Walt Whitman's Post-Transcendentalist Poetics of New York

Chiara Howe
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Andrew Hook Centre for American Studies
School of Critical Studies
University of Glasgow

Abstract

This materialist study considers the place of Walt Whitman's poetics in relation to American transcendentalist 'philosophies' by examining the importance of place to those ideas. Unlike his protean poetic persona, Whitman's world was New York. My reading of *Leaves of Grass* views Whitman's transcendentalist poetics of New York as a geocultural phenomenon of New England transcendentalism. By 1862, Whitman had left New York just twice and published three editions of *Leaves*. For this reason and their proximity to the historical moment of transcendentalism, I focus on the three antebellum editions (1855, 1856, 1860), tracing Whitman's democratic poetics in relation to the New York 'flavour' of transcendentalism expressed in the early poetry. I analyse sex, the body, and the city as the conceptual site of this facet of Whitman's poetics, its geographical site(s) being New York, Brooklyn, and Long Island. Most often I refer to 'Emersonian' transcendentalism, or the transcendentalist ideas contained in the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose influence is most easily traced.

The thesis is structured in three parts: 'Locations', 'Vocations', and 'Print & Periodical'. 'Locations' maps Whitman's relationships with the city more broadly in connection with his transcendentalist poetics and then with Long Island, Brooklyn, and Manhattan; 'Vocations' surveys Whitman's work as a Long Island school teacher and Brooklyn house builder; and 'Print & Periodical' reads Whitman as a product of 19th century print and periodical culture in Brooklyn and Manhattan, as well as of artistic contexts, literary and otherwise, and cultural contexts like bohemianism. Within the material and textual instabilities of antebellum New York, such contexts were essential to the development of an emphatically material poetics distinct from New England transcendentalism in its belief in sex, the body, and the city. The transcendentalists gathered at Emerson's Concord home; the bohemians at Pfaff's, an underground beer saloon on Broadway which Whitman began to visit daily in 1859. Examining how Whitman inherits and departs from his transcendental heritage, this research argues for the ways in which life in New York led him to transform transcendentalist thought, some of which were more faithful to the transcendentalist conception of self than others had been. I call this Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of New York.

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Closer to home, I'm so grateful to Panda, Grab, and Bean; to my late grandparents, Anne and Jim; and to my mum, Stephanie.

Author's declaration

I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and I certify that this thesis is my own work, except where indicated by referencing, and that I have followed good academic practices.

Signed: *C. Howe*

Date: 1st March 2023

Introduction, or 'a bit nearer the beginning than any other spot'

That Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* reads at times like the peculiar marriage of a New Yorker and New England transcendentalism is a curiosity to which the book's very first reviewers alerted their readers in 1855. Charles Eliot Norton (*Putnam's Monthly*, qtd. in *Leaves of Grass* 1856: 368–9) said it read like 'a mixture of Yankee transcendentalism and New York rowdyism, and, what must be surprising to both these elements, they here seem to fuse and combine with the most perfect harmony.' You'll see from my citation that Whitman published Norton's review of the first *Leaves* in the second. As a New York journalist with a penchant for self-promotion, he naturally included a number of reviews of the first edition in the subsequent one. The 'New Yorker's transcendentalism' critical strand endured, but especially in the course of the first three antebellum editions and largely in a less favourable tone than Norton's. Reviews portrayed *Leaves* instead as 'an odd New York urban adjunct of the Transcendentalist movement' as Ed Folsom (2010a: 276) puts it, as New England transcendentalism gone awry. 'Properly speaking,' Roger Asselineau (1998: 737) points out, 'for geographical and social reasons, Walt Whitman was not a transcendentalist, since transcendentalism was a New England phenomenon affecting American scholars and clergymen's relatives.' My research examines the implications of those reasons by reading Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of New York as a geocultural phenomenon of New England transcendentalism.

Since this study is concerned with Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of place, there are a couple of things to note about its key terms — New York and transcendentalism — before pivoting to Whitman's New York complications of New England transcendentalism. I use New York to mean Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Long Island. Today, New York City (NYC) encompasses five boroughs: the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. In Whitman's day NYC was interchangeable with Manhattan and Brooklyn was then New York's sister city, before being annexed to NYC in 1898. Geographically, Brooklyn is 'on' Long Island and this is as true today as it was in the 19th century. When I refer to Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of New York, I'm concerned with Manhattan (which was then NYC in its entirety), Brooklyn, and Long Island, rather than the state of New York in its entirety. The second clarification is that the transcendentalists didn't all sing from the same hymn sheet about their own movement or the legitimacy of Whitman's place as its poetic flowering. Their incongruity and reputation for nebulous abstraction can make the term slippery. Dickens wrote in *American Notes* (1842: 39) of being 'given to understand that whatever was unintelligible would be certainly transcendental.' The most well-known of the transcendentalist circle was Emerson, who in 1842 defined 'The Transcendentalist' (1884: 265): 'What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism', he told the Masonic Temple in Boston, 'Idealism as it appears in 1842.' Fearing a solitary definition would be too straightforward, he (ibid. 272) offered another stylish if mystifying answer: 'Transcendentalism is the Saturnalia or excess of Faith.' In print (ibid. 269), 'The Transcendentalist' is subtitled 'A Lecture Read at the Masonic Temple, Boston, January, 1842', whereas the *Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* (2010: xxiii) states December 1841. The difference is inconsequential, perhaps just a typo, but if Emerson did address an audience in 1841 about how transcendentalism was idealism as it appears in 1842 it would serve quite neatly as an indication of his

philosophically forward-thinking position and of the rationale for meaningfully discussing Whitman as part of that post-transcendentalist future.

Offering a more scholarly definition, Phyllis Cole (2020: 67) helpfully proposes that 'affirmation of intuitive thought, questioning of inherited authorities, and recognition of a divinely charged natural universe' should feature in any glossing of American transcendentalism. The second bears special relevance to Whitman's transcendentalist inheritance, which I trace largely though not solely through 'Emersonian' transcendentalism or the thoughts contained in Emerson's work. Together with Jana L. Argersinger, Cole has recently worked *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism* (2014) that does not begin, as has been tradition, with Emerson. Their collection of essays opens with one of abolitionist and women's rights activist's Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New York* (1845). Musing on having herself been called, or accused of being, a transcendentalist, Child (1845: 128) wrote that 'New-York is in too much of a hurry scurry all the time, to "lie still in the sunshine" and ripen such fruit as either transcendental philosophy, or its poverty-stricken imitations. It never enters into the head of a Wall-street merchant, that he is, as a friend of ours asserts, "personally responsible for the obliquity of the earth's axis."' The friend responsible for that assertion was Amos Bronson Alcott, known for his conversational educational experiments. From Child, Argersinger and Cole turn to Margaret Fuller who moved from Boston to New York to work as a journalist in the role of literary editor for Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune*. Whitman knew far more of Fuller than he did Child, and more of Alcott and Thoreau than Child, too. Emerson's influence is the one most in evidence, however. Whitman (*PW*: 322) said that 'the best part of Emersonianism' is 'it breeds the giant that destroys itself.'[1] After reading *Leaves of Grass*, Emerson (qtd. in *LG*56: 345) famously greeted Whitman 'at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start.' By way of thanks, Whitman seized on this practically gift-wrapped opportunity for self-promotion. After having the letter published in the *Tribune*, he did so again in the following year's (ibid.) edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Among a number of reviews — good and bad — of which Norton's was one, Whitman wrote a lengthy open reply to Emerson. He titled these addenda, or tipped in paratextual material, 'Leaves-Droppings' — a pun dripping with insouciance. As a final flourish, lest any reader fail to flick through 300-odd pages of the 1856 *Leaves* to do any eavesdropping, Whitman embossed the words 'I Greet you at the/Beginning of A/Great Career/ R W Emerson' on the book's spine, in gold. These beginnings are so familiar and so frequently retold that it is tempting, though quite impossible, not to rehash them. They set the scene for what an unsigned article by Whitman ('New York Dissected: Street Yarn', 1856, *WWA*) called a 'sturdy, self-conscious microcosmic, prose-poetical' book, 'an incongruous hash of mud and gold.'

Although the contemporary perceptions of Whitman's transcendentalist inheritance and its relationship to New York have been critical commonplace since the inception of *Leaves of Grass* and many

[1] Throughout the thesis, I abbreviate Whitman's *Complete Prose Works* (1892) to *PW* and the page number. '*WWA*' denotes a source taken from the *Walt Whitman Archive.* When quoting from *Leaves of Grass*, I cite editions using '*LG*55', '*LG*56', '*LG*60', and so on followed by the page number. The '1860' *Leaves* is more accurately termed the 1860–1861 *Leaves*, as per the book's stated (and Whitman's preferred) years of publication, but for simplicity's sake I use '*LG*60'. The same applies to the 1871–82 and 1881–82 editions.

volumes about transcendentalism mention him, sustained attention to the relationship between the poet's New York and his transcendentalist poetics has been scant. This thesis considers with specific focus and at length how the particular geocultural character of antebellum New York complicates Whitman's reception of New England (and especially Emersonian) transcendentalism to produce poetry that Emerson (qtd. in Folsom and Price 2005: 25) called 'a remarkable mixture of the Bhagvat Gita and the *New York Herald*', by a poet one reviewer called the '"enfant terrible" of transcendentalism' (*The Catholic World*, 1882, *WWA*). I consider the New York 'hurry scurry' as an incubator of a particular 'flavour' of transcendentalism. My angle is a materialist, place-driven reading of the antebellum *Leaves of Grass* in relation to transcendentalism. By 1862, Whitman had left New York twice and published three editions: 1855, 1856, 1860–61. For this reason and their proximity to the historical moment of transcendentalism, I focus on this trio, tracing Whitman's democratic poetics in relation to the transcendentalist strain. After 1860 Whitman also began to distance himself from Emerson, his averred 'Master' (*LG*56: 346). Emerson had recommended certain excisions be made to the 1860 text, the first edition to have attracted a Boston publisher, Thayer & Eldridge. The Concordian advised the removal of some of the book's more explicit passages in order to improve its saleability and circulation, and Whitman refused. This study contributes to and synthesises two traditions in Whitman studies. The first considers the degree to which Whitman was the transcendentalist poet Emerson called for and the second regards Whitman as a poet of the city, or more properly a poet of New York City.

A single context of any kind is unlikely to cut it as far as concerns Whitman's poetics of person and place. Narrowing the locus to antebellum New York, or Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Long Island, my research views Whitman as a poet of contexts, as Joanna Levin and Edward Whitley do in their edited volume *Walt Whitman in Context* (2018). Betsy Erkkila observed in her landmark work, *Whitman the Political Poet* (1989: 7), that 'the religiospiritual and ultimately transcendental focus' of Whitman's early biographers has often 'remove[d] Whitman's work from the historic specificity of his time'. Arguing for the centrality of Whitman's political life to his democratic poetics, she (ibid. 6) contends that to discuss his work 'in relation to a line of poetic development that runs from Edward Taylor to Ralph Waldo Emerson to Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens reflects the privileging of New England and the "New English" sensibility in America that Whitman challenged.' 'By dwelling on Emerson in our study of Whitman,' Erkkila writes (ibid. 69), 'we have tended to dehistoricize him, privileging the transcendental value of the religiospiritual poet with roots in working-class culture in Brooklyn and New York.' While my focus is not concentratedly political in the same way, and I do to a degree consider Whitman within the line of which Erkkila is understandably suspicious, or a short stretch of it, I do so by analysing this transcendentalist poetics as a geocultural phenomenon of New England transcendentalism. William Dean Howells famously moved from Boston to New York in literal and symbolic departure from New England hegemony, fictionalised in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889), as the US literary epicentre travelled south, a shift Whitman anticipated by some thirty years. My analysis acknowledges New England dominance, positioned in relation to a New York-inflected 'streetwise poetics' (Erkkila 1989: 79), and it considers how Whitman navigated this transition.

The Whitman-as-transcendentalist and Whitman-as-New-Yorker critical strains share in common an interest in democratic poetics. In his 1841 *American Renaissance*, F. O. Matthiessen reflected on the shared

democratic impulse between Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. For Matthiessen (1968: 532) and many since, Whitman 'was attracted by the wider sweep of the city, and though his language is a natural product, it is the natural product of a Brooklyn journalist of the eighteen-forties who had previously been a country schoolteacher and a carpenter's helper, and who had finally felt an irresistible impulse to be a poet.' Later, in *From the Heart of Europe*, Matthiessen (1948: 90) called Whitman 'the central figure of our literature affirming the democratic faith', an assertion to which the poet's attraction to 'the wider sweep' is central. As to the 'democratic faith' Matthiessen identified, here I'll introduce Lawrence Buell's *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (1973). Buell (ibid. 168) holds that transcendentalism is 'the natural religion of democracy', that there are 'visionary' as well as 'political, or ideological' dimensions to the democratic in Emerson or Whitman. Whitman himself (*PW*: 278) wrote of his 'basic purpose', his 'religious purpose': 'Not of course to exhibit itself in the old ways, as in writing hymns or psalms with an eye to the church-pew, or to express a conventional pietism, or the sickly yearnings of devotees, but in new ways, and aiming at the widest sub-bases and inclusions of humanity, and tallying the fresh air of sea and land.' Beyond the odd reference to Whitman's 'metropolitan expansiveness' (1973: 312), Buell does not concern himself with the poet's particular island metropolis and Whitman is but a part of his scope. Whitman's prose-poetic preface (*LG*55: xi) calls for the poet to be 'himself the age transfigured', and here I would add 'the place', too, in line with the geographical dimension of my study.

