



# WALT WHITMAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

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VOLUME THIRTY-NINE NUMBERS TWO AND THREE FALL 2021/WINTER 2022

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A SCHOLARLY OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL

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Front Cover: Facsimile of the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* /  
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“I AM MORE INTERESTED THAN YOU KNOW,  
BILL”: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
WILLIAM HENRY DUCKETT JR.

STEPHANIE M. BLALOCK AND BRANDON JAMES O’NEIL



WILLIAM HENRY “BILL” DUCKETT JR.’s role as Walt Whitman’s carriage driver and youthful companion is typically the extent of his portrayal in Whitman biography. Details of the Duckett family history and of Bill’s adult life, however, have remained largely shrouded in mystery. As far as Whitman scholarship is concerned, Duckett was practically condemned to spend adulthood in obscurity after falling out of favor with Whitman’s disciples and losing touch with the poet once he had moved out of Whitman’s Camden home at 328 Mickle Street. Drawing on a combination of digital, archival, and printed materials, this essay aims to trace Bill’s past and to uncover previously unknown details about his personal and professional life before, during, and after his friendship with Whitman. Court proceedings, city directories, and digitized newspaper articles enabled us to corroborate information in Whitman’s notebooks and his two-way correspondence with Duckett, available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. Resources well-known to genealogy enthusiasts and professionals—Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and FamilySearch.org—allowed us to examine Duckett’s lineage, and we have presented our findings by creating a family tree for Duckett (see Figure 1) that can serve as a reference point as we unpack his complex history. Census records, tax lists, and marriage licenses helped us identify and track the correct Duckett family in Pennsylvania, and through numerous newspapers, we followed their social lives and careers, relocations, and legal proceedings. While this methodology reveals and contributes much new biographical information on Bill Duckett, many new questions emerged and opportunities for further research came to light with each important find.

Thomas Donaldson’s depiction of Bill Duckett in *Walt Whitman the Man* (1896) emphasizes his role as Whitman’s driver, helper, and friend, marking the first appearance of Duckett in Whitman biography (105, 193). Later biographies

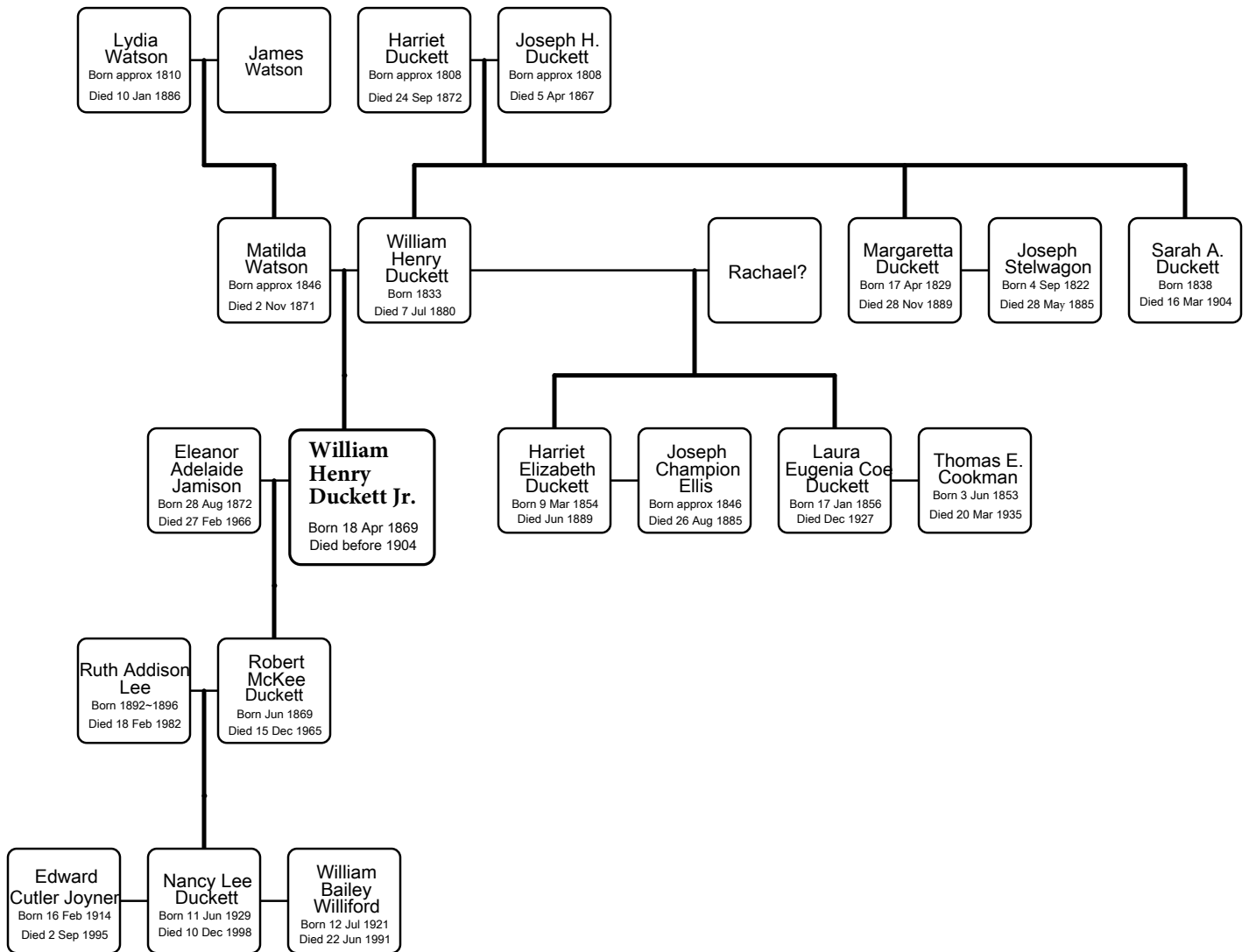


Figure 1: Family tree of William Henry “Bill” Duckett Jr. and his descendants.

present Duckett as Whitman's "carriage driver and companion," offering perhaps a more nuanced view of their relationship, though providing limited insight into Duckett's own history.<sup>1</sup> Duckett's life has received varying treatments in other historical and biographical works, ranging from complete omission (as in David Reynolds' *Walt Whitman's America*, Philip Callow's *From Noon to Starry Night: A Life of Walt Whitman*, Emory Holloway's *Free and Lonesome Heart: The Secret of Walt Whitman*) and passing mentions (Allen, Kaplan), to more extended portrayals (Folsom, Schmidgall's *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life*). Charley Shively's *Calamus Lovers: Walt Whitman's Working-Class Camerados* offers the most extensive consideration of a potential sexual relationship between Duckett and Whitman, based on Shively's reading of Whitman's sexuality and known attraction to younger and working-class men. If Duckett was a romantic partner for Whitman, they do not seem to have shared a long-term intimate relationship. This essay leaves the question of a romantic relationship between Whitman and Duckett open for further research since our focus will be on Duckett's life as he left both Camden and the poet behind and embarked on personal and professional journeys that took him to at least two other states.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, photographically, Duckett's image remains inextricable from Whitman's, as two tintypes of the pair taken by Camden photographer Lorenzo Fisler are the only confirmed images of Duckett, each portraying him as Whitman's youthful assistant and companion, just as he is characterized by Whitman biographers.<sup>3</sup> One photo, the first known image of Whitman taken outdoors, features the pair near a local meats and produce establishment in Camden, seated in Whitman's horse-drawn phaeton, a gift from his friends and admirers. The other, a studio portrait, presents Duckett as a round-faced youth, posed with his arm around the poet in front of a painted background depicting a view of the sea with a ship and a lighthouse (See Figures 2 and 3). Both photos are believed to date from 1886 when Whitman was nearly seventy, his characteristic flowing white beard dramatically contrasted by Duckett's fresh-faced and wide-eyed stare. Ed Folsom has suggested that the portrait, much like earlier images of Whitman and his longtime love interest Peter Doyle, resembles portraits of married couples from the period.<sup>4</sup> At the time, Duckett would have been seventeen years old, fifty years the poet's junior, according to a Philadelphia city birth record citing his birthday as April 18, 1869.<sup>5</sup>

### Coming of Age in Philadelphia and Camden

According to the 1880 Federal Census, Duckett lived with his grandmother,

Lydia Watson, on Mickle Street in Camden, New Jersey, a few doors down from the house purchased by the aging poet in 1884.<sup>6</sup> At some point, the new neighbors encountered one another, and they struck up a friendship. Whitman's conversations with Horace Traubel suggest that the relationship between Duckett and the poet took on a degree of co-dependence when the teenage boy moved into Whitman's home in 1886, likely around the time of the final illness and death of his grandmother.<sup>7</sup> He accompanied the poet on local and regional trips, their destinations ranging from the graves of Whitman's family to city hotels. On one occasion Duckett and the poet even enjoyed baked shad and champagne together at William Thompson's restaurant in Gloucester, New Jersey.<sup>8</sup>

Orphaned by the age of twelve, Duckett benefitted from Whitman's support, but Duckett's personal idiosyncrasies would lead a conflicted Whitman to pronounce him "bright—very bright" and alternatively a "young scamp."<sup>9</sup> Tensions mounted at 328 Mickle Street soon after Duckett moved in; Whitman contended that he and his housekeeper, Mary Oakes Davis, never argued save over Duckett's presence in the home and his purported theft of items that went missing from Whitman's rooms.<sup>10</sup> Disagreements ensued about whether Duckett was expected to pay room and board and the amount he owed, with arguments culminating in Davis filing suit in 1889 against Duckett to obtain the money she felt he owed for the time he lived there. Duckett claimed that Whitman had asked him to stay in his home free of charge; he believed he was the poet's guest when he agreed to the living arrangements. But Whitman, upon learning his name had been brought up at the trial, was equally adamant when he told Traubel that he had issued no such invitation. Whitman offered his own version of events: "By and by the boy's grandmother died: on her deathbed she pleaded with Mary to receive, trust, care for, the boy. . . . I left the matter with Mary entirely for her to do with as she thought best."<sup>11</sup> Davis was successful in her suit, winning \$190, minus legal fees.

Davis may have felt justified in taking legal action against Duckett, since he had inherited a trust fund from which he may have drawn quarterly dividends and, therefore, should have been able to afford to pay for his board. "This young jackanapes has an income," Whitman told Traubel, "one of the big trusts in the city—the Fidelity" in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> Despite this income, Duckett asked Whitman for money both before and after the 1889 trial. Not averse to helping a friend in need, Whitman gave Duckett \$10 in June of that year, during a visit in which Duckett confided his half-sister Harriet Duckett Ellis had died suddenly. He may have also shared plans to relocate, and Whitman was eager to keep in touch. "I am more interested than you know, Bill," Whitman told him, adding, "when you get settled in the city, write me how you like it, or come see me."<sup>13</sup>





Figures 2 and 3: Walt Whitman and Bill Duckett, 1886. Ohio Wesleyan University, Bayley Collection.



“The city” may refer to Philadelphia, from which Duckett would write a letter the following December, asking for more money. Admitting he had only \$5 to sustain him with rent due the next week, Duckett’s letter claims Whitman would understand his situation, and indeed, the poet was likely privy to much knowledge about Duckett that may never be recovered.<sup>14</sup> Whitman, by this time very ill, declined to send Duckett any cash, and this may be the last time he heard from the young man, as Duckett fell out of the Whitman circle and largely disappeared to history.

Whitman characterizes Duckett as taking “every advantage” of the poet and Mary’s generosity, adding that Duckett paid them “probably fifty dollars in all: then stopped: not another cent,” but Whitman claimed he took pity on the boy and let him stay anyway because “Bill would swear by all that was holy that he would by and by make all this right: would almost literally get down on his knees.” Though this image seems overly theatrical, Bill’s determination to compensate Walt and Mary might have been genuine, provided he had access to the trust fund of which Whitman seems to have been aware. A February 1889 notice of Davis’s court award in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* confirms Whitman’s assertion that Bill Duckett did have a trust through the Fidelity Company, a trust inherited through his father’s family that was later the subject of numerous additional legal proceedings. The trust originated with Bill’s grandfather, Joseph H. Duckett, a paper manufacturer in Philadelphia,<sup>15</sup> who died in 1867—two years before the birth of his grandson, Bill—and left behind a will that called for the division of his assets among his three children: Margaretta (Duckett) Stelwagon, Sarah A. Duckett, William Henry Duckett, Sr., and their heirs.<sup>16</sup> The will, contested in a series of court proceedings that lasted at least until 1906, notes that William Sr. had already been married once; his first wife is not named in the proceedings and still remains unknown, but the suit does list their two daughters, Harriet Elizabeth (Duckett) Ellis and Laura E. C. (Duckett) Cookman. Harriet was born in 1854 and Laura approximately two years later, making them more than a decade older than their half-brother, Bill.<sup>17</sup> Sometime after his enlistment in the Civil War in 1863, William Sr. either divorced or was left a widower, and by 1869 had married Matilda Watson, daughter of James and Lydia Watson of New Jersey, who was approximately twelve years younger.<sup>18</sup> William and Matilda’s only child, William Henry Jr., was born on April 18, 1869, and the family lived at 619 Montgomery Street in Philadelphia throughout Bill’s infancy.<sup>19</sup> According to the 1870 Federal Census, William Sr. was then working at a “roofing material store” and sharing his home with his wife Matilda, son William, and mother-in-law Lydia.<sup>20</sup> But on November 2, 1871, when Bill was

only three years old, his mother, twenty-five-year-old Matilda Duckett, died of consumption, leaving a will granting her mother Lydia and her young son a lifetime right to the home on Montgomery.<sup>21</sup>

Within two years of Matilda's death, William Sr. left the house at 619 Montgomery and moved back to his parents' home at 882 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> For a short time, Lydia may have stayed on Montgomery caring for Bill, but the two did not remain in Philadelphia. By 1880, Federal Census records show they were boarding with Harry Sellars, a laborer, and his wife Hannah, at 334 Mickle Street in Camden, New Jersey, while William Sr. had moved in with his eldest daughter, Harriet, and her husband Joseph Champion Ellis in nearby Ellisburg.<sup>23</sup> The Ellis family may have been helping to care for William Sr. in what would turn out to be the final year of his life, and when he died in 1880, Bill, now orphaned, was left in the sole care of his seventy-year-old grandmother.<sup>24</sup> She and Bill seem to have remained in Camden in the years just prior to Whitman's arrival on Mickle Street. Contrary to some biographers of Whitman that claim Duckett's mother died in 1884, he was actually orphaned much earlier—well before he first encountered the poet—since Matilda died in 1871 and William Sr. nine years later in 1880.<sup>25</sup>

From 1873, Whitman lived with his brother George in Camden, until the poet was able to purchase his own home at 328 Mickle Street in 1884.<sup>26</sup> At this time, Bill's grandmother Lydia is listed as living a few blocks away at 33 South 4th Street, though when Duckett signs Whitman's daybook around 1885, he continues to use the Sellars' address as his own (see Figure 4).<sup>27</sup> When Bill met the poet for the first time, he was an active and athletic, if occasionally wayward, fifteen-year-old who appears to have been a cycling enthusiast, winning a prize in a one-mile bicycle race at Millville.<sup>28</sup> *The Cycle*, a magazine for cyclists published in Boston, also credited Duckett with a second place finish in a half-mile race at the Merchantville Driving Park in May 1886, an event sponsored by the Camden Wheelmen.<sup>29</sup> The following month Bill participated in the Camden Club boys' race of approximately half a mile and won first prize.<sup>30</sup> He may also have been the "Willie Duckett" who participated in a contest that involved skating blindfolded toward "a ham suspended from the ceiling by a string" at the Armory Rink in Camden. Bill managed to catch the ham, securing the prize in a contest against a "half-dozen fellows."<sup>31</sup> Whitman encouraged Bill's active pastimes, gifting the young man and his friends a brand new set of quoits, a ring-toss game popular among them, as Duckett's childhood friend John Browning later recalled for the *Courier-Post*.<sup>32</sup> Browning even claims that the poet promised to use some of the proceeds from selling his writings to

buy the neighborhood boys baseball suits after they proudly told him that they had decided on “The Walt Whitman Champion baseball club” for the name of their team.<sup>33</sup> But, Browning admits, the boys never received their caps, shirts, and leggings, perhaps because Whitman may not have been able to afford to keep his promise.

Whitman was invested in Duckett’s pastimes and friends, and also seems to have wanted to serve as a father figure for Duckett, whose only potential parental figures would have been his grandmother and extended family. John Browning vividly remembers Whitman stepping into the role of parent and disciplinarian once Bill moved into his home. According to Browning’s account, when a rowdy and boisterous Duckett got into a fight with an African American boy of about the same age, Whitman seemingly grounded Bill as punishment, confining Duckett to his room for the evening. But Duckett’s faithful band of neighborhood friends had other plans and concocted an elaborate plan to break out their comrade. Having stolen a ladder, they placed it against Whitman’s house and began climbing up to Duckett’s second-floor room, and they were well on their way to performing a daring rescue when the poet awakened and his “gray, bewhiskered face in a white night cap appeared at the window brandishing a large army pistol in each hand,” thinking a band of robbers was attempting to enter his home. The “robbery story” grew in tall-tale proportions, with Bill and his friends disagreeing upon how many shots were fired, how badly the would-be rescuers were wounded, and the number of casualties in the incident. Regardless of what actually happened, the boys never again undertook such foolhardy missions to reclaim their companions when they were forbidden to come out and play. The band instead apologetically returned the stolen ladder to its rightful owner and went back to playing quoits and baseball in the evenings.

Bill might not have had as much time for his hobbies and neighborhood friends once he began driving for Whitman on outings in Camden and beyond, accompanying him to New York, Gloucester, Philadelphia, and Sea Isle City.<sup>34</sup> An article in the *Courier-Post* described the poet’s exploration of “Latham’s Beach” with his Camden and Philadelphia friends, including Duckett, and highlighted “the good of the surf and shore, the sea air, the bathing” at Sea Isle City.<sup>35</sup> Notably escorting Whitman to the 1887 New York Lincoln Lecture, Duckett “acted as valet and nurse, and it was on his arm the old man leaned as he came forward on the stage.”<sup>36</sup> At a reception following the lecture, Bill announced Whitman’s guests, including a number of literary men: “In an hour Mr. Duckett had a very full hand of the cards of distinguished men and the crowd became so great that he gave up trying to announce each newcomer.”<sup>37</sup>



According to Walt's recollection, "I paid him well for all he did for me," stating that his money was "as freely Bill's as my own."<sup>38</sup> In just a few years Whitman's relation to Bill had evolved from one of neighbor and philanthropist to that of friend and employer.

Driving for Whitman was not Bill's only source of income in the 1880's, a decade in which he sought employment in a series of jobs. In March 1886, Whitman noted, for example, that "Billy Duckett" was in Camden and "working at [a] notion store" located at 257 Market Street. Whitman later wrote that the name of Duckett's employer was McKinley & Horn, Notions & Woolen Goods.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that Duckett functioned as a clerk or salesman at the store through May. Beside the address for McKinley & Horn, which Whitman pasted into his daybook, the poet wrote: "WHD left early June" (see Figure 5). William White explains his reading of this brief statement in a footnote, "By 'left' Whitman means that [Duckett] moved out of 328 Mickle Street" (*DBN* 384, n2133). In a later piece, White suggests that Duckett returned to Mickle Street in September but had left by 1888.<sup>40</sup> Later biographers have offered various timelines for Duckett's boarding with Whitman, claiming that Bill lived with the poet for a period ranging from a few months to a few years. But if Bill had only been a full-time boarder on Mickle Street for one or two months, Mary's \$190 settlement would have grossly overcharged his trust fund. Given its placement on the daybook page beside the McKinley and Horne address, it seems more likely that Whitman's note about Bill's leaving indicates a change in employment for Bill instead of a decision to move out of the poet's home.

