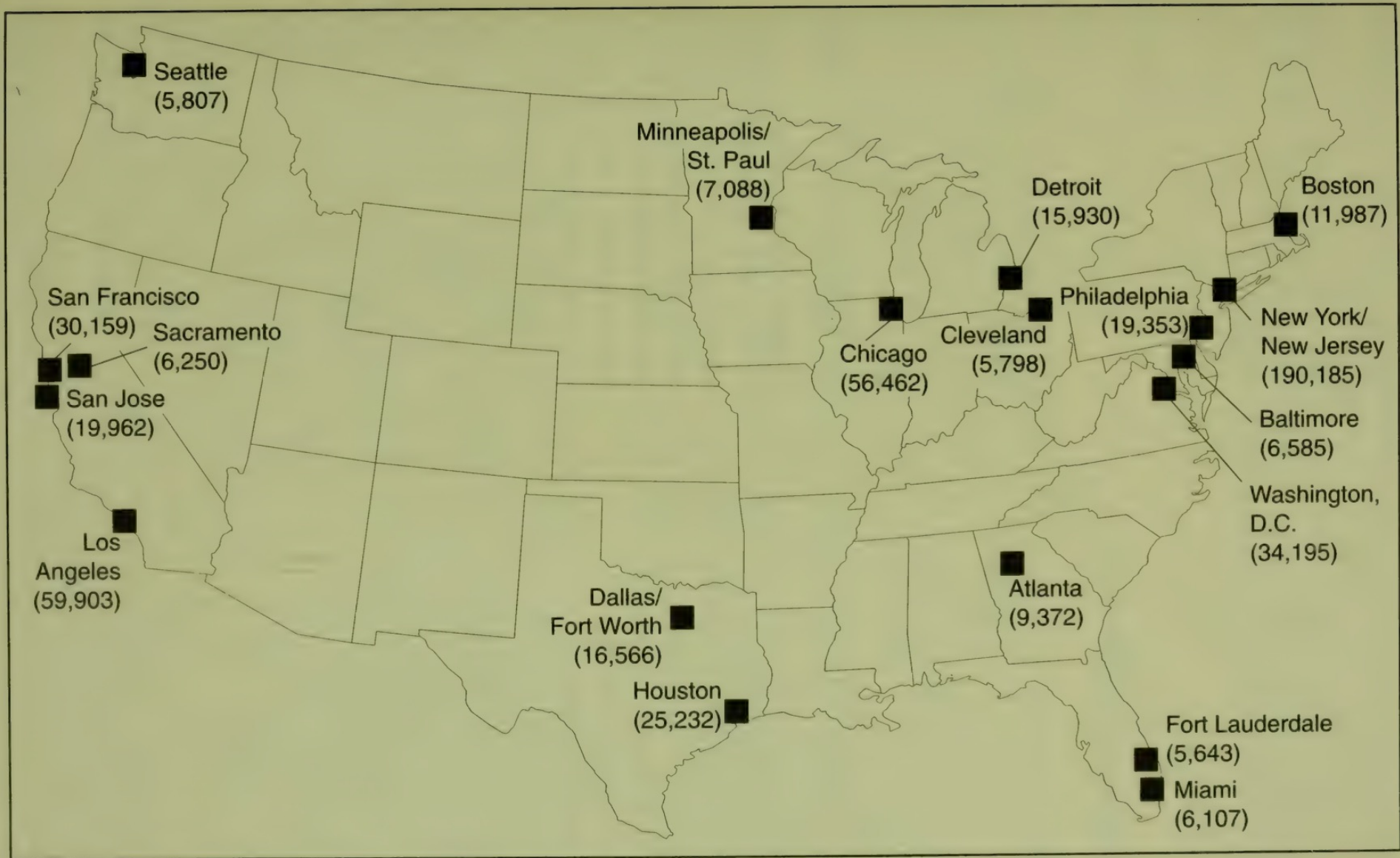


1978

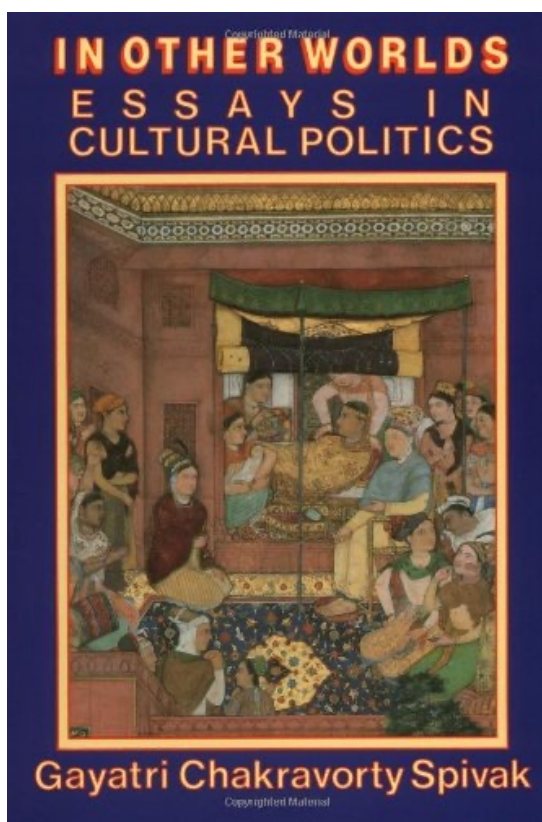


**Fig. 4.** Indian Immigration to the United States by decade, 1901-1990

SOURCE: Immigration and Naturalization Service Annual Reports



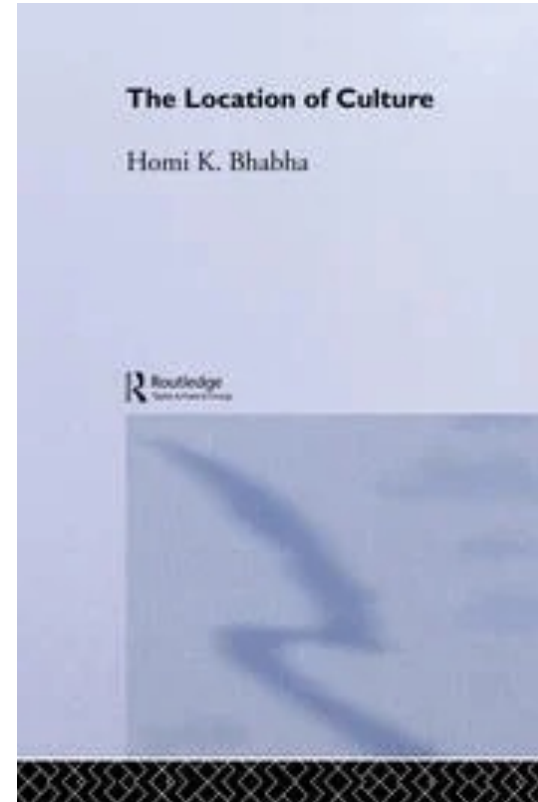
**Fig. 5.** Asian Indian population in the United States by major urbanized areas, 1990