David S. Reynolds's *Beneath The American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1989), which has a chapter on 'Whitman's Transfigured Sensationalism', examines the poet's 'transfiguring' of text and context. Reynolds constructs a similar argument in *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (1996), a book comprised of a number of New York contexts in addition to the Emersonian or transcendentalist context. James Dougherty's *Walt Whitman and the Citizen's Eye* (1993) also considers Whitman's urbanism alongside the transcendentalist influence, amongst other influences, literary, journalistic, and artistic. Dougherty's eye is trained on the interaction of subject and object in Whitman as it relates to visual modes, to seeing itself, and to the visionary qualities of his democratic poetics. The book is also interspersed with comparisons to Emersonian models of relation and selfhood, which makes it a significant precursor to my research. On the subject of the democratic (and Democratic) in Whitman as it relates to the journalism, Jason Stacy's *Walt Whitman's Multitudes* (2008) also considers the poet's journalistic career as part of his 'language experiment' (Whitman 1904: viii) and more specifically his experiments in persona. Reynolds (2013) has more recently written about Whitman's journalism as part of the 'long foreground' to *Leaves*, and Levin and Whitley's (2014) *Whitman among the Bohemians* compiles essays examining the context of bohemia in antebellum New York within the wider print and periodical sphere, such as Karen Karbiener's (2014) research into how a specific paper, the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, brought Whitman physically and politically to the Manhattan haunt of the bohemians. There are thus overlaps in geographical and periodical gathering 'places'. The transcendentalists congregated at Emerson's Concord home, the bohemians gathered at Pfaff's, a beer cellar on Broadway. Leading up to the 1860 *Leaves*, Whitman spent considerable time with the Pfaffians, headed by 'King of Bohemia' Henry Clapp Jr and his *Saturday Press*, a significant cultural context to my antebellum focus.

Jay Grossman (2003: 115) recommends we view 'Whitman's work (and Emerson's, for that matter) as originating in, and reflective of, a much more capacious discursive context than the singularity of an author-driven canonical history permits.' Most often, I refer to Emersonian transcendentalism, or the ideas Emerson expressed in essays, lectures, and so forth. With the qualification that Grossman makes, I do so because, for Whitman, Emerson was largely synonymous with transcendentalism. With a view to characterising Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of New York, I consider how local contexts and local manifestations of broader contexts led Whitman to imbibe, interpret, or transform the transcendentalist thought emanating from New England. The thesis moves from particular New York locations to Whitman's particular vocations, before shifting to print and periodical contexts, as well as some cultural and artistic ones, with some natural imbrication. Chapter One considers 'Locations', Chapter Two 'Vocations', and Chapter Three 'Print & Periodical' contexts. Whitman's transcendentalist complications, if you like, can be grouped broadly as sex, the body, and the city, and that tripartite framework can similarly be affixed to the democratic in Whitman. My research is therefore calibrated to reflect the symbiosis between Whitman's democratic and transcendentalist poetics, which is a significant foundation of those groupings. I understand the democratic in Whitman as George Kateb (1990) does, as 'the culture of democracy'. This includes 'the connectedness that emanates from democratic individuality' (ibid. 546, 547), as well as the 'democratic transcendence of democratic culture' made possible by 'philosophical self-respect'.

Beyond Whitman's 1855, 1856, and 1860 *Leaves*, I draw democratically on his journalism from the 1840s onwards, as well as archival sources like manuscript notes, annotations, marginalia, and paratextual material. Many of these are made accessible by the digital *Walt Whitman Archive*, edited by Matt Cohen, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price. The *Archive* contains all editions of *Leaves of Grass*, with transcriptions and scanned page images. This means the books are not only very accessible but that our sense is retained — insofar as this is possible in a digital age — of the text as a material object. This is not only timely but crucial to a materialist study that is especially concerned with Whitman's curiously and emphatically material constructions of spiritual transcendence in connection with the material conditions of antebellum New York. As Matt Cohen observes in his introduction to *The New Walt Whitman Studies* (2020: 1, 9), 'digital storage and transmission platforms enable another "new life" of forms' and Whitman's 'cachet in the domain of materialist approaches to literary studies has been on the rise.' The 'new life of the new forms' is announced in the first sentence of the first *Leaves* (*LG*55: iii). I combine close readings of poems with the broader literary critical approach taken to the aforementioned sources, which contains elements of biography and historicism, intellectual history and historiography. The biographical strand has dominated scholarship since before Whitman's death, though the earliest biographies are in many respects hagiographies, the contents of which have since been revised by historiography. William Douglas O'Connor's *The Good Gray Poet* (1866) and John Burroughs's *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867) came first in the hagiographical line-up. Whitman essentially co-authored the latter, as he did Richard Maurice's Bucke's *Walt Whitman* (1883). A century later, Paul Zweig's *Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet* (1984) testified to the endurance of the mythologising vogue in Whitman studies, a vogue in which the poet enthusiastically participated. Jerome Loving (1984: 42, 44) reviewed Zweig's book as 'a prose poem about

Whitman', 'Whitman at 36,000 feet'. Whitman always claimed that *Leaves* was the 'tallying' of his life — though he variously upheld different elements as totally and utterly, absolutely and unquestionably the most vitally important of the lot — so the longstanding biographical critical tradition is unsurprising, as is the proliferation of Walt Whitmans. As to Whitman's life in text and context, more and more of his prose has been discovered, including Zachary Turpin's 2015 unearthing of 'Manly Health and Training' (1858) and, the following year, an earlier novella: *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* (1852). 'Manly Health' was published in the *New-York Atlas*, a paper that Stefan Schöberlein, Stephanie M. Blalock, Kevin McMullen, and Jason Stacy (2022) have argued was the seat of one of Whitman's editorial stints. They do so with the aid of computational linguistics, which has supported other attribution claims in Whitman studies. As Stacy (2017: 361) points out, 'the medium of digital editing allows the flexibility to adapt according to new scholarship and technology, which will no doubt continue to shape the ways in which Whitman's long foreground is realized in the digital format.'

Following the observations of Whitman's early reviewers, biographers continued to document the Emersonian and transcendentalist influence, which the poet himself at times denied completely and at others upheld as indispensable to the genesis of his book. Many scholars accept transcendentalism as *an* influence on the strange poetic 'stucco' that is *Leaves of Grass*. William P. Trent (1903) understood Whitman as a transcendentalist who was different because he absorbed the life of the nation. In *Walt Whitman* Bliss Perry (1906) considered Whitman's indebtedness to the transcendentalists, within the gradual and accumulative nature of the poet's life in text and context, which a number of other scholars then took up. Leon Howard's 1932 essay, 'For a Critique of Whitman's Transcendentalism', turned a critical eye to the continuing assumption 'that Whitman was definitely of the Transcendentalists or that his poems mark a revival of New England Transcendental thought, modified in its expression by the influence of a rough and more crudely democratic environment'. Although passages of Whitman spoke to 'the communion of the individual soul with the infinite', for Howard (1932: 82, 83) the crux of the irreconcilable difference between Whitman and the transcendentalists came down to 'the avowal of equality between body and soul.' Howard concluded (ibid. 85) that 'the famous conversation between Emerson and Whitman beneath the Boston Elms', when Whitman was in Boston to see his 1860 publishers Thayer & Eldridge, represented 'a battle at the practical point of contact between two lines of thought which were fundamentally different.' Buell (1973) instead sees, as I do, Whitman as willing to take certain tenets of transcendentalism (transcendental egoism, or the self as god, for instance) further than his antecedents, not as a fundamentally different philosophy but, in some ways, a more faithfully transcendentalist one. I build on this by synthesising this critical strain with the New York one in order to argue for both the commensurability of *Leaves* with transcendentalism and for the complications arising from that book's distinct geocultural habitat. Asselineau's *The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature* (1980) — which, like Buell's, has a Whitman chapter — demonstrated a difficulty one faces in writing about transcendentalism. Buell (1982: 117) took issue with Asselineau's use of transcendentalist as 'almost a rubber-band term', applied to anyone who might '"prefer the infinity of dreams to the finite material world"'. My research is sensitive to diluting that term and precisely locates transcendentalist ideas in texts, like Emerson's *Essays: First Series* (1841) and *Second Series* (1844), when considering their applicability to Whitman.

Among more recent essays on Whitman's transcendentalism, Ed Folsom (2010a) has compared the transcendentalist poetics of Whitman and Dickinson and Mitchell Santine Gould (2007; 2016) has studied the parallels between the Quaker Inner Light and transcendentalism in Whitman's confluence of influences. Regina Schober (2018) has traced some 'points of contact between transcendentalist thought and Whitman's poetry, especially as manifest in their notion of interconnectedness', and examined Whitman's transformations via the body, the city, and the masses. Emphasising the 19th century's changing material culture, Blake Bronson-Bartlett (2018) has compared Emerson's and Whitman's responses to the shifting material culture of writing 'From Loose Leaves to Readymades' and Marianne Noble (2019) has compared Emerson's and Whitman's transcendental approaches to the physical culture of human contact. In addition to the transcendentalist connection, my research is enmeshed in criticism that seeks to recognise Whitman's urbanism, whether more generally or born from the very specific milieu of antebellum New York. In *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1991: 156) Dana Brand complained of there being in Whitman studies 'surprisingly little discussion of the nature and contexts of Whitman's imaginative interaction with the city'. Although in the thirty years since there have been efforts in that direction, as is the case in the Whitman-as-transcendentalist critical strain, Whitman-as-New-Yorker studies tend to take the forms of an essay or book chapter rather than of a full-length study. Whitley (2020: 148) identifies in critical trends 'a "sights-and-sounds" approach' to Whitman as a poet of the city. The other approach that Whitley (ibid. 149) isolates is the literary world, or the institutions through which Whitman experienced New York as it swelled to displace Boston as the literary epicentre of the United States, which my research reflects methodologically, as well as thematically, in its recourse to the journalism.

This study draws on both approaches in synthesising the transcendentalist and urban strains to argue for specific New York influences — material, sensory, and institutional — on Whitman's own fusion of that curious pair. Chapter One, 'Locations', begins with an overview of Whitman as 'a poet of the city'. I then trace his transcendentalist poetics of that island metropolis to rural Long Island, where he was born, considering geographical, cultural, and textual foundations, before moving westwards to Brooklyn and Manhattan. Chapter Two, 'Vocations', also begins by introducing notions of work and labour in *Leaves*. It then returns to Long Island and Whitman's early performances for its country schoolrooms, before moving back to Brooklyn to discuss not cerebral but physical forms of building the future in a restlessly redeveloped and materially unstable market landscape. Chapter Three, 'Print & Periodical', is based in the literary world of Brooklyn and Manhattan. In addition to bookmaking and journalism, it considers artistic contexts, which can be grouped as performance and image, and cultural contexts like bohemianism. This study is an effort best described by modifying Whitman's metaphor for his own face as his 'heart's geography's map' (1876, *WWA*). Nestled within other approaches, it is a poetic cartography seeking to show how Whitman's New York led him to warp and whet the compass of New England transcendentalism.

Chapter One

Locations

Whitman told his first biographer, Richard Maurice Bucke (1883: 67), that *Leaves of Grass* originated from his 'life in Brooklyn and New York from 1838 to 1853, absorbing a million people, for fifteen years, with an intimacy, and eagerness, an abandon, probably never equalled'. This has a neat and attractive specificity, though for its sake Long Island is omitted, as is the shorter period immediately preceding the book's 1855 publication. In the first iteration of 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 47), we are told — prosaically — that 'This is the city . . . . and I am one of the citizens', which is by comparison quite vague. It features the long elliptical pause found only in the first *Leaves* and the frustrating Whitmanian deixis: 'This is the city', not New York City or his city, but the city. This short line contains multitudes in capturing the essence of the civic religion that buttresses the democratic strengths of Whitman's transcendentalist poetics. It states the political creed upon which he based his ranging democratic poetics and within which sex and the body were sacred. This chapter looks first at Whitman as a 'poet of *the* city', an identity that so clearly demarcates him from his transcendentalist antecedents, before considering the specific terrains of Long Island, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. I argue for how the city, more broadly and then in connection with particular locations, inflects Whitman's reception of transcendentalist thought. I'll begin with one of Whitman's best known urban poems, which takes place between what were then the sister cities he credited with the growth of *Leaves*.

'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' began life as 'Sun-Down Poem' in the 1856 edition of *Leaves* and gained its present title in 1860. Whitman mixes verb tenses, assuming his position in the present and placing us in the future. He shifts himself into the past tense and subtly shifts his future reader into the present. In places (*LG*56: 215), tenses chafe against each other in a way that weakens one's grasp on the temporal progression at hand. The movement is non-linear, as if governed by the gentle bobbing of the ferry, up and down, side to side, back and forth:

> The men and women I saw were all near to me,
> Others the same—others who look back on me,
> because I looked forward to them,
> The time will come, though I stop here today and
> tonight.