The theory of a shorter stay would be at odds with other evidence about how long Duckett lived with the poet. In a January 1889 letter to the Canadian physician Richard Maurice Bucke, Whitman describes Mary's suit as one that took place over "many months' board," and he proclaimed Duckett was guilty of having "fooled" her, making her wait for "eighteen months or more" for him to settle his debts.<sup>41</sup> In a December 1886 letter, Duckett states, "I have been with [Whitman] for nearly a year," concluding with his signature and the poet's Mickle Street address.<sup>42</sup> Using information likely collected in 1886 or 1887, the *Howe's Camden City Directory* (1887-1888) confirms Duckett as a resident of 328 Mickle Street.<sup>43</sup> For the purposes of comparison, Whitman's daybook records him paying \$16 per month for his brother Eddy's board in 1886, and he paid \$10 monthly for his own lodging in 1884.<sup>44</sup> If Bill was being charged a similar rate, Mary's suit would indicate he remained at Mickle Street for nearly a year, if not longer. This means that even if Duckett left the Notion store in June 1886, he likely continued to board at Mickle Street through the end of December and



Review 3 ~~27~~ Fayette Place  
East 14th Street  
Benj: F.C. Costelloe, 33 Chancery Lane  
London W.C.  
Harry Lanco, electric light man den's chum  
Mrs. Wm Allen, Macomb, Ill.  
Wm N. Duckett  
2534 Mickle St. near Westmont 6  
Haddonfield N.J. 7  
(can go to 328 Mickle - May 1 1869)  
(call in Mickle St.)  
Dec: 27 '88  
Frank Jess  
Josiah Garrison Mickle St  
Livery Stable 4th  
C.C. Savage  
Dow's Stores Brooklyn N.Y. 9

Figure 4: Duckett's handwritten address from Whitman's Daybook, 1885. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress.

F. W. Fisher (typed)  
290 Chestnut St. Camden.  
and at The Philadelphia Press.  
MCKINLEY & HORN,  
NOTIONS & WOOLEN GOODS,  
257 Market Street, Philadelphia.  
W.H.D left early in June  
Century

Figure 5: Whitman's Daybook, ca. 1886, showing note regarding Duckett's departure from the notions store. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress.

may have remained through the early months of 1887. This revision to the timeline for Duckett's stay makes Mary's suit seem more reasonable with respect to the costs of room and board. By March 20, 1888, however, Duckett was settled in Haddonfield, and the *Camden Telegram's* "Pen Sketches of People we all See and Know," informed its readers that "W. H. Duckett of Haddonfield, spent Sunday in this city," indicating that although Bill had moved out of Whitman's home on Mickle Street, he was a familiar visitor to his old neighborhood.<sup>45</sup>

If Bill did quit his job at the notions store in June after approximately two months of employment, it would explain why Whitman wrote a letter of recommendation to the *Philadelphia Press* the same month, in hopes of finding the young man a new situation. Fred W. Fisher of the *Philadelphia Press*, whose address is included at the top of the daybook page just above that of McKinley and Horn, may have been the recipient of Whitman's letter inquiring about positions in the "counting room or on the writing staff" of the *Press*.<sup>46</sup> In his letter, Whitman explains that Duckett is "used to the city, & to life & people," has "the first Knack of Literature," and vouches that Duckett is "reliable and honest." This literary "knack" implies that the educated young man may have been considering a career in the newspaper business. William White similarly observes that Duckett's letters appear to be written by "someone trained in a secretarial school," a far more likely scenario than that imagined by Charles M. Oliver, who describes Whitman's male friends, including Duckett, as "all laborers and barely literate."<sup>47</sup> Not finding employment in the offices of the *Philadelphia Press*, Duckett took a job as a "news agent" "on the [railroad] train," from July to September 1886, when he was "laid off from RR after two months work," but "went on again soon," as Whitman recorded in his daybook.<sup>48</sup> Seeking a new position for the eighteen-year-old Duckett by 1887, Whitman drafted another letter to a potential employer, this one written from the young man's perspective, that he signed "W H Duckett." Whitman presents Duckett to an unidentified correspondent "on the road" as "competent and determined to give satisfaction."

While Whitman may have intended to start Bill on the course of a career as a news agent or in newspaper work, Duckett's entry in *Howe's Directory* for 1887-1888 lists his profession as "telegraph operator." Whitman's notebooks record Duckett "practising" his skills at Sewell, proceeding to Stockton, serving as a "night operator" at the Railroad Station in Haddonfield, and later working in Ancora. The poet's timeline of Duckett's early career in telegraphy and railroad work shows him moving from station to station in 1887, perhaps in temporary positions before being laid off or transferred.<sup>49</sup> The 1888-1889 *Howe's Directory* also includes Duckett in the Haddonfield section, returning to the city as a

“telegrapher” at Haddon Station, as Whitman also noted.<sup>50</sup> Duckett’s last known letter to the poet indicates he may have been employed with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company by December 1889, since the letter was written on pages with the company’s name printed on them. These pages may be intended for recording telegraphic messages as each one includes pre-printed blanks for documenting the sender and recipient, as well as the “operator” that handled the message (see Figure 6).<sup>51</sup>

Duckett’s final letter was sent in the same year other strains were put on the relationship between Duckett, Whitman, and those at 328 Mickle Street. Opening the year of 1889 was Davis’s lawsuit against Duckett and her award payable from Duckett’s trust. Roughly four months later in June, Duckett went to visit Whitman following the unexpected death of his half-sister Harriet, and the poet gave him \$10, the same amount he had given Peter Doyle when Doyle’s mother passed away in 1885.<sup>52</sup> Although Duckett made an effort to meet with Whitman again in November, he was not allowed upstairs to see the ailing poet. It is uncertain if Whitman’s poor health or his household’s distrust of Duckett’s motivations prevented the visit, but Duckett’s experience is similar to that of Peter Doyle, who did not visit Whitman as often as he would have liked because seeing the aging poet required “run[ning] the gauntlet of Mrs. Davis and a nurse and what not.”<sup>53</sup> In his last letter to Whitman, Duckett writes, “I was over to see you some days since but you was unable to see me would like to see you very much.” Duckett adds that Whitman would “understand the circumstances,” perhaps alluding to either his current financial status or the tension between Duckett and “the people downstairs.”

Frequent reprinting of a newspaper anecdote during the final months of the year may have also played a role in the termination of Whitman’s and Duckett’s friendship. Continued reappearances of the piece and/or its variants could have easily exacerbated a situation already pressured significantly by Duckett’s financial difficulties and his requests for money from Whitman. In the article, published in the October 18, 1889, issue of the weekly *Epoch*, the author recalls, “Some time ago I was present at a literary tea given in Philadelphia to Walt Whitman. He at that time had a young boy some twelve years of age to drive him around.” Following the article’s publication, Traubel mentions having received several inquiries as to the young man’s identity, to which Whitman responded, “Why—that must be Billy Duckett—who else?” and Traubel adds that the piece “amused [Whitman] into great laughter.”<sup>54</sup> The article states that Whitman was “proud of the boy and thought him an excellent reciter of poetry,” a skill the boy demonstrated with a recitation of “O Captain! My Captain!” There are

multiple retellings of the *Epoch* anecdote published in newspapers in at least ten states. The Chicago *Inter Ocean* publishes the account in its entirety but adds an original title presenting Duckett as “an American boy” and implying that he is a fitting companion and sidekick for America’s poet. The *Atchison Daily Champion* [Kansas] labels Duckett “a true Yankee” and characterizes him as both Whitman’s driver and caregiver.

The original *Epoch* account, after all, describes the youth’s plans for a series of lectures on Whitman, and sarcastically attributes to him a “keenness of intelligence and a business sense” seldom found among youths. Duckett’s lectures were to be based on the boy’s original observations of his time with Whitman: “I keep a notebook, and I put down all he says into the notebook; and after he’s dead I’m going to go round lecturing about him.” This statement, outlining Duckett’s supposed entrepreneurial intentions modelled after Whitman’s own lecturing on the assassinated Lincoln, make his efforts sound like a precursor for Traubel’s project and those of the other disciples who would ultimately preserve Whitman’s legacy. Only these tongue-in-cheek references to Duckett’s lecture plans from the *Epoch* piece are included in the shortened “personal” version that appeared in the December 1889 issue of *Current Literature*. Even Traubel took note of its publication, calling this version a “blundering passage,” and Whitman adds that it “has most of all, lie in big, big type” but admits there is a grain of truth “underneath, in the smallest possible compass.” However, Whitman never specified exactly which parts of the brief “personal” espoused falsehoods in big type and which details contained some truth.

Duckett did keep a series of personal notes written in pencil during his time with Whitman, some of which are currently held in the Feinberg Collection at the Library of Congress. They are accompanied by a coversheet in Whitman’s hand, labelling them “Wm Duckett’s Notes &c: pencil draughts 1886-7.” Duckett’s daily recordings are no rival to Traubel’s *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, however, and if there were notebooks or a more complete series of notes detailing Duckett’s experience boarding with Whitman, they are currently lost or no longer survive.

The few pages that do remain date from November and December of 1886 and primarily account for meals, buggy rides, the weather, and guests at Mickle Street. Despite the Philadelphia *Times* report that “a boy” is “collecting the Poet’s sayings,” Duckett’s notes include few direct quotes from Whitman. In a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke, Canadian physician and, later, literary executor to the poet, Duckett offers his notes for Bucke’s collection of materials by and about Whitman, but as William White argues, since the notes contain



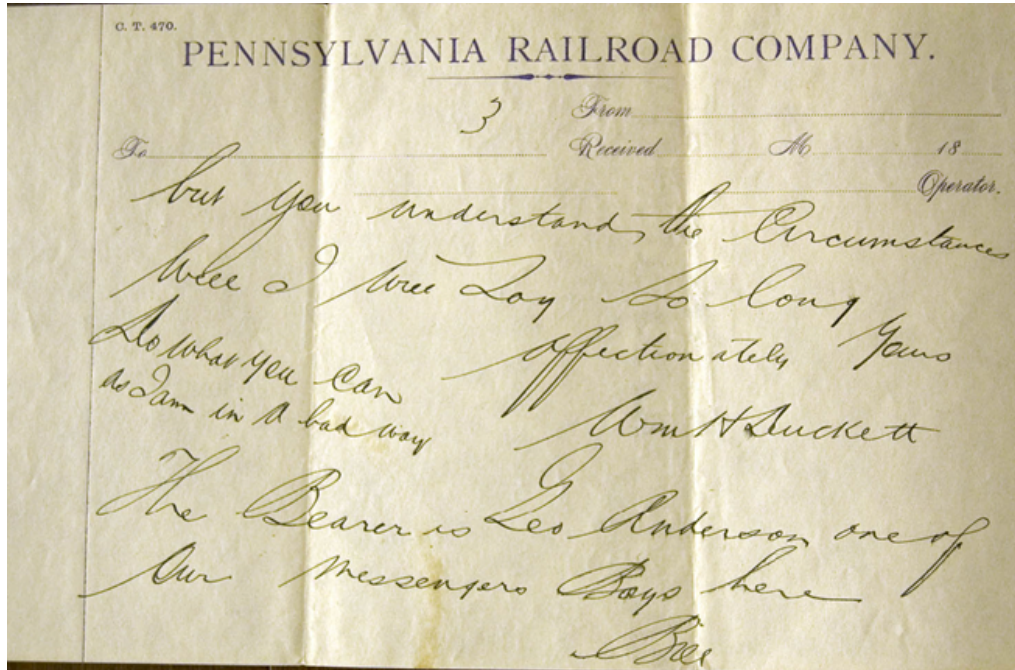


Figure 6: Letter from Duckett to Walt Whitman, December 20, 1889. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress.

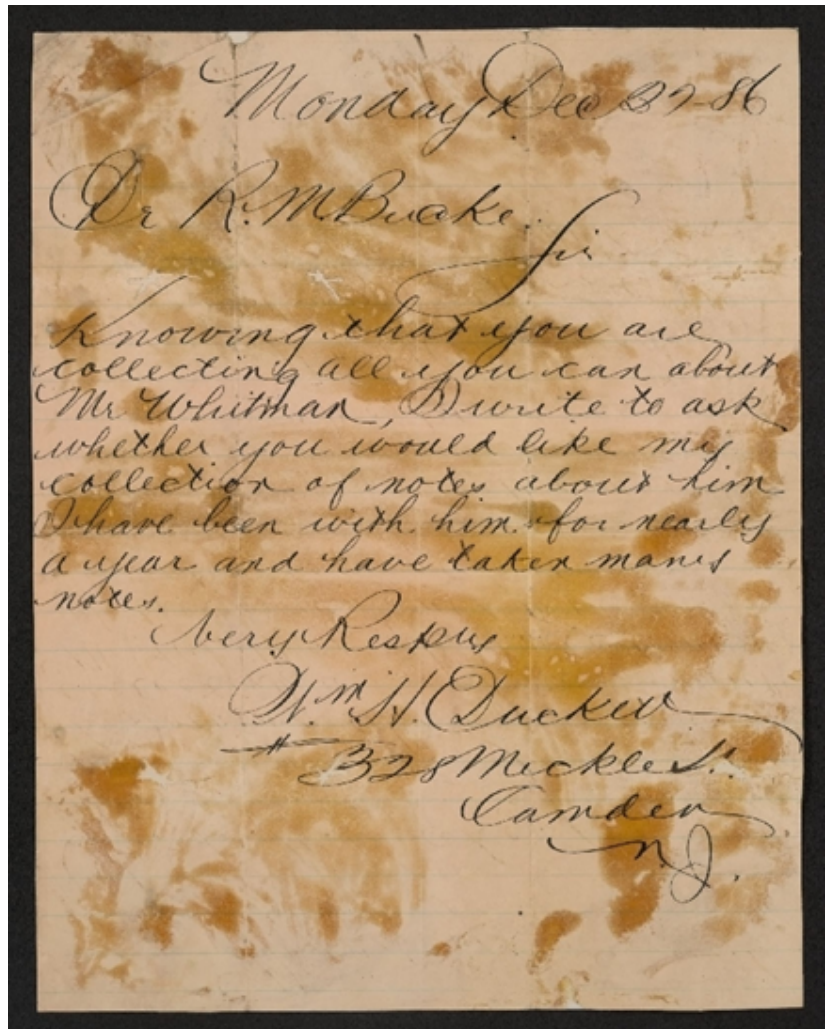


Figure 7: Letter from Duckett to R. M. Bucke. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress.



little valuable information, it is unlikely Bucke would have found them worth acquiring (see Figure 7). Despite the possibility presented by F. DeWolfe Miller that Whitman may have collaborated in the writing of the notes—perhaps intending them as a source of income for Duckett—Bucke pronounced Duckett a “moral imbecile,” and he likely felt no obligation to help Bill financially by purchasing them.<sup>55</sup>

Dating from roughly the same period as Duckett’s notes, Whitman composed a glowing narrative of his friendship with Duckett, written from Duckett’s perspective, like Whitman’s previous letter to one of Duckett’s potential employers. Miller describes this narrative as Whitman’s “unique attempt to present himself as seen by a youth,” but adds that “every sentence except the last has its precedent in previous writings about himself.”<sup>56</sup> The mentions of Whitman’s health complaints alongside contradictory descriptions of his “good appetite” and “full-blooded” body are typical of his self-promotion, and the narrative even includes a passing endorsement for *Specimen Days*. But the narrative’s physical descriptions of Whitman as, “close to six feet high” and “weigh[ing] over 200 pounds” are far more detailed than any of Duckett’s notes, which barely mention Whitman’s appearance. While Whitman attributes this degree of physiological attention to a youthful perspective, Duckett’s notes contain more description of the poet’s horse than of the poet himself and seem to be little more than the dailies of Whitman’s carriage driver. Perhaps intending for the notes to provide both another small source of income for the young man, as well as a defense of Whitman’s character and even their own relationship, Whitman’s ghostwritten narrative emphasizes the poet’s “great frankness and naturalness,” and pronounces him “entirely free from indelicacy or any unchastity.”<sup>57</sup> It also serves to enumerate the qualities Whitman wanted youth to see in him, perhaps as a model for emulation, including “patience, good nature, and a sunny disposition.” Among these virtues are Whitman’s selfless giving “to the poor” and his willingness to assist “indigent old persons and widows constantly, sometimes with food or fuel or money, sometimes paying the rent.” This last act of charity sounds especially ironic in light of the 1889 suit against Duckett. Whitman’s final gift of \$10 to Duckett, though, shows that there may be some sincerity to the narrative’s conclusion that “he [Whitman] always gave me good advice and help and was the best friend I ever had.” This final sentence also sounds eulogistic and may lend some credibility to the *Epoch*’s account of the boy who will lecture on Whitman “when he is dead.”

The year 1889, with the lawsuit and the press coverage of the Duckett-Whitman bond, culminated in what appears to have been a complete severance

of the friendship, and Whitman had no known connection to Duckett during the last two years of his life. After the year's end, the specifics of Bill Duckett's life have been hazy at best, save the possibility that he posed nude for the painter and photographer Thomas Eakins at the Philadelphia Art League.<sup>58</sup> While there are still many gaps in Duckett's biography, the developing narrative of his life in the 1890s is equally, if not more, interesting than that of his youth. As far as we know, he was unattached at this time and was starting to make his own way in the world; once he had the skills of telegraphy, he could apply for positions that allowed him to explore a number of cities. His frequent moves might help explain why the adult Duckett has proven hard to trace, since telegraphy may have taken him as far west as Ohio and, later, as far south as North Carolina. A William H. Duckett, Telegraph Operator for Western Union, appears in the 1893 Cincinnati, Ohio City Directory.<sup>59</sup> Not referenced in any previous or subsequent directories for the city, this William Duckett lived in a boarding house on W. 4th Street, and he only remained there for one year. Employment with Western Union may have led Bill to move from Cincinnati to the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, by April of 1895.

### Bill at Home in the South

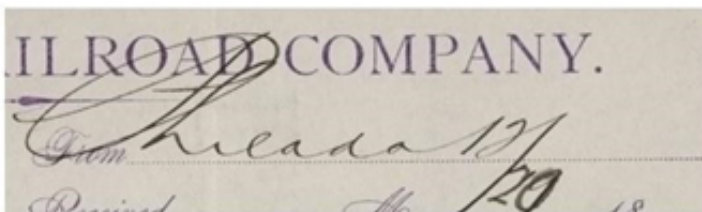
The April 12, 1895, issue of the *Daily Concord Standard* notes that "Mr. Wm. H Duckett" had temporarily left Charlotte to work as a "night operator" in the neighboring city of Concord.<sup>60</sup> Back in Charlotte shortly afterward,<sup>61</sup> Duckett was living at 308 South Church Street, a popular boarding house owned by a Mrs. Bradshaw.<sup>62</sup> Early records of Tryon Street Methodist Episcopal Church list Duckett as a member residing at the Church Street address, also home to fellow church members, the Creswell family.<sup>63</sup> Sharing the boarding house were Ed F. Creswell, his wife Mamie (Frazier) Creswell, Mary I (Jamison) Creswell, and her daughter Annie. While living on Church Street, Duckett helped his friend Charles Frazier secretly elope with Annie Creswell despite her mother's objections to their union.<sup>64</sup> Serving as official witness to the marriage, Duckett signed the marriage certificate and listed the city in which he was born as "Philada," an abbreviation for Philadelphia he had used previously on an extant letter to Whitman (see Figure 8 for handwriting comparison).<sup>65</sup> The Frazier-Creswell wedding foreshadows Duckett's future in Charlotte, since by July of that year, he would apply for a marriage license of his own.

