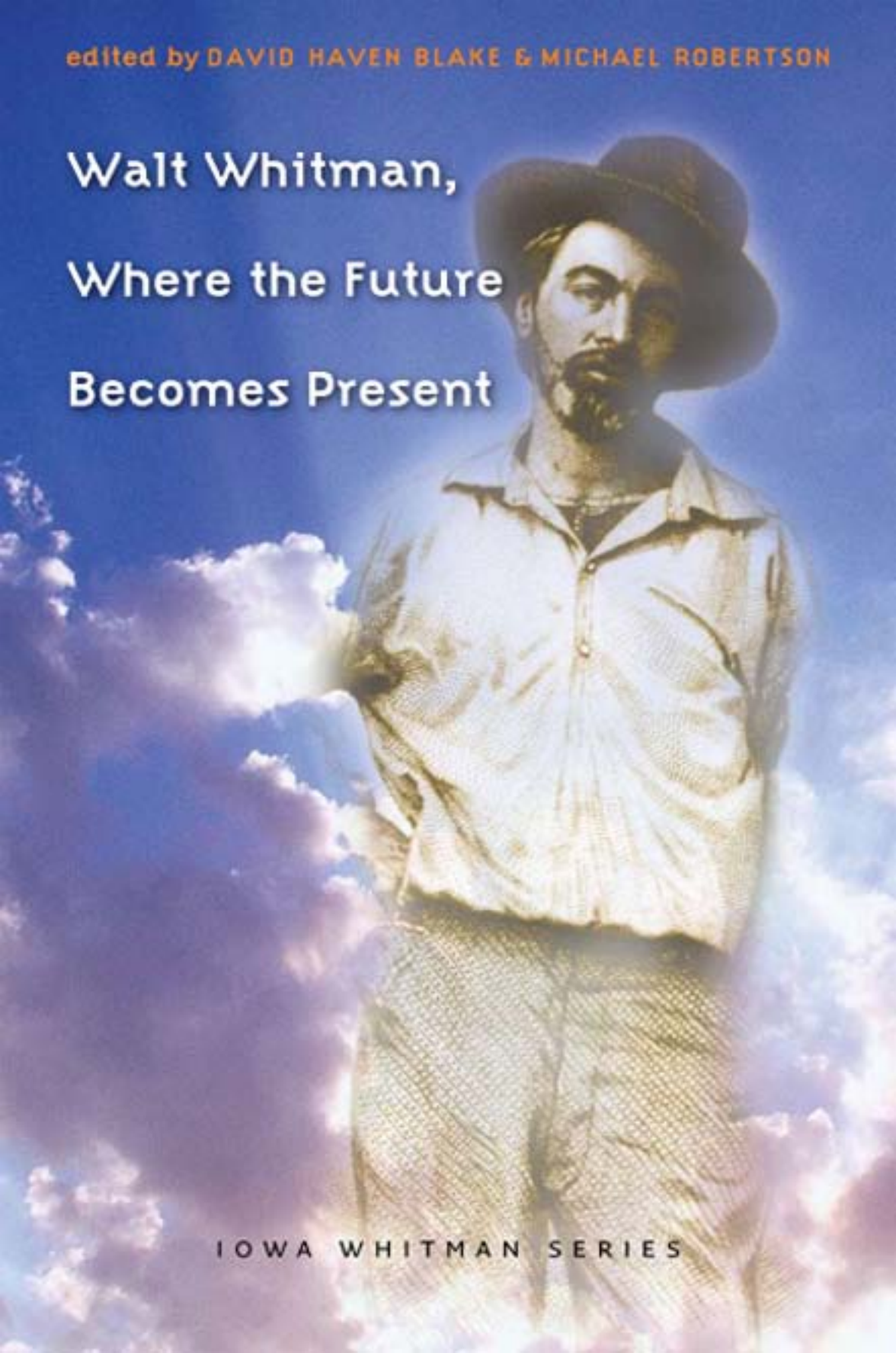
edited by DAVID HAVEN BLAKE & MICHAEL ROBERTSON

Walt Whitman, Where the Future Becomes Present



IOWA WHITMAN SERIES

Walt Whitman, Where the Future Becomes Present

THE

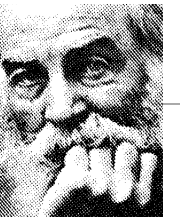
IOWA

WHITMAN

SERIES

Ed Folsom, series editor

WALT WHITMAN, WHERE THE FUTURE BECOMES PRESENT



EDITED BY DAVID HAVEN BLAKE

AND MICHAEL ROBERTSON

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA PRESS IOWA CITY

University of Iowa Press, Iowa City 52242

www.uiowapress.org

Printed in the United States of America
Design by Richard Hendel

The University of Iowa Press is a member of Green Press Initiative and is committed to preserving natural resources.

Printed on acid-free paper
ISSN: 1556–5610
LCCN: 2007936977
ISBN-13: 978-1-58729–638-3 (cloth)
ISBN-10: 1-58729–638-1 (cloth)

08 09 10 11 12 C 5 4 3 2 1

Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined.

The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . . he places himself where the future becomes present.

WALT WHITMAN

Preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*

{ CONTENTS }

{ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS }

This book has, from its inception, been a work of Whitmanesque comradeship and collaboration. It began life as "Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: The Sesquicentennial Symposium," held at the College of New Jersey in September 2005. The symposium was funded in part by a generous grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities and was sponsored by the TCNJ Office of Academic Affairs, the School of Culture and Society, and the Department of English. The College of New Jersey was founded in 1855, the same year as the publication of Walt Whitman's first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and the college's Sesquicentennial Committee generously included the symposium under its wing.

Many administrators, faculty, and students at the college made the symposium possible. We would especially like to thank President R. Barbara Gitenstein, Provost Stephen Briggs, Associate Provost Suzanne Pasch, and Dean Susan Albertine. Ellie Fogarty of Academic Affairs served, in essence, as the event's third director, always with good humor and grace. Jo Carney and Paulette LaBar put the English Department's resources at our disposal at several crucial points, and we are grateful to them; to all our English Department colleagues; to the department's student assistants Francine Roche, Angie Velez, and Liz Finelli; and to project coordinator Jane Marchetti. Our work on this volume was supported by the Support of Scholarly Activities committee of the College of New Jersey.

It has been a privilege to collaborate with Holly Carver and Ed Folsom at University of Iowa Press, who do their work with a Whitmanesque generosity of spirit. Thanks also to the two anonymous reviewers, whose rigor and insight greatly improved this manuscript.

Finally, we want to thank our families—Julie, Eben, and Eva Blake and Mary Pat and Miranda Robertson—for their patience, love, and support.

{ DAVID HAVEN BLAKE AND MICHAEL ROBERTSON }

Introduction

Loos'd of Limits and Imaginary Lines

Walt Whitman believed in anniversaries. As editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, he liked to remind his readers when they had come upon an important date from the past: the Battle of Long Island, the signing of peace agreements with Great Britain, Alexander Hamilton's death. In preparation for Evacuation Day in 1847, he celebrated the departure of British troops from New York City and noted the anniversary's fitting coincidence with the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Marking the thirty-second anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, he told readers that he had exclaimed "Hurrah for Hickory!" at the breakfast table and listened from the rooftop to a thirty-gun salute as it resounded across the East River. The pattern would continue into old age with Whitman giving lectures, writing poems, and offering public greetings for an array of celebrations and memorial observances. His lectures commemorating the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's death played a major role in securing his national reputation.[1]

In 2005 the United States, along with much of the rest of the world, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a book which brashly introduced the world to a new kind of poet:

> Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos,
> Disorderly fleshy and sensual . . . . eating drinking and breeding,
> No sentimentalist . . . . no stander above men and women or apart from them . . . . no more modest than immodest.[2]

Whitman would go on to publish numerous editions of his poems, editions that would significantly expand his vision and voice. But the qualities that readers most valued in the nineteenth century and afterward—the confident flouting of literary convention; the spiritual fervor and earthy assurance of the author's voice; the clarion call for political, aesthetic, and sexual change—were all present in the 1855

first edition. On the 150th anniversary of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman's admirers gathered on college campuses in the United States and Europe; they attended exhibits at the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the South Street Seaport Museum; and they participated in public readings of Whitman's poems—all as a way of commemorating a poetic career that had taken Whitman from the streets of Brooklyn to the military hospitals of Washington, D.C., to the working-class neighborhoods of Camden, New Jersey. In honoring the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, these events recognized the history of a poet and a book that have shaped the literature not only of the United States but of countries far beyond its borders.

The essays in this collection arose out of one of those events, "Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: The Sesquicentennial Symposium," which the College of New Jersey hosted September 22 to 24, 2005. Founded in 1855, the College was a particularly appropriate site for celebrating a poet who for nineteen years called New Jersey home. In addition to scholarly presentations, the symposium featured an array of aesthetic responses to *Leaves of Grass*: Matthea Harvey, David Lehman, and James Longenbach read their poems on the symposium's opening night; a show in the College Art Gallery featured works by nearly a dozen artists inspired by Whitman; Stephen Collins offered a sparkling performance as Walt Whitman in the one-man play "Unlaunch'd Voices"; and the Fred Hersch Ensemble performed Hersch's jazz composition *Leaves of Grass*, an expansive, celebratory piece that received both critical and popular acclaim during the sesquicentennial year. It was a testament to Whitman that the symposium not only involved writers, musicians, and artists but also drew a highly diverse audience, including community activists, ministers, physicians, psychologists, and teachers.

In the course of both formal presentations and informal dialogue, it became clear that the symposium's participants regarded the anniversary not simply as an occasion to honor the poet but also as an opportunity to reflect on his complicated legacy, to consider the promise and the burden of his work. The great poet, Whitman wrote in 1855, exists "where the future becomes present," and his poems frequently address posterity, encouraging readers to think that he has dissolved the years between them (13). As he comments in "Song of the Open Road," the poet is "loos'd of limits and imaginary lines," free to travel across the confines of space and time (299). "What is it then between us? / What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?" Whitman asks in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." "Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not" (310). One hundred fifty years later, Whitman's assertions seem at once problematic and hopeful, clever and naïve. He may be with us, but there is little consensus about what that presence means.

This collection represents the complexity of contemporary responses to Whitman and *Leaves of Grass*. Although Whitman aimed to transcend the limitations of

his moment and place, the time and space of the sesquicentennial celebration clearly exerted a considerable impact on these essays. The symposium occurred in the midst of an increasingly unpopular war in Iraq and only days after a failed federal response to disastrous flooding in New Orleans. On the symposium's last day, bus loads of students left New Jersey to join the thousands of protestors who had converged on Washington, D.C., to oppose the war. Political events were obviously on the minds of several symposium participants as they talked about *Leaves of Grass*. Others focused on aesthetic issues, though perhaps even in their choice of subject matter—fragmentation, loss, death, Whitman as a global rather than a national voice—one could see the impression of contemporary events.[3]

The many Whitmans depicted in this volume also suggest the professional diversity of our contributors. "No one will get at my verses," Whitman wrote in 1888, "who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance . . . or as aiming mainly towards art or aestheticism" (671). Time has taught us that no single approach will ever "get at" *Leaves of Grass* and that one of the pleasures of thinking about Whitman is listening to the vastly different voices that have risen around him. This volume broadens the circle of conversation. Loosed of the limits of field and specialization, it draws contributors from art history, political theory, and creative writing, as well as from literary criticism. While several of our contributors have published multiple essays and books about Whitman, others are publishing their reflections on the poet for the first time. The result is a provocative collection of essays meant to invigorate Whitman studies by gathering insights from a range of writers and intellectuals who see the poet as vital to our comprehension of literature and the world.

The volume opens with the poet and critic David Lehman, who begins by exploring the question of Whitman's multiple selves: Walt and Walter, public man and private individual, soul and self. ("I meet new Walt Whitmans every day," Whitman once told his friend Horace Traubel. "There are a dozen of me afloat."[4]) Lehman's essay ties the poet's multiplicity to a familiar theme in Whitman criticism: the significance and comfort of death. The first edition of *Leaves of Grass* concludes with the lines, "Sure as life holds all parts together, death holds all parts together; / Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light, death is great as life" (145). Death serves as a kind of metaphysical counterpart to the poet's imagination, a force uniting different existential states in a coherent whole. Lehman examines the importance of death to Whitman's development as a poet. "The mind's ability to contemplate its own extinction," he writes, "is Whitman's major motive for metaphor." This motive becomes all the more haunting in Lehman's exploration of "Scented Herbage of My Breast," a poem that proclaims death to be Whitman's truest, most erotic love.

Whitman's status as the quintessentially American poet is generally unquestioned, but as Wai Chee Dimock reminds us, Whitman himself wrote an essay titled "American National Literature: Is there any such thing—or can there ever be?" Dimock grounds her essay in Whitman's description of himself as a young man running up and down the beach at Coney Island declaiming passages from the *Iliad*. The scene gives Dimock the opportunity to examine Whitman as an oceanic poet who merged the nineteenth-century lyric with the ancient, sea-borne epic. In Dimock's analysis, Whitman extends beyond temporal and geographic boundaries to identify himself with antiquity, positioned amid the traffic between Egypt and Greece. Thus Dimock sees "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as being situated simultaneously on the East River and the Nile, with Whitman transferring readers to a place of origins that extends far beyond the history of nation-states.

Meredith L. McGill's essay offers a comprehensive look at the 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and, in particular, the open letter to Emerson that Whitman included as an appendix. The letter presents Whitman as a champion of the decentralization of U.S. print culture and the democratization of literary institutions that implies. We may be accustomed to seeing Whitman as a literary originator, but in McGill's analysis, his vision of literary nationalism "comes to look like collage, as much a mode of reading as it is of writing." From this perspective, Whitman's publication of Emerson's congratulatory letter captures the ways in which the "poetics of reprinting," as McGill terms it, permeates the 1856 *Leaves of Grass* and undoes traditional conceptions of authorship.

McGill's focus on the 1856 edition is indicative of perhaps the most important development in Whitman criticism since the 1992 centennial of his death: the growing interest in examining each edition of Whitman's poems as a singular work of art. Rather than debate the relative superiority of one edition over another, scholars have turned with increasing care to the ways in which Whitman constructed his individual editions. Michael Moon's *Disseminating Whitman* (1991) demonstrated the appeal of this approach for a whole generation of scholars, but clearly the engine driving what we call the New Textuality in Whitman studies has been the emergence of the *Walt Whitman Archive* on the World Wide Web. Edited by Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, the *Whitman Archive* has given scholars electronic access to manuscripts and texts that have been restricted, in their original forms, to a handful of research libraries. In making these materials widely available, the *Whitman Archive* has not just revolutionized the ways in which scholars perform their work; it has dramatically opened up new sets of questions. What poems did Whitman include from edition to edition? What revisions did he make? How did his spelling, typography, layout, and cluster titles suggest new concerns and emphases? The New Textuality has provided a dramatically fresh way of looking at

Whitman's poetic output. This collection marks an important shift away from thinking about the poet as spending his life perfecting a single authoritative version of his book. It begins with the assumption that Whitman wrote multiple books of poems that share the title *Leaves of Grass*.

Kenneth M. Price examines the complex textual history of one cluster in *Leaves of Grass*, the 1860 "Debris." Drawing on his experience editing the *Whitman Archive*, he argues that *debris*, as both concept and cluster, serves to signal Whitman's interest in the antipoetic—the scattered, the severed, the unattached, the very materials that caused such a spiritual and aesthetic challenge in "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life." Price argues that, like the famous photograph of Whitman in his Camden bedroom surrounded by a lifetime's worth of papers, the cluster positions Whitman between order and chaos, at home in the liminal state that was integral to his work.

Michael Warner's essay examines the "macabre erotics of mortality" in the original 1865 edition of *Drum-Taps*. Commentators have long recognized how the Civil War brought Whitman face to face with death on a shocking scale. In the prewar poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," death is a sweet and delicious word (394). In *Specimen Days*, it is a pile of amputated body parts outside a surgical tent (712). As Warner memorably puts it, *Drum-Taps* seems to tremble before history as if the war itself had produced in the poet both terror and desire. In Warner's analysis, the corpses that Whitman gazes on throughout the book commit him to shuttling between two different conceptions of time—religious and historical. The poet's movement between these two states attests to his ambivalence toward the redemptive Civil War religion of his contemporaries. Like Lehman, Warner views the poet's homoeroticism as being as much a response to physical tragedy, to the body's capacity to bruise and wound, as it is to the experience of pleasure and dream of community.

Whitman's restlessness and his rejection of traditional literary and political forms lead Benjamin R. Barber to enlist him as an American emblematic. Barber's essay celebrates the poet as a roustabout adventurer, a man filled with pluck and muscle having little regard for conventional rules and ways of thinking. Barber's comparison of Whitman to his contemporary William "Wild Bill" Rockefeller may take some readers by surprise, for few would initially see connections between the democratic, compassionate poet and the impulsive, ruthless speculator. But Barber sees Whitman as embodying the kind of risk-taking energy that was prevalent among early United States capitalists, a group of men Barber contrasts with the narrow, prudent accountants who succeeded them. Barber summons a Whitman for our times, a new Jeremiah who might shame the political establishment into abandoning the comforts of corporate indifference for the hazards of a just democracy. "It is a moment, not to recite Walt Whitman's poems," Barber exhorts, "but to hear his voice."

Responding to the trials of our own age, Angela Miller, like Barber, suggests that it is time to recover the Jeremiah-like Whitman from the optimist celebrated in the 1930s. It was the optimistic, visionary poet that United States artists gravitated towards in the first half of the twentieth century. As Miller argues, Whitman proved to be a complicated master to the generation of artists who came of age in the decades following World War I. To New Deal artists given the task of cataloguing and collecting native materials across the United States, he was a guiding spirit who preached the value of the commonplace and ordinary. To artists such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Alfred Stieglitz, he was a solitary genius who had labored unappreciated in the nation's arid cultural landscape. Miller contrasts Whitman's reception with that of Herman Melville, whose sense of exile and estrangement matched the mood of artists such as Jackson Pollock and Theodore Roszak after World War II.

Ed Folsom continues this inquiry into how issues of nationalism and identity have shaped aesthetic appropriations of Whitman. In his essay on Whitman and Langston Hughes, Folsom unites the principles of the New Textuality that we see in Warner's, McGill's, and Price's essays with an acute awareness of Whitman's problematic influence. Critics have long discounted Hughes's 1959 *Selected Poems* as a calculated effort to obscure his radical past. Folsom revisits *Selected Poems* to argue for its literary and cultural value, exploring how Hughes used *Leaves of Grass* as a model in powerfully addressing the rise of the civil rights movement. As Folsom points out, however, Hughes's admiration for Whitman did not come without struggle. When Hughes defended the poet from detractors, he acknowledged the significant gap between the workaday reality of the man and the visionary possibilities of his verse. Folsom reminds us that Whitman drew a similar distinction as an old man: "What do I care about material America?" he asked Horace Traubel. "America is to me an idea, a forecast, a prophecy: it may evolve to noble fruition or end as an incommensurable disaster."[5]

Comparing Whitman to Louise Glück, James Longenbach argues that Whitman is a particularly powerful poet when he is unable to overcome the gaps between himself and others. Readers have frequently seen in Whitman the kind of transcendental immanence that Emerson envisioned when he wrote that the poet "re-attaches things to nature and the Whole."[6] Whitman is the poet who sees God in the faces of the men and women surrounding him, who finds letters from God in the street, who looks at all the particles of the universe and finds that each "has reference to the soul" (183). Longenbach views Whitman's poetics as revolving around a confrontation with mortality and the knowledge of spiritual aspirations that remain unfulfilled. Longenbach suggests that Whitman is at his strongest and most compelling in "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," a poem in which he confesses, "I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that no man ever can" (395).

This volume closes with Kirsten Silva Gruesz, who asks us to imagine Walt Whitman as a Latino poet. As Gruesz demonstrates, the traditional models of legacy and influence are inadequate when we seek to understand Whitman's complicated presence in Latino writing. His fervent support of the U.S. invasion of Mexico and his easy appropriation of Latin identity have made him a problematic figure for Latino writers and intellectuals. On the one hand he is Pablo Neruda's "*hombre del pueblo*"; on the other he is Mauricio González Garza's "racista, imperialista, antimexicano." Gruesz argues that Whitman has not influenced poets such as Julia Alvarez, Martín Espada, and Victor Hernández Cruz so much as he has required "adaptation across language, space, and time." That adaptation seems appropriate considering Whitman's tendency, as Gruesz describes it, "to spatialize history and temporalize space."

The theme of adaptation is a fitting conclusion to a volume of essays written to commemorate the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. For over 150 years, Whitman has challenged readers to read him into their lives. He is the point at which the future becomes present, a poet in whom the men and women of many generations will find an image of themselves. To read Walt Whitman is to adapt him to the times, to bring his unmoored voice to the rooms of Congress, the llano of New Mexico, and the galleries of New York City. Like countless commentators before them, the writers assembled here devote so much thought to Whitman because they believe that the future of his poems matters to our present.

NOTES

1. [Walt Whitman], "Peace–War," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 16, 1847, 2; [Walt Whitman], "A Reminiscence," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 27, 1846, 2; [Walt Whitman], "Old Mrs. Hamilton," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 15, 1846, 2; [Walt Whitman], "Evacuation Day," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 24, 1847, 2; [Walt Whitman], [On the Battle of New Orleans], *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 8, 1847, 2. All texts found online at http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle/.

2. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 50. Subsequent quotations from Whitman are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

3. In the wake of World War I, D. H. Lawrence wrote that Whitman was a "great postmortem poet." Readers of this volume will see how regularly our contributors return to this theme. See D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1922; New York: Penguin, 1990).

4. Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, vol. 1, (1906; New York: Rowman and Littlefied, 1961), 108.

5. Horace Traubel, "Walt Whitman's America," *Conservator* 28 (November 1917): 134.

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 455.

{ DAVID LEHMAN }

The Visionary Whitman

The reclusive Emily Dickinson felt that it would be "dreary" to be a known entity. "How public—like a Frog,"[1] she wrote. In this category, as in many others, Walt Whitman seems to represent the antithetical ideal. For three years during the Civil War he ministered to injured soldiers in and around Washington, D.C. He wrote about warriors and wounds close-up, in poems that have an obvious public dimension, such as "Reconciliation" and "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night." When President Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, Whitman wrote "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," which may be to American poetry what John Milton's "Lycidas" is to that of the British Isles: the touchstone elegy by which subsequent efforts (e.g., Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais" in Milton's case, Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish" in Whitman's) must be judged. Certainly Whitman was proud of his public identity and cognizant that it was a created rather than a received thing.

In the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the poet announces himself as "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos," a self-descriptive line so superior to the revised version of the same ("Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son") that I would cite it as exhibit A in a brief in favor of the original "Song of Myself" as published one hundred fifty years ago.[2] There is a strong sense in which "Walt Whitman" is the poet's greatest creation, an identity better than a mask as in William Butler Yeats, or a persona as in Ezra Pound, not because it blurs the distinction between self and anti-self but because it implies that there are more distinctions to be made.

"Walt Whitman"—not "Walter Whitman," as on the copyright page of the first edition—arrives full-born without preamble as if in fulfillment of a prophecy made by Ralph Waldo Emerson implicitly in several essays and overtly in "The Poet":

> Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, methodism and unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the

> town of Troy, and the temple of Delphos, and are as swiftly passing away. Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon, and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres.[3]

Whitman recognized himself at once. "I was simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil,"[4] he said. The recognition was mutual. When a copy of *Leaves of Grass* arrived in Emerson's mailbox, he acknowledged the gift with what is probably the greatest fan letter ever sent to an American poet:

> 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 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.[5]

The public Walt Whitman is the bard who "[gives] the sign of democracy," the camerado who sounds his "barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" (211, 247). The public Whitman announces with Emersonian self-assurance that "the United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem," a sentence in which I think the key word is not "greatest" but "poem," for it is a quality of the United States as Whitman envisions them that they exist like poems in the making, creations in a continual process of becoming (5). The public Whitman is the seer of democracy. As he writes in "A Song for Occupations," "The President is up there in the White House for you . . . . it is not you who are here for him," a sentence not to be judged by the standards of descriptive accuracy but to be invoked as a rallying cry (93).

But in addition to having a public self, who wants very much to influence the minds and hearts of his countrymen, Whitman also has a secret life, an interior self that he would distinguish from his "disorderly fleshy and sensual" person (50). In the passage in "Song of Myself" beginning "Trippers and askers surround me," he introduces us to "the Me myself," the self that is capable of a kind of negative capability (29, 30). This self is both an actor and a spectator: "Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it" (30). Whitman takes pains to differentiate this identity from the fellow people meet, the citizen who votes, the social being who eats dinner, gives compliments, pays dues. The "Me myself" stands apart, watchful, detached, "amused, complacent, compassionating, idle,

unitary" (30). At the same time, Whitman distinguishes the "Me myself" from "my soul," which the poet addresses in the next section of the poem:

> I believe in you my soul . . . . the other I am must not abase itself to you,
> And you must not be abased to the other. (30)

Note the unusual phrasing: *the other I am.* Not the other me or the real me, not the me nobody knows, but "the other I am." This raises a biblical echo, the Lord's assertion of his own existence as the foundation statement of the ten commandments: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). It makes one recall how Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, defined what he named the primary imagination: "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."[6] By the evidence, then, Whitman's "other I am" would be the part of himself that he associates with the creative impulse.

An implication of the passages I have cited is that Whitman has more selves than two. He is not to be understood as a human dichotomy, a bare forked animal with a public side and a private side, half self and half soul. He has the self of a citizen, and he has the soul of a man who holds himself accountable to his maker. But it is more complicated than that. He has a secret life, private, interior, unknown, which makes the other selves possible.

The paradox of Whitman's secret life is that he is naturally gabby and can't keep a secret. Again and again in his poems he gives voice to deep secrets, all of which seem variants on the one big secret, the secret that can be stated in a single word: the word initially withheld and then released and reiterated in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." In this poem Whitman reveals the genesis of his poetic vocation: it is death as a fact, a word, a condition. But then, for Whitman, death is the mysterious solution to a host of riddles. In "Song of Myself," Whitman expresses the conviction that either death doesn't exist or it is benign: "And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier" (32). On what does he base this conviction? There is the influence of Eastern mysticism, which mingles so productively with the influence of Emerson. But I would argue that above all else there is the poet's determination to defeat the fear of death. Death is his obsession, and the visionary imagination with which Whitman opposes it follows from an act of will.

The visionary Walt Whitman is the product of a crisis, the exposure of the mind to the possibility that death will wipe out consciousness forever. Whitman addresses death directly, intimately, toward the end of "Song of Myself": "And as to you death, and you bitter hug of mortality . . . . it is idle to try to alarm me" (85). Death is erotic, a "hug," as it is in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," where the poet listens to the bird and confesses that "for many a time / I have been half in love with

easeful Death, / Called him many soft names in many a mused rhyme."[7] In Keats's ode, as in Whitman's "Song of Myself," Thanatos has an erotic pull. Both poets seem to have instinctively anticipated Freud's thesis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: the idea that *love* and *death* are in some contexts interchangeable terms. But Keats's death wish is based on the urge to escape consciousness and terminate painful sensation: "Now more than ever seems it rich to die, / To cease upon the midnight with no pain." Less delicate, as befits "one of the roughs," Whitman conceives of mortality as a "bitter" experience but one that he can triumphantly, mystically surmount (50, 85). It is as if he can, in sexual union with death, father spiritual offspring. He can go with confidence, knowing that his atoms will recombine to form new life, new leaves of grass in addition to the book entitled *Leaves of Grass* that will long outlast the poet's lifetime. And so "Song of Myself" sounds its valedictory note with the promise that we'll meet again some lucky day. Here are the closing lines:

> I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
> If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles.
>
> You will hardly know who I am or what I mean
> But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
> And filter and fibre your blood.
>
> Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
> Missing me one place search another,
> I stop some where waiting for you (88)

Compare this conclusion to Keats's close in "Ode to a Nightingale." Both poems are endowed with self-awareness. They know that they are ending, they realize that the writing of a timeless poem itself exists in time and must come to a halt. But Keats says adieu to the nightingale—and to his vision—in resignation, amid questions and doubts: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?" In contrast, in most printings of the poem, Whitman concludes the 1855 "Song of Myself" without punctuation of any kind. The poem stops—you might say it stops short—but avoids the usual mark of terminal closure as if to underscore the poet's confidence that "I" and "you" shall reunite in some future time and shall meet as equals. Thus the poem's last line links up with its opening:

> I celebrate myself,
> And what I assume you shall assume,
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (27)

I would argue that each of these three opening lines divides neatly into two parts, like the two halves of an equation. In line one, "I" is the subject and "myself" the

object; in line two, "what I assume" precedes and is synonymous with what "you shall assume"; in line three, the words "as good" function as a folksy equal sign. All three lines propose a dichotomy only to collapse it. "I" equals myself, though "I" is also distinct from "myself." And similarly "I" and "you" are two different entities yet in some sense they are equal, even identical; in some sense they are merely grammatical fictions. If it is really true that "I" equals "you," then I need never die, and you're the reason why.

In a curious way Whitman's secret life overlaps with Emily Dickinson's. Dickinson, the poet of dashes and telegraphic urgency, and Whitman, the poet of the deep breath and the long line, are alike in the extent to which they obsess about death. For both, the problem of human mortality is an insistent challenge, not an abstraction but an experience somehow to be endured. Death in life is real and vivid and (for Whitman) sometimes hauntingly sensual. Like secretive notes, written without the expectation that they will ever be read, Dickinson's poems tell you that she died for Beauty, that she had a brief conversation with one who died for Truth, that she could hear a fly buzz, that she was able to stand up, and other privileged details that attendees of their own funerals seldom notice and never report. From Dickinson's poems you might almost suppose that she had died and written them posthumously. "To have been immortal transcends to become so,"[8] she wrote as though having been in both states.

Whitman's uncanny poems, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in particular, resemble letters postdated one hundred and fifty years into the future. They are communications from one whose audible voice proves the proclamations it states—that, for example, the dead "are alive and well somewhere" (32). That this is a belief to be earned, not a piety to parrot, is clear from the section of "Song of Myself" beginning "A child said, What is the grass?" (31). To answer the child's question, Whitman turns naturally to metaphor: the grass is the flag of his disposition, or it is the handkerchief of the Lord, or a child of vegetation, or a uniform hieroglyphic speaking to all. The catalogue comes to an end with one final metaphor, the metaphor for finality: "And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves" (31). The living enduring grass, because it covers our remains, is itself an emblem of life's eternal opposite. And here the poem, a hymn to life, enters the zone of elegy—the poet working through the imagery ("This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers" [32]) like a composer varying a motif before returning triumphantly to the main theme:

> What do you think has become of the young and old men?
> And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere;
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appeared. (32)

This is the moment before one of the great climaxes in "Song of Myself":

All goes onward and outward . . . . and nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier. (32)

Whitman's conviction, his confidence, bespeak terror. That is, only a man who had the experience of the terror of death could write of it as something he has vanquished. The vision he proposes is of a self that will not die, and the reason he will not die is that he is a poet and lives on in his poetry, and the reason he became a poet is that two mockingbirds sang their love song, then one died, and the other mourned his mate, and the boy Whitman on Long Island listened and understood. For many years, through many readings, I wondered at "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"—which I have in mockingbird fashion paraphrased—as an account of the origin of the poet's vocation. And in particular I wondered at the poem's conclusion, and the glee with which the poet reports the sea's answer when he pleads to be told the singular word, the "word final, superior to all":

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death. (393)

What accounts for the ecstasy in these and the following lines? What makes *death*, the word, "low and delicious"? Why does he say the word ten times in the course of six lines?

In the allegory that the poem proposes, poetry is the bird's elegiac song, and therefore death, as the condition that provoked the song into being, is as necessary to poetry as cause to effect. Death is (in the words of Wallace Stevens) "the mother of beauty," for where there is no mortality, there is only aridity, no poetry. Yet I did not fully grasp the significance of the ecstatic reiteration of "death" at the

end of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" until I read another poem of Whitman's, "Scented Herbage of My Breast," in which a parenthetical interruption of thought "(what indeed is finally beautiful except death and love?)" leads Whitman to proclaim death his truest love:

> O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers, I think it must be for death,
> For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmosphere of lovers,
> Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,
> (I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death most,)
> Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as you mean,
> Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my breast!
> Spring away from the conceal'd heart there! (269)

What does Whitman mean by his "conceal'd heart"? The current thinking is that this—this phrase in particular and this whole bundling of love and death—is a veiled reference to Whitman's veiled homosexuality. As Jeffrey Meyers puts it in a recent essay in the *Antioch Review*, "the fundamental issue with Whitman, as with Christopher Marlowe and T. E. Lawrence, is his homosexuality." This question, Meyers adds, "once swept under the Victorian carpet, now dominates all others."[9] Nor is this a revolutionary insight. In 1935, when the word *homosexuality* itself remained *verboten*, Mark Van Doren wrote an essay for the *American Mercury* quoting the same lines from "Scented Herbage of My Breast" and observing that "Love and Death are inseparable in this man's mind because one is the satisfaction of the other, and the only satisfaction. Love as [Whitman] defined it and as he knew it was something that could not be fulfilled within the harsh limits of life. There was no place for a lover like him, there were no answering voices; so he fled for comfort to the 'sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.'"[10] This may be too prettily or primly stated for the taste of scholars and critics today, who will have encountered the argument that Whitman was the most masturbatory of poets, the poet of unfulfilled desires, the perennial virgin who copulated with neither woman nor man, whose boasts of paternity were falsehoods, and for whom the act of writing was a creative surrogate for sex.

Where Van Doren is discreet and gentlemanly, Jeffrey Meyers is overt and bitchy. He disparages "Whitman's cock-teasing obfuscations." He calls Whitman "Wally the Wanker." Whitman "could not resolve his own ambivalence about homosexuality nor accept his own sexual guilt," Meyers contends. And the "simultaneous desire to express yet conceal his sexuality" became "the vital source and theme of his poetry."[11] The idiom is different, but Van Doren in 1935 had expressed

the same animating idea when he said that "*Leaves of Grass* is drenched with longing. It is one of the loneliest books ever written."[12]

It is possible to read Whitman—or Hart Crane, for that matter—as a master of the coded utterance. You can argue that the secret of "Scented Herbage of My Breast" lies in the poet's homosexuality, his guilt and his conflicted desire. If poetry is a substitute for progeny and you equate childlessness with death, then yes, it makes sense to connect the poet's obsessive adoration of death to his sexual orientation. There is, moreover, something undeniably sexual in the longing that informs his lonely book. But this is at best an incomplete answer. If death is another word for necessity, I think there is something else at work in Whitman's encounter with a force that will outlast all human endeavor. Death can be simultaneously the great object of the poet's yearning, the reason for his initiation into poetry, and the most certain of eventualities, only if two conditions are met. The first is that in death Whitman senses the true nature of the sublime, which involves terror and awe. The second is the recognition that mortality to the living is not a defect but a power.

I think of a phrase used in two strikingly different ways by Emily Dickinson and by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The phrase is "the power to die." It is the concluding phrase in Dickinson's "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—" where the gun is doing the talking: "For I have but the power to kill, / Without—the power to die—."[13] The gun is inanimate and can therefore last a long time. It "may" outlive the lifetime of its owner. Yet the owner "must" outlive the gun, for mortality is not (or not only) a lamentable fact, an inevitability, but also a "power," a power as superior to the power to kill as the categorical "must" is superior to the contingent "may."

In Tennyson's "Tithonus," too, the ability to die is a sign not of man's helplessness but of his potency. Tithonus, who cannot die, who received his gift of immortality but continues to wither because he had neglected to ask for eternal youth—Tithonus envies the steam floating "up from those dim fields about the homes / Of happy men that have the power to die, / And grassy barrows of the happier dead."[14] The association of *death* with *power* is striking in both cases. Death confers a power on the living because it is only in the face of death that events have meaning, action has value, beauty has a reason for being.

The mind's ability to contemplate its own extinction is Whitman's major motive for metaphor, whether the mood be elegiac or retrospective, sensual or mystical. Whitman, lover of all men and no man, longing for life, afraid of death, and in need of the greatest subject to whom or to which he can speak with the most robust intimacy, finds this subject in death. Death is the ultimate "you" that Whitman can address. "May-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very long, / But you will last very long," he writes at the end of "Scented Herbage of My Breast" (270).

And death will not fail him. Death will hear him out. It will fulfill his longing. The poetry written with the love of oblivion on its breath will last so long as eyes can see.

NOTES

1. Emily Dickinson, "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" #260, in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R. W. Franklin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), I, 279.

2. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 50, 210. Subsequent references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

3. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 465.

4. Walt Whitman quoted in "Reminiscences of Walt Whitman," by John Townsend Trowbridge, *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1902, reprinted in *Whitman in His Own Time*, ed. Joel Myerson (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 173.

5. Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman, July 21, 1855, in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, 1326.

6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn and Bart Winer, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 304.

7. John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," in *John Keats Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 279–280.

8. Emily Dickinson to T. W. Higginson, July 1875, *The Selected Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 230.

9. Jeffrey Meyers, "Whitman's Lives," *Antioch Review* 63, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 759.

10. Mark Van Doren, "Walt Whitman Stranger," in *The Private Reader: Selected Articles and Reviews* (New York: Henry Holt, 1942), 74–75.

11. Meyers, 759, 769.

12. Van Doren, 75.

13. Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, II, 722–723.

14. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Tithonus," in *Tennyson's Poetry* (2nd ed.), ed. Robert W. Hill (New York: Norton, 1999), 102.

{ WAI CHEE DIMOCK }

Epic and Lyric

The Aegean, the Nile, and Whitman

"While living in Brooklyn (1836-'50)," Whitman writes in *Specimen Days*, "I went regularly every week in the mild seasons down to Coney island, at that time a long, bare unfrequented shore, which I had all to myself, and where I loved, after bathing, to race up and down the hard sand, and declaim Homer or Shakespeare to the surf and sea-gulls by the hour."[1] Whitman was apparently in the habit of memorizing whole passages. Sometimes he carried with him chapters which he had torn out and stuffed into his pocket.[2] And, of the two Homeric epics, he seemed to have a marked preference for one. In "A Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads," he says: "The Iliad (Buckley's prose version,) I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, northeast end of Long Island, in a shelter'd hollow of rocks and sand, with the sea on each side" (665). Later, he would supplement this prose translation of the *Iliad* with Pope's verse translation. This *Iliad*, along with the sight, sound, and smell of the sea, would reappear in one of his last entries in *Specimen Days*, recorded on July 25, 1881:

> A good day here, on a jaunt, amid the sand and salt, a steady breeze setting in from the sea, the sun shining, the sedge-odor, the noise of the surf, a mixture of hissing and booming, the milk-white crests curling over. I had a leisurely bath and naked ramble as of old, on the warm-gray shore-sands, my companions off in a boat in deeper water—(I shouting to them Jupiter's menaces against the gods, from Pope's Homer.) (906)

Sea-Borne Epic

It is an appropriate setting. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are sea-borne genres: they take their form from the wine-dark sea and would not be what they are without its

unceasing, unappeasable, but not altogether unsustaining presence. Wind-swept and storm-tossed, these epics are nonetheless kept afloat by a hydraulic principle that Whitman might call an "original inexhaustible fund of buoyancy" ("Backward Glance," 667). Nothing better dramatizes this principle than the sea god Poseidon, whose wrath against Odysseus dooms him to shipwreck and keeps him abroad for ten more years. Adorno says that the rhythm of the epic is oceanic, a rhythm of ebb and flow: it goes under and it comes up, being inundated and then resurfacing, "flood[ing] over the rocks and then stream[ing] back from them with a roar."[3] Whitman's poetry is "epic" in just this sense. It too swells and subsides, "ebb[ing] with the ocean of life," as he himself says (394), alternating between input and output, plenitude and dissolution. This hydraulic rhythm makes the poetry less tightly sealed than its nationality might suggest: less locked into a territorial jurisdiction and more buffeted by currents, by drifts and eddies coming from afar. Its coordinates are the Aegean (and, as I will argue, also the Nile), no less than the continental land mass of the United States.

It is helpful, then, to think of Whitman in the company of another poet whose poetry is even more sea-permeated and sea-fronting. Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (like much of his other work) is liquid, archipelagic: it is "an epic where every line was erased / yet freshly written in sheets of exploding surf," an epic that says Homer's name with a Caribbean accent: "and I heard my own voice / correcting his name, as the surf hissed: 'Omeros'."[4] But to bring up Walcott is to see, right away, just how different Whitman is. In fact, the Homer that they respond to is not even the same poet, or at least not a poet who is "epic" in the same way. For Walcott, Homer is a combination of the *Iliad and* the *Odyssey*, a poet who celebrates survival, who celebrates the primacy of life, and who also celebrates heterosexual marriage, building up to the reunion between a man and a woman who have been separated for twenty years.[5] This is not the poet who speaks most deeply to Whitman. His Homer is solely the Homer of the *Iliad*, a war poem, given over to nonsurvival, to the primacy of death, and a poem that, for Whitman, is quite unlike the *Odyssey* in being "noisy, muscular, manly, amative."[6] This Homer is overwhelmingly homosocial.

It is this homosociality that makes war a matter of honor and makes death not a mockery, not sheer degradation. Even though the warriors do drop off like flies, the moment of death turns out also to be the moment when humans are *least* like flies, because there are always comrades, brothers in arms, who will fight to their last breath so that their dead will continue to be human—not just chunks of meat, but bodies that are cherished, nursed with love, to be taken home and mourned and buried with full ceremony. The *Iliad* is an epic about love between comrades. The emotional center of such a poem is not marriage, but death, when it is the

supreme obligation of the living to care for the humanity of those no longer able to care for themselves. This point seems clear enough. What is not so clear is its implication for Whitman, and perhaps for literary history in general. What are we to make of this strange alignment between a reputedly "American" poetry and an ancient Greek epic, dominated by the end of life and the burst of love it occasions? How does this emphasis on the *end* shape the landscape of love in Whitman, a love also between comrades? What poetic genres does it call forth? And—if Whitman is any indication—what is the relation between American poetry and the poetry of the world?[7]

In the notes and fragments collected by his literary executor Richard Maurice Bucke, Whitman has an entry that separates the *Iliad* from the *Odyssey*, linking the former instead to the Bible. The *Iliad* and the Bible belong together, Whitman says, because both "are not complete.—Each of these poems is but a portion of a poem—Each strictly considered is but an episode, neither of them is a filled up, entirely perfected work of art. . . . —The building is grandly planned, and what is done is done by great mastery, but the building is not even half done."[8]

The appeal of the *Iliad* is that it is unfinished. It is a mere sketch, the bare outline of a much larger project, with many future episodes to be added. This makes it of special importance to poetry that has yet to be written, "unborn" poetry, a category to which American literature belongs. In an entry called "Old Poets" in *Good-Bye My Fancy*, Whitman writes:

> Grand as to-day's accumulative fund of poetry is, there is certainly something unborn, not yet come forth, different from anything now formulated in any verse, or contributed by the past in any land—something waited for, craved, hitherto non-express'd. What it will be, and how, no one knows. . . . Of our own country, the splendid races North or South, and especially of the Western and Pacific regions, it sometimes seems to me their myriad noblest Homeric and Biblic elements are all untouch'd, left as if ashamed of, and only certain very minor occasional *delirium tremens* glints studiously sought and put in print. (1256)

World literature is an "accumulative fund," with layers of input, tributaries running over the course of many centuries. This is especially true of "Homeric and Biblic" texts. More accumulative than most, they are not the repository of any single locale. On the contrary, they are apt to do what Whitman urges in "Passage to India": "hoist instantly the anchor! / Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!" (539). These texts travel. Their contoured landscape is an accretion of those itineraries. In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman speaks of them as coming "from voyages over wide, century-stretching seas," bringing with them their "cargo" and

"freight." Literary history is an oceanic history. It is a history of the "little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them." And he goes on: "Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Eschylus, Plato, Juvenal, &c" (972–973). All of these, being seaworthy, will make their way sooner or later to America, winding up on the Pacific coast. It is true that, at the moment, they are still dormant. Once they find their proper bearings, however, they will burst on the scene as a new force, a new genre, different from everything now existing, a poetry never before witnessed. No one knows what this new genre would look like, but one thing seems clear: it will not bear the stamp only of a single nation or a single period. Coming into being in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, it will in turn make its way across other oceans, "a trail of drift and debris," a long, winding, and freight-laden voyage, "bridging the way from Life to Death" ("As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," 395; "Proud Music of the Storm," 530).

Prenational Time

Whitman is so often taken as quintessentially American that it is helpful to bracket that assumption for a moment and to think of him not in terms of nationality but in terms of genre. On *that* front, Whitman would seem much harder to pin down, requiring nothing less than a world map. Whitman himself is quite aware of this. In an 1891 essay written for the *North American Review*—titled "American National Literature: Is there any such thing—or can there ever be?"—he is emphatic that the subject can be broached only in the form of a question, not in the form of a declarative statement. Whatever it is, national literature is not something we can declare; it is something that has "yet to be" (1259). And he reminds us that there are skeptics on just this point: "the high-pitch'd taunt of Margaret Fuller, forty years ago, still sounds in the air: 'It does not follow, because the United States print and read more books, magazines, and newspapers than all the rest of the world, that they really have therefore a literature'" (1262). Indeed, forty years after Fuller, Whitman himself can do no more than equivocate on this point, ending the essay as he begins, asking the same unanswered question: "The whole matter has gone on, and exists to-day, probably as it should have been, and should be; as, for the present, it must be. To all which we conclude, and repeat the terrible query: American National Literature—is there distinctively any such thing, or can there ever be?" (1264).

The unanswered question is, in fact, *two* questions. The simpler one revolves around the word *can*. Is the United States in a position to develop a national literature? Does it have the wherewithal to do this? The other, more complex question,

revolves around the word *is*. Is there such a thing as an American national literature? Is there heft to the concept, does it have an actual existence in the world? It might not—for surely no literature worth its name can be "national" in any strict sense, in the sense of being one with the geography and chronology of the United States. Whitman sees his own poetry as a "varied little collation," leaves gathered one after another, layer after layer, a cumulative process that grows "slowly, slowly, curiously, from many more and more, deeper mixings and siftings" (1258, 1259). These mixings and siftings, proceeding with such phenomenal slowness, must have had an early start. Many layers of history are stirred up and thrown back together, with material coming from "the ensembles of time and space" ("Democratic Vistas," 988). Literature, in short, is a sort of flood plain, thick with sediments, marking the passage of many currents. Together, those currents "run through entire humanity (this new word and meaning Solidarity has arisen to us moderns) twining all lands like a divine thread, stringing all beads, pebbles or gold." And Whitman adds, "From anything like a cosmical point of view, the entirety of imaginative literature's themes and results as we get them to-day seems painfully narrow" ("Old Poets," 1256).

Rather than looking for an "American national literature" replicating the geography and chronology of the United States, this quixotic quest should perhaps be abandoned altogether. The unit of analysis might not be a nation at all, a land-based unit, for literary history is circulatory, spread across oceans. Water is its time-honored medium: its players are "those old and less old songs ferried hither from east and west" ("Backward Glance," 663). With such ferry traffic, begun at the very beginning of human history, the point of inception for American literature has to be *prenational*. It is a point of inception "reflect[ing] humanity *en masse*," correlating with the length and width of the species rather than the length and width of the United States (1259). The question that we should ask, and that Whitman *does* ask, is this: "Of the great poems receiv'd from abroad and from the ages, and to-day enveloping and penetrating America, is there one that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy?" (663).

