



WALT WHITMAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

VOLUME THIRTY-EIGHT NUMBER TWO FALL 2020



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Front Cover: Facsimile of the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* /
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“FIT FOR WAR”: RHYTHM AND BODILY HEALTH IN WALT WHITMAN’S *DRUM-TAPS*

JAMIE FENTON



AT THE END OF THE SHORT-LIVED FIRST EDITION of *Drum-Taps* (1865), Walt Whitman looks back over the last few years of war, as if from the end of a long life:

Not youth pertains to me,
 Nor delicatessen—I cannot beguile the time with talk;
 Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant;
 In the learn’d coterie sitting constrain’d and still—for learning inures not to me;
 Beauty, knowledge, fortune, inure not to me—yet there are two things inure to me;
 I have nourish’d the wounded, and sooth’d many a dying soldier;
 And at intervals I have strung together a few songs,
 Fit for war, and the life of the camp.¹

The posture of the poem is familiar. This is Whitman the rough, awkward in the confined spaces of polite society, “constrain’d” by etiquette. It forms a counterpart to earlier poems similarly intent on eschewing establishment mores and looks all the way back to the frontispiece of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, which shows a Whitman facing the reader, his face almost a sneer of derision at the staid author portraits from which this likeness emphatically diverts. The poem itself operates on a willfully obtuse grammatical bending. Initially controlled by the “Not [x] pertains to me” construction, this is replaced in line 4 by the contorted syntax of “[x] inures not to me.” The standard sense of “inure to,” i.e., to habituate by exposure, is present but upended. We expect the subject to inure themselves to an object or quality. Webster, for example, suggests “we *inure* ourselves to cold.”² Whitman reverses this formation, so that he himself is the undesirable thing to which the ideals of “Beauty, knowledge, fortune” cannot accustom themselves. Also present is the legal sense of inure: to take effect, as in the transferal of property via a will. In this case the subjects of the sentence become objects of exchange. The lines are syntactically clumsy and fidget with their grammar.

When we emerge from the slew of negatives (Not, Nor, cannot, neither, not, not), it is as if a knot has been untied. Whitman takes on a simple, declar-

ative tone, presenting openly for consideration the things which he thinks have made themselves part of his way of living:

I have nourish'd the wounded, and sooth'd many a dying soldier;
And at intervals I have strung together a few songs,
Fit for war, and the life of the camp.

The first of these statements is demonstrably true. From January 1863 until the end of the Civil War, Whitman went almost daily to the army hospitals in Washington, and there practiced a unique form of care based on close personal attention to the wounded and sick. Notably, the poem's speaker is not claiming to have *treated* any of the soldiers, as does the speaker in "The Dresser" (later retitled "The Wound-Dresser"). Instead, he claims only what is true of the personal Whitman: he "nourish'd" them, with both physical and emotional provisions, and "sooth'd" them, both through conversation, touch, and by acting as amanuensis, ensuring they could contact their families. Following this acknowledgment of his contribution to the war effort, Whitman downplays the contribution of the book itself: "And at intervals I have strung together a few songs, / Fit for war, and the life of the camp." This is the last poem in the first issue of *Drum-Taps* and concludes a book which is anything but "strung together." Instead, *Drum-Taps* presents an almost novelistic journey through the Civil War, from its clangorous patriotic inception to its weary, wounded close. We then learn that these songs are, apparently, "Fit for war, and the life of the camp." What are we meant to take from this boast? "Fit for" wavers between several possible senses. In the context of the poem's opening lines, it carries a sense of etiquette, of "fitting in." Whitman's poems, he seems to boast, are as fit for war as his demeanor is unfit for the parlour. But in the context of "war, and the life of the camp," the phrase has a meaning closer to "fit for service." This is a bodily fitness, a guarantee that the subject can complete certain physical tasks.

Either way, this "fitness" is quite the claim to make to a reader with the evidence in their hands. The first sense of "Fit" can easily be put to the test. We can compare the contents of *Drum-Taps* to Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," a Civil War poem with a rich history of fitting in. Howe and her companions were returning from watching a review of troops near Washington, D.C. in November 1861, where they had heard a group of soldiers singing "John Brown's Body."³ The minister James Freeman Clark challenged Howe to write "good words" for the tune; he clearly judged the present text and its lines describing John Brown "a-mouldering in the grave" to be uncouth. Howe took the suggestion and in the dim light of the next morning she fit her new

words to the tune of the old hymn, in an act of contrafactum. The reworking was a remarkable success: the text was widely reprinted and “Battle Hymn of the Republic” became the Union’s unofficial anthem. Howe later recalled that she “knew, and was content to know, that the poem soon found its way to the camps, as I heard from time to time of its being sung in chorus by the soldiers” (276). Here, then, is a text demonstrably “Fit for war, and the life of the camp.” While the sentiments of Howe’s lyrics undoubtedly aided their wide uptake in comparison to “John Brown’s Body,” they worked in partnership with a rhythmical closeness and familiarity.

Drum-Taps, by comparison, can only be designated unfit for the camp. Whitman did not submit to the rhythmical trends of the period and there are no poems in *Drum-Taps* which could be fit to a rousing martial tune. Whitman quietly admitted this in time via a small alteration to the text of “Not youth pertains to me” when the poem appeared in the “Drum-Taps” cluster of the 1871 *Leaves of Grass*:

I have nourish’d the wounded, and sooth’d many a dying soldier.
And at intervals, waiting, or in the midst of camp,
Composed these songs.⁴

Where before Whitman claimed his poems were written *for* the camp, here they are only written *in* the camp. And they are no longer “strung together,” with the *ad hoc* sense of a soldier darning socks, but “Composed.” Whitman recognizes his essential distance from the lives of the soldiers and changes the status of the poems in *Drum-Taps* from rough and ready wartime materiel to refined literary material.

It has long been noted, though, that the poems of *Drum-Taps* come nearer to rhythmical regularity than the work which preceded them. Daniel Aaron writes that *Drum-Taps* “is more calculating and concessive than the earlier *Leaves*, not so verbally daring or radical or spontaneous.”⁵ Gay Wilson Allen observes that “*Drum-Taps* and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* are a great deal more conventional in form and style than earlier poems in the *Leaves*.”⁶ And Lawrence Kramer in his 2015 edition of *Drum-Taps* refers to a “formalizing impulse” which adds “a note of ritual” and aligns the poems with “the Civil War era’s popular verse.”⁷ Despite this apparent consensus, it is worth taking a moment to assess how exactly this “formalizing impulse” manifests. Allen goes too far by claiming that *Drum-Taps* is “a great deal more conventional” than earlier publications. Besides the metrical “O Captain! my Captain!” and the metrical-looking “Pioneers! O Pioneers!” and “Dirge for two veterans,” the instances of rhythm in *Drum-Taps*

are just that: instances. We encounter individual lines or pockets of rhythm with some frequency but little regularity. It would be wrong to call these instances of *meter* because meter is the opposite of an instance.⁸ They are, instead, moments when a pattern of alternation continues long enough to be experienced but not long enough to become predictable. Sometimes, these patterns recur multiple times in the same poem, and we might say that these poems have a rhythmical feel or motive: the recurring three beat phrases of “Cavalry Crossing a Ford,” for example.⁹ None of the critics above, however, attempt to explain *why* Whitman’s War poems were newly motivated by rhythm. Allen suggests that Whitman might have “found more conventional metrics either convenient or necessary for the expression of his experiences and emotions connected with the war.”¹⁰ His offerings of “convenient or necessary” both open up interesting paths: convenient plays nicely on “conventional” and asks what kind of poetic work requires convenience, perhaps the kind written as “impromptu jottings” or “at intervals in the midst of camp.”¹¹ For metrics to be “necessary” implies Whitman was called into a position of wartime service, no longer vagrant and free. But Allen does not push much further and ends his paragraph with a vague, Romantic gesture towards the poems as an echo of Whitman’s heartbeat throbbing “to the beat of the rhythms of marching feet.”

I am going to argue here that in order to understand Whitman’s reasons for embracing rhythm during the Civil War, however gingerly, we need to explore the bodily, physical sense of “Fit for war.” While Whitman was never convinced by metered rhythm in poetic structure, there is a large body of evidence suggesting he believed deeply in the importance of rhythm as an element of a healthy, democratic existence. The richest vein of this evidence can be found in the recently re-discovered journalistic series, “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions,” which Whitman wrote under the pseudonym Mose Velsor. Across this long, often idiosyncratic text, we find a desire for a way of living based, at its heart, on rhythm.¹² I propose that Whitman sketched out an ideal rhythmical figure in this text and then saw this figure marching into existence in the form of the Union soldier. *Drum-Taps* is in large part an ode to this figure, and simultaneously an account of Whitman facing up to the realities of war, especially to the fact that steady rhythm had a dark counterpart in the military discipline which sent thousands of men to their deaths. This article will explore “Manly Health and Training” as an untapped source of Whitman’s rhythmical theories and then follow these theories into the Civil War, where they were tested by Whitman’s encounters with upright marching soldiers and then with their opposite—the prostrate, convulsive bodies of the wounded.

Rhythmical Living

Any text which offers an alternative route into Whitman's thoughts on rhythm must be given space, because Whitman's more direct writings on form lead us swiftly into a mire of contradiction. We might, for instance, try out a passage from Horace Traubel's *With Walt Whitman in Camden* as a potential key to Whitman's prosodic theory:

Well—the lilt is all right: yes, right enough: but there's something anterior—more imperative. The first thing necessary is the thought—the rest may follow if it chooses—may play its part—but must not be too much sought after. The two things being equal I should prefer to have the lilt present with the idea, but if I got down my thought and the rhythm was not there I should not work to secure it.¹³

Here, rhythm and thought are set apart: thought is “imperative” while rhythm seems a latecomer without whom the party could still go ahead. But if we turn away from Traubel's volumes, we find Whitman giving a totally contradictory account. William Thayer recalls Whitman declaring: “Nobody could write in my way unless he had a melody singing in his ears. . . . I always had a tune before I began to write.”¹⁴ Here, the acoustic hook of a poem precedes its thought. Both statements as to what is “anterior” in Whitman's compositional process seem equally sincere but they cancel each other out. In order to get some handle on Whitman's opinion on rhythmicality, and avoid his potentially deliberate obfuscation, we must approach him while his back is turned.

In 2016, Zachary Turpin made the largest discovery of new Whitman writing in decades: a column written by Whitman for the *New York Atlas* under one of his favorite pen names, “Mose Velsor.”¹⁵ The column, which ran from September to December 1858, was entitled “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions” and promised to show its male readers the path to “a perfect body.”¹⁶ Over the weeks, Whitman, as Velsor, gave instruction on diet, exercise, and routine, all of which amounted to a total theory of soundness in all aspects of life. From cold baths to calisthenics, Velsor would have his readers submitting entirely to his regime and thus fulfilling the promise of American manhood. The column's literary mode and texture is that of repetition. Reading the pieces as they have been collected can be a trying experience because Whitman covers the same ground again and again, and admitted as such: “We place the greater reliance upon the forming of the habit [of training], and therefore repeat it many times in these articles.”¹⁷ Read with breakfast each Sunday morning (which should be a small portion of meat, a

nearly raw egg, a slice of dry bread, and a cold cup of tea), the articles would themselves come to form a habit, within which Whitman repeats his instruction to be repetitious in all things.

“Manly Health and Training,” then, is both a handbook and a metronome, teaching readers to live a rhythmical life. It also teaches them how to read poetry. In the October 17th column, after instruction on the value of baseball, hurling, and swimming, Whitman turns to “Training the Voice” (241). As with all the training he proposes, vocal exercise should be “systematic and daily,” and if done right, will provoke “the habit of electricity through the frame.” The particular exercise he recommends is that of declaiming texts. This is not declamation as promoted by the elocution manuals so popular in nineteenth-century America, though. Those manuals required students to perform their exercises carefully, and preferably in front of a tutor. Whitman’s exercises, meanwhile, are raw and natural:

We would recommend every young man to select a few favorite poetical or other passages, of an animated description, and get in the habit of declaiming them, on all convenient occasions—especially when out upon the water, or by the sea-shore, or rambling over the hills on the country.

There is no tutor here to correct pronunciation and posture, only the hills to echo back the voice. Whitman’s advice on declamation is unusually disordered. We should declaim whenever, wherever, with none of the temporal consistency characterizing the other regimes in the column. The declamations themselves, though, should be entirely rhythmical:

Careful, however, not to overstrain his voice, or scream, for that is not the object that is aimed after. A loud, slow, firm tone, as long as it can be sustained without fatigue, and agreeably to the ear, is the test.

This is an injunction towards a rhythmical performance. While certainly not a theory of versification, the specific qualities of the reading Whitman proposes do imply a stance on prosody. They might look back, for instance, to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Poetic Principle*. Poe argues, facetiously, that “a long poem does not exist.”¹⁸ A poem must excite, he claims, but can excite only for so long (half an hour to be precise), after which “it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues.” Such a flagging and failing is what Whitman’s instructions are designed to help us avoid; we must declaim only while we have the energy and while the sound pleases us. While we declaim, though, we must be rhythmical: “loud, slow, firm.” The instructions also look back to another part of Whitman’s own text: his advice

on walking. “A pretty long walk” is good exercise, Whitman advises, but must be approached carefully.¹⁹ We should work up our step till “it takes the power of locomotion pretty well,” and then keep up that pace “as it can be well endured—not to the extent of fatigue however, for it is a law of training that a man must not exercise so hard at any time as to overdo and tire himself.” Walking, like reading poetry, must have a tempo, but must never exhaust itself, as that tempo would then be lost. In “rambling over the hills” and declaiming poetry, then, we reach the height of rhythmicity, all our body involved in maintaining a pace both sustainable and pleasing.

In “Manly Health and Training,” Whitman talks about rhythm without his own rhythmically problematic poetry forcing him to hedge his bets. Velsor’s column shows a writer deeply enamored with rhythmicity, even metricality, as a property of all parts of life, which must include poetry. I suggest that readers can carefully employ the theory of rhythmicity presented in “Manly Health and Training” when encountering *Leaves of Grass*. Instead of reading the long lines of Whitman’s early poems as exhausting themselves, perhaps we should read them as measured, tempered exertions. Whitman’s lines always end with punctuation: they very rarely stumble into enjambment. Many sections of “Song of Myself” seem to set up their own regime, picking up a grammatical structure and repeating it steadily to a point, not of fatigue, but of purposeful conclusion.

Leaves of Grass’s rhythmic scheme, though, is fiercely independent—centered on the statuesque figure of a single man—as seems the physical training regimen it matches. But is “Manly Health and Training” purely interested in the individual, or does it place that individual in a community of like-minded and like-bodied brethren? Or, to rephrase this in a way which applies also to Whitman’s poetic rhythm, is it enough to be fit or do we also have to fit in? Over its length, “Manly Health and Training” ends up promoting the latter. Whitman is enamored with the male body not just individually, but *en masse*, where it has the potential to be America’s great contribution to the world:

We are not insensible to the triumphs of the demonstrative sciences and philosophy—to the explanation of the subtleties of mind—to the accomplishment of such wonders as the Atlantic Telegraph, the great feat of the age; but for all that, we are clear in the opinion of the still greater importance of all these researches and statements directly affecting individual happiness and health—the development of a superb race of men, large-bodied, clean-blooded, and with all the attributes of the best material humanity. (195)

This sentence runs on to exhaustion, in contradiction of Whitman's own advice, but out of it rises the true American man. Past and future technologies are laid out: the development of "a superb race of men" is to be the next step after innovations like "the Atlantic Telegraph, the great feat of the age." American manhood is a technology which will outdo even the telegraph in its capacity to span and bridge. A "great feat" is to be replaced with great feet which will move in powerful, cohesive locomotion over the country, for in human motion we find "the whole expression of life, the passions, and the outshewing of active beauty."²⁰

It is impossible to read "Manly Health and Training" without it seeming to predict, even eagerly to await, the Civil War and the teleology which Whitman built around it. In 1858, under a pseudonym, we find a Whitman primed to welcome the Civil War as a consummation of the devout hopes he had for America as a rhythmical nation. Strong rhythm was not mere ornamentation or frippery, but an intentional way of existing in the world, of instantiating the potential of the American man as a strong, aesthetic individual. Whitman only had to wait a few years before this conception was seemingly manifested entire, in the ranks of men marching out of New York to defend the Union. What he soon found, though, was that his teleology was to be tested, over and again, against the reality of war. The rhythmical utopia prophesied by his newspaper column was soon to encounter a real column of marching men, being drummed on their way towards slaughter.

Marching Soldiers, Wounded Soldiers

The rhythmical story of Whitman's Civil War is recorded in the title of *Drum-Taps*. Immediately available is the tapping or beating of a drum. This beating sounds a reveille for the nation: a motivation to war and the setting of an army on the march. But the title also refers to a specific drumbeat. Before the final tattoo which sent soldiers in camp to bed, the drum corps would tap three times signaling a move from activity to rest, motion to prostration. One of the bugle calls played for this evening tattoo became known, after the drums which preceded it, as "Taps." During the War, this bugle tune became a traditional feature of military funerals. So in *Drum-Taps* we might hear three different rhythms: a patriotic stirring, a signal of stasis, and a cry of mourning.²¹ Before we even begin to read the poems, we are faced with a rising up as well as a laying down and a laying out. We find the body in motion, the body prostrate, and the body mourned. The remainder of this essay will trace Whitman's encounters

with the first two of these forms, showing that while the rhythms of his poems are not necessarily mimetic of his wartime environment, they do betray an immersion in rhythmicality, one result of which was the more frequent appearance of recognizably patterned poetic lines. This is not an enquiry which sets out to prove that the poems of *Drum-Taps* “sound like” their environment; rather that they are a sounded part *of* that environment.

