

WALT WHITMAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

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CONTENTS



ESSAYS

- 163 “The Battle Trumpet Blown!”: Whitman’s Persian Imitations
in *Drum-Taps* / Roger Sedarat

DISCOVERIES

- 189 Walt Whitman, Editor at the *New-York Atlas* / Stefan Schöberlein,
Stephanie M. Blalock, Kevin McMullen, and Jason Stacy
- 205 APPENDIX: Athletic Men Wanted—An Article for the
Old and Young, for Doctors, Teachers, &c
- 209 “The Indications” (1857): An Early Whitman Imitation /
Zachary Turpin

REVIEWS

- 213 Kenneth M. Price. *Whitman in Washington: Becoming the
National Poet.* / Martin T. Buinicki
- 216 Morton Schoolman. *A Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation
Image, Aesthetic Education, Possible Politics.* / John E. Seery
- 219 Nicole Gray, ed. *Leaves of Grass (1855) Variorum.* / Edward Whitley
- 224 Caterina Bernardini. *Transnational Modernity and the Italian
Reinvention of Walt Whitman, 1870-1945.* / Russell Scott Valentino
- 227 Stefan Schöberlein, ed. *Walt Whitman’s New Orleans: Sidewalk
Sketches and Newspaper Rambles.* / T. R. Johnson

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 228 Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography / Ed Folsom

“THE BATTLE TRUMPET BLOWN!”:
WHITMAN’S PERSIAN IMITATIONS
IN *DRUM-TAPS*



ROGER SEDARAT

WHILE WALT WHITMAN’S THEMATIC USE of the Orient continues to receive critical attention based on his explicit foreign references,¹ his engagement with the poetry of Iran—aside from observations of specific signifiers in “A Persian Lesson”—has remained quite speculative and therefore analogical. J. R. LeMaster and Sabahat Jahan’s *Walt Whitman and the Persian Poets*, for example, compares Whitman’s mystical relation to his own religious influences and the Sufism of Rumi and Hafez.² Whitman left nothing comparable to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s scholarly notes of his eastern reading and his drafts of Persian translations through German sources; his very claims upon the foreign influence appear deliberately grounded in abstraction, as he both “denied *and* asserted that he had read the oriental mystics before writing the *Leaves of Grass*.”³ An examination of Whitman’s study of William Rounseville Alger’s *The Poetry of the East*⁴ and of Emerson’s essay “Persian Poetry” in the late 1850s and early 1860s, however, reveals a rather subtle yet sustained attempt to directly imitate Persian verse throughout much of his 1865 collection, *Drum-Taps*. This essay will analyze how and why Whitman came to mimic translations of Persian poetry and how he turned to identifiable foreign models to depict what he deemed his nation’s most significant historical moment. Such analysis suggests that Whitman is quite personally invested in Persian verse, using it to surrender the distinct Romantic individuality of his earlier poems for the greater spiritual preservation of his conflicted nation.

The specific Persian influence on *Drum-Taps* seems to have evaded identification because it tends to function in considerable ambiguity. Malini Johar Schueller astutely summarizes the American poet’s general use of the Orient by explaining, “Whitman’s Asia, far from simply being an abstraction, is constructed against and through particular historical and material realities that form a major part of the poems” (175). Yet unlike the examples Schueller considers, Whitman’s Civil War poems offer no eastern reference point upon which to project such important western history. Further impeding analysis,

along with the latent rhetorical effects of Persian translations, many of the actual “historical and material realities” of the war in Whitman’s rendering remain suspiciously absent. As Cristanne Miller explains:

In the 1865 *Drum-Taps*, Whitman eschews the discourse of enemies, describes no specific battles, no generals, no heroic deeds, alludes only in abstract terms to the war’s causes or goals, and never mentions who is fighting or even who wins the war.⁵

This more abstract thematic treatment of the historical moment conflicts with Schueller’s assessment, while rendering the identification of the American poet’s reliance on Persian influence especially elusive. The poet’s evasion of historical particularity in *Drum-Taps*—through what Lawrence Kramer deems the abandonment of his “cosmic ego” in “Song of Myself” centered upon his “transcendently particular personality”⁶—offers a critical entry point for discovering his imitative aesthetic. Tracking the stylistic and formal effects of Whitman’s foreign mimicry exposes a rather dramatic mid-career change in his verse, wherein he predicates his personal and his nation’s history upon a greater transcendence that attempts to dissolve, rather than to reify, many of the concrete details from American history that Schueller locates elsewhere in his oeuvre.

Rambles Among Words and Emerson’s “Persian Poetry”

In *Rambles Among Words: Their Poetry, History, and Wisdom*, an 1859 book on English etymology credited to William Swinton and partially ghostwritten by Whitman, the poet shrouds in authorial ambiguity his thoughts on the spiritual underpinnings of the Persian language and its literature. *Rambles Among Words* cites a saying from the Iranian prophet Zoroaster regarding “the congruities of material forms to the laws of the soul,”⁷ laying an ancient foundation for Whitman’s belief in spiritual transformation through the very materiality of language itself. Echoing Emerson’s linguistic philosophy wherein “Language is fossil poetry,” quoted as an epigraph to the fourth chapter of *Rambles Among Words*, the book suggests an ultimate “unity within variety” in the evolution of languages (56). “The English Language expresses most typically those tendencies which all show more or less,” Whitman argues in the twelfth chapter, “English in America” (286). He contrasts “the spirit of the modern” in English and “the crystalline structure of the classic mold” in the language’s ancient predecessors, characterizing English as exhibiting “the splendid newness, the aspirations of freedom, individualism, democracy.” The book’s placement of Persian among other languages constitutive of modern English accounts for Whitman’s later

turn to translation of foreign rhetoric. In the eleventh chapter from *Rambles Among Words*, which C. Carroll Hollis convincingly shows emerges from Whitman's own writing,⁸ "the Zend-Avesta of the Persians—primeval documents of the Iranic world" and the Indian Vedas become the figurative foundation of the west where "we see the germs of all we call Europe," in which is seen the "beginnings of the cultures of the occidental world" (269). All appears to emanate from this source: "Science was born in that mind. The intuition of nature, the instinct for political organization and that direct practical normal conduct of life and affairs."

These ghostwritten passages from *Rambles Among Words* typify the way in which nineteenth-century American Romanticism so easily accommodates eastern influences. While the early popularity in America of books like Jonathan Scott's 1811 translation of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* had done much to generate appreciation of the Orient, the mid-nineteenth century brought a more comprehensive importation of both the spirit and the letter of eastern verse. Poetry translated from specific Persian sources through the British sponsored Oriental Translation Fund began appearing in journals like *The Knickerbocker* and *American Monthly Magazine*. Emerson's translations through the German renderings by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall significantly furthered this introduction of seminal Persian poets like Hafez and Sa'di to New England writers, who began to share their enthusiasm for the mystical underpinning of the poetry in their correspondence with each other as well as in their own journals.⁹ Whitman surely engaged with such literary interests of his time, yet unlike many of his contemporaries, he fails to record his thoughts about his foreign reading practices. Understandably, the lack of textual evidence leads to mere conjecture based on thematic resonances with Persian verse in his writing. More closely considering Emerson's roles as both seminal translator and critic of the poetry as well as Whitman's inspiring mentor, however, grounds the search for influence in his writing and rendering of foreign lines into English. Knowing that Whitman looked closely to his "dear Master"—as he referred to Emerson in the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1856 (358)—and valued his aesthetic enough to first reach out for praise of his work, it is worth considering how much Emerson bases his conception of the ideal American poet who Whitman seemingly longed to become upon the thirteenth-century Persian Sa'di.¹⁰ Mehdi Aminrazavi's claim that Whitman most likely would have read Emerson's poem "Saadi" in imitation of the Persian's writing published in *The Dial* in 1842,¹¹ as well as James Russell's comprehensive reference of Emerson's spiritual relation to the Persian poets as the central influence upon Whitman's verse, invites further and much closer comparative tracking.¹²

If Whitman looked to the Persian poets through Emerson, at least in part, then following his contemporary's response to them offers the needed shift toward his uniquely American perspective on the foreign verse. Instead of simply recording his reflections upon the poetry that Emerson helped introduce to his nation's literary tradition, Whitman makes greater use of it in his own writing, particularly at a crucial turning point in United States history. While by the middle of the nineteenth-century Emerson's influence upon the reading of Persian verse indeed proved pervasive,¹³ looking more specifically at his translations and criticism of it in the context of a dramatic political change—one that simultaneously brought a radical shift in Whitman's aesthetic—reveals how the American poet came to rely more directly on foreign sources rendered through his contemporary to figuratively reconcile the emerging domestic conflict of his nation.

Emerson's close study of Iranian poets critically positions such influences in a discourse through which Whitman could access the classical foreign tradition. As Aminrazavi explains, Persian verse had always seemed to closely resonate with nineteenth-century readers on "philosophical and religious as well as literary levels" (3), but a new kind of "spiritual attraction" to it occurred around the Civil War, when such identifiable themes as "temporality, fleeting nature of life, and the idea of existence being closely connected with suffering" proved especially "therapeutic and soothing to the traumatized American society" (2). That Whitman's Civil War poems reflect such themes similarly noted in Emerson's writing warrants investigating how he looks, through his "dear Master," to Persian verse for comparable solace as well as for the kind of linguistic inspiration he references as ghostwriter. If the Persian poets for Emerson could infinitely extend the spiritual reach of verse, then for Whitman they could be used to subsume all conflict—along with much of the grandiose individualism of his earlier poems—through comparable lyric vision.

Emerson's essay "Persian Poetry," published in *The Atlantic Monthly* just three years after the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, curiously begins with an extended metaphor for the ancient verse tradition of Iran that reconfigures Whitman's point about ancient Persian tradition as the inception of the scientific mind:

The seven masters of the Persian Parnassus, Firdousi, Enweri, Nisami, Dschelaleddin, Saadi, Hafiz, and Dschami, have ceased to be empty names; and others, like Ferideddin Attar, and Omar Chiam, promise to rise in Western estimation. That for which mainly books exist is communicated in these rich extracts. Many qualities go to make a good telescope,—as the largeness of the field, facility of sweeping the meridian, achromatic purity of lenses, and so

forth; but the one eminent value is the space-penetrating power; and there are many virtues in books, but the essential value is the adding of knowledge to our stock by the record of new facts, and, better, by the record of intuitions which distribute facts, and are the formulas which supersede all histories.¹⁴

This concluding preference in books for “intuition” over “facts” becomes the central theme of Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer,” included among several poems possibly influenced by Persian verse in *Drum-Taps*. As though looking to predecessor texts with such “space-penetrating” telescopic power, Whitman seems to similarly subsume the spirit underpinning the letter of the verse, conflating all significant differences into his lyric vision. Emerson’s association of “the masters of the Persian Parnassus” with the intellectually informed gaze of science further posits a comparable dichotomy found in Whitman’s poem. Responding to the astronomer’s process of fact-finding through “proofs” and “figures” along with the calculation of “charts and diagrams,” the bored speaker “wander’d off” alone into “the mystical moist night air.”¹⁵ His transcendent reaction to the astronomer’s lecture resembles Emerson’s preference for inspiration over scientific deduction in his description of Persian poetry. Similarly, Massud Farzan compares this Whitman poem to Rumi debunking the “donkey of reason” in favor of the sun that proved itself simply as it “rose as proof of the sun.”¹⁶

Whitman-as-speaker in “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer,” and in other poems in *Drum-Taps*, undergoes a change in his relation to the universe observed by Kramer in the aforementioned surrender of the poet’s well-known “cosmic ego.” Noting how Whitman drops the mention of his nationality in his identification with the universe in the edition of *Leaves of Grass* published immediately following the Civil War, Stephen Cushman further supports the idea that “Whitman’s sense of himself as a kosmos somehow did not square with his sense of himself as American.”¹⁷ Cushman speculates how this change reflects “his confidence in the stability of a national identity” as well as his ambivalence in his “sense of patriotism” (169). Whitman surrendering to the mystery of the universe—instead of attempting to subsume it—seems to follow the trajectory of spiritual overcoming in his writing of the Civil War: while the prose entries of *Memoranda During the War* certainly remain invested in minute details of his life as he tended to injured soldiers, in *Drum-Taps* Whitman appears to lose himself in a greater mystic vision rather than follow his previous attempts to take possession of it. Despite the fair number of historical details that do surface in *Drum-Taps*, mid-career Whitman generally tends toward a greater transcendence in relation to his new wartime subject matter.

Considering his relative abandonment of what had become up to the Civil War his distinctive American identity, where the world he once encountered served his self-aggrandizement, his partial reliance upon Persian models in rendering spiritual his nation's conflict facilitates a kind of "self-annihilation" similar to the Sufi mystic's *fanā*, or "extinction in God."¹⁸ From its first printing Whitman made himself synonymous with his growing collection *Leaves of Grass*, using his own full-bodied image as the frontispiece—substituting for his name, which was absent on the title page—while predicating its first grand poem, later titled "Song of Myself," upon his own self-discovery as "Walt Whitman, a kosmos" (1855 ed., 29). With *Drum-Taps*, however, he tries at least in part to disappear by conflating his biography with the fight to preserve the union of his country during the Civil War. Anticipating Farzan's reading of his late poem "The Persian Lesson" that finds him modeling the mystic's self-transcendence through "complete absorption" where "duality ceases altogether" (581), Whitman states his intention for his mid-career verse in a poem from *Leaves of Grass* titled "To Thee Old Cause," declaring, "my book and the war are one" (1871 ed., 12). Such a statement can be taken in the spirit of a pun (a ubiquitous literary device in Persian verse), wherein both the war and his verse "are won" through his greater aspiration toward Platonic unification.

In addition to truly giving much of his life through the well-known sacrifice of his time and energy tending to thousands of wounded soldiers, this Romantic poet who previously wrote endless lines about his physical prowess and sensual indulgences curiously begins to demonstrate the kind of self-denial representative of the Sufi's ascetic turning away from the material world toward a commitment to abstinence.¹⁹ After the attack on union soldiers at Fort Sumter, he notes in his journal:

I have this hour, this day resolved to inaugurate a sweet, clean-blooded body by ignoring all drinks but water and pure milk—and all fat meats, late suppers—a great body—a purged, cleansed, spiritualized invigorated body.²⁰

Around this time Whitman's eroticism—which has been compared to the Persian poets in its view of "sexual union and the various aspects of the material world as forming a necessary prelude to spiritual reality" (LeMaster and Jahan, 178)²¹—further follows the Sufis in its transformation to a greater spiritual cause. As Robert Roper observes, Whitman sublimated homosexual feelings during the war in service to wounded soldiers with a more "mystical kind of love."²² Further showing how his actual biography and personal details extended toward this greater transcendence around the Civil War, his mystical surrender also

manifests in his prose. As Amy Parsons observes in the last entry about the war in *Specimen Days*, Whitman makes setting aside “the violent passions of war” as “the necessary condition for future loving, physical bonds between the living after the conflict is over, beyond the hospitals and battlefields and beyond his own specific affectionate body.”²³

While the metaphor of the telescope at the beginning of Emerson’s “Persian Poetry” offers a way of conceptualizing how Whitman inverts the typical gaze of himself as a “kosmos” toward what he saw as a greater humanistic universality beyond the Civil War, Emerson’s translation of lines from the twelfth-century Persian Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar at the end of the essay presents a more tangible imitative model for lyric transcendence of an ideally unified nation. Emerson’s translated excerpt summarizes *The Conference of the Birds*, a more than four-thousand-line poem relating the story of a flock of thirty birds searching for the bird of supreme wisdom, known as the simurgh, or “Simorg.” At the end of their spiritually transformative journey across seven valleys—each of which represents a stage in the learning process of Sufism—they come to realize that all along they themselves collectively represent the king bird whom they have been seeking. This insight puns upon the Persian name of the bird, with “si” as the number “thirty” and “murch” meaning “bird.” Emerson aptly captures the revelation in the following excerpt:

They knew not, amazed, if they
Were either this or that.
They saw themselves all as Simorg,
Themselves in the eternal Simorg.
When to the Simorg up they looked,
They beheld him among themselves . . . (264)

True to the “intuitions” which “supersede all histories” in the metaphor of the telescope—and evoking Whitman’s ghostwritten theory of English as an a-temporal “[convergence of] the spirit of the modern”—Emerson claims to cite the longer passage from which these lines of verse have been taken “as a proof of the identity of mysticism in all periods,” adding that “the tone is quite modern” (263).

Dramatizing this spiritual transcendence through a modern reorientation of such ancient mysticism, Whitman begins to lose his definitive identity from “Song of Myself” as he attempts in *Drum-Taps* to transcend the politics of his American nineteenth century by making himself the domestic version of this foreign bird of wisdom:

From Paumanok starting, I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar, to sing the idea of all;
To the north betaking myself, to sing there arctic songs,
To Kanada, 'till I absorb Kanada in myself—to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they are inimitable;)
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs—to Missouri and
 Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky—to the Carolinas and Georgia, to sing theirs,
To Texas, and so along up toward California, to roam accepted everywhere;
To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum, if need be,)
The idea of all—of the western world, one and inseparable,
And then the song of each member of These States. (18)

Rewriting the origins of the source poem, Whitman audaciously makes himself the mythical bird by starting his own journey from his preferred name for his native Long Island. He further rewrites Attar's individuated birds becoming one with the simurgh as separate states belonging to a greater nation, "one and inseparable." After getting the bird's eye view from the top of North America in "Kanada," he encompasses clusters of representative states throughout his country threatened with separation through the Civil War. This includes Missouri, site of the failed 1820 compromise that attempted to keep slavery from expanding into new territories, and Kansas, center of the 1850 Act that undermined that earlier agreement. Seeking to unify with his verse like Attar before him, he will "sing first" the grand "idea of all," even if he must do so, ultimately like Lincoln, to the rhythm of the "war-drum." No longer the individuated poet containing multitudes, the multitude of states he longs to see reconciled contain him.

Contrary to the analogical correspondence between literary traditions suggested by Fayeze and Farzan, Attar's poem through Emerson's translation offers a possible source used by Whitman at a crucial turning point in his writing to lose himself in the greater ideal of his nation. Singing "The idea of all—of the western world," he seeks to collapse all dichotomies, most fundamentally the one between himself and his country, thereby realizing through greater spiritual connection "the theme of political union that became the overarching figure of his life and his work."²⁴ As Roger Asselineau explains, Whitman "exalted the Union because it had become for him a sacred and mystical notion to which everything, if necessary, must be sacrificed."²⁵ Reconsidering Whitman's surrender to the greater cause in the context of Sufism, upon which he partially appears to base it, his writing of the Civil War places his nation in the role of the Persian "Beloved" as referenced by G. M. Fayeze in his comparison of the American poet

to Rumi, wherein the divine “consists of the union of absolute objectivity with absolute subjectivity.”²⁶ True to Jahar Schueller’s reading of Whitman that elsewhere positions the Orient through an “amative poetic persona who, embodying the nation, would embrace the world” (175), here the poet further attempts to transcend the material struggle for union by taking flight into abstraction as he fuses himself into “the idea of all . . . one and inseparable.”

The Influence of Alger’s *The Poetry of the East*

Though the influence of the Persian verse tradition through Emerson remains somewhat speculative, Whitman’s specific imitation of poems and ideas from the introduction of William Rounseville Alger’s *The Poetry of East* dramatically exposes his reliance upon foreign models when writing *Drum-Taps*. As an intermediary text between his own writing that he attempts to fuse with the war, Whitman viewed this anthology of translations as extending his own self-sacrifice as a poet to his greater cause. He says of the collection:

Have often read (dabbled) in the ‘Introduction to Oriental Poetry’ pp 3 to 92— & over & over again. —(the stain on the edges is from breaking a bottle of Virginia wine in a trunk where it was stored, down South in the war). two or three of my jaunts thro’ the war I carried this vol: in my trunk—read in it—sometimes to hospital groups, to while away time.²⁷

Even Whitman’s statements that he never read his own verse to injured soldiers, opting instead for Shakespeare or this book of poetry from the Orient with an emphasis on Persian verse, exemplifies his ongoing surrender as center of his own “kosmos.”²⁸ While around the time of the war he was also reading Dante and Virgil—“perhaps in search of an epic model for his war poems,” as Erkkila suggests (212)—he gravitated toward the Persian tradition described by Emerson in his essay as more predisposed to short lyrics than epics (“Persian Poetry,” 218). This stylistic shift proves further representative of his cutting back upon his tendency of making an epic of himself. Much like his commitment to an ascetic life, which includes the aforementioned redirection of his sexual appetite, his response to his nation’s traumatic conflict mirrors the Sufi mystics’ abandonment of their own ego-centric claims upon the world.

Staining the edges of his book with wine from Virginia domesticates the most definitive trope of classical poets from Iran, which in their Sufi mystic tradition reflects divine intoxication. The stain is evident in the image of his personal copy—currently in Special Collections at the University of Virginia Library—literally re-framing the trope’s foreign origin with the broken Virginia

bottle and speaking to his greater figurative repositioning of classical Persian poetry within the American Civil War (see Figure 1). On the book's title page, he signed his name in blue pencil, which he used further to draw vertical lines along key passages of the almost one-hundred-page introduction he claimed to have read "over & over again." Significantly, though Alger's extensive essay covers an array of Oriental poetry, including his classifications of "Arab," "Hindu," "Hebrew," and "Sanskrit," six of the twelve vertical markings were made by Whitman in paragraphs referencing Persian Sufi verse.

A further paratextual examination demonstrates how Whitman relied on Alger's *The Poetry of the East* as a kind of model for his own self-portrait in later life, a shift which appears mid-career with his writing of *Drum-Taps*. The frontispiece and epigraph facing the title page alone appear to capture Whitman's Persian gaze (see Figure 2). The epigraph reads:

Young and enterprising in the West;
 Old and meditative in the East.
 Turn, O Youth! With intellectual zest,
 Where the Sage invites thee to the feast.

The profile of a western "Youth" looks to the "old and meditative" East, toward a figure reminiscent of the "greybeard sufi" in Whitman's late poem "A Persian Lesson" that Farzan shows most likely represents the American poet himself (582). The iconic beard of "the Sage" of the east resembles both photographs of an older Whitman and the "greybeard sufi" from his poem who stands "on the slope of a teeming Persian rose-garden," towering over "young priests and students" (*Leaves of Grass* 1891-1892 ed., 418). Here, Whitman makes the mid-career visual transformation from younger to older poet, a move coinciding with William Douglas O'Connor's 1866 pamphlet, "The Good Gray Poet," that bestowed on Whitman his popular sobriquet.