At some point, after arriving in North Carolina, Bill Duckett began a relationship with Eleanor Adelaide "Addie" Jamison, the daughter of Robert

McKee Jamison and his second wife Sarah L. (Todd). Addie was dubbed by the local press as “one of the fairest of Charlotte’s fair ones and otherwise attractive.”<sup>66</sup> Though possibly Bill was drawn to Addie’s charm, the Jamisons’ social position would also have appealed to him; Mr. Jamison had at one time been a prominent blacksmith, and the Jamisons were a well-connected family.<sup>67</sup> On July 2, 1895, Duckett, then age twenty-six, and Addie, twenty-two, applied for their marriage license, and a private ceremony in nearby Paw Creek followed two days later.<sup>68</sup> This certificate significantly notes the connections that allow us to identify William H. Duckett of Charlotte as Whitman’s Bill.<sup>69</sup> With Philadelphia listed as his city of birth and his deceased parents recorded as William H. and Matilda Duckett, also of Philadelphia, the information is too consistent with what we know of Bill Duckett’s history to refer to any other Bill Duckett from Pennsylvania. The Duckett-Jamison wedding announcement that later appeared in the paper notes that, although Duckett had not been in North Carolina very long, he had made many friends in Charlotte.<sup>70</sup> The paper added that Duckett, a telegrapher by trade, was planning to connect with the city’s YMCA, an affiliation he could have established through the local church. By all accounts, the Ducketts settled into their new life as a wedded couple, renting a home with Addie’s mother, the recently-widowed Sarah, shortly after the marriage. Sarah Jamison died less than a year later, in May 1896, about a month before the birth of Bill and Addie’s first and only child, a son named Robert McKee after Addie’s father.<sup>71</sup>

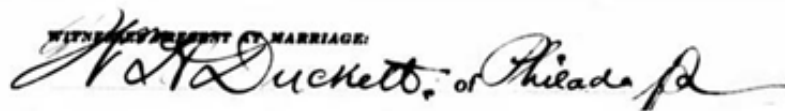


Letter from Wm. H. Duckett to Whitman in December 1889



From letter to WW in December 1889

Figure 8: Handwriting comparison of letter from Duckett to Whitman (above) and as witness to the Fraizer-Creswell marriage (below).



Witness to Charles Frazier and Annie Creswell’s Marriage, June 1895

“At midnight tonight the year 1896 will pass into history,” declared a writer for the *Mecklenburg Times* in a report on Tryon Street Methodist Church’s New Year’s Eve service: “This year has been an eventful one for Charlotte, the State, and the country at large.”<sup>72</sup> The year was no less eventful for the Ducketts and Jamisons; the birth of Robert, a change of address, and the death of Addie’s mother mark 1896 as a year of rapid change. The Christmas season offered no respite from transition and leave-taking. At some point around Christmas Eve, when baby Robert was nearly seven months old, as the divorce records would later indicate, Bill Duckett suddenly abandoned his young family and left Mecklenburg County and possibly even the state of North Carolina.<sup>73</sup> What happened during the holiday season that made Bill leave so abruptly is uncertain, and many questions remain unanswered: Were there past mistakes he was worried would be found out? Had he given up attempting to fit into the comfortable society the Jamison family represented? Had he conned his new family out of assets and fled town, living up to his notorious reputation among Whitman’s friends? It is even possible to imagine the couple simply parting ways, with Duckett returning to his transitory lifestyle and Addie remaining in the social circles to which she was accustomed, but the official records offer no definitive explanation for Duckett’s abrupt departure.

After abandoning his wife and small child in December 1896, Duckett’s whereabouts recede back into obscurity. An index card at the National Archives provides scanty information on a William H. Duckett who enlisted in Company E of the Second North Carolina Infantry during the Spanish American War of 1898.<sup>74</sup> The volunteer roster lists this Duckett as coming from Charlotte and enlisting for two-years on June 13<sup>th</sup>, only to be mustered out of service on November 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same year, a few months after the end of the war. This company did not see any action, but spent the duration of 1898 training in Georgia, before the men were mustered out near Tarboro, North Carolina.<sup>75</sup> Until more conclusive evidence is found on this Private William H. Duckett, it is impossible to determine whether this proves Addie’s ex-husband abandoned her and later pursued a brief military service, though the notion is enticing.

For four years after Bill’s departure, Addie raised their son and continued to participate in social events around Charlotte. In the 1900 census, mother and son are listed alongside the head-of-household William Duckett Jr, a telegraph operator by profession,<sup>76</sup> who was perhaps included as a mere formality, since the divorce records indicate no one had seen or heard from him during the previous four years.<sup>77</sup> Living with Addie at 300½ South Church Street was her brother Dr. Isaac Wilton Jamison, who would serve as young Robert’s male



authority-figure in his father's absence. On December 6, 1900, Addie filed for divorce in Mecklenburg County Court, which she was granted in March of the following year along with sole custody of her four-year-old son.<sup>78</sup> Nine months after the divorce was finalized, on the day after Christmas, Addie celebrated her second marriage. In a well-attended ceremony, she exchanged vows with Warren Stokes Shelor in her parlor on Church Street which was "beautifully decorated with holly and mistletoe," according to the *Charlotte Observer*.<sup>79</sup>

The Shelor-Duckett wedding garnered much more fanfare than that of Duckett-Jamison. Surrounded by well-wishing friends and given away by her brother, Addie wore "a lovely gray poplin dress, trimmed in crepe de chine lace." Shelor was a clothing salesman originally from South Carolina who would later become a haberdasher in Charlotte.<sup>80</sup> In 1903, the couple welcomed their only child together, Warren S. Shelor, Jr. The well-connected family was frequently featured in local papers; the *Charlotte Observer*, for example, printed a picture of Warren, Jr. under the heading of "Belles and Beaux of the Future" in October 1904,<sup>81</sup> and letters to Santa from Robert and his half-brother indicate that the two were brotherly affectionate, at least when young.<sup>82</sup>

### Bill Duckett's Death and Legacy

In 1904, eight years after Duckett's quick departure from Charlotte and the year his son Robert turned eight, the Pennsylvania courts audited the Joseph H. Duckett estate. It is uncertain whether court officials contacted Addie or the Shelor family had previously connected with Bill's relatives in Philadelphia, but a notice published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* announced that the case would be discussed in early June.<sup>83</sup> That same month in Mecklenburg County, Dr. Isaac Wilton Jamison filed to be the guardian and financial manager for Robert Duckett until he came of age. The guardianship documents indicate that Robert stood to inherit up to \$4,500 from a Fidelity Trust that had belonged to his father, Bill.<sup>84</sup> Jamison then went to Philadelphia, "to look after some property interests inherited by his little nephew."<sup>85</sup> It cannot be a coincidence that Jamison went to Philadelphia regarding an inheritance for Robert the very week that the trust was due to be audited and distributed. This evidence decisively reaffirms that Robert McKee Duckett was the child of Bill Duckett, something previously unknown to Whitman scholars.

But the court dealings with the estate of Joseph H. Duckett were still not entirely settled; it would not be until 1906, thirty-nine years after Joseph's death, that the heirs would see the distribution of the remaining assets. Joseph's eldest daughter Margaretta and her husband, Joseph Stelwagon, concerned about their



children's share of the inheritance, appealed the court's earlier ruling regarding the division of the estate.<sup>86</sup> The previous verdict was reversed, and the descendants of Joseph Duckett's children, including Robert McKee Duckett, became legal heirs entitled to a portion of the estate. Without the documentation of these legal battles over the inheritance that clearly list Robert as the surviving son of Bill and Whitman's casual reference to Duckett's trust fund, we might never have found Bill in North Carolina.

What can be ascertained by the transfer of guardianship of Bill Duckett's son to I. W. Jamison and Robert's claim to the inheritance of the trust fund is that the Pennsylvania courts and the Fidelity Company knew or at least presumed Bill Duckett to be deceased by the time of the 1904 court proceedings. One possible narrative of Bill's demise ends in a Philadelphia jail cell on September 21, 1902, when, according to a newspaper notice the following morning, "William H. Duckett, 35 years old, was found dead in a cell at the Eleventh and Winter streets station house."<sup>87</sup> The two-paragraph notice details how Duckett had been arrested and taken to Hahnemann Hospital where "physicians diagnosed his case to be acute alcoholism." The man was taken back to the station house and died at some point in the evening; his body was discovered by the morning staff the next day. If this is truly Whitman's Bill, however, it would be the first record of Duckett's struggle with alcoholism, and the absence of such references in Whitman's letters and notebooks concerning the young man introduces questions to this claim for his identity.

News of this man's death appears twice in print, with the initial write-up being followed by a brief notice of funeral details two days later. In both cases, he is named "William H. Duckett," a name at odds with both the interment record and death certificate that clearly give the name "William A. Duckett."<sup>88</sup> The changing middle initial could have several origins, and it is easy to imagine "H" being verbally slurred into "A," mistakenly transcribed in a station ledger, and subsequently corrected for the newspaper by a relative or friend of Duckett. Initially interred at Oddfellows Cemetery on September 24, 1902, Duckett's body would not rest undisturbed for long, as he continued in death the constant relocations he had made in life. This William was moved to Lawnview Cemetery when the city of Philadelphia purchased Oddfellows Cemetery in 1950 and disinterred the bodies as part of an early stage of urban renewal. While Bill Duckett's fate—exactly when and how he died—remains uncertain, this "William A. Duckett," nevertheless, remains a strong candidate for Whitman's Bill (William H.).

It is unfortunate that Bill Duckett died before he had a chance to recon-

nect with his son or even to learn from newspaper accounts about Robert's military service and later, his career and family in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 1917, twenty-one-year-old Robert left Raleigh for military training at Camp Sevier following the United States' entry into World War I. A notice in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* indicates that a Fidelity Trust account in the name of Robert M. Duckett's guardian, presumably still Isaac Wilton Jamison, was audited yet again.<sup>89</sup> Soon to be a legal adult, Robert may have gained full control of his Trust as he prepared to leave his reporting job and enlist in the First World War. The *Charlotte News* announced that he resigned from the local staff of the *Raleigh Times* to serve in the Army's 60<sup>th</sup> infantry brigade.<sup>90</sup> "[It] nearly killed me when I saw him marching away in his uniform," Addie confides in a letter to her brother shortly after Robert's departure. For her, that day was "like a funeral," yet she took comfort and pride in being "the mother of such a son" who fought "for the women and children, not only of this country, but those across the sea."<sup>91</sup> In a letter written from France on the date of the Allied offensive (July 15, 1918) and published in the *Raleigh News and Observer*, Duckett declares that "people at home" are "ignorant as to the real game of war as it is played nowadays."<sup>92</sup> He adds, "an opinion may be had from the press and periodicals, but the 'real thing' is a picture that cannot be painted," a sentiment that poignantly echoes Whitman's own claim that the "real" Civil War would "never get in the books."<sup>93</sup>

Within a decade after returning from the War, Robert Duckett married Ruth Addison Lee (1926),<sup>94</sup> was treated for rabies (1929),<sup>95</sup> and celebrated the birth of his daughter, Nancy (1929), in the same year that also saw the Great Stock Market Crash.<sup>96</sup> From 1935-1938, in the middle of the Great Depression, he worked for the Unemployment Service in Raleigh as senior interviewer and later as district manager.<sup>97</sup> He would go on to reestablish his pre-World War I affiliation with North Carolina newspapers, and at the time of his passing on December 16, 1965, he had been librarian for the *Raleigh Times* and the *Raleigh News and Observer* for ten years.<sup>98</sup> He was survived by his wife, daughter, and mother; Addie died the following year, at the age of 94.<sup>99</sup> Addie, Robert, and several other members of The Duckett/Shelor family are buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh. Robert's daughter Nancy followed in her father's footsteps and worked as a journalist and public information officer of the Department of Community Colleges of the State Board of Education; her articles were published in numerous North Carolina newspapers. Although she was married twice, as far as we know, she died childless in 1998, the last known descendant of Bill Duckett.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

During the years Bill Duckett knew America's poet, he served as Whitman's driver, attendant, hired help, and would-be chronicler; but his potential to fulfill a more central role was unrealized as the poet neared the end of his life. Despite having the drafted reminiscence in Whitman's hand and a short series of personal recordings that reflect daily life on Mickle Street, Duckett seems never to have published that material, perhaps not wanting to draw attention to the Davis lawsuit against him for failing to pay room and board. Nor was Duckett to become the biographer of Whitman's last years: that place would belong to Horace Traubel, who spent years documenting his conversations with Whitman with his voluminous *With Walt Whitman in Camden*. Warren Fritzing, the son of a sea captain and a ward of Davis, displaced Duckett as Whitman's young companion and served as his final nurse.<sup>101</sup> Although Duckett might not have wanted to be found after he abandoned his family in December 1896, the record of this elusive Whitman comrade is beginning to come into focus. The years following his service to Whitman are no longer entirely a mystery; Duckett's work as a telegraph operator and attempt at building a family in North Carolina give us insight into the adult life of one who forever remained a teenager in the eyes of Whitman chroniclers. Duckett's movements as a telegrapher travelling from city to city merit further research, as do his whereabouts following his hasty departure from North Carolina. Often considered a con man and "moral imbecile" in Whitman's inner circle, there might remain more skeletons in Duckett's closet to be revealed, and, if he was the con man they accused him of being, many that might never be known.

While discussing Mary's suit against Bill Duckett with Traubel, Whitman states his conviction that "there seem to be some men, some natures, that must develop, must display, the bad, just as the snake gives its poison, just as the tiger exercises its ferocity."<sup>102</sup> Whitman's emphasis on latent character flaws may indicate that Duckett's faults had become increasingly visible to the poet over time. Yet, Whitman continues to seem conflicted in his estimate of Duckett: "poor boy! poor boy! I pity him: I would receive him today if he needed me: would help him: I am sure I would be the first to help him," a sentiment that suggests Whitman may have truly aspired to be the "best friend" Duckett ever had. Even as Duckett grew up and sought employment that would take him farther and farther away from Camden, Whitman likely remained "more interested" in Bill's life and advancing career than Duckett would ever know, even though the two were no longer able to keep in touch across time and distance. Our research has revealed previously unknown details and offers a much fuller picture of

Duckett's development into manhood, his career and his family, a future that Whitman never witnessed. Never able to take root in one locale, his was a life-time of relocation, forever caught between staying and going, bachelorhood and marriage, North and South, as new responsibilities attempted to pin him down.

*The University of Iowa*

## Notes

1 See Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 122; Gay Wilson Allen, *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 523; Justin Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 28; Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 437.

2 Thomas Donaldson, *Walt Whitman the Man* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1896); David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996); Philip Callow, *From Noon to Starry Night: A Life of Walt Whitman* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992); Emory Holloway, *Free and Lonesome Heart: The Secret of Walt Whitman* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960); Gary Schmidgall, *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life* (New York: William Abrahams; Dutton, 1997); Charley Shively, *Calamus Lovers: Walt Whitman's Working-Class Camerados* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1987).

3 Photograph of Walt Whitman and Bill Duckett, 1886, by Lorenzo Fisler. Ohio Wesleyan University, Bayley Collection, Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org)) ID: owu.00068. Hereafter, *WWA*; Photograph of Walt Whitman and Bill Duckett in Phaeton, Camden, NJ, 1886, by Lorenzo Fisler. Ohio Wesleyan University, Bayley Collection, *WWA* ID: owu.00068. The photograph of Whitman and Duckett in his phaeton was also published in Thomas Donaldson's *Walt Whitman The Man*, between pages 192 and 193.

4 Ed Folsom, "Whitman's Calamus Photographs," in *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 193-219.

5 "Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Births, 1860-1906," database with images, *FamilySearch*; image 227 of 628; City of Philadelphia, Department of Records, Pennsylvania.

6 Year: 1880; Census Place: Camden, Camden, New Jersey; Roll: 773; Page: 141D; Enumeration District: 044. Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *1880 United States Federal Census*. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

7 Death records for Lydia Watson, Bill's grandmother, record conflicting dates for her death. Ancestry.com records January 10, 1886, citing the *New Jersey, Deaths and Burials Index, 1798-1971*, while Familysearch.com, citing the same source, gives January 10, 1887.

8 *Daybooks and Notebooks: Daybooks, December 1881-1891*, ed. William White (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 2:421. Hereafter, *DBN*.



- 9 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (various publishers, 1905–1996), 4:65. Hereafter, *WWC*. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 10 *WWC*, 5:82.
- 11 *WWC*, 4:65.
- 12 *WWC*, 4:65.
- 13 *WWC*, 5:329-330. Harriet Duckett Ellis (1853-1889), wife of Joseph Champion Ellis, was the eldest daughter of William Henry Duckett Sr. and his first wife, whose name is currently unknown.
- 14 Letter from William H. Duckett to Walt Whitman, December 20, 1889. *WWA* ID: loc.02004. Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress. Duckett leaves off the year in his dating of the letter, but tells Whitman, “I was over to see you some days since but you was unable to see me.” He is possibly referring to a visit made in November 1889. Traubel relates Whitman saying on November 29th, “Billy was here to see me the other day, but they would not let him in—the people downstairs” (*WWC*, 6:167).
- 15 “Death of an Old and Respected Citizen,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (April 8, 1867), 2.
- 16 *Pennsylvania State Reports*, vol. 214. William I. Schaffer, reporter (The Banks Law Publishing Company, 1906), 362-368.
- 17 Birth record for Harriet: Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records; Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669-2013 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Birth record for Laura: Source Citation Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Collection Name: Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records Source Information Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669-1999 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Original data: Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Methodist Church Records. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Eastern Pennsylvania United Methodist Church Commission on Archives and History 2 42154\_329967-00044.
- 18 War Record: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registration Records (Provost Marshal General’s Bureau; Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865); Record Group: 110, Records of the Provost Marshal General’s Bureau (Civil War); Collection Name: Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863-1865 (Civil War Union Draft Records); NAI: 4213514; Archive Volume Number: 1 of 1 Source Information Ancestry.com. U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Original data: Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registrations, 1863-1865. NM-65, entry 172, 620 volumes. NAI: 4213514. Records of the Provost Marshal General’s Bureau (Civil War), Record Group 110. National Archives at Washington D.C 32178\_645874\_0062-00286.
- 19 Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Births, 1860-1906.
- 20 “United States Census, 1870,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6WJ7-H1X?cc=1438024&wcc=92KW-829%3A518666601%2C519997601%2C520051401> : 22 May 2014), Pennsylvania > Philadelphia > Philadelphia, ward 20 > image 1207 of 2859; citing NARA microfilm publication M593 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).