The easy answer is no. Literature from the distant past—and from distant continents—will do us no good: it only "imperiously and scornfully dominates" the local scene. "As authoritative types of song they belong in America just about as much as the persons and institutes they depict," Whitman says in "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" (663). And yet in the same essay he also writes: "If I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head . . . I could not have written 'Leaves of Grass.' My verdict and conclusions as illustrated in its pages are arrived through the temper and inculcation of the old works as much as through

anything else—perhaps more than through anything else" (664). American poetry comes into being at all only as an "inculcation" of ancient works, foreign works. Whitman is not ashamed to say this, but this un-American genealogy can be politically suspect. As Horace Traubel reported, Whitman seemed to have gotten into trouble just here, especially in the charged context of "Calamus". Among those feeling queasy about the volume, there is "Sulzberger questioning the comradeship there announced as verging upon the licentiousness of the Greek. W. took it seriously, saying thereto: 'He meant the handsome Greek youth—one for the other?—Yes, I see! And indeed I can see how it might be opened to such an interpretation."[9] Whitman then offers an interpretation of his own:

> "Calamus" is a Latin word—much used in Old English writing, however. I like it much—it is to me, for my intentions, indispensable—the sun revolves about it, it is a timber of the ship—not there alone in that one series of poems, but in all, belonging to all. It is one of the United States—it is the quality which makes the states whole—it is the thin thread—but oh! The significant thread!—by which the nation is held together, a chain of comrades; it could no more be dispensed with than the ship entire. I know no country anyhow in which comradeship is so far developed as here—here, among the mechanic classes. It is for the possession of this that I own such a warm affection for the Russians—comeraderie [sic] has gone a great way with them—yes, and with the German—anywhere under the [History] influence—though I don't know why I should say this, for in Oriental countries there is an ample expression of the same spirit.[10]

Rather than beating a hasty retreat back into the nation, Whitman shifts instead from one prenational past to another. His coordinates are now the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, bodies of water west of the Aegean, though continuous with it. The languages floated in shift from Greek to Latin and Old English. Since the ocean remains the operative medium, however, the figure of the ship remains central. "Calamus" is the "timber" of this ship as well as its crew, "a chain of comrades." This chain binds together the nation, and it binds together more than the nation, for even though it is a "thin thread," its tensile strength is such as to take it from the United States to Germany, to Russia, and onward to the "Oriental countries."

Non-Western Antiquity

The "Oriental countries" are by no means an afterthought. For Whitman, these are the wellspring of world history, a source antedating Greece, and their priority is undisputed. "Hindostan, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, China, Phoenicia, and other elder lands, preceded the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews," he writes.[11] These Asian and

African civilizations mark the earliest recorded life of the species; they are the pre-national past for all of us. In one of the notes and fragments collected by Richard Maurice Bucke, Whitman writes:

> The first literature to be mentioned is doubtless Assyrian literature, and the literature of Egypt and Hindostan. Many, many thousand of years since, books, histories, poems, romances, Bibles, hymns, works illustrative of mechanics, science, arithmetic, humor, Government, war, manners, manufactures of all the principal themes of interest to civilized life and to men and women, were common in the great Asiatic cities of Nineveh and Babylon and their empires, and in the empire of Hindostan, and in the African Memphis and Thebes and through Egypt and Ethiopia.[12]

World history is by and large Afro-Asian history, with Mesopotamia, India, and Egypt as its vital centers. These civilizations have thousands of years to their credit; all of us are in their debt. This is as true of American poetry of the nineteenth century as of Greek poetry of the fourth century BCE. Neither is strictly speaking original: "one cannot at this day say anything new, I suppose, from a literary point of view." The *Iliad* owes much to this prior civilization, for "that work was certainly of Asiatic genesis, as Homer himself was—considerations which seem curiously ignored."[13] And if Whitman were to have his way, that oversight would soon be rectified. In "Passage to India" he reminds the West in general, and the United States in particular:

> Not you alone proud truths of the world,
> Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
> But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
> The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
> The deep diving bibles and legends,
> The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions. (531)

There is a "long foreground" to American literature, as Emerson astutely says about Whitman's own poetry.[14] That long foreground includes not only the Greek epic but also other literary forms preceding it and abutting it. Restored to this extended landscape, America might be seen, without hyperbole, as a junior partner to Asia, an appendage, a "peninsula," like the one on which Whitman first read the *Iliad*.

Whitman seems to have anticipated the ground-breaking (and much debated) recent work by Martin Bernal and Walter Burkert, arguing for just this "Asiatic genesis" of western culture. For Bernal, the Mediterranean was an *Egyptian* sea, with the formative influence flowing from south to north, from Thebes and Memphis to Athens.[15] For Burkert, Greece was on the receiving end of a civilization still

more ancient, located east rather than south, in Mesopotamia, with Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Egyptian offshoots.[16] Whitman's hunches are very much in line with these recent arguments. This is not altogether surprising, for the nineteenth century, with its interest in comparative philology and comparative religion, was already at the cusp of a paradigm shift, one that Dipesh Chakrabarty would now call "provincializing Europe."[17] The centrality of the West could no longer be taken for granted, given the prior claim of other civilizations. Whitman was among the first to make this intellectual readjustment. In a notebook entry, "Fossil History," he writes: "Comparative Philology studying languages as living organisms—subject to organic laws of growth and decay—has shown that we possess in speech a grand recorded History of Humanity, where in colossal outlines man, his affiliations, migrations, workings, growths, are drawn."[18] Thanks to this durable linguistic record, "the European nations have all been tracked back to Oriental foundations."[19]

And, among those Oriental foundations, two in particular stand out: "Egypt has flashed up from the deeps of fifty centuries with her antique and august civilization, and now from the deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions of West Asia are emerging those old Assyrian and Babylonian worlds, venerable with years, coevals of primeval man."[20] Assyria and Babylon are awe-inspiring as historical monuments, but it is Egypt that remains a living force, still active in the world. In *Good-Bye My Fancy* Whitman writes about his visits to the Egyptian Museum as an encounter with a way of life still tangible, still proximate: "The great 'Egyptian Collection' was well up in Broadway, and I got quite acquainted with Dr. Abbott, the proprietor—paid many visits there, and had long talks with him, in connection with my readings of many books and reports on Egypt—its antiquities, history, and how things and the scenes really look, and what the old relics stand for, as near as we can now get" (1290). These Egyptian books and reports were by no means casually glanced at. Even late in life, Whitman still read them with exceptional care and thoroughness. Ordinarily Whitman "seldom read any book deliberately through," Richard Maurice Bucke notes. "He seemed to read a few pages here and a few there, and pass from place to place. Sometimes (though very seldom) he would get sufficiently interested in a volume to read it all. I think he read almost if not quite the whole of Renouf's 'Egypt,' and Brusch-bey's 'Egypt' but these cases are exceptional."[21]

These books, read in the 1870s, were part of what appeared to be a forty-year fascination with Egypt. Whitman probably began in the late 1830s by reading Sir John Gardner Wilkinson's three-volume *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837) and the abbreviated *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians* (1854), as well as Christian Karl Josias Bunsen's five-volume *Egypt's Place in Universal History*

(1848–1859) and *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History* (1854).[22] He probably also read George R. Gliddon's *Ancient Egypt*, published in 1843 as a special number of the *New World*, in which his own novel, *Franklin Evans*, had appeared just the year before.[23] And he seemed to have attended all six lectures on Egypt that Gliddon gave at the Brooklyn Institute from November to December, 1846, writing several reports in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.[24]

Egypt is central to Whitman because it was central to the ancient world. From Wilkinson, Whitman would have gotten the idea that Egypt is the crossroads between two continents: aside from being African, "there has always been a striking resemblance between the Egyptians and Asiatics, both as to their manners, customs, language, and religion," so much so that some scholars "have divided the country into two parts, the east and west banks of the Nile, assigning the former to Asia, the latter to Africa, and taking the river as the boundary line of the continents."[25] Whitman likes to think that this Afro-Asian nexus is important not only to himself but to all those Greek historians, poets, and philosophers he cites. In his 1855 article "One of the Lessons Bordering Broadway"—a tribute to the Egyptian Museum—he points to the large debt of Herodotus, Pythagoras, and Homer to their southern neighbor:

> The length and breadth of Egyptian records cause to shrivel into nothingness the oldest reminiscences of modern nations. Herodotus, 400 years before Christ, traveled through both Asia and Africa. At Memphis, in the latter continent, in the temple of Hephaestos, or Phtha (the creator), the priests argued with him on astronomy and other branches of learning, and, much as he knew, he there seemed to them, as to himself, a child. . . . Not only Herodotus, but all the Grecian and Latin sages, poets, rhetors, sophists, and teachers of every description, learned from Egypt. The Egyptians, more than five hundred years before Christ, taught Pythagoras that the sun was fixed in the center, and that the earth revolved around it. Homer is supposed to have visited Egypt in the ninth century before Christ; he was charged with gleaning some of his finest figures from Egyptian sources.[26]

Herodotus, Pythagoras, Homer: one could not have asked for better precedents. And what these people teach us is the importance of having Egypt as a precedent in turn, one whose "length and breadth" causes modern chronologies to "shrivel into nothingness." This is not as threatening as it sounds, for being "nothing" is actually a good way of being in time, a good way to fade into the shadows of a long duration. Whitman writes: "The course through time of highest civilization, does it not wait the first glimpse of our contribution to its cosmic train of poems, bibles, first-class structures, perpetuities—Egypt and Palestine and India—Greece and

Rome and medieval Europe—and so onward? The shadowy procession is not a meagre one, and the standard not a low one" ("Poetry to-day in America—Shakspere—the Future," 1029–1030).

Asiatic Bible

That shadowy procession, once acknowledged, changes the very nature of literature itself. The Judeo-Christian Bible, for one, becomes a different genre altogether: in his essay "The Bible as Poetry," Whitman calls it one of "the songs of those old Asiatic lands" (1141). The Bible is *Asiatic* rather than European primarily because of two features that interest Whitman: first, "the glow of love and friendship, the fervent kiss," and, second, the "suggestions of common mortality and death, man's great equalizers" (1140). These qualities, as we have seen, link the Bible to the *Iliad*; they also set it apart from most works in the Anglo-American tradition, for the Bible's "immense sensuousness [is] immensely spiritual—an incredible, all inclusive non-worldliness and dew-scented illiteracy (the antipodes of our Nineteenth Century business absorption and morbid refinement)—no hair-splitting doubts, no sickly sulking and sniffling, no 'Hamlet,' no 'Adonias,' no 'Thanatopsis,' no 'In Memoriam'"(1140).

As a poem both spiritual and sensuous, the Bible is a witness and envoy from the ancient world. It is a much needed corrective to the sickly, sulking, and sniffling nineteenth century. But even the Bible is not perfect, and Whitman is not shy about pointing this out. "Compared with the famed epics of Greece," he says, "the spinal supports of the Bible are simple and meagre" (1140). The Bible, for all its sensuousness and spirituality, cannot bear the weight it is asked to bear. Its lack of "spinal supports" is due to its single lineage: there is no kinship network here, no crisscrossing web, not enough of the "verteber and marrow" common "to all the antique races and lands, Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, the Chinese"—as much as "the Jews" ("Darwinism—(then furthermore)," 1060). In a notebook entry on "The Iliad. The Bible," Whitman spells out this particular complaint: "Nor does Christ merge and make fruitful all the Syrian canticles that preceded him."[27]

What would the Bible look like if it were to merge and make fruitful all the Syrian canticles, if it were to take on the burden of being Egyptian, Indian, Greek, Roman, and Chinese, as well as Jewish? It would have to be a different kind of poetry, answering to a different map, with a kinship network commensurate with the life of the species. Whitman is also not shy about claiming this task for himself. While working on the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* in the summer of 1857, he jotted down this note: "The Great Construction of the New Bible. Not to be diverted from the principal object—the main life work—the Three Hundred and Sixty

five."[28] The New Bible would be an around-the-clock project, something Whitman would work on 365 days of the year. And he seems to have a pretty good idea of what needs to be done in order to firm up the Bible, add "spine" to it. In his note on Milton, Whitman makes it clear that the Christian faith itself is what limits the Bible, for its basis of support is just not broad enough. This is the problem with Milton: "For instance what nations in Asia, or Africa, not Christian, would see any great point in his poem if read to them?"[29]

Determined to avoid that problem, Whitman will not be the kind of epic poet that Milton is, nor will he swear exclusive allegiance to just one Bible. The blueprint for *his* Bible will have non-Christian readers in mind:

> Spinal idea of a "lesson." Founding a new American religion (? No religion). That which is comprehensive enough to include all the doctrines and sects and give them all places and chances, each after its kind.
>
> Egyptian religion—existing in nascence or development through many thousand years, five or ten or perhaps even twice ten thousand years. The central idea seems to have the wonderfulness and divinity of life, the beetle, the bull, the snipe were divine in that they exemplified the inexplicable mystery of life. It was a profound and exquisite religion.
>
> Greek—existing through several thousand years—certainly two, very likely several more. Central idea, a combination of Love, Intellect, and the Esthetic (the beautiful and harmonious)—Refined perceptions, the presence of perfect human bodies, the climate, the peculiar adhesiveness or friendship of the people all are in the Greek mythology.
>
> Hebrew—the most etherial and elevated spirituality—this seems to be what subordinates all the rest—The soul, the spirit rising in vagueness.[30]

The New Bible will still have a Hebrew component, but it is no longer the sole component. Whitman is impressed but also troubled by its particular brand of spirituality: stiffly hierarchical, one that "subordinates all the rest." To avoid this, he would need to meander more, tempering that stiffness with other traditions more supple and capacious. The "peculiar adhesiveness or friendship" of the Greek epic is one place to begin; the peculiar "divinity of life" in Egyptian religion is another.

Egypt and Greece

Egypt and Greece are not casually mentioned together; they are inseparable for Whitman, given his belief in the "Asiatic genesis" of Homer. They are inseparable as well because, as a hydraulic system, there is no break between the two. The Nile

runs through Egypt as the Aegean encircles Greece, and together these two make up a single body of water, continuous and uninterrupted. Currents flow both ways: just as Homer and Herodotus learned from Egypt, Egypt's ongoing life also depends crucially on the work of these authors. Its antiquity is woven into the Greek language and translated into modern tongues through that language. In the opening pages of Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,* Whitman would have come upon this account of the word *Aegyptus*, highlighting its etymological identity with the word *Nileus*, an etymology threaded through another language: Greek. The "word Aegyptus" is used by Homer "to designate both the Nile and Egypt," Wilkinson says:

> and that the river was so called in ancient times is testified by the authority of Diodorus, who states that Nileus, one of the early monarchs of the country, transferred this name to the stream, which previously bore that of Aegyptus. Arrain again justly observes, that the river, now called by the Eygptians and others Nile, is shown by Homer to have been named Aegyptus, when he relates that Menelaus anchored his fleet at the mouth of the Aegyptus.[31]

The Egyptian past is written into the name of the Nile and merged with the course of the river. And both are merged, in turn, with an infusion of words from the Aegean. This is the case not only in the Homeric genesis of the name *Aegyptus*, but even more so in the Hellenizing account of Egypt found in Herodotus, the account most likely to be read by western readers. In book two of the *Histories*, Herodotus spends pages and pages talking about the wonders of Egypt, especially the wonders of the Nile: its source, its name, the boats on it, and its remarkable annual flooding. When this flooding takes place, the land turns temporarily into water and, when the water subsides, it leaves behind a fertile flood plain. This periodic inflow and outflow give rhythm to Egyptian life. The farmers here are unlike farmers anywhere else, Herodotus says, for "they have had no need to work with plough or hoe, or to use any other of the ordinary methods of cultivating their land; they merely wait for the river of its own accord to flood their fields; then, when the water has receded, each farmer sows his plot, turns pigs into it to tread in the seed, and then waits for the harvest."[32]

The Nile and its floods seem eternal, a reproductive cycle, dissolution followed by renewal, allowing an endless series of beginnings to be nested within an endless series of endings. They are the bearer, not only of rich alluvial deposits, but also of a temporal truth, the truth of geological time. Herodotus writes:

> Now it is my belief that Egypt itself was originally some such arm of the sea—there were two gulfs, that is, one running from the Mediterranean southwards

> towards Ethiopia, and the other northwards from the Indian Ocean towards Syria, and the two almost met at their extreme ends, leaving only a small stretch of country between them. Suppose, now, that the Nile should change its course and flow into this gulf—the Red Sea—what is to prevent it from being silted up by the stream within, say, twenty thousand years? Personally I think even ten thousand would be enough. That being so, surely in the vast stretch of time which has passed before I was born, a much bigger gulf than this could have been turned into dry land by the silt brought down by the Nile—for the Nile is a great river and does, in fact, work great changes.[33]

For Herodotus, the Nile is temporal even more than it is spatial. It is both a physical river and a nonphysical force, a carrier of "silt" also not physical, slowly sedimented, and slowly narrowing the gulf between continents. Twenty thousand years, ten thousands years: this is the scale on which it operates, on which it brings the weight of geological time to bear on quotidian lives. Not just Herodotus but every human being is floating in that "vast stretch of time which has passed before I was born." Such immensity is not something we can handle individually; none of us can navigate it on our own. Boats are needed—either the black ships of the Akhaians or, more modestly, the Brooklyn ferry:

> Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,
> Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
> Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,
> Others will see the islands large and small;
> Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
> A hundred years hence, so ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
> Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide. (308)

Long Island is not usually known as a flood plain, but this is how Whitman sees it, thanks to Herodotus's portrayal of the Nile. Harkening back to *that* river, the pouring-in of the flood-tide and the falling-back of the ebb-tide now run in both directions, not only forward (as we assume it does) but also back from the nineteenth century, back thousands of years. The Brooklyn ferry is, for that reason, also both physical and nonphysical. It is a ferry that crosses from Long Island to Manhattan, and a ferry that crosses invisibly from the Atlantic to the Aegean and the Mediterranean. Fifty years hence, a hundred years hence, and ever so many

hundred years hence, it will still be there, writing a literary history on these bodies of water.

Lyric Pronoun

Where will the poet be, after the passage of fifty years, a hundred years, and ever so many hundred years? He should not be around anymore, but surprisingly he still seems to be:

> Closer yet I approach you,
> What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in advance,
> I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.
>
> Who was to know what should come home to me?
> Who knows but I am enjoying this?
> Who knows, for all the distance, that I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see me? (311–312)

The speaker should have been dead a long time ago, but there he is, alive and well, always looking at us, always headed in our direction. Helen Vendler detects in this undead voice the "ordaining power of the shaman," a power that hails from the invisible world, from a nonphysical force. She calls this force the force of "lyric intimacy" and adds: "Yearning toward someone who may not be born for some years or even hundreds of years hence is . . . a feeling not uncommon in lyric, but Whitman carries it further than any poet before or since."[34]

What then is this lyrical speaker, and where is he? Is he in the world of the living or the world of the dead? This clear-cut division does not work, for this pronoun is eerily unanchored, amphibian to a fault. While he calls himself an "I," we are not sure what bodily form he takes or whether he has a body at all. This uncertainty of corporeal state is compounded by his uncertain location in time. "Closer yet I approach you," he says, naming the direction in which he is moving but not specifying the starting point. He seems to have his eyes fixed on us—"I am as good as looking at you now"—but we are not sure from what distance. He is hovering somewhere, in that interval between the two verb tenses, *had* and *have:* "What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you." But exactly how far apart are these two moments? It can be an hour, or it can be a decade, a century, a millennium. The interval can be of any length, for the "I" will still have a relation to "you" after *any* lapse of time. Navigable distance here is not predicated on the human life span; it is a function of the syntactic relation between two pronouns.

The "I" here seems to emanate from a sphere outside the jurisdiction of biology. That is why it seems like a "shaman," belonging both to the world of the living and the world of the dead, crossing that line with apparent freedom. And in fact, in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," we are getting only a mild version of this pronominal power. Elsewhere its presence is even more striking, as in "So Long!" where Whitman says: "I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead" (612). Being dead, disembodied, and triumphant are all the same thing, adding up to the same equation. And it is an equation that allows the first person pronoun to speak from beyond the grave and to act as if the grave were nothing, as in this poem fragment called "After Death":

> Now when I am looked back upon, I will hold levee,
> I lean on my left elbow—I take ten thousand lovers, one after another, by my right hand.—[35]

Death is clearly not an end for this pronoun, not a cessation of his earthly pleasures. On the contrary, he is still lounging around, still holding court, and still making free with his right hand, draping it around anyone he wants from the living world.

What genre makes this after death potency possible? The requisite generic convention cannot be inherited from the Greek epic: Whitman himself is emphatic on this point. In a prose fragment written in September 1856, he wrote: "*Leaves of Grass* must be called *not* objective, but altogether *subjective*—'I know' runs through them as a perpetual refrain. Yet the great Greek poems, also the Teutonic poems, also Shakespeare and the great masters are objective, epic—they have described characters, events, wars, heroes, etc."[36]

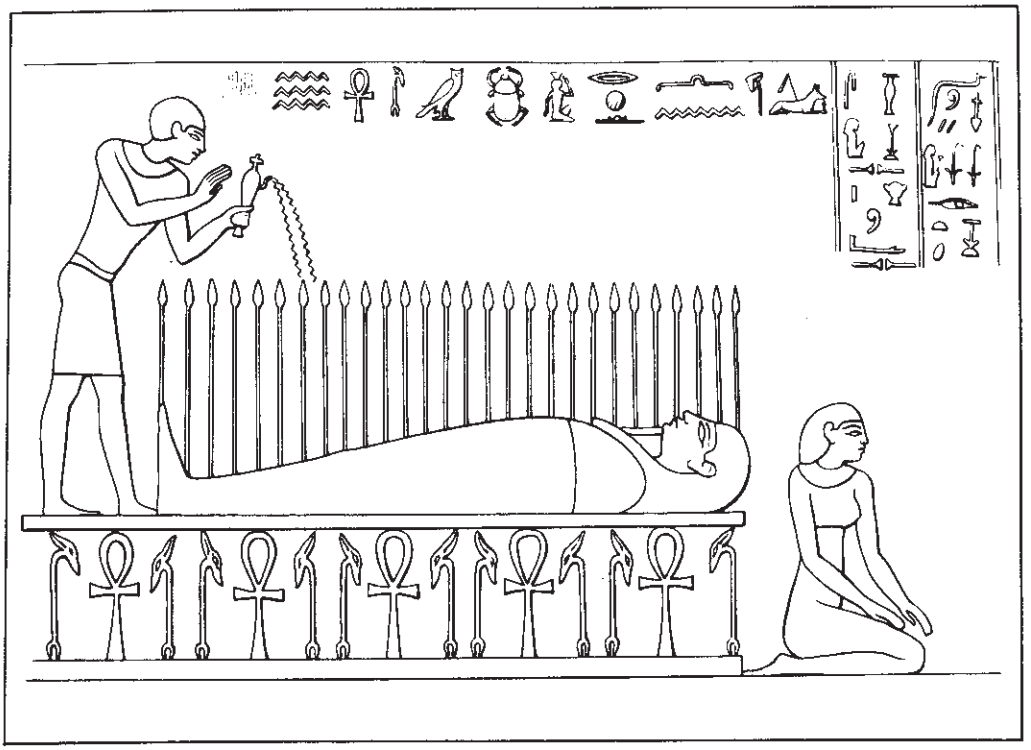
This is true. The epic is relentlessly "objective" when it comes to the afterlife of the dead: there are no privileges to speak of. The Underworld (which Odysseus visits in book 11 of the *Odyssey*) is a dark and forbidding place, and the dead are anxious, helpless, sorrowful, yearning incessantly for their former home. The choice between life and death is a non-choice: there is nothing preferable about the latter. In the Buckley prose translation, Whitman would have come upon this speech by Achilles, railing against his confinement in Hades: "Do not, O illustrious Ulysses, speak to me of death; I would wish, being on earth, to serve for hire with another man of no estate, who had not much livelihood, rather than rule over all the departed dead."[37]

The voice of the dead in Whitman is, by contrast, a satisfied voice, assertive and confident, luxuriating in its undiminished powers. There is no sense of confinement here, because the posthumous "I" is able to do all the things he once did, and he knows that there will always be a second person pronoun, a "you" for whom he

has prepared "in advance," a "you" who will not fail to answer to his desires. This is not the voice of epic but the voice of lyric. And it is not the Aegean, but the Nile, that cradles this particular genre. Specifically, it is that vast collection of religious and funereal texts—called the Book of the Dead—that grants this poetic license by making syntax the "nest" of subjectivity, giving it an extended life in the extended claim of pronouns as grammatical forms. This is a poetry of the undead and the undying, emanating from the south rather than the north of the Mediterranean.[38]

In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman refers to those "Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs" (973). The hieroglyphs were engraved on the sides of pyramids: the earliest versions of the Book of the Dead are called "Pyramid Texts." But the Egyptians were also "graving" those hieroglyphs in the sense that the present participle seems to be cropping up like grass from the dead who fertilize them. In 1855, in the Astor Library in New York, Whitman came across a large collection of etchings of Egyptian hieroglyphics and tomb carvings, published fifteen years previously by the Italian archeologist Rosellini.[39] One of them, showing the resurrection of Osiris, featured twenty-eight stalks of wheat sprouting from his coffin (fig. 1). One year later, this etching would inspire this line: "The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves" ("This Compost," 496). This sprouting of life from death would not have been possible without the Egyptian script, directly named as the operating medium in "Song of Myself." "Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic," Whitman says when the child brings him the grass, adding, "And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves" (193). This beautiful uncut hair of graves comes from the "white heads of old mothers," from the "colorless beards of old men," and from the "faint red roofs of mouths" (193). It is the most powerful form of reproduction: "The smallest sprout shows there is really no death, / And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it" (194).

The dead come back to life in vegetative form. And they come back in other forms as well. Within the Egyptian religious and funereal tradition, the dead are not confined to the underworld. They come back to the realm of light and air, not in a bodily guise but as a syntax, a pronoun, a form of address: lusty, vigorous, unchastened. In the Brooklyn Institute Lectures in 1846, Whitman would have encountered that pronoun first hand: during the last lecture, he reported, Gliddon had "treated his audience to several translations" of the "inscriptions upon the mummy cases," which is to say, from the Book of the Dead.[40] In volume 5 of Bunsen's *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, he would have also come upon further passages, with the deceased regularly saying things like: "I went in as a Hawk, I came out as a Phoenix," and "I have opened the doors of the heaven, the doors of the



1. Osiris etching that Whitman probably saw in the Astor Library in 1855.

earth open to me."[41] Here then is an "I" after Whitman's own heart, an "I" who addresses a "you" with utter self-confidence, with every expectation that this "you" will be there for him, and with every intention of pressing his claim:

> When I have opened, who art thou? Or whom do I see pass? I am one of ye being with you. What my eyes desire is that thou lettest him draw near [in peace], head to head, accompanying him to the birthplace of the heaven . . . The name of the ferry-boat is the Boat of plaited white Corn.[42]

The ferry-boat had a special meaning for the Egyptians, being an important part of the funeral ritual. The custom was to put the body of the dead on this boat and carry it across a body of water before its burial. Wilkinson, in his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, discusses this custom at length and explains in the process why this body of water was called a sea, a semantic dilation he traces, once again, back to Homer and the Greek language. Even though the ferry is just crossing a river, Wilkinson says, nonetheless, "To the river [Homer] gives the name of Ocean, because, as they say, the Egyptians call the Nile Oceanus in their language."

And "the reason of the dead being thought to inhabit these places," he adds, "is that the greater part of the Egyptian catacombs are there, and the bodies are ferried over the river."[43]

A river called Oceanus, a ferry that crosses the East River as well as the river Nile, the voice of the Egyptian dead haunting the waters of the Aegean as well as the waters of the Atlantic—these are the coordinates of the world that will filter and fiber the poetry of the United States. Dissolving a national literature in the fluid play of genres, lyric and epic merge here into a sea-borne tradition, cradling a subjectivity and depositing it in the most durable of pronouns, the first person pronoun, not physical but always audible, writing a death filled and death defying autobiography.

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, "Paumanok, and My Life on It as Child and Young Man," from *Specimen Days*, in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 698. Subsequent references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text. Titles of essays and poems have been added when they are not clear.

2. Gay Wilson Allen, *The Solitary Singer* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 101.

3. Theodor Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1: 24.

4. Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 296, 280.

5. Walcott's fascination with the *Odyssey* is evident not only in *Omeros* but even more clearly in his play *The Odyssey*, a reworking of Homer that, once again, psychologizes and creolizes the Greek epic.

6. Whitman, "Homer and Shakespeare," in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier, 6 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 5: 1752.

7. I have tried to theorize the relation between American literature and world literature in "Planet and America: Set and Subset," introduction to *American Literature and the Planet*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

8. *Notes and Fragments: Left by Walt Whitman and now edited by Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, one of his Literary Executors* (London, Ontario: Talbot, 1899), 100, now collected in Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 5: 1877.

9. Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 6: 342.

10. Ibid., 6: 342–343.

11. Whitman, "Assyria and Egypt," in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 5: 1928.

12. *Notes and Fragments*, 102, now collected in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 4: 1566.

13. *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 5: 545–546.

14. In his letter to Whitman, Emerson famously says: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." Emerson to Whitman, July 21, 1855, in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, 1326.

15. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987, 1991).

16. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

17. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

18. Whitman, "Ramble Fifth. Fossil History," in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 5: 1632–1634, quotation from 1632.

19. Ibid., 5: 1633.

20. Ibid.

21. Richard Maurice Bucke, *Walt Whitman* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1883), 52.

22. Floyd Stovall, "Notes on Whitman's Reading," *American Literature* 26 (1954): 337–362, esp. 338–339, 346–347.

23. Ibid., 339.

24. Notices about the Gliddon lectures appeared regularly in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from November to December. Whitman's reports appeared on November 14, December 12, and December 18, 1846. The archive is available online. I thank David Blake for alerting me to this important resource.

25. Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 3 vols. (1837; reprint London: John Murray, 1878), 1: 9.

26. Whitman, "One of the Lessons Bordering Broadway: The Egyptian Museum," written for *Life Illustrated*, reprinted in *New York Dissected*, ed. Ralph Adimari and Emory Holloway (New York: R. R. Wilson, 1936), 32.

27. Whitman, "The Iliad. The Bible," in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 5: 1877.

28. Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 1: 353. On Whitman's relation to the Bible, see Gay Wilson Allen, "Biblical Echoes in Whitman's Works," *American Literature* 6 (1934): 302–315; Herbert Schneidau, "The Antinomian Strain: The Bible and American Poetry," in *The Bible and American Arts and Letters*, ed. Giles Gunn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 11–32; Herbert J. Levine, "'Song of Myself' as Whitman's American Bible," *Modern Language Quarterly* 48 (1987): 145–161.

29. Whitman, "Preparatory Reading and Thought" #56, in *Notes and Fragments*, 99.

30. Whitman, "Preparatory Reading and Thought" #9, in *Notes and Fragments*, 78. In *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, "Spinal idea" and "The Egyptian Religion" are recorded as two separate entries: the former in 6: 2046, the latter in 6: 2028.

31. Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1: 7.

32. Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Selincourt., rev. A. R. Burn (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), 134.

33. Ibid., 133.

34. Helen Vendler, *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 35.

35. Whitman, "After Death," in *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 687.

36. Whitman, fragment #70, in *Notes and Fragments*, 73.

37. *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London: Henry Bohn, 1851), 159.

38. Miriam Lichtheim points out that the autobiography emerged in Egypt during the Fifth Dynasty, in tandem with the prayer for offering, and that "during the Sixth Dynasty it attained great length, and for the next two millennia it remained in use." The purpose of this "self-portrait in words," she adds, is "to sum up the characteristic features of the individual person in terms of his positive worth and in face of eternity. His person should live forever, in the transfigured form of the resurrected dead, and his name should last forever in the memory of people." See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1: 3–4.

39. In "One of the Lessons Bordering Broadway" (1855), Whitman writes: "Rosellini, of Tuscany, has issued a complete civil, military, religious, and monumental account of the Egyptians, with magnificent plates. This work is of such cost that only wealthy libraries can possess it. There is a copy in the Astor Library in New York." *New York Dissected*, 37.

40. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 18, 1846, 2.

41. Christian Karl Josias Bunsen, *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, 5 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1848–1867), 5: 167, 205.

42. Ibid., 5: 204.

43. Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 3: 457.

{ MEREDITH L. McGILL }

Walt Whitman and the Poetics of Reprinting

In drawing his vituperative 1856 political tract "The Eighteenth Presidency!" to a close, Whitman turns from excoriating slaveholders to address "Editors of the Independent Press" and "Rich Persons," instructing them to:

> Circulate and reprint this Voice of mine for the workingmen's sake. I hereby permit and invite any rich person, anywhere, to stereotype it, or re-produce it in any form, to deluge the cities of The States with it, North, South, East and West. It is those millions of mechanics you want; the writers, thinkers, learned and benevolent persons, merchants, are already secured almost to a man. But the great masses of the mechanics, and a large portion of the farmers, are unsettled, hardly know whom to vote for, or whom to believe. I am not afraid to say that among them I seek to initiate my name, Walt Whitman, and that I shall in future have much to say to them.[1]

The poignancy that attaches to this appeal has to do with its untimeliness, its status as what J. L. Austin would call an "unhappy" performative.[2] Though set in type, "The Eighteenth Presidency!" was, as far as we know, never published. This is a tract whose call for its own reprinting never managed to circulate in print. By the time "rich persons" got their hands on it in 1928, the text had long since been drained of the political efficacy Whitman imagined it might accrue through spontaneous acts of reprinting. Nonetheless, Whitman's dramatic surrender of a copyright he never held in the name of workingmen with whom he can only hope to speak helps to elucidate how the loose control over intellectual property that was characteristic of antebellum publishing contributed to the development of his characteristic modes of poetic address. In "The Eighteenth Presidency!" Whitman cedes control over his literary property in the name of a vastly multiplied, though indirect, political agency. Whitman's direct appeal to independent editors and wealthy benefactors should

remind us that the mechanics and farmers he hoped would be galvanized by hearing "this Voice of mine" lay outside the reach (and influence) of partisan newspapers, which had established the closest thing to a national distribution network in the decentralized print culture of the antebellum U.S. Whitman's printed approximation of a stump speech calls for help in reaching a mass public he can imagine but cannot directly address through the media that are available to him. The ultimate failure of the command "Circulate and reprint this Voice of mine" lays bare what Whitman's aggressive self-promotion is designed in part to mask: that the "initiation" of the name "Walt Whitman" among the masses depends on the uncontrolled and uncontrollable mediation of other hands.

Whitman's injunction to potential reprinters—"I hereby permit and invite"—recalls the odd mixture of imperiousness and solicitousness invoked by the famous opening lines of the first poem in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*: "I celebrate myself, / And what I assume you shall assume" (27). While both texts show Whitman struggling to constitute the audience he passionately desires to address, his failed fiat in "The Eighteenth Presidency!" enables us to draw an explicit connection between Whitman's mode of address and the conditions of textual circulation that obtained in the mid-1850s. As I detailed in *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*, a mass market for literature in the pre–Civil War period was built and sustained by the publication of cheap reprints of foreign texts. While native authors could and did obtain copyrights, such books took their place within a publishing system that circulated many of the most popular texts—both foreign works and domestic newspaper and magazine literature—without authorial or editorial control. Rather than taking the "culture of reprinting" simply as a hindrance to American authors, I have been interested in the ways in which reprinting might be understood to generate new kinds of writing and new kinds of relationships between authors and their texts. Are there formal consequences to the loosening of the legal ties between an author and his or her work? If so, how would we trace these connections? What kinds of agency become available in a print culture in which the name of the author fails to regulate the circulation of texts?

In a recent essay on "Walt Whitman and the Question of Copyright," Martin Buinicki attempts to resolve what he sees as a potentially damning contradiction between Whitman's support for international copyright and his solidarity with the artisans and tradesmen who were at the forefront of the resistance to foreign authors' rights. Given Whitman's lifelong fascination with the ordinary workingman, one might indeed suppose that he would have sided with international copyright opponents who argued that the protection of the American publishing industry was more important than payment to foreign authors, insisting that an

American book was one made by American workers regardless of the nationality of the writer.[3] Moreover, as Buinicki notes, Whitman's frequent disavowal of originality in his poems—"If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing" ("Song of Myself," 204)—seems troublingly inconsistent with the poet's careful superintendence of his copyrights. Examining Whitman's pro-copyright statements as well as his negotiations with publishers, Buinicki argues that Whitman saw copyright not as a mark of personal possession but as a state-mediated link between himself and his readers, a system of regulation more reliable, more public, and more oriented toward futurity than Whitman's private financial arrangements could ever be.

Buinicki draws most of the evidence for his argument from the 1870s and early 1880s, a pivotal period in Whitman's career as well as a time of heightened optimism that respect for authors' rights might serve to regulate the international trade in books. The second general revision of the U.S. copyright code, granting rights of dramatization and translation to copyright authors, was passed in July of 1870. The British Royal Commission on Copyright was formed in 1875; it published a blistering report in 1878 on the disorderly state of British copyright law, strongly recommending a bilateral treaty with the United States. Thanks in part to pressure provided by numerous European countries signing the Berne Convention in 1886, the U.S. Congress finally passed an international copyright law in 1891.[4] While it is striking that Whitman's postwar consolidation of his poetic corpus should run in tandem with the centralization of American publishing and the growing internationalization of the trade, these confluences do not do much to elucidate the role of literary property in Whitman's early career, during which a far different politics of print obtained.

Indeed, throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, Whitman the journalist, fiction writer, and newspaper poet was thoroughly immersed in the culture of reprinting. Joel Myerson's bibliography of Whitman's contributions to magazines and newspapers bears rich witness to the unauthorized reprinting of many of Whitman's early poems and tales, particularly those that appeared in the partisan *Democratic Review*, which was frequently mined for content by local newspapers.[5] The uncopyrighted status of antebellum periodicals enabled the wider, if unpredictable, circulation of Whitman's writing; it also enabled him freely to republish poems and tales he had first printed in local papers. Whitman's work as a printer, writer, and editor for the *New World* and its rival *Brother Jonathan* put him at the epicenter of resistance to international copyright. Whitman's *Franklin Evans; or, The Inebriate* (1842) was first published as part of the cheap reprint series Park Benjamin issued as extra numbers of the *New World*; the publication of this temperance novel directly followed the sensational reprinting by both weekly

papers of Charles Dickens's attack on pirate publishers, *American Notes* (1842). Scholars continue to debate whether and when to assume that an anonymous newspaper editorial was Whitman's own, but most have ignored the impress on Whitman, and on the papers he edited, of his daily labor of cut and paste. As editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1846–1848) and as exchange editor for the *New Orleans Crescent* (1848), Whitman bore primary responsibility for selecting items for reprinting from other papers.[6] Even later in his career, as Whitman carefully cultivated his poetic persona and multiplied the printed forms of his authorial signature, he also invested in circulating his writing without owning—or owning up to—it. Transposing strategies honed in antebellum periodicals to the postwar market for books, Whitman supplied large amounts of biographical and critical material to be published under others' names, most notably in John Burroughs's *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867) and Richard Maurice Bucke's *Walt Whitman* (1883).[7]

In order to get some purchase on the challenges posed and opportunities provided by the practice of reprinting, I will focus my attention on the "second" or 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a volume which might also be described as the first *reprinted* edition. It is not only this volume's manifest secondarity that makes it a fitting subject for analysis; the 1856 edition demonstrates at numerous levels a rich engagement with the advantages and disadvantages of reprinting. The 1856 edition reprints with minor revisions all twelve of the poems that appeared in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, giving them for the first time individual titles. As Jay Grossman has noted, the 1856 edition uses the word "poem" in all of the new titles, the majority of which begin with the phrase "Poem of." This formula relentlessly raises the question of ownership and allows for seemingly endless recycling. Grossman argues that in using the phrase "Poem of," Whitman insists on the status of his writing *as poetry* as a response to Emerson's understated praise of the first edition as a collection of "wit and wisdom," and in the face of hostile critics' attacks on *Leaves of Grass* as no more than "disjointed babbling."[8] In recurring to this formula, Whitman also repeatedly invokes an unstable relation between subject and object, an instability that Jacques Derrida has identified as a grammatical property of the double genitive.[9] "Poem of Walt Whitman, An American," "Poem of Women," "Poem of Salutation," "Poem of the Body" (and so forth) take Walt Whitman, Women, Salutation, and the Body as objects of poetic attention, but they also claim these noun-subjects as points of origin. In reissuing *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman appears both to seize and to abjure authority over his text. His 1856 titles aggressively announce the mutual self-constitution of the poet and the objects of his attention; at every point authorial agency threatens to slide into mere transcription.

In addition to recasting and recontextualizing the poems from the 1855 edition, Whitman also reprints large swaths of the 1855 "Preface," which was dropped from the 1856 volume, in revised and relineated form as "Poem of Many into One" (later titled "By Blue Ontario's Shore"). The most visible and infamous act of reprinting that marks this edition, however, is Whitman's decision to have Emerson's expansive salutation "I Greet You at the / Beginning of A / Great Career" embossed on the spine of the volume; he also reprints this letter in its entirety in an appendix, "Leaves-Droppings," along with an extensive reply, compounding the scandal of having already printed Emerson's letter without permission in the *New York Tribune*. This simulacrum of an exchange of private letters, titled "Correspondence," is followed by a section called "Opinions. 1855–6," in which Whitman reprints eight reviews of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Comprised of positive reviews written by strangers, two of Whitman's own anonymous, exuberant self-reviews, and vitriolic condemnations of the book as a "mass of stupid filth,"[10] "Leaves-Droppings" recycles ephemeral periodical texts, putting them back into circulation in more durable form.

At one level, the reprinting of Emerson's letter along with a smattering of reviews merely formalizes Whitman's marketing strategy for the 1855 edition. As the reviewer for the *New York Daily Times* noted, a printed copy of Emerson's letter and proof slips of Whitman's anonymous self-reviews had been enclosed in the copy sent to him for evaluation.[11] That all three reprinted British reviews make reference to Emerson's endorsement of the first edition suggests that a printed copy of Emerson's letter was also enclosed or tipped into the copies that were sent to foreign reviewers.[12] By including "Leaves-Droppings" within the framework of the 1856 edition, however, Whitman materializes the field of circulation of his poems for all of his readers and signals the centrality of questions of circulation to the volume itself.

In "Leaves-Droppings," Whitman takes advantage of the loose connection between texts and the author's name that was characteristic of the culture of reprinting. In the antebellum U.S., anonymous reviews were frequently noted and reprinted in far-flung newspapers and regional periodicals, making gentlemanly anonymity acutely susceptible to manipulation. The untraceable origins of many reviews allowed for ventriloquism effects that numerous antebellum authors, including Edgar Allan Poe, sought to turn to their advantage.[13] While the *Daily Times* reviewer reproves Whitman for pretending to editorial impartiality in his anonymous self-reviews, he deplores such puffery as an abuse of a system that is regulated by literary "honesty" and not by law.[14] Similarly, reviewers of the 1856 edition condemned the unauthorized circulation of Emerson's letter as a violation of what the *Christian Examiner* calls "literary comity and courtesy."[15]

Strikingly, these reviewers were not concerned with the printing of Emerson's letter *per se* but rather with the fact that Whitman's placing of Emerson's endorsement on the spine of the volume extended his praise to poems he could not possibly have seen. The publication of a private letter troubled them less than the mismatch of text and reference; Whitman's circulation of the letter was not a breach of privacy but a kind of forgery or fraud.

In what follows I will argue that Whitman uses the occasion of the reissue of *Leaves of Grass* to meditate on and experiment with reprinting's characteristic detachment of texts from their authors and from authorizing contexts. Looking first at the printed exchange of letters in "Correspondence"—a heading that recalls the spaces in newspapers and periodicals that were devoted to readers' feedback—I will argue that Whitman strives to articulate a cultural politics that could reconcile reprinting's populist effects with literary nationalist aims. In his reply to Emerson, Whitman directly addresses the cultural debt that Americans have incurred through unauthorized reprinting, projecting the imminent rectification of an imbalance of trade ("These States . . . initiate the outlines of repayment a thousand fold" [*LG* 1856, 356–357]) and imagining a new kind of poet who could accommodate "foreign-born materials as well as home-born" (*LG* 1856, 357). Whitman also attempts in this letter to settle his complex debt to Emerson, returning his praise by placing Emerson at the origin of American "character," a newly emergent national identity. Both in his discussion of literary nationalism and in his reciprocal recognition of Emerson, Whitman invokes an author's lack of control over the circulation of his texts not as a crisis of ownership but as a necessary condition of origination.

Finally, I will sketch how Whitman's fascination with processes of circulation that are beyond his control is reflected in some of this volume's more radical experiments with poetic address. In "Leaves-Droppings," Whitman responds to the dependence of his authorial reputation on the opinions of anonymous strangers by including them in the volume, making their outrage and praise manifestly a part of his poetic project, while circulating his own self-validating prose anonymously among them. In many of the poems that are new to this volume, Whitman claims a similar latitude in throwing his voice, establishing authority over his poems through complex acts of distancing and disavowal. In poems such as "Poem of Salutation" (retitled "Salut au Monde!" in 1860) and "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" (known as "Respondez!" in the 1867 and 1871 editions), Whitman repositions *Leaves of Grass* as a response to a call that originates elsewhere. Whitman's experiments with address in these poems point to a keynote of the 1856 edition which is often lost in accounts of his poetic achievements in this

volume—that is, Whitman's willingness to cede mastery in favor of an exploration and revaluation of passivity, secondarity, and responsiveness.

Reprinting, Self-censorship, and the Origins of a National Literature

Whitman's printed letter to Emerson is perhaps best known for its attack on the effeminacy of American literati, whom he describes as "a parcel of helpless dandies" (*LG* 1856, 353). This attack draws reprinting into its orbit insofar as it condemns American authors for their eager emulation of foreign writers: "no one behaving, dressing, writing, talking, loving, out of any natural and manly tastes of his own, but each one looking cautiously to see how the rest behave, dress, write, talk, love—pressing the noses of dead books upon themselves and upon their country—favoring no poets, philosophs, literats here, but dog-like danglers at the heels of the poets, philosophs, literats, of enemies' lands" (*LG* 1856, 353). Whitman's account of the American literary man as a kind of foreign gentleman on native soil is literary nationalist enough for Whitman to have been identified with Young America, both by contemporaries such as Bronson Alcott and by modern literary critics.[16] And yet Whitman is also notably enthusiastic about what he elsewhere in the letter calls "that huge English flow, so sweet, so undeniable" (*LG* 1856, 348). Whitman delights in "the lists of ready-made literature which America inherits by the mighty inheritance of the English language" (*LG* 1856, 347) and repeatedly invokes the democratizing potential of such "schooling cheaply procured" (*LG* 1856, 349). Although he himself would rather circulate bodily among "the young men, to discover the spirit of them and to refresh [himself]", he regards "authors, publishers, importations, reprints and so forth" as the next best thing to affectionate presence: "they do the indispensable service, outside of men like me, which nothing else could do" (*LG* 1856, 347).

Indeed, Whitman's extensive catalogue of recent developments in printing, which has been read as a paean to technological progress, is more precisely taken as praise of the multiplicity and dispersal of American literary institutions, an invocation of the seemingly agentless power of the decentralized mass-production of print:

> The twelve thousand large and small shops for dispensing books and newspapers—the same number of public libraries, any one of which has all the reading wanted to equip a man or woman for American reading—the three thousand different newspapers, the nutriment of the imperfect ones coming in just as usefully as any—the story papers, various, full of strong-flavored romances, widely circulated—the one-cent and two-cent journals—the political ones, no matter what side—the weeklies in the country—the sporting and pictorial papers—the

> monthly magazines, with plentiful imported feed—the sentimental novels, numberless copies of them—the low-priced flaring tales, adventures, biographies—all are prophetic; all waft rapidly on. (*LG* 1856, 349)

Whitman doesn't simply praise a burgeoning market for print, he emphasizes the democratizing potential of cheap print, singling out formats such as newspapers and periodicals that depended on reprinting for much of their content.