From the first reactionary musters in New York to the columns moving daily through Washington, the tramp of marching soldiers followed Whitman throughout the War. This is the rhythm that has been theorized as motivating Whitman’s own turn towards regularity in his poems. An early review in *Watson’s Weekly Art Journal* claimed that the poems of *Drum-Taps* are not “the elaborate martial strains of the parade-ground, but the vigorous ‘drum taps’ of the column in march.”²² Allen follows this response, claiming that it was natural that “the poet’s heartbeat would throb to the rhythms of marching feet.”²³ Do these passages, though, describe the actual experience of reading *Drum-Taps*, or are their comments a way of fitting Whitman into a role as unifying American poet which he does not actually fill? The *Watson’s* reviewer is keen from the start to make something monumental of Whitman: “for the first time’, they argue, “the full strength of our American life receives expression—receives assertion.”²⁴ Would it not be wonderful if we found in this newly-American poet a transcription of the column in march?

As an interlocutor to these questions, we can turn to a type of poetry which spoke out its rhythms in a clear, unambiguous voice: children’s verse. A popular book appeared in 1862, written by one “Cousin John,” called *The Drummer Boy*²⁵ and subtitled “A story of the war in verse for the young folks at home.” Edwin Haviland Miller suggests that the book was written by Whitman’s friend John Townsend Trowbridge and that it passed through Whitman’s hands when Trowbridge sent him a package of books to distribute to the soldiers in the hospitals and with it had included two copies of this publication.²⁶ The story is one of the Civil War’s favorite: a young boy, Bill, frustrated he cannot join up as a soldier, heads to war as a drummer and charms all he encounters with his innocence and patriotism. He has his adventures, sees the glories and horrors of war, and is converted entirely to the godly cause of the Union. The poem was published with the thick of the war ahead of it, and it ends with Bill marching on under the banner of freedom:

Armed with this truth,
Bill, noble youth,
Is marching while you read;

You'll not be slow
 To bid, I know,
 Him "Onward, and God-speed!"
 These simple rhymes,
 Of these great times,
 May give your heart a joy,
 For now you know
 To war doth go
 Your friend, the Drummer Boy. (48)

The sudden turn to the reader in the third line above makes manifest a rhythmical communication which was already in play. A child reading on the home front, perhaps even reading out loud, is given access to Bill the drummer boy via the poem's "simple rhymes" and simple rhythms. The poem is in ballad stanzas, made more digestible by splitting the four beat lines into two rhyming lines of two beats. The patterning is tight: we never have to travel far between rhymes. We read about Bill setting the tempo for the soldiers marching with him and do so in a poetic tempo which asserts itself from start to finish (see figure 1). Part of the reason the reader is able to "know / To war doth go / Your friend, the Drummer Boy" is that reading the poem instantiates that going in its rhythm. He is "marching while you read," but also marching *because* we read. Transfer the poem to the army hospital and the conversation becomes even richer. A wounded soldier, taken from marching to prostration, would be invited to imagine a child imagining marching soldiers. He may be static in his hospital bed but is put in motion by eavesdropping on the child's encounter with martial rhythm.

This children's poem, then, is the kind of reading experience in which poetic rhythm and the rhythm of marching might be said to coincide. This is not the reading experience we find in *Drum-Taps*. With the exception of "O Captain! my Captain!"—and even then, shakily—Whitman's poems surely cannot be said to march. Allen, however, disagreed, calling "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" a "marching poem."²⁷ This is an odd declaration. It is certainly a poem *about* marching, but it is impossible to march to. Surfacing now and again across the stanzas is the promise of a falling rhythm echoing Poe's *The Raven*:

O you youths, western youths,
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
 Plain I see you, western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!



Figure 1: Bill marching beside Union soldiers, from *The Drummer Boy: A Story of the War in Verse* (29).

Here the poem begins to tramp, in strong trochees, but elsewhere it stumbles. For example, when we come to a stanza about the entire world beating in the same rhythm, that stanza loses its own beat:

All the pulses of the world,
 Falling in, they beat for us, with the western movement beat;
 Holding single or together, steady moving, to the front, all for us,
 Pioneers! O Pioneers!

The caesura in the second line intrudes but can be navigated. The third line, though, goes awry. We are asked to pronounce “to” of “to the front” with a stress, which after its unstressed appearance in “together” is uncomfortable, and then the line carries on past its eighth beat, with a double stress across “front, all.” Certainly this is not “steady moving.”

This veering towards-then-away-from meter suggests that Whitman had a suspicion of total submission to a pre-ordained pattern. It is a suspicion that runs deep within Whitman’s war writing and leads him repeatedly into paradox. The Civil War confirmed his belief in the importance of the common man sacrificing themselves to America’s greatness:

We have seen the alacrity with which the American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent, and the least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline, sprang, at the first tap of the drum, to arms—not for gain, nor even glory, nor to repel invasion—but for an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety of the flag*.²⁸

While Whitman did not himself exhibit this alacrity, he did imagine himself joining the army if pressed. While discussing conscription in an 1863 letter to his brother, he mused:

I would like to see the people embodied *en-masse*—I am very sure I shall see that my name is in its place on the lists, and my body in the ranks, if they do it that way—for *that* will be something like our nation getting itself up in shape.²⁹

These passages show Whitman embracing military order but simultaneously remind his reader that the army is an army of individuals. In the first passage, Whitman paints the American populace as averse to controlling structures: they are “least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline.” In the letter, we get the doubled “my”: “my name,” “my body.” Whitman is keen to index himself in this imagined scenario. The list of names will be long and total, but within it will shine the name of “Walt Whitman.” His body will be part of the mass, but will still be his body, inviolate and unique. Whitman’s support for enlistment and regimental discipline relied on the American individual remaining intact within the throng.

Marching was a metonym for this stance. Unified movement could only be sanctioned if the soldier remained, at the same time, an independent locomotive force. In describing the “actual soldier of 1862-’65” in *Specimen Days*, Whitman highlights a number of qualities, among which is his “lawless gait.”³⁰ The paradox of Whitman’s support for enlistment and discipline is crystallized in this phrase. How can a soldier’s gait, drilled into them and forced to fit to the tap of the drum, at the same time be “lawless”? It is worth noting that the role of the drum in marching was, in fact, a constant negotiation between the human body and artificial rhythm. Columns of soldiers marched to a tempo set by the drum corps. What should be emphasized, though, is that the tempo the drum corps set was *itself* set by the natural tempos of human walking. The tempo was not measured in an arbitrary amount of beats per minute, but in steps per minute. Eric Spall, in his excellent survey of the role of the drum in the Civil War, finds that Silas Casey’s *Infantry Tactics* specified “three standard tempos: common time was to be played at 90 steps per minute, quickstep at 110 steps, and double quick at 140.”³¹ The drum might seem tyrannical, an artificial check on a natural movement, but that check emerges from the pace a group of American infantry in the 1860s would naturally fall into. Haun Sassy in *Critical Rhythm* argues that marching rhythms are distinctly national, a bodily technique which emerges from societal rules, not merely an idiosyncrasy.³² I would further argue that the societal rules imposed on our bodies emerge from their

natural operation. Somewhere underneath the cultural layers of marching is the palimpsest of walking.

In fact, the drum did not even maintain its control over the column for very long. Once the column had been set going, it would often march in silence, in a rhythm maintained by common physical consent. This negotiation between the individual and the column is on display in “A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown.” The poem begins in motion:

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown;
 A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness;
 Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating; (44)

The first line has a readily available rhythm:

x / x x / \ / x x / x /
 A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,³³

We get five beats in a rising pattern, alternating unobtrusively between duple and triple. The triple stress across “ranks hard-prest” is as close as we can get to a rhythm which could be called mimetic. The stresses are crammed hard together, forced to move forwards under pressure. Line 2, though, drops this rhythm. We are led into to the poem’s world by a rhythmical line, made part of its story of heavy discipline, but then left to wander more freely. Rising rhythms, both duple and triple, sound out now and again as vestiges of the momentum which inaugurated the poem (“Our army foil’d with loss severe” . . . “We come to an open space in the woods”), but the steady going of the first line falls away.

The column comes to a halt at a church which has been made into an “impromptu hospital.” The scene Whitman describes within is one of infernal chaos:

Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps,
 And by one great pitchy torch, stationary, with wild red flames, and clouds of
 smoke; (44)

Whitman is clearly most interested in how this scene reaches the eye, but a moment of soundscaping slips in between his visual noticings: “An occasional scream or cry, the doctor’s shouted orders or calls . . .” (45). The sound is as disordered and unperiodized as the sights. In the doctor’s “calls” we can find a distorted parallel to the drum calls which controlled army life, as described in “Camps of Green.” Where those calls are regulated and predictable, the doctor’s

calls are but one element of the chaotic action of the hospital. The speaker manages to draw himself out of this chaotic mass by ministering to a particular wounded soldier, whom he can single out “more distinctly” at his feet. His act of staunching the young man’s blood is entirely voluntary, and thus in opposition to the disciplined march which brought him to the hospital. Discipline is soon reasserted, though, and with it comes a return of precise rhythm:

Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, Fall in;*
 But first I bend to the dying lad—his eyes open—a half-smile gives he me;

There is a work of counterpoint going on here between the soldier’s duty to continue marching and his desire to tend to the wounded youngster. The speaker takes up the rising rhythm begun by the first line above (Then *hear outside the orders given*), but applies it to his own mission of ministration: “But *first I bend to the dying lad.*” The rhythm then disappears as the poem turns to pay close, intimate attention to the soldier: “his eyes open—a half-smile gives he me.” There is a negotiation between the speaker as member of a grand column marching towards a fight for freedom, and his individual project of care and mercy. Importantly, both projects are presented as worthy subjects of rhythmical lines. Whitman seems to believe that the column is only worth having if it is made up of soldiers who would leave its strictures in a moment to look into the eyes of a dying boy far from home.

Whitman’s invocation of the marching body in “Manly Health and Training,” sketched out before the War began, was doomed to fail when it encountered war’s realities. That body in “Manly Health and Training” is a precursor for the vibrant, healthful figure who arrived in *Drum-Taps* as a “strong man, erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing” (“1861,” 17). This soldier might stride, with “springy gait,” but he does so as an independent figure, not as a piece in a military machine. As the War went on, Whitman became uncomfortable with the prospect of an artificial drum motivating the natural step of this American soldier. We learn in “Manly Health and Training” that no motion should be continued unto exhaustion, yet the soldiers in *Drum-Taps* are frequently tired, hard-pressed, and pushed to their limits. In “Spirit whose work is done,” published in the *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, the drum has lost all its patriotic timbre and readers are left with “the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last.” Once Whitman has seen what the drum drives to, it lands differently on his ear. The drum in “Dirge for Two Veterans,” another later war poem, sounds “convulsive.” At this late stage, rhythmicality has itself become spasmodic, an unwelcome intrusion on the more enduring, democratic rhythms to

which Whitman wishes the nation could return. He reaches again for the word “convulsive” at the close of his war chapters in *Specimen Days*:

“Convulsiveness”

As I have look'd over the proof-sheets of the preceding pages, I have once or twice fear'd that my diary would prove, at best, but a batch of convulsively written reminiscences. Well, be it so. They are but parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke and excitement of those times. The war itself, with the temper of society preceding it, can indeed be best described by that very word *convulsiveness*.³⁴

While used here to speak about writing and politics, “convulsiveness” is a word which looks originally to the body in a state inverse to the erect, healthful figure which strides through *Drum-Taps*. It takes the body from fit to fits, and it is to this inverse we must now turn. While Whitman listened closely to the rhythms controlling soldiers and thought hard about their paradoxes, his own time among active soldiers in the camp was sporadic and curtailed, and he was never truly inured to army discipline. Whitman’s war was structured by his work in the army hospitals, among the convulsive wounded.

From its bureaucracy to its soundscape, the Civil War hospital was experienced as an arhythmic institution. This is apparent in Whitman’s sulphuric rendition of the “impromptu hospital” in “A march in the ranks hard-press,” but the more established hospitals were not significantly more periodized. Even the large Washington hospitals were still basically impromptu, established in requisitioned buildings with layouts which did not lend themselves to the work of tending the wounded. Early in the War, Whitman visited a hospital set up in the Patent Office, which impressed itself on him as a “curious scene.”³⁵ He describes an ensemble of elements which interact but do not cohere:

The glass cases, the beds, the forms lying there, the gallery above, and the marble pavement under foot—the suffering, and the fortitude to bear it in various degrees—occasionally, from some, the groan that could not be repress’d—sometimes a poor fellow dying, with emaciated face and glassy eye [...]

The “glass cases” of the patent office, which are “crowded with models in miniature,” find their way into Whitman’s description of the wounded man’s “glassy eye,” turning the human body into a sterile display case of machinery. The different forms collide: the groan that cannot be repressed rings out in a space somewhere between museum, theatre, and mausoleum, all of which should remain hushed. To sum up this chaos, Whitman coins the phrase “Hospital

Perplexity.”³⁶ It is virtually impossible, he claims, for a family member arriving in Washington to track down the location of a wounded relative among these hospitals, because the directories “are nothing like complete; they are never up to date, and, as things are, with the daily stream of coming and going and changing, cannot be.” He relates an anecdote of a farmer arriving from New York in search of a wounded brother, giving up after a week, and then arriving back home to find a letter from his brother detailing his location. Everything is out of kilter.

Whitman’s own interactions with the hospitals have been presented as arhythmical, in terms of both criticism and praise. Thomas Wentworth Higginson denigrated Whitman’s wartime service in an article published the same year as *Specimen Days*:

I am one of many to whom Whitman’s “Drum-Taps” have always sounded as hollow as the instrument they counterfeit, simply because their author, with all his fine physique and his freedom from home-ties, never personally followed the drum, but only heard it from the comparatively remote distance of the hospital.³⁷

Higginson opposes “followed” to “heard.” The former implies a submission to rhythmical discipline, the latter only a vague noticing of that rhythm as one sound among others. The hospital, “comparatively remote,” is an acoustic filter which let Whitman ignore the drum and continue his unmanly mission. It is worth noting the possible failure of Higginson’s apparently neat opening analogy. If Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* “have always sounded as hollow as the instrument they counterfeit,” surely Higginson is admitting that the drum itself sounds hollow. In that case, why is it worth following? His simile has wrapped round on itself, leaving us with the impression that the tap of the drum might be counterfeiting something.

Generally, though, Whitman’s spontaneous, self-motivated work in the hospitals has been read as a productive counter to the military hegemony which Higginson’s piece implicitly supports. Whitman lamented that the hospitals failed to extricate themselves from such control:

Of all places in the world, the hospitals of American young men and soldiers, wounded in the volunteer service of their country, ought to be exempt from mere conventional military airs and etiquette of shoulder-straps. But they are not exempt.³⁸

By choosing not to follow the drum, Whitman exempted himself from this etiquette which he elsewhere described as “ill-fitting,” and was thus able pursue his independent mission of nourishing the wounded and soothing the dying.³⁹

Whitman often emphasizes the importance of ministering to each soldier's unique wants. Each case, he writes, "requires some peculiar adaptation to itself," and must be responded to "after its kind or call."⁴⁰ That adaptation ranged from buying them particular candy, to searching out a glass of milk, to sitting by them and writing long letters on their behalf to family. This was exactly the kind of work that nurses were almost always too busy to do, and that religious groups like the Christian Commission did not include in their visits, preferring a catch-all program of delivering religious tracts and praying over the soldiers "without having smiled [...] or dropped a word of comfort or cheer."⁴¹ Where the nurses and preachers were restricted by institutional forms, Whitman could wander where he wished, attending personally to each patient as an individual.⁴² In Robert Leigh Davis's study of Whitman's hospital work, this coalesces into an "erotic mobility unconfined by prescriptive boundaries."⁴³ Whitman's ability to form deep, personal attachments to particular soldiers rewrote the hospital space, dissolving some of its etiquettes.