Highly relevant to Whitman's reliance upon this book for imitative models of his war poetry, the western youth holds a rifle with one hand on the end of the barrel. The gun's verticality runs parallel to the scroll held by the elder sage and extends to the greater point of the staff in his other hand, aimed toward the sky. Interposed between this foregrounding of transcendence over violence, a mother adorned in eastern clothing with a stringed instrument at her lap looks down upon a child in a turban (dressed much like the old man) near her breast. Considering that Whitman called the Civil War the "umbilicus of my whole career,"²⁹ this mother and child warrants special consideration. Schueller suggests that "the venerable Asian mother, fixed in the past, has no materiality

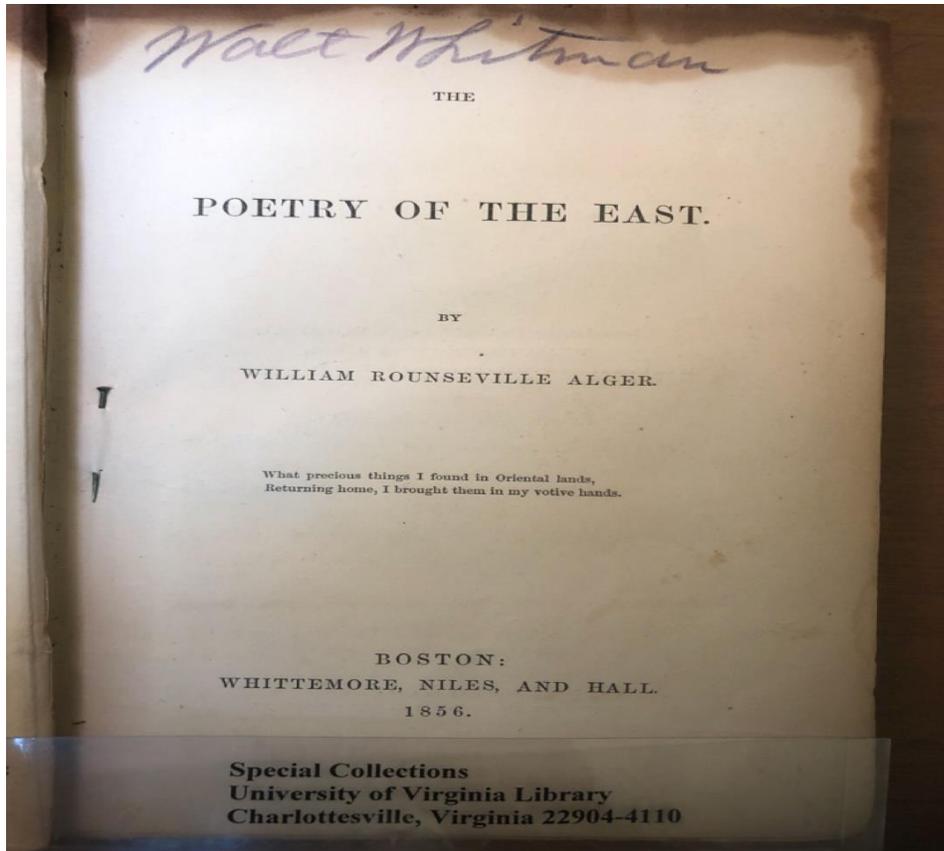


Figure 1: Scan of Whitman's personal copy of William Rounseville Alger's *The Poetry of the East* (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856). From Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

or presentness. Asia both is and is not” (189). Whitman’s general tendency to “exclude the erotic and represent the Orient/Asia” through an “asexual maternal” (Schueller, 188) supports the thematic shift in his Civil War verse away from his aforementioned personal expressions of sexuality. In this respect, the phallic transport of a young man’s rifle to the old wise man’s staff informs the eastern woman nurturing the child with Oedipal implications.³⁰ What Schueller identifies as a “return of the New World Child to the Old World mother” in Whitman’s writing (183) plays into Whitman’s reliance here on both the poetry and image in Alger’s anthology of translations. Along with providing treats for wounded soldiers, Whitman “fed” them lines from this text in his more feminine nurturing role antithetical to fighting in battle. As Schueller further explains, Whitman’s “spiritual-maternal Asia promised both the oneness and unity that could heal national wounds and the transcending of history” (194-195).

This depiction of the passive mother nurturing her son in the background and the frontispiece’s epigraph reinforces Whitman’s turn from the violence and industriousness of his American nineteenth century toward the spirituality of Asia. Interestingly, Whitman’s biographer and disciple Horace Traubel echoes the epigraph’s invitation to “Turn . . . with intellectual zest” when noting how



Young and enterprising is the West;
Old and meditative is the East.
Turn, O Youth! with intellectual zest,
Where the Sage invites thee to his feast.

Figure 2: Frontispiece and epigram from Alger's *The Poetry of the East*.

Whitman read Alger's anthology "with zest and till the end of his days."³¹ What Roper takes as "a mystical kind of love" in Whitman's tending to the wounded seems to appear in Alger's excerpted translation of a poem without author citation, titled "The True God":

Each tear forlorn that trickles down man's cheeks,
 He marks, and pities every aching sigh;
 To give them compensation ever seeks;
 Their life-woes shares; and takes them when they die. (119)

Traubel notes Whitman quoted these lines to him from memory, and they are distinctively marked in his personal copy of Alger's anthology. Considering his strong interest in the translation, its influence possibly surfaces in the conclusion of "The Wound-Dresser," as a speaker resembling the American poet tending to wounded soldiers declares:

Some suffer so much—I recall the experience sweet and sad;
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,
 Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.) (*Drum-Taps*, 34)

While Whitman retains some sense of his lyric identity, he tends to follow these comparative translation models by positioning the speaker and his greater subject within the realm of the divine.

The closer and more conclusive the evidence of his direct imitations from Alger's English renderings, the more his verse approaches such transcendence. The clear influence of a couplet by Attar titled "The Grave a Green Tent" on Whitman's poem "Camps of Green" (*Drum-Taps*, 57) supports both Whitman's formal interest in Persian verse while warranting closer examination of how he makes spiritual use of it. Alger's complete translation reads: "A furloughed soldier, here I sleep from battle spent, / And in the resurrection I shall strike my tent" (259). Whitman's poem makes the same play upon the green tent of the grave; however, he expands upon the basic idea by unifying soldiers of the past to the present, to those who fought in the Civil War:

NOT alone our camps of white, O soldiers,
 When, as order'd forward, after a long march,
 Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens, we halt for the night;
 Some of us so fatigued, carrying the gun and knapsack, dropping asleep in our tracks;
 Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up begin to sparkle;
 Outposts of pickets posted, surrounding, alert through the dark,
 And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety; . . . (*Drum-Taps*, 57)

Developing Attar's image of a single "furloughed soldier," Whitman turns the brief spiritual Persian couplet into a realistic, domestic scene of battle-weary infantry, rendering the Sufi mystic version of an afterlife into the tangible, material world. Details that would cement his poem in the Civil War, however, prove relatively wanting, as though Whitman returns to his theorizing of the Persian underpinnings of the English language and Zoroaster's demonstration of "the congruities of material forms to the laws of the soul." Though greatly expanding Attar's couplet, he nevertheless follows the translation's basic Platonic structuring that extends back to his reading of the Persian prophet, similarly juxtaposing the living soldier and spiritual resurrection. The opening stanza of Whitman's poem concludes:

Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating the drums,
We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and resume our journey,
Or proceed to battle.

Turning towards the original Persian source text, the following stanza reveals that occupants of the tents now camp in the afterlife:

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war keep filling,
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? Is it too only halting awhile,
Till night and sleep pass over?)

Modelling the collapse of all dichotomies to achieve something like the divine unification of the simurgh, he places "those of camps of green" belonging to civilians—the "parents, children, husbands, wives," "the old and young"—alongside those of "our corps and generals all, and the President over the corps and generals all." The pithy last stanza in the voice of those from the afterlife directly references Attar's couplet in its address to the soldiers that "we too camp in our place in the bivouac-camps of green." Belonging now to the divine resurrection, they rise without need for a "drummer to beat the morning drum."

Whitman's "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame" is another poem developing an Oriental model predicated upon the spiritual transcendence of war: "The Spirit-Caravan," a poem Alger cites and categorizes in his introduction under the category of "Arabic poetry" without source author attribution. Consider first the opening by Whitman:

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow;—but first I note,

The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim outline,
 The darkness, lit spots of kindled fire—the silence;
 Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving; . . . (*Drum-Taps*, 16)

Compare this to lines from Alger's translation, featuring a similarly sleepless speaker:

On the desert sand bivouacked and silent lay our motley throng;
 My Bedouin Arabs slumbered the unbridled steeds among;
 Far away the moonlight quivered o'er old Nilus' mountain chain,
 Dromedary-bones lay bleaching, scattered o'er the sandy plain.

Wide awake I lay: —my caftan's ample folds were o'er me spread,
 Covering breast and feet; my saddle formed a pillow for my head;
 There I thrust my purse, together with the date tree's fruit; and near
 I had placed my naked sabre, with my musket and my spear. (50-51)

Whitman's speaker notes "the silence" and "the darkness," juxtaposed with the "lit spots of kindled fire," echoing the foreign poem's scene, in which "All was silent, save the rustle by the dying embers made." In the firelight of the latter "ghastly shapes are gliding by" in what soon becomes a cinematic rendering of an "endless" spiritual army that invades the camp throughout the night until "the morning breezes will consign them to their tombs." Whitman also brings the spirit world to his camp, with the speaker suggestively noting "an occasional figure moving" phantom-like in the fire's low light. Rather than an army of ghosts, the speaker encounters "thoughts, O tender and wond'rous thoughts, / Of life and death—of home and the past and loved, and of those that are far away" that "wind in procession" around the sleeping camp. These American soldiers' thoughts of home domesticate and further rewrite the ghostly presence of Arab "troops of phantom riders" who "in procession haste" to pray with their "young maidens" at "Mecca's shrine." These lines from Arabic quoted in Alger's introduction right before his longer section on Persian poetry offer a pattern from which Whitman can use spiritually-informed translated verse to transcend much of his nation's conflict. Whitman's reliance on foreign translations to render the war into greater Platonic abstraction demonstrates his frequent attempts to transform the conflict into much greater transcendence, and to achieve an ultimate reconciliation.

The translated verse offers Whitman a means to fuse his American voice into grand, all-encompassing patriotic appeals—in addition to forging spiritual unity—which, like the simorg, facilitate a national overcoming of war's

harsh reality. His use of the following translation, “Bestir Thee Betimes,” from another unknown source (presumably Persian, given its juxtaposition with a Hafez poem in Alger’s anthology), especially demonstrates how he conflates his aesthetic and political intentions with Sufi mysticism:

Oh! be thou zealous in thy youth;
Fill every day with noble toils,
Fight for the victories of Truth,
And deck thee with her deathless spoils.
For those whose lives are in retreat,
Their valor and ambition flown,
In vain the ’larum drum is beat,
In vain the battle trumpet blown! (Alger, 165)

Tapping into the theme of *carpe diem* in Persian verse with which mid-nineteenth-century New England poets greatly resonated (See Aminrazavi, 2), Whitman reprises the poem’s “’larum” with “Beat! Beat! Drums!” (*Drum-Taps*, 38). Calling on the same instruments of trumpets and drums, he advises to “Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer; / Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,” echoing the invitation in the Persian poem’s first line to be “zealous in thy youth.” More a poet of itemized cataloging than his Persian counterparts who opt for broad abstraction, Whitman expands upon those “whose lives are in retreat” by introducing the newly married “bridegroom,” “the peaceful farmer,” the church “congregation,” along with “the singer,” “the talker,” “the lawyer,” “the timid,” and even “the dead.” Rather than subsuming these facets of American life into his previous lyric self who once proclaimed, “I contain multitudes,” all must now be forsaken for the greater call to battle. The poem communicates an uncompromising mandate to leave all recognizable quotidian creature comforts of home and work—those that once defined Whitman’s earlier writing—for self-sacrifice to the nation. Whitman importantly echoes the same admonition to avoid “in vain” hearing the call of both drum and trumpet and to instead “fight for the victories of Truth.”

“Song of the Banner at Daybreak”

A close reading of Whitman’s long Civil War poem, “Song of the Banner at Daybreak,” reveals his extensive imitation of a translation of a poem Alger presumably attributes to Ferriddudin Attar of Tun—coming two centuries after the more famous Ferriddudin Attar of Neishabour, poet of “The Conference of

the Birds”—and offers perhaps the most extreme example of his relying upon foreign verse in his writing of *Drum-Taps* for both patriotic and spiritual transcendence.³² That “Song of the Banner at Daybreak” seems to signal a distinct shift in his mid-career writing calls for new considerations as to how and why he comes to use imitation to effect such a different style. Erkkila cites “the dramatic presentation” of this poem along with “the metric regularity of ‘Beat! Beat! Drums!’” as his need for “greater artistic control” over the disruption of war (211). An analysis of Whitman’s reliance upon Persian translations as rhetorical models—with Alger’s and Emerson’s renderings often in rhyme and English prose—greatly expands upon such a claim. Though critical analysis of Whitman’s earlier work continues to highlight its formal resemblance to the foreign poetry, a search for further equivalence reveals how his imitations during the Civil War became especially inventive in borrowing certain themes, diction, image, and metaphor. “Song of the Banner at Daybreak,” in particular, reveals the extent to which following the structuring of translations from Persian and their underpinnings of Sufi mysticism accounts for much of what Kramer assesses as the great shift occurring in the voice of *Drum-Taps* relative to Whitman’s earlier verse: “a dispersal and multiplication of voices” wherein even “many of the direct first-person lyrics cannot unhesitatingly be assigned to the normative voice of Whitman ‘himself’” (xvii).

Yet ironically, through a voice not entirely his own, “Song of the Banner at Daybreak” proves radically emblematic of Whitman’s distinctive aesthetic as a poet of the American Renaissance with verse written as “a response to and an attempt to manage the disintegrative forces of democracy and technology in the nineteenth century” (Erkkila, 11). The nameless poet—closely associated with Whitman himself (see *Arbour*, 176)—who sets up the argument of a father trying to convince his son to ignore the banner and pennant calling him to war in favor of domestic prosperity, ultimately follows the boy in his transcendence over the material picture. “I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,” the Poet says, “I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men—I hear LIBERTY!” (*Drum-Taps*, 12). The aforementioned Sufi *fanā* allows Whitman a means by which to ultimately overcome what Erkkila posits as perhaps an even greater fear than his country going to war: “the possibility that the American people would sacrifice the principle of Union in the interest of continued wealth and prosperity” (194). Insofar as the Poet surrenders his definite lyric identity and the child sees beyond what Erkkila calls “the dough-faced politics of the Father to the absolute value of Union,” Whitman and his readers follow the Persian poets in divine dissolution of the self.

Whitman's "Song of the Banner of Daybreak" predicates the father's comparable plea to his son determined to leave behind the same comforts of home related in "Beat! Beat! Drums!" by completely giving himself to the symbols of flag and pennant. The crux of the tension between materialism and spirituality manifests in the same dialogic mode, which stylistically lends to Whitman's imitation some of the "borrowed voices" that Kramer observes throughout much of *Drum-Taps*. Consider first in the Persian poem, titled by Alger as "God's Boy-Lover: Or, the Mystic's Suicide," the father's reasoning with his son as to why the perilous sea voyage is worth the risk, provided they survive it:

. . . "All the world, my child, behold,
Driven right and left, and near and far, by lust of gold.
'Tis sweet to sail the sea, for when the danger's o'er,
Great wealth and honor is the fruit the danger bore." (Alger, 256)

This passage in Whitman's copy of Alger's book shows evidence of his attention with scribbled circles in the same blue pencil that he used to mark the anthology's introduction, and it sounds quite similar to the father advising his son to focus on similar material gains in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak":

. . . But look you, my babe,
Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you the money-shops opening;
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the streets with goods:
These! ah, these! how valued and toil'd for, these!
How envied by all the earth! (*Drum-Taps*, 10)

Both sons are summoned by forces much greater than the voices of their respective fathers. In the Persian poem, after initial resistance to the sea-voyage for fear of losing his life, the boy is called to self-martyrdom: "A revelation saw I from the flood upshot, / Saw rise from the sea, an image of the Absolute." Whitman's boy relates a similar beckoning to his father: "Father what is that in the sky beckoning to me with long finger? / And what does it say to me all the while?" When further interrogating the respective summoning to surrender their security in the material world to a greater spiritual calling, both boys confront resistance from paternal authority. The Persian father condescendingly dismisses the revelatory wisdom his son receives that advises him to give his life to the ocean:

“Dear soul!” then said the father, “cease from such discourse:
Before an old man boastest thou thy wisdom’s source?
O infant, with the shell of Law be thou content:
Truth absolute is not as sport to children’s sent.” (Alger, 257)

Relentlessly, the son insists upon heeding the call to ultimate self-surrender, committing the “mystic’s suicide” named in the poem’s title:

“Father,” replies the youth, “my eye towards home is turned;
I see the way for which my heart has ever yearned.
The sea’s a symbol how one must destroy self’s root:
Upon the inmost selfhood now exults my foot.”

The father responds with passionate though reasoned authority, as if condescendingly implying his son is still but an infant, “In rage the Father cries: ‘Silence this instance keep, / Pert babbler!’”

As the Persian boy looks to the sea for the dissolution of self and consequent spiritual realization, the son in Whitman’s poem similarly fixates upon the image of the “banner and pennant” representative of a collective American movement toward the greater cause of war that surfaces as a divine calling:

O father, it is alive—it is full of people—it has children!
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children!
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast! O my father,
It is so broad, it covers the whole sky! (*Drum-Taps*, 11)

Whitman’s father similarly attempts to silence his son’s compulsion to lose himself in the comparably oceanic symbols of banner and pennant:

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,
What you are saying is sorrowful to me—much it displeases me;
Behold with the rest, again I say—behold not banners and pennants aloft;
But the well-prepared pavements behold—and mark the solid-wall’d houses.

Both American and Persian sons undergo a spiritual conversion relative to their fathers’ respective commitments to the materialistic world. Truer to the Sufi wisdom favoring “knowledge of the heart” over intellectual knowledge (Schimel, 4), the Persian son claims, “I see the way for which my heart has always yearned.” As Mahnaz explains of Whitman’s “A Persian Lesson,” the American poet receives comparable insight from Sufi mysticism:

The most important lesson Whitman learned from the ‘greybeard Sufi’ is that logic and discursive reasoning have never provided all the answers and that the solution to the baffling mystery of life lies in a mystical surrender of the limited human ego to the infinite self in an act of love. (160)

Even more than forgoing the material world, the mystic children of both poems challenge the materiality of language itself. Accused by his father of being a “pert babbler,” the Persian boy expresses his inability to express: “‘Thou understand’st me not,’ the love-drunk stripling cries / ‘Know in each soul the hidden Loved One slumbering lies.’” As though returning to his own semantic theory of English’s Persian influence from *Rambles Among Words* which Romantically privileges “the intuition of nature,” The Poet—Whitman’s otherwise nameless speaker of the poem—declares the ineffability of writing relative to a song’s transcendence over discursive logic:

Words! book-words! what are you?
Words no more, for hearken and see,
My song is there in the open air—and I must sing,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping. (*Drum-Taps*, 9)

In this respect, both poems demonstrate Rumi’s declaration that even the words of his verse seemed a poor metaphor compared to the spiritual ecstasy he experienced.³³

“Song of the Banner at Daybreak” further demonstrates how Whitman uses the Sufi mystic’s *fanā* to his own thematic ends, both personalizing and politicizing his imitation to drum up support for unifying the nation. In the Persian source poem, the father, learning the lesson of surrender from his “mystic” son, finds himself compelled to follow the boy into the sea:

As in the son a pure snow-flake dissolves to tears,
The beauteous youth beneath the flood so disappears.
The father gazes where that plunge a gurgling makes:
A piercing groan from out his anguished bosom breaks.
Then, realizing all, sudden he looks around,
Steps to the ship’s frail edge,—is gone with silent bound. (Alger, 258)

Responding to this model, “Song of the Banner at Daybreak” radically disrupts the relationship, opposing the materialistic father to the spiritual surrender of the son. Consequently, Whitman begins turning against his own well-established aesthetic of his earlier verse, divorcing the means by which his ego “contains multitudes” of seemingly endless objects in the world. In response to his father

listing things that the son can use to root himself to the world—“the well-prepared pavements” and “the solid-wall’d houses”—the son declares his loyalty to more abstract symbols. His desire to become one with the banner and pennant comes especially close to his Persian counterpart’s proclamation that “[t]he sea’s a symbol how one must destroy self’s root.” As the American boy explains:

O my father, I like not the houses;
 They will never to me be anything—nor do I like money;
 But to mount up there I would like, O father dear—that banner I like;
 That pennant I would be, and must be. (*Drum-Taps*, 13)

The father protests, ultimately to no avail:

Child of mine you fill me with anguish,
 To be that pennant would be too fearful,
 Little you know what it is this day, and henceforth forever;
 It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy everything; . . . (*Drum-Taps*, 13-14)

Without what Burton Hatlen reads as Whitman’s political agenda to stir the public for war,³⁴ the Persian poet can focus on giving his father and son to a complete union with “the Loved One.” Through the *fanā* of the son becoming “lost to the self,” the poem ends in silence, an ultimate counterpoint to the father’s earlier vain attempts to silence the debate. As the Persian poem concludes, witnesses to the double martyrdom can only watch around the perimeter of the mysterious center: “Like points within a circle the crew all dumb: / Spell-bound, each stands, like a pearl in the muscle numb” (259).

Though less comprehensive than the sea as grand maternal metaphor for what the child in the Persian poem calls “the Absolute” that stands in contradistinction to his father’s authority, the banner in Whitman’s imitation allows the nameless poet to similarly conclude with a negation of the material world identified with established patriarchal order. Here especially, Whitman exemplifies Schueller’s assessment of American Orientalism’s trope of “the venerable Asian mother, fixed in the past” without any “materiality or presentness”:

I too leave the rest—great as it is, it is nothing—
 houses, machines are nothing—I see them not;
 I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with stripes, I sing you only,
 Flapping up there in the wind. (*Drum-Taps*, 16)

Unlike the Sufi surrender in the translation of the Persian poem, however, the boy of Whitman’s poem paradoxically attempts to lose himself through symbols

limited to the materialistic world that he attempts to dismiss. In this respect, Whitman's reliance upon foreign models for the poems in *Drum-Taps* somewhat displaces the divine from his Persian models with his version of an idealized Platonic patriotism, illustrating what Hatlen observes as "a radical falling off" in his verse around 1860 and "a monistic will toward unity" that "restricts or even stifles the free play of semiosis." While Hatlen argues that the poem "consistently operates at an abstract, ideological level," Whitman's limited image of the flag diverges from the divine ocean into which the Persian boy surrenders, and instead attempts to redirect the *fanā* toward Whitman's own patriotic ends. "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" thus perhaps too forcibly conflates the eastern and western sensibilities defined by Alger's introduction:

This mysticism, which is the soul's groping in a world of symbols after realities too vast and elusive, occupies the same place in Eastern literature that is filled with sentimentality in the modern literature of the West. (80)

In part, the problem for Whitman concerns his substitution of the banner for the sea, a finite and sentimental symbol far more limited in scope than the mystical expansiveness of the ocean used by the Persian poet.