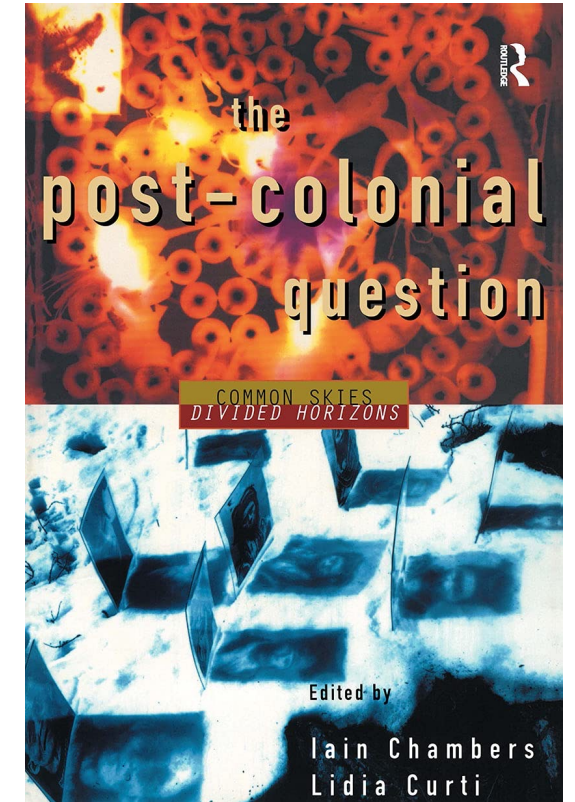
1987



1990



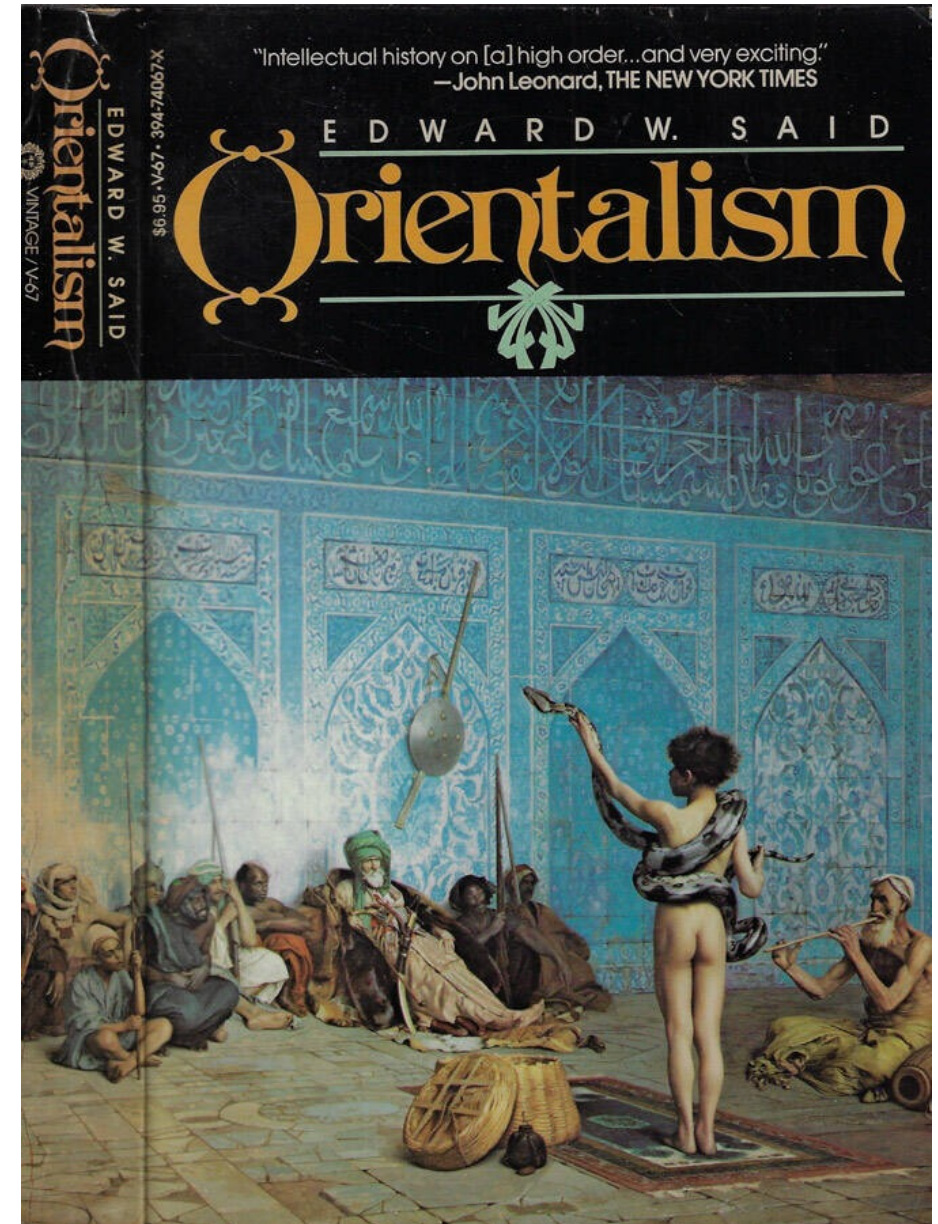
1994



1996



Edward Said, Jerusalem 1935 – New York 2003



1978

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.

Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly). Unlike the Americans, the French and the British—less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss—have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling *Orientalism*, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies,

The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions.

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident.”

Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a **discourse**, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*.

A **discourse** is a set of statements that are correlated with each other, among which certain regularities (or rules of appearance, formation, transformation, etc.) obtain. Discourse is not language (in the sense of grammatical rules and a lexicon) but is rather a practice; a discourse consists of all the statements that have been made within it. [...] These discourses are not fixed and invariable, but rather are bound by all the prior statements and altered by every new statement that is made within a given discourse. Discourses can arise, be transformed, and disappear; they are fragmentary and incomplete. [...] In sum, discourses are the complex networks of statements that make knowledge possible; that delimit what can be said, or understood, within a particular discourse; and that determine who can speak (or at least speak with authority or be heard) within that discourse.

The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.

[...]

It is **hegemony**, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far.

[...]

Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.

There is no unique meaning attached to “hegemony” but an oscillation between a narrow “leadership” as contrasted with “domination” and a broader one which includes both “leadership” and “domination”, leading the allied classes or groups and dominating the opposing ones: in Gramsci’s words, the “‘normal’ exercise of hegemony” is characterized by a “combination of force and consent”. Hegemony is exercised across a variety of fields – not solely political as in the first use of the term, but “political-intellectual”, “intellectual, moral and political”, “politico-cultural” and “cultural”. And the content of political hegemony “must be predominantly of an economic order”. The intellectuals, as defined and discussed by Gramsci in the *Notebooks*, occupy a particular role in the exercise of hegemony in society by the dominant group and in the domination over society embodied by the State. In a struggle for hegemony, a subaltern group must go beyond the economic-corporative phase, to advance to “political-intellectual hegemony in civil society and become dominant in political society”. Hegemony is intimately connected with democracy, such that in a hegemonic system “there is democracy between the leading groups and the groups that are led”.

Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the “Oriental” world. It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of “interests” which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various

kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do).

No longer does an Orientalist try first to master the esoteric languages of the Orient; he begins instead as a trained social scientist and “applies” his science to the Orient, or anywhere else. This is the specifically American contribution to the history of Orientalism, and it can be dated roughly from the period immediately following World War II, when the United States found itself in the position recently vacated by Britain and France. The American experience of the Orient prior to that exceptional moment was limited. Cultural isolatos like Melville were interested in it; cynics like Mark Twain visited and wrote about it; the American Transcendentalists saw affinities between Indian thought and their own; a few theologians and Biblical students studied the Biblical Oriental languages; there were occasional diplomatic and military encounters with Barbary pirates and the like, the odd naval expedition to the Far Orient, and of course the ubiquitous missionary to the Orient.

... let us consider the founding of the *American Oriental Society* in 1842. At its first annual meeting in 1843 its president, John Pickering, made the very clear point that America proposed for itself the study of the Orient in order to follow the example of the imperial European powers.

[...]

The objects of the Society were to cultivate learning in Asiatic, African, and Polynesian language, and in everything concerning the Orient, to create a taste for Oriental Studies in this country, to publish texts, translations and communications, and to collect a library and cabinet. Most of the work has been done in the Asiatic field, and particularly in Sanskrit and the Semitic languages.

[...]

all suggest the imperial constellation facilitating Euro-American penetration of the Orient. [...] During and after the Second World War, the escalation in United States interest in the Middle East was remarkable. Cairo, Teheran, and North Africa were important arenas of war, and in that setting, with the exploitation of its oil, strategic, and human resources pioneered by Britain and France, the United States prepared for its new postwar imperial role.



## Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston 1803 - Concord 1882)

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- Unitarian clergy
- Europe and European Romanticism
- Transcendental Club
- *Nature* (1836)
- **“The American Scholar”** (1837)

## *Essays*

1841, 1<sup>st</sup> series: “Self-Reliance”, “Compensation”, ”The Over-Soul”

1844, 2<sup>nd</sup> series: “The Poet”, “Experience”

## *Representative Men (1850)*

- Plato, the philosopher
- Swedenborg, the mystic
- Montaigne, the skeptic
- Shakespeare, the poet
- Napoleon, the man of the world
- Goethe, the writer

## *Nature*

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe?

The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

## “Self-Reliance”

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity: yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot, and flee.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. — ‘Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.’ — Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

## Emerson and India

- “The Character of Socrates” 1820
- “Indian Superstition” 1821
- “Brahma” 1856-57
- “Maya”
- *Essays*

### Possible sources:

- Sir William Jones’s works
- *Monthly Anthology and Western Review* (M.M. Clifford’s “Asia, an Elegy”, 1804)
- Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* (1572)
- Robert Southey, “The Curse of Kahama” (1810)

**Ralph W. Emerson, “Brahma” (1856-57)**

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Ralph W. Emerson, "Maia"

Illusion works impenetrable,  
Weaving webs innumerable,  
Her gay pictures never fail,  
Crowds each on other, veil on veil,  
Charmer who will be believed  
By Man who thirsts to be deceived.

