

“THIS FUGITIVE DAMNED ACT”: WALT WHITMAN AND THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW OF 1850



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“THERE IS A SIN OF OMISSION often laid at [Walt] Whitman’s door by ardent humanitarians,” Clifton Furness wrote in 1928; “How is it, they say, ‘that a poet of democracy and humanitarianism did not express himself on the subjects of abolition, ill treatment of slaves, the Missouri Compromise, and the national issues leading up to the Civil War?’”¹ For all his expansiveness of both form and content, Whitman was indeed, on certain key matters, a poet of omission. As Kenneth M. Price, Martin Klammer, Ed Folsom, and others have demonstrated, the poet repeatedly grappled with issues of slavery and race in his manuscripts, only to often erase such issues in the final, published versions of works.² The same is true of Whitman’s thinking on other explosive political measures of the antebellum years. Whitman’s manuscripts and unpublished writings of the period reveal that he was closely attuned to such debates, and highly opinionated about their outcomes; indeed, we see in these documents some of the most fiery, impassioned writing of his entire career. And yet his published works bear few traces of such engagement.

It is in examining Whitman’s unpublished writings that we find what was for him the most important political issue of the day: not slavery, *per se*, but the host of political and legislative debates spawned by that hateful institution—foremost among them the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. The general scholarly consensus about Whitman’s attitude toward the law has been that he opposed it, not out of humanitarian concerns for the fugitive slaves, but out of anger over the federal overreach that the measure represented.³ Indeed, as scholars have often pointed out, in “The Eighteenth Presidency!”—an unpublished prose

tract from 1856—Whitman bluntly stated that fugitive slaves “must” be returned, not out of an obligation to the 1850 law but out of good faith to the Constitution’s so-called “fugitive slave clause.”²⁴ While it is certainly true that Whitman despised the federal intervention in state’s affairs occasioned by the Fugitive Slave Law, his unpublished writings from the mid-to-late 1850s reveal that he was also greatly conflicted about his obligation to the actual fugitives that the law targeted, to the point that, as I will reveal, he considered removing his infamous pronouncement in “The Eighteenth Presidency!”—a key omission, heretofore unacknowledged, in one of the page-proofs of the essay that offers an opportunity to reevaluate his stance on this contentious issue. Yet despite his repeated and passionate engagement with the law in his unpublished prose, “A Boston Ballad” remains the only poem in which Whitman addresses the law in his published work—and there, in a poem about the return of a fugitive slave, the slave himself is nowhere to be found.

Throughout the 1850s, and even after the publication of the first two editions of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman demonstrated an increasing sympathy for the plight of fugitive slaves in his unpublished political prose. This essay traces Whitman’s developing thinking about the Fugitive Slave Law through this unpublished prose and into his poetry, where the law’s legacy survived through to the final edition of *Leaves of Grass* in “A Boston Ballad.” In so doing, I demonstrate that the debate surrounding the law challenged Whitman’s democratic humanism, pitting his idealism against the practicalities of life in a bitterly divided nation. For Whitman, as for many in the North, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law transformed his thinking about slavery from abstract principles into tangible actions, forcing him to contemplate what he would do if a hounded slave did indeed show up in his dooryard. While the two fugitive slave scenes of “Song of Myself” provide an inclusive and daring response, the problem for many scholars and general readers has always been how unable Whitman seems in his life and other writings to achieve a comparable level of compassion and identification. By making use of a number of analytical approaches—from archival and documentary analysis, to close reading of *Leaves of Grass* and tracing the evolution of numerous

poems—this essay will reveal Whitman’s complicated thinking on this key issue across multiple genres, forms, and levels of revision. Yet I also argue that his main concern about the Fugitive Slave Law—the one that caused him to retain “A Boston Ballad” in all editions of *Leaves of Grass*—ultimately was not the legislation itself, its implications for slaves, nor even the federal intervention that it mandated, but the flaw it revealed in the citizens of the United States, a flaw that, if expressed, could prove fatal to Whitman’s loving conception of the nation.

The Fugitive Slave Law, passed as part of the so-called Compromise of 1850, put new teeth into the U.S. Constitution’s vaguely-worded decree to “deliver up . . . persons held to service or labor,” creating a nation-wide system of federal commissioners, marshals, and deputies responsible for seeing that fugitive slaves were tracked down, captured, and returned to their owners, nearly all on the dime of the American tax-payer. While many citizens of the North had long been able to dismiss the evils of slavery as merely a Southern peculiarity in which they had no part, the Fugitive Slave Law had the power to turn any United States citizen into a potential slave-catcher by commanding “all good citizens” to “aid and assist” in the enforcement of the law, thus forcing many in the North to grapple with the realities of the “peculiar institution” for the first time. Matters of race, state’s rights, popular sovereignty, constitutionality, and, indeed democracy itself coalesced in the fierce debates that broke out about the law. It was a measure about which everybody in the nation seemed to have a strong opinion, including the nation’s aspiring poet.⁵



Throughout much of the 1840s, Whitman had worked as a newspaper editor and journalist, occupations that necessitated a close awareness of current events both local and national. As Jerome Loving argues, it was the very nature of Whitman’s relatively blue-collar profession that contributed to the manner of his interest in slavery as a political issue; unlike Emerson and the other Boston Brahmins—men of relative privilege, not reliant upon wages earned by their weekly toil,

and therefore opposed to slavery for more abstract, moral reasons—Whitman’s initial opposition was not so much to the institution itself, but to its expansion into new territories where it would compete with the work of free white laborers.⁶ As the editor of a Free Soil newspaper in 1848 and 1849, Whitman closely followed the political debates over the fate of the Mexican Cession and the admission of California to the Union, issues that would become key aspects of the Compromise of 1850.⁷ A falling out with the paper’s ownership led to Whitman’s departure as editor sometime in 1849, and by the time that the Senate began to debate the legislation that formed the Compromise of 1850—including the Fugitive Slave Law—he was living on the meagre profits of a small bookstore that he owned and operated in Brooklyn, supplementing his income by contributing freelance material to local papers. Although he was no longer involved in the regular reporting of current events, Whitman’s published poetry of 1850—including “Blood Money,” his first poem to employ free verse—evinces a close knowledge of the latest political happenings. Although he alludes to the Fugitive Slave Law in “Blood Money,” it is never referenced by name in his poetry, nor—except for “A Boston Ballad”—is the law discussed at any length. However, Whitman’s extant manuscripts from the same period reveal that he was engaging in an intense personal debate over his duty and obligation to the government enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law and to the fleeing fugitives that were its intended targets.

In a manuscript likely written within a few years of the law’s passage in 1850, Whitman wrote of “this ~~Fugitive~~ damned Act,” crossing out the word “Fugitive” and inserting the adjective “damned” in its place. He notes that the real matter at the heart of the debate over the law was state sovereignty, and poses a rhetorical question, asking whether

the irresponsible police of the President will not touch us or our women, nor the coal in that cellar nor the horses in that barn? We know they will not for certain excellent reason.—Passing over the more direct ones, the heart of the theory under which we are secure from such outrages, and an endless programme of others, is, state sovereignty, dispensed through the hands of equal, well-defined, all-powerful Law, unwarped by any outside influence, complete in itself, broad, benignant.⁸

However, despite Whitman's seeming confidence in the supremacy of state sovereignty, within two or three years his outlook was decidedly less positive.

Coupled with the lack of success of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the political dysfunction of late 1855 and 1856 caused a souring of Whitman's mood. David Reynolds observes that the poet's notebooks from this time "were filled with bleak generalizations about politics and society. He saw ugliness on all levels of society, North and South."⁹ Whitman reviled the candidacies of Millard Fillmore and Franklin Pierce, and his hopes for the presidential election of 1856 were not much brighter. The candidates—Fillmore for the nativist Know-Nothing Party, James Buchanan for the Democratic Party, and John C. Fremont for the newly-formed Republican Party—simply seemed to Whitman more of the same: aloof politicians caught up in the shady dealings of party politics, with little concern for the common people. "Out of thirty enactments passed by the Congress of these states, or by the legislatures," Whitman wrote in a notebook in 1855 or 1856, "twenty-nine are for petty personal objects, in which the people have no broad interest whatever."¹⁰ The answer to such a problem lay outside the current political party system; the answer lay, as it so often did for Whitman, in the unadorned, common man: "The remedy is not in authority but in the throwing off of authority. . . . It is not this or that party who is going to save America, and make it justify the mighty prophecies and promises which are all that it has hitherto been.—It is in countless breeds of great individuals, the eternal and only anchor of states."

As ardent as Whitman appears in these lines, he never published them. The closest he would come to publishing a political treatise in the 1850s was "The Eighteenth Presidency!," a political pamphlet that Whitman likely wrote around the same time as the preceding notebook lines. He even went so far as to have "The Eighteenth Presidency!" printed up in proofs-sheets. Whitman scrawled at the top of one surviving copy, "written and printed summer of 1856," but it seems that the essay never made it past the proof stage, for there is no evidence that the piece was ever published.¹¹ Yet when Whitman's stance on the Fugitive Slave Law is mentioned, it is from

“The Eighteenth Presidency!” that scholars most often quote; and it is in this piece—and the rarely-acknowledged manuscripts related to it—that we can most clearly see Whitman struggling with his feelings towards the Fugitive Slave Law.



As the title suggests, “The Eighteenth Presidency!” mainly expresses Whitman’s disgust with the 1856 Presidential election and America’s political party system more broadly, which he proclaims should be abolished. The opening sections make clear who Whitman thinks best fit to lead the nation:

I expect to see the day when the like of the present personnel of the governments, federal, state, municipal, military, and naval, will be looked upon with derision, and when qualified mechanics and young men will reach Congress and other official stations, sent in their working costumes, fresh from their benches and tools, and returning to them again with dignity.

In the heading of a later section, Whitman makes even more explicit the types of occupations these young men will hold, as he addresses “Butchers, Sailors, Stevedores, And Drivers Of Horses—To Ploughmen, Wood-Cutters, Marketmen, Carpenters, Masons, And Laborers—To Workmen In Factories—And To All In These States Who Live By Their Daily Toil.” All these occupations seem to coalesce in the exclamatory term that begins the section: “Mechanics!” These mechanics, Whitman envisions, would shape the nation in the same way that they shaped their own productions in their “daily toil”—with their hands.

In his analysis of Whitman’s views on labor, particularly in his journalism and early poetry, Jason Stacy explains that Whitman “defined the nature of the human body . . . through a redefinition of the labor theory of value.” To do so, “Whitman revised the idea of work. The word ‘work’ carries within it a confluence of two meanings. The first relates to the work one does. . . . The second meaning represents the product of one’s occupation. . . . In this simultaneous sense, one is what one produces.”¹² Much in the same way that Whitman sought

to embody himself in his work as a writer and poet, he called for the “young men” of the nation to make America their *work*, and in the process, to both form and become the America that he envisioned.

Although this is what Whitman hoped for in the future, what he found in the present of 1856 was that “the millions of farmers and mechanics of These States [were] the helpless supple-jacks of a comparatively few politicians.” And the mechanics were not necessarily unwilling puppets. “The people,” Whitman proclaims, “credulous, generous, deferential, allow the American government to be managed in many respects as is only proper under the personnel of a king and hereditary lords; or, more truly, not proper under any decent men anywhere.” Near the conclusion of the piece Whitman again appeals directly to the young mechanics and farmers, asking, “How much longer do you intend to submit to the espionage and terrorism of the three hundred and fifty thousand owners of slaves? Are you too their slaves, and their most obedient slaves?” In other words, unless the young mechanics begin to make America the object of their labor, they risk complete subjugation as the means and tools of somebody else’s work, just as slave owners have already done to black slaves. Whitman argues in “The Eighteenth Presidency!” that America did not need the artificial apparatus of political parties, asking in the heading of one section, “Are Not Political Parties About Played Out?” He immediately and emphatically replies, “I say they are, all around. America has outgrown parties; henceforth it is too large, and they too small.” Here we get a definite statement of Whitman’s democratic ideal: the people should not be the playthings of their politicians and government, but should be the government themselves. And the same logic underpinning Whitman’s attitude towards individuals and their government also underpins his attitude toward states and their federal government: “Any one of These States is perfect mistress of itself; and each additional State the same. When States organize themselves, the Federal government withdraws, absolved of its duties, except certain specific ones under the Constitution, and only in behalf of them can it interfere in The States.”