Whitman's measured tone, his "composure" (*LG* 1856, 348) in the face of "the swarms of reprints" (*LG* 1856, 349) contrasts markedly with Charles Dickens's anxiety at the spectacle of unauthorized reprinting. As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, the reprint trade forced Dickens to attend to the author's lack of control over conditions of publication, not just in America but as a matter of course. For Dickens, reprinting threatened to dissolve the cultural presumption of authorial control, a fiction that served both to consolidate publishers' power and to protect authors from their readers.[17] Whitman, however, unabashedly celebrates American reading; he is eager both to submit to that sweet English flow and to circulate among workingmen newly imaginable as readers. Unlike many literary nationalists, Whitman does not call for tighter regulation of the press but rather for looser self-regulation on the part of literary elites. Whitman's pleasure in the promiscuous circulation of cheap print and his confidence that the debt incurred by reprinting would eventually be repaid finds its opposite in this manifesto in the utter failure of frank language about sex to circulate in print or even for sex to be spoken about in literary circles. Whitman's enthusiasm for the relatively unregulated American press is set in charged but unexplained juxtaposition with his indictment of the anxious self-censorship of provincial authors.

While Whitman stops short of drawing strong connections between these parables of self-regulating circulation, he stakes out a position that is clearly distinct from Whig support of international copyright, which characteristically railed against the licentiousness of the reprint trade,[18] and from the Democrats' advocacy of the writing of American authors so long as such literary protectionism did not threaten the prosperity of American publishers.[19] Whitman calls instead for the disbanding of self-censoring, self-sequestering literary elites, enjoining them to be "bards of ensemble" rather than "a class set apart, circling only in the circle of themselves" (*LG* 1856, 354). Whitman is ultimately more concerned with the stifling effects of social convention than he is with the regulation of print; the "filthy law" he urgently desires to repeal is an unwritten one—the consensus that sex is "unmentionable and to be ashamed of" (*LG* 1856, 355). In Whitman's lexicon, stigma attaches to the enforcement of social norms, not to their violation; filthiness inheres in shame, not in sex, while a lack of faith in the body shows itself in

"foetid polite face" (*LG* 1856, 355). Given Whitman's irritation at the general "silence or obedience" of literary elites, who he thinks "have long connived" (*LG* 1856, 355) to exclude sex from representation, one can begin to see how the unrestrained circulation of poets and cheap print among the people might promise to produce a more robust and representative national literature.

Whitman's solution to the problem of an imitative literary culture returns again and again to figures of reprinting, as if the only remedy for this disease is more of the same. At times, his literary nationalist program seems to be mostly a matter of readdressing literature to a new audience, a way that is arguably paved by reprinters' circulation of elite literature in cheap formats: "What is to be done," Whitman maintains, "is to withdraw from the precedents and be directed to men and women—also to The States in their federalness" (*LG* 1856, 350). Reprinting itself provides a figure for understanding how the old world might less threateningly be brought into relation to the new: "The genius of all foreign literature is clipped and cut small, compared to our genius;" "Old forms, old poems, majestic and proper in their own lands here in this land are exiles" (*LG* 1856, 351). For Whitman, the road to an authentically national literature clearly goes by way of cut and paste. Even the original expression Whitman passionately invokes in this manifesto comes to look like collage, as much a mode of reading as it is of writing. As Whitman enigmatically proclaims, "Expressions do not yet serve, for sufficient reasons; but that is getting ready, beyond what the earth has hitherto known, to take home the expressions when they come and to identify them with the populace of The States" (*LG* 1856, 348–349). Reprinting and original American expressions do not stand in opposition to one another, they are continuous. Although the process of transition from one to the other is everywhere mysterious, reprinting clearly helps to generate a national literature; it serves as "nourishment" to the national body, on the brink of emerging from an extended period of latency.

In addition to proposing a solution to and prophesying the imminent end of American cultural indebtedness, the 1856 edition works hard to discharge Whitman's debt to his deferentially acknowledged "Master," Ralph Waldo Emerson. Critics have rightly focused on Whitman's use of an excerpt from Emerson's letter on the spine of the volume, but Whitman's extended reply to Emerson in "Leaves-Droppings" indicates more than simple appropriation, the scandal of transforming private praise into a public strategy of self-promotion. Whitman's lengthy letter concludes with an indirect attempt to attribute his text to Emerson, to place Emerson at the origin of his poetic program, to sign his text with Emerson's name. What intrigues me is the ways in which this countersignature is modeled and made possible by the loose regulation of literary property, the development of a publishing system that installed a lag of indeterminate duration

between publication and attribution, one that promoted readerly appropriation at the expense of authorial control.

While Emerson had greeted Whitman at "the beginning of a great career," Whitman insists in return that the promise of a commensurability between the American continent and its literature—a literature founded on "that vast basis of the supremacy of Individuality" (*LG* 1856, 357)—was foreseen by Emerson, returning responsibility for Whitman's vision to Emerson himself. In an extended analogy with maritime exploration, Whitman blurs the distinction between accident and origination, returning Emerson's personal greeting in the form of a second person address that also blurs the distinction between author and reader:

> Those shores you found. I say you have led The States there—have led Me there. I say that none has ever done, or ever can do, a greater deed for the States than your deed. Others may line out the lines, build cities, work mines, break up farms; it is yours to have been the original true Captain who put to sea, intuitive, positive, rendering the first report, to be told less by any report, and more by the mariners of a thousand bays, in each tack of their arriving and departing, many years after you. (*LG* 1856, 358)

In this passage, credit for discovery is subsumed into ordinary navigation; Emerson's heroic deed is invisibly inscribed in the routine comings and goings of those who come after him. That this moment of attribution is also an aggressive assertion of Emerson's lack of control over his legacy becomes unmistakable in Whitman's closing address, in which Whitman nominates himself as the people's representative and as the executor of Emerson's literary estate: "Receive, dear Master, these statements and assurances through me, for all the young men, and for an earnest that we know none before you, but the best following you; and that we demand to take your name into our keeping" (*LG* 1856, 358).[20] What kind of an assurance could possibly be offered by this reply, sent not through the mail like the first edition but broadcast to the world in full confidence that it would find its way to Emerson? What kind of custodianship is implied by the "demand" that Emerson's name be taken into Whitman's and other young men's "keeping"?[21] Credited with a book he did not write and saddled with responsibility for its poetic program, Emerson is put on notice that the afterlife of his writing is helplessly and permanently out of his hands.

Textual Authority and Poetic Address in the 1856 Edition

Much of the audacity of Whitman's reply to Emerson lies in his insistence that the work of the "Master" is subject to a field of circulation that is beyond his control, an assertion that the paratexts of the 1856 edition perform in their rhetorical ex-

cessiveness, in their techniques of readdress, and in the manifest incommensurability of personal greeting and printed response. Emerson's problem was, of course, Whitman's desire; if Emerson could not control the circulation of his texts or reputation, Whitman's struggle in 1856 was to distribute his poems to a wider public than he was able to reach with his first edition. Whitman's indirect claims to authority, his disavowal of originality, and his framing of his poems with a partially fabricated history of their reception can all be seen as attempts to increase the circulation of his poetry by projecting it as already in circulation. I want to suggest, however, that these are not only publishing strategies, they are also poetic strategies. In Whitman's experiments with poetic address—his poems' shifting stance toward their utterances—we can see him modeling what literary recognition might look like, splitting, suspending, and subordinating the lyric "I" so as to restage the emergence of his poetic voice. While these modes of address might be seen as attempts to recharacterize the voice that speaks to us so imperiously from the pages of the 1855 edition, they are also techniques for launching that voice into a print culture that had for the most part failed to recognize it.

Compared with the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, which sets up the expectation of first-person address, Whitman's experiments with the delayed delivery or avoidance of the "I" in the 1856 edition are striking. The first poem of the reprinted edition—"Poem of Walt Whitman, an American" (known as "Song of Myself" after 1881)—is manifestly both by and about the poet. The announcement of Whitman's name in the poem's title, combined with the truncation of the name on the copyright page from "Walter" to "Walt," appears to bring both poet and poetic speaker squarely into alignment with the person who claims title in the book-as-object. And yet the poems that follow work in complex ways to disavow responsibility for this poetic enterprise. Unlike the first edition, which follows the opening poem with one that intensifies the urgency and intimacy of the address to the reader—"Come closer to me, / Push close my lovers and take the best I possess" (89), Whitman disrupts this sequence in 1856 with two new poems that take up familiar themes and tropes but with some distance: "Poem of Women" (later called "Unfolded Out of the Folds") and "Poem of Salutation." "Poem of Women" provides a back-story for the self who speaks so forcefully in the initial poem, denying him both originality and singularity: "Unfolded only out of the inimitable poem of the woman can come the poems of man—only thence have my poems come" (*LG* 1856, 101). This poem offers priority to women in exchange for a kind of exposure; the poems that are "unfolded" in this volume may disclose, expand upon, or make dangerously plain the repressed subject of sex, but they will remain passive, secondary, and multiple—thoroughly dependent on the singular gestational power of "woman."[22] Strikingly, the poem avoids first-person address, deferring the

emergence of the poet's "I" and confining it to a set of parallel clauses which restore a measure of equivalence to the otherwise subordinated love between men: "Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only thence can appear the strong and arrogant man I love" (*LG* 1856, 101). The poem concludes its exploration of the sexual origins of individual identity in the neutrality and generality of the third person: "First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped in himself" (*LG* 1856, 102).

"Poem of Salutation" picks up on this deferral and the offloading of credit and responsibility for origins, beginning with a startling apostrophe: "O take my hand, Walt Whitman!" (*LG* 1856, 103). This instance of self-address is profoundly dislocating, particularly in light of the title's equivocation as to whether salutation is its subject or its source, the poet-speaker's chosen mode of address or a speaking personification. A "Poem of Salutation" might reasonably be expected to greet the reader, but, bizarrely enough, it begins by addressing the poet in our stead. But whose hand is it, then, that is being extended to Walt Whitman for him (and us, by proxy) to grasp? And what is the relation of this salutation to the greeting embossed on the spine that authorizes the volume as a whole?

The lines that follow provide little direction. Unlike "Poem of Walt Whitman, an American," which offers a measure of fixity and security in insisting on the logical priority of poet to reader ("And what I assume you shall assume" [*LG* 1856, 5]), "Poem of Salutation" is unmoored in space and time. The dislocation of the initial address to Whitman is followed by lines in which the poet is urged to concur in praise of a series of strategically indefinite objects of attention: "Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds! / Such joined unended links, each hooked to the next! / Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all" (*LG* 1856, 103). These exclamations court banality in the service of temporal indistinctness. If the sights and sounds the poem celebrates are decisively but vaguely praised for having the character they have, this is so that the lines can refer backwards, commenting approvingly on wonders we have already seen, while also reaching forward to the sights and sounds to which the poem will soon expose us. Rather than establishing the poetic "I" as the source of and filter for the poem's observations, "Poem of Salutation" places both poet and reader in the middle of a series without origin or end. We are bystanders, caught up in a riot of responsiveness, "each answering all."

In addressing himself in "Poem of Salutation," Whitman suspends the narcissistic drama of ordinary apostrophe in order to reauthorize his poetry as a response to provocation from without. Jonathan Culler has described the solipsism of apostrophe as the calling card of a lyric subject who either "parcels out the self to fill the world, peopling the universe with fragments of the self. . . . or else . . . internalizes what might have been thought external."[23] While self-apostrophe

might be thought to be a further driving inward of this already dangerously interior poetic genre, the effect of Whitman's self-address is to put the poem into dialogue with forces that precede and exceed it.[24]

"Poem of Salutation" subsumes long stretches of characteristically Whitmanian observation into the structure of call-and-response: "What widens within you, Walt Whitman?" (*LG* 1856, 103); "What do you hear, Walt Whitman?" (*LG* 1856, 104); "What do you see, Walt Whitman?" (*LG* 1856, 106); and "Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?" (*LG* 1856, 107). While with this last question, the poem finally settles into a set of observations and recognitions that appear to be initiated by the poetic speaker, the poem never shakes the spectral presence of the disembodied voice that set it going. The speaker's responsiveness to a variety of prompts provides an alibi for the immense historical range and global scope of the poem, as if Whitman realized that world geography, civilization, and religious history could not convincingly be addressed from a single vantage point. If the "hand" offered to Whitman at the start of the poem provides a kind of tether that allows him to pass "in compassion and determination around the whole earth" (*LG* 1856, 120), it also serves as a reminder that there is an outside to even the global poet's vision. The comprehensive claims of "Poem of Salutation," which produces a sense of arrested motion from its distanced and shifting perspective,[25] are tempered by the speaker's niggling awareness of oversight by others: "And you everywhere whom I specify not, but include just the same! / I salute you for myself and for America!" (*LG* 1856, 118–119).

In "Poem of Salutation," Whitman strives not only to claim the power of lyric address for himself but to locate such effects outside of the figure of the poet, prior to his calling. Here, and in "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness," Whitman refuses the presumptive solitude of what Virginia Jackson has identified as a property of "lyric reading"[26]—our retrospective insistence that nineteenth-century poems produce the voice of a solitary speaker turned away from his listeners, who then reprise the poet's isolation in acts of solitary reading. While I won't attempt in this essay to disentangle Whitman from all the snares set by this reading formation, it is worth noting that the dialogic framework of "Poem of Salutation" is picked up and echoed in a number of other poems in the early editions of *Leaves of Grass*, poems in which the poet channels other voices ("Respondez! Respondez!"; "Clear the way there, Jonathan!"), or in the frequent stretches of longer poems comprised of rhetorical questions directed to the reader. Whitman is interested in forms of intimacy that emerge from the space of circulation, not in those that precede it or attempt to circumvent its limits.

A brief look at "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" will show how Whitman's experiments with poetic address in this edition work to characterize his

poetic voice as one that emerges from a play of discourses and voices that are already in circulation. As in "Poem of Salutation," Whitman inaugurates this poem with a direct address that seems to come from nowhere, setting the poem up as response to an authoritative demand of mysterious origin. In this poem, however, Whitman turns back to reflect on the conditions of poetic address, both exercising and questioning the poet's power to will new states of affairs into being. The double genitive of the poem's title gives some indication of just how complex the speech situation of this poem is. Nakedness could be the personified origin of these propositions and of the poem itself, particularly given Whitman's insistence in his letter to Emerson that "the body of a man or woman, the main matter, is so far quite unexpressed in poems" (*LG* 1856, 356). In this reading, the poem constitutes what nakedness might say if finally given a chance to speak. Then again, what holds these propositions together could be their claim to strip American society of its pretensions; nakedness could be a property of these diverse and contradictory statements, rather than serving as their point of origin. Either way, it is crucial to note Whitman's elaborate refusal to allow this poem to coalesce around a stable and coherent lyric "I." Critics have tended to domesticate the strangeness of this poem by catching up its wild, centrifugal energies, tracking the array of propositions back to Whitman, and assimilating the poem to the canon as a rare inversion of Whitmanian optimism.[27] And yet "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" delights in testing the limits of social order and in imagining lifting a variety of constraints on discourse, including the assumption that a poem proceeds from and reinforces a single point of view. These are not statements initiated and controlled by the central figure of the observing poet, what Whitman describes in "Song of Myself" as "Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd" (211). The poet's voice emerges in this poem in reaction to the inversion and negation set loose by forbidden subjects of discourse.

The poem begins with an incomprehensible demand that will in later editions serve as its title, an urgent call, in fractured French, for a response to a question that goes unasked: "Respondez! Respondez!" (*LG* 1856, 316). Read in the context of the sequence of poems, this demand could easily refer to the invocation that concludes the poem that precedes it, "Lesson Poem" (later "Who Learns My Lesson Complete?"): "Come! I should like to hear you tell me what there is in yourself that is not just as wonderful" (*LG* 1856, 315). However, while "Lesson Poem" provides a plausible context for this utterance, it explains neither the sudden shift from genteel invitation ("I should like") to impatient demand ("Respondez!") nor the poem's swift turn to explore the paradoxical mix of permission and compulsion that is implicit in this demand:

Let every one answer! Let all who sleep be waked! Let none evade—not you, any more than others!
Let that which stood in front go behind! And let that which was behind advance to the front and speak!
Let murderers, thieves, tyrants, bigots, unclean persons, offer new propositions!
Let the old propositions be postponed! (*LG* 1856, 316)

The poem begins by calling for the lifting of ordinary constraints on speech, commanding readers to reply to the poet and granting socially marginalized persons access to an imaginary podium, but the list of propositions quickly disrupts the premise of inversion on which it is initially based. Although the poem invokes the gospel promise that "The last shall be first" (Matthew 20:16), its propositions will not proceed with the measured, compensatory tones of biblical justice. Rather, the poem stages a kind of takeover of its apparatus; as soon as "murderers, thieves, tyrants" and others are invited (and commanded) to offer new propositions, it is no longer clear what rules will govern the making of statements. Are the fiats that follow these lines with strict grammatical parallelism the new or the old propositions, those that have been called for or those that have been postponed? On whose authority does this poem proceed?

In "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness," Whitman courts the energy released by the carnivalesque overturning of social norms. The poem's propositions are deliberately inconsistent and range widely in subject and tone: they are righteous, radical, fanciful, outrageous, absurd, revolutionary, and inconsequential. While some sound like Whitman and are presumably statements he would endorse ("Let contradictions prevail! Let one thing contradict another! And let one line of my poem contradict another!" [*LG* 1856, 317]), others are self-parodying in their extravagance ("Let him who is without my poems be assassinated!" [*LG* 1856, 318]), and still others read like the proposals of an overly eager, reform-minded disciple ("Let us all, without missing one, be exposed in public, naked, monthly, at the peril of our lives! Let our bodies be freely handled and examined by whoever chooses!" [*LG* 1856, 319]). But these propositions cannot, finally, be made sense of by reference to Whitman, in part because of their sheer diversity and in part because the trope of inversion, through which the reader is prompted to endorse the opposite of what is proposed, does not consistently hold. While we may heartily reject the proposals of tyrants ("Let freedom prove no man's inalienable right!" [*LG* 1856, 318]) or those of genteel reformers ("Let nothing remain upon the earth except teachers, artists, moralists, lawyers, and learned and polite persons!" [*LG* 1856, 318]), some of these propositions do not bear reversal, either because we are inclined to endorse them or

because they are absurd. For example, the collapse of the proposal for monthly bodily exposure leaves us not with a counterassertion we can rally behind but with the status quo. Other propositions defy the rule of misrule by commanding states of affairs that actually seem to obtain: "Let the theory of America be management, caste, comparison!" (*LG* 1856, 317); "Let priests still play at immortality!" (*LG* 1856, 318); "Let there be money, business, railroads, imports, exports, custom, authority, precedents, pallor, dyspepsia, smut, ignorance, unbelief!" (*LG* 1856, 319). While the first two of these propositions can activate dissent through the reader's cynical agreement with their claims, the last inspires only bafflement or resignation.[28] In his varied use of the poet's fiat, Whitman explores the limits of inversion for the accomplishment of social change and the insufficiency of the counterfactual as a description of the work of poetry. After all, if the state of affairs a proposition attempts to call into being already exists, the poem's declarations are redundant; they may be drenched in irony, but their performative force collapses into mere description. This is to say, if such a proposition works as critique, it fails as poetry or at least as an instrument for calling into existence alternative worlds.

If "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" succeeds in questioning the power of poetic address, it does offer a figure for poetic voice that is more in line with the 1856 edition's interest in responsiveness and receptivity. One of the effects of the poem's lifting of restraints on speech is to invest readerly silence with a wealth of possible meanings. Each proposition can be seen not only as an experiment in the limits of the sayable or imaginable but also as an inquiry into what prevents such things from being said. While the opening lines of the poem suggest that unresponsive readers may be inattentive, cowardly, or oppressed, the sheer number and variety of these propositions implies that readerly reticence has multiple sources, some of them admirable and desirable. The liberties these propositions take with social norms point to a range of regrettable impediments to speech—modesty, passivity, habit, social conditioning, conventionality, and conservatism. In provoking readers to resist their terms, however, these propositions also suggest that readers' silence might conceal reservoirs of unarticulated sympathy ("Let the sympathy that waits in every man, wait!" [*LG* 1856, 317]), a becoming modesty or self-restraint ("Let men among themselves talk obscenely of women!" [*LG* 1856, 319]), the ordinary citizen's capacity for social and political leadership ("Let them that distrust birth and death lead the rest!" [*LG* 1856, 317]), and, by accrual, a vast array of unrepresented opinions, ideas, and responses.

The poem begins to lay the groundwork for a social and political program that would get beyond simply overturning social norms through a series of parentheticals scattered throughout the poem, all of which begin with the exclamation "Say!":

Let none be pointed toward his destination!
(Say! do you know your destination?) (*LG* 1856, 316)

Let the theory of America be management, caste, comparison! (Say! what other theory would you?)
Let them that distrust birth and death lead the rest! (Say! why should they not lead you?) (*LG* 1856, 317)

Both an expression of astonishment and a call for response, "Say!" and the open-ended questions that follow it allow for a significantly gentler mode of address to the reader than the hectoring command with which the poem begins. While both "Respondez!" and "Say!" essentially ask for the same thing, Whitman's parenthetical questions recharacterize the poet as a quizzical onlooker and potential interlocutor, an addressee rather than a speaker with the power to command the attention of those he addresses. In "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" Whitman cultivates incoherence in his list of statements, enjoying rather than policing the cacophony. Resolutely avoiding the lyric "I," he develops a grammatical and graphic structure through which he can introduce the voice of the poet as a welcome aside, a commentator on the play of propositions. The poet plays a stabilizing but not a regulatory function in this poem, shifting the work of judgment onto readers who are encouraged to generate more satisfactory propositions of their own.

Putting "Walt Whitman" into Circulation

Whitman's renegotiation of poetic address in "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedeness" and in "Poem of Salutation" suggests the insufficiency of first-person address to provoke the kind of response he wanted from his readers. Critics have long meditated on the ways in which the poems of the 1856 edition accommodate the failure of the first edition, speculating, for example, that Whitman's orientation toward posterity in "Sun-Down Poem" (later known as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry") is in part produced by his turn away from his contemporaries.[29] This poem recalls "Poem of the Propositions of Nakedness" in its reliance on the poet's fiat, although "Sun-Down Poem" manages to stage a successful metalepsis—casting a vision of the future into the past and the past into the future—by extending the poet's fiat across time. If the "Propositions of Nakedness" collapse because they command a state of affairs that may in part already exist, the commands in "Sun-Down Poem" demonstrate the poet's power by claiming identity across temporal difference, confirming Whitman's experience as a back-projection of our own.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Whitman's experiments with poetic address in the 1856 edition constitute an abandonment of his contemporaries,

particularly since he uses some of the same techniques of self-estrangement we have seen in these poems in the active promotion of his book. We have become so habituated to the idea of the coincidence of poet and speaker, Walt Whitman and the lyric "I," that we fail to see how Whitman uses ventriloquism to stage his emergence onto the literary scene. Returning to "Leaves-Droppings" with Whitman's poetic experiments in mind, we can see that his interventions into cultural politics make use of the very same techniques. Rather than making the case for his poetry on literary nationalist grounds, Whitman caricatures this position in order to distinguish his own "composure" in the face of reprinting from the frenetic tone of "such propositions" (*LG* 1856, 348). In asserting the imminence of the transition from reprinting to original authorship, Whitman slips into an elaborate, extended apostrophe to the nation: "America, grandest of lands in the theory of its politics, in popular reading. . . . collapses quick as lightning at the repeated, admonishing, stern words, Where are any mental expressions from you beyond what you have copied or stolen? Where are the born throngs of poets, literats, orators, you promised?" (*LG* 1856, 348). Whitman cultivates some confusion as to where his own voice leaves off and this one begins, perhaps because of the erotic violence of the position he ventriloquizes: "Strangle the singers who will not sing you loud and strong. Open the doors of The West. Call for new great masters to comprehend new arts, new perfections, new wants. Submit to the most robust bard till he remedy your barrenness. Then you will not need to adopt the heirs of others; you will have true heirs, begotten of yourself, blooded with your own blood" (*LG* 1856, 348). Nevertheless it is crucial to note that Whitman dissociates himself from this position in much the same way that he distances himself from the many and varied "Propositions of Nakedness." Whitman doesn't want to author this call for "new great masters"—or, more precisely, this call for a call—so much as to situate his poetry within the play of such calls and anticipated responses.

Michael Warner has called our attention to the way in which Whitman's poetry "continually exploits public sphere discourse conventions as its conditions of utterance," trading on the "necessary anonymity and mutual non-knowledge of writer and reader."[30] In the culture of reprinting, such discourse conventions included the expectation that uncopyrighted texts—foreign works and most newspaper and periodical articles—could and would circulate without the supervision of the author. In the 1856 edition, Whitman exploits the powerful deauthorizing and reauthorizing potential of a publishing system that relied on unauthorized reprinting to reach a new class of readers only just coming into a sense of themselves as a reading public. If the deference of an emergent mass readership to the opinions of literary elites made it difficult for Whitman to reach the very readers

he desired, anonymous reprinting made it possible for him to stage forms of recognition that could potentially galvanize the dissemination of his poems.

In concluding, I'll quote a brief excerpt from one of Whitman's reprinted self-reviews to show how his claims for the novelty of his lyric "I"—the decisive break with genteel literary norms he desired to effect—depends on a kind of ventriloquism that makes it difficult to tell the difference between poetic strategies and publishing strategies. This review dramatizes Whitman's entry onto the literary scene as an episode drawn from the metaleptic fantasy of "Sun-Down Poem," giving voice to Whitman's extraordinary ambitions under the sign of a rebuke. This review also makes an excerpt from the poem we will come to know as "Song of Myself" sharply visible *as* direct address through an elaborate self-apostrophe:

> Meanwhile a strange voice parts others aside and demands for its owner that position that is only allowed after the seal of many returning years has stamped with approving stamp the claims of the loftiest leading genius. Do you think the best honors of the earth are won so easily, Walt Whitman? Do you think city and country are to fall before the vehement egotism of your recitative of yourself?
>
> I am the poet of the body,
> And I am the poet of the soul
> The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me,
> The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue.
> I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
> And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
> And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.
> I chant a new chant of dilation or pride,
> We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,
> I show that size is only development. (*LG* 1856, 372)

In the context of this review, the powers claimed by the poet clearly depend on the splitting, dispersal, and subordination of the lyric "I." Reading with or without the awareness of Whitman's authorship, one cannot help but agree with the reviewer, who concludes this short excerpt by confirming his initial diagnosis, exclaiming "It is indeed a strange voice!" (*LG* 1856, 372). It is a strange voice, but not because it violates literary conventions, flies in the face of social norms, or stakes too much on its own egotism but rather because of the elaborate structures of estrangement Whitman deploys in order to convince us of his directness and simplicity. In the 1856 *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman exploits reprinting's detachment of texts from their authors and from authorizing contexts in order to orchestrate a rupture with literary elites who had failed, by and large, to register the breach. Reprinting *Leaves of Grass* became

an opportunity for Whitman to develop techniques for extending his poetic voice, using poetic and publishing strategies that draw our attention elsewhere for an account of origins, cultivate a range of possible responses, and allow a voice we will come to recognize as Whitman's to emerge in their very midst.

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 1323. Further references to this edition will be noted parenthetically in the text.

2. J. L. Austin, Lecture II, *How to Do Things with Words*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 12–24, 14.

3. Martin T. Buinicki, "Walt Whitman and the Question of Copyright," *American Literary History* 15:2 (Summer 2003), 248–275. For American print tradesmen's agitation against an international copyright law, see my *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–53* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 93–102.

4. For a legislative history of international copyright in the postbellum period, see George Haven Putnam, ed., *The Question of Copyright* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 40–63.

5. See for example, E29, E30, E31, E35, E42, E148, E151, and E157 in Joel Myerson, *Walt Whitman: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

6. Jerome Loving analyzes the texts Whitman likely selected for reprinting when he was exchange editor at the *New Orleans Crescent*. See his *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 114–140.

7. For evidence of Whitman's heavy hand in the production of Bucke's adulatory biography and critical history, see Stephen Railton, *Walt Whitman's Autograph Revision of the Analysis of Leaves of Grass* (New York: New York University Press, 1974) and Quentin Anderson's "Whitman's New Man" printed as an introduction to that volume (11–52).

8. Jay Grossman, *Reconstituting the American Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 75–115, esp. 100–101. Three of the initial twelve poems receive simple descriptive titles ("Night Poem," "Lesson Poem," and "Burial Poem"), while five of the additional twenty poems are similarly exempt from the predominant "Poem of" formula: "Broad-Axe Poem," "Clef Poem," "Faith Poem," "Bunch Poem," and the anomalously titled "Liberty Poem for Asia, Africa, Europe, America, Australia, Cuba, and the Archipelagoes of the Sea."

9. Derrida uses this term frequently in his writing. An early, detailed explication of the concept can be found in Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Stony Brook, NY: Nicolas Hays, 1978), 142–143.

10. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, 1856), 383. Although this edition is rare and unavailable in print form as a scholarly facsimile, page images and transcriptions can easily be accessed electronically at the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, www.whitmanarchive.org. Further references to this edition will be noted by page number in the text following the year of publication.

11. See Kenneth M. Price, ed., *Walt Whitman: The Contemporary Reviews* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61. Ezra Greenspan discusses Whitman's inclusion of a variety of re-

views in the second issue of the first edition in *Walt Whitman and the American Reader* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

12. See "Leaves-Droppings" (*LG* 1856, 359, 377, and 388).

13. For a more extensive treatment of the overlap of gentlemanly and republican anonymity and a discussion of Poe's critique and practice of anonymous reviewing, see my *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*, 24–27, 146–149, and 197–199.

14. *New York Daily Times* (November 13, 1856), 2, available online at the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/drumtaps/nation.html.

15. *Christian Examiner* 60 [also numbered as 4th series, 26, no. 3] (November 1856), 471–473, available online at the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/drumtaps/nation.html.

16. For Alcott's appraisal, after an October 1856 visit to Brooklyn, that Whitman was "an extraordinary person, full of brute power. . . . likely to make his mark on Young America," see Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself*, 224. For the long tradition of reading Whitman in literary nationalist terms, see Scott McPhail, "Lyric Nationalism: Whitman, American Studies, and the New Criticism," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 133–160.

17. See my *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*, 109–140.

18. For an example of such rhetoric, see "Necessity for a National Literature," *Knickerbocker* (May 1845), 416–417. I discuss Evert Duyckinck's refashioning the Young American appeal for international copyright for a Whig audience in *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*, 201–202.

19. Leading Democratic editor John O'Sullivan's influential abandonment of the cause of international copyright was published as "The International Copyright Question," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 12 (February 1843): 113–122.

20. Kenneth M. Price reads Whitman's published 1856 letter as marked by a pattern of acknowledging indebtedness and aggressively offering resistance in *Whitman and Tradition: The Poet in His Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 35–52.

21. Jay Grossman speculates that Whitman proposes not only to oversee and preserve Emerson's legacy but to take his name out of circulation. See *Reconstituting the American Renaissance*, 114.

22. Whitman will revise this poem to downplay the necessity of women to men's achievement of identity and to deidealize maternity, removing the word "only" from the first line in the 1860 edition and revising "the inimitable poem of the woman" so that it referred to "inimitable poems of woman" in the 1881 edition. Whitman struggles to find a place for this poem in later editions, inserting it into other sequences and ultimately placing it in the "Autumn Rivulets" cluster. See Sculley Bradley et al., eds., *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorium of the Printed Poems*, vol. 1 (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 160–161.

23. "Apostrophe," in Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 135–154, 146.

24. My reading here differs from that of Tenny Nathanson, who focuses on apostrophe as a figure of the poet's presence in *Whitman's Presence: Body, Voice, and Writing in Leaves of Grass* (New

York: New York University Press, 1992). Nathanson explores how Whitman's apostrophes embody voice and seek to overcome temporal distance; I'm interested in the distancing effects of Whitman's attempts to throw his voice in the 1856 edition. In this regard it is interesting that Nathanson turns to two poems new to the 1856 edition—"Poem of the Road" (later "Song of the Open Road") and "Poem of You, Whoever You Are" (later "To You")—to qualify his claims, noting that Whitman's apostrophes accentuate as well as attempt to overcome generality and anonymity. See Nathanson, 356–357.

25. A general thematics of passivity, echoing the speaker's position at the start of the poem, is produced by the very great distance from which he must view world geography and civilization, a distance that abstracts pattern and stasis from motion and history. This tendency toward arrested motion stretches from the inclusion of details, such as mariners who are carried past geographical landmarks or left waiting at the wharves, to the speaker's general interest in settings and not actions, his fascination with the inscriptions left behind by history.

26. See Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). I am also indebted to Jackson's argument that Whitman exploits the conventions of lyric address, rather than simply attempting to circumvent or abolish them. Her essay, "Your Name and Walt Whitman's," was presented at the 2001 meeting of the English Institute, held at Harvard University. On the tendency within cultural studies to misread nineteenth-century poems as the personal utterances of historical subjects, see Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, "Lyrical Studies," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27 (1999): 521–530.

27. Critics have found it difficult to resist identifying this poem as an example of the "terrible negative voice" of social critique Whitman called for in his letter to Emerson (*LG* 1856, 352). For readings that proceed along these lines, see Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 138–140, and David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 357–359. As with "Poem of Women," Whitman had difficulty fitting this poem to the architecture of later editions of *Leaves of Grass*, making it one of the "Chants Democratic" in the 1860 edition and revising it so that it could take its place as one of the "Marches Now the War Is Over" in 1871 before dropping it from the volume altogether.

28. For a reading of "Respondez!" that emphasizes Whitman's "ironic valorization of corrupt social practices" see James A. Berger, "Whitman's Rejection of 'Respondez!'," *Essays in Literature* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 221–230, quote 225.

29. Michael Moon reviews this tradition and takes exception to it in *Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in Leaves of Grass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 105–110.

30. Michael Warner, "Whitman Drunk," in *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 30–43, 40.

{ KENNETH M. PRICE }

"Debris," Creative Scatter, and the Challenges of Editing Whitman

When Henry James reviewed *Drum-Taps*, he lamented that Whitman's "essentially prosaic mind" was incapable of poetry because he refused to filter experience: "To become adopted as a national poet, it is not enough to discard everything in particular and to accept everything in general, to amass crudity upon crudity, to discharge the undigested contents of your blotting-book into the lap of the public."[1] Willa Cather agreed with James that a poet must "select the poetic." But Whitman, she continued, "never bothers to do that, he takes everything in the universe from fly-specks to the fixed stars."[2] Whitman had courted precisely this type of criticism. Reviewing his own work anonymously in 1855, he wrote admiringly about its nondiscriminatory inclusiveness: "Things, facts, events, persons, days, ages, qualities, tumble pell-mell, exhaustless and copious."[3] If amassed debris was inherently antipoetic to Cather, James, and others, for Whitman it was crucial to his anti-poetic poetry.[4] Yet debris was at one pole in Whitman's creative process, and order was at the other: the two were in dialectical relationship throughout Whitman's career, though early critics such as James and Cather often noticed only the debris. Opposing Whitman's impulse toward "form and union and plan"[5] were forces—some beyond the poet's control—of scatter, disintegration, and chance. Whitman's writings, both within and beyond *Leaves of Grass*, encompassed the growth and dropping of leaves, sprouting and shedding, living and dying.

Haphazard and antihierarchical, debris was fascinating to Whitman and fundamental to his view of poetry and existence. It is not surprising that debris would be of interest to one who wrote so often in opposition to the refined, the polished, and the ornate. Whitman famously praised materials often regarded as trash—"all kinds of light reading, novels, newspapers, gossip, etc, [because they] serve as manure for the few *great productions*."[6] In the poem ultimately titled

"Song of Myself," in "This Compost," and in many other passages, Whitman explores the idea of death or destruction as both ruination and renewal, a process in which things are broken down to an elemental condition for whatever comes next. Such a notion inheres in his use of the word *debris* and in his statements about his own poetry as it relates to the past, to "poets to come," and to American culture more generally.

The word *debris* resonates at moments of great importance in Whitman's verse. In the initial poem of *Leaves of Grass* (1855) he writes: "I am the mashed fireman with breastbone broken . . . . tumbling walls buried me in their debris" (*LG* 1855, 39). In the poem ultimately titled "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," often thought to be autobiographically revelatory, he sees the "friable shore, with trails of debris" and soon regards himself as "but a trail of drift and debris, / I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island" (*LG* 1860, 197–198). In "Spain, 1873–74" debris becomes key to historical transformation: "Out of that old entire European debris, the shatter'd mummeries, / . . . / Lo, Freedom's features fresh undimm'd look forth" (*LG* 1892, 365). Most memorably, perhaps, in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," Whitman moves beyond the death of the President when he sees "askant" the remains of every soldier killed in the Civil War:

> I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
> And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
> I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war. (*LG* 1892, 261)

Multiple threads connect "Lilacs" and debris. A key image from Whitman's great elegy first appeared in the cluster "Debris," an enigmatic series of seventeen short, often pithy poems that debuted in 1860 and disappeared, at least as a cluster, by 1871. In the eleventh of those poems, beginning "Three old men slowly pass," Whitman describes companions joined by hands: "They are beautiful—the one in the middle of each group holds his companions by the hand" (*LG* 1860, 423). Although this brief poem was dropped from later editions, it takes on new life when reworked to become a memorable part of "Lilacs": "Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me, / And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me, / And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions" (*LG* 1892, 259–260).

Debris is a word with a remarkable range of meanings in *Leaves of Grass*. In addition to suggesting refuse and rubbish, and beyond acknowledging it as the source of new life, Whitman strongly associates *debris* with the spiritually transcendent. In his hands the word has unusual elasticity of meaning as it stretches from the degraded to the revered, even as he restlessly unsettles such categories and labels. In a manuscript draft of "Ashes of Soldiers" the word is used reverentially as Whit-

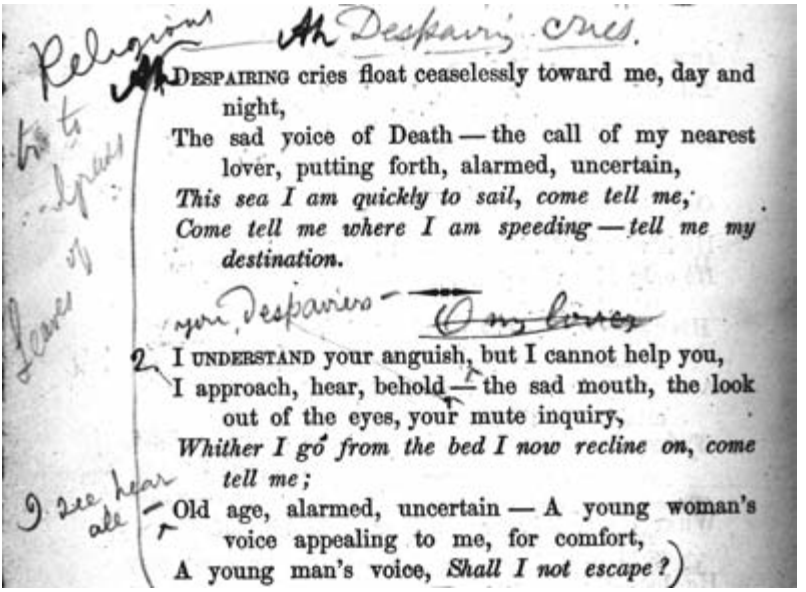
man regards the decaying bones of soldiers and considers the inseparability of debris and new life:

> Decoration Day May 30
> Ashes of Roses
> The dust & debris below
> in all the cemeteries
> not only in Virginia &
> Tennessee but all through
> the land
> ——
> The names of the flowers.
> lilacs
> roses
> early lilies
> the colors,
> purple & white
> ~~& red~~ & yellow
> & red—
> —the graves—
> Ashes of Armies
> The Unknown
> ? Army-Ashes
> The dust of each ~~mingling~~
> fused ~~all with~~ in the dust
> of each—(i.e. the rebel & the Union)[7]

Given Whitman's sense that debris could be hallowed, it is not surprising that in the Blue Book—his copy of the 1860 edition containing manuscript revisions—he recorded his intention to move two parts of "Debris" to a planned religious volume that was to parallel *Leaves of Grass*: the fifth poem, "Ah Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me, day and night," and the sixth poem, "I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you"[8] (see fig. 1).

What Is "Debris" (1860) and How Should It Be Edited?

Perhaps because much of Whitman's initial "Debris" was dropped after 1860 and what remained was radically reconfigured in subsequent editions, the cluster has been neglected and poorly understood, despite the interest of the word *debris* and the strong link between this cluster and "Lilacs." "Debris" has received scant


Religious — Ah Despairing cries.

DESPAIRING cries float ceaselessly toward me, day and night,
The sad voice of Death — the call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarmed, uncertain,
This sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,
Come tell me where I am speeding — tell me my destination.

your Despairs — O my lover

I UNDERSTAND your anguish, but I cannot help you,
I approach, hear, behold — the sad mouth, the look out of the eyes, your mute inquiry,
Whither I go from the bed I now recline on, come tell me;
Old age, alarmed, uncertain — A young woman's voice appealing to me, for comfort,
A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape?*

1. Page from Walt Whitman's Blue Book. Courtesy Oscar Lion Collection, Rare Books Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

commentary—in fact, it has been almost entirely ignored by critics.[9] Yet "Debris" can highlight issues of consequence for the editing and interpretation of Whitman. If we consider "Debris" as poetry and *debris* as idea, we encounter a broad range of issues: Whitman's beliefs about himself and his work, the development of his career and his beliefs about the interrelation of matter and spirit, and the difficulties of editing his work in print—which, I have come to believe after ten years of coediting the *Walt Whitman Archive*, is matched only by the difficulties of editing his work electronically.[10] To undertake either a print or an electronic edition of Whitman raises very complex questions about textual organization and authority. The poet's life and career were defined by the growth of and droppings from *Leaves*, by the development of order, and by the endless scatter and drift of debris.

Whitman's own bibliographic codes indicate reasonably clearly that "Debris" is a cluster. In 1860 "Debris" comprises seventeen poems totaling sixty lines. It is easy to understand, however, why "Debris" has been misapprehended and why some editors have regarded this version of "Debris" as a poem rather than a cluster. In the table of contents of the 1860 *Leaves*, the overall cluster title "Debris" is listed on its own line (see fig. 2), but the seventeen individual poems receive no mention whatsoever. Only the cluster title is recorded, possibly because most of the poems are so brief, some as short as a single line. The typography of Whit-

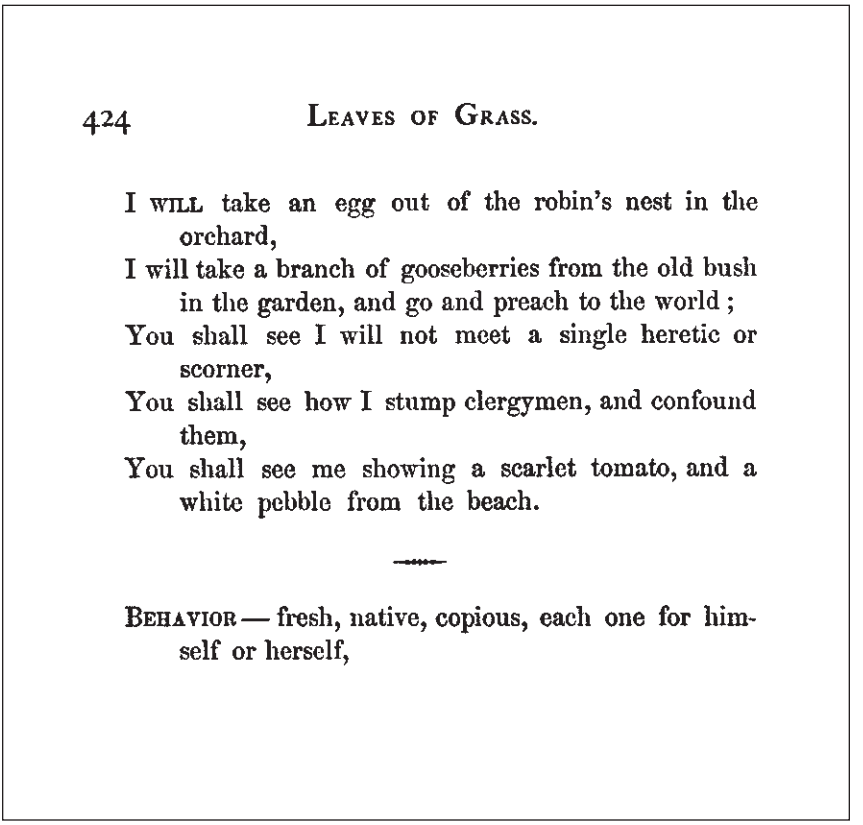
man's table of contents does not unambiguously distinguish cluster titles and poem titles. In fact, if we had only the table of contents to go on, it would be reasonable to assume that "Debris" is probably a poem. In the table of contents, the separate poems within other clusters are ordinarily itemized by name, as in "Messenger Leaves," or by a span of numbers indicating the items within the cluster, as in "Chants Democratic Numbers 1 . . to . . 21." In contrast, the individual parts of "Debris" are not marked in the table of contents by either words or numbers serving as titles (this is true as well for the cluster "Says"). The unique nature of "Debris" becomes clear when we move into the body of the book. It is the only cluster in the 1860 edition in which the poems are neither titled nor numbered.

The lack of titles within "Debris"—both in the table of contents and in the body—is not necessarily evidence that the individual parts are something other than poems. As we know, Whitman presented poems without titles at other times in his career—the epigraph to the volume *Passage to India* (1871) is just one example. In the absence of titles, Whitman uses typographic features within "Debris" to indicate where the separate poems begin. First, an ornament between poems indicates where the breaks occur (nowhere in the 1860 edition does Whitman use ornaments between units smaller than a poem). Interestingly, when a poem ends at the bottom of the page these ornaments are omitted. In these cases, Whitman allowed the white space in conjunction with a consistently employed second feature—the use of an initial capital letter followed by a string of smaller capitals in the initial word—to serve as the indication that a new poem had begun[11] (see fig. 3).

My conclusion that "Debris" is a cluster hinges in part on its sharply varied content and also on nonlinguistic textual features, specifically typeface and ornamentation. In the face of the same evidence, other editors have concluded differently. Sculley Bradley and Harold Blodgett asserted in *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition* (1965) that the "Debris" of 1860 is a single poem.[12] However, when these same editors joined forces with Arthur Golden and William White to produce the Variorum of *Leaves of Grass* (1980), they regarded "Debris" not as a poem but as a cluster of untitled poems, in an apparently last-minute change of mind that threw off their numbering system.[13] Justin Kaplan in *Walt Whitman: Poetry and Prose* (1996) followed Bradley and Blodgett's first conclusion and regarded "Debris" as a single poem (Kaplan's decision is clear from the typography of his table of contents where clusters are in italics while individual poems are in roman). Most editors, however, end up avoiding "Debris" in its somewhat puzzling 1860 form because the usual practice—despite years of historical criticism and widespread abandonment of the quest for a solitary authoritative text—is to reproduce either the first or final version of *Leaves of Grass*, neither of which includes anything with that title.

CONTENTS.

2. Table of Contents, *Leaves of Grass*, 1860.


424 LEAVES OF GRASS.

I WILL take an egg out of the robin's nest in the orchard,
I will take a branch of gooseberries from the old bush in the garden, and go and preach to the world;
You shall see I will not meet a single heretic or scorner,
You shall see how I stump clergymen, and confound them,
You shall see me showing a scarlet tomato, and a white pebble from the beach.