**M. M. Clifford, “Asia, An Elegy”**

*(The Monthly Anthology, or Magazine of Polite Literature, vol. 1, n. 3, January 1804)*

THE miserable condition of society in Asia is prettily intimated in this tender strain of lamentation; and is well contrasted with the state of those countries, where Christianity and rational liberty have established their improving influence.

(Written in Marmorice Bay, during the residence of Sir Ralph Abercrombie’s army there, in February, 1801.)

AH! country, lost to honour, lost to love!  
How vain the spicy gale, that fans thy coast;  
How vain the myrtles, that enrich thy grove,  
Or the warm roses in thy valleys lost.

Not here at eve the labouring hind retires,  
To share the pleasures of his social cot,  
Nor smiling views, beside his little fires,  
The cherish’d partners of his humble lot.

The little tyrant of a fleeting hour  
Here dwells in gloomy fear, and sullen state;  
Here starts, awaken'd from his dream of pow'r,  
To kiss the mandate that awards his fate.

Yes; though rude storms o'erhang our Northern isles,  
Yet Nature wears in them a livelier green;  
Pure honour there, and love's domestic smiles,  
Congenial spring, to decorate the scene.

What though thy ivied walls, thy ruin'd towers,  
Thy scatter'd hamlets, on the dreary plain,  
Might lure young Pity from her classic bowers,  
To mourn oppression's solitary reign;

Yet here no gleam of worth adorns her song,  
No virtue breathes beneath the slumbering clay;  
No brighter name, distinguish'd from the throng,  
Whose deeds of glory harmonize the lay.

The fierce defender of a tyrant's cause  
Here, restless, seeks awhile a false renown,  
Bids Nature hush, and mocks her purest laws,  
Then dies, the victim of his master's frown.

Yet not the awful form, the sinewy frame,  
That marks the natives of this Eastern sky,  
Was meant to cloke a bosom dead to shame,  
Or sink, abash'd, beneath a tyrant's eye.

Not thus the children of a bleaker clime,  
Who feel, in smaller forms, a breast more pure,  
Like the firm rock, that stands the lapse of time,  
More firm from tempests, from attacks more sure.

Ah, happier climes! if erst when honour calls,  
Thy free born sons rejoice awhile to roam,  
With laurell'd worth they seek thy sacred halls,  
And add more lustre to their parent home.



# Louisa May Alcott

Germantown, PA 1832 - Boston 1888

Daughter of Amos Bronson Alcott

Reader of Goethe and Emerson

Death of her sister Elizabeth (1858)

Nurse during the Civil War (1862-63)

Trip to Europe (1865)

*Little Women* (1868)

*Little Men* (1871); *Jo's Boys* (1886)

*Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873)

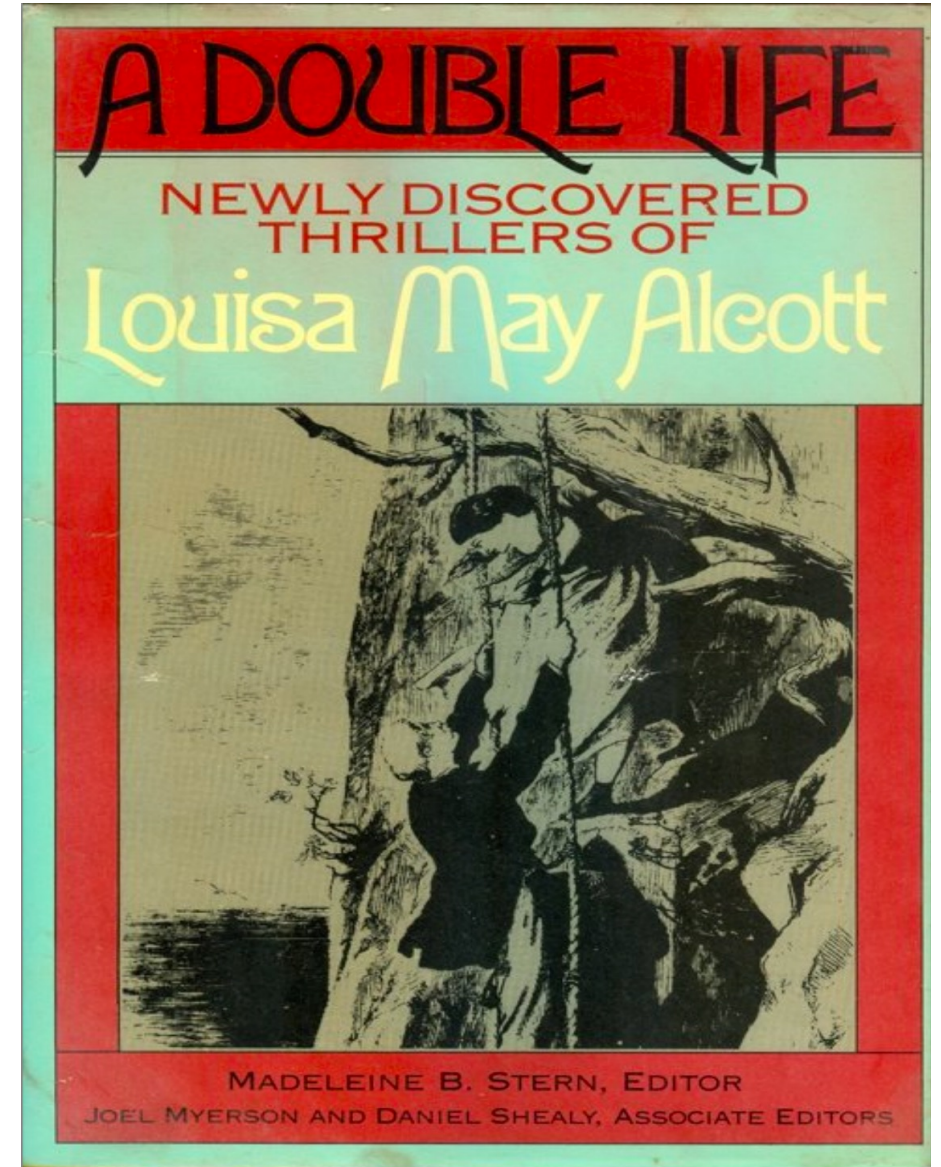
A Pair of Eyes; or, Modern Magic (1863)

**The Fate of the Forrests (1865)**

A Double Tragedy. An Actors Story (1865)

Ariel. A Legend of the Lighthouse (1865)

Taming a Tartar (1867)



“Rubbish keeps the pot boiling” (1864)

**Themes:**

Sadomasochism

Occult

Orientalism/Exoticism

Mesmerism (Franz Anton Mesmer)

**Sources:**

Poe (?)

Shakespeare (*The Tempest*, *Macbeth*)

**... and also**

Theater

Gender issues





**Theme:** Indian Thugs (Hindi ठग, Sanskrit स्थगति = deceiver), North-Eastern India, 14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century

Philip M. Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug* (1839)

Emilio Salgari, *I misteri della giungla nera* (1887), originally published as *Gli strangolatori del Gange*



## The dark side of the Enlightenment

“... the age of enchantment is not yet past”  
(*The Fate of the Forrests*, 73)

Count Alessandro di Cagliostro  
(1743 - 1795)

Madame Blavatsky  
(Dnipro, Ukraine 1831 - London, 1891)



# Walt Whitman

West Hills, NY 1819 - Camden, NJ, 1892

“Born here of parents born here from parents  
the same, and their parents the same”