Lying above and beneath this figure of the mobile, itinerant healer, though, is a history of deep, sustained rhythmicity which is not a mere giving-in to the etiquette Whitman despised, but a layered, productive reaction. This rhythmicity extends from the temporal to the linguistic and can be read back into the poems of *Drum-Taps*. Firstly, we must recognise that while Whitman's work inside the hospitals was characterized by flexibility and adaptation, his wider project of hospital visiting was sustained, periodized, and quasi-institutional. From early in 1863 until mid-1866 Whitman structured his life around his hospital visits.⁴⁴ The paid employment Whitman took as a copyist was essentially a way of funding this project: he figured his wages in terms of how they could be spent in providing for patients. He had an unerring tendency to describe his hospital work in the language of military service and campaigning. It was not just a voluntary, charitable endeavor, but a fixed posting, as shown in lines across his correspondence: "I have been on self-imposed duty some five hours, pretty closely confined"; "I am back again in Washington, on my regular daily and nightly rounds"; "I work somewhere among them every day or in the evening . . . Yesterday I spent nearly all day at Armory Square Hospital. This forenoon I take an intermission, & go again at dusk."⁴⁵ In an 1863 letter to Lewis Brown, a soldier whom Whitman had met as a patient in Armory Square Hospital, Whitman refers to "giving myself a furlough of three or four weeks and going home to Brooklyn."⁴⁶ He is evidently attempting to make himself a comrade to Brown, to figure his hospital work as somehow equivalent to Brown's role as an infantryman. It is odd that despite his distaste for military etiquette, he ended

up adopting a form of that etiquette by assigning himself a posting from which he could not go absent without leave, even if he could grant that leave himself. In a letter to his mother, we find Whitman addressing this bind:

I have not missed a day at Hospital I think for more than three weeks—I get more & more wound round—poor young men—there are some cases that would literally sink & give up, if I did not pass a portion of the time with them.⁴⁷

While Whitman's ministrations were fluid and adaptive, he came to believe the soldiers relied on them, would "sink & give up" if the visits stopped, and so had to form a rhythmical project of visiting. He is "wound round" his own charity. In this letter about hospitals it is almost impossible not also to hear "wound" as in "wounded." And this is exactly what Whitman did: he went on wound rounds, effective exactly because they were round—recurring and predictable.

Whitman's activities on these rounds employed rhythm as cure. He had had a theory of health and healing ready since before the war even began, as displayed in "Manly Health and Training," and he adapted it swiftly to the army hospitals. The patients, prostrate, convulsive and often gravely injured, could not engage in the daily exercise and habits Mose Velsor recommends, so Whitman brought those habits in his own body and hoped to transfer them via a kind of magnetism.⁴⁸ This was a chance to test his theory, espoused five years before he entered the hospitals, that there is "a wonderful medicinal effect in the mere personal presence of a man who was perfectly well."⁴⁹ He thus prepared for his visits by ensuring he had "previous rest, the bath, clean clothes, a good meal, and as cheerful appearance as possible."⁵⁰ So equipped, he would set forth into the hospitals:

I believe my profoundest help to these sick & dying men is probably the soothing invigoration I steadily bear in mind, to infuse in them through affect, cheering love, & the like, between them & me. It has saved more than one life.⁵¹

Across all his individual attentions, Whitman relies on the steadiness of his healthful form to do some of the work of healing. It is a theory deeply intertwined with rhythm. Whitman set a tempo which he hoped the wounded soldiers would begin to fall into or catch up with.

This tempo burst into sound through Whitman's emphasis on the voice as part of his healing process. Civil War hospitals had a distinct soundscape, as displayed in a recollection by *New York Herald* reporter George Townsend:

There were some who had been shot in the bowels, and now and then they were frightfully convulsed, breaking into shrieks and shouts. Some of them iterated a single word, as, “doctor,” or “help,” or “God,” or “oh!” commencing with a loud spasmodic cry, and continuing the same word till it died away in cadence. The act of calling seemed to lull the pain.⁵²

What begins as arhythmical and “spasmodic” turns into rhythm as a way of soothing. Whitman took this potential for rhythmical sound to lull and delivered it like a tonic. He would talk to the soldiers constantly, whether or not they were well enough to talk back. He also read to them from whatever they requested, even from the Bible, though he admits “I see my friends smiling at this confession.”⁵³ In particular, though, the soldiers were fond of “declamatory poetical pieces,” so fond that “the whole ward that can walk gathers around me and listens” to such performances. Here, then, we have “Manly Health and Training” fulfilled. In speaking out hearty, rhythmical poems in the wards, Whitman worked to counter the spasm and convulsion, and instantiated his belief that declamation fortifies “the bodily system.”⁵⁴ It is notable that he did not make his own poems part of this cure. While he was describing his project of reading to soldiers, Traubel asked him if he ever brought out his own books. The reply: “No, I don’t think so: I can’t recall a single case in which I gave away *Leaves of Grass*.”⁵⁵ The poems he turned to were “declamatory,” the sort of thing to be found in the elocution manuals which eschewed Whitman in favor of established figures writing in established forms. In Whitman’s hospital work, we can find a belief that traditional metrics did have their purpose: they motivated, stirred, and got going.

Just as Whitman’s poems did not play a part in his hospital work, so the hospital plays only a small part in his poems. Army hospitals appear now and again in *Drum-Taps*, but they are certainly not the focus as they are across Whitman’s prose notes and especially his letters home, in which he has to apologize to his mother for talking about them at the expense of other news. Whitman claimed the wounded soldier in his perseverance was the ultimate manifestation of American manhood, but *Drum-Taps* prefers to give us soldiers either in motion or stilled in death. The in-between form of the wounded soldier seems to pose a unique problem, and emerges in only a handful of poems: we find it in one line of “Not youth pertains to me,” in the central vision of “A march in the ranks hard-prest,” and across the entirety of “The Dresser,” Whitman’s only long poem set in a hospital. It is a poem which, like many in *Drum-Taps*, makes sure to declare what kind of poem it isn’t. As a framing device, Whitman inhabits a speaker addressing an enquiring crowd of children in some far-off future, where the Civil War is a story told by old men. The crowd asks him to speak of “armies

so rapid so wondrous,” and of “hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous.” They ask, essentially, for a ballad. The speaker begins to assemble the necessary materials for such a tale, but they slip through his fingers:

Soldier alert I arrive, after a long march, cover'd with sweat and dust;
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in the rush of
successful charge;
Enter the captur'd works . . . yet lo, like a swift running river they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade; (31)

The scene disappears, and we enter on another:

But in silence, in dreams' projections
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors—(while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go, (32)

There are two stories being told in this transition from battlefield to hospital, war to ward. First there is the story of the movement of a soldier's memories; the tales of “furious passions” and “chances / Of unsurpassed heroes” which the crowd want to hear are not the path of least resistance for the teller, whose thoughts flow inevitably to the terrible sights of the hospital. Overlaid on this story, though, is that of Whitman's own war. The fading out of the scene of battle seems to be an admission that such battles were something Whitman never actually experienced. As an old man, Whitman would be unable to tell tales of heroic charges and the wild chaos of combat because he spent his war on a different mission. Instead, he told tales of the hospitals—in letters and articles, in *Memoranda During the War* and *Specimen Days*, and then to Horace Traubel in Camden.

As the speaker enters the ward, the site of Whitman's real, visceral experience, a neat dactylic rhythm also makes an entrance:

/ x x / x x / x x / [x x]
Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
/ x / x x / x x / [x x]
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,

This is a rare instance of rhythm being visually present on the page: the lines are shorter than those that have come before and are aligned with each other on the right, where previous lines have roamed. It seems to be a brief submission to meter. Why here, though? I read these lines as Whitman attempting to motivate his poem into action. In the first stanza, the speaker describes how his “fingers fail’d,” presumably leaving him unable to pull a trigger and explaining why he was reassigned as a hospital orderly. We soon find more fingers in the form of the neat dactyls shown above, which seem to be trying hard to achieve something: to help the poem steal itself as it advances into the hard work of presenting to the reader the fetid wards filled with convulsive patients. We have been asked to “follow without noise,” and Whitman gets straight to the work of poem-making as signaled by the quick lapse into meter. The unusually precise dactylic rhythm gives way almost immediately to Whitman’s usual style (the fingers quickly fail), but the poem continues to be textured with rhythmical phraseology. Twice Whitman gives us the peculiar image of “hinged knees.” It is an emphasis on anatomy with the potential for steady, back-and-forth motion, where the rest of the anatomy in the poem has had this potential erased: “crush’d head”; “amputated hand”; “perforated shoulder”; “fractur’d thigh.” The soldiers, which throughout *Drum-Taps* are shown in motion, are here laid low and broken down. The dresser must thus take on the responsibility of movement: “I onward go, I stop”; “On, on I go”; “I am faithful, I do not give out.” The poem is a transcription of Whitman’s motion-by-example approach to his hospital work, where the pendulum is set going by a brief moment of steady rhythm.

Reading *Drum-Taps* via “Manly Health and Training” allows us to see how Whitman’s interest in healthy, rhythmical bodies shaped his response to the Civil War. Union soldiers, both upright and prostrate, marching and wounded, became sites of intense scrutiny, where Whitman’s physiological and poetic ideals were tested. Whitman did not set out to make his poems sound like the tramp of the marching soldier he loved so dearly, but the War let him instantiate his belief that rhythm might strengthen the body, while confirming his suspicion that discipline can lead to catastrophe. This negotiation found its way into the poems of *Drum-Taps*, which are often set going by a brisk beat, but then head out under their own rhythms to perform works of radical humanitarian care.

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NOTES

- 1 Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps* (New York; Washington, D.C., 1865–1866), 72. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 2 Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. I (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, 1844), 928.
- 3 Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences 1819-1899* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 276.
- 4 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Washington, D.C.: 1871), 297. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 5 Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 66.
- 6 Gay Wilson Allen, *The New Walt Whitman Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 241-242.
- 7 Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps: The Complete 1865 Edition*, ed. Lawrence Kramer (New York: New York Review Books, 2015), xviii.
- 8 Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960), 364.
- 9 Space does not permit a full survey of criticism of Whitman’s prosody. My own reading is most indebted Annie Finch’s *The Ghost of Meter: Culture and Prosody in American Free Verse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).
- 10 Allen, 241-242.
- 11 Walt Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1996), 713. We might look to the scene of sonnet-writing in *Parade’s End* for another example of the convenience of form in wartime. It is near to hand, and near to ear: an acoustic pattern to retreat to in an otherwise chaotic soundscape.
- 12 Mose Velsor [Walt Whitman], “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions,” ed. Zachary Turpin, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (2016), 184-310. Hereafter, “Manly Health and Training”.
- 13 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1915), 1:163. Hereafter, *WWC*.
- 14 William Thayer, “Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 65 (June 1919), 682. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: med.00574.
- 15 Jennifer Schuessler, “Found: Walt Whitman’s Guide to Manly Health,” *New York Times* (April 29, 2016), nytimes.com.
- 16 “Manly Health and Training,” 184.
- 17 “Manly Health and Training,” 206.

- 18 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Poetic Principle," *Home Journal* 36 (August 31, 1850), 1.
- 19 "Manly Health and Training," 200.
- 20 "Manly Health and Training," 282.
- 21 For more on how Whitman's title inaugurates his project, see John M. Picker, "The Union of Music and Text in Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and Higginson's *Army Life in a Black Regiment*," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 12 (1995), 231-245.
- 22 Anonymous, "Drum Taps—Walt Whitman," *Watson's Weekly Art Journal* 4 (November 1864), 34-35. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: anc.00052.
- 23 Allen, 242.
- 24 The review is anonymous, and it is tempting to suggest that it was written by Whitman himself.
- 25 "Cousin John," *The Drummer Boy* (Boston: Crosby & Nichols, 1862).
- 26 *WWC*, 4:290. See Miller's note in Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, Vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 195. Miller is probably mistaken in this identification, since I have found no evidence that Trowbridge, though he often used pseudonyms, was in fact "Cousin John." Trowbridge did write a novel for juveniles called *The Drummer Boy* and subtitled "A Story of Burnside's Expedition," published in 1863 by J. E. Tilton & Co., and this is no doubt the book Trowbridge sent to Whitman. I am grateful to the editors of *WWQR* for their noticing of this probable error by Miller.
- 27 Allen, 242.
- 28 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 968.
- 29 Whitman, *Correspondence*, 1:76. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: wwh.00005.
- 30 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 803.
- 31 Eric Spall, *The Tongue of the Camp: Drumming and Drummers of the America Civil War* (Honors Thesis, Ball State University, 2010), 13.
- 32 Haun Sassy, "Contagious Rhythm: Verse as a Technique of the Body," *Critical Rhythm*, ed. Ben Glaser & Jonathan Culler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 106-127.
- 33 My own scansion uses the method set out in Derek Attridge's *Poetic rhythm: An introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 34 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 799.
- 35 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 741.
- 36 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 763.
- 37 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 'Unmanly Manhood', *The Woman's Journal* 4 (February 1882), 1.
- 38 "The Great Army of the Sick," *New-York Times* (February 26, 1863), 2. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: per.00195.
- 39 "The Great Washington Hospitals," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (March 19, 1863), 2. Available on the

Walt Whitman Archive, ID: per.00210.

40 “‘Tis But Ten Years Since (Sixth Paper.),” *New York Weekly Graphic* 7 March 1874, 46. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: per.00215.

41 From a soldier quoted in Roy Morris, Jr., *The Better Angel: Walt Whitman in the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108.

42 Many nurses, of course, spent as much time as possible performing individual ministrations for patients, as shown in Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches*. But what the *Sketches* also show is that each nurse was part of a larger machine, which pulled them to certain duties in a rhythm which could not often be broken to give special attention to particular cases. Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (1863; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 2006).

43 Robert Leigh Davis, *Whitman and the Romance of Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

44 Whitman’s letters from 1866 show the work gradually petering out around him: May 7th: “My hospitals are dwindled to a small force—but there are plenty of cases to occupy me a couple of visits a week”; May 14th: “I spent yesterday afternoon at the Quarter Master’s hospital—it is the old dregs & leavings of the war.”; September 27th: “Washington is rather dull—no more soldiers around like there used to be—no more patrols marching around the streets—no more great racks of hospitals.”

45 *Memoranda During the War*, 7; *Memoranda*, 30; Walt Whitman to Moses Lane, 11 May 1863, available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00769.

46 Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00886.

47 Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00774.

48 Lawrence Kramer, note to *Drum-Taps: The Complete 1865 Edition* (New York: New York Review Books, 2015), 51.

49 “Manly Health and Training,” 185.

50 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 751.

51 Walt Whitman to Nicholas Wyckoff or Daniel L. Northrup, May 14, 1863. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00885.

52 In Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Blue and the Gray* (1950; New York: The Fairfax Press, 1982), 771.

53 *Memoranda During the War*, 31.

54 “Manly Health and Training,” 241.

55 *WWC*, 4:63.

WHITMAN'S FIRST-PERSON PLURAL

ALYSON BRICKEY



IN HIS 1855 POEM that he continually reworked for twenty-five years and eventually titled “Song of Myself,” Walt Whitman pulsates between the singular and the plural, reflecting on both the single “spear of summer grass” and the vast, multitudinous “journey-work of the stars.”¹ The poet constantly toys with the distinction between the one and the many in this text, which has become one of the most quintessential of American poems. This is partially achieved through his experimentation with poetic lists. His penchant for catalogues, especially in *Leaves of Grass*, has both fascinated and frustrated readers since its initial publication. Upon reading the collection for the first time, Ralph Waldo Emerson famously wrote, “I expected—him—to make—the songs of the Nation—but he seems—to be contented to—make the inventories,”² and in 1896 John Burroughs called the poem “a series of ejaculations, utterances, apostrophes, enumerations . . . with little or no structural or logical connection” (Miller xix). Were it not for the “intimate sense of the man back of all,” Burroughs exclaimed, “the piece would be wild and inchoate” (Miller xix). Whitman himself acknowledged that “it is the catalogue business that wrecks them all—that hauls them up short, that determines their opposition. They shudder at it” (Miller 145). Despite the sometimes negative associations with the poem’s catalogue form, more than one third of “Song of Myself” is made up of lists, displaying a steadfast aesthetic commitment to what can often feel an excess of enumeration.

Many have linked this technique to an explicitly American expression of democratic equality. This is partly because Whitman’s lists are often composed of a diverse range of American subjects, including but not limited to farmers, “lunatics,” police officers, enslaved people, children, women, carpenters, and thieves, among many others. In his foundational essay “Transcendental Catalogue Rhetoric: Vision Versus Form,” Lawrence Buell connects these stylistic experiments to the American Renaissance and its fascination with transcendentalist idealism, arguing that Whitman accentuates the “democratic side” of this philosophy, supporting its conception of “all persons and things” as “symbols of spirit . . . conjoined by analogy in an organic universe.”³ Similarly,

Edwin Miller argues that the lists display “a democratic choreography created by a perceptive observer—and lover—of the heterogeneous, classless American society” (Miller xi). and Harold Bloom characterizes Whitman’s poetry as enacting what he calls “the American sublime of influx” (Miller xxv).

In *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing*, Robert Belknap identifies what he calls “modes of copiousness” in works by Whitman, Emerson, Melville, and Thoreau.⁴ It is Whitman alone, however, who holds a particularly privileged place, as “no one,” Belknap boldly claims, “has even approximated his efforts to create a poetics of listing” (29). Belknap connects Whitman’s enumerative style to what Hayden White calls “a democracy of lateral coexistence” housed within “a purposeful paratactic structure,” suggesting once again that the poet’s unique style does some kind of political work (Belknap 29, 86). Though reactions to Whitman’s poetry have certainly been diverse, the critical canon suggests that his lists come to represent, for many readers, an aestheticization of a rhetorically equalizing discourse. Whether identifiably American or not, something about Whitman’s catalogues seems to engender a critical consideration of democratic ideals.