Whitman's 'here', his 'today and tonight', are left open. We might imagine 'here' as the Fulton Ferry in the 1850s, carrying commuters across the East River, past seagulls, ships, docks, between Brooklyn and Manhattan. 'Here' could refer to the physical page of the poem, held by the reader as it was by the poet. To 'stop here' could be to punctuate the line in the act of writing it. Whitman wrote in *Specimen Days* (*PW*: 17) that ferries 'afford inimitable, streaming, never-failing, living poems.' In one sense, then, 'here' is both 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' and the ferry itself. That Whitman would jot lines on the move, for example on

a ferry, and declaim poetry in motion, atop an omnibus for instance, gives this special resonance. The poem is set in a hinterland of definite terms where tenses, and the temporal categories they represent, elide with ease. As M. Wynn Thomas (1987: 108) writes, river ferries, omnibuses, and horsecars were 'a striking instance of how, in a democracy, what used to be the privilege of a few was now being made available to all.' This transition is parodied most memorably by Mark Twain (1895: 325–328) in the New York section of *Roughing It* when Col. Jim and Col. Jack announce to their fellow passengers that they have chartered the omnibus. Whitman's beloved Broadway omnibuses provided a ride in motion that fused together a continuous stream of input, as he told Peter Doyle (1868, *WWA*): 'You see everything as you pass, a sort of living, endless panorama—shops, & splendid buildings, & great windows, & on the broad sidewalks crowds of women, richly-dressed, continually passing, altogether different'. The fusion enacted in the creation of a shared conceptual space through the artistic conduit of 'Sun-Down Poem' allows Whitman, posthumously, to stake his claim to 'here' and 'today', or rather his share to that claim. Consider the premise outlined in the preface to the first edition of *Leaves* (*LG*55: vi): 'Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined.' The speaker (*LG*56: 218) asks 'Who knows but I am enjoying this?/Who knows but I am as good as looking at you/now, for all you cannot see me?' His urban-born prescience asserts that he knew this shared moment would occur, and he was 'enjoying this' before we existed, joining past, present, and future. By dint of his gift, Whitman's bard harnesses the flow of the East River in 1850s New York to become an 'embouchure' (*LG*55: iv) for 'ever so many generations hence' (*LG*56: 212). The rhetorical question borders on unsettling, though its ghostliness is tempered by the joy that invigorates a reimagined scene of the anonymous encounter, those fleeting moments that endure as urban archetypes.

The realisation of this shared moment was inextricably urban in character, derived in part from the countless ferry journeys Whitman took between Brooklyn and Manhattan, the 'countless crowds of/passengers' (*LG*56: 219) who journeyed alongside him. Each crowd was similar enough in aggregate yet entirely different in makeup, moving in opposite directions on identical ferries, ebbing and flowing between shores for years to come. He (ibid. 212–213) seizes on this:

> It avails not, neither time or place—distance
> avails not,
> I am with you, you men and women of a genera-
> tion, or ever so many generations hence,
> I project myself, also I return—I am with you,
> and know how it is.

'This is the city' may be vague, but the final line of this stanza is vaguer still in its beguiling, monosyllabic simplicity: 'I am with you, and know how it is.' Both it and the city are 'here and everywhere' in what Whitman elsewhere terms the 'eternal float of solution' ('Sun-Down Poem' *LG*56: 220), infinitely portable to wherever, however far, analogous to his *Leaves.* The poem specifies locations, but the unfolding realisation could take place in any city and is in fact staged in the liminal space between two cities. This is an awakening spurred on and necessitated by an urban environment, but one inflected by Whitman's particular urban environment, by Brooklyn and Manhattan, and the fact that the water was a connecting and defining feature of those sister cities, as it was of Long Island. Whitman conceived of the 'eternal float'

as something akin to the Emersonian Over-Soul, though he never used the word and his concept is more obviously inflected by a life in proximity to the water, which surfaces fully in the location-specific portion of this chapter. Weighing Whitman's 'harborscape' against Emerson's Over-Soul, Dougherty (1993: 149) suggests that the poet's sun-down rendering is a 'transcendental scheme in the image of a supersaturated solution'. Where Emerson envisaged this merging as a depersonalised experience, a transparent eyeball, Whitman's vision was egoic and empathic, projecting as well as absorbing. The saturation is osmotic: 'I project myself,' his speaker says, 'also I return'. In 'The Over-Soul' Emerson (1883: 256) states that 'the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.' Whitman relocated this idea to the city, which created shared time and space between an everchanging citizenry. The city afforded what Paul Orlov (1984: 15) describes as 'shared moments of seeing and being', moments that transform the physical ferry crossing into a transcendental experience and recruit the reader to it. The use of direct address here is strikingly intimate not only because of the view shared with the reader (*LG*56: 214, 219) — of 'fine centrifugal spokes of light/round the shape of my head in the sunlit/water' for example, crisply precise yet richly suggestive — but because the speaker says he could in fact be looking at them: 'Who knows but I am as good as looking at you/now, for all you cannot see me?' He claims at once to see and to be the reader, transposing 'the act of seeing and the thing seen'.

Thomas (1987: 99) argues that the image of 'fine centrifugal spokes of light' emitting halo-like from the speaker's head is 'not narcissism but an act of self-perception utterly central to Whitman's social philosophy'. The whole scene of 'Sun-Down Poem' is held together by light: 'the bright flow' of the river, the 'glistening yellow' of seagulls' bodies and the 'scallop-edged waves in the twilight' (*LG*56: 213–14). The light emanating from the speaker's head illuminates the individual's power, which Whitman placed at the centre of the city and of society. The image reappears towards the poem's end (*LG*56: 220):

> Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of
> My head, or any one's head, in the sun-lit
> water!

The speaker now shares the halo, affirming the egalitarianism that is central to his vision. Simultaneously, the self is portrayed as a sacred, even angelic figure but also as interchangeable with any other self. The image of the halo occurs elsewhere in *Leaves*, such as in the preceding 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 207): 'But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head/without its nimbus of gold-colored light'. In the context of the Fulton ferry this image has a certain verisimilitude, but it is also representative. At sunset over the 'effulgently flowing' (ibid.) East River, or any of the 'interminable riv-/ers' (209), the light touches all, 'Old, young, male, female, rude, low' (210). The 'swarming groups' (207) of painters rather stream, surge, and merge with the water as differences dissolve.

Related to Whitman's use of light is its connection with the Enlightenment in the lead up to the French Revolution. In *Specimen Days* (*PW*: 200) he considers the direct relation of light to democracy using imagery that brings the country into the city, a recurrent feature of his transcendentalist poetics of New York:

> American Democracy, in its myriad personalities, in factories, work-shops, stores, offices—through the dense streets and houses of cities, and all their manifold sophisticated life—must either be fibred, vitalized, by regular contact with outdoor light and air and growths, farm scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds, sun-warmth and free skies or it will certainly dwindle and pale.

Within an imagined social discourse, Whitman's speaker makes clear that the foundations of his relationship with the reader rest on each person being equal to one unit of a crowd, no more and no less: 'Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd' ('Sun-Down Poem' *LG*56: 213). The living crowd is the city, its members the citizens. The revolutionary potency of the Whitmanian 'I' derives from its dialectics with the 'you', making 'Song of Myself' a rather ostentatious red herring in its suggestion of a singular self. Whitman rewrites the hierarchy between poet and reader, formulating a poetics of radical equality and a persona transcendently protean in its capacity to 'project' itself. He assumes with ease identities as disparate as priest and prostitute, moving seamlessly and suddenly from Kentucky to California, which Buell (1973: 327) notes is 'no real contradiction, but rather a sign of healthful fecundity.' The projection of the self into other identities and circumstances — of which there were many more examples in city than in country life — constitutes the basis of Whitman's empathetic powers. Through this imaginative self-projection, 'the principle of spiritual metamorphosis which the Transcendentalists celebrated in the activity of nature is at last fully dramatized on the human level' (ibid).

Philip F. Gura's (2008: 122) metaphor for transcendentalism is 'a many-headed Hydra'. This likely draws on Christopher Pearse Cranch's ([1841] 2006: 101) claim that the 'glory' of transcendentalism was its '*many*-headed' nature, and on James Freeman Clarke's (qtd. in Bakratcheva 2013: 7) having dubbed the Transcendental Club 'the Club of the likeminded', since 'no two of us think alike'. *Leaves of Grass* is many-headed in a more literal sense. The populous, bustling 'million-headed-city' (*PW*: 117) was an ideal venue to celebrate spiritual metamorphosis. Manhattan was a microcosm of the scheme announced earlier in 'Sun-Down Poem' (*LG*56: 211),

> The simple, compact, well-joined scheme—myself-disintegrated, every one disintegrated,
> yet part of the scheme,

democratic and poetic, physical and conceptual. This paradox is expressed in terms of disintegration and participation. We are disintegrated — 'even individually reducible to discrete atomic particles' as Stephen John Mack (2002: 50) articulates — yet we each share in one 'well-joined scheme'. The language of carpentry emphasises the scheme's physicality, the material components of democracy, and the individual bodies comprising the body politic. Chapter Two, 'The Artisan', examines this in detail.

Besides this physicality, Whitman's democratic mythos — his faith in 'a word of the modern . . . . a word en masse' (*LG*55: 28) — represents a point of divergence from Emerson. Though Emerson travelled extensively, once describing Paris as 'a loud modern New York of a place' (1984: 109), this difference was partly a function of their respective locations; in Concord, one could more easily avoid other people and their problems. 'It was difficult for a New Yorker to ignore politics', however, as Roger Asselineau puts it (1998: 739), comparing New York's cosmopolitan turbulence to the relative serenity of rural Concord.

Kenneth M. Price (1990: 42) quotes a particularly unsympathetic comment from Emerson's journals, throwing the class distinction into sharp relief and, Price suggests, displaying 'elitism tantamount to a breach of democratic faith': 'The worst of charity, is, that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. The calamity is the masses.' Whitman's immersion in the city's periodical culture made him more politically engaged than most. In an 1849 editorial for the *New York Sunday Dispatch* (*WWA*), Whitman made 'Some Poetical Comparisons Between Country and City', arguing that the isolation entailed by country life promotes 'a singular sort of egotism'. Herbert Gilchrist (qtd. in Allen 1955: 205–206) reported Whitman's feelings about Thoreau on the matter of 'the masses'. Thoreau was very different from Emerson, and Whitman took issue with the former's thoughts of Brooklyn:

> I liked Thoreau, although he was morbid. I do not think it was so much a love of woods, streams, and hills that made him live in the country, as from a morbid dislike of humanity. I remember Thoreau saying once, when walking with him in my favorite Brooklyn—'What is there in the people? Pshaw! What do you (a man who sees as well as anybody) see in all this cheating political corruption?' I did not like my Brooklyn spoken of in this way.

Whitman's prolifically egoic persona sings in tandem the 'other', the 'you'. In New York — and Brooklyn too, which had around a quarter of a million more inhabitants in 1860 than in 1823 when the Whitmans relocated there from West Hills, Long Island — others were inescapable. The preface (*LG*55: vii) states that

> The soul has that measureless pride which consists of never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other, and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other.

Whitman's poetry figured the 'I' and the 'you' as mutually dependent, as it did soul and body. This relation is often (homo)erotically charged, as in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*56: 211):

> I was called by my nighest name by clear loud
> voices of young men as they saw me ap-
> proaching or passing,
> Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the neg-
> ligent leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,

says the speaker as he describes the simple yet vivid experience of hearing his name from, being seen by, and feeling the touch of others. In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 29), Whitman's persona declares that 'Seeing hearing and feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle.' The description of 'arms on my neck' and 'the neg-/ligent leaning of their flesh' is diffuse, fragmentary, an effect reinforced by line-breaks. 'I Sing the Body Electric' (*LG*55: 79) uses similarly detached language to label 'Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands—all diffused . . . . mine too/diffused'. One almost has the sense of a dissolution of bodies as opposed to discrete figures, bodies who belong to a single organism rather than to the owners of their individual parts and tags. Whitman's recourse to the senses, to the body, is to a universal language, a common denominator, and therefore to a democratic medium. On the Brooklyn ferry, the experience

described in this stanza is collectively proprioceptive. Individual bodies, constantly changing, are seen to adjust themselves within the jostle of the city at large, which is itself in a permanent state of flux. Citizenship is established in motion, and in a manner that is fundamentally and essentially physical. The river's flow (ibid.) informs the ecstatic sexual experience of the body electric, a radical reconfiguration of the human-nature relation, held together by sex as well as water: 'Ebb stung by the flow, and flow stung by the ebb'.

Motion is key to the poem's sensory depictions and to the contrasted movement of body parts and the resolved passivity of 'I stood' and 'I sat'. Elsewhere in *Leaves* the insistence of the present participle emphasises a distinctively timeless present. In 'Sun-Down Poem', however, the present participle mingles with the firmness of 'Felt', 'stood' and 'sat' to underscore the reader's impression of confused temporality, of fixed moments that are somehow also in flight, fleeting moments that endure. Motion mirrors the movement of the water, mimicked in turn by lapping lines of changing length. The tidal ebb and flow is underscored rhythmically and by the visual patterning of the lines, though confused again by the imagistic mingling of motion and stillness. Whitman depicts seagulls 'high in the air floating with/motionless wings oscillating their bodies', 'glistening yellow' and 'strong shadow' (*LG*56: 213), images of opposition harmonised by assonance. The speaker appeals to the shared experience of standing still on the ferry and yet moving on the water. He insists in a list of successive, syntactically repetitive assertions that

> Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry
> with the swift current, I stood, yet was hur-
> ried,

from which emerges the paradox of Whitman's transcendental vision. Discrete temporal moments are nonetheless in flux because they exist specifically 'here' and for 'you', but also everywhere and for everyone else. Rewriting the paradox of the soul's measureless pride as established in the preface, Whitman wrote in *Democratic Vistas* (*PW*: 228) that to 'the unyielding principle of the average […] is surely join'd another principle, equally unyielding', which is 'individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself'. In the ferry crowd, a sample of the city, Whitman recognises the democratic paradox identified in his prose. The image of the radiating haloed self sits in tension with its isolation, and he expresses the tension between the individual and the crowd explicitly in terms of centrifugal and centripetal forces, affirming in their reconciliation a transcendental unity.