BEHAVIOR — fresh, native, copious, each one for himself or herself,

3. Page from "Debris," *Leaves of Grass*, 1860.

Those editors who saw the 1860 "Debris" as a poem probably did not attend closely to the nonlinguistic textual features, and they certainly did not reproduce them when creating their modern editions. When they reset the type, they deprived their readers of significant evidence. Prior to the work of the *Walt Whitman Archive*, the only edition that presented Whitman's typography and ornaments—that is, the only edition that conveys the full scope of Whitman's apparent intentions, including those conveyed by nonlinguistic aspects of his book—was the facsimile of the 1860 edition prepared by Roy Harvey Pearce in 1961.[14] (Pearce offered the evidence but was silent about its meaning: that is, he reproduced all of the pages of the 1860 edition with photographic exactitude, including of course those pages of "Debris" that have puzzled readers. But Pearce's edition provides no scholarly apparatus commenting on textual puzzles.[15]) Fortunately, in an online environment it is not necessary to choose between a facsimile edition and a scholarly edition:

we can combine the virtues of each type of editing. "Debris" illustrates that an ideal scholarly edition needs to supply more than an accurate transcription: we need transcriptions accompanied by page images, especially with a writer like Whitman who was so extensively involved in the design of his books as material objects. Providing transcriptions and images in tandem allows users to benefit from the insights of Whitman scholars and to draw their own conclusions about matters that involve both linguistic and typographic cues.

It matters, of course, if we regard "Debris" as a poem or a cluster because our opinion of the quality of a literary text is shaped by our expectations based on form. If "Debris" is a poem it could be (generously) regarded as an innovative "collage" or, more likely, as a poorly integrated if not downright incoherent document.[16] If, on the other hand, "Debris" is recognized as a cluster, it stands as a loosely linked but thematically coherent group of short poems that treat matters of consequence, often powerfully. Moreover, from an electronic editing perspective the proper labeling of materials is foundational. Computers are fast and obedient, but they are also literal-minded. They cannot make decisions based on a feel for context. Electronic editing requires us to be explicit in identifying textual units, for example, and because of that requirement much that was once assumed to be understood is revealed as unresolved.

The question about whether "Debris" is a poem or a cluster goes to the heart of the procedural workings of the *Walt Whitman Archive*. This question is precisely the type of issue that arises literally thousands of times in cases small and large. The significance of our work over the long term will no doubt depend on how well we answer those questions, the cumulative weight of the content we present, and the scholarly apparatus with which we surround it.[17] In this type of electronic editing project, we need to attach labels or tags to features, to make choices. It is such ongoing decision-making, interpretive rather than mechanical, that adds intelligence to an electronic text and that can make it robust and illuminating as a tool for analysis. Once we have labeled, say, all the items we believe to be clusters, users can gather, sort, and analyze them. The matter of labeling may seem tedious at best and at worst a process that does violence to a text shimmering in its own wonderfully unresolved ambiguity. There is a modicum of justice in both reactions. Yet there are also offsetting advantages to a computational method, and I do not mean simply that we can search, retrieve, and manipulate texts. Computational methods require editors to face basic questions, and the results can at times be stunning. It was only when we began to declare what we saw on the pages of the 1855 *Leaves*, for example, that those poems, previously described by critics as "untitled," suddenly became visible to us as a mixture of poems individually and repetitively entitled "Leaves of Grass" (the first six) and untitled (the final six).

To fully appreciate "Debris" we must view the cluster both with an eye to detail (attentive to Whitman's bibliographic markers) and with an eye to the big picture (attentive to how "Debris" functions within the overall 1860 *Leaves*). The placement of the cluster is significant. "Debris" is situated very late in the volume and is followed by only four poems: "Sleep-Chasings," "Burial," "To My Soul," and "*So long!*"[18] Contributing to Whitman's conclusion, "Debris" comments on both the closure of his volume and the closure of life. At the beginning of his career, Whitman asserted that "the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he absorbs it" (*LG* 1855, xii). Still believing in popular judgment in 1856, he made an outlandish claim to Emerson about the sales of *Leaves of Grass*: "I printed a thousand copies, and they readily sold" (*LG* 1856, 346). After few copies of the first two editions actually sold, Whitman eventually adjusted his expectations about his audience: the 1860 edition rests hope not on a broad audience but on "poets to come."[19] Yet if he was to rely on the future, his writings would need to endure not only as spirit but palpably, materially. The question of what might be passed on and what might endure became central. Whitman's 1860 edition is preoccupied with these considerations, with "*So long!*" being only the most famous case in point.

The cluster "Debris" opens with two aphoristic poems. The second poem, a single line, underscores Whitman's concerns as he contemplates death, departure, and loss: "Any thing is as good as established, when that is established that will produce it and continue it" (*LG* 1860, 421). What will happen to individual life and achievements when confronted with forces of death, dispersal, and disintegration? This poem is in dialogue with lines that appear a few pages later in "*So Long!*":

> I have established nothing for good,
> I have but established these things, till things farther
> onward shall be prepared to be established,
> And I am myself the preparer of things farther
> onward. (*LG* 1860, 452)

And yet for those "farther onward" to benefit from Whitman's work, something must remain and be preserved "for good," if only as a stimulant to new work. Questions about the materiality of artifacts and their preservation and transmission are key here because Whitman's ideas are dependent on their physical containers. "Debris" has hardly entered Whitman criticism except through what is sometimes regarded as the precritical work of editors, mentioned above. It is fitting in a way that editors should be the ones to engage this cluster because it (and the very concept of *debris*) speaks powerfully to issues of disorder and dispersal, death and sometimes regeneration. Death and regeneration are key editorial issues because at the time

of death authorial identity begins to shift decisively from the poet's body to his book. This is also the most likely moment for order to be imposed upon the writings of a successful writer: if collected works are to appear, they tend to appear shortly after death. The idea of *debris* made Whitman think of his own accumulated writings and of their destiny—of what was likely to be their partial perpetuation, transfer, and loss. There were and remain threats to the material records containing his writings, and there was the subtler threat of Whitman's refinements of and excisions from *Leaves of Grass*, with its complex mix of good and bad consequences, not to mention his outright destruction of some documents.

"Debris" is most basically concerned with remains—both poetical and bodily. The cluster attunes itself to what the fourth poem calls "the sad voice of Death." The fifth poem, filled with forebodings of death, concludes with "A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape?*" [emphasis in the original] (*LG* 1860, 422). The thirteenth poem considers the "weeping face" and asks: "Is it for some burial place, vast and dry? / Is it to wet the soil of graves?" (*LG* 1860, 423). This sober consideration is met by the vibrant colors and overall vitality of the next poem:

> I WILL take an egg out of the robin's nest in the orchard,
> I will take a branch of gooseberries from the old bush in the garden, and go and preach to the world;
> You shall see I will not meet a single heretic or scorner,
> You shall see how I stump clergymen, and confound them,
> You shall see me showing a scarlet tomato, and a white pebble from the beach. (*LG* 1860, 424)

The problem of death is not so much addressed as it is countered by Whitman's highlighting of life in its common and infinite loveliness. The passage, strangely similar to "Ashes of Roses," expresses a characteristic Whitmanian response to the threat of debris-as-death by reorienting his perspective toward debris-as-new-life. He immerses himself in color and in the glory of resurgent vitality. His various proofs are as random as debris and as likely to be overlooked, including a pebble on the beach.

In 1867 Whitman changed "Debris" from a seventeen-poem cluster to a two-poem cluster of four lines. The fate of the other original fifteen poems and fifty-six lines is tangled to say the least. There are relatively few obvious patterns in how the 1860 "Debris" poems were reconfigured in later editions. It can be said, however, that six poems of "Debris" (1860) were discarded in 1867 (plus the last lines of two other poems), and another four poems were discarded in 1871, with no additional poems discarded thereafter. Interestingly, a sizable amount of the original "Debris" poetry was moved into *Passage to India* in 1871, a realization of his plan to move some

of his original cluster into a volume treating matters of spirit. The following list notes other features of Whitman's revisions:

- Two of the 1860 poems were, in 1867, joined into one poem, "Despairing Cries," which in later editions gained another opening linegroup and the new title "Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours."
- Two of the 1860 poems survived as unnamed poems in a "Debris" cluster in 1867 and then were dropped.
- Four poems survived essentially whole throughout the period 1860–1892 and constitute whole poems in the deathbed edition: ("Beautiful Women," "Visor'd," "Offerings," and "Not the Pilot").
- One other poem gained another opening line and otherwise survived ("As If a Phantom Caress'd Me").

Given that "Debris" in 1860 constituted one cluster of a mere sixty lines, and in light of this abbreviated account of the changes that small cluster underwent, it becomes apparent that to strive to offer a full and accurate representation of the totality of Whitman's evolving writing—a worthy goal for the *Whitman Archive*—is to battle debris if not chaos.

A key step in confronting these formidable editorial challenges is to find more positive and less dismissive terms than "supplementary" or "excluded from *Leaves of Grass*" when we comment on or reproduce poems from, say, the 1860 *Leaves of Grass*. To declare that something that was in a version of *Leaves of Grass* was excluded from *Leaves of Grass* is to imply that one or more versions of *Leaves of Grass* are authentic while others are not. Many commentators become caught in a powerful but ultimately distorting teleological perspective. Whitman sanctioned the so-called deathbed edition, but he sanctioned other versions of his writings as well. He remarked near the end of his life: "the last edition is as necessary to my scheme as the first edition: no one could be superior to another because all are of equal importance in the fulfillment of the design."[20] We should keep in mind, too, that the 1860 edition has been regarded by some eminent critics as the highwater mark of his achievement. "Debris" certainly was integral and included—rather than supplementary and excluded—in what Whitman once called the "permanent" form of the 1860 *Leaves of Grass*.[21]

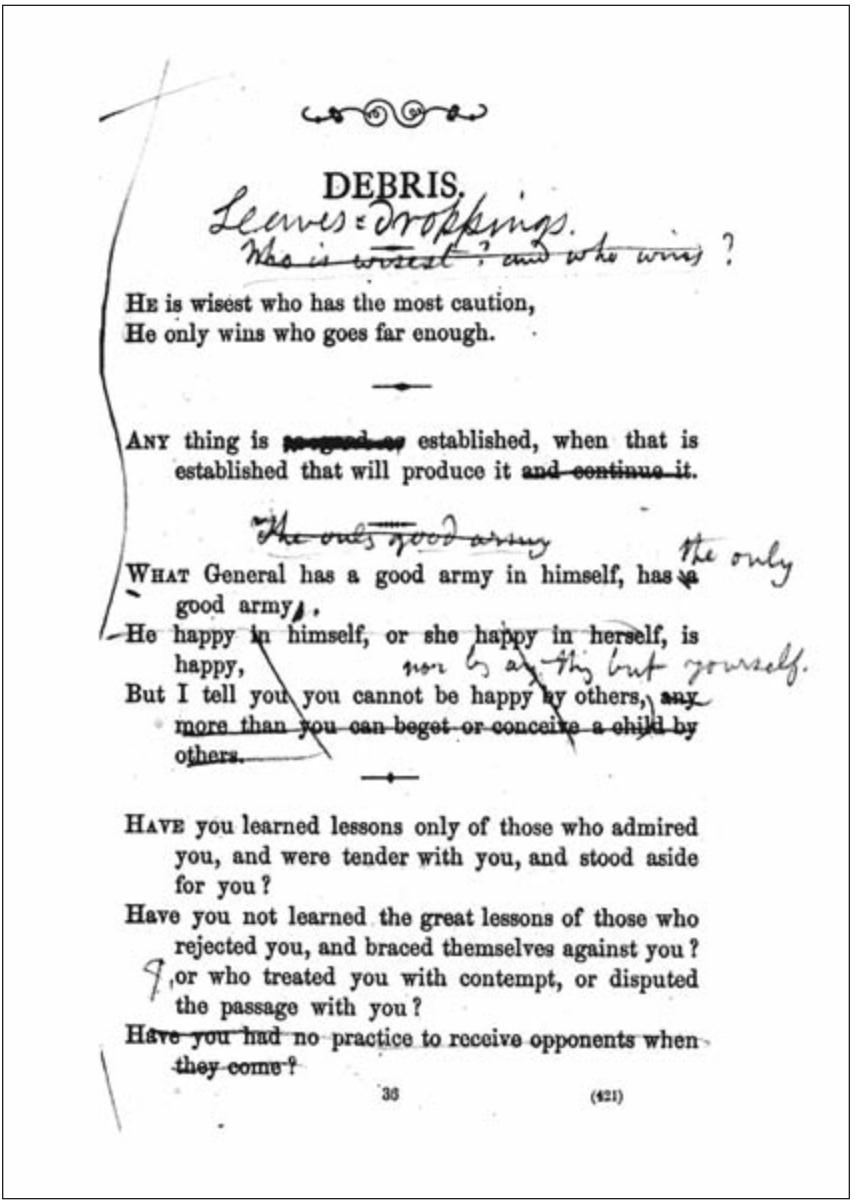
Most twentieth-century editorial work has driven us repeatedly to view the deathbed edition as normative, and this continues to have a major impact on scholarship and helps explain the neglect of the 1860 "Debris." Oscar Lovell Triggs, in *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman* (1902), offered "Variorum Readings of 'Leaves of Grass' Together with First Drafts of Certain Poems; Rejected Passages; and Poems Dropped by the Way."[22] His system, like the one later employed

by Harold Blodgett and Sculley Bradley in their influential *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, assumes the deathbed edition to be authoritative. Yet the granting of special status to last words is dubious on many grounds: most fundamentally, poets rarely possess their best judgment as clarity and energies are failing, and when social pressures have had time to blunt experimental impulses. Many have seen in Whitman's later work evidence of decline, of eroding powers and judgment. To the extent possible, the *Walt Whitman Archive* resists privileging the deathbed edition.[23] Instead, we attempt to reconstruct Whitman's writings after the fact, in an inclusive electronic edition that incorporates all writings, without prejudice, including those that Whitman endorsed at the end of his career and those that he endorsed at other times, however briefly. That Whitman came to reject some poems and lines in "Debris" does not call into question the authenticity of "Debris" in all its various documentary forms. Erasures and excisions, for example, can be of great interest for certain kinds of inquiries, and some rejected material possesses remarkable artistic merit. In short, a document's potential historical or biographical or literary significance should be weighed independently of the writer's own (often conflicting) judgments on it.

The goals of the *Walt Whitman Archive* are fundamentally different from those of earlier Whitman editions because we are striving to create what might be thought of as a truly inclusive, or democratic, or even atomized edition. In such an atomized edition, the goal is to preserve the authority of each unit in the entirety of the documentary record. We could conceive of the result as a "fabulous circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."[24] We create unique identifiers—one-of-a-kind names assigned to each electronic text we create. At this atomized level each object in the *Whitman Archive*, including objects that he came to disown, is equal. Our approach is fraught with its own difficulties, but we have opted for the principle of inclusion as being most fitting for a writer of Whitman's stature. One danger in creating this type of site devoted to an artist whose works are multitudinous is that it will lose organizational coherence and become a mere hodgepodge of materials—that is, debris. Our aim at the *Whitman Archive* is to "achieve the greatest possible coverage" of Whitman's work, its finished monuments and its raw and scattered forms, while attaining the "greatest possible degree of scholarly coherence."[25]

"Debris" and "Leaves-Droppings"

During that period of radical transformation between 1860 and 1867 when "Debris" changed from a seventeen- to a two-poem cluster, Whitman worked on revisions in his famous Blue Book. Intriguingly, he apparently considered changing



DEBRIS.

Leaves = droppings.

~~Who is wisest? and who wins~~ ?

He is wisest who has the most caution,
He only wins who goes far enough.

Any thing is ~~arranged or~~ established, when that is established that will produce it ~~and continue it.~~

~~The only good army~~ the only

What General has a good army in himself, has ~~a~~ good army.

He happy in himself, or she happy in herself, is happy, nor by any thing but yourself.

But I tell you you cannot be happy by others, ~~any more than you can beget or conceive a child by others.~~

Have you learned lessons only of those who admired you, and were tender with you, and stood aside for you?

Have you not learned the great lessons of those who rejected you, and braced themselves against you? or who treated you with contempt, or disputed the passage with you?

~~Have you had~~ no practice to receive opponents when ~~they come?~~

36 (421)

4. Page from Walt Whitman's Blue Book. Courtesy Oscar Lion Collection, New York Public Library.

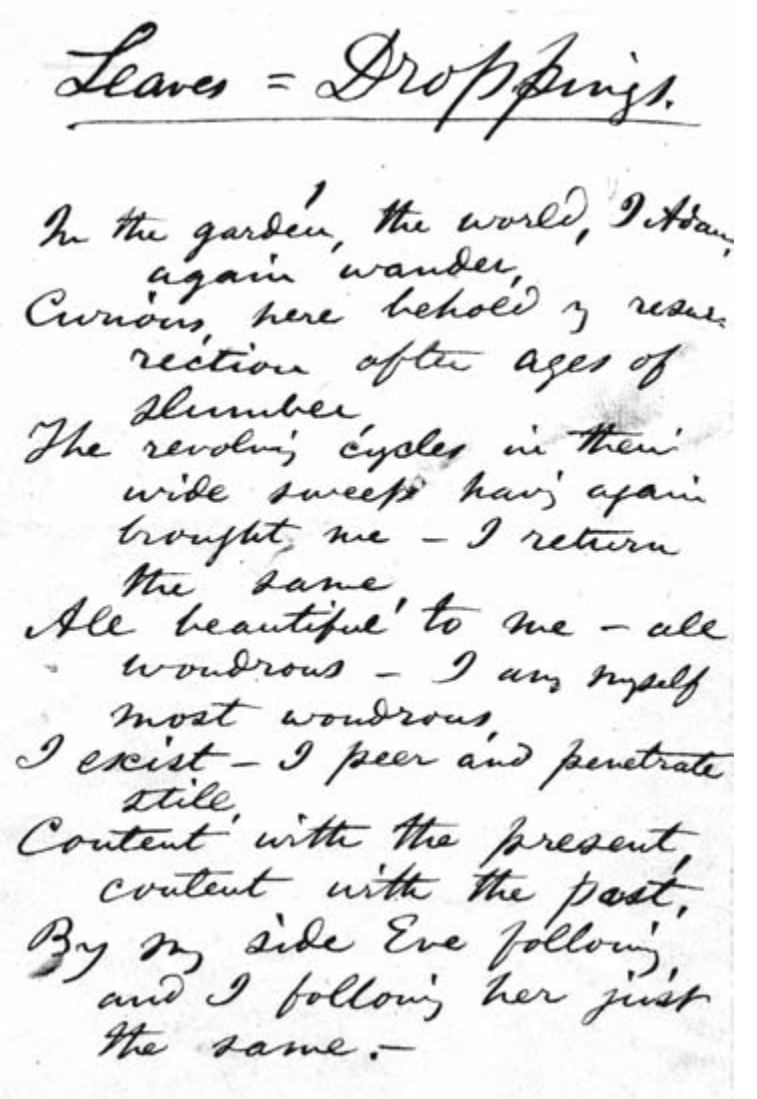
the title from "Debris" to "Leaves-Droppings" (see fig. 4). By looking at the history of Whitman's use of the latter phrase, we can understand the two terms' overlapping implications and recognize this cluster's engagement with key concerns of Whitman about reception, generation, and regeneration.[26]

Whitman's first known use of the term "Leaves-Droppings" occurred in the 1856 edition's backmatter, which includes two sections: "Correspondence," consisting of Emerson's famous letter greeting Whitman at the beginning of a great career and Whitman's open letter of response; and "Opinions, 1855–6," an assortment of reviews of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, including some penned by Whitman himself. Both sections were printed under the same running head: "Leaves-Droppings." In an illuminating essay about the paratextual feature of the 1856 "Leaves-Droppings," Edward Whitley quotes Gerard Genette as saying that paratextual elements such as advertisements, endorsements, and similar materials "surround and extend [the text] . . . in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of the verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption."[27]

Whitley, however, does not mention a key fact: a few years afterward, in the late 1850s, Whitman considered using "Leaves-Droppings" as the title for the opening poem of "Enfans d'Adam," now known by its final title "To the Garden the World" (see fig. 5). Whitman often insisted that *Leaves* would be fundamentally distorted if the "sex poems" were excluded because they were at the core of his work. Yet the first of these sex poems—or the group as a whole—was provisionally entitled "Leaves-Droppings." Whitman, a lover of paradox, often put important statements within parentheses, and expressed key points in documents bearing names like "Debris" and "Leaves-Droppings." As used in the 1856 *Leaves of Grass*, "Leaves-Droppings" puns on eavesdropping, of course, suggesting that readers get to overhear what is being said about Whitman in reviews. It was probably the eaves-dropping / leaves-droppings idea that also led Whitman briefly to contemplate a title suggesting that his sex poems provided a candid glimpse into private lives. In a section concerned with Adam, leaves-dropping signals the abandonment of the fig leaf and a new candor about sexuality.[28]

Debris: The Grass-Grown—Mossy Endings

Debris was a concept that informed not only Whitman's poetry but also his reconstructions of the meaning of his own life. Reviewing his photos late in life, the poet thought about what all the images from over the years suggested about the wholeness of his life: "It is hard to extract a man's real self—any man—from such a chaotic mass—from such historic debris."[29] He himself lived literally among


Leaves = Droppings.

In the garden, the world, I Adam,
again wander,
Curious, here behold my resurrection after ages of
slumber
The revolving cycles in their
wide sweeps have again
brought me – I return
the same
All beautiful to me – all
wondrous – I am myself
most wondrous,
I exist – I peer and penetrate
still,
Content with the present,
content with the past,
By my side Eve following,
and I following her just
the same.–

5. Walt Whitman manuscript poem, late 1850s. Papers of Walt Whitman, MSS 3829, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

6. Whitman late in life. Courtesy Library of Congress.

debris, in a chaotic sea of papers—it was the way he chose to "organize" his life (see fig. 6). In his conversations with Horace Traubel, the word *debris* comes up repeatedly.[30] In one case, Traubel describes the poet's room: "There is all sorts of debris scattered about—bits of manuscript, letters, newspapers, books. . . . 'This,' [Whitman] said once, 'is not so much a mess as it looks: you notice that I find most of the things I look for and without much trouble. The disorder is more suspected than real.' "[31] On another occasion Whitman spoke to Traubel lovingly of

debris: "An old wharf, the decayed, rotted, soaked, beams, pilings: the debris: the grass-grown—mossy endings, surfaces—oh! they appeal to me most of all. Many, many, many years ago—in New York—up towards Harlem—Mott Haven—there was an old wharf on which I spent some of the happiest hours of my life."[32]

The photographic image of Whitman surrounded by the debris of his papers is emblematic of issues that are at the heart of his poetry, of his way of life, and of the ways we confront him. That is, Whitman's writings appear as a mass existing on the border between order and chaos; Whitman himself is liminal, caught between life and death, both the source and product of the papers around him. The medium of the photograph highlights our own activity in the "creation" of Whitman—how can we, or any editors, best make sense of all that clutter anyway? Should the disorder be cropped out? Should a more flattering depiction be constructed? Many have attempted to extract a version of Whitman in hopes of getting the real thing, the essence. We prefer to honor the debris in the belief that there may be more truth in the fullness of the entire chaotic record than in any distillation of it.

NOTES

I would like to thank Brett Barney, Amanda Gailey, and Yelizaveta Renfro for insightful comments on various drafts of this essay.

1. [Henry James], "Mr. Walt Whitman," *Nation* 1 (November 16, 1865), 625–626, available online at the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/drumtaps/nation.html.

2. [Willa Cather], *Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements 1893–1896*, ed. Bernice Slote (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 351–352.

3. [Walt Whitman], "An English and an American Poet" [review of Alfred Tennyson, *Maud, and other Poems* and *Leaves of Grass*], *American Phrenological Journal* 22, no. 4 (October 1855), 90–91, available online at the *Walt Whitman Archive* http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/leaves/leaves55/phren.html.

4. As early as 1856, a reviewer of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, commenting on the "friendly and flowing savage" section of the initial poem, criticized Whitman's mixture of gems with debris: "Here again is a grand idea, not altogether new; and rough in its present setting, as the native gold still buried in Californian beds of quartz and debris. Nevertheless it is full of suggestive thought, and like much else in the volume—though less than most,—only requires the hand of the artist to cut, and polish, and set, that it may gleam and sparkle with true poetic lustre." See D.W., [review of W. Edmondstoune Aytoun, *Bothwell: A Poem in Six Parts* and *Leaves of Grass*], *Canadian Journal* n.s. 1 (November 1856), 541–551, available at the *Walt Whitman Archive* http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/leaves/leaves55/canadian.html.

5. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn: n.p., 1855), 55 (reprinted in the *Walt Whitman Archive*, http://www.whitmanarchive.org/works/). Later in this essay I cite the 1856 *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, 1856), 1860 *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860–1861), and the 1891–

1892 *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1891–1892), also in the *Whitman Archive*. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text as *LG* 1855, *LG* 1856, *LG* 1860, and *LG* 1892.

6. Whitman's marginalia is on an essay "Thoughts on Reading," *American Whig Review* 1 (1845): 485. The original document is in the Trent Collection, Perkins Library, Duke University.

7. See the manuscript draft entitled "Ashes of Roses" at www.whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/.

8. Interestingly, many of the changes Whitman marked in the Blue Book as he prepared his next edition weren't finally implemented. Nonetheless, this document stands as an important milestone in the composition process.

9. "Debris" does not appear in the index to the bibliography prepared by Scott Giantvalley, *Walt Whitman, 1838–1939: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981) nor in the index to Donald D. Kummings, *Walt Whitman, 1940–1975: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982); it does not surface in a key word search of approximately 5,000 entries included in the online bibliography at the *Walt Whitman Archive* covering criticism since 1975; and it does not earn an entry nor appear in the index to *The Walt Whitman Encyclopedia*, ed. J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland, 1998). Recently, Ed Folsom has commented on debris in an insightful discussion of the title page of *Sequel to Drum-Taps*. Folsom observes that "there is a poignancy to the small 'and other pieces' that follows the 'Lilacs' title on the title page, since 'Lilacs' itself focuses on 'the debris and debris of all dead soldiers' and on 'the staffs all splinter'd and broken.' It's as if Whitman's typeface on the title page indicates he is making his poetry out of that splintered and broken debris." See Folsom, *Whitman Making Books / Books Making Whitman: A Catalog & Commentary* (Iowa City: Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, 2005), 27.

10. The term *edition* can certainly be used to describe the work of the *Walt Whitman Archive*, though *digital thematic research collection* may be more apt (see Carole Palmer, "Thematic Research Collections," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman et al. [Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 348–365). The *Whitman Archive* meets the same needs addressed in the familiar multivolume scholarly edition, while also addressing needs that go well beyond the capacity of a print edition. A digital thematic research collection might be described as a laboratory for the humanities that approaches the ideal of amassing all needed research materials in a single location. Thematic research collections embrace many types of materials not seen in typical print editions devoted to an individual writer. The *Whitman Archive*, for example, includes teaching materials, a substantial biography of the poet, over 130 known photographs of Whitman (with full annotations), searchable finding guides to manuscripts, a regularly updated annotated bibliography of scholarship since 1975, a growing body of critical work, and a great deal of contextual material, both encyclopedia entries about various topics relating to Whitman and selected writings by Whitman's associates. Also included is material related to the building of the site: essays about the *Archive*, technical documentation, text encoding guidelines for the staff and for curious visitors (not to mention future builders of other electronic archives), and more.

11. If the initial word is a single letter—for example, the word "A" or "I"—that initial word is in a large capital and all of the letters of the second word are in smaller capitals.

12. In a note within the section entitled "Poems Excluded from *Leaves of Grass*," Blodgett and Bradley describe "Debris" as follows: "As a single poem of sixty lines 'Debris' appeared only in *LG*

1860. In 1867 and later issues, the poet excluded the poem as a whole, but extracted certain passages and stanzas as separate poems or parts of new poems. In the present text we see again the entire collage of associated ideas, epigrams, characters, and events—with the poet present as commentator, producing the tonal and emotional unity of a single composition. The thirty-one totally discarded lines included, among other good things, the elusive and genuine lyric (lines 39–43) 'I will take an egg out of the robin's nest.'" See *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 605 n.

13. It appears that the Variorum editors altered their view of "Debris" late in the preparation of their text. They at first thought it was a single poem but later concluded, correctly, I believe, that it was a cluster made up of multiple poems. Their chronological list numbered from 1 (the opening poem of 1855) through 437 ("A Thought of Columbus") is therefore upset by "Debris," as is indicated by the workaround of numbering poems 161A, 161B, and 161C, and so on. See *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, ed. Sculley Bradley et al. (New York: New York University Press, 1980), xxxix–xl.

14. Pearce issued his facsimile of the 1860 edition in paperback form so of course did not attempt to reproduce the look and feel of Whitman's original binding and covers nor of his paper stock.

15. Pearce does include a long introduction preceding the facsimile itself, though it is not oriented toward textual scholarship.

16. The term "collage" is used by *Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 605 n.

17. There is little that is mechanical or automatic about editing Whitman. The idea that editing is simply transcribing "what is on the page," assumes people would agree about the marks of typography and ornament, not to mention the infinite possible puzzles in deciphering manuscripts. Everything from basic identification of structural features of texts to more minute decisions about false starts and crossed out or overwritten characters is anything but simple.

18. "Sleep-Chasings" and "Burial" are better known by their final titles, "The Sleepers" and "To Think of Time."

19. Whitman backed away from hopes of popularity only very reluctantly. As late as January 1860 he was still claiming that the U.S. needed to be supplied with "copious thousands of copies" of the upcoming 1860 edition. See Whitman's "All about a Mocking-Bird," *New York Saturday Press*, January 7, 1860, 3, reprinted in the *Walt Whitman Archive*, http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/a_child/satpress.html.

20. Quoted in Folsom, *Whitman Making Books / Books Making Whitman*, 68.

21. Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 53.

22. *Leaves of Grass: Including Variorum Readings, Together with First Drafts of Certain Poems[,] Rejected Passages, and Poems Dropped by the Way*, ed. Oscar Lovell Triggs, vol. 3 of *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1902), 83.

23. We of course recognize that the deathbed titles have become a kind of lingua franca for referring to Whitman's works, so the *Walt Whitman Archive* uses deathbed titles as a convenience—for example to help our users locate various versions of related documents.

24. Jerome McGann, "The Rationale of HyperText," http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/public/jjm2f/rationale.html. In a coda to the essay, McGann notes: "Editors and textual theorists interested in computerized texts appear to differ on a significant point: whether or not HyperEditing requires (even if it be at some deep and invisible level) a central 'text' for organizing the hypertext of documents. My judgment is that it doesn't."

25. The quoted words draw on a description of the goals of the *William Blake Archive* (http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/public/about/principles/index.html).

26. There is an earthy pun at work in "Leaves-Droppings," as well, and Whitman apparently thought better of making an explicit connection between the sexual and the excremental. Yet for Whitman, droppings, like manure, could be the source of greatness. The opening poem of the 1855 *Leaves* famously records "beetles rolling balls of dung." One commentator has explained that the "Egyptians saw in the beetle rolling a ball of dung (supposed to contain an egg) a life symbol, and had the myth that a giant beetle rolled the great ball of the Sun across the heavens" (T. O. Mabbott quoted in Edwin Haviland Miller, *Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself": A Mosaic of Interpretations* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989], 93).

27. Edward Whitley, "Presenting Walt Whitman: 'Leaves-Droppings' as Paratext," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 19 (Summer 2001): 1–2.

28. Whitman remained fascinated by the concept of leaves-droppings long into his career. When he contemplated revising the cluster title "Sea-Shore Memories" (first used in 1871 in *Passage to India*), he considered numerous other titles, including "Leaves-Droppings," as a manuscript at Duke University reveals. He ultimately settled on "Sea-Drift" for the particular cluster title.

29. Whitman's remark is quoted in Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (various publishers 1906–96), 1: 108. See also, Ed Folsom, "'This heart's geography's map': The Photographs of Walt Whitman," available at http://www.whitmanarchive.org/gallery/.

30. See Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 1: 155; 5: 434–435 and 494–495; 8: 322, 335, and 535–536; 9: 44–45, 58–59, and 116. Many of these passages are fascinating and deserve analysis in their own right. I quote three to give a sense of how Whitman continually reconsidered *debris* and its implications. Volume 8 discusses how debris, once lodged in a river, collects other debris and before long becomes a thing of real substance: "We have been seeing something of a paper from Conway—discussing freedom in America and England—his key idea being: English society is the result of evolution, American of revolution. W. laughed mildly, then grew serious and said, 'That is one of Moncure's strange notions—and he will stick to it. It stays in his head, and the longer it stays, the bigger it gets. By and by it will possess him. You know his crotchet about the Presidency—that the Presidency is an obstruction—unnecessary—ought to be abolished! Oh! He would wipe it out forthwith! He's got that theory—it plays the devil. It assumes more and more the appearance of a tyrant—an octopus! Grows like a bit of debris lodged in the river—the currents flow on—add to it—fasten it—till in time it is a part of the place!'" (8: 535). On another occasion he explained how debris was a necessary part of his own make-up: "I picked up from the floor a piece of paper to which was pinned various newspaper clippings, scraps of writing, etc.—marked—'Hospital notes'—and asked him 'What's this?' Before taking it he said, putting on his glasses: 'I suppose something or other I have needed

some day and not found: as with so much of my stuff, spirited away at the moment I most asked it. You know,' he said—waiving his hand down towards the litter on the floor—'I live here in a ruin of debris—a ruin of ruins. This piece was probably a bit I wanted very bad the time I wrote up the Century article about the hospitals. Sometimes things I know very well I possess, turning up after a piece is printed, sold, paid for—make me almost mad—as near mad as I could get over such a matter.' Then with a laugh—'But I suppose all this is a necessary part of the critter—of this critter, anyhow!'" (5: 434–435). Finally, even Emerson's famous letter of greeting emerges magically out of debris as the Whitman-Traubel scene is recreated in *With Walt Whitman in Camden*: "In the midst of it all happened an extraordinary and unlooked for thing. Kicking about the floor—as often—I turned over a couple of yellowed letters fastened by a gum band and, picking them up, found my heart to stand still at the inscription that met my eye! The Emerson 1855 letter at last! And by strangest accident, which no one could have foreseen. Often had he promised me this letter—never knew where it was. 'When it turns up, it shall be yours.' Was always confident he had it, and I doubting. Now to have its thousand eyes look at me from this heap of debris!" (9: 44).

31. Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 1: 155.

32. Ibid., 5: 495.

{ MICHAEL WARNER }

Civil War Religion and Whitman's *Drum-Taps*

War has often been seen to raise ultimate questions: crises of sovereignty, law and its limits, purpose and history, mortality, fate and accident, suffering and evil. Under some dispensations these would be called philosophical matters. But in Civil War America, they were unmistakably about religion. Almost everyone who had anything to say about the war—even unlearned people on the margins of command, commenting in their letters and diaries—worried about what the war implied for the relation between religion and the nation, as well as about what it meant for their own devotions and obligations. From stories about the magical bullet-stopping properties of bibles, to camp revivals, to the martyrologies that sprang up around John Brown or Stonewall Jackson, to the organization of the Christian Commission, which licensed Whitman as a hospital visitor, to the ordinary prayers and consolations of soldiers and civilians, the combat was everywhere understood not only religiously but *as* religious, and thus—especially when things went bad—as posing questions about religion.[1]

In this context, *Drum-Taps* looks partly anomalous. Critics have often noted how much of the usual framework of war poetry is missing from the volume. It does not mention slavery or slaves, or the causes of the conflict, or any of the generals or their battles, or the civilian leaders. Unlike Melville's *Battle-Pieces*, which traces out the history of the war, event by event, in chronological order, with every hero and every crisis in its allotted place, *Drum-Taps* would not allow one to reconstruct the history of the war, or what was at stake in it politically, or who won.[2]

My focus here on the 1865 version of *Drum-Taps* requires a bit of explanation. Very few people know *Drum-Taps* as a book now; its poems—edited, rearranged, retitled, added to and subtracted from—survive as a "cluster" in *Leaves of Grass*. Some of the poems were begun before Lincoln's election ("Chanting the Square Deific," "Song of the Banner at Day-Break"); others at the beginning of the war,

before Whitman saw it; others, while the book was in press. And in the cluster version within *Leaves of Grass*, other poems have been added that were written in other contexts. So critics are now accustomed to seeing the 1865 book version as a kind of draft for the cluster.

I would like to consider the 1865 version, however, if only to remind us of the strangeness of the book in its temporal setting. At least one poem, "Hush'd be the Camps To-day," seems to have been composed and revised at a Brooklyn print shop on April 17, 1865: it carries the epigraph "A. L. buried April 19, 1865." Lincoln was not buried on April 19 of that year. Whitman expected he would be, because that is what the papers announced on April 17. On April 18 they announced a change of plans: the cortege to Springfield. So Whitman's poem was already anachronistic by the day it was to commemorate, when it was not yet published.[3]

Drum-Taps was not even released before Whitman had begun to change it (though he did not correct the date in that epigraph until 1871). In fact, I think he changed it rather more than is commonly recognized. He contracted all the printing and binding arrangements himself, negotiating in minute detail over the paper quality, page count, and type font. As was his practice in earlier editions, he worked over page proofs. Publication constraints determined a number of features about the book; layout partly governs sequence, for example, since shorter poems are put at the bottom of pages after longer poems, in order for other longer poems to begin at the top of the following page. The first version was also rearranged before publication in anticipation of the sequel. It is not often noted that the advertising placard that Whitman drew up in advance of publication lists in the table of contents several poems that did not in fact appear in *Drum-Taps* when it was released, but were then reinserted in the *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, which despite being called a sequel was issued only as the second part of a second issue of *Drum-Taps* (fig. 1).

The best explanation I can come up with for the advance advertisement of poems that then only appeared in the sequel is that Whitman was rounding out collations. The first state is 72 pages, a neat total for printers and binders but shorter than the contract called for; the sequel has 24 pages, including the Lincoln elegies together with poems unrelated to Lincoln that had been advertised for the first state but held back. Here again the shorter ones are used for flexibility in layout, which might be why these short poems and not others had been held back. Only two years later, the poems were rearranged and altered to make the cluster "Drum-Taps" in a new edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

By the author-centered canons of criticism there is no special validity of fixed intention to the book version, which is probably why few people think about it—despite Whitman's claim that "I consider Drum-Taps superior to Leaves of Grass."[4] There was only about a two-year window in which he even thought of

Walt Whitman's New Volume of Poems.

DRUM TAPS.

To be issued immediately in a small handsome volume, good paper and print. The following is the

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Drum-Taps.
Song of the Banner at Day-Break.
1861.
The Centenarian's Story.
Pioneers! O Pioneers!
The Dresser.
Rise O Days from your fathomless deeps!
Come up from the fields, father.
Beat! beat! drums!
Vigil strange I kept on the field one night.
A march in the ranks hard-prest and the road unknown.
As I lay with my head in your lap, camerado.
I dream, I dream, I dream
As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods.
As I in vision surfaces piercing.
From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird.
Turn O Libertad.
You foes that in conflict have overcome me.
A soldier returns, he will soon be home.
Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither.
Over sea hither from Niphon.
Beginning my studies.
When I heard the learn'd astronomer.

Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries.
A sight in camp in the day-break grey and dim.
By the bivouac's fitful flame.
Give me the splendid silent sun.
City of Ships.
Spirit with muttering voice.
Year of meteors.
Years of the unperformed.
A battle, (sights, sounds, &c.)
Angry cloth, I see there leaping.
Flag of stars! thick-spangled bunting.
Lo, the camps of the tents of green.
Aboard at a ship's helm.
Race of weapon'd men.
Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd.
I heard you solemn sweet pipes of the organ.
Cavalry crossing a ford.
Weave in, weave in, my hardy life.
I saw the old General at bay.
World take good notice.
The bivouac halt,
Pensive on her dead gazing.
Reconciliation.
Not youth pertains to me.

Also, will soon be issued, a new edition of

LEAVES OF GRASS,

Entirely revised and much changed from the last edition of 1860-61.

1. Premature placard announcing *Drum-Taps*, 1865. Gay Wilson Allen Collection.

these as separate books. But it is useful to consider the volume as an unusual piece of war discourse. What I'd like to show is that its preoccupations—patient registration of collective history, a stare at mortality and fate, devotion of attention to the world, durative time—are given an implicitly and sometimes explicitly religious cast, though in the context of providential narrative they also carry an implication of critical worldliness.

The book's relation to wartime is complex, shuttling between different layers of composition and different rhetorics of time; and the complexity has a different implication when read as an intervention in the historical consciousness of its postwar publication moment than when read as historical commentary from the retrospective consolidation of lyric genre. In the same 1865 letter that compares the book to *Leaves*, Whitman wrote that the reason he was so happy with the book was that "it delivers my ambition of the task that has haunted me, namely, to express in a poem (& in the way I like, which is not at all by directly stating it) the pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*." Much of *Drum-Taps* has an unusually tight rhetoric of historicity: one poem, for example, is called "1861"; several others address themselves to calendrical years, recreating and commenting upon historical frames of expectation and uncertainty. These include "Year of meteors," "Years of the unperform'd," "Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither," and "Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me."

I call this a tight rhetoric of historicity because it is hard to think of analogues to this sustained evocation of experience mediated by a calendar; but it is not newspaper time that is recorded here, and the driving point of these titles is that the calendar itself has been rendered directionless and nonnumerically suggestive—a kind of anti-calendar. There are other temporalities that matter a great deal in the volume, such as the complex anticipated retrospection in "The Dresser" (later "The Wound-Dresser") —"An old man bending, I come, among new faces, / Years looking backward, resuming, in answer to children, *Come tell us old man*" (*DT*, 31)—or the running counterpoint of lunar time; or the antiquarian retrospect of "The Centenarian's Story"; or the photographic freezing of those extremely short, imagistic poems that no one knows quite what to do with: "A farm picture," "The Torch," "The ship," "Cavalry crossing a ford."

The calendrical poems turn out to employ elaborate devices for rendering the historical. One of these, "Years of the unperform'd" (later retitled "Years of the Modern"), indulges strong expectations of providential narrative. "I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and very haughty, with Law by her side, both issuing forth against the idea of caste" (*DT*, 53). It is true that this "force advancing with irresistible power on the world's stage" is said to be transnational and leading to "the solidarity of races" (*DT*, 53). But this is one of the standard mutations

of America's redeemer nationalism; it is not at all inconsistent with the idea of aggressive U.S. self-assertion.[5]

In this poem the role of divinity belongs to humanity: "Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a God; / Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!" (*DT*, 53). This association of the sentiment of divinity with the historical considered as a mystery of collective agency is, I would say, one of the dominant notes of *Drum-Taps*: a transpersonal transport that fills the speaker with a sense of being taken out of himself, out of the ordinary frame of time. The default condition of this feeling is national, though here the sense of America as liberty's vanguard leads to a picture of general apocalypse:

> Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
> Is humanity forming, en-masse?—for lo! tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim:
> The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war. (*DT*, 54)

At this point we would seem to be in the same millennialist framework as "Battle Hymn of the Republic," the angel's scythe swinging in the vineyard of the world. There are at least two relevant differences: here the feeling of divinity seems to be immanent to the phenomenon of massively coordinated human action in history—i.e., to the secular in its most exemplary form. Second, the poem's plot turns out to be a field of contingency. The last section, immediately following "perhaps a general divine war," is a drama of prophetic but oddly untranscendent knowledge:

> No one knows what will happen next—such portents fill the days and nights;
> Years prophetical! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms;
> Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes around me;
> This incredible rush and heat—this strange extactic [sic] fever of dreams, O years!
> Your dreams, O years, how they penetrate through me! (I know not whether I sleep or wake!)
> The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in shadow behind me,
> The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance upon me. (*DT*, 54)

This general movement, from prophetic expectations to a realization of being "penetrated" by contingency, marks a whole set of poems about historical consciousness in the volume. "Year of meteors," for example, gestures toward the "portents" in events of 1859–1860 (including the execution of John Brown,

treated by Melville in *Battle-Pieces* under the title "The Portent.") The poem ends not by discrediting the oracles but by submitting to them:

> Year of comets and meteors transient and strange!—lo! even here, one equally transient and strange!
> As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what is this book,
> What am I myself but one of your meteors? (*DT*, 52)

A similar note is struck in a parenthesis in "Weave in, weave in, my hardy soul," parentheses being in Whitman's poems very often a device of inner commentary, almost confessional:

> (We know not, what the use, O life! nor know the aim, the end—nor really aught we know;
> But know the work, the need goes on, and shall go on—the death-envelop'd march of peace as well as war, goes on;) (*DT*, 69)

Recognitions like this return us to a contemplation not of providential authorizations for violence but of immersion in fatality. And that turn is perhaps all the more striking because of the prophetic expectations that precede it. *Drum-Taps* does not exactly record history; events have been pushed to the margin along with the historical god who is usually thought to direct them. Its oddly looped narrative time is registered through a kind of trembling before history.

This might be the time to notice that the subject at the center of the poems exerts almost no agency of the kind expected in war. Quite the opposite. One of the most arresting poems in the volume was suppressed from all subsequent versions. It is almost never reprinted—including *The Portable Walt Whitman*, which I edited.

> Not my enemies ever invade me—no harm to my pride from them I fear;
> But the lovers I recklessly love—lo! how they master me!
> Lo! me, ever open and helpless, bereft of my strength!
> Utterly abject, grovelling on the ground before them. (*SDT*, 17)

I suppose it is easier to see why Whitman suppressed this poem than to see what contemporary readers might have made of it in the war's immediate aftermath. Why is it that penetration by enemies is less threatening than penetration by lovers? Because my enemies clarify my ego by antagonism, while the mastery of my lovers is indistinguishable from my own recklessness? (Note that Whitman characteristically pluralizes his lovers, avoiding even the fixity of the couple.) The poetic precipitation, a recollection of invasion in tranquility, represents a very powerful strain in *Drum-Taps* in the way it fuses an experience of union with one of finitude, an experience patiently registered rather than heroically produced.

There are a number of poems in *Drum-Taps* that make this same connection between the fatefulness of erotic exchange and immersion in history, including "As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods," "Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats," or "O tan-faced Prairie-boy." In "As I lay with my head in your lap, Camerado," to take another example, the poem begins with a disconcerting temporal loop: "As I lay with my head in your lap, Camerado, / The confession I made I resume—" (*SDT*, 19). The confession takes place at least twice; once before at an unspecified time ("the confession I made") and now again at the moment of its resumption in an intimate setting (and, by an ambiguously implied extension, a third time in reading), suggesting an ongoingness to the intimacy, to the act of confession, and to the state of mutually pledged ignorance that is the topic of the speaker's confession:

> I know my words are weapons, full of danger, full of death
> . . . the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing to me;
> And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing to me;
> . . . Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me, and still
> urge you, without the least idea what is our destination,
> Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and defeated. (*SDT*, 19)

Notice that in this case, as in so many of the poems in the volume, it would not be possible to determine from the text alone even which side of the conflict the speaker is on. Heaven and hell have been suspended. War's meaningfulness, rather shockingly, has been disconnected from its transcendent justifications. But just as strikingly, it continues to be meaningful. Immersed, as Whitman had said of the volume, in "the pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*," the speaker ties himself erotically and perhaps destructively to another. He characterizes his own speech simultaneously as confessing and urging. These acts might be seen as contradictory, of course, but what they have in common is a heightened rhetoric of responsibility that contrasts with the posture of infantile or feminine dependency in which he physically finds himself: he confesses he urges death with his head in a man's lap. The appearance of the language of final judgment, of confession, in such a posture grounds transcendent responsibility in the erotic relation, in a way that turns out to be typical of the book.