*(Song of Myself)*

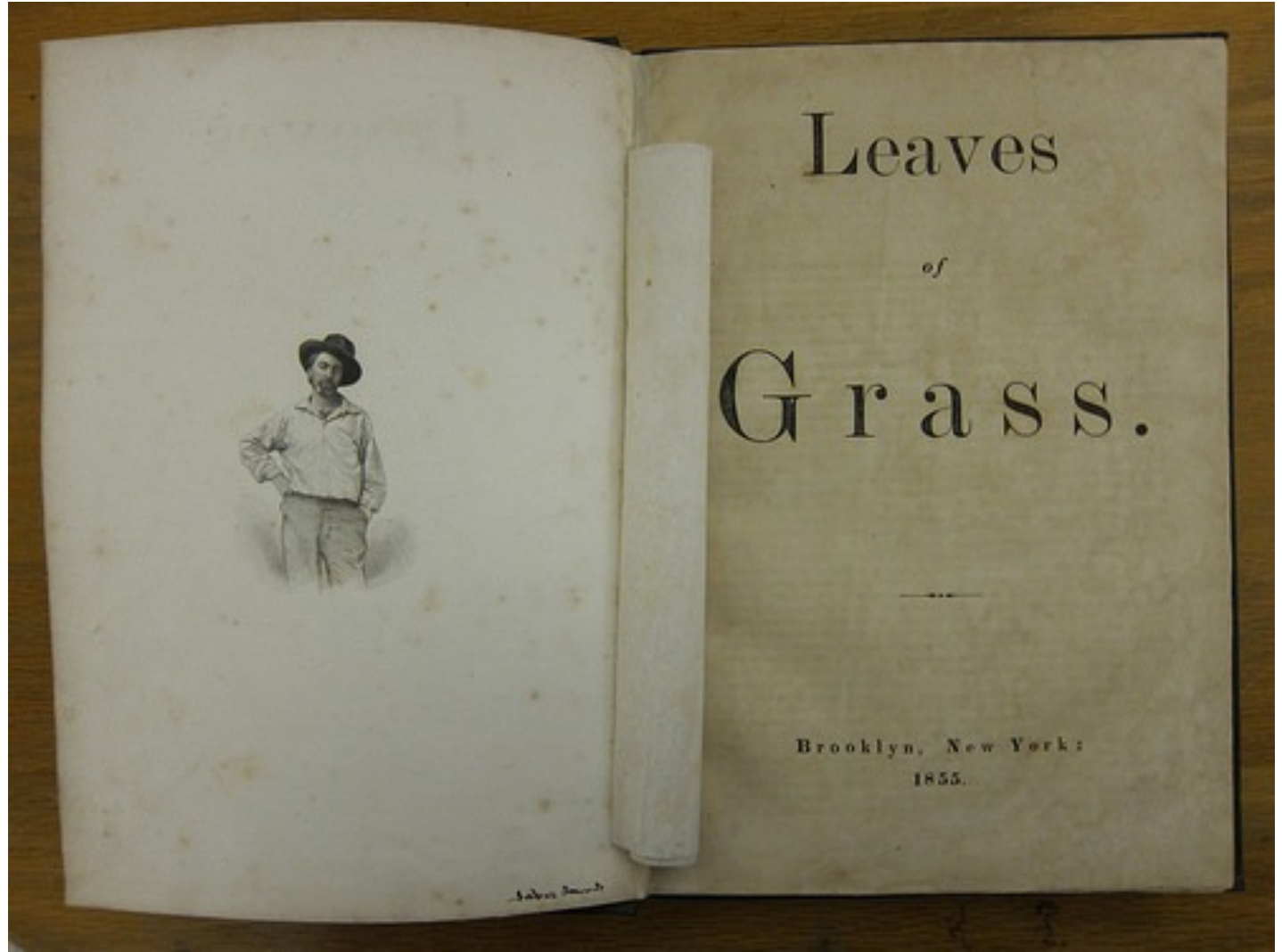
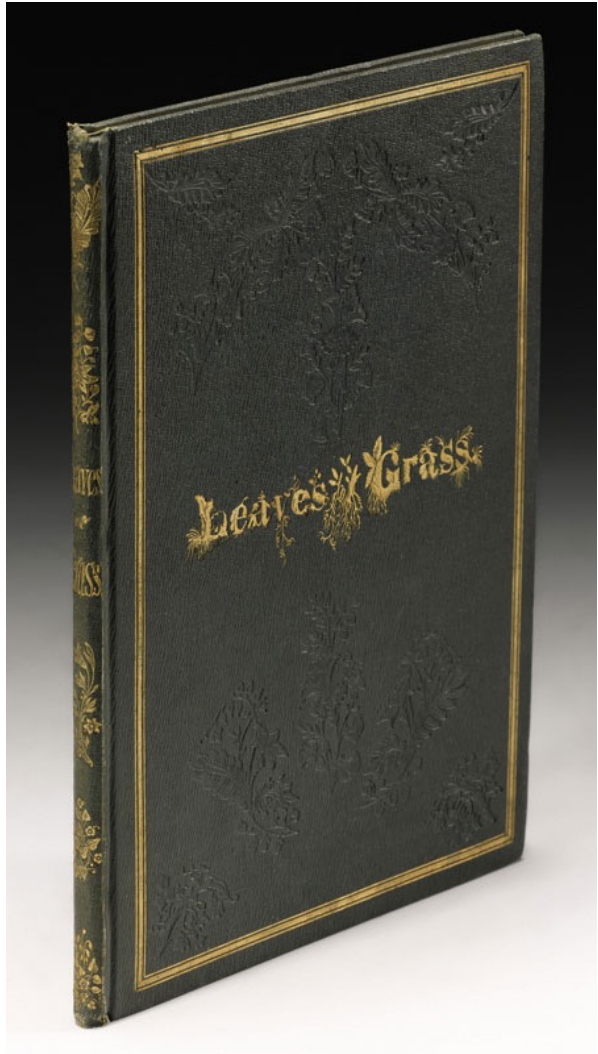
Relocated to Brooklyn, 1823

Working-class family & context

Short stories & journalism: *Long Islander* (1838)

*Leaves of Grass* (1855)





1st edition: 1855, New York, 94 pages, 12 poems  
“Deathbed edition”: 1892, 389 poems

## Themes

The poet and poetry

The human being (body + soul)

Sexuality

America

Civil War (“O Captain! My Captain!”)

## Language & style

Colloquial English

Free verse

Catalogs

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

*(Song of Myself, 11)*

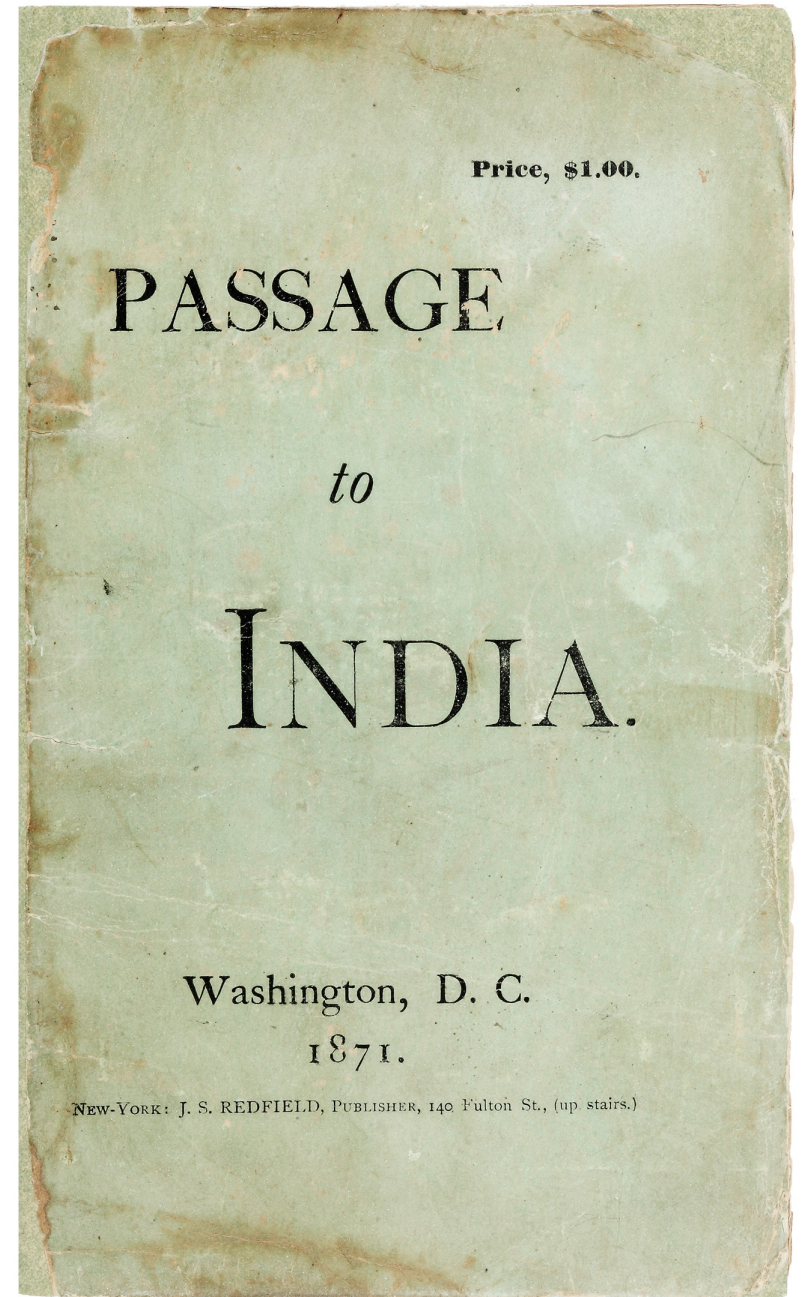
## Preface (1855)

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.