The city was an ideal model for the bodily and sexual dimensions of Whitman's democratic poetics. 'Sex contains all', the speaker declares in 'Poem of Procreation' (*LG*56: 240), proceeding — naturally — to catalogue exactly what it contains: 'Bodies, souls, meanings, proofs'. Where Emerson assumed that 'the primitive impulse is essentially chaste' (Buell 1973: 325), Whitman took more seriously the idea that *all* acts carried the potential to be holy, including sexual acts. He told Traubel (1914: 452–453) 'it's sex, sex, sex: sex is the root of it all.' Sex represented the unity-in-diversity principle: a single act that holds the potential for countless others and without which nothing would exist, the 'original energy' ('Proto-Leaf' *LG*60: 8). That principle was the 'revolutionary seal of the American republic' (Erkkila 1989:

50), 'e pluribus unum', and for Whitman the city was its living embodiment. Embodiment in its most literal sense is key to thinking about this concept, in terms of the embodied body politic and of the city itself as a body of bodies. 'A Broadway Pageant' (*LG*81: 193), first published in the *The New York Times* (1860), features the synecdochic scene of 'million-footed Manhattan unpent descend[ing] to her pavements'. Whitman may have been passionate about ferries (conveniently detailed in *Specimen Days* under 'My Passion for Ferries'), but as a New York flâneur he most often experienced the city on foot. I'll leave flânerie for Chapter Three, but wish to highlight here that the flâneur, as William Pannapacker (2009: 43) observes, 'seeks to distinguish himself from the urban mass rather than to merge with it'. In *American Renaissance*, F. O. Matthiessen (1968: 532) wrote that Whitman was 'attracted by the wider sweep of the city'. This attraction also swept him through the city and through an abundance of material for his catalogue, countless sights and sounds that awaited transformation into paeans to difference.

As the 'poetic analogue of democracy' (Erkkila 1989: 88), the catalogue was an ideal conduit for Whitman's hybridised art, the 'wider sweep'. Aesthetically, it was Whitman's greatest transcendentalist inheritance, the expression of the cosmic unity in diversity principle that 'adheres to a sort of prosodic equalitarianism' (Buell 1973: 167). It gave Whitman a form, as Miles Orvell (1989: 3, 6) contends, 'that could contain within the bounds of the artwork the rich particularity and clashing contradictions of American life', which Orvell affixes to 'the relatively brief perception of discrete particulars made possible by the camera.' Whitman gestures to this poetics of radical equality in the concluding lines to 'Sun-Down Poem' (*LG*56: 222) where we are told that 'Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.' Whitman's paratactic presentation of sights, sensations, and sounds on the horizontal plane — of his eyeline and ours in the act of reading — owes much to the stream of sensory input he experienced as he moved through Brooklyn and Manhattan, on foot, by ferry or omnibus, or any other means of transport within the city's growing network infrastructure. This poetic identity is defined by connections (*LG*55: 32), for which the city provided plenty of opportunity: 'I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,/They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.' As Whitman (ibid.) describes the city's wider sweep, so do the reader's eyes sweep across the page, over 'sounds of the city and sounds/out of the city' that must first be read to be heard. Poetry transforms the New York cacophony into an 'almost operatic panorama of simultaneous human action in which all apparent differences – the urban and rural, the past and the future, the observer and the observed – are dissolved' (Pannapacker 2009: 45). I would stress the Emersonian influence on the collapsing of observer and observed (the subject and object, the act of seeing and thing seen). Whitman saw the city's 'profusion of teeming humanity' (*PW*: 211) on a par with the abundance of nature itself, which his prose describes in typically catalogic form. He included man's mechanical accoutrements in the natural order, once describing (qtd. in Killingsworth 2004: 141) Grace Church on Broadway as 'a ghostly light-house looming up over the porpoise-backs of the omnibuses'. Below, note the water's significance as a structural feature of land and man, of the city's 'oceanic amplitude and rush' (*PW*: 211), a Whitmanian take on the journalistic fashion to speak of Broadway and other large New York thoroughfares as if describing a wave, river, or current:

> The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpass'd situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron, of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of gay color, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted, even at night; the jobbers' houses, the rich shops, the wharves, the great Central Park, and the Brooklyn Park of hills, (as I wander among them this beautiful fall weather, musing, watching, absorbing)—the assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters—these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fulness, motion, &c., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my esthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always and more and more, as I cross the East and North rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall street, or the gold exchange, I realize, (if we must admit such partialisms,) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity—in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships—these hurrying, feverish, electric crowds of men, their complicated business genius, (not least among the geniuses,) and all this mighty, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.

Whitman wrote the above in 1870, having returned to New York and Brooklyn 'after an absence' (ibid). Usually critics omit the next paragraph (ibid. 212) as the tone changes, or dries up: 'Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics.' 'Always and more and more' might describe the organising principle of Whitman's catalogue, seeking to dazzle by sheer volume contained in an ongoing 'now', or what James Dougherty (1993: 48) has called 'parataxis en masse', 'the grammar of egalitarianism'. Simultaneously, it is the basis on which many have regretted Whitman's indiscriminateness, a monotony he too regretted in the 'dry and flat Sahara', a poetic desert across which echoes an auctioneer's rattle, selling 'democratic vistas' to the highest bidder.

Walking the bustling streets, or sailing them on a porpoise-back omnibus, gave Whitman a keen awareness of the city as a proprioceptive collective, the coordination of a 'feverish, electric' (*PW:* 211) — and, crucially, erotic — body of bodies. Ben Lerner (2014) uses 'social proprioception' as a key motif in *10:04*, a novel set in New York that ends on the closing line from 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry': 'I am with you, and know how it is.' Here I choose proprioceptive collective because I wish to emphasise the literal, physical (and erotic) meaning over the social one, although they are entangled. In Whitman's poem (*LG*56: 216), the speaker's body becomes that of his future reader:

> I too lived,
> I too walked the streets of Manhattan Island, and
> bathed in the waters around it;
> I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir with-
> in me,
> In the day, among crowds of people, sometimes
> they came upon me,
> In my walks home late at night, or as I lay in my
> bed, they came upon me.
>
> I too had been struck from the float forever held,
> in solution,
> I too had received identity by my body,
> That I was, I knew was of my body, and what I

should be, I knew I should be of my body.

To receive identity by one's body is the socially proprioceptive experience Lerner captures, to act as conductor for the connection between the individual body and the body politic. Whitman emphasises that the crowds of people among whom he walks and which compose the city are composed of bodies. The final line of the second stanza encapsulates the body-city relation, as suggested by Whitman's apostrophe to his 'City of Ships' (*LG*67: 41a) where the speaker asks Manhattan to 'incarnate me, as I have incarnated you!' Where in Langston Hughes's 'I, Too' ('I, too, sing America') the 'too' is heard numerically, reinforcing his subordination, 'I too had received identity by my body' seems rather to multiply the first-person. 'I too' doubles Whitman's representative 'I', formulating the 1:1 ratio that holds together the catalogue, the formal trademark of his democratic and transcendentalist poetics. It's the equivalence between one body and another, erotically charged by this fact: 'Sex contains all' (*LG*56: 240).

Whitman's walks were not just a way of experiencing the city but of maintaining the body, and he links the physical health of a city's citizenry — notably its male citizens — with the health of American democracy. In this sense, he was thinking of honing one's proprioceptive capabilities more literally. In 'Manly Health and Training' (1858a, *WWA*), a treatise on physical fitness and male beauty published in *The New York Atlas*, Whitman claims that bodily health correlates to moral health:

> It is our deeply felt conviction, the result of much observation in New York, Brooklyn, and other cities, that the only true and profitable way of reaching the morals of the young is through making them first, *healthy, clean-blooded, and vigorous specimens of men*.

The 'well-joined scheme' (*LG*56: 211) depends on the physical health of its constituent parts. Whitman (1858b, *WWA*) describes walking as 'nature's great physical energy' and refers to 'locomotive organs'. We find similar language to 'million-footed Manhattan' in his prose, such as 'Human and Heroic New York' (*PW*: 117), connecting physical health to the strength of the 'many-item'd Union':

> No need to specify minutely—enough to say that (making all allowances for the shadows and side-streaks of a million-headed-city) the brief total of the impressions, the human qualities, of these vast cities, is to me comforting, even heroic, beyond statement. Alertness, generally fine physique, clear eyes that look straight at you, a singular combination of reticence and self-possession, with good nature and friendliness—a prevailing range of according manners, taste and intellect, surely beyond any elsewhere upon earth—and a palpable outcropping of that personal comradeship I look forward to as the subtlest, strongest future hold of this many-item'd Union—are not only constantly visible here in these mighty channels of men, but they form the rule and average.

Whitman's faith in physical fitness as an insurance policy on the fitness of American democracy was not an unconventional emphasis, though he added a distinctive homoerotic — and sometimes sexually graphic — twist. He was very taken by phrenology, its influence particularly visible in his use of 'amativeness' and 'adhesiveness'. 'Amativeness' related to the eugenics of his time, combined with the notion of producing citizenry to populate a new democracy; 'adhesiveness' to the 'spiritual breeding of the new democracy' (Zapata-Whelan 1998: 226). The latter is connected to Whitman's conception of comradeship, to which he refers in the passage above.

In a manuscript (~1855, *WWA*), perhaps an initial idea for 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', Whitman wrote about 'A City Walk': 'Just a list of all that is seen in a walk through the streets of Brooklyn and New York,—and crossing the ferry'. The editorial note suggests the heading was the tentative title of a poem titled 'City of Orgies' in 1867, but which appeared in the 'Calamus' (*LG*60: 363) cluster:

> CITY of my walks and joys!
> City whom that I have lived and sung there will one day make you illustrious,
> Not the pageants of you—not your shifting tableaux, your spectacles, repay me,
> Not the interminable rows of your houses—nor the ships at the wharves,
> Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows, with goods in them,
> Nor to converse with learned persons, or bear my share in the soiree or feast;
> Not those—but, as I pass, O Manhattan! your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love,
> Offering me the response of my own—these repay me,
> Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

Negations culminate in the decision that Manhattan's delights, dazzling though they are, cannot compare to the anonymous and erotically charged encounters engendered by the city. Jason Frank (2011: 158) has aptly termed this 'promiscuous citizenship', so called for three reasons: it doesn't discriminate, 'it emerges from mixed and promiscuous public contact', and 'it connotes erotic attachment to non-intimates'. Frank's term is especially helpful in conceptualising the uncanny claim in 'Sun-Down Poem'. Frank quotes Pannapacker's (2009: 54) description of 'the promiscuous attractions of all people towards each other', which the latter equates to 'the essence of the democratic spirit' for Whitman. In 'Poem of the Road' (*LG*56: 229), Whitman links adhesiveness — and its democratic spirit — to the erotic, anonymous urban encounter:

> Here is adhesiveness—it is not previously fashion'd
> —it is apropos;
> Do you know what it is, as you pass, to be loved by strangers?

The anonymity is neither isolating nor alienating. In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman (*PW*: 225) describes the 'singular awe' of mixing with 'interminable swarms' in 'the crowds of the great cities'. The fact that the other parties remain strangers or 'non-intimates' (Frank 2011: 158) doesn't preclude closeness. Rather, the number of interactions permitted by the more densely populated urban environment promotes closeness between a greater number of citizens. That those interactions are wordless — just 'faces and eyes forever' (*LG*67: 49) — is of no consequence because for Whitman the body, not language, is the site of American democracy. The 'talk of those turning eyeballs' (*LG*56: 229) vaults linguistic barriers. Here, I suggest

Thoreau's (qtd. in Hodder 2008: 28) 'sauntering eye' has more currency than Emerson's transparent eyeball: 'Carlyle said that how to observe was to look—but I say that it is rather to see—& the more you look the less you will observe'. 'What I need is not to look at all' he wrote (ibid.), 'but a true sauntering of the eye.' Thoreau's 'sauntering eye' is a mode of perception that seeks a more comprehensive form of sight by undermining cerebral interference. Whitman's 'turning eyeballs' similarly give agency to the organ of sight, rather than to the minds of individuals in the crowd, to underscore the bodily, visceral attraction of people to one another, whereas Emerson's transparent eyeball etherealises the experience of seeing.

Frank (2011: 176–77) argues compellingly that the 1855 frontispiece, standing in for Whitman's name, not only enacts a 'political self-representation' in its portrayal of a common man and 'foregrounds the usually unremarked sensuousness of reading', but visually remodels 'the promiscuous encounters of the democratic street'. These encounters are 'shared moments of seeing and being' (Orlov 1984: 15). The frontispiece — a steel engraving of a daguerreotype, with 'clear eyes that look straight at you' (Whitman *PW*: 117) — prefaces the question posed in 'Sun-Down Poem', its 'impossible metaphysics of immediacy' (Shaw 2010: 78): 'Who knows but I am as good as looking at you/now, for all you cannot see me?' (*LG*56: 219) The transition between Whitman's photographic self-representations from the first two editions to the third demonstrate the significance of process to *Leaves of Grass* which, like New York City and American democracy, was a process of growth and revision. Sex and the body were the constants in an everchanging urban citizenry. He was not a systematic philosopher, so the deictic vagueness of 'This is the city . . . . and I am one of the citizens' befits a Whitmanian creed in much the same way that transcendentalist thought — the offshoots of an eclectic, incongruous group, headed by a 'sage' with the considerable aura of public celebrity — offered malleable material. Whitman's city was New York, but in his poetry it is transferrable, as is the egalitarian proclamation balancing the line. Whitman, a single citizen and body, represents the city, the city represents America, and America represents the world.

