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## **“A nation is only an individual multiplied.”: Whitman’s “Song of Myself”**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper I draw on Twain’s quote “A nation is only an individual multiplied” from his essay “The Turning Point of My Life” as a paradigm to explore the concept of nation in Whitman’s “Song of Myself.” In it I try to argue how the individual, regardless of age, class, religion, race and sex, comes to stand for the various forms of the collective which shape the poem and thus inform Whitman’s ideas of democracy, equality, unity and pantheism. In this way, the ‘multiplication’ of the individual not only raises this poem to the height of an epic poem that speaks for America but also produces one of the most romantic and idealistic views of the nation, hardly ever to be found in literature.

**Key words:** *Whitman, nation, the individual, the collective*