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.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them.

- 75 poems, 23 unpublished
- Supplement to the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass*
- Incorporated in the 1881 edition





## The Suez Canal



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## Opening of the Suez Canal, 1869



placesbook.org



**First transcontinental railroad, 1869**

*Salut au monde* (1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*)

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India,  
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.

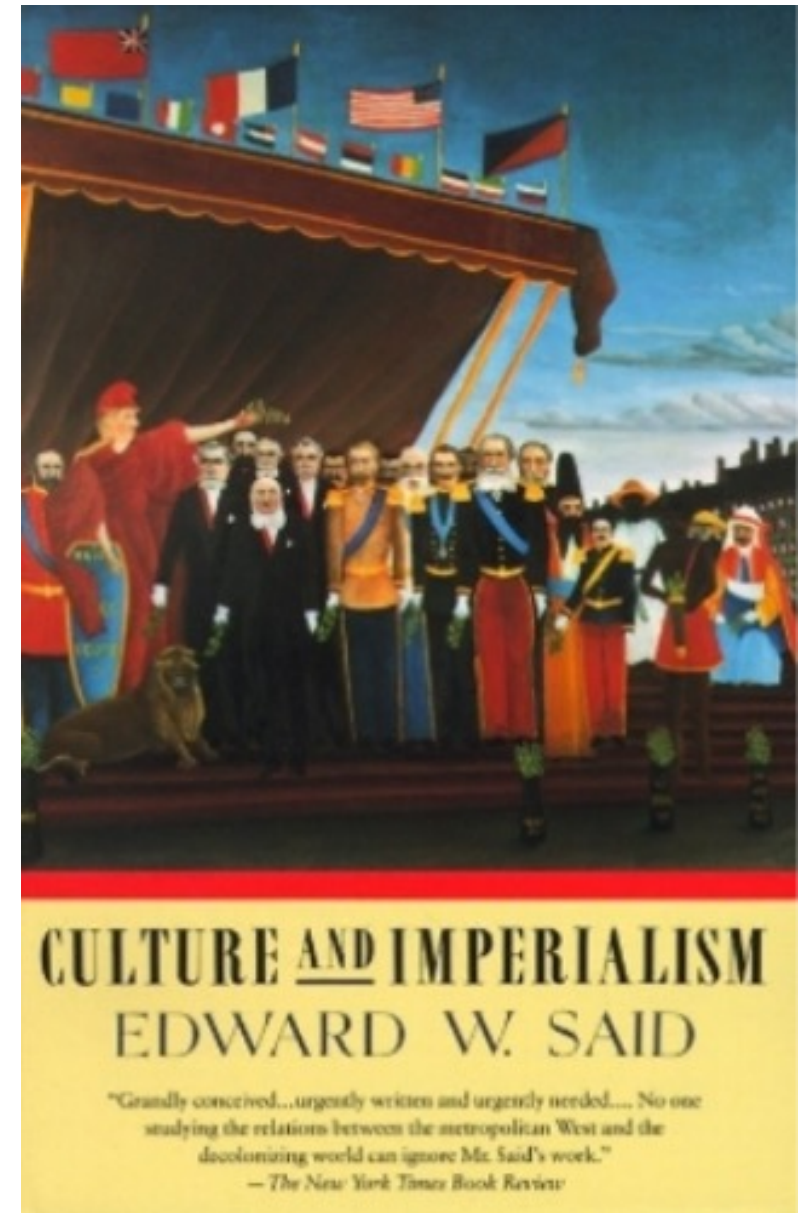
I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human forms,  
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth—oracles, sacrificers, brahmins,  
    sabians, lamas, monks, muftis, exhorters;  
I see where druids walked the groves of Mona—I see the mistletoe and vervain,  
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods—I see the old signifiers.

I see Christ once more eating the bread of his last supper, in the midst of youths and old  
    persons,  
I see where the strong divine young man, the Hercules, toiled faithfully and long, and then  
    died,  
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the  
    full-limbed Bacchus,

I see the steppes of *Asia*,  
I see the tumuli of *Mongolia*—I see the tents of *Kalmucks* and *Baskirs*,  
I see the nomadic tribes, with herds of oxen and cows,  
I see the table-lands notched with ravines—I see the jungles and deserts,  
  
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tailed sheep, the antelope,  
and the burrowing wolf.

I see the high-lands of *Abyssinia*,  
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree, tamarind, date,  
And see fields of teff-wheat, and see the places of verdure and gold.

... the empire functions for much of the European nineteenth century as a codified, if only marginally visible, presence in fiction, very much like the servants in grand households and in novels, whose work is taken for granted but scarcely ever more than named, rarely studied [...], or given density. To cite another intriguing analogue, imperial possessions are as usefully *there*, anonymous and collective, as the outcast populations [...] of transient workers, part-time employees, seasonal artisans; their existence always counts, though their names and identities do not, they are profitable without being fully there. This is a literary equivalent, in Eric Wolf's somewhat self-congratulatory words, of "people without History," people on whom the economy and polity sustained by empire depend, but whose reality has not historically or culturally required attention.



1993

## Correspondence.

### LETTER TO WALT WHITMAN.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 21 July, 1855.

DEAR SIR — I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of "LEAVES OF GRASS." I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seemed the sterile and stingy nature, as if too much handiwork, or too much lymph in the temperament, were making our western wits fat and mean.

I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little, to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging.

I did not know until I last night saw the book advertised in a newspaper that I could trust the name as real

and available for a post-office. I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks and visiting New York to pay you my respects.

R. W. EMERSON.

### LETTER TO RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

BROOKLYN, August, 1856.

HERE are thirty-two Poems, which I send you, dear Friend and Master, not having found how I could satisfy myself with sending any usual acknowledgment of your letter. The first edition, on which you see that till now unanswered letter, was twelve printed a thousand copies, and they readily sold thirty-two Poems I stereotype, to print several copies of. I much enjoy making poems. Other have set for myself to do, to meet people and to face to face, to confront them with an American tongue; but the work of my life is making poems on till I make a hundred, and then several hundred perhaps a thousand. The way is clear to me. A friend and the average annual call for my Poems is ten thousand copies—more, quite likely. Why should I or compromise? In poems or in speeches I say one or two that has got to be said, adhere to the truth with the countless common footsteps, and remind every man and woman of something.

Master, I am a man who has perfect faith. Master, we have not come through centuries, caste, heroisms, fables, to halt in this land today. Or I think it is to collect a ten-fold impetus that any halt is made. As nature, inexorable, onward, resistless, impassive amid the threats and screams of disputants, so America. Let all defer. Let all

October 13, 1955: Telegram from Lawrence Ferlinghetti to Allen Ginsberg, both in San Francisco

I GREET YOU AT THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT CAREER [stop] WHEN DO I GET MANUSCRIPT OF "HOWL"? [stop] LAWRENCE (FERLINGHETTI) CITY LIGHTS BOOKSTORE

Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California"

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!—and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

Berkeley, 1955

# The Beat Generation



Allen Ginsberg  
1926-1997  
Peterson, NJ  
(Jewish family)



Jack Kerouac  
1922-1969  
Lowell, MA  
(Catholic family)



Gary Snyder, 1930  
San Francisco -  
Seattle countryside  
(Anarchic family)



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WITHOUT  
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DIRECTED BY  
DAVID WEISSBART NICHOLAS RAY  
A WARNER BROS. PICTURE



**THE WELL-EQUIPPED PAD**

A Beat's entire "pad" or hoard, as re-created in studio that using paid models, contains all the essentials of uncomfortable living and consists of the following: 1 Beat chick dressed in black, 2 coal

stove for heating hale's milk, drying chick's boots and displaying crucifix-shaped Mexican cow bells, 3 naked light bulb, 4 hot plate for warming express coffee pot and bean cans, 5 marjamins for smoking, 6 poster from old poetry readings and jazz concerts, 7 paperback library of Beat classics,

8 crates which serve as tables and closets, 9 hi-fi loudspeaker, 10 typewriter with half-finished poem, 11 bearded Beat wearing sandals, cello and turtle-necked sweater and strutting a record by the late saxophonist Charlie Parker, 12 Italian wine bottle, 13 empty beer cans, 14 ill-tended plants, 15 corner

item favorite of Beats, Miles Davis's *Kind of Blues*, 16 guitar, 17 record player, 18 Beat poetry booklet (Edmunds' *Manifesto*), 19 bare mattress, 20 lounge drums for accompanying poetry reading (guitar is also so used), 21 cat, 22 Beat babe, who has gone to sleep on floor after playing with beer cans.