Whitman sums up this pars pro toto equation in the 1855 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 29) as 'Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos'. The equation remained this way until 1867 (*LG*67: 49) when the 'kosmos' dropped off and 'Walt Whitman, an American' became 'Walt Whitman am I, of mighty Manhattan the son'. In 1871 (*LG*71: 54), 'kosmos' returned, now capitalised: 'Walt Whitman am I, a Kosmos, of mighty Manhat-/tan the son'. Finally (*LG*81: 48) he settled on 'Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son.' As he and his city grew, his own stature increasing alongside its literary prestige, he reordered his affiliations. In the 1855 and 1856 books, 'Brooklyn, New York' stands in for Whitman's name, positioned as author. Slowly, Manhattan came to be claimed as its artistic heritage. To the extent that the poetry can be read as biography, the body of Whitman's ideas, he also makes the claim that the history of the city — a body of bodies — can be read as biography. It might come as a surprise that in the three antebellum editions of *Leaves*, the name 'New York' appears only once, in one edition, nestled in a jumbled list (*LG*55: 43): 'We walk the roads of Ohio and Massachusetts and Virginia and Wisconsin and/New York and New Orleans and Texas and Montreal and San Francisco and/Charleston and Savannah and Mexico'. When one considers how New York is woven throughout *Leaves*, however, it makes more sense that it hardly needs naming. It's for similar reasons that I'll be fairly concise in discussing Brooklyn and Manhattan within this first chapter. Apart from the fact that I began with 'the city', features

of these two cities are central to other thematic concerns, so space has been reserved to discuss them there. With the general outline of Whitman's city sketched, I will now argue for Long Island as the site of Whitman's latent transcendentalism.

Long Island

In the course of his oft-quoted summary of the roots of *Leaves*, from Bucke's (1883: 67) biography, Whitman interrupts himself: 'absorbing a million people, for fifteen years, with an intimacy, and eagerness, an abandon, probably never equalled— land and water.' He mentions his 'friends the pilots on the Brooklyn ferry-boats' (ibid.), the historical and biographical context to 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'. Whitman's swift movement westward to Brooklyn and New York is the more obviously significant factor in the crafting of a transcendentalist poetics with such faith in the city, the en masse. I see Long Island, however, as the provenance of the poet's fascination with the interpenetrating landscape, and the ways in which the New York coastline structures, shapes, and interrupts the early editions of *Leaves*. Whitman was born on the island, in West Hills, Huntington, his ancestral home. 'A native of West Hills,' writes Joan D. Berbrich (1969: 148), 'he could stand on the highest hill in that area and see to the south the broad expanse of the Atlantic; then, by merely turning his head, he could look to the north on the blue waters of Long Island Sound.' That West Hills vantage point is called Jayne's Hill, a part of the Harbor Hill 'terminal moraine', the furthest point to which a glacier can advance. At the glacier's edge, the accumulation of debris like loose rock can be pushed no further forward, in which can be found an analogy for the Whitmanic 'I', determined to accumulate until it can progress no further but will, as at the denouement of 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 56), 'stop some where'. The temporal dimension to this is expressed in a two-line poem, 'To Old Age' (*LG*60: 402), via the metaphor and, visually, its enjambment: 'I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads/itself grandly as it pours in the great sea.' Writing for *The Pall Mall Gazette* William Summers (1888, *WWA*) recounted Whitman's explanation of his origins:

> "I came originally," continued Whitman, "from Long Island. Paumanok, you know, is the old Indian name of the island. It was settled first by the Dutch, and then by the English. I was born here, at Huntingdon [*sic*]" (saying which Whitman drew with his stick a map of Long Island, and pointed out the relative positions of Huntingdon [*sic*], Brooklyn, and New York).

Chapter Two discusses Whitman's vocational return to Long Island as a country schoolmaster, so this chapter maps the effects of the natural environment, the water's ebb and flow. I foreground the to and fro from small-town neighbourliness to city-sprawl anonymity that Whitman adapted in travelling between fluctuating social and natural environments, a mode of affection and identificatory familiarity that defines the imaginative self-projection for which New York provided so much material, while transcendentalism offered a conceptual framework. That travel in and of itself was partly facilitated by the Long Island Rail Road, the island's first rail network, a part of growing infrastructural interconnectivity in New York and the nation, and 'similar speedy modes of conveyance' as Whitman put it in a short story (*The Columbian*

Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine, May 1844, *WWA*). I also locate Whitman's receptiveness to certain transcendental ideas in the Quaker beliefs to which he had some familial proximity on Long Island and which predated his exposure to transcendentalism. My discussion of the Quaker influence concentrates on another Long Island native, travelling minister Elias Hicks, after whose son-in-law Valentine Hicks Hicksville is said to be named for his role as Long Island Rail Road president in making the town accessible by train. Drawing on work by Susan Dean (1999) and Mitchell Santine Gould (2007), I consider the relative positions of the Hicksite interpretation of the Inner Light, of Emersonian self-reliance, and of the radically democratic potential of the Whitmanic first-person singular singing the body. I argue that both Whitman's early exposure to radical Quakerism on Long Island and the island's topography made New England transcendentalism more ideologically accessible.

Liquid, mystic theme

'Starting from Paumanok', I'll look first at the poem of that title. It appeared in 1860 as 'Proto-Leaf', but Whitman began work on it soon after his 1855 book was published. It introduces *Leaves*, as indeed 'fish-shape Paumanok' (*LG*60: 5) introduced him to New York's coastline, and it superseded the 1855 preface. 'Paumanok' is a known Whitman pseudonym which, like 'Mannahatta', he preferred for its 'poetic value and patriotic fitness', C. Caroll Hollis (1957: 147) observes. 'Paumanok', Whitman claimed in one of his 'Brooklyniana' series of local history articles for the *Brooklyn Standard* (No. 13. 1862, *WWA*), meant 'the island with its breast long drawn out and laid against the sea.' 'Mannahatta', meanwhile, he thought came from an Algonquian word meaning 'the place encircled by many swift tides and sparkling waters' (*PW*: 502), which he considered most befitting of 'America's great democratic island city'. Writing as 'Paumanok' in 1849, he wrote a series of 'Letters From a Travelling Bachelor' for the *New York Sunday Dispatch*; in 1851, three 'Letters From Paumanok' for the *New York Evening Post*, about a trip to Long Island. The letters were 'from' Paumanok in a locational sense and also in the sense of place as author, the latter being especially apposite to my concern with the geocultural sources of Whitman's transcendentalist complications. In a letter from the first series, 'Paumanok' (4th November 1849, *New York Sunday Dispatch*, *WWA*) describes a Long Island Railroad locomotive's onward journey: 'The bell rings, and winds off with that sort of twirl or gulp, (if you can imagine a bell gulping)'. The relationship of person to place is made clear in the opening to 'Proto-Leaf' (*LG*60: 5) when the poet announces himself using adjectives that might just as well describe the island:

> FREE, fresh, savage,
> Fluent, luxuriant, self-content, fond of persons and
> places,
> Fond of fish-shape Paumanok, where I was born,
> Fond of the sea — lusty-begotten and various,
> Boy of the Mannahatta, the city of ships, my city,

The water is the defining feature of and the common ground, so to speak, between Whitman's rural, 'fish-shape' birthplace and his magnificent Mannahatta, 'city of ships'. As Robert Belknap (2004: 116) comments in *The List*, the reader's sense from the lines above is 'of lives lived in parallel' within a list that 'seems to generate possible alternate yet simultaneous lives'. Belknap (ibid.) quotes Jay Grossman's observation that the speaker is 'released from the rational justice of the situation, inclusive of many places at once (here and also there) not as seeing is but as light is.' One might — if not modify that rather perfect metaphor — place alongside it a parallel one, substituting water for light. I borrow a phrase from economist Edward L. Glaeser (2005: 12) to describe a key conceptual and geographical detail: New York's 'pure water connection'. Glaeser (ibid.) cites the 'extremely navigable' Hudson River, the city's 'direct access to the ocean', and its port's 'combination of depth, shelter, and freedom from ice.' Underlining Whitman's insistence on this connection, Peter Conrad (1984: 12) calls it 'the water-borne status of New York', with streets 'fluctuant and riverine'. Like the locomotive bell's 'gulp', the body is often centred in Whitman's interactions with the water. He eroticises the 'lusty-begotten and various' sea by having it share a line with these words, although he's referring to his own begetting. In the section below (*LG*60: 13), Whitman locates his cardinal matter/spirit paradox — and his key transcendentalist complication — in the natural environment of the ocean and the air. He infuses the scene with cosmic, mystical wonder and, via the French 'melange', accentuates his radically democratic conception of 'thrilling' 'Contact daily and hourly' with countless 'beings, identities'. As Betsy Erkkila (2020: 61) discerns, Whitman's favourite French borrowings are 'words of communality, affection, and global embrace'. More explicitly now, the erotic dimension of 'Extasy everywhere touching and thrilling' is identified with the water as the oceanic qualities of the transcendental ego surface:

> Melange mine!
> Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,
> Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering
> around me,
> Wondrous interplay between the seen and unseen,
> Living beings, identities, now doubtless near us, in
> the air, that we know not of,
> Extasy everywhere touching and thrilling me,
> Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,
> These selecting—These, in hints, demanded of me.

Undulating lines reflect the 'spirit of materials shifting' around and within the poet. Free flowing yet tangible, the water models Whitman's exploitation of the cosmic 'I' which, while it has fluidly 'run through what any river or strait/of the globe has run through' ('Salut au Monde' *LG*56: 120), is also emphatically 'fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, breeding' ('Song of Myself' *LG*60: 54). The poet corporealizes the water in 'Salut Au Monde' (*LG*56: 120): 'I think, you waters, I have fingered every shore/with you'. And, as the water penetrates the island's shoreline, and the 'cities the light or warmth penetrates', the poet sets out to 'penetrate those cities [him]self' (ibid). The sight, sound, and touch of the water Whitman knew as a Long Islander therefore offers a relational model for his own transformation into New York poet and for his

relationship to the city, one defined by submersion in urban currents in physical, intimate, and erotic terms that nevertheless offer spiritual transcendence.

Critics have long noted the significance to Whitman's work of formative years spent on an island and Asselineau (1980) has done so with reference to the transcendentalist influence. Whitman (Traubel 1906: 414) once likened *Leaves* to the ocean:

> Its verses are the liquid, billowy waves, ever rising and falling, perhaps sunny and smooth, perhaps wild with storm, always moving, always alike in their nature as rolling waves, but hardly any two exactly alike in size or measure (meter), never having the sense of something finished and fixed, always suggesting something beyond.'

The oceanic suggestion of 'something beyond' sounds like Emerson's (qtd. in Asselineau 1980: v–vi) joking definition of transcendentalism in an 1836 journal entry: 'Transcendentalism means, says our accomplished Mrs. B., with a wave of her hand, *a little beyond*.' This nebulousness finds more sincere poetic expression in Emerson's 'Sea-Shore' poem (1867: 126), in which he describes 'the Sea,/The opaline, the plentiful and strong'. His sea is detached, impersonal, his mysticism unerotic: 'And, in my mathematic ebb and flow,/Giving a hint of that which changes not.'[2] Compare this with the demand Whitman's speaker (*LG*55: 27) makes of the sea: 'Cushion me soft . . . . rock me in billowy drowse,/Dash me with amorous wet . . . . I can repay you.' In the lines below, we watch the muted travel of Emerson's poet (1867: 127), so far removed from Whitman's (*LG*55: 29) impassioned commands to 'Unscrew the locks from the doors!/Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!'

> Then I unbar the doors: my paths lead out
> The exodus of nations: I disperse
> Men to all shores that front the hoary main.

What rescues Whitman's bard from impersonality in some of his more oracular flights — the transcendentalist instinct, alert to 'something beyond' the seashore's material presence — are those autobiographical anchors, the geographical and human contexts to which he can tether his philosophies. Whereas in such commands to 'Unscrew' it is, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, the overseer of construction who speaks with an artisan's knowledge of carpentry, in the seashore scenes and intimacy with the water we hear echoes of Whitman's Long Island boyhood, and of later retreats to that natural haven east of mighty Mannahatta. One such retreat, to Peconic Bay, followed the poor reception of the 1855 *Leaves*. Whitman's 'eternal float of solution' personalises Emerson's Over-Soul (1883: 252), the 'great nature […] within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other.' One can trace the origins of Whitman's transcendentalist-inflected 'eternal float' to his Long Island birthplace. The water continued to structure his transcendentalist poetics of Brooklyn and Manhattan, not only in how he thought about the 'oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities' (*PW*: 211), but particularly about their

[2] 'The nearest gnat is an explanation and a drop or the motion of waves a key,' writes Whitman in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 53), his 'key' similar to Emerson's 'hint'.

crowds, those 'hurrying human tides' ('Broadway' *LG*91: 394), and the relation of one member of that crowd to any other, which was erotic even where fleeting and anonymous. Whitman put the logic of identification — expressed by Emerson's (1860: 31) statement in 'Fate' that 'relation and connection are not somewhere and sometimes, but everywhere and always' — to the test in the surging metropolis of Manhattan island.

'As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life' was first published in 1860 the *Atlantic Monthly* as 'Bardic Symbols'. To feature in the *Atlantic*, the organ of the Bostonian literary elite, was momentous for Whitman. Editor James Russell Lowell insisted on deleting two lines, a graphic parenthetical image of a corpse, which Whitman begrudgingly accepted and later reinstated (*LG*60: 199): '(See! from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last!/See—the prismatic colors, glistening and rolling!)' The poem sees the bard falter, his confidence slip. This makes it a more unusual Whitman poem, especially as concerns the three antebellum editions of *Leaves*. Erkkila (1989: 169) writes that, in the face of the failed 'ensemble of a national democratic order', 'Whitman's drowned poet projects the shipwreck of an entire culture.' Reflecting on his art, the poet (*LG*60: 197–98) shares a series of regrets:

> I too Paumanok,
> I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float,
> and been wash'd on your shores;
> I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
> I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped
> island.