The swerve between sex and death in "As I lay with my head in your lap" brings me to the often macabre erotics of mortality in *Drum-Taps*. Over and over, the poems ask us to imagine staring at corpses, sometimes kissing them. "A sight in camp in the day-break grey and dim" seems at first to be an exception. It echoes, in an oddly quotational way, a piety of redemptive suffering. The speaker encounters three stretchers with corpses, which he then addresses. The first is an old man, the second a boy:

Then to the third—a face nor child, nor old, very calm, as of beautiful
yellow-white ivory;
Young man, I think I know you—I think this face of yours is the face of the
Christ himself;
Dead and divine, and brother of all, and here again he lies. (*DT*, 46)

Ordinarily the point of comparing dead soldiers to Christ would be to suggest a redemptive purpose to the death, Christ being the ultimate exemplum of nonrandom, nonarbitary death. Whitman's poem does not draw that conclusion, though doubtless many readers can infer it easily enough. The connection has an odd willfulness, since the face is initially described as "of beautiful yellow-white ivory," like the icon of Christ more than the body itself, as though the movement of the poem is not from the corpse to its religious significance but from the religious symbol back to its literal corpse. When we reflect that this one is singled out for divinization mainly because of his age (old man / child / young man), the erotic dimension of the image leaps out. The other two are not exactly thieves on the cross, but because they are too old or too young for the irony of sacrificial beauty, they aren't in the right category for godhood. One striking thing about the poem, though, as with so many of the *Drum-Taps* poems, is the flatness of its ending: "and here again he lies"—that is to say, unresurrected. So the redemptive function of the image seems to be contradicted by the repetition of death (not a Christ alive again, but a Christ dead again, alive and dead over and over, as "Chanting the Square Deific" imagines it), a truly and not just temporarily mortal divinity.

In the context of the volume, the decision to end the poem this way can be seen as foregrounding the speaker's sympathetically blank gaze. Remember that the only action in the poem is lifting the blankets that cover the faces. Gazing at the corpse is an activity that here dilates in lyric time, endlessly and unblinkingly. In several of the poems this witnessing—not, mind you, a meditation on the theme of death, but a physical looking at dead bodies, in a markedly literal way, with the uncanniness of a broken taboo—is transposed to a lunar or sidereal time, as in "Pensive on her dead gazing, I heard the mother of all," or this poem, "Look down fair moon," which I quote entire:

Look down, fair moon and bathe this scene;
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods, on faces ghastly, swollen, purple;
On the dead, on their backs, with their arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon. (*DT*, 66)

The dead lie on their backs, face up in uncanny impersonality; the moon ("sacred moon"!) regards them with a durative, "unstinted" activity that is vaguely repara-

tive in "bathing" the scene, but without beautifying the faces: "ghastly, swollen, purple." The bodies seem to have been translated out of the history that injured them. This is one of *Drum-Taps*'s most consistent effects, and one reason why I have taken the time to survey a rather large number of short poems rather than concentrate on the better known longer ones. A reader of the book as a whole shuttles continually between a fatal immersion in temporal unknowing and, punctuating that sense of history, a higher time of nature, devoted to the unflinching staring at corpses.

Indeed, this is how I see the end of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." Most critics want to find a movement toward transcendence or redemption here, but it is worth noting that the poem makes no movement away from the macabre. In the last stanza the speaker is still standing, hands locked with "the thought of death" and "the knowledge of death," literalized as two bodies beside him, while the song—an obvious analogy to the poetic contemplation—has "ceased" while still being "kept" indefinitely.

But nowhere is the macabre element more pronounced than in "Reconciliation." This short poem, which is placed together with "To the leaven'd Soil they trod" at the very conclusion of the book, had been advertised in the same position in the placard that Whitman drew up for the original plan of *Drum-Taps*; it is reasonable to conjecture that he held it back so as to retain for it a special position.

> Word over all, beautiful as the sky!
> Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;
> That the hands of the sisters Death and Night, incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world:
> . . . For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead;
> I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near;
> I bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin. (*SDT*, 23)

In the image of Death and Night washing "this soil'd world" again and again, Whitman once more reminds us of the ultimate scene of the fallen world, though here that purgation seems to happen continuously and unprogressively, with neither apocalypse nor millennium, but the ordinary activity of corpse dressing. The kiss to the lips of the "white face in the coffin"—like the kiss to the "boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding)" in "Vigil strange I kept on the field one night" (*DT*, 43); or "Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips" in the closing parenthesis of "The Dresser" (*DT*, 34); or the exhalations of the "torn bodies" in "Pensive on her dead gazing"—marshals an erotic attentiveness in a scene of no imagined consummation other than the devotional production of

mortality recognition—as though anything short of a clammy kiss would be a cowardly aversion from the knowledge of death and the thought of death. The devotional quality of this attention has as its object a dead god, "a man divine as myself," underscoring of course the religious sense of obligation, though the sacred duty would usually consist in avoidance of defiling contact.

What is so strange here is the way the insistence on nonaversive and unremediated attention to the body is both the most religious moment in the book (owing to the summons to duty toward the dead, the existential stakes of recognition, the high seriousness of a violated taboo) and the most secular (because nonredemptive, worldly, material, even erotic). As in so much of his work, Whitman shows a delicate instinct for negotiating the dialectical distortions of religion and secularism in late Christian culture. Rejecting alike the theodicy of Christianity, its systematic negation of worldliness, and the program for redemptive violence that defined wartime religiosity, he nevertheless manages an attitude of devotional observation. For all his assertive rhetoric of worldly historicity, Whitman seems determined to avoid the postures of rationalist or liberal secularism, determined not to cede to national Christianity its claim of privileged access to ultimate questions and higher time.[6]

NOTES

1. The scholarship on this topic is immense; the most helpful single volume I have found is *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2. These points are strikingly made by John P. McWilliams, Jr., in "'Drum Taps' and *Battle-Pieces*: The Blossom of War," *American Quarterly* 23 (1971): 181–201.

3. These details are well explained in F. DeWolfe Miller's introduction to the facsimile edition, *Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps (1865) and Sequel to Drum-Taps (1865–66)*, ed. F. DeWolfe Miller (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1959). Subsequent citations of the poems derive from this volume, abbreviated *DT* for the first part, *SDT* for the sequel. *Drum-Taps* shows occasional inconsistencies between the title pages and the poems themselves, but Whitman in general opts for lowercase titles in this volume, and I have cited them accordingly.

4. Letter to William O'Connor, January 6, 1865, in Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence* vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 247.

5. The phrase "redeemer nation" is meant to invoke Ernest Tuveson's classic study of that title: *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Tuveson's argument is essential to understanding the apocalyptic rhetoric of *Drum-Taps* discussed here.

6. On these points he can be usefully compared to Melville, who saw the problems of Civil War religiosity in substantially similar ways. See my "What Like a Bullet Can Undeceive?" *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 41–54.

{ BENJAMIN R. BARBER }

Walt Whitman's Song of Democracy

Walt Whitman is an emblematic writer, not just an American icon but what we might call an American emblematic. He seems to be incarnating and acting out as he writes and as he lives what it means to be American in some deep sense. At the same time, like many great authors, Whitman reflects universal, cosmopolitan themes as well. The talent to invest the local and familiar with the universal may in fact be one part of what literary greatness means. But the themes for which he is best known have been associated, for better or worse, with a certain species of iconic America. He is an American emblematic as Voltaire and Sartre might be thought of as French emblematics, or Goethe and Kant as German emblematics, or Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky as Russian emblematics. When we think about America, we think of Walt Whitman, and when we think about Walt Whitman we think of America—though this may also be to think about what America is not or about how other places are, in certain ways, also American.

To be an emblematic is not exclusively about what an author writes. It is also about who an author is. It points to a way of being as well as a way of writing. Most great writers simply write; a few incarnate in their work, in their spirit, and in their lives—in their themes and what they write about—the society to which they belong and which they help define. Whitman is one of these. Along with such other American emblematics as Whitman's favorite president, Lincoln, and that other literary president, Thomas Jefferson, but also (to select but a few) Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill, and more recently, Norman Mailer and Toni Morrison, Whitman speaks to us through how he appears to live his oeuvre, breathing in (as he has it) the North and the South, the East and the West.

Of course, to be an American emblematic cannot mean to incarnate or define a singular and uncontested America, because there is no such thing. America is multivalent and diverse, and therefore permanently contested. To be an American

is never just to inhabit an identity, but always also to contest an identity. Iconic figures clash, emblematics offer conflicting narratives, and their competing definitions of America invite rebuttal. "No, Whitman is not what America is about!" a more traditional sort of American moralist will protest, much preferring Emerson, or perhaps John Winthrop or Cotton Mather. Or the dour and tragic O'Neill—whom others will deem more Irish than American, or at best Irish American. Iconic writers often fail to be constant to an attributed archetype even within themselves. "I cannot write without my contradictions," insisted Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and that is patently true for many others.

Jefferson's America is cosmopolitan and even exudes a certain aristocratic spirit in its democratic thrust, yet it is also rural and agrarian, insistently focused on wards and locality. His America was little more trustful of its own emerging equality than Tocqueville would be, but still was cheerful about democratic innovation. Lincoln's America is dour, moral, impassioned, at times charismatic, but public where O'Neill's parallel nature turned wholly inward. Lincoln's America embraces *and* rejects slavery, torturing itself for the embrace, ambivalent but self-punishing about the rejection. The *Second Inaugural Address* portrays an America deeply divided and a Lincoln torn by the moral costs of the divisions.

> God gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came. . . . Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."[1]

Hemingway shares Whitman's energy and commitment to action, but his America is more ordinary, even vulgar and macho, as if he intended to capture Hollywood's America before Hollywood was quite through inventing it. It cannot incorporate the American feminine that Whitman understood as core to American character. Hemingway contains a very large self that leaves little room for others, whereas Whitman contains multitudes: his work is multigendered, multivalent, and multicultural in that early sense in which cultures flowed and merged like tributaries feeding a great American river. Mailer and Morrison, already receding classics in our rushing culture of youthfulness, point passionately east or point reluctantly west, point to a marginalized south or to a self-aggrandizing north, but Walt Whitman owns the compass. That is why Whitman ends up my own American emblematic as Mailer and Morrison cannot quite be.

But that of course is just me, one man's choice in the contest over the meanings of America.

There is then no need for a quarrel here. I am not insisting that the America I find in Whitman *is* America, or that there are not as many other Americas as there are icons and emblematics—or for that matter readers of icons and emblems. Whitman's America is simply *an* America, take it or leave it, but an America powerful and portentous for all that, one worth limning and outlining for what it tells us about those dimensions of the country Whitman fixed on or perhaps helped invent. The useful thing about the notion of the emblematic is that all emblematics are problematics as well, and therefore can and will (I am quite sure) be contested.

My reading of Whitman occurs in the context of my work on *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantalize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*, a book that explores Max Weber's ideal of a cultural ethos that mirrors and conditions capitalism as it evolves.[2] Weber imagined a Protestant ethos that reflected and nurtured early productivist capitalism, while I portray an "infantilist ethos" for a late consumer capitalism that is compelled to sell a surfeit of goods for which there are no genuine needs. In thinking about Whitman and America as it emerges from the Civil War, I seek an appropriate cultural ethos; in his poetry I find it, and find too that it resonates with an early capitalist ethos in which the robust anarchy of the pre- and post–Civil War period in the United States is captured.

That is to say, there is a certain affinity between the spirit of early entrepreneurial capitalism and post-Jacksonian democracy on the one hand and a set of Whitmanesque themes associated with his poetry on the other. Sean Wilentz has approached this affinity in provocative ways in his 1984 study of antebellum artisan culture, *Chants Democratic*, which is actually a much better place to begin a study of American capitalism than Weber. The capitalism Weber associated with the Protestant ethos was a fully developed system that had already left behind the early and unruly phase, a system in which commercial institutions were already socially formed and capitalism was focused on accounting, saving, and investment.[3] His Protestant ethic has a rationalistic and calculating feel that no longer reflected spontaneous entrepreneurial creativity but rather established bourgeois culture. Weber is adamant in noting that his focus is not on acquisition or acquisitiveness per se, features which he discerns in every society and that belong to no particular economic model and which are particularly evident in the earliest stage of capitalism. The focus is rather, for Weber, on capital investment. He is at pains to note that the capitalism whose ethic he is examining is already beyond the stage of what he calls daredevil and unscrupulous speculators and those "economic adventurers such as we meet in all periods of economic history."[4] His

entrepreneurs are men who, although they have grown up in the hard school of life and may be calculating and daring, are nonetheless "temperate and reliable, shrewd, and completely devoted to their business with strictly bourgeois opinions and principles."[5]

One can hardly imagine a less Whitmanesque portrait. Nevertheless, it describes a certain American archetype and a certain capitalist archetype as well—Weber's model is Ben Franklin. In fact, the actuarial wizards and cartel capitalists that are produced in the stages of rationalization and consolidation that follow early entrepreneurship are nothing if not Puritan. Weber's ethos, when applied to America, is then anything but Whitman's. But of course Whitman's ethos is anything but Puritan. It does, however, capture a moment of capitalist development in America for which Wilentz is a better guide than Weber. Whitman longs to be "loos'd of all limits," which is also true of a great majority of those who came and continue to come to America. This "second Eden," this "city on the Hill," this "New-found-land" and "boundless and bountiful continent," this land of the moving frontier and the throw-away city, of a restless, ever-in-motion citizenry, is the America that runs (bounds!) through the pages of *Leaves of Grass*. It is an America in full rebellion against Puritanism's austere and rigid social, moral, and ethical boundaries, boundaries that were to make capitalism into a moral calling as well as a Darwinist system.

Though Puritanism comes first as a cultural mirror and rationalization of capitalism, Whitman at a later date captures not this capitalism of the Protestant ethos but rather an atavistic capitalist prelude: the anarchic individualism that drew pioneers, fortune hunters, adventurers, and footloose criminals into the ragged mobile entrepreneurship that, before the Civil War, was to set the stage for full-blown cartel capitalism after the Civil War. In fact, the bourgeois capitalism described by Weber is well beyond that capitalist prelude that first inaugurates capital accumulation, a protocapitalist stage at odds in its anarchistic, wild tendencies with the Puritan ethic. Yet it is a phase that clearly is necessary to capitalism's eventual emergence.

During this prelude period, a period that, in the United States, came right before, during, and immediately after the Civil War, the men whom Max Weber disdained as "daredevils, speculators, and adventurers" in fact predominate on the economic and social scene. Weber recognized that such characters exist in every epoch, and certainly some exist in our own, as well, but they are prized only in the capitalist prelude when their otherwise disruptive personalities appear briefly as quite nearly virtuous, if hardly in the Puritan mold. Moreover, these characters tend to be archetypically American in exactly the way Walt Whitman describes them, for, in effect, he was one of them. In a potent admixture of profane entrepreneurial and ecumenical religious images, he writes of himself:

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
Buying drafts of Orisis, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha.[6]

Among the American archetypes is the outlaw, a man outside or simply beyond the law, an outlier who sees that law as beside the point rather than an outlaw who transgresses it for personal advantage. The entrepreneurs of what I've called the capitalist prelude exude virile recklessness, and they are rarely female—though sometimes there are women. Molly Brown is an example in the American tradition of an entrepreneurial, reckless female pioneer. These pioneers shape a not yet rationalized form of capitalism in which invention and discovery are driven by new and often cockamamie ideas and undisciplined energy. As swashbuckling risk-takers, cocky gamblers, fortune-hunting buccaneers, these precapitalist renegades engender an ethos that rationalizes irresponsibility and legitimizes an otherwise untrustworthy impulsiveness. For many Americans, not just those Puritans at heart, the characters whom Whitman describes with such salutary adjectives are dangerous and irresponsible, mocking the law and disrupting and deranging an otherwise orderly society. Whitman's New York teems with such creatures:

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going.
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment receiving,
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools. (235)

Those who come after these early outliers and outlaws will look back at them merely as hypocrites since, too often, they seem to forgive themselves their sins and seem—as Shakespeare says in *The Comedy of Errors*—to "teach sin the carriage of a holy saint." Many of them, Whitman included perhaps, were guilty of boastfulness about their putative innocence, which can only taint it. Moreover, many of the actual precapitalist adventurers who set the stage for big capitalism after the Civil War were literally snake oil salesmen—self-confessed crooks and confidence men who alone among their peers deemed their own undeniable creative vitality and radical iconoclasm heroic, thus placing a halo of virtue over

maverick mores that just a short time later were to be condemned by Protestant preachers. Whitman too would be censored by puritanical Victorians agog at his electric ardor.

The goal of such early entrepreneurs was not yet to accumulate capital, only to get rich. Or at least to have a hell of a good time trying. Such were the pleasures of iconoclasm, breaking with the past by smashing feudal conservatism and stirring the imagination and envy (and eventually the censure) of less robust souls. It was enough to dream dreams and embark on enlivening journeys (which was how America was settled), even if they led as often to disaster as to discovery. It was enough to fashion machines (some were inventors) and uncover resources (others were searchers) which only later generations learned to employ for productivity, profit, and prosperity.

It is protocapitalist men of this sort that George Gilder somewhat atavistically celebrates in his Reagan-era book on risk-taking modern entrepreneurs, in which he lionizes them and ignores the prudent accountants, whose risk-taking today is always filtered by calculation.[7] The conservative English philosopher Michael Oakeshott (and, again, he might be describing Whitman himself) once described this fascinating and trustless tribe who brokered the transition from feudalism to commercial society as "younger sons making their way in a world which had little place for them, footloose adventurers who left the land to take to trade, town dwellers who emancipated themselves from the communal ties of the countryside, vagabond scholars."[8] Oakeshott's ragged explorers—uprooted from hearth, home, and comfortable country manse, breaking with the mores of a conservative, landed society—were not capitalists, not even traders; but without them prudent investment, rational management, and, hence, capital accumulation and market exchange would not have become possible. There would have been neither the material to manage nor the wealth to accumulate—no gold and silver to facilitate trade, no navigational tools to enable exploration, no coal or oil to fuel the economy and build the great monopolies, no machines to gin the cotton, no looms to weave the textiles, no uprooted agrarian laborers to form a restless urban proletariat. These are the men and women who built Whitman's "City of Ships":

> City of ships!
> (O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
> O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)
> City of the world! (for all races are here,
> All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)
> . . .

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant city!
Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed yourself, warlike!
(429–430)

The credo of these city builders, these explorers and adventurers, was imprudence. Bold rather than prudent, they refused to calculate. They displayed a foolish and destructive indifference to money and its management. Who makes the decision to leave home for the far country based on prudent risk assessment? How many who passed through Ellis Island in New York harbor came as part of a cautious "life-plan" built on carefully calculated cost-benefit analyses? The conservative temper is risk averse. Only fools surrender what they have to seek fortunes that may not even exist.[9] These adventurers were clearly fools, bolder than they were wise. The ethos that explained and rationalized their often destructive conduct was deeply American, Whitmanesque, singing the song of the open road, singing the body electric, singing songs of unbounded selves, inhaling great draughts of space. Whitman's dedication to the spontaneous energy of the solitary self did not include the sort of calculation in which costs are tabulated against benefits. In the 1855 version of "Song of Myself," he captured as a self-description an America on the creative capitalist threshold in the years before the Civil War:

Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos,
Disorderly fleshy and sensual . . . . eating drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist . . .

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs! (1855, 50)

Time and again, in each society's early capitalist history, roguish rebels emerge boasting the size of their appetites. "I inhale great draughts of space, / The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine," proclaimed the swaggering Whitman in his "Song of the Open Road" (300). Time and again they perceived their mission as holy when others saw it as profane. "I am larger, better than I thought, / I did not know I held so much goodness," exulted Whitman, adding the assurance "Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me" (300).

It was Whitmanesque adventurers who helped open the trade routes, who made the contacts that led to exchange, repaired the road beds, laid the rails, mined the gold and silver, drilled for the oil on which others would found prudent fortunes. The first generation created first wealth or, at least, the conditions for creating first wealth, but they were not the accountants who accumulated it, counted it, and gave value to it and thus converted it into collective prosperity. These precapitalists were continental explorers like Lewis and Clark and their sea-faring predecessors who

showed not just that there was a great, wide world beyond the safety of the hearth but how to tie it together through knowledge, communication, trade. They were wildcatters and miners in the United States who became small town founders, building saloons and general stores around Colorado silver mines and surrounding Pennsylvania oil rigs with opera houses and brothels. The towns came and went in the flash of a pyrite nugget in a prospector's hand and survived only as long as the oil kept pumping from a shallow field that might run dry in a year or a month. The little boomtowns mirrored the men who founded them. They came, flourished, acquired reputations beyond any substantial reality, then withered and vanished in the twenty years it took for the managers and accountants to bring the new wealth under control and rationalize it into a system of accumulation, distribution, and consumption which helped whole societies to prosper for centuries to come but which no longer needed the anarchic new towns and the outlaw adventurers who had built them.

In the modern American era there were still Whitmanesque figures such as Howard Hughes, larger than life personalities who multiplied, spent, lost, and regained fortunes. In Howard Hughes's case it was the fortune of his prudent father, of Hughes's Tool Company, and he squandered the money on a series of romantic escapades and entrepreneurial adventures involving aircraft, movies, women, real estate, Las Vegas hotels and casinos, and, of course, the aviation giant TWA.[10] In all these fields he was a pioneer and speculator. He made his own laws. He led the way for more prudent followers, like Pan American Airways and the great Hollywood studios. Still more recently there are the pioneers of the electronic and digital revolution, Silicon Valley cowboys who made the imaginative leaps and took the risks in the 1960s and 70s and into the 80s, that allowed the consolidators and businessmen who established the monopolies and made the fortunes in the late 1980s and the 90s. These are not the Bill Gateses of the cyber-world, but people like William Gibson, John Perry Barlow (who wrote lyrics for the Grateful Dead), and the great cyber-pioneer Norbert Weiner—men with little respect for convention or tradition, or in some cases even for the law. Here again, it is the voice of Whitman we hear, talking about that mythical and magical American city:

> Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
> Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,
> Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons,
> Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,
> . . .

Where the citizen is always the head and the ideal, and President, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay. (335)

There is, perhaps, no better American model of this Whitmanesque capitalist swashbuckler than the little known father of a figure Americans know very well, John D. Rockefeller, the iconic capitalist, founder of Standard Oil and calculating creator of cartel capitalism. If there is a contemporary of Whitman who embodies what is Whitmanesque in early capitalism, then John D. Rockefeller's father William "Wild Bill" Rockefeller fits the bill. Ron Chernow, in his comprehensive and engaging biography of John D. Rockefeller, spends several chapters on the little known father. He describes the decade after the Civil War as "the most fertile in American history for schemers and dreamers, sharp-elbowed men, fast-talking swindlers. A perfect mania for patents and inventions swept America as everybody tinkered with some new contrivance. It was a time of bombastic rhetoric and outsized dreams"—bombastic rhetoric and outsized dreams to which Walt Whitman had already given a literary, a poetic voice.[11] It was the epoch that Whitman both memorialized and incarnated within himself. John D. Rockefeller—who was an accountant, keep in mind, and initially an actuary, not a capitalist—naturally disdained his father's irresponsible ways, as well as all the dream-dazed risk-takers like his father whom he met along the way and whom he used and overcame on his way up fortune's ladder. Bill Rockefeller was one of the maddening mavericks, a flimflam man and charming bigamist, raising two families, counties apart, with more guile than sustenance; a character also known as Devil Bill, who burnished his reputation as a gambler and a horse thief—not a camerado but a desperado. In fact, he was an actual snake oil salesman and had crafted schemes to sell all-purpose tonics and establish new businesses, one as hopeless as the next. Along the way, he made and lost several modest fortunes. He was a father who made early loans to his titan-to-be son, though obviously he never once grasped how much closer to the secrets of making money his son would become than he ever was.

Walt Whitman was not simply a literary alter ego to William Rockefeller but his actual contemporary. Rockefeller was Whitman's unwitting proxy, living out the character Whitman gave to himself when he wrote about those roughs—"Disorderly fleshy and sensual . . . . eating drinking and breeding" (1855, 50). He was a study in mobility, keeping two families and a host of businesses. But William's prudent son knew well enough that "the weak, immoral man was also destined to be a poor businessman," that as the frontiersman was only a moment in America's journey to maturation, the flimflam man was but a passing stage in the early life of capitalism—a man who created the conditions for capitalist accumulation but quickly came to stand between capitalism and its destiny, as Whitman, in a certain

sense, stood between America's early history of the romantic roamer and its corporate destiny.[12] Throughout his life John D. Rockefeller encountered and overcame men of the caliber his father had been. He had despised an early wildcatter partner named Jim Clark whom he called "an immoral man who gambles in oil," and he had bought him out with a bluff that was an early example of Rockefeller's own calculating risk-taking, which was always in the name of prudent management.[13] He had disdained swaggering show-offs, like his first partner, who spent all he earned on fancy clothes and large watches to announce his wealth to an envious world he should have been diligently and quietly serving. He carried a like contempt for the boomtowns that must have fired his father's imagination. Towns like Pithole Creek, where the first Pennsylvania oil wells had come in, represented to John D. the souls of men like his father writ large. They were cautionary fables, writes Chernow, of blasted hopes and counterfeit dreams, fables that renewed fears of the oil industry's short life span. Yet without William as ideology as well as biology there would have been no John D., no child of fortune, no fortune-founding capitalism either. John D. Rockefeller's success rested coldly on that earlier ethos cherished and memorialized by Walt Whitman that celebrated boundary breaking creativity and narcissistic spontaneity, even though John D. knew the triumph of capitalism would await the suppression of this creative anarchy.

Bourgeois capitalism was able to root itself in firm soil only because of the deracination of those who came before. Deracination, it turns out, is a prime condition for democracy. Without an uprooting from feudal lands, without peasants turning away from the soil and looking up, there could be no new citizens, there could be no Renaissance, no Reformation, no trade, no capitalism. Perhaps most important of all, those early deracinated protocapitalist adventurers were, in fact, models for America's new democratic men—not European communitarians born of Hobbes and his anxieties about security against the war of all against all; not the Enlightenment empiricists for whom equality was but an entailment of common impulses and a common response to pleasure and pain; and not Virginia's farmers or the Carolina plantation owners whose ward government was a model of Jefferson's democratic aristocracy and who understood the relationship between liberty and private property (which did not exclude slavery). For these men were still rooted, still bounded by fences and property lines. They would become democratic in a European way, eventually overcoming the plantation system and its slavery and building free townships.

But that distinctively American democratic ethos associated with individualism and mobility was not nurtured in the soil or in some antediluvian state of nature but propelled by people on the move: cattlemen, woodsmen, searchers and

pioneers, women and men who left the old thirteen colonies and settled the Tennessee territory that would give birth to Andrew Jackson, and then headed on west; those who set up artisan trades in St. Louis and Mason City and then pushed on, joining wagon trains on the way to California in search of gold.[14]

New England township democracy was vital to American democracy—communitarian, rights based, representative, experienced, looking back to Europe. Yet the democracy of Whitman owes more to people like Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson who fled the confines of Massachusetts. Whitman's democracy was robust, narcissistic, and innocent—unhinged and unpredictable. And it brought a new and quintessentially American egalitarianism. Not the equality of the social contract based on the abstract commensurability of beings with common natures, common needs, and common pleasures and pains but the concrete variety of actual people, each as worthy of respect as the next; not the equality of the state of nature, of all men *created* equal, but the *earned* equality of the teeming city, the equality of the trail, the equality of the wounded and dying, the equality that attaches to the dignity of all who live and die whether in female or male bodies, black or white, refined or rugged. Whitman's is the equality that comes after the fact of birth and with the fact of death, rather than the equality to which we are born—not the "right" but the actuality, incarnated in "Song of Myself" in Whitman's acknowledgment of the least of others as himself:

> The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,
> I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas,)
> I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and shallowest is
> deathless with me,
> What I do and say the same waits for them,
> Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in them. (235)

The "kosmos" Walt Whitman discovered in his Manhattan self was, in its deep individuality and infinite variety, always egalitarian. Right after he proclaimed those words "Unscrew the locks from the door!" he wrote, "Whoever degrades another degrades me . . . . and whatever is done or said returns at last to me, /. . . / I speak the password primeval . . . . I give the sign of democracy, / By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have" (1855, 50). These seem less the words of a philosopher dreaming about egalitarianism than the oath of a trail boss, insisting everyone in the wagon train will share their grub and their grievances, what they think and what they experience; or the words of a hospital nurse during wartime, measuring the equality of death. (Whitman himself was of course a dreamer of adventures rather than an adventurer himself, and his kinship with these types was literary rather than actual.)

For the founders and for the political theorists from whom they drew inspiration, equality was above all about politics, about the right to equal access, one man one vote; because, they believed, democracy was about elections and about the accountability of those elected. Hence all the rights talk, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments and then suffrage for women. In this vision, equality was something to which people had a natural right that had to be secured by constitutions and bills of rights. Not for Walt Whitman. His democracy was about how we live, how we experience and treat one another. Constitutional equality evokes uniformity (all are to be treated alike) while Whitman celebrated variety. In "Song of Myself," he celebrated the self in everyone. It was an equality born of experience rather than theory, of living among the many rather than imagining their rights. Black Americans had won equality in theory through the words and proclamations that brought the Civil War to a conclusion. They have yet to fully experience what those words announced back then in the practice of American life today, except perhaps when they find themselves among those rough souls who measure their peers by spirit and energy and individuality. You are my equal not because it is your right (though it is) but because you *are* my equal. My individuality is yours, my thirst yours, my appetites yours, my differences yours. I am alike in my differences.

Whitman's sense of equality was the product of Comradeship: the sense of fraternity with which equality was affiliated in traditions less theoretical than that of the Social Contract, traditions in which, in Whitman's language, it was "amative" and "adhesive" affection that drew people together, women and men, men and men, women and women—eros adumbrating the democratic republic: "It is by a fervent, accepted development of comradeship," Whitman writes in the *Preface* to the 1876 centennial edition of *Leaves of Grass and "Two Rivulets*," "the beautiful and sane affection of man for man . . . that the United States of the future . . . are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated, anneal'd into a living union" (1011).

It might of course be asked in this moment when the word "democracy" is on every tyrant's lips, in every conman politico's bag of tricks, in every hypocritical banker's vocabulary, whether Whitman's hardy democratic cameraderie and the distinctive notion of equality it evokes has any relevance. After all, it did and does little to confront the structural inequalities of capitalism (which helped breed the very individualism Whitman celebrates) or the failures of a more explicitly political democracy (about which it can perhaps be too self-absorbed and cavalier). As J. M. Coetzee reminds us, Whitman himself recognized that the dismal proletarian uniformity and raw exploitation of the Gilded Age had little to do with the Jacksonian yeoman farmers and proud artisans he celebrated in "Song of Myself" and

"A Song for Occupations." And though he supported the Civil War and emancipation, he was never an abolitionist nor a particularly ardent fan of the emancipated black man or of Reconstruction. Critics suggest that however agile and mobile his imagination might have been, Whitman was a loafer rather than a roamer.

Still, Whitman's equality feels real and palpable and speaks today to the endless variety of America, to its now global cities, teeming as ever with immigrants who are the hardy new specimens of an emerging global civil society—or not so civil society. For Whitman celebrates not government but society, and a pretty rough society at that: call it uncivil society. But like Tocqueville and Dewey, he understands, from the depth of his poetic intuition, that formal democracy depends on informal democracy, that voters must first be citizens. To be more than mere commands inscribed on paper, rights must be embedded in the habits and mores of a free people. In this sense it may be that Whitman's rough brief for uncivil society with all its abrasive edges, his equality of grittiness and sweat and sex and blood, is a firmer foundation for democracy than any written constitution on its own could ever be. Iraq needs a new constitution, to be sure, but it also needs citizens to animate it; it needs poets as well as lawyers of democracy. Mumbai's ghetto needs to feel more like Brooklyn, where scores of communities rub shoulders and engage in common work, argue over politics and comprise the global city that relies on their cooperation for its vitality.

Whitman's democracy is finally a democracy of hope, a democracy that looks forward because its history "remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted" (960). It is a democracy that America needs no less than Iraq or Russia—one that opens its borders instead of erecting new and futile walls, that accommodates the "illegals" who make up in robust hard work what they lack in documentation, that responds to terror fearlessly by refusing to yield its liberties or its equality.

To the degree democracy is at risk today (and democracy is always at risk), to the degree it has been trivialized as elections or made over into a slogan behind which tyrants who command majorities can hide, to the degree it becomes a myth in whose name wars are made and governments overthrown—to the degree, in short, that it has been reduced to an unkept promise to women and children in New Orleans's Ninth Ward or Baghdad's Sadr City slum, it may be because Whitman's truths have been neglected or forgotten. In his remarkable essay *Democratic Vistas*—which belongs in every political science curriculum short list alongside *The Federalist Papers* and Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and Lincoln's *Second Inaugural* and King's *I Have A Dream* speech—Whitman seeks out democracy's heart: "Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics,

and for a party name?" he challenges. "I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in religion, literature, colleges, and schools—democracy in all public and private life" (956).

Like John Dewey, who insisted democracy was not a form of government but a way of life, Whitman saw the largeness of democracy. The spirit of our own age is the shrunken, greedy spirit of the imperious corporate manager and the grasping customer, not of the entrepreneur and adventurer, or of the bard and the workman: Donald Trump, it may be said, has been allowed to fire Walt Whitman. Even in its politics, the spirit of our age is privatized and made technocratic rather than public souled and participatory: Bill Gates has been allowed to program Walt Whitman. Our age prefers the spirit of formalistic legalism to robust citizenship: Chief Justice John Roberts has been allowed to subpoena Walt Whitman. The spirit of our age is faux national hubris, concealing what is really a lethargic indifference to the democracy and social justice about which it prattles: George Bush has been allowed to wage preemptive war on Walt Whitman.

If ever democratic voices, ardent dreamers, lawless artists were needed, they are needed today. If ever Walt Whitman's spirit might make a difference for an America whose cities truly are global and actually contain multitudes, it is now. It is a moment not to recite Walt Whitman's poems but to hear his voice; a moment in which we need not so much to read as to emulate him, to become again what he was to America in the second half of the nineteenth century. There, fresh from a terrible civil war and the assassination of a president, on the eve of a gilded age of robber barons, Whitman taught America to sing the song of democracy.

NOTES

1. Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural*, *Inaugural Addresses of Presidents of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 128.

2. Benjamin R. Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantalize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: Norton, 2007).

3. On the emergence of working class culture in antebellum New York, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class. 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

4. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner's, 1958): "At all periods of history . . . there has been ruthless acquisition, bound to no ethical norms whatever" (57).

5. Ibid.

6. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 233. Subsequent references to any Whitman citation will be given parentheti-

cally in the text. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the poems will be to their 1891–1892 version.

7. George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

8. Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 239.

9. For the role of risk in American archetypical character, see Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (New York: Penguin, 2003).

10. See Charles Higham, *Howard Hughes: The Secret Life* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993).

11. Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (New York: Random House, 1998), 81. See also chapter one, "The Flimflam Man," 3–13.

12. Chernow, *Titan*, 84. My portrait of Bill Rockefeller leans heavily on Ron Chernow's brilliant portrait of both father and son in *Titan*.

13. Ibid.

14. Thus did my great-great-grandfather, inexperienced as he was, organize and lead a wagon train from Illinois to California in 1849 and return with six bags of gold to Mason City to buy the land that our family owned there for a century or more.

{ ANGELA MILLER }

The Twentieth-Century Artistic Reception of Whitman and Melville

Walt Whitman and Herman Melville were born the same year, in 1819. Although the two great contemporaries seem not to have acknowledged one another during their lifetimes, in twentieth-century commentary they were frequently paired—indeed often pitted against one another—as antithetical figures representing two distinct literary and poetic traditions. This commentary was often partisan in tone, suggesting differing underlying loyalties—philosophical as well as aesthetic and literary. To map the multifaceted reception of Whitman and Melville in the visual arts, both independently and in relation to one another, in the first half of the twentieth century reveals more than an anatomy of difference. It brings to view broad transformations—or parallel possibilities—in the cultural response to individualism, technology, and democracy. It reveals the rich source of inspiration furnished by these two formative figures of the previous century, as modernist artists and writers wrestled with their often difficult and ambivalent relationship to modernity.

Roughly a decade into the "Melville revival," the free-verse poet and literary promoter Alfred Kreymborg, in his 1929 study of American poetry *Our Singing Strength*, linked and contrasted Whitman and Melville as "great American primitives, Whitman, the epic lover, Melville, the epic hater."[1] Two decades later, in his 1947 book *Call Me Ishmael*, the scholar and poet Charles Olson once again compared the two:

> Whitman appears, because of his . . . conscious identification of himself with the people, to be more the poet. But Melville had the will. He was homeless in his land, his society, his self. . . . Whitman we have called our greatest voice because he gave us hope. Melville is the truer man. He lived intensely his people's

> wrong, their guilt. But he remembered the first dream. The *White Whale* is more accurate than *Leaves of Grass*. Because it is America, all of her space, the malice, the root.[2]

Where Whitman—for Olson at least—found his literary voice in a powerful sense of democratic empathy, Melville's America was "a people of Ishmaels." Whitman and Melville were each—in the word used by both Olson and D. H. Lawrence—"aboriginal," American originals. These two pillars of what would become the canon of the American Renaissance—though we may see them today as occupying a similar cultural space—clearly embodied very different visions of mythic America over the course of their twentieth-century reception.[3]

Whitman's impact on twentieth-century American arts and letters was enormous and has been much inventoried, if not always deeply analyzed.[4] A brief survey of those shapers of twentieth-century visual arts in the U.S. who reckoned with his legacy begins with photographers Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, and Edward Weston; sculptors John Storrs and Mahonri Young; and architects Frank Lloyd Wright and his émigré German associate, Richard Neutra.[5] Whitman also left his imprint on the ecstatic form breaking dance of Isadora Duncan, as well as on the early twentieth-century painters of modern life: Robert Henri, John Sloan, Joseph Stella, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Stuart Davis—who called him "our one big artist"—and Ben Shahn, among others.[6] I limit myself here mostly to those who wrote directly of Whitman's place in their art or who drew in some fashion from his work. His pervasive if undocumented influence extends well beyond these.[7] Whitman's popularity peaked in the 1930s when—along with Lincoln—he was routinely invoked as a culture hero for the generation actively forging connections with the most vital figures of its own history.[8]

Whitman's "defiance of the old theories and forms," as Englishman Edward Gordon Craig put it,[9] drove a powerful experimental spirit in the arts: "Allons! from all formules!" ("Song of the Open Road").[10] Many would agree with Alan Trachtenberg that Whitman was the single most profound influence on the formation of a native American modernism.[11] But he offered more than the example of a new form breaking poetics: he projected for later generations a powerful image of the artist as form*giver*, a force uniquely capable of endowing the inchoate, chaotic social matter of a new democracy—"a vast Sargasso Sea," in Van Wyck Brooks's memorable image—with significant shape and spirit.[12] "Few are aware," Whitman wrote in 1871, "how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will."[13] The poet as architect of both selves and nations, forging—in the words of James Joyce several decades later—"the

uncreated conscience of the race," was a powerful idea to the first generation of American modernists.[14]

Whitman was, in the words of Brooks in 1915, the spiritual "precipitant" of a newly vitalized modern expression escaping the double thrall of a repressive gentility and of a chokingly narrow utilitarianism—"a great vegetable of a man, all of a piece in roots, flavor, substantiality, and succulence, well-ripened in the common sunshine."[15] The artist-visionary was the lens that brought an evolving and unformed democracy into focus, proleptically grasping its future fulfillment "in the amplitude of time."[16] "[T]he throes of birth are upon us," Whitman wrote in *Democratic Vistas*, yet the new culture remained unrealized (957). Whitman's version of the poet was explicitly sacerdotal: "The priest departs, the divine literatus comes" (932). What Whitman, somewhat self-servingly, called for, the next generation recognized in the figure and work of the poet himself. He envisioned a great national literature—never merely reflective of society—to be a uniquely powerful agent of national consciousness, its very bone and marrow.

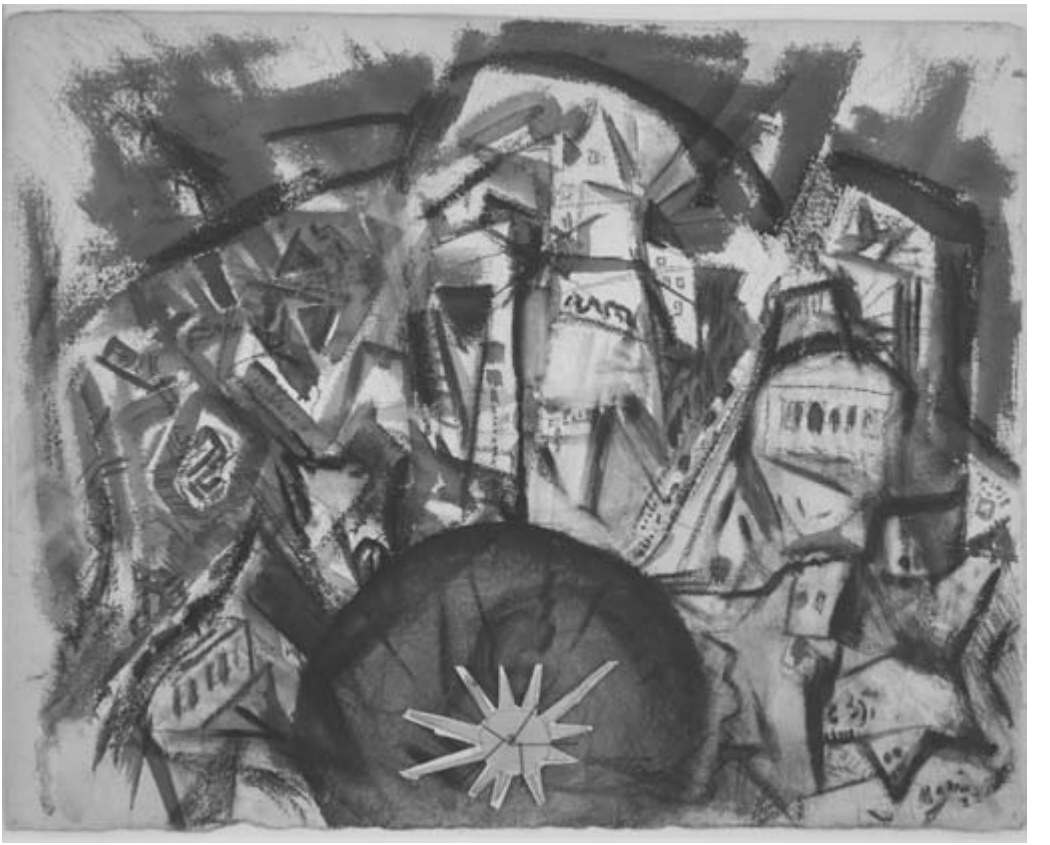
Whitman's influence on American modernism comes more fully into focus in relation to the potent counterexample of Melville. Both were great shaggy writers; Alfred Kreymborg referred to *Leaves of Grass* as "Walt's herd of buffalos trampling the continent."[17] Melville was in many ways the very epitome of what Whitman had summoned forth in 1871: the grand literatus of democracy. Looking at the state of American literary culture, Whitman saw only "spreading, undulating masses of squid, through which the whale swimming, with head half out, feeds" (974). Here in an uncanny echo of Melville's leviathan was the very image of an epic New World literature.

Despite these common bonds, it is still tempting to identify Melville as Whitman's evil twin (a "hater" to Whitman's "lover," in Kreymborg's words), a man temperamentally incapable of taking safe harbor in any established belief or faith, be it democratic, theological, or artistic. A survey of the parallel reception of these two figures in the twentieth century goes some distance in establishing contrasting intellectual and temperamental coordinates. And while we may comfortably accommodate both, the shifting generational loyalties of the first half of the twentieth century tell us a great deal about the changing meanings of the artist figure and his relation to America's cultural promise, or failed promise.[18]

Whitman's example for the first generation of modernists took shape on several different fronts. In the work of Isadora Duncan and the vanguard New York bohemians clustering in Greenwich Village—artists and writers both—Whitman offered a liberating embrace of the body and redeemed it from its Victorian associations with a shameful animality to realize its expressive power through a new

language of earthbound but soulful movement.[19] To the circle of artists and critics around Alfred Stieglitz, Whitman offered a language and imagery of correspondence between self and nature that reinforced Stieglitz's own form of native symbolism.[20] And his international stature helped validate the modernists' turn toward the kind of homely native subject matter that characterized the avowedly nationalistic artistic programs of such writers and artists as Robert Coady and Stuart Davis, while at the same time escaping the charge of provincialism. For the Whitman of the modernists was also a cosmopolitan at home in the world, "living habitually among world ideas, world emotions, world impulses," and "perfectly at home in the company of Achilles, or Erasmus, or Louis XIV," as Van Wyck Brooks put it.[21] Whitman's mythic "Mannahatta" offered an expansively optimistic prospect for a New World urbanism of democratic energies, countering the darker vision of modernity explored by such European writers as Baudelaire and Marx. He overcame the divisions between culture and society, bringing technology and industry back from their cultural exile and forging for them a place in the modernist vision of America. The writers and apologists for a new modern expressive culture turned to Whitman as the force that would lift American arts and letters out of the gentle shoals in which it had been caught adrift, espousing a high-minded but ineffectual idealism in the face of a crassly utilitarian business ethos.[22]

Whitman invoked the sun—"our favorite figure," as he called it—as symbol of the realized promise of a New World literature (973). In the 1855 preface he linked the new American bard to a sun whose dazzling rays illuminate "character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all" (13). And again in 1871, "A new creation, with needed orbic works launch'd forth, to revolve in free and lawful circuits—to move, self-poised, through the ether, and shine like heaven's own suns!" (971). The image of the sun enlightening the shadowy wastes of American culture appealed in particular to the artists around Alfred Stieglitz, ardent promoter of a vital new American modernism. John Marin's 1922 watercolor *Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)* (fig. 1) evokes the image of the artist-visionary as a sun whose rays burst forth upon the city, a radiant orb around which the surrounding urban chaos organizes itself. Marin's cutout sun, pasted on the watercolor, realizes Whitman's own metaphor for a fulfilled democratic principle, "arriv'd at meridian, filling the world with effulgence and majesty far beyond those of past history's kings" (957). For Whitman—and Marin, it seems—this fulfillment awaited the arrival of the artist. Marin, considered by many during his lifetime to be the leading American modernist painter, was an intimate of Stieglitz. Paul Rosenfeld, Stieglitz's rhapsodic acolyte, wrote about Marin that he achieved a "sort of absolute painting as American in feeling as Whitman's [poetry] and as simultaneously rough and exquisite."[23] Elsewhere Rosenfeld associated Marin's pigment



1. John Marin, Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth), 1922. Watercolor, graphite, and charcoal on paper with paper cutout attached with thread, 21 5/8″ x 26 7/8″ copyright © 2007 Estate of John Marin/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, R.22.28.

itself with the poet in its "chaste" sensuality: "Something Walt Whitmanish abides in its essence."[24] Marin affected a kind of childlike wonder in fractured prose—projecting his ego upon the world and paradoxically cultivating "a directness of impulse" and naïve expressionism akin to that of young children.[25] This transformational egocentrism echoes Whitman's notion of "personality"—the peculiar visionary power of the individual genius, a power located at the center of a new expressive culture.[26]

There was little dissent from these various expressions of Whitman's importance for American modernists. But one exception is the art historian Meyer

Schapiro's scathing critique of Frank Lloyd Wright, whose admiration for Whitman is well known.[27] Whitman's attraction for Wright is hardly an enigma; in his self-styled role as prophet of a new American architecture, Wright found rousing confirmation in the broadly disseminated version of the Whitmanic creator as a solitary hero giving form to the inchoate energies of a new democracy. Sensitive to the charge of "exorbitant egotism," at the same time Wright styled himself "no singer for this false sentimentalized American democracy. . . . this making a god of Demos."[28] Creativity was seated in the ego, and to restrict its full expression was both hypocritical and unwise. Wright repeatedly invoked Whitman in support of these ideas.[29] In a review of a book Wright coauthored about cities and urbanism, Schapiro attacked his "neo-Whitmanesque theogonic jargon of 'integral,' 'organic,' and the man 'individual,' " terms that in the 1930s resonated with fascist overtones.[30] Schapiro rightly associated Wright with Whitman's most individualistic aspect; indeed, by the 1930s Wright had gone far beyond Whitman—who heralded for the architect the "sovereignty of the individual"—in denouncing the mediocrity of the masses and insisting upon the peculiar privilege of the artist to bring forth new forms.[31] Schapiro's remark measures the subtle tremors emerging from faultlines within the American intelligentsia, in particular toward those who delegated to themselves unique epiphanic powers and "unlimited expression of the individual will," in the words of Granville Hicks's mostly celebratory 1933 profile of the poet.[32]

The emergence of charismatic fascist leadership in Europe and Asia, with its glorification of the mystical affinities binding a racialized nation-state to the soil of place, cast Whitman's legacy into the lurid glow of international fascism. And it points toward the political restoration of Melville by such writers as C. L. R. James, precisely for his vision of a world defined not by the singular individual of supreme creative force and vision but by the everyday heroism of seafaring men. For the Marxist Schapiro, "the Whitmanesque" represented a misguided focus on expressive rather than political solutions to the failed promise of democracy. That Schapiro could pin such charges on followers of Whitman suggests his emphasis on the prophetic visionary Whitman over and against the related but ultimately distinct version of Whitman as the poet who powerfully affirmed the nobility of anonymous men at the heart of the democratic dream.