# The Only Rebellion Around

**BUT THE SHABBY BEATS BUNGLE THE JOB IN ARGUING, SULKING AND BAD POETRY**

by PAUL O'NEIL, *Lava Staff Writer*

If the U.S. today is really the biggest, sweetest and most succulent caesars ever produced by the melon patch of civilization, it would seem only reasonable to find its surface profaned—as indeed it is—by a few fruit flies. But reason would also anticipate oriented fruit flies, blissful fruit flies—fruit flies raised by happy environment to the highest stages of fruit fly development. Such is not the case. The grandest casualty of all, in this case, has inoculated some of the hardest, scrawniest and most disoriented specimens of all time: the imperishable rebels of the Beat Generation, who not only refuse to sample the seeping juices of American plenty and American social advance but scrape their feet in disdainful scorn of any and all who do.

This penetrating thoroughness has been going on ever since the Korean War, but it is astonishing how seldom the noise has been understood. The wide public belief that the Beats are simply dirty people in sandals is only a small if repellent part of the truth. Any attempt to list the collective attitudes of Beatdom, it must be admitted, would be foolhardy in the extreme. Most of its members are against collectiveness of any description, a great many of them even refuse to admit there is any such thing as a Beat Generation, and most of them spend hours differing vehemently with their own kind. Individual Beats, however, in the course of what might be described as the Six Year War Against the Squares, have raised their voices against virtually every aspect of current American society: Man, God, Politics, Marriage, the Savings Bank, Organized Religion, Literary Elegance, Law, the Ivy League, Sport and Higher Education, to say nothing of the Automatic Dishwasher, the Cellulose-wrapped Soda Cracker, the Split-Level House and the clean, or peace-provoking, H-bomb.

Beat philosophy seems calculated to offend the whole population, civil, military and ecclesiastic—particularly and ironically those radicals of only yesterday who demanded a better world for the ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed of the Great Depression and who still breathe heavily from proclaiming man's right to work and organize. Hard-core Beats want freedom to disorganize and thus to ensure full flowering of their remarkable individualities. They

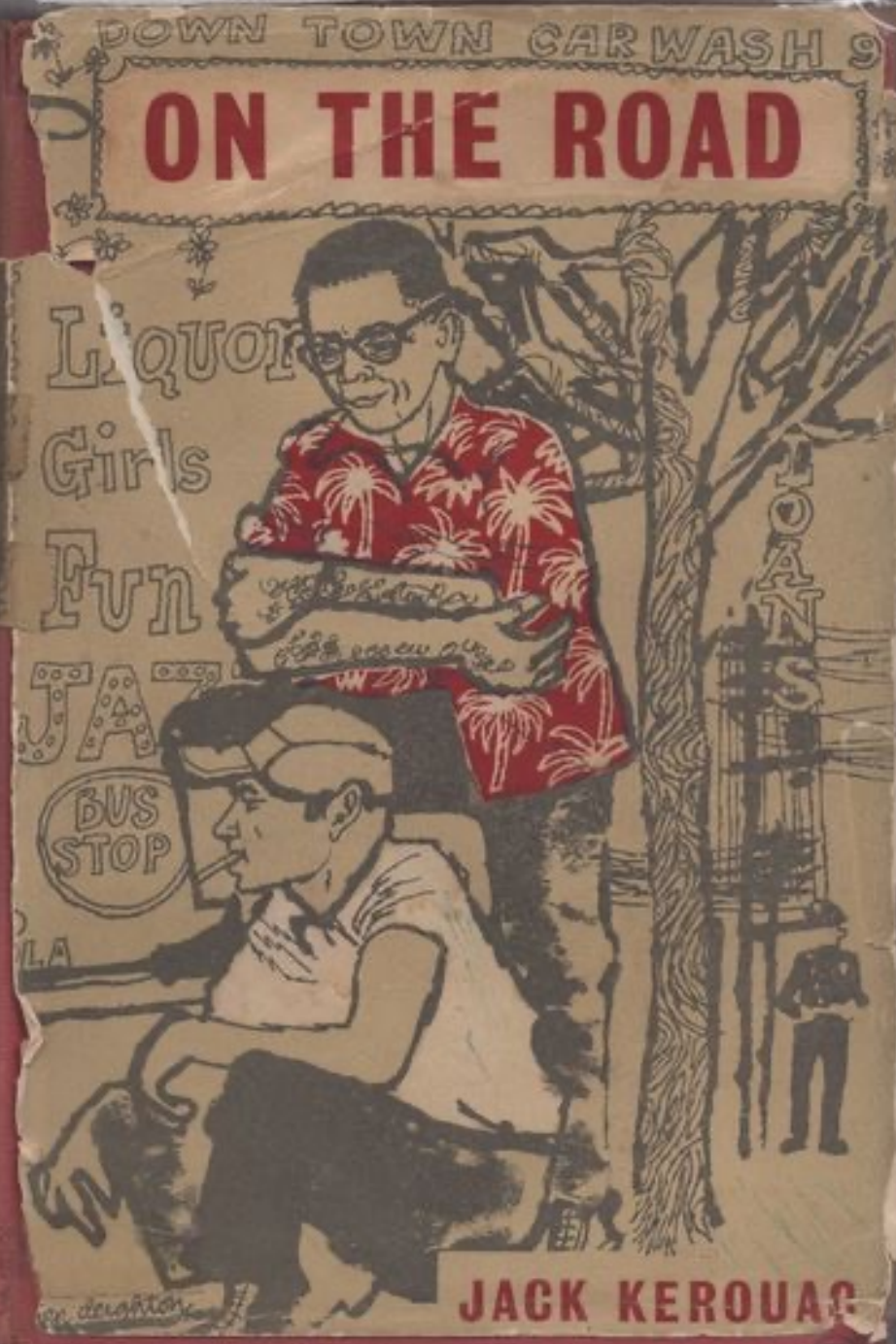
are against work and they are often ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed by preference. The Negro, it is true, is a hero to the Beat (as are the junkie and the jazz musician), and he is embraced with a fervor which San Francisco's anarchist poet Kenneth Rexroth sardonically defines as "crow jimson." But it seems doubtful that anti-segregationists or many Negroes could take comfort in this fact. The things the Beat treasures and envies in the Negro are the irresponsibility, cheerful promiscuity and sardonic defiance which were once enforced in him during his years of bondage. A middle-class Negro would be hopelessly square. Novelist Norman Mailer, a devoted follower of hipsterism, calls the Beat movement the call of the White Negro and glibly suggests that its members seek the "constant humility" of Negro life in order to emulate its "primitive . . . joy, lust, and languor. . ." But the Beat Generation can be much more accurately described as a cult of the Pariah. It yearns for the coach-guarded moors of the skid road, the flophouse, the hobo jungle and the slum, primarily to escape regimentation. It shares these with Negroes, when it does, only by coincidence.

**Squares are tragic saps**

UNLIKE England's Angry Young Men who know what they want of society and lay for it with vehemence, the Beat finds society too tedious to contemplate and so withdraws from it. He does not go quietly, however, nor so far that his voice is inaudible, and his route of retreat is littered with old beer cans and marijuana butts. The industrious squares, he cries, is a tragic sap who spends all the juices and energies of life in stultifying submission to the "rat race" and does so, furthermore, with no more reward than sexual enslavement by a matronly of stern and grasping wives and the certainty of atomic death for his children. Thus, say the Beats, the only way man can call his soul his own is by becoming an outcast.

Little of this is as remarkable as the Beats like to think. Bohemianism is not new to big American cities, and the whiskey bum was a familiar U.S. figure long before the advent of

CONTINUED 115



*Life*, 30 November 1959

for 37 years  
**WOMEN** have admired **MEN**  
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**"The Beat  
 Generation"**

(Continued from Page 16)  
 just the prevailing atmosphere was an almost objective sense of loss, through which the reader felt immediately that the richness of things had diminished. It was, for an entire generation, an image which expressed, with dreadful accuracy, its own spiritual condition.