Long Island had 'a long history of wrecks tragedies' and, as a boy, Whitman (*PW*: 13) was 'in the atmosphere and traditions of many of these wrecks—of one or two almost an observer.' Among the transcendentalists, Margaret Fuller lost her life to a shipwreck off Fire Island in 1850. Using Whitman's working notes for *Leaves*, Folsom (1998: 93) has highlighted that Whitman 'originally planned to include an illustration in the [1855] book, the figure of "A large ship under her full power of steady forward motion."' Whitman (*PW*: 211) employed similar language in his catalogic prose, excerpted earlier, declaring that cities, namely Brooklyn and New York, 'completely satisf[ied] [his] senses of power, fulness, motion'. The 1860 *Leaves* featured illustrations, 'a finger with a butterfly, a cloud-encircled globe, and an ocean with a rising or setting sun' (Folsom 1998: 93), but no ship. Read alongside Erkkila's metaphor for the country on the eve of war, as projected in 'As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life', this suggests that the 'large ship under her full power' was later excluded on the basis of its no longer being a viable motif in 1860. Nowhere to be seen in the poem is the unbridled joy in the 'eternal float of solution' streaming through 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'. The poem reads as Whitman wrestling with a fear D. H. Lawrence (1960: 91) would express about the former's will to speed through, merge, absorb, perhaps to the detriment of some integral selfhood: 'Oh, Walter, Walter, what have you done with it? What have you done with yourself? With your own individual self? For it sounds as if it had all leaked out of you, leaked into the universe.'

Turning from the weakness connoted by 'leaked' to look at other liquid aspects of *Leaves*, this proves an effective structure for thinking about Whitman's transcendentalist poetics. In many more poems,

such as 'Starting from Paumanok', the water provides comfort, ecstasy, or wonder, as well as — vitally — a model for fluid movement between states, reflected by the American bard's fluid movement between States. The water symbolised a mode of democratic transcendence, appearing at times to echo Emerson's 'Circles' (1883: 282): 'The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. Our globe seen by God is a transparent law, not a mass of facts. The law dissolves the fact and holds it fluid.' Whitman (*PW*: 95) described his early awareness of such elemental properties, 'the solid marrying the liquid':

> that suggesting, dividing line, contact, junction, the solid marrying the liquid—that curious, lurking something (as doubtless every objective form finally becomes to the subjective spirit,) which means far more than its mere sight, grand as that is—blending the real and the ideal, and each made portion of the other. Hours, days, in my Long Island youth and early manhood, I haunted the shores of Rockaway or Coney island, or away east to the Hamptons or Montauk. Once, at the latter place, (by the old lighthouse, nothing but sea-tossings in sight in every direction as far as the eye could reach,) I remember well, I felt that I must one day write a book expressing this liquid, mystic theme. Afterward, I recollect, how it came to me that instead of any special lyrical or epical or literary attempt, the sea-shore should be an invisible influence, a pervading gauge and tally for me, in my composition.

Water 'leaks' through *Leaves of Grass*, its contents 'subterranean sea-rills making for the sea' (*LG*81: 277). David Kuebrich's *Minor Prophecy* (1989) isolates the sea's divine and religious import in Whitman's poetry. As George Hutchinson (1990: 105) reasons, Kuebrich's theological, spiritual emphasis, as well as the parameters of his phenomenological method, does at times 'dilute the sensuousness and fleshliness of the poems'. As a segue to the Long Island shoreline, gateway to the landscape and natural environment that colours *Leaves*, I'll briefly examine some instances in which the water interacts with the sensuous and fleshly to do more than symbolise 'the divine or the spiritual' (Kuebrich 1998: 623), tempering Whitman's transcendentalist inheritance, 'blending the real and the ideal'. Like New York, transcendental thought streams through *Leaves* largely without being named, the blindingly obvious caveat to this being Whitman's choice not only to name Emerson in the 1856 edition but publicise his private correspondence.

'This Compost', originally 'Poem of Wonder at the Resurrection of The Wheat' (*LG*56: 204), sees the poet realise, ecstatically, that his 'lover the sea' is in fact the font of renewal he thought it to be, 'That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash/of the sea which is so amorous after me!/That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked/body all over with its tongues!' The second and fourth lines are indented, marking visually the eroticised interlapping of flesh and water. The rhyme in 'sea' and 'me' is unusual, one that points in very blatant fashion to the identificatory logic of the transcendental self, the fullest potentialities of Whitman was so willing to explore in his earlier verse. In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 27), too, the sea is a lover: 'I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,/I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me'. Whitman reinforces syntactically the likeness of lovers, the catalogic and conceptual merging, since 'feeling of me' can be read both as the feeling of me by you and the feeling of you by me, as in 'liking the touch of me' (*LG*55: 57). 'Of' gestures to the erotic contract of contact initiated by the sea's 'inviting fingers' and then entered into by a poet ready to 'repay' (*LG*55: 27) his lover, like a receipt written as 'Received of X, by Y.' The Whitmanic self is organised by contact points that are as erogenous as they are metaphysical, 'quivering [him] to a new identity' (*LG*55: 32), a programme that transfers to the city and

its everchanging citizenry. The sea, or water more widely, embodies the re-constitution and re-definition of this self so well precisely because it too is constantly being re-constituted and therefore in some sense re-defined by fluctuating proportions of 'Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-/lettuce, left by the tide' (*LG*60: 196). Like Whitman's conception of the ferry crowd, it remains similar enough in aggregate yet entirely different in makeup. In this flux and likewise in sex, 'Nature without check, with original energy' (*LG*60: 8), spiritual certitude is to be found. The oceanic 'gauge and tally' dramatises identity in flux, staging the transcendentalist idea 'that identity consists of one's perceptions of the universe moment by moment' (Buell 1973: 330). The liquidity of the Whitmanic 'I' thus anticipates the stream-of-consciousness techniques made possible by 'the fluid and swallowing soul' (*LG*55: 38), though it also makes more understandable criticisms like George Santayana's (1968: 93) that Whitman's catalogues are 'a phantasmagoria of continuous visions, vivid, impressive but monotonous and hard to distinguish in memory, like the waves of the sea'.

In response to the sea's 'crooked inviting fingers' (*LG*55: 27), the poet's exclamations culminate in a mystical proclamation, spoken with jarringly sudden serenity:

> Sea of stretched ground-swells!
> Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths!
> Sea of the brine of life! Sea of unshovelled and always-ready graves!
> Howler and scooper of storms! Capricious and dainty sea!
> I am integral with you . . . . I too am of one phase and of all phases.

Mack (2002: 69) writes that 'the specter of death […] is cradled within the crosscurrents of a nature envisioned as the grand choreography of benign and libidinal forces'. That choreography is underscored rhythmically and visually: lines stretch like groundswells, breaths broaden to accommodate the swell, declarations tumble forth like hurried waves. And then, entranced calm accompanies integration. A long elliptical pause intervenes between clauses to force 'convulsive breaths' to slow, having been quickened by exclamations that build like sexual climax. For Asselineau (1980: 38), Whitman's 'brine of life' 'runs through our veins and carries the male's semen' and this correlation cultivates the merge between sex and sea. A late poem titled 'The Singer in the Prison', originally written for Washington weekly the *Saturday Evening Visitor* in 1869, speaks of convicts' 'long-pent spirit rous'd to reminiscence' of 'youth's convulsive breathings' (*LG*81: 293).[3] Along similar lines, 'The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie/willing and naked' (*LG*56: 311) refers both to seawater and 'the brine of life', 'that inbound urge and urge of waves' ('From Montauk Point' 1888, *New York Herald*) to the 'Urge and urge and urge,/Always the procreant urge of the world' (*LG*55: 14). Whitman's way of expressing 'the correspondence between the laws of nature and the truths of the spirit' (Ljungquist 2010: 337) rested upon his poetic edict that 'Sex contains all,/Bodies, souls' ('Poem of Procreation' *LG*56: 240). We might imagine in the elliptical pause quoted above the sound of waves breaking softly on the sand to punctuate Whitman's line, as they would have done when he (*PW*:

[3] Susan Belasco (2022) writes that the poem 'commemorates the performance of Euphrosyne Parepa Rosa (1836–1874), a Scottish singer' and 'Whitman may have attended a performance at Sing Sing, a state prison established north of New York City in 1828.'

14) would retreat 'in the mild seasons down to Coney island […] and declaim Homer or Shakspere to the surf and sea gulls by the hour.' Or, perhaps, each dot mimics 'many a thump as of low bass drums', the sound described in 'Sea-Shore Fancies' (*PW*: 95), each lending a percussive grandeur to the 'slow-measured sweep' of sea and sand. If, as Whitman (ibid.) suggests, his poetry 'indirectly show[s] that [he and the sea] have met and fused', a fusing so often imagined as the ecstatic experience of sexual transcendence, one might rather hear those four dots as a heartbeat, amplified in postcoital silence. Indeed, an unsigned review of the 1856 edition in the *Brooklyn Daily Times* (*WWA*) described the book as 'altogether *sui generis*, unless we may call it Emersonian', before quoting 'Song of Myself' — including Whitman's address to the sea — as evidence that 'it is not shaped to all the radiations of the unbridled muse of the author'.

As both a compositional and thematic guide, the sea's waves and phases complement the poetry's alertness to the oral tradition because sound, like light, was known to travel in waves. In 'the sound of breaking waves' (*LG*60: 195), therefore, is replicated aurally the form of the thing transmitted. Besides his 'extracurricular' reading habits, Whitman's journalistic career in New York — by 1855 'the nation's center for the popular exploration of science' (Scholnick 1998: 617) — put him in close proximity to scientists of all stripes who would give talks in large lyceums that were printed in the daily press. I'll pause here to contextualise the air(s) through which sound waves travelled — 'This is the common air that bathes the globe' (*LG*55: 24) — within 19th century reform literature, which distinguished between different airs. 'Vital air', for instance, was a scientific term associated with the experiments of Joseph Priestley, Thomas Beddoes, and Humphry Davy to isolate chemically the different breathable gases. In Whitman we find 'common air', figured above as liquid, or 'open air', as in 'The sun and stars that float in the open air' (*LG*55: 59). These align more with reformist, health-inflected critiques of stale air in enclosed spaces, like ships or prisons, or schools, as will crop up in the next chapter. That discourse informed democratic critiques on enclosure, following earlier work by English prison reformer John Howard in *The State of the Prisons,* applying thermometric science to penal reform and 'condemning dungeons like the Bastille' (Cervantes and Porter 2016: 100). In another of Whitman's 'Brooklyniana' pieces (No. 5. 1862, *WWA*), he discusses 18th century British prison ships where 'The air was fœtid, in warm weather, to suffocation.' He called (No. 5.---Continued, *WWA*) for 'an appropriate monument on the highest point of old Fort Greene, Washington Park.' From these small details emerge the parallels in Whitman's thinking between democracy, enclosure, and fresh air. Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park came about in part owing to Whitman's journalistic campaign for a 'lung' for the city ('City Intelligence: Brooklyn "Lungs"—Washington Park' qtd. in Bergman et al. 1998: 414). 'What sobers the Brooklyn boy', Whitman (*LG*55: 42) asks, 'as he looks down the shores of the Wallabout and/remembers the prison ships'? The answer is the empathic projection of the self, seeing himself 'in prison shaped like another man', 'tried and sentenced' (ibid. 43). To give voice to 'many long dumb voices' (*LG*55: 29), Whitman's bard draws breath from symbolic and literal air.

In as much as the Atlantic's 'pervading gauge and tally', washing in and out of the Long Island Sound, was also somewhat perversely a kind of metronomic influence on Whitman's free verse, for instance to measure the breath to speak the long lines, so were the 'liquid' aspects of Emerson's writing an indirect influence on his form and content. In 'A Font of Type' (*LG*91: 386), a six-line ode to typesetting in the

'Sands at Seventy' collection, oceanic and seafaring metaphors describe not sexual but textual potential, the power of 'unlaunch'd voices'. The ecclesiastical meaning of 'font' denotes (baptismal) renewal, and the lines diminish in length to suggest visually a retreating wave. Shortening sibilantly, the alliterative 'l' liquidly rolling the poem to conclusion, the final line implies the pattern's imminent (re)beginning. This effect is compounded by the present participle on which it ends, or regains repose:

> These ocean waves arousable to fury and to death,
> Or sooth'd to ease and sheeny sun and sleep,
> Within the pallid slivers slumbering.

The ocean's incongruence becomes a metaphor for the potential power of original expression, as if a model for Emersonian inconsistency. Around the time the poem was composed, Whitman (Traubel 1982: 335) characterised Emerson himself as 'a font of type—a genuine letter—only set into a new text.' Setting 'into a new text' is arguably what Whitman does when in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 27), before apostrophising the sea in those eroticised exclamations, he imagines 'Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!' Remarking on this 'most surprising phrase' in *Leaves*, Asselineau (2002: 222) says 'Liquidity is its quiddity'. Taken to mean language and form, liquidity is the 'new text' into which Whitman sets identity and the Earth. In 'A Song of the Rolling Earth', originally 'Poem of The Sayers of The Words of The Earth' (*LG*56: 327–328), the poet sees the world 'Tumbling on steadily,' 'The liquid vacuum around and ahead still entering/and dividing.' He concludes (329) that 'Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom/the earth is solid and liquid' and that 'all merges' osmotically 'Towards him who makes the dictionaries of the/words that print cannot touch.' The poet's role is to make expressible what is so far nameless, 'piling up words that would eventually make a democracy speakable and thus possible' (Folsom 1998: 194). In 'Broad-Axe Poem' (*LG*56: 153), 'The solid forest gives fluid utterances,/They tumble forth, they rise and form'.