To this point in “The Eighteenth Presidency!,” Whitman has been both building an argument against the current political system

and seeking to inculcate a sense of patriotic duty in the workmen of America. While he has cast stinging aspersions on past and present politicians, he defers spelling out what awaits the nation if his warning is not heeded until the final paragraph of a section entitled “One or Two Radical Parts of the American Theory of Government”:

I said the national obligation is passed over to The States. Then if they are false to it, and impose upon certain persons, can the national government interfere? It can not, under any circumstances whatever. We must wait, no matter how long. There is no remedy, except in The State itself. A corner-stone of the organic compacts of America is that the State is perfect mistress of itself. If that is taken away, all the rest may just as well be taken away. When that is taken away, this Union is dissolved.

Here, Whitman voices the fear that much of the nation had been harboring for several years: that the nation was in danger of fracturing. Apart from abolitionists, most people in the North were willing to tolerate slavery—even if many of them were, in principle, morally opposed—if it meant keeping the Union together. The problem of slavery, many thought, would simply have to work itself out; what they could not tolerate was anything that threatened to tear the nation apart. Thus it is significant that at this moment, when the threat of disunion is most explicitly raised, that Whitman turns to the issue of the Fugitive Slave Law in the next section, titled, “Must Runaway Slaves Be Delivered Back?” His answer is, on the surface, quite simple: “They must.”

This terse opening line of the section, “They must,” was quite clearly meant to jolt Whitman’s imagined reader, as indeed it continues to elicit the attention of scholars when citing Whitman’s attitudes to the Fugitive Slave Law. Whitman undoubtedly knew that such a remark could be controversial for Northern opponents of the law, which is why he quickly clarifies his position:

By a section of the fourth article of the Federal Constitution, These States compact each with the other, that any person held to service or labor in one State, under its laws, and escaping into another State, shall not be absolved from service by any law of that other State, but shall be delivered up to the persons to whom such service or labor is due.

Here Whitman approximately quotes, not the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, but what is known as the “Fugitive Slave Clause” of the U.S. Constitution—a notoriously vague clause that had been at least somewhat clarified by a previous Fugitive Slave Law in 1793. As Whitman had made abundantly clear earlier in the pamphlet, he revered the Constitution, calling it “a perfect and entire thing” and “the greatest piece of moral building ever constructed,” adding that he believed “its architects were some mighty prophets and gods.” It is to the obligation of “good faith” towards the Constitution—including its Fugitive Slave Clause—that Whitman is here appealing: “This part of the second organic compact between the original states should be carried out by themselves in their usual forms, but in spirit and in letter.” If citizens simply practiced good faith, Whitman reasoned, there would be no need for federal interference. However, good faith meant adhering to the Constitution regardless of moral objections. “I perceive [the fourth article] is not to be evaded on any plea whatever, not even the plea of its unrighteousness,” Whitman argues, before repeating again that the clause is to be obeyed “in spirit and in letter, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant.”

Having made clear where he stood on the broader question of returning fugitive slaves, Whitman turns to the 1850 law:

As to what is called the Fugitive Slave Law, insolently put over the people by their Congress and President, it contravenes the whole of the organic compacts, and is at all times to be defied in all parts of These States, South or North, by speech, by pen, and, if need be, by the bullet and the sword.

Here, Whitman lambasts the 1850 law with the same adamancy that he endorses the Constitutional clause, even going so far as to call for violence. Given his earlier statements—both in “The Eighteenth Presidency!” and the 1856 notebook—Whitman’s stance is perhaps not surprising. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 represented, for Whitman, the ultimate betrayal of the proper chain of relations between a nation, its constituent states, and its citizens. It was a piece of legislation predicated on layers upon layers of both political and bodily coercion. Slaveholders, with their ownership of bodies and those bodies’ coerced labor, were the legislation’s originating source; the pressure

of slaveholding politicians and politicians sympathetic to slaveholders necessitated the creation of a law to appease Southern threats of disunion; the law, once in place, was forced upon the states, giving federal marshals the power to force Northern citizens into service of the law; the marshals and their potentially unwilling posse were tasked with the capture and transport of an equally unwilling body back into enslavement. It is thus not surprising that the law would have outraged Whitman, a lover of both political and bodily freedom. And with the distinction drawn between the 1850 law and the Constitutional clause, Whitman's claim that fugitives should still be returned does not, in theory, contradict this stance, as critics have pointed out.¹³

However, it is hard to imagine a practical scenario—after the 1850 law had already been passed—in which the willful return of a fugitive slave by a Northern citizen would not have been viewed as at least a tacit endorsement of the Compromise of 1850 and its Fugitive Slave Law. Likewise, it seems unlikely that somebody taking up Whitman's charge to boldly defy the new Fugitive Slave Law would, with no questions asked, willingly return a runaway slave. It is possible that Whitman did not consider this potential practical difficulty, or perhaps he simply viewed the enforcement of the Constitution's fugitive slave clause as a necessary evil along the path to ultimate political and bodily freedom, and that any contradictions—moral or practical—would have to be somehow overcome in the service of the Union. There is evidence, however, to suggest that Whitman had second thoughts about this claim.

While scholars acknowledge that "The Eighteenth Presidency!" was unpublished during Whitman's lifetime, most speak as though it existed in a single, finished version, usually (in recent years) citing the text as it appears in the Library of America edition of Whitman's poetry and prose. However, as Edward Grier notes in his introduction to the 1956 reprint of the piece, at least three "original" copies of the printed proofs still exist.¹⁴ Furthermore, the two copies in the Feinberg collection at the Library of Congress contain several deletions and insertions in Whitman's hand. While Whitman's edits in one copy are mostly minor—single words crossed out here and there, and slight changes made to the headings of a few sections—the changes in the

other copy are more substantial. Significantly, Whitman has crossed out the entire section entitled “Must Runaway Slaves Be Delivered Back?” (see Figures 1 and 2). Given the historical specificity of the essay’s subject, it is almost certain that he made these corrections and deletions in the summer or early fall of 1856, before the outcome of the election in November would have rendered much of the essay irrelevant. The reasons for Whitman’s deletions, however, are unclear. In the same proof, Whitman also crossed out the sections entitled “To Fremont, of New York” and “To Editors Of The Independent Press, And To Rich Persons,” and a large portion of the final section, “The World’s Portents, Issues, The 80th Year Of These States.” In some ways, the fugitive slave section is the outlier of the piece, as it does not deal specifically with either the Presidency or other political offices; thus perhaps Whitman simply felt it did not fit with the rest of the essay. Given his comments elsewhere in “The Eighteenth Presidency!” however, particularly in the only other section dealing directly with the Fugitive Slave Law, it seems more likely that Whitman was having reservations about the implications of his pronouncement that fugitives “must” be returned.

At the end of the section entitled “Lesson of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Terms of the Presidency,” Whitman writes:

to-day, to-night, the constables and commissioners of the President can by law step into any part of These States and pick out whom they please, deciding which man or woman they will allow to be free, and which will be a slave, no jury to intervene, but the commissioner’s mandate to be enforced by the federal troops and canon, and has been actually so enforced.

Whitman was certainly not the first person to make the argument that the Fugitive Slave Law made slaves of the whole nation. Similar arguments were frequently made by opponents of the law, who asserted that the federal government had effectively made itself a slave to the interests of Southern slaveholders in bowing to the demands of the politicians who called for a strengthened Fugitive Slave Law. So too for Northern citizens who were now in danger of being forced to return escaped slaves against their will. This section of “The Eighteenth Presidency!” expands the threat of the Fugitive Slave Law even

ampler west is to be ordained. Is it to be ordained to workmen, or to the masters of workmen? Shall the future mechanics of America be serfs? Shall labor be degraded, and women be whips in the fields for not performing their tasks? If slaves are not prohibited from all national American territory by law, as prohibited in the beginning, as the organic compacts authorize and require, and if, on the contrary, the entrance and establishment of slave labor through the continent is secured, there will steadily wheel into this Union, for centuries to come, slave state after slave state, the entire surface of the land owned by great proprietors, in plantations of thousands of acres, showing no more sight for free races of farmers and work-people than there is now in any European despotism or aristocracy; and the existence of our present Free States put in jeopardy, because out of that vast territory are to come states enough to overbalance all.

Workmen! Workmen! These immense national American tracts belong to you; they are in trust with you; they are latent with the populous cities, numberless farms, herds, granaries, groves, golden gardens, and inalienable homesteads, of your successors. The base political blowers and kept-editors of the North are raising a fog of prevarications around you. But the manlier Southern disunionists, the chieftains among the three hundred and fifty thousand masters, clearly distinguish the issue, and the principle it rests upon. McDuffie, disunionist governor, lays it down with candid boldness that the workingmen of a state are unsafe depositaries of political powers and rights, and that a republic can not permanently exist unless those who ply the mechanical trades and attend to the farm-work are avowed, subordinated by strict laws to their masters. Calhoun, disunionist senator, denounces and denies, in the presence of the world, the main article of the organic compact of These States, that all men are born free and equal, and bequeaths to his followers, at present leaders of the three hundred and fifty thousand masters, guides of the so-called democracy, councilors of Presidents, and getters-up of the nominations of Buchanan and Fillmore, his deliberate charge, to be carried out against that main article, that it is the most false and dangerous of all political errors; such being the words of that charge, spoken in the summer of the 10th year of These States, and, indeed, carried out since in the spirit of congressional legislation, executive action, and the candidates offered by the political parties to the people.

ARE NOT POLITICAL PARTIES ABOUT PLAYING OUT?

I say they are, all round. America has outgrown parties; henceforth it is too large, and they too small. They habitually make common cause just as soon in advocacy of the worst deeds and men as the best, or probably a little sooner for the worst. I place no reliance upon any old party, nor upon any new party. Suppose one to be formed under the noblest auspices, and getting into power with the noblest intentions, how long would it remain so? How many years? Would it remain so one year? As soon as it becomes successful, and there are offices to be bestowed, the politicians leave the unsuccessful parties, and rush toward it, and it ripens and rots with the rest.

WHAT RIGHT HAS ANY ONE POLITICAL PARTY, NO MATTER WHICH, TO WIELD THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT?

No right at all. Not the so-called democratic, not abolition, opposition to foreigners, nor any other party, should be permitted the exclusive use of the Presidency; and every American young man must have sense enough to comprehend this. I have said the old parties are defunct; but there remains of them empty flesh, putrid mouths, mumbling and squeaking the tones of these conventions, the politicians standing back in shadow, telling lies, trying to delude and frighten the people; and nominating such candidates as Fillmore and Buchanan.

PARTY PLATFORMS, SECTIONS, CREEDS.

What impudence! for any one platform, section, creed, no matter which, to expect to subordinate all the rest, and rule the immense diversity of These free and equal States! Platforms are of no account. The right man is every thing. With the downfall of parties go the platforms they are forever putting up, lowering, turning, repainting, and changing.

THE UNSCHANGEABLE AMERICAN PLATFORMS.

The platforms for the Presidency of These States are simply the organic compacts of The States, the Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution, the action of the earlier Congresses, the spirit of the fathers and warriors, the official lives of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and the now well-understood and morally established rights of man, wherever the sun shines, the rain falls, and the grass grows.

THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

Much babble will always be heard in the land about the Federal Constitution, this, that, and the other concerning it. The Federal Constitution is a perfect and entire thing, an edifice put

together, not for the accommodation of a few persons, but for the whole human race; not for a day or a year, but for many years, perhaps a thousand, perhaps many thousand. Its architecture is not a single brick, a beam, an apartment, but only the whole. It is the grandest piece of moral building ever constructed; I believe its architects were some mighty prophets and gods. Few appreciate it, Americans just as few as any. Like all perfect works or persons, time only is great enough to give it area. Five or six centuries hence, it will be better understood from results, growth.

The Federal Constitution is the second of the American organic compacts. The premises, outworks, guard, defense, entrance of the Federal Constitution, is the primary compact of These States, sometimes called the Declaration of Independence; and the groundwork, bed, understratum of that again, is its deliberate engagement, in behalf of the States, thenceforward to consider all men to be born free and equal into the world, each one possessed of inalienable rights to his life and liberty, (namely, that no laws passed by any government could be considered to alienate or take away those born rights, the penalties upon criminals being, of course, for the very purpose of preserving those rights.) This is the covenant of the Republic from the beginning, now and forever. It is not a mere opinion; it is the most venerable pledge, with all the forms observed, signed by the commissioners, ratified by The States, and sworn to by Washington at the head of his army, with his hand upon the Bible. It is supreme over all American law, and greater than Presidents, Congresses, elections, and what not, for they hurry out of the way, but it remains. Above all, it is carefully to be observed in all that relates to the continental territories. When they are organized into States, it is to be passed over to the good faith of those States.

ONE OR TWO RADICAL PARTS OF THE AMERICAN THEORY OF GOVERNMENT.

Man can not hold property in man. As soon as there are clear-brained original American judges, this saying will be simplified by their judgments, and no State out of the whole confederacy but will confirm and approve those judgments.

Any one of These States is perfect mistress of itself; and each additional State the same. When States organize themselves, the Federal government withdraws, absolved from its duties, except certain specific ones under the Constitution, and only in behalf of them can it interfere in the States. The true government is much simpler than is supposed, and abstains from much more. Nine tenths of the laws passed every winter at the Federal Capitol, and all the State Capitals, are not only unneeded laws, but positive nuisances, jobs got up for the service of special classes or persons.

Every rational uncriminal person, twenty-one years old, should be eligible to vote, on actual residence, no other requirement needed. The day will come when this will prevail.

The whole American government is itself simply a compact with each individual of the thirty millions of persons now inhabitants of These States, and prospectively with each individual of the hundred millions and five hundred millions that are in time to become inhabitants, to protect each one's life, liberty, industry, acquisitions, without excepting one single individual out of the whole number, and without making ignominious distinctions. This is government sublime; thus it is equal; otherwise it is a government of castes, on exactly the same principles with the kingdoms of Europe.

I said the national obligation is passed over to The States. Then if they are false to it, and impose upon certain persons, can the national government interfere? It can not, under any circumstances whatever. We must wait, no matter how long. There is no remedy, except in The State itself. A corner-stone of the organic compacts of America is that a State is perfect mistress of itself. If that is taken away, all the rest may just as well be taken away. When that is taken away, this Union is dissolved.

MUST RUNAWAY SLAVES BE TURNED BACK?

They must. Many things may have the go-by, but good faith shall never have the go-by.

By a section of the fourth article of the Federal Constitution, These States compact each with the other, that any person held to service or labor in one State under its laws, and escaping into another State, shall not be absolved from service by any law of that other State, but shall be delivered up to the persons to whom such service or labor is due. This part of the second organic compact between the original States should be carried out by themselves in their usual forms, but in spirit and in letter. Congress has no business to pass any law upon the subject, any more than upon the hundred other of the compacts between the States, left to be carried out by their good faith. Why should Congress pick out this particular one? I had quite as lief depend on the good faith of any of These States, as on the laws of Congress and the President. Good faith is irresistible among men, and friendship is; which lawyers can not understand,

Figures 1 and 2: Printer's proof of The Eighteenth Presidency! showing the crossing out of the section titled, "Must Runaway Slaves be Turned Back?"

thinking nothing but compulsion will do.

But cannot that requirement of the fourth article of the Second Compact be evaded, on any plea whatever, even the plea of its unrighteousness? Nay, I perceive it is not to be evaded on any plea whatever, not even the plea of its unrighteousness. It should be observed by The States, in spirit and in letter, whether it is pleasant to them or unpleasant, beholding in it one item among many items, each of the rest as important as it, and each to be so carried out as not to contravene the rest. As to what is called the Fugitive Slave Law, insolently put over the people by their Congress and President, it contravenes the whole of the organic compacts, and is at all times to be defied in all parts of These States, South or North, by speech, by pen, and, if need be, by the bullet and the sword.

Shall we determine upon such things, then, and not leave them to the great judges and the scholars? Yes, it is best that we determine upon such things.

TO FERMONT, OF NEW YORK.

Whenever the day comes for him to appear, the man who shall be the Redeemer President of These States, is to be the one that fullest realizes the rights of individuals, signified by the impregnable rights of The States, the substratum of this Union. The Redeemer President of These States is not to be exclusive, but inclusive. In both physical and political America there is plenty of room for the whole human race; if not, more room ~~can be provided~~.

TO THE AMERICAN YOUNG MEN, MECHANICS, FARMERS, BOATMEN, MANUFACTURERS, &c., OF VIRGINIA, DELAWARE, MARYLAND, THE CAROLINAS, KENTUCKY, TENNESSEE, GEORGIA, ALABAMA, FLORIDA, MISSISSIPPI, ARKANSAS, MISSOURI, LOUISIANA AND TEXAS.

How much longer do you intend to submit to the espionage and terrorism of the three hundred and fifty thousand owners of slaves? Are you to your slaves, and their most obedient slaves? Shall no one among you dare open his mouth to say he is opposed to slavery, as a man should be, on account of the whites, and wants it abolished for their sake? Is not a writer, speaker, teacher to be left alive, but those who lick up the spit that drops from the mouths of the three hundred and fifty thousand masters? Is there hardly one free, courageous soul left in fifteen large and populous States? Do the ranks of the owners of slaves themselves contain no men desperate and tired of that service and sweat of the mind, worse than any service in sugar-fields or corn-fields, under the eyes of overseers? Do the three hundred and fifty thousand expect to bar off forever all preachers, poets, philosophers—all that makes the brain of These States, free literature, free thought, the good old cause of liberty? Are they blind? Do they not see those unrelaxed circles of death narrowing and narrowing every hour around them?

You young men of the Southern States! Is the word Abolitionist so hateful to you, then? Do you not know that Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and all the great Presidents and primal warriors and sages were declared abolitionists?

You young men! American mechanics, farmers, boatmen, manufacturers, and all work-people of the South, the same as the North! you are either to abolish slavery, or it will abolish you.

TO THE THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND OWNERS OF SLAVES.

Suppose you get Kansas, do you think it would be ended? Suppose you and the politicians put Buchanan into the Eighteenth Presidency, or Fillmore into the Presidency, do you think it would be ended? I know nothing more desirable for those who contend against you than that you should get Kansas. Then would the melt begin in These States that would not cool till Kansas should be redeemed, as of course it would be.

O gentlemen, you do not know whom Liberty has nursed in These States, and depends on in time of need. You have not received any report of the Free States, but have received only the reports of the trustees who have betrayed the Free States. Do you suppose they will betray many thousand men, and stick at betraying a few men like you? Raised on plantations or in towns full of menial workmen and workwomen, you do not know, as I know, these fierce and turbulent races that fill the Northeast, the East, the West, the Northwest, the Pacific shores, the great cities, Manhattan Island, Brooklyn, Newark, Boston, Worcester, Hartford, New Haven, Providence, Portland, Bangor, Augusta, Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Lockport, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Madison, Galena, Burlington, Iowa City, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Sacramento, and many more. From my mouth hear the will of These States taking form in the great cities. Where slavery is, there it is. The American compacts, common sense, all things unite to make it the affair of the States diseased with it, to cherish the same as long as they see fit, and to apply the remedy when they see fit. But not one square mile of continental territory

shall henceforward be given to slavery, to slaves, or to the masters of slaves—not one square foot. If any laws are passed giving up such territory, those laws will be repealed. In organizing the territories, what laws are good enough for the American freeman must be good enough for you; if you come in under the said laws, well and good; if not, stay away. What is done, is done; henceforth there is no further compromise. All this is now being cast in the stuff that makes the tough national resolves of These States, that every hour only anneals tougher. It is not that puffy you see in Congress and in the Presidency; it is iron—it is the undissuadable swift metal of death.

TO EDITORS OF THE INDEPENDENT PRESS, AND TO RICH PERSONS.

Circulate and reprint this Voice of mine for the workmen'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, Wally Whitman, and that I shall in future have much to say to them. I perceive that the best thoughts they have wait unspeakably impatient to be put in shape; also that the character, power, pride, friendship, conscience of America have yet to be proved to the remainder of the world.

THE WORLD'S PORTENTS, ISSUES, THE EIGHTH YEAR OF THESE STATES.

The times are full of great portents in These States and in the whole world. Freedom against slavery is not issuing here alone, but is issuing everywhere. ~~The Eastern~~ ~~It divides a~~ ~~persiva~~ ~~for a~~ ~~more aggressive~~ ~~than any of the past.~~ Old men have played their parts, the act suitable to them is closed, and if they will not withdraw voluntarily, must be bid to do so with unmistakable voice. Landmarks of masters, slaves, kings, aristocracies, are moth-eaten, and the peoples of the earth are planting new vast landmarks for themselves. Frontiers and boundaries are less and less able to divide men. The modern inventions, the wholesale engines of war, the world-spreading instruments of peace, the steamship, the locomotive, the electric telegraph, the common newspaper, the cheap book, the ocean mail, are interlinking the inhabitants of the earth together as groups of one family—America standing, and for ages to stand, as the host and champion of the same, the most welcome spectacle ever presented among nations. Every thing indicates unparalleled reforms. Races are marching and countermarching by swift millions and tens of millions. Never was justice so mighty amid injustice; never did the idea of equality erect itself so haughty and uncompromising amid inequality, as to-day. Never were such sharp questions asked as to-day. Never was there more eagerness to know. Never was the representative man more energetic, more like a god, than to-day. He urges on the myriads before him, he crowds them aside, his daring step approaches the arctic and antarctic poles, he colonizes the shores of the Pacific, the Asiatic Indies, the birthplace of languages and of races, the archipelagoes, Australia; he explores Africa, he unearths Assyria and Egypt, he re-states history, he enlarges morality, he speculates anew upon the soul, upon original premises; nothing is left quiet, nothing but he will settle by demonstrations for himself. What whispers are these running through the eastern continents, and crossing the Atlantic and Pacific? What historic denouements are these we are approaching? On all sides ~~trants tremble~~ ~~crowns are unsteady~~, the human race restive, on the watch for some better era, some divine war. No man knows what will happen next, but all know that some such things are to happen as mark the greatest moral convulsions of the earth. Who shall play the hand for America in these tremendous games? A pretty time to put up two debauched old disunionist politicians, the lees and dregs of more than sixty years! A pretty time for two dead corpses to go walking up and down the earth, to guide by feebleness and ashes a proud, young, friendly, fresh, heroic nation of thirty millions of live and electric men!

further; here, the law not only has the ability to force one to assist in the capture of an escaped fugitive, but to force citizens into slavery, extending the threat of slavery to all. Because of the low standard of evidence required of a slave-owner to retrieve an escaped slave—only the signed order of a federal commissioner—and the inability of accused fugitives to appeal or testify on their own behalves, the Fugitive Slave Law greatly increased the possibility of free black Northerners being kidnapped and carted off to a Southern plantation. Thus, if, in this earlier section of the essay, Whitman hoped that the threat of enslavement was enough to compel his readers to fight against federal intervention, he may have felt that the contradiction of asking those same readers to return fugitives to their own previous enslavement was too great to be justified.