**B**UT the wild hours of today are not lost. They flash, often jostling, always latent, some about the world and it would crowd glory to them. For this generation conspicuously lacks that abstract air of involvement which made so many of the exponents of the Lost Generation spiritual artists. Furthermore, the repeated inventory of shattered ideals and the failure about the world is moral torments, which so afflicted the Lost Generation, they did concern young people today. They take it frightfully for granted. They were brought up on these rates and so sought entire things. They seek to "come down" or to "get high," not to illustrate anything. They are serious like drugs or promiscuity come out of necessity, not disillusionment.

Only the most bitter among them would call their reality a nightmare and protest that they have indeed lost something, the future. But ever since they were old enough to disagree one, they have been in jeopardy anyway. The absence of personal and social values is to them, not a revolution making the ground beneath them, but a gradual demand, like a day-to-day solution. How to the better in their much more critical than any. And it is precisely at this point that the experimenter and the hot-rod driver meet, and their admitted bestiality becomes experiment, for, unlike the Lost Generation, which was destroyed with the loss of faith, the Beat Generation is becoming more and more intrigued with the need for it. As such, it is a disturbing illustration of Voltaire's notable old joke: "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent Him." But content to become His slaves, they are busily and laboriously creating substitutes for Him on all sides.

**F**OR the graying school, sitting up the highway at night with an hour, and leaving with his feet, is no Jerry Chesley. The poet of the Lost Generation who drew his name into the sun one day because he could no longer envisage the modern world. On the contrary, the hot-rod driver writes death only to exploit it. He is affirming the life within, not in the way he knows it, at the extreme. The edge-ward girl, parked up on a high ledge, is not one of those  
 "Portrait as Following Page"

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STEELE WARD COMPANY, INC., 1475 BAY STREET, NEW YORK

Six Gallery, San Francisco  
 October 1955

Beat Manifesto  
 The New York Times, 1952

## Howl

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,  
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,  
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of  
night,  
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water  
flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,  
who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs  
illuminated,  
who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among  
the scholars of war,  
who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,  
who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the  
Terror through the wall,  
who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York,  
who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after  
night  
with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls,  
[...]

Allen Ginsberg, “A Footnote to Howl”, 1955

Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!

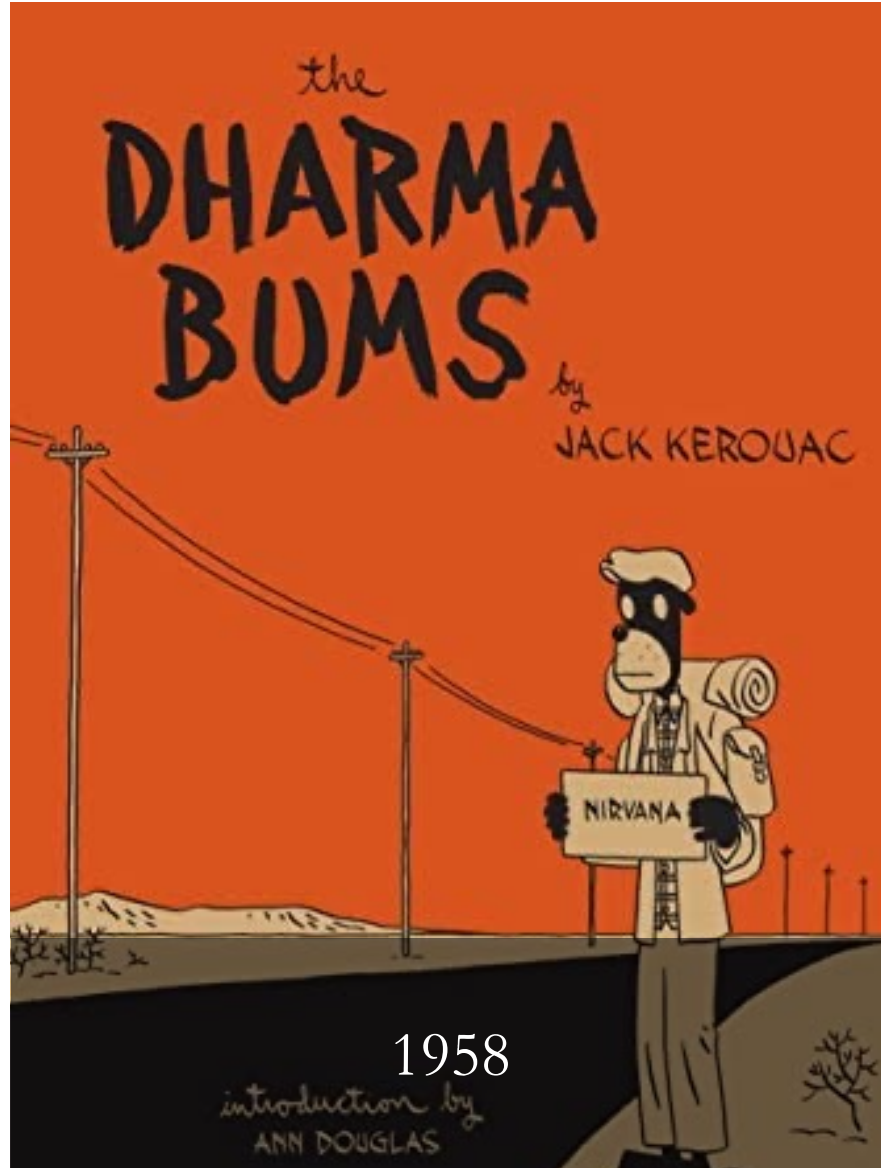
The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock  
and hand and asshole holy!

Everything is holy! everybody’s holy! everywhere is holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman’s an  
angel!