How is it that Whitman's legacy—if not Whitman himself—could produce such antithetical responses, even as we must recognize that far more often the poet represented inspiration than danger?[33] A partial answer can be found in the tensions within Whitman's own construction of the poetic self, its alternations between the voice of the poet as representative of a broader public and as a solitary prophet, exiled in the wilderness of a crude and materialistic democracy. I suggest

that, in terms of twentieth-century reception, the many versions of Whitman cluster more or less around these two poles: those who found in the artist figure a privileged voice of visionary power and those who gazed through Whitman's insistent individuality to the democratic masses for which he professed to speak.[34] The tension is there in Whitman himself: "For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, is surely join'd another principle, equally unyielding . . . This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself—identity—personalism" (958).

Whitman was invoked throughout the 1930s as the spiritual father of cultural democracy, sponsored and promoted by a range of new government programs and initiatives under Roosevelt's New Deal.[35] In these years, his role shifted from that of "precipitant," in Van Wyck Brooks's words, to father figure, genially surveying his cultural progeny in the vast work of cataloguing, collecting, and possessing—region by region—native materials. Here the act of recognizing value in the ordinary, striking down snobbism and hierarchy, was elevated to the level of official credo. Embraced by American Communists and fellow travelers as a proletarian poet, Whitman also became the voice of the people in the 1930s culture of the Popular Front, his short declamatory poem "I Hear America Singing" seized upon by union men and women and set to music.[36]

But side by side with this populist Whitman as midwife of a new identity and pride of place was the other version of Whitman: a visionary laboring in the arid wastes of a crude as yet unrealized civilization. This was the Whitman who spoke not only to Frank Lloyd Wright but also to Alfred Stieglitz, artists whose democratic professions thinly veiled their carefully nurtured conviction of being prophets in the wilderness, gathering around them a small band of faithful followers. Stieglitz—notoriously truculent toward any who did not adhere to his exacting (and elitist) standards of aesthetic integrity—left a string of interrupted friendships; his sense of artistic collectivity was both strong and exclusive. Unlike Whitman, whose name is sprinkled throughout the 1934 tribute to Stieglitz as artist and promoter of a new American art, Stieglitz was powerfully judgmental. He remained fiercely loyal to those artists who realized his vision of a personal language of art making, insistent "on the eternal verities," those artists who would, like him, "battle to the death with the shams and stupidities of the ordinary round of living." A "true-blue solitary rhinoceros," Stieglitz was remarkably thin skinned when it came to dissent from his artistic program.[37]

Writing in an essay on Stieglitz published in 1934, Lewis Mumford recovered a different "aristocratic" Whitman better accommodated to the aesthetic elitism of Stieglitz. In Mumford's telling, Whitman, like Melville, escaped the thrall of the bourgeoisie; neither was "debased into accepting their prudent paper routine.

Both of them were capable of a passionate aristocracy that reserved for the spirit its primacy in the affairs of men. Whitman's democracy was the prelude to a broader-rooted aristocracy, and none knew the fact better than he."[38] Mumford's Whitman is understood through the lens of Stieglitz's uncompromising attitude toward an American art serving the highest ideals of a spiritually awakened culture. Instrumental to this awakening was the artist figure, rising to greet the sun, like the skyscrapers that were the subject of Stieglitz's camera in the early 1930s. In these photographs, the slablike monoliths of Rockefeller Center and the setback structures of midtown tower above the anonymous mass of ordinary buildings, plunging them into deep shadow (fig. 2: *New York from the Shelton*). Given Stieglitz's own symbolist imagination—his tendency, that is, to search in the world beyond the self for resonant expressions of his inner moods—the skyscraper series suggests both his somewhat Olympian attitude toward the toiling masses and his growing sense of isolation in spite of his cultlike status among American modernists.

Throughout his career, photography was for Stieglitz an instrument of power through which he willed a new aesthetic order out of the chaotic elements of urban modernity; indeed, as Peter Conrad has argued, the image of the sun irradiating and attenuating the inert mass of the new skyscrapers Stieglitz photographed suggests the "ocular eminence" of the artist himself, his visionary power to transform matter into spirit, mass into light.[39] Stieglitz held fast to his ideal of an art in productive tension with American society, sparked into arousal by the life energies of its modern artists.[40] For Stieglitz, a new American art—like that he nurtured in his gallery, "An American Place"—would provide the measure with which to assess the depth and quality of the culture taking shape just beyond his private sanctuary: "If what is in here," he commented, as reported by Dorothy Norman, "can stand up against what is out there, it has a right to exist. But if what is out there can stand up against what is in here, then what is in here does not need to exist."[41] The arts were a catalyst whose raison d'etre remained their ability—in proleptic fashion—to model and direct the future shape of the republic.[42] Such pronouncements clearly link his passionate—and often elitist—advocacy of the arts to Whitman's visionary quest for a cross-semination between the arts and the republic. Out of this a new literature and art would emerge, bound by the most organic ties to the soil of culture.

If Whitman held a place of honor in the nationalist and demotic self-discovery of the 1930s as well as in the modernist mythologies of the artist figure between the wars, Melville's presence gained greater importance for the artists and writers of the postwar decades.[43] While the revival of Melville's reputation began in the 1920s, it was

2. Alfred Stieglitz, *New York from the Shelton* copyright © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

only in the context of the 1940s that he found a properly historical place as a writer whose works resonated deeply with the postwar collapse of what Schapiro had called a Whitman-inspired "theogonic jargon." The existential pessimism of a generation that had witnessed 56 million dead in the apocalyptic events of the late 1930s and 40s saw a decided shift away from the utopian aspirations of the early mod-

ernists. The writers and artists of these years—F. O. Matthiessen, Charles Olson, C. L. R. James, Jackson Pollock, Theodore Roszak, Seymour Lipton, Barnett Newman, Theodore Stamos, and others—engaged *Moby-Dick* as myth—or perhaps more accurately, as countermyth—in which the Whitmanesque dream of conquering space becomes the American nightmare of men utterly defeated by nature. Charles Olson framed the problem of space thus: "This Ahab had gone wild . . . he had all space concentrated into the form of a whale called Moby-Dick. And he assailed it as Columbus an ocean, LaSalle a continent, the Donner Party their winter Pass." Like Ahab, America had one aim: "lordship over nature."[44]

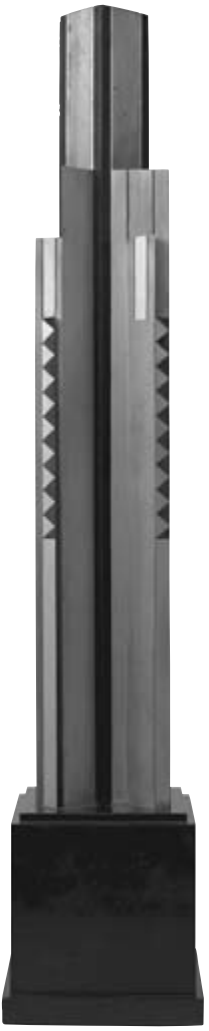
The very different meanings Whitman and Melville carried for later generations is particularly pointed with respect to the image of space. Throughout *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman's poet is fully commensurate with the spatial challenge of America, organizing its formlessness through the power of his words. For Whitman, spatial metaphors suggested a liberating boundlessness within which the formgiving poet formed fragile pathways.[45] He imagined this process in "A Noiseless Patient Spider": "Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space" (564) but drawing a finespun web that anchored the small creature within this vast space. Whitman's spatial expansiveness, his vision of the democratic bard sending out fine filaments to catch somewhere in the universe beyond the self, contrasts strikingly with Melville's vision of a desublimated space—a space no longer filled with the buoyant optimism that early twentieth-century modernists found in Whitman.[46] Melville's space threatens a self-annihilating vastness, in which the self as point of origin was lost sight of, or set aside as a sentimental fiction. In *Moby-Dick*, Whitman's spatial buoyancy gives rise to a vertiginous loss of orientation, as the organizing poetic ego threatens to dissolve altogether. Acknowledging the sense of spiritual homelessness in Melville that spoke to the postwar generation, Charles Olson wrote that "Space was the paradise Melville was exile of."[47]

The differences between the two men are played out in sculpture, the medium that most directly engages the dynamics of space. John Storrs and Theodore Roszak cited the influence of Whitman and Melville, respectively. Storrs, working among the first generation of modernists, shared with them a passion for Whitman, actually proposing a monument to commemorate the 1919 centennial of the poet's birth. Storrs's proposal—a winged man astride a massive horse—worked more through metaphoric linkages between flight and liberation of the soul than through any formal connections. But in the 1920s Storrs did a series of Precisionist abstractions that evoked—albeit in static forms—the energies of the new skyscraper city. Executed in a variety of materials, from brass and steel to bronze, copper, and marble (fig. 3), these impersonal and static skyscraper-like forms contain the unstable energies of the new city in a manner similar to Paul Strand's

and Charles Sheeler's short film *Manhatta* [*sic*], whose six-part structure is framed by passages from Whitman's poetry. Storrs's vertical forms, erect and rigid, bespoke a masculine will to mastery that simultaneously feminized and rendered inert the surrounding spatial envelope: as Storrs wrote, "Let the artists create . . . forms that will express that strength and will to power, that poise and simplicity that one begins to see in . . . factories, rolling-mills, elevators and bridges."[48] Storrs's artist models his energies on those of modernity itself and relies less directly on his own visionary authority to shape the new urban environment.

With their sharp geometries and elegant formality, Storrs's skyscraper-inspired series may not conjure Whitman to contemporary viewers. But the spirit of the poet was clearly present to Storrs in these works. In 1917 he wrote that "Aside from a few of our designers of bridges, grain elevators, steel mills, etc., Walt Whitman stands practically alone as one who has discovered a national soul and has given it expression in a form that can be called beautiful—that can be called art."[49] Storrs associated national soul here with the great space-defining and space-unifying constructions that embodied the nation's modern urbanism and industry. The transvaluation of brute technology into exempla of a new modern "soul" is itself a Whitmanic move. Storrs also associated the verticality of the skyscraper form with a liberation of sorts, the antithesis of the horizontal dimension that expressed "all that is heavy & brutal."[50] His immediate inspiration for the skyscraper works that preoccupied him throughout much of the 1920s was the explicitly Whitman-inspired work of Joseph Stella, whose *New York Interpreted (The Voice of the City)* Storrs encountered at an exhibition of Stella's work in New York.

Some thirty years later, the sculptor Theodore Roszak turned from the Precisionist- and Constructivist-influenced sculptures he had produced in the 1930s to works directly inspired by his reading of *Moby-Dick* (fig. 4: *Whaler of Nantucket*, 1952–1953). For Roszak, Melville's work "related to the problems of the artist today."[51] If the sculptor appreciated the epic dimensions of Melville's art, so too did he grasp its essential ambiguities, its protean imagery, as a rich visual source. For the postwar generation, the *Whaler of Nantucket* was a prophetic figure of humanity tortured by Promethean longings to dominate an unknowable universe—as emblematic for the 1950s as the figure of the visionary bard had been for early modernists. Melville's writings were for Roszak "almost a bible" in the decade after the war.[52] In his pitted, tortured, and scaled surfaces, with their aggressive projections and violent eruptive forms, Roszak conjured the energies that would commandeer technology for its own demonic purposes. Roszak described the origins of his *Whaler* in his impassioned reading of *Moby-Dick*, and he used the properties of his medium itself to suggest the powerful distorting effects of Captain Ahab's monomaniacal quest, a monomania that turned him into the very image of that which he obsessively



3. John Storrs, *Forms in Space*, ca. 1924, aluminum, brass, copper, and wood. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Charles Simon, 77.58.

4. Theodore Roszak, American, 1907–1981, b. Poland, *Whaler of Nantucket* (1952–1953), steel, 34 1/2″ x 45 1/2″ approximately 525 pounds, Edward E. Ayer Endowment in memory of Charles L. Hutchinson, 1954.958.
Photograph copyright © Art Institute of Chicago, E29219.

pursued. ("I tried through forms to project symbolically the pursuer and the pursued, an enigma that I fear is still with us in the modern world, as it has been in the past."[53]) Here, the ambiguity of the title itself (the "whaler" refers to both Ahab and his ship) suggests the fusion of the human and the technological, now no longer the heroic transfiguration envisioned in Whitman's "Song of the Centennial" and elsewhere, but a horrific prosthesis inspired by the accidental shape of an anvil in the forge of Roszak's studio.[54]

Consistent with this shift in the symbolism of technology, Roszak also gave a very different formulation of sculpture's space-defining qualities: "Space—no longer buoyant, but unobtrusively concealed, where I think it now properly belongs."[55] Roszak's meaning emerges in relation to his sculptural work, with its interior cavities and convolutions, its sense of a space pitted, contorted, no longer unobstructed or open. The significance of this transformation was taken up by Roszak himself, as he commented on his own shift from "sharp and confident edges" to "lines and shapes . . . now gnarled and knotted . . . scorched and coarsely pitted."[56] The worked surfaces of the metal suggested a more psychological understanding of the individual, along with the collapse of the poet's clarion voice and panoramic grasp of his subject. Not simply are form and medium being rethought by these new techniques, but space itself, as it emerges in relation to sculptural form, is now discontinuous, alternatively enveloping and collapsing inward. This alternation mirrors what Roszak described as the interpellated nature of the hunter and the hunted, a primary theme in *Moby-Dick* which drove his own sculptural fascination with the book: "In Melville's life, I believe that a crucial moment occurred when he could no longer clearly separate the area of his own pursuit from the enveloping wrath of his protagonist. In his great novel . . . he traces the invisible lines of this conflict at a point when Ahab and the whale become increasingly indistinguishable, until finally they become one."[57] Melville's space—threatening engulfment—triggers a ferocious and aggressive counterthrust from the Ahab-like protagonist, a symbol of the artist himself. Whitman's serene egotism transmutes in Roszak's work into a battle to the death between the protagonist/artist and the unknowable elemental world that surrounds him.

The sense of space as a lost Eden—"Space was the paradise Melville was exile of"[58]—is articulated once again in Jackson Pollock's densely entangled filaments of paint, threatening entrapment rather than spiritual release. Space haunts not only Pollock's drip paintings but also Charles Olson's experimental poetics.[59] For a postatomic generation, Melville's space was immensely resonant. Olson, following an extended study of Melville's library and sources for *Moby-Dick*, found his way to a new poetic practice informed by the field theories of the new quantum physics, in which subatomic particles and their associated electromagnetic fields energize space. The impossibility of precisely locating the position of subatomic particles suggested a new indeterminacy of identity, increasingly understood as a function of the observer's position. As interpreted by Olson, the new physics and mathematics pointed to an intersubjective model in which individuality is radically reshaped within a far more dynamic and relational energy field, one in which the artist—rather than making heroic gestures of formgiving—is himself constituted anew at every moment, so that there is no unitary (or Whitmanesque) artistic ego

interpreting the world. Grasping essential differences separating these two father figures of American modernism, Olson definitively pronounced that "Whitman derives. M [Melville] is prospective." Melville alone, he thought, was capable "of founding a new humanitas."[60]

Melville's grasp of an *atropos*—a malignant destiny—driven by an elemental evil also resonated profoundly with the Abstract Expressionists. This generation's Ahab was most fully articulated in F. O. Matthiessen's 1941 account of *Moby-Dick* in *American Renaissance*: Ahab as the "ungodly, godlike" man of Captain Peleg's description. Alongside Melville's affirmative vision of democratic man—alongside his embrace of "mariners, renegades, and castaways"[61]—was his recognition of the Promethean urge driving Ahab's obsession. It was this duality—the "ungodly, godlike" character of Ahab and all he represents, and that radically qualified democratic aspirations—that distinguished Melville from Whitman's more sanguine assessment and that informed his appeal for existentially minded postwar intellectuals. A tragic vision of life dominates early formulations of Abstract Expressionism: "only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless," as Theodore Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb wrote in 1943.[62] This tragic vision was also central to postwar interpretations of Melville's great dark book.

Indeed, *Moby-Dick* enjoyed a vogue among the Abstract Expressionists: Pollock, notoriously silent about his intellectual influences, paid tribute to Melville by naming his dog Captain Ahab. His painting of 1943, *Pasiphaë*, was originally named either *Moby-Dick* or *The White Whale*, depending on the informant.[63] Pollock referred to Melville once again in his gouache and ink painting entitled *Blue (Moby-Dick)* (1943).[64] William Baziotes—a friend of Pollock's—was devoted to the book as well. Baziotes's mutant phosphorescent shapes floating in darkness[65] recall "The Castaway" chapter in *Moby-Dick*, where "strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro" before the "passive eyes" of Pip, Ahab's cabin boy, cast upon the sea and forever transformed by the experience[66] (see for instance *Night Form*, 1947). Nowhere is the very different nature of Melville's inspiration more apparent than in the contrast between the light-infused, epiphanic imagery associated with Whitman in early twentieth-century modernism and Melville's watery depths, those spaces where he seemed so often to locate the source of mysteries and primordial truths about human nature. Clement Greenberg, writing about Pollock, identified this as "an American chiaroscuro which dominated Melville, Hawthorne, Poe."[67]

In light of what appear to be the systematic Melville-inspired inversions the postwar generation worked upon the visionary optimism of Whitman, Melville appears a kind of anti-Whitman. But we should resist the impulse to see him thus, for to do so is also to flatten out Whitman's vastity (to use Joseph Stella's wonder-

ful neologism), to reduce Whitman to the caricature he sometimes becomes in twentieth-century memory, our great ruddy uncle, besotted, in the words of Richard Gambino, by "a bombastic pollyanaism, or softheaded narcissistic, mystical messianism" which sometimes prevents us from seeing how truly radical he was.[68] For if Whitman, far more than Melville, lent himself to a genially affirmative embrace by later promoters and apologists for a national culture, he also assumes his place within a tradition of radical thought and action, directed at bringing twentieth-century institutions, politics, and culture into line with the highest democratic ideals. If each generation invents for itself a different Whitman, it is time perhaps for us to recover the Jeremiah-like Whitman of his 1871 *Democratic Vistas*, a Whitman who reflects our own deeply contracted vision of democratic possibilities.[69] In the oscillating appeal of these two nineteenth-century voices, succeeding generations find embodied their own greatest dreams and fears for America.

NOTES

1. Alfred Kreymborg, *Our Singing Strength: An Outline of American Poetry (1620–1930)* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1929), 206.

2. Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael* (1947; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 14–15.

3. The present essay considers their reception up to mid-century. The poet Muriel Rukeyser, in "Note from the Author," *The Life of Poetry* (Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 1996; first published in 1949), x, once again paired Whitman and Melville as opposing poets of "possibility" and "outrage," leaving it to each reader to "choose a tradition."

4. A short list of scholarship on Whitman's influence on artists in the twentieth century includes Max Kozloff, "Walt Whitman and American Art," in *The Artistic Legacy of Walt Whitman*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 29–53; Kent Blaser, "Walt Whitman and American Art," *Walt Whitman Review* 24, no. 3 (September 1978): 108–118; Charles Alexander, *Here the Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth-Century America* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1980); Matthew Baigell, "Walt Whitman and Early Twentieth-Century American Art," in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 121–141; and Roberta Tarbell, "Whitman and the Visual Arts," in *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 153–204.

5. See Richard Neutra, *Life and Shape* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 167, 168, in which he compares his "first American father," Adolf Loos, to "Walt Whitman of Lower Manhattan"; both men admired ordinary Americans. "Loos's story was . . . an optimistic immigrant's version of Leaves of Grass."

6. Davis quoted in Baigell, "Walt Whitman and Early Twentieth-Century American Art," 134.

7. For other examples of Whitman's influence on American modernism, see Baigell, 121–141; Paul R. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), esp. 55–59; and Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing:*

Modern Art and National Identity, 1815–1935 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Ruth Bohan, *Looking into Walt Whitman: American Art, 1850–1920* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), a more sustained examination of Whitman's influence on first generation modernists through focused case studies on Joseph Stella, Marsden Hartley, and Robert Coady.

8. For writer Mike Gold, he modeled a new form of proletarian culture. See Andrew Hemingway's discussion of Gold in *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926–1956* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 14.

9. Edward Gordon Craig quoted by Ruth Bohan, "'I Sing the Body Electric': Isadora Duncan, Whitman, and the Dance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*, ed. Ezra Greenspan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 172.

10. This call for a new American voice freed from the vestiges of the past is a prominent theme in the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass.* Whitman's status as form-maker was confirmed at Allen Ginsberg's legendary reading of *Howl* at City Lights in 1955, when Lawrence Ferlinghetti's congratulatory telegram echoed Emerson's letter to Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career" (*Nation* [June 14, 2004]: 34).

11. Alan Trachtenberg, "Walt Whitman: Precipitant of the Modern," *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*, ed. Ezra Greenspan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 194–207. See also Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 52, 59, 87, 109, 114, 131, 186, and passim, on the admiration for Whitman shared by European and American avant-gardes.

12. Van Wyck Brooks, "America's Coming of Age" (1915), in *Van Wyck Brooks, The Early Years: A Selection from his Works, 1908–1925*, ed. Claire Sprague (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 149.

13. "Democratic Vistas," in Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 933. (Subsequent references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.) Whitman sounds this theme throughout the essay, calling forth "original American poets" to "give more compaction and more moral identity . . . to these States, than all its . . . hitherto political, warlike, or materialistic experiences" (935).

14. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; New York: Penguin, 1976), 253.

15. Brooks, 128; see also 131. For a similar pronouncement see Malcolm Cowley, "Pascin's America," *Broom* 4, no. 2 (January 1923): 136: "Before Walt Whitman America hardly existed." See Trachtenberg, "Precipitant of the Modern," 204–205, on the image of machinery brought to organic life by the hand of the artist. Whitman's own call in the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass* anticipated Brooks's vision of the role of the poet in forging a new culture: calling for a new American poet to sing "the great psalm of the republic," one capable of seeing "the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms" (8). Whitman's exemplary status for the modernists, in their mission of forging a new frankness toward the body, is a critical commonplace. See for instance Kreymborg, 208, in 1929: "For the first time in American letters, the body came into its own . . ."

16. See Trachtenberg, "Precipitant of the Modern," 205, on Whitman's propaedeutic quality of anticipating the emergence of new expressive forms and of providing, through his example, instruction in the art of the future.

17. Kreymborg, 210.

18. I use the male pronoun here with conscious intent, as the very concept of the artist-prophet was clearly gendered.

19. This rejection of Victorian prudishness was of course a central aspect of the modernist embrace of Whitman. See for instance Paul Rosenfeld's memorable pronouncement on Arthur Dove, one of Alfred Stieglitz's inner circle of artists: "Dove begins a sort of *Leaves of Grass* through pigment." *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924), 169.

20. "Equivalents" was the name of a series of photographs of clouds Stieglitz took between 1922 and 1935. See Daniell Cornell, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Equivalent: Reinventing the Nature of Photography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1999).

21. Brooks, 129.

22. See Brooks, 83, for a statement of the split between "Highbrow" and "Lowbrow" that had stunted the growth of American letters.

23. Quoted in MacKinley Helm, *John Marin* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1948), 52. Like virtually everyone else in his circle, Marin was well acquainted with Whitman's poetry, alluding to it in recorded conversations; see Helm, 54.

24. Rosenfeld, "John Marin," in *Port of New York*, 162.

25. Ibid., 158.

26. Max Kozloff went further, calling this a "pungent megalomania." ("Walt Whitman and American Art," 30). This recognition of the central place of "the single personality" also stood at the center of F. O. Matthiessen's assessment of Melville's Ahab, in *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 423–430. Early twentieth-century critics associated Marin with Whitman: see Paul Rosenfeld, "The Water Colors of John Marin," *Vanity Fair* 18 (April 1922): 92, quoted in Baigell, 131; and Henry McBride, "A Prediction on Marin," in *The Flow of Art: Essays and Criticism of Henry McBride*, ed. Daniel Catton Rich (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 169.

27. See John Roche, "Democratic Space: The Ecstatic Geography of Walt Whitman and Frank Lloyd Wright," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 6 (Summer 1988): 16–32.

28. See Alexander, *Here the Country Lies*, 4, 44 passim; Wright to Jens Jensen, in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Letters to Architects*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (Fresno: California State University Press, 1984), 72.

29. Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Hillside Home School of the Allied Arts," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings*, vol. 3 (1931–1939), ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli in association with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1992), 48.

30. Meyer Schapiro, "Architect's Utopia," review of Baker Brownell and Frank Lloyd Wright, *Architecture and Modern Life*, *Partisan Review* 4 (March 1938): 42–47.

31. Wright, "A Testament," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* vol. 5 (1949–1959), ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli in association with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1992), 169. Ironically, Wright himself invoked the democratic principle—along with a call for economic isolationism—against the twin enemies of a democratic culture: "Fascism" and "Plutocracy." Wright's 1941 essay, "To Beat the Enemy," ends with a poem by Whitman. *Collected Writings*, vol. 4 (1939–1949), ed. Pfeiffer, 85–87.

32. Granville Hicks, *The Great Tradition: An Interpretation of American Literature Since the Civil War* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1933), 22–23.

33. While uncomfortable with Whitman's influence, Schapiro was far more accepting of Whitman himself, invoking him as a democratic spirit in his 1950 book on Van Gogh. See Hemingway, *Artists on the Left*, 251.

34. For a related statement of this tension at the heart of Whitman's work and influence, see Baigell, "Walt Whitman and Early Twentieth-Century American Art," 127–129. Kozloff, "Walt Whitman and American Art," 29, wrote that Whitman "shock-welded an autocratic imagination and an egalitarian social conscience."

35. See for instance Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

36. See Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 187, 204, 219, 306, on Whitman's influence. A firsthand statement of Whitman's meanings for the 1930s is Hicks's *The Great Tradition*, 20–31.

37. Ralph Flint, "Post-Impressionism," in *America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait*, ed. Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, and Paul Rosenfeld (New York: Literary Guild, 1934), 173.

38. Lewis Mumford, "The Metropolitan Milieu," in *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, 43–44.

39. Both Conrad and art historian Vivien Green Fryd take this argument one step further to suggest that Stieglitz's wife, the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, in a series of skyscraper paintings she did in the late 1920s, referenced Stieglitz himself, collapsing skyscraper and man into a single (and for Fryd somewhat satirical) image. Fryd argues that O'Keeffe's *Radiator Building* is an emblematic portrait of Stieglitz as skyscraper; O'Keeffe branded Stieglitz's name across its top in glaring red lights, lightly mocking his notorious egocentrism. Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City: Views and Versions of New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 83–85; and Vivien Green Fryd, "Georgia O'Keeffe's 'Radiator Building': Gender, Sexuality, Modernism, and Urban Imagery," *Winterthur Portfolio* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 269–289.

40. Stieglitz's description of his own creative inspiration was markedly sexual, here and elsewhere. In answer to a frustrated female visitor "of about fifty," who plaintively asked him why the works of John Marin on view in his gallery "arouse no emotion in me," he replied, "Can you tell me this: Why don't you give me an erection?" Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1960), 208.

41. Dorothy Norman, "An American Place," in *America and Alfred Stieglitz*, ed. Waldo Frank (1934; New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 127.

42. See also Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City*, 80–82, for a reading of this series.

43. For a thorough survey of *Moby-Dick* as a subject for twentieth-century artists, see Elizabeth A. Schultz, *Unpainted to the Last: Moby-Dick and Twentieth-Century American Art* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

44. Olson, *Call Me Ishmael*, 12–13.

45. Space is a poetic resource for both Whitman and Melville—a tool through which they imagine the world, though in radically different ways. For Whitman, space was animated by what Gay Allen Wilson identified as a form of "noumenal idealism," or "panpsychism," which

bound the individual soul in a vast communion with other spirits and which bridged the divide between matter, space, and spirit. See Wilson, *The Walt Whitman Handbook* (New York: Hendricks House, Inc., 1957), 256–257. On the related panoramic or "omniscient survey" mode of vision, see Conrad, *The Art of the City*, 5–21.

46. John Roche, in "Democratic Space," 21, refers to Whitman and Wright both as "agoraphiles, reveling in the experience of inexhaustible space as a renewable source of personal and artistic energy." At times, however, Whitman's poetic voice approached the boundaries of ego dissolution, as in "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" and elsewhere. My thanks to Vivian Pollak for this observation.

47. Olson, *Call Me Ishmael*, 82.

48. John Storrs, "Museums or Artists," *Little Review* 9 (Winter 1922): 63, quoted in *John Storrs*, by Noel Frankman (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986), 57.

49. Storrs, from letters to Horace Traubel and Louise Bryant, John Storrs papers, Archives of American Art, quoted in Roberta Tarbell, "John Storrs and the Spirit of Walt Whitman," in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell, x.

50. Frankman, *John Storrs*, 70.

51. Theodore Roszak, "In Pursuit of an Image, Delivered before the student body at The Art Institute of Chicago, March 16, 1955," *Time to Time Publications of the Art Institute of Chicago*, no. 2. (n.d.), 12. I thank Nora Riccio at the Art Institute for help in securing this text.

52. H. H. Arnason, *Theodore Roszak* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center in collaboration with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1956), 30.

53. Roszak, "In Pursuit of an Image," 13. For a related and more extensive reading of Roszak in relation to Melville, see Schultz, *Unpainted to the Last*, 145–146.

54. Arnason, *Theodore Roszak*, 34. Whitman's "Song of the Exposition" is certainly the baldest statement of his adulation for the technological might of the U.S. The submission of technology to the demonic obsession is also a theme of the chapter in *Moby-Dick* "The Try-Works." This understanding of the Pequod as a machine turned to the infernal purposes of its master is echoed in Charles Olson's visions of whaleship as machine and of the Pacific as a vast sweatshop. See Olson, 12, 23.

55. Roszak, "In Pursuit of an Image," 4.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 12.

58. Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, 82.

59. Kozloff, "Walt Whitman and American Art," has linked Abstract Expressionism to Whitman, although such linkages are rooted in a "myth and symbol" approach to American culture which assumes the persistence of certain "American" characteristics but overlooks more often the historical tensions that distinguish one generation from another. I know of no documented evidence that Barnett Newman, David Smith, Pollock, Clyfford Still, or Robert Motherwell acknowledged the poet as an influence, although his name is commonly invoked in earlier studies of Whitman and American art. Kent Blaser, "Walt Whitman and American Art," takes a similar approach to Pollock and Whitman.

60. Charles Olson quoted in Merton M. Sealts, Jr., "Afterword," *Call Me Ishmael*, 142.

61. The title of C. L. R. James's 1953 book on *Moby-Dick*.

62. "Letter to the New York Times" by Theodore Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb, *New York Times* (Sunday, June 13, 1943), in Ellen H. Johnson, ed., *American Artists on Art, from 1940 to 1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 14. For Charles Olson, a most impassioned student of Melville in the 1940s, democracy as presented in *Moby-Dick* was deeply inflected by the tragic dimension; see *Call Me Ishmael*, 69.

63. Pollock changed the title under pressure from Peggy Guggenheim, who apparently didn't appreciate the Melville connection.

64. Ellen G. Landau, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Abradale Press, 1989), 31, 121, 125. The source of the title is undocumented.

65. See Baziotes's *Moby-dick* (1955), in Schultz, *Unpainted to the Last*, pl. 17.

66. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 453.

67. Clement Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Marc Chagall, Lyonel Feininger, and Jackson Pollock," *Nation* (November 27, 1943), reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), vol. 1, 165.

68. Richard Gambino, "Walt Whitman," *Nation* (July 21/28, 2003): 16. Peter Balakian, "Whitman as Jeremiah," in *Walt Whitman of Mickle Street: A Centennial Collection*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 70, has summed up Whitman's "poetic apotheosis" as the "humanity hugging bard extolling the virtues of the folk." The criticism that Whitman was too uncritically affirmative and accepting of "everything" was already made by Van Wyck Brooks in 1915: see "America's Coming of Age," 133–135 and passim, a sustained criticism of Whitman in a mostly laudatory essay.

69. Balakian, "Whitman as Jeremiah," 70–79.

{ ED FOLSOM }

So Long, So Long! Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, and the Art of Longing

In 1860, Walt Whitman issued a new, vastly expanded edition of his poems and closed the volume with a poem he called "So Long!" A century later, Langston Hughes issued the first gathering of his scattered poems and *opened* the volume with those same words: "So long." It's no accident that the African American poet most indebted to Whitman would make this gesture of picking up where Whitman left off, using that slippery and evocative phrase, "so long," as the pivot between a book written just on the edge of the Civil War, a war that would evolve into the country's first extended battle over civil rights for black Americans, and a book written just on the edge of the second great battle over civil rights for black Americans, the civil rights movement of the early 1960s. Both books were put together just prior to some of America's most violent internal battles, as cities burned a century apart, inflamed by racial injustice: Los Angeles and Detroit and Cleveland and Newark, with their so-called race riots in the 1960s, echoed Atlanta and Richmond and New York in the 1860s, as the end of slavery set one group of cities ablaze and the failure to end racial injustice a hundred years later set another group on fire.

In 1860, as the United States moved inexorably toward civil war, Whitman issued his new edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a huge expansion of the thin first edition and the modest devotional-book-sized second. The 1860 volume was the one he thought of as his American Bible, and it set out to do nothing less than to hold North and South together, desperately offering up visions of manly affection in a new "Calamus" cluster that encouraged erotic union over ideological separation, that encouraged men to embrace rather than to fight. This was the edition that inaugurated Whitman's idiosyncratic cluster arrangements of his poems, thematic groupings that allowed the poet from then on to revise his poems simply by rearranging them,

transferring them from one cluster to another, pulling some from one cluster to make up a new cluster, altering the meaning of any given poem by shifting its placement in the book. It was the final antebellum edition of *Leaves*, and the book would of course again change dramatically after the war, when the horror of mass fratricide had to be absorbed into his national Bible, eventually resulting in clusters called "Drum-Taps," "Memories of President Lincoln," and "Bathed in War's Perfume." Whitman had written his country's redemptive New Testament before he was forced to write its bloody Old Testament, and then, after he did, he shuffled and melded them into the postbellum editions of *Leaves of Grass*.

Whitman used his 1860 poem "So Long!" to conclude every edition of *Leaves* from then on. For years, he had been keeping notes about a slang phrase he had heard on the streets of New York: "so long," he wrote in the mid-1850s, "a delicious American—New York—idiomatic phrase at parting equivalent to 'good bye' 'adieu' &c."[1] Explaining to his friend William Sloane Kennedy in the 1880s just why he found the phrase so "delicious," he described it as "a salutation of departure, greatly used among sailors, sports, & prostitutes—the sense of it is—'*till we meet again*—conveying an inference that somewhere, some how, they will doubtless so meet,—sooner or later."[2] And so that familiar yet mysterious phrase became the title of his envoi poem,[3] his final address to the reader, as he imagined dying into his book, Whitman the man becoming Whitman the text:

> The unknown sphere, more real than I dreamed, more direct, darts
> awakening rays about me—*So long!*
> Remember my words—I love you—I depart from materials,
> I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.[4]

Almost exactly a hundred years later, Langston Hughes gathered his poems into a single volume for the first time and, like Whitman, rearranged them from their earlier appearances to construct his own clustered volume. Arnold Rampersad, in his biography of Hughes, writes of how the poet "labored over the arrangement of the poems," and he suggests that Hughes was "echoing perhaps Walt Whitman's evolving attempt at organic harmony in the several editions of *Leaves of Grass*, . . . ignor[ing] chronology in favor of thematic and chromatic clusters, organizing his poems into groups according to theme and mood—'Afro-American Fragments,' 'Feet of Jesus,' 'Sea and Land,' 'Distance Nowhere,' . . . and so on." What he wanted to achieve, Rampersad says, was nothing less than "a single transcendent song of himself as a major American singer, and to confirm his standing as the central poet of the black condition in America."[5]

Rampersad and other critics, notably George Hutchinson and Kenneth Price, have written effectively about the Whitman-Hughes relationship.[6] I want to add

to this ongoing discussion by looking not so much at Hughes's attitudes toward Whitman as at his *use* of Whitman's book, his direct response to *Leaves of Grass*, his incorporation of key aspects of Whitman's book into his own book, and his casting of his book as a literal extension of *Leaves of Grass*. It is the shimmering intertextuality of Whitman's *Leaves* with Hughes's *Selected Poems* that provides us with some significant lessons about how poetic influence can work at the level of the line and in the very structure of a book. What makes this more than the usual exploration of one poet's response to his predecessor is the remarkable fact that here we have an African American poet harkening back to and extending the work of the great white father of American poetry, the white-bearded, white-haired, white poet with a name that is defined in *Rambles among Words*, the book about language that Whitman may well have had a hand in writing, as meaning, etymologically, "white" man.[7] In *Selected Poems*, Hughes surprisingly and powerfully turns Walt "Whiteman's" work black.[8]

June Jordan plays on the Whitman/White Man association in her 1980 essay on the poet, when she writes, "I come back to Walt Whitman. What in the hell happened to him? Wasn't he a white man?" and goes on to claim "that Walt Whitman is the one white father who shares the systematic disadvantages of his heterogeneous offspring trapped inside a closet that is, in reality, as huge as the continental spread of North and South America."[9] As Jordan demonstrates here, Whitman's work becomes for a number of African American writers (Jordan and Hughes prominent among them) a kind of utopian imaginary of the past that they retrieve and hold onto to try to build a broader collective political imagination for the future. For all his problematic qualities, Whitman was the one white American writer who wrote the imaginary that continued to best sustain these African American writers in their American present.

Episode after episode in American history reminds us why Whitman's departing phrase, "So long!," has been so resonant for African American writers. There were, for example, the painful scenes that America witnessed in September 2005 of the poor and dispossessed black population of New Orleans, left behind to fend for themselves as their city flooded after the more prosperous and mobile largely white population had left, scenes that seemed drawn straight out of newsreel footage of the last years of apartheid in South Africa, with thousands of blacks corralled and abandoned. Such scenes haunt the country and strike many as the unhappy return of the repressed knowledge of poverty and racism: it *has* been *so long* since promises were made, since vows to act "with all deliberate speed" to undo the nation's sorry history of racial injustice were taken, and yet we're all still waiting. One cluster in Langston Hughes's 1959 *Selected Poems* is called "Montage of a Dream Deferred," and it is that sense of deferral, Hughes suggests, that defines the African

American condition of life in this country and is a key to his response to Whitman. "So long" does not indicate only good-bye but also resonates with the *postponement of desire*, the deferral of a dream, whether the dream is reunion with a friend or a loved one or realization of a national dream of freedom and equality. The English word "long" derives from the Old English "lang," meaning desire. "So long" is not just "till we meet again," it is a command to "long," to desire that deferred meeting: so, *long*. Or, again in Whitman's words, it is the "inference that somewhere, some how, they will doubtless so meet,—sooner or later." It's what would become the phraseology of the blues.

We tend to recall Whitman's "So Long!" as the poem that enacts the ultimate metonymy, that full identification of Whitman with his book, because of its memorable lines: "This is no book, / Who touches this, touches a man, . . . / I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me forth."[10] But it is also and primarily a poem in which Whitman makes clear his distress at how long the American experiment is taking to reach the fulfillment of its stated ideals, what he calls its "true theory":

> Once more I proclaim the whole of America for each individual, without exception.
> As I have announced the true theory . . . of The States, I adhere to it;
> . . .
> As I joined the stern crowd that still confronts the President with menacing weapons—I adhere to all,
> . . .
> I demand the choicest edifices to destroy them;
> Room! room! for new far-planning draughtsmen and engineers!
> Clear that rubbish from the building-spots and the paths!
>
> *So long!*
> I announce natural persons to arise,
> I announce justice triumphant,
> I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,
> . . .
> I announce that the identity of These States is a single identity only,
> I announce the Union more and more compact,
> I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous politics of the earth insignificant.[11]

Whitman ends his book, then, announcing a political utopia and then sealing it with deferral: *So long!* He writes of the "single identity" of the states, the com-

paction of the Union, just as the Union is about to violently come apart at the seams; he announces "uncompromising liberty and equality" at the very time the Fugitive Slave Law was, as Whitman argued, taking away every American's liberty by forcing citizens to be complicitous in supporting the base inequality of slavery. In this poem, it's as if he is saying "so long" to the United States as he has known the country and putting his faith in some distant and unknown future nation, one that could come into being only long after he is dead, when the deferred dream might be realized, when the "splendors and majesties" that "make all the previous politics of the earth insignificant" might manifest themselves. It is a poem saying "so long" to the America that compromised its revolutionary ideals in a tainted constitution, a poem enfolding those ideals in lines that will wait "so long" as it takes to have them realized.

Whitman would continue to place this poem at the end of *Leaves of Grass*—in the 1867 edition at the end of the Civil War, in the 1871 edition in the midst of Reconstruction, in the 1881 edition after the end of Reconstruction and the retreat of the nation from its aborted attempt to construct a multiracial democracy. As he experienced deferral after deferral, he continually revised "So Long!," toning down its brash predictions of American success and emphasizing the chastened and somber tone. He muffles the repeated call of "So long!" by tucking it into parentheses, shifting the "farewell" connotation more toward the associations with desire and longing, and his confident projections of the future are deleted, leaving the stark emphasis on the still empty present: "*When* America does what was promis'd, / . . . *Then* to me and mine our due fruition."[12] His poems can conclude only "so long" as the promise is realized.

It was at the moment of writing "So Long!" that Whitman fully figured out that the readers he must address are readers who will be reading him long after he is dead. Denis Donoghue has recently written that Whitman's great strength is that he encourages his readers to imagine "what it would be to believe something that seems worth believing."[13] So, as the poet says "so long" to his own life, he accepts the "so long" that it will take for us to achieve the long-deferred ideals and enact them in our present (his future): "Dear friend, whoever you are, here, take this kiss, / I give it especially to you—Do not forget me, / I feel like one who has done his work."[14] Late in his life Whitman called America "our experiment in democracy" and was vehement in saying "I've never written or spoken of it as an achieved thing: never! never!"[15]

And so, a hundred years later, Langston Hughes opens his own book with the same phrase, and, in speaking the last words of Whitman's book, he speaks the first words of his own, riding the phrasal conveyance of "so long" over a century of American history from 1860 to 1959:

So long,
So far away
Is Africa.
Not even memories alive
Save those that history books create,
Save those that songs
Beat back into the blood—
Beat out of blood with words sad-sung
In strange un-Negro tongue—
So long,
So far away
Is Africa.

Subdued and time-lost
Are the drums—and yet
Through some vast mist of race
There comes this song
I do not understand
This song of atavistic land,
Of bitter yearnings lost
Without a place—
So long,
So far away
Is Africa's
Dark face.[16]

To better understand how this poem is a direct response to Whitman, we must realize the moment that the poem recalls, one of the most charged moments in Hughes's life, when he left Columbia University and boarded a freighter for Africa in 1923, packing a box of books that he had picked up at Columbia, and then, in a moment of revulsion over the white traditions that he thought he was abandoning to go to Africa, to his "atavistic land," he threw the books overboard, volume by volume, "like throwing a million bricks out of my heart," right up until he got to *Leaves of Grass*. Just as he was about to say "so long" to it, he stopped, carried it with him to Africa, and held on to it for the rest of his life: "I had no intention of throwing that one away," he later recalled.[17] Whitman was thus the one American writer who accompanied Hughes to Africa. And he makes that decision to hang on to *Leaves of Grass* at the moment he is saying "so long" to America, at the moment when Africa is still "so far away": "So long, / So far away away / Is Africa."

The poem was first published in *Crisis* in July 1930, when Hughes was twenty-eight, seven years after his journey to Africa. It is a poem that Hughes had worked and reworked as he struggled to come to grips with his African American identity, a hyphenated identity that he indicates with the title, "Afro-American Fragment": this poem is a fragment of a song, and it's about fragmented song. It begins with a piece of Whitman's song and echoes pieces of African song, and it's also a poem about a fragmented sense of identity, as Hughes recalls that moment at sea, leaving America behind, with Africa looming ever closer, when he abandons the "history books" written in "strange un-Negro tongues" but keeps one white man's book, the one that bid him "so long" in its own final sad "song."

The phrase does double duty in Hughes's poem: to go to Africa is to say "so long" to America, something he finally cannot do, because America, he knows, is part of what he is; nor can he say "so long" to Africa, because some core of his identity will always draw him there. For African Americans, Hughes suggests, the memory of Africa is often kept alive only by words, by history and song, which can internalize some of the reality of Africa, can "beat [it] back into the blood," but also, because the songs and histories are written in English, in European tongues, the very words of the song beat Africa *out* of the blood. The songs come from black suffering. Whitman conceived of *Leaves of Grass* during a time Africa was literally beat out of blacks with the bloodletting of slavery, but the loss is also more subtle: the songs are "beat out of blood" in that their beats, their rhythms, come from deep within the body. Hughes's admiration of black music, from spirituals to blues to jazz to bebop, always recognized the "atavistic" nature of the music, as if these distinctly American beats were following the rhythms of lost, long-ago songs from Africa, the beat still somehow in the blood, reemerging in American settings.

The key rhymes that weave through the poem are long/song and race/place/face. How does one's face carry race and place, and what race, what place? Does a black American face call up a lost place; is Africa written on some American faces atavistically? And can a face ever be free of race? In what place could there be a face beyond race? And how long *is* the song, this song of longing? Those long black songs, Hughes suggests, are all that African Americans have left of an African memory: "Not even memories alive / Save those that history books create, / Save those that songs / Beat back into the blood." That repeated "save" at the beginnings of lines 5 and 6 initially means "except for"—there are no living memories *except* for those the history books give us and the songs give us—but the "save" also becomes a command, a plea: *Save* those memories that history books create; *save* those memories that songs restore to our blood. Hughes would ultimately retrieve those books he threw overboard by replacing them with new copies. "So long" in the sense of good-bye transforms into "so long" in the sense of desire:

long for an idealized Africa, long for an idealized America; so long to both and to neither one. African Americans have little choice but to embrace the hyphenated fragment that divides and unifies and defines them.[18]

Picking up, then, from Whitman's deferral of American history in "So Long!," Hughes opens his book with a mixing of American and African history, an Africanizing of American history that had certainly begun in Whitman's time and was accelerating in Hughes's time, a process of merging and melding that America's violent civil rights struggles demonstrate has been anything but a steady or easy process. When Hughes chose to open his 1959 *Selected Poems* with Whitman's phrase, he made a number of other striking decisions about the arrangement of the book that underscore his use of Whitman's envoi poem. These changes have received little attention in the criticism, because Hughes's *Selected Poems* has usually been dismissed by critics, viewed in recent decades as a sellout by Hughes, a retreat from his most radical, even revolutionary, statements into a kind of tamed, expurgated selection of his more innocuous poems. Some have seen the book as a cowardly self-revision, a chastening of his own revolutionary past, prompted by his harassment by Senator Joseph McCarthy's notorious congressional subcommittee on subversive activities, before which Hughes testified in 1953.

But *Selected Poems* as a unique and powerful volume still waits to be taken as seriously by critics as Hughes himself took it, when he modeled it on *Leaves of Grass*, culling and clustering his poems and creating a book that speaks to the future every bit as much as Whitman's book was addressed to readers "a hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence."[19] Just as Whitman kept altering and excising and adding and shuffling his poems to respond to the changing historical moment, so does Hughes in 1959 drop many of his most angry and most topical poems to emphasize instead a possibility of a new American voice, picking up from and extending Whitman's democratic voice, answering Whitman by having an African American assume that Whitmanian "I" that speaks for America, insisting that he too can sing America. The book offers to the future, then, an Afro-American fragmented self that seeks to become whole again through an embrace of the best that America has to offer, even while it fights off the worst, and even while it realizes that the best is still "so long" and "so far away."

So, when Hughes includes as one cluster in *Selected Poems* his 1951 "Montage of a Dream Deferred" sequence, one of the great achievements in modern American poetry, he makes two major changes.[20] He drops "Freedom's Plow," a powerful poem, and moves it to the end of the book, as I'll discuss in a moment. In its place, Hughes inserts a new poem, written specifically for the "Montage" sequence as it would appear in this volume. It's a poem that appears *only* in *Selected Poems*, and it is clear why this is the case. The poem is entitled "So Long." By in-

serting it in this key position in the "Montage" sequence, significantly just before his poem called "Deferred" (which offers Hughes's most poignant evocation of the effects of deferral), he calls up Whitman's book once again, this time using Whitman's title as his own:

So long
is in the song
and it's in the way you're gone
but it's like a foreign language
in my mind
and maybe was I blind
I could not see
and would not know
you're gone so long
so long.[21]

He has learned from Whitman that "So long" *is* indeed "in the song" of America, with deferral woven into the American dream for blacks. America's ideals hold out the promise of rights for everyone, liberty and prosperity and self-determination, but America's history of racism continually defers realization, placing "so long" between the present failed history and the future realized dream. In this short "So Long" poem, which can be read as a blues lost-love poem as well as a critique of American history, Hughes again evokes foreign language, as if this language of deferral is beyond comprehension, as if something has been lost in the translation of America's promises when they are applied to blacks. "Montage" was written at the beginning of the 1950s, just at the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate American schools "with all deliberate speed." The language of that decision *seemed* clear enough, but as the court order got carried out and challenged and interpreted, it became another foreign language for black Americans, who would discover that the phrase "all deliberate speed" apparently had "so long" built into it, just as words like *freedom* and *equality* and *justice* also did. Hughes's poem can be read as addressed to Whitman himself, now "gone so long," with his poetry of American promise for "justice triumphant, . . . uncompromising liberty and equality," sounding more and more, a hundred years later, like a "foreign language" rather than the language of America.

In his prose writings about Whitman, Hughes always emphasized the seeking side of Whitman, the poet's persistence in holding America to its principles and commitments even in the face of continual deferral. Whitman's own distinction between the United States and America—between the actual present historical nation with its flaws, corruptions, biases, and discriminations, and the utopic democratic

nation that would be realized, if at all, in the future—was one that Hughes shared and even applied to Whitman himself.[22]

On July 4, 1953, Hughes wrote on Whitman in the *Chicago Defender*, praising Whitman as the "greatest of American poets" whom "Negroes should read and remember" and saying that *Leaves of Grass* "contains the greatest poetic statements of the real meaning of democracy ever made on our shores." He quotes Whitman's poem "Says" and claims that "certainly there has been no clearer statement made on equality or civil or political rights than this statement." He praises Whitman for his frequent references "to Negroes, to Africa, to Asiatics and to darker peoples in general," and he celebrates how Whitman includes them all in "the amplitude of his democracy and his humility." A black professor of English at Roosevelt College in Chicago immediately wrote to the *Defender*, taking issue with Hughes: "From a careful study of all Whitman's published works I am convinced that he was not a friend of the Negro, and had very few contacts with Negroes, and thought that they were inferior to other human beings." This professor quotes racialist and racist passages from Whitman's journalism and concludes that "to get a true picture of Whitman one has to read his writings that are not included in *Leaves of Grass*." Hughes answered back in an article called "Like Whitman, Great Artists Are Not Always Good People." Hughes admits that Whitman in his "workaday editorials" contradicted "his own highest ideals," but nonetheless it must be "the best of him that we choose to keep and cherish, not his worst." Great people are not gods, Hughes says: "They are mortal human beings, subjected to all the currents and evils, sins and stupidities of their times." "If we let temporary human failings destroy for us the timeless value of the best of [his] work," Hughes warns, "we will have only [his] sins to contemplate."[23] Like Whitman's distinction between the historical present United States and the idealized America, Hughes sees a distinction between Whitman the workaday biased journalist, reflecting the United States of the 1840s and 50s, and Whitman the nondiscriminating poet of *Leaves of Grass*, projecting an America of the future. "My America is still all in the making," Whitman said; "it's a promise, a possible something: it's to come: it's by no means here. Besides, what do I care about the material America? America is to me an idea, a forecast, a prophecy: it may evolve to noble fruition or end as an incommensurable disaster."[24]

This *Defender* incident prompted Hughes to write his 1954 poem about Whitman, "Old Walt," that famously celebrates the "seeking" quality of the poet, who was himself frustrated by not finding what he was seeking, by the "so long" quality of the American democratic experiment, but whom Hughes admired precisely because he did not allow the frustration to stop him from continuing to seek: "Old Walt Whitman / Went finding and seeking, / Finding less than sought / Seeking

more than found, / . . . Pleasured equally / In seeking as in finding."[25] The finding, Hughes suggests, can only come if the seeking continues, though the extended deferral, he warns in a number of his "Montage" poems, could well lead to another violent explosion, as it did in the 1860s, and as indeed it would again in the 1960s, soon after Hughes's *Selected Poems* appeared. Hughes's "Harlem" was prophetic: "What happens to a dream deferred? / Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun? / . . . *Or does it explode?*"[26] In *Selected Poems*, Hughes puts "Old Walt" in the cluster of poems he calls "Distance Nowhere," a sequence exploring how getting from "here" to "there" really involves a "distance" that "is nowhere."[27] The finding is in the seeking, even if the found never appears.

When Hughes faced the problem of figuring out how to end *Selected Poems*, to write his own envoi poem, he had a problem. He had *begun* with "so long" and could hardly end there. *Something* had happened in American history in the hundred years since Whitman had shouted his "So long!" to the future, and not all of it had been negative. There *had* been progress in civil rights for black Americans, albeit painfully slow, grudgingly gradual, as federal legislative and court decisions discernibly shifted away from assumptions of black inferiority and separation of the races.[28] Still, though, the dream of freedom and equality was being deferred, and that frustration would become the dominant tone of Hughes's book, the montage he would create, the "weary blues" he would sing: his aesthetic task, in some essential way, was to make an art of deferral, a poetry of the blues, while still keeping the eyes focused on the prize.

That phrase—"eyes on the prize"—that became the title of the famous PBS documentary on the civil rights movement of the 1960s derives from an old gospel song traced back to Negro spirituals, "Keep Your Hands on the Plow," which had been sung frequently in labor-movement rallies earlier in the century:

> Got my hands on the gospel plow,
> Wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now.
> Keep your hands on that plow, hold on.
>
> Hold on, hold on,
> Keep your hands on that plow, hold on.

While Hughes was working on his *Selected Poems*, a graduate of a voter education school on John's Island in South Carolina, Alice Wine, added some lyrics to the old song, thinking they would serve the nascent civil rights movement: "I know one thing we did right / Was the day we started to fight. / Keep your eyes on the prize / Hold on, hold on." The song continued to grow and morph and be sung across the South and eventually throughout the country during the civil rights movement.

Hughes presciently realized that this song was gaining resonance, and so he moved his poem called "Freedom's Plow" (first published in 1943) from the "Montage of a Dream Deferred" sequence, and he placed it at the end of *Selected Poems* as his concluding call. He had found his own signature envoi phrase, rhyming Whitman's "so long" (picked up from the sailors and prostitutes on the streets of New York) with "hold on" (picked up from slave spirituals and labor songs and carried into the civil rights movement).

When Hughes built his final cluster of poems, like Whitman he gathered together some earlier and some more recent poems. Whitman named his last cluster "Songs of Parting," and Hughes called his "Words Like Freedom," which we might think of as "Songs of Starting." One poem Whitman included in his cluster was the brief couplet called "The Untold Want": "The untold want by life and land ne'er granted, / Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find" (608). Here, in this little "Songs of Parting" poem, is where Hughes picked up his "seeking and finding" Old Walt, who also included another couplet in that cluster called "These Carols": "These carols sung to cheer my passage through the world I see, / For completion I dedicate to the Invisible World" (608). Both these small poems may initially strike us as examples of the older Whitman turning his back on his radical composting notion of death and life and looking instead toward a religiously conventional afterlife, something beyond his life and land, an "Invisible World." But that world that he believes will furnish "completion," will grant the finding to his seeking, is *not* beyond *this* world, just beyond his own time. *We* in the twenty-first century are now occupying what for him was "the Invisible World," and we are still seeking the completion of what he sailed forth to seek and find. These little poems, then, set up his "So Long!" envoi.

Similarly, Hughes sets up his final poem by building toward his "HOLD ON!" envoi. He begins the cluster with an early poem, one of his most familiar, "I, Too," a poem that, according to George Hutchinson, "forthrightly challeng[es] American rituals of incorporation and exclusion while more subtly playing off of Whitman's 'I Hear America Singing' with a dark minor chord."[29] The poem was written in 1924 while Hughes was trying to get back to the U.S. after his trip to Europe and was repeatedly denied passage on freighters because of his race. As its title indicates, the poem claims that the Whitmanian "I" that sings America belongs to African Americans as well as to whites: "I, too, sing America," says Hughes in the opening line, evoking his omnipresent pun of "too/two," the African American self as hopelessly divided, always pulled toward Africa and toward America, rendered marginal by white society, cast in the role of having to say "me too," as if blacks were an afterthought, not a central presence, increasing their sense of doubleness. But here the voice seeks oneness by extending the American family to in-

clude the "darker brother" who has been cast out by his white siblings—not black, but *darker*, the relationship now claimed as a gradation of difference instead of an opposition or dichotomy: darker and lighter, not black and white. The poem affirms the speaker's identity now as no longer "two," not an "Afro-American fragment" but rather African *and* American. Whitman had made the radical gesture in 1855 of not just speaking *for* black slaves (lots of white abolitionists were doing that) but speaking *as* a black slave—"I am the hounded slave . . . . I wince at the bite of the dogs" ("Song of Myself," 65) or, more threateningly, "I hate him that oppresses me, / I will either destroy him, or he shall release me" ("The Sleepers," 113)—and Hughes answers by making the equally radical gesture seventy-five years later of having a black man speak not *to* America but *as* America: "I, too, *am* America," he concludes, claiming a place at the table with his lighter-skinned brothers and sisters.[30]

Hughes was always fascinated with that vast, expanding, inclusive Whitman "I" that welcomed diversity and contained contradiction. In preparing a 1946 children's anthology of Whitman's poetry for the Marxist International Publishers, Hughes wrote in his introduction that Whitman was "one of the greatest 'I' poets of all time," but emphasized that "Whitman's 'I' is not the 'I' of the introspective versifiers who write always and only about themselves. Rather it is the cosmic 'I' of all peoples who seek freedom, decency, and dignity, friendship and equality between individuals and races all over the world."[31] Reimagining Whitman as a child playing with slaves and thus "acquir[ing] his sympathy for the Negro people and his early belief that all men should be free," Hughes in this essay characterizes Whitman's "all-embracing words" as "lock[ing] arms with workers and farmers, Negroes and whites, Asiatics and Europeans, serfs, and free men, beaming democracy to all" and affirming that "his poems contain us all."[32] At about this time, he put together an anthology, never published, called "Walt Whitman's Darker Brothers," focusing on blacks and American Indians, furthering the project of widening America's color scale that he started in his "I, Too" poem.[33]

"I, Too" sets the tone for the final cluster of *Selected Poems* and leads to a bracing series of poems that track, one final time, the problems of African American identity ("What I lack, / Black, / Caught in a crack / That splits the world in two")[34] and the frustrations of dream deferral ("Democracy will not come / Today, this year / Nor ever / Through compromise and fear / . . . I tire so of hearing people say, *Let things take their course. / Tomorrow is another day*").[35]

Then comes the conclusion, "Freedom's Plow,"[36] and it evokes one final time the seeking and finding Old Walt but again does so without naming him: "First in the heart is the dream. / Then the mind starts seeking a way." Hughes traces American history, beginning with the ships of European settlers and the ships bearing

African slaves, traces how the American land was plowed "by the free hands and the slave hands": "White hands and black hands / Held the plow handles." Then Hughes quotes, in capital letters, the words that planted the freedom seed, the words of the Declaration of Independence ("ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL"), the words of Lincoln ("NO MAN IS GOOD ENOUGH / TO GOVERN ANOTHER MAN / WITHOUT THAT OTHER'S CONSENT"), the words of Frederick Douglass ("BETTER TO DIE FREE, / THAN TO LIVE AS SLAVES"), then the song "the slaves made up" ("KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE PLOW! / HOLD ON!"). He does not quote Whitman's words here because he is now *enacting* Whitman, *becoming* the "I, too" who sings America, claiming coequality with Whitman as the voice of the culture.

Hughes recalls America's ongoing history of failure but also acknowledges the persistence of the dream; recalling Whitman's "So Long!" ("When America does what was promised") he writes, "America is a dream. / The poet says it was promises. / The people say it *is* promises—that will come true." "If the house is not yet finished," he says, "Don't be discouraged, builder! / . . . The plan and the pattern is here, / Woven from the beginning / Into the warp and woof of America," and, affirming what he had claimed in "I, Too," he asks "Who is America?" and answers "You, me! / We are America!" "FREEDOM! / BROTHERHOOD! / DEMOCRACY! / To all the enemies of these great words: / We say, NO!" And then the poem moves to its conclusion:

> A long time ago,
> An enslaved people heading toward freedom
> Made up a song:
> *Keep Your Hand on the Plow! Hold On!*
> That plow plowed a new furrow
> Across the field of history.
> Into that furrow the freedom seed was dropped.
> From that seed a tree grew, is growing, will ever grow.
> That tree is for everybody,
> For all America, for all the world.
> May its branches spread and its shelter grow
> Until all races and all peoples know its shade.
>
> KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE PLOW!
> HOLD ON!

Echoing Whitman right down to the exclamation points, Hughes prepares his readers for a long and rough journey through a continuing American history, one

that will require faith in the seed that has been planted, faith that the tree will someday shade all races, all peoples. The old "gospel plow" of the spiritual has now been replaced by a more ambiguous and activist plow, because the promised future is no longer the afterlife promised by old gospel religion, the afterlife that kept so many slaves docile as they suffered through this life because they had been assured their payoff would come in eternity as long as they remained subservient here. Now, though, "Freedom's Plow" insists the prize is in *this* world, a freedom to be realized *in* history, in America, in the world. It hasn't come quickly or easily, and it won't. It will still take "so long." It will require us to "hold on." And the payoff is still unsure: our history is leading us, as Whitman put it, to an America that will "evolve to noble fruition or end as an incommensurable disaster." It's a wild, unpredictable, long ride, with a clear destination but no map. Hold on, so long!

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, *Daybooks and Notebooks*, ed. William White, 3 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 3: 669. Whitman's friend and disciple was William Sloane Kennedy, who, in *The Fight of a Book for the World* (West Yarmouth, MA: Stonecroft Press, 1926), 110, comments at length on Whitman's phrase: "The salutation of parting—'So long!'—was, I believe, until recent years, unintelligible to the majority of persons in America, especially in the interior, and to members of the middle and professional classes. I had never heard of it until I read it in *Leaves of Grass*, but since then have quite often heard it used by the laboring class and other classes in New England cities. Walt wrote to me, defining 'so long' thus: 'A salutation of departure, greatly used among sailors, sports, and prostitutes. The sense of it is 'Till we meet again,'—conveying an inference that somehow they will doubtless so meet, sooner or later.' This is interesting as comment on his use of the phrase in his Songs of Parting, conveying an intimation of his belief in personal immortality. The phrase is said by the etymologists to be probably a corruption by sailors of the Oriental 'Salaam' ('saluting,' 'wishing you peace'). It is evidently about equivalent to our 'See you later.' The phrase is reported as used by farm laborers near Banff, Scotland. In Canada it is frequently heard, 'and its use is not entirely confined to the vulgar.' It is in common use among the working classes of Liverpool and among sailors at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and in Dorsetshire. . . . The London *Globe* suggests that the expression is derived from the Norwegian 'Saa laenge,' a common form of 'farewell,' *au revoir*. If so, the phrase was picked up from the Norwegians in America, where 'So long' first was heard. The expression is now (1923) often used by the literary and artistic classes."

2. Walt Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier, 6 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 3: 1137.

3. See Kenneth M. Price and Cynthia G. Bernstein, "Whitman's Sign of Parting: 'So long!' as l'envoi," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 9 (Fall 1991): 65–76, which offers a close reading of Whitman's "So Long!" in the context of the poetic tradition of l'*envoi* and concludes that the poem is "a sign of parting that represents not an ending but a threshold where the past and the future meet." I will be developing this threshold idea in this essay.

4. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860), 456. Available online at the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, http://www.whitmanarchive.org.

5. Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2: 295.

6. See George B. Hutchinson, "Langston Hughes and the 'Other' Whitman," in *The Continuing Presence of Walt Whitman*, ed. Robert K. Martin (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 16–27; Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 415–416; Kenneth M. Price, "Whitman in Selected Anthologies," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81 (Spring 2005): 147–162; and Rampersad, passim.

7. William Swinton, *Rambles among Words* (New York: Scribner's, 1859), 222.

8. Hughes designed his book to accomplish this white/black reversal in visual as well as verbal ways. Compare, for example, the frontispiece images in Whitman's 1860 *Leaves* and in Hughes's *Selected Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959). Stephen Alonso Schoff's engraving of the Charles W. Hine painting of Whitman is a detailed portrait showing a full-faced Whitman riveting the eyes of the reader with an insolent stare. Hughes chooses for his frontispiece portrait a drawing by the great poster designer E. McKnight Kauffer (Kauffer's drawings originally appeared in Hughes's *Shakespeare in Harlem* [New York: Knopf, 1942]). Kauffer's frontispiece portrait echoes Whitman's while countering it; both portraits emphasize the eyes riveted on the reader, but Kauffer's is a much more primitive and raw portrait of a young African American, with the defining lines of the portrait white against a vast black background, the opposite of the fine black lines and broad white background in the Whitman frontispiece. Kauffer's figure is not a portrait of Hughes but rather a challenging portrait of a young African American who confronts the reader with the same direct and insolent gaze that Whitman directs at us in his frontispiece. It's as if the Hughes frontispiece is the negative of Whitman's portrait, and this young African American seems to be returning Whitman's glare.

9. June Jordan, "For the Sake of a People's Poetry: Walt Whitman and the Rest of Us," in *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, ed. Jim Perlman, Ed Folsom, and Dan Campion (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 1998), 411.

10. *Leaves* 1860, 455.

11. *Leaves* 1860, 452–453.

12. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 609 (italics mine). Subsequent references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

13. Denis Donoghue, "*Leaves of Grass* and American Culture," *Sewanee Review* 111 (Summer 2003): 374.

14. *Leaves* 1860, 456.

15. Horace Traubel, "Walt Whitman's America," *Conservator* 28 (November 1917): 134.

16. Hughes, "Afro-American Fragment," *Selected Poems*, 3.

17. Rampersad, 72.

18. See Jeff Westover's illuminating reading of "Afro-American Fragment" in "Africa/America: Fragmentation and Diaspora in the Work of Langston Hughes" (*Callaloo* 25 [Fall 2002]: 1206–1223), where he argues "that it is from his dual vantage as a U.S. citizen and a member of

the African diaspora that Hughes criticizes the failures of American democracy and challenges the United States to live up to its founding dream of freedom."

19. *Leaves* 1860, 380.

20. Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel, eds., *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 664. Rampersad and Roessel offer helpful editorial notes on many of Hughes's poems, and the *Collected Poems* is an impressive accomplishment. By returning all of Hughes's poetry to a chronological arrangement, however, they have submerged even further the significance of Hughes's distinctive and resonant arrangement of his poems in *Selected Poems*.

21. *Selected Poems*, 251–252.

22. I explore this distinction in Whitman's work in my essay, "'What a Filthy Presidentiad!': Clinton's Whitman, Bush's Whitman, and Whitman's America," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81 (Spring 2005): 96–113.

23. *Chicago Defender* (July 4, 1953), 11; (July 18, 1953), 11; (August 4, 1953), 11. See the discussion of this exchange in Martin Klammer, *Whitman, Slavery, and the Emergence of Leaves of Grass* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 1–2.

24. Horace Traubel, "Walt Whitman's America," 134.

25. Hughes, *Selected Poems*, 100.

26. Ibid., 268.

27. Ibid., 81.

28. I'm reminded of John Hope Franklin's recent statement: "I'd jump out the window if I thought we had made no progress [in advancing the rights of African Americans]. What I am saying is that the changes have been superficial, and we are still a segregated society when it comes to schools and the neighborhoods where we live." See "Awash in Inequity," *New York Times Magazine* (September 18, 2005): 23.

29. Hutchinson, "Langston Hughes and the 'Other' Whitman," 22.

30. Hughes, *Selected Poems*, 275.

31. Langston Hughes, "The Ceaseless Rings of Walt Whitman," in *I Hear the People Singing: Selected Poems of Walt Whitman*, ed. Langston Hughes (New York: International Publishers, 1946), 9.

32. Ibid., 8, 9. 10.

33. Rampersad, 2: 112.

34. Hughes, "Consider Me," *Selected Poems*, 287.

35. Hughes, "Democracy," *Selected Poems*, 285.

36. Hughes, *Selected Poems*, 291–297.

{ JAMES LONGENBACH }

Whitman and the Idea of Infinity

"Folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects," said Whitman in the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*: "they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls."[1]

I want to take this expectation as seriously as Whitman did. I want to forget about the poet's place in social and literary history. I don't want to be distracted by our knowledge of how prominent a poet's spiritual aspirations once were—or how sweetly antiquated (if not downright suspicious) those aspirations seem in the twenty-first century. My subject is not simply the poet's claim to indicate a path between reality and the soul: I want to examine the ways in which the material language of poetry, the work of diction and syntax, may actually be said to provide that path as easily today as it did one hundred and fifty years ago.

Here is a brief poem by Whitman:

> When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
> When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
> When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
> How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars. (409–410)

This poem fails to achieve a path between reality and the soul, but it fails to do so in ways that help point to what success might look like. The poem's ironies are readily apparent, and by allowing the communal practice of learnedness to face off

so relentlessly against the private accident of perception, the poem allows us to discover nothing: by the second line ("When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me"), we know that the astronomer is a loser, and the poem has nowhere to go, despite the fact that the syntax keeps going, despite the fact that the poem concludes with the most readily available sound of culmination—an iambic pentameter line. This poem explains something to us, but its language doesn't make something happen to us.

Now read a brief poem by Louise Glück, "Telescope":

> There is a moment after you move your eye away
> when you forget where you are
> because you've been living, it seems,
> somewhere else, in the silence of the night sky.
>
> You've stopped being here in the world.
> You're in a different place,
> a place where human life has no meaning.
>
> You're not a creature in a body.
> You exist as the stars exist,
> participating in their stillness, their immensity.
>
> Then you're in the world again.
> At night, on a cold hill,
> taking the telescope apart.
>
> You realize afterward
> not that the image is false,
> but the relation is false.
>
> You see again how far away
> each thing is from every other thing.[2]

Written more than a century after Whitman's, Glück's poem depends on all the same oppositions, except that our attitudes toward both scientific learnedness and private perception have been scrambled. Here, the astronomer's instrument becomes the means through which we feel wonder. But we feel the wonder not while looking through the telescope but in the moment after we move our eye away from its lens. Then the feeling passes, and only at this moment, at the beginning of the poem's sixth sentence, does Glück tell us where we really are: on a cold hill, taking the telescope apart. The poem's most basic narrative information is strategically delayed so that we might feel its mere recital as revelation. For the poem's

mission is not to assert the incomprehensible distance of the stars but to make us feel the incomprehensible distance between ourselves and what appears most near to us. In the scrupulous vocabulary of the poem itself, we are not wrong to feel wonder at the "image" of the night sky; but we are wrong to think of our "relation" to the stars as being more inexplicable than our relation to any other thing, no matter how close, no matter how familiar.

"The sentence in which god comes to be involved in words is not 'I believe in god,'" says the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. "It is the 'here I am,' said to the neighbor to whom I am given over."[3] For Levinas as for Glück, the infinite is not an ontological category. It is no more inevitably to be found in the night sky than in an astronomy classroom, though it is more likely to be found through the human interaction afforded by places like a classroom. "To possess the idea of infinity is to have already welcomed the other," says Levinas, for there is no relation more harrowing and more inexplicable than the relation with whatever is plainly in front of our face.[4] To feel at home in the world is consequently to eradicate the desire for infinitude. To depend on the night sky to kindle that desire is to squelch it. "To have the idea of infinity it is necessary to exist as separated," says Levinas, and this act of separation entails a rejection of any given image of infinitude, the soul, heaven—call it what you will.[5]

In the terms of Glück's "Telescope," the feeling of infinitude is produced not by the image of any particular thing but by the relation between things. The final lines of her poem are thrilling ("You see again how far away / each thing is from every other thing") because they reduce the perceiving human mind to the status of mere "thing" while simultaneously suggesting that all such things, no matter how familiar, no matter how close at hand, participate in the mysterious grandeur we associate with infinite space. What's more, the poem does not simply explain these terms to us: it places us in a particular relation to the image it renders, and the act of reading the poem is the process of coming to inhabit that relation. By exceeding itself, the language of the poem participates in the conjuring of infinitude, leading us to conclusions we could not have predicted readily at the beginning of the poem. When this happens in the final lines, a gulf opens, and we feel the unfathomed distance between us and the very thing with which we assumed we were intimate: the poem. In contrast, Whitman's poem confirms itself, depending on an image of infinitude rather than establishing a relation through which infinitude might be experienced.

My reading of "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" is strategic, however, for Whitman is in fact the author of what seems to me the most rivetingly existential account of infinitude in the English language—a poem in which separation is

so acute that the discovery of relation with inanimate objects becomes the source of an overwhelming feeling of otherness. "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" is often discussed as if it were Whitman's farewell to poetry, and I suppose that chronology might support this assertion. But even if the poem came to Whitman at the end of poetry, the poem does not itself describe the end of poetry; it describes the relations from which his greatest poetry had always begun. More than that, the poem not only describes those relations but enacts them, making the poem itself the process through which the possibility of infinitude is spoken.

Just how far away is each thing from every other thing? Here is a list of things from the beginning of "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life": "Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten" (394). Here is a list of things from the end of "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life": "Tufts of straw, sands, fragments" (396). The thrill of this poem is that it can appear to have traveled nowhere, ending in the same place, in the same rhetoric, with which it began. But while its images of things remain pretty much the same, our relation to those things has been radically disoriented: in the first line I've quoted, the images refuse to be linked to anything beyond themselves, but in the second line, the images are wildly metaphorical, conjuring a palpable but indeterminate sense of otherness. How does Whitman alter our relation to these images? How does he make us travel this immense distance without ever averting our eyes from the unchanging ground beneath our feet?

Here is the final sentence of the poem's first section:

> Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to follow those slender windrows,
> Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,
> Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by the tide,
> Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of me,
> Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of likenesses,
> These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,
> As I wended the shores I know,
> As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types. (394)

Here, Whitman refuses the gesture with which he concludes "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer": he refuses to look up. Though he wanders the shoreline "seeking types" in a poem that was originally called "Bardic Symbols," he does not look away from the things that so stolidly refuse to be made meaningful; instead, he feels his immense separation from those things. The idea of infinity requires such separation, as Levinas suggests; but Whitman must inhabit his desolation with an intensity the poem has not yet imagined. He must become a thing himself.

I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift. (395)

As in the final lines of Glück's "Telescope," in which the perceiving mind becomes a thing among things, this transformation is simultaneously emptying and revelatory. Emptying because Whitman has aligned himself with things that seem completely lacking in interiority; revelatory because the act of entering into this relation with things is itself immensely suggestive. The chaff, straw, splinters, and weeds are like nothing, but Whitman is like them. How does it feel to be like something that is like nothing? It feels, answers the poem, as if the self were divided, unlike itself.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that no man ever can. (395)

At this extraordinary midpoint in the poem, Whitman is bent to the earth, locked to the sand beneath his feet, and the act of averting his eyes to the stars—or to any other image of spiritual plenitude—is literally unimaginable. While Whitman looks at the earth, the "real Me" looks at him, pointing first to the poems and then to the sand. The gesture equates them, suggesting that they are both things, equally bereft of meaningfulness. This refusal of likeness is once again based on an assertion of likeness: the sand is like nothing, and the poems are like the sand. But if there is consolation to be had in this complexity, Whitman refuses it as well. His most astonishing gestures are always simple to the point of flatness, and "I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that no man ever can" is to me the most astonishing line he ever wrote. The line is no pentameter; it does not sing. It is adamant, repetitive, and it does not feel like hyperbole. How does a poem recover from such a line? How does poetry recover from such a line?

"I hold you so firm till you answer me something," says Whitman to the barren earth (396). Like Glück, he is confronting the immense distance between himself

and the other: this is where Glück's poem ends, with the stark inhabitation of a relation. But unlike Glück, Whitman moves on from insight to rage, refusing to accept the relation. This effort is doomed, however: the earth will not speak to him, and rage must be superseded by submission. Whitman must speak for himself among others, and it is this final act of speaking, of exceeding the given terms of the poem, that constitutes the irruption of infinitude. This happens not in spite of the fact that Whitman has become a body in the most desolate sense; it happens because he inhabits that condition utterly, speaking from it.

"The infinite concerns me and encircles me, speaking to me through my own mouth," says Levinas. "This is not a psychological wonder, but the modality according to which the infinite comes to pass."[6] Here is the poem's final sentence:

> Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,
> Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
> (See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,
> See, the prismatic colors of glistening and rolling,)
> Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
> Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,
> From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,
> Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, dab of liquid or soil,
> Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and thrown,
> A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating, drifted at random,
> Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,
> Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-trumpets,
> We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out before you,
> You up there walking or sitting,
> Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet. (396)

The core of this sentence is delayed until the final line: we lie. Preceding the subject of the sentence are appositions to it—all the things of the world with which Whitman claims kinship: tufts of straw, sand, fragments. Like those things, Whitman himself is a dead thing; he has been buoy'd, fermented, thrown, torn. Even the fantasy of the earth's voice has been abandoned. Speaking out of this deprivation, not against it, Whitman begins a sentence with the word "me," ending the sentence with a "we" that addresses a "you." He has not turned his face from the ground beneath him, but the "you" is above him, looking down on him as he looks down at the ground. We don't know who the "you" is, and efforts to identify it clearly seem to me beside the point. For although Whitman has gestured obscurely to "this phantom" in lines preceding the poem's final fifteen-line

sentence, the phantom does not exist meaningfully until Whitman utters the word "you" in the stanza's thirteenth line: "We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out before you." By inhabiting his relation with the things below him so utterly, by refusing to look up, Whitman is gripped by the sense of something above him, something beyond him, something that looks at him as he looks at the images spread before him. When this happens, and it happens in the movement of syntax, all the dead things of the world are suddenly alive in their relation with the mysterious other who countenances them. Everything—even Whitman himself, speaker of the sentence, beholder of things—becomes a metaphor for something else. "Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet." This is not a turning from the classroom to the stars; it is the rigorous occupation of the classroom. This is not a resort to an available image of infinitude; it is the stark, unpromising inhabitation of a relation through which the possibility of infinitude is spoken.

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 10. Subsequent references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

2. Louise Glück, *Averno* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 71.

3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 75.

4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961), 93.

5. Ibid., 79.

6. Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 75.

{ KIRSTEN SILVA GRUESZ }

Walt Whitman, Latino Poet

Celebrating a Whitman anniversary is made infinitely easier by the fact that the poet has already anticipated the commemorative scene. Whitman's poetry is full of proleptic gestures, places where he directly addresses his future readers and acknowledges the time lag between them only to shrug it off. In "Starting from Paumanok," for example, Whitman confidently waves his hand toward an imagined gathering much like the one at the College of New Jersey in the fall of 2005 that prompted this collection: "See, projected through time, / For me an audience interminable."[1] "Interminable" has two meanings here: both extending indefinitely in time and expanding limitlessly in space, without terminus. Whitman's summoning of his future interlocutors is marked by a wish to imagine *where* those readers are located, as well as *when*. The most notorious example is probably "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," in which the speaker forges an intimacy with his as-yet-unborn listener on the basis of their habitation of the same space: a space in constant flux ("Flow on, river!"; "Thrive, cities"), yet so electrically charged with powers of transcendence that "It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not" (312, 313, 308).

The "audience interminable" addressed in this early section of "Starting from Paumanok," like the perpetual, self-renewing crowd of observers of the East River, is similarly located in America—but not necessarily within the confines of the nation as Whitman knew it. The spatial change he anticipates in the nation's future is a crucial element of the poem, which requests that we step successively backward and forward in time to take in the long hemispheric view:

> See revolving the globe,
> The ancestor-continents away group'd together,
> The present and future continents north and south, with the isthmus
> between.
>
> See, vast trackless spaces,
> As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,

Countless masses debouch upon them,
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institutions, known.

See, projected through time,
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,
One generation playing its part and passing on,
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its turn,
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to listen,
With eyes retrospective towards me. (176–177)

The possibilities for the evolution of "America" in time always preoccupied Whitman, and his formulation of "the present and future continents north and south" here seems to outline a much ampler sense of that term. When he urges later in the poem, "Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North" (177), it is difficult to read those directional markers as merely sectional or intranational. Moreover, Whitman intriguingly imagines that his future audience (the "hundred millions" of "Americanos") will have evolved along linguistic as well as geo-demographic coordinates. The following section repeats that summons and sprinkles in another of Whitman's favorite Spanish terms, "Libertad," for good measure—as if to acknowledge that his future audience should be addressed in what poet Gina Valdez calls "ESL 100, English Surely Latinized."[2] The poem ends with a similar address partly in Portuguese: "O camerado close!" (188).

Without buying uncritically into the mythos of Whitman as prophet, I want to follow his proleptic gaze toward twenty-first-century geopolitics, which will also involve some speculation about the historicity of the moment in which I write. Whether one chooses to interpret his imagined union of the Americas as a fraternal embrace of fellow republics or as an apologia for territorial acquisition, it cannot be read without some reference to the troubled history of inter-American relations. We must ask not only what specific forms of "Latinization" are anticipated here and there in Whitman's work but also how these traces have determined the way Latina/o writers and readers can receive and revise Whitman as part of their own strategies of linguistic, political, and cultural accommodation. For the list of contemporary U.S. Latino poets who address Whitman more or less directly in their writing is startlingly long and inclusive—from the *caribeños* Martín Espada, Victor Hernández Cruz, and Julia Alvarez to the Chicanos Luis Omar Salinas, Ricardo Sánchez, Juan Felipe Herrera, and Jimmy Santiago Baca, to the Colombian-born pop songstress Shakira. This diverse group suggests not so

much a consistent genealogical tradition of Whitmanian discipleship passing from one generation to the next, but a series of discontinuous ruptures and refractions: the figure of Whitman is liable to appear filtered through another language or a very different set of cultural constructs and collective knowledge about one of his key terms, "America." The tendency of Whitman's writing to spatialize history and temporalize space has, I will argue, a particular resonance for U.S. Latino writers, who are directly implicated in his address to the "Latinized" national future. Latinos are primed to understand his muddling of space-time coordinates not as mere mystical conceit or rhetorical device but within the concrete historical framework of five centuries of speculation about the common destiny of the Americas. My framing of this question will thus move beyond identifying Whitman's stylistic or ideological "legacy" among Latino poets to consider the logically impossible notion of Whitman *as* a Latino poet—reborn, through the logic of succession he refers to in the lines from "Starting from Paumanok" quoted above, into the very *americanismo* he struggled to articulate in a language not his own.

Whitman and "Multicultural" Adaptation

The use of the adjective "Whitmanian" to describe contemporary Latino poets is so common as to be nearly debased. It crops up most frequently in the paratextual apparatus of the book introduction or back cover blurb, suggesting that Whitman's name, as well as his perceived association with a liberal communitarian ethos, lends these writers symbolic capital. For instance, Robert Creeley's foreword to Martín Espada's first book compares him to Whitman as the spokesman of an art that "can never leave the common body of its own communal life."[3] John Bradley later reiterates that judgment in a blurb for Espada's 2001 *A Mayan Astronomer in Hell's Kitchen*, calling Espada "the moral conscience for our nation" who has been "emerging as our modern Walt Whitman."[4] Roy Skodnick's afterword to the final book of the late Miguel Algarín invokes Whitman three times in seven pages ("Like Whitman, Algarín is a sentinel of the city's streets. He listens to the 'blab of the pave'").[5] Nor is this phenomenon limited to the New York-centered publishing world, where "Latino" tends to refer to writers of Puerto Rican, Dominican, or Cuban origin: the smaller Western presses that are historically more likely to publish Chicano writers perform the same gesture. The elder statesman of Chicano studies, Luis Leal, introduces a new edition of the works of *Movimiento* writer Ricardo Sánchez with the judgment that "his literary manifesto [is] not too distant from that of Walt Whitman."[6] Arte Público Press, one of the two major bilingual and Latino-directed houses in the nation (Sandra Cisneros was first published

there), marketed one of the early books of Arizonan Ray González as being "in the tradition of Walt Whitman and Antonio Machado."[7] Jimmy Santiago Baca, the Chicano/Apache New Mexican whose adoption by San Francisco-based New Directions lent a fair amount of celebrity to his early writing from the *pinto* (prison), is described in a recent blog as "a spiritual heir to Whitman, the coming-to-be of the great and generous generality 'democracy.'"[8] Just as Latina/o novelists must contend with a commodification of magical realism that encourages them to imitate García Márquez in order to get published, poets—it seems—are readily labelled "Whitmanian" as a way to identify them as being of the [ethnic] people. Recondite, postmodernist, or L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets need not apply.[9]

The summoning of Whitman in these paratextual and critical apparatuses suggests their underlying endorsement of additive multiculturalism: a classically liberal inclusion of the contributions of various ethnic groups to American identity in a way that leaves the core of "Americanness" unchanged.[10] In the context of American literarature, additive multiculturalism reproduces a fairly banal vision of literary influence that progresses forward in time unproblematically, as Whitman begets imitators among "newer" ethnic groups. More important, it represents a lost opportunity to use that comparison as a way to discuss the vexed historical relationship of the U.S. with Latin America for which Whitman's own life and works provide a perfectly ambivalent and complex example. In the summer of 1883, the poet was asked by the Santa Fe Tertio-Millennial Anniversary Association to write a commemorative poem on the 333rd anniversary of the city's founding. Not one for writing poems to order, he instead sent a letter, which was subsequently published in a Philadelphia newspaper under the title "The Spanish Element in Our Nationality." "We Americans have yet to really learn our own antecedents, and sort them, to unify them," he writes. "They will be found ampler than has been supposed, and in widely different sources. . . . As it is, the British and German [stock], valuable as they are in the concrete, already threaten excess. Or rather, I should say, they have certainly reach'd that excess. To-day, something outside of them, and to counterbalance them, is seriously needed" (1146). After an ambiguously romanticized excursus on the nation's indigenous heritage, he continues, "As to the Spanish stock of our Southwest, it is certain to me that we do not begin to appreciate the splendor and sterling value of its race element. Who knows but that element, like the course of some subterranean river, dipping invisibly for a hundred or two years, is now to emerge in broadest flow and permanent action?" (1147).

If Whitman's quasi-prophetic construction ("who knows but . . . ?") sounds prescient today, it is not only because it proved to be demographically accurate. It anticipates as well the very terms of engagement by which Latinos enter the pop-

ular imagination in the U.S. These headlines of the past decade mirror the poet's image of a "subterranean river" that after years of quiet accumulation must surge toward the surface: "Latinos emerge as political force"; "Hispanic population surges." But this insistent identification of Latinos with the temporalities of the now-unfolding and the soon-to-be-seen renders invisible a long history of the presence of Spanish speakers and their descendents within the boundaries of the present-day U.S., as well as centuries-old patterns of expansion, imperialism, and economic neocolonialism in the rest of the hemisphere which have played out in patterns of reverse migration, countermigration, and other nonprogressive forms of being *in* the United States. The rhetoric of emergence represents Latinos as a new phenomenon, forever located in the present progressive tense of *becoming*, while for Whitman they were *always already there*—concealed in the veins of the continent's subterranean landscape of "antecedents," and therefore of historical as well as futurological interest.

Latinos, as I have argued elsewhere, were anticipated before they were "born" as a demographic category: anticipated by the steady shifting of borders, by the subtle entanglements of Spanish- and English-speaking cultures in the Americas from the sixteenth century forward.[11] Thus to label someone like Baca a "spiritual heir" to Whitman is to inscribe him at the *end* of a line, representative of a group tagged as a demographic and cultural novelty: the latest (in the sense of "belated" as well as "most recent") in a long line of immigrants to the United States. The proverbial melting pot has its own telos, its own direction in time; it is structured around a moment of eventual homogenization. In the traditional national time frame of assimilation, the Latino is both belated and doomed. Yet in its intuitive grasp of the deep indigenous and *mestizo* roots of "our" America and in its summoning of multiple temporalities, Whitman's "The Spanish Element in Our Nationality" suggests an alternative vision. The occasion of that essay's composition and reception links it ironically to Baca, for while events like the Tertio-Millennial Anniversary sought to promote a "fantasy heritage" of pure Spanishness in New Mexico, Baca's poetry specifically rejects this racist *hispano* identity in favor of what he characterizes as a redemptive indigenous spirituality of place.[12]

The relationship of summoning that exists between Walt Whitman and the Latino poets of our present is both dynamic and—if we take Whitman's scenes of proleptic address seriously—mutual. The complex temporality of those relationships cannot be adequately described through traditional models of literary influence that work through geographical dispersion ("Whitman in *x*," where *x* is a region or nation), genealogy ("Whitman in *y*," where *y* is a defined literary period or authorial "generation"), or additive multiculturalism ("Whitman and *z* poets," where *z* is an adjective of ethnicity). Literary critics following the lead of

film theorist Robert Stam have argued for replacing the notion of *influence* with *adaptation*. In the textual context as in the filmic, as Susan Gillman writes, adaptation theory challenges hierarchies of "original" and "copy," of master and disciple, implying that the relationship between text and context is "not unidirectional, with one here, reflecting, mirroring the other over, or out, there, but each adapting and producing the other." Unlike prior models of intertextuality and comparison, adaptation theory understands the generative relationship of texts and ideas through time as a historically uneven, perhaps even anachronistic, process.[13] As David Wellbery writes, citing Erwin Panofsky:

> Every historical phenomenon "represents the intersection of numerous frames of reference that confront each other as products of different spaces and times and whose interaction in each instance leads to a unique result." Such interactions produce what Walter Benjamin called "constellations," configurations of historical facts that converge in a moment of sudden insight. Thus multiple paths radiate from each event to other events. Echoes, influences, and contrasts become perceptible. Sometimes these interconnections are chronologically proximate; sometimes they leap across centuries.[14]

Adaptation across language, space, and time provides a more useful way to characterize the work of Latino writers, who rather than seeing themselves as "heirs" of a particular line of influence (there being no agreed-on "Latino canon") simultaneously maneuver among multiple traditions and networks of relation. This refusal of belonging to any particular tradition does not involve a rejection of historicity so much as a *restoration* of it. This might take the form of reading the present or the near past as a historical moment (considering, for instance, the way that neoliberal accommodations like NAFTA and its successor CAFTA have specifically altered the balance of power in the hemisphere), or it may involve the unburying of forgotten and "distant" historical visions that can be summoned into the present in a radically revisionist way.

Among those source texts of the past is the rich narrative of how Whitman was himself adapted (not merely "adopted") in Latin America—a story that, while not fully coextensive with or exclusively generative of these Latino adaptations, interestingly illustrates the conjunction of Whitman's temporality with that of Latinos. In Doris Sommer's overview, "Whitman's persona and poetry are underfoot everywhere in South America and have been enlisted in support of competing ideologies ever since José Martí celebrated him as the model citizen of a New World."[15] Sommer, along with Fernando Alegría and Enrico Mario Santí, has written extensively on this scene of adaptation, which I will briefly rehearse here. Alegría, noting that both positive and negative responses to Whitman have been exaggeratedly

intense in Latin America, lays out a schematic of "schools": on the one hand, the spiritualized Whitman that Martí enshrined in his famous essay and then willed to Rubén Darío—a figure for universal love and the triumph of poetry over the commercial instinct; and on the other, the more carnal (and *carnalista*) rendering produced by Pablo Neruda, who reinterpreted that earlier Modernist vision to present Whitman as a protosocialist defender of the people.[16] Santí, in contrast, eschews Alegría's genealogical notion of schools of influence to characterize the Latin American treatment of Whitman in terms that intimate a political history: it is a "commonly shared contest or *conquest* of Whitman—a contest or conquest of wills over the most accurate appropriation of the American bard's legacy."[17]

Santí's notion of contestatory adaptation is also central to Sommer's account. For her, even José Martí's celebratory readings bear the traces of that small countertradition emblematized by Mauricio González Garza's notorious tract from the 1970s, which "outed" Whitman as "racista, imperialista, antimexicano," citing his editorials in favor of the U.S.–Mexican War and the vicious racial justifications of Manifest Destiny that accompanied that war.[18] Limning Garza's edgy description of Whitman's language as "like a rape," Sommer then schematizes three lines of descent that emanate from the internally contradictory facets of his reading: the egalitarian Whitman of Neruda, the mystical Whitman of Borges, and the contradictory liberal democrat of Paz. She uses this tripartite scheme to associate a particular politics with each of these scenes of adaptation: each represents a different interpretation of the nature of the U.S. democratic ethos, and thus a different position on the nation's relationship with its Latin American "others":

> [Whitman's] political availability for radically different positions pits contestants in a struggle for his legacy that seems starker in Latin America than in the North. Perhaps Whitman remains a bit exotic for South Americans, available material for strong misreadings. The geographic distance and foreign traditions put the Latin Americans beyond having to wrestle with Whitman, as Pound felt he had to. Instead, Spanish-language poets could choose to claim him. And those who did took advantage of his Americanness to declare it their patrimony, to use it freely in one strident direction or another.[19]

Sommer, with characteristic irony, neatly reverses the usual direction of "exotic" gaze, so that the Anglo-American poet, for a change, sits on its receiving end. But her fidelity to traditional notions of influence (the Bloomian "wrestling" between strong and weak poets) suggests that Latin Americans experience Whitman in a more transcendent way (they are "beyond" such wrestling) than their U.S. counterparts. Moreover her scheme, though compelling, effectively polarizes the categories of "North" and "South" as geographical and ideological extremes.

Where does this leave Latinos who write—in Spanish, English, or some recombination—from a U.S. location? Can they claim the "Latin American"'s freedom from engagement with the colossus of the Whitman myth? At stake here is the nature of the overlap between the terms "Latin American" and "Latino," which are never precisely coextensive despite the distressing tendency both in the popular press and in academia to try to make them so.[20] To posit Latino writers as merely the most recent instantiation of Latin American Whitmanism renders them doubly infantilized and doubly history-less. Again, we must turn to an intersectional and transtemporal model instead—one that is willing to go outside the chronologies of generational influence to envision scenes of mutual adaptation.

Oyendo y leyendo a Whitman: Ortiz Vargas, Alvarez, Guevara, Anaya, Moraga

An obscure example will serve to trouble the Latin American–Latino boundary. Alfredo Ortiz Vargas published his epic poem, *Las torres de Manhattan*, in its original Spanish in Boston in 1939, with an English-language foreword urging North American readers to consult it as a kind of lyric travel guide, a "spiritual orientation" to the city. A translation by the minor poet Quincy Guy Burris appeared five years later in a University of New Mexico Press series with the new subtitle, "A Spanish-American Poet Looks at New York."[21] The thematic of observation and the locale of New York City make an address to Whitman almost inevitable, and indeed the poet is invoked directly in several places throughout: in a section on U.S. poets (as "The arrogant savage, / the mystical trumpeter / the lord of all poesy" [*TTOM* 48–49])[22] and most prominently in the epigraph from Whitman ("A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy!") to the book's prophetic closing poem.[23] The book's publication predates that of Lorca's posthumous *Poeta en Nueva York* as well as Neruda's *Alturas de Machu Picchu*—two milestones in Spanish-language poetry with which it shares a common imagery and a communitarian ethos—yet *Las torres de Manhattan* is never mentioned in Alegría's exhaustive *Walt Whitman en hispanoamérica*, which treats both Lorca and Neruda at some length, nor in John Englekirk's "Whitman y el antimodernismo," the two major bibliographical sources on the topic. Perhaps the neglect is unintentional, but more likely the book's publication in Boston and New York, and its apparent address primarily to that audience, seemed to place it outside the scope of those studies; Latin Americanist scholarship is often just as uncertain about what to do with U.S. Latino writing as is English-language criticism.

Ortiz Vargas was born in Colombia in the imperial year of 1898 and emigrated to the U.S. as an adult; he also published critical studies on both Spanish- and

English-language poets, including a piece on Frost and Sandburg.[25] *Las torres de Manhattan* is derivative in certain respects—particularly of Vicente Huidobro's 1919 *Altazor*—but Ortiz's vision of New York describes something that Martí, Lorca, and Neruda (who in any case would not visit the city until many years later) all ignore: its burgeoning Latino community, described in a pivotal penultimate sequence titled "The Spanish-Speaking Quarter" (*el barrio hispanoparlante*). Its residents are described through their labor: "Some sewing blouses / for Jews, some washing dishes / in cafés on Broadway, / running elevators / and painting lampshades / in the murk of factories, / some on the wharf, loading with stevedores" (*TTOM* 118–119). Using the Whitmanian gerund of *doing*, Ortiz effectively unifies the community through their common activity even as he presents them as downtrodden, threatening to "sink forever / in tired defeat" (*TTOM* 120). Although Ortiz's vision is pessimistic in certain respects ("they corrupt their language / with the bizarre confusion / of strange tongues / they will never learn" [*TTOM* 120]),[26] his observation of Spanish Harlem leads him to ponder the former glories of the Mayan and Andean cities. This imaginative journey to 1491 inspires a utopian vision of a future *reconquista*, when his readers will have rediscovered and revalued the indigenous roots of the Americas. The climax of the epic counteracts the desolation of modern New York by envisioning a world of restored human dignity, where violence is abjured in favor of "The conquest that alters / all vaporous concepts, / all well-worn truths /of space and time / and erases distinctions / between nation and nation / and gathers together / the peoples of all lands" (*TTOM* 127–128).[27] Structurally, that vision is enabled by the discovery, in a hidden part of New York City, of a nascent *Latino* sensibility, even before that term was available to express it.

Both Santí and Sommer attribute a good deal of the looseness of Whitmanian adaptations by Latin American writers to their limited access to the original, since Spanish translations, when available, were partial, and many read his work instead in French. Ortiz, however, not only reads but cites Whitman in English (his Whitmanian neologism "Democracity" appears in the Spanish original). The closing lines echo "Song of Myself" in a way that could hardly be more obvious:

> I pass. Singer and pilgrim,
> I pass like the shadows
> of gray in the afternoon . . .
> And I come from afar . . .
> And I go even farther . . . (*TTOM* 134, ellipses in original)[28]

Ortiz Vargas's uses of Whitman, both direct and indirect, thus point out the need for another way of thinking about those Latina/o writers who first encounter

Whitman in English—sometimes even in an Anglo-American school setting, where Julia Alvarez locates her first glimmer of the problems of literary inheritance in her 2004 collection, *The Woman I Kept to Myself*. In "Passing On" (a title that contains all the multiple meanings of the phrase as it is used in Morrison's *Beloved*), the poet confronts a vision of herself as a young woman, "Emily in one hand, Walt in the other, / That's how I learned my craft, struggling / to navigate my own way between them."[29] While "Emily" remains disembodied, the speaker must indeed wrestle with "rowdy Walt, so loud and in my face, / I've had to stuff his mouth with leaves of grass / at times to hear my own song of myself!" (*TWIK* 139). However comic this image, it also resonates with a subtle critique of imperialism that runs throughout Alvarez's work, where the dominance of U.S. ways over her parents' Dominican ones—frequently expressed as the dominance of pragmatic English over beloved but powerless Spanish—is lamented again and again.[30]

Even more pointed is the poem "Direct Address," a kind of didactic meditation on the efficacy of the Whitmanian mode. Alvarez writes:

> though I know
> that thousands upon thousands of readers
> have trod his *Leaves of Grass*, I'm still convinced
> it's me Whitman's instructing when he writes,
> *Look for me under your bootsoles.* (*TWIK* 137)

What starts out as a poem about the anxiety of influence and the poet's fears about her own specificity as a subject becomes a rhapsody to the erasure of self: "The only way the dead come back," the speaker concludes, is through the written word. The poem ends:

> I'd like to think this is how I'll come back:
> lines in a poem that spring upon your lips,
> though who the author was has slipped your mind.
> It's agency, not fame, I want: my words
> at work, a slap awake, a soothing hand.
> But since death's likely to transform my task,
> There's no direct address that I can give
> Where you should look for me. So you (yes, *you*!)
> Keep watch! I could be under your bootsoles
> or inside this poem already inside you. (*TWIK* 138)

Rather than "stuff his mouth," the speaker here joins Whitman at his game, addressing not only the reader of the future but the Good Gray Poet himself ("yes, *you*!")—even as she rejects the personalism exemplified by the cult of Whitman

("who the author was has slipped your mind"). Paradoxically, the monolingual Whitman shows the poet-narrator a way to overcome the language problem she describes excruciatingly elsewhere in the collection: Spanish as the language of the home versus English as the language of literary initiation and public life. The individual can resist both the decomposing force of time and the structural consequences of this linguistic duality by celebrating a return to prelinguistic experience: "the poem already inside you." The ending of "Passing On" makes this point explicitly. The speaker's wavering "between" Dickinson and Whitman becomes an analogy for an in-between Latino sensibility: "Such mixtures are my forte, after all, / Since I prefer the hyphenated voice" (*TWIK* 139):

> And most of these voices not in English,
> Some in Spanish, and some in that first tongue
> where all I knew was heartbeat and the hum
> of Mami's murmuring blood becoming mine. (*TWIK* 140)

A more explicit literalization of the trope of literary descent could hardly be found. Whitman, then, gets embodied in Alvarez's poems not as a translator, and not as a literary father in any kind of straightforward way, but as a mediator of the questions of linguistic difference that often crop up in Latina/o writing.

Maurice Kilwein Guevara's short poem "Long Distance" (1996) likewise summons the body of Whitman to describe the complexities of Latino self-creation within very specific geographical, linguistic, and political fields: in his case "Pennsylvania to the coast of Ecuador."[31] The speaker interrupts a story about his mother's efforts to talk over a bad connection to her dying aunt in Ecuador to make an apparently unconnected, random observation: "This morning I saw Walt Whitman / half-buried in the blowing snow of the foothills." The two events are discontinuous in time: "This was two weeks ago," he says of the phone conversation, while the remainder of the verbs are in the present progressive tense. The poem mixes temporal with spatial metaphors throughout (the mother, on the phone, is "waiting / the four thousand miles"). The apparently irrelevant, and never explained, reference to the body of Whitman—a statue, perhaps, or a vision from the speaker's morning dream—links together four characters in the poem: the English-monolingual Whitman, the presumably bilingual speaker and his mother, and the Spanish-monolingual great-aunt. The fragile, but real, communication of these four across continents, languages, and centuries softens the blow of the old woman's death, as her voice fades away. "*Te oigo*," she says, and the speaker translates, "I hear you" to lead seamlessly from the reported conversation back to his internal meditation in the final line: "Singing under the snow. Singing under the falling snow."

The phrase "*Te oigo* / I hear you" serves not simply as a quotidian translation but as an *entrada*, an entryway, into Whitman's poetics of calling and recognition. The snow-buried body of Whitman, along with the failing great-aunt, is another referent of the word "singing" in the last line; he both hears and is heard, but he mostly listens in the silence. Indeed, it is striking how frequently the responses to Whitman of writers from marginalized groups emphasize that they want *him* to listen to *them*: think of Langston Hughes's reminder, "I, too, sing America."

One might usefully contrast Rudolfo Anaya's "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico," which also summons Whitman as an interlocutor ("I met Walt, kind old father, on the llano," it begins) but never really invites him into a dialogue. The speaker identifies himself as an acolyte of the Good Gray Poet, a True Believer: "I knew you would one day find the Mexicanos of my land . . . I kept the faith, don Walt, because I always knew / You could leap continents! Leap over the squalor!"[32] "Don Walt" personally singled out this "Chicano child," the poem suggests, for his literary talent: "in your *Leaves of Grass* there was / salvation for the child." Anaya invokes *Movimiento* poet Ricardo Sánchez's figure of *canto y grito*:

> Save our children now! I shout. Put *Leaves of Grass* in their
> lunch boxes! In the tacos and tamales!
> Let them call him Abuelo! As I call him Abuelo!
> Chicano poets of the revolution! Let him fly with you
> as your squadrons of words fill the air over
> Aztlán! Mujeres chicanas! Pull his bigote as you
> Would tug at a friendly Abuelo! His manhood is ours!
> Together we are One![33]

Sommer suggests that Latin American poets have a particular burden to point out the weak spots in Whitman's poetics of union, to resist his "resistless" force. Anaya's poem avoids this work of critique: no link is made between the scenes of poverty in New Mexico and the history of Manifest Destiny in that region. The notion that politically engaged Chicanas would find liberation by imagining themselves tugging on the mustache of grandfatherly Whitman, claiming "his manhood" as their own, is unconvincing if not downright invasive. Anaya's extensive, even exaggerated positioning of Whitman as father and grandfather perhaps bespeaks an anxiety about literary parentage and legitimacy—and an inability to imagine *adapting* Whitman any other way than in chronological terms of generations.

To "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico," Cherríe Moraga's "New Mexican Confession" provides a fruitful point of comparison, since it shares that poem's landscape but not its Whitmanian style. Rather than inserting Spanish

terms into its English in a decorative way, it poses bilanguaging not as a choice but as a result of larger social patterns that reflect the distribution of power:

> These were the words denied me in any language:
> piñon
> cañón
> arroyo
> except as names on street signs,
> growing up in California sprawl[34]

A note beneath the title situates the poem as a meditation on reading and literary influence: "Upon reading Whitman fifteen years later. Jemez Springs, 1988." It is, then, a poem about temporality as well, one that drifts between the individual experience of time ("fifteen years later" than *what*, we are never told; it is the speaker's secret) and that unimaginable abstraction, human history. Whitman's tactic of transpersonal identification, of course, seeks to overcome this divide, and Moraga's rereading of Whitman seems to encourage her to try it:

> I am the Guisewa woman
> across the road
> who 300 years ago . . .
> walled up the Spanish religion
> built templos to enclose his god
> while the outer cañón
> enveloped and pitied them all.

But this foray into the poetics of union, while it does allow her to employ a Spanish word previously "denied," ends there, walled in: a summoned-up image of the past that goes nowhere. Instead, a new stanza follows, one that compares the speaker to an aging Whitman whose "body knew the same fragility." Where Whitman wanted to "blend" with "the mountain / the blade of grass / the boy," the speaker finally distinguishes her own identificatory process from his: "I *bleed* with the mountain / the blade of grass / the boy / because my body suffers in its womb." With this recourse to the *diferencia* of the female body, Moraga turns the poem into a feminist critique, to be sure, but one that goes beyond the linguistic rejection of "man" as universal term: "I am everyman more than man."

Whitmanian *encarnación:* Espada and Hernández Cruz

While Ortiz Vargas, Alvarez, Guevara, Anaya, and Moraga describe a primal encounter with Whitman in (and as) American English, other Latino poets have

accessed Whitman first through Spanish translation or through prior Latin American readings, arriving indirectly to the colossus of his reputation. And it is Neruda—the poet who, much more than Martí, codes as both "populist" and "popular" in the United States—who serves them as Whitman's primary mediator. Martín Espada is frequently cited as Whitman's heir apparent among contemporary Latino writers, not least because he lived for many years in Brooklyn.[35] But that comparison is made possible by way of Neruda's vision of Whitman as a radical egalitarian, a vision apparently untroubled by Whitman's problematic vision of race. Espada's poems are populated with the marginal figures of migrant workers and the working poor, who struggle with their linguistic and economic position in a world that rejects them as alien. In a 2002 interview with Ilan Stavans, Espada commented, "I didn't start at the beginning. I didn't start with Whitman and move forward. I moved backwards to Whitman . . . they [Hughes, Sandburg, Neruda] were all descended from Walt Whitman. Then, once I discovered Whitman, that was like going to the source; that was the fountain from which the waters sprang."[36]

Espada solidifies this notion of descent and literary parentage in his introduction to an issue of *Ploughshares* commemorating the centenary of Neruda's birth:

> In October, I visited Walt Whitman's house in Camden, New Jersey. Whitman was Neruda's poetic father, and mine, too. Pablo would have been shocked. Compared to Neruda's house at Isla Negra—an astonishing museum and a national treasure—Whitman's house is spare and solitary, overlooking a prison across the street. On this day, five people trailed behind a tour guide who seemed more preoccupied with Whitman's chairs than the poet himself. The priorities of the two governments, and the two cultures, were starkly illustrated.[37]

The "stark" difference between the "two governments, and the two cultures," while rhetorically effective, discourages historical nuance (during the Pinochet regime, Isla Negra was closed to the public); Espada's binary seems to offer the poets of the South, yet again, as the heroic counterforce to the North's imperialism. But Espada's attention to the *lieux de mémoire* of Whitman—the places where his body was or is, the sites of his offical memorialization—is more nuanced. His meditation on the poet's *body*, rather than his words, becomes a site from which to point out discrepancies between the ideology of democratic equality, for which Whitman is often made a mouthpiece, and the *actual* inequality of both minority citizens and migrant noncitizens. The mention of the "prison across the street" recalls one of Espada's best known poems, one whose message hinges on the testimony of Whitman's dead—or is it?—body.

In Espada's "Another Nameless Prostitute Says the Man Is Innocent" (1997), a poem about Mumia Abu-Jamal that achieved some notoriety when National Public Radio judged it too political to be read on the air, Whitman transcends space and time to become a key witness in the Abu-Jamal case: "even / Walt Whitman knew what happened, / poet a century dead, keeping vigil / from the tomb on the other side of the bridge." Invoked three times in the course of the poem, the "poet a century dead" is once again *Neruda's* Whitman, the politicized denouncer of national wrongs: the poet's tomb becomes a symbolic place "where the granite door is open / and fugitive slaves may rest." His rigorous gaze holds the present to account for past misdeeds—specifically, for the century of racial exclusion that in the poem's view all but dictated the outcome of Abu-Jamal's case.[38] The irony that the crime occurred in the vicinity of the tomb of the national poet implicates the U.S. as a penal state—an insight that is key to following Espada's distinction between Whitman's "immigrants" and his own "migrants." One of the characteristics of the penal state is the policing of its borders militarily, ideologically, and judicially, by separating persons into categories of "legal" and "illegal." At the same time, the nation's economy relies heavily on the labor of the very persons who are rendered alien and abject in this process: Latina/o workers, in Espada's poetry, are the hidden clockwork that makes possible the luxuries of our unthinking everyday life. Espada joins in the Latin American claim upon an "America" that exceeds the boundaries of the United States, and he layers onto this a critique of citizenship-based rights. That contradiction—of claims to sanctuary foreclosed because of restrictions on access to full personhood status—is a problem not anticipated in Whitman, for whom the state and the nation are coextensive and, at least in theory, fully inclusive: the immigrant becomes an American once she sets foot on Brooklyn's docks.

Espada's 1982 poem "Heart of Hunger" lodges an overt political critique of this un-Whitmanian bifurcation of *americanos* into legal and illegal, visible and invisible. It begins:

> Smuggled in boxcars through fields of dark morning,
> tied to bundles at railroad crossings,
> the brown grain of faces dissolved in bus station dim,
> immigrants: mexicano, dominicano,
> guatemalteco, puertorriqueño, orphans and travelers,
> refused permission to use gas station toilets,
> beaten for a beer in unseen towns with white porches,
> or evaporated without a tombstone in the peaceful grass.[39]

The catalogue of Spanish-language national identities updates Whitman's broadly sketched "Americanos" with concrete detail, though its dark rendering

of racist "white porches" and an "open road" marked by anxiety and peril rather than by exuberance and freedom might seem to locate this poem's sensibility far from Whitman's. Yet the opening of "Heart of Hunger" also recalls the sixth poem in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, later titled "Faces," which veers away from its opening catalogue of contented faces to describe the poor man, the criminal, the cripple: "This now is too lamentable a face for a man; / Some abject louse asking leave to be . . cringing for it / . . . / This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage / . . . / This is a face of bitter herbs" (125–126). These "faces"—disembodied, dehumanized, and left out of the social compact—must be brought back into it, which the poem accomplishes by following the speaker through a kind of conversion to social commitment. He vows to attack the perpetrators of such devastation ("I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother" [127]) and sets his determined proleptic gaze toward the future, toward what he insists is their certain redemption ("I shall look again in a score or two of ages" [127])—although the *process* by which that redemption will be carried out is never logically explained.

Espada's survey of the "brown grain of faces" in the bus station registers a similarly contained anger at those unnamed "agents" who doom the migrants to lie "without a tombstone in the peaceful grass": an image that seems to put Whitman's key metaphor, the grass, into ironic question. The close of Espada's poem does, however, offer a modest image of redemption, not unlike the resolution of "Faces":

> Yet there is a pilgrimage,
> a history straining its arms and legs,
> fishermen wading into the North American gloom
> to pull a fierce grasping life
> from the polluted current.[40]

Rather than the Whitmanian "open road," with its indeterminate telos, the migrants understand their experience through the Latin-Catholic temporality of pilgrimage, which ends in salvation. Those who survive the ordeal become "fishermen" who wrest their sustenance from the waters despite the difficult circumstances. They are "fishers of men" as well: the image recalls the transitional and transformational experience of those migrants who cross the Río Grande as "wetbacks" and of those who are sometimes present to help them. Both the sacred and secular narratives suggested by this image propose a radical revision of the dominant U.S. narrative of immigration and eventual assimilation. The journey into what Espada pointedly qualifies as "North" America, translating Latin American usage, is not a journey toward the light but toward the "gloom," the

"dim" of the bus station; the fierce current of economic opportunity they play is already "polluted." Espada insists here on giving a *history* to the migrant struggle, and it is, moreover, an embodied history with "arms and legs," not an alienated, commodified laboring machine. Like Whitman, Espada dwells on the body to project an emancipatory narrative that cannot always be read in the face or on the surface. The spectatorial scene of "Heart of Hunger" is quintessentially Whitmanian: narrated by a speaker who claims to see into the dark, hidden corners of things, it ends with a figure addressing the future across the current of time—"sauntering the pavement or crossing the ceaseless ferry" (Whitman, "Faces," 125). Within the stream of humanity, an individual face can be glimpsed, addressed, redeemed.

Unlike Martín Espada, Victor Hernández Cruz was not born in Brooklyn—he left Puerto Rico as a child—but the urban space of New York plays a similarly crucial role in his figuration of access routes to fellow *americanos*, including Whitman, across time and space. While Espada channels a version of Whitman previously shaped by the populist poetics of Neruda, Hernández Cruz gravitates instead to Martí's more spiritualized Whitman. His essay "Writing Migrations" conjures a vision of Whitman—perversely but instructively—as a minor character in the dramatic tale of the development of *Latin* American poetry: "It was while reading an article by José Martí published in Argentina that Darío first became aware of the poetry of Walt Whitman. Without reading a single line of Whitman's poetry, he wrote his famous 'Ode to Walt Whitman.' It is amazing what a group of words can suggest."[41] A long passage in the essay describes the meeting of Martí and Darío in New York "on a cold winter street," though in fact it took place in May 1893 in a comfortable parlor. The revision to history allows Hernández Cruz to place the two poets within Whitman's public zone of observation and communication, while intensifying the alienness of the Northern scene of that meeting.

The prose of "Writing Migrations" freely recirculates into the poetry, just as Whitman's 1855 "Preface" and his Civil War notebooks do; Hernández Cruz's mature collections, *Red Beans* (1991) and *Panoramas* (1997), alternate such essayistic meditations with the poems. In "Writing Migrations" he writes, "language is timing, a cadence. Everyone is not in the same present; we are inside mandalas with points of different time zones circling inside each other." Poetry, he says, "combines the chronology of a private life with history, mixes the elements of the future into the present. It is different time zones orbiting simultaneously and in close proximity. Writing is the oil spill of memory. Imagination, the memory of the future. In the writings of many Latinos in the United States there is a great grasp of this dislocation, geoconfusion, territorial crisscrossings—an inquiry into the

nature of place."[42] The poem "Time Zones" in the same collection follows through on this manifesto, taking on the task of works like "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking": to interrogate the primordial matter of life by turning back time. His landscape of origins is lush and tropical, a kind of Caribbean Paumanok:

> If we forget how to lay out a village,
> Just open a guayaba in half,
> These seeds are perfect,
> And can guide you back[43]

Those "perfect" seeds, dried and shaken together, then form the primal origin of language in rhythm, as the poem returns imaginatively to "The first string that vibrated / The Rock of Gibraltar"[44]: the symbolic location between Spain and Africa from which the post–1492 world was shaped.

From this vantage point, the speaker shape-shifts and then re-embodies himself as an observer on the teeming streets: "As I sea walk through coconut heights," he sees before him the whole history of New World contact and conquest, spinning off from the scene of Gibraltar and the moment of 1492 to highlight random corners and moments of hemispheric history:

> In the embroidery of Italians,
> Garcilaso came to José Martí,
> Who ducked Spanish spies
> In Manhattan
> And hugged Walt Whitman's beard in Philadelphia
> As the Cuban Habaneras' Shango
> Made it south to tango.[45]

Within the same simultaneous present of the poem, the Spanish Baroque poet Garcilaso de la Vega (his "Italian embroidery" suggestive of Columbus) collides with the two great poets of the nineteenth-century Americas, Martí and Whitman, to the accompaniment of African rhythms both divine (addressed to the god Shango/Changó) and profane (embedded, ultimately, in the Argentine tango that would eventually become a worldwide dance craze). And *that* beat, the poem intimates, goes on forever, although individual words

> disappear into the foam of time,
> One age living next to another,
> We are both living things at once,
> We are the cadaver that is
> About to be born.[46]

Rhythm—the experiential quality of spoken language—equalizes individuals in space and time, and as such it is key to Hernández Cruz's work in a way that far exceeds Whitman's well known musical obsessions.[47] He puns on "keeping time" to signify not just synchrony for the players but a kind of moral imperative to preserve history as a living thing, to liberate memory from its static recordings. "Time Zones" retraces Whitman's "present and future continents" in a way that insists not just upon their common history but on their common ability to *transcend* history as chronology, to move fluidly in space-time. Proleptic address and vividly contrahistorical visions—like Martí's imaginary meeting with Whitman—fill these poems and essays because they characterize the "timing" of the Latino experience in the U.S., as Hernández Cruz understands it.

The political content of Hernández Cruz's writing, I want to propose, is expressed as a critique of that progressive temporality associated with Euro-American modernity, and with the one-way U.S. (im)migration narrative in particular. His 1993 "El poema de lo reverso" spells out this message vividly:

> In which everything goes backward
> in time and motion
> Palm trees shrink back into the ground
> Mangos become seeds
> and reappear in the eyes of Indian
> women
> . . .
> I see Columbus's three boats
> going backwards on the sea
> Getting smaller
> Crossing the Atlantic back to the
> ports of Spain Cádiz Dos Palos Huelva
> Where the sailors disembark
> and go back to their towns
> To their homes
> They become adolescents again
> Become children infants
> they re-enter the wombs of their mothers.[48]

The poem's counterhistory, in which the Spaniards turn around and go home, is more than a playful jab at the Columbus quincentenary celebrations that surrounded the moment of its composition. "El poema de lo reverso" makes use of the commemorative opportunity to confound historical time, for Hernández Cruz shares with Walter Benjamin and Martí an interest in the political potential of

moments in which the past strategically irrupts into the present.[49] Just as Martí had argued that Latin Americans must embrace the indigenous and *mestizo* origins that their Eurocentric histories had rendered shameful, the poet here envisions a kind of healing return to the origin point of European contact with the Americas—then peels away another layer to insinuate that the "European" Spaniards were themselves disguised Moors, closeted Jews.

The "I" of "El poema de lo reverso" stands, like Whitman's speaker in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," craning his neck across the water toward the gaze of a future interlocutor, imagining he can see both of their reflected faces merging on that rippled surface. Both poets write from a position within the United States, awaiting the arrival of "the Spanish element in our nationality" that, "like the course of some subterranean river, dipping invisibly for a hundred or two years, is now to emerge in broadest flow and permanent action" (1147). Hernández Cruz, like many Latino writers, goes beyond the imperative of retelling lost and occluded histories—particularly those that reflect African and indigenous traditions—to challenge progressive temporality itself. This does not merely invite a spiritual or transcendent response: it is part of a larger intellectual and political project that critiques the narrative direction of modernity and its characterization of certain groups and spaces within the Americas as "backward" and "underdeveloped."[50] The counterhistorical invitation to read Whitman as a Latino poet, then, requires that we consider his flouting of chronological time in a similarly serious vein—as something more than mystical, as a thought experiment about temporality and its implications for social arrangements. This is not to claim that the biographical Whitman anachronistically shared political views with writers of the present day but to suggest that both his texts and his persona are altered as a result of their adoption by Latino poets, who take on certain dimensions of his project and infuse them with a new urgency. "Whitman" then signifies, in the strongest of this work, not just a poetic progenitor or ancestor nor a source from which to borrow, but an *entrada* into a process of mutual adaptation across space and time.

NOTES

1. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 177. Subsequent references to any Whitman citation will be from this work and given parenthetically in the text, with poems in their 1891–1892 version unless otherwise noted.

2. Gina Valdez, "English con Salsa," in *Paper Dance: 55 Latino Poets*, ed. Victor Hernández Cruz, Leroy V. Quintana, and Virgil Suarez (New York: Persea, 1995), 203–204 (originally published 1993). Although I do not discuss the work of Valdez—who hails from the Baja/Alta California border region—in this essay, this poem contains a highly effective code-switching stanza that makes exemplary use of Whitmanian anaphora as it describes "English refrito, English con sal y limon, / English thick as mango juice, English poured from / a clay jug, English tuned like a

requinto from Uran, English lighted by Oaxacan dawns, / English spiked / with mezcal from Juchitan, English with a red cactus / flower burning in its heart."

3. Robert Creeley, "Foreword" to Martín Espada, *Trumpets from the Islands of their Eviction* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press, 1994), 9.

4. Espada, *A Mayan Astronomer in Hell's Kitchen* (New York: Norton, 2000). The Bradley quote appeared in *Bloomsbury Review.*

5. Roy Skadnickh, "Afterword" to Miguel Algarín, *Love is Hard Work: Memorias de Loisaida* (New York: Scribner's, 1997), 145.

6. Luis Leal, "Introduction to WSU Press Edition," in *Canto y Grito Mi Liberación*, by Ricardo Sánchez (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996), 8. The title of Sánchez's collection (originally published in 1973) comes from his revised Whitmanian mantra, "I ADAMANTLY SING AND SHOUT MY LIBERATION" (15).

7. Ray González, *From the Restless Roots* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1986), back cover.

8. Curt Hopkins, "A Bellrope in the Wind: Poet Jimmy Santiago Baca Steps into the Light," http://morphemetales.blogspot.com/2004/12/bellrope-in-wind-poet-jimmy-santiago.html.

9. On the "marketing" of Latinos as exotic ethnics, see in general Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Making and Marketing of a People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), and Karen Christian, *Show and Tell: Identity as Performance in U.S. Latina/o Fiction* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). On poetry in particular, see Maria Damon, "Avant-garde or Borderguard: (Latino) Identity in Poetry," *American Literary History* 10: 3 (Fall 1998): 478–496. The closest equivalent of the cult following of García Márquez for Anglo-American poetry readers would be Neruda; on the tendency of publishers to market Latino writers by invoking Neruda, see Teresa Longo, "Post Wonder Bread: Pablo Neruda in Centerfield?" in *Pablo Neruda and the U.S. Culture Industry*, ed. Teresa Longo (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 141–150, as well as the other essays in that collection.

10. Critiques of additive (sometimes called "pluralistic") multiculturalism endorse, instead, a "radical" or "revisionist" multiculturalism that would use the alternative cultural perspective from the margins as a way to reshape and rethink the normative version of identity. For a succinct discussion of these terms and an overview of the debates, see the introduction to *Mapping Multi-Culturalism*, ed. Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

11. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), ix–xiii.

12. See B. V. Olguín, "Jimmy Santiago Baca" in *Latino and Latina Writers*, vol. 1, ed. Alan West-Durán, María Herrera-Sobek, and César Salgado (New York: Scribner's, 2004), 161–172, for this argument. Olguín also identifies Baca as a poet who "transcends" the "chauvinistic nationalist pantheon" emblematized by Whitman and Neruda (164).

13. Susan Gillman, "Whither Transamericas Studies?" forthcoming. She argues against the preconception "that [historical] context is relatively stable, whereas all the variability is lodged in different textual representations. If we think instead of text-context as distinct entities, with multiple possible interrelations, then the whole question of the 'inside' and the 'outside' comes into focus in radically different ways than it has heretofore."

14. David E. Wellbery, "Introduction," in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David E. Wellbery (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), xxii.

15. Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 52. See also the two essays she refers to here as the other parts of her trilogy on Whitman in Latin America: "Supplying Demand: Walt Whitman as the Liberal Self" in *Reinventing the Americas*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 68–91, and "The Bard of Both Americas," in *Approaches to Teaching Whitman's* Leaves of Grass, ed. Donald D. Kummings (New York: MLA, 1990), 159–167.

16. See Fernando Alegría, *Walt Whitman en hispanoamérica* (Mexico City: Ediciones Studium, 1954) and "Whitman in Spain and Latin America" in *Walt Whitman and the World*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 71–95. "Carnalista" translates, roughly, as a member and defender of a brotherhood defined by other affiliations than blood. An interesting comparison of racial thought in the Whitman-Neruda relationship can be found in James Nolan, *Poet-Chief: The Native American Poetics of Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

17. Enrico Mario Santí, "The Accidental Tourist: Walt Whitman in Latin America," in *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*, ed. Gustavo Pérez-Firmat (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 156–176, 159 (emphasis in original). Santí traces the initial appeal of the (often twice-translated and abridged) work of Whitman to his audience's difficult positioning at the crossroads between Romantic and Modern sensibilities. Whitman at first "tends to be a *theme* rather than a stylistic or rhetorical model," but in the first decade of the twentieth century "the Whitman theme would be gradually replaced by his persona as it seduced Latin American bards into accepting it as a full-blown rhetorical model" (160). The rhetoric of seduction and conquest is key here, for critics following in Santí's wake have picked up the hints he drops in it about the homoerotic affinity Latin American poets display toward Whitman. In "His America, Our America: José Martí Reads Whitman" (*Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996], 83–91), Sylvia Molloy brilliantly gets at the way erotic affinity replaces genealogy as a model of influence as she explores Martí's revulsion at homoeroticism in Whitman: "In Whitman's communal masculinity Martí recognizes his own all-male affiliative model, the revolutionary family of sons and fathers confounded in a continuum of natural, unhierarchical masculine emotion, and he also recognizes the political, specifically *American*, potential of that model . . . Martí will have been the only Latin American to consider, in Whitman, the erotic together with the political, and to register his anxiety, even his panic, before that explosive alliance" (90).

18. Mauricio González Garza, *Walt Whitman: Racista, Imperialista, Antimexicano* (Mexico City: Colección Málaga, 1971). On Whitman's vision of Latin America as it was shaped during the New Orleans period, see 121–135 in my *Ambassadors of Culture*. Although his early enthusiasm for Manifest Destiny modulated over time, the traces of his editorial positions stand out, in lines like "The present and future continents north and south, with the isthmus between" (176), given how the struggle to control a passage from Atlantic to Pacific across the Panama Straits,

or Lake Nicaragua, or the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico, dominated U.S. policy toward Latin America during the antebellum period and again from the 1880s onward.

19. Sommer, *Proceed with Caution*, 38. On the three lines of descent, see 53.

20. To make the terms interchangeable is to suggest that persons of Mexican, Dominican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central American, or South American ancestry living in the United States remain forever foreigners and outsiders, imprisoned in the category of "immigrant"—with the result that projections about "native" Latin American literary modes, particularly magical realism, are projected onto Latinos as well. See Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

21. A. Ortiz Vargas, *Las torres de Manhattan* (Boston: Chapman & Grimes, 1939) and *The Towers of Manhattan: A Spanish-American Poet Looks at New York*, trans. Quincy Guy Burris (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1944). Subsequent references to the original will be identified with *LTDM* and page number(s), English references, with *TTOM* preceding the page numbers, are to this translation. The translation was published in a series with the School of Inter-American Affairs, which had recently been organized at UNM by Professor Joaquín Ortega. The founding of the school forms part of the interesting complexity of New Mexican culture going into the 1940s: on the one hand, there is the celebratory but problematic rediscovery of its Mexican roots by C. F. Lummis, Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, et al.; on the other hand, there were abysmal educational and economic conditions for its Mexican and indigenous citizens.

22. The lines in the original: "Whitman. / Bárbaro soberbio, / trompetero místico, / capitán del verso" (*LTDM* 72). Burris, for some reason, adds the line "Manhattan and cosmos" after this.

23. The reference to the "mystical trumpeter" pays homage to Whitman's poem "The Mystic Trumpeter," which is the source of the epigraph to the closing section.

24. John E. Englekirk, "Whitman y el antimodernismo," *Revista Iberoamericana* 13, no. 2 (October 1947): 3–16.

25. On the book jacket of the translation appears this unattributed blurb: "He has come to live among us and to judge us, and he has uttered his judgment in an idiom reminiscent of Whitman, but with a detachment and justice we have not always encountered in earlier criticisms." Ortiz Vargas, in addition to writing pieces on Latin American poets for English-language organs, contributed a Spanish series to the *Revista Iberoamericana* on U.S. writers of the moment: Frost, Sandburg, O'Neill, and others.

26. "Ellas cosen blusas / para los semitas; / ellos lavan platos / en fondas de Broadway, / suben ascensores / y pintan pantallas / en lóbregas fábricas, / y en el muelle cargan con los cargadores" (*LTDM* 163–164). The Spanish version accentuates the gendered nature of these labors. "En sus pobres derrotas / para siempre se hundieron" (*LTDM* 164). "Corrompieron su lengua / con la mezcla bizarra / de la lengua extranjera / que jamás aprendieron" (*LTDM* 164). Burris's translation is more judgmental: he gives "confusion" for *mezcla*, mixture, and gets an important verb tense wrong: it should read "a foreign tongue they never *learned*." This resistance to the "corrupting" influence of Spanglish was, and remains, common among Hispanists.

27. "La que modifica / los vagos conceptos, / las rancias verdades / de espacio y de tiempo, / y borra las líneas / entre suelo y suelo, / y acerca las gentes / de todos los puertos" (*LTDM* 176). "Suelo" (ground, place) has a more earthy and Whitmanian feel than "nation"; and the original describes people from all *ports* rather than lands.

28. "Yo paso. Cantor peregrino, / yo paso cual pasan las sombras / del gris de la tarde . . . / Y vengo de lejos . . . / Y voy aún más lejos" (*LTDM* 183–184).

29. Julia Alvarez, *The Woman I Kept to Myself: Poems* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2004), 139. Subsequent parenthetical references in the text will be identifed with *TWIK*.

30. In other poems, Alvarez describes how the loss of Spanish at an early age prompts a later in life recovery effort to read the Spanish and Latin American classics; among those is the work of Pedro Mir, the recently deceased poet laureate of Dominican Republic whose important *Contracanto a Walt Whitman* (1952) recalls Neruda's use of Whitman to embrace the democratic ethos while distancing himself from U.S. politics. The border terrain of Spanish/English is also fertile ground for punning throughout Alvarez's poetry. In this collection, see "Undercover Poet," in which the young poet is seen surreptitiously "poring through the lustier poems / omitted from our Whitman sampler" (*TWIK* 130).

31. Maurice Kilwein Guevara, *Poems of the River Spirit* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 28. All quotes in this paragraph are from this page.

32. Rudolfo Anaya, "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico," in *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, ed. Jim Perlman, Ed Folsom, and Dan Campion, 2nd ed. (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 1998), 476–477.

33. Ibid., 479.

34. Cherríe Moraga, "New Mexican Confession," in *Daughters of the Fifth Sun: A Collection of Latina Fiction and Poetry*, ed. Bryce Milligan, Mary Guerrero Milligan, and Angela de Hoyos (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 259–262.

35. See César Salgado, "Martín Espada" in *Latino and Latina Writers*, vol. 2, ed. Alan West-Durán, María Herrera-Sobek, and César Salgado (New York: Scribner's, 2004), 851–872. Salgado describes Espada as "someone whose visionary breadth brings to mind Walt Whitman's ebullient American outlook, yet who identifies strongly with the periphery of 'minority' and 'Third-World' subjects" (851). He also "avoids the bombast and self-aggrandizement frequent in Whitman's and Neruda's work" (856).

36. http://www.martinespada.net/new_page_12.htm.

37. http://www.pshares.org/issues/article.cfm?prmarticleID=8244. In fact, the state of New Jersey, not the U.S. Park Service, owns and runs the Whitman House. The Nicaraguan-born painter and poet Omar d'León, who now lives in Los Angeles, wrote a somewhat similar poem describing joint pilgrimages to the home of his "national poet," Darío, and to the Long Island birthplace of Whitman; it ends with the speaker naming himself in their line of succession: "Omar, león cachorro, ermitaño, novato aprendiz / Paisano y apóstol devoto de Walt y de Rubén." See "A W. Whitman. . . ." in *Ventana Abierta* IV, #13 (2002): 70; originally published in León's collection *El pez y la serpiente*.

38. The poem later appeared in Espada's collection of essays, *Zapata's Disciple* ([Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998], 30–32), along with a commentary on the incident. The vision

across the bridge represents a bit of poetic license; the killing of which Abu-Jamal was accused took place around 13th and Locust in Philadelphia, a mile west of Camden as the crow flies; however, one would have to take an indirect route to get to Harleigh Cemetery from Philadelphia, veering north or south to cross a bridge.

39. Martín Espada, *Alabanza: New and Selected Poems, 1982–2002* (New York and London: Norton, 2003), 30.

40. Ibid., 31.

41. Victor Hernández Cruz, *Panoramas* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1997), 123.

42. Ibid., 117, 120. See also the earlier poem "Matterative" in his *Maraca: New and Selected Poems 1965–2000* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2001), 100–102, where he explains his practice of moving between English and Spanish through temporal metaphors: translation is "the kind of reversal of gears for which a car has not been made yet"; it is "information not yet given a house a time of / piece / peace. The Spanish and English cross each other in / simultaneous tracks that are spelled different" (100).

43. Hernández Cruz, *Panoramas*, 98.

44. Ibid., 99.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 101.

47. Hernández Cruz is a fixture on the performance poetry circuit. See Frances Aparicio, "Salsa, Maracas, and Baile: Latin Popular Music in the Poetry of Victor Hernández Cruz," *MELUS* 16, no. 1 (1989): 43–58. "Areyto," in *Red Beans* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1991), is a tour de force of this same political and spiritual premise, with references to (and imitations of) complexly synchopated *trio* music. The poem interweaves three references to Martí within this repetitive structure, which integrates Spanish and English, naming and beat counting, call and response:

America sur south
America norte
Juan America
Two Americas Juan
Juan America one
Then America blend
. . .
Two America Juan
One America One
America that Bolívar Betances
to José Martí Us to Hostos who wanted
us to be one único Unidos. (80–81)

48. *Maraca*, 155. The premise of the poem recalls that of the celebrated Alejo Carpentier story, "Viaje a la semilla." Outside the scope of this essay, but certainly of note, is the way Hernández Cruz uses tropes of female fecundity in his writing in an idealized and sometimes disturbing way, recalling Whitman's descriptions of maternal bodies.

49. On Benjaminian temporality in the Latino context, see my essay "Utopía Latina: *The Ordinary Seaman* in Extraordinary Times," *Modern Fiction Studies* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 54–83.

50. The copious writings of Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo have described how certain epistemological structures—spatial, temporal, and linguistic—have historically been used to reinforce the notion of the West's "modernity" and thus its superiority, supporting what Mignolo terms "the denial of coevalness" to indigenous, African, and *mestizo* peoples with different concepts of time, space, and literacy. See Mignolo's dense but rewarding account in his *Local Histories, Global Designs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

{ CONTRIBUTORS }

BENJAMIN BARBER is Gershon and Carol Kekst Professor of Civil Society and Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland and a director of the Democracy Collaborative, with offices in New York and Maryland. His seventeen books include *Strong Democracy*, recently reissued in a twentieth anniversary edition, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, and most recently, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. He has served as a consultant to Governors Howard Dean and Jim McGreevey, Senator Bill Bradley, President Bill Clinton, UNESCO, the European Parliament, and the Swedish and French governments. He writes regularly for *Harper's*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, and European newspapers and magazines.

DAVID HAVEN BLAKE is associate professor of English at the College of New Jersey. His work on American literature and political culture includes essays on the Adams-Jefferson correspondence, the captivity narrative, and confessional poetry. He is the author of *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity*.

WAI CHEE DIMOCK is William Lampson Professor of English and American Studies at Yale University. She is the author of *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* and *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* and coeditor of two volumes: *Rethinking Class* and *Literature and Science* (a special issue of *American Literature*). Her most recent publications include *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*; *Shades of the Planet*, a collection of essays coedited with Lawrence Buell; and *Remapping Genre*, a special issue of *PMLA* coedited with Bruce Robbins.

ED FOLSOM, Carver Professor of English at the University of Iowa, is the editor of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, codirector of the *Walt Whitman Archive* (www.whitmanarchive.org), and editor of the Iowa Whitman Series at the University of Iowa Press. He is the author or editor of numerous books and essays on Whitman, including *Walt Whitman's Native Representations*, *Whitman East and West*, *Walt Whitman: The Centennial Essays*, and (with Gay Wilson Allen) *Walt Whitman and the World*.

KIRSTEN SILVA GRUESZ is associate professor of literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she teaches the U.S. and Latin American traditions together with contemporary Latino/a writing. She is author of *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing*. She has published essays on topics ranging from the archival recovery of early Spanish-language writings in the U.S., to theories of translation, to sentimental poetry, to Latino temporality, and she is currently completing two books: *Bad Lengua: A Cultural History of Spanish in the United States* and *Bordering the Gulf: Routes of Latinidad from the Yucatán to la Florida*.

DAVID LEHMAN is poetry coordinator of the New School's graduate writing program in New York City and teaches at New York University. His books of poetry include *The Daily Mirror*,

The Evening Sun, and *When a Woman Loves a Man*. He began writing for *Newsweek* in 1983 and was elected a vice-president of the National Book Critics Circle in 1987. Among his nonfiction books are *The Perfect Murder: A Study in Detection*, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man*, and *The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets*. He is the series editor of *The Best American Poetry*, which he initiated in 1988, and the editor of *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award.

JAMES LONGENBACH is the author of three books of poems, most recently *Draft of a Letter*, and six books of criticism, most recently *The Art of the Poetic Line*. He teaches in the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers and at the University of Rochester, where he is the Joseph H. Gilmore Professor of English.

MEREDITH L. MCGILL is associate professor of English at Rutgers University. Her scholarship combines the study of legal history, the history of the book, and literary criticism and theory. She is author of *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–53* and is the editor of *The Traffic in Poems: Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Transatlantic Exchange*. Her current research concerns the circulation of poetry in the antebellum U.S.

ANGELA MILLER is professor of art history at Washington University, St. Louis. She has published broadly in the field of nineteenth-century American art and is author of *Empire of the Eye: American Cultural Politics and Landscape Representation, 1825–1875*, which won the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize of the American Studies Association. She is coauthor of *American Encounters*, an inclusive survey of American arts from the beginning to the present.

KENNETH M. PRICE is University Professor and Hillegass Chair of Nineteenth-Century American Literature at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He also serves as codirector of the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at UNL. He is the author of over thirty articles and author or editor of nine books, including *Whitman and Tradition*, *Walt Whitman: The Contemporary Reviews*, and *To Walt Whitman, America*. With Ed Folsom, he coauthored *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman: An Introduction to His Life and Work* and, also with Folsom, he codirects the *Walt Whitman Archive*.

MICHAEL ROBERTSON, professor of English at the College of New Jersey, is the author of *Worshipping Walt*, a group biography of the Whitman disciples. His book *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* received the Frank Luther Mott Prize, awarded by Kappa Tau Alpha, the honorary journalism fraternity.

MICHAEL WARNER is professor of English and American Studies at Yale University. His most recent books include *Publics and Counterpublics* and *The Portable Walt Whitman*. He is also the author of *The Letters of the Republic* and *The Trouble with Normal*. He has edited two literary anthologies: *American Sermons* and, with Myra Jehlen, *The English Literatures of America, 1500–1800*. He is also the editor of *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* and, with Gerald Graff, *The Origins of Literary Studies in America: A Documentary Anthology*.

{INDEX}

{ THE IOWA WHITMAN SERIES }

Conserving Walt Whitman's Fame: Selections from Horace Traubel's Conservator, *1890–1919*, edited by Gary Schmidgall

Intimate with Walt: Selections from Whitman's Conversations with Horace Traubel, 1888–1892, edited by Gary Schmidgall

The Pragmatic Whitman: Reimagining American Democracy, by Stephen John Mack

Transatlantic Connections: Whitman U.S., Whitman U.K., by M. Wynn Thomas

Visiting Walt: Poems Inspired by the Life and Work of Walt Whitman, edited by Sheila Coghill and Thom Tammaro

Walt Whitman: The Correspondence, Volume VII, edited by Ted Genoways

Walt Whitman and the Earth: A Study in Ecopoetics, by M. Jimmie Killingsworth

Walt Whitman, Where the Future Becomes Present, edited by David Haven Blake and Michael Robertson

Whitman East and West: New Contexts for Reading Walt Whitman, edited by Ed Folsom