To my knowledge, no scholar has yet commented on the deletion of this section from “The Eighteenth Presidency!”¹⁵ Since the essay is known only by its existence in Whitman’s printed proofs, the piece has been handed down to us with the “Runaway Slaves” section included only because editors over the years have chosen to include it, even though we have evidence of Whitman’s intention to delete it. This editorial approach has resulted in the “Runaway Slaves” section being commonly singled out to encapsulate Whitman’s stance towards fugitives. It is useful, then, to consider how our view of Whitman’s stance might have been different if the copy with the deletions had been used as the copy text for reproductions of the essay, particularly given that two of his unpublished manuscripts on slavery suggest that his stance towards both fugitives and the Fugitive Slave Law may have changed considerably by later in the 1850s.



One of those manuscripts contains a pasted-on title that reads “Slavery—the Slaveholders—The Constitution—the true America and Americans, the laboring persons.”¹⁶ The history of this manuscript is complicated, and scholars have debated when it was written, what ultimate form Whitman imagined it taking, and what relationship it might bear to “The Eighteenth Presidency!” Gay Wilson Allen

suggested that it was the manuscript of a speech that Whitman actually delivered, likely sometime in 1858.¹⁷ In the headnote to his transcription of the manuscript, Grier explains the difficulty in accurately dating the material, ultimately concluding that “[w]hat we have here, then, seems to be a composite manuscript assembled, in characteristic Whitman fashion, from fragments large and small, with several discontinuities. . . . This was combined into one essay or speech about 1856 and revised in minor detail in 1858 or later.”¹⁸

It is clear is that “Slavery—the Slaveholders” and “The Eighteenth Presidency!” are closely related: both discuss the supremacy of the Constitution, making frequent use of the phrases “organic compact” and “primary compact”; both discuss at length the importance of state sovereignty; both include substantial catalogs of various types of workmen, including “mechanics,” pitting such citizens against “the owners of slaves”; and both include approximate quotations of the entire Fugitive Slave Clause from the Constitution. But while Whitman writes in both that the states are bound to respect this clause, the “Slavery” manuscript contains several important differences of phrasing that leave interpretation of the clause up to the states themselves. Indeed, Whitman in some ways seems to subtly endorse the so-called “personal liberty laws” passed by many Northern states to evade the earlier fugitive slave laws.¹⁹ After quoting the clause, he writes:

This immensely overrated clause of Article 4th of the Constitution is in reality simple and unexceptionable, easily understood and not at all inconsistent with the rest, *so long as you keep it in its place and due proportion and subordination to the rest*. It is not the whole Constitution and Primary Compact. It should be strictly and faithfully observed by every state, *as far as its plain meaning goes. It should of course be construed in deference to the evident spirit of the rest of the Supreme Law, and under the control of the head and heart thereof as much as possible...Over and above this part of the covenant, it is imperatively reserved to each state, by the letter and spirit of the bargain, to decide who those escaped servants are, and to honorably perform the whole obligation, as they perform any other obligation, by due process of law and without any violent intrusion from abroad.* [Emphasis mine.]

In this quoted portion, Whitman effectively offers the North a moral escape clause, something “The Eighteenth Presidency!” had reject-

ed. If a state determines that the return of an alleged fugitive violates “the evident spirit of the rest of the Supreme Law” (for Whitman, the Constitution and Declaration of Independence), that state has a right to refuse the rendition. Whitman also allows for both “the head and heart” to enter the decision. Furthermore, he stresses that it should be up to the states to determine “who those escaped servants are” and that any fugitive slave case be decided “by due process of law.” Both of these claims rebutted the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, which left the determination of an accused fugitive’s status solely up to an appointed federal commissioner and expressly forbade admittance of the accused’s testimony in any trial or hearing. (This latter stipulation was made largely redundant as the law also protected slave owners against “molestation . . . by any court, judge, magistrate, or other person whomsoever” by stating that a certificate approved by a federal commissioner was all that was required for an owner or his agent to capture and return the fugitive).²⁰ In this manuscript, then, Whitman revises his definitive statement in “The Eighteenth Presidency!” that the Constitution’s slave clause “is not to be evaded on any plea whatever, not even the plea of its unrighteousness.” Here Whitman appears much more lenient to those who might wish to defy both the earlier fugitive clause and the new federal dictates.

There appears to be a chronological progression in Whitman’s thoughts from “The Eighteenth Presidency!” to “Slavery—the Slaveholders,” and I believe that the manuscript represents a later stage of the same—or at least a very similar—project. The dating of “The Eighteenth Presidency!” presents a fairly straightforward case, as the political circumstances described and the players involved mean that the pamphlet, in its existing printed form, could only have been written between the late spring and early fall of 1856.²¹ While it seems likely that Whitman wrote portions of the “Slavery” manuscript around the same time or even slightly earlier²²—a chronology that would allow the possibility of portions of the manuscript contributing to “The Eighteenth Presidency!”—the fact remains that Whitman unquestionably made changes and additions to the “Slavery” manuscript as late as 1858. In two different places he changed the number of states from “31” to “32,” a number which is only accurate after Minnesota

joins the Union in May of 1858. That Whitman was bothering to make such changes to the manuscript in 1858 suggests that he was still considering making use of it, and that, ostensibly, he still believed the words he had written. Gay Wilson Allen's suggestion that the manuscript represents a speech that Whitman gave in 1858 supports such an interpretation. It therefore seems reasonable to read the progression of Whitman's political ideas as moving from "The Eighteenth Presidency!" to the "Slavery" manuscript, clearly demonstrating that the Fugitive Slave Law was emerging as the most crucial—and, for Whitman, the most infuriating—political issue in the nation during the mid-to-late 1850s.

Just as the climax of "The Eighteenth Presidency!" saw Whitman invoking the Fugitive Slave Law, in the most angry and impassioned moment of the "Slavery" manuscript he compels his audience to "speak to these official intruders [the federal agents of the Fugitive Slave Law] whenever and wherever they come among us, not in the snivel of prayer meetings nor with the genteel moderation of northern congressmen but in tones something like the crack of the artillery." He then assumes the first-person pronoun and inhabits the role of the one addressing the federal agents:

Who fetches you here?—What do you want among my haughty and jealous democracies of the north?—I do not discuss any nigger question with you now; this is a vital question of my own dignities and immunities which I decide at once and without parley. . . . These streets are mine.—There are my officers and my courts.—At the Capitol is my Legislature.—The warrant you brought with you we know it not.—It is foreign to my usages, as to my eyes and ears.—Go back to the power that sent you.

The bitter enmity of Whitman's words is striking, and, it is in these lines that we get a tone and style clearly reminiscent of his poetry—the first person intimacy that seems to see the speaker fully inhabiting the mind and voice of somebody else, and the tone of immediacy that seems to reach off the page, grabbing the reader by the collar. But perhaps most importantly, we here see a stark statement of just what, for Whitman, is at stake with the Fugitive Slave Law; he bluntly turns the matter away from slaves (he is not discussing "any nigger

question,” after all)²³ and directs his fire against federal intervention and the affront such an intervention provides to his “own dignities and immunities.” “Is this a small matter?” Whitman asks. “The matter of tea and writing paper was smaller.—But this is every way a larger matter.—It involves the point whether we or somebody else shall possess the simplest control of on [*sic*] our house, on our premises.” In voicing his anger over such an affront, however, he—perhaps unknowingly—enters into a discourse of possession and ownership; the streets, officers, courts, and legislatures are *his*. While slaves may be owned by another, what Whitman cares about here is ownership of his state and its government, and, perhaps most importantly, ownership of himself.

As though aware that he has begun to rant, Whitman rhetorically asks:

But why do I babble here? This hour, this moment while I talk such big words the police of the President might march in here and by law of Congress, passed by votes of my delegates lay their hands upon my shoulder, and in the name of the statute and under its penalties order my active assistance to capture some ignorant wretched countrymen [*sic*] of mine, born and bred on American soil, his father or grandfather very likely a white man, and this poor unhappy brute hunted by greater brutes avowedly for no crime, but because some Southerner or Northern gentleman owns the title deed of him, and he has made a run for it.

This passage presents a complicated mix of sympathies and emotions. Whitman refers to the slave as his “countrymen” and acknowledges the unfair treatment of the fugitive slave, both in the immediate context of the slave hunt—in which the slave has committed no crime other than yearning for a freedom that was rightfully his—and in the broader scope of American slavery, an institution in which many slaves were the product of white rape of a black woman. However, his description of the slave as a “poor unhappy brute” is unflattering, to say the least. Although Whitman describes the fugitive as a “brute,” it is possible to read the usage as rhetorically encouraging readers to think the writer agrees that blacks are brutish, only to turn the tables by describing those hunting fugitives as even “greater brutes.” But, ultimately, the speaker of this passage is most frightened by the federal government’s hand on *his own* shoulder, not the shoulder of the slave,

and the lack of control over his own body and its manipulation by the hand of another. We thus see at work in this manuscript the multiple layers of bodily coercion that the Fugitive Slave Law enacts. Whitman once again is imagining an enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, as he did in “The Eighteenth Presidency!,” but with a slightly different tack. Here, the threat is not that he himself might be captured into slavery, but that his morals and rights might be infringed upon.

Cursory readings of both “The Eighteenth Presidency!” and the “Slavery” manuscript seem to support the generally held scholarly assessment of Whitman’s overall attitude towards the Fugitive Slave Law: that his concern lay mainly in the implications the law—and the expansion of slavery more broadly—had for whites.²⁴ In “The Eighteenth Presidency!” he bluntly asks the young mechanics of America, “Shall no one among you dare open his mouth and say he is opposed to slavery, as a man should be, on account of whites, and want it abolished for their sake?” Thus the manuscript phrase in the title of this essay encapsulates Whitman’s writings about the Fugitive Slave Law: “this Fugitive damned Act.” While Whitman was quick to curse the law, the fugitives themselves were quite often absent, erased from the scene, since Whitman’s focus was the affront that the law represented to the free citizens and workers of the North, the unjustness—from a Constitutional perspective—of the law itself. As a Northern Free Soiler (and later Republican) opposed to the Fugitive Slave Law, Whitman struggled to define what his political opposition to the law meant for the treatment of actual fugitives, and what his obligation was to the individuals that the law targeted. It is clear from closer readings of these two pieces, and another related manuscript, that Whitman’s answer to his own question—“Must Runaway Slaves Be Delivered Back?”—was not as straightforward as his oft-quoted answer would have us believe.

In the “Slavery” section of his *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, along with “Slavery—the Slaveholders,” Edward Grier includes a manuscript he titles “As of the Orator” (6:2192-2198). Grier did not have access to the manuscript itself, deriving his text instead from Clifton Furness’ *Walt Whitman’s Workshop* (1928). While both Furness and Grier treat the manuscript as a cohesive text, it is unclear

whether it ever existed in such a form. Several sections of Furness' transcription contain strong similarities between other Whitman manuscripts, including "Slavery—the Slaveholders," suggesting that they were written in the mid-to-late 1850s.²⁵ However, the manuscript source of another section has been recovered, and is found in a Civil War-era notebook alongside notes that can be definitively dated to 1862 and 1863.²⁶ Therefore, it seems likely that "As of the Orator" is comprised of scattered manuscript scraps, written as much as ten years apart, that Furness pieced together.²⁷ Two of the sections are of particular note for their comments on fugitives.

Whitman begins one section by writing of the "uniform and inherent right of every man and woman to life and liberty."²⁸ He goes on to note that this right cannot be taken away "without outrage," and that therefore every man "has the inalienable right to defend himself." He then turns to the matter of assisting a person whose liberty is being assaulted.

As to assisting such a person, it is not likely I shall ever have the privilege, but if I can do it, whether he be black or whether he be white, whether he be an Irish fugitive or an Italian or German or Carolina fugitive, whether he came over sea or over land, if he comes to me he gets what I can do for him.—He may be coarse fanatical, and a nigger, he may have shown bad judgment, but while he has committed no crime further than seeking his liberty and defending it, as the Lord God liveth, I would help him and be proud of it, and protect him if I could.