Despite this concluding deviation from "the Absolute" in favor of patriotic symbolism, Whitman's writing prior to *Drum-Taps* follows the same kind of predilection for losing self in the sea. In her reading of the 1860 poem "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," for example, Elena Furlanetto finds a comparable loss of self in both "Sufi imagery and the shores of Paumanok."³⁵ She further relates the "drowning fantasies" in Whitman's earlier work, a manifestation of the *fanā*, anticipating his reading of Alger's translation of "God's Boy-Lover: Or, the Mystic's Suicide":

If the Sufi resorts to drowning imagery to express the quest for the union with god and attainment of the ultimate divine truth, Whitman also offers metaphorical drowning as a path to self-awareness and a more vibrant poetic word. (107)

In later poems, too, Whitman continues meditating on the loss of self in the mystic ocean. Arthur Ford further traces this Sufi imagery of the ocean in his analysis of Whitman's late-life poem "A Persian Lesson," noting how "the concept of ultimate reunion of soul with an original source is not uncommon in Whitman's poetry," in which "the central urge in every atom" returns it "to the Great Float or the Mother of the Sea."³⁶

In *Drum-Taps*, Whitman places upon himself the onus of reconciling his

nation's conflict within his personal surrender. He turns to the sea as grand maternal symbol to settle the politics of his nation as he attempts to depict his umbilical connection to what he calls "this time and land we swim in," which despite its "conflicting fluctuations and despair & hope" he senses is led "by invisible hand, a definite purport & idea."³⁷ Persian verse in translation, predicated upon the transcendence of such idealized revelation of the divine, thus offers him a qualified means to become the spiritual unifier of his nation. Just as he follows the simurgh in "From Paumanok Starting I Fly Like a Bird" to unify the states of his nation, he further follows "God's Boy-Lover," who uses the same all-encompassing metaphor of the unifying Persian bird:

Dear father, thou know'st not the mystery aright:
 Let me reveal to thee the Absolute's own light.
 Know, father, in the heart I dwell of the Alone:
 Simurg am I, the mountain Infinite my throne. (Alger, 257)

Whitman turns to verse in translation and mimics his foreign source authors in an attempt to transform himself into comparable divine realization redirected toward his nation. While he succeeded in becoming a uniquely American poet around the Civil War, this comparative reading necessitates further considerations as to how much Whitman imitated the Persian poets he read with such "zest" and the extent to which he fused himself into the Persian sources. American poet and critic Elsa Barker detected the influence of Attar on Whitman's work but qualified her comparative reading by declaring that "Whitman was not a disciple of Orientals or anyone else . . . he was himself."³⁸ Becoming "himself" in *Drum-Taps*, however, entailed getting lost in the mysticism underpinning his foreign models in service to the great cause of unifying his nation. Locating his authorial presence in his writing of the Civil War must therefore include further searches through Persian verse in translation. In Alger's translation of "God's Boy Lover," the boy upon whom Whitman predicates his own "Child" has eyes described as "heavenly blue" (255). It is a rather suspicious color for a Persian, strangely more applicable to Whitman himself, suggesting the transformation of his American vision through an Orientalist gaze toward Iran.

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Notes

- 1 Malini Johar Schueller's *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), for example, predicates a comparative analysis upon Whitman's specific references to the Orient in "A Passage to India" as well as "A Broadway Pageant" (see 175-198). Similarly, Stephen Tapscott's "Leaves of Myself: Whitman's Egypt in 'Song of Myself,'" *American Literature* 50 (1978), 49-73, relies upon the poet's foreign allusions based on his knowledge and fascination with Egyptology.
- 2 J. R. LeMaster and Sabahat Jahan, *Whitman and the Persian Poets: A Study in Literature and Religion* (Bethesda, MD: IBEX, 2009).
- 3 John McCormick, "Walt Whitman: Orientalist or Nationalist?" in *Another Music: Polemics and Pleasures* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 71-84. See page 71.
- 4 William Rounseville Alger, *The Poetry of the East* (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856).
- 5 Cristanne Miller, "Drum-Taps: Revisions and Reconciliation," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 26 (Spring 2009), 171-196. See page 179
- 6 Lawrence Kramer, "Introduction." Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps, the Complete 1865 Edition* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2015), ix-xxiii. See page xvi.
- 7 William Swinton, *Rambles among Words: Their Poetry, History, and Wisdom* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Company, 1859), 31.
- 8 C. Carroll Hollis, "Walt Whitman and William Swinton: a Cooperative Friendship," *American Literature* 30 (1959), 425-449. See 439-440.
- 9 Phillip Edmonson, "The Persians of Concord." *Sufism and American Literary Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 213-219. See pages 214-215.
- 10 Roger Sedarat, *Emerson in Iran: The American Appropriation of Persian Poetry* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 91-93.
- 11 Mehdi Aminrazavi, ed. "Introduction." *Sufism and American Literary Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 1-14. See page 8.
- 12 James Russell, "Emerson and the Persians," *Lecture Series: Near East in the Mind of America* (Harvard University, 2002).
- 13 John. D. Yohannan, "American Transcendentalists' Interpretations of Sufism," 191-212. See page 198; *Sufism and American Literary Masters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 1-14.
- 14 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Persian Poetry." First published in *Atlantic Monthly* 1 (1858). Reprinted in "Persian Poetry," *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Letters and Social Aims*, ed. Alfred Ferguson, Joseph Slater, et al., vol. 8 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010), 237. Hereafter, "Persian Poetry."
- 15 Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps* (New York, Washington D.C., 1865-1866). Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. Hereafter, "Drum-Taps."

- 16 Massud Farzan, "Whitman and Sufism: Toward a Persian Lesson," *American Literature* 47 (1976), 572-582. See page 577.
- 17 Stephen Cushman, "Whitman and Patriotism," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81 (2005), 163-177. See page 168.
- 18 Eric Geoffrey, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*, trans. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010), 14.
- 19 Annmarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011), 109-111.
- 20 Gay Wilson Allen, as quoted from Whitman's journal entry dated April 16, 1861, in *The Solitary Singer* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 272.
- 21 See also Farzan's comparison of Whitman to Rumi and Hafez for the "I-thou relationship, the microcosm-macrocosm duality to complete fusion and oneness" that "finds its most convenient and poetic expression in the love sex relationship between two people" (576).
- 22 Robert Roper, *Now the Drum of War: Walt Whitman and His Brothers in the Civil War* (New York: Walker and Company, 2008), 174.
- 23 Amy Parsons, "Desire, Forgetting, and the Future: Walt Whitman's Civil War," *Arizona Quarterly* 71 (2015), 85-109. See page 96.
- 24 Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman and the Political Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23.
- 25 Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999) [originally published Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1960], 155.
- 26 Ghulam M. Fayeze, "Images of the Divine in Rumi and Whitman," *Comparative Literature Studies* 17 (1980), 33-43. See page 33.
- 27 William Sloane Kennedy, "Notes on the Text of *Leaves of Grass*," *Conservator* 8 (1898), 184-185.
- 28 George Hutchinson, "Race and the Family Romance: Whitman's Civil War," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 20 (Winter/Spring 2003), 134-150. See page 139.
- 29 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* 3:95. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 30 See Schueller's extended psychoanalytic reading, showing how "the idea of the mother—without agency, ever giving, located in the past—attracts Whitman the poet, for whom it is represented by Asia." For Whitman, argues Schueller, this "not only suggests regression but also becomes a means of naturalizing colonization" (184).
- 31 Horace Traubel, "Notes on the Text of *Leaves of Grass*," *Conservator* 9 (1898), 9-10.
- 32 Though attributed to Ferideddin Attar of Tun, the Persian source poem used for "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" was possibly written by an unknown author trying to pass himself off as the established poet, a rather common pattern in the classical verse tradition. The following is related to the author by Persian scholar Francis Lewis: "[Alger's poem] comes from what is quite likely a pseudo-Attar work called the Javaaher al-dhaat (Jowhar-e dhaat or Jowhar-naame) which has however circulated in Ferriddudin Attar-e-Tuni's name since at least the 15th century." A link to the extended narrative (which Alger has significantly condensed) can be found here: ganjoor.net/attar/jz/d1/sh27/.

- 33 John Baldock, *The Essence of Rumi* (London: Arcturus, 2005), 101.
- 34 Burton Hatlen, "'Song of the Banner at Daybreak' (1865)," *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1998). Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 35 Elena Furlanetto, "Walt Whitman's 'Sea Drift' Cluster: The Encounter of Sufi and American Selves at Paumanok," *Harbors, Flows, and Migrations: The USA in/and the World* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2017), 95-110. See page 96.
- 36 Arthur Ford, "The Rose-Gardens of the World: Near East Imagery in the Poetry of Walt Whitman," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 5 (Summer 1987), 12-20. See page 18.
- 37 Walt Whitman to William D. O'Connor, January 6, 1865. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: nyp.00196.
- 38 Elsa Barker, quoted in "Did Whitman Borrow From the Orientals," *Current Literature* 43 (August 1907), 165-166.

WALT WHITMAN, EDITOR
AT THE *NEW-YORK ATLAS*STEFAN SCHÖBERLEIN, STEPHANIE M. BLALOCK,
KEVIN MCMULLEN, AND JASON STACY

WHEN ZACHARY TURPIN DISCOVERED the journalistic series “Manly Health and Training” in 2016,¹ one of the questions that remained was why Whitman would have chosen the *New-York Atlas* as his venue for the publication. After all, scholarly commentary generally suggests that Whitman’s previous engagement with the paper’s editor and proprietor, Anson Herrick, ended on particularly bitter terms. Following a short stint as editor of the *Aurora* (the *Atlas*’s daily sister publication) in 1842, Whitman made a quick departure from Herrick’s paper, a move David Reynolds describes as “surrounded by infighting and backbiting.”² Turpin thus wonders: “Why the *Atlas*, rather than some other paper—did it pay the most? Was it the only paper willing to buy Whitman’s columns?” (3). Even the topics covered in Whitman’s self-help-focused articles—primarily diet, health, and exercise—were a noticeable departure from the *Atlas*’s regular front-page offerings of serial fiction, urban sketches, gossip, and politics. Here we present new evidence on Whitman’s relationship with the paper that might explain this mystery: we believe that the Sunday paper chose to publish “Manly Health” because Whitman was one of its editors.

The owner of the *Atlas* provides the first clue. In late spring of 1861, Herrick published a multi-part series on the history of New York’s Sunday press in the *Atlas*, then overseen by himself, his brother Hugh, and the English-born poet Henry Morford. (Later, Herrick’s sons would join the operation.) In the installment of May 12, Herrick turns his full focus to the staff of the *Atlas*, providing an extensive, albeit not exhaustive, list of the paper’s collaborators. It includes this passage, excerpted here in full (see Figure 1). In the center of the paragraph, we encounter a familiar name: “Walt Whitman, whose dirty and bestial ‘Leaves of Grass’ have since disgusted every decent man who has been snared into reading them, and well entitled him to a term on Blackwell’s Island under the statute against indecent personal exposures.”³ The list then goes on,

naming two dozen newspapermen and -women, who had been associated with the *Atlas* in the more than two decades since its founding in 1838.

Wendy Katz, in her invaluable “Unofficial Index” to antebellum newspapers, acknowledges this piece, noting that it contains a list of “other writers for [the] *Atlas*.”⁴ However, tracing the wording of this list carefully—and cross-referencing it with known editors and associate editors—makes clear that Whitman is not just named as a “writer” for the *Atlas*, but indeed as one who “wielded the pen at the desks of the *Atlas*.” This list is, then, not a list of *contributors*, who periodically submitted writing, but of *editors*. Herrick himself primes the metaphor: “pen[s] at the desks” equal “pens . . . editorially employed.”⁵

During the same extended space of time, it may be supposed that many different pens have been editorially employed on the old ATLAS, at different periods of its existence, in addition to the large body of well-known outside contributors who have furnished matter for its columns. Without attempting to make a full list of those who have at different times wielded the pen at the desks of the ATLAS, we may mention among those involved in its earlier history, the names of Frederick West, Samuel J. Burr, Washington G. Snethen (all connected with its commencement); Samuel Nichols; Henry A. Buckingham; S. S. Southworth, now of the *Mercury*, whose “John Smith, Jr., of Arkansas” papers, commenced in the *Boston Morning Post* and other newspapers, as correspondence, were continued in the ATLAS; George G. Foster, already mentioned; Walt. Whitman, whose dirty and bestial “Leaves of Grass” have since disgusted every decent man who has been soared into reading them, and well entitled him to a term on Blackwell’s Island under the statute against indecent personal exposures; Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro, a well-known and somewhat popular general writer and literary Bohemian; Lawrence Labree, a most laborious writer, long a steady wheel-horse on the ATLAS, who died about two years since at his residence at Hoboken; Zavarr Wilmshurst, an Englishman of decided talent, who married the brilliant little Getty Gay, (herself an old contributor), and had the bitter grief of burying her not many months since; David Wemyss Jobson, the “expert,” who threw so many thorns in the path of poor Lola Montez, and not long ago temporarily filled an

English prison for libelling one of the aristocracy; William Burns, an admirable writer, and, as otherwise stated, one of the founders of the *Dispatch*; James F. Otis, now for years connected with the New Orleans *Picayune*, and the “Gemotice” of that popular journal, at present buried under the wet-blanket of secession; Thomas L. Nichols, the incarnate Bohemian who lately divides himself between Mary Gove, catholicism and the water-cure; Thomas J. Newhall, of the New England press; Thaddeus W. Meighan, one of the best-known hard-workers of the New York press, a strong man in point of talent, but a comet in eccentricity, who has just given up an engagement on the *Dispatch* to mount the gray jacket of a captain in Billy Wilson’s Zouaves, and “march through Baltimore”; and Elger S. D. Bangs, one of the most variedly learned and eccentric men ever connected with the press of this city, and who died from over-work and over-excitement some four years ago. A. G. Seaman, mentioned as temporarily one of the proprietors, was one of the editors during his connection; and John A. Harrington, the somewhat well-known “Mr. John Carboy” of the press of Philadelphia and this city, held an engagement here until within a few months past. The present working editorial force employed upon the ATLAS consists of Anson Herrick, the founder; Hugh M. Herrick, Clerk in the Court of Common Pleas, and brother to the proprietor; and Henry Morford—“the Governor,”—at present conspicuously connected as a high-private with the Nineteenth Ward Home Guard—who has discharged the duties of Associate Editor since August, 1860, to the entire satisfaction of all parties concerned—his *own* satisfaction, especially.

Figure 1: Excerpt from “The History of the Grandfather Atlas” by Anson Herrick (*New York Atlas*, May 12, 1861).

Although this “list of those who have wielded at different times the pen at the desks of the *Atlas*” follows a vague chronology—beginning with the paper’s “commencement” in 1838 and ending with the 1861 editors—individual “editorial pens” appear slightly out of order. Some names might even be partially misremembered: the “Thomas J. Newhall” at the close of Herrick’s list is most likely *James R. Newhall*, who was also Whitman’s co-editor at the *Aurora*.⁶ Overall, however, the paragraph paints a compelling picture of an editorial department in frequent flux. To make sense of this complex staffing history, we have contextualized the 1861 list with contemporary newspaper data from the 1840s and 1850s and translated it into a graphic showing the tenure or possible tenure (gradients) of each editorial voice:



Figure 2: Those “editorially employed” at the *Atlas* [blue = named in 1861 editorial, green = (also) named in paper as editor/associate editor, yellow = (also) co-owner of paper; color grading expresses chronological uncertainty]. Note: the paper expanded from 4 to 8 pages between 1857 and 1858.

While the gradient ranges indicate a wide degree of uncertainty for some “pen[s] at the desks,” it becomes clear that editorships at the *Atlas* were typically short: to be remembered as a “long and steady wheel-horse”⁷ somebody like Lawrence Labree only had to have been involved for around five years. Most others likely spent somewhere between a season and a year at the *Atlas*. With an editorial staff of around three or four at any given time (the number of editorial staff present at the paper’s commencement and in 1861) and a publishing run of over twenty years, a list like Herrick’s appears to be a fairly accurate record of most of those who worked in an editorial capacity at the *Atlas*.

Logically, there are three possible scenarios for Whitman's editorial employment at the *Atlas*: (a) Herrick conflated Whitman at the *Aurora* with the *Atlas* (the papers shared an office); (b) an early tenure in the 1840s⁸; or (c) a late tenure in the 1850s, likely parallel to the publication of "Manly Health." We find the third scenario to be most probable and will detail our rationale below, arguing that there is sufficient evidence to claim a more involved relationship between Whitman and the *Atlas* that helps explain why "Manly Health and Training" appeared in its pages.

As Whitman's only known contribution to appear in the *Atlas*,⁹ the 1858 health guide serves as a potential anchor for an uncredited editorial tenure. At this point in Whitman's career, he had, of course, already shifted his public persona from dandy-newspaperman to poet-tough, rendering a named editorship much less appealing to the image-conscious Whitman. While Whitman tried to make his mark in the newspaperdom of the 1840s by getting his name associated with leading papers, the Whitman of *Leaves* relied on such work now largely as a means of subsistence and, occasionally, self-promotion. His concurrent involvement with the *Brooklyn Daily Times* discloses a similar disinterest in being outed as a hard-working newspaperman. While recalled as an occasional editor of the *Times* by colleagues years after his tenure, an association even acknowledged by Whitman himself in an 1885 letter to Charles Skinner, the poet's name does not appear in an editorial capacity throughout the late 1850s.¹⁰

Still, this does not mean Whitman saw this unattributed work as pure hackery, especially in the *Atlas*. In fact, he seems to have treated publication in the local press as a convenient medium for experimenting with new ideas and formats, some of which were pursued with a degree of gumption that goes beyond mere column-filling subsistence work. "Manly Health and Training," for example, does not appear to have been intended as a one-off series produced for a quick buck, as its pseudonymous attribution and slap-dash style might imply.

Indeed, there is a crucial editorial frame to "Manly Health" that is (and has been) overlooked when the series is considered as a piece submitted by Whitman the free-lance writer rather than Whitman as an editor of the *Atlas*. The issue containing the last installment of "Manly Health" includes an extended puff that employs the editorial "we" to promote "Mose Velsor" and ensure the series survives the vicissitudes of a weekly paper.¹¹ This editorial puff outs "Mose Velsor" as a pseudonym and offers insider information about the composition of the series, connecting the origins of Velsor's

diet and exercise advice to the training regimens of highly experienced athletes. Effectively a postscript to “Manly Health,” this puff piece promotes Velsor’s vision as crucial, even existential, to the American Man and the American Republic:

This may seem strong language but it is the result of a deliberate thought and judgement. “Mose Velsor,” in the course of his articles, well indicates that the conditions called health and disease are not trivial effects, produced by temporary causes, but the results of long trains of processes and influences. When a man is really ill, for instance, although he is apt to lay it to some little cause, of recent date, the undoubted truth is that what really makes him ill, the foundation on which the whole evil stands, has long been preparing, layer by layer, for weeks and months, perhaps for years. The manly frame, thoroughly prepared and bred from boyhood to manhood, and then kept in decent condition, would be innocuous to disease; but then it would indeed require all those antecedents—of which how many cases could we find, through New York city, or any city, or country either? Yet all this is vital, and that theory of doctoring and medicating is nonsense which does not involve it and make “health, strength and beauty,” familiar themes of daily habit and household knowledge, instead of keeping them for the apothecarie’s shop and the doctor’s confessional.

It closes by disclosing its intent:

We believe it is the intention of “Mose Velsor” to put these articles in shape for publication, in handy and cheap book-form. Just now there is among all classes of American young men, great interest in this subject of MANLY TRAINING, and we think a publisher would make a good and profitable investment by bringing it out.

This somewhat lengthy piece, titled

We invite the special attention of our readers to our new Revolutionary story. “Martin Montkion” is certainly one of Charles Bardett’s very best efforts, and will repay a careful perusal. It has the rare merit of being not only historically true in its characters, but worked up in such romantic style, as to enthrall the attention of the reader. Again we say, read it, and carefully.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!
**A FIRST-CLASS ORIGINAL WORK ON
 MANLY TRAINING.**

We commence this week a series of articles which cannot be better indicated than by the aim stated in their own heading,
**TO TEACH THE SCIENCE OF A SOUND AND BEAUTIFUL
 BODY.**

This work is not only original and of a high degree of literary merit, but goes into full practical details, giving that specific advice in all departments of general training for health, whose result, if faithfully followed, would be, for every man who reads it,
A NOBLE AND ROBUST PHYSIQUE.

The articles, which we shall continue week after week contain many things of direct application to

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Young Men, | Clerks, |
| Mechanics, | Actors, Vocalists, and all |
| Operatives in Factories, | Public Performers, |
| All Employed In-doors, | Lawyers, Preachers, &c. |
| Farmers, | Literary Persons, |
| Gentlemen, | Middle-aged and Elderly Men, |
| | &c., &c., &c. |

To these—to all—the facts, laws, suggestions, &c., conveyed in the above work, will be of priceless value. For what can be more to a man than a perfect condition of health and strength?

These articles are for the People; all cannot only appreciate them, but easily follow them. Technical and medical terms are avoided. After once commencing them, they will be found of as engrossing interest as any romance.

They give the great subject of Training for Health its due position, not as something merely for an occasion here and there, to fit a man for a race, a prize fight, &c.; but as
**A SYSTEM FOR GENERAL AND CONTINUAL USE AMONG
 ALL YOUNG AND MIDDLE-AGED MEN.**

This point is argued with consummate eloquence and ability.

We have said enough, we are sure, to make the reader look with interest upon these valuable articles, which will be continued for some weeks.

Figure 3: Ad for “Manly Health.”

“Athletic Men Wanted” (attached to this article in full), is then not so much an editorial comment on “Manly Health” but the voice of the paper perpetuating “Velsor’s” argument—and pitching it to potential publishers. It is our belief that Whitman was the author of this editorial in the *Atlas*. We have assessed “Athletic Men Wanted” using a computational stylometric approach, which offers additional support for our claim of Whitmanian authorship.¹²

Thus, it appears that Whitman was not primarily writing “Manly Health” as a tossed-off piece for quick remuneration, as initial scholarship has suggested.¹³ Instead, the publication of “Manly Health” in the *Atlas* seems to have been the foregrounding of a more ambitious and free-standing project: a collection of articles gathered into a book subsequent to its appearance in the *Atlas*—a “handy and cheap” publication to carry in one’s pocket, notably similar to Whitman’s vision for *Leaves of Grass*, a self-help guide to be read on the omnibus, at the counter during a slow sales period, or in the workshop upon the close of the day. In light of the doldrums into which *Leaves* had fallen during this period, *Manly Health*—the imagined but ultimately unpublished book—begins to look like another unrealized career path for Whitman’s writing life in the late 1850s.

A carefully laid out advertisement for “Manly Health,” published twice at the start of the series’ run, on September 12 and on September 19, supports this argument. As Turpin has observed, the ad was drafted in Whitman’s notebooks and seemingly transferred into the pages of the *Atlas* (“Introduction,” 156). Perhaps Whitman even set the type for this advertisement himself. These ads are extraordinary for Herrick’s paper since, generally, even high-profile contributions did not receive such treatment. A standard promotion appears to have consisted of a 3–4-line manicule on the first page (see top of Figure 3). In contrast, the promotion of Whitman’s mini pamphlet is quite prominent (bottom of Figure 3). It is telling that contributions like the one by Charles Burdett, the popular journalist and novelist, did not receive as much effusive praise and promotion as Whitman’s new venture did in the pages of the *Atlas*. Clearly, the editorial promotion of “Manly Health and Training,” both through the paper’s advertising of the series and the editorial puffing for its future, indicates that behind the editor’s desk sat a motivating interest in the publication and success of the series beyond the bounds of the paper itself.

Besides the technicalities of production and promotion, there are thematic resonances between “Manly Health” and the *Atlas* at large that might suggest involvement by Whitman. Throughout 1858, the paper also frequently ran short “self-help” style tidbits, usually on the right side of its fifth or sixth page, offering brief tips on health, happiness, and self-reform under

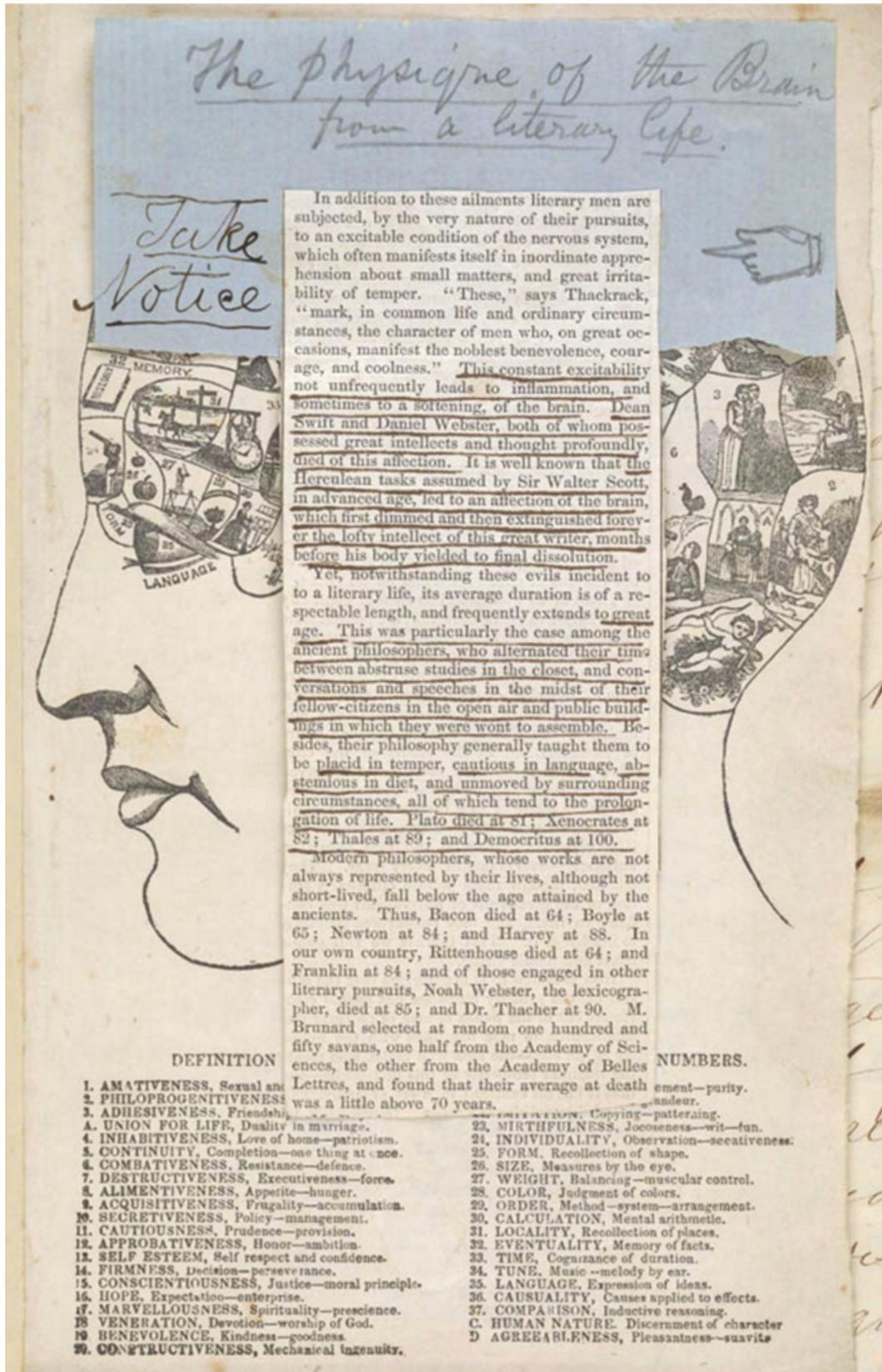


Figure 4: Whitman's clippings/notes on brain health and aging (Trent Collection, Duke University Libraries).

such titles as “Cultivate Cheerfulness” or “Work” (on the value of “honest labor”).¹⁴ In this regard, the *Atlas* echoed the more expansively edifying, domestic, and health-related topics of other weekly papers during this period.¹⁵

Some of these items might be read as anticipating “Manly Health”—such as the piece of July 27, 1858, titled “Mental Over-Exertion” that argues that “over-excitement of the brain,” especially in “literary men” and among youths, is an “injurious” use of vital energy that has a negative effect on one’s longevity.¹⁶ This claim compellingly presages Whitman’s “Too Much Brain Action and Fretting” section of “Manly Health.”¹⁷ While this argument is by no means exclusive to Whitman, it did occupy his mind: it appears on his famous notebook page on the “Physique of the Brain from a Literary Life” via a clipping from the January 17, 1857, issue of *Harper’s Weekly*, titled, “Effect of Literary Occupation Upon the Duration of Life” (see Figure 4).¹⁸ “Mental Over-Exertion” corresponds to Whitman’s underlining in this *Harper’s Weekly* article. “Take Notice,” Whitman suggests to himself in the margin. In this way, writings in the *Atlas* prior to the publication of “Manly Health” seem to build on Whitman’s marginalia, suggesting Whitman may have expressed his interest in these topics in the pages of the *Atlas* months before his major self-help work appeared in print.

Indeed, for a paper owned and run by a man who by 1861 described *Leaves of Grass* as an act of indecent exposure, the *Atlas* seemed quite partial to Whitman and his work in the late 1850s. A brief item of 1855, for instance, takes issue with the poet’s anonymous self-review in the *American Phrenological Journal*—which it seems to identify as such—and lets its readers know that those writing for the *Atlas* do not feel “compelled to puff ourselves, or get our friends to do it for us.” Still, there is little of the animosity by Herrick (who likely authored the piece) towards Whitman that biographers like Reynolds have read into the relationship: “We hope that Walter Whitman,” the note concludes, “whom we really and truly regard as a friend, will not quarrel with us for our remarks.”¹⁹

But perhaps Whitman found a way around Herrick’s discouragement of self-puffing, since the poet began receiving support from the *Atlas* shortly afterwards. In addition to brief notices—like an excerpt from Thomas Butler Gunn’s *Physiology of New York Boarding-Houses* (1857) that describes a “naughty” lady who secretly reads *Leaves*,²⁰ or a note about “Walt Whitman, one of the most popular writers of the day” driving an omnibus²¹—one series stands out in particular: “Fourteen Thousand Miles Afoot,” authored by Dr. William Porter Ray,²² sub rosa as “A Peripatetic.” Ray did not serve as an editor of the *Atlas*, but he was a frequent contributor between 1859 and 1861 (also writing as “Tewksbury”). An M.D. and recently-fired Episcopalian presbyter,²³ Ray

not only name-dropped the poet repeatedly²⁴ but also composed a defense of *Leaves* that remains one of the most extensive, over-the-top pieces of praise for Whitman prior to 1861 not authored by the poet himself.

The installment in question is later reprinted in Whitman's promotional pamphlet *Imprints*,²⁵ but has so far not been identified as from the *Atlas* (*Imprints* credits it just by the series title). Beginning with an admonishment of the Female Moral Reform Society ("To such even an angel would appear indecent without breeches"), the short essay quickly turns to Whitman. It is worth excerpting here at length for three reasons: it discloses information about the poet that was not public knowledge; it describes *Leaves of Grass* as a public-health intervention; and it suggests Whitman was pursuing the *Atlas* as a promotional tool²⁶ in the late 1850s:

Nothing can more clearly demonstrate the innate vulgarity of our American people, their radical immodesty, their internal licentiousness, their unchastity of heart, their foulness of feeling than the tabooing of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." It is quite impossible to find a publisher for the new edition which has long since been ready for the press, so measureless is the depravity of public taste. There is not an indecent word, an immodest expression, in the entire volume; not a suggestion which is not purity itself; and yet it is rejected on account of its indecency! So much do I think of this work, by the healthiest and most original poet America has produced, so valuable a means is it of rightly estimating character, that I have been accustomed to try with it of what quality was the virtue my friends possessed. How few stood the test I shall not say. Some did, and praised it beyond measure. These I set down without hesitation as radically pure, as "born again," and fitted for the society of heaven and the angels. And this test I would recommend to every one. Would you, reader male or female, ascertain if you be actually modest, innocent, pure-minded, read the "Leaves of Grass." If you find nothing improper there you are one of the virtuous and pure. If, on the contrary, you find your sense of decency shocked, then is that sense of decency an exceedingly foul one, and you, man or woman, a very vulgar, dirty person.

The atmosphere of the "Leaves of Grass" is as sweet as that of a hay-field. Its pages exhale the fragrance of nature. It takes you back to man's pristine state of innocence in Paradise and lifts you Godwards. It is the healthiest book, morally, this century has produced; and if it were reprinted in the form of a cheap tract, and scattered broadcast over the land, put into the hands of youth, and into the hands of men and women everywhere, it would do more towards elevating our nature, towards eradicating this foul, vulgar, licentious sham modesty, which so degrades our people now, than any other means within my knowledge.²⁷

Printed half a year after "Manly Health," this celebration of *Leaves* underscores the similarities between "Mose" and Walt as well as their respective book projects, envisioned as "cheap tract[s], . . . scattered broadcast over the land, put into the hands of youth, and into the hands of men and women everywhere" as

a means to ensure physical and moral “health” of the young nation.

Likewise, Ray’s piece echoes a pressing concern of Whitman’s: an inability to find a publisher for the “new edition” he is believed to have completed prior to his 1860 trip to Boston. This frustration was certainly not public knowledge beyond Whitman’s circle of personal acquaintances;²⁸ we could locate no contemporary newspaper that repeated this claim. Read alongside the *Atlas*’s pitch to find a book publisher for “Manly Health,” it suggests that Whitman doubled down on soliciting other voices to advocate on his behalf—sidestepping any negative associations attached to his name and his reputation for self-puffery.²⁹ Whitman’s editorial involvement with the *Atlas* would explain how one of the paper’s frequent contributors had access to insider knowledge about the poet’s plans and frustrations.

The *Atlas* retained some degree of inside knowledge of Whitman until 1860 when the paper’s tone towards him drastically changed. It was then, when the editor John Adams Harrington (writing as “Mr. John Carboy”), for instance, began to repeatedly attack Whitman as an “author of Bosh”³⁰ whose work was only fit to be read at the opening of the Japanese embassy, his “poems being thoroughly incomprehensible to our people, may possibly be appreciated by the Japan Princes.”³¹ Harrington later penned one of the earliest Whitman parodies.³² Clearly, by 1860 Whitman had fallen out of favor. Herrick’s tone, as seen in the 1861 editorial that opened this essay, followed step.³³

Still, tantalizing bits of information in the *Atlas* suggest some personal knowledge of Whitman’s activities even after this change of fortune. Indeed, the *Atlas* printed the first public acknowledgement so far located of Whitman’s trip to Boston to work with Thayer and Eldridge. Again, this acknowledgement was part of a mocking attack by Harrington, who noted on April 8, 1860 (only three weeks after Whitman’s departure): “Walt Whitman has gone to Boston and will deliver a lecture upon his own genius, which he has appropriately titled, ‘A Stupidetta.’”³⁴ Whatever contact the paper still had with Whitman or his acquaintances, it was enough to have an inside scoop on the poet’s movements—but not enough to know about the third edition of *Leaves* (which certainly would have been welcome fodder for Harrington).³⁵ Perhaps the parting wounds were fresh, or perhaps Whitman had carefully withheld concrete plans for a third edition from former colleagues at the *Atlas* now that the climate there had turned against his work. Nevertheless, Whitman was still a topic of discussion around the office of the *Atlas* by this period, and discussants seem to have had some personal contact with Whitman or those close to the poet, enough so to know his whereabouts, but not enough to know the reasons for his departure.

Likewise, the claim that he was on a lecture tour acknowledges that Whitman was known for fishing around for publicity through means other than poetry alone, and that a series of lectures was not out of character.

It seems, then, that Whitman may have been “editorially employed” around the time “Manly Health” was published (late 1858) and severed his ties with the *Atlas* by or before the early spring of 1860 when its tone changes from “Friend Whitman” to “Dirty Whitman.” However, the question remains: when could Whitman’s tenure have started? In the absence of a large number of long, overtly Whitmanian writings in the *Atlas* prior to 1858, we have identified the following piece as potentially the earliest extant clipping that suggests Whitman’s authorship. In the short news item, the only one on the subject we could locate in digitized papers that year, there are two themes that recall Whitman’s *Jack Engle* (1852): a critique of the contract system of street cleaning and the villainous Richard D. Covert. As previously argued,³⁶ the then-former lawyer Richard D. Covert was very likely the blueprint for the character of “Covert” in *Jack Engle* and “Revenge and Requital” (later “One Wicked Impulse!”), a real-life villain who defrauded the Whitman family during Walt’s youth.³⁷ In the short clipping from the *Atlas*, Covert is *finally* getting his comeuppance:

Two Members of the Hoboken Council Board and Van Mater, and Street Commissioner Whitney were arrested last week and taken to Bergen jail, in Hudson City, on complaint of Richard D. Covert, coal-dealer in Hoboken, charging them with “malicious prosecution.” The malicious prosecution amounted to nothing more than removing from the sidewalk coal-dust and wood, by order of the Council, on the complaint of several citizens. We are afraid that Mr. Covert has this time “put his foot in it,” and will have to suffer for false imprisonment. . . .³⁸

This news item adds one more piece of historical evidence to the fictionalization of this character in *Jack Engle*: as in the novella, Covert relies on the police to enforce his nefarious plans. Certainly, Covert was far from being a celebrity or even a well-known citizen—and the emphatic “this time” only makes sense for a writer who had a good deal of knowledge of Covert and his usual misdeeds. For the readers of the *Atlas*, it would likely have been a puzzling one-off comment.

While a lack of access to many sections of the *Atlas*’s run and a dearth of expressly Whitman pieces puts a more assertive attribution beyond the scope of this essay, we believe there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to suggest a likely chronological frame for Whitman’s tenure as an editor of the *Atlas*, a tenure that began around 1857 and concluded in late 1859 or very early 1860—thereby putting it roughly parallel to a potential editorial tenure at the *Brooklyn Daily*

Times.³⁹ The prospect is logistically feasible, since the *Times*'s daily publication schedule did not interfere with the *Atlas*'s weekly format. As such it provides more biographical context about how Whitman, then in dire need of income, managed to keep afloat.

We believe that the theory of a co-editorship of the *Atlas* in the late 1850s, anchored by statements of the paper's owner and supported by circumstantial textual evidence, suggests the pages of *Atlas* as a crucial place for further explorations of what may just be Whitman's most generative period as a writer. Having uttered his "yawp" to a largely indifferent public, he in these years was open to experimenting again. Between 1857 and 1860, Whitman returned to the idea that message trumps medium—musing, perhaps in the same vein as he did in the famous notebook that sees the birth of *Leaves of Grass*: "Novel?—Work of some sort? Play? . . . Plot for a Poem or other work A spiritual novel?"⁴⁰ One might now want to add: Health tract?

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NOTES

1 Zachary Turpin, "Introduction to Walt Whitman's 'Manly Health and Training'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (Winter/Spring 2016), esp. 161-164.

2 David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1996), 102.

3 [Anson Herrick], "The History of the Grandfather Atlas, and of the other Sunday and Weekly Papers of New York City," *Atlas* (May 12, 1861), 1. As Herrick was the only person who witnessed the *Atlas*'s progress since 1838, he seems like the only feasible candidate for authorship of this piece.

4 Wendy Katz, "Atlas (*Sunday Morning Atlas*; *New York Atlas*)," *Katz's Unofficial Index to Antebellum New York City Newspapers*, katznewspapers.com/atlas.

5 The *Brooklyn Daily Times*, by then another recent employer of Whitman, also quotes the line about "dirty" Whitman and likewise considers it proof that Whitman was "one of [the *Atlas*'s] . . . editors" (May 18, 1861, 2).

6 Thomas J. Newhall was James R. Newhall's ancestor—the latter Newhall would author historical scholarship about the former and may have used that name as a pen name. See *Newhall's Lin: or Jewels of the Third Plantation* (D.C. Colesworthy, 1880), 117. No "Thomas J. Newhall" could be identified as writing for New York newspapers in the 1840s or 1850s. If he was a correctly named,

distinct person, he was likely a rather obscure figure, perhaps related to the Newhall of the *Aurora*. For more on the editorial history of the *Atlas* (especially in its first decades), see Katz's *Humbug! The Politics of Art Criticism in New York City's Penny Press* ([New York: Fordham University Press, 2020], esp. 164, 196) as well as her 2018 talk "'All so juicy ripe . . . But none of them for me': Whitman's Satirists and their Pleasures" (Transatlantic Walt Whitman Association Symposium, Dortmund, Germany, 2018), available in transcript on her website.

7 [Herrick], "The History."

8 Katz has previously argued for Whitmanian involvement with the *Atlas* in these years, namely via a series of letters titled "Brooklyn Affairs" that appear in the *Atlas* between 1847 to 1850 (see her "A Newly Discovered Whitman Poem about William Cullen Bryant," *WWQR* 32 [Summer/Fall 2014], 70, 74; and "Previously Undocumented Art Criticism by Walt Whitman" *WWQR* 32 [Spring 2015], 226). While this series of letters (each signed "Aristides") is extensive, it is not authored by Whitman. Indeed, its pseudonymous author acknowledges being a lawyer in one letter—and the series actually continues (from Brooklyn, with detailed local news) while Whitman spends the spring of 1848 in New Orleans. This incorrect attribution appears to be based on a misreading of an oddly-worded passage in Rubin, who noted that "Aristides" wrote about Whitman—not that he is Whitman (see: Joseph Jay Rubin, *The Historic Whitman* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973], 406). The pieces providing updates on Whitman are the "Brooklyn Affairs" pieces of December 7, 1847 (2), January 23, 1848 (2), and May 6, 1849 (3). Additionally, John Thorn has recently identified that Whitman copied elements from an 1845 piece from the *Atlas* for the *Aurora*. In his assessment, Thorn "[comes] down on the side of plagiarism" and finds a Whitman involvement with the *Atlas* in these years unlikely ("Walt Whitman, Plagiarist?," *Our Game*, ourgame.mlblogs.com/walt-whitman-plagiarist-ecf4d0bf9201).

9 The authors did not have access to many issues of the *Atlas*, most notably any issues between mid-September 1857 and early May 1858.

10 Walt Whitman to Charles M. Skinner, January 19, 1885. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.03812.

11 "Athletic Men Wanted—An Article for the Old and Young, for Doctors, Teachers, &c.," *Atlas* (December 26, 1858), 4-5.

12 For more information on the method and the comparison corpora used, see: Stefan Schöberlein and Zachary Turpin, "'Glorious Times for Newspaper Editors and Correspondents': Whitman at the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, 1848–1849," *WWQR* 39 (Summer 2021), 1-39. We employed a "most frequent character trigrams" approach in the "classify"-function of the toolkit *stylo* for R, using three different statistical measures of distance, on incrementally growing lists of top 200 to top 2000 most frequent character trigrams. The percentage of attributions to Whitman by measure of distance are: 100% for Support Vector Machines, 93% for Delta, and 73% for Nearest Shrunken Centroid.

13 "[N]ewspapers needed their columns filled, and Whitman was good at filling them" (Zachary Turpin, "'Manly Health and Training' and the New York *Atlas*," *Walt Whitman Archive*, ed. Matt Cohen, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price).

14 *Atlas* (August 15, 1858), 6.

15 See, for example, pieces likely by Whitman in *Life Illustrated*, including "The Opera," November 10, 1855; "America's Mightiest Inheritance," April 12, 1856; "School Discipline," April 26, 1856; and his series "New York Dissected," July-August, 1856.

16 It reads in full: “Severe or long-sustained thought is injurious both by the direct over-excitement of the brain, and by leaving less nervous energy available for carrying on the ordinary vital processes. Occasional strain on the mind may be little felt in health, when the powers of nature are quickly restored by food, rest, sleep, and variety of occupation. In time, however, over-exertion of thought will tell unfavorably on the strongest constitution. Literary men and others who are subject to constant mental fatigue are rarely healthy or long-lived, except through extraordinary care and prudence, for which such persons, with all their knowledge, are seldom remarkable. It is very common to find hard students and laborious thinkers men of feeble or irritable nerves and general debility of system. The same wearing effect of the mind appears in the fate of those who have been precociously clever or studious. Life is generally short when the mental faculties are early developed and imprudently tasked in youth. There are also dangers to health in the opposite extreme of indolence and inactivity of mind. It is with the mind very much as with the body, moderate exercise is conducive to health, while over-fatigue or inactivity are both unfavorable” (*Atlas* [July 27, 1858], 3).

17 *Atlas* (December 19, 1858), 6.

18 Trent Collection of Whitmaniana, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, MS 4 to 148; Frey p. 66, item 24. The clipping argues against an over- or under-exertion of the brain and connects Greek philosophers’ long lives to how they “altered their time between abstruse studies . . . and conversations and speeches in the midst of their fellow-citizens in the open air.” The clipping ends on this note: “Plato died at 81, Xenocrates at 82, Thales at 89 and Democritus at 100.” “Manly Health” includes a similar list: “Plato lived to be 81 years of age, Diogenes 90, Democritus 100, Zeno 102.” Given the often highly divergent life-span estimates for ancient thinkers as well as the clearly mirrored sentence structure, this clipping must constitute a source for “Manly Health,” specifically, the “Brain Action” section—and its central argument can already be located months prior to that in the *Atlas*. See “Effect of Literary Occupation Upon the Duration of Life,” *Harper’s Weekly* 1.3 (January 17, 1857), 34.

19 “A Reviewer and a Poet,” *Atlas* (November 25, 1855), 2. It should also be noted that even prior, the *Atlas* kept its readers apprised of Whitman’s professional development, praising his work for the New Orleans *Crescent* as “capital” and calling him a “gentleman” (“New Orleans Daily Crescent,” [May 14, 1848], 2), noting the founding of the *Freeman* (“Free-Soil Paper,” [September 10, 1848], 2) and the *Salesman* (“New Paper in Brooklyn,” [June 8, 1851], 2).

20 “She . . . [is] of course entirely unacquainted with ‘Don Juan,’ though, singularly enough the volume (her property) always opens to that naughty poem. And when, on one occasion, your copy of Walt Whitman’s ‘Leaves of Grass’ disappeared for three whole days, she it was who brought it to you, having discovered it behind the sofa, where it had unaccountably slipped” (“New York Boarding Houses,” *Atlas* [July 12, 1857], 1). In Gunn’s book, this passage appears on pages 105-106 (New York: Mason Brothers, 1857).

21 “Items of Local Interest,” *Atlas* (April 3, 1859), 4.

22 For a short obituary, see “Death of Dr. William Porter Ray,” *The New-York Times* (March 5, 1864), 3.

23 The reason for his canonical suspension is only described as “circumstances” that came to the church administrators’ attention in 1858 (*The Protestant Episcopal Quarterly Review, and Church Register*, vol. 5 [New York: H Dyer, 1858], 571). In a letter to the editor of the *Episcopal Recorder*, Ray defends himself by saying the oddly phrased dismissal “notice may leave a false impression,” and that he “was suspended . . . for no criminal or immoral conduct, as those terms are employed in the

ordinary speech of men, but for alleged eccentricities of character, peculiar theological opinions, and cosmopolitan habits which have been acquired through my German education and long continental travels” (“Messrs. Editors,” *Episcopal Recorder* [September 18, 1858], 98).

24 For example: “to borrow an apt expression from Walt Whitman” (A Peripatetic, “Fourteen Thousand Miles Afoot,” *Atlas* [July 10, 1859], 1); “The greater part of his [Osborne’s] jokes, like Walt Whitman’s poetry, will not bear recital to a promiscuous audience” (A Peripatetic, “Fourteen Thousand Miles Afoot,” *Atlas* [February 27, 1859], 1); “The shade . . . began to make me feel, like Walt Whitman, infernally lazy” (A Peripatetic, “Fourteen Thousand Miles Afoot,” *Atlas* [July 10, 1859], 2); etc.

25 *Leaves of Grass Imprints: American and European Criticisms on “Leaves of Grass,”* ed. Walt Whitman (Boston: Thayer & Eldridge, 1860), 51-52.

26 The *Atlas* was not the first weekly paper that Whitman used for self-promotion. See, for example, from *Life Illustrated*, a review of *Leaves of Grass* from July 28, 1855; “Annihilation of Walt Whitman,” December 15, 1855; “Walt Whitman’s Article,” April 12, 1856; a reprinting of a positive review by Fanny Fern, May 17, 1856; and an announcement of the appearance of the second edition from August 16, 1856. *Life Illustrated* was owned by Fowler and Wells, the publisher of Whitman’s second edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

27 A Peripatetic, “Fourteen Thousand Miles Afoot,” *Atlas* (May 15, 1859), 1.

28 Whitman discussed his publishing frustrations and desire to bring out a third edition of *Leaves of Grass* in a July 20, 1857, letter to Philadelphia abolitionist and Fourierist Sarah Thorn Tyndale (1792-1859): “Fowler and Wells are bad persons for me.—They retard my book very much.—It is worse than ever. I wish now to bring out a third edition—I have now a hundred poems ready (the last edition had thirty-two.)—and shall endeavor to make an arrangement with some publisher here to take the plates from F. & W. and make the additions needed, and so bring out the third edition.” See Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961-1977), 1:44.

29 Considering Whitman’s turn towards health (“Manly Health”) and self-help pseudoscience (animal magnetism, phrenology) in these years, William Porter Ray deserves more scrutiny from Whitman scholars. A Harvard-educated medical professional turned religious scholar turned rambling writer with a penchant for religiously-justified transgressiveness almost reads like a foreshadowing of Whitman’s later relationship with Richard Maurice Bucke. Perhaps it was likewise a productive one.

30 “Patent Hash,” *Atlas* (March 4, 1860), 1.

31 “Japan Embassy Coming,” *Atlas* (April 1, 1860), 1. The unsigned piece echoes Harrington’s signed critique of Whitman as “author of Bosh” by translating one of his most famous terms: “A Yawp (Japan for Bosh).”

32 It is titled “Soul-Gush—A Poemet” and parodies Whitman’s work in the *Saturday Press*. It reads: “How is it I live and don’t live, yet breathe and move, / Considering that I consider the weary; / Stretch of illimitable stuff which, soiling the snow / Whiteness of the ruled papyrus pure and unstained, / That I scribble on, cannot understood be by me. Oh yes! ah! me!— / The inscrutable great, like a beauteous halo around the bright brow of some saint martyred, / And all that. Awake! ah, soul slumber disturbed at last. / To and fro for a single ray of mind light softly sprinkles spray like / My life. Wherefore, ah! No! Stuff! The soul is gushed at last” (“Patent Hash,” *Atlas* [February 26, 1860], 1).

33 In November, about seven months after the Boston firm of Thayer and Eldridge published the third edition of *Leaves*, Whitman is explicitly dubbed the author of a “dirty” book in the *Atlas*. Reacting to the news that the *New York Saturday Press*, a bohemian newspaper edited by Henry Clapp Jr., was folding for financial reasons, a writer for the *Atlas* seems to partly blame the *Press*’s demise on Whitman, writing, “All the world does not . . . appreciate [the *Press*’s] continual puffs of Walt Whitman’s dirty ‘Leaves of Grass” (“Alas! Poor ‘Saturday Press,’” [November 17, 1860], 1). For an excellent analysis of this piece in the *Atlas* and a consideration of puffing in the *Press* and the larger implications of the practice for the late-antebellum New York literary marketplace, see Leif Eckstrom, “On Puffing: The *Saturday Press* and the Circulation of Symbolic Capital,” *Whitman Among the Bohemians*, ed. Edward Whitley and Joanna Levin (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 53-74.

34 “Patent Hash,” *Atlas* (April 8, 1860), 6.

35 It is telling, however, that Harrington speculates about a lecture here, which echoes Whitman’s (likely unrealized) plans for becoming a traveling lecturer—either of his “The Eighteenth Presidency!” or “Manly Health”—in these years. Even the false information seems to disclose knowledge about the poet that was not widely publicly available.

36 See Stefan Schöberlein and Stephanie M. Blalock “‘A Story of New York at the Present Time’: The Historico-Literary Contexts of *Jack Engle*,” *WWQR* 37 (Winter/Spring 2020), 157-162.

37 In a series of autobiographical notes, Whitman mentions a “Covert” and associates him with a “swindle” at the Whitman family home. See Whitman’s “Nehemiah Whitman” notebook, c. 1845-1861, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library. Available on the *Whitman Archive*. Edward Grier proposes that the villainous lawyer “Adam Covert,” a character in Whitman’s short story “Revenge and Requitall,” (a tale Whitman drew on when composing his novel *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* [1852]) might be based on the lawyer “Richard Covert” of Brooklyn. See Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*. ed. Edward Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 3:1087.

38 “Trouble in Hoboken,” *Atlas* (January 11, 1857), 2.

39 The earliest reference to Whitman’s editorship at the *Daily Times* calls him the *de facto* editor (“Walt. Whitman was, by no means, the first *de facto* editor of the Times”). See *Brooklyn Daily Times*, (November 10, 1864), 2. As a “de facto” editor of a daily paper like the *Times*, Whitman could have also had time to edit a weekly paper like the *Atlas*. Likewise, the owner of the *Times*, George C. Bennett, took an active role in the production of the paper, which likely also diminished the time Whitman dedicated to day-to-day production duties.

40 Quoted in Ed Folsom, “Introduction,” *Song of Myself: With a Complete Commentary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 3.

APPENDIX: ATHLETIC MEN WANTED—AN ARTICLE FOR THE OLD AND YOUNG, FOR DOCTORS, TEACHERS, &C.

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT MEDICINE—A CANDID CONFES-
SION—ANTECEDENTS OF HEALTH AND DISEASE—THEORY AND LAWS
OF TRAINING—FINE ANIMAL PERFECTION THE TRUE REQUISITES OF
A RACE—TABLE OF HUMAN DISEASES, AND WHAT IS NEEDED TO REM-
EDY THEM—THE LAW OF PHYSIQUE SHOULD BE MADE A POPULAR
THEME.

OUR readers have doubtless perused the series of articles given during a number of weeks past by *Mose Velsor*, of Brooklyn, entitled “MANLY HEALTH AND TRAINING,” the conclusion of which appears in to-day’s issue. The subject is one of the very greatest importance—for what is of more importance than sound health, a vigorous race of men, a stalwart and competent nation?

It is almost incredible what an extent of folly and ignorance there is on the science, if we may call it so, of health and disease. People who are quite incapable of moral or mental superstition are guilty, in countless droves, of what is quite as bad, viz., what may be termed physical superstition—the very weakest and worst fanaticism on the subject of illness, medicine, doctors, and all that appertains thereto. The doctor supplies the place of the priest, and the Latin prescription that of the formula and creed. The exercise of their own common sense, and of a spirit of inquiry and freedom in men’s minds, give place to a blind and baseless credulity in “medicine and the doctor.” As if the said doctor were not, four times out of five, nearly altogether in the dark as to the most weighty points of his patient’s case! Or, as if there were ever any two cases (or hardly ever any two) exactly alike, in combinations, temperaments, antecedents, and so on.

But occasionally the honest truth is let out; for the really great physician (and there are some in New York, and other places, too) will not only often acknowledge himself at fault what course to take, but will caution the world against the evils of his own profession. Witness the following extract from a lately published work, “The Rationale of Medicine,” by Dr. Jacob Bigelow:

“I sincerely believe that the unbiassed opinion of most medical men of sound judgement and long experience is made up, that the amount of death and disaster in this world would be less,

if all disease were left to itself, than it now is under the multiform, reckless and contradictory modes of practice, good and bad, with which practitioners of adverse denominations carry on their differences at the expense of their patients.[”]

Dr. B. might have added that of what is called “medicine,” and applied to disease nineteen-twentieths of it is in all cases absolutely pernicious and poisonous—and is equivalent to casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

This may seem strong language but it is the result of a deliberate thought and judgement. “Mose Velsor,” in the course of his articles, well indicates that the conditions called health and disease are not trivial effects, produced by temporary causes, but the results of long trains of processes and influences. When a man is really ill, for instance, although he is apt to lay it to some little cause, of recent date, the undoubted truth is that what really makes him ill, the foundation on which the whole evil stands, has long been preparing, layer by layer, for weeks and months, perhaps for years. The manly frame, thoroughly prepared and bred from boyhood to manhood, and then kept in decent condition, would be innocuous to disease; but then it would indeed require all those antecedents—of which how many cases could we find, through New York city, or any city, or country either? Yet all this is vital, and that theory of doctoring and medicating is nonsense which does not involve it and make “health, strength and beauty,” familiar themes of daily habit and household knowledge, instead of keeping them for the apothecarie’s shop and the doctor’s confessional.

According to “Mose Velsor,” (whom we are following,) the whole subject of manly health reduces itself, for general consideration, to a few simple statements, broad and continental enough to give room for the multitudes of difference of special cases, and include them. He starts from the theory and practice of the trainer for the prize-ring, the foot-race, and for all those feats of strength of agility, in ancient or modern times, so dear to the popular heart—and which have given to public exposition the finest specimens of masculine physique and beauty. The ancient athletes and gladiators, the Greek warriors, the Roman legions, and so on down to the modern English fighting-man, the pugilist, and the runner or walker, all come under the same type, or what is equivalent to it, in training. The laws which govern this training, the writer of the series finished in our issue of to-day, look for general application to all who are ambitious of a perfect and sound manly physique. We do not propose to go over the ground again in these paragraphs. For that, recurrence must be had to the articles themselves.

We confess we are about ready to place ourselves among those who

think that *fine animal perfection*, not in a low but generous sense, is the first and greatest blessing to an individual, a city, or a nation—and that it must be publicly acknowledged as the first requisite. As we go forth through the streets of any great modern city, or view any assemblage of people in the country, how lamentably few are the specimens of perfectly sound and beautiful bodies!—how continual the sight of shambling, malformed, consumptive, rheumatic, dropsical, scrofulous, inflamed, blotched, syphilitic, sick, blood-corrupted, vitality-destroyed men!

Of the human beings born into the world (so feeble and depleted is the parentage-power), one-third die forthwith—that is, before they are fifteen months old. Of the remainder, one quarter, by or before they attain their full growth, suffer[,] pine away, and at last die, of some disease of the lungs or throat. Another quarter go the same process with diseases of the stomach or bowels. A large portion have neuralgia—others affections of the liver—others running sores, &c., &c.

What a picture! And does any one pretend to tell us that all this horrible table of unquestioned facts can be met by anything offered, or possible to be done, by doctors and medicines? We know perfectly well that doctors and medicines do not touch the evil—but rather are a part of it, and add to it. We know that the sick world, through a sterner realization of that wonderful play of minute causes and effects, which we term health and disease, must rely at last upon its daily habits and usages, and upon Nature's divine medicines, *air, food, activity, and rest*, for the only real cure. These, under the control of experience and art, (for we believe in art too, which is necessary to put Nature in form, but, in so many cases has come to be only another meaning for a violation of Nature,) would put a different face upon mankind—and grander bodies beneath the face. The sooner people come to realize the huge truths we have intimated in the foregoing paragraph, the sooner will the foolish myth of doctoring and medication be dissipated away—which result, heaven speed!

No! not from any other course than such simple and long-continued processes of sanitary training, outlined in the articles we have been publishing for two or three months past, and from the greater prevalence of the feeling, knowledge and ambition which permeate them, can the human physiology of our cities and country places too, (for there is no preference,) be renovated and made what it ought to be. Among the young men especially ought this knowledge and ambition to be sown broadcast—made the eminent feature of their lives. In houses, in the domestic circle, in schools, among parents, among those who contemplate marriage, ought all these facts to be well understood. There is

no *accident* in disease—it is the shameful consequence of gluttony, immorality, morbid brain-action, and a long list of precedents. Or, in nineteen cases out of twenty is there any valid excuse for these feeble and puny-framed young men we now see everywhere.

Gymnasiums for the bodily health, should be as common as the morbid schools for producing a monstrous mentality now are—or rather, should take the place of about nine-tenth of the latter kind of schools. The whole subject of physique should be well discussed, taught, promulgated—should be presented to the emulation of boys—a strong, perfect, sound-conditioned body, placed at the highest summit of human good. What “Mose Velsor” calls the pink-and-white wax-doll theory of beauty, should be scouted, and rude health and strength, with its very uncouthness, brought forward as more beautiful—which, of course, it really is.

We believe it is the intention of “Mose Velsor” to put these articles in shape for publication, in handy and cheap book-form. Just now there is among all classes of American young men, great interest in this subject of MANLY TRAINING, and we think a publisher would make a good and profitable investment by bringing it out.

“THE INDICATIONS” (1857): AN EARLY WHITMAN IMITATION



ZACHARY TURPIN

ONE MEASURE OF THE EARLY INFLUENCE of *Leaves of Grass* is the speed with which it generated parody. Following the appearance of the first edition in 1855, newspaper poets and editors quickly began to poke fun at the hallmarks of Whitman’s mature verse: his long free-verse line, his wide-ranging vocabulary, his cosmic-democratic subject matter, and his ostensible egotism. Within a decade, Whitman parodies would become something of a staple of American newspaper culture, with comic take-offs appearing in periodicals as diverse as *Puck*, the *New York Saturday Press*, the *London Mirror*, the *New York Tribune*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Punch*, and the *Century*.¹ The rise of Whitman parody poems in the 1860s was, as Gay Wilson Allen notes, a clear “indication that Walt Whitman was gaining notoriety,” but his deeper impact on poetry would not be obvious for some time.² Indeed, the earliest poetry that is traditionally agreed to exhibit Whitmanian influence is Adah Isaacs Menken’s *Infelicia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1868), a posthumous collection of the American actress’s poems, many of them written in a vibrant, Whitmanesque free verse; the more general impact of Whitman’s poetics, of course, would not be apparent until the early twentieth century.³ However, I have located a non-parodic Whitman imitation that pre-dates Menken’s earliest free-verse by several years. It is called “The Indications,” and it appeared in the June 3, 1857 issue of *Life Illustrated* magazine (New York: Fowler and Wells).

There are a number of interesting things to note about the poem (see Figure 1). Most notably, “The Indications” appears in a periodical with which Whitman was intimately connected. Its proprietors and editors, phrenologists Lorenzo N. Fowler and Orson S. Fowler, were Whitman’s friends, and they and their brother-in-law Samuel R. Wells had by 1857 done a great deal to promote the early editions of *Leaves of Grass*, from publishing one of its earliest reviews in *Life Illustrated* (July 28, 1855), to selling the first edition in their Manhattan storefront, to financing the publication of the disastrous second edition. Perhaps as a favor to the poet, they also irregularly published Whitman’s prose journalism in *Life Illustrated* between 1855 and 1858, the

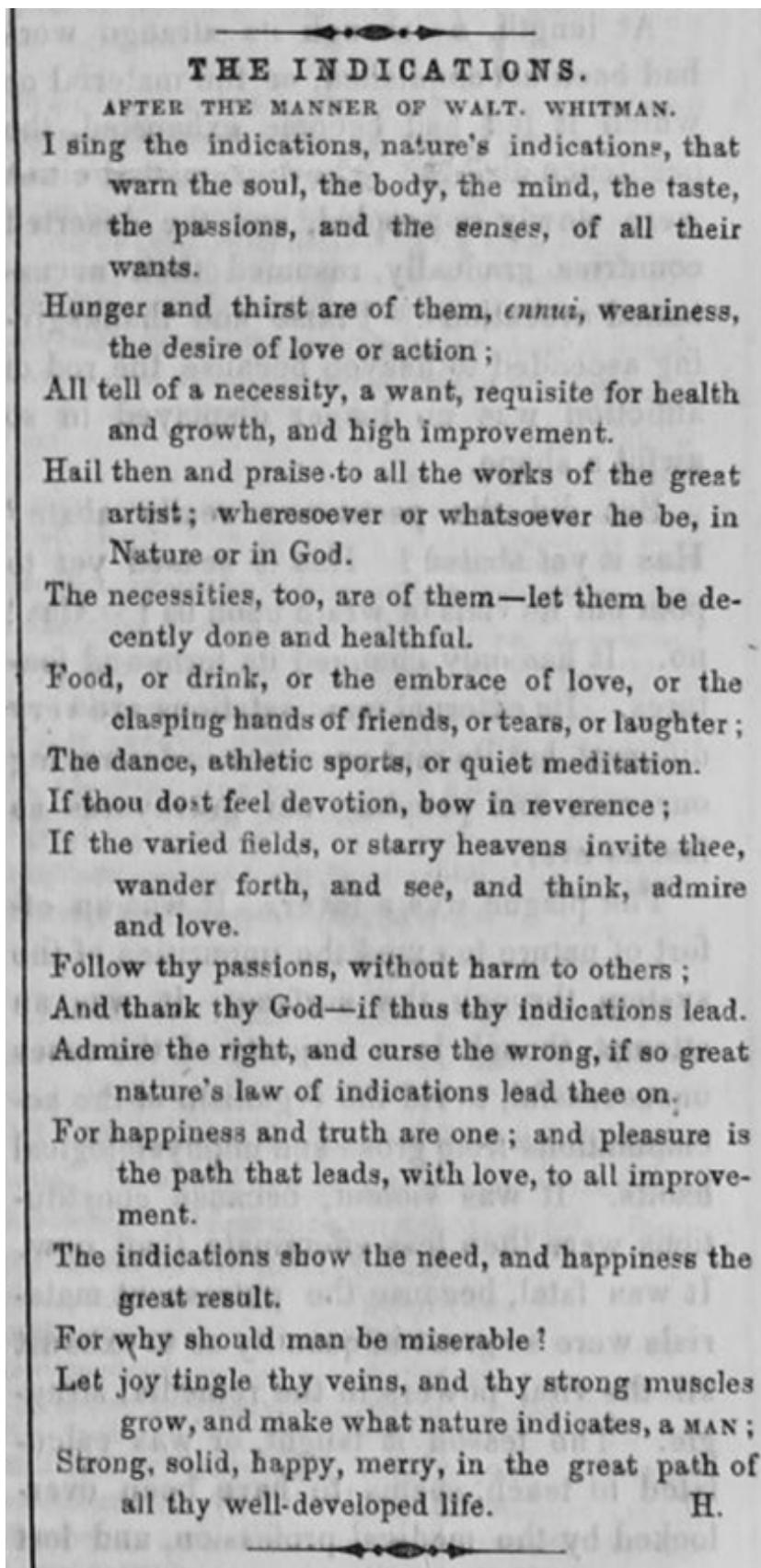


Figure 1: "The Indications." *Life Illustrated* (June 3, 1857).

most prominent example being his unsigned “New York Dissected” series. No known examples of Whitman’s writings have been found in *Life Illustrated* for 1857, though “The Indications”—written “AFTER THE MANNER OF WALT. WHITMAN”—might arguably have issued from the poet’s own pen.

There are several reasons to consider the possibility. First, the poem is an exceedingly capable imitation of Whitman’s unique style and pet subjects; whether sincere or parodic, most nineteenth-century take-offs of Whitman’s poetry land wide of the mark. “The Indications,” on the other hand, accurately features a number of Whitman’s stylistic trademarks, including his fondness for French words (“*ennui*”) and his use of the phrase “I sing.” (The latter is particularly curious, since Whitman does not substantially adopt the anaphoric use of “I sing” until 1860.) Second, the poem’s topics are believably Whitmanian: nature, happiness, physical desire, athleticism, a loose and syncretic spirituality, and the personal determination of meaning. And lastly, Whitman does title one of his own poems “The Indications,” in the fifth edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1871-72).

That said, I think the verses in *Life Illustrated* are likelier a careful imitation of Whitman than Whitman’s own work. For one thing, beyond the title itself there is no apparent relation between “The Indications” in *Life Illustrated* and Whitman’s later poem of the same name. For another, even considering Whitman’s lifelong fondness for Quaker “plain speech” and the English of the King James Bible, he entirely avoids words like “thee,” “thy,” and “thou” in the first few editions of *Leaves of Grass*. Their earliest appearance is in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (1865); only later, in Whitman’s more traditional, late-life poems, would he use such words more liberally, as in “Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood,” “What Best I See in Thee,” “Today and Thee,” “Prayer of Columbus,” and so on. Furthermore, the rather fussy use of a period to abbreviate Whitman’s given name in the byline—“WALT. WHITMAN”—is something that the poet himself never did. And of course, the *Life Illustrated* poem is signed “H.” Though he ghostwrote a handful of the earliest reviews of *Leaves of Grass*, I know of no instance in which Whitman published a pseudonymous work “after the manner” of himself, presumably to imply his own growing influence—though I would not put such a strategy past him.

In all likelihood, “The Indications” is simply a perceptive and well wrought early imitation of Whitman’s poetry, possibly written by (and certainly published by) someone who knew Whitman personally. Even taking into account its appearance in a periodical linked to Whitman, the existence of this early and impressive imitation suggests a need to reimagine the arc of Whitman’s

poetic influence. It is not inaccurate to say that his stylistic impact was largely posthumous, evident in the poetry of (and often openly acknowledged by) early twentieth-century modernists, yet early imitations like “The Indications” suggest that Whitman’s overt influence may have begun far earlier, in periodical poetries that are only now coming to light.

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Notes

- 1 For an early sampling of Whitman parodies, see Henry S. Saunders’ compilation of *Parodies on Walt Whitman* (New York: American Library Service, 1923). More recent discussions of comic Whitman imitations include Joseph Andriano’s entry on “Parodies” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 505-506; and Amanda Gailey’s “Walt Whitman and the King of Bohemia: The Poet in the *Saturday Press*,” *WWQR* 25 (2008), 143-166. *WWQR* has reprinted a number of little-known Whitman parodies, including “An Unknown Whitman Parody” found by W. T. Bandy, in *WWQR* 2 (1985), 45-46; and “The ‘Strong Man’ at Dartmouth College: Two Uncollected Parodies of Whitman’s ‘As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free’” located by Todd Richardson, in *WWQR* 18 (2000), 81-84.
- 2 Quoted in *Walt Whitman Birthplace Bulletin* 1.1 (1957), 11.
- 3 For more on Whitman’s nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reception and cultural influence, see the primary sourcebook *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, 3rd edition, ed. Jim Perlman, Ed Folsom, and Dan Campion (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 2019).

REVIEWS



KENNETH M. PRICE. *Whitman in Washington: Becoming the National Poet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xiii + 191 pp.

In *Whitman in Washington: Becoming the National Poet in the Federal City* (Oxford, 2020), Kenneth M. Price makes the most comprehensive and compelling argument to date for putting the US capital at the center of our understanding of the poet during and after the Civil War. Price convincingly demonstrates this, despite the poet's close connections to New York and "Manahatta," and his later residency in New Jersey, memorialized in Horace Traubel's multi-volume *With Walt Whitman in Camden*. Instead, Price argues, it was Whitman's time living and working in DC that shaped his views of the war-torn nation and helped cement forever his reputation as a national poet. With insightful textual analysis and groundbreaking archival research, *Whitman in Washington* is essential reading for those seeking to understand Whitman's life and politics during the Civil War, and the troubling disjunction between the democratic egalitarianism of much of his poetry and his personal and political views.

The broad outlines of Whitman's life in Washington are familiar to Whitman scholars: the journey to Virginia at the end of 1862 to find his wounded brother George, and the subsequent decision to remain and volunteer in the hospitals; his employment as a clerk in a variety of government offices, and his notorious termination from the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and, of course, the prodigious amount of writing and revision the poet accomplished during his ten-year residence in the city. Given the productivity and vibrancy of his life there, Whitman likely would have remained if not for the paralytic stroke that caused him to move in with his brother and eventually cost him his position working for the government. While these facts are well known, no prior volume has done so much to bring them to life. Price has an intimate knowledge of the wartime capitol, honed by his ongoing work on the invaluable web resource *Civil War Washington* (www.civilwardc.org). His descriptions include street-level detail of the rapidly changing city, and carefully chosen images like the photograph of cattle on the capitol Mall (80) drive home the fact that Washington was a very different place than it was today.

Similarly, Price's headline-making archival research into Whitman's

actual output as a clerk provides new insights into the poet's day-to-day working life. Through close attention to "scribal documents," texts that Whitman either copied or wrote on behalf of others, Price demonstrates not only the demands of the poet's job, but how it brought him into contact with some of the most pressing and controversial issues of the period. Whitman read and copied reports dealing with efforts to combat the Klan in the South, for example, and witnessed the stream of former Confederates arriving in the Attorney General's office to apply for pardons (158). Price also provides background on the status of clerks in Washington and the poet's views on the profession prior to and during his time working there. As he notes, disjunctions between the poet's stated values and his bureaucratic role become apparent upon inspection: "Nearly 250 documents Whitman inscribed as a clerk close with a formulaic declaration of subservience: 'your obedient servant.' In contrast, there is not a single instance of Whitman signing this way as a private citizen" (114). While this is only one way that the poet may have felt constrained by his job, Price also reveals that "Whitman admired his fellow federal employees. He asserted that 'honesty' was the 'prevailing atmosphere' in government offices" (117). No other book has done so much to trace the contradictions inherent in the poet's work for the government and analyze the role it may have played in his poetry and politics.

While Whitman's time as a clerk has received relatively little attention by scholars up to now, his time volunteering in the hospitals has long been central to scholars' accounts of Whitman during the Civil War. Here again, however, Price provides new insights into the poet's service and the occasional tensions and possible contradictions that emerge from a closer examination of the context. In particular, he employs Whitman's later description of himself as a "missionary to the wounded" (qtd in Price 23) as a lens through which to explore the poet's volunteerism and his initial engagement with the Christian Commission, an apparently unlikely turn of events given his religious views. Price provides valuable background information and context for the Commission, including how it differed from the more well-known U.S. Sanitary Commission, and provides ways to interpret Whitman's relationship with the more overtly religious organization: "Although Whitman was neither evangelical nor religious in a conventional sense, he long believed that those who relished work in hospitals were driven by an inner light and put into action values of compassion and self-sacrifice" (39). Here as elsewhere, Price employs considerable archival evidence in explaining the poet's thoughts on both religion and serving the wounded, and offers new readings of Whitman's poetry, as well as his interactions with and letters on behalf of soldiers.

Connections such as these are the most impressive element of *Whitman in Washington*. Price never addresses these varying aspects of the poet's life in the capitol as discrete biographical episodes; instead, he shows how they affected both his writing and his view of a nation undergoing an enormous, if tragically incomplete, transformation. His most compelling example in a text filled with surprising new readings is his examination of the "Blue Book," a copy of the 1860-61 edition of *Leaves of Grass* in which Whitman made notes, emendations, and revisions while in Washington; indeed, his termination from the Department of the Interior was precipitated by the discovery of the Blue Book at his desk. As Price notes, "Differing significantly from the 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass* because many of its revisions were never implemented, the Blue Book is a unique document, a shadow edition. . . . Just as we think of *Drum-Taps* as a volume of war poetry, we should consider the Blue Book as a volume of war-inflected poetry" (131). As we have seen, the poet's experience of the war was shaped by the entirety of his life, from writing and copying documents during the day to serving as "missionary" and wounded soldier's amanuensis in the hospitals at night. Price makes the most compelling case thus far that Whitman scholarship has missed a great deal by not paying closer attention to the former, even if it lacks the pathos and immediacy of the latter.

A constant thread throughout the book is Whitman's representation of and reaction to the growing number of African Americans living and working in Washington. Building on the important work of Ed Folsom and others, Price's research further highlights the avoidance and erasure that too often typifies Whitman's writing when it comes to race: "Although Whitman's work as a scribe documents the government's efforts to destroy the Klan, he remained silent in his poems, essays, and journalism about the dangers of Klan activity" (165). For a poet who championed democratic and egalitarian ideals, too often Whitman's expression of these ideals was circumscribed. As Price notes: "It will not do to deny, obfuscate, and look away from Whitman's, or the nation's, pattern of associating egalitarianism only with white men" (170). By carefully reviewing Whitman's public and private writing, as well as his governmental work, Price provides a new way to measure the troubling gap between "persona and person" (172). The gap widens when Price compares Whitman's writing on racial equality with contemporaries like Frederick Douglass and Frances Harper; however, he also notes what the poet's work meant to later writers like Langston Hughes and June Jordan. What Price ultimately demonstrates is that scholars looking to understand Whitman's time in Washington will not find a simple or flattering portrait. In a tumultuous period in a city often under siege,

there is much to celebrate and to condemn, or, as Price notes, “Whitman is not beyond his culture but of it, for better and worse. He invited us to complete him or defeat him. There is much work to be done” (174). This is certainly true, and *Whitman in Washington* is a formidable contribution to that labor.

Valparaiso University

MARTIN T. BUINICKI

★

MORTON SCHOOLMAN. *A Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image, Aesthetic Education, Possible Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. xii + 318 pp.

January 6, 2022: No prophet or easy alarmist, I write this review on the precipice of a second civil war in the United States. Who, during these toxic times, could possibly think that Walt Whitman—poet of presumptuous if capacious whiteness—might be enlisted as a viable and revisable resource to reconcile our nation’s deep racial antagonisms?

Morton Schoolman, that’s who. Mort (he’s a friend) is a political theorist who, I propose, ought to be recognized as one of the most gifted and accomplished Whitman expositors, any and everywhere. He’s spent a well-wrought career devoted to ever-close readings of Whitman’s poetry and prose. Not many people advance a grand yet pressing vision of democracy’s utopic possibilities, and mean it. Whitman and Schoolman are two who do. They belong together, as poet and professor, both earnest and upbeat, while at the same time nobody’s fool about democracy’s failings.

A Democratic Enlightenment is a major work, impressive in its detail and scope. Schoolman lays out a step-by-step case for Whitman as the herald of a radically new enlightenment project, whose all-inclusive affects and sweeping egalitarianism are to supplant the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment that installed reason as the centerpiece for all estimable human affairs. It’s a book bookended by big claims. Schoolman worries, at the outset, that the book’s “core ideas . . . have gone unrecognized” and that he’s broaching his boldly wayward thesis “in our own dark democratic and most unlikely of political times” (1). Still, he accepts that heavy burden of explanation, to the point that readers might detect a measure or tone of compensatory evangelism in his scholarship. Yet, I dare say that even the most captious of readers will nevertheless find many moments and many pages of incisive exegesis and utterly brilliant

argument. Beautiful sentences abound.

For all the high praise I wish to lavish upon the book, I do view certain key aspects as curious and questionable. Schoolman reads and refracts Whitman's all-American poetry through the high-theory lens of Euro-thinkers Voltaire, Diderot, Schiller, Nietzsche, Bergson, Benjamin, Adorno, Barthes, Bazin, Lyotard, Deleuze, and Foucault. It is, at the least, a paradoxical approach: to parse the poetry of "the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular" by way of some of the most arcane philosophy ever produced on the planet. The book's analytic apparatus, once assembled part by part, makes good sense; and it all comes together, though some fits seem Procrustean and the overall approach rather roundabout, but never workaday.

Like an innovative hip-hop artist, Schoolman samples Schiller's proto-democratic notion of "aesthetic education"; Adorno's post-Holocaust turn-around toward "the reconciliation image" in modern artwork; and Bergson's, Deleuze's, and Deleuzian scholar Brian Massumi's fascination with elusive and moving images. Whitman's salutary imagism in poetry can thus be discovered, Schoolman submits, lurking in modern movies, and movies could potentially become the latter-day Whitmanesque vehicle for changing hearts, minds, and perceptions, not just rules and regulations, all in democratically expansive directions. Hollywood, if you scratch below the sex-and-violence and even white-savior plot lines, may save us—or, in Schoolman's words, "my discovery of the reconciliation image in film" might help us appreciate a "possible politics" in which we work toward welcoming difference and embracing otherness rather than doing violence to it (200).

Schoolman attempts to put in words what Whitman apparently passes over in silence. Whitman's own words, Schoolman observes, hint at mystery and the unknowable and performatively attest to the inherent limitations of language to arrest truth. Instead, Whitman's poetry showcases the play of appearances; his poetry is insistently *visual*, eye-centered and image-rich. Appearances are just that, appearances, a little rickety and rather dreamy. Whitman's many inventories of diverse images thereby impart, albeit by indirection, an overall democratic lesson: the human comedy of identity and difference is something of a spectacular shadow play; and, once schooled in images qua images rather than as essential truths, we may become more receptive to each other, or at least less likely to do violence to each other, as fellow shades, no longer certain other persons stand before us as implacable foes deserving destruction. Schoolman's Whitman strikes me as a poststructuralist *avant la lettre*: linguistic missives are self-betraying and thus epistemically suspect and thus conducive toward

all-inclusive doubt inclining toward receptivity to all identities and differences, a kaleidoscopic agglomeration of singular persons who also meld with multiplicity, ergo Democracy.

Much is lost in translation, Schoolman's as well as mine. *A Democratic Enlightenment* deserves more scrutiny and commentary than I've given it here. Reading this formidable work, I find my head nodding far more than shaking. But I want more time to brood. Reading Whitman typically sets me off on bouts of brooding. Schoolman's account of Whitman's poetry and prose, in contrast, often strikes me as too explicative, too didactic, too programmatic. Poetry becomes a puzzle, solvable and to be solved. The "thesis" of Whitman's "Eidólons," says Schoolman, is "life itself is a visual image" (104). All those visual images are, moreover, in constant flux. Hence: "Motion is Whitman's deep ontology" (106). But what exactly is an Eidólón? Schoolman explains that it derives from the Greek verb *eido*, "to see." That etymology evokes the Platonic *eidos*, commonly construed as the ideal model of truth that informs yet lies outside our cave-like world. Deleuze helps us, says Schoolman, get beyond Plato's reality-appearance binary by redirecting our attention to images playing against other images, without then needing to judge any image as defective against a sky-high standard. Schoolman then concludes (the italics are his): "*For Whitman, the inversion of the Platonic 'ideal,' so that it now imitates the 'copy,' is the reconciliation of identity and difference*" (89). And to drive home the point:

Hence Whitman, who must have been thinking of Plato in Deleuze's terms when he not only makes *poesis* the champion of difference and the democratic enemy of the republic Plato imagined it to be but also charges it with the responsibility for the *aesthetic* creation of an entirely new and different world. (89)

Full disclosure: I've never read Plato as a Platonist, but instead as an ironist (as did the young Marx). Hence for me (and I'm already writing too adamantly), the term "inverted Platonism" is too clever by half, too naïve, too assured. As Eva T. H. Brann argues, the term *eidos*, as Plato uses it, is ostensibly ironic, for it combines in one term both the aspect of visibility and invisibility—an intelligible "look"—the "sight" of something that cannot, speaking literally but perhaps too literally, be seen ("The Music of the *Republic*," *St. John's Review*, 29 nos. 1-2 [1989-1990]). Plato's *Republic* is, on that lead, that hunch, an elusive phantasm, scribbles seen on a page about a story staged in an Orphic underworld, a *katabaino* death scene echoic of Homer's, in which Plato bans the poets from his city yet does so, when he does so, in (in the Greek) a hyperbolically mock-Homeric mode (often overlooked by commentators). I would need more time to think

about all that, and to connect it to, or distinguish it from, Whitman's possible politics. But my gut sense in reading "Eidólons" after reading Schoolman is to associate Plato and Whitman as fellow infernal travelers, though Plato's "reconciliation image" is a *gennaion pseudos*, a giant falsehood, which probably doesn't bode well for our troubled times.

Pomona College

JOHN E. SEERY

★

NICOLE GRAY, ED. *Leaves of Grass (1855) Variorum*. *The Walt Whitman Archive*, whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1855/variorum/index.html: 2020.

The newest addition to *The Walt Whitman Archive* is a variorum edition of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* that is both ambitious in its scope and transformative in its insights. The variorum recently received the 2021 Richard J. Finneran Award from the Society for Textual Scholarship, recognizing it as the best English-language critical edition from the previous two years. This is the first time that a digital edition has won this prestigious award, and the accolade is well deserved.

The 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum was created under the leadership of Nicole Gray, a contributing editor at *The Whitman Archive*, along with archive directors Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price, associate editors Brett Barney, Stephanie M. Blalock, and Brandon James O'Neil, designers Karin Dalziel, Jessica Dussault, and Greg Tunink, and project contributors Matt Cohen, Caitlin Henry, and Kevin McMullen. As Gray explains in the excellent 13,000-word introductory essay that anchors the variorum, she and her collaborators have brought together "the text of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, including variants and insertions; the early manuscripts and notebooks; the reviews and extracts that were printed and bound into some copies; and a bibliography of known surviving copies." This wealth of additional materials expands the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum beyond the realm of a standard variorum edition, which typically includes a collation of all the known variants of a text. Such a variorum of the major print editions of *Leaves of Grass* has existed since 1980 as *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems*, a three-volume set published by New York University Press as part of *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*. The NYU Press variorum, however, fails to account for the bibliographic irregularities that, we have learned over the past 20 years, are actually the defining

characteristics of the 1855 edition. As Ed Folsom wrote in his contribution to *Leaves of Grass: The Sesquicentennial Essays* (2007), “Today, we know about so many variations between copies [of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*] that we didn’t know about a couple of years ago—and there are so many more that I’m convinced haven’t yet been found—that it’s safe to say that Whitman and Rome managed in 1855 to create a book that is bibliographically indescribable” (18).

Folsom was referring to the then-new revelation that the 795-1,000 copies of *Leaves of Grass* that Whitman produced with the Rome Brothers printing firm in 1855 were by no means textually identical. Beyond the expected differences in state and binding—which would be common for almost any nineteenth-century book—there were substantive differences in word choice, spelling, and punctuation from copy to copy. For example, Gary Schmidgall discovered in 2000 that Whitman stopped the print run on *Leaves of Grass* at some point early on in the process to alter the line “And the night is for you and me and all” by adding the phrase “day and” and changing the verb “is” to “are” to become “And the day and night are for you and me and all.” Whitman retained both printings, meaning that some copies of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* contain the shorter line, while others contain the longer one. Ted Genoways made a similar discovery about modifications to the frontispiece engraving, and as a result of such revelations Folsom led the heroic effort to compile a census of the 200 known existing copies of *Leaves of Grass*, which is included in the variorum as “The 1855 *Leaves of Grass*: A Bibliography of Copies.” Again, it is common for a single edition of a text to exist in different states with different bindings, but one of the things that makes the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* such a unique challenge for bibliographers and textual scholars alike is the existence of these small-but-not-insignificant changes that took place at different points during the print run. For the first time, all of these known changes are accounted for in a single critical edition.

The variorum succeeds not only in identifying such changes, but also in fundamentally reframing how we think of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* as a material (and, by extension, poetic) object. One of the core principles at the heart of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum, Gray writes, is the desire “to create an edition that vividly reveals to readers what Ed Folsom concluded over a decade ago: that, materially speaking, there is *no such thing* as the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*.” The statement of editorial policy from the “About the *Archive*” section of *The Whitman Archive* explains the rationale behind the claim that, from the standpoint of descriptive bibliography, there is no such thing as the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*:

Because of the apparently random way in which the printed gatherings were assembled,

there is currently no way of identifying if there is such a thing as an “original” issue—that is, a single copy that contains the “first state” of everything before any of the type slipped, before Whitman or someone in the Rome office made corrections and changes, and that consists only of first state gatherings in the earliest stages of printing.

This is a big claim, to be sure. But Whitman scholars are used to making big claims about their objects of study: *Leaves of Grass* is the ur-text of free verse poetry; Whitman is a transformative figure both in American letters and in world culture as a whole; Whitman and his disciples helped to define modern notions of LGBTQ+ identity; and so on and so forth. Such claims are consistently—and productively—open for debate. But in arguing that, “materially speaking, there is *no such thing as the 1855 Leaves of Grass*,” both Folsom and Gray are on solid bibliographic ground.

It is this insight that I would like to underscore with as dark and as heavy a pen as I can find: the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* is not a single edition per se, but rather as a collection of documents that includes all 200 extant printed copies, relevant manuscripts and notebooks, reviews and extracts bound into some (but not all) of the printed copies, early drafts of advertisements (which include lines of poetry), and Whitman’s own annotated copy of his book (similar to his more well-known “blue book” copy of the 1860 *Leaves of Grass*). Those of us who use or create digital humanities projects have come to take for granted that digital archives—or “thematic research collections,” as they were once, perhaps more accurately, called—have a lot of stuff in them. We expect that digital resources will include a wide array of texts and other artifacts: the core text(s) in question, supporting documents, items drawn from the cultural context, analytic and introductory apparatuses, etc. But the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum doesn’t just have a lot of stuff in it simply because *that’s what we do with digital archives*. Rather, the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum includes the material that it does in order to make the case that *all* of those materials are what make up the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*—and also, that none of them are.

The best way for me to wrap my mind around the Schrödinger’s cat that is the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* (“It’s all of these texts, but also none of them!”) is not to appeal to poststructuralist notions like “absent presence” or “intertextuality,” but rather to be reminded of similarly transformative efforts to understand the textual history of another genre-defining book that may or may not actually exist either: the Bible. With the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* Variorum, Gray and her collaborators have created what we could call a documentary hypothesis of Whitman’s new American Bible. Like the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, there isn’t really such a book as “the Bible” so much as there is an assemblage of documents that

have settled into place around the convenient fiction of a single book whose name in Greek (*biblia*) means “the books.” Like the documentary hypothesis for the Pentateuch, the 1855 *Leaves of Grass Variorum* has given us a collection of source documents which we could also categorize with the letters J, E, D, P, and R.

The P source consists of the Printed copies that came off the Rome Brothers’ presses. *The Whitman Archive* uses a copy from the University of Iowa as their base text, which they rightfully call a “necessarily arbitrary” choice given the apparently random manner with which printed gatherings were put together. From there, they note textual variants (including missing, altered, or additional text), differences in bindings and insertions, and changes that likely occurred due to the shifting of type during the printing process—such as when the period fell off the final line “I stop some where waiting for you” of the poem that would later be titled “Song of Myself.” One of the big takeaways from analyzing these print sources is the reminder that *Leaves of Grass* took shape through a confluence of both agency and serendipity. We can see this impulse to revise and rewrite that would define the next four decades of the book’s life when Whitman changes “And the night is for you and me and all” to “And the day and night are for you and me and all,” just as we can marvel at the happy little accident of the terminal period falling off of a 1,300-line poem that ends with the promise of the poet’s resurrection into the blades of grass at our feet.

The R (or Review) source provides further evidence of Whitman’s compulsive drive to revise and update his work. Whitman took some of the early reviews of *Leaves of Grass* that appeared in the press (including three he had anonymously written himself), arranged for them to be printed in an eight-page insert, and then had them either sewed or tipped into the front or back of the volume. He similarly pasted the now-famous letter from Ralph Waldo Emerson greeting him at the beginning of a great career into either the front or back endpapers. As with everything else about the production of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, this process was unsystematic and unevenly distributed across copies of the book. For this aspect of the variorum, *The Whitman Archive* has used a copy from the University of Virginia as their base text, noting variations as they occur across the corpus of existing copies. In these reviews we see Whitman already beginning to conceptualize the promotional apparatus that he would include in the 1856 *Leaves of Grass* as “Leaves-Droppings,” which included reviews, the letter from Emerson, and his own open-letter reply. (He would produce something similar yet again in 1860 with *Leaves of Grass Imprints*.) *The Whitman Archive* has made use of the open-source comparison and collation tool Juxta

(which I'm cheating and calling the J source for the purposes of my analogy) to display the changes between the original periodical reviews and the reprinted versions that Whitman included in his book. Whitman the self-promoter—as well as Whitman the creature of print—fully emerges in the R source, as he does in the E source of Early Draft Advertisements. At some point in the publishing process, Whitman wrote and printed the drafts of four different advertisements proclaiming himself to be “The New Poet” and his book “America’s first distinctive poem.” We have known for decades that Whitman was completely immersed in the culture of nineteenth-century print; the variorum allows us to see his movement through those waters with even greater clarity.

Finally, with the D (or Document) source, *The Whitman Archive* takes manuscript and notebook drafts and lines them up with their corresponding locations in the printed text. It is likely that much of the new scholarship that will emerge from work with the variorum will come from insights gained by studying these manuscripts and their relationship to the poems and preface of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. The team at *The Whitman Archive* has already begun to generate powerful insights about Whitman’s process as a writer by getting up close and personal with these manuscripts and notebook drafts. As Gray writes in her introduction, “These manuscripts demonstrate how frequently Whitman revised across genre. Jotted notes, sometimes taken from external sources, sometimes become poetry, sometimes prose; prose becomes poetry; even, in a couple of cases, what look in manuscript versions like lines of poetry become segments of the prose preface.” If the first major argument of the variorum is that the most honest bibliographic description of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* needs to include a range of different texts and documents, its second argument emerges from this insight about the fungibility of Whitman’s lines. From a practical standpoint, as declared in the statement of editorial policies, “The poetic line is the fundamental unit of the variorum for the purpose of describing relations between manuscripts and notebooks and the printed text.” From the perspective of how the variorum invites us to understand Whitman’s poetic process, Gray quotes Folsom and Ken Price to argue that, “for Whitman the line was the basic unit of his poetry.”

This is a non-trivial argument to make. We could argue, instead, that Whitman’s basic poetic unit is the word, the stanza, the poem, the cluster, or even the book. But, as Gray writes, the variorum “makes it clear how often Whitman moved lines around, sometimes between poems.” This is where the variorum has so much to offer not only for thinking about the material conditions of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, but its aesthetic conditions as well. How do we

read Whitman's lines given these new insights? Are they discrete and fungible? Infinitely cut-and-pasteable like Raymond Queneau's "One Hundred Thousand Million Poems"? How did Whitman think of his poetic lines? How should we? The variorum doesn't offer the answers, but that's not its job. Instead, Gray and company have invited us to ask the right questions about this consistently surprising, endlessly wonderful work.

Lehigh University

EDWARD WHITLEY

★

CATERINA BERNARDINI. *Transnational Modernity and the Italian Reinvention of Walt Whitman, 1870-1945*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2021. xii + 281 pp.

Translators know intuitively that the meaning of an utterance never depends only on the meanings of the words uttered: context is everything, and context depends on situations and on people, i.e., on where and when a particular combination of words appears in the world, and on who the individuals involved are, what they know about each other, and why they have brought these words to this place at this time. This principle remained with me throughout my reading of Caterina Bernardini's *Transnational Memory*, which provides a rich and nuanced exploration of the reception and resonance of the poetry of Walt Whitman in Italy from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the end of the second world war. Bernardini's account elucidates not only what Whitman's poetry meant to people but how it did so, both in the limited context announced in its title and in the broader context of the poet's European reception and dissemination.

Bernardini achieves a remarkable synthesis of historical, political, and cultural context with analyses of the work of the individual literary and public figures who made sense of Whitman's poetry—interpreting it, translating it, and finding parallels between it and the Italy of their day. It balances an approach to the interpretation of Whitman in a European context with an attempt to measure the longer-term inspiration that Whitman provided to Italian (and not just Italian) poets, fiction writers, and cultural figures. A major part of this inspiration, Bernardini makes clear, is conditioned upon the degree to which Whitman's searching attempts to define and describe an "American" identity resonated within the contemporaneous search for a modern Italian one, a

phenomenon that repeated itself for more than one generation and thus yielded different Whitmans in the chronology of her study, as he became by turns a proto-modernist, a futurist, an anti-fascist, and a democrat.

A frequent theme in such encounters is the tendency for Whitman's work to serve as a mediation point for authors operating on the shifting ground between tradition and innovation, a position Bernardini explores through the poetic experiments of, among others, Giosu  Carducci (especially his late nineteenth-century *Barbaric Odes*), Gabriele D'Annunzio, Dino Campana, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Giovanni Pascoli, and, in two of the broadly comparative analyses in the book, Ivan Turgenev, in his 1882 *Poems in Prose*, and the Russian futurist Velimir Khlebnikov.

Translation frequently serves as a nexus for the book's tracing of the many complex interconnections that make up Whitman's changing face. The Sicilian Luigi Gamberale, who in 1907 produced the first complete translation of Whitman's work into any European language, receives a delightful chapter unto himself. Indeed, the book can be said to pivot on the self-taught Gamberale's lifelong work of translating Whitman, to which he dedicated himself after retiring from a career as a teacher and school principal. Bernardini's full and varied treatment explores questions of motivation and interpretation, sources, and methods, furnishing close readings of specific choices made by the translator and an overview of responses he received—some quite fascinating and accompanied by the publications of the letter writers. In 1913, one arrived from Marinetti, thanking the translator for his work and enclosing a copy of the newly published *I poeti futuristi* (The Futurist Poets), which contained his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature." Marinetti gets his own extended treatment in the book's second to last chapter, "Whitman, the Futurists, and the Birth (and Death) of Free Verse," while the letter itself helps to show another aspect of Bernardini's project, which is to trace a web of circulation networks, often with cosmopolitan, multi-lingual figures at their centers: Enrico Nencioni, the Sicilian Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, d'Annunzio, the writers associated with the Florentine periodical *La Voce*, Cesare Pavese.

How its various threads fit together is part of the book's fascination, as Bernardini traces the trajectory of the adoption of Whitman-inspired innovations, especially the liberation of free verse, first by Marinetti (including in the anthology he sent to Gamberale in 1913), then in the Russian Futurist experiments of Khlebnikov in the mid 1910s and early 1920s, and the polyglossia of Mina Loy's poems of the 1940s. In following such lines, Bernardini is careful to point out the complexity of this Futurist "reinvention" of Whitman, which

is not limited to simply channeling the poet's "audacity and energetic faith in the future" but extends to a new, more authentic poetic language, capable of expressing "crucial aspects of individuality, such as one's sexuality" (190).

While it is rooted in the context of the search for a modern Italian identity, a process in which Whitman's image and work provided important rallying points, the book's comparative methods and cross-cultural emphases cut against the grain of national literatures and contrast the impulse to write and rely on them, an impulse that is not likely to fade in the foreseeable future for most of world literature today, where having a distinct literature, like having a distinct language, is often understood as a marker of sovereignty and cultural legitimacy.

The book's tenth and final chapter is devoted to Cesare Pavese and provides both an important bridge, as Pavese was instrumental in the appearance of a new unabridged translation of Whitman into Italian, by Enzo Giachino in 1950, and yet another mediating influence in the interpretation of Whitman's work for a global audience. Here the notion of Whitman's "barbarism" or "primitivism," already evident in the understanding of Marinetti, Khlebnikov, Campana, and others, gets a new face. By contrast to these earlier readers of Whitman, who tended to see Whitman's expressive exuberance and poetic expertise in sharp relief, Pavese characterized Whitman as a poet who both "knew what he was doing" and who was "his own best critic" (197). For Pavese, in his translations and criticism, and, more complexly, in his creative works, Whitman's apparent primitivism turned out to be the manifestation of an expressive problem most of all, one shared widely in post-World-War II Europe. Whitman was not "a primitive, irrational, wild poet" (204). He was a modern artist engaged in the "poetry of poetry making," in a "total rethinking of *how* 'America' should be written," in other words, someone for whom, as Pavese put it in his translator's note to "Nineteenth-century Naturism" in 1948, "even American democracy became an expressive problem. Which is beautiful and consoling, still today" (204).

Indiana University

RUSSELL SCOTT VALENTINO



STEFAN SCHÖBERLEIN, ED. *Walt Whitman's New Orleans: Sidewalk Sketches and Newspaper Rambles*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2022. Library of Southern Civilization Series. xxx + 170 pp.

Stefan Schöberlein's collection of Whitman's newspaper writings from the spring of 1848, which Whitman spent in New Orleans, offers a glimpse into the spectacle of daily life in the city in that moment and, moreover, an invaluable view of Whitman's development in the years just before he began writing what would become *Leaves of Grass*.

The epigraph that begins Schöberlein's book is an excerpt from Whitman's *Specimen Days* that summarizes how, after losing his job at the *Brooklyn Eagle*, a chance meeting in the lobby of a theater on Pearl Street in New York, led to a job in New Orleans. The man who hired him was starting a new newspaper in New Orleans that would take its name from the shape of the boom town that was nestled into a sharp bend in the Mississippi River – it would be called the *Crescent*. Two days after the offer was made, Whitman and his younger brother, Jeff, set off for New Orleans.

They would arrive on February 25, 1848, and stay for ninety days, leaving to return to New York on May 27. In the excerpt from *Specimen Days* that serves as the epigraph to Schöberlein's volume, Whitman notes, "I enjoyed my . . . Louisiana life much." Near the end of the volume, Schöberlein includes a manuscript fragment that Whitman seems to have written near the end of his journey back to New York, in which he writes of his time in New Orleans, "My health was most capital; I frequently thought indeed that I felt better than ever before in my life." Perhaps he might have stayed quite a bit longer, but for his younger brother's homesickness (Jeff was fourteen to Walt's twenty-eight) and adverse reaction to the city's drinking water.

In his preface, Schöberlein begins with the question of attribution. In that period, newspaper writers did not sign what they wrote, so Schöberlein traces a history of Whitman scholars who have attributed to the poet articles from newspapers where he worked that bear Whitman's initials or that address events either mentioned in his brother's letters or that he himself wrote about or recalled in other contexts. Schöberlein also includes pieces written for the *Crescent* during Whitman's time there that demonstrate a coherent narrative persona that matches Whitman's use of New York slang or that reflects a stranger from the North exploring New Orleans on foot.

In a letter of 1887 that Schöberlein includes near the end of this volume,

Whitman notes that, in the New Orleans of forty years earlier, “Probably the influence most deeply pervading everything at that time through the United States, both in physical facts and in sentiment, was the Mexican War, then just ended.” He continues, “[T]he city of New Orleans had been our channel and *entrepot* for everything, going and returning. . . . No one who has never seen the society of a city under similar circumstances can understand what a strange vivacity and *rattle* were given throughout by such a situation.” Whitman then catalogues the details that had stayed with him over those four decades: “I remember the crowds of soldiers, the gay young officers, going or coming, the receipt of important news, the many discussions, the returning wounded, and so on.”

In Schöberlein’s excellent introduction to the book, he notes that the Whitman brothers lived just off Lafayette Square, an area where the noise was constant and deafening and the stench quite strong. From here, Whitman would take his “sidewalk rambles” and develop his “peeps” for the *Crescent*. He had done this sort of writing in New York, as Schöberlein notes, and found New Orleans to be fertile ground for the same practice. It offered him a viable mode in which to articulate, even if indirectly, the “Barnburner” political values that may have cost him his job a few months earlier at *The Brooklyn Eagle*. To wit, these short pieces allowed him to hold forth on the ordinary, working-class people he encountered on the streets in ways that might have been read as defiant of the more mannered, pretentious, conservative, and older newspaper voices of the time. In several of these pieces, one can discern the homoerotic traces that would become explicit in “Calamus Leaves,” a draft sequence of poems that echoes some of his New Orleans experiences and that is more commonly known by the Louisiana-evocative title, “Live Oak, with Moss.” Though Whitman never published this poetic sequence in his lifetime, much of it would be woven into the “Calamus” poems in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and Schöberlein reprints it in its entirety near the end of this new book.

The bulk of the collection offers Whitman’s sketches of scenes he encountered on the streets of New Orleans. There are about fifty of them. After an opening section called “Prelude: Excerpts from the Traveller’s Notebook” about the journey, mostly by steamboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, with stops in Cincinnati and Louisville, there appears the main section, “Sketches of New Orleans.” Here Whitman records his impressions of The Annual Celebration of the Firemen, where great music made everyone overlook the chilly weather and muddy streets; and of Mardi Gras itself, an account that begins, “Yesterday was the famous day for everyone who wishes to see the colors

of the rainbow in the streets and squares” and ends by noting approvingly that “we do not believe that more than a dozen fights took place during that day.” There then follows many “peeps” into barrooms and groups of people mingling along the levee. There are also portraits of people hanging around hotel lobbies, rhapsodies on the city’s foliage, nightscape, and entertainment options, a piece on the pratfalls of a drunken barber, the antics of a razor-strop man, and the two failures of a “lady aeronaut” to ascend in a hot-air balloon; there are pieces too on pickpockets, vagrants, an aging mother, an oysterman, some German sailors, an Irish drayman, some doctors, some church-goers, a Kentucky flatboatman, a bouquet-peddler, and an elderly pauper, to name only a handful. Whitman’s work anticipates that of Lafcadio Hearn some thirty years later, who was the first to deliver the “exotic” charms of New Orleans to a national audience of magazine readers after the Civil War and thereby anchor what would become the major themes of the city’s tourist industry as it hums along today, a century-and-a-half later. But Whitman’s short studies of a considerable range of social types anticipate, still more importantly, the long catalogues of snapshots of ordinary, urban, working-class people, going about their daily lives, that populate *Leaves of Grass* and make it a central artifact of the long struggle for democracy in the U.S.

Schöberlein’s collection of Whitman’s New Orleans newspaper writings from the spring of 1848 will be of keen interest to scholars focused on the question of how the poet developed and came to do the work that would soon follow. And for those curious about daily life in the city just over a decade before the Civil War and, more pointedly, in the ur-texts for the writings that, just over a decade after the war by Hearn and others, fixed the city as myth and symbol in the national imagination, the Schöberlein collection will be most welcome.

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WALT WHITMAN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY



- AKaiser. "Mary O. Davis." *North American Review* 304 (Spring 2019), 9. [Poem about Whitman's housekeeper during the poet's final years, concluding "Mary O. Davis chose to stay, time and over again, / then brushed closed the eyes upon the death of Walt Whitman. / Her keep, her friend."]
- Aucoin, Matthew. *The Impossible Art: Adventures in Opera*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. [Chapter 5, "Walt Whitman's Impossible Optimism," discusses how "Whitman is more operatic than opera itself" in the ways "he attempts, in his poems, to channel the surging, boundary-bursting force of the burgeoning American nation, in all its chaotic self-contradiction, . . . to speak on behalf of the whole continent, to unite opposites and smooth over differences, as if the country could be gathered into a gigantic choral collective"; recalls how Aucoin came "to put [Whitman] onstage as the protagonist of my first opera, 'Crossing' (2015)," an opera that grew out of the fact that Aucoin was a "Whitmanian optimist at heart, and 'Crossing' turned out to be an interrogation of the limits of that optimism"; discusses how he discovered how "relevant" Whitman was "to the reckonings America would face throughout the years the opera was being developed," and how he set the goal in the opera of "look[ing] at America through Whitman's lens and scrutiniz[ing] that lens, hold[ing] it up to the light"; also discusses Whitman's hospital experiences during the Civil War and Whitman's own idiosyncratic love of opera.]
- Basu, Amitava. "Divine Lives in You." *The Economic Times* [India] (January 2, 2022), economictimes.indiatimes.com. [Finds it "a revelation" that Whitman and Lalou Fakir (1774-1890), "a Baul singer from Kusthia," "shared a common philosophy" (that "God resides right inside the human body and one does not need to search for Him anywhere else") "without having met each other and having no digital connectivity."]
- Belflower, James. "Emerging Improvisations: A Review of *Writing in Real Time: Emergent Poetics from Whitman to the Digital*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 44 (Winter 2021), 162-169. [Review of Paul Jaussen, *Writing in Real Time*.]
- Blalock, Stephanie M. "Whitman." In Gary Scharnhorst, ed., *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual 2019* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 53-66. [Reviews the scholarship on Whitman published in 2019.]
- Blalock, Stephanie M., and Stephanie Farrar. "Whitman and Dickinson." In David J. Nordloh, ed., *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual 2018* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 49-67. [Reviews the scholarship on Whitman and Dickinson published in 2018; the section on Whitman (49-59) is by Blalock.]

- Blalock, Stephanie M., and Brandon James O’Neil. “I am more interested than you know, Bill’: The Life and Times of William Henry Duckett Jr.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 89-117. [Traces Whitman’s carriage driver and “youthful companion” Bill Duckett’s (1869-1902?) life, filling in details of his ancestry, his family, his childhood, and his peripatetic adult life—including his marriage, divorce, military service, occupation, and death, all previously unknown to Whitman scholars.]
- Bui, Phong. “Dear Friends and Readers.” *Brooklyn Rail* (February 2022), brooklynrail.org. [Notes that the U.S. is undergoing “a slow recovery process from two profound ruptures,” the pandemic and “near collapse of our democracy,” and goes on to urge a re-reading of Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas* to remind ourselves of how the nation is “a perpetually self-correcting democracy, akin to nature in its cosmic manifestations of growth and decay, life and death.”]
- Bush, Rodney, and Eric Rosen. *Leaves: Song of Ourselves*. New York: 2022. [An “eclectic mix of pop, rock, and folk music”—partly a “direct adaptation of Whitman’s poetry” and partly music inspired by his work—exploring “the joy, complexity, romance, and pleasure of being gay in 1855 and now”; premiering at Feinstein’s/54 Below in New York City on June 27, 2022; performed by Lauren Patten, Claybourne Elder, Anthony Alfaro, Adam Hyndman, and Bradley Gibson, among others.]
- Butt, Andrew. Review of David Grant, “*The Disenthralled Hosts of Freedom*”: *Party Prophecy in the Antebellum Editions of Leaves of Grass*. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 145-149.
- Camboni, Marina. “William Wetmore Story, Walt Whitman, and Enrico Nencioni: A Node in the Web of Transatlantic ‘Traffic’ in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century.” In Melissa Dabakis and Paul H. D. Kaplan, eds., *Republics and Empires: Italian and American Art in Transnational Perspective, 1840-1970* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2021), 103-124. [Examines Italian critic and poet Enrico Nencioni’s (1837-1896) relationship with American sculptor William Wetmore Story (1819-1895) and Walt Whitman “from a semiotic critical perspective and within the parallel processes of political unification in Italy and national consolidation in the United States,” arguing that “the relational nodes constituted by Story and Nencioni, and Nencioni and Whitman, [are] part of a larger network that contributed to the shaping of an asynchronous, complex transnational and transatlantic cultural sphere.”]
- Catacalos, Rosemary. “Mr. Chairman Takes His Leave.” *Poets.org* (April 13, 2022), poets.org. [Poem in memory of William Rashall Sinkin (1913-2014), beginning “Whitman, you once told me, is democracy on the page, messy / and imperfect as we are in real life, which gave you hope.”]
- Clifton, Lucille. *Generations: A Memoir*. New York: New York Review Books, 2021. [Originally published in 1976; quotations from Whitman’s “Song of Myself” serve as epigraphs for the various sections.]

- Cohen, Matt, and Nicole Gray. "Printers of the Kosmos: Designing a Variorum of the First *Leaves of Grass*." *Textual Cultures* 14 (2021), 134-154. [Describes the "editorial logic behind a recently released variorum of the 1855 edition" of *Leaves of Grass* that appears on the *Walt Whitman Archive*; shows how the reading of numerous copies of this edition "informs the design and apparatus of the variorum, which attempts to represent something of the fundamental textual and material instability of the copies that make up the edition."]
- Cohen, Matt. Review of Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman*. *Resources for American Literary Studies* 43 (2021), 239-242.
- Cohen, Matt. Review of Zachary Turpin and Matt Miller, eds., *Every Hour, Every Atom: A Collection of Walt Whitman's Early Notebooks & Fragments*. *Textual Cultures* 14 (2021), 254-258.
- Crumley, Jim. "Can America Avoid Another Civil War?" *The Courier Evening Telegraph* [Dundee, Scotland] (January 10, 2022), the.courier.co.uk. [Ruminates on the possibility of another civil war in the U.S. and recalls Whitman's involvement in the original Civil War, concluding that "President Biden, on whose shoulders the outcome of these tense moments rests, could do worse than prescribing a crash course in Walt Whitman for every American."]
- Epp, Michael. Review of Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman*. *Political Theory* 50 (February 2022), 182-186.
- Esteban, Ángel, and Dora Poláková. "Whitman transatlántico: su huella en los modernistas José Martí y Jirí Karásek y en las vanguardias de entreguerras (Huidrobo y Nezval)" ["Transatlantic Whitman: His Imprint on the Modernists José Martí and Jirí Karásek and on the Interwar Avant-Gardes (Huidrobo and Nezval)"]. *Ars & Humanitas* 15 no. 2 (2021), 223-234. [Argues that Whitman's international influence grew in the last decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries, with the interval between the world wars a particularly fertile time, when Whitman's work was used to define and defend freedom, on thematic and formal levels; his influence is seen in the works of such writers as the Cuban José Martí (1853-1895), the Czech Jirí Karásek (1871-1951), the Chilean Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948), and the Czech Vitezslav Nezval (1900-1958); in Spanish.]
- Evon, Dan. "Did 'Be Curious, Not Judgmental' Originate with Walt Whitman?" *Snopes* (August 5, 2021), snopes.com. [Offers a fact-check on a scene in the television series *Ted Lasso*, in which the main character quotes Walt Whitman as writing "Be curious, not judgmental"; offers an assessment by Whitman scholar Ed Folsom that "Whitman never said or wrote 'Be curious, not judgmental'"; Folsom goes on to note that the statement "is one of ten or fifteen 'quotes' often falsely attributed to Whitman" that take hold on social media and soon "are better known than any actual Whitman quotations."]

- Flower, Amanda. *Verse and Vengeance: A Magical Bookshop Mystery*. New York: Crooked Lane, 2019. [Mystery novel about magical bookshop owner Violet Waverly, who solves a murder with the help of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.]
- Folsom, Ed. "Walt Whitman: An Annotated Bibliography." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 156-162.
- Fomeshi, Behnam. "Democratic Poetics: A Comparative Study of the US and Iran." *Kritika Kultura* 38 (2022), 100-119. [Compares Whitman's role in the US poetic tradition with Nima Yushij's (1897-1960) role in the Iranian poetic tradition, examining how "Whitman's free verse and Yushij's New Poetry are the results of translating the discourse of democracy to a literary discourse"; seeks to "unravel the relationship between sociopolitical situations in Whitman's and Yushij's societies" in order to "examine the resulting literary changes" unique to each writer.]
- Grill, Stanley. "The Mystic Trumpeter." Haworth, NJ: SG Music Publications, 2021 (stan-grillcomposer.com). [Musical composition for trumpet and string orchestra, offering a "musical response to each of the 8 sections" of Whitman's poem.]
- Grünzweig, Walter. Review of Walt Whitman, *Lebenseiche, moosbehangen*. *Live Oak, with Moss*, translated and edited by Heinrich Deterling. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 149-151.
- Haines, Christian P. *A Desire Called America: Biopolitics, Utopia, and the Literary Commons*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. [Chapter 2, "The People and the People: Democracy and Vitalism in Walt Whitman's 1855 *Leaves of Grass*" (74-113), investigates "how the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* constitutes an attempt to reimagine American democracy in nonliberal terms," as Whitman "proposes a majoritarian utopianism in which the nation need only realize its innermost potential in order to arrive at a better world"; argues that "there is a constitutive tension between a vitalist democracy and an eventual democracy in Whitman's poetry," "a polemical demarcation between the people (as status quo) and the people (as subject of the Revolution)."]
- Haines, Christian P. Review of Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman*. *American Literary History Online Review Series* 27 (2021), oup.com/alh.
- Hamdoune, Lahoussine. "The 'Vernacular Process' and the (Re)Construction of Tradition in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures* 13 no. 4 (2021), 645-663. [Examines how Ellison in *Invisible Man* undertakes "revision" of writers like James Joyce, Whitman, and T. S. Eliot; one section, "Signifying on a 'Racialized' Tradition: Revisiting Eliot and Whitman" (657-660), suggests how Ellison "juxtaposes and interrogates Walt Whitman's romantic images of the nineteenth century America" and moves to "Eliot's 'wastelandish' images to evince the chaos of racialized America."]
- Harjo, Joy. *Poet Warrior: A Memoir*. New York: Norton, 2021. [Part 5, "Teachers" (161-202), explores the author's various literary inspirations, including Whitman: "My poetry would not exist without Audre Lord's 'Litany for Survival,' without Mvskoke stomp

dance call-and-response, without Meridel Le Sueur or N. Scott Momaday, without death or sunrise, without Walt Whitman, or Navajo horse songs, or Langston Hughes, without rain, without grief, without—”; acknowledges Whitman’s work in the Indian Bureau, his incomplete novella *The Half-Breed*, and his belief that “we embody everything, we are related to all life, all beings” (181-183).]

Hetherington, Paul. “Creative Rewriting and Recontextualisation: Fluid and Shape-Shifting Literary Works.” *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* 19 no. 1 (2022), 91-102. [Discusses how “Whitman constructed his poetic oeuvre as an ongoing work-in-progress” with “repeated cycles of redrafting, supplementing and editing previously published work,” and suggests that Whitman is one key model for creative writers, who need to embrace “the idea that creative works are always potentially being re-made,” “to embrace a commitment to writing as an ongoing, fluid and sometimes shape-shifting process”; examines how “as Whitman changed his poem he also amended its voice, adopting a more knowing tone and expatiating manner.”]

Hornik, Julian. *Deathbed Edition*. 2019. [Musical drama about Whitman on his deathbed, talking to a *New York Times* reporter who has been dispatched to keep a bedside vigil; premiered at Ars Nova’s 2019 ANT Fest in New York City and performed again at the Connelly Theater in New York City in October 2021; directed by Rory Pelsue, with Danielle Chaves as Whitman and Julian Hornik as the reporter.]

Hosseini, Mostafa. Review of Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 152-155.

Hubbard, Alison Louise. “Wildflowers.” *Saturday Evening Post* (February 11, 2022), saturdayeveningpost.com. [Short story about a gardener—recovering from the recent stillbirth of her baby—who is called by the director of the Whitman Birthplace and Visitor’s Center on Long Island to tend to the lilacs around Whitman’s birthplace in preparation for the celebration of the bicentennial of the poet’s birth.]

Jonik, Michael. “The Pleasures of a Saint, the Pleasures of a Plant: William James, Walt Whitman, and the Varieties of Hedonic Experience.” *Revue Française d’Études Américaines* no. 167 (2021), 71-84. [In an exploration of how William James theorizes “how the varieties and uses of pleasure can constitute an ethics of living,” examines how “Whitman’s optimistic approach to phenomena not only serves as an example for a ‘religion of healthy-mindedness,’ it verges on a pantheistic ‘ontological mysticism,’ that James counterposes to the mystical ecstasies of the Christian saints, and to Gustav Fechner’s panpsychical notion of a feeling earth embodied in sentient plants”; one section, “The pleasures of Walt Whitman” (75-78), shows how “James extends Whitman’s optimistic vision into an ‘organic’ religious temperament” and how “Whitman serves as the principal *point de repère* of the literary in [James’s] psychology of pleasure”; concludes that “the pragmatist must think of both Whitmans at once: the monist mystical pantheist and the proto-radical empiricist idler,” because “this double figure of Whitmanic pleasure sets the tone for James’s late philosophy.”]

- Loonin, Paulo. "Democratic Portraiture: The Political Aesthetics of the Individual and the Collective in Whitman's 'Song of Myself.'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Fall 2021/Winter 2022), 118-144. [Examines "democratic portraiture" in "Song of Myself" in order to illuminate the ways that "aesthetics and politics" in the poem are not "two categories to be weighed against each other" but rather "one formational question about how to imagine and represent a democratic ideal" by "challeng[ing] 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"; demonstrates how such a reading of 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"; traces how, "by oscillating between the mass-portrait and the portrait-series, Whitman tried to imagine democracy in action while simultaneously enacting it in his poem" as he tried "to balance the mass-portrait and portrait-series in an overarching democratic portrait, with himself as its emblem."]
- Magavern, Sam. "Freedom and Joy: Walt Whitman's 'We Two Boys Together Clinging.'" *Commonplace* March 2022), commonplace.online. [Offers a reading of "We Two Boys Together Clinging" as "a moving embodiment of love and rebellion" and as a poem of "uncanny depth."]
- Miller, J. W. Review of Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill, eds., *"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up": Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings*. *Choice* 59 (March 2022), xx.
- Morris, David Brown. *Wanderers: Literature, Culture, and the Open Road*. New York: Routledge, 2022. [Chapter 26, "The End of the Road" (130-138), deals briefly with the way Whitman embodies "a counter-ethos opposed to capitalist labor and to instrumental reason"; Whitman is referred to throughout this book about the cultural and literary significance of wandering.]
- Mullins, Maire. "Walt Whitman and the Washingtonian Temperance Movement." *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* 67 no. 2 (2021), 477-515. [Investigates "the importance of the Washingtonian Temperance Movement as a formative influence on *Franklin Evans*," examining how various Washingtonian ideas and practices—including meetings, public confession, and compassion—help structure Whitman's novel, and how Whitman blends into the novel his notions of class anxiety, gender fluidity, and same-sex desire, all demonstrating "the Washingtonian Temperance movement's influence on Whitman's sensibility" as seen in "techniques and themes he would later incorporate into his prose and poetry: confession, the healthy physical body, the compassionating witness, gender fluidity, same-sex desire, and the inclusion of the working class and women."]
- Munger, Megan. "Walt Whitman's Healing through Radical Empathy: A Trauma Studies Analysis." *Midwest Quarterly* 63 (Winter 2022), 198-209. [Argues that "Whitman's frustration and excessive lengths to cover up any speculation about potential homosexual themes or images in the *Calamus* poems" indicate that "Whitman's sexuality

constitutes psychological trauma”; uses recent “trauma studies” approaches to read ways in which “Whitman coped with this trauma” by writing poems, specifically “Song of Myself” and the “Calamus” poems.]

New, Elisa. “*Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman.” *Poetry in America*. Boston: WGBH, 2020. [Half-hour program in the *Poetry in America* series, telecast on PBS, with discussions of Whitman’s book with Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, playwright Tony Kushner, poets Mark Doty and Marilyn Chin, scholar Karen Karbiener, and others; written, narrated, and moderated by Elisa New.]

New, Elisa. “The Wound-Dresser, by Walt Whitman.” *Poetry in America*. Boston: WGBH, 2022. [Half-hour program in the *Poetry in America* series, telecast on PBS, with discussions of Whitman’s poem and his Civil War experiences, with actor David Strathairn, playwright Tony Kushner, composer Matthew Aucoin, opera singer Davóne Tines, physician-writers Rafael Campo and Abraham Verghese, and historian Drew Faust; written, narrated, and moderated by Elisa New.]

O’Malley, Thomas. “A Celestial Encounter with a Heavenly Bard.” *Buffalo News* (January 16, 2022), buffalonews.com. [Brief essay on the author’s experiencing “the presence of the grandfather of American poetry, Walt Whitman,” as the author gazes at the night sky and thinks about Whitman as “a lifelong stargazer” while ruminating on “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer.”]

Patterson, Anita. “‘I’ve Known Rivers’: Langston Hughes, Jacque Roumain, and the Emergence of Caribbean Modernism.” *Langston Hughes Review* 27 no. 1 (2021), 12-28. [Explores the complex “dynamics of influence” between Langston Hughes and Haitian writer Jacques Roumain (1907-1944), and finds the key in these poets’ “shared affinities” with Whitman and Franco-Uruguayan poet Jules Laforgue (1860-1887), as well as in Laforgue’s own admiration of Whitman; offers readings of Hughes’s poems influenced by Roumain and Whitman, including “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” with its “Whitmanian antecedents,” allowing us to see “the influence exerted by Whitman on both [Hughes and Roumain] as mediated by Laforgue,” thus explaining “the surprising pattern of resemblances in their poetry.”]

Pottroff, Christy L. “Incommensurate Labors: The Work behind the Works of Harriet Jacobs and Walt Whitman.” *American Literature* 94 (June 2022), 219-244. [Traces the backstory of the 1860 contracts that both Harriet Jacobs and Walt Whitman signed with Boston publisher Thayer and Eldridge—Jacobs for *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Whitman for the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1860)—and shows how the production of the two books “were thoroughly intertwined”; argues that “Whitman brought his artistic vision into the literary marketplace . . . at the expense of Jacobs,” because “Thayer and Eldridge went bankrupt printing and promoting Whitman’s book,” leaving Jacobs to publish her book by herself; goes on to track Jacobs’s “post-publication book tour.”]

Raz, Yaniv, director. *Dr. Bird’s Advice for Sad Poets*. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Kreate Films, 2021. [Film about a teenager named James Whitman, who searches for his missing older

sister, and who seeks advice from an imaginary pigeon therapist and from his namesake, Walt Whitman, who speaks from a poster photo of the poet on James's bedroom wall; directed by Yaniv Raz, who wrote the screenplay, with Michael H. Cole as Walt Whitman.]

Sánchez, Erika L. "On Rudolfo Anaya's Expansive, Aching View of Childhood." *Literary Hub* (March 28, 2022), lithub.com. [Compares Rudolfo Anaya's novel *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) to Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth," and views Anaya as "a descendant of Whitman," with both authors "awakening us to the spirit of the child who lives in all of us."]

Schöberlein, Stefan, ed. *Walt Whitman's New Orleans: Sidewalk Sketches and Newspaper Rambles*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022. [Collects Whitman's writings for the *New Orleans Crescent* that focus on the city and its people, including some newly discovered pieces, along with additional materials illuminating Whitman's relationship with the city; with an introduction, "Whitman on the Levee" (xv-xxviii), and "Whitman's Bibliography until 1848" (159-160), both by Schöberlein.]

Schweizer, Harold. *On Lingering and Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2021. [Chapter 6, "The Temporality of Whitman's Grass" (46-52), explores the significance of "lingering" in Whitman's work, especially "Song of Myself," which performs "a celebratory waiting, stopping, lingering, idling, sauntering, meandering, strolling, wandering, reclining and leaning; most famously a loafing," in which "Whitman's verbs 'observe,' 'witness,' 'wait,' 'lull,' hold desire in abeyance, slow it down," and where Whitman nudges us to be "leaning towards loafing": "All one has to have, besides pulse, is a 'leaning,' an inclination, a vigilance."]

Shafer, Ronald G. "Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass' Was Banned—and Cost Him His Federal Job." *Washington Post* (April 30, 2022), washingtonpost.com. [Retells the familiar stories of some of the initial poor reviews of early editions of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman's being fired by Interior Secretary James Harlan in 1865, and the 1881 *Leaves* being "banned in Boston" as "obscene literature."]

Skiveren, Tobias. "New Materialism's Second Phase." *Criticism* 63 (Summer 2021), 309-312. [Review of Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman*.]

Smith, Elena, producer and creator. *Dickinson*. Apple TV+, 2021. [TV series focusing on Emily Dickinson (2019-2021), played by Hailee Steinfeld; in Season 3 (2021), Episode #4 ("This is my letter to the world"), Dickinson finds Whitman (played by Billy Eichner) in a New York hospital helping soldiers, and he takes her to Pfaff's bohemian saloon in New York.]

Stewart, Garrett. *The Ways of the Word: Episodes in Verbal Attention*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. [Chapter 2, "The Tensed Word," contains a section, "Paging All Readers: Whitman's Time Machine" (78-86), that offers a reading of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" focusing on Whitman's "paradoxical tense structure" and his "protocinematic sentencing—including, at the level of diction and syntax, its inscribed future verdict on its moving phrasal pictures, a verdict delivered in none other than

the medium of verbal delivery,” demonstrating how “it is we who live the poet’s words, keeping them alive in their crossing of the page,” especially if we keep a keen ear/eye for “hearing things, stray tracings, shadowed forecasts overwritten by the given”; returns to the poem in “Tracked: An Epilogue on Aftertones” (205-208).]

Su, Larry S. “Walt Whitman’s Vision of America.” *American Thinker* (January 23, 2022), americanthinker.com. [Op-Ed piece about Whitman’s “unparalleled patriotism and hope for America” and the need for American people “to recommit ourselves to the vision of an upbeat America that Whitman proposes in *Democratic Vistas* in hope to find inspiration and new strength for America in 2022,” and the need for Americans “to return to [Whitman’s essay] again and again to refresh the visions the Founding Fathers and towering figures like Whitman mapped out for this young, energetic, and hopeful nation” and “discard all that toxic politics of division and pessimism and embark on a new journey of hope and optimism.”]

Tremblay, Francis. Review of Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman*. *CompLit: Journal of European Literature, Arts and Society* 2 no. 2 (2021), 174-176.

Van Sise, B. A. *Children of the Grass: A Portrait of American Poetry*. Tucson, AZ: Schaffner Press, 2019. [Presents a series of eighty photographs by Van Sise—“visual poems of the many contemporary poets working today,” each appearing opposite one of their poems—offered as a “monument” to Whitman, who inspires these poets as well as Van Sise, and demonstrating that “American poetry is a landscape as diverse as the land that gives birth to it, a cacophony of voices from persons of all colors, genders, religions, backgrounds, loves,” expressing the “multitudes” Whitman claimed to contain; with a foreword by Mary-Louise Parker.]

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Richmond, VA: Circling Rivers, 2021. [A “Circling Rivers Pocket Edition” of the 1891-1892 *Leaves of Grass*, in 17 compact saddle-stitched volumes, with a preface by Jean Huets (iii-iv).]

The University of Iowa

ED FOLSOM

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

IN MEMORIAM:

Joel Myerson
1945-2021

I first met Joel Myerson (of blessed memory) in his Washington, DC, hotel suite at the 1989 Modern Language Association convention when he was chairing the University of South Carolina's Department of English and I was looking for a job. I inquired his suite number at the desk, to which the clerk responded, "you mean Joel Myerson from Columbia, South Carolina?" I must have flinched, I so associated Joel Myerson with the woods and villages of New England.



A month later, there I was myself in Columbia on a campus visit. In the course of a friendly private conversation in his office, I inquired what he was working on and was surprised to hear it was a Walt Whitman bibliography. I asked: wouldn't two Whitman scholars be one too many for the department? He parried with a wink. That night, he and Greta graciously hosted me at their booklined house in Columbia, where on walking into the front foyer I immediately noticed a glass-enclosed bookshelf containing first editions of *Leaves of Grass* and other familiar-looking Whitman imprints. Looking to make conversation, I remarked ingenuously about security, to which Joel responded: no alarm, no special precautions—the last thing local thieves would go for was a bunch of old books.

Joel Myerson had a lifelong affair with old books. I don't know enough to draw a portrait of this bibliophile as a young man, but I remember his repeated statements of indebtedness to the great bibliographer/book collector, Harrison

Hayford, whom he trained under at Northwestern. Hayford and his colleagues transmitted to him the art and mystery of the study of printed texts, which Joel practiced with great expertise and tireless devotion to the end of his life. He also convivially passed on what he had learned, often accompanied with a rollicking story about books, collectors, and academics, to succeeding cohorts of students and colleagues.

He played his cards as shrewdly at book collecting as at poker. Out of a public university instructor's salary he scraped together funds to build his great nineteenth-century American literature collections. Book by book, pile by pile, his holdings grew: Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson, Alcott, sundry Transcendentalists—and, of course, Whitman. That collection had a distinctive point of origin. It cohered via a single transaction with his own mentor and comrade, Harry Hayford. With copies of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and various other prime Whitman imprints in hand, he set his mind to the task of building a major collection of Whitmaniana. Over time it grew to include not only all editions of *Leaves of Grass* and Whitman's other books and pamphlets but a wide array of a bibliographer's allies—textual and binding variants, poetry manuscripts and photographs, memorabilia (such as the hefty 1881 bronze of Whitman's writing hand cast from life), scattered correspondence, proofs, ephemera. That collection eventually found its permanent home alongside his other major collections of American authors and miscellaneous Americana in the eleven-thousand-volume Joel A. Myerson Collection of Nineteenth-Century American Literature housed at Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina.

It was a point of pride that his authoritative bibliographies drew extensively on his personal library. One by one those thick volumes took shape, typed (later, keyed) steadfastly with index fingers alone: Fuller, Parker, Emerson, Dickinson, and finally Whitman—that last, his last as he promised Greta, an eleven-hundred-page, multitude-containing paragon of scholarship. It was his personal Whitman summa and the Whitman community's bibliographical summit. Half a dozen additional secondary works on Whitman followed, as well as a 2011 supplement to the bibliography, and right up to his death the work—as scholar, collector, editor, colleague, and mentor—was ongoing.

Whitman was obsessed with his own “passing,” but he knew with perfect confidence that his work would live on. Joel too has passed, but his work lives on, informing and inspiring. Lovers of Whitman and nineteenth-century American literature writ large are the better for it.

EZRA GREENSPAN, *Southern Methodist University*

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.

References: Follow *The MLA Style Sheet*, Second Edition. Mark references in the text with raised footnote numbers, not author-year citations in parentheses. Double-spaced endnotes should follow the essay on a new page headed "Notes." Do not use Latin abbreviations for repeated citations. Do not condense the names of publishers or titles. Make references complete so that a bibliography is unnecessary. When citing journal articles, give the volume number of the journal followed by the issue date in parentheses, followed by a comma, followed by the page number(s)—e.g., Joann P. Krieg, "Whitman and Modern Dance," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 24 (Spring 2007), 208-209.

QUOTING AND CITING WALT WHITMAN'S WORK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The physiognomy of the Brain from a literary life.

Take Notice



In addition to these ailments literary men are subjected, by the very nature of their pursuits, to an excitable condition of the nervous system, which often manifests itself in inordinate apprehension about small matters, and great irritability of temper. "These," says Thackeray, "mark, in common life and ordinary circumstances, the character of men who, on great occasions, manifest the noblest benevolence, courage, and coolness." This constant excitability not unfrequently leads to inflammation, and sometimes to a softening, of the brain. Dean Swift and Daniel Webster, both of whom possessed great intellects and thought profoundly, died of this affection. It is well known that the Herculean tasks assumed by Sir Walter Scott, in advanced age, led to an affection of the brain, which first dimmed and then extinguished forever the lofty intellect of this great writer, months before his body yielded to final dissolution.

Yet, notwithstanding these evils incident to a literary life, its average duration is of a respectable length, and frequently extends to great age. This was particularly the case among the ancient philosophers, who alternated their time between abstruse studies in the closet, and conversations and speeches in the midst of their fellow-citizens in the open air and public buildings in which they were wont to assemble. Besides, their philosophy generally taught them to be placid in temper, cautious in language, abstemious in diet, and unmoved by surrounding circumstances, all of which tend to the prolongation of life. Plato died at 81; Xenocrates at 82; Thales at 89; and Democritus at 100.

Modern philosophers, whose works are not always represented by their lives, although not short-lived, fall below the age attained by the ancients. Thus, Bacon died at 64; Boyle at 65; Newton at 84; and Harvey at 88. In our own country, Rittenhouse died at 64; and Franklin at 84; and of those engaged in other literary pursuits, Noah Webster, the lexicographer, died at 85; and Dr. Thacher at 90. M. Brunard selected at random one hundred and fifty savans, one half from the Academy of Sciences, the other from the Academy of Belles Lettres, and found that their average at death was a little above 70 years.



DEFINITION

1. AMATIVENESS, Sexual and
2. PHILOPROGENITIVENESS
3. ADHESIVENESS, Friendship
4. UNION FOR LIFE, Duality in marriage.
5. INHABITIVENESS, Love of home—patriotism.
6. CONTINUITY, Completion—one thing at a time.
7. COMBATIVENESS, Resistance—defence.
8. DESTRUCTIVENESS, Executiveness—force.
9. ALIMENTIVENESS, Appetite—hunger.
10. ACQUISITIVENESS, Frugality—accumulation.
11. SECRETIVENESS, Policy—management.
12. CAUTIOUSNESS, Prudence—provision.
13. APPROBATIVENESS, Honor—ambition.
14. SELF ESTEEM, Self respect and confidence.
15. FIRMNESS, Decision—perseverance.
16. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, Justice—moral principle.
17. HOPE, Expectation—enterprise.
18. MARVELLOUSNESS, Spirituality—prescience.
19. VENERATION, Devotion—worship of God.
20. BENEVOLENCE, Kindness—goodness.
21. CONSTRUCTIVENESS, Mechanical ingenuity.

NUMBERS.

22. PURITY, Purity—purity.
23. MIRTHFULNESS, Jocoseness—wit—fun.
24. INDIVIDUALITY, Observation—secretiveness.
25. FORM, Recollection of shape.
26. SIZE, Measures by the eye.
27. WEIGHT, Balancing—muscular control.
28. COLOR, Judgment of colors.
29. ORDER, Method—system—arrangement.
30. CALCULATION, Mental arithmetic.
31. LOCALITY, Recollection of places.
32. EVENTUALITY, Memory of facts.
33. TIME, Cogazance of duration.
34. TUNE, Music—melody by ear.
35. LANGUAGE, Expression of ideas.
36. CAUSALITY, Causes applied to effects.
37. COMPARISON, Inductive reasoning.
- C. HUMAN NATURE, Discernment of character
- D AGREEABLENESS, Pleasantness—suavity

About this image: Walt Whitman's clippings and notes on brain health and aging (rent Collection, Duke University Libraries). See pages 189-208.