Swivelling back to the Emersonian influence, if 'Words are signs of natural facts' (1884: 28) and for Whitman 'the substantial/words are in the ground and sea' (*LG*56: 322), water is well suited to the expression of facts that are themselves both material and fluid, or 'the solid marrying the liquid' (*PW*: 95). 'Now I see what there is in a name,' he writes in 'Mannahatta' (*LG*60: 404), 'a word, liquid,/sane, unruly, musical, self-sufficient'. Herman Grimm (qtd. in Salinas 1978: 397) calls Emerson 'a perfect swimmer on the ocean of modern existence. He dreads no tempest, for he is sure that calm will follow it'. Kenneth Burke (ibid.) praises the 'buoyant' spirit of *Nature*. Emerson (1883: 75) himself likened the nature of being to a fluctuating series of 'interminable oceans' in 'Experience', life being merely 'a hint of this vast-flowing vigor.' Likewise, the 'lubricity of all objects' (ibid. 53) resists our clutches and personality is 'a succession of moods' that 'Gladly we would anchor, but the anchorage is quicksand' (ibid. 58). This latter notion, and its motion, is in plain sight in 'As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life' (*LG*60: 199) and the poet's anxiety that he has been 'Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another.' In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 38) this is rather a positive mark of the poet's liberty to float from one identity to the next: 'I anchor my ship for a little while only,/My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns to me.' '[T]he currents of the Universal Being circulat[ing] through' Emerson (1884: 17) are floated in rhetoric that also mimics the

ocean's expansion, contraction, transmission, and reflection. Consider the following from 'Nature' (ibid. 27), in which Emerson sways between process and unity:

> For, although the works of nature are innumerable and all different, the result or the expression of them all is similar and single. Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind.

From an expansive description of numberless differences, the focus narrows to how 'all is similar and single'. The radical likeness he sees in the sea of forms is balanced by the uniqueness reflected back, a polar contradiction contained within a succinct statement and the declared equivalence itself mirrored by the recurrent sound in 'alike' and 'unique'. Emerson lists discrete items before subsuming them under 'an analogous impression'. Process and unity are at stake when he lays out the endless circulations permitted by water in terms of changing states (ibid. 19): 'the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this'. Whitman (*LG*55: xi) writes that eternity 'rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today, and is held by the ductile anchors of life […] and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave'. Out of eternity come precise segments of time; out of unfathomable incongruity, perfection.

Moving inland

Having abstracted Whitman's 'liquid mystic theme', I'll move the discussion to some of Long Island's environmental specifics and some textual, as well as geographic, sources that organised the poet's thinking about Paumanok. While the ocean lent its 'pervading gauge and tally' to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman's eye was also on the necks, contours, and expansions of his fish-shape island. Marginalia from the Feinberg Collection show his annotations of Benjamin F. Thompson's *The History of Long Island* (1843, *WWA*). Whitman mostly jots down the island's dimensions, its 'length 140 miles ——— breadth from 12 to 20 miles — (in 90 miles)'. Bodily imaginations of place, as in 'million-footed Mannhattan' (*LG*81: 193), are in evidence in 'a chain of Hills —a spine' and where Whitman simply notes the word 'necks', beside a list of 'Little Neck, Great Neck, Cow Neck'. He makes a few little adjustments to Thompson's descriptions. He inserts that the island's 'numerous streams' are '^very small', copies the altitude of his West Hills birthplace at '339 ft high' — a vantage point — and notes the '5 ft rise of tide'. Thompson (1843: 24–25) describes the island's ecosystems in the excerpt below, focusing on the Great South Bay that Whitman ('Brooklyniana, No. 13.' 1862, *WWA*) termed 'that inexhaustible sea-mine, full of treasures', between Long Island and Fire Island:

> In this bay are very extensive tracts of salt marsh, and islands of meadow, furnishing an immense quantity of grass annually to the inhabitants; and its waters are equally prolific of almost every variety of shell and scale fish, which can never be exhausted. Wild fowl of many kinds, and in countless numbers, are found here, affording a pleasant recreation to the sportsman, and a source of profitable employment to many hundreds of individuals, who pursue it as matter of emolument. Indeed, the country generally, as well as the markets of New-York and Brooklyn, are mostly supplied by the

> produce of this bay, and is a mine of inexhaustible wealth. The bony fish that abound here are used extensively for fertilizing the soil, and are unsurpassed by any other manure. The beach which separates this bay from the ocean is composed entirely of sand, which in many places is drifted by the winds into hills of the most fantastic forms, and in other parts is low and flat, scarcely rising a few feet above the level of the ocean. This beach is in some places nearly half a mile in width, and has upon many parts, a considerable growth of forest, and some tillable land, although less of the latter than formerly. Very great and extraordinary changes are constantly taking place on this beach, composed of drift sand and exposed, as it is, to the continual action of the winds and the heavy waves of the wide and boisterous Atlantic. While in some parts much of the beach has been washed away, in others large accretions of alluvial matter have been made; and at the same time the sand is carried onward, so that the guts or inlets are constantly progressing to the westward.

Besides the bay's support of New York and Brooklyn, what stands out here — or what I suggest stood out to Whitman — is Thompson's attention to diversity, abundance, and transformation: the island's 'prolific' waters, the 'countless numbers' of wild fowl, the intermingled salt marsh, meadow, and forest, the 'great and extraordinary changes […] constantly taking place', and the 'large accretions of alluvial matter'. Whitman's 'inexhaustible sea-mine, full of treasures' probably rewrites Thompson's 'mine of inexhaustible wealth'. Kevin McMullen (2020, *WWA*) collates other material borrowed from Thompson's text for 'Brooklyniana', such as very lightly edited sentences. The practice wasn't unusual in the context of 19th century textual borrowing and Whitman's compositional approach often relied on a fluid process from reading to note-taking to annotation to writing. I'll demonstrate a few instances in which it seems Whitman repurposes Thompson's work more indirectly, highlighting traces of *The History of Long Island* in the antebellum *Leaves.* McMullen (ibid.) shows borrowings from Samuel Goodrich's 1855 textbook *The World As It Is And As It Has Been; A Comprehensive Geography and History, Ancient and Modern*, the main source text for Whitman's weighty cultural geography scrapbook. McMullen (ibid.) pinpoints the 'textbook's note that Whitman's native east end of Long Island is "least settled, and deer, and wild-fowl, and fish are found here,"' and this 'becomes "the wild-fowl and fish of Paumanok,"' in a note headed 'The Empire State'. A geography textbook in this way structured (and sometimes helped to word) Whitman's native knowledge of New York, founded in sensory experience and grounded in the body (*PW*: 14): 'the soothing rustle of the waves, and the saline smell—boyhood's times, the clam-digging, bare-foot, and with trowsers roll'd up—hauling down the creek—the perfume of the sedge-meadows'.

Whitman was already possessed of a local's knowledge of Paumanok's geological features, the uses and pleasures of its various ecosystems, but in reading Thompson's depictions it's difficult not to imagine the poet taking in the same factual information about his birthplace — from his Brooklyn home — and beginning to transform it into his own poetics of person and place. Apart from its emphatic solidity and physicality, Whitman's transcendentalist poetics is characterised by continuous disintegration and reintegration, by the reattachment of natural and human dislocations. In 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*56: 211) the poet observes 'every one disintegrated,/yet part of the scheme'; in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 27) he is 'Partaker of influx and efflux'. Among 'very extensive alterations that have taken place […] by the inroads which the sea is incessantly making in some places, and the large accretions to the land in other locations' (1843: 32, 33, 38), a recurrent feature that Thompson identifies is the island's crumbliness, 'the soft and yielding substance of the headlands and beaches', 'continually wearing away by the action of the sea'. He also describes (ibid. 25) how the wind whips the sand, minutely small individual particles, into new

'fantastic forms'. The 'What is the grass?' passage from 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 17) meditates on the same continuous wearing away of the human landscape, on what has become of 'young and old men', 'women and children'. Faced with this erosion, the speaker affirms that 'All goes onward and outward . . . . and nothing collapses' (ibid). Thompson (1843: 37–38) lists 'necks', or islands now 'united by a sand and shingle beach', and details many alluvial formations, such as one in Huntington, where West Hills is located, 'on the north and north-west sides of Lloyd's Neck, in Huntington, and formed entirely by the deposite of the coarse detrital matter swept along by the current from the destruction of the high cliffs in the vicinity'. I have said that the ocean is, perversely, a metronomic influence on Whitman's free verse, and to this I add that his catalogic form, his agglomerative style, can itself be read as a kind of alluvial formation. Often its constituents are loosely connected, and they struck many critics as 'coarse detrital matter', a charge Whitman (*LG*60: 309) calmly accepts in a poem later titled 'We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd'. The poet inducts the reader into his unaffected coarseness, which is after all only natural, elemental: 'We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals'. In the succeeding poem (*LG*60: 309), later titled 'Native Moments', he even courts the charge: 'Give me the drench of my passions! Give me life/coarse and rank!' The detrital matter is 'swept along by the current' of an all-encompassing 'I' that responds to the country's 'pulverulent soil' (Thompson 1843: 63), those particulate differences in the nation at large — innumerable, different, similar, single — that were displayed in microcosmic form by Manhattan and also found on Paumanok's 'friable shore' (*LG*60: 197). *Leaves of Grass* was born of the desire to develop separately from traditional poetic forms, the 'high cliffs in the vicinity' that loomed large and remained the defining feature of Emerson's verse, as seen in his seashore lyric, even as he called for a new voice. Then a yardstick of prestige, those high cliffs were also New England's literary elite. Alluvial formations are young, geologically speaking, which is reflected in Whitman's new American voice, confidently and elatedly 'Stuffed with the stuff that is coarse' (*LG*55: 23). Identities are 'soft and yielding' (Thompson 1843: 33) in Whitman's self-projections, mouldable like 'light soils with loam and clay' (ibid. 59). Rural imagery yields to the urban and vice versa ('Song for Occupations' *LG*55: 61), following an elliptical movement from 'Grains and manures . . marl, clay, loam . . the subsoil plough' to 'Manufactures . . commerce . . engineering . . the building of cities'. The effect is a transcendentalist sediment that is at turns 'Disorderly fleshy and sensual' ('Song of Myself' *LG*55: 29, 56) and drifting 'in lacy jags'.

'As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life' features Paumanok's 'friable shore' and, more intriguingly, describes 'loose winrows, little corpses' (*LG*60: 198). I suggest Whitman refers to the 'mossbonker', the 'bony fish' used for 'fertilizing the soil', 'unsurpassed by any other manure' (Thompson 1843: 24). Thompson (ibid. 63) explains the mossbonker's fertilising powers with specific reference to Suffolk County, home to Whitman's West Hills birthplace, Huntington:

> On a considerable portion of Long Island the bony fish, called hard-heads or moss-bonkers, have become the principal article for fertilizing the soil; and the crops thereby produced as so abundant as to be almost a matter of astonishment. These fish weigh from one to two pounds each, and are either spread directly on the land, or mixed with other substances to decompose. In some instances, at Southold, two or three hundred thousand, and it is even said that a million have been caught at a time; and there are, probably, more than one hundred million used annually upon this island. The sandy land in Suffolk County could hardly be cultivated to advantage without the aid derived from these fish.

Even without being named, the mossbonker would provide a specific local influence — or at least a partial origin — for lines like 'And as to you corpse I think you are good manure', 'And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths' (*LG*55: 54), which come towards the end of 'Song of Myself'. Whitman names the mossbonker in a section from 'Poem of Salutation' (*LG*56: 113–14) — eventually 'Salut Au Monde!' — which he later excerpted as the standalone 'A Paumanok Picture' (1881). Unlike the imaginative visions of distant continents and peoples through which the speaker soars bird-like, this picture has a realist quality. It reads as if being narrated in real time by one stood, stationary, atop a coastal cliff. The poet's vantage point lends a certain detachment, which rather adds to the firm attachment of each element of the scene to the next.

> I see the little and large sea-dots, some inhabited,
> some uninhabited;
> I see two boats with nets, lying off the shore of
> Paumanok, quite still,
> I see ten fishermen waiting—they discover now
> a thick school of mossbonkers, they drop
> the joined seine-ends in the water,
> The boats separate, they diverge and row off,
> each on its rounding course to the beach,
> enclosing the mossbonkers,
> The net is drawn in by a windlass by those
> who stop ashore,
> Some of the fishermen lounge in the boats,
> others stand negligently ankle-deep in the
> water, poised on strong legs,
> The boats are partly drawn up, the water slaps
> against them,
> On the sand, in heaps and winrows, well out from
> the water, lie the green-backed spotted moss-
> bonkers.

Fishing for mossbonkers was a familiar, representative scene to Whitman, but I argue that he seized on this species for the filtering and fertilising properties observed by Thompson. This activity was a fitting emblem not only of the Long Island seashore but of the landscape permitted to grow by the decomposition of the fish, a connecting symbol of Whitman's self-interrupted 'land and water'.