- 21 Death Certificate: Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803-1915,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JKQ1-5WG> : 9 December 2014), Matilda Duckett, 02 Nov 1871; citing item 1, Philadelphia City Archives and Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; FHL microfilm 2,020,949; Will: Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania, Wills and Probate Records, 1683-1993 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: Pennsylvania County, District and Probate Courts Image 226.
- 22 *Gopsill’s Philadelphia City Directory for 1874*. Isaac Costa, ed. (Philadelphia: James Gopsill, 1874), 421. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
- 23 “United States Census, 1880,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MNZP-4DG> : 29 August 2017), William Duckett in household of Harry Sellers, Camden, Camden, New Jersey, United States; citing enumeration district ED 44, sheet 141D, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 0773; FHL microfilm 1,254,773; United States Census, 1880,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MNZ5-VWF> : 12 August 2017), William H Duckett in household of Joseph C Ellis, Ellisburg, Camden, New Jersey, United States; citing enumeration district ED 59, sheet 458D, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 0774; FHL microfilm 1,254,774.
- 24 Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803-1915,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JKQM-VPX> : 9 December 2014), William H. Duckett, 07 Jul 1880; citing, Philadelphia City Archives and Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; FHL microfilm 2,047,203.
- 25 William White, “Billy Duckett: Whitman Rogue,” *American Book Collector* 21 (February 1971), 20-23. Allen mistakenly writes that it was Duckett’s mother, not his grandmother, who had recently died prior to his boarding at Mickle Street (*Solitary Singer*, 523).
- 26 Geoffrey Sill, “Mickle Street House [Camden, New Jersey]” from *The Walt Whitman Encyclopedia*, available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 27 *Howe’s Camden City & County Directory* (Philadelphia: C. E. Howe Co, 1884), 520. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
- 28 See “Racing News,” *The Bicycling World* 13.11 (July 16, 1886), 292; “Sea Isle City,” *The (Camden) Morning Post*, (July 9, 1886), 2.
- 29 See “The Path,” *The Cycle* 1 (June 11, 1886), 205.
- 30 “Races at Merchantville,” *Camden Daily Courier* 5 (June 21, 1886), 1.
- 31 “Rinkles from the Rinks,” *The Morning Post* (March 2, 1885), 1.
- 32 Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection: Supplementary File, 1806-1981; Speeches and Writings File, 1866-1978; Articles and other writings; Duckett, William H., diary notes, 1886-1887, with introductory note by Whitman; mss18630, box 74.
- 33 John Browning, quoted in “Life Hereabouts,” by Charley Humes *Courier-Post* (June 1, 1950), 2.
- 34 *WWC*, 4:65
- 35 “Sea Isle City,” *Courier-Post* (July 9, 1886), 2.

- 36 Elizabeth L. Keller, *Walt Whitman in Mickle Street* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1921), 69-70.
- 37 “An Old Poet’s Reception,” *The Evening Sun*, (April 15, 1887), WWA ID: med.00558.
- 38 *WWC*, 4:65.
- 39 *DBN*, 2:382; 2:384.
- 40 White, 22.
- 41 Letter from Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, January 31, 1889. *WWA* ID: loc.07574.
- 42 Letter from Bill Duckett to Richard Maurice Bucke, December 27, 1886. Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection: Supplementary File, 1806-1981; Speeches and Writings File, 1866-1978; Articles and other writings; Duckett, William H., diary notes, 1886-1887, with introductory note by Whitman; mss18630, box 74.
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- 44 For Whitman’s note about paying \$16, see *DBN* 2:400. For his mention of the \$10, see *DBN* 2:511.
- 45 “Personals Column,” *Camden Daily Telegram* (March 20, 1888), 1.
- 46 Walt Whitman to the Philadelphia *Press*, June 2, 1886, *WWA* ID: loc.03500.
- 47 See Charles M. Oliver, *Critical Companion to Walt Whitman* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 279; White, 21.
- 48 *DBN*, 2:390; 396.
- 49 See *DBN*, 2:410; 414; 429; 432; see also 349n1907.
- 50 *DBN*, 3:429. See “William H. Duckett” in *Howe’s Camden City and County Directory* (1888-1889), 717. Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; *Howe’s Camden City Directory* (1887-1888), 216. Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
- 51 Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection: General Correspondence, 1841-1892; Duckett, William H., undated, series: General Correspondence, 1841-1892. Mss18630, box 9; reel 5-6.
- 52 *DBN*, 2:357.
- 53 Richard Maurice Bucke, *Calamus: A Series of Letters written during the years 1868-1880* (Boston: L. Maynard, 1897), 32-33.
- 54 *WWC*, 6:79.
- 55 F. DeWolfe Miller, “New Glimpses of Walt Whitman in 1886,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 8 (1963), 71-80; *WWC*, 4:66.
- 56 Miller, 78-79.
- 57 Whitman’s handwritten notes are included in the file with Duckett’s diary notes in the Feinberg Collection. Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection: Supplementary File, 1806-

1981; Speeches and Writings File, 1866-1978; Articles and other writings; Duckett, William H., diary notes, 1886-1887, with introductory note by Whitman, series: Supplementary File, 1806-1981, mss18630, box 74.

58 See Folsom, "Whitman's Calamus Photographs," in *Breaking Bounds*, 211-212.

59 *William's Cincinnati Directory* (Cincinnati: Directory Office, 1893), 438. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

60 *The Charlotte Observer* (April 12, 1895), 4.

61 *Daily Concord Standard* (April 18, 1895), 3.

62 *The Charlotte Observer* (August 12, 1888), 4.

63 M. M. McEwen, *First United Methodist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina* (Charlotte, NC: Heritage Printers, 1983), 35.

64 "And They Were Wed," *The Charlotte Observer* (June 4, 1895), 4. Charles and Annie were married over forty years and had two daughters, Lucille and Helen. Charles, a Charlotte cafe owner, died in 1936, survived by Annie who died in 1962.

65 Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. Microfilm. Record Group 048. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC 42091\_333005-00746.

66 "To Celebrate the Fourth," *The Charlotte Observer* (July 4, 1895), 4.

67 "Blacksmithing," *The Charlotte Democrat* (January 18, 1870), 1.

68 "A July Wedding," *The Charlotte Observer* (July 3, 1895), 2.

69 Ancestry.com. *North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. Microfilm. Record Group 048. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC 42091\_333005-00746.

70 "To Celebrate the Fourth," *The Charlotte Observer* (July 4, 1895), 4.

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74 Ancestry.com. *U.S., Spanish American War Volunteers Index to Compiled Military Service Records, 1898*. Provo, UT; Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

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77 Superior Court of North Carolina, Mecklenburg County. E. Adelaide Duckett vs. William H. Duckett, December 6, 1900.

78 *The Charlotte News* (March 28, 1901), 1.

79 *The Charlotte Observer* (December 27, 1901), 6.

80 “Shelor & Company,” *News and Observer* (December 15, 1906), 3.

81 *The Charlotte Observer* (October 9, 1904), 15.

82 *The Charlotte News* (December 14, 1904), 10; *The Charlotte News* (December 9, 1905), 9.

83 *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 24, 1904), 14.

84 Wills and Estate Papers (Mecklenburg County), 1663-1978; Author: North Carolina. Division of Archives and History (Raleigh, North Carolina); Probate Place: Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: North Carolina County, District and Probate Courts.

85 *The Charlotte News* (June 4, 1904), 5.

86 *Pennsylvania State Reports*, vol. 214. William I. Schaffer, reporter (The Banks Law Publishing Company, 1906), 362-368.

87 The death certificate lists Duckett’s age as “about 35 years.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 22, 1902), 7. *Inquirer* (September 24, 1902), 15. See also “Died of Alcoholism,” *Miners Journal* (September 24, 1902), 3.

88 Internment Record: Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records; Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669-2013 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Death certificate: Ancestry.com. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Death Certificates Index, 1803-1915. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. “Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803-1915.” Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2008, 2010. From originals housed at the Philadelphia City Archives. “Death Records.”

89 *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 3, 1917), 11.

90 *The Charlotte News* (July 16, 1917), 2.

91 *The Charlotte News* (October 12, 1917), 13.

92 *News and Observer* (August 4, 1918), 13.

93 *Specimen Days & Collect* (Philadelphia, David McKay, 1882), 80.

94 Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

95 *Greensboro Daily News* (May 2, 1929).

96 Ancestry.com. U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

97 *News and Observer* (February 10, 1937); *News and Observer* (June 22, 1938); Genealogybank.com.

98 *The High Point (NC) Enterprise* (December 16, 1965), 53.

99 North Carolina State Archives; Raleigh, North Carolina; *North Carolina Death Certificates*. Ancestry.com. *North Carolina, Death Certificates, 1909-1976*. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2007.

100 First Marriage: May 29, 1959 Source Information Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. Microfilm. Record Group 048. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC 42091\_343420-02679; Second Marriage: December 6, 1963 Source Information Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. Microfilm. Record Group 048. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC 42091\_343394-01253.

101 Loving describes Duckett as “a sailor who was an acquaintance of Mrs. Davis’s” (*Song of Himself*, 450). Duckett seems to be partially confused here with Frank Warren Fritzingler, or “Warrie” as Whitman affectionately referred him. Fritzingler was the son of a sea captain and had gone to sea by the age of 13 (1880 census). Duckett’s occupation, however, is consistently listed in relation to telegraphy. There does not seem to be definitive evidence that Duckett ever went to sea.

102 *WWC*, 1:66.



DEMOCRATIC PORTRAITURE:  
THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF THE  
INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE  
IN WHITMAN'S "SONG OF MYSELF"

PAULO MILLER LOONIN



IN *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari polemicize, “We’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much. . . . Many people have a tree growing in their heads, but the brain itself is much more a grass than a tree.”<sup>1</sup> Their hope for egalitarian rhizomatic grass as an alternative cultural form, one that might displace the hierarchical tree of tradition, continues to be appreciated today. I cite them, however, not to signal a theoretical orientation, but to suggest the enduring relevance of a problem Walt Whitman had previously figured, one that remains core to conversations about a just society. Anticipating Deleuze and Guattari by more than a century, Whitman championed a grassy ideal in 1855, using it as the namesake of his book *Leaves of Grass* and as a prominent figure in its flagship poem that he later titled “Song of Myself.” Yet, while it is easy to see why the hierarchical tree is a problematic model for social formation, a question remains as to the wisdom of assuming, with Deleuze and Guattari—and apparently with Whitman—that grass would not make us suffer just as much. If trees are hegemonic, grass is a faceless interchangeable collection of pieces forming an impersonal aggregate, a field of grass, which might be wild, but can also be landscaped, mowed, and managed. In other words, grass shares many of the traits that make mass populations susceptible to authoritarian power. Trees figure order but at the cost of rigid hierarchy, while grass figures equality but at the potential cost of disorder or populist authoritarianism. While it has become common to describe Whitman as an extremist, he in fact handles this volatile figurative and political material carefully and deftly.

Whitman organizes “Song of Myself” around the tension between both the individual and the collective, seeking to recognize and harmonize these

extremes, a persistent difficulty of democratic life. Following touchstone books by David S. Reynolds and Betsy Erkkila in the late 1980s,<sup>2</sup> much of Whitman scholarship has continued to concentrate on how *Leaves of Grass* engages the politics of antebellum American democracy and egalitarian ideals, even as that scholarship reframes itself according to various turns.<sup>3</sup> Agreeing on the central importance of this topic to Whitman,<sup>4</sup> critics differ on how he handles the tensions that arise between valorizing the individual and the collective.<sup>5</sup> Does one come at the expense of the other? And what does the balance between the individual (the tree or blade of grass) and the collective (the field of grass) mean for the formation of egalitarian democratic politics? In the present essay, I engage this conversation through a misunderstood component of “Song of Myself”: Whitman’s deployment of democratic portraiture.

The influence of photography on “Song of Myself” is well known and photography indeed contributes much to the poem’s formal and theoretical work.<sup>6</sup> As is now established, Whitman departs from the commonly practiced method known as ekphrasis, where poems describe individual artworks. Heavily invested in the aesthetic and rhetorical potential of photographic and visual imagination flowering around him, Whitman takes the photographic portrait as an aesthetic model more than a poetic subject.<sup>7</sup> As Alan Trachtenberg emphasizes, the famous 1855 *Leaves of Grass* frontispiece image of Whitman (see figure 1) “declares the method as well as the author of the book” (65). Ed Folsom even more explicitly states that Whitman “would not write about photography so much as he would write with and from photography” (*Native Representations*, 177). Building on such studies of Whitman and photography, I argue here that Whitman goes beyond drawing inspiration from photographic methods and applying them to poetry. Instead, he uses these methods as a starting point for his account of image-making as a reshaper of political regimes. In “Song of Myself,” he extrapolates from photography to take portraiture in new directions and, finally, to push the limits of democratic formation as such. At issue in this conversation is a judgement about Whitman’s aesthetic politics which critics have generally condemned in one way or another. I demonstrate that the political astuteness of his approach, however, has not been adequately recognized, particularly in his deployment of two distinct varieties of democratic portraiture: the mass-portrait and the portrait-series. Their dynamic counterbalance makes “Song of Myself” a more flexible, comprehensive, and politically sophisticated account of the relationship between self and society than the preponderance of scholarship credits.



Figure 1. Samuel Hollyer engraving of a daguerreotype by Gabriel Harrison (original lost), "Street Figure," 1855. Steel Engraving. Frontispiece for Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.



## Democratic Portraiture and Whitman

Deeper review of the criticism and cultural grounding for democratic portraiture, and the implications of photography (specifically, the shifting daguerreotype), will be brought back into discussion later. Here, I introduce the subject enough to begin a reading of “Song of Myself,” since an understanding of some dimensions of this poem depends upon an understanding of democratic portraiture, my term for the mid-nineteenth-century practice whereby American authors tried to reconceptualize and re-use the traditionally elite genre of portraiture for democratic art and politics. In frontispieces, photographs, narratives, poems, and lectures, Whitman, along with others such as Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville, tested the ways a visual and/or verbal image of one unique self might fit together with images of other equal selves, forging egalitarian social-political forms.<sup>8</sup> Whitman’s democratic portraiture is rooted in alternation and counterpoise, the rhythm and flux of democratic life. The balanced structure of “Song of Myself” combines two aesthetic innovations corresponding to two modes of political formation: the mass-portrait corresponds to representative democracy and the portrait-series to radical democracy. As we shall see, they work together because the series contributes content and difference to the mass while the mass contributes form and unity to the series.

As Whitman was well aware, the portrait condenses expansive aesthetic, political, historical, and interpersonal matter into a tightly contained image. The etymology of “portrait” goes through French “pour trait,” short for “trait pour trait”: “feature for feature” or “line for line.” implying an exact copying of person to picture, and something of that notion attaches to most discussions of the portrait. Addressing painted portraiture in the European tradition, Andreas Beyer states, “There is in fact no real theory of the portrait.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, art history as a field naturally has its classifications and definitions. According to some art historical definitions of the portrait, which limit the category to pictures of actual named persons, the possibility of a *democratic* portrait should be ruled out from the start, since it implies either depicting individually or representing collectively many people—too many to be effectively recognized for their names, physical likenesses, and inner characters (traditional components of the portrait). Art historian James Breckenridge offers the following influential definition:

- 1) [A ‘true’ portrait] must represent a definite person, either living or of the past, with his distinctive human traits.
- 2) The person must be represented in such a manner that under no circumstances can his identity be confused with that of someone else.

3) As a work of art, a portrait must render the personality, i.e., the inner individuality, of the person represented in his outer form.<sup>10</sup>

Given such constraints, philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman finds inherently contradictory “portraits of anonymous sitters, even of crowds, that portray the common people and thus defy representation.”<sup>11</sup>

However, to define as portraiture only such images as communicate the fully individuated identity of historical or contemporary persons is to rule out of bounds the most important questions associated with portraiture, broadly conceived, in the last two hundred years. The fact that democratic portraiture presents something of a paradox should not define it out of discussion but rather demand a consideration. To do justice to my subject, I try to approach such issues in the spirit of Whitman himself, who would find interest in considering what counts as a portrait, but who used the term loosely, granting the broadest possible conception for his own democratic purposes. This broad approach includes both visual and verbal modes of presenting images.<sup>12</sup> For those disposed to enforce tightly controlled genre boundaries, then, it might be fairer to say that, under the name of “portraiture,” this essay considers visual and verbal images of named and unnamed real and fictional persons and even personified forces in addition to portraits in the technical, art historical sense. The key idea I retain from traditional portraiture studies is the requirement of distinction/recognition, the rendering of a unique, specific individuality. It is the compounding of the democratic equality requirement with the traditional distinction/recognition requirement that makes the democratic portrait a volatile and revealing topos for modern representation.

The mass-portrait, one half of Whitman’s democratic portraiture, hinges on the identification of one representative individual with the anonymous mass of population. It is the initial premise on which “Song of Myself” is built, the meaning of “what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you” (13).<sup>13</sup> The speaker here “assumes” that what is true of “Walt Whitman, an American” (29) is true of all and any Americans. Essentially, the mass-portrait in “Song of Myself” is presented as a relationship of identity between the self-portrait of Whitman on the one hand, and crowds—often figured as grass and atoms—on the other. A second iteration of the same identificatory logic uses “I” and “You” as the paired figures of the mass-portrait. These two variations of the mass-portrait can be thought of schematically as “I-am-the-crowd” and “I-am-You.” The apparently dual figure of the mass-portrait is in fact a proper portrait—a single image—because Whitman’s claim is that the speaker *is* the crowd/grass/atoms, the speaker *is* the



reader. They are not two identities but, seen clearly, they are one identity, one image—one comprehensive portrait. The danger of the mass-portrait, syntactically put, is unchecked hypotaxis, the subordination of one term to the other, self to crowd or crowd to self, I to you or you to I.<sup>14</sup>

The portrait-series, in contrast, is just that: a series of images. In “Song of Myself” the portrait-series is synonymous with the catalog sections. It is complementary to the mass-portrait and provides the vital diverse content that makes Whitman’s assertions about the individual’s identity with the whole more than a vacuous abstraction. The symbolically exhaustive stream of images in the poetic catalogs Whitman later denominated as sections 15 and 33 serve as a kind of proof that in the whole world nothing and no one escapes incorporation into the ecstatic I-am-the-crowd, I-am-you. The portrait-series is Whitman’s answer to the riddle of how to integrate the one and the many: the progression of images of distinct persons are a middle ground version of grass and atoms, a middle ground version of the many, but not an identical/anonymous many. The catalogs present a horizontal, egalitarian many that still maintains difference and recognizability—one would not mistake “The duck-shooter walk[ing] by silent and cautious stretches” for “The spinning-girl retreat[ing] and advanc[ing] to the hum of the big wheel” (21) in the way that one would mistake two pieces of grass. The danger of this portrait-series strategy, syntactically put, is unchecked parataxis, the loss of a meaningful order to the flow of images. Late in life, Whitman confessed how this aspect of his portrait program could get out of hand when, looking upon the proliferation of photographs and engravings of himself, he commented that there were so many Whitmans he could not remember which he was.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the portrait-series can potentially disperse identity rather than maintain it.

On its own, the mass-portrait—that is, representative democracy—tends to slide towards too much sameness and flatness (as when everyone is reduced to an anonymous atom or leaf of grass) or too much representativeness (as when everyone is reduced to Whitman’s “I”). On its own, the portrait-series, or radical democracy, tends to slide towards incoherence and disintegration, an interminable list of images and interests with no clear relationship, reference, or meaning. “Song of Myself” is ordered so that the reader passes repeatedly in and out, back and forth, through segments emphasizing the mass-portrait and the portrait-series. The rewriting of hierarchies as equalities and dualities as unities is produced rhetorically by toggling between two modes of imaging democratic formation: the necessary order of the mass-portrait and the egalitarian value of the portrait-series. This is the democratic theory of the poem at work.

Politically, the mass-portrait should especially be understood in terms of the substitution of The People—“the sign of democracy” and “a word en masse” (28-29)—for the royal Sovereign, which in prior political history occupied the role of legitimating the state and holding it together. The famous cover of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* is a benchmark for this vision of the state: the giant figure of the King as Sovereign literally contains the myriad individuals residing within his power (see figure 2). As Hobbes explains, “A multitude of men, are made one person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular.”<sup>16</sup> As Claude Lefort has shown, modern democratic states perform a rhetorical and real inversion whereby the fractious interests of discreet dependent subjects are reconceived as The People and substituted into the role of legitimating and ordering state power; they become the Sovereign symbolically.<sup>17</sup> Whitman performs the same conversion in the mass-portrait. In the Preface to the 1855 *Leaves* he writes, “Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another” (vii). Here Whitman expands the democratic claim to say that not only the collective People are Sovereign (“Supreme”), but that each individual person is also Sovereign. One trouble with this rhetorical claim is that if you try to visualize it as an embodied fact, or even a version of Hobbes’ cover, it is virtually impossible, suggesting that the claim may struggle to gain purchase on actual states of affairs.

