

Community: 2

Connecting with Others: Who are They?

Setting the Stage: Words for Sessions

From: *Whitman: Poetry and Prose*, The Library of America, Justin Kaplin, ed.

The Ox Tamer Walt Whitman

In a far-away northern county in the placid pastoral region,
Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a famous
tamer of oxen,
There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-olds
to break them,
He will take the wildest steer in the world and break him and
tame him,
He will go fearless without any whip where the young bullock
chafes up and down the yard,
The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with raging
eyes,
Yet see you! how soon his rage subsides – how soon this tamer
tames him;
See you! on the farms hereabout a hundred oxen young and
old,
and he is the man who has tamed them,
They all know him, all are affectionate to him;
See you! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty looking;
See you! some are buff color'd, some mottled, one has a white
line running along his back, some are brindled,
Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign) – see you! the
bright hides,

See, the two with stars on their foreheads – see, the round
bodies and broad backs,
How straight and square they stand on their legs – what fine
sagacious eyes!
How they watch their tamer – they wish him near them – how
they turn to look after him!
What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he
moves away from them;
Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books,
politics, poems, depart – all else departs,)
I confess I envy only his fascination – my silent illiterate friend,
Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,
In the northern county far, in the placid pastoral region.