In *Whitman the Political Poet*, Betsy Erkkila nuances the attention to Whitman’s excess by arguing that the personal and the political are entwined through the poem’s embodied patterns of not just influx, but also “efflux,” repositioning the speaker as one who “advances and retreats, absorbs and bestows.”⁵ The sexualized nature of Whitman’s verse, she contends, approaches the political ideals of America only by “testing and enacting poetically the principle of self-regulation in the individual and cosmos that is at the base of his democratic faith” (106). Erkkila tempers the critical tendency to align Whitman’s aesthetics with an uncomplicated faith in the promise of a pluralized America. While “democratic ideology gave Whitman a reason for being, a language of possibility, and a country to dream in,” the poet was also keenly aware of the failures of that ideology as it had manifested in the class inequities that were worsening, not improving, as a result of Jeffersonian liberalism (Erkkila 21).

Erkkila recalibrates a speaker in “Song of Myself” who doesn’t necessarily fulfill the political ideals of the founding fathers, but instead hesitates and oscillates in the face of them, giving us access to a more complex idea for which Whitman is advocating. The cultural mythology of those ideals has all too often served to elide the deep contradictions that constituted their enactment in the first place. Embedded even in the history of Jefferson’s first draft of the Declaration of Independence is the paragraph he was pressured to remove decrying the “assemblage of horrors” to which kidnapped Africans had been

subjected as a result of the transatlantic slave trade.⁶ In the very same moment, then, that this new nation was founding itself on the enlightenment ideals of liberty and self-determination, it was guaranteeing the continued enslavement of millions; a practice that would persevere for nearly another ninety years. This central tension in the history of the United States is thus reflected in the complicated, double movements that Whitman's speaker repeatedly performs.

Whitman's oscillating speaker allows us to reconsider the manner in which we continue to mobilize "Song of Myself" in the service of the necessarily exclusionary ideology inaugurated by the Declaration of Independence. In what follows, I suggest that what Whitman develops with this poem is not an uncomplicated manifestation of a pluralized democracy, but rather a poetic invocation, through listing, of a version of individualism that includes, at the same time and in the same movement, a celebration of multiplicity. Reconsidering what "Song of Myself" achieves as something other than what we call "democracy" allows us to re-read the poem as advocating for an ideal that carries with it more potential than what even Whitman himself politically envisioned.⁷

While the canon of American literature is no doubt tied to a particular version of self-reliance, Whitman's poem complicates that Emersonian ideal by insisting that we account for a type of communal, shared existence. While Emerson urges that we look within ourselves and "believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men. . . . Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense," Whitman's speaker seems to gain individual momentum from an outward-looking, voraciously social glance.⁸ Though we might be tempted to offer Whitmanian democracy as an ideological counterpoint to Emerson, I instead distinguish Whitman's oscillation between the singular and plural as something markedly more complex than a steadfast commitment to an identifiably politicized ideal.

Gunter Leypoldt suggests that it may not be Whitman's catalogues that engender an attachment to democracy, but rather the way in which we have already historically received the poet himself as ideologically committed to a particular polemic. "Whitman's method 'emerges' as democratic," Leypoldt argues,

only because he provides the necessary interpretation, the discursive "program," as it were, to his chants. It hardly needs to be pointed out that except at a very high level of abstraction, there is no ontological connection between, say, parallelistic catalogues and the idea of cultural inclusiveness (the catalogues in Hebrew poetry or the Bible rarely strike us as symbolic of democracy). If it now seems natural to associate stylistic de-hierarchization with political freedom, it is partly because we have already accepted Whitman's program before we listen to his song.⁹

The poem's speaker manages to consistently tread a line between strongly asserting a sense of individual identity (a brash "I" that some readers find too aggressive, too masculine, too self-involved), and an "I" that also opens itself up to a din of other voices and subjectivities. "One and all tend inward to me," he declares, "and I tend outward to them, ... I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise, / Regardless of others, ever regardful of others, / Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man, / ... I resist anything better than my own diversity" (Whitman 42). Here, Whitman's "I" is constituted by a variety of others, whom the poet roll-calls through their social positions. These archetypes "tend inward" toward the poem's speaker as if succumbing to some centripetal force, and he in turn "tend[s] outwards" toward them, creating a reciprocal, mutually constitutive relationship. Here the list is working to broaden the poet's field of inclusivity.

This gesture is structurally aligned with work of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, whose concept "being singular plural" describes an ontology that depends upon relationality for its very existence. Working within continental philosophy's concern with questions of ethics and responsibility, Nancy envisions a type of sociality that pre-exists ethical behaviour. Responsibility, he believes, does not denote an obligatory action that must take place in response to an event, but rather it is the very condition of Being itself. "To be responsible," he writes, "is not, primarily, being indebted to or accountable for some normative authority. It is to be engaged by its Being to the very end of Being, in such a way that this engagement or *conatus* is the very essence of Being."¹⁰ "Conatus," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is an "effort, endeavour, [or] impulse . . . a force": a movement in which we are already involved. Our task, then, is not to create the conditions under which an ethical relation might be possible, but rather to acknowledge and maintain the relation in which we are already implicated: the condition of life itself as a condition of "cobelonging" (Nancy 201).

Within our contemporary intellectual concern with the ethics of alterity—what Emmanuel Lévinas structures as a face-to-face encounter with "The Other"—there is a focus on ideas of hospitality and openness to the unknown. Jacques Derrida calls this "say[ing] yes to *who or what turns up*."¹¹ This shift in emphasis from the self to the Other is a response to what many have diagnosed as western metaphysics' problematic obsession with the human subject: the lone Cartesian thinker who is more often than not constructed as white, male, and heterosexual; who is able to account for himself and understand his ontological position without the need for relation of any kind. By calling this solipsistic closed circuit into question, philosophers following Lévinas and Derrida attempt

to wrest epistemological control from the subject and place it squarely in the hands of the Other—be it an animal, human, or ecological counterpart. What Nancy argues is quite different, however: it is a rhetorical binding of the very categories “self” and “other.” Taking seriously Martin Heidegger’s notion of *Mitsein*, or the “Being-with” of existence, Nancy inextricably joins the self and other in what he calls “the first-person plural,” without erasing their individual characteristics (Nancy 26-27). Additionally—and here is where he diverges from Hegel—Nancy’s formulation does not require that self and other engage in a dialectic of power in order to move forward toward some more improved, enlightened, or evolved level of existence.

Nancy proposes that philosophy must start again with what he calls “first philosophy,” beginning again with Heidegger’s work and diverging when required (Nancy 26). Because of Heidegger’s collaboration with the Nazi Party during World War II,¹² Nancy posits that philosophy must “recommence” in order to

refigure fundamental ontology . . . with a thorough resolve that *starts from the plural singular of origins, from being-with*. . . . What would happen to philosophy if speaking about Being in other ways than saying “we,” “you,” and “I” became excluded? Where is Being spoken, and who speaks Being? . . . Again: *Being is put into play as the “with”* that is absolutely indisputable. From now on, this is the minimal ontological premise. Being is put into play among us; it does not have any other meaning except the dis-position of this “between.” (Nancy 26-27; emphasis Nancy’s)

This is neither an ethics for the Other nor for the community over the individual. Instead, Nancy offers an exposition of a shared ontology of singular plurality. It is within this philosophical context that I read “Song of Myself.” Under this lens, where singularity necessarily contains within itself a plurality of others and vice versa, the poem’s oft-quoted line, “I am large, I contain multitudes,” takes on a new meaning (Whitman 78).

Creating what Nancy identifies as “the interlacing of strands whose extremities remain separate even at the very centre of the knot,” Whitman fills his stanzas with lists that work not to assimilate and classify their members according to some normative standard, but to proliferate informational specifics without offering any real sense of categorical cohesion (Nancy 5). Echoing Nancy’s textile metaphor, Whitman writes, “Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex, / Always a *knit* of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life” (31; emphasis added). The radical simultaneity gestured at in these lines—the rhythmic repetition of “always,”

which also points to Whitman's interest in eroticizing even the form of the poem itself—undermines the sense of teleological progress denoted by words such as “advance,” “increase,” and “breed.” Instead of following a process from beginning to completion, we are asked to stay in this moment and experience plurality itself as meaningful, as all of these processes are already happening, all at once. More important, however, is the way Whitman here imagines a crowd of advancing equals who nonetheless remain distinct from one another: “singulars singularly together, where the togetherness is neither the sum, nor the incorporation [*englobant*], nor the ‘society,’ nor the ‘community’ (where these words only give rise to problems)” (Nancy 33).

In the passage above, Nancy expresses concern over ideas that would take the form of overtly politicized or ideologically polemic language. This wariness is due in no small part to the global horrors that have been repeatedly committed in the name of ideals such as social democracy, communism, and nationalism. In his book *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Paolo Virno similarly reaches for a notion of connectedness that is not based on an affiliation to a particular group or set of political ideals. Drawing on the writings of Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza, Virno prefers the term “multitude” to “people” when accounting for what he sees as the contemporary interconnectedness of post-Fordist modern life. “For Spinoza,” he explains,

the *multitudo* indicates a *plurality which persists as such* in the public scene, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One, without evaporating within a centripetal form of motion. Multitude is the form of social and political existence for the many, seen as being many: a permanent form, not an episodic or interstitial form. For Spinoza, the *multitudo* is the architrave of civil liberties The concept of people, according to Hobbes, is strictly correlated to the existence of the State; furthermore, it is a reverberation, a reflection of the State: if there is a State, then there are people. In the absence of the State, there are no people. In the *De Cive*, in which the horror of the multitude is exposed far and wide, we read: “The *People* is somewhat that is *one*, having *one will*, and to whom one action may be attributed.” (21-22, emphasis Virno's)

Whitman's use of the term “multitude” contains within itself the reverberations of the Spinozian concept of a group of distinct (and perhaps even contradictory) individuals. The entirety of “Song of Myself” can be read as a poetic grappling with the unruly, the beautiful, and the radically multifarious multitudes, who stand “plumb in the uprights, well entreated, braced in the beams, / Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical” (Whitman 31).

As readers, we are repeatedly asked to perform a type of rhetorical assemblage, deciding how or why these disparate subjects are held together in common.

The poem demands that we contend with its insistent force and dynamism: the incessant “urge and urge and urge, / Always the procreant urge of the world” (Whitman 30). Belknap connects what he identifies as a force of intrusion and the specific demands the literary list places on a reader: its challenge to hold together disparate and “strange” parts. Drawing on the work of Chaucerian Stephen Barney, Belknap notes that “lists adjust and shift as subsequent units are added . . . unanticipated dynamics develop when such ‘strangers’ are held together . . . crafted compilations ‘potentially react with the narrative that encloses [them],’ operating as ‘intruders’ that interrupt but represent some relation to the greater work” (17). In the case of “Song of Myself,” of course, we are dealing less with the challenge of holding together an overarching narrative structure than the difficulty of maintaining the poem’s status as a unified semantic whole. Because Whitman’s lists increasingly introduce elements of referential unpredictability, they constantly threaten the cohesion of the text itself. By crowding his stanzas with more information than we might be comfortable receiving, Whitman thus puts pressure on our ability to organize and make sense.

The poem’s consistent grammatical oscillation between the singular and plural confuses the distinctions between the speaker and the others who make up Whitman’s landscape; as a result, we feel we are learning more about him even as he is giving us more information about them. “It is time I explain myself,” the speaker boldly announces, “let *us* stand up” (Whitman 71; emphasis added). And, as the poem progresses, so too does its level of expansion. “There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,” he declares,

If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces, were this moment reduced
back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span or
make it impatient,
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that. (73)

Here we see expansion along several conceptual axes; time, space, even depth all reach to infinity. The poem amasses vast quantities of detail as it moves along, and we get the sense that had we the patience to count all that it listed here, we might indeed exhaust our intellectual resources and discover that its reach is

“limitless.”

In much of this poem, it appears that this expansiveness is a joyous and exuberant response to that which is wondrous, multiple, and surprising in its vitality. There are also moments, however, that invoke this sense of multitude in relation to suffering, pain, and inexplicable loss. In *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy grapples with this second sense of unboundedness as it relates to the suffering of others—the perpetual violence that at any given moment is always multiple, and always taking place somewhere in the world. “It is an endless list,” he writes, “and everything happens in such a way that one is reduced to keeping accounts but never taking the final toll” (xiii). He calls this darker thing a “proliferation”:

[an] autistic multiplicity . . . that seems to have no other meaning than the indeterminate multiplication of centripetal meanings, meanings closed in on themselves and supersaturated with significance—that is, meanings that are no longer meaningful because they have come to refer only to their own closure, to their horizon of appropriation, and have begun to seek nothing but destruction, hatred, and the denial of existence. What if this autistic multiplicity, which tears open and is torn open, lets us know that we have not even begun to discover what it is to be many? . . . What if it lets us know that it is itself the first laying bare . . . of a world . . . with no meaning beyond this very Being of the world: singularly plural and plurally singular? (xiii-xiv)

Here Nancy attempts to account for those horrors that simultaneously overwhelm our abilities to make sense and demand that we understand them as important precisely *because* of their plurality: multiple wrongs committed against multiple lives. Calling this multiplicity “autistic” semantically yokes a sense of individual implication to what can often be seen as innumerable, distant, and affectively irretrievable others.

The oppression of so many Black lives is a mid-nineteenth century historical reality that is always running beneath the explicit joyousness of many of Whitman’s stanzas, working to temper his exuberance with a constant reminder that not all are free to “celebrate” and “sing” (Whitman 29). Throughout the poem, Whitman often contextualizes both individual and collective suffering in relation to enslavement. He tells of the “runaway slave [who] came to my house and stopt outside, / . . . I saw him limpsy and weak, / . . . / And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,” and insists that in his America, even the “heavy-lipp’d slave is invited” (36, 43). As he moves from an objective to a subjective perspective, however, Whitman (perhaps problematically) then *inhabits* the interiority of the enslaved person, claiming

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,
 Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,
 I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin,
 I fall on the weeds and stones,
 The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,
 Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with whip-stocks. (60)

Here the brash “I” of the poem strongly emerges, willing to not just acknowledge and then attempt to describe another’s suffering, but to actually appropriate that experience and claim it as his own. This is not just a playful subjectivity willing to roam far beyond the reaches of his own patch of grass; this is a speaker who harnesses the freedom to speak and uses it to speak for others who cannot claim such expressive mobility. Is this not, however, a type of epistemic colonization, ensuring that we remain even more ignorant to the experiential realities of enslaved Americans?

This accusation is, of course, a definite possibility, even if one argues that accessing experiential reality is not, in fact, the point or tenor of Whitman’s work. It is worth considering, however, whether the speaker’s perspectival drift is potentially complicating what can at first appear to be a straightforward act of appropriation. “*Through* me many long dumb voices,” he insists,

Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
 Voices of the diseas’d and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
 Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
 And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father-stuff,
 And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
 Of the deform’d, trivial, flat, foolish, despised, . . .

Through me forbidden voices,
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil’d and I remove the veil,
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur’d.
 I do not press my fingers across my mouth. (48; emphasis added)

Here we see Whitman positioning his speaker not as a witness offering testimony, but as a conduit through which we can somehow access those voices that have been silenced and lost: voices that help us hear those realities about which there is no dominant narrative other than exclusion. There is no risk here that we might mistake the voice of the speaker for the voices of countless oppressed others, since his loud, dominant personality never truly leaves this poem. Though the “I” claims to “be” the enslaved person, in other words, we

of course understand that he is anything but. He is free to roam and taste and make love to the world he inhabits, stopping only a while to ask that we somehow attend to the “interminable” list of others who do not possess such expressive luxury.

Whitman’s representational scope grows so large that it eventually encompasses even cosmic elements. In the following stanza, he begins from a very corporeal, personal place, and ends with nothing less than the sun itself:

The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz’d whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air
through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color’d sea-rocks, and
of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch’d words of my voice loos’d to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting
the sun.

Have you reckon’d a thousand acres much? have you reckon’d the earth much?
Have you practis’d so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?
Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left). . . (30)

Rather than collapsing all of these details into one giant undifferentiated mass, Whitman’s speaker maintains a level of individual distinction. Delight, he reminds us, can be found just as equally “alone or in the rush of the streets.” This constant flicker between the self and the many colors the entire poem, resulting in an elastic form that will tolerate endless processes of expansion and contraction.

This may explain why, throughout the text, Whitman often uses the word “single” within the phrase “not a single,” always tempering the idea of total isolation with its opposite. “Not a single,” of course, can refer to no one or nothing at all, or it can merely act as a negation, countering the notion of one with the notion of many. The labourers discussed above are walking “in single file . . . seasons pursuing each other,” individually distinguishable and yet part of a larger chain: a longer, endless line (41). Later, we encounter “the meal” that the speaker has “equally set: this the meat for natural hunger, / It is for the

wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments with all, / I will not have a single person slighted or left away” (43). Here “not a single” refers to the absence of any one person who is not invited to this grand, inclusive table. “Each who passes is consider’d,” he assures us, “each who stops is consider’d, not a single one can it fail” (70). When the speaker recounts the murder of 412 rangers at Goliad during the Texas Revolution in 1836, he uses a list to render these men infinitely strong and defiantly brave—rugged and masculine:

They were the glory of the race of rangers,
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age. (61)

With the final line Whitman reveals that these men were all in their twenties, urging us to now re-read their story with a tinge of lost potential and extinguished youth. Here, “not a single” stands in for a false hope that those who have suffered such violent deaths might have at least already lived long, fulfilling lives. Like the thousands of young soldiers who perished in huge numbers in America’s Civil War, however, these men stand in this stanza as a testament to the many brutal, singular sacrifices that are made in the name of the many.

In his book *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled*, Michael Cobb argues for a repositioning of the single person as a potentially revolutionary figure. Much of the history of philosophical and social thought, he reveals, has been rhetorically obsessed with the notion of the dyad, or couple, which has been preciously held above that of the individual. The single person, as a result, has been culturally marginalized as a sexual minority. “Individualism,” Cobb writes,

the value of aloneness, can barely be thought unless we strip away the pathologizing dynamics of coupledness that attach to the individual a bitter affect we might call loneliness. [. . .] Dialectics, encounters, face-offs, and conversations tend to be formally thought of as a relation between two (and rarely, especially now, one). True/false: we must wonder, even at the level of definition, why there are always two sides of every story. Why not three, or more? Or fewer? . . . Foundationally speaking, I think we tend to understand by way of a very conventional kind of interrelational dynamic, which can then make even the most progressive, ethically charged work deeply conservative along one structural axis: the intellectual world this work elaborates insists on theories that belong, in some fundamental ways, to the uninterrogated supremacy of the couple.¹³

Cobb advocates for what he calls “an aesthetics of distance,” whereby our attempts to avoid loneliness by obsessively crowding individuals together in a type of forced intimacy will be counterbalanced by a focus on the individual who is alone, but not necessarily lonely (30). Whitman’s constant fluctuation between the single and the many, therefore—his playful flitting between the self and a myriad of others that does not include a teleological focus on coupling as some necessary endpoint—can be imagined as an expression of someone “who may just want to relate to others outside the supreme logic of the couple, which has become the way one binds oneself to the social, otherwise known as the crowd” (Cobb 32).

In his configuration of his speaker as boldly “replenish’d with” his own “supreme power,” Whitman presents us with a single figure who is solitary, and yet anything but lonely (65). Despite his exuberant celebration of the world around him and the others within it, the speaker sings a song of himself. He does not, in the end, depend upon an other to justify or make whole his existence. What, then, are we to make of Whitman’s last line? “I stop somewhere,” the speaker says, “waiting for you” (79). Is this not an open invitation to the reader, suggesting that despite all of his confident solitary wanderings, Whitman’s “I,” in the end, feels incomplete without a reciprocal “you”? The rest of the stanza suggests that the opposite might in fact be true; that it may be us, and not the speaker, who desires an other. “If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles,” Whitman writes,

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.
Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you. (79)

It is the reader who is chasing Whitman’s elusive singer, not the other way around. We find ourselves left not just alone, but corporeally incomplete: in need of our blood “filter[ed] and fibre[d]” by his presence. The speaker seems to enjoy the company of others, but by no means requires it. “I am satisfied,” he assures us; “I see, dance, laugh, sing; / As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread” (6). He finds pleasure in both proximity and distance, engaging in an intimacy with others that always gives way to a spacing. He ponders “exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two,” giving each equation equal weight, wondering

“which is ahead?” (31). This is not the portrait of a figure pressed urgently into a swelling crowd, but rather an account of one who wanders effortlessly, interlaced with others just as much or as little he pleases.

Nancy too positions a fundamental spacing at the heart of what it means to co-exist with others. “From one singular to another,” he writes,

there is a contiguity but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. All of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation; moreover, it is the heterogeneity of surfaces that touch each other. Contact is beyond fullness and emptiness, beyond connection and disconnection. (47)

Here, we see togetherness imagined not as continuity, in the sense of there being “no interstices or breaks” between individuals, but rather as contiguity, as touching “loosely. Close proximity, but without contact” (*OED*). This notion of being-with-others has at its core a sense of closeness that does not collapse the one into the many: an intimacy and adjacency that allows for the maintenance of individualism and individual space.

There is one point in the poem, however, where Whitman’s speaker sounds crowded and drowned, desperate for more space. “My lovers suffocate me,” he reveals,

Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,
 Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at night,
 Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirping over my head,
 Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,
 Lighting on every moment of my life,
 Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses. (72)

Here the speaker is overwhelmed by the sheer number of those around him, using his lines to list verbs in the progressive present tense, lending to a feeling of constant motion and anxious unease. Others are too close, invading even the pores of his skin, assaulting him aurally, visually, and physically. The line between himself and others is rapidly dissolving here, and we get the sense that he wants desperately to redraw it. Despite this discomfort, however, these “busses” he receives—a word denoting harsh, smacking kisses and a potentially violent kind of contact—are rendered “balsamic” by the speaker: healing, healthful, and restorative. Instead of dissolving into the swelling crowd around him, he effectively transforms the experience into something pleasurable and light. By granting his “I” this representational power, Whitman ensures that

even when threatened, the sanctity of the individual is never truly at risk in his poem.

According to Nancy, it is a focus on the spacing between humans, a distancing that protects us against a total collapse into a single indistinguishable mass, that must be recognized. When we focus only on a politics of similarity or togetherness, an adherence to a particular group or loyalty to a particular ideological perspective, we risk closing that important gap. “What becomes of being-with,” he asks,

when the *with* no longer appears as com-position, but only as dis-position? . . . The question has to be posed as to whether being-together can do without a figure and, as a result, without an identification, if the whole of its “substance” consists only in its spacing . . . when thinking moves too quickly, when it is fearful and reactionary, it declares that the most commonly recognized forms of identification are indispensable and claim that the destinies proper to them are used up or perverted, whether it be: “people,” “nation,” “church,” or “culture,” not to mention the confused “ethnicity” or the torturous “roots.” There is a whole panorama of membership and property, here. . . . It is the history of the representation-of-self as the determining element of an originary concept of society. (47, emphasis Nancy’s)

Nancy’s suspicion about a type of belonging that requires a membership to a particular group is founded upon resistance to particular historical and political incarnations of totalitarianism. Indeed much of his book is indebted to a discussion of very specific social and political concerns, which he argues are fundamentally related to ontology. He believes that the notion of the ontological

does not occur at a level reserved for principles, a level that is withdrawn, speculative, and altogether abstract. Its name means the thinking of existence. And today, the situation of ontology signifies the following: to think existence at the height of this challenge to thinking that is globalness as such (which is designated as “capital,” “(de-) Westernization,” “technology,” “rupture of history,” and so forth. (46)

It is necessary, therefore, to understand the notion of “being singular plural” as grounded in and manifested by our real, lived, socio-political circumstances.

Whitman displays an awareness of and attention to these circumstances, as evidenced by his catalogues that not only build a very real and tactile world before our eyes, but also work to constitute what we might call a social “crowd.” Consider the following stanza, for example, in which uses a list initially anchored by an anaphoric “I hear” to help build a soundscape that swells and pulses with both life and death:

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames, clack of sticks cooking
 my meals,
 I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,
 I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,
 Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night,
 Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh of work-people at their meals,
 The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the sick,
 The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing a death-sentence,
 The heave'e'yo of stevedores unloading ships by the wharves, the refrain of the
 anchor-lifters,
 The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-streaking engines and hose-carts
 with premonitory tinkles and color'd lights,
 The steam whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching cars,
 The slow march play'd at the head of the association marching two and two,
 (They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with black muslin.) (51)

As this list moves forward, Whitman drops his “I hear” in favour of the more objective “the” to begin the line, thereby widening the scene to suggest a more expansive scope. This simultaneity of events works to populate Whitman’s world with a veritable symphony of human (and, at the outset, nonhuman) activity. When the music finally falls silent at the end of this section, Whitman’s speaker categorizes the cacophonous din as essential to what we might call “Being”—what he terms, rather mysteriously, the great “puzzle of puzzles” (52). Seemingly heeding Nancy’s call to resist homogenizing a world that is full of heterogeneity, Whitman leaves us having to grapple with this “grand opera,” filled with so many varied and distinct registers. (51)

As Umberto Eco explains in *The Infinity of Lists*, lists have always been closely tied to classical rhetoric and the achievement of specific ideological aims. “Since antiquity,” he argues, “rhetoric has encompassed rhythmically enunciated and enunciable lists, in which it was less important to hint at inexhaustible quantities than to attribute properties to things in a redundant manner, often for pure love of iteration.”¹⁴ Eco would likely classify many of the lists in “Song of Myself” as forms of “*accumulations*, or, in other words, the sequence and juxtaposition of linguistic terms belonging to the same conceptual sphere,” despite the fact that Whitman’s “sphere” is consistently expanding and contracting, making it difficult to delimit (Eco 133, emphasis Eco’s). This constant change in scope, however, renders the task of classifying the poem’s lists quite challenging. Eco identifies some sub-categories of accumulations, but Whitman’s catalogues seem to frustrate them; slipping between and oscillating amongst these types:

Slightly different forms are the *incrementum* or *climax* or *gradatio*. Even though they still refer to the same conceptual field, at every step they say something more or with greater intensity (the converse procedure is *decrementum* or *anticlimax*). An example of this can be found in another oration against Catiline: ‘You can do nothing, plot nothing, imagine nothing, that not only will I understand it, but even if I do not see it, I will penetrate it in depth, I will sense it.’ (136-137, emphasis Eco’s)

The narrative of gradation Eco identifies does not conform to Whitman’s catalogues, which in one moment will appear to swell and enlarge themselves, only to shrink and decrease the next, rendering determinations of scale and importance very difficult to satisfy. This technique allows for an interesting kind of equanimity between members, however, and it is ultimately why Whitman is able to convince us that

. . . a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d’oeuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress’d head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels. (53-54)

The rhetorical move Whitman’s catalogues successfully make, then, is to allow the very small and the very large, the infinitesimal and infinite, to not only coexist, but to be coextensive with one another. The tree toad isn’t just *as important as* a chef-d’oeuvre, it literally holds that “highest” position, thereby enacting the radical malleability between classes and things and persons for which the American democratic ideal can only optimistically reach.

The Declaration of Independence, a document that begins with a long list of abuses committed by King George III against his American colonies, promises to not just separate one group of people from another, but to dissolve the singular into the plural and “unanimously” unite the desires and values of the “thirteen States of America.”¹⁵ This document marks these “Free and Independent States” as “assembled,” and each agrees, in unison, to “mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” A short eleven years later, the United States Constitution would solidify this plurality: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States

of America.”¹⁶ These documents valorize the plural in a rhetorical attempt to suture a sense of national unity to the very nascent beginnings of the America Whitman will later poetically represent. But for all of this historical focus on maintaining the ideals of individual freedom and independence in the face of this unification, there are many in America for whom these founding documents still refuse to speak. Whitman’s representational commitment to constantly move between the general and the particular, then—to dramatically oscillate between the one and the many—enacts a refusal to participate wholly in the homogenizing ideal that these documents attempt to manifest.

As Nancy emphasizes, the problem of how to articulate communal bonds without erasing individual identity has long troubled philosophers and political theorists alike. “The philosophical politics and political philosophy,” he writes,

regularly run aground on the essence of community or community as origin. Rousseau and Marx are exemplary in their struggle with these obstacles. Rousseau revealed the aporia of a community that would have to precede itself in order to constitute itself: in its very concept, the “social contract” is the denial or foreclosure of the originary division [*déliaison*] between those singularities that would have to agree to the contract and, thereby, “draw it to a close.” Although assuredly more radical in his demand for the dissolution of politics in all spheres of existence (which is the “realization of philosophy”), Marx ignores that the separation between singularities overcome and suppressed in this way is not, in fact, an accidental separation imposed by “political” authority, but rather the constitutive separation of dis-position. However powerful it is for thinking the “real relation” and what we call the “individual,” “communism” was still not able to think being-in-common as distinct from community. (24)

It is in its refusal to land squarely on either side of the community/individual divide that “Song of Myself” marks itself as a peculiarly radical poetic offering. Whitman populates his world with groupings that enact Nancy’s “being-in-common” simply by retaining and celebrating the power of singularity amidst the unapologetic pull of the poem’s crowded, vibrant masses. “(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither),” Whitman’s speaker whispers, surrounding his voice in parentheses like the “callous shell” of the “quahaug,” enacting the liberation that constitutes and sustains this most singular, this most plural of texts (52).

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NOTES

- 1 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1891–1892), 29–79. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 2 Quoted in Edwin Haviland Miller, *Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself": A Mosaic of Interpretations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 141.
- 3 Lawrence Buell, "Transcendentalist Catalogue Rhetoric: Vision Versus Form," *American Literature* 40 (November 1968), 325–339.
- 4 Robert E. Belknap, *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- 5 Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 6 Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, from *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1790*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 35–42.
- 7 See for example Ed Folsom's discussion of Whitman's problematic stance on the enfranchisement of Black Americans after the Civil War in "Erasing Race: The Lost Black Presence in Whitman's Manuscripts," in Ivy Wilson, ed., *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray Poet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 3–31.
- 8 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Shorter 9th Edition. Vol. 1: Beginnings to 1865*, ed. Robert S. Levine et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 596–613.
- 9 Gunter Leypoldt, "Democracy's 'Lawless Music': The Whitmanian Moment in the U.S. Construction of Representative Literariness," *New Literary History* 38 (Spring 2007), 333–352.
- 10 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 183.
- 11 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77. (Emphasis is Derrida's.)
- 12 For more on Heidegger's connection to National Socialism, see Victor Fairas, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1991), and Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
- 13 Michael Cobb, *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 15, 24–26.
- 14 Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists: An Illustrated Essay* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009).
- 15 "The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 10, 2014.
- 16 "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed November 10, 2014.

REVIEWS



MARK DOTY. *What Is the Grass: Walt Whitman in My Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020. 278 pp.

In *What Is the Grass: Walt Whitman in My Life*, Mark Doty explores his passionate engagement with the life, work, and ideas of the poet Doty regards as the most important influence on his own development. This is a familiar role for Whitman and one he has played for countless writers. However, the way Doty talks back to Whitman is distinctive in a number of ways: While many poets have cited Whitman as central to their creative growth, far fewer have claimed such a deeply personal influence as does Doty. Fewer still have described their personal and literary influences so as to be nearly indistinguishable. As a book-length biographical study, his book calls to mind another about Whitman written by a poet, Paul Zweig's influential *Walt Whitman: The Making of a Poet*, but with an important distinction: while Zweig's book is about how Whitman created himself, Doty's book is about how Whitman created Doty. What makes this unusual is that for Doty his mentor's poetry is rivaled or exceeded in importance by his influence's biography. Part diary of the spirit, part sexual bildungsroman, part critical reflection, as much as any book on Whitman I can recall, Doty's *What Is the Grass* takes to heart Whitman's famous claim, "whoever touches this book touches a man."

As a book-length study by a major American poet, Doty's book also calls to mind C. K. Williams' 2010 volume, *On Whitman*. Doty, like Williams, is fascinated by the erotic, bodily aspects of Whitman's poetry, but where Williams focuses on the musical qualities of Whitman's language, Doty is more interested in his personal and literary representation. Williams hears Whitman better than does Doty, and his attention to the music of Whitman's poetry is more revealing; however, Doty sees Whitman—sees him as a human being emerging from history—with far greater intensity of imagination and feeling. This personal retelling of Whitman's biography (Doty does not claim to offer fresh discoveries) is threaded through with autobiography, and the threads merge in ways that vary between the fascinating, the personally revelatory, and the salacious, such as Doty's account of his affair with his own stepson (79-80). As a guide to

Whitman's life, Zweig is far superior, and as an analyzer of the poetry, I prefer Williams, but I find Doty's prose to be more achingly alive than either of theirs, and I suspect this book will also find a wider public audience. For while it is flawed, it is seldom tedious. Ultimately, this book has perhaps less in common with either Zweig's or Williams's books than it does with Gary Schmidgall's odd, sexually focused, and equally candid study, *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life* (1997). Both Schmidgall and Doty combine and at times even conflate literary biography with erotic memoir, but where Schmidgall mainly limits and contains his personal narratives to a single chapter, Doty continually weaves between the two modes. Another difference is that, while Schmidgall's prose is engaging and clear, Doty is a poet with a gorgeous prose style that can sustain chapters on its own merit.

One of Doty's poetic gifts is his capability for recording intoxicatingly precise observations. He has a good ear, but his eyes are better. At times in his poetry, I find Doty's descriptive capabilities to be undercut by a lack of drive, resulting in passages that are vivid but which cohere around predictable turns and trajectories. I find this to be less the case in Doty's prose, which strikes me as more formally experimental than his poetry. His prose is surprising in other ways as well. For a book labeled a biography, *What Is the Grass* is shockingly personal, nearly as much so as his heartbreaking memoir, *Heaven's Coast*. It is also structurally unconventional due to its fragmented form, constructed mainly of short sections that often only loosely pull together. Its generic nature too is unusual. Besides Schmidgall's, not many works combine personal narratives of sexual adventure and discovery with literary close reading and informal academic biography. *What Is the Grass* is almost as intensely personal as *Heaven's Coast*, and this too is unusual for a work that purports to mainly be about another author. On the dust jacket it is categorized as biography, but Doty is that rare poet whose prose is often more intimate than his poems.

Doty's eye for Whitman is both historical and literal. One of my favorite sections focuses on how Doty sees the famous photograph of Whitman known to scholars as his "Christ likeness." The phrase originates with Whitman's friend, Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, who used it to describe this quarter-plate daguerreotype and saw signs in it of Whitman's illumination, the "moment this carpenter too became seer . . . and he saw and knew the Spirit of God." Doty's interpretation is also infused with Christ-like spiritual elevation:

This face looks far beyond the minutes in which the picture was taken; it arrives in the present from a considerable distance. Its power to hold our attention rests in the eyes, which are clear and magnetic and look through us to something beyond the viewer. As I look from the

eyes to the slight smile and then back to the eyes again, it seems the distance between the face and the world is lit up by love. It's a look that pours out compassion, and if it betrays a certain weariness or impatience, that quality is softened by tenderness. (35)

This memorable and compelling description instantly impacted how I look at this image. However, Doty's interpretation, like Bucke's, is belied by what we actually know about the portrait. Here is Whitman's account, as told to Horace Traubel: "I was sauntering along the street: the day was hot. . . . A friend of mine . . . stood at the door of his place looking at the passers-by. He cried out to me at once: 'Old man!—old man!—come here: come right up stairs with me this minute' . . . 'Do come: come: I'm dying for something to do.' This picture was the result." Doty cites and surely used the same source most of us use for Whitman's portraits: the online *Walt Whitman Archive* gallery of photographs, where he would have found the quote just cited. Yet I find Doty's omission here to be not particularly troubling. His tone makes clear he is aware that many of his best passages romanticize and distort from what we know by historical records alone. Thoroughgoing historical fidelity is not Doty's goal.

As with Ginsberg, Doty's engagement with Whitman is literary, mystical, and definitively sexual, and some of Doty's accounts of Whitman's erotic inspiration make Ginsberg look restrained by comparison. In the book's sixth chapter, "The Unwriteable," Doty begins by describing his experiences at an invite-only private orgy where all the attendants wear masks. The image of masked men recalls for Doty the masks he once wore constantly in his private life, leading him to describe "the complex web of guilt and shame and misplaced loyalties that held [him]" to his unhappy marriage (84), the false poses he maintained with his ex-wife, and the affair that led to its unraveling. This recalls other affairs Doty has had, which he records with considerably more zest than his relations with his wife, until Doty is reminded of the death of one of his lovers, which lends a sobering quality to his ruminations, until he returns to the thought of the masked ball he once frequented, where he remembers having "taken on a volunteer-job, for one evening, in the clothes-check room, just for the sheer pleasure of helping the desiring, beautiful men out of their street identities and into their nakedness and then into their masks . . . to set the men at ease, to usher them into the deeper hours of the night" (87). The point is that Doty has in essence become Whitman—not through a literary influence so much as through erotic, personal inspiration.

For poets like Whitman, Ginsberg, and Doty, a complete embrace of life's erotic possibilities brings their intimate lives in touch with the mystical. As Doty correctly notes, Whitman "left no account" of the kind of unexplainable and

transcendent experiences upon which Doty's own writing depends, but as with his interpretation of "the Christ likeness" Doty is not disturbed by a lack of documented evidence. This is unsurprising, given that he himself has experienced events that he cannot explain through worldly knowledge and reason. Doty's erotic intimations of the mystical sometimes help him tie together passages that would otherwise seem incoherent. The most important and effective of these connections is the one Doty threads between his interpretation of the "the Christ likeness" and a liaison he describes between himself and a friend in New York City. After some sexual play in his friend's Upper West Side apartment, Doty describes an experience akin to Ginsberg's famous mystical encounter with Blake:

I would be hard pressed to describe any transition between what I saw first, which was my friend's grey-bearded, strongly sculptured face, and what, after a moment, replaced it. It wasn't Frank who looked at me then, but another man with short gray hair and beard, the same half-smile, but with the visionary dazzle of starlight in his eyes. I was, quite calmly, looking into the face of the Walt Whitman of 1856 [sic], the year of the Brooklyn daguerreotype, the picture in which he seems to be slowly and with a great inner radiance returning to earth from wherever it is he's been. (173-174)

Ignoring Doty's mistaken dating of this image, which Whitman established was created in the summer of 1854, this striking description aligns Doty with a tradition of American poets, including Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, and Alice Notley, who were similarly inspired by a spiritual encounter with a literary ancestor reborn. It's a description that has lingered in my mind.

Doty's mistaken dating in this passage, however, is not his only factual misstep. Describing Whitman's self-promotion, he claims Whitman "splashed a private letter from Emerson . . . on the back cover of the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*" (190). In reality, he excerpted a single brief sentence and had it placed on the book's spine. Doty notes that in 1856 Whitman "had the barest handful of readers," when he was actually well known as a journalist and had a substantial, influential following among New York City's early bohemians (252). Doty claims "there are a troop of Whitman biographers and scholars . . . who will tell you Whitman was not queer" (177). That might have been true several decades ago, but today that claim rings false. None of Whitman's recent biographers deny that Whitman was queer, and in over twenty years of studying Whitman, attending countless conferences and symposiums, I have never encountered an individual who denied Whitman was attracted to men. Doty also imagines many events we have no evidence for, such as a conversation between Whitman

and Fanny Fern about his reviews, and he fails to cite the scholars he depends upon for many of his readings. His interpretation of the “boss tooth” passage in “The Sleepers,” for example, seems to have been lifted from *Collage of Myself: Walt Whitman and the Making of Leaves*.

What Is the Grass: Walt Whitman in My Life arrives at a time when Whitman’s reputation is again being reevaluated. While Whitman’s racist statements related to African Americans and racial integration in Reconstruction-era America have been known and discussed for decades, recently they have been given renewed life by readers encountering them for the first time. Such attention to Whitman is warranted both by the statements themselves and our country’s current moment of racial unrest. Doty’s book offers a valuable counterpoint to these reassessments, emphasizing a more positive aspect to Whitman’s legacy. For as limited as Whitman’s imagination was with respect to the historical reality of the multicultural integration celebrated in his poems, the poet has also played a crucial role in the liberation and affirmation of the lives of countless gay men like Doty. Doty touches on Whitman’s racial failings only briefly, but his powerful testimony to the way Whitman inspired him to discover and realize his truest self reminds us that our tallies of Whitman’s influence must account not only for how he failed in terms of race but for what he achieved in terms of sexual empowerment.

This book reads like a collection of fragments that only sometimes cohere, but in a sense this quality strengthens its connection to Whitman’s writing, which also proceeds by way of fragments and finds form via leaps and digressions. Where the formal mode of *Leaves of Grass*, especially the first edition, foregrounds this art of disjunction and confronts the reader with its refusal of coherence, Doty’s approach smooths things over at the edges and suggests a desire for coherence that is sometimes lacking. In *What Is the Grass* I do not feel that the pieces are held in hands as sturdy as Whitman’s. Doty, however, does have an elegant touch.

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MATT MILLER

NOTES



A NEWLY DISCOVERED 1849 WHITMAN LETTER TO THE “MESSRS. MERRIAM”

AN IMPORTANT 1849 LETTER written by Whitman to “Messrs. Merriam” has recently been found. “Messrs. Merriam” are George and Charles Merriam, the brothers who formed G. & C. Merriam Company, which in 1843 gained the rights to publish Noah Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. The letter turned up several years ago in the collection of Merriam Company papers owned by Madeline Kripke. Ms. Kripke, well-known as the “dame of dictionaries” (and founding member and Fellow of the Dictionary Society of North America), amassed one of the world’s largest collections of historical dictionaries and dictionary-related materials, all housed in her Greenwich Village walkup, which contained over 20,000 books and countless boxes of documents. She worked with me on this note for several years before her death from COVID-19 in April of this year.¹ She originally contacted me in 2013 about the existence of this letter, and, with her typical caution, moved slowly and carefully toward its publication.

Madeline Kripke received a cold call fifteen years or so ago offering her a large archive of old Merriam papers, which she agreed to purchase over a period of several years. Correspondence from well-known nineteenth-century celebrities associated with the dictionary had been weeded out of the archive decades before by the heirs. The reason this letter from Whitman slipped through, Kripke believed, was his lack of fame in 1849. This appeared to the heirs to be just another letter from another newspaper man. When Kripke was combing through the massive archive, she suddenly saw on one docket page the notation “Brooklyn Freeman April 17 / ’49.” She knew that Whitman had edited that paper around that time, and she recalled her fear and excitement as she began to open the stampless cover. “My wonder was profound,” she told me, “even *before* I saw that it really *was* from Walter Whitman. I was in fact trembling as I opened the letter slowly and carefully.”

This letter joins the very few extant Whitman letters from before 1855. Until this Merriam letter was found, there had been only twenty-one known

letters from Whitman prior to the publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*: nine letters written to Whitman's friend Abraham Paul Leech in 1840 and 1841; one letter to an unidentified correspondent in 1841; two letters from 1842 (both to editor Nathan Hale, Jr.); four letters in 1848 written by Whitman and his brother Jeff to their mother (when Walt and Jeff were in New Orleans); one in 1849 (to politician Tunis G. Bergen); and four letters in the early 1850s before *Leaves of Grass* was published.

The letter to the Merriam brothers is particularly significant because it records the inception of Whitman's lifelong relationship with G. & C. Merriam Company, during which he sent them new editions of *Leaves of Grass* and asked for the latest edition of Webster's Dictionary in return. And it documents just how early Whitman's lifelong love of and fascination with dictionaries began. The letter records Whitman's complaint to the Webster brothers that, although he had already published in the *Freeman* a long notice he had written himself about a new revised edition of Webster's published in 1847, he had not yet received his complimentary specially bound copy of the *Dictionary* in return. This tit-for-tat advertising strategy was a staple of the Merriam Company's promotions. Whitman lets the Merriams know he had inquired at the publisher and book agent Mark H. Newman's shop on Broadway in New York, which he had designated as the place for the Merriams to send the copy of their new Webster's.

Here is a transcription of the letter:

"Freeman" office
Brooklyn, L.I., April 17

Messrs. Merriam,

I have published one long notice, (written by myself,) and the two short notices sent me from you—as you have doubtless seen by the papers I send you.—All have been printed in the editorial columns.—

But I have not yet received my copy of the Dictionary.—I have called several times at Mr. Newman's, but they have either not had any copy in Russia binding, or were averse to giving me one.—If convenient, upon the receipt of this, I wish you would envelope a Dictionary and put on it my address (as below) and send it to Newman's—labelled "to be called for."—Let it be Russia bound—black, or some other dark color.—I shall publish the notices received the other day—and from time to time, what others you send.—

I still have the note you wrote me, embodying an order on Mr. Newman for a Dictionary—which order I will give him, when my copy arrives.—

Walter Whitman
Publisher "Freeman"
106 Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn L.I.

The smudged, hard-to-read Merriam disposition note in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the letter reads:

sent an
order
Newman &
asked him to
return order
on Newman[?]

The letter was accompanied in the archive by a docket page on which there is light pencil writing in the hand of Douglas Rowley, the grandson of Homer Merriam, who joined the Merriam brothers as a partner of the company in 1856. The first word in that note is “news.” Then “Brooklyn” and “Freeman news.” Above that is “Brooklyn Freeman April 17 / ’49.”

Whitman began editing the Brooklyn *Freeman* after he returned from New Orleans in June of 1848, following his three-month stint on the *Crescent*. He attended the Free Soil convention in Buffalo in August, then continued his political activities as a member of the Free Soil General Committee for Brooklyn and became editor of *Freeman*, the new Free Soil newspaper, which published its first issue on September 9, 1848. That issue, the only one that survives, reveals Whitman passionately stating the paper’s reason for existing: affirming that “our doctrine is the doctrine laid down in the Buffalo Convention,” he goes on to vow that “we shall oppose, under all circumstances, the addition to the Union, in the future, of a single inch of *slave land*, whether in the form of state or territory.” The next day, a fire destroyed twenty acres of Brooklyn, including the newspaper’s office. (A couple of days later, another fire threatened the Whitman family residence on Myrtle Street but was put under control just in time.) The *Freeman* office was uninsured, but Whitman nonetheless managed to get the paper back into print on November 1, just in time to get in a word before the election, positioning the Free Soilers against the larger conservative faction of Democrats as the conscience of the party. Free Soilers lost the 1848 presidential election and lost again in spring elections of 1849, but Whitman continued to publish the *Freeman* and turned it into a daily in May 1849. He supported the election of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, but, eventually losing his optimism, he resigned the editorship on September 11, 1849.²

Since there are no extant copies of the *Freeman* after the first issue, it is not possible to find the puffs that Whitman published in the paper endorsing the Merriams’ Webster’s Dictionary. We can see a good example, however, in *The*

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, and *Kings County Democrat* of October 18, 1845, just a few months before Whitman became editor of that paper:

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY.—George and Charles Merriam, of Springfield, Mass., have published an edition of Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, in two volumes octavo—being the first in that shape. It contains the whole vocabulary of the quarto, with corrections, improvements, and several thousand additional words, and an explanation of the principles on which language is founded. The claims of this book are so well known and so generally acknowledged, not only in this country but in England, that it would be a work of supererogation to speak of them at length. It engrossed the author's time and talents during the best part of his life, and is not only an authoritative standard, but likewise a monument of patience and perseverance. In it the words are traced to their *sources*, and numerous quotations made from the best writers to assist in determining their meaning. Mark H. Newman, Broadway, N.Y. is the agent.³

These kinds of endorsements were important to G. & C. Merriam, since they were in the midst of the “dictionary war” with Joseph Emerson Worcester's dictionary for most of the nineteenth century; both companies worked vigorously to position their dictionaries as the “standard” for use in schools, homes, and businesses. This particular puff identifies Mark H. Newman as the Merriams' New York agent, making it clear why Newman appears so prominently in Whitman's letter. In addition to selling books, Newman was also a publisher of school textbooks, with offices at 199 Broadway.³

The 1847 revised edition of Webster's that Whitman presumably did eventually procure from the Merriam brothers (with its fine, dark Russia leather binding) became his preferred dictionary when he was writing the poems for the first three editions of *Leaves of Grass*. He kept tabs on the dictionary war, owning at various times both Webster's and Worcester's dictionaries and marveling at how quickly the American English language was growing as each new edition contained thousands of new words.⁴ Right to the end of his life, Whitman was thinking about the growing proliferation of American dictionaries (the six-volume *Century Dictionary* was being published in New York from 1889 to 1891), their growing lists of words, and what they signaled for the English language as it developed, altered, and expanded in America; he told his disciple Horace Traubel in 1889:

English anyhow is a composite tongue—is made up of world-contributions—the Century dictionary having 200,000 words. In this last hour or so in which we three have been talking together, I suppose 9 out of every 10 of the words we used are derived—and this applies especially with respect to America, for America may well be—must be—in her language what she is in her physiological composition—a complex of agencies from all quarters of the globe—a mosaic—the most remarkable natural combination of time.⁵

The beginnings of Whitman's lifelong journey with dictionaries, then, can now be further documented with this 1849 letter to the brothers Merriam.

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MADALINE KRIPKE
ED FOLSOM

NOTES

1 See Sam Roberts, "Madeline Kripke, Doyenne of Dictionaries, Is Dead at 76," *New York Times* (April 30, 2020).

2 See Jon Panish, "Brooklyn Freeman," in J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings, eds., *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1998), 82-83; and Joseph Jay Rubin, *The Historic Whitman* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973), Chapter 14: "Abdiel."

3 For a selection of Newman's school texts, see openlibrary.org/publishers/Mark_H._Newman_&_Co.

4 For a full discussion of Whitman's take on the dictionary war, on dictionaries in general, on his attempts to write his own dictionary, and on the significance of dictionaries in his work, see Ed Folsom, *Walt Whitman's Native Representations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 1: "Whitman and Dictionaries."

5 See Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (various dates), 6:165. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.

*But on
the
note
in Newman*

"Freeman" office

Brooklyn, L. I., April 17

Messrs. Merriam,

I have published
one long notice, (written by
myself,) and the two short
notices sent me from you -
as you have doubtless seen
by the papers I sent you -
All have been printed in
the editorial columns. -

But I have not yet
received my copy of the Dic:
tionary. - I have called several
times at Mr. Newman's, but
they have either not had
any copy in Russia binding,
or were averse to giving me

one - If convenient, upon the receipt of this, I wish you would envelope a Dictionary, and put on it my address (as below), and send it to Newman's - labelled "to be called for." - Let it be Russia bound - black, or some other dark color - I shall publish the notices received the other day - and from time to time, what others you send -

I still have the note you wrote me, embodying an order on Mr. Newman for a Dictionary - which order I will give him, when my copy arrives -

Walter Whitman
 Publisher "Freeman"
 106 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn L. I.

Whitman Freeman
A 11/17/49
news
Brooklyn
Freeman news

G. & C. Merriam docket page for the Whitman letter.

WALT WHITMAN: A CURRENT BIBLIOGRAPHY



Beckman, Siduri; Soledad Alfaro-Allah, David Jones, Wes Matthews, Mia Concepcion, and Cydney Brown. *Storm: From Whitman's Election Day to Ours*. Philadelphia: Vote That Jawn, 2020, votethatjawn.com/post/storm-from-whitman-s-election-day-to-ours. [Poems written in response to Whitman's "Election Day, 1884": Siduri Beckman, "A Dinner with Walt" (1-7); Soledad Alfaro-Allah, "Gargoyles, Angels, and Headstones" (8-10), David Jones, "Definitions of Elect" (11-12); Wes Matthews, "Election Day, 2020" (13-14); Mia Concepcion, "Vote for You" (15-17); Cydney Brown, "Choosing Day" (18-20).]

Folsom, Ed. "Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Summer 2020), 64-70.

Geter, Damien. "Cantata for a More Hopeful Tomorrow." DG Music, Sans Fear Publishing, 2020. [Five-movement work for choir and cello based on J.S. Bach's cantata BWV 12 (*Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*); the final movement is a setting of Whitman's "Continuities"; commissioned by The Washington Chorus and featured in a film (*Cantata for a More Hopeful Tomorrow*) directed by Bob Berg.]

Glasgow, Matty Layne. Review of Mark Doty, *What Is the Grass*. *Quarterly West* no. 100 (2020), quarterlywest.com.

Green, Jesse. "Now Be Witness Again" [Online title: "Walt Whitman, Poet of a Contradictory America"]. *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* (September 20, 2020), 70-79. [Wide-ranging article thinking back on Whitman in the Civil War and comparing that crisis to the pandemic crisis of 2020; views Whitman as one of America's "heroic forebears . . . a touchstone for hippiedom, women's lib, self-actualization, environmentalism, bootstrap pride and Brooklyn beard culture," but notes that "it is only as an icon of queerness that Whitman's legacy is sometimes denied, as if gay people, rooting through the crypts of time, had dug up the wrong body"; focuses on Whitman's love relationships with young men, before and during the Civil War; suggests that "perhaps he wasn't boasting but complaining . . . when he said he contained multitudes; sometimes he seems like a medium through whom too many different spirits are trying to speak," but the fact "that he cannot be pinned down is part of what keeps him vivid 201 years after his birth, like a restless ghost with more work to do on earth": "We know him."]

Herrmann, Bernard. "Whitman." Franklin, TN: Naxos, 2020. [CD: reconstruction of a 1944 radio drama (written by Norman Corwin) that featured a live performance of Herrmann's musical score for texts from *Leaves of Grass*; reconstruction performed by PostClassical Ensemble, conducted by Angel Gil-Ordóñez.]

- Johnson, T. R. “What Happened to Walt Whitman in New Orleans?” *Tulane School of Liberal Arts Magazine* 2 (Spring/Summer 2020), 26. [Brief note summarizing what we do and do not know about Whitman’s three-month sojourn in New Orleans in 1848.]
- Martin, Philip. “Critical Mass: Our ‘rude American tongue.’” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (January 19, 2020). [Offers an overview of Whitman as “part huckster and con man,” but recognizes that “it’s hard to imagine American culture without Whitman,” whose “barbaric yawp” is “our legacy.”]
- Montalbano, Tom. *An Early History of Woodbury, Long Island, New York*. Syosset, NY: self-published, 2020. [One section, “The ‘Good Gray Poet’ Comes to Woodbury” (35-41), chronicles what is known of Whitman’s time in Woodbury as a schoolmaster in either 1838-39 or 1840, when he recorded his reactions to the place in a series of letters to Abraham Leech; later sections discuss what happened to the “Walt Whitman Schoolhouse” in later years, including when it was moved to a farm and became the “Whitman Schoolhouse Book Shop” for a few years in the late 1920s before being moved again to the estate of a Whitman collector, where it still stands.]
- Naughton, John. “We need a new Walt Whitman to imagine a virtual public space.” *Guardian* (October 17, 2020), theguardian.com. [Discusses the new concept of creating “online parks” in order to “mend a broken internet” and reflects on Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn, which serves as a real-world model for the proposed online park; goes on to recall Whitman’s 1846 envisioning of and support for the creation of Fort Greene Park “to serve that democratic purpose.”]
- Perry, Seamus. “‘America is a poem in our eyes’: Walt Whitman, universal poet.” *TLS* (September 4, 2020), 4-5. [Review of Mark Doty, *What Is the Grass*.]
- Rosenbaum, Lew. “I, Like You, Am Made of Stars: Matt Sedillo’s *Mowing Leaves of Grass*.” *Counterpunch* (September 11, 2020), counterpunch.org. [Review of Matt Sedillo, *Mowing Leaves of Grass*, emphasizing how the book “demand[s] that the reader come to terms with Walt Whitman,” challenging the reader to “cut Whitman down to size, perhaps.”]
- Routhier, Jessica Skwire. “Fellow Journeyers Walt Whitman and Jesse Talbot: Painting, Poetry, and Puffery in 1850s New York.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Summer 2020), 1-37. [Offers extensive new biographical information on the painter Jesse Talbot (1805-1879) and “trace[s] Talbot’s professional development in tandem with Whitman’s, exploring how both artists, in different media, used related imagery and punning motifs, as well as the theme of pilgrimage, to articulate and promote a shared vision for American arts and culture” and “draws on new primary evidence about Talbot and Whitman’s promotion of him to demonstrate how Whitman’s critical response to Talbot’s work shaped both men’s careers—for better and for worse.”]
- Schmidt, Nathan. “‘A Hastily Corrected Slip’: Literary and Democratic Collectivity in a New Whitman Artifact.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Summer 2020), 38-63. [Offers an extended bibliographical and critical analysis of a “cobbled together document” that Whitman constructed (now housed at Indiana University’s Lilly Library),

consisting of a heavily corrected 1879 newspaper interview of Whitman in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, with Whitman's new handwritten introduction (on the back of a letter from his tailor); argues that the document, which Whitman sent to the journalist Robert Underwood Johnson, allows for an exploration of "the complicated interaction of Whitman's personal notoriety and his ostensible democratic egalitarianism, along with providing a useful snapshot of his relationship to the press in the late 1870s."]

Schoolman, Morton. *A Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image, Aesthetic Education, Possible Politics* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2020). [Part 1, "The Reconciliation Image in Whitman," consisting of two chapters ("Democratic Vistas: Democratic Enlightenment and Reconciliation" [47-78] and "Whitman's Discovery: Aesthetic Education through the Visual Image" [79-118]), builds the foundation for the central idea of the book: how "a radically new type of enlightenment is emerging in our own dark democratic and most unlikely of political times, . . . proceeding by way of an aesthetic education that in its earlier stages had relied on the 'reconciliation image,' . . . which had appeared in traditional art forms to teach an ideal of reconciliation ending identity's violence toward difference," an ideal emerging from "a genealogical history of visual images of reconciliation, from a past that is prologue to the reconciliation image in film, which envisions a possible politics of reconciliation transforming identity's relation to difference"; traces the development of "a political discourse of reconciliation through the thought of Whitman, [Theodor] Adorno, and the media of film"; argues that "in *Leaves of Grass* Whitman often represents himself as just such an image of democratic becoming to perfectly illustrate how his reconciliation image performs the work of aesthetic education" as "his verse models reconciliation as an aesthetic ideal and its relation between identity and difference as an aesthetic relation," allowing him to "hold the diversity of differences to be infinite" and cultivating "in each of us a democratic sensibility to difference, receptivity to the to the all-inclusiveness of differences through which they become eligible for our imitation"; credits Whitman, then, with the "discovery of how the visual image can become the medium of democratic enlightenment."]

Sedillo, Matt. *Mowing Leaves of Grass*. McAllen, TX: FlowerSong Press, 2019. [Poems, responding in various ways to Whitman, who appears on the cover; the title poem includes the lines "Mowing down leaves of grass / Fuck Walt Whitman. . . ."]

Whitman, Walt. *Democratic Vistas*. Chicago: Mouse Book Club, 2020. [Smartphone-sized print edition of selections from Whitman's essay, designed for portable reading.]

Whitman, Walt. *Song of Myself*. Chicago: Mouse Book Club, 2020. [Smartphone-sized print edition of the first twenty-seven sections of Whitman's poem, designed for portable reading.]

Whitman, Walt. *Specimen Days*. Chicago: Mouse Book Club, 2020. [Smartphone-sized print edition of selections from the first half of Whitman's *Specimen Days*, designed for portable reading.]

Yanagihara, Hanya. "Specimen Days" [Online title: "A Poet of Multitudes, Whose Work Feels Newly Pertinent"]. *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* (September 20, 2020), 26. [Explains why Whitman is this year's focus in "our fall Men's Fashion issue," which is always dedicated "to an author or work of literature that seems particularly pertinent to our era"; suggests that Whitman, though flawed (he was "a reflexive racist"), taught us to celebrate how we all "contain multitudes."]

*PhD Dissertations and M.A. Theses
Dealing with Whitman, 2015-Present*

Andrews, Jason Scott. "Unum et pluribus: Walt Whitman's Philosophy of Democracy." PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2015. [Examines Whitman as "a representative American ideologue," an "ardent devotee" of both "strong nationalism and strong individualism," who "is capable of both assimilating differences toward his ideal One, and accommodating differences on behalf of every individual in celebration of the many," thus bringing "an entirely new meaning to the national motto: . . . 'from many diverse identities, One complete person'; argues that Whitman suggests a "potential answer to the problem of the One and Many in an increasingly globalized world, particularly in the context of growing migration and increasing demands for minority rights"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10025151.]

Anzini, Patricia. "'Welcome, American Brother': Cultural Encounters between Walt Whitman and Brazilian Writers." PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2018. [Examines "the works of three Brazilian writers and cultural figures" who responded to Whitman in key ways—Ronald de Carvalho (1893-1935), Geir Campos (1924-1999), and Ana Cristina Cesar (1952-1983)—and argues that, "by responding to Whitman's legacy in their own works, these writers helped to fashion a hemispheric (as opposed to a nationalist) narrative of writing and culture in Brazil"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10982882.]

Barasch, Benjamin Welner. "The Ontological Imagination: Living Form in American Literature." PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2019. [Argues that Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, Henry James, and Whitman "held a paradoxical conception of the imagination as *both* the mark of human uniqueness . . . and the space of our greatest intimacy with the nonhuman world"; Chapter 4, "'Like the Sun Falling Around a Helpless Thing': Whitman's Poetry of Judgment," "emphasizes the figural and perspectival features of Whitman's poetry at even its most prosaic in order to show how the imagination grounds us in a common world rather than detaching us from it," and examines how, "in opposition to an ethics for which realistic recognition of the world demands suppression of the imagination, Whitman's realism requires acts of imaginative judgment"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13806747.]

Bassett, James. “—Long as Ages Steal!?: Millennial Whiteness, (Counter) Occasional Poetics, and Antinomian Allegory, 1861-1876.” PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2018. [Presents “a revisionist account of the reception history of *Leaves of Grass*” and argues that “the twentieth-century monumentalization of Whitman’s free verse as a radical prosodic break has simultaneously disseminated an account of American democracy in which whiteness has been disavowed and rendered immaterial” and interrogates how, “by sublimating material legacies of racial and ethnic eradication, territorial expropriation, acculturation, assimilation, and coercive conversion, the historicity of whiteness’ own ethnic massifications—renewed and redeemed for posterity by Whitman studies as the autochthonous voice of American democracy—has abjured temporal flux for a timeless theodicy implicitly and explicitly predicated upon an expansive exteriority of dominion-in-perpetuity and an immutable interiority of redemptive martyrdom”; seeks to undo “the erasure of Leadie Mae Clark, the African-American counter-centennial reader of Whitman” whose work “historicize[d] the millennial whiteness that Whitman’s poetics idealizes,” and sets out to “reintroduc[e] her insights of Whitmanian democracy as the idealization and ensoulment of Jacksonian democracy” and thus to “unsettle the mythologized origins of 1855 in our critical discourse and our pedagogy” because “endlessly re-centering and reconstructing Whitman itself reenacts the collapse of Reconstruction”; the introduction, “Whitman and Americanness: A Problem; or, Against 1855,” develops these ideas; and Chapter 2, “‘Must I Change My Triumphant Songs?’: Whitman, Melville, and the Abolition of War,” investigates the absence of racial concerns in Whitman’s Civil War writings and analyzes “what connections obtain between the systematic erasure of slavery and genocide from the nation-state’s matter of record, the quarantining, footnoting, or outright interdiction of Whitman’s millennial whiteness in the critical commemoration of the essentially the [sic] greatest poem, and his enduring, symbolic monumentalization as the ‘secular’ prophet of the nation state”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10977576.]

Bell, Jason Eric. “Archiving Displacement in America.” PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2018. [Two extended sections, “Whitman’s Trunk” and “In the Prison Pen,” explore ways that Whitman’s Civil War writings “constituted the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp as a portable template for concentrating and exterminating enemy nations” and examines Whitman’s use of apophasis, his use of the trunk sent to him by his brother George who was imprisoned in a Confederate camp, and his positioning of “the war’s metaphorical and bodily violence in a frame of national rebirth”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10907735.]

Bird, Jacob. “Music of the ‘Cult of Whitman’: Charles Villiers Stanford’s *Elegiac Ode*.” M.A. Thesis, Marshall University, 2017. [Examines “the reception of Whitman’s poetry in England,” as well as “the late Victorian musical climate,” and then analyzes Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford’s (1852-1924) musical setting *Elegiac Ode* to determine “how Whitman’s poetry impacted the work”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10279193.]

- Borchert, Nicholas. "Nameless Wonders and Dumb Despair: Rhetorics of Silence in Mid-Nineteenth-Century U.S. Poetry and Culture." PhD Dissertation, University of Iowa, 2017. [Examines the work of John Rollin Ridge, Emily Dickinson, Whitman, and Eliza Snow, focusing on "those moments where words are declared to be inadequate, impertinent, unavailable, unintelligible or otherwise unsuitable for a task that the poet has proposed"; Chapter 3, "I utter and utter, / I speak not': Walt Whitman and In-Forming the Nation," analyzes "a puzzling strain of reticence in the otherwise garrulous national bard"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10602829.]
- Brickey, Alyson. "'Fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth': Lists in American Literature, 1851-1956." PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2017. [Chapter 2, "Whitman's 'First-person plural,'" "reimagines Walt Whitman's catalogues in 'Song of Myself' as initiating a rhetorical oscillation between the singular and plural, a process that works to repopulate the cultural representation of America with subjects who have traditionally been excluded or marginalized"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10245906.]
- Burright, Christopher Preston. "Walt before *Leaves*: Complicating Whitman's Authorship through *Jack Engle*." M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2019. [Uses a "hypertextual model" to trace "linguistic and thematic development" across *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* and *Leaves of Grass*; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 28103713.]
- Cameron, Gabe. "The Establishment and Development of the Mockingbird as the Nightingale's 'American Rival.'" M.A. Thesis, Tennessee State University, 2017. [One section of Chapter 4, "Whitman's Idealized America," argues that "his use of the bird had such a great impact" because the "struggle for identity and fight for an American purpose becomes layered into Whitman's mockingbird"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13830163.]
- Castaneda, Clarissa. "Latinidades and the Repository Function of the Poetic." PhD Dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 2019. [Chapter 3, "Poetics Americana: From Whitman and Ginsberg to Anzaldúa," considers Whitman's work "in relation to Gloria Anzaldúa's poetics in *Borderlands/La Frontera*"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13808236.]
- Chakraborty, Sumita. "Signs of Feeling Everywhere: Lyric Poetics, Posthumanist Ecologies, and Ethics in the Anthropocene." PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 2018. [Uses Whitman as one of numerous poets to argue that "transatlantic lyric poetry after 1850 can help us imagine ecological ethics in the Anthropocene" and that "posthumanism is . . . compatible with lyric poetry"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10948008.]
- Duncan, Joel. "The Song in the Machine: Organic Forms of American Poetry." PhD Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2016. [Studies how "American poets writing in free verse . . . have harnessed the machinery of capitalist development toward poetic ends"; Chapter 1, "Whitman's Organic Hum-anity," "considers Whitman's confrontation with industrial capitalism and slavery, elaborating how the 'hum' produced by his loafer in the grass transforms the abstract equality inherent in wage labor toward poetic song"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10308123.]

- Earnhardt, Eric. "The 'Sentient Plume': The Theory of the Pathetic Fallacy in Anglo-American Avian Poetry, 1856-1945." PhD Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 2016. [Chapter 7, "Nested Fallacies: The Pathos of the Mockingbird in Whitman's 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,'" offers a reading of Whitman's poem in the context of a study of "the history and theory of the pathetic fallacy, often as it relates to birds"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 28078794.]
- Eckstrom, D. Leif. "Untimely Verse: Distressed Publishing and Exemplary Circulation in Antebellum America." PhD Dissertation, Tufts University, 2018. [Looks at the works of Phillis Wheatley, Rufus Griswold, Edgar Allan Poe, and Whitman and seeks to recover the ways "their work circulated, as material texts and as a developing set of ideas about American poetry and authorship within antebellum periodical and book formats"; Chapter 3, "Whitman, the *Saturday Press*, and the Distressed Print History of the Whitman Poem," examines the *Saturday Press*'s aggressive promotion of Whitman in the context of the late-antebellum literary marketplace; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10812316.]
- Eldrett, Christopher Gerald. "Walt Whitman's Prophetic Voice in Hispanic Lyric Poetry: León Felipe, Federico García Lorca, and César Vallejo." PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 2019. [Explores "the prophetic tradition in lyric poetry, focusing on the example set by Walt Whitman and carried forth in Hispanic letters" and argues that "the roots of Whitman's lyric song would grow deep in these three contemporary Hispanic poets, during times of grave social and political crisis," and "their prophetic lyric voice rises from Whitman's song, founded upon a communal humanity and an 'I' freed from the limits of the individual self"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13859495.]
- Gilson, Lisa. "Another Romanticism: Re-Thinking Social Criticism from Rousseau to Tolstoy." PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2019. [Examines works of Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Leo Tolstoy "to argue that they transformed romantic concepts into potent rhetorical techniques to motivate social reform" and thus reveal "that the romantic tradition served as a central resource for the theory and practice of social criticism"; Chapter 5, "Walt Whitman's Poetic Critique of American Identity," examines the relationship of Rousseau and Whitman, Whitman's "Rousseauvian Aesthetics," his response to Johann Gottfried Herder's ideas of "cultural nationalism," his relation to Thomas Carlyle's "conservative Romantic nationalism," and his "pluralist persuasion"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13805944.]
- Gochberg, Reed Abigail. "Novel Objects: Museums and Scientific Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century American Literature." PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 2016. [Chapter 2 "examines how Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings on originality and Whitman's Civil War writings define the literary and political stakes of technological novelty in relation to the U.S. Patent Office gallery's collection of patent models"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10191060.]
- Haddad, Vincent. "Novelistic Intimacies: Reading and Writing in the Late Age of Print, 1996-Present." PhD Dissertation, Wayne State University, 2016. [Part of Chapter 1,

- “Conjuring David Foster Wallace’s Ghost: Prosopopoeia, Whitmanian Intimacy and the Queer Potential of *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*,” analyzes the “relatively under-explored” relationship between Whitman and Wallace; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10195854.]
- Hensley, Kathleen D. “The Embodied Poet in the Works of Emerson, Whitman, and Hesiod.” M.A. Thesis, Harvard University, 2016. [Examines these three authors’ “versions of the poet’s role and . . . their agreement that the poet is an archaeologist of language, which is fossil poetry”; the two sections on Whitman deal with his 1855 Preface and “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.”]
- Johnson, David W. “Recovering the Agency of Editors in the Careers of Three Canonical Nineteenth-Century American Authors.” PhD Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2015. [Explores the role of editors in publishing and influencing canonical nineteenth-century American works; Chapter 4, “Whitman and Penny Press Editors,” analyzes how “Whitman circumvented the marketplace to a considerable extent, yet employed, in marketing his book of poetry, techniques that he learned as a penny press editor in New York City”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 3733947.]
- Larson, Logan Thomas. “Beats from the Dead.” M.M. Thesis, University of Kansas, 2018. [Musical composition for wind ensemble with a Talkbox solo; text is a “mosaic of portions from Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself*”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10809924.]
- Licato, Amanda Mehsima. “‘Out from Behind This Mask’: Persona in African American Poetry, 1830-1930.” PhD. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2018. [Chapter 2 is focused on Adah Isaacs Menken’s “forgotten work as the first poet besides Walt Whitman and the only female poet before the twentieth century to write an entire volume—titled *Infelicia* (1868)—in the form of free verse”; points out similarities and differences in Menken’s and Whitman’s work; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 28114887.]
- Lin, Hsinmei. “The Poetics of Worlding: Nonhuman Cartographers and the Becoming of Histories.” PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, 2019. [Parts of the dissertation examine, in the context of Jacques Derrida’s “zoopoetics,” Whitman’s and Emily Dickinson’s engagement with “nonhuman subjects” and their attempts at “multi-species world-building,” arguing that both poets “write to, as, and with animals” to build an “anti-anthropocentric alter-world”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13900423.]
- Loonin, Paulo Miller. “Democratic Portraiture: Imagining Equal Selves in Melville, Whitman, and Douglass.” PhD Dissertation, Washington University, 2019. [Examines how Herman Melville, Whitman, and Frederick Douglass, in “frontispieces, photographs, novels, poems, and lectures . . . tested the ways an image of one unique self might fit together more or less harmoniously with images of other ‘equal’ selves, together building an image of an egalitarian social and political collectivity,” and “draws on word and image theory to develop an expanded definition of portraiture that links it

- to narrative and introduces it in new ways to literary studies” to study “Whitman’s visionary mysticism”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 22622972.]
- Luikart, Tamara. “Human Nature and the Civil War: Justification, Comprehension, and Reconciliation through Environmental Rhetoric.” PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. [Part of Chapter 5, “Melville Writes Reconciliation,” examines how Melville and Whitman “are not as different as commonly believed” and how “both poets present the possibility of national reconciliation through natural renewal”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10751345.]
- Merandy, Jesse Alan. “Vanishing Leaves: A Study of Walt Whitman through Location-Based Mobile Technologies.” PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2019. [Offers a detailed description of “the core concepts and inspiration underlying the development of ‘Vanishing Leaves,’” a “location-based mobile experience” (LBME) designed to “take users to Brooklyn Heights to learn about the poet Walt Whitman and his connection to the neighborhood where he lived, worked, and published the first edition of his masterwork *Leaves of Grass*; discusses importance of walking for Whitman; offers extensive background on LBMEs; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13865750.]
- Meiners, Benjamin Michael. “Unsettling Geographies: Primitivist Utopias in Queer American Literature from Walt Whitman to Willa Cather.” PhD Dissertation, Washington University, 2018. [Explores how the works of Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Charles Warren Stoddard, and Willa Cather demonstrate that “the colonial discourse of primitivism played a central role in the queer literary imaginaries” of these writers and that, “while those erotic alternatives have been posited as inherently politically radical in many feminist and queer theoretical traditions, the pervasive primitivization of indigenous bodies and lands in these literatures tells us a more complicated and troubling story about the co-implicated histories of non-heteronormativity and settler colonialism in the U.S.”; Chapter 1, “The Frontier Erotics of Whitman’s Native Futurism,” focuses on how these issues play out in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10936376.]
- Michael, Krystyna. “The Urban Domestic: Homosocial Domesticity, Literature, and Culture in 19th and 20th Century New York City.” PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2019. [Investigates Whitman and Edith Wharton as “two authors with distinctly ambivalent relationships to the hetero-normative nuclear family and the ways New York’s built environments shaped and controlled the nation’s gender and sexual politics,” a situation that provided them with opportunities “to reimagine traditional domesticity at the turn of the 20th century”; examines Whitman’s poetry in the context of “Frederick Law Olmstead’s and Calvert Vaux’s plans for Central Park,” and argues that “both Wharton and Whitman worked within and against middle class, conservative forces in order to open up new spaces of imaginative dwelling”; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 13428303.]
- Palmer, Leah. “Between Silent Lines: Walt Whitman Imagines Possible Futures for Minorities in Post-Emancipation America.” M.A. Thesis, Oklahoma State University, 2015. [Investigates Whitman’s contradictory ideas about race in the U.S.; considers “the

- Vanishing Indian theory, Darwin's evolutionary theory, as well as Abolitionist theories"; focuses on "I Sing the Body Electric"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10139463.]
- Price, Marsha M. "Faded Blackness: Racial Ideologies of Whitman, Alcott, and Cather Reflecting the Antebellum and Postbellum Periods." M.A. Thesis, Morgan State University, 2018. [Chapter 3, "Whitman's Marginalization of the African American in *Leaves of Grass*," examines Whitman's "marginalizing of significance of African Americans and other non-white subjects" in several poems; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10809383.]
- Raymond, Brytani L. "Whitman and the Elegy: Mythologizing Lincoln and the Poetic Reconstruction of Mourning." M.A. Thesis, 2017. [Examines Whitman's elegies on Lincoln to determine "the ways in which Whitman consciously subverted the established traditions of the elegiac form to demonstrate that the process of grief could not be broken down to a simple formula as suggested by past elegists"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10682065.]
- Rebrovick, Tripp. "Routine Maintenance: Forming, Reforming, and Transforming Social Formations." PhD Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2016. [Explores "four routine activities—seeing, working, touching, and eating—in order to develop the concept of a social formation"; Chapter 3, "The Queer Politics of Touching: Walt Whitman's Theory of Comrades," develops the "politics of touching" by "analyzing Walt Whitman's poems that envision a new political order founded on comradeship—a distinct kind of friendship characterized by physical intimacy"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 27606729.]
- Rittenhouse, Brad Christopher. "TMI: The Data-Driven Literature of the American Renaissance." PhD Dissertation, University of Miami, 2017. [Chapter 3, "What great births you have witnessed!": Walt Whitman, Democracy, and Literary Data Efficiency," analyzes the "seeming disorder of Whitman's poetics" and examines his "aesthetic innovation" as he (and Melville) "produced highly anomalous texts that prioritized the aggregation, aestheticization, and transmission of unprecedented volumes of cultural data" and developed a "data-driven' writing style"; argues that Whitman successfully "portray[ed] his world . . . by imagining structures and strategies that anticipate digital logics of data manipulation"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10281234.]
- Robbins, Timothy David. "Walt Whitman and the Making of the American Sociological Imagination, 1870-1940." PhD Dissertation, University of Iowa, 2015. [Rethinks the "history of sociology in the United States by focusing on one of the discipline's most surprising and neglected sources: the poetry of Walt Whitman" and demonstrates "how the recirculation of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* across some of the founding texts of social science in the United States helped furnish the conceptual vocabulary for a compassionate, impartial and distinctively 'American' sociology"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10186705.]

- Rowe, Charles W. "The Ethics of Perception in Transatlantic Romantic Poetry." PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2019. [Proposes that "the late-eighteenth century poet William Cowper is the initiator of the ethically oriented poetry of perception that Wordsworth, Emerson, and Whitman experimented with and refined in the Romantic era; Chapter 4 focuses on how Whitman's "free verse experiments in the 1850s and 1860s along with his prose sketches of the horrors of America's Civil War can be read as the most pronounced arguments for the ethical value of perception in the Romantic era"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 22624504.]
- Skafidas, Michael. "A Passage from Brooklyn to Ithaca: The Sea, the City and the Body in the Poetics of Walt Whitman and C. P. Cavafy." PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2016. [Offers "the first extensive comparative study" of Whitman and Egyptian Greek poet C. P. Cavafy (1863-1933) and examines how the two writers "embody the antithesis of hope and dislocation to such a degree that a comparative examination of their poetics reveals two minds, and two narratives, closer than their continents"; focuses on "three key subjects"—"the sea, the city, and the body"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10006987.]
- Smalley, Matthew R. "Resistance and the Sermon: The Cultural Work of Literary Preaching from Emerson to Morrison." PhD Dissertation, University of Kansas, 2016. [Explores how "a wide variety of writers," including Whitman, "have subverted the predominantly religious content of the sermon in order to reimagine profound moments of reform in a political, cultural, aesthetic, and principally secular mode"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10245837.]
- Stears, Ryan. "The Evolutionary Life of Walt Whitman as Told through Photography." M.A. Thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2018. [Explores "Whitman's ideas about and use of photography" and investigates Whitman's projected but never-completed "photo project," including Whitman's 1889 special issue of *Leaves of Grass* ("which can be considered a smaller version of Whitman's photo project"); looks too at collector Charles E. Feinberg's attempt to realize Whitman's project by compiling "Portraits from Life"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10822860.]
- Stripes, Denise G. "The View from Nowhen: Time and the Metaphysical Self in Twentieth-Century Literature." PhD Dissertation, Washington State University, 2016. [Part of Chapter 2 ("Transcendence and Time in the Poetry of Dickinson and Whitman") looks at how "scientific and technological advances" along with the Civil War presented "new ways of expression" in poetry, and how Whitman "revolutionized poetry" by moving away from "romanticized poetic visions . . . to self-reliant humanism": *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10139719.]
- Sturgess, Jessica N. "Saying the World Anew: A Philosophical Understanding of Communication as Testimony." PhD Dissertation, Purdue University, 2016. [Explores "the relationship between communication and a radical democracy" via the "rhetorical figure of hyperbole"; part four of Chapter 5, "Still to Come, or Whitman on Democracy," looks at how Whitman's concept of democracy "has the structure of a promise, a promise that can never be actualized in full"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10179943.]

- Sollenberger, David M. "Walt Whitman's Personalist Political Theory." PhD Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2018. [Examines Whitman's "deeper purpose, to explicate the 'fathomless' person who stands as the reason for and justification of democracy," or what he called "personalism" ("an attempt to evoke the person as a whole, in all of their spiritual, material, relational, historical, and national complexity"); looks at the sources of Whitman's "idea of democracy" in "the Radical Enlightenment and the Anglo-American republican tradition" as well as in "Romanticism and German Idealism"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10793643.]
- Traphagen, Sarah K. "Bite the Belt: The Surgeon in Civil War Literature." PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, 2014. [Chapter 3, "With Hinged Knees and Steady Hand: Walt Whitman as Surgeon-Scribe," examines Whitman as "an intermediary between the world outside of the hospital and the relatively new world inside concentrated with the war's aftermath" and looks at ways that "self-reflective Civil War doctor narratives . . . construct a new way to read Whitman's *Drum-Taps*"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10299072.]
- Vecchio, Nicholas. "Six Reflections Through Music and Poetry." M.M. Thesis, University of Arkansas, 2016. [Musical composition in six movements, each accompanied by a poem; the final movement is based on and accompanied by Whitman's "O Me! O Life!"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10249034.]
- Wilson, Robert P. "American Resonance: Soundscapes of the American Renaissance." PhD Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2016. [Examines "soundscapes in the writings of Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville" and argues that these writers' works "offer listening and sounding out as productive sites for historical memory, the construction of meaning and identity, creative expression and cultural critique, the formation of social arrangements, and political action"; Whitman is the focus of Chapter 2, "Whitman among the Philosopher Musicians: Poetry and/as Performance," which "analyzes the effects of Whitman's deep reverence for opera on his poetry and politics" as he "situate[s] readers as 'philosopher musicians,'" even as he misses other local music (like "African American folk musical forms") that would have "more fully demonstrate[d] the democratic ethos Whitman sought to encompass in his poetry"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10134300.]
- Windle, Elisabeth. "Pleasure in the Past: Queer Nostalgia in the Gay American Century." PhD Dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016. [Chapter 1, "'Cocksucking and Democracy' in the Shadow of the Capitol: Walt Whitman and the Neoliberal Literary Imagination," examines Whitman's "When I Heard at the Close of Day" in the context of the issue of gay marriage, arguing that "the democratic vision of this poem aligns with and points toward precisely [the] gay neoliberal political program" "to incorporate gender-conforming, white, wealthy gays and lesbians into the institutions of American democracy, such as marriage"; points to "the strange and revealing conjunction of Whitman and same-sex marriage" and tracks the history of this conjunction in "Whitman studies" and in "popular representations of Whitman"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10249250.]

Wu, Pao-lin Louis. "Shadows in the Forest: Imperialism, Indigenous Dispossession, and the Politics of Wilderness in Nineteenth-Century American Literature." PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018. [Chapter 2, "I Become a Transparent Eye-Ball: The White Imagination and Transcendental Blindness in Emerson and Whitman," examines how these two writers "mistake whiteness as transparency in their transcendental visions" and how Whitman "is involved in the imaginative removal [of Indians] to construct a white America"; *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*, 10821797.]

University of Iowa

ED FOLSOM

"Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography," now covering work on Whitman from 1838 to the present, is available in a fully searchable format online at the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* website (ir.uiowa.edu/wwqr/) and at the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org).

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QUOTING AND CITING WALT WHITMAN'S WORK

When quoting from individual editions of *Leaves of Grass* (the 1855, 1856, 1860, 1867, 1870-1871, 1881, 1891), please use the facsimiles available online on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, and cite the edition, date, and page numbers, followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (www.whitmanarchive.org)." Do not list the URL of individual page images or the date accessed. After the initial citation, contributors should abbreviate as "LG" followed by the year of the edition and the page number (e.g., LG1855 15).

The standard edition of Whitman's work is the *Walt Whitman Archive* (www.whitmanarchive.org) in addition to *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, twenty-two volumes published by the New York University Press under the general editorship of Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley, and supplemented with volumes published by the University of Iowa Press and Peter Lang. Citations and quotations from Whitman's writings not yet available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* should be keyed to the specific volumes in this edition.

After the initial citation, contributors should abbreviate the titles of the *Collected Writings* in the endnotes as follows:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| EPF | <i>The Early Poems and Fiction</i> , edited by Thomas L. Brasher (1963) |
| PW | <i>Prose Works 1892</i> , edited by Floyd Stovall. Vol. 1: <i>Specimen Days</i> (1963); Vol. 2: <i>Collect and Other Prose</i> (1964).
with a Composite Index (1977); Vol. 7, edited by Ted Genoways (2004). |
| DBN | <i>Daybooks and Notebooks</i> , edited by William White. 3 vols. (1978). |

- NUPM *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, edited by Edward F. Grier. 6 vols. (1984).
- Journ *The Journalism*, edited by Herbert Bergmann, Douglas A. Noverr, and Edward J. Recchia. Vol. 1: 1834-1846 (1998); Vol. 2: 1846-1848 (2003).
- Corr *The Correspondence*, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. Vol. 1: 1842-1867 (1961); Vol. 2: 1868-1875 (1961); Vol. 3: 1876-1885 (1964); Vol. 4: 1886-1889 (1969); Vol. 5: 1890-1892 (1969); Vol. 6: A Supplement; Vol. 7: edited by Ted Genoways (2004).

For Whitman's correspondence, letters available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* take precedence over the *The Correspondence* edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. These should be cited in this format: Sender to recipient, month, day, year, followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: xxx.00000."—e.g., Herbert Gilchrist to Walt Whitman, August 20, 1882. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.02192.

Horace Traubel's *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (9 Vols) is available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. After an initial citation followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (www.whitmanarchive.org)," it should be abbreviated *WWC*, followed by its volume and page number (e.g. *WWC* 3:45).

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