Nonetheless, Whitman compensates with an added trick in “Song of Myself,” where the encompassing Sovereign figure alternates between The People and “Walt Whitman, an American.” Like a hologram, a translucent palimpsest, or a daguerreotype that shifts with the angle of view, Whitman’s “I,” his self-portrait, is sometimes positioned as the omnipotent ruler—“I troop forth replenished with supreme power” (43)—and sometimes positioned as one of the small individual figures—“This is the city . . . and I am one of the citizens” (47). The variation affords Whitman his extravagant claims and his humble ruminations without contradiction: he is in both positions, by turns. Meanwhile, he continually provokes The People—his readers—to be their own Sovereign, their own Supreme.<sup>18</sup>

In seeing how democratic portraiture in the poem relates to democratic representation more broadly, I aim to shed light on the way scholars have talked about aesthetics and politics in Whitman’s work. Many treat poetic form and political content as parallel but separate topics, along the lines of David Reynolds, who claims that Whitman “continued to explore the imaginative rather than the political possibilities of reform rhetoric, so that popular reform was chiefly

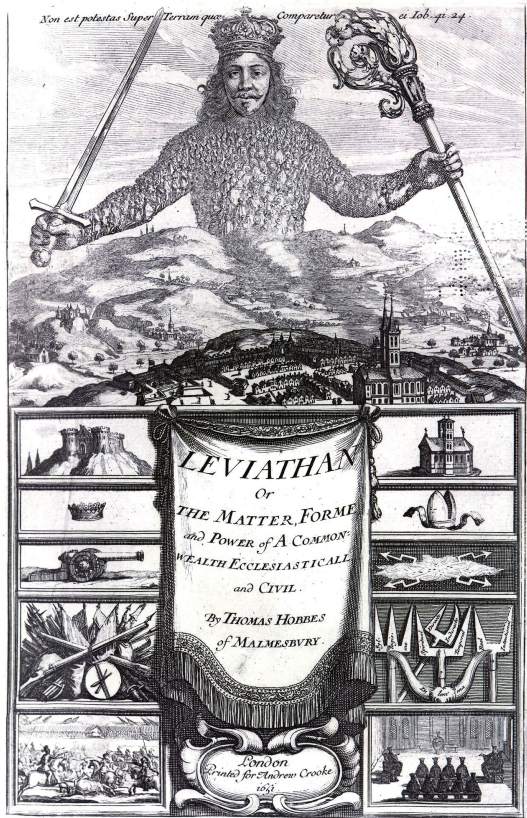
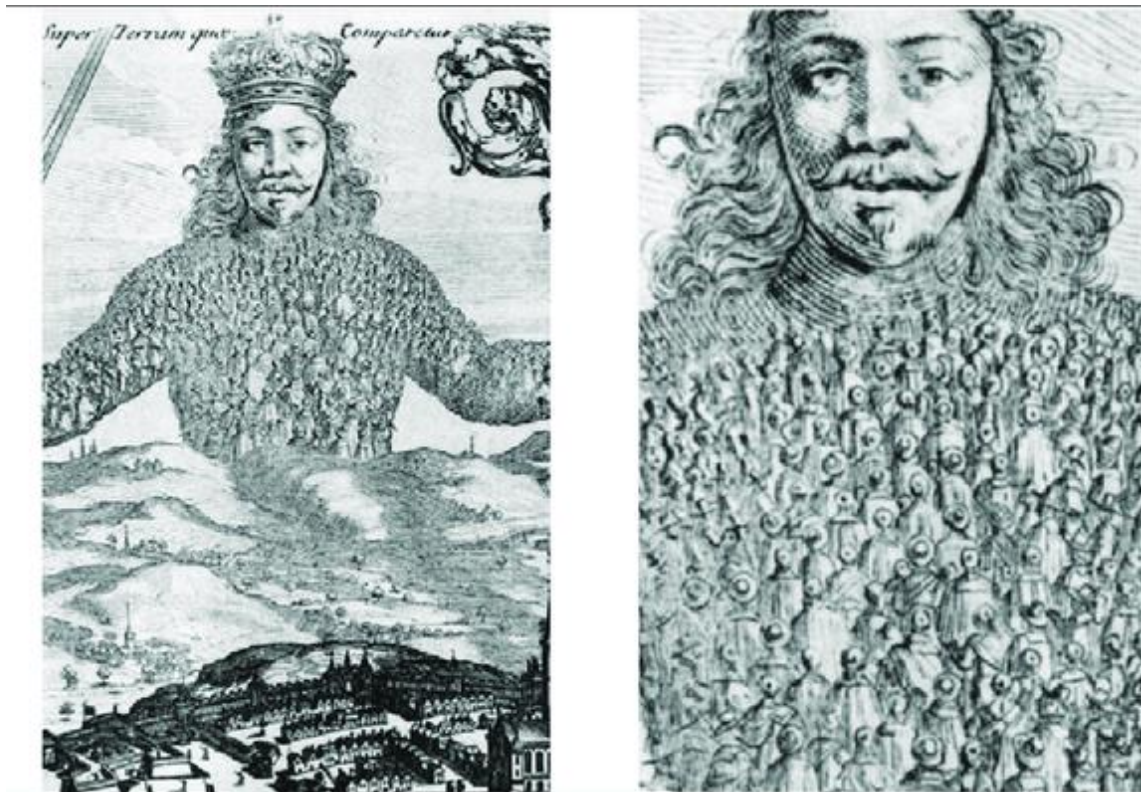


Figure 2. Abraham Bosse with creative input from Thomas Hobbes, 1651. Etching. Frontispiece for Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Below, details from the Bosse etching.





important as a training ground in zestful, defiant writing.”<sup>19</sup> Here politics and style are two different worlds rubbing up against each other, and the interest of the politics lies chiefly in how it influences the style. Betsy Erkkila represents a shift to emphasizing political content as valuable in its own right: “The publication of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855,” she writes, “was not an escape from politics but a continuation of politics by other means” (92). In helpfully recalibrating, however, Erkkila and her successors often veer towards relegating the style to a reflection of the politics. By contrast, I understand aesthetics and politics in “Song of Myself” not as two categories to be weighed against each other but as one formational question about how to imagine and represent a democratic ideal. The aesthetic is political; the political is aesthetic. “Song of Myself” challenges readers with new understandings of representation (literary and political) and representativeness (who is the representative hero of the American epic?), which aim precisely to merge aesthetic-political projects.

Reading portraiture in the poem brings all of these themes to life: Whitman’s effort to represent and achieve equality, the relationship between literary and political representation, and the role played by photography and other visual arts in Whitman’s poetry. By oscillating between the mass-portrait and the portrait-series, Whitman tried to imagine democracy in action while simultaneously enacting it in his poem. Here I show how far he pushed and what formal obstacles he encountered.

### The *Mass* in Mass-Portrait

“Song of Myself” presents itself (indeed is itself ultimately named) as a self-portrait. In fact, the self-portrait is half of the mass-portrait, which has two parts: the self-portrait and the “en-masse”—the collective, the average, the crowd, the grass, the atoms, or the uniformity of Whitman’s various catalogs. To the mass I now turn, since it is with the mass that Whitman lodges his claim to significance and relevance, his claim to making more than a personal self-indulgent bellow in “Song of Myself.” As F. O. Matthiessen attests, “What saved Whitman from the last extreme of egotism was his insistence on the typical.”<sup>20</sup> His speaker speaks for more than himself; in the logic of the mass-portrait he speaks for everyone. And, in turn, the speaking self-portrait, the “I,” draws validation and power from being *one of* the masses he speaks for and to. He depends on them for vitality and context.

“Song of Myself” rests in part on Whitman’s ability to construct a plausible and inspiring presentation of the mass, seemingly an inauspiciously bland,



abstract, uninspiring topic, even when Whitman applies an elevating adjective to it (as in “the divine average” referred to in the later poem, “Starting from Paumanock”). If literature often relies on exemplarity—instances that are made to stand out—then the exemplary average is something of an oxymoron. A phrase of Whitman’s indicative of the difficulty is “one of an average unending procession,” which conveys the potential monotony of the material (43). In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville elaborates, “none of the single, nearly equal, roughly similar citizens of a democracy will do as a subject for poetry, but the nation itself calls for poetic treatment. The very likeness of individuals, which rules them out as subjects for poetry on their own, helps the poet to group them in imagination and make a coherent picture of the nation as a whole.”<sup>21</sup> Replacing the classical or Romantic hero figure, the collective takes over as the locus of action, and this is supposed to provide the democratic poet with a suitable theme. How exactly an average mass becomes a compelling read is problematic. Later in life, Whitman would insist he had solved the problem: “I have imagined a life which should be that of the average man in average circumstances, and still grand, heroic” (quoted in Matthiessen, 650). To this end, Whitman’s technique in the mass-portrait is to populate the space of the mass with a group of figures that *are* appealing to the imagination, although they are not precisely the stuff of classical or Romantic poetry.

The figure of grass is essential to imagining the average democratic En-Masse in “Song of Myself.” Grass anchors the poem at beginning and end. We meet the speaker “observing a spear of summer grass” (13) and leave him “bequeath[ing] myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love” (56). The book itself is composed of “leaves” of paper that bear obvious analogy to grass. Grass iterates like a refrain in what would become sections 1, 5, 6, 9, 17, 31, 33, 39, 49, and 52, and is inferred elsewhere throughout. Grass not only brackets and sustains but also generates the poem. According to Paul Zweig, “the entire poem will be an answer” to the question posed by the child, “What is the grass?”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, for Folsom, the grass generates the poem repeatedly, once when the speaker “loafes” and observes “a spear of summer grass,”<sup>23</sup> and, agreeing with Zweig, again in response to the child—“the answer to this [the child’s] question will in some ways occupy the poet through all the rest of the sections” (24). Among many scholarly attempts to pin a genre designation on “Song of Myself,” it is certainly, as Tony Tanner puts it, a “grasspoem,” insofar as “the poem . . . organizes itself” around the grass.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond its general importance to the poem, how does the grass function in the mass-portrait? Identifying it with the “I,” Whitman overlays his self-portrait

with images of grass, as in, “I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven” (16). This overlay invites the reader, through the course of the poem, to toggle back and forth in imagination between Whitman as Whitman and Whitman as a nameless segment among the grass, that is, among the mass of citizens. The effect is a sort of blended portrait with elements of personality and elements of population. Whitman does political work through this blending, for, as Erkkila observes, “the poet reads in the hieroglyphic of the grass the politics of democracy. As the overarching figure of *Leaves of Grass* and the central image of ‘Song of Myself,’ the grass signifies many in one” (98). Such a thought lies behind the depiction of “the cow crunching with depressed head” (34) and the poet’s question, “How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?” (25). The grass is not only a political metaphor but also a material metonym, actually becoming part of the human body, eaten by the cow, which is then eaten by Whitman. For the circle to be complete, of course, the grass not only becomes the human but the human must become the grass, filtering into it through the soil after death. As he compensatorily puts it, “the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation” (16). This is one of Whitman’s versions of immortality, encapsulated in those closing lines, “I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles” (56). Thus grass connects the mass-portrait with key themes of the poem including the nature of the self, part-whole relations, and immortality.

The poem’s concern with immortality suggests that grass is not only a spatial but also a temporal figure. The spatial display is the single leaf amidst the field. The temporal dimension involves the circulation of atoms through the grass and the human both, so that each are composed of the same resilient and anonymous democratic substance. As Vivian Pollak elucidates, “Dying authenticates Whitman’s claim, announced at the poem’s inception, that ‘Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.’ Atomized into his component parts, he shares in a universalized, ungendered identity to which everyone and everything potentially belongs” (103). For Whitman, the baseline of identity resides in atoms, and this means that his ubiquitous first-person singular is just as much itself when formed into grass (or anything else) as when formed into his person. That may ring a note of apprehension for readers who are more comfortable having names and faces. Atoms, in this sense, have a lot in common with grass: both are egalitarian, abundant and equal, but they hardly lend themselves to distinction and recognition; they are promising figures of mass population, but not of unique human portraits.

To indicate how this same representational impasse recurs regularly for

Whitman beyond “Song of Myself,” I would point to another 1855 poem, eventually titled “The Sleepers.” Sleeping bodies share advantages for portraying egalitarianism with grass and atoms. Whitman writes of the sleepers, “I swear they are averaged now . . . one is no better than the other” (75). We can imagine how sleeping people are indeed “averaged” and democratized compared to waking ones: their faces are relaxed; their unequal bank accounts do not buy them better or worse dreams; their personalities are temporarily uniform in stillness. However, in the next line Whitman confesses, “The night and sleep have likened them and restored them.” *Night* and *sleep* have likened and restored them . . . perhaps, but more likely night and sleep have *obscured* them. Sleepers may look alike, but precisely because they are not really their full individual selves in that state. Politically, if we extrapolate out to what a nation of sleeping bodies would be, the problem of taking them as a model of democratic collectivity becomes obvious. Sleepers may be average, democratic, and, as Whitman swears, “all beautiful,” but they lack faculties and fall short of individual human personality (75).

Portraiture here provides a perspective that scholars otherwise tend to overlook as they affirm the democratic qualities of grass, atoms, and sleepers. Reynolds, for instance, remarks in *Walt Whitman’s America*, “The valorization of the grass is a means of seeking resolution of the individual-versus-mass tension in nature itself: grass embodies simultaneously individualism, each spear a unique phenomenon, and radical democracy, as it is a common vegetation that sprouts everywhere, among all sections and races” (327). This is correct as far as it goes, but neglects the recognizability issue: each spear may be a “unique phenomenon,” but it doesn’t embody the kind of distinction we affirm for unique persons with their different faces and personalities. The point is nontrivial, because if Whitman cannot somewhere supply that deeper level of individuation, “Song of Myself” is not successful by his own standards of affording dignity and recognition to each reader, each citizen.

Some spiritual or universal self may survive the transmutations from grass to cow to human and back to grass again, but personality is not maintained through the process. In this sense, grass as a comprehensive (two-sided) mass-portrait (the leaf of grass is the individual, the field of grass is the mass) does not in itself supply a satisfactory integration of individual and collective, since it does not do justice to the individual side. Indeed, many critics have registered discomfort with Whitman’s strategies for mediating the interplay of self to society through grass and other inhuman materials. Matthiessen early on summarized for many when he called Whitman’s compromises here “tragic” (179), in the sense of

sanctioning sacrifices and trade-offs at the expense of persons. On the other side of the mass-portrait, in terms of the field of grass representing the social body, we may reflect that after all, an undifferentiated field of grass translated into human terms may be a mob in the bad sense of a random destructive force, or a force compelled by a demagogue. Thus, there are several hazards in relying on grass and atoms to underwrite identity and collectivity in the mass-portrait. Whitman, as we noted and will see in more detail shortly, attempts to resolve these ticklish side effects of identifying with anonymous objects and processes by fusing the grass with his unique self-portrait.

Grass, atoms, and sleepers do unequivocally provide compelling, flexible poetic tropes. Lines like, “This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers, / Darker than the colorless beards of old men, / Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths” (16) show the author making enduring music and images in a way that abstractions about population and politics could not match. In addition, Whitman deals with figures of the mass that are closer to the referent, namely when he writes about crowds, mobs, and masses. He uses crowds in part to represent concepts and values, typically while situating himself among the throng. Pollak describes the “visionary poet’s uncanny ability to re-form himself as part of a crowd, whether that crowd be understood as an eternal religion, an eternal family, an eternal nation, or an eternal profession” (95-6). The observation finds confirmation in lines such as “A call in the midst of the crowd, / My own voice, orotund sweeping and final” (46). Whitman’s universalizing seems to intend a twofold effect. One, it would ensure that the poetry of the crowd is not merely sensationalism or reckless embrace of damaging social impulses, what Whitman recognizes as “the fury of roused mobs” (18). Two, it would assign intellect and dignity to crowds, which otherwise may provoke defensive rejection, as in the reactions of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe (see below), examples of which Whitman was keenly aware.

As for situating himself among the crowd, the move operates much as interweaving himself in the leaves of grass: it creates a blended portrait where his image contributes coherence and order to unruly elements, while the elements link him to larger forces. Placing himself amidst the crowd has an additional effect that does not apply to the grass. Whitman standing or walking in the crowd makes him one of us. If atoms hold grass-cow-and-human together, electricity, or what he would later call “the body electric,” holds crowds together. Whitman’s Socratic gambit is to stress that he is exactly like other members of the crowd *except in that he knows* he is exactly like everyone else; he registers the



electric bond. He states in the Preface, “the others are as good as he [the poet], only he sees it and they do not” (v). By showing the reader that he, Whitman, is an equal member “Hurrying with the modern crowd, as eager and fickle as any” (37), and provoking the reader to recognize herself that way also, he will awaken everyone to this truth of “the divine average,” the divine current pulsing through all. Whitman’s crowd is a place of transmutation where fleshly bodies become awakened souls precisely by recognizing themselves as mutual fleshly bodies.

If crowds awakened to their own equality constitute a utopian vision, certain negative aspects of the mob bring to mind a threatening dystopia. The question of the mob as unenlightened horde of violent bodies haunts “Song of Myself” and democratic theory and portraiture more broadly. In a sense, the image of the mob is the antithesis of the democratic portrait. A mob is a disordered conglomeration of what should be distinct selves. Fear of the mob is a major concern of the nation’s founders and of democratic theorists of all stripes. Two of Whitman’s own main influences, Emerson and Poe, were aghast at the mob. One can see the anxiety betrayed by Emerson, for example, in an 1867 speech in which he admonishes, “We wish to put the ideal rules into practice, to offer liberty instead of chains . . . believing that it will not carry us to mobs, or back to kings again.”<sup>25</sup> Emerson imagines mobs and kings as two sides of the same anti-democratic coin. Poe for his part posits democracy as a mistake, and mobs as evidence thereof.<sup>26</sup> When confronted by public and literati opinion, Whitman believed he needed to demonstrate to his readers and literary interlocutors that grass, atoms, and crowds were something other than dangerous mob formations.

### The *Portrait* in Mass-Portrait

Whitman’s foremost strategy is to impose himself as the principle of order governing the would-be mob: his prophetic self-portrait will intervene to bend readers away from random violence and towards enlightened self-expression. In one anonymous review of *Leaves of Grass* perhaps written by Whitman himself, the potential audience is told that “its author is Walter Whitman, and the book is a reproduction of the author. His name is not on the frontispiece, but his portrait, half length, is. The contents of the book form a daguerreotype of his inner being, and the title page bears a representation of its physical tabernacle.”<sup>27</sup> The review suggests the text and frontispiece together form a complete portrait of the author. The author, in turn, forms a representative portrait of

the nation. So the book represents Whitman (and vice-versa), and Whitman represents America (and vice-versa). This scheme may amount to “carrying us back to kings again,” to aesthetic demagoguery, because it depends so heavily on the image of one individual. Such is the delicate balance of the mass-portrait.

The logic of the self-portrait imposing itself on the mass-portrait appears in lines such as, “This is the touch of my lips to yours. . . . this is the murmur of yearning, / This is the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face, / This is the thoughtful merge of myself and the outlet again” (25). From the intimate (a kiss) to the distant (the “far-off depth” of a landscape painting), everything is interwoven with “myself.” Matthiessen reports, “Emerson had reached his own position that ‘there is properly no history, only biography,’ a position that Thoreau, in his confidence, carried to the point of saying, ‘Biography, too, is liable to the same objection; it should be autobiography,’” (631). “Song of Myself” carries such reasoning to the extreme. Autobiography (the textual equivalent of self-portraiture) saturates every line, directly or indirectly. Peter Bellis assesses, “Not only is the poet’s work foregrounded from the very start (‘celebrate’), but he also functions as the poem’s ‘subject’—in not one but two different senses: its language emerges from his subjectivity, and he also serves as the poem’s topic.”<sup>28</sup> Wherever the mass is in “Song of Myself,” there also is the self.