The mossbonker also symbolises the cycle of death and renewal epitomised by the poet's transfiguration of the grass into 'the beautiful uncut hair of graves' (*LG*55: 16). The seine-haul fishing depicted in the 'Paumanok picture' draws together some other conceptual strands of Whitman's transcendentalist poetics. This being an ancient fishing technique, one is the primitive beauty he associated with Paumanok and its Lenape name and which he tried to widen to Mannahatta and the city more broadly. The seine-haul also implies the cycle in which the fishermen themselves are, like their haul, enclosed. Their 'rounding course to the beach' and the winding of the windlass replicate the natural circulations encapsulated by the mossbonkers' fertile deaths. The smooth transition between movements

recalls one of the poet's (*LG*56: 103) initial exclamations: 'Such joined unended links, each hooked to the/next!' The fishermen's negligent stance mirrors the 'neg-/ligent leaning' of young men in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*56: 211). It reinforces the reader's sense of controlled, continuous timelessness — as in the endless 'Sun-Down' behind the ferry crossing — and exhibits Whitman's desire to rediscover certain rural attitudes and behaviours in an urban context. Nonchalance meets precision in the image of boats that 'separate' and 'diverge', a net 'drawn in', boats 'drawn up'. The movement is orderly, familiar, routine, yet this local Long Island backdrop, a realist painting, becomes emblematic of a broader programme of transcendental unity. When Whitman excerpted 'A Paumanok Picture', he chose to accentuate the visual effect of the measured choreography, the drawing in and drawing up. There is a gently elaborated democratic progression at work from 'two boats', to 'ten fishermen', to 'a thick school', to 'heaps and winrows', and finally to 'green-backed spotted moss-/bonkers.' This is a dance of antitheses, of the one and the many, of exact numbers that subside into vagueness, before circling back to an image of crisp precision sharpened further by harsh consonants. I return to Emerson's 'Nature' (1884: 27): 'For, although the works of nature are innumerable and all different, the result or the expression of them all is similar and single. Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique.' Close to the outset of his preface, Whitman (*LG*55: iii) identifies this sentiment with the United States, which 'themselves are essentially the greatest poem': 'Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses.' 'On the sand, in heaps and winrows,' we see those particulars in vast masses, as indeed we do throughout *Leaves*. We are shown 'action untied' or, perhaps more properly, unwound.

The *Archive* features a manuscript, estimated to date to before or early in 1855, in which Whitman notes some thoughts about the kind of Long Islanders who fished for mossbonkers and dug for clams. It wouldn't be hard to separate into Whitmanesque lines:

> Outdoors is the best antise[ptic] yet.—What a [cha]rm there is ~~about~~ in men that have lived main[ly?] [cut away] the open air—among horses—at sea—on the [ca]nals—digging clams—~~cutting timber~~ timberers—~~rafting,~~ rafters, or steamboat~~ing.~~ers, or ~~house~~ framers of houses,—and mechanics generally.—Clean~~er~~ly shaved and ~~more~~ grammatical folks I call Mister, and lay the tips of my fingers inside their elbows ~~as~~ after the orthodox fashion, and discuss whatever had the biggest headline in the morning papers, and pass the time as comfortably as the law allows.—But for the others, my arm leans over their shoulders, and around their necks.—In them nature justifies herself;—~~and In~~ in ~~t~~Their indefinable excellence ~~giving~~ gives ~~us~~ out something as ~~superior to all~~ much ~~above~~ beyond the ^special productions [of colleges and pews and parlors as the morning air of the prairie or the sea-shore outsmells the costliest scents of the perfume shop.]

'Cleanly shaved and grammatical folks' invite stilted intimacy. They demand contact that requires physical and social dexterity to align with what 'the law allows'. These are interactions that call for the fine motor skills of fingertips. Conversation likewise follows a script of social permissibility, aided by the prop of the morning papers. But men of 'the open air' invite the more insouciant affection of a lean, an arm around the neck. Embraces of all sorts are scattered throughout *Leaves*, though this one from what would become 'I Sing the Body Electric' (*LG*55: 78) is most relevant to my presentation of the Whitmanic speaker's erotic delight in Paumanok's seashore and the easy affection of the communities it sustains. Simultaneously this embrace is solid, as in flesh against flesh; liquid, 'as in a sea'; and vaporous, as in the 'odor of them'.

> To be surrounded by beautiful curious breathing laughing flesh is enough,
> To pass among them . . to touch any one . . . . to rest my arm ever so lightly round
> his or her neck for a moment . . . . what is this then?
> I do not ask any more delight . . . . I swim in it as in a sea.
>
> There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them and in
> the contact and odor of them that pleases the soul well,
> All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

Like 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', there is a dissolution of bodies, a single, nebulous 'it' in which to swim. The manuscript describes contact of the kind that defines the fluctuating and physically established citizenship enacted in the ferry crossing (*LG*56: 211) and the casualness of 'arms on my neck as I stood, or the neg-/ligent leaning of their flesh against me'. This is Whitman's challenge to the alienated experience of city life, mounted with help from the villages, and villagers, of Paumanok whose way of being he relocates to mighty Mannahatta and subjects to the logic of the crowd, of identification.

In 'Poem of Salutation' (*LG*56: 103), casual intimacy is enacted dialogically as Whitman places his readers — 'you of centuries hence' (118) — in the position of his questioner, as if gliding alongside each other, 'arms about each other's necks':

> What widens within you, Walt Whitman?
> What waves and soils exuding?
> What climes? what persons and lands are
> here?
> Who are the infants? some playing, some slum-
> bering?
> Who are the girls? Who are the married
> women?
> Who are the three old men going slowly with
> their arms about each other's necks?

Promising to 'penetrate' every city 'the light or warmth penetrates', to 'wing' his way to 'All islands to which birds wing their way' (120), the speaker finishes with a liquid analogy for the interconnectedness of the sights and sounds he lists. Emerson (1884: 19) observes how 'the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this'. Whitman (*LG*56: 120) centralises the self — and the body — in this web of connections, but progresses in a similar fashion:

> I think I have risen with you, you vapors, and
> moved away to distant continents, and fallen
> down there, for reasons,
> I think I have blown with you, you winds,
> I think, you waters, I have fingered every shore
> with you

'Spontaneous Me' also begins with a casual act of affection, as in the negligent leaning of ferry-riders atop the water or the negligent stance of fishermen in the water. As part of 'Beautiful dripping fragments—the negligent list/of one after another', fragments soaking in those liquid aspects of Whitman's poetics until saturated, the speaker notes 'The arm of my friend hanging idly over my/shoulder' (*LG*56: 309). 'Poem of Many in One' (*LG*56: 184), later 'By Blue Ontario's Shore', borrows liberally from the 1855 preface. Whitman takes the image of an arm around the neck, an emblem of the rural familiarity and ease of being he praises in that manuscript. He reimagines it as the poet's arm around the neck of the nation, the poet

> Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,
> Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its neck with incomparable love,
> Plunging his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits,

penetrating the landscape as the sea does the Long Island shoreline, as if hanging onto one of its peninsulas, Little Neck, Great Neck, Cow Neck, or indeed Lloyd Neck in Whitman's Huntington hometown. For Whitman, the democratic ideal contained in the (pro)creative act was at once poetic and sexual, spiritual and muscular, inspired by the equilibrium he saw first in land and water on fish-shape Paumanok.

We might read the plunging of the Whitmanic bard's 'seminal muscle' (he corrected 'semitic' in 1871), 'body and soul', as a very literal interpretation of Emerson's decree in 'The Transcendentalist' (1884: 269) to 'let the soul be erect, and all things will go well.' When Unitarian minister William Rounseville Alger reviewed the 1856 *Leaves* for the *Christian Examiner* (*WWA*), he decried its 'ithyphallic audacity that insults what is most sacred and decent among men' and, in allusion to Whitman's printing Emerson's private letter, lamented that the latter's 'honored name […] which has never before been associated with anything save refinement and delicacy in speech and writing, is made to indorse [*sic*] a work that teems with abominations.' Susan Dean (1999: 194) argues compellingly that Whitman was not only espousing a fundamentally Quaker view of human sexuality as natural and elemental (and thus sacred and decent), but specifically 'trying to win for the gay minority in nineteenth-century America what the Quaker minority had won in England in the seventeenth.' She (ibid.) cites the ways in which Quakers exhibited 'their "Friendly Persuasion" in public: insisting on dressing differently from their neighbors; insisting on addressing everyone with familiar pronouns, "Thee" and "Thou," to express shared subjectivity; refusing to remove their hats to social superiors in public; refusing to swear oaths or to serve in the army or to pay war taxes.' On that last point, Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' is the obvious transcendentalist counterpart, though Reynolds (1989: 98) notes that Bronson Alcott anticipated his poll tax refusal by three years, and that his notion owed much to the 'agitation of William Lloyd Garrison', for instance, who co-edited Benjamin Lundy's Quaker abolitionist paper, *Genius of Universal Emancipation.* Jane E. Calvert (2006: 69) proposes that 'it was the Quakers' theologico-political theory of a civil constitution that allowed the idea and practice of civil disobedience to arise.' Referring to travelling Quaker minister

and Long Islander Elias Hicks, Mitchell Santine Gould (2007: 3–4) proposes that 'Whitman's unique openness about sex and sexuality is not only consistent with, but indeed derived from, the moral implications of Hicksite principles' and that his 'effort to redeem the fact of sex should be understood as congruent with other prevailing Quaker advocacies, such as female suffrage and abolition.' Writing about the poet's 'Quaker paradox', Gould (ibid. 17) considers Whitman 'simultaneously the voice of the fundamental human right to sexual self-determination *and* the voice of Long Island Quakerism.' Of Dean's (1994: 194) list, the Quaker preference for 'familiar pronouns' bears the most obvious relation to the affectionate familiarity that Whitman associated with Long Island and sought to move westwards to the city streets. A dream poem from the 'Calamus' cluster about 'the new City of Friends' (*LG*60: 373) makes this association quite explicit: 'Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust/love—it led the rest'. The simplicity of that phrasing, 'robust love', testifies to the criticality of adequately stating the physicality of that affection, the embodied establishment of identity and relation. Hicks himself was known for this easy familiarity. A writer in *The Friends' Intelligencer* (1839: 438), a Hicksite journal published in New York, remarks on 'the open hospitality of E. Hicks, offered to a stranger, with all the kindness and courtesy for which he was remarkable'. Below, Whitman (ibid. 372) praises not 'the vaunted glory and growth of the great city' but something far simpler, contained in this recurrent image of physical intimacy, set on a pier:

> But I record of two simple men I saw to-day, on the pier, in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,
> The one to remain hung on the other's neck, and passionately kissed him,
> While the other one to depart, tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

This 'adhesive' comradeship ensures democratic potential 'in the midst of the crowd', the relation of 'The one' to 'the other one'. When the speaker in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 26) says 'I cock my hat as I please indoors or out', this is an act not only of neighbourly familiarity but a refusal after the Quaker fashion to make himself subservient. Both are anchored in Whitman's Long Island upbringing. The frontispiece image, which establishes familiarity before the reader embarks, shows Whitman wearing a 'wide-awake' Quaker hat. Manuscript notes collected by Clifton Joseph Furness (1928), mostly contemporary to the early *Leaves*, also indicate the Quaker influence — or Hicksite influence — as another quiet gauge and tally originating from Paumanok. 'Change the name from *Elias Hicks*', Whitman writes under 'Notes for Lectures on Religion' (ibid. 39), 'make no allusion to him at all.' Under 'Notes for Lectures on Democracy and "Adhesiveness"' (ibid. 55), he refuses to name Hicks or any other Quaker, but makes this religious and secular heritage quite plain: 'I want no more of these deferences to authority — this taking off of hats and saying Sir'.

An anonymous article published in *The North American* (1889, *WWA*) relates an evening spent at 'a Banquet to the Good Gray Poet' on the occasion of his seventieth 'Natal Day', complete with 'little neck' clams from the Long Island bay of that name. It quotes Whitman: 'My friends, though announced to give

an address, there is no such intention. Following the impulses of the spirit (for I am at least half of Quaker stock), I have obeyed the command to come and look at you for a minute and show myself face to face, which is probably the best I can do.' I'm reminded of Whitman's 1855 self-review for the *Brooklyn Daily Times* (*WWA*) in which he described himself as 'a man never called upon to make speeches at public dinners'. There, close to the end, Whitman had in both manner and dress a Hicksite quietist sensibility that is not in evidence in the early editions of *Leaves of Grass* or indeed the poet's own life in antebellum New York. This was not the 'Garrulous to the very last' self-portrait of 'After the Supper and Talk' (*LG*91: 404), a poem in Whitman's 'Sands at Seventy' collection. As to his 'Quaker stock', it was perhaps convenient to round up in support of his reticence, as well as to align himself more neatly with the 'Good Gray Poet' moniker initiated by William Douglas O'Connor's 'The Good Gray Poet: A Vindication' (1866). Whitman's garrulous mysticism was in many ways sharply opposed to the quietist, ascetic tendencies of Elias Hicks and moreover of the Quakers with whom Whitman first gained familiarity via his maternal 'grandmother Amy's sweet old face in its Quaker cap' (*PW*: 11). Known as 'Amy', Naomi Van Velsor was what one might describe as 'Quakeress-adjacent', well-versed in the culture but not a formal member. She would appear to be the inspiration, though, for the woman in what would later be titled 'Faces' (*LG*55: 85) who 'looks out from her quaker cap . . . . her face is clearer and more beautiful than/the sky.' Lawrence Templin (1970: 166) raises the possibility that she or her parents 'were barred from Quaker membership for marrying outside the society.' Whitman's parents weren't formal Quakers, but they loved Hicks, who was also working-class, and had Quaker friends and neighbours. The poet's paternal grandfather had known Hicks in his youth (*PW*: 457). Whitman was raised in an environment where the Quaker terