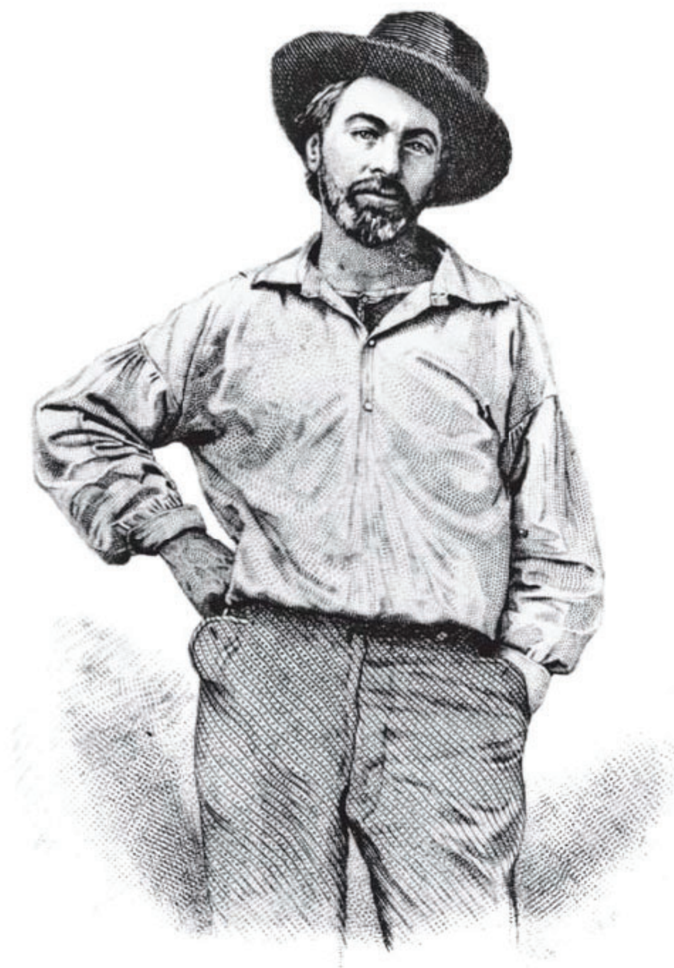

WALT WHITMAN
QUARTERLY REVIEW

VOLUME FORTY NUMBERS THREE AND FOUR WINTER/SPRING 2023

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CONTENTS

Essays

95 “A Singing Walt from the Mower”: Dylan Thomas and the “Whitmanian [Re]turn” in the Post-War Poetic Culture of the States / M. Wynn Thomas

Discoveries

127 “If you call on me I will tell you what I know of Walt”: Unrecorded Assessment of Walter and Walt Whitman by William Booth, Brooklyn Carpenter / Nathan Tye

140 A Long-Lost *Eagle* Article Puts Walt and Jeff on the Map / Amy Kapp

Reviews

150 Susan Jaffe Tane and Karen Karbiener. *Poet of the Body: New York’s Walt Whitman*. / Brandon James O’Neil

Bibliography

154 Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography / Ed Folsom

"A SINGING WALT FROM THE MOWER": DYLAN THOMAS AND THE "WHITMANIAN [RE]TURN" IN THE POST-WAR POETIC CULTURE OF THE STATES

M. WYNN THOMAS

In July 1951, John Malcolm Brinnin, academic and minor poet, visited his friend Dylan Thomas at his boathouse in Laugharne, West Wales. The poet had recently returned from his first turbulent tour of the United States, which the American had innocently arranged. En route to Laugharne, Brinnin stopped off in the Welsh capital, Cardiff. There, he met Aneirin Talfan Davies, Thomas's long-time friend and important early mentor. It was Davies who had first given the poet an opportunity to broadcast from the BBC studio at Swansea, and he was also to be involved in the broadcasting of *Under Milk Wood*. Seizing his opportunity, Davies extended to Brinnin an invitation to broadcast a short talk about Dylan Thomas in America.

Brinnin then proceeded to Laugharne, and while there, he began to work on his script. To do this, he repaired to Thomas's little "studio"—a disused garage he'd acquired that was conveniently adjacent to the boathouse (see image on back cover). Seated there among the "rat's nest of chewed, rolled, and discarded paper," his eye was immediately caught by a face: "Topmost in the room over the small wooden table that served Dylan as a desk was a handsome portrait of Walt Whitman."[1] It was flanked by portraits of Marianne Moore and Edith Sitwell.

Brinnin then set about reflecting on Thomas's explosive impact on the poetry scene in America, and he came to two interesting conclusions about its causes. The first was what he believed to be the American response to the perceived "ancientness" of Thomas's Welsh cultural hinterland. This, he suggested, was deeply attractive to a nation whose "history is brief, and our national character, compounded of so many heterogeneous influences, still does not allow of definition." But Thomas seemed to have Welsh "history in his bones": "As a Welshman rooted deeply in his people and land, Dylan Thomas speaks to us from sources we have lost, and we are drawn by his native accents with

nostalgia and the excitement of vicarious participation." (*DTA*, 97) There was, Brinnin suggested, something of the appeal of the "primitive" to Thomas—an American impression to which this essay will return.

The other reason for his appeal in the States, Brinnin continued, was that "we find in him not only the lyrical finesse and delicacy of the [English poets] of the seventeenth century, but the vigour and breadth of Walt Whitman. For American readers this combination is irresistible." Brinnin then proceeds to throw interesting light on the way in which American poets and academics regarded Whitman before what I would describe as the "Whitmanian turn" that was in some ways to be heralded three years later by the publication of Gay Wilson's landmark biography *The Solitary Singer*. "We read Whitman when we are young," Brinnin wrote:

> . . . and he implants in us a lively vision of democracy, that persists as part of our belief. But as we grow older, we find less and less satisfaction in his qualities as an artist, and finally tend to remember him as a prophet rather than as a poet. On the other hand, we find that our youthful acquaintance with Donne and Marvell and Herrick and Crashaw grows into a loving knowledge. While Whitman the laureate of large ideals, lies forgotten on the shelf, we read these earlier poets with new pleasure and are perhaps puzzled by the change that has come over us. When we read Dylan Thomas, then, we feel again not only the breadth and grandeur that Whitman once evoked, but that finely wrought music of the intellectual eye and ear which charms us back to the seventeenth century lyricists. (*DTA*, 98)

It is a comment that is as provocative as it is intriguing and suggestive. It is also a reminder that, before the "Whitmanian turn" in post-war American culture, he was routinely viewed as lacking in the refinements of form and expression that were proper to poetry. As we shall see, suggestive connections between Thomas and Whitman did not occur to Brinnin alone, nor was he the first to intuit that the connection might facilitate Thomas's reception in the States. But he seems not to have foreseen that those visits were to contribute to a new cultural interest in Whitman that led to a radical representation of him in America—what I have termed the "Whitmanian turn." Thomas's contribution to this process—which was also part of the process of Thomas's own acculturation, his "translation" into terms intelligible and acceptable to American culture—is one of the themes of the following discussion. But before pursuing such lines of inquiry further, it might be useful to reflect on Thomas's attitude toward Walt Whitman, who had served him as a "pin-up boy" in his little garage.

In a footnote to a letter he sent to Mimi Josephson on June 20, 1953, Thomas provided his own take on the picture of Whitman on his garage wall:

> The photograph of the man with the striped tie, on the fire-escape of his New York apartment: W. H. Auden. Other photographs in my hut are of D. H. Lawrence & Thomas Hardy, there's a big photograph of Walt Whitman over my table, just under the roof, and a portrait of Blake. There are also, pinned about, pictures of monkeys & naked women.[2]

It is a useful little snapshot. On the one hand, there's that deliberately provocative mention of "monkeys & naked women," which gestures ostentatiously towards the promiscuous, and often libidinous, appetites of Thomas's creative imagination. From the very beginning, he'd refused to distinguish between respectable and disreputable, "literary" and popular culture, high and low taste—and Whitman had anticipated him in this, of course. The mad mélange of "sources" instanced in that patchwork of disparate images was to be a trademark of his output throughout his career. Whitman is, therefore, just another casual item on the list. On the other hand, all the other poets mentioned by Thomas are poets for whom we know he had the very highest regard, and all had impacted on his development, even though no simple evidence may be found of their "presence" within his writing. That strongly suggests that Whitman, too, had played his part in the growth of Thomas's poetic imagination.[3]

There are two other interestingly contrasted references to Whitman in Thomas's correspondence. April 1934 finds Thomas sending a letter to his early friend Glyn Jones, a young and highly talented Welsh modernist poet like himself. "I refuse on paper to quarrel with you about obscurity, fluid verse, T. S. Eliot, Walt Whitman, Worker's Poetry, my own anatomic slap-stick, and other controversial points mentioned in your letter, especially as you're coming down," Thomas writes, before adding "I would far rather be Eliot than Whitman, if only because Eliot has a very splendid sense of form" (*CL*, 117).

There are important features of these remarks that need to be noted. First, "form" meant everything to Thomas, who was the strictest of formalists. And at this point, he seems to agree with Brinnin that Whitman is essentially a "formless" poet and, therefore, no model for him. Second, the movement of the sentence directly from a mention of Whitman to Worker's Poetry is very important. It helps us set Thomas's acquaintance with Whitman at this juncture in its proper context: that of the Socialist culture of Thomas's industrial South Wales.

But before considering that, attention must be paid to the second reference to Whitman in Thomas's correspondence.

Six eventful years were to pass before Thomas referred again to Whitman, this time in a letter to his bosom friend and fellow Welsh poet Vernon Watkins. He sent him a 100-line satirical poem, a "half-comic attack on myself." "You'll see," he added, "the heavy hand with which I make fun of this middle-class, beardless Walt who props humanity, in his dirty, weeping, expansive moments, against corners & counters & tries to slip, in grand delusions of all embracing humanitarianism, everyone into himself." (*CL*, 445) The poem is deliberately rough-and-ready knockabout verse:

> And I in the wanting sway
> Caught among never enough
> Conjured me to resemble
> A singing Walt from the mower
> And jerrystone trim villas
> Of the upper of the lower half,
> Beardlessly wagging in Dean Street,
> Blessing and counting the bustling
> Twolegged sparrows,
> Flogging into the [porches]
> My cavernous featherbed self.[4]

Reading this, it is useful to recall that one of the pictures Thomas had pinned to the garage wall alongside that of Whitman was of D. H. Lawrence, of whom he was an avowed admirer. The image that he paints of Whitman in this verse squib is very much in line with Lawrence's notoriously savage attack on Whitman in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, where he too mocks Whitman's omnivorous appetite for devouring all and sundry who stray into the path of his poetic imagination: "His poems, Democracy, En Masse, One Identity, they are long sums in addition and multiplication, of which the answer is invariably MYSELF."[5] The comment remains one of the most devastating indictments that can be made both of Whitman and of those aspects of American culture that claim to embody everything to which the world at large aspires in the name of "democratic progress."

There were influences additional to that of Lawrence that mediated Thomas's response to Whitman. One of the most important of these was the working-class culture of industrial South Wales during the inter-war period. Its version of Whitman needs to be kept in mind when approaching Thomas's treatment of the subject.

As I have demonstrated at length elsewhere, the Whitman who so impressed the intellectual leaders of the Welsh proletariat (copies of an invariably bowdlerized edition of his poetry could be found in some of the South Wales Miners' Libraries) was, in essence, a utopian socialist and an internationalist.[6] Their image—which owed much to the writings of Edward Carpenter—is irrelevant in this context. What is far more interesting to consider are the ramifications and practical outcomes of this heavily culturally inflected picture of "Whitman the radical" as they relate to Thomas.

Thomas's well-known Leftist sympathies caused some difficulties whenever he applied for a visa to read in the States.[7] This was, after all, the era not only of the Cold War but of Senator McCarthy and his notorious witch hunts; Reds were deemed to be lurking under many an American's bed. Was Thomas a Red? Certainly not. But he was pink enough to alarm American immigration authorities. One of the questions he was suspiciously asked by them was whether he would go to hear Paul Robeson sing. "Of course," was his prompt answer. And that was highly significant at a time when Robeson—a self-declared international Communist and supporter of the Stalinist Soviet Union who had long been the darling of South Wales's industrial culture for his portrayal of a Welsh miner in the film *Proud Valley* and his championing of the cause of the Welsh miners—was being increasingly persecuted in the States, his passport confiscated to prevent foreign travel.[8]

Critics and biographers have repeatedly drawn attention to the young Thomas's close and educative friendship with Bert Trick, a communist grocer in Swansea. But as the early letters indicate, Thomas's socialism was never the Marxist version of the Communist Party. Nor was it even the politically pragmatic Socialism of the British Labour Party, class-based and union-centered as it was, that already held South Wales firmly in its grip. No, Thomas's socialism was very much in accord with the "socialism" that so many in South Wales attributed to Walt Whitman.[9] In other words, it was a socialism of an ethical and utopian kind, sentimentally communitarian, inclined to the anarchic, benignly internationalist, and angrily anti-capitalist while retaining at its core a fierce sense of the sacred integrity of the individual. These, I would suggest, are the values that Thomas associated with Whitman and appreciated even as he expressed his misgivings about the American's devouring appetites for union and universality.

As for Whitman himself, his cautious views of Socialism in his old age

have been accurately chronicled by Traubel, who was very much a socialist sympathizer. When pressed on the subject of common ownership, the canny old man professed an ignorance tinged with innocent curiosity. He had remarked that he "looked forward to a world of small owners," and Traubel had countered by provocatively suggesting that "a world of 'of no owners at all' might be even better." Whitman's mental eyes opened wide in disingenuous astonishment at this suggestion. "'What do you mean by that? no owners at all?' he mused. 'Do you mean common owners—owning things in common? . . . [I]t *sounds* best: could it *be best*?" (*TC*, 173-174) It was, in truth, just a rhetorical question. To the end, Whitman belonged to the pre-capitalist world of "the small owners," as in many ways did the British Utopian Socialists of the late-nineteenth century from whom the socialism of many Welsh Socialists—including Dylan Thomas—originated, products as they all were, in essence, of the reformingly Liberal Nonconformist culture of Victorian Wales. This caste of Welsh radicalism unconsciously appealed to some of Thomas's listeners in the States which helped them reconnect with Whitman.

There were those among his listeners in the States who sensed Thomas's affinities with Whitman early. Karl Shapiro was one, and at that time, he was an influential figure on the poetry scene. He ended a long, balanced, and complex posthumous assessment of Thomas—who had become his friend—by referring to his poem "Twenty-four years remind me the tears of my eyes" and adding that "the last line of the poem is so much like a line of Whitman's that I have searched through Whitman's poems to find it. I am sure it is there and yet I know it isn't. The line reads: 'I advance for as long as forever is.'"[10]

Shapiro's remark comes from the careful textual study of Thomas's poems. But in general, the Whitmanian power of his poetry was revealed in his stunning performances of it, performances that were astonishingly at odds with the crabbed impression given by the published texts and that shocked delighted audiences with their electric demonstrations of the potential power of bardic orality. In the early fifties, poets and intellectuals in the post-war States were just beginning to shake off the strait-jacketing influence of a New Criticism that had resulted in intricately complex texts determinedly resistant to public performance. It was a precondition of the turn—or return—to Whitman, and Thomas, the incomparable and mesmerizing reader, made a modest but vital

contribution to the process.

At this distance in time, it is difficult to truly appreciate the seismic effect, at once scandalized and ecstatic, that Thomas's readings had on audiences right across the United States. Decades later, Donald Hall could still vividly recall the transformative and revelatory experience. "Out of this silly body," Hall wrote,

> Rolled a voice like Jehovah's, or the Ocean's, or Firmament's. "R's" rolled, vowels rose and fell . . . consonants thudded and crashed and leapt to their feet again . . . . I hovered five inches above my uncomfortable chair in New Lecture Hall, stunned by the beauty of poem and reading. Although I was later to meet him under different guises, I remember the first Dylan Thomas I saw: a small and disheveled figure bodying forth great poetry in great performance, an act of homage to poetry, an act of love for magnificent words . . . . the voice was partly Thomas's performance and partly the poetry's structure of rhythms and assonance, which inhere and will endure.[11]

Many another listener was to testify similarly to the transfiguring effect of Thomas's readings.

One of those to attend a Thomas reading in New York City was the young Allen Ginsberg. Immediately following the event, he recorded the aftermath in his *Journals*. It was "Late April 1952," and Allen Ginsberg was "in San Remo[12] sitting relaxed toward closing time" when "Dylan Thomas and someone else with a big bruise on right forehead" walked in. Ginsberg—yet to become the leading poet of the Beat Generation with the publication of *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956—is asked whether he knows "who this is" by Thomas's companion. "Of course man it is obvious," answers the young poet. Thomas, who boasts that "I have the shortest legs in the world, my belly hangs down to my groin," is looking for an obliging girl. But Ginsberg persuades him to end his evening's drinking in his attic. At this point, Thomas's companion reminds him that "Caitlin is waiting," and Ginsberg recalls in his journals that

> Finally Thomas decided to go, and I closed a cab door on them, ran to other side & stuck my tongue in window at him which I immediately regretted tho I meant it as a friendly gesture. He stared out at me drunkenly without response . . . .
>
> Ah, Dylan Thomas, I would have liked to know you that night, wish I could have communicated who I was, my true feeling, and its importance to you. For I too am a lover of the soul.
>
> How disappointing to come away empty-handed with no recognition from this Chance meeting—I fell sick and unhappy because I could not make a great sweet union of the moment of life—now this is 45 minutes after, it will pass but it is sad & true.[13]

Over forty years later, Ginsberg was invited to read his poetry at a festival in Thomas's hometown of Swansea. While there, he insisted on being driven to Laugharne. Having arrived in the early evening, he embarrassed and alarmed his companion by sinking to his knees by Thomas's simple grave in the village churchyard and chanting the *Kaddish*, the Jewish elegy for the dead. It was moving, disconcerting testimony to Thomas's significance for Ginsberg, who in the fifties had helped draw his poetry and his performances to the attention of his fellow Beats in California at exactly the time when, as we shall see, Ginsberg was beginning to come under the influence of Whitman.

At least equally important, however, in effecting that vital connection between the Welshman and nineteenth-century American was Kenneth Rexroth, an avowed enthusiast for Whitman and Thomas. By the early fifties, Rexroth was already a very well-accredited American radical both in politics and poetics. Thereafter, he became routinely labeled—much to his chagrin—the "father of the Beats." Some eight years older than Thomas, he was already well-known as a poet in America long before the former exploded on the scene. He'd had a colorful early career that included backpacking across the country several times and spending two months in a Hudson Valley monastery. During the 1930s, he became a leading figure of the left—he claimed his parents had been associated with Eugene Debs—participating in the Communist Party's John Reed Clubs, organizations supporting working-class writers and artists.

His passion for Whitman developed early, lasted long, and powerfully impacted his beliefs, his poetry, and his life. In her essay "Re-Discovering Community: Rexroth and the Whitman Tradition,"[14] Linda Hamalian described Rexroth as a "wanderer-speaker," who "found the wellspring of his own authentic idiom, that direct presence of speaking that Whitman demanded of his own poetry." Although his roots lay in Indiana, Rexroth settled in San Francisco in the late 1920s and thereafter identified strongly with the wild country of California, embracing it with fervor. During the Second World War, an assortment of "alternative" figures, poets, and political activists gravitated to Rexroth's home, many imbued with the same pacifist-anarchist values as Rexroth himself. But while Hamalian mentions Rexroth's importance for an emergent generation of post-war American poets—Ginsberg, Snyder, Ferlinghetti, Diane DiPrima, Whalen, and Kaufman—nowhere does she mention Dylan Thomas, whom Rexroth had recognized as a poetic brother in the early 1950s.

Rexroth wrote a brief, pithy, brilliant essay on *Leaves of Grass* that deserves to be much better known.[15] For him, Whitman had provided the supreme answer, in his poetry, to "a predatory society" such as the twentieth century had become.

And he had done so by advancing a unique vision of "the American Dream as an apocalypse, an eschatological event which would give the life of man its ultimate significance." In the process, he had exposed and exploded "all the frauds that pass for the American Way of Life. It is the last and greatest vision of the American potential." At the center of that vision was "a community of men related by organic satisfactions, in work, love, play, the family, comradeship—a social order whose essence is the liberation and universalization of selfhood." Work, in his poems, was not conventional labor since, for him, workers were "participants in a universal creative effort in which each discovers his ultimate individuation." And Rexroth ended his piece by explicitly praising Whitman's artistry, his practice of poetics that has influenced all the cadenced verse that has come after it.

Rexroth's essay identifies, with uncanny prescience, some of the key features of Whitman's poetry that were duly noted and praised by the generation of young, left-wing academic scholars (myself included) that emerged from the 1980s onwards. It equally clearly lays bare the social vision underlying the poetry of the Beats, who were, in many ways, Rexroth's heirs and admirers of Whitman on the same terms as himself. The essay also makes clear that Rexroth's admiration for Thomas sprang from the very same source as his admiration for Whitman. For him, Thomas was a poet whose social values rhymed exactly with those of Whitman.

After Thomas's death, Rexroth wrote "Thou Shalt not Kill," a memorial that became one of the American's best-known performance pieces. A long work, it treats Thomas's death as emblematizing the death of all artists martyred at the hands of a murderous capitalist order that had demonstrated its true, ruthless nature by exploding the hydrogen bomb over Hiroshima. It accuses capitalism of "vaticide"—that is of slaying the vates, the bardic seer, and sayer—and it ends apocalyptically:

> The underground men are not singing
> On their way to work.
> There is a smell of blood
> In the smell of the turf smoke.
> They have struck him down,
> The son of David ap Gwilym.
> They have murdered him,
> The Baby of Taliesin.
> There he lies dead,
> By the Iceberg of the United Nations.
> There he lies sandbagged,

At the foot of the Statue of Liberty.
The Gulf Stream smells of blood
As it breaks on the sand of Iona
And the blue rocks of Carnavon.
And all the birds of the deep sea rise up
Over the luxury liners and scream,
"You killed him! You killed him,
In your God damned Brooks Brothers suit,
You son of a bitch."[16]

Rexroth viewed Thomas, partly courtesy of his Welshness, as an outsider to the Anglo-American Establishment like himself and like Whitman, of whom he was a devoted disciple. This becomes clear if one recalls his verse report on his fleeting experience of the London poetry scene in the early 1950s, "The Dragon and the Unicorn." It includes the following passage:

Intellectual parties,
Orgies of foolish snobbery,
Bad manners, and illiteracy.
The Irish are not considered
Human, the Scotch and Welsh subject
To worse chauvinism than
Can be found in the Deep South.
Everywhere, here, covetousness
And envy of money-grubbing
Americans.[17]

From his early days in Chicago, Rexroth had reveled in the company of oddballs and crazy marginals: "Anarchists-Single-Taxers, British-Israelites, self-anointed archbishops of the American Catholic Church, Druids, Anthroposophists . . . Socialists, communists . . . Schopenhauerians, Nietzscheans." He also loved to go to jazz clubs to listen to Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke. When he settled on the West Coast, in the Bay Area of San Francisco, he reveled in the freedom of mountains and ocean. He also established groups to discuss politics and read poetry. By the 1950s, these informal gatherings had spawned a new kind of performance poetry, and it was at one such event that Allen Ginsberg heard Rexroth read poems to musical accompaniment, poems that included the elegy to Dylan Thomas.

There is also another point of connection between Rexroth, Thomas, and Whitman. As Hamalian shrewdly notes, "What cannot be overemphasized is that during the thirties, forties, and fifties, the kind of poetry that Rexroth was

writing ran against the grain of literary critics who believed that poetry had to be written in an impersonal voice, in language of preconceived and historical order." Rexroth instinctively recognized in Thomas's readings a speaking out of the self, albeit in the heavily mediated form of his poetry. In this, he heard an echo of Whitman's song of himself. Thomas made a similar impression on other listeners, who were roused by the impression the poems gave of emanating from the core of a self that, like that of Whitman, was untamed and untamable and accordingly condemned to the suffering solitariness of perpetual, radical alienation. By such means did the "Whitmanian" Thomas inadvertently prepare the way for the emergence of the Confessionals as well as the Beats. However, by 1955, Lowell, an earlier qualified admirer of Thomas, was already hastily placing a distance between himself and the disreputable Welshman.

Bob Kaufman, a fellow traveler of the Beats, may commonly be labeled a Whitmanian poet, but he is also a revealing example of Thomas's unexpected appeal to African Americans, a subject that has been brilliantly explored in an essay by Daniel G. Williams who traces that appeal back to a perceived "primitivism" in Thomas to which several of Thomas's White American listeners—conditioned by their inter-war interest in the supposedly "primitive" art of the Jazz to which they had become familiar through their experience of Harlem—bore witness.[18] In turn, African American poets like Kaufman professed to find a link between Thomas's poetry and the performances of "Bird" (Charlie Parker), the virtuosic Black jazz saxophonist. It was linked to what those same listeners deemed to be the "Druidic" character of Thomas's verse and its supposed "Celticism"—a concept that derived from Matthew Arnold's influential, and racist, lecture on that subject.[19] And from the very beginning, of course, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* had been dismissed as the work of a "primitive," totally unversed in the arts of true poetry. In turn, Whitman had shrewdly presented himself, on occasion, as precisely such a figure.

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Whitman had also presented himself as a poet of the body and all its "processes," polite and otherwise, and had emphasized that these were the processes that generated and maintained the world at large so that the body offered a microcosm. This belief was also a prominent feature of Thomas's writing; and at this juncture, it may be useful to digress and to call to mind that Thomas was the grandson of a remarkable nineteenth-century minister for whom he had in part

been named. "Marlais," his middle name, was a tribute to Gwilym Marles, a radical social activist and despised Unitarian in a west Wales solidly dominated by an iron Calvinistic Methodism. This alone would have marked him out as a reviled "outsider" after Thomas's own heart, but Gwilym Marles was yet a more controversial figure than that because he was a dissident amongst dissenters, a Unitarian of a shockingly independent turn of mind. In short, he was a follower of some of the leading figures of American Transcendentalism—the Transcendentalism out of which Whitman's own cosmic vision had sprung, albeit in a startlingly "aberrant" form, although Emerson, very much to his credit, gamely acknowledged the relationship.[20]

As for Thomas, there are obvious affinities between some of his best-known poems, such as "And Death Shall Have No Dominion," and passages such as the following by Theodore Parker from an essay that was published in Emerson's *Dial*. It had appealed deeply to his uncle:

> Nature ever grows, and changes, and becomes something new, as God's all pervading energy flows into it without ceasing. Hence in nature there is constant change, but no ultimate death. The quantity of life is never diminished. The leaves fall, but they furnish food for new leaves yet to appear, whose swelling germs crowd off the old foliage . . . . Since God is essentially and vitally present in each atom of space, there can be no such thing as sheer and absolute extinction of being.[21]

Exhaustive scholarship has long since demonstrated the very evident continuities between this Transcendentalist vision and Whitman's poetry.

The American poet who was most excited by the Whitmanian aspects of Thomas's "process" poems, however, was Theodore Roethke, who was also the American poet Thomas himself most admired and with whom he felt a strong affinity. Theodore Roethke, whom Thomas came to know intimately and whose biomorphic vision of the evolution of the human self so uncannily resembled his own, had by 1950 already moved away from his formalist beginnings and begun to anticipate confessional practice, announcing "himself as the material of his art" and producing a poetry that searched "for some dynamic correspondence between the human and vegetable worlds." No wonder Thomas could write to Roethke about the latter's new collection: "I'd like to hear you read them, and to go through them very carefully with you. Perhaps we can learn a little from each other, and anyway it will be enjoyable if we learn and know nothing and only blunder loud about" (*CL*, 895). Brinnin recalls that, on his very first encounter with Thomas, when he had just landed in New York for his inaugural tour, "the first American writer he asked about was Theodore Roethke" (*DTA*, 5).

It was at Thomas's own request that Roethke reviewed *In Country Sleep and Other Poems* for *Poetry* in December 1952. As the flamboyant title, "One Ring-tailed Roarer to Another," would lead us to expect, not only is it an extravagant verbal bagatelle, it is also an ingenious act of acculturation—of the American appropriation of Thomas. This is signaled in the title itself, which is a slang American expression deriving from Southern folk humor, for a larger-than-life character: a loud, swaggering braggart, a ready roisterer and brawler.[22] And in keeping with this, the whole piece is a colorful exercise in verbal brawling, designed to imagine Thomas as an untamed character after Roethke's own heart:

> Has the ring-tailed roarer begun to snore? The limp spirit of a Peruvian prince taken over his wild psyche? Has he shoved down the throttle only to find a ramshackle model of patch-work fancies fluttering to a short cough? What time's the train of his spirit due? To what wonders are we now exposed?

At once approximating to Southern tall-tale convention and roughly imitating Thomas's writings at their most wildly surreal, Roethke seems to demonstrate that he and the Welshman are kindred spirits, free rebel spirits both, walking on the wild side of language and convention, crazy boyos, "one of the roughs," ever-ready for a verbal punch-up. Roethke devotes a whole paragraph to the ancient art of "flyting," excoriating "those loathly wearers of other men's clothing . . . hyenas of sensibility . . . anglo-saxon apostles of refinement."

Roethke was alive to the importance for him of Whitman's writing. In "Some Remarks on Rhythm," he analyzed his own lovely poem, "Elegy for Jane," and in the process, highlighted two features of Whitman to which he was indebted: "For one thing, the enumeration, the favorite device of the more irregular poem. We see it again and again in Whitman and Lawrence." And then there was the freedom to lengthen or shorten lines according to the promptings of breath and emotion. "Think of what we'd have missed in Lawrence, in Whitman, in Charlotte Mew, or, more lately, in Robert Lowell, if we denied this kind of poem."[23] Whitman's gift for "enumeration" was clearly of considerable personal importance to Roethke. Judging by the following invocation from "The Abyss," he valued Whitman for his ability to reduce the threateningly manifold nature of the world to order by such a device: "Be with me, Whitman, maker of catalogues: / For the world invades me again, / And once more the tongues begin babbling. / And the terrible hunger for objects quails me: / The sill trembles."[24]

Roethke was always sympathetic to Thomas's situation as an undomesticated Welsh outsider out to shock middle-class English establishment

culture: "a home-made halo he has in a sour country where at least they love a bard. *And* sing" (*LP*, 212). Many other American poets were adopting this approach when dealing with the Welshman. Their construction of him as a "primitive" was another facet of the Whitmanian aspect of his influence. Roethke's invocation of him as a "ring-tailed roarer"—wide of the mark though he came after Thomas's death to understand it had been—meant that he was a "type" familiar to American culture: a singer who sounded his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the post-war American world. Also like Whitman, his poetry seemed to be a song of himself, one who appeared to lay himself excruciatingly and vulnerably bare before his readers and listeners—and to do so at great personal cost. "He was one of the great ones," Roethke wrote in a posthumous notice, "there can be no doubt of that. And he drank his own blood, ate of his own marrow, to get at some of the material" (*LP*, 52). Like Whitman, Thomas was destined to become a martyr-victim to a grossly materialist and exploitative America that had welcomed him only to destroy him—an image of Whitman, too, that Ginsberg was shortly to propagate in "A Supermarket in California."

It was this perception of the "Americanness" of Thomas that made Elizabeth Hardwick, in a notable posthumous essay, remark that "He was one of ours, in a way, and he came back here to die with a terrible and fabulous rightness. (Not ours, of course, in his talents, his work, his joys, but ours in his sufferings, his longings, his demands)." That "he was first-rate" she had no doubt, but she was most interested in examining the reasons why he was "literally *adored* in America." She concluded that "he was both a success and a failure in a way we find particularly appealing . . . a wild genius who needed caring for . . . he was a pattern we can recognize all too easily—the charming young man of great gifts, wilfully going down to ruin. He was Hart Crane, Poe, F. Scott Fitzgerald . . . and also, unexpectedly, something of a great actor . . . in a time when the literary style runs to the scholarly and the clerical." Hardwick also recognized the important contribution made by Brinnin's notorious, "outlandishly successful" book to the posthumous clinching of this American image of a suffering Thomas. And she ended her brief study with the remark that Thomas's meteoric American passage had brilliantly illuminated and briefly relieved "the sober and dreary fact of the decline of our literary life, its thinness and fatigue. From this Thomas was, to many, a brief reprieve." The ensuing "Whitmanian turn" in that literary life was also partly a reaction against that "thinness and fatigue."[25]

The description of Thomas as a "great actor" reminds us of another obvious

link between him and Whitman. Both were fascinated by the arts of oral performance and had grown up in cultures that admired oral skills. Whitman lived in the age of the great Lyceum lectures, of powerful preaching, and, of course, of the renowned Shakespearean actors on the Broadway stage. Thomas was born shortly before Lloyd George, a spellbinding orator, became Prime Minister of an Imperial Britain, and he could recall the memorable histrionic performances of the giants of the nineteenth-century Nonconformist pulpit. He had attended elocution classes when young and learned his acting skills on the stage of the Swansea Little Theatre. Whitman loved to declaim Shakespeare aloud atop a Broadway stage, and he strove to ensure his great poetry would approximate to oral performance. Thomas lived on into the era when the famed skills of the Welsh pulpit were finding new expression in a secular setting through the appearance of several generations of talented Welsh actors and actresses, such as Richard Burton, Sian Phillips, Anthony Hopkins, and Michael Sheen. And, as I have argued elsewhere, Thomas may be regarded as one who consciously set out to wrest control of the word in Wales from the preachers so as to be free to exercise as he wished in his writings—a transfer of power paralleled by Whitman when he produced his own distinctive, maverick version of his period's oral performances in his poetry. In Thomas's case, the process is clearly enacted in the short story "The Peaches" and in "After the Funeral," the elegy for Ann Jones in which he consciously dons the mantle of the preacher to preach his own obsequy, in the process usurping the role of the preacher at the traditional burial service (*ISP*, 229-230).

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"I'm giving a reading on the BBC 3rd Programme of Roethke this week," Dylan Thomas wrote to Oscar Williams on October 8, 1952, and added, "Oh, yes, and I'm introducing & arranging a half hour of Spoon River, and also a Personal Anthology—the B.B.C. has been running a feature called this for over six months now—devoted to Masters, Lindsay, Robinson & Sandburg, a fine old four for a programme and a boozeup" (*CL*, 841). It is evidence that he was fully aware of the form that a socially committed "Whitman tradition" had taken during the America of the inter-war years. (The Whitman of Hart Crane's "The Bridge" could be seen as a rogue variant.) His own readings in the States were to coincide with, and even perhaps to help enable, the beginnings of a new "Whitmanian turn," very different indeed from the old, in the poetic culture of

post-war America.

The reasons for that turn were admittedly many and complex, and quite as much social, political, and economic as poetic. Thomas had arrived in America at the beginning of what Lowell was to term "the tranquilized fifties," the Eisenhower era of what one critic has described as "the bland leading the bland." Out of the traumas first of the Depression thirties and then of involvement in a World War, Americans had emerged into a period of supreme military dominance, political quietism, and consumer craving. It was perhaps the golden age of bourgeois America, although shadowed by the specter of communism and the threat of the bomb. This was the cultural context that produced a backlash in the form of James Dean, Marlon Brando, Elvis Presley, the dissenting culture of the Beats, the lacerating self-exposures of the Confessionals, and the ominous psychic landscapes of the Deep Image school. The early stages of the turn to Whitman were another example of the reaction against this perceived social and cultural stagnation. Although Thomas did not survive to see the emergence of this anti-bourgeois counterculture, he actually lived through its beginnings and helped develop the conditions necessary for its full development. And he was able inadvertently to do so because he already naturally spoke the language of this new generation—a vulgarized Freudian discourse, the anarchist vocabulary of the soft Left, the vatic utterance of visionary sexual politics.

Brinnin is shrewd on Thomas's relationship to the politics of the Left in this period:

> Dylan's political naïveté, it seemed to me, was a consequence of his promiscuous affection for humanity and of his need for emotional identification with the lowest stratum of society. His socialism was basically Tolstoyan, the attempt of the spiritual aristocrat to hold in one embrace the good heart of mankind, a gesture and a purpose uncontaminated by the *realpolitik* of the twentieth century. While he expressed himself strongly on political matters and tended indiscriminately to support the far left, his attitude was a kind of stance unsupported by knowledge, almost in defiance of knowledge. As long as, anywhere in the world, there existed groups of men pilloried by the forces of propertied power, Dylan wanted to be counted among their sympathizers. (*DTA*, 26)

It is a passage worth dwelling on, because for "Tolstoyan" (Christian anarchist), Brinnin might as appropriately have written "Whitmanian," since Whitman, like Thomas, was instinctively an anarchist, in the strict political definition of that term; a radical libertarian who believed in spontaneous communitarianism. The thrust of Brinnin's comments helps us understand how and why Thomas came to appeal to the Beats and even to prepare the way, so to speak, to Woodstock.

As David Boucher has noted, "The Beat Generation was nascent at the time of Thomas's death."[26] The response of the Beats to Thomas (which in many cases was ambivalent) has been covered extensively and excellently elsewhere, as has the fascinating record of his attractiveness for Black American poets, such as Al Young and Bob Kaufman—Amiri Baraka is a dissenting case.[27] He began, when still LeRoi Jones, by viewing Thomas as a liberating Bohemian presence on the American scene, writing a letter in 1958 to the editor of *Partisan Review* regretting that "Poor Dylan Thomas carried the ball all by himself in England, and we know what happened when he eventually he did get to America."[28] When eventually he became Amiri Baraka, he could see him only as a representative of the White "European" cultural ascendancy. And several Black writers regarded Thomas as a kind of poetic equivalent of Charlie ("Bird") Parker.[29] The Beats, too, saw an affinity between Thomas and jazz.

The debt of the Beats to Whitman has already been extensively considered in Whitman scholarship. Writing to Ginsberg about *Kaddish* on April 10, 1959, Lowell praises it as "really melodious, nostalgic, moving, liturgical," before cautiously adding, "probably there's too much Whitman."[30] Ginsberg had been excited by "Song of Myself" when his high school English teacher had read a passage of it aloud to her class. He was hooked for life. After Ginsberg had read excerpts from the typescript of *Howl* at the 6 Gallery in late 1954, Lawrence Ferlinghetti sent him a letter paraphrasing Emerson's acclamation of Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career. When do I get the manuscript?" And *Howl* contained several tributes to Whitman, including the celebrated "A Supermarket in California"—an early example of Ginsberg's long struggle to apprehend his own sexual orientation by taking Whitman as his model.

In a later conversation with Gregory Corso, following a trip to Russia, where homosexuality was illegal, Ginsberg interestingly explained his sensitive and nuanced understanding of how Whitman had broached his homosexuality in his poetry. In response to Corso's query, "how did the Russians take to [*Leaves of Grass*]," Ginsberg patiently explained that even in the States, Whitman's gayness was still, as late as 1978, never fully acknowledged. He then proceeded to talk sympathetically about how Whitman had disguised his desires by generalizing it "into comradeship, adhesiveness, empathy, sympathy, universal compassion," and concluded by emphasizing that, nevertheless, it would not do to describe Whitman's poetic strategies as a coverup for his homosexuality, because his was a case far more complex than that. Ginsberg ended by emphasizing that Whitman had no "secret poems."

As for Corso, he, too, took his cue from Whitman, as is evident in his elegy for Jack Kerouac, "Elegiac Feelings American," where he explicitly makes the connection between Kerouac and Whitman:

> How a Whitman we were always wanting, a hoping, an
> America, that America ever an America to be,
> never an America to sing about or to, but ever an
> America to sing hopefully for.[31]

The Whitmanian Corso was taken aback when, during the course of a conversation, Ginsberg responded to Corso's reading of his poem "Hair" by remarking that "it's more like Dylan Thomas than you would think . . . think of all the mad images in that, that's like Dylan Thomas—'I see the angels washing their oceans of hair' is something that Thomas would have smiled at." Corso is forced wryly to agree.[32]

Of the Beats, it was Ferlinghetti who was most alive to Thomas's influence on the milieu out of which they emerged and most appreciative of his achievements. During a visit to San Francisco, Thomas had given readings to packed houses in the Bay area as well as on the influential KPFA radio station, and those readings made an indelible mark on Ferlinghetti's consciousness: "His voice," he recalled years later, "had a singular beauty and richness, in the great Welsh oral tradition; and the excitement he generated was an early inspiration for a tradition of oral poetry here, the subsequent San Francisco poetry movement being consistently centered on the performance of poetry in public." By 1957, Ferlinghetti and Rexroth were to begin performing poetry to jazz accompaniment at the cellar (576) Green Street, and these events were a focus of attention for the Beats as much as the City Lights Bookstore (which had opened in 1953).[33]

Ferlinghetti made his poetic obeisance to Whitman in "Poem for Old Walt," which opens by noticing "SKY OVER PATCHOGUE DENSE & GREY / AS WHITMAN'S BEARD / FLIGHTS OF GREY GEESE NESTED IN IT," and goes on to imagine the "hulk" Whitman's body "HOVE-TO / OFF OLD MANNAHATTA- / POETS STILL / SWIM OFF IT / THEIR FAR CRIES FAILING / LIKE LOST SAILORS IN A BURNING / TURNER SHIPWRECK"—implicitly representing Whitman as a patron saint of American poets destroyed by the inimical realities of their country. For Ferlinghetti, the poets of the US were condemned to live in a mechanized society, when human speech had been "affected by the absolute staccato of machines. And city poetry certainly echoed it. Whitman was a holdover, singing the song of himself." (Geddes, 326)

The quality of song in Thomas's poetry was probably what attracted Ferlinghetti to it. In due course, following a visit to Wales, he wrote his "Belated Palinode for Dylan Thomas," which opens by setting the scene before continuing in a loose style that allows him to incorporate familiar phrases and references from Thomas's poetry into his own verse:

> In Wales at Laugharne at last I stand beside
> his cliff-perched writing shed
> above the coursing waters
> where the hawk hangs still
> above the cockle-strewn shingle

Ferlinghetti looks out across "a bold green headland lost in the sun":

> Beyond which lie
> (across an ocean and a continent)
> San Francisco's white wood houses
> and a poet's sun-bleached cottage
> on Bolinas' far lagoon
> with its wind-torn Little Mesa
> (so very like St. Johns Hill)[34]

It is a moment of moving self-identification with Thomas and acknowledgment of his contribution to the culture of the Beats, a reverend act of poetic homage in the spirit of Ginsberg's gesture at Thomas's unassuming graveside in Laugharne.

If Ginsberg's gesture at Laugharne is one powerful image of Thomas's influence on post-war American poetry, then it finds its equally powerful counterpart in the presence of John Berryman at Thomas's bedside in St. Vincent's Hospital, New York, when he passed away on November 9, 1953. Berryman was at that time on the very threshold of the critical recognition that would begin to come his way with the publication of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* in 1956. He had first met Thomas when he was a student at Clare College, Cambridge, in the mid-thirties and had reviewed him for the *Kenyon Review* in 1940. But like Lowell and so many others, Berryman had come a long way from the formalist poetry of his early period, and it was a different Berryman who, particularly with the publication of 77 *Dream Songs* (1964), was to perfect a new genre of

Freudian lyric, who kept vigil by the dying Thomas's bedside. It is an appropriate emblem of Thomas's notable importance for a new, emerging generation of post-war American poets.

Berryman's debt to Whitman in the *Dream Songs* has been well canvassed. James E. Miller suggested that Berryman was working in the new tradition of the personal epic, the founder of which had been Whitman. As for Berryman himself, he stated in 1957 that "the greatest poem so far written by an American" was "Song of Myself." He followed this up in 1976 with a personally revealing essay on Whitman entitled "Song of Myself: Intention and Substance." There, he emphasized that Whitman had been the first to shatter the concept of a unitary "I" by demonstrating that the poet was "a mere channel, like a valve which admits various experiences." Whitman, he claimed, had been the first to conceive of the "I" as an "ambiguous pronoun"—an insight Berryman had by then already exploited for his own poetic purposes in his *Dream Songs*. (*MS*, 152-57)

What has been insufficiently noticed, however, is that Berryman had much earlier detected a similar fracturing of the "I" in the work of his friend Dylan Thomas. Forty years after Thomas's death, researchers found an unpublished memoir of Berryman's friendship with Thomas that was written in 1959.[35] This includes the usual colorful stories, such as the anecdote about the occasion Thomas got Berryman drunk in an attempt—vain, as it turned out—to prevent him from making a rendezvous with his hero, the great W. B. Yeats. Even then, "I was perfectly clear already that he was the most important of my generation to come into view on either side of the Atlantic."

It is, however, by characterizing the impression Thomas made on him as a remarkable reader of poetry that Berryman most clearly indicates Thomas's contribution to his own development. "At this time Dylan Thomas was very thin and small," writes Berryman. "His face gave the impression of being covered with knobs; he looked rather like a bug-eyed pixie; he was one of the most delicious clowns I have ever come on." Thomas the clown—Roethke likewise recalls his devotion to the films of Chaplin and of the Marx Brothers—was well calculated to appeal to the future poet of *Dream Songs*. That is the first of Berryman's significant comments. The second quickly follows: "His reading then was less mannered, less virtuoso-like, and adapted itself better to whatever the poem was . . . . Later, wonderful as his voice remained, he often used it as a machine into which he fed poems of every sort that came out then all much alike."

Two points, then: Thomas's gifts as a clown, and his gifts as a reader not of poetry but of poetries—the young Thomas seemed to have not merely a single, sonorous, organ voice, but a dramatic range of different voices at his disposal. He

was precociously polyvocal. Those are the points to remember when one turns to Berryman's acknowledged masterpiece. Itself a "play for voices," except that the voices were all internal to Berryman himself, *Dream Songs* are one of the greatest achievements in post-war American poetry. Collectively, they constitute a vaudeville theatre of Berryman's psyche. The starring role, so to speak, is given to Henry, an imaginary character representing the unruly impulses of the id—since the anonymous scriptwriter of this vaudeville is, in effect, Freud, and the whole endless program of chaotic, tumultuous "acts" is based on Berryman's experiences.

Berryman underlined the closeness he felt to Thomas, as well as to Whitman, when he wrote "In Memoriam," an elegy for Thomas that Berryman wrote when he was "in his mid-fifties and hospitalized at least once a year from drink and depression" and starting "to understand that he may be veering towards the same sad end as Thomas."[36] Berryman ruefully remarked that, on meeting Thomas, he immediately noticed that "his talent for ordinary life was even less than mine." And he was never so besotted that he failed to protect himself from Thomas's dangerously radioactive presence. He made it clear that the more practiced the Welshman became at public readings, the more inauthentic they became, as "the voice" took over. He also distinguished between the early Thomas, whose "work was accomplished, even prodigious, but . . . overdone and a little inhuman," and the post-war work. And he particularly admired "Fern Hill" and "A Refusal to Mourn"—one of the poems that made a profound impression on a substantial number of American poets. Touchingly, he recalled how he and Thomas had enthused together about the unfulfilled promise of the young Welsh poet Alun Lewis, who had tragically died in wartime Burma by his own hand.

Whitman and Thomas became twinned in the minds of several American poets because they were both outcasts who instinctively sympathized with other outcasts and social rejects. Both poets were prized for their energizing presence in a moribund society. In "I Sing the Body Electric," Philip Levine plays the vibrancy of Whitman's affirmations off against the numbness, physical and mental torpor of the residents of Wallace Stevens's Hartford, Connecticut, in the biting cold of a glum Sunday in March. He feels that he lives in a country and in an age where "poems are dying." In a twenty-minute radio interview with BBC Wales's Caroline Hitt—recorded to mark the centenary of Thomas's birth—Levine spoke at length about his love for Thomas's poetry, which he had first encountered in

Oscar Williams as a freshman at what became Wayne State University. He had found it refreshing for its exuberant vitality, after slogging in class through the "gloom and doom" of Eliot's poetry. A few years later, he heard him read and was startled both by how different he had then become from his youthful self—in the flesh, he proved to be "Rumpled, stubby, red-faced"—and by his electrifying performance. Thomas had, he still remembered, read not only his own poetry but Crowe Ransom's "Captain Carpenter," and pieces by Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, and Theodore Roethke, whom he had strongly recommended. Levine and a group of other excited students had then met Thomas at the front door of the member of staff who was entertaining him, and still vividly recalled how delighted they all had been when Thomas boomingly announced that "he had come to meet the students." Adding "Fuck the Faculty."[37]

Levine stressed what a rock star of poetry Thomas had been—the only previous example of anyone vaguely similar had been Edna St. Vincent Millay, striking in appearance but a bad poet and terrible reader. What a contrast, Levine archly added, Thomas was to the "dowager" Marianne Moore and to William Carlos Williams, who always seemed to be humbly embarrassed at being there. Levine had, he explained, later come to see Thomas as belonging to the vatic tradition of Blake and Whitman and had also come to believe that, as a reader, he had been somewhat of a ham. But he still loved some of the poems and still remembered how different his subjects (meadows, birds, and pastoral landscapes) had been from those of the survivors of the 1930s, who were still addressing the social and political issues of the Depression years in their poetry. Of his poems, he particularly liked "In Memory of Ann Jones," "The Hunchback in the Park," "Poem in October" and—above all others—"A Refusal to Mourn," which was the greatest of war poems. For Levine, Thomas remained a remarkable one-off, and one whose poetry always seemed to sing.

Levine's close friend Galway Kinnell was another who confessed to an early interest in Thomas in a *New Yorker* interview. Recalling his awakening to poetry as a young man, he explained that "I read a lot of poetry. I really set out to read all poetry, from the beginning to now, and some of it I loved and some of it I disliked, and some of it sort of stirred me to write something myself. I would say Dylan Thomas was one of those."[38] In that way, Thomas helped set Kinnell on the road that led to a lifelong admiration for Whitman, about whom he eventually wrote an interesting essay. "No one before him had thrust his presence and actual voice so boldly onto the written page," Kinnell wrote: "This voice, so unmistakably personal, is also universal: while it is outgoing and attaches itself to the things and creatures of this world, it speaks at the same time of a life within"

(*MS*, 216). This is, for Kinnell, by far the most compelling and consequential feature of Whitman's writing, and so he dwells on it at illuminating length:

> . . . as far as I know only Whitman has written on this primary subject, the original music of the human voice, how it rescues words and makes them fresh . . . . And since the reader's throat and mouth must form the words, the words enter the reader's very flesh. Poetry goes not merely from mind to mind, but from the whole being to the whole being. Whitman understood this. (*MS*, 217)

It is at this seminal point in his discussion that the example of Dylan Thomas comes to Kinnell's mind as relevant to Whitman's case. "Given the great public voices of Theodore Roethke and Dylan Thomas," he writes, "it is true that Whitman's specific prescriptions occasionally appear to be in error," but he then insists that "Whitman was the first to grasp the basic truth, that the music of the voice releases the word's secret life, just as being loved makes plain people brighten." (*MS*, 217-218) In context, therefore, these remarks also reflect upon the music of Dylan Thomas's voice.

Another poet of Kinnell's generation who admitted to an admiration both for Thomas and Whitman was Robert Bly, who achieved celebrity in the 1990s thanks to publishing a book, *Iron John*, that became the sacred text, the veritable testament, of the men's movement. It was the counterweight to the new wave of feminism that had emerged during the early seventies. One of Bly's reasons for a qualified admiration of Whitman was his lack of "care for male masters," and parallel with this, he embarked on a poetic search for his own "chosen fathers," or poetic teachers. The most important came from Russia, but among the others Bly included was Dylan Thomas.

During the course of an essay devoted to Whitman's limitations, Bly insisted that "I am a student of Whitman's and I think he is a genius several times over." (*MS*, 333) He valued, for example, his "emphasis," like that of Thomas, on an audience. (*MS*, 322) And, necessitating a deep indrawing of breath, Whitman's "public" poetry reveals language to be at root not the obedient tool of the rational, functional intelligence but the secret agent of our primal, pre-conscious, sensuous being: it beats to the pulse of our body and moves to the tidal rhythms of our blood, the "systole and diastole" of the heart hymned by Whitman, and it also reproduces, as does his poetry, "the promiscuous urge of the world." Bly recognized this, too, as being a signature of Thomas's poetry and highlighted through the relationship he forged through his readings with his audience. Bly expresses this in his poem "The Gaiety of Form," addressed to his chosen father, Dylan Thomas:

> How sweet to weight the line with all these vowels!
> Body, Thomas, the codfish's psalm. The gaiety
> Of form lies in the labor of its playfulness.
> The chosen vowel reappears like the evening star
> There, in the solemn return the astronomers love.
> When 'ahm' returns three times, then it becomes
> A noise; then the whole stanza turns to music.
> It comforts us, says: 'I am here, be calm.'[39]

"Whitman's influence has been very strong on my generation" (*MS*, 321), Bly wrote at the beginning of his essay, and he proceeded to give three examples: Kinnell, Ginsberg, and Louis Simpson. Simpson was born and raised in Jamaica and throughout his life, he felt himself to be an outsider to the States, where he had moved when only 17 years old. He went on to serve distinction in the Pacific Theatre during World War Two. His most famous poem—and also perhaps his finest—is "Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain," which includes memorable lines of sad commentary on the state of the USA:

> 'Where are you, Walt?
> The Open Road goes to the used-car lot.
>
> 'Where is the nation you promised?
> These houses built of wood sustain
> Colossal snows,
> And the light above the street is sick to death.
>
> 'As for the people—see how they neglect you!
> Only a poet pauses to read the inscription.' (*MS*, 255)

Simpson the outsider understandably didn't warm to Whitman when he was "whooping it up over the chest-expansion of the United States," as he put it sardonically (*MS*, 257). But he confessed he was exhilarated by the hospitable breadth and energy of his long lines. And he clearly sensed in Whitman something of an outsider like himself.

It was this aspect of Dylan Thomas, too, that drew Simpson strongly to him, and caused him to pay extensive attention to him, alongside Ginsberg, Plath, and Lowell, in a book-length study. He tellingly contrasted the Welshman with Auden:

> Auden's dislike of Thomas had complex roots. Auden was an Englishman of the professional middle class, Anglican in religion, educated at public schools and Oxford or Cambridge. Thomas's people were Welsh dissenters, and anyone who does not know the suspicion with

which most Englishmen regard the Welsh, the Scots,[40] and the Irish, knows little of England. Celts are dreamers—they even believe in magic. They are music hall turns, entertaining there perhaps, but nowhere else. Moreover, not only was Thomas a Welshman, he came of a lower class—his father had raised himself by his bootstraps. Finally he was in bad taste: he cadged money, he drank too much, his behavior was a disgrace.[41]

Auden's style of writing was likewise the very opposite of that of Thomas. He was rational, while the Welshman was "demonic." Auden aimed at disenchantment, Thomas at enchantment.

"Whitman's return to American poetry, if we can set a date," wrote Galway Kinnell, "did not come until 1956, one hundred years after the appearance of *Leaves of Grass*, with the publication of Ginsberg's *Howl*." In early 1956, Ginsberg was reading proofs for his forthcoming landmark publication and was devouring Gay Wilson Allen's seminal biography of Whitman, *The Solitary Singer*, which had appeared the year before (*GJ*, 171). In that year, Ginsberg had reread *Leaves of Grass* from cover to cover, an experience he described as "a total turn-on" (*GJ*, 167). Also in 1955, James E. Miller, Jr., who would go on to become a major Whitman scholar, published *A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass*. This, then, is clear evidence that at this inaugural moment of the post-war Whitman revival—there was a culturally germinating coincidence between the new academic interest and a new American poetry.

From then on, the paths of their respective development began to diverge, although they continued to cherish the image of Whitman as a great American visionary, a prophet, and a harbinger of a New Society. But just before the parting of ways, Miller—along with his academic colleague at the University of Nebraska, Bernice Slote, and the poet Karl Shapiro, who had known Thomas well—brought out in 1960 an important collection of essays under the title *Start With the Sun: Studies in Cosmic Poetry*.[42] It was dedicated to the enthusiastic study of what they termed the "Whitman tradition," a tradition they also termed "the New Paganism," contrasted by the "Eliot tradition," which they styled "The New Puritanism." The former was life-affirming and celebratory, in its delight in all the forces implicated in what Whitman had famously called "the promiscuous urge of the world," while the latter was lamentably negative and sterile. The key figures in the Whitman tradition, they asserted, were Whitman, Lawrence, Hart Crane, and Dylan Thomas, all of whom resembled Whitman in some way or

other in their poetics. But they emphasized that theirs was a study concerned not with "influences" but with "relationships, affinities, definitions." And they observed that "Crane, Thomas, Lorca, and Ginsberg all participate in the creation of a twentieth-century Walt Whitman who was relatively unknown in the nineteenth"—as, one might add, he was unknown in twentieth-century America (with the exception of Crane) until after the Second World War.

In his essay "James Dickey as a Southern Visionary," the distinguished Southern critic Monroe K. Spears described Dickey in terms that dovetail neatly with the discussion of twentieth-century heirs of "the Whitman tradition" in *Start with the Sun*.[43] Recalling Dickey's statement that his religious vision "involves myself and the universe and it does not admit of any kind of intermediary, such as Jesus and the Bible," Spears concludes that "Dickey belongs to the line of visionaries running from Blake through Rimbaud and Whitman to such modern exemplars as Hart Crane, George Barker, Dylan Thomas, and Theodore Roethke."

As a young man Dickey, a committed Southerner, was prone to mock and dismiss Whitman as a "bard of the North." But when addressing a 1977 Whitman conference in Camden, New Jersey, he completely changed his tune.[44] He'd first read Whitman, he claimed, in the gloom of the cockpit of a trainer fighter during the war and had suddenly realized that here was a poet he could relate to. Whitman had revealed to him, he added, that he needn't despair of being able to write like Tennyson; that he could draw upon his own experiences and rely on his own style to write a poem. "And so I have been doin' ever since," Dickey concluded, "I think he's my great father as a writer" (6). Dickey's account of encountering Whitman may well have been a stretcher—he was an adept practitioner of the Tall Tale tradition of the South—but there may have been at least a grain of truth that he'd found his way to writing partly through Whitman. Joyce Carol Oates once arrestingly described Dickey as "our dark Whitman" because he embraced the buoyant energies of American individualism, but in forms contaminated by the violence of the twentieth century.[45]

Spears linked Dickey as a visionary not only with Whitman but with Roethke and Thomas, and evidence for his deep admiration for both seems to me to be unequivocal. He remarked that he'd been profoundly influenced by Roethke's *The Lost Son* and thereafter had aimed for his "haunted perceptual clarity." And during the course of informal discussions held with students at the University of South Carolina (where he taught), Dickey took off for ten enraptured minutes describing his envy for Thomas's effortless and authentic originality of mind and expression. He marveled at lines in which there seemed a blend of surrealism and Freudianism, and both were combined with a song-like, rhythmic utterance

consistent with Thomas's South Wales accent. Such originality, he added, was inimitable, and so he'd been careful never to be influenced by Thomas. But he had learned from him. And Dickey ended with the typically hyperbolic claim that Thomas "was the most original and most unimitable" poet in English. He stated that the only two who could claim to be his equals were Donne and Hopkins, but in the end, Thomas was the most original of the three.[46]

Dickey, then, provides another example of how familiarity with Whitman could facilitate admiration for Thomas in the States. In his case, though, what seems to have happened is that such an admiration seems to have coexisted in his creative consciousness with an admiration for Thomas, without resulting in what he was ever comfortable calling "influence." His insistence on that is understandable enough. After all, what he had learned from both was that the color of his own saying was bound to be different from that of theirs. He had to sing of himself and not join any chorus of praise for theirs. For him, both had proved liberators and enablers who had set him free to make his own distinctive way in poetry.

Glyn Jones, that youthful friend and fellow spirit of Thomas's, defied the Swansea poet's mockery of Whitman by remaining a great admirer of the great American until the very end of his long life. And a poignant note is struck in a late notebook entry by Jones (1973): "Ah, Walt, why were you never a Welshman? What a Welshman you would have been."[47] It perfectly voices the affinity that some in Wales felt with Whitman, and in so doing, it unwittingly mirrors the response to Thomas in the States by readers and listeners who, consciously or not, intuited that the poetry of the Welshman was curiously and instructively related to that of their own "Walt," who had long been culturally occluded.

Many of the terms that Americans used to describe their experience of hearing Thomas read—the terms in which they effectively "reconstructed" him as an honorary American—were terms that also later came to be applied, explicitly or implicitly, to Whitman. He was bardic, vatic, Orphic, Druidic, prophetic; he was thrillingly, even scandalously, visceral, undomesticated, and feral; he was shockingly personal, uninhibited in his evocations of the processes of the body and devoted to celebrating "the promiscuous urge of the world"; and he sounded his Welsh yawp unashamedly over the roofs of the American world.

One of those who were aroused by that yawp was Alan Ginsberg, at that time an embryonically Whitmanian poet who always lamented the fact that academics at Columbia, when he had been an undergraduate there in the late 1950s, had no time at all for Whitman. Their attitude towards him had been snobbishly condescending and dismissive. By 1955, things were beginning to change both in academia and in the world of American poetry. Dylan Thomas happened to appear in the States at that very time, in time to be implicated in this change, as this essay has attempted to demonstrate. That he facilitated it seems to me fairly clear; although exactly how far he did so is much more difficult to establish. What is certain is that American listeners repeatedly marveled at his demonstrations that spoken poetry could be an electric power capable of transfiguring lives. Long after he had died, his unquiet ghost seemed to linger in the States, and to buddy up with the equally unquiet ghost of an old Walt who was stealthily preparing for his comeback. And who knows, perhaps it was those two unquiet ghosts that Ginsberg was attempting to lay to rest in 1995 when he sank to his knees at Dylan Thomas's graveside in Laugharne and began to chant the Kaddish.

Swansea University

Notes

1 John Malcolm Brinnin, *Dylan Thomas in America* (London: Dent, 1956), 93. Hereafter *DTA*.

2 Paul Ferris, ed., *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters* (London: Dent, 1985), 900. Hereafter *CL*.

3 For discussions of Whitman's possible influence on Thomas, see Stanley Friedman, "Whitman and Laugharne," *Anglo-Welsh Review* 18 (1969), 81; and Paul J. Ferlazzo, "Dylan Thomas and Walt Whitman: Birth, Death and Time," *Walt Whitman Review* 23 (1977), 136-141.

4 Dylan Thomas, *Letters to Vernon Watkins* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 89.

5 D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, ed. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151.

6 M. Wynn Thomas, *Transatlantic Connections: Whitman US, Whitman UK* (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2005), Chapter 9, 227-260. Hereafter *TC*.

7 Some important work has been done on this subject. See, for example, Victor Paananen,

"The Social Vision of Dylan Thomas," in *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Studies* 8 (2003), 46-66; and Vic Golightly, "'Writing with Dreams and Blood': Dylan Thomas, Marxism and 1930s Swansea," *Welsh Writing in English* 8 (2003), 67-91.

8 By this time, Robeson had become a *persona non grata* in the States because he was a self-confessed Communist and admirer of the Soviet Union, where he frequently travelled. The account of the FBI's hounding of Robeson is as disgraceful as it is harrowing. Having deprived him of his passport, they set out to break him mentally. But in South Wales, Robeson had been a hero to the mining communities since the 1930s. He was a staunch admirer and supporter of the International Socialism of the South Wales miners—he was eventually to sing to them, via the Transatlantic cable, in their annual Eisteddfod at Porthcawl in 1957, because he was denied travel abroad. Robeson had famously played the part of a black Welsh miner in the (rather absurd) movie *Proud Valley* in 1939. For a definitive, and scrupulously nuanced, account of Robeson's relationship to Wales, see "'They feel me a part of the land': Paul Robeson, Race and the Making of Modern Wales," in Daniel G. Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales, 1845-1945* (Cardiff; University of Wales Press, 2014), 142-207. See also "Class and Identity: Aneurin Bevan and Paul Robeson," in Daniel G. Williams, *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (Cardiff; University of Wales Press 2014), 73-92. Brinnin mentions that Thomas expressly instructed him to agree to a reading, at a much reduced fee, for the Socialist Party of New York City: another example of his fidelity to the Socialism that was the default political faith of the industrial South Wales of his era (*DTA,* 109).

9 Whitman's appeal to industrial Wales in the late Victorian Period and early-twentieth century was based on interpretations of him (mediated by Edward Carpenter's writings) as a kind of Utopian Socialist. See *TC*, 226-260.

10 E. W. Tedlock, ed., *Dylan Thomas: The Legend and the Poet* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 283. Hereafter *LP*.

11 Donald Hall, *Their Ancient Glittering Eyes: Remembering Poets and More Poets* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1991: enlarged edition, 1998), 46-47.

12 In the early 1950s, "the San Remo [was] the restlessly crowded hang-out of the intellectual hipster and catch-all for whatever survived of dedicated Bohemianism in Greenwich Village. There Dylan was ogled, and intruded upon, and recognized with surliness or awe"; *DTA,* 8.

13 Gordon Ball, ed., *Ginsberg, Journals: Early Fifties, Early Sixties* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 14-16. Hereafter G*J*.

14 Linda Hamalian, "Re-Discovering Community: Rexroth and the Whitman Tradition," in *Modern American Poetry: An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to Anthology of Modern American Poetry*, ed. Cary Nelson (1999), maps-legacy.org/poets/m_r/rexroth/hamalian.htm.

15 Kenneth Rexroth, "Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*," *Bureau of Public Secrets: Kenneth Rexroth Archives,* "Classics Revisisted (9)," bopsecrets.org/Rexroth/cr/9.htm#Leaves%20of%20Grass.

16 Kenneth Rexroth, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*: *A Memorial for Dylan Thomas* (Sunnyvale, CA: Horace Schwartz, 1955); available online at genius.com/Kenneth-rexroth-thou-shalt-not-kill-annotated.

17 Eric Mottram, ed., *The Rexroth Reader* (London: Cape, 1972), 332.

18 See Daniel Williams' exploration of this perceived affinity in *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales*, 47-72.

19 R. H. Super, ed., *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 3 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 291-386. For an extensive discussion of the "Celticism" that became immensely popular the end of the Victorian period, see Chapter 5, "The Celtic Option," in M. Wynn Thomas, *The Nations of Wales, 1890-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).

20 See M. Wynn Thomas, "Marlais," in Hannah Ellis, ed., *Dylan Thomas: A Centenary Celebration* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 30-41. For a far fuller discussion, see M. Wynn Thomas, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit*: *Literature and Nonconformist Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 226-255. Hereafter *ISP*.

21 *The Dial*, vol. 1: 1840-1844 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), 59.

22 For the origins of the term in Southern folk culture see Henry Wonham, "Character Development of the Ring-Tailed Roarer in American Literature," *Southern Folklore* 46 no. 3 (January 1, 1989), 265.

23 "Some Remarks on Rhythm," in Gary Geddes, ed., *20th Century Poetry and Poetics* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 904.

24 Jim Perlman, Ed Folsom, Dan Campion, eds., *Walt Whitman: the Measure of His Song* (Minneapolis: Holy Cow! Press, 1981), 180. Hereafter *MS*.

25 Elizabeth Hardwick, *The Collected Essays of Elizabeth Hardwick* (New York: NYRB Classics, 2017), 72-79.

26 David Boucher, "The Price of Fame: Bob Dylan, the Beats and Dylan Thomas," *Symbiosis: A Journal of Transatlantic Literary and Cultural Relations* 20 (2016), 75-90. See also David Boucher and Lucy Boucher, *Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen: Deaths and Entrances* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021). The following paragraphs of mine are heavily indebted to Boucher's discussion.

27 See "Blood Jumps: Dylan Thomas, Charlie Parker and 1950s America," *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales,* 47-72.

28 Letter of summer, 1958, reprinted in Matt Theado, ed., *The Beats: A Literary Reference* (New York: Carrol and Graf, 2003), 82.

29 See Daniel Williams' brilliant exploration of this perceived affinity. In particular, he sees both Parker and Thomas as representing different versions of the supposed "primitivism" (both of African Americans and of "Celts") that post-war White middle-class America welcomed as sources of "revitalization" for a jaded and satiated emergent consumer culture.

30 Saskia Hamilton, ed., *The Letters of Robert Lowell* (New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 2005), 345.

31 Gregory Corso, "Elegiac Feelings American (for the dear memory of John Kerouac)," in *Elegiac Feelings American* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 7.

32 *The Allen Ginsberg Project*, "More Vintage Corso" (July 6, 2013), allenginsberg.org/2013/07/more-vintage-corso.

33 Laurence Ferlinghetti, *Literary San Francisco* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1981).

34 Lawrence Ferlinghetti Papers, 1919-2003, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, folder 32; available online at *immaginepoesia* (December 4, 2009), immaginepoesia.wordpress.com.

35 John Berryman, "After many a summer: Memories of Dylan Thomas," *Times Literary Supplement* no. 4718 (September 3, 1993), 13-14.

36 John Berryman, "In Memoriam," *Collected Poems, 1937-1971*, ed. Charles Thornbury (London: Faber, 1990), 244.

37 Philip Levine interviewed by Carolyn Hitt, 2014. Accessed at "Hundred Years of Dylan Thomas," WNYC.org.

38 Alice Quinn, "Working Poets" (interview with Galway Kinnell and Philip Levine), *New Yorker* (October 30, 2006), newyorker.com.

39 Robert Bly, "The Gaiety of Form," *American Poetry Review* 22 (January 1, 1993), 12.

40 Simpson's father was of part Scottish descent.

41 Louis Simpson, *Studies of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell* (London; Macmillan, 1978), 36.

42 James E. Miller, Karl Shapiro, and Bernice Slote, *Start with the Sun: Studies in Cosmic Poetry* (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1960).

43 *Virginia Quarterly Review* 63 (Winter, 1987), 110-123; available online at vqronline.org/essay/james-dickey-southern-visionary.

44 James Dickey, "Introductory Remarks to a Reading, 8th Annual Walt Whitman Festival, Camden, New Jersey, 4 May 1977," *Mickle Street Review* no. 1 (1979), 3-6; available online at micklestreet.rutgers.edu/issue-1.

45 Aaron Baker, "The Strangeness of James Dickey," *Contemporary Poetry Review* (February 1, 2004), cprw.com/the-strangeness-of-james-dickey.

46 James Dickey, "Writer's Workshop" (episode in PBS series *Writer's Workshop* hosted by George Plimpton, University of South Carolina and the South Carolina ETV Network, 1982), available online at KnowItAll.org.

47 Meic Stephens, ed., extracts from Glyn Jones's Notebooks, *New Welsh Review* 29 (1995), 18.

"IF YOU CALL ON ME I WILL TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW OF WALT": UNRECORDED ASSESSMENT OF WALTER AND WALT WHITMAN BY WILLIAM BOOTH, BROOKLYN CARPENTER

NATHAN TYE

Pasted in the front of Thomas Fenton Taylor's copy of John Burroughs' *Whitman: A Study* is an unrecorded letter by a Brooklyn carpenter describing his assessment of Walter (Walt's father) and Walt Whitman, his business and personal relationships with both, and his willingness to disclose more about Walt in-person (see Figure 1.)[1] The letter's author, William Booth, was the younger brother of Samuel Booth, a carpenter, and later, mayor of Brooklyn from 1865 until 1869. Both Booths knew Walter and Walt Whitman according to the letter. Booth goes so far as to claim that he and Walt "were quite intimate." These disclosures were made at the request of Taylor, a New York attorney and local historian. Taylor's interest in Whitman drew on his complicated family tree (he appears to be distantly related to Booth) and his lifelong interest in literature—dynamics explored below which add to the letter's context.

William Booth's assessment connects the father and son through carpentry and eccentricity. This vocational and emotional relationship, although brief, suggests those who knew both men considered the pair cut from the same block. The details of Walter's work expand our understanding of his labor and connections within the wider network of the Brooklyn housebuilding trade. Moreover, this letter further situates the Whitmans' homebuilding and real estate ventures within the emergent market economy of the era. Finally, this letter points to another friendship predating the publication of *Leaves of Grass* that may yet shed further light on the biographical absences within Whitman's known life.

Walter Whitman is the lesser known of Walt Whitman's parents. Early scholars typically downplayed the significance of Walt's father. In her oft-cited study, Katherine Molinoff concluded, "Probably the full story of Walter Sr. will never be known. Somehow he seems to have made no deep impression upon

Whitman, certainly nothing to compare with the profound love and respect he felt for Louisa."[2] Whitman scholars often underscore the close relationship with his mother, but later biographers found his father left a deeper imprint than previously presumed.[3] Jerome Loving suggests that the Whitmans would be defined as "dysfunctional" today, pointing towards Walter's stubbornness, poor business acumen, and presumed alcoholism.[4] Nevertheless Walter was, according John Burroughs, "a most honorable man, a good citizen, parent, and neighbor. He was a large, quiet, serious man, very kind to children and animals. For some years he was a farmer on his own land, but afterwards went into business, housebuilding and carpentering."[5] Carpentry was the family trade as Walt noted in an 1886 interview with the *Brooklyn Eagle*, "My father was a carpenter and came into that trade by inheritance. So I set to work at it after I gave up editing newspapers."[6] The Booth letter does not radically disrupt these varied readings of Walter and the Whitmans; rather it evidences similarities between father and son.

The letter also provides new insights into Walter Whitman's labor and points to another of Walt Whitman's friendships within the "long foreground."[7] The Booths' connection to the Whitman family was previously unknown. Yet, a small clue exists in a different letter, written by Walt's mother, Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, in 1869: "i see by the paper exmayor Booth is to be the post master of Brooklyn)."[8] This comment initially reads as local news. Yet, when read against William Booth's letter, it confers a personal update on an individual known to the family—her husband's former employer. In the letter, Booth noted that Walter Whitman "worked for my brother previous to the year 1850." Moreover, he disclosed that Walter Whitman rented workshop space from the Booths. These details illuminate Walter Whitman's carpentry and housebuilding work in the decade prior to his death. Booth also discloses that Walter Whitman attempted to sell him land in Islip, Long Island.

William Booth found echoes of the father in the son, aligning with most biographical studies of Walt. Booth deemed Walter "an eccentric character," but he notes further that Walt Whitman "was more eccentric than his father but a noble generous hearted man." This reading of Walt as generous and eccentric echoes his brother George's later assessment of Walt's relationship with his neighbors and family: "He was like us—yet he was different from us too. These strangers, these neighbors, saw there was something in him out of the ordinary."[9] Booth does not comment further on the contours of Walter's and Walt's eccentricities, but his comment matches extant accounts of both men's personalities.

Samuel and William Booth were both carpenters, but later expanded into real estate and city politics. Their success, discussed further below, derived from the Brooklyn area's population boom and their prefabricated homes.[10] Biographer David Reynolds found that "[f]rame houses on tiny lots were popping up everywhere."[11]The building boom relied on "unskilled and poorly paid laborers," as Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace have noted, and turned away from the "old-fashioned artisan" like Walter Whitman, Sr.[12] The Booths presumably met the Whitmans through the building trade. William Booth informed Taylor that Walter Whitman worked for Samuel Booth and rented space above their office "where he worked by himself." Walter Whitman worked as a carpenter in Brooklyn, and during stints on Long Island he built as well as farmed.[13] He continued carpentry and built homes when the family returned to Brooklyn in 1845.[14] Walter's employment by the Booths ensconces him within the earlier artisan tradition, just then giving way to prefabricated building. Yet, his son did not suffer the same fate; instead, he "plunge[d] into this space of motion and exchange" and thrived as a speculator and homebuilder, as Andrew Lawson argues.[15]

William Booth told Taylor that Walter Whitman, Sr., tried to sell him fifty acres of forested land in Islip for one hundred dollars. These forests, according to Booth, were being made into charcoal. Walt Whitman documented this land and its transformation in *Specimen Days*: "extended wide central tracts of pine and scrub-oak (charcoal was largely made here,) monotonous and sterile."[16] Walter's employment by the Booths likely occurred after their return to Brooklyn. Moreover, given Walt Whitman's own time "at the rougher work," according to Burroughs, it is possible Walt worked for or with the Booths in the 1850s.[17] As Peter Riley rightly notes, Walt was not building homes himself by this period but rather "was a hirer of labour, and overseer of production."[18] How Walt interacted with the Booths as a real estate developer within the exploding housing market of the period is uncertain, but he certainly worked with and/or alongside them until he "[q]uit house-building in the spring of 1855 to publish the first edition," according to Richard Maurice Bucke's Whitman-approved biography.[19] This is presumably how Booth developed "a personal acquaintance" with Walt. Yet, theirs was a personal rather than professional relationship, in Booth's telling. He does not grant Taylor many details of this relationship, but he considered Walt "a noble generous hearted man" and affirms that "we were quite intimate." Booth was willing to share more: "if you call on me I will tell you what I know of Walt." Unfortunately, any information gleaned from that meeting (if it happened) was not preserved with this letter. Thus, illuminating

further the Booth family's place in nineteenth-century Brooklyn is necessary to understand the shape of their relationship and to discover where else the Whitmans and Booths crossed paths.

Unlike the Whitmans, the Booths were recent arrivals to the United States and within a generation became prominent business and political figures in Brooklyn. Thomas and Rebecca Booth emigrated from England in 1818 with three-week-old Samuel. Thus, he was about a year older than Walt. In 1828, the family moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn. Samuel initially worked as a clerk before apprenticing to Elias Combs as a house carpenter in 1835.[20] In 1843 he started his own construction and carpentry business, and a contemporary historian noted "since that time his history has been, to a great extent, identified with the prosperity and advancement of the city of Brooklyn."[21] He and his business partner, Stephen Cadwell, dissolved their carpentry and construction firm in 1848.[22]

The following year Booth's business took off with the discovery of gold in California, according to a November 1849 notice in the *Freeman* (two months after Whitman left the paper) referenced in the *Evening Star*. Booth "has built a large number of homes destined for California; among others, an hotel, 86 feet by 30; three stories high, and containing 47 rooms. The frame and timber are so arranged, that the building can be packed into the smallest possible compass."[23] Booth's business thrived because of prefabricated construction. Reynolds suggests Walter Whitman struggled to make the shift from custom built to prefab home construction, preferring his own artisanal work.[24] William Booth lends evidence to this contention and situates Walter squarely within the changing labor dynamics of the era. Booth recalled that Walter "worked by himself making doors and other such works" above the Booth's shop. According to labor historian Bruce Laurie, the decline of craftsmanship within the building trade was first marked by "prefabricated windows, doors, and other parts traditionally made and fitted by skilled carpenters on construction sites." The Booths' employment of Walter Whitman to make "doors and other such works" fits this shift. As such, he follows the path marked by Laurie: "Masters became framers or installers of precut parts who moved from project to project and yielded to other specialists when their tasks were done."[25] Walter Whitman evidenced the earlier craft but was not entirely sidelined by new homebuilding techniques. Rather, he adapted to the changing marketplace under the Booths. Although the precise dates of Walter's work for the Booths remains unknown, it is possible he made the doors and other prebuilt fixtures for the hotel described above. The precise location of this shop is unclear, but the Whitman and Booth

families both lived on Myrtle Avenue. The former lived at 106 Myrtle Avenue from April 1849 until May 1852.[26] At the time of Walter Whitman's death in 1855, the Booths worked out of 58 Myrtle Avenue and moved to 66 Myrtle Avenue the following year.[27]

Buoyed by his business success, Samuel Booth entered politics and was elected Fourth Ward alderman in 1850.[28] Initially a Whig, he later ran on the Republican platform. After one term as alderman, he served on the board of education and was elected Fourth Ward supervisor in 1857. He served in this role until 1865 when he was elected mayor of Brooklyn. Four years later he was appointed Brooklyn postmaster.[29] Booth's political rise and party shift occurred during Whitman's own political realignment. In 1857, Whitman became editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, a leading Republican paper. He left the paper in June 1859. Distanced from his Democratic and Free Soil years and Republican editorship Walt was, as Reynolds argues, "a man adrift . . . with no faith in political institutions."[30] As the editor a Republican paper, he almost certainly knew the up-and-coming Samuel Booth as well as his politically involved brother, William. It is curious that William does not mention this probable connection in his letter, but this aspect of their relationship may be part of the story he promised to share with Taylor in person.

In 1860, William Booth was captain of the Prairie Rangers of the Ashland Republican Club.[31] That August, Booth marched an estimated 100 Prairie Rangers alongside 500 other young abolitionist Wide-Awakes down Fulton Street. "Rockets and roman-candles were let off in profusion, and the enthusiasm was unbounded," reported the *Brooklyn Evening Star.* "Democracy for once trembled last night," it concluded.[32] William Booth was also involved in the state militia. He had joined the 14th Regiment New York State Militia by 1851 and was an ordnance sergeant when the Civil War erupted.[33] Booth served in the 14th Regiment until at least 1870, and likely later. In 1876, then Lieutenant-Colonel Booth gave the Decoration Day address at Admiral David Farragut's grave in The Bronx's Woodlawn Cemetery.[34] The Booth brother's business and political activities in the 1850s and 1860s marked them as prominent Brooklyn citizens whose activities would have been well-known to Walt Whitman.

The existence and survival of the Booth letter is in and of itself a curiosity. Taylor's biography provides clues as to why he inquired about Whitman in the first place and what he intended to do with this information. Additionally, his biography may point to currently unidentified connections to Whitman and the Booths that may orient future scholarship.

Taylor was born in New York City to John George Taylor and Charlotte

Matilda Mortimer (Booth) Taylor in 1852.[35] John G. Taylor was a prominent New York costumer.[36] Thomas F. Taylor was orphaned at nine and placed in Indiana aboard a so-called "Orphan Train."[37] There, Taylor was fostered by Alonzo Blair, an attorney and Democratic politician. Blair supported Taylor's matriculation at Harvard. He graduated in 1875, followed by Columbia Law School in 1877.[38] Shortly thereafter he worked for the United States District Attorney and later entered private practice in New York City. He published occasional legal essays but was more interested in historical and literary concerns.[39] His interest in history dates, at least, to his time at Harvard, where he took three courses under Henry Adams. Upon retirement, he entered Harvard's graduate school but only completed a year of coursework.[40] Taylor lectured frequently in New York City on political, historical, and literary subjects, including Chinese immigration, Aaron Burr, John Keats, and Ivan Turgenev. He also researched local topics, although the outcome of this work, as is so far known, is limited to the letter analyzed here and a small donation of family materials to the Long Island Historical Society, now the Brooklyn Historical Society.[41] Taylor was a Brooklyn resident until 1884, when he moved to New Jersey.[42] Considered "something of a clubman and yachtsman," he split his time after retirement between various homes in the United States and Italy.[43]

Taylor harbored early literary ambitions, and his public lecture topics indicated he never completely abandoned literature. His continued interest in literature and authors' lives provides a clear motivation for his Whitman inquiry. Moreover, surviving correspondence with his former Harvard professor, the critic Charles Eliot Norton, shows that Taylor relished his connection to notable authors and describes his practice of saving important letters within related books. At Harvard, Taylor was awarded prizes for Shakespeare recitation and even considered a writing career. Norton counseled otherwise but organized a reading in his home for Taylor. James Russell Lowell also attended. Taylor does not make the connection in his extant writings, but both Norton and Lowell, of course, knew of Whitman and his work. Although Taylor never pursued a formal literary career, he cherished his connections to literary figures. Nearly thirty years after the reading, he told his one-time host that "fastened in your first volume are the kind letters you and Mr. Lowell gave me."[44] Taylor's preservation of his Norton and Lowell correspondence within a volume of the former's work echoes the pairing of the Booth letter within Burroughs' Whitman biography examined here.

Extant material suggests Taylor was interested in the history of the Booth family, which presumably brought the Whitman connections to his attention.

The obituary of his foster father, Alonzo Blair, noted that Taylor was eventually "found and reclaimed by his own relations—a distinguished and wealthy family in the East."[45] Unfortunately, the obituary does not indicate who came for Taylor, but he later donated Samuel Booth's indenture along with one of his letters to the Brooklyn Historical Society.[46] Taylor's mother, Charlotte Matilda (Booth) Taylor, was likely related to Samuel and William Booth. Given Samuel Booth's financial success and political position within Brooklyn, it is probable that this maternal branch of his family reclaimed Taylor. Yet, the formality of William's response to Taylor's request for information about the Whitmans suggests Taylor was not close to all his extended maternal relatives. Nowhere in the letter is there any indication of familial ties made or even an informal greeting, as it is addressed to "Dear Sir."

Where then, does this letter leave us regarding Walter and Walt Whitman? William Booth's relationship with the Whitmans expands our understanding of both men's housebuilding years and similarities in their personalities. Moreover, the letter documents a friendship of Walt's that preceded the initial publication of *Leaves of Grass*. The letter to Thomas Fenton Taylor hints at further glimmers into Walter and Walt Whitman. Whether he called on his potential distant relation to obtain "the information you desire" is yet unknown, but the proposed conversation and its probable contents warrant further archival exploration.

University of Nebraska at Kearney

Brooklyn March 8-190

Thomas F Taylor

Dear Sir

In answer to your enquiry relating to Walt Whitman I would advise you that Walter Whitman Sr the father of Walt Whitman worked for my brother previous to the year 1850. he had a room in the old building on our office where he worked by himself making doors and other bench work. He was an eccentric character. He owned 50 acres of wood land in the town of Islip L.I. which he offered to sell me for the sum of one hundred dollars as the charcoal burners were cutting the wood and burning it into charcoal. The land is now selling for from two to five thousand dollars per acre so far for Walt Whitman Sr I had a personal acquaintance with Walt Whitman the poet and the author

Of the poem Leaves of Grass he was
more eccentric than his father but
a noble generous hearted man
we were quite intimate. If I knew
what line of information you wanted
to know of him if it was in my power
I would be glad to give you the
information you desire. In conversation
with you we might get at the information
you desire If you call on me
I will tell you what I know of
Walt

Respectfully Yours
W. C. Booth

Figure 1. William C. Booth to Thomas Fenton Taylor, 1904.

Transcription of letter from W. C. Booth to Thomas F. Taylor (March 8, 1904):

Brooklyn March 8-1904

Thomas F Taylor

Dear Sir

In answer to your inquiry relating to Walt Whitman I would advise you that Walter Whitman Sr the father of Walt Whitman worked for my brother previous to the year 1850. he had a room in the old building over our office where he worked by himself making doors and other such works. He was an eccentric character. He owned 50 acres of wood land in

the town of Islip L.I. which he offered to sell me for the sum of one hundred dollars as the charcoal burners were cutting the wood and burning it into charcoal. The land is now selling for from two to four thousand dollars per acre so far for Walt Whitman Sr I had a personal acquaintance with Walt Whitman the poet and the author of the poems Leaves of Grass He was more eccentric than his father but a noble generous hearted man we were quite intimate. If I recall what line of information you wanted to know of him if it was in my power I would be glad to give you the information you desire. In conversation with you we might get at the information you desire if you call on me I will tell you what I know of Walt.

Respectfully yours
W. C. Booth

Notes

1 John Burroughs, *Whitman: A Study*. Volume 10 of the Riverby Edition of the *Writings of John Burroughs*. (Cambridge, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; Riverside Press, 1905). The text at hand is part of the publisher's presentation set gifted to Thomas Fenton Taylor on March 8, 1906, per the bookplate in the first volume. The date of Booth's letter is difficult to determine as the final numeral is incomplete due to paper loss, but could also be March 8, 1906. Marginalia in Taylor's *Whitman* is limited to a sole concluding note, presumably in his hand, "Finished 28 March 1906," on the final page, indicating he read it swiftly after receiving it. The books and letter are in private hands, but a scan of the letter is available via the University of Nebraska at Kearney's digital repository: https://openspaces.unk.edu/spec-coll/56/.

2 Katherine Molinoff, *Some Notes on Whitman's Family* (Brooklyn: Comet Press, 1947), 17.

3 David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 23-29; Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 206.

4 Loving, 23, 30, 53-55.

5 John Burroughs, *Notes on Walt Whitman, As Poet and Person* (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1871), 79. For more on Burroughs' biography, see Loving, 315-316.

6 "A Visit to Walt Whitman," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 11, 1886). Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org).

7 "Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman, July 21, 1855," in Walt Whitman, The Correspondence: Volume 1: 1842-1967, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 41.

8 Louisa Van Velsor Whitman to Walt Whitman, 14 [April 1869]. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: duk.00579. Whitman's journalism connected him to Brooklyn's leaders. When

he left for Washington D.C. in 1862 to find his wounded brother, he carried a letter of introduction from the former mayor, George Hall. See Loving, 13, 488n23.

9 Horace L. Traubel, "Notes from Conversations with George W. Whitman, 1893: Mostly in His Own Words," *In Re Walt Whitman*, ed. Horace L. Traubel, Richard Maurice Bucke, and Thomas B. Harned (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1893), 38.

10 For more on the New York and Brooklyn real estate markets and homebuilding practices discussed here, see: Peter J. L. Riley, "*Leaves of Grass* and Real Estate," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 28 (Spring 2011), 163-187; Cleveland Rodgers, "The Good Gray House Builder," *Walt Whitman Review* 5 (December 1959), 63-69; Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 112-116.

11 Reynolds, 113-114.

12 Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 765.

13 Loving, 36; Joann P. Krieg, "A Newly Discovered Walter Whitman, Sr., Document," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 19 (Fall 2001), 111-112.

14 Reynolds, 113-114.

15 Andrew Lawson, *Walt Whitman and the Class Struggle* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 14.

16 Walt Whitman, *Prose Works 1892*, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 1:11.

17 Burroughs, *Notes on Walt Whitman*, 82-83; Reynolds, 134.

18 Riley, 165.

19 Richard Maurice Bucke, *Walt Whitman* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1883), 26; Loving, 180.

20 Indenture, 1835, Samuel Booth Papers, 1974.155, Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, New York.

21 Henry Reed Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: Published by Subscription, 1869), 2:479.

22 *The Brooklyn Eagle* (June 17, 1848).

23 "Hotel For California," *Brooklyn Evening Star* (November 28, 1849). On Whitman and the *Freeman*, see Loving, 143-147.

24 Reynolds, 25.

25 Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 42.

26 Walt Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 1:11.

27 *Smith's Brooklyn Directory, For The Year Ending May 1st, 1856* (Brooklyn: William H. Smith, 1855), 54; *Smith's Brooklyn Directory, For the Year Ending May 1st, 1857* (Brooklyn: Charles Jenkins, 1856), 54. It is unclear when Samuel and William entered business together. While not definitive proof of familial employment, in 1856 the Booth brothers lived next to one another at 83 and 82 Tillary. Later, they lived apart. William Booth was living at 207 Graham Avenue in 1862. *Smith's Brooklyn Directory, For the Year Ending May 1st, 1857* (Brooklyn: Charles Jenkins, 1856), 54; "Robberies," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (June 24, 1862). By 1865, Samuel and William partnered in the construction firm S. & W. C. Booth, located at 63 Myrtle Avenue; see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (February 21, 1865).

28 "Election Returns," *Williamsburgh Daily Gazette* (November 7, 1850).

29 Henry Reed Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: Published by Subscription, 1869), 2:478-481.

30 Reynolds, 368-375.

31 *Brooklyn Evening Star* (August 2, 1860).

32 "The Republican Meeting last night–Our Wide-Awakes," *Brooklyn Evening Star* (August 9, 1860).

33 William C. Booth, "Answer to Hanley's Letter," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (May 31, 1861).

34 "Military," *Brooklyn Union* (August 5, 1870); "Woodlawn Cemetery," *Brooklyn Union* (May 30, 1876).

35 *Harvard College Class of 1875. Secretary's Report No. VIII, 1875-1899* (Boston: George E. Ellis), 91.

36 "Tremendous Excitement!" *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 23, 1847); "Academy Ball," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 6, 1853).

37 For more on placing out in the nineteenth century, see Marilyn Irvin Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

38 "Dust to Dust," *The Shelby Democrat* (July 17, 1879); "Letter from Thomas F. Taylor, Esq. To Mrs. Alonzo Blair," *The Shelby Democracy* (August 7, 1879); *Harvard College Class of 1875. Secretary's*

Report No. VIII, 1875-1899 (Boston: George E. Ellis), 91-93.

39 Thomas Fenton Taylor, "The 'Dwight Method,'" *Harvard Law Review* 7 no. 4 (November 25, 1893), 203-212; Thomas Fenton Taylor, "Practice of Law in New York City," *Harvard Law Review* 10 no. 1 (April 25, 1896), 23-45.

40 Stewart Mitchell, "Henry Adams and Some of His Students," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Third Series) 66 (October 1936-May 1941), 305-306.

41 Guide to the Samuel Booth Papers, 1974.155. Center for Brooklyn History, Brooklyn, New York: http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/bhs/arms_1974_155_booth/bioghist.html.

42 *Harvard College Class of 1875. Secretary's Report No. VIII, 1875-1899* (Boston: George E. Ellis), 91-93.

43 Mitchell, 306. While in Italy, Taylor maintained membership in the Dante Society. See *Annual Reports of the Dante Society* 38 (1919), ix.

44 Thomas Fenton Young to Charles Eliot Norton, November 16, 1907; Box 39, Charles Eliot Norton Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

45 "Dust to Dust," *The Shelby Democrat* (July 17, 1879).

46 Alice Griffin, Center for Brooklyn History, email communication with author, July 18, 2022; Guide to the Samuel Booth Papers, 1974.155. Center for Brooklyn History, Brooklyn, New York.

A LONG-LOST *EAGLE* ARTICLE PUTS WALT AND JEFF ON THE MAP

AMY KAPP

While researching annotations for an NEH-sponsored grant for the *Walt Whitman Archive* that focuses on the poet's involvement with the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, I came across an intriguing article titled "Visit to Baisley's Pond" in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from June 30, 1858. Even though this article appears in the pages of a direct, local competitor of the *Times*, it appears to be authored by Walt Whitman. The short piece is written in the style of a journalistic "peep," a specialty of the journalist Whitman. It focuses on a visit by an unnamed reporter to see the progress on the construction of the Brooklyn Waterworks and the engineers—including Walt's younger brother, Thomas Jefferson Whitman. These men were responsible for the system of pipes and conduits that would carry the water from supply ponds, like Baisley's, to the citizens of Brooklyn. Walt, as we now know, was heavily involved in advocating for the project in the pages of the *Times*. This advocacy, it appears, also extended into other papers.

Published nearly ten years after Walt Whitman was allegedly "fired" from the *Eagle*, and while he was editing the rival *Times*, this discovery raises several questions. Why did this article appear in a competitor's paper to which Whitman seemed to hold no official editorial connection? And why was Thomas Jefferson Whitman mentioned here, yet never in any of Whitman's numerous *Times* editorials on the same topic, the Brooklyn Waterworks? By making a case for Whitman's authorship of "Visit to Baisley's Pond," I will briefly demonstrate how this discovery complicates previously accepted ideas about Whitman's editorial tenure at any paper, his supposedly long-standing feuds with former bosses, and his trajectory from journalist to poet.

I found this piece in the *Eagle* mostly by chance. I had been annotating an editorial in the *Daily Times* that will soon be published on the *Walt Whitman Archive* as part of an endeavor to identify and edit Whitman's unpublished *Daily Times* editorials. The article I was annotating from April 17, 1858, mentions the discovery of mastodon remains in Brooklyn. I then began a search for earlier references to this mastodon in hopes of writing an annotation that provided updates on the find. It was then that I stumbled upon this piece in the *Eagle*

that follows the author's journey to the site where the mastodon was exhumed and to Baisley's Pond, guided by the engineers of the Waterworks. It was at the dredged Baisley's Pond, a pond created in the eighteenth century by damning three streams in order to accommodate a mill operated by David Baisley (1792-1875), where mastodon bones and teeth were found. The land that Baisley's Pond sat on was eventually acquired by the Williamsburg Waterworks in 1852. Baisley's Pond (known by various names during the nineteenth century, including "Jamaica Pond" and "Mill Pond") can now be found in Baisley Pond Park located in South Jamaica, Queens. [See Figure 1.]

Walt Whitman's earlier history with the *Eagle* is well known to scholars of his early journalism. From 1846 to 1848, Whitman edited this Democratic paper and his work coincided with the country's discussion about what to do with the land that the U.S. acquired during the Mexican-American War. This issue caused a rift in the Democratic Party over the extension of enslaved labor to the West. "Hunkers" wanted to maintain party unity and allow slavery in the newly acquired land, a benefit to Southern enslaving interests. However, "free-soilers," like Whitman, wanted slavery to be excluded from these territories. Traditionally, scholars have assumed that the proprietor of the paper, Isaac Van Anden, fired Whitman in 1848 because of his free-soil proclivities. Later, in 1848, Whitman founded his own newspaper to promote the free-soil cause, the *Brooklyn Freeman*.

Whitman's work as a journalist in the 1850s has been harder to trace. The *Archive*'s most recent grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities thus seeks to determine the extent of his contributions to the *Brooklyn Daily Times*. To this end, our efforts have initially focused on Whitman's longest, coherent corpus of writings for the paper: his lobbying for the Waterworks from 1856 to 1859, during which he penned many articles advocating for improvements to the Waterworks recommended by James Kirkwood, the project engineer. Thomas Jefferson Whitman, Walt's younger brother, was an employee of Kirkwood's, and likely provided Walt access to the engineer and to the plans, which Walt, in turn, used to publicly advocate for their recommendations for costly revisions to the project.

There are several different aspects of the *Eagle* article that point to it being written by Whitman. The first is the author's mention of Thomas Jefferson ("Jeff") Whitman. Whitman had not mentioned his brother in any of his *Brooklyn Daily Times* editorials, though scholars on the grant team had identified Jeff's close involvement with the project. In the *Eagle*, however, Jeff is noted as one of the tour guides on the visit to the Waterworks excursion.

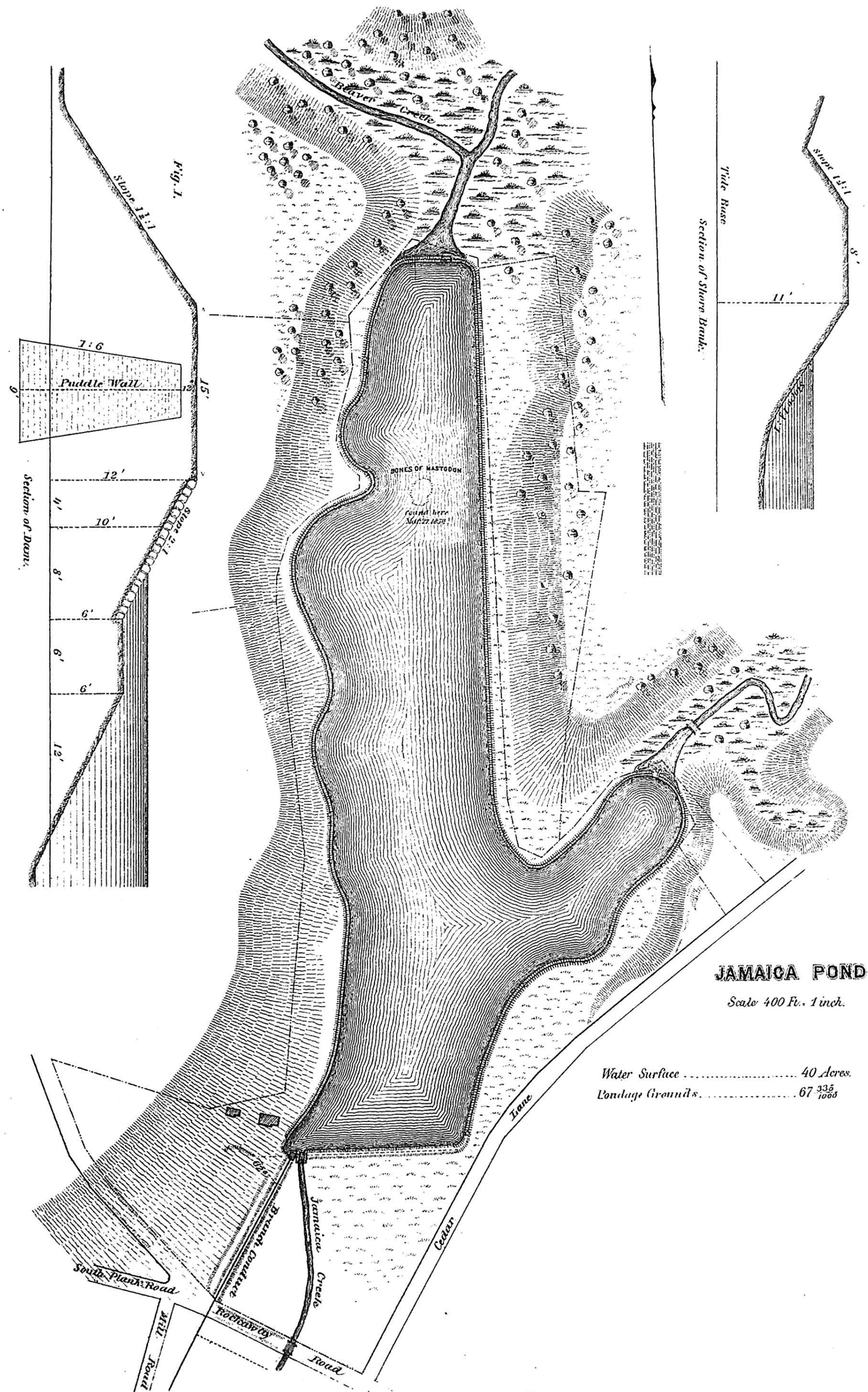

Figure 1: Map of Jamaica [Baisley's] Pond, showing where mastodon bones were found; from *The Brooklyn Water Works and Sewers: A Descriptive Memoir*, prepared by the Board of Water Commissioners (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1867).

Perhaps Walt worried that mentioning his brother or referencing Jeff's engineering work in his *Times* editorials would reveal his familial bias for the project. However, the *Eagle* editorial, published anonymously in a paper that had famously (and quite publicly) parted ways with Whitman, offered plausible enough deniability of any connection between Jeff's boss and arguments in favor of the Waterworks coming from the rival *Brooklyn Daily Times*. It also allowed the *Times* itself, whose publisher was the official printer for the city of Brooklyn, to maintain a more objective tone and bracket how personally implicated in the project one of its main editorial voices at the time really was. Jeff was, of course, providing financial support to Walt during these years.

The style in the *Eagle* piece bears some compelling similarities to Whitman's style in *Leaves of Grass* as well as the journalistic voice he was known for during his *Eagle* days. For example, consider a famous short catalog from Whitman's 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*—"And limitless are leaves, stiff or drooping in the fields, / And brown ants in the little wells beneath them, / And mossy scabs of the worm-fence, heaped stones, elder, mullein, pokeweed"—and its stylistic similarities in the *Eagle* editorial: "The quiet of the country—the birds singing in the trees—the low gurgle of the brooks—the fresh smell of the water and the swamps." In both cases, there is a use of vivid natural imagery organized in a successive order. Both moments focus on celebrating nature not atop mountain peaks or in mighty woods but in the liminal and abject: in decaying leaves, mosquito-ridden swamps, and muddy ponds. "To the shallow and too hasty glance, these things may afford little or no material," the author of "A Visit" notes, "But we think that even our crude and rapid report . . . will suggest to the reader that there is a vast fund of interest, fact, reminiscence, sentiment, etc., even in a small part" like Baisley's Pond.

And, of course, this is not Whitman's only known editorial in the *Eagle* at the time. Only a few days after "A Visit" appeared, a reminiscence of the "Old Times in Brooklyn" was published in that paper, signed "W," which has been convincingly attributed to Whitman. "Old Times," in turn, echoes language from a Whitman-authored piece in the *Times*, a year prior. An unsigned follow-up piece of sorts to "Old Times," from 1862, also subtitled "Old Times in Brooklyn," has likewise been identified as Whitman's. (It almost seems to retroactively turn "Old Times" into an *Eagle* series.) Noticeably, both late 1857 *Eagle* pieces, "A Visit" and "Old Times," are laid out as "external features" with similar, four-level titles highly atypical for in-house reporting at the *Eagle* (see Figure 2). In the weeks surrounding their appearance in print, we could locate no similarly laid out articles, suggesting that Whitman, a trained printer since his youth, may even have had a hand in the process.

Visit to Baisley's Pond.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS POND.

Its Present Condition.

SOMETHING MORE ABOUT THE MASTADON.

OUR CITY JUST 33 YEARS SINCE.

Fourth of July 1825—Visit of Lafayette—
The Apprentices' Library.

OLD TIMES IN BROOKLYN.

The Village Fathers—Elias Hicks, &c.

The Leviathan.

The taste for eccentricity is amusing when confined within moderate bounds, but when it involves large capital its results are more vexa-

Figure 2: Second-page title formatting of "A Visit," Whitman's "Old Times," and a typical *Eagle* piece.

The recovery of "Visit to Baisley's Pond" and the case for it as a Whitman-authored piece expands and complicates our understanding of Whitman's writing life during these years, a period when he was revising *Leaves of Grass*, perhaps tinkering with "Manly Health and Training," and seemingly publishing in multiple newspapers about the Brooklyn Waterworks. Clearly, the *Eagle* continued to serve as a "go-to" publication for Whitman well past his editorial employ and is ripe for a scholarly reassessment. Recent discoveries have similarly complicated our assumptions about the stability of Whitman's work at one particular place during these years. "A Visit to Baisley's Pond" also presents opportunities for future research by raising significant questions about Whitman's journalism: Why might the *Eagle* publish an article by Walt Whitman, an active contributor to a rival paper? Why were editorials identified as Whitman's in the *Times* so stylistically different from this one piece in the *Eagle*? But what this

discovery does make clear is that we need to re-think Whitman's involvement and relationship with the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in the late 1850s, as well as what it meant to be an editor and a journalist during this period.

University of Illinois Springfield

From *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 30, 1858:

Visit to Baisley's Pond.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS POND.
Its Present Condition.
SOMETHING MORE ABOUT THE MASTADON.

The pond above named is of direct and deep interest to the people of Brooklyn just now, because from it, commencing this fall, will be drawn exclusively, for a while, and very largely, for all future time, that long-wanted supply of pure water we make so much reckoning of. Perhaps it is not generally known that when our water works take their practical commencement—when the mighty basin at Ridgewood is duly puddled, stoned, grated and locked—the conduit finished from Jamaica to the pump well—the steam got up—the huge pumping machinery in motion, and the water forced up through the pipes—the mains and laterals laid through all the avenues and streets of the city, and everything put in connection, we are to rely then for the real article of all, for the daily 3,500,000 gallons flowing down to us from Baisley's pond—and on that, as we have said, exclusively for a time. The ponds beyond, (Nostrand's, Simonson's Clear Stream, P. Cornell's, Pines and Hempstead,) will not be in order for perhaps a year yet, and, indeed, are not likely to be so much needed at first.

As these are quite important considerations, we have just devoted a day to a visit and thorough examination of this nearest pond, gleaning much that will doubtless be of immediate interest to our readers. We had every facility and kindness from the Engineers, Messrs. Elseffer, Whitman, Bottsford, and Ward—the first-named gentleman having charge of this action. They are all pleasantly quartered at the farm house of Mr. Rider near the pond.

We would like to give the people of our city a more correct idea than they probably have of the cleanliness and sweetness of the supply of water from these ponds. Baiseley's especially, we should say, would satisfy even the most delicate and fastidious person. It is all pure, natural, clear water, free from taint, free from any obnoxious contact whatevever [sic], or from any mineral infusion. All over the bottom, where the workmen have cleaned it off, gush up little crystal springs. There are scores and scores of them.

Through the middle, and coming into it from various directions, are great brooks, deep, and of strong current. We stood by one towards the top of the Pond, and bending down to drink of it, found the taste peculiarly sweet and delicious. The brook in the middle is quite a little river, after wet weather. The 3,500,000 gallons before named as the daily outflow, is the lowest mark of this Pond; and a considerably greater supply may be generally relied upon. We have to add, that the Pond never runs dry. It is fed by those inexhaustible springs—a very curious part of the hydrographic character of Long Island.

In size this Pond covers nearly 40 acres, and when filled with water, it will have an average depth of about six feet. The greatest width across at any place is 1,800 feet. It has

quite an accession from a little inlet at the side of it—giving the whole very much the shape of an old-fashioned mitten, with a thumb to it.

It is curious to look on the heavy layers of muck, (peat, or turf bottom,) which the workmen have to cut and cart away. In nearly every direction these layers are from four to six feet in thickness—the accumulations of ages. They cart this peat away, and use it for enriching the fields.

The premises of what now forms Baiseley's Pond were granted, long before the Revolutionary War, to one John Cole, on condition that he would then and there forthwith establish a Mill to grind flour from the grain of the farmers of the neighborhood. From that dates the original title to the spot.

We walked up the bank on one side of the Pond and so around, across, and down the opposite bank. It was quite early in the morning. The scene was a pleasant one, and calculated to associate all future thought of our Brooklyn Water Works with very agreeable recollections. The quiet of the country—the birds singing in the trees—the low gurgle of the brooks—the fresh smell of the water and the swampbushes—the sight of the surrouning [sic] woods and fields—even little things, near at hand—the track of the mud-turtle on the wet mud—the bottom and sides of the Pond, in places, all gnarled with roots, the brown and green roots of the water-lilies, like stout ship-hawers [sic?]—the patches of white and silvery sand, where everything had been cleared away above—all these are indelibly impressed upon our memory.

Then the *Mastadon*! The young Engineers guided us to the spot whence the monster was exhumed and told us all about it. We stood upon a little sand-hillock, upon the identical ground where the ancient beast had lain, and like a faithful reporter, took notes!

It was about the 27th of last March that the Mastadon was found. The workmen were digging through the remains all the afternoon and part of the next morning, before the Engineers knew of the discovery. As soon as they learned it, they had the greatest care observed in the digging—and the earth that had been carried away was turned over; for it was possitively [sic] asserted by the men, when questioned, that part of a large jaw-bone, with a tooth in it, had been carted off. Unfortunately, however, the remains were in such a condition, and the shovels and picks of the laborers so effective that only a few relics were collected, as solid and lasting mementos of the Long Island Mastadon.

Still, they were enough. Four teeth were found, with other bones, (many of which we have since seen and handled.) The largest tooth is in a remarkable state of preservation, the enamel on it glossy and smooth, and black as ebony—in shape the usual tooth shape; in size it measures 17 1-2 inches around, and from 7 to 8 inches in length. One of these teeth is in the cabinet of J. C. Brevoort, one of the Water Commissioners, at his residence, Bedford. Mr. Elseffer, the Engineer in charge, has also a number of the relics, large and small, some of them, we understand, offering curious studies for the savan. Much that we learned, upon this subject, would need a scientific explanation and this would be out of place in a rapid article like this.

Last Friday there were two other teeth found, one very large one, in a perfect state of preservation, and one small one. The large tooth has the same black color and glossy enamel, as the others. The laborers who found them, still hold on to them, hiding them in their shanties, believing them to possess great value.

If the reader be of those who had some doubt, (as we had previously), about this L. I.

Mastadon story, he may dismiss such doubt; for the case is a real one, and deserving of very far more attention and examination than has been given to it. Had it occurred a great way off, we should very likely have heard more about it. We still hope that some competent Naturalist will devote time to the preparation of a memoir upon this deeply interesting subject.

To give some idea of the size of the huge unknown we may mention there was pointed out to us, as we stood on the spot, the space of sixteen feet by thirty, where it had lain, and through which it had left significant traces of its decay.

Of course we cannot stop here to jot down the many reflections that must naturally arise out of these facts, which bring as it were the ancient world here again, tangibly present, to the doors, to the very senses, of us Brooklynites. The finding of these remains is a text from which just as much may be educed, and carried out to conclusions, as from those distant and significant facts, that the great books are made of, and which savans pore over in the famous libraries.

We will add to the foregoing that the "barrel conduit" connecting Baiseley's with the great conduit is now finished, and that it and the gate or junction at its terminus, are pieces of workmanship worthy of examination.

Much more might be learned and written of Baiseley's Pond, of the other Ponds, and of the Brooklyn Water Works generally. To the shallow and too hasty glance, these things may afford little or no material—nothing beyond certain figures, amounts, and dry statistics. But we think that even our crude and rapid report, (because a daily paper must both learn and write "on the wing,") will suggest to the reader that there is a vast fund of interest, fact, reminiscence, sentiment, etc., even in a small part of what concentrates about the office, up near the City Hall, of the Contractor for the Brooklyn Water Works.

Notes

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1 NEH Grant, "Walt Whitman's Journalism: Finding the Poet in the *Brooklyn Daily Times*."

2 Stephanie M. Blalock, Kevin McMullen, Stefan Schöberlein, and Jason Stacy, "'One of the grand works of the world': Walt Whitman and the Brooklyn Waterworks, 1856-1859" (forthcoming in *Technology and Culture*).

3 Dennis K. Renner, "Brooklyn Daily Eagle," in J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings, eds., *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998); available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org).

4 The mastodon became a part of the historical memory of Brooklyn soon after. See Boston Society of Natural History, *Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Riverside, 1861), 287. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle Book and Job Department, 1895), s.v. Animals of L. I., Extinct.

5 "Residents Struggle with Urban Blight," *Newsday* (June 24, 1990).

6 Scholarship on Whitman's journalism goes back nearly a hundred years with scholars such as Emory Holloway, Thomas L. Brasher, Herbert Bergman, and William White.

7 David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 114-118.

8 Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 111.

9 Jason Stacy, *Walt Whitman's Multitudes* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 100-101.

10 For Whitman's time at the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, see Emory Holloway, "Walt Whitman as an Editor Fought All, Including His Boss," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 27, 1924), sec. B, 4:7-8; Thomas L. Brasher, *Whitman as Editor of The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970); Herbert Bergman, "Walt Whitman as a Journalist, March, 1848-1892," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (Autumn 1971): 431-437; William White, "Whitman's Years with The *Daily Eagle*, Before and After" *Calamus* 25 (October 1984), 5-33; Loving, 227-232; Karen Karbiener, "Reconstructing Whitman's Desk at the *Brooklyn Daily Times*." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (Summer 2015), 21-50.

11 NEH Grant, "'One of the grand works of the world': Walt Whitman and the Brooklyn Waterworks, 1856-1859." Unpublished.

12 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn: Fowler & Wells, 1856), 11.

13 W, "Old Times in Brooklyn," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 3, 1858), 2; William White identified this article as Whitman's in *Walt Whitman's Journalism: A Bibliography* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), 28.

14 From "Old Times" in the *Eagle*: "Several gentlemen . . . began handing the children down to stand on convenient spots in the lately excavated basement; among the rest, Lafayette himself assisted. The writer recollects well the pride he felt in being one of these who happened to be taken into Lafayette's arms, and passed down." From the *Brooklyn Daily Times*: "Among those who aided ex tempore in handling down the children was Lafayette himself; and the writer recollects well the childish pride he experienced in being one of those who were taken in the arms of Lafayette" ("Henry C. Murphy," *Brooklyn Daily Times* [June 3, 1857], 2). For more on the *Times* piece, see Karbiener, 29-31.

15 Arthur Golden, "An Uncollected Whitman Article," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 64 (July 1960), 353–360.

16 “An Old Landmark Gone, An Interesting Reminiscence of Old Times in Brooklyn,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (October 9, 1862), 2. Each of these “Old Times” pieces details Whitman’s oft-repeated childhood encounter with Lafayette.

17 Stefan Schöberlein, Stephanie M. Blalock, Kevin McMullen, and Jason Stacy, “Walt Whitman, Editor at the *New-York Atlas*,” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 39 (Spring 2022), 189-204.

REVIEWS

Susan Jaffe Tane and Karen Karbiener. *Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman—An exhibition based on the Walt Whitman Collection of Susan Jaffe Tane on the occasion of the Bicentennial Anniversary of Whitman's Birthday.* New York: The Grolier Club, 2019. 218 pp.

When considered as artifacts, books offer windows onto the foreign country called *the past*, where, as L. P. Hartley famously observed, they do things differently. Normally, the line between past and present is gradually—albeit relentlessly—drawn, as subsequent mornings roll into a heap under which are buried the faces, manners, and mores of our yesterdays. Occasionally, however, there are those radical shifts when we feel the calendrical curtain fall abruptly, finding ourselves on the other side of life-as-lived, when the past becomes suddenly and irrevocably unfamiliar. Such a moment of temporal demarcation was March 2020, the beginning of the global pandemic under whose margin lie more than a million American fatalities. Reviewing a book published less than a year previous requires an acknowledgment of its position on the other side of this historical divide, especially for a book so intimately related to New York City, the pandemic's epicenter from March to May of 2020. For many of us living in New York at the time, the yearlong celebrations of Walt Whitman's bicentennial birthday in 2019 are among the last treasured memories of pre-pandemic life. During lockdown in our Upper West Side studio, I often found myself flipping through the pages of *Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman,* reliving in memory the Grolier Club's momentous exhibition—which ran from May 15 to July 27, 2019—and the rich lectures given in the ground floor gallery. I recalled the faces of my friends reflected in the glass cases, and the intimacy of the scene felt so remote. There was a strange poetry to meditating on Whitman as the "poet of the body" at a moment when bodies were to be kept six feet apart, when we collectively feared a bare handshake and uncovered breath.

Whitman birthday celebrations abounded in 2019 but generated comparatively little literary output. Featuring an annotated checklist of over three hundred items then displayed—skillfully compiled by Julie Carlsen of the Colorado Antiquarian Book Seminar—*Poet of the Body* stands as by far the most comprehensive documentation available of any celebration of Whitman's bicentennial.

It celebrates, too, the enthusiastic community of scholars, collectors, archivists, and artists whose labor and devotion made the eponymous exhibition possible. In her brief preface, Susan Jaffe Tane details her 2014 acquisition of Francis O. Mattson's extensive Whitman collection, and the subsequent work in cataloguing and presenting these materials that preponderated the Grolier exhibition (items also appeared on loan from the Feinberg Collection at the Library of Congress, Bryn Mawr College's Special Collections, the Brooklyn College Library, the New York Public Library's Berg Collection, and private collections). Working from the unsorted boxes of the Mattson collection to the opening of the Grolier Club's exhibition took multitudes—"great teamwork and working friendships," Tane says—and in the list of those Tane recognizes are many names familiar to readers of *WWQR,* including her co-curator Karen Karbiener of New York University. Karbiener's eleven-chapter chronological exploration of "New York's Walt Whitman" follows, incorporating rich full-color illustrations. The text masterfully maintains accessibility for a general audience and a thoroughly researched contextualization of the exhibition's artifacts (each chapter includes endnotes constructing a rich web of literary and scholarly interrelations). "The aim," Karbiener argues, "is for visitors (and here, readers) to feel that they not only learned about Whitman, but experienced him." Whitman's presence saturates the book, from the prominent display of the exhibition's logo—a horizontal pen-in-hand Whitman, designed by Allen Crawford, whose *Whitman Illuminated: Song of Myself* (Tin House Books, 2014) was the subject of his Grolier Club lecture, "A Year in the Basement with Walt Whitman"—to the several full-page reproductions of Whitman photographs and engravings. Readers also encounter clippings of Whitman's hair (both loose and enshrined in two gold rings), his blackthorn walking stick, and numerous samples of his handwriting, enacting the simulation of physical intimacy central to Whitman's poetic project, epitomized in his assertion that "Camerado, this is no book, / Who touches this touches a man." (High-resolution digital photos of items from Tane's collection, taken by Gabriel Mckee who also provided the index to *Poet of the Body,* are available online at gabrielmckee.hosting.nyu.edu/whitman/.)

Summarizing the project of *Poet of the Body*—both exhibition and catalogue—Karbiener writes that the curatorial team has "sought to materialize the inspiring stories of Whitman's life and art, with the particular goal of shedding light on his most obscure years." "Obscure" here describes the decades before the publication of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, and indeed Whitman's pivotal work does not appear until chapter six, "I celebrate myself: Manhattan's Son Rises,"

midway through the catalogue's main body. The first five chapters explore the Whitman family's Long Island history and Whitman's early years in Brooklyn, his work in Manhattan as a printer and writer of conventional prose and verse, and his relationships, both neighborly and romantic. Especially interesting are photos showing the various books once owned and annotated by Whitman—the works of Burns, Homer, and Shelley, and Frederick Hedge's *Prose Writers of Germany*—that illustrate Whitman's engagement with Western literary traditions (the latter three books were on loan from Bryn Mawr; for more of Whitman's personally-owned books included in the exhibition but not pictured in the catalogue, see items 150-160 in the item checklist). In these first five chapters, Karbiener reconstructs Whitman's cultural milieu, the world into which *Leaves of Grass* arrived, a world decidedly displayed on the streets of New York. The goal is to "highlight New York's role in the extraordinary transformation of Walter Whitman Jr. to 'Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son.'" The chapter on *Leaves of Grass* is thus a fulcrum between the two identities, on the other side of which readers encounter Whitman's experiences in Washington D.C. during the Civil War, the correlated decline of Whitman's physical health and increase of his literary recognition, and his strenuous efforts toward self-promotion during his years in Camden, New Jersey. The final two chapters—"Poets to come! Whitman's Legacy in the Book Arts" and "I give you my hand!: Collecting Whitman's Body (of Work)"—detail Whitman's posthumous influence and continued cultural depictions. In these final entries, Karbiener connects her fleshed out depiction of Whitman's nineteenth-century context to our own present, highlighting recent works including a linocut from Barbara Henry's *Walt Whitman's Faces: A Typographic Reading* (Harsimus Press, 2012) and illustrations from Brian Selznick's *Live Oak with Moss* (Abrams ComicArts, 2019). The collection features ephemeral commercial objects as well—beer bottles, cigar boxes, canned good labels—demonstrating how Whitman "has become more than just another pretty face: he is a symbol, a brand, an identity" that we might encounter in unexpected territory.

This catalogue's meticulous artistry communicates the evident love that went into its creation, including the three-year gestation period of research and planning described by Tane and Karbiener. The book is also noteworthy physically: its roughly 8" x 11" size and mauve dustjacket make *Poet of the Body* stand out proudly on the shelf. Beneath the dustjacket, Crawford's stylized title and butterfly are stamped in silver foil on cloth boards of deep purple. The interior is equally pleasing to the eye, set in Scala and Scala Sans types. Far from the ephemeral paperback and stapled booklets common to other exhibitions, *Poet of*

the Body offers a high-quality production that is bound to withstand numerous readings, a lasting statement of New York City's devotion to Whitman. It is a fitting tribute to the poet who was himself concerned with the physicality of book production, and who understood that the message and the medium require equal artistic treatment.

While I know I am not alone in considering *Poet of the Body* a reliquary for memories of another time, this review is also a tribute to this catalogue's continued significance. Tane invites us to ask two questions of *Poet of the Body*: "will it have done justice to the life and work of a great American literary hero?" and has the effort to present Whitman been "of durable and sustaining intellectual value?" From the vantage point of 2023, both questions can be answered affirmatively. Its artistry could be called "High Whitmanesque" from concept to execution, as we have here the tangible presence of "the poet of the body," never sundered from its here unspoken correlative: "the poet of the soul." It is this confluence of soul and body—their essential and personal inseparability—which allows the poet to "graft and increase" the "pleasures of heaven" and to "translate into a new tongue" the "pains of hell." In the past four years, we have had an ample share of both pleasure and pain, heaven and hell, and in all of this, *Poet of the Body* continues to offer a relevant and colorful depiction of New York's Walt Whitman.

Principia College Brandon James O'Neil

Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography

Aćamović, Bojana. "Poetry in Times of Struggle: Walt Whitman and Young Bosnia." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 37-49. [Examines "the pre-World War I reception of Walt Whitman's poetry in the Serbo-Croatian linguistic and cultural space, focusing on the interest shown in the American poet by the members of the Young Bosnia circle between 1908 and 1913," a group of young intellectuals interested in "introducing revolutionary tendencies to the domain of literature" who found Whitman "particularly inspiring"; argues that the Young Bosnians' translations of Whitman's work were central to their involvement "in the struggle for national independence and cultural progress of the South Slavs."]

Athenot, Éric, and Claire Fabre-Clark. "Speaking in Tongues: Celebrating Walt Whitman in Translation." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 2-6. [Introduces this special issue of *TIES*, *Speaking in Tongues: Celebrating Walt Whitman in Translation*, edited by Athenot and Fabre-Clark; the introductory essay examines how non-English-language poets have responded to Whitman over the decades, their "fascination with Whitman's verse" resulting from "more or less accurate perceptions of his representativeness as an American, his claim to be read as an advocate of political and artistic internationalism, his innovative poetics, and, for a sizeable number of them, his ground-breaking queerness"; contrasts American celebrations of the Whitman 2019 birth-bicentennial with those held in Europe, the former focusing on "America's Whitman," the latter on "Whitman as a poet for the world"; offers an overview of the eight essays in this special issue, each listed separately in this bibliography.]

Avramović, Marko. "Walt Whitman and Aleksandar Ristović." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 50-67. [Examines how Whitman's poetry influenced Serbian poet Aleksandar Ristović (1933-1994) and traces Whitman's appearance in Ristović's work from his 1966 *Weddings* forward, including his poem "Za dva i dva" ["For Two and Two"], which addresses Whitman directly; goes on to track Whitman's influence on the Serbian poet's imagery and how key aspects of Ristović's own work—including catalogs and direct address—emerge from his reading of Whitman.]

Barnat, Dara. *Walt Whitman and the Making of Jewish American Poetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2023. [Offers "a genealogy of Jewish American poets in dialogue with Whitman, and with each other," and explores "how the lineage of Jewish American

poets responding to Whitman extends far beyond the likes of Allen Ginsberg," beginning with Emma Lazarus and Adah Isaacs Menken, and extending through twentieth-century poets such as Charles Reznikoff, Karl Shapiro, Kenneth Koch, Muriel Rukeyser, Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Alicia Suskin Ostriker, and Gerald Stern; argues that "Whitman has been adopted by Jewish American poets as a liberal symbol against exclusionary and anti-Semitic elements in high modernist literary culture" and examines how these poets' "turn to Whitman serves as a mode of exploring Jewish and American identity."]

Camboni, Marina. "Between Poetics and Politics: Enrico Nencioni's Reading of Whitman through Mazzini in Post-Risogimento Italy." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 8-22. [Challenges George Steiner's notion of translators as "performers who re-enact a text" and argues instead that "translators not only perform a text but take sides, and assume responsibility for the life they transfer"; goes on to track the "migratory process" of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* to "Italian shores," looking in detail at the work of Enrico Nencioni (1837-1896), "Whitman's first Italian passeur," and how he "informed critics" of "the ways [Whitman's] modern poetry could contribute to the shaping of a new cultural identity for the recently unified [Italian] nation"; goes on to show how Nencioni's essays and translations—in "adopting the political lens of Giuseppe Mazzini" (1805-1872)—evidence "the transnational and transcultural scope of Whitman's *Leaves*."]

Chu, Wei-Cheng. "Whitman's Homosexuality, Homopolitics, and Homonationalism: A Case for Historicist Parallel Reading." *Euramerica* 52 no. 3 (September 2022), 413-461. [Argues that "historicist parallel reading" (searching for "proximate agreements" instead of accepting "antipodal views") is the best strategy for reading Whitman, and demonstrates this through a focus on "three of Whitman's interrelated core thematics": (1) "the homotextuality of *Leaves of Grass*," which should be recognized as "a coded (and thereby hidden) level" that indicates Whitman was aware of "his (sexual) minority status"; (2) "Whitman's homopolitics (the hidden level of his openly promoted democratic comradeship)"; and (3) "Whitman's subscription to US national ideology and hence endorsement of white supremacy and glorification of imperialism," a reading that is challenged by Whitman's "more widespread reputation as a democratic internationalist and pro-immigration multiculturalist," thus complicating this aspect of his work.]

Cohen, Jonathan. "'Countersong to Walt Whitman': Pedro Mir's Radical Dialogue with the Bard." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 103-118. [Examines how Dominican poet Pedro Mir's (1913-2000) 1952 poem "Contracanto a Walt Whitman" "becomes a 'countersong' to the poetic 'I' of Whitman's . . . 'Song of Myself,'" capturing "Mir's dialogue with Whitman"; demonstrates how "Mir incorporates Whitman's voice by means of lines taken from the Spanish translation of 'Song of Myself' made by Spanish poet León Felipe" and how the English translation of Mir's poem (done in 1986 by the author

of this essay) presents unique challenges that the author illustrates through several revealing examples of back-translation, as he tries to create an English version of Mir's poem that "expands the boundaries of U.S. literature."]

Cowen, Richard. "Walt Whitman's expensive tomb right here in N.J.—under your boot soles." *NJ.com* (March 25, 2023), nj.com. [Summarizes Whitman's life in Camden, New Jersey, during his final twenty years and delineates the story of Whitman's tomb in Harleigh Cemetery.]

Darda, Joseph. "The Great American Baseball Novel: How Literature Invented the National Pastime." *American Literary History* 34 no. 4 (2022), 1335-1357. [Argues that "baseball nationalism needed the hard sell of sportswriters and the soft touch of literature," and that "first came the great American baseball novel, then the national pastime"; Section 1, "The Hurrah Game" (1340-1345), offers an overview of Whitman's fascination with the game, his writings about it, and his role as the first writer to "nationalize baseball."]

Eiselein, Gregory. Review of Maire Mullins, ed., *Hannah Whitman Heyde: The Complete Correspondence*. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 40 (Summer/Fall 2022), 84-87.

Erlandson, Andrew. "Intemperate Reform: Cripped Associations in Walt Whitman's *Franklin Evans*." *J19* 10 (Spring 2022), 179-185. [Examines Whitman's 1842 novel *Franklin Evans* in light of "disability studies and crip theory," arguing that intemperance and disability were often viewed as related, and emphasizing "the importance of studying the intersecting histories of disability and addiction, given that people placed in both categories often share an interrelated abject social position" (so that "Whitman's approach to the genre of the temperance novel and the underlying ideas of the movement were shaped by his relationship with his brother Eddy, a person with physical and mental disabilities"); reads the crowd scenes in the novel as Whitman's questioning of "what role people with non-normative bodies and minds can have in a democracy."]

Folsom, Ed. "Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 40 (Summer/Fall 2022), 88-94.

Ghazoul, Ferial J. "A Passage to More than India: The Suez Canal in the Poetics and Politics of Walt Whitman." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 25 no. 2 (June 2022), 216-231. [Sets out to "challenge the myth of Whitman as a prophet of brotherhood and a progressive poet" by revealing "the contradictions inherent in Whitman," showing how, in "Passage to India," Whitman's "nationalistic fervour" and his belief in "the imperial mission of the United States" are in tension with "an internationalism where Whitman or rather the poetic persona in the poem projects the brotherhood of all peoples and the integration of all continents."]

Guerrero-Strachan, Santiago Rodríguez. "Miguel de Unamuno and Juan Ramón Jiménez's

Creative Translations of Walt Whitman." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 23-36. [Analyzes Miguel de Unamuno's (1864-1936) partial translation of "So Long!," a poem he did not fully understand but blended with "his own spiritual endeavor"; and examines Juan Ramón Jiménez's (1881-1958) writings on Whitman, including his translation of selected lines from "Song of Myself," intended to be not a literal translation but a recreation of "the spirit and atmosphere of the poem"; discusses "why each poet felt attracted Whitman's work" and how "both poets viewed Whitman through the lens of their own poetics."]

Kajiwara, Teruko. "Tasting/Loving/Writing the Other: The Sensuous Poetics of Li-Young Lee and Walt Whitman." *Textual Practice* 37 no. 3 (2023), 416-434. [Explores poet Li-Young Lee's (b. 1957) "sensuous poetics . . . and its affinities with Walt Whitman's poetics," focusing on how both writers "vividly picture the speaker's reaching out to the Other by tasting—eating, touching and loving—and they associate the ecstatic self-Other encounter which occurs through erotic communication with the ecstasy generated in writing and reading a poem"; challenges the reading of Lee as simply a "diasporic poet of otherness" by illuminating "Lee's ambivalent struggle for sameness along with his consciousness of otherness."]

King, Neil R. *Shock: Let There Be Fright*. Philadelphia: Bold Faced Comics, 2022. [Graphic biography of Philadelphia television personality Joseph Zawislak ("Dr. Shock"), whose late-night B-movie series ended in the 1970s; contains an illustrated adaptation of Whitman's "This Compost," set in Harleigh Cemetery.]

Lain, Karah. Review of Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman*. *Religion and the Arts* 26 no. 3 (2022), 389-390.

Merchant, Natalie. *Keep Your Courage*. New York: Nonesuch, 2023. [Album of solo songs, containing "Song of Himself," a song that Merchant calls her "love letter" to Whitman, with lyrics beginning "Come sing your song of love bold, brave and proud."]

Millbern, David, director and writer. *100 Years of Men in Love: The Accidental Collection*. Pacific Palisades, CA: Here Media, 2022. [Film documentary, originally airing on Here TV; examines documentary evidence of men loving men in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with Whitman quotations throughout.]

Moe, Lukas. "Addressing Walt, Nursing Whitman." *J19* 10 (Fall 2022), 219-230. [Probes the similarities between "the COVID-19 pandemic" with its extreme pressures on health-care workers and Whitman's Civil War hospital work, and re-examines "Whitman's art of letter writing" during the war, especially letters he wrote for and about wounded and dying soldiers, creating "a style not meant for public consumption, a style authorized by Whitman but whose authorship was not strictly his . . . an archive of pain and longing on some level lost"; also looks at letters former soldiers Whitman had nursed

wrote to the poet after the war, "gestures of distance-defying connection," where "the sender turns the tables by preempting the receiver"; examines these writings that demanded "generalizing and glossing over" in relation to the "video chat in a plague year" as well as to the final "phone calls made from the COVID ward" that allowed those dying to hear a distant goodbye from those they loved.]

Murray, Caleb. "'Dash me with Amorous Wet, I can Repay You': Relational Ethics, Queer Ecology, and Walt Whitman's Poetics of Trans-Human Kinship." *Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture* 16 no. 3 (2022), 370-393. [Argues that scholars have generally misinterpreted Whitman's embrace of contradiction, seeing it as the poet's acceptance of both sides of "well-trod binaries" like "body-soul, sacred-profane, nature-culture, and woman-man"; proposes instead that "a queer attention to the poetic construction of such binaries reveals them to be fluid and ultimately non-binary," and so "in poeticizing the construction of binary logic (e.g., man-woman), Whitman and his speakers reveal such purportedly self-contained and discrete domains to be open, fluid, and co-constituting," leading readers to a new "understanding of [the] ethical and political implications of Whitman's queerly relational nature ethics."]

Muschietti, Delfina. "Whitman-Borges-Dickinson-Dylan, and the boundaries of literature." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 86-102. [Moves through a broad range of writers who "blaze the trail of contemporary poetry at the end of the 19th century" (Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Lewis Carroll, Whitman, Dickinson) and who introduce "free verse and colloquial language" that creates "a rhythmical map that links poetry to music and visual arts, the experience of mass-culture, and the experimentation with language" that result in another large group of recent poets, from Borges to Sylvia Plath to Alejandra Pizarnik to, most notably, Bob Dylan, "who takes the legacy to the outermost boundaries of what we call literature, creating a new artistic field," taking "to the edge the legacy left by Whitman and Dickinson . . . leading poetry back to its musical origins" and making "memorable, formally perfect lines stand."]

Napolitano, Ann. *Hello Beautiful*. New York: The Dial Press, 2023. [Novel, suffused with Whitman's ideas; his lines are quoted throughout by the character Charlie.]

Nori, Giuseppe. "*A Few Musts* di un bardo americano Walt Whitman e i confini transatlantici della poetica romantica" ["A Few Musts by an American Bard: Walt Whitman and the Transatlantic Borders of Romantic Poetics"]. *LEA:Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente* 11 (2022), 247-270. [Examines "Whitman's poetics of the soul, between 'sympathy' and 'egotism,'" focusing on the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* and viewing the work "in the larger context of 'Transatlantic Romanticism,'" while arguing that Whitman sought to "bring to completion . . . a whole Romantic tradition of verse which had flowered half a century earlier in the Old World"; in Italian.]

Oliver, Mary. "Mi amigo Walt Whitman"/"My Friend Walt Whitman." *Hermēneus* 24 (2022),

595-599. [Reprints poet Mary Oliver's 1992 essay "My Friend Walt Whitman" in both English and a Spanish translation by Manuel Barrós, with an introduction by Barrós.]

Phelan, Joseph. "'One of the Roughs': Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself,' and *Bleak House*." *Notes and Queries* 69 (September 2022), 254-256. [Notes Whitman's admiration of Dickens and his defense of Dickens' "bad characters," then goes on to note "one striking example of Whitman's indebtedness to Dickens which has so far passed unnoticed"—Whitman's introduction of himself, by name, on p. 29 of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* ("Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos"), where Whitman's self-description as "one of the roughs" echoes the Dickens' character "Mr George" ("the epitome of the bluff, straightforward, honest man of the people"), who twice in *Bleak House* (1852-1853) describes himself as "one of the roughs."]

Rumeau, Delphine. "The Russian Whitman and World Literature." *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 68-85. [Examines "Whitman's reception in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century and in the first two decades of the USSR" from the perspective of "how Whitman's reception was part of emerging conceptions of World literature, first as a dense network where texts circulated, then as constituting an international revolutionary canon"; goes on to show how Whitman's reception in Russia and the USSR "echoes that of other European countries, and how, in return, it shaped Whitman's reception as a communist poet in US Proletarian poetry and, after World War II, in Latin American poetry."]

Schmidgall, Gary. "Two Resplendent Suns: Dante Alighieri and Walt Whitman." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 40 (Summer/Fall 2022), 1-83. [Sets out "to align the masterpieces, lives, and legacies of Dante Alighieri and Walt Whitman"; examines Whitman's scattered comments on Dante and the evidence of his reading of Dante's work; illuminates "a deep affinity between Alighieri and Whitman—an affinity that has autobiographical, aesthetic, philosophical, political, and even cosmological dimensions"; argues that, "in many ways, Whitman was Dante's revived self" and goes on to examine in depth the two poets' pedagogical impulses, their emphasis on "dreams and visions," their similarities as "autobiographers and cosmologists," their views of "the body, sex, sexuality," their "thirst for freedom" and belief in "free will," their embrace of pride, and their centering of their work on Love and Hope; examines several Whitman poems as sharing "resonances" with Dante's *Comedy*; concludes by summarizing "some instances of . . . the double-helix relationship of Dante and Walt."]

Seeger, Sean. Review of Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Whitman*. *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 26 no. 2 (2022), 188-190.

Sledge, John. "Poet on the Levee: Walt Whitman's New Orleans." *French Quarter Journal* (2023), frenchquarterjournal.com. [Review of Stefan Schöberlein, ed., *Walt Whitman's New Orleans*.]

Spitzer, Nicole Francis. "The Wanderer in the Supermarket: An Examination of Consumer Culture in Cold War America." *Textual Practice* 37 no. 3 (2023), 456-467. [Contains a substantial analysis of Allen Ginsberg's "A Supermarket in California" (1956), with its evocation of Whitman; argues that "the America of Whitman and the one of Ginsberg are worlds apart," but "if anyone can aid Ginsberg in rediscovering the spirit and soul of America it is Whitman."]

Strack, Franziska. "Sounds Like America: The Elemental Politics of Walt Whitman and John Luther Adams." *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 70 no. 1 (2022), 23-37. [Places Whitman in conversation with contemporary composer John Luther Adams, searching for a "sonic-elemental account of American geography and community" and arguing that both artists "treat America as a constellation of elemental relations between bodies and materialities, and that sound helps to discern and describe those relations," creating "an elemental politics that relates political actions to their surrounding soundscapes, thus emphasizing communality while rebuffing nationalism and spanning across multiple times and places while remaining rooted in specific present situations."]

Sulimma, Maria. "Scripting Urbanity through Intertextuality and Consumerism in N. K. Jemisin's *The City We Became*: 'I'm Really Going to Have to Watch Some Better Movies about New York.'" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 63 (2022), 571-586. [Examines N. K. Jemisen's 2020 novel *The City We Became* and traces "intertextual storytelling practices" in the work, including ways that it "rescripts Whitman-inspired urban multitudes."]

Tamâianu-Morita, Emma. "Over-Specification in Japanese Translations of 'Song of Myself.'" *TIES: Revue de littérature: Textes, Images et Sons* [*TIES: Journal of Literature: Text, Image, Sound*] 7 (2022), 119-139. [Compares six Japanese translations (from 1921 through 1998) of "Song of Myself," focusing on five lines from Section 4 of the poem, arguing that "the Japanese versions display a noticeable tendency towards lexical, grammatical and stylistic over-specification," which "significantly narrow[s] down the range of possible interpretations of the text," reflecting "the translators' misguided attempt to 'clarify' the text, thus profoundly altering the Japanese reader's interpretive experience"; offers "a cross-linguistic comparison with several Spanish, French and German translations" as a way to seek "more appropriate solutions" for Japanese translations of Whitman.]

Turner, Jack. "Whitman's Undemocratic Vistas: Mortal Anxiety, National Glory, White Supremacy." *American Political Science Review* 117 no. 2 (2023), 705-718. [Disputes the "recent theoretical celebrations of *Democratic Vistas*" and seeks to "expose the antidemocratic side" of Whitman's essay "by analyzing (1) its philosophy of death and (2) its politics of race"; argues that "Whitman framed his immortalist response to death within an imperialist historical teleology" that "entailed violations of Native sovereignty, the political inequality of Black Americans, and the projection of both

Black and Native peoples' evolutionary extinction," thus rendering *Democratic Vistas* "both necropolitical and white supremacist."]

Tuscan, John. "The President and the Poet." *Gettysburg Times* (March 24, 2023), gettysburgtimes.com. [Summarizes Whitman's and Abraham Lincoln's mutual admiration for each other and suggests how the writings of both men "invoke an American democratic ethos and egalitarian principles."]

Vander Schaaff, Sarah. *American Poet: Whitman's Warnings*. 2023. [Play about Whitman creating *Leaves of Grass* during a dangerous time for American unity; staged reading performed at Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site, Huntington Station, NY, on June 10, 2023, produced by Jared Hershkowitz, directed by Milton Justice, with Erik Lochtefeld as Whitman.]

Young-Mason, Jeanine. "Walt Whitman's Legacy of Compassion." *Clinical Nurse Specialist* 36 (November/December 2022), 346-348. [Recounts "Whitman's personal and intimate experience of caring for wounded and dying soldiers during the Civil War" and reprints "The Wound-Dresser" as an example of "his now notable volunteer nursing career—without a formal nursing education," and as proof that "Whitman suffered with his soldiers in this timeless action of compassion."]

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).

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.)

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QUOTING AND CITING WALT WHITMAN'S WORK

When quoting from individual editions of *Leaves of Grass* (the 1855, 1856, 1860, 1867, 1870-1871, 1881, 1891), please use the facsimiles available online on the *Walt Whitman Archive,* and cite the edition, date, and page numbers, followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (www.whitmanarchive.org)." Do not list the URL of individual page images or the date accessed. After the initial citation, contributors should abbreviate as "*LG*" followed by the year of the edition and the page number (e.g., *LG*1855 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	*The Early Poems and Fiction*, edited by Thomas L. Brasher (1963)
PW	*Prose Works 1892*, edited by Floyd Stovall. Vol. 1: *Specimen Days* (1963); Vol. 2: *Collect and Other Prose* (1964). with a Composite Index (1977); Vol. 7, edited by Ted Genoways (2004).
DBN	*Daybooks and Notebooks*, 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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Whitman's portrait hanging above Dylan Thomas's writing desk in his boathouse studio at Laugharne, West Wales, December 21, 1953. Photo by Express/Stringer, Hulton Archive, via Getty Images. See pp. 95-126.