This brings us to the richly studied question of the precise nature and identity of the Whitmanian self or “I.” While likely no one is crying out for a fresh set of conjectures on this subject, the pertinent note here is that the self is a self-portrait which emerges in dynamic tension between the “I” and the mass—it cannot be adequately grasped apart from the mass-portrait. This simple observation makes sense of many complicated claims about “Song of Myself” and identity. If such claims have one thing in common, it is an insistence on the paradoxical, contradictory, multiple nature of Whitman’s “I.” This stands to reason when we recognize the “I” is always implicated in the mass and vice-versa.

To develop and distinguish his socially embedded “I,” Whitman draws heavily on photography. If, as Folsom asserts, “Photography . . . came to be one of the key tests for Whitman’s theories” (*Native Representations*, 101), it also came to be one of the key building blocks of his democratic portraiture, featuring in both the mass-portrait and the portrait-series, although deployed in different ways for each. Whitman had been thinking and writing admiringly about nascent photographic potencies since at least 1846 when he published “A Visit to Plumbe’s Gallery” in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. As acknowledged in discourses about photography from this period, portrait photography can

be leveraged towards either of two overlapping representational modes: a more traditional metaphorical aesthetic, where one figure represents a type of person or a group of persons; or, a metonymic snapshot aesthetic (though the term “snapshot” belongs to the 1890s), where the image escapes mere representation and stands as a part of social and material reality, even usurping the real status of the portrait subject.

A characteristic instance of the metaphoric discourse of photography is Mathew Brady’s *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* (1850), where the portraits—lithographs taken from daguerreotypes—of prominent men function much as a bust of Caesar or a painting of George Washington had previously, representing both the state and a class of persons. A characteristic instance of the metonymic discourse of photography is found in Oliver Wendell Holmes’s essays on photography, where he associates photographs with sunlight and calls them “a mirror with a memory.”<sup>29</sup> Both sun and mirror emphasize the material base of the photographic image. This metonymic discourse of photography has come, in contemporary scholarship, to be frequently associated with Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of indexicality, a mode of signification involving material continuity—such as the touch of sunlight on skin or, indeed, on exposed film.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, note that both the metaphoric and metonymic discourses of photography participate more-or-less in what Dana Luciano identifies as the “longstanding belief in photographic objectivity and transparency, which positions the photographic image as an unmediated record of the world.”<sup>31</sup>

In “Song of Myself,” Whitman uses both photographic potencies. His mass-portraits are more metaphorical. When he positions himself as *standing for* the mass, he draws on photographic metaphor. The portrait-series on the other hand is meant to be metonymic, with the catalogs capturing quick pictures from everyday life. When Whitman positions himself as *a member of* the crowd, he draws on the photographic metonym of actual physical presence. Combined, Whitman uses these two modes to make a claim for his self-portrait as transcendently true *and* materially real.

Nowhere is Whitman’s claim to the physical and simultaneously transcendent authority of his self-portrait more pronounced than in his iconic 1855 frontispiece to *Leaves of Grass*. The British engraver Samuel Hollyer produced the image, taken from a daguerreotype by Gabriel Harrison. Hollyer’s work has a layered effect, showing Whitman’s bust area in detailed pseudo-photographic focus, then transitioning into a sketchy outline at the waist, and finally fading into the page at the thighs. Thus, the image combines photographic and painterly effects. Folsom identifies that Whitman “stands against the most demo-

cratic of backgrounds, a vast blank page” (*Native Representations*, 145). This image, called “the street figure” by Whitman (*WWC*, 2:412), was replaced as frontispiece in subsequent editions, in which Whitman employed frontispieces that represented him at approximately the age he was at the time of publication. Such temporal specificity made sense if *Leaves of Grass* was, as he promoted, “an attempt, from first to last, to put a Person, a human being (myself, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, in America) freely, fully and truly on record, my definitive *cartes de visite* to the coming generations of the New World” (*LG* 1881, p. 562). Whitman did retain the 1855 frontispiece elsewhere in later editions, where it was typically set opposite the first page of “Song of Myself,” confirming that its primary referent in the book was this complex self-portrait of a poem. “The portrait in fact is involved as part of the poem,” Whitman told William Sloane Kennedy.<sup>32</sup>

Much has been written about the 1855 frontispiece, especially its workingman, bodily quality in contrast to the cerebral, spiritualized heads of prior depictions of poets. The workingman effect places Whitman among the laboring masses, the crowd, whom he will detail in the catalogs. In other words, it sets him in the portrait-series and the logic of photographic metonymy—he *stands among* us, a part of the actual daily world, the divine average. At the same time, and even more assertively, the frontispiece deploys that other photographic logic of metaphor by which he *stands for* us, as his self-portrait stands for “Song of Myself” and *Leaves of Grass*. The question of how this single, specific image stands for each member of his readership invokes the most basic problem of democratic portraiture, namely, how to preserve distinction *and* equality in a single coherent image. Folsom describes how Whitman was often “looking for ways . . . single images added up to a totality.”<sup>33</sup> Whitman’s larger answer in “Song of Myself,” as I have mentioned, is to balance the mass-portrait and portrait-series in an overarching democratic portrait, with himself as its emblem. That larger answer, however, does not resolve the specific question of the frontispiece and how it works. Trachtenberg details the way Whitman uses the frontispiece to comment on and redefine what Mathew Brady took to signify an “illustrious American” in his gallery, where pictures of economic and political elites reigned (69). Whitman’s street figure stood against this aesthetic-political elite and aimed to liberate the mass from its tyranny. But he did not dissolve the representational tyranny altogether. The new “illustrious American” was not a businessman or politician; he was a poet; he was—Whitman. In this sense, the frontispiece might be Exhibit A in a case about the power and also intractable difficulties of democratic portraiture in general and Whitman’s mass-portrait in particular.



During the same period that Whitman was working on the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Søren Kierkegaard was worrying about the opposite pole of the photographic mass-portrait, the one that overemphasized equality to the point of sameness (instead of overemphasizing representativeness to the point of hierarchy). Kierkegaard mused, “With the daguerreotype, everyone will be able to have their own portrait taken—formerly it was only the prominent; and at the same time everything is being done to make us all look exactly the same— so that we shall only need one portrait” (quoted in *Native Representations*, 147). In Kierkegaard’s thinking, we will “only need one portrait” for Susan Sontag’s reason that “[i]n the open fields of American experience, as catalogued with passion by Whitman and as sized up with a shrug by Warhol, everybody is a celebrity . . . no person is more interesting than any other person.”<sup>34</sup> Translated into the problem of democratic portraiture, the problem of maintaining both equality and distinction, Kierkegaard and Sontag diagnose a swerve towards equality at the cost of distinction: we will “all look exactly the same”; “no person is more interesting than any other person.” The former, Whitman would deny; the latter, he would embrace. Whitman’s trouble is plain: what he wants to affirm and deny is the exact same thing—he wants it when it is called “equality” but not when it is called “sameness.”

### The Portrait-Series

Preparing to write *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman made a note to himself: “Poem of pictures. Each verse presenting a picture of some characteristic scene, event, group, or personage—old or new, other countries or our own country.”<sup>35</sup> His plan to write a poem consisting of a series of portraits and scenes became what scholars know as the catalogs of “Song of Myself,” which to some degree pervade the whole poem. Oliver Wendell Holmes, an acute reader of Whitman and of photography, recognized the use of photographic style in Whitman’s catalog poetics, writing in 1891’s *Over the Teacups*, “He accepts as poetical subjects all things alike, common and unclean, without discrimination, miscellaneous. . . . He carries the principle of republicanism through the whole world of created objects. He will ‘thread a thread through [his] poems,’ he tells us, ‘that no one thing in the universe is inferior to another thing’” (234). Whitman accepts everything in his sight without classifying or stratifying, like a camera capturing pieces of reality in the snapshot aesthetic of photography. This snapshot effect is a key hallmark of the portrait-series in “Song of Myself,” along with coordinate syntax and paratactic accumulation of sentences. Together they support one



The farmer stops by the bars of a Sunday and looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirmed case . . . (21)

The portrait-series, then, is marked syntactically by extensive coordination within lines and repetition of articles or prepositions at the opening of lines. Combined with end-stopped lines devoted to a single image and closing largely on commas, these constitute the grammar of the portrait-series. In “Song of Myself,” the catalog passages highlight this paratactic grammar and logic, but it is used elsewhere and pervades the poem even outside of the long catalogs, so that its democratizing effect is always echoing for the reader.<sup>36</sup>

Beyond grammar, the portrait-series sections are structured by a certain photographic aesthetic. One might presume that if Whitman lived a thousand years, he would have kept expanding his portrait-series without limit, like a photo album with no last page. In Kierkegaard’s critique and in other contemporary accounts such as Herman Melville’s *Pierre* (1852), this everyone-has-their-daguerreotype-taken motif results in the oblivion of distinction. In “Song of Myself,” because the theoretically limitless series of portraits is bracketed by the mass-portrait, the series carries a rationale and a purpose that preserves it from oblivionating digression: the many portraits are the vital legitimating content of the mass-portrait, bridging the gap between the abstraction of the mass and the narcissism of the “I.” The portrait-series is the alphabet filling in between the alpha-and-omega totalization of the mass-portrait, supplying human scale and middle ground, a language beyond hyperbolic extremes. Context is everything here, for without the mass-portrait—if “Song of Myself” was made up only of catalogs—that *would* justify a reading of Whitman’s democratic portraiture as a morass of unorganized fragments. In context, as if fulfilling the promise to “not have a single person slighted or left away” (25), the portrait-series is purposeful, preserving distinction and the independence of individuals within the collective.

In addition to what we have seen of the frontispiece, Whitman ties the portrait-series to the mass-portrait repeatedly and in various ways, bonding them as closely as possible, typically through his “I.” At the end of the long catalog in what would become section 15, the speaker tells us, “And these one and all tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them, / And such as it is to be of these more or less I am” (23). In the second line, he summarizes the series of portraits by affirming he is one of them, a member of the crowd. But in the first line he also situates himself outside of the series and larger, with a gravitational force matching its own, so that a gravitational “tending” inward and outward connects them. In one instance, he is part of the portrait-series, in the other, part of the mass-portrait. “I” bridges the two.

This overlapping “I” can make it tricky to recognize the mass-portrait and the portrait-series as distinct ways of thinking and representing political formation. Because Whitman uses himself as a figure in both, they seem to blur not just aesthetically but also conceptually. Larzer Ziff, for example, argues that Whitman “masters” the democratic paradox of individual and mass by “realizing it as a strong, seminal flow which diffuses a succession of sweet forms, rather than as a form itself, a structure forever threatened by the antagonism of its parts.”<sup>37</sup> Ziff takes “the succession of sweet forms” (the catalogs, the portrait-series) as the totality of Whitman’s method, to the exclusion of structure (the mass-portrait). This kind of reading explains much about the conflicting critical accounts of “Song of Myself,” such that one sometimes feels one is reading about different poems. Critics assume there is one method at work and they emphasize it, effectively subordinating and sometimes ignoring the other method, whether that is the “flow” of the series or the dominating structure of the mass-portrait. But the series of portraits in the catalogs are not *part of* the binary mass-portrait proposition contained in “One’s-Self I sing, a simple separate person, / Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse,” or vice-versa; these constitute distinct aesthetic-political images that are complementary to each other. In the mass-portrait, the “I” finds its characteristic position as the large-scale self-portrait frontispiece, holding the reader’s attention as the representative illustrious American workingman. In the portrait-series, the “I” finds its characteristic position as the small-scale snapshot of Whitman among a crowd of other snapshots all flowing rapidly before the reader’s attention, or as one image among many on the thickly stacked walls of New York’s portrait galleries.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the portrait-series in particular, a set of nineteenth-century debates around whether photography could be considered an art sheds light on ongoing debates about whether Whitman’s catalog poetics could be considered good art. This strain of criticism was first taken up by the New Critics and others who found Whitman unfitted to their uses. The issues involved include specificity and selectivity. Folsom takes a line from the Preface, “He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing” (v), to indicate the indulgent qualities of photographic imagination in the catalogs: “The lens and the light sensitive field were radically democratic; they absorbed what the light revealed” (*Native Representations*, 105). Whitman presents the portrait-series catalogs as if he were simply “absorbing what the light revealed” and recasting it in multiple rapid—but perhaps inadequately developed—images. Matthiessen, though rarely severely critical of Whitman, observes, “For the distinguishing gesture, the particular emphases of look and bearing that are the main preoc-



cupation of the portrait painter, Whitman had no sustained gift, any more than he had for the detailed characterizations of the novelist” (612). The point is well taken as regards the portrait-series. Each snapshot was composed in a single long line, measurable in one breath per line, and did not afford time or space to fill in extensive detail. This brings us back to my larger point, however, that if the whole of “Song of Myself” consisted only of catalogs, many criticisms of the work would be more valid than they are. In fact, there is more to the poem than the one-line snapshots of the portrait-series. For example, would Matthiessen describe the frontispiece portrait as failing to convey a particular “look and bearing?”

Aside from detail, or lack thereof, the question in both photography and Whitman’s portrait-series was selectivity. Could a practice that made no distinction between significant and insignificant objects be considered art? Painters, who had always specialized in selecting out the random to emphasize the meaningful, argued defensively that photography could never match them. Although Whitman appreciated painting, he sided with photographers in this dispute, on the grounds that photography was indeed nonselective and, precisely for that reason, democratic and desirable—an art to match the times, an art of the modern. If democratic art did not conform to aristocratic conventions of hierarchic selectivity, so much the better. I would argue that, indeed, photography and poetry do not necessarily lose artistic power by losing selectivity, nor does democratic portraiture—so long as counterbalancing formal features are in place to preclude *mere* randomness. And, whereas some critics complain about the lack of depth accorded each person in the series, the limited time onstage before the viewer’s eyes in the catalogs may actually make each image more portrait-like, in the sense that portraits are single images of a person, not narrative digressions about a person.

Naturally, there are various accounts of the reason for Whitman’s failure to linger in the portrait-series sections. Pollak, for example, finds its causes in the psychology of the author: “Whitman’s style, with its nervous profusion of images, tends to move us away from any particular scene or gender or erotic desire before we have had a chance to examine it fully. . . . [T]he more highly individuated persona quickly escapes into the out of doors, where he finds a reason for being” (88-89). Rather than choosing an aesthetic-political intention, Whitman here acts out of compulsion, fleeing “thoughts and feelings he cannot endure” (Pollak, 91). Even if the causes are on some level psychological, I argue that the rapid, snapshot style movement of the portrait-series passages serves to efficiently produce a crowd within the poem, in part validating Whitman’s

claim to deliver democratic *representation*, and alleviating the tendency of his self-portrait to overpower with its *representativeness*.

Through the mass-portrait and the portrait-series, Whitman answers many of the questions regarding trees and grass with which we began. Despite its reputation, “Song of Myself” is really not a grasspoem but a grass-and-trees poem. Whitman combines and balances the order of the tree with the equality of the grass, while counteracting the hierarchy of the tree and the monotony and malleability of the grass. Drawing on the metaphoric and metonymic logics of photography, and developing a multivalent display of portrait-images, Whitman’s formal innovations in combining mass-portrait and portrait-series in “Song of Myself” generate critical puzzles and account in part for the poem’s enduring aesthetic-political resonance. Kathryn Walkiewicz, in “Portraits and Politics,” has pointed out how later in his career Whitman used racialized portraiture “in an attempt to justify large-scale United states military invasions and genocidal projects.”<sup>39</sup> In 1855, he displayed no such intentions, but tried rather to offer portraiture in a fully egalitarian form.

However, as egalitarian as its intentions may be, and as impressive as is its imaginative scope, “Song of Myself” nonetheless fails to address certain serious problems when it comes to race and gender. While the analogy between portraits and plants is not perfect, thinking about grass and trees helps us see what Whitman’s portrait formations can and cannot do in terms of picturing radically inclusive democracy. By folding in the portrait-series, Whitman’s poetry is able to reimagine the grass as multi-hued instead of a uniform green, as if each leaf of the grass had a distinguishing individuality. Here, Whitman can fit himself in as one leaf among equals in a diverse field among all colors, shapes, sizes, and genders. The mass-portrait, on the other hand, is like a tree in which Whitman is the trunk and the masses are the leaves. The problem is plain: the leaves of the tree can be any combination of genders and races and colors and sizes Whitman wishes to enumerate, but the trunk is always white and male.<sup>40</sup> This tells us something significant about the horizon of Whitman’s universalism and the limits of the inclusivity of his democratic portraiture. In the frontispiece portrait, Whitman is a common workingman, “one of the roughs” (29), but one of the white roughs, a white workingman. His interweaving of mass-portrait and portrait-series may produce the effect of transcending class, but it does not produce the effect of transcending race and gender—at least in the seat of power.

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## Notes

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1 *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 15.

2 David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

3 In particular, scholarship in print and material culture has exploded over the past twenty years. I do not lean heavily into the material dimensions of portraiture in connection to Whitman's poetry, however, because the associated scholarship is little engaged with the conceptual and formational questions that are my focus.

4 Reynolds is representative in stating, "The famous opening lines of 'Song of Myself' immediately seek to resolve by fiat what had long been a basic problem in American life: how to balance the demands of the individual with those of the mass" (*Walt Whitman's America* [Vintage, 1996], 326).

5 With a few exceptions including Ed Folsom (in various works) and George Kateb ("Walt Whitman and the Culture of America," in *A Political Companion to Walt Whitman*, ed. John E. Seery [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011], 19-46), both of whom can safely be called Whitman enthusiasts as well as scholars, critics are skeptical about Whitman's ability to achieve balance, though they emphasize different ways in which he goes astray. Focusing on publishing and circulation, Matt Cohen describes how "Song of Myself" is finally more about Whitman making a celebrity of himself than anything else (*Whitman's Drift: Imagining Literary Distribution* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017], 115). Jay Grossman finds the imbalance in Whitman rooted in the imbalance of the Constitutional settlement at the founding of the American nation, so that Whitman perpetually recapitulates within his lyric persona a destabilizing Federalist versus anti-Federalist debate (*Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation*. [Durham: Duke University Press, 2003], 15). Vivian Pollak psychologizes the issue, finding that "Whitman sought to democratize models of reading" but ended up reproducing "the quick loud word of the authoritarian father" (*The Erotic Whitman* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000], 86)—the push for collective equality eventuates in the return of postures of individual domination. F. O. Matthiessen cites the poet's tendency to "expand into the pride that annihilates all valid distinctions," destroying any harmony between self and community (*The American Renaissance* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1941], 548), and Quentin Anderson concurs that Whitman ends up subordinating everyone and everything to his overweening "I" (*The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History* [New York: Knopf, 1971]), while Pablo Neruda simply identifies in Whitman "the first totalitarian poet" (quoted in *Walt Whitman's America*, 49). Meanwhile, Wai-Chee Dimock claims the generalizing side of Whitman, his dependence on the "average" and on "kosmos," renders the work affectively dull and inhuman, closing off "access to a special world of loves and hates"—the abstract collective overpowers the real individual (*Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 124). Similarly, Kerry Larson believes Whitman is too diffuse, failing to generate the coherence called for by "Song of Myself" and his larger poetic project (*Whitman's Drama of Consensus* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988]). David S. Reynolds argues Whitman recapitulates the contradiction between individual and collective without resolving it (*Walt Whitman's America*).

6 Core sources on photography in "Song of Myself" include Alan Trachtenberg's *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1990), Folsom's *Walt Whitman's Native Representations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Reynolds's *Walt Whitman's America*.

7 Folsom in *Native Representations* and Reynolds in *Walt Whitman's America* provide strong background on Whitman's overall visual cultural context. Marcy Dinius in *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) and Sarah Blackwood in *The Portrait's Subject: Inventing Inner Life in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019) describe, respectively, the material culture and psychological discourse that inform Whitman's visual culture.

8 See, for example, Douglass's "Lecture on Pictures" and "Pictures and Progress" (*Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* [New York: Norton, 2015], 126-141 and 160-173) and Melville's *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1852).

9 *Portraits: A History* (New York: Abrams, 2003), 15.

10 *Likeness: A Conceptual History of Ancient Portraiture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 4.

11 Quoted in Hans Belting, *Face and Mask: A Double History*, translated by Thomas S. Hansen and Abby J. Hansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 9.

12 Elsewhere, I develop a word and image approach to portraiture. Important studies of portraits and American literature, such as Susan S. Williams's *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997], Dinius's *The Camera and the Press*, and Blackwood's *The Portrait's Subject* largely pass over art historical work on portraiture, in part because art history assumes visuality as the horizon of the genre. I claim there is value for the literary scholar in a background of art historical approaches to the portrait if they are leavened with image theory (particularly Hans Belting and Richard Brilliant) and word and image theory (particularly Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and W. J. T. Mitchell), so that they apply beyond pictorial representation. I also draw insights from John Klein's argument that the defining feature of the portrait is its social agency. In sum, I claim that a portrait is really an image held in the imagination (in fact the imagining-body) of a viewer/reader. This portrait-image may be generated by a visual or verbal depiction of a person, in other words a picture or a literary description. For Belting, see *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, translated by Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) and *Face and Mask*; for Brilliant, see *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and *Portraiture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); for Lessing, see *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, translated by Edward McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); for Mitchell, see *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); for Klein, see "The Mask as Image and Strategy" (*The Mirror and the Mask: Portraiture in the Age of Picasso*, edited by Paloma Alarco and Malcolm Warner [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007], 25- 35) and "The Social Agency of Portraiture" (*Matisse Portraits* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001], 1-15).

13 Unless otherwise noted, all citations come from the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, 1855), available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org)).

14 For a cornerstone text on Whitman and rhetorical style, see C. Carroll Hollis's *Language and Style in Leaves of Grass* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983). As I uncover later in the essay, paratactic and hypotactic syntax relate to metonymic and metaphoric figuration, respectively. Hollis claims that Whitman's inventive pre-Civil War work was metonymic whereas his post-War output saw decline into metaphoric traditionalism (186). While not tracking changes of style across time, I differ from Hollis in reading in the 1855 *Leaves* a carefully constructed interplay of metonym and metaphor, parataxis and hypotaxis, rather than metonymic dominance.



15 See Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 1:367, available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. Hereafter *WWC*.

16 *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1904), I.16.13.

17 See Lefort, “The Image and the Body of Totalitarianism” (in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, edited by David Thompson, [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986], 293-306) and *Democracy and Political Theory*, translated by David Macey (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1988). Lefort addresses Hobbes’s theory of the Sovereign directly, claiming that democracy is a “creative power capable of weakening, even slaying the totalitarian Leviathan” (21) through creative substitution in the “empty space” (Saul Newman, “The Place of Power in Political Discourse,” *International Political Science Review* 25 [April 2004], 139-157) of power left in the wake of the collapse of theological foundations for political authority.

18 Whitman’s insistence on The People as Sovereign is, in a larger sense, a feature of his discourse of equal rights. One primary strain of this discourse circulating in his antebellum world was an older enlightenment idea of identical natural political rights applying to each individual, whereby they were protected from intrusions against themselves and their property as they engaged in the competitive pursuit of private gain. Another, more recently developing discourse came from social democrats that extended the meaning of equality to denote a universal natural justice, a positive right that didn’t just protect individuals from harm but dictated the establishment of material social and economic parity. Whitman affirmed both.

19 *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 107.

20 *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 650.

21 Quoted in Larson, *Imagining Equality in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 81.

22 *Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 252.

23 Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill, *Song of Myself: With a Complete Commentary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 8.

24 *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 78.

25 Quoted in Floyd Stovall, *American Idealism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 54.

26 For example, see Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd” (1840). In *The Politics of Crowds: An Alternative History of Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Christian Borch contrasts this story with *Leaves of Grass* to show how Poe dramatizes the loss of the individual to the crowd while Whitman embraces the crowd’s radical democracy (127-131).

27 “‘Leaves of Grass’—An Extraordinary Book,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (September 15, 1855), 2. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: anc.00012.

28 *Writing Revolution: Aesthetics and Politics in Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 87.

29 “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” in *Soundings from the Atlantic* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), 124-165. Page 129. For more on Brady and Holmes, see especially Trachtenberg,

*Reading American Photographs*, and Sean Ross Meehan, *Mediating American Autobiography: Photography in Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, and Whitman* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 2008).

30 For a review and reading of photography as indexicality, see Mary Anne Doane, “The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity,” *Differences* 18 (2007), 128-152.

31 “Touching Seeing,” *American Literary History* 28 (2016), 140-150 (p. 140).

32 *The Fight of a Book for the World* (West Yarmouth, MA: Stonecroft Press, 1926), 248.

33 “‘This Heart’s Geography Map’: The Photographs of Walt Whitman,” available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: anc.00275.

34 *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 28.

35 Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: uva.00289.

36 The mass-portrait passages and the catalog passages in the poem are both adjacent and intermingled. There are sections where the mass-portrait predominates (section 1 for example) and sections where the portrait-series predominates (section 15 for example). There are also many sections incorporating elements of both in various proportions.

37 “Whitman and the Crowd,” *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1984), 579-591 (p. 586).

38 The catalogs themselves would have probably been unimaginable for Whitman without inspiration from photography and the crowded galleries in which early photographic images were displayed. As James Dougherty summarizes, “Ed Folsom, Miles Orvell, Richard Rudisill . . . [and] Ruth Bohan find the picture gallery, with its crowded, intense, and various displays, a prototype of the pictorial catalogues in ‘Song of Myself’ and many later poems” (“Art and Daguerreotype Galleries,” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Donald D. Kummings and J. R. LeMaster [New York: Garland Publishing, 1998], 26-726).

39 “Portraits and Politics: the Specter of Osceola in *Leaves of Grass*, ” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 25 (Winter, 2008), 108-115.

40 The issue is mirrored in Whitman’s actual politics. He supported the Free Soil Party in the late 1840s and early 1850s; the party opposed the expansion of slavery—primarily to preserve the privileged status of white labor. And he spoke of women’s equality but would not have endorsed or accepted an African American or woman president (even in 1855 during his most radical period, let alone after the Civil War). He championed, instead, the idea of a white working-class president.

## REVIEWS



DAVID GRANT. “*The Disenthralled Hosts of Freedom*”: *Party Prophecy in the Ante-bellum Editions of Leaves of Grass*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2021. Iowa Whitman Series.

In *The Disenthralled Hosts of Freedom*, David Grant presents a fascinating and thought-provoking reassessment of Whitman’s antebellum output through an extensive reading of the poet’s 1856 political tract, *The Eighteenth Presidency!* and the early editions of *Leaves of Grass*. While compelling, his conclusions leave Whitman scholarship in a peculiar place in the political landscape of 2021, since Grant’s primary intervention in the theoretical debate surrounding Whitman’s early works concerns the poet’s relationship to Republican party discourse—a conspicuously absent area of criticism in the pale of earlier work by Bill Hardwig and Robert J. Scholnick, as noted by Grant. Where those earlier works focused on Whitman in relation to the Whigs and the Democrats, the positionality of Whitman within the discursive formations of Republican rhetoric proves a more challenging task, and not simply because the proximity of Whitman to party is already a contestable field in a historical sense. Any argument proposing Whitman’s relationship to party becomes difficult precisely because the formal movements of *Leaves of Grass* present a politically minded text without attributing that political mind to any one party. Indeed, Grant highlights the “absence of those party signs in *Leaves of Grass*” as a critical point of his study regarding the salience of *The Eighteenth Presidency!*, a tract “so unqualifiedly Republican” that still shares “many of the tropes, associations, and national representations of his great poetry cycle.” How then, Grant asks, can scholars “account for those features common to the two works when they are shorn of their clear party markers?”

The poet’s style is consistent throughout the many iterations of *Leaves of Grass*. Recapitulating backwards, however, with a reading of *The Eighteenth Presidency!* as a politicized reorientation forward through *Leaves of Grass*, Grant considers the maneuvers of Whitman’s poetry in its use of multiple political tropes that existed as part of Republican discourse as well as the wider political battleground of the period: the tropes of “sovereign labor” in relation to the antislavery movement implicating the individual in self-consciousness and sovereignty; the typological dimensions of a historical sense between populace

and the founding fathers; the “thronging” sense applying itself to the power of collectivity; and the collective spirit of defiance in the face of conservative obedience.

Grant’s examination of each of these tropes is stunning, and the book’s principal dedication to a reading of Whitman in an antislavery mode is successful, with each chapter contributing to a complex political whole. However, in the shadow of this developing whole a mesh of content and form begins to take shape and slowly works at the distinctions between Whitman and the rhetorical discourse from which Grant’s argument claims he borrows. Alongside his general trepidation of seeing Whitman inundated within party contest in the early stages of the development of *Leaves of Grass*, Grant places Whitman in a privileged position, a *pathos of distance*, in relation to party rhetoric. Accordingly, Whitman is understood to be in close enough proximity to party discourse to “diagnose” social and political ills measure for measure with the Republicans, while also standing a far enough distance from that rhetoric to “promise a cure [to the ills related to party politics, both in source and instrument] independent of those offered by any one of the nation’s competing factions.” Although explicitly written in reference to the political project of *The Eighteenth Presidency!*, Grant’s analysis takes the early tract as the archetypal move freeing Whitman from party and opening the door to the use of tropes with a “free[dom] to abstract them from their source in the campaign contests and hence insinuate their new implications more fundamentally into the national imaginary.”

This position functions quite effectively for much of the text, with the first chapter identifying Whitman’s use of trope—the condemnation and distance of/ from party—for its effective abstraction and invocation of the people in combating “narratives of subservience.” These narratives return in the third chapter, where Grant considers poetic and party invocations of present relationships to the founding fathers. Similarly, Grant’s second chapter configures the historical context of Republican “free labor” as a touchstone-figure for the antislavery movement—a figure of progress that invokes the Republican standards of self-determination alongside political community threatened by the potential spread of slavery into the west. In Grant’s reading, for Whitman labor and the “labor poem” form the ground for a political sovereignty of embodied action given possibility by, and giving meaning to, the criticisms of party found in his first chapter. In Grant’s third chapter, however, the question of labor gives rise to the question of slavery, but now with the rhetorical trope of “the founders’ revolutionary achievement.” Here, through a trope that reduces by “universal and pervasive” use its distinctions in deployment, the Republican Party found itself positioned to assert a dedication to the founders’ vision which had otherwise



been “inadequate” and ineffective. In this regard, Whitman’s work is intensely focused on the antislavery movement and the maneuvering of political rhetoric to reverse political consensus in relation to the founders’ goals. Where any party had the ability to use the trope to declare the “conservative” necessity of the founder’s vision (thereby, a call to non-action or sovereignty) or the heralding of fulfillment (of the father’s successes and sacrifices), Whitman’s rhetoric was able to mend together antislavery politics and the compulsive, spontaneous necessity of action. As Grant puts it, “memory and performance thrive in a reproductive system where the undernourishment of one would starve the other. The Revolution will have happened only when treated as a herald of what the people must immediately do.”

Each of Grant’s prospective “tropes” offers something—often an ideological or social effect—unable to be treated in similar terms toward similar aims in party discourse. Such is especially the case in the fourth and fifth chapters where Grant offers readings of Whitman’s “Poem of the Road,” a poem he suggests throngs the collective while deferring to “Calamus” its realization into a post-universally binding community. It is in the “Calamus” poems that these affective dimensions of community, like sovereign labor and the typological reading of the founders, become a “call for action” rather than a “medium and the motivation for political restraint.” Thus Grant shows Whitman charging tropes into enriching and embodying tools for political struggle which, despite these transformations, still leaves a “debt” owed to the “affiliation” with a particular set of distilled Republican operations, reinvigorated by the possibilities of the party from which Whitman seemingly worked so hard to distance himself. It is here where Whitman himself becomes the potentially appropriated and reinvigorated “trope” that leaves Grant’s argument in a difficult position.

As he concludes his theoretical narrative, Grant considers the impetus of consciousness in party discourse as that which spells out the conditions of possibility for partisan struggle towards “completing and hence truly realizing the Revolution.” Channeling the idea of “becoming,” he writes:

In a party’s own representations, less important than any contest for power was the conversion narrative that would decide that contest: each voter traveling down a course from inertia, isolation, and incoherent outrage toward recognition, awakening, affiliation, and redemption. . . . No matter how fantastical this narrative appears, it authorizes us to treat party discourse as an important part of the rhetorical field to which other varieties of nineteenth-century national self-fashioning belong.

Here, precisely, is the crux of Grant’s project: the narrative he offers is not “fantastical.” Rather, what appears fantastical—the non-linear yet multi-staged process of becoming, with its end not a prescribed party initiative but

the product of a reinvigorated populace with the conditions of reconciliatory redemption present to it—is all too familiar in contemporaneous frames outside the context of the antislavery movement. Without the fantastical element of the argument, then, there lies a consistent gap in the formal dimensions of what Whitman offers. Where Grant proposes such a “conversion narrative” as potentially “fantastical,” he claims the value of his position lies in the “*author[ization]*” of an approach to a discursive field which has already occurred—it is an authorization and discursive uncovering that has given space to the approach he offers, but that works against Whitman’s poetry.

It is apt to return at this point to Grant’s introductory maneuvers throughout his reading of *The Eighteenth Presidency!* that offer differing perspectives on Whitman’s relation to political discourse. “Echoes of [George Frederickson’s 1965 reading] that the tract floated free from party,” he argues, “can be nuanced or unqualified. They range from Betsy Erkkila’s balanced conclusion that ‘[a]lthough Whitman was closest in his views to Fremont’s Free-Soil platform, in *The Eighteenth Presidency!* he refuses to identify with any particular political party’ to a more extreme position that the denunciation of party amounts to a renunciation of political involvement.” We should ask whether what Grant offers is inadvertently—in a reversed form of his own argument on Whitman—an extreme position on the poet’s early “debts” to Republican party discourse through his empty, non-ideological yet functional, and undoubtedly political, use of formal tropes borrowed from and channeled through their discursive frame. The “fantastical” work at play in *The Disenthralled Hosts of Freedom* is not the developmental model it traces in Whitman, then, but its seeing in Whitman a continued dialectical enmeshing of a form/content distinction that disguises as much as it reveals. For all that Grant’s analysis does to position Whitman’s politics outside the frame of Republicanism—with resemblance and iteration rather than repetition and translation (however much “translation” seems to be an apt conceptual position to consider difference)—its excellent aesthetic arguments leave Whitman entrenched within the interlocked tropes and formal rhetorical devices of the party.

In this sense, Grant’s novel opening of discourse in the spaces between the works of Hardwig and Scholnick is an enclosure around Whitman in which poet and party form a system home to “thronging,” affective community, typological relation to the forefathers, and a spontaneous self-directing labour, all ostensibly emptied of their Republican ideological content, yet incomprehensible as prophetic tropes without their framing within that field of discourse. Moreover, such an enclosure presents a Whitman whose early poetic output succumbs to and reproduces a set of ideological maneuvers that further a

redemption narrative distinct from its antislavery origins and which lends its voice to those left “articulat[ing] the most extravagant claims of national regeneration.” However, when examined as a rhetoric beyond the intentional thrust of an antislavery discourse of redemption—that is, when examined through the dialectical process of Grant’s analysis—Whitman’s prospective politics (and enjoining rhetoric) become devoid of any such “claims of natural regeneration.” Instead, Grant allows them to exist in a rhetorical field populated by “claims” ironically emptied of rhetorical necessity. Despite these challenges, David Grant’s work offers an invigorating and complex set of political and aesthetic interrogations of Whitman’s poetic output which ask us to reconsider and take seriously the poet’s relationship with Republican discourse. In taking such a possibility seriously, however, we must consider whether the use of rhetorical tropes that are perpendicular to a certain discursive arena—through a noteworthy and all-too-emphasized and equivocal distance and proximity—may yet leave the rhetorician both buried in its trappings and inadvertently free from more radical, even conservative, poetic potential.

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WALT WHITMAN. *Lebenseiche, moosbehangen. Live Oak, with Moss*, translated and edited by Heinrich Detering. Aachen: Rimbaud, 2021. 70pp.

Heinrich Detering, professor of Modern German and Comparative Literature Studies at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, has worked, or is working on, a variety of topics, including ecocritical and gay literature, and the writings of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, and Günter Grass. A poet himself, he is also a translator who has rendered Bob Dylan’s poems and prose into German. Now he has come out with a small but interesting bilingual edition of a cycle of Whitman’s poems that until recently was primarily known only to Whitman specialists.

*Live Oak, with Moss* is a cycle of twelve manuscript poems headed with Roman numerals which are part of University of Virginia Valentine-Barrett collection. It includes such poems as those Whitman would later entitle “I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing,” “What Think you I take my Pen in Hand to Record” and “When I Heard at the Close of the Day,” that center on the poet’s emotional relationship with another man. Whitman at one point probably considered this work an integral whole to be published in that format and order.

considered this work an integral whole to be published in that format and order. For reasons unknown, however, he never published the sequence and instead included the poems, with some changes and in a completely different order—including the omission of two poems, “Hours continuing long, sore and heavy-hearted” and “Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me”—in the new “Calamus” section of the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1860. This has led to a discussion over whether Whitman possibly “censored” his lyrical coming out by diluting the homoerotic plot of the *Live Oak, with Moss* into the larger “Calamus.”

The bilingual edition presented by Detering contains not only the original texts and the translations, but (also bilingual) variants of and annotations on the text, as well as a commentary characterizing the speaker of these poems as a “highly nuanced and manifold persona, . . . less aimed at external representation than at intimate subjectivity . . . a longing, loving and desiring individual named Walt Whitman.” Emphasizing that “in the density and brevity of the sequence” of these poems “Whitman’s amorous protagonists go beyond the borders of the human species,” the plant symbolism (including its botanical title) leads to an “equally erotic and environmental poetry, erotic poetry that is also environmental”: “The trees, the landscapes and the embraces, the wanderers and the words, they all prove to be protagonists of a sole indestructible network in the poetic-erotic ecology of Whitman’s sequence.” In order to show “how the rhizome of relations inexorably branches out until finally it has encompassed all poems,” Detering adds five poems from later editions of *Leaves*, including “Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?” and “To Him That was Crucified.”

Detering’s translation brings across the intimacy and passion of these poems. By de-capitalizing German nouns, oftentimes a marker for experimentality in German poetry and literature at large, the poetic text here becomes more private and coherent. Whereas German nouns normally stand out, here they contribute to the cycle’s erotic universalism. The translation also uses male-gendered versions of words like “friend” and “lover,” which are grammatically gender-neutral in English, to emphasize the homoerotic quality of these poems. Even in places where a more universal word might be suitable, Detering tends to use gendered language, as when using “Mann” (male) for “man” where Hans Reisiger’s translation, *Walt Whitmans Werk* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922)—which equally stressed the male-sexual dimension of Whitman’s poetry—used the word “Mensch” (human being). On the lexical level, there are a few—but not many—significant semantic variations, for example when “robust friends” become “inseparable friends” (“unzertrennliche Freunde”).

The book is volume 132 of a series called “Lyrik-Taschenbuch” (poetry



paperback) published by Rimbaud publishers in Aachen, a city at the border triangle of Germany, Belgium, and France. Rimbaud's publishing record—some 600 titles since 1981—reflects its location at a central European intersection. Obviously, there are Modernist (or pre-modernist) authors like Rimbaud himself, or Ezra Pound, García Lorca, and Marianne Moore. There is an amazing series of more than 100 volumes of writers, mostly poets, from the Bukovina, a historical region at the extremely dynamic border between Eastern and Central Europe (Mitteleuropa), with Czernovitz (Chernivtsi) as its literary capital. Situated at the Eastern outskirts of the Hapsburg Empire, later in an uncertain tension between Romania and the Ukraine, Bukovina authors, most of them Jewish, often are, or should be, part of the world literary canon: headed by literary personalities such as Paul Celan, Rose Ausländer, and Aharon Appelfeld, there is much that can be discovered in this collection and in Rimbaud's many other literary worlds.

This extraordinary publishing firm, one of whose areas of specialty is gay literature, also focuses on a select group of nineteenth-century authors who were modern even in their own time: Goethe, of course, Heinrich Heine, and Georg Büchner among the Germans and—Walt Whitman. In 2011, Rimbaud published a bilingual Whitman volume entitled *Liebesgedichte—Love Poems*, which is now in its third edition. It assembles poems fitting this very flexible category from the “Calamus” and “Children of Adam” series, along with a number of others. The title of this collection alone forces one to rethink Whitman's poetry, since the author himself never used the generic term “love poetry,” and the collection thwarts the differentiation into two variants, “homosexual” and “heterosexual.” The polarizing categories are abolished: all you need is love. The translator, Frank Schablewski, a poet himself, calls his work a “literary adaption” rather than a translation—more explicit than Reisiger, but also more willing to depart from the monosemantic paths.

If one of the largest German publishing firms, Hanser, has done German Whitman readers the favor of publishing the first complete, though monolingual, German version of the deathbed edition, Rimbaud is proving to be an innovative new German home for Whitman's work that is located outside the Deathbed Edition. The firm is already planning its next two Whitman books—the first German translation of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and a new edition of *Specimen Days*, last published in the German Democratic Republic in 1985. The multitudes Whitman contains are beginning to be opened up to German readers.

BEHNAM M. FOMESHI. *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2019, 256 pp.

In the long history of world poetry, a few poets—often because they were far ahead of their time—were neglected, ostracized, and even hated during their lifetimes, and the importance of their poetry was only belatedly recognized and appreciated. Walt Whitman is a notable case in point. While not properly appreciated in his lifetime, his poetry was received warmly in the twentieth century not only in the U.S. but also around the world, and his absorption into other languages and cultures—from Germany to Brazil to Italy to China to France and beyond—has been the subject of numerous books and essays over the past twenty-five years. Now we can add Iran to the list.

Siegbert S. Praver, in his *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction* (1973), made the point that “[s]tudies of reception, diffusion and literary fortune, form an important part of comparative studies. In the wrong hands they degenerate, all too easily, into mechanical catalogues; ... scholars engaging in this kind of exercise have first to collect and then interpret.” Behnam Fomeshi, a well-versed comparatist, deftly performs these two comparativist acts—collection and interpretation of the translations of the works of a certain author in a certain period—in *The Persian Whitman*. Fomeshi investigates in detail the reception of Whitman’s poetry during almost a century—from 1922 to 2019—in Iran. So, as the subtitle of the book rightly indicates, the study goes “beyond a literary reception” because it also covers the social, political, and ideological background of the Iranian encounter with Whitman. Fomeshi has examined all the book-length and fragmentary Persian translations of Whitman, except for one: Hassan Shahbaz’s translation of four poems published in *A Survey in World Most Famous Books*, volume one (1974). (As Fomeshi shows, all such fragmentary translations contributed, however slightly, to the continuation of the presence of Whitman’s poetry in Iran.)

*The Persian Whitman* is comprised of an introduction, nine chapters, a conclusion, and an appendix—“a chronology of sociopolitical and literary events of modern Iran interspersed with significant dates in Whitman’s reception.” The book is an interdisciplinary study, dealing with comparative literature (reception studies and imagology) and literary criticism (New Historicism), as well as with translation studies (translation and ideology and Genette’s paratextual elements).

The first three chapters focus on Whitman’s turbulent life, his unusual poetic innovations, and his literary, social, and political contexts, including the dominant discourses of nineteenth-century U.S. democracy and nationalism.

Fomeshi aims primarily to connect Whitman's poetic career to his reception in Iran. Although these chapters are informative, they are too long for a study like this one. A potential future edition might condense them into a single chapter.

Reception studies of a writer in another culture focus chiefly on the translation of the author's works into the target language; accordingly, Fomeshi devotes the fourth chapter to an examination of the first Persian translation of Whitman, "The Big City" by Yusef Etesami (1874-1938). This translation is in fact an excerpt from "Song of the Broad-Axe" and consists of the last two lines of the fourth section of the poem together with the subsequent section. Because of religious and political reasons, or perhaps official censorship or self-censorship, the translation provides only a modified version of Whitman's poetry, with some lines left out to correspond with "the country's constitutional movement towards democracy." It is also noteworthy that Etesami's translation was reprinted in a well-known anthology, Hamidi Shirazi's *The Sea of Gem* (1955), which has gone through ten editions and has contributed to Whitman's continuing presence in Iran.

The fifth chapter discusses the relationship between the rise of Persian literary modernism and the emergence of Whitman in Iran. According to Nima Yushij (1897-1960), the father of the New Poetry modernist school, Persian poets turned to some modern European (notably French) poets as well as to Whitman, the first modern American poet, to modernize Persian poetry. Fomeshi focuses on a section from Nima's *The Value of Feelings* to analyze how Nima read Whitman and to elaborate on his poetic innovation and modern poetics, showing how Nima used the "urban" aspect and the loose structure—without meter and rhyme—of Whitman's poetry to break with traditional norms of Persian poetry and to justify his own unorthodox poetic innovations and poetic discourse.

Next, Fomeshi takes up an "unexplored field"—the literary relationship between poet Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) and Whitman. Fomeshi suggests that Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider" was Parvin's source of inspiration in writing the poem "God's Weaver," and argues that Parvin's poem can be regarded as an artistic adaptation, not a superficial copy, written in the form of a debate incorporating elements from mystical Persian poetry, her personal life, and her zeitgeist to appropriate or "naturalize" it. According to Fomeshi, "Parvin might have come across 'A Noiseless Patient Spider' in her student days in the American school for girls in Tehran"—a claim that is not well-documented. It is difficult to find clear answers to the question of direct influence, and the comparatist must refer to the author's autobiography, interviews, diaries, and so on to find a clue. Without evidence, it is an unsupportable assumption.

Rather, it is fair to conclude that the Whitman/Parvin comparison is a study in analogies or parallels rather than direct influence. According to scholar Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Attar's parable of the spider in *The Conference of the Birds* was another source of inspiration to Parvin: "To me, Parvin has read Attar's parable of the spider and in writing his 'God's Weaver' was under his influence" (*Bud O Nemud Sokhan.Tehran* [2015], 232). Fomeshi, however, does not take Attar's work into consideration.

Chapter 7 focuses on the association between Nima and Whitman that owes much to the literary and political activities of Ehsan Tabari (1917-1989) in the 1940s. Tabari was among the first translators of Whitman for Persian readers and had both familial and literary relations with Nima, all of which "link the two modern poets under the leftist discourse in Persian literary and intellectual circles." Using Genette's paratextual elements (the epitext and the peritext), Fomeshi bridges comparative literature and translation studies to shed more light on Whitman's reception in Iran. Of particular importance is the contribution of *Sukhan*, a leading and widely read journal where Tabari's short introduction on Whitman and two translations by "M. M." appeared. Fomeshi believes that "Nima was so pleased with the introduction that he wrote a letter to Tabari and thanked him for his interpretation of the poem." The documents themselves, however, show the opposite. According to well-known Nima scholar Sirus Tahbaz, "this introduction made Nima very angry, and he wrote a letter back to Tabari" that put an end to his collaboration with the periodical (*Kamandar-I Buzurg-I Kuhsaran* [2008], 723).

Fomeshi's next chapter, a study in imagology, provides an answer to the question "What does the Persian Whitman look like?" By "image" Fomeshi means "both visual representations, such as pictures or photographs, and the mental conceptions held in common by members of a group." This chapter, dealing with translation of the writer's "image" in Iran, is the most creative and innovative part of the book, scrutinizing the front covers of two recent book-length Persian translations of Whitman by Farid Ghadami (2010) and Mohsen Tohidian (2011). According to Fomeshi, the front covers present the American poet as a sage or a mystic, comparable to the image Iranians have of the Persian poets. Fomeshi neglects, however, the front cover of a recent book-length Persian translation of Whitman by Mansoreh Bakvaie (2016), which would further support his ideas. It is also worth mentioning that the front cover of the 2019 edition of Parham's translation of Whitman and the front cover of the Persian translation of the Cambridge Introduction to Whitman (trans. Razieh Sarmadi [2019]), both published after *The Persian Whitman* appeared, also



support Fomeshi's reading of the image of the Persian Whitman. What is more, the front cover of the 2002 edition of Parham's translation of Whitman designed by Farshid Mesghali (1943-) and inspired by a line from "A Song of Joys," while not an image of Whitman, represents a different aspect of Whitman's poetry and character than that which Fomeshi addresses. Interestingly, the front cover of *The Persian Whitman*—a reproduction of a Civil War photograph—displays the prematurely old and wise poet, the exact picture that the Persian reader wants to see. In this picture, Whitman gazes into a distant vista, where perhaps he can dimly make out the ultimate success of American democracy, even while the war rages around him.

The penultimate chapter studies Farid Ghadami's (1985-) 2010 translation of fifteen Whitman poems and delves into the intricate relationship between Persian poetry and Iranian politics, exploring the interactions between the opposing discourses in modern Iran post-2009. From here, Fomeshi concludes the book by examining Whitman's increasing presence in Iranian academia and his growing presence on the Web. There are two minor errors in this final chapter. First, Fomeshi claims that "Sipihri was familiar with Whitman; the many instances of anaphora . . . might have been a single indication of this famil-iarity," but, again, there is no proof for this claim. While anaphora is one of Whitman's favorite literary devices, this does not mean that Sipihri necessarily borrowed it from Whitman, since Sipihri may have known examples of anaphora in Persian literature—as in some poems by Rumi. Second, Fomeshi claims that Tabari "wrote an introduction to Whitman and translated three poems of the American poet." Tabari in fact wrote a one-page introduction on M. M.'s trans-lation of "When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame" and "As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado," which were published in *Sukhan*, but he translated only "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," which appeared in *Name Mardum*.

*The Persian Whitman* is a methodologically innovative, original, and well-documented interdisciplinary study. The author's ideas, interpretations, and conclusions are logical and convincing. More importantly, the book is full of innovative readings of both familiar and overlooked materials. Despite a few unnecessary repetitions, *The Persian Whitman* is a well-organized book, enjoyable to read and full of valuable information. It will be useful to those interested in Iranian studies, comparative literature, translation studies, American literature, and Modern Persian Literature.

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MOSTAFA HOSSEINI

## WALT WHITMAN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY



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- Anzini, Patrícia. “Was Whitman ‘Betrayed’ in Brazil? Geir Campos, Ana Cristina Cesar, and the 1983 Chopping Up of *Leaves of Grass*.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Summer 2021), 51-54. [Examines the striking case of Brazilian poet Geir Campos’s 1964 translation into Brazilian Portuguese of Whitman’s poetry, and then his 1983 re-translation of that poetry; compares the two books and assesses Campos’s own explanations of why he did a re-translation; then seeks to answer why Campos did a re-translation by analyzing the review of the 1983 re-translation by Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar, who condemns Campos’s “leafy choppings-up” of Whitman’s work; appends a translation of Cesar’s 1983 review (55-58), listed separately in this bibliography.]
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- Barney, Brett. “TEI, the Walt Whitman Archive, and the Test of Time.” *TEI: Journal of the Text Encoding Initiative* no. 13 (May 2020), [openedition.org/jtei/3249](https://openedition.org/jtei/3249). [Reviews the use of TEI on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([whitmanarchive.org](https://whitmanarchive.org)) since 2000 and examines problems in “TEI’s relatively new provisions for encoding temporality”; offers suggestions for ways “to leverage [TEI’s] potential to encode the temporal characteristics and relationships among various manuscript and print instances”; uses as a case study multiple manuscripts of a passage from the poem that Whitman eventually entitled “The Sleepers.”]
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Whitman's work within them, [and] the possible solution to the former and Whitman's potential role in it.”]

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- Cesar, Ana Cristina. “The Face, the Body, the Voice.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Summer 2021), 55-58. [Translation, by Patrícia Anzini and Reginald Gibbons, of Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar's 1983 review of Geir Campos's 1983 re-translation of Whitman's poetry; the review was originally published in *Jornal do Brasil* on April 23, 1983.]
- Dahl, Adam. *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern American Thought*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018. [Parts of Chapter 5, “Slavery and the Empire of Free Soil” (127-156), investigate Whitman's views on the expansion of free labor, free-soil ideology, notions of democratic culture and poetic dispossession, and settler colonialism; seeks to reveal “the settler colonial dimensions of Whitman's poetics and political thought,” and argues that “democratic poetics and colonial politics, for Whitman, were closely connected” and that “Whitman's poetry and political prose both reflect and reinforce settler colonial ideologies”; concludes that “Whitman's democratic theory is significantly shaped by the logic of colonial dispossession.”]
- Folsom, Ed. “Walt Whitman: An Annotated Bibliography.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Summer 2021), 78-87.
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Whitman,” 23-32), Ivo Barroso (“A Voz Oceânica de Walt Whitman,” 33-38), Gilberto Godoy (“Há Multidões Dentro de Mim,” 39-47), Euler de França Belém (“O Beijo na Boca dos Poetas Walt Whitman e Oscar Wilde,” 49-56), Max S. Moreira (“Percurso de um Poeta,” 57-61), Gerson de Almeida (“Whitman—O Poeta da América,” 63-71), E. Carrera Guerra (“Walt Whitman Renegado, Honra a Whitman!,” 73-86), Luis Dolhnikoff (“Walt Whitman, ou a Ascensão e a Queda da Poesia Moderna,” 87-92), André Cechinel (“T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound e Walt Whitman: Dois Pactos,” 93-99), Denise Bottmann (“Walt Whitman no Brasil,” 101-104), Pedro Queiróz (“Walt Whitman,” 105-107), Ronei Antonio Bossolan (“A Vida e Criação Artística de Walt Whitman . . . um Momento Surpreendente,” 109-112), Adriano Scandolora (“Alguns Poemas Breves de Walt Whitman,” 113-122), Maria A. L. Piai Rosa (“O Ideal Democrático Presente nos Poemas de Walt Whitman,” 123-132), Eduardo Pitta, “Walt Whitman e as Folhas de Relva,” 133-146), J. R. Guedes de Oliveira, “Whitman—Poesia e Humanismo,” 147-152), Ignácio Gerber (“De Walt Whitman para Sigmund Freud e Vice-Versa,” 153-166), Sérgio Caldieri (“Walt Whitman, o Poeta da Democracia e da América,” 167-172), Newton Sabbá Guimarães (“Walt Whitman, o Épico da América: A beleza e força de seus versos,” 173-179), Guido Heleno, “Carpen Whitman,” 181-185), Fernando Jorge (“Walt Whitman Sonhou um Cristianismo Singular,” 187-191), Antonio Miranda (À Glória de Walt Whitman,” 193-196), Mário Faustino (“Walt Whitman,” 197-201), Lyza Brasil (“Escrito por Walt Whitman, um Amigo,” 203-206), Paulo Mendes Campos (“Walt Whitman,” 207-213), Renato Suttana, trans. (“Uma Hora para a Loucura e a Alegria,” 215-216; “Uma Saudação de Natal,” 217; “A Terrível Dúvida das Aparências,” 219-220; “Eis o que Cantando na Primavera,” 223-225), Tomaz Amorim Izabel, trans. (“Canção da Estrada Aberta, de Whitman,” 227-240), J. R. Guedes de Oliveira (“Variações Sobre ‘Carpe Diem,’ de Walt Whitman,” 241-243; “Tributo a Walt Whitman,” 245-246); all in Portuguese.]

Hirsch, Alexander Keller. “Witnessing and Waiting in Walt Whitman’s Democratic Arts of Attention.” *Humanities* 10 no. 3 (June 25, 2021), doi.org/10.3390/h10030085. [Takes issue with “democratic theorists” (like Anne Norton and Kaja Silverman) who overstate “the extent to which Whitman sacrificed the self in order to exalt the flux of a world where the sensed and the sensing collapse into reversibility”; argues instead that in “Song of Myself” Whitman “experiments with an arts of attention that adapts the reader to the ‘procreant urge of the world,’ in ways that do not abolish the sovereign self, so much as refract and expand it”; employs Gilles Deleuze’s ideas to argue that “Whitman articulates a *poetics of democratic cleaving*, a sense of belonging to the world owing to an intensified awareness,” one that “is catalyzed by perceptual excitations that take shape in spaces of proximity that are also spaces of sundering”; takes issue with Elaine Scarry’s notion of “‘opiated adjacency,’ the pleasure-bearing pressure that quickens a concern for the welfare of others” and proposes instead that “Whitman’s witnessing and waiting provides a way of viewing democracy as something more,” calling “on citizens to fashion an act of attention adapted to the world’s surplus aliveness” and encouraging “a profound sense of affiliative cleaving that goes beyond ecstatic disintegration or pleasurable self-loss”; concludes that “Whitman exhibits acts of attention that both cleave the world into difference and celebrate effusive relation,” resulting in “a democracy of



attunement and interconnectivity, not tragic sacrifice of the self nor transcendent identity that absorbs difference into an idealized ‘I.’”]

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Unsigned. "Marshall Faculty Member Discovers New Writings by Walt Whitman." *Herald-Dispatch* [Huntington, WV] (October 5, 2021). [Reports on Marshall University faculty member Stefan Schöberlein's discovery (with Zachary Turpin) of "two newly unearthed sets of texts" by Whitman published in the New Orleans *Crescent* in 1848, after he and his brother Jeff had left the city and returned to New York.]

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"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/](http://ir.uiowa.edu/wwqr/)) and at the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([whitmanarchive.org](http://whitmanarchive.org)).



## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS OF STYLE

*Essays:* Place the author's name two inches below the title and the institutional affiliation at the end of the essay. (Note: this information will be excised for peer review by the editor.)

*Notes, Book Reviews, Bibliographies:* These are configured like essays, except the author's name follows the work.

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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](http://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](http://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).<br>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](http://www.whitmanarchive.org))," it should be abbreviated *WWC*, followed by its volume and page number (e.g. *WWC* 3:45).

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Monday Dec 27-86  
Dr R. M. Bucke, Jr  
Knowing that you are  
collecting all you can about  
Mr Whitman, I write to ask  
whether you would like my  
collection of notes about him  
I have been with him for nearly  
a year and have taken many  
notes.  
Very Respecly  
W. H. Duckett  
# 328 Mickle St.  
Camden  
N. J.

Letter from W. H. Duckett to R. M. Bucke. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress. For more information, see pages 89-117.