

“STRICT, STRAIGHT NOTIONS OF LITERARY PROPRIETY”:

Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s Gradual Unbending to Walt Whitman

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ON 24 SEPTEMBER 1888, in one of his almost nightly conversations with his faithful amanuensis Horace Traubel, Walt Whitman commented on some of his major detractors:

“You know, Horace, there are some who in the natural order couldn’t accept Walt Whitman – couldn’t appreciate the inmost purpose of his art: it is the absence of affinities. Lowell, with his almost steel-like beauty, and Higginson, with his strict, straight, [*sic*] notions of literary propriety – I could call them enemies, creatures natively antipathetic.”¹

Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911), critic, editor, minor poet, Unitarian minister, abolitionist, social reformer, and colonel in the Union Army, had certainly earned a right to the label of “enemy” to Whitman; witness his contributions in the preceding years to the *Nation*,² *Woman’s Journal*,³ and *Harper’s Bazar*.⁴ His denigration of Whitman would peak a few years later in his New York *Evening Post* obituary of Whitman, a tirade that fortunately Whitman was not around to read.

Yet it is a pity that a decade later Whitman could not have looked up from the dirt to which he had bequeathed himself to discover a significant shift in Higginson’s stance. According to Higginson’s widow, he went so far as to quote, “with deep emotion,” Whitman’s “Joy, Shipmate, Joy!” He even wanted its lines “engraved on his memorial stone.”⁵ Although such appreciation of Whitman’s work may have come only after the years had shown him Whitman was no literary flash in the pan, it was nonetheless real. And certainly Higginson was not unique: his gradual shift from disgust to recognition of Whitman’s value mirrors the change in the general American attitude toward this strange new poet.

The most obvious evidence of his decreased “venom” toward Whitman⁶ is his oft-expressed love for such spiritual and shapely poems as “Joy, Shipmate, Joy!” and “Darest Thou Now O Soul.”⁷ But some other significant evidence has gone unnoticed: the clear reduction of negative remarks when Higginson reprinted and revised his *Evening Post* obituary, first as one of the essays in *Contemporaries* (1899) and later in *A Reader’s History of American*

Literature (1903).⁸ To make concessions to the value of Whitman's work, he had to come a long way from his first known published remark on Whitman in 1867: "It is no discredit to Walt Whitman that he wrote 'Leaves of Grass,' only that he did not burn it afterwards."⁹

According to Higginson, the trouble with Whitman was threefold, as he made clear in three paragraphs devoted to the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass* in an unsigned review of "Recent Poetry" in the *Nation*.¹⁰ First, he deplored the "somewhat nauseating quality" of Whitman's treatment of sex: "Whitman's love, if such it can be called, is the sheer animal longing of sex for sex — the impulse of the savage, who knocks down the first woman he sees, and drags her to his cave. On the whole, the condition of the savage seems the more wholesome, for he simply gratifies his brute lust and writes no resounding lines about it." Next, he criticized the "hollowness" of "Drum-Taps" because this "stalwart poet," though "with the finest physique in America, as his friends asserted, and claiming an unbounded influence over the 'roughs' of New York," had "preferred to pass by the recruiting-office and take service in the hospital with the non-combatants." Finally, Whitman was a failure because of his poetic theory, which was overthrown by his "one fine poem" that accepted "the restraints of ordinary rhyme," "O Captain! My Captain!" Its success suggested that Whitman "may yet be compelled to recognize form as an element in poetic power." These are the complaints that persist through most of Higginson's published writing on Whitman. The favorable remarks would come later.

Higginson had not always felt such intense opposition to Whitman, as is clear in two letters to John Burroughs in spring, 1868, arguing over the supposed "incompatibility between native force and high polish" in literature, with American literature's common problem being "to combine a cosmopolitan culture with indigenous strength."

The only objection I have to your favorite, Walt Whitman, is that he seems to me not to have been quite strong enough to do this; but that with all his remarkable gifts he has stopped short with being a phenomenon, when he might have accomplished something much greater.¹¹

The reasonable tone and suggestion of appreciation are confirmed in his subsequent letter to Burroughs of 24 April in which he recalls his first reading of Whitman's work:

His poems I read on their very first appearance, and with some disappointment; the attacks on them made me expect more from them than I got. This, you would say, was my fault; perhaps it was — at any rate, I like your loyalty to your friend. Afterwards I met the author, and was gratified to see his fine physique, that being rather a hobby of mine. In other ways he did not make so favorable an impression — seemed a little self-conscious and egotistical, I thought — though here, again, I may have done him an injustice. Several times I have gone back to him, trying to do him justice. Believing most heartily myself in whatever is broad, hearty, American; having found the roughest forest and border society palatable (to say nothing of the camp),

I cannot quite understand why it is that he still seems to me crude, turgid and even morbid.

When I read a single line or passage it sometimes seems the preface to something very fine; but when I follow it up, I always wish that he had ploughed it all in and waited for a better crop which, in that rich soil would surely come. But Time will show the truth. As to the general question, the difference between us seems to be that you think only one great want exists, and I think there are two: original manhood and culture.¹²

While Higginson's third complaint (Whitman's want of polish) is made clear, he gives no hint or explanation of his other two complaints, much more personal, though hardly idiosyncratic given the nature of the times. Later years—or the fact that he was writing for a general audience rather than for an audience consisting only of one of Whitman's staunchest supporters—may have loosened his memories and his pen, for in his memoirs, first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in May 1897 and later in book form in 1898, he gives a distinctly interesting and singular reason for his inability "to do him justice." Here he describes his one and only meeting with Whitman, at the shop of Thayer and Eldridge in Boston where Whitman was preparing his third edition in 1860:

I saw before me, sitting on the counter, a handsome, burly man, heavily built, and not looking, to my gymnasium-trained eye, in really good condition for athletic work. I perhaps felt a little prejudiced against him from having read his "Leaves of Grass" on a voyage, in the early stages of seasickness,—a fact which doubtless increased for me the intrinsic unsavoriness of certain passages. But the personal impression made on me by the poet was not so much of manliness as of Boweriness, if I may coin the phrase. . . . This passing impression did not hinder me from thinking of Whitman with hope and satisfaction at a later day when the regiments were to be trained for the war, when the Bowery seemed the very place to enlist them. . . . When, however, after waiting a year or more, Whitman decided that the proper post for him was hospital service, I confess to feeling a reaction which was rather increased than diminished by his profuse celebration of his own labors in that direction. Hospital attendance is a fine thing, no doubt, yet if all men, South and North, had taken the same view of their duty that Whitman held, there would have been no occasion for hospitals on either side.¹³

Such rejection of military service was certainly deplorable to a man who raised troops in 1861 and who advanced to the rank of Colonel in 1862 when he headed the first Negro regiment in the Union Army.

But it must have been the nausea keeping Whitman in his mind until 1862, for no mention of Whitman has been located in newspapers or magazines for 1861 and most of 1862 and Whitman's involvement with the hospitals did not begin until late December 1862. Yet when Higginson responded to Emily Dickinson's first letter asking for comments on her poetry (16 April 1862) and "sounded her about certain American authors, then much read," he apparently included Whitman as a figure of some significance, even though he may not have approved of him. Dickinson's response ("You speak of Mr. Whitman. I never read his book, but was told that it was disgraceful.") is her only known comment on her fellow poetic revolutionary, so Higginson must have mentioned him no more.¹⁴

Just as Higginson's literary conservatism kept him from fully appreciating Dickinson's remarkable achievements, so he restrained himself from yielding to Whitman's power, except occasionally, as he had suggested earlier to Burroughs and as he noted in his *Nation* review of 1881: in "a phrase, an epithet, a fine note—as when the midnight tolling for General Garfield is called "The sobbing of the bells.'" A decade of further discussion and explication of Whitman did not bring him any closer to appreciation. In fact, the frequent attacks on the American literary establishment by W. D. O'Connor and Robert Buchanan for its failure to recognize Whitman's worth may have increased his opposition. Higginson repeated and elaborated, almost with relish, his criticisms in his obituary of Whitman in the *New York Evening Post* (28 March 1892) which was reprinted ten days later (7 April) in the *Evening Post's* weekly offshoot, the *Nation*.¹⁵

If his tone had been critical before, it was now downright nasty. The long article begins with a biographical sketch containing Higginson's usual praise for Whitman's magnificent physique and appearance. It proceeds to describe Whitman's readership as largely composed of the English and their American imitators, "the class he least approves." His robust personality has held its own in the public eye because he was "aided greatly by his superb but now blighted physique, by the persistent and somewhat exaggerated panegyrics on his services as an army nurse, and by that rise in pecuniary value which awaits all books classed by the book-venders as 'facetiae' or 'curiosa.'"¹⁶ After offering nonliterary reasons for Whitman's popularity with admirers such as the English, Higginson points out that they give the same recognition to anyone, like Artemus Ward or Josh Billings, who merely "misspells or makes fritters of English, or who enters literature . . . by throwing a back somersault in at the door"; that "all the malodorous portions of Whitman's earlier poems were avowedly omitted from the first English edition of his works," letting him appear "clothed and in his right mind"; and that Whitman's "vague" democratic sentiments, old hat to an American, are novel to an Englishman. But Whitman also, Higginson notes, has been acclaimed by the American critic E. C. Stedman,¹⁷ though he questions the absolute credibility of Stedman's praise:

The most distinct canonization ever afforded to Whitman on our own shores was when Mr. Stedman placed him among the *Dii majores* of our literature by giving him a separate chapter in his 'Poets of America'; and though it is true that this critic had already cheapened that honor by extending it to Bayard Taylor, yet this was obviously explained in part by personal friendship, and partly by the wish not to give New England too plainly the lion's share of fame. Possibly this last consideration may have had influence in the case of Whitman also; but it is impossible not to see in this chapter a slightly defensive and apologetic tone, such as appears nowhere else in the book.

Higginson next presents Whitman juxtaposed with other, already forgotten experimenters in form—Ossian and Tupper—but then admits Whit-

man later became "far more compressed and less simply enumerative than when he began," with later poems showing less of Whitman's habit of "throwing a dozen epithets to see if one may chance to stick" rather than culling "the very best phrase out of language." Later, "the lines grow shorter; and though he does not acquiesce in rhyme, he occasionally accepts a rhythm so well-defined that it may be called conventional, as in the fine verses entitled 'Darest thou now, O Soul?'" Higginson praises "O Captain!" again, as he did in 1881. This poem, paradoxically, is considered first among Whitman's works by Whitman's admirers, and comes "so near to recognized poetic methods that it actually falls into rhyme."

Whitman's focus on himself and his country throughout his work has brought "a certain access of power" but has "also implied weakness; on the personal side leading to pruriency and on the national side to rant." His over-emphasis on the sexual nature has given his work a nauseous quality accentuated by "the entire absence of that personal and ideal side of passion which can alone elevate and dignify it." This complaint, familiar from the *Nation* review, is elaborated by extension to Whitman's life following Whitman's own example of identifying a writer with his work. Higginson raises this matter in order to deplore such works' "bad influence—we speak from personal observation—on the lives of many young men; an influence that can scarcely be estimated." Quoting Whitman's "Native Moments," Higginson warns "that paralysis, insanity, premature old age are the retribution for 'the drench of the passions' in youth," contrasting Whitman's "premature senility" with the "clean and wholesome" old age of "the chaster poets," Bryant and Whittier. Whitman's admirers hardly dare attribute his decline to his service in the war, for many others had there encountered "an ordeal of bodily exposures to which those of Whitman were as nothing, in that comparatively sheltered position which he chose for himself," and yet "are still in health and vigor."

Higginson does grant Whitman "lyric glimpses," borrowing a phrase Emerson had applied to Margaret Fuller. But the compliment becomes rather backhanded when he adds:

It constantly happens that the titles or catch-words of his poems are better than the poems themselves. . . . "Proud Music of the Storm" "When Lilies Last in Door-yard Bloomed," [*sic*] and others, will readily occur; and if they were sometimes borrowed or duplicated, as "The Sobbing of the Bells" from Poe, it is no matter.

Whitman's foreign phrases are criticized as incongruous and affected, like a schoolgirl's half-educated use of French, with many examples being presented as proof. Higginson concludes:

Of all our poets, he is really the least simple, the most meretricious; and this is the reason why the honest consciousness of the classes whom he most celebrates, the drover, the teamster, the soldier, has never been reached by his songs. He talks of labor as one who has never really labored; his "Drum-Taps" proceed from one who has never personally responded to the tap of

the drum. This is his fatal and insurmountable defect; and it is because his own countrymen instinctively recognize this, and foreigners do not, that his following is mainly abroad, not at home. But it is also true that he has, in a fragmentary and disappointing way, some of the high ingredients of a poet's nature: a keen eye, a ready sympathy, a strong touch, a vivid but not shaping imagination. In his cyclopaedia of epithets, in his accumulated directory of details, in his sandy wastes of iteration, there are many scattered particles of gold—never sifted out by him, never abundant enough to pay for the sifting, yet unmistakable gold. He has something of the turgid wealth, the self-conscious and mouthing amplitude of Victor Hugo, and much of his broad, vague, indolent desire for the welfare of the whole human race; but he has none of Hugo's structural power, his dramatic or melodramatic instinct, and his occasionally terse and brilliant condensation. It is not likely that he will ever have that place in the future which is claimed for him by his English admirers or even by the more cautious endorsement of Mr. Stedman; for, setting aside all other grounds of criticism, he has phrase, but not form—and without form there is no immortality.

This essay was a perfect example of the negative attitudes persisting in America even after Whitman's death. Singled out by the *Bookman* of London for its surprising misquotation of one of Whitman's best-known titles, it was evidence that Whitman's detractors may not have read him as thoroughly as they complained about him.¹⁸ But while Whitman's friends could tolerate criticisms of his work because they had become accustomed to such attacks over the past three decades, the aspersions on his character rankled. Hence, John Burroughs objected to this article in a letter to the *Evening Post* that was published in the *New York Critic* when the *Evening Post* editor refused to print it.¹⁹ Burroughs denied Higginson's "unwarranted inference with reference to the poet's life and conduct," and affirmed Whitman's wholesome life and the impossibility of his paralysis being caused by syphilis, as Higginson implied.

Higginson apparently did not consider it worth his while to respond, but by 1899 he had changed his tone through deletions and revised wordings. Perhaps the mellowing of age, perhaps the continuing attention Whitman had received (and not only by the Whitman cult), or perhaps the bad press he himself had suffered at the hands of cultists like Burroughs, William Sloane Kennedy,²⁰ and Horace Traubel caused the change in Higginson's emphasis. Traubel offered him the pages of his radical journal the *Conservator* for comment on the poetry, not merely on the man as in his just-published and already quoted *Cheerful Yesterdays*.²¹ Higginson again passed up this opportunity to respond directly to an opponent, but he seemed to offer a response the next year when he brought out *Contemporaries*. In this volume he collected his critical essays on various figures, including his Whitman obituary. This piece, like others in the volume, according to the general prefatory note, shows "such revision as was made necessary by the development of new facts or by the reconsideration of opinions."

The first revision apparently represented "reconsideration of opinion." In the previously quoted passage that listed reasons for the hold Whitman's personality had on public attention, Higginson changed the first two reasons

to “his personal picturesqueness” and “recognition of his services as an army nurse,” – a considerable softening of “superb but now blighted physique” and “persistent and somewhat exaggerated panegyrics on his services.”

The discussion of Stedman’s consideration of Whitman was also revised: in light of many recent commentaries, Stedman’s piece is cited as “the first distinct canonization,” rather than “the most.” The suggestion of a geographical reason for Whitman’s inclusion in Stedman’s book was deleted, as if Higginson now recognizes Whitman’s right to be included on his own merits.

After revising the paragraph on the sexual emphasis in Whitman’s work by making some minor changes (including deletion of the blunt reference to “the physical appetite for the requisite quantity of white flesh”), Higginson performs his most notable excision: he omits the three paragraphs that had criticized Whitman’s self-indulgence, his adverse influence on young men, and his blighted health (to which Burroughs had objected so indignantly in 1892). In their place, he provides a much more positive transition from criticism of Whitman’s sensual emphasis to discussion of his “lyric glimpses”:

As time went on, this less pleasing aspect became softened; his antagonisms were disarmed by applauses; although this recognition sometimes took a form so extreme and adulatory that it obstructed his path to that simple and unconscious life which he always preached but could not quite be said to practice.

Higginson seems to be taking exception more to the effect Whitman’s idolators had upon him than to Whitman himself, even if Whitman is not entirely blameless:

No one can be said to lead a noble life who writes puffs of himself and offers them to editors, or who borrows money of men as poor as himself and fails to repay it.

The former criticism is new and probably stems from the revelation in the memorial volume *In Re Walt Whitman*²² that three early reviews of *Leaves of Grass* were by Whitman himself. But the tone of these inserted paragraphs is certainly more sympathetic than those deleted. Moreover, Higginson goes on to admit:

Yet his career purified itself, as many careers do, in the alembic of years, and up to the time of his death (March 26, 1892) he gained constantly both in friends and in readers.

Such an acknowledgment of a growing readership would have been hard for the Higginson of 1892 to make. Yet a hint of this shift had appeared in his 1897 collection of essays, *Book and Heart*: “the American names one sees oftenest mentioned in European books – Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Whitman – are those of authors who never visited Europe, or under such circumstances as to form but a trivial part of their career.” This shows that the “American writers who established our nation’s literature, half a century ago,

were great because they were first and chiefly American.”²³ Heady company for a man who could never attain immortality!

Higginson would make one further revision of the *Contemporaries* article. After using parts of it in a course of lectures he delivered before the Lowell Institute of Boston in January 1903, he proceeded to publish this new version in *A Reader's History of American Literature*. To put this book together the eighty-year-old Higginson collaborated with Henry Walcott Boynton, “a younger associate, to whom has fallen the task of modifying and supplementing the original text, so far as either process was necessary in order to make a complete and consecutive, though still brief, narrative of the course of American literature.”²⁴

After Higginson's earlier criticism of Stedman for granting Whitman a whole chapter in his *Poets of America*, it is interesting that Whitman is the only writer whose name appears in the table of contents of *A Reader's History*: Chapter 8, “The Southern Influence – Whitman.” Of course, at the turn of the century, in the days before terms like “American Renaissance,” the most individualistic figure in American literature could not be incorporated easily into group discussions of “The Puritan Writers” or “The New York Period” or “The Concord Group.”

Chapter 8 is taken from Higginson's lecture of 22 January 1903 and includes discussions of Poe and Sidney Lanier. The Lanier and Whitman discussions are revised from essays in *Contemporaries*, each in turn a revision of earlier articles. Each has been abridged by approximately five pages, but although almost a third of the twelve pages on Lanier is purely biographical, the eight pages on Whitman concentrate on actual critical analysis, with the biographical matter relegated to passing references. In a key revision, Higginson deletes his own strictures on Whitman and instead concentrates on Lanier's criticisms of Whitman.

As a transition from the discussion of Lanier, a new paragraph on Whitman is added. In a tone of explication and interpretation rather than of judgment or evaluation, Higginson describes Whitman as a poet of the city but of no single region. He then makes this rather happy addition, which gives the reader a fuller sense of what Whitman was about than does his earlier criticism:

Several of his poems record the delight with which the manifold restless forces of life in the new metropolis affected him, and the fondness which grew in him for all sorts and conditions of men as he saw them upon the wharves and streets of New York. (p. 227)

This addition, quite a new idea in the sequence of Higginson's commentary on Whitman, of course may be due to his collaborator Boynton, but the fact remains that Higginson accepted it as worthy of appearing under his own name. The shift to the positive is accentuated because the critic omits the paragraphs belittling Whitman's favorable reception from the English and from Stedman.

With a new sentence to introduce the previously printed parts of the essay, Higginson comes quite a distance from his earlier sense that poetry occurred only in "O Captain!" and scattered phrases. When he writes, "In the stricter sense of the critics, Whitman may not be called a poet," he implies that the critics' sense, the "strict, straight, notions of literary propriety," may not be the only or even the most important gauge. Higginson retains other criticisms of Whitman, but softens them in ways that only he—not Boynton—could have effected. For example, the somewhat surprised tone Higginson used earlier when describing "O Captain!" ("it actually falls into rhyme") is altered by a slight but significant change of adverbs ("it falls naturally into rhyme"). The extensive disapproving discussion of Whitman's glorification of sex is abridged considerably: the ideas of nausea and of sex itself are omitted, and Higginson concentrates simply on Whitman's neglect of "the emotion of high and ideal love between the sexes," for which "we cannot attribute final and complete acceptance" to him. This idea of acceptance, to any degree, is quite new: while Higginson clearly voices his perennial objection, the wording implies at least a degree of acceptance that the writer of the 1881 *Nation* review hardly would have admitted.

The allusions to Whitman's puffs of himself, his failure to repay borrowed money, his incongruous borrowings and affectations, together with the schoolgirl comparison, are deleted from the next paragraph, which thus becomes generally favorable. (Higginson is still critical of Whitman's "extreme and adulatory" admirers, whom he would come to define as a cult of second-rate men who were helping only "to check his widening fame."²⁵)

The final paragraph retains the more serious criticisms, although it deletes the absolute label of "his fatal and insurmountable defect." Higginson also omits the references to Whitman's possession of "the very highest ingredients of a poet's nature" and to his "unmistakable gold," as if he did not wish to make himself appear too flattering to a poet about whom he still had strong reservations. But finally, in place of his doubt that Whitman "will ever have that place in the future which is claimed for him" (*Contemporaries*, p. 84), Higginson tells an anecdote:

He sometimes suggests a young man of rather ideal stamp who used to invite Mr. Emerson and others to give readings at his room in Boston, many years ago. He was an ardent disciple of Fourier, and had painted on his door in large golden letters the motto of Fourier, "Universal Duty," with beams of starlight diverging from it in all directions. Below this was the motto, hung separately and painted in neat black and white, "Please wipe your feet." Unfortunately, Whitman himself, with all his genius, was not quite careful enough to provide the footmat. (p. 234)

He does not deny Whitman's flaws; even an admirer—as distinguished from an idolator—might admit many of them. But at last Higginson recognizes that Whitman could not be passed off simply as "likely to leave scarcely a complete work that will be remembered," as the critic had written in 1881.

The realization that Whitman did indeed have “genius” had come to Higginson with time, that necessary catalyst for a more general acceptance that had emerged only after Whitman’s death.

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NOTES

- 1 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 2 [16 July 1888–31 October 1888] (New York: D. Appleton, 1908), 372.
- 2 “Recent Poetry,” *Nation*, 33 (15 December 1881), 476–477.
- 3 “Unmanly Manhood,” *Woman’s Journal*, 13 (4 February 1882), 1.
- 4 “Woman and Man. War Pensions for Women,” *Harper’s Bazar*, 20 (5 March 1887), 162.
- 5 Mary Thacher Higginson, *Thomas Wentworth Higginson: The Story of His Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), 395.
- 6 So William Douglas O’Connor labeled Higginson’s attitude in a letter to Whitman, quoted in Traubel, 2:14.
- 7 In 1905 Higginson paid double tribute to the former poem. In *Part of a Man’s Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., p. 25), Higginson suggests that we honor the dead with “not the mournfulness of old-time epitaphs, but rather the fine outburst of Whitman’s brief song of parting, ‘Joy, Shipmate, Joy!’” At the end of the year (*Nation*, 81 [7 December 1905], 469), Higginson criticized Henry Bryan Binns’s *A Life of Walt Whitman* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905) for offering little about Whitman as a poet beyond quoting the “ever delightful” “Song of the Open Road,” adding: “He has not yet discovered, that Whitman’s poetry at its loftiest takes us into an atmosphere far above his general range, if not above that attained by any American poet, as in this cheering glimpse of human life’s last moment” —he proceeds to quote “Joy, Shipmate, Joy!” in full.
- 8 *Contemporaries* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1899), “Walt Whitman,” pp. 72–84; *A Reader’s History of American Literature* (Boston, New York and Chicago: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1903), “The Southern Influence—Whitman,” 227–234.
- 9 “Literature as an Art,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 20 (December 1867), 753.
- 10 “Recent Poetry,” 476–477.
- 11 Quoted in Clara Barrus, *Whitman and Burroughs: Comrades* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), 53.
- 12 Barrus, 54.
- 13 *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), 230; originally printed in *Atlantic Monthly*, 79 (May 1897), 676.
- 14 Higginson, “Emily Dickinson’s Letters,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 68 (October 1891), 446.
- 15 “Walt Whitman,” *New York Evening Post* (28 March 1892), p. 1, cols. 1–3; “Walt Whitman,” *Nation*, 54 (7 April 1892), 262–264.
- 16 Perhaps he already realized he was going a bit too far, for the *Nation*’s version, virtually identical to the *Evening Post*’s, omits the phrase “but now blighted.”

- 17 "Walt Whitman," *Poets of America* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1885), 349–395; reprinted with minor revisions from *Scribner's*, 21 (November 1880), 47–64.
- 18 "News and Notes," *Bookman*, 2 (May 1892), 38–39, 42.
- 19 Burroughs, "Walt Whitman, After Death," *Critic*, 17 (9 April 1892), 215.
- 20 See *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman* (Paisley, Scotland, and London: Alexander Gardner, 1896).
- 21 Traubel, "Collect," *Conservator*, 9 (July 1898), 66–67.
- 22 Horace L. Traubel, Richard M. Bucke, and Thomas B. Harned, *In Re Walt Whitman* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1893).
- 23 *Book and Heart: Essays on Literature and Life* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1897), 198–199.
- 24 *Reader's History*, Preface, iii–iv.
- 25 *Nation*, 82 (26 April 1906), 353.