Though his description of the "nigger" (fugitive slave) as "coarse" and "fanatical" displays prevalent racial stereotypes of his time, here we find the sympathy towards fugitives that was lacking in "The Eighteenth Presidency!" and "Slavery." In short, we find in these lines, as Betsy Erkkila has pointed out, the sympathy that often characterizes Whitman's poetry.²⁹ The speaker of this passage would view it as a "privilege" to assist a runaway slave and would "be proud of it." His promise to "protect [the slave] if I could" may also cast some light on the ambiguous "firelock" that leans in the corner of Section 10 of "Song of Myself."

Without the original manuscripts, it is again difficult to know when Whitman wrote these lines of the "As of the Orator" manu-

script, and thus where they fall in the chronology of his thinking on fugitive slaves and the Fugitive Slave Law. However, given that Furness groups the lines along with others from the 1860s, it is quite possible that these lines come from sometime in the late 1850s or early 1860s, later than either “The Eighteenth Presidency!” or the “Slavery” manuscript. With increasing sectional, political, and racial discord following the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 and the Dred Scott decision in 1857—and with broader public sentiment in the North finally beginning to turn against the Fugitive Slave Law—it is possible that Whitman grew less and less concerned with upholding a Constitutional obligation to Southern slaveholders who seemed more and more like an enemy. Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, Whitman may have finally resolved that allowing a fugitive slave to “sit next me at table” was an admirable act not only in poetry but in practice.³⁰

However, as is so often the case with Whitman, just at the moment that we as twenty-first century readers hope for a definitive, progressive statement of cross-racial identification, Whitman shifts focus. The next section of “As of the Orator” reads:

We are all ready enough to make ovations for the great refugees who come with banners flying and the sound of trumpets and drums.— Then we go with the crowd, most men for motives that are credible to them—a few suckers to make a show and lay traps for votes.—But if some poor Cudjo dodges this way, with the marshal of the United States on his track, and the police to aid in the hunt, that’s a different affair. An abolitionist or two may bandy words with the court; but in the main we join against the man and the few who stand up for him.

While this section also deals with fugitive slaves and expresses sympathy for them, we see Whitman’s focus once again turning away from the slaves themselves. The emphasis on the “marshal of the United States” indicates that this is for Whitman, once again, a matter of federal overreach. The mention of the police “aid[ing] in the hunt” also raises the issue of local cooperation with the federal marshals, something that we have seen Whitman did not view favorably. Increasingly, the debate over the Fugitive Slave Law came to be representative of something else for Whitman, something ultimately unrelated to fugitives, slavery, state sovereignty, or Constitutionality. Ultimately,

Whitman in this passage focuses on the response of Northern citizens towards fugitive slaves being sought under the Fugitive Slave Law. Whitman's opinion seems to be that their response is insufficient and self-centered, putting on a show of being hospitable to foreign political fugitives but then allowing a fugitive slave to be captured by the marshals and police without a word of objection.³¹ And it is in this disdain for acquiescence to the law's enforcement that we find the strongest connection between Whitman's unpublished prose writings and his engagement with the Fugitive Slave Law in his poetry.



It is important to remember that by the time Whitman printed the proofs of "The Eighteenth Presidency!" in 1856 and had made his final edits to the "Slavery" manuscript in 1858, he had published the first two editions of *Leaves of Grass*. In both editions, the poem that would later be titled "Song of Myself" features a fugitive slave at two key moments. As Martin Klammer has pointed out, Whitman has been seeking a truly "sympathetic and imaginative self" for the entire "Song of Myself," and it is not until he reaches the "hounded slave" portion of the poem that Whitman is able to arrive at a self that is able to make the final leap "not merely from observer to participant but from wholly self to wholly other, from object to subject, from 'he' to 'I.'" ³² Thus, as both Klammer and Karen Sánchez-Eppler have convincingly argued, fugitive slaves were key to Whitman's poetic project in *Leaves of Grass*, and his bardic "I" clearly sought to sympathize and identify with fugitive slaves.³³

Of course, the difficulty for many readers and scholars has always been that Whitman's biographical "I"—as close as we can come to delineating such a slippery concept—seemed to be lacking the very same sympathy and identification that his poems espoused. But although he seems to have never achieved in his life the sympathy and openness towards blacks, including fugitive slaves, that his poetic persona aspired to, the unpublished prose evidence that I have discussed thus far suggests that he tried. His acknowledgement of the fugitive's innocence and nefarious parentage in the "Slavery" manuscript, and his

granting of moral leniency in the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law indicate that he clearly had sympathy for the *condition* of the slave and fugitive slave, if not necessarily for the slaves themselves. And the “As of the Orator” fragment suggests that his sympathies may have run deeper still.

While fugitive slaves figure prominently in Whitman’s poetry, only one poem—“A Boston Ballad”—can be said to deal explicitly with the Fugitive Slave Law, and I turn in the second half of this essay to an analysis of the poem and its movement throughout the six editions of *Leaves of Grass*. In doing so I will argue that it was the poem’s depiction and critique of the passivity and ossification of America’s citizens that caused Whitman to retain “Boston Ballad”—a poem about a very specific historical moment—in every edition of his book, even long after the Civil War had been ended, slavery abolished, and the Fugitive Slave Law repealed.

Whitman first published the untitled poem that would eventually be called “A Boston Ballad” in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The poem was precipitated by the capture and return of fugitive slave Anthony Burns, one of the most prominent enforcements of the Fugitive Slave Law. Burns’s rendition was particularly notable because it took place in Boston, a city strongly associated with both abolitionism and the American revolutionary ideal of liberty—indeed, Erkkila refers to the poem as “Whitman’s poetic burning of the Constitution,” likening it to William Lloyd Garrison famous protest that occurred in the wake of Burn’s capture (63). Having escaped from slavery in Virginia just months earlier, Burns was apprehended in Boston on May 24, 1854. After a highly publicized hearing that lasted over a week, Burns’s owner, Charles Suttle, was allowed to take Burns back to Virginia. In light of a radical abolitionist attempt earlier in the week to rescue Burns, the federal marshal in charge of ensuring the slave’s return (a man ironically named Freeman) ordered a massive military escort to accompany Burns from the courthouse to the harbor, where he was to be put on a ship. Thousands of people gathered on the streets of Boston to watch the spectacle. In Whitman’s poem, the spectacle also calls up the ghosts of American Revolutionary soldiers, who register their disgust with the proceedings. The poem’s speaker,

however, is oblivious to the reason for the phantoms' displeasure, and suggests that they do not belong. "But there is one thing that belongs here," the speaker ironically notes, calling on the Mayor of Boston to exhume the corpse of King George III from its "royal vault" in England, after which it is brought back to America to become the new centerpiece of the government procession.

Scholars such as Jay Grossman and Ivy Wilson have argued that Whitman's poem was ultimately not concerned with American chattel slavery or the plight of fugitive slaves—after all, the fugitive slave Anthony Burns is completely absent. Instead, as Grossman argues, "[w]hat appalls the speaker in this poem is . . . that American revolutionary fervor has vanished. Arbitrary, nonrepresentative power has returned to rule, not in the figure of the King and his cronies, but now in the figure of his as-good substitute: the federal government."³⁴ Most other readings of the poem follow this or a similar argument.³⁵ However, such readings take for granted the traditional characterization of the Anthony Burns affair as a watershed moment of abolitionist sympathy in both Boston and the North more broadly. As such, scholars have assumed that Whitman intentionally misrepresented the public response to the Burns incident to fit his own purposes. Martin Klammer writes that "to make [his] point Whitman had to contradict what he probably knew to be the truth about Boston's response."³⁶ Grossman makes a similar argument, noting that "[t]he poem's intervention grows more curious when it is placed beside contemporaneous documents describing how some of Boston's most prominent citizens . . . were anything but passive in response to Burns' arrest."³⁷ As a result of such a reading, the poem's attack on popular sovereignty has tended to receive more discussion than its attack on passive citizenry. "[W]hy else," Grossman asks, "revise the 'truth' of the response to Burns' imprisonment . . . except to demonstrate federal power's virtual nullification of the local control the Revolution had been fought to reassert" (51).

Recent historical reexaminations of the Burns affair call into question this traditional view of the event as inciting a groundswell of antislavery sentiment. Arguing that historians of the Burns case have tended to "read history backward from the Civil War," historian

Gordon Barker, in his book *The Imperfect Revolution*, concludes that “[a]t critical moments such as the Burns rendition, antislavery sentiments competed with a wide range of other, much less noble opinions and beliefs.”³⁸ Drawing largely on personal correspondence and contemporary newspaper accounts of the events, Barker convincingly argues that Boston’s reaction was much more tolerant of Burns’ return than most histories would suggest. Barker’s argument is largely in agreement with what remains the most thorough study of the Fugitive Slave Law and its impact—Stanley Campbell’s *The Slave Catchers*, in which Campbell states that between 1850 and 1854, “public opinion in the northern states toward the Fugitive Slave Law was ambiguous, but on the whole it was acquiescent.”³⁹ He adds that, “By far the greater majority [in the North], . . . although unsympathetic with the harsh provisions of the law, was willing to acquiesce in the return of fugitive slaves to their owner in order to maintain good relations with the South and to prevent disruption of the Union.” The sentiment that Campbell describes can be found throughout newspaper editorials and public pronouncements from the early 1850s. Craig R. Smith, in his study of Daniel Webster, notes that following Webster’s March 7, 1850, Senate speech in support of the Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Law, public opinion in Boston—abolitionist objections notwithstanding—was largely in favor of Webster’s position and the Compromise, including the Fugitive Slave Law, if it led to the stability of the Union.⁴⁰

Even those who strongly opposed the law admitted that public opinion was working against the abolitionist cause. In 1851, after the successful return in April of fugitive slave Thomas Sims in Boston, abolitionist Richard Henry Dana, Jr., related the story of running into Josiah Quincy III on the streets of the city.⁴¹ Quincy was a former mayor of Boston, President of Harvard University, and father of the prominent abolitionist Edmund Quincy—and by 1851, 80 years old. “He stopped me,” Dana said, “and it was indeed refreshing to find one aged, venerable man, of the upper class of the city of Boston, who had his heart in the right place.” The account continues:

He told me that he felt mortified and degraded. ‘When the law passed,’ he said, ‘I did think the moral sense of the community would not enforce it; I said that it never would be. But now I find that my fellow-citizens are not only *submissive* to, but that they are earnestly active for its enforcement. The Boston of 1851 is not the Boston of 1775. Boston has now become a mere shop—a place for buying and selling goods; and I suppose, also, of *buying and selling men*.’⁴²

Thomas Sims’s forced return to his owners drew condemnation from many of the city’s and the nation’s leading abolitionists who were aghast that such an act should happen in the so-called “Cradle of Liberty.” A year later, on the anniversary of Sims’s return, Theodore Parker gave a speech detailing Boston’s shame.⁴³ During the gathering, the Rev. John Pierpont, a frequent contributor of verse to the abolitionist press, read a poem that he had composed for the occasion. Like “Boston Ballad,” the poem opens by invoking the “Souls of the patriot dead, / On Bunker’s heights who bled,” before drawing a sharp contrast with a current political climate that can allow a hounded fugitive to be willingly returned. Should the people of Boston ever again “run down the poor, who flee / From slavery’s hell,” Pierpont asks that God “[e]xclude us from thy bliss” and “[a]t us let angels hiss.”⁴⁴ A similar poem was published in the *New York Independent* following Burns’ capture three years later, bemoaning that “[t]he northern mind is bowed; / No more pilgrim banner waves. / Content we see our father’s graves / By Slavery’s groaning cannon plowed.”⁴⁵ Thus, in penning “A Boston Ballad,” Whitman contributes to a minor poetic tradition of calling out Boston’s acquiescence to the Fugitive Slave Law.