“Sunflower Sutra”, 1955

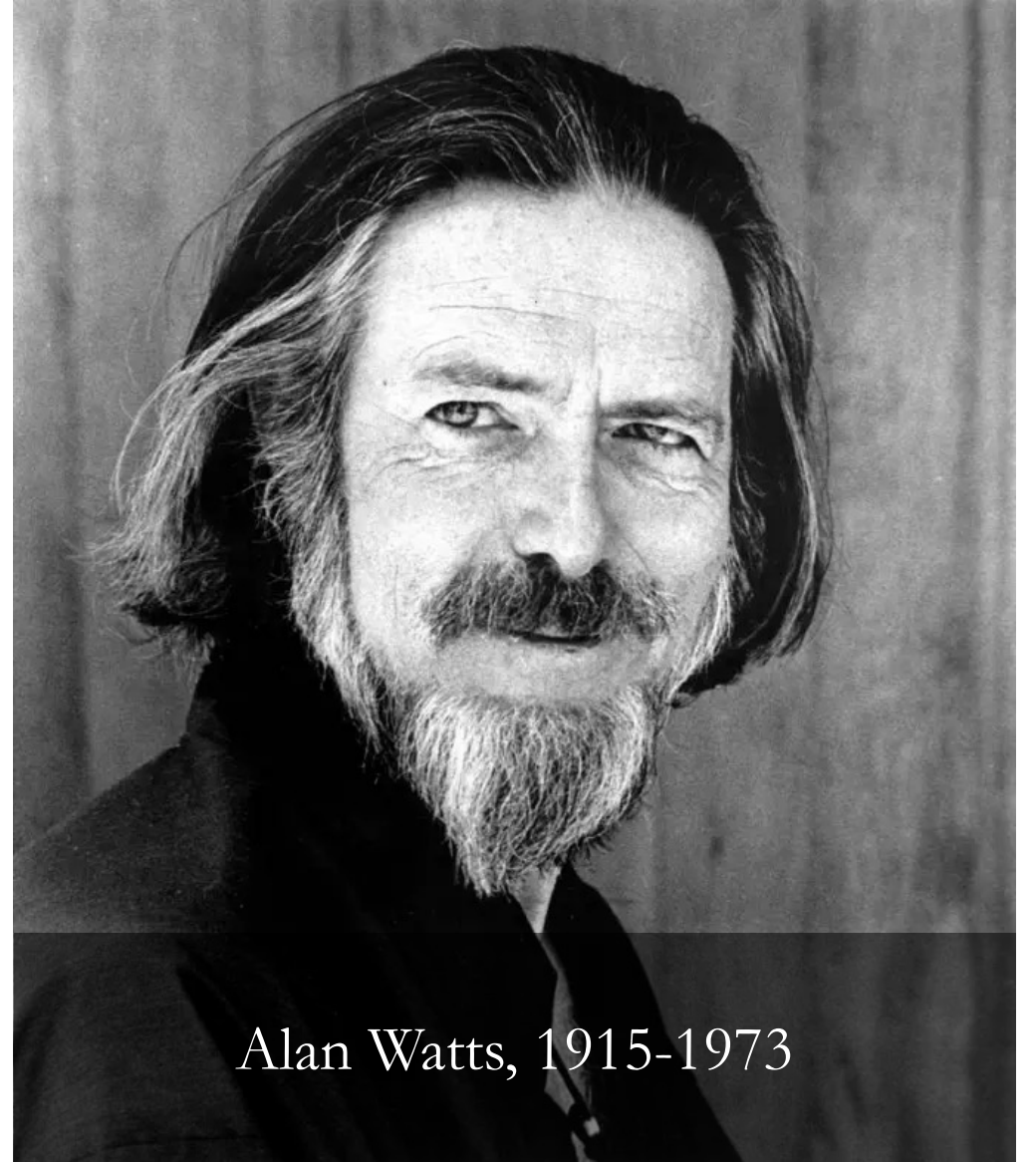
*Indian Journals*, 1963

“Wichita Vortex Sutra”, 1968



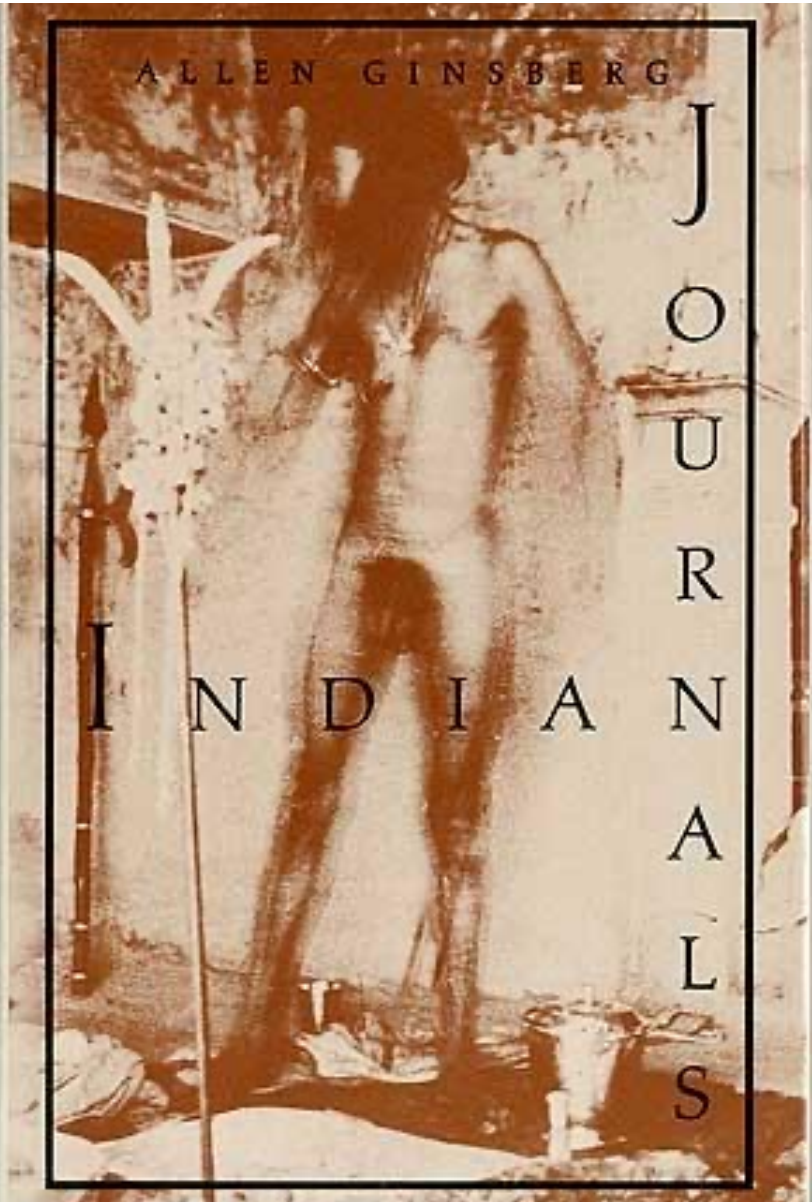
1958

introduction by  
ANN DOUGLAS



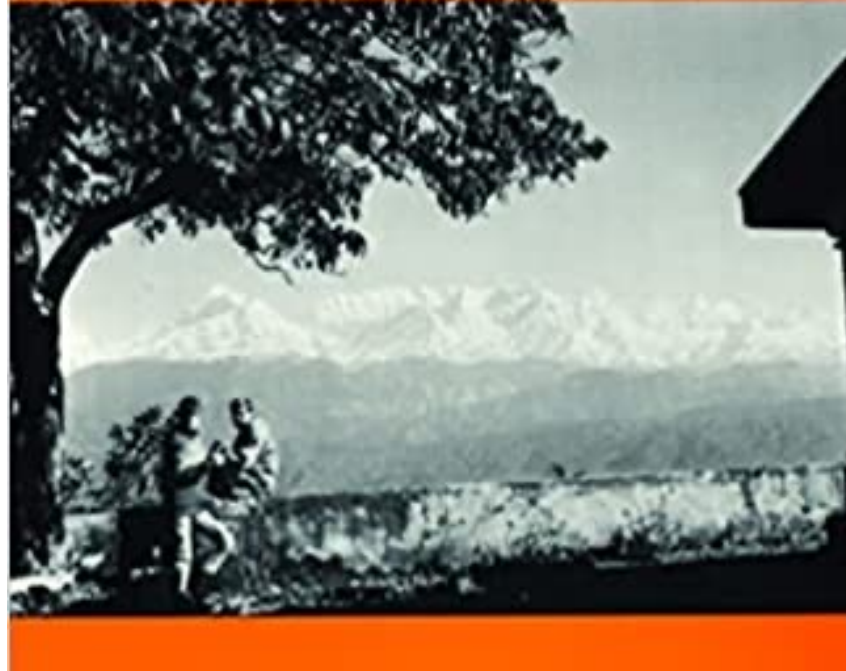
Alan Watts, 1915-1973

1970



Gary Snyder

PASSAGE  
THROUGH  
INDIA



1983

2000



Gary Snyder, *Passage through India*, 1972, 1983

## Foreword

[...] Gandhi stands forth as a twentieth-century Bodhisattva, whose impulses and actions were only marginally inspired by Hindu India.

The culture that articulated (especially in Jain and Buddhist religions) the most thoroughgoing philosophy of carefulness with life (Ahimsa, non-injury) is a land of ecological degradation and human difficulty.

Panini's elegant analysis of language (5th century B.C.) lives on in the extraordinary logical and verbal fluency of the Indian intelligentsia—now prepared more thoroughly than anyone else on earth to employ the analytical methods of “deconstruction.”

Krishna, whose ‘real face’ appeared to J. Robert Oppenheimer as “brighter than a thousand suns’ on the occasion of testing the first atom bomb (as it did to Arjuna on the eve of another military exercise), is now celebrated in U.S. airports; and “thunderclouds the dark blue of Krishna” mount perilously over all human affairs.

I honor India for many things: those neolithic cattle breeders who sang daily songs of love to God and Cow, as a family, and whose singing is echoed even today in the recitation of the Vedas and the sutra-chanting of Los Angeles and Japan. The finest love poetry and love sculpture on earth. Exhaustive meditations on mind and evocation of all the archetypes and images. Peerless music and dance. But most, the spectacle of a high civilization that accomplished art, literature, and ceremony without imposing a narrow version of itself on every tribe and village. Civilization without centralization or monoculture. The caste system as a mode of social organization probably made this possible—with some very unattractive side effects.

But those who study the nature of the rise of the centralized state will find India full of surprises. And lastly, no culture but India prior to modern times imagined such a scale of being—light years vast universes, light-year size leaps of time. Dramas of millions of lifetimes reborn. How did they do it? Soma? Visitors from Outer Space? Nah. I think just Big Mind drank in with Himalayan snow-melt rivers and seeing Elephant's ponderous daintiness, and keeping ancient shamanistic sages and forest hermits fed on scraps on food, to hear and respect their solid yoga studies. The Buddha Shakyamuni, one of those, was loved and listened to by cowgirls, traders, and courtesans.

India has had superb times—now fallen a while on hard times. And, beginning to end, irreducible pride. The sharp-tongued, sharp-eyed village men and women, skinny with hard work and never a big fat meal to eat a whole lifetime, live under an eternal sky of stars, and on a beginningless earth. They might need aid-dollars or aid-food, but they don't need or want pity or disgust. An anvil the spirit is pounded finer on, India. Skinny, and flashing eyes.

February 28, 1948