As Barker notes, accounts of the Burns trial and procession have tended to emphasize the actions and reactions of the radical abolitionists, with descriptions of the failed rescue attempt led by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and, with several buildings draped in black, the ominous sight of a coffin, emblazoned with the word “LIBERTY,” hung from the window of a building as Burns’s procession marched past. But as Barker points out, for most citizens of Boston—and, indeed, for much of the North—ardent abolitionists were seen as unruly radicals intent on ending slavery at all costs, even if it meant tearing the Union apart, something which many in the North were loathe to see happen. “At midcentury,” Barker writes, “the divisions

between Americans who supported the Fugitive Slave Law, or at least advocated compliance with it, and abolitionists was sharper in Boston than in any other place in the Union” (34). Just months after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, the *Boston Evening Gazette*, referring to the events at a recent abolitionist meeting which condemned the law, applauded another Boston newspaper’s denouncement of “those who are endeavoring to create an agitation about this law. . . . [The newspaper] also disapproves, as every thinking man will, of the intemperate and seditious language used at a late public meeting.” The *Gazette* stated that newspaper reports such as this “expressing honest sentiments, will do more for the cause of the fugitive slave than all the spoutings of fanatics and weak-brained maniacs.”⁴⁶

Many accounts of the Burns affair painted the actions of Boston’s abolitionists as the actions of a violent, radical minority, not the will of Boston’s majority, if it describes them at all. The New York *Weekly Herald*, a paper that Whitman read frequently in the 1850s, applauded the lawful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law taking place in Boston, writing that “[w]e hope the law will be allowed to take its due course, that the people of this country may learn whether or not the supreme laws of the land are to be set at naught by a mob led on by a band of notoriety-seeking fanatics.”⁴⁷ The *Boston Evening Transcript*, in which Whitman would later publish his Civil War poem “Beat! Beat! Drums!” writes:

Our military friends have responded with great promptness to the numerous calls which have been made upon them during the exciting times of the past few weeks. The public, we believe, duly appreciate their loyalty to the law, and many persons who in former times have questioned the expediency of their organization, now feel that their own persons and property are secure against mob violence by reason of the large military force we have to support the supremacy of law in every emergency which may arise.⁴⁸

While there were certainly isolated outbursts protesting the show of military force in the Burns procession, most of Boston’s citizens, it would seem, were thankful to see order being upheld. Barker notes that Boston newspapers in the days after Burns’ rendition “underscored Bostonians’ commitment to the Union and their strong incli-

nation toward law and order. Some Boston papers actually printed letters from Southerners thanking Bostonians for ‘the firm and patriotic manner in which they had acted.’”⁴⁹ While Thomas Wentworth Higginson may have been beating down doors to free Burns, most Bostonians were not. “Many of the thousands who gathered [to see Burns’ procession],” Barker writes, “seemed to be curious rather than incensed” (23).

Several of the New York papers Whitman would likely have read reported that the procession of Burns from the courthouse to the wharf had been largely peaceful. Drawing its account from the *Boston Post* of June 3, the *New York Daily Times* notes:

The first division of Massachusetts militia formed upon the Common about 7 o’clock, A.M., in accordance with the order of Major-General Edwards, to await the command of the authorities in the preservation of the peace of the city, during the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave law in the rendition of Burns. With an exalted sense of duty pervading the breast of every man, it was easy to perceive that the city’s peace was secure in their trust, and the law was sure of its operation, with strong arms and strong hearts to support it.

Of the procession itself, the account stated that “[w]hile the escort was passing through Court and State streets some little disposition was manifested to crowd upon the soldiers, but no collision occurred that we heard of.” After noting a brief disturbance, in which cayenne pepper was “thrown from the Commonwealth building upon those who were guarding the slave,” the report concludes that “[t]his was the only opposition that we heard of for the day, and the march was unobstructed to the wharf. . . . After discharging their duty the various corps were dismissed, and quiet again reigns in our city.”⁵⁰ While there was certainly opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law, it remained relatively isolated and was confined mainly to abolitionists; a vast negative shift in public opinion towards the law did not occur until *after* the nearly simultaneous events of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (May 30, 1854) and Anthony Burns’ return to slavery (June 2, 1854), a fact which Stanley Campbell accentuates in his study of the law by dividing his discussion of public opinion into two chapters: “The Fugitive Slave Law and Public Opinion, 1850-1854” and “The

Fugitive Slave Law and Public Opinion, 1854-1860.”⁵¹

This reconception of the trial and rendition of Anthony Burns informs a reading of “A Boston Ballad” suggesting that Whitman truly did believe citizens were capable of being as passive as he depicts them in the poem. Although none of Whitman’s other responses to the Fugitive Slave Law ever reached the public eye, “A Boston Ballad” appeared in every edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Its inclusion points to what the Fugitive Slave Law came to represent for America’s poet, not just in the tense and tumultuous years immediately after its passage, but in the decades to follow, which saw the poet’s precious nation ripped apart, sutured back together, and slowly reconstructed. The frustrations we see in “A Boston Ballad” are the same as those Whitman expresses in the “As of the Orator” manuscript—frustrations over people’s unwillingness to assist a fugitive slave “with the Marshal of the United States on his track,” and, in fact, their tendency to “join against the man and the few who stand up for him.” Betsy Erkkila has traced the “insurrectionary sentiment” of Whitman’s early political manuscript writings and his early poetry. She suggests that it was this spirit of insurrection that inspired Whitman to write “A Boston Ballad,” and *Leaves of Grass* more broadly.⁵² While a roughly contemporary poem like “Resurgemus” (which I discuss later) indeed seems inspired by a spirit of insurrection, I argue that “A Boston Ballad,” even allowing for its ironic tone, is a poem born out of frustration and defeat. By examining the poem and its journey in print—its placement within the various editions of *Leaves of Grass* and the poems that Whitman positioned around it—I suggest that the enduring legacy of the Anthony Burns trial and the Fugitive Slave Law was the passivity it revealed in American citizens, and the danger of a nation and a government divorced from the physical body.



Harold Aspiz has noted that Whitman frequently draws an analogy between the body and the state in order to espouse his political philosophies.⁵³ As the recent discovery of Whitman’s 1858 journalistic series “Manly Health and Training” has made even more abundantly clear,

Whitman also had a much more literal engagement with the human body.⁵⁴ His interest was not just the body politic, but the body *in* politics, or, perhaps more specifically, the effects of politics on the body and the effects of the body on politics, as “The Eighteenth Presidency!” and the “Slavery” manuscript reveal in envisioning a government made up of “mechanics.” It is significant then that “A Boston Ballad,” the most explicitly political poem in the 1855 *Leaves*, is a poem preoccupied with bodies, but mainly absent ones.

The poem opens with the image of a body being shoved aside, as the poem’s speaker addresses Jonathan, a representative American citizen and arguably the poem’s main character: “Clear the way there Jonathan! / Way for the President’s marshal! Way for the government cannon! / Way for the federal foot and dragoons . . . and the phantoms afterward.” In these opening lines, we encounter two bodies of soldiers: one, the federal troops escorting Burns, and the other the phantoms of American Revolutionary soldiers, called “out of the earth.” The difference between the two groups is striking, and described in oddly sexual terms, with the phantoms figured as limp and impotent, and the federal troops as erect, their weapons loaded and cocked. The phantoms enter “limping” and “bloodless,” with “crutches made of mist,” and they exit with the command, “Back to the hills, old limpers!” They are emasculated and unarmed—both literally and figuratively—with their “[a]rms in slings” and without traditionally phallic weaponry. “Do you mistake your crutches for firelocks and level them?” the speaker asks. Compare this to the description of the federal troops: “How bright shine the foremost with cutlasses, / Every man holds his revolver . . . marching stiff through Boston town.”

Despite Whitman’s uncharacteristically ironic tone in this poem, it seems clear that, in his view, nobody he describes seems to have the right body for the job. The phantoms’ hearts may be in the right place, but they have no body with which to carry out their actions. The federal troops may have bodies but those bodies are not their own, since they are merely acting under the orders of another. The federal marshal is, in all three mentions, described as “the President’s marshal,” and the cannon is always “the government cannon.” Even King George, the centerpiece of the procession, is not an actor but

an object acted upon; the collection and reassembly of George's fugitive bones requires both force and governmental permission, making his rendition oddly similar to that of a fugitive slave. There is even a suggestion that some of his bones may wish to escape: after the committee reopens the box and "set[s] up the regal ribs," they are forced to "glue those that will not stay." In this poem, the event being described has little or nothing to do with the fugitive slave himself, further following the pattern established in Whitman's prose writings about the Fugitive Slave Law. Anthony Burns has, in the poem, no body or spirit at all, not even a name.

The only character who may be capable of independent action is Jonathan himself. But in focusing on the poem's commentary on federal intervention, most readings of the poem have tended to ignore Jonathan. Whitman, however, does not end the poem with the foreboding image of King George's dead body being paraded through the cradle of liberty. Instead, the poem ends with what—for Whitman—was much more troubling: "Stick your hands in your pockets Jonathan you are a made man from this day. / You are mighty cute and here is one of your bargains."

Betsy Erkkila is perhaps the scholar who has given Jonathan the most attention, noting that he "represents the failure of republican traditions in the present."⁵⁵ She ties Whitman's depiction of Jonathan to a notebook passage likely written around the same time as "A Boston Ballad." The passage reveals Whitman's worry over the current despondency of America's citizens: "I do not believe the people of these days are happy. . . . The public countenance lacks its bloom of love and its freshness of faith.—For want of these, it is cadaverous as a corpse."⁵⁶ Erkkila suggests it was this concern over the "dead body of republican America" that served as the foundation of Whitman's regenerative project in *Leaves of Grass*. I would also suggest that it is the haunting depiction of passive, unattached citizenry that compelled Whitman to retain "A Boston Ballad" throughout the six editions of *Leaves*.

This depiction is emphasized by the poem's placement in relation to other poems in *Leaves*. Given how much attention Whitman paid to the physical construction and arrangement of his books, it is espe-

cially important to consider how he sequenced his poems. “Because reading is a process of patterning,” Neil Fraistat argues, “to read an individual poem in isolation outside of its original volume is not only to lose the large retroactive sweep of the book as a whole . . . but also to risk losing the meanings with the poem itself that are foregrounded or activated by the context of the book.”⁵⁷ Examining how the various editions of *Leaves of Grass* frame “A Boston Ballad” shows Whitman’s effort to highlight Jonathan’s moral and physical impotency.

In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), “A Boston Ballad” was preceded by a poem that Whitman had first published in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1850 under the title “Resurgemus.”⁵⁸ Later called “Europe. The 72nd and 73rd Year of These States,” the poem focuses on the European revolutions of 1848, in which Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, and Italy all saw failed popular uprisings against ruling powers followed by despots reasserting control. The poem serves as a warning to America that, even though power may have been wrested away from a tyrant, the people must remain vigilant, lest the tyrant return. The second stanza reads: “God, ‘twas delicious! / That brief, tight, glorious grip / Upon the throats of kings.” The success of the European revolutions is analogous to the American overthrow of British rule, while the eventual return to power of the European kings suggests that in America one form of exploitative rule has simply replaced another: “And frightened rulers come back: / Each comes in state, with his train . . . / An appalling procession of locusts, / And the king struts grandly again.” Whitman also manages to get in a subtle jab at the Fugitive Slave Law. The clever phrasing of “each comes in state” holds the double meaning of a king arriving with the pomp and splendor of his court, but also suggests that the federal government has entered the *states*, imposing its authority where it does not belong—an aspect of the Fugitive Slave Law that Whitman vehemently opposed. But Whitman also strikes a hopeful note, writing that “[n]ot a grave of the murdered for freedom but grows seeds for freedom . . . in its turn to bear seed.” He thus implores his readers to take heed of Europe’s example, to “[t]urn back unto this day, and make yourselves anew.”

“Resurgemus” opens with the image of Europe, “Its feet upon the ashes and rags . . . Its hands tight to the throats of kings.” When

read together, the themes of “Resurgemus” and “A Boston Ballad” are starkly contrasted through the image of hands: in the first, the hands of Europe violently choke the life from the throat of kings; in the second, the hands of America’s Jonathan dip demurely into a pocket and out of sight. Jonathan’s vanishing hands emphasize how “A Boston Ballad” is a poem of bodily absence, or, at least, bodily impotence; Jonathan’s hands may not be gone, but they are certainly not engaged in an activity of which Whitman approves. The use of the word “bargain” in the final line (You are mighty cute and here is one of your bargains) may signify that Jonathan is concerned with money and economics, rather than with political or moral principle.⁵⁹ In 1854 Boston was home to large numbers of so-called Cotton Whigs—conservative members of the Whig party whose business interests, many in the textile industry, led them to be sympathetic to Southern slaveholders who relied on slave labor to produce cotton. As Gordon Barker points out, “[m]idcentury Boston was also home to a growing middle class of salaried employees and professionals who saw their well-being linked to the stability of the Cotton Whig empires.”⁶⁰ Whitman’s Jonathan may thus have been a Cotton Whig, happy for the financial bargain that the Compromise of 1850 provided in keeping the Union together and his lines of business open.

In 1856, Whitman added more poems in the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, splitting up “Resurgemus” and “A Boston Ballad.” But the poem that he now chose to precede “A Boston Ballad” served an almost identical purpose. Titled “Liberty Poem For Asia, Africa, Europe, America, Australia, And the Archipelagoes Of The Sea,” the poem was formed from lines that had previously been part of the 1855 Preface.⁶¹ Like “Resurgemus,” the poem proclaims the need to continue the struggle for liberty regardless of setbacks:

Courage! my brother or my sister!
 Keep on! Liberty is to be subserved, whatever occurs;
 That is nothing, that is quelled by one or two failures, or any
 number of failures,
 Or by indifference or ingratitude of the people,
 Or the show of the tushes of power—soldiers, cannon, penal
 statutes.

What we believe in waits latent forever through Asia, Africa,
Europe, America, Australia, Cuba, and all the islands and
archipelagoes of the sea.

Once again, Whitman frames America's struggles within a global context; the soldiers, cannon, and penal statutes of "A Boston Ballad" are impositions that have also been faced on other continents and in other countries throughout history. Although a malignant power may temporarily triumph—"or supposes he triumphs," Whitman adds—"But for all this, liberty has not gone out of the place, nor the infidel entered into possession." As in "Resurgemus," Whitman holds out faith that liberty, though latent, will endure.

Following "A Boston Ballad" in the 1856 edition is "Poem of Remembrances For A Girl Or A Boy Of These States," in which Whitman calls on his reader to "[r]emember the organic compact of These States! / Remember the pledge of the Old Thirteen thenceforward to the rights, life, liberty, equality, of man!"⁶² As Ivy Wilson has explained, the organic compact became for Whitman a "more expansive theory of relation not only between the states themselves but between the United States and its founding documents . . . its intermediaries . . . and its meta-narratives."⁶³ Appearing on either side of Jonathan, "Liberty Poem" and "Poem of Remembrance" are effectively the poetic incarnations of the Revolutionary phantoms of "A Boston Ballad," gathering at the "flank and rear" to remind Jonathan of the possibilities that lie within him, and his duties to fulfill those possibilities.

No significant critical attention has been given to placement of "A Boston Ballad" in the third edition (1860), where it immediately precedes the much-studied "Calamus" cluster. But it is significant that a poem about absent bodies and bodily disconnection is followed by a cluster of poems devoted to social, emotional, and bodily connections. While "A Boston Ballad" thematizes the imposition of governmental force, "Calamus" presents an alternative power structure, one predicated on natural adhesiveness, rather than political coercion. Whitman begins "Calamus No. 5" by asking, "States! / Were you looking to be held together by the lawyers? / By an agreement on a

paper? Or by arms?"⁶⁴ Instead, Whitman says, "Affection shall solve every one of the problems of freedom." And when Whitman speaks of holding men together, he does not refer to "men" only as an analog for a larger political unit, such as a state: "Underneath all are individuals, / I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals! / The American compact is altogether with individuals." As Wilson notes, this organic, American compact was, for Whitman, "a way to describe a social, as well as a political, cohesion."⁶⁵ Thus, if Whitman truly feared the specter of a passive, impotent American citizenry, "Calamus" reads as a guide for the Jonathans of America as to how best to conduct themselves and what to do with their hands and their pockets.

"Pocket" is not a common word in the Whitman vocabulary. As a noun, "pocket" or "pockets" appear only three times in the 1860 edition: in "A Boston Ballad," in "Calamus No. 4," and in "Song of Myself," when the poem's speaker directs one who is "impotent, loose in the knees" to "lift the flaps of your pockets" so that he might "blow grit within you." In "Calamus No. 4," a poem later titled "These I Singing In Spring," the speaker walks through nature collecting what he calls "tokens" for his lovers. Midway through the poem, the speaker turns to the reader and begins distributing his gifts:

Here! lilac, with a branch of pine,
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pulled off a live-oak in
Florida, as it hung trailing down,
Here, some pink and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-
side.

These lines contain what may be, other than his book's eponymous leaves, the three most central plants in the Whitman garden: lilac; moss, from a live oak; and the plant that he drew from the pond-side, which the next line reveals to be the calamus root itself. Just a few poems after Jonathan has shoved his hands into his pockets, Whitman now reaches into his own and pulls out some moss. Both in these lines and those of "Song of Myself," the pocket is a private, intimate, sexualized space, but one that the poem's speaker nevertheless wishes

to either share or fill.

The image of Jonathan shoving his own hands into his pockets, impotent and uninvolved, is the antithesis of the adhesiveness Whitman envisions in the “Calamus” poems. “Calamus No. 37,” for example, reads in its entirety:

A leaf for hand in hand!
You natural persons old and young! You on the Eastern Sea, and
you on the Western!
You on the Mississippi, and on all the branches and bayous of the
Mississippi!
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! You roughs!
You twain! And all processions moving along the streets!
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to
walk hand in hand.

Here, the procession of “A Boston Ballad,” marked by both militaristic force and indifferent inaction, has become a procession of organic, communal bonding. Whitman also claims the poet’s role as mediator in this bonding, an act that, while eventually resulting in union, belies Whitman’s fear that such a union will not happen of its own accord.

“A Boston Ballad” precedes “Calamus” only in the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*; Whitman alters its position in each of the three final editions. In 1867, “Liberty Poem,” now retitled “To a Foil’d Revolter or Revoltress,” reassumes its place ahead of “A Boston Ballad.” In 1871, “A Boston Ballad” becomes part of a two-poem “Leaves of Grass” cluster, along with “Year of Meteors.” Finally, it is moved in 1881 to its position as the first poem in the new “By the Roadside” cluster, where it is reunited—for the first time since 1855—with “Resurgemus,” now titled “Europe. The 72nd and 73rd Year of These States.” In this final sequence, however, the order of the poems has been reversed, and readers encounter first a poem about America’s failed revolutionary ideals, then move backward in time to the European revolutions, a fact that Whitman accentuates by including a date in the subtitles of both poems. Whitman, a poet who once claimed that “all goes onward and outward and nothing collapses,” was not often one to move backwards, yet by reversing the chronology he suggests that America may be even further from achieving its true liberty in 1881 than it was in

the 1850s. In his analysis of the “By the Roadside” cluster, Stephen Rachman singles out these two poems for establishing what he calls the cluster’s “most abiding theme”: “hiatal moments of frustrated rebellion.”⁶⁶ Even the cluster’s title suggests passivity, the image of somebody standing “by the roadside” watching something pass by.

Surprisingly, the poem that immediately follows this pair has received almost no attention for its political import; the dark, strange little poem entitled “A Hand-Mirror” may suggest just what Whitman thinks of what America has become. The poem begins:

Hold it up sternly—see what it sends back, (who is it? is it you?)
Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice or springy step,
Now some slave’s eye, voice, hands, step.

It continues with a catalog of cankerous body parts, of “lungs rotting away piecemeal . . . / . . . bowels clogged with abomination, / Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams, / . . . No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex.” The poem ends: “Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence, / Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!” The cluster opened with an invocation of America’s glorious, revolutionary beginning and a scathing indictment of feckless Jonathan, and here, a mirror is held up to the reader to see what they and Jonathan have become. What we find is none of the revolutionary vigor of “Liberty Poem,” none of the sexual magnetism of “Calamus,” but rather a cadaverous America of nothing but ashes and filth.

The poem’s title suggests both a mirror held in the hand, but also the hand *as* a mirror, either as an object of reflection, or—in an alternate definition of “mirror”—as a model or exemplar. The hand, Whitman suggests, reflects the person who wields it, illustrated by Jonathan’s hands in his pockets in “A Boston Ballad.” Likewise, the hands of a nation are indicative of the nation’s character. Thus hands shape the nation and are shaped by it in turn. Democracy and liberty were, for the poet, physical acts, acts that required arms, hands, and sometimes even the full body, with all its physiological, sexual, and emotional potential. Whitman propounded this argument for much

of his writing career. In a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorial from 1847, he writes of men going into the undeveloped territories of the American West and “rear[ing] States which will prosper and become mighty under the power of *free* arms and stout hearts. The only persons who will be excluded will be the *aristocracy* of the South—the men who work only with other men’s hands.”⁶⁷ Democracy begins with the body, and Whitman demanded a physical engagement from its citizens who ideally were, as previously noted, mechanics, farmers, laborers—people who lived by the work of their own hands.

But the nation and the citizens that Whitman saw were far from achieving this ideal. In *Democratic Vistas* (1871)—the most extended and ambitious political work he ever published—Whitman expounds upon the possibilities of democratic literature. But, as Ed Folsom explains in his introduction to the 2010 facsimile reprint of *Democratic Vistas*, as important as a democratic literature might be for Whitman, it required also an active, democratic reader. Whitman writes:

Books are to be call’d for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast’s struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work.⁶⁸

In making clear the link between the nation and its literature, Whitman also makes clear that the citizens of the democratic nation must too be gymnasts, doing something for themselves, always on the alert. The presence of “free political institutions” does not, Whitman reminds his readers, guarantee the success of Democracy. “With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possessed,” he writes, “[s]ociety, in These States, is cankered, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. . . . I say we had best look out time and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States” (10).

Whitman’s fear of a hollowness at the heart of America’s citizens began in earnest in 1850 after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law,

was solidified in the events surrounding the capture and return of Anthony Burns in 1854, and only increased over the succeeding two decades. Written during Reconstruction, *Democratic Vistas* depicts America suffering from a cankered, malignant illness that not even the nation's most cataclysmic war could cure. It is this fear, then, that is the enduring legacy of the Fugitive Slave Law in Whitman's writing, since it was a law that represented all that was rotten in the political, economic, social, and racial structures of America. The Fugitive Slave Law called on people to do the work of others, rather than the others doing it with their own hands, and the Burns affair revealed to Whitman the danger of a nation, a government, and a citizenry that lacked the will to get its hands dirty. Democracy, liberty, and freedom were, for Walt Whitman, a hands-on job. So in every edition of *Leaves of Grass*, there stands a warning—Jonathan, model of the passive citizen, his hands in his pockets.

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NOTES

- 1 Clifton Furness, ed., *Walt Whitman's Workshop: A Collection of Unpublished Manuscripts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 71.
- 2 Martin Klammer, *Whitman, Slavery, and the Emergence of Leaves of Grass* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Ed Folsom, "Lucifer and Ethiopia: Whitman, Race, and Poetics before the Civil War and After," in *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45–95; Kenneth M. Price, "Whitman in Blackface," in *To Walt Whitman, America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 9–36; Price, "The Lost Negress of 'Song of Myself' and the Jolly Young Wenches of Civil War Washington," in *Leaves of Grass: The Sesquicentennial Essays*, ed. Susan Belasco, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 224–243; Ed Folsom, "Erasing Race: The Lost Black Presence in Whitman's Manuscripts," in Ivy G. Wilson, ed., *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray Poet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 3–31.
- 3 As Betsy Erkkila notes in her invaluable *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Whitman was deeply committed to the idea of popular sovereignty and state's rights. Erkkila further notes that this came "at a time [in the 1850s] when the right of the individual and the states against federal

interference were still jealously guarded as the primary heritage of the American Revolution” (47).

4 See Erkkila, 48; David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 136–137; Klammer, 106, 108–109. Ed Folsom also created a page devoted to “Whitman, Dickinson, and the Fugitive Slave Law” as part of the on-line *Classroom Electric* initiative in the early 2000s (classroomelectric.org/volume2/folsom/fugitive/index.html). The page provides basic background about the law, and then offers quotations from the work of both writers that deal with fugitive slaves and the Fugitive Slave Law, as well as a few short excerpts from relevant criticism. While useful and informative, the site is intended for instructional use and does not offer any original analysis or interpretation of the passages it reproduces. Instead, it provides a series of questions that students might answer about the material. This chapter is, in a way, a response to some of the questions that Folsom’s project poses. The Whitman section can be found here: classroomelectric.org/volume2/folsom/fugitive/index-whitman.html.

5 The law contained ten sections, with sections five, six, and eight being arguably the most controversial. Section 5 stated that federal marshals and specially appointed slave commissioners had the authority to “summon and call to their aid the bystanders, or *posse comitatus* of the proper county, when necessary to ensure a faithful observance” of the law. Thus, under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, not only was the federal government charged with hunting down and returning escaped slaves, but “all good citizens” were “commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law.” Section 6 effectively negated the writ of habeas corpus, forbidding accused fugitives from testifying on their own behalf in any trial or hearing. Section 8 stipulated that federal commissioners would be paid \$10 for ruling in favor of the slave-holders, but only \$5 if they ruled in favor of the accused fugitive. The law’s authors and supporters claimed that the discrepancy in fees was the result of increased paperwork required to arrange for a fugitive’s return, but detractors of the law argued that it was effectively a federal mandated bribe. These aspects of the law led many in the North to claim that the measure went well past its initial aim of removing impediments to the recovery of runaway slaves by their owners; opponents of the law claimed that it instead trampled on long-established legal protections, and was potentially unconstitutional. Yet despite the protestations of abolitionists, in the early years following the law’s passage, many in the country—even if displeased with certain aspects of the law’s mandates—were willing to see that it was carried out if it meant the Union could be maintained.

6 Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 143.

7 Whitman attended the inaugural Free Soil convention in Buffalo, New York, in August 1848, and not long after took over the editorship of a new Free Soil paper, the *Brooklyn Freeman*. The paper’s offices burned down after it had published

just one issue, and publication was suspended for several months before resuming as a daily in April 1849. Unfortunately, only one issue of the *Freeman* is known to have survived. See Loving, 143–147.

8 Walt Whitman, “[But when a voice in our hearing],” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/transcriptions/loc.01018.html.

9 Reynolds, 349.

10 Walt Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 1:285–286.

11 This quotation, and all quotations from “The Eighteenth Presidency!” that follow, are taken from digital images of the original page proofs held at the Library of Congress, soon to be available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. The text can also be found in Walt Whitman, *The Eighteenth Presidency!: A Critical Text*, ed. Edward F. Grier (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1956).

12 Jason Stacy, *Walt Whitman’s Multitudes: Labor Reform and Persona in Whitman’s Journalism and the First Leaves of Grass, 1840–1855* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 114, 116.

13 Folsom makes this point in his introduction to the *Classroom Electric* page on Whitman and the Fugitive Slave Law (classroomelectric.org/volume2/folsom/fugitive/index-whitman.html). So too does Reynolds, 145.

14 Grier, *Eighteenth Presidency*, v–vii.

15 Grier typographically denotes the deletion in his edition but does not comment on it further.

16 For a complete transcription and page images of the manuscript see Walt Whitman, “[Slavery],” *Walt Whitman Archive*, whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/transcriptions/duk.00149.html.

17 Gay Wilson Allen, *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 220.

18 Grier, 6:2172. See the rest of Grier’s headnote for detailed descriptions of the inconsistencies that complicate the dating of the manuscript.

19 Such laws were partially rooted in a desire to protect the states’ free blacks from being kidnapped into slavery, with many laws stipulating that fugitives being removed from the state were entitled to a full jury trial—something that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 did not stipulate, even though it did not explicitly forbid it; the 1850 law, however, forbade legal intrusions. Some states banned state officials from participating in the capture of fugitive slaves, while others went to great lengths to prosecute slaveholders or their agents for kidnapping whenever they came into the state. For a more detailed discussion, see Stanley W. Campbell’s chapter on personal liberty laws, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law*,

1850–1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 170–186; and H. Robert Baker, *The Rescue of Joshua Glover: A Fugitive Slave, the Constitution, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 35–41. While personal liberty laws existed prior to 1854 (see Baker), Campbell notes that most personal liberty laws specifically related to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 were not passed until 1854 or later, partially in response to the Anthony Burns incident, and partially in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and repeal of the Missouri Compromise (Campbell, 87).

20 *An Act to amend, and supplementary to, the Act entitled “An Act respecting Fugitives from Justice, and Persons escaping from the Service of their Masters,” approved February twelfth, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three, U.S. Statutes at Large* 9 (1850): 464.

21 Grier notes that “[t]he earliest likely date would be after the middle of June, by which time the conventions had nominated the [Presidential] candidates. The latest possible date of composition is mid-September” (*Eighteenth Presidency*, 14).

22 On the twelfth leaf, Whitman asks, “Have we been kicking and sweating these eighty years under some ugly dream?” Eighty years after the formation of the nation would date that portion of the manuscript to 1856.

23 The phrase “nigger question” is possibly a reference to Thomas Carlyle’s 1849 essay “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question.” While originally published anonymously in *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, the essay was republished in 1853 as a pamphlet, under Carlyle’s name and with the title *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question*.

24 See Klammer, 79–81.

25 For example, in both “As of the Orator” and “Slavery,” Whitman notes citizens’ prerogative to protest undue federal overreach with “the iron arm of rebellion,” utilizing the same phrase in both manuscripts. An extended portion of the recto of leaves 17 and 18 in “Slavery” is also nearly identical to the portion of “As of the Orator” that begins “I say that the power to stand among us. . . .” However, while numerous phrases between these two sections are at times identical, at other times they contain significantly different phrasings, suggesting that they are almost certainly two distinct but related manuscripts.

26 The section of “As of the Orator” beginning “in dim outline we see” comes from a Civil War era notebook which both Grier and the *Whitman Archive* call “Dr. L B Russell” (images available on the *Whitman Archive* at whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/finding_aids/Library_of_Congress-Harned.html, loc.05449, surface 73). On the verso of the notebook leaf is an entry dated May 2, 1863.

27 Furness’ book is notoriously problematic, as he rarely acknowledges the sources of his transcriptions, and in several cases appears to have cobbled together a more or less coherent text from disparate manuscript scraps. However, there is no

evidence that Furness ever invented text that did not exist in some form.

28 Whitman makes a similar appeal to the Declaration of Independence in “Slavery—the Slaveholders,” writing that when the nation was formed, “[i]t was settled and covenanted as the nucleus of all that should come, that every human being who is born into this world has inalienable rights against any jeopardy from other human beings, to his life liberty and his lawful pursuit of happiness” (leaf 2 recto).

29 See Erkkila, 61–62.

30 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, NY: 1855), 19.

31 In the mid-1850s the most famous political fugitive to visit the United States was Lajos (Louis) Kossuth, a hero of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution. Kossuth made a much-heralded tour of the United States in 1851 and 1852, when Whitman witnessed his arrival into New York, and even met Kossuth on several occasions (Reynolds, 143).

32 Klammer, 131.

33 In addition to Klammer, see Karen Sánchez-Eppler, “To Stand Between: A Political Perspective on Whitman’s Poetics of Merger and Embodiment,” *ELH* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1989), 940–946.

34 Jay Grossman, *Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 50.

35 See, for example, David S. Reynolds, “Politics and Poetry: *Leaves of Grass* and the Social Crisis of the 1850s,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*, ed. Ezra Greenspan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.

36 Klammer, 32.

37 Grossman, 50.

38 Gordon Barker, *The Imperfect Revolution: Anthony Burns and the Landscape of Race in Antebellum America*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010), xvi.

39 Campbell, 49.

40 Craig R. Smith, *Daniel Webster and the Oratory of Civil Religion* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 231–235.

41 Three years later, Dana would serve as an attorney for Anthony Burns in Boston.

42 “What a True Boston Man Thinks,” *The Liberator* (May 23, 1851), 3.

43 A summary and excerpts of Parker’s speech were reprinted in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (April 22, 1852).

44 John Pierpont, “Hymn,” reprinted in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (April

22, 1852).

45 [Anonymous,] “The Toscin,” reprinted in *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* (June 17, 1854). “Toscin” is seemingly a misspelling of “tocsin,” a term for an alarm bell.

46 “From the Boston Evening Gazette. The Fugitive Slave Law,” *The Liberator* (October 23, 1850), 1. *The Liberator* frequently reprinted material such as this on its first page, excerpts from other papers decrying abolitionist activities.

47 “The Fugitive Slave Disturbances, Etc.,” *New York Weekly Herald* (June 3, 1854), 1.

48 Barker, 45, quoting the *Boston Evening Transcript* (June 1, 1854).

49 Barker, 49.

50 “Boston Slave Case. The Rendition of Burns,” *New York Daily Times* (June 5, 1854), 8.

51 It is also worth noting that Whitman’s New York City was particularly known in the 1850s for its unfriendliness to fugitive slaves, and its rigid enforcement of the new law. This was due largely to an influential portion of the city’s most wealthy businessmen, who were not keen to see their trade interrupted by political conflict with the South. As Eric Foner notes, by the early 1850s, “public sentiment [in New York] quickly turned in favor of enforcement.” For more on New York’s reaction to the law, see Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Norton, 2015), 129–130.

52 See Erkkila, 61–63.

53 Harold Aspiz, “The Body Politic in *Democratic Vistas*,” in *Walt Whitman: The Centennial Essays*, ed. Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 105–119.

54 Zachary Turpin’s discovery of the previously unknown journalistic series was first announced, and the entire series reprinted (with an introduction by Turpin), in the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (2016), 147–310.

55 Erkkila, 64 (quoted passage), 65.

56 Walt Whitman, “Autobiographical Data,” *The Walt Whitman Archive*, whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.05935.html

57 Neil Fraistat, “Introduction” in *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 8.

58 Both “Resurgemus” and “A Boston Ballad” are untitled in the 1855 edition of *Leaves*.

59 Erkkila notes Whitman’s “intuitive” understanding of the economic underpinnings of the slavery controversy, although she does not explicitly tie such feel-

ings to the conclusion of “A Boston Ballad” (Erkkila, 66).

60 Barker, 34.

61 This poem was eventually titled, “To a Foil’d European Revolutionaire.”

62 This poem appears in heavily edited form as “Think of the Soul” in *Leaves of Grass* (1871). Whitman removed it from *Leaves* entirely in 1876.

63 Ivy G. Wilson, “Organic Compacts, Form, and the Cultural Logic of Cohesion; or, Whitman Re-Bound,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 54 (2008), 201.

64 This poem was later titled, “Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice,” and was moved to the *Drum-Taps* cluster following its inclusion in Whitman’s stand-alone *Drum-Taps* (1865).

65 “Organic Compacts,” 201.

66 Stephen Rachman, “‘By the Roadside’ (1881),” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 93.

67 Walt Whitman, *The Gathering of the Forces: Editorials, Essays, Literary and Dramatic Reviews and Other Material Written by Walt Whitman as Editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle in 1846 and 1847*, ed. Cleveland Rodgers and John Black (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920), 1:204.

68 Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas: The Original Edition in Facsimile*, ed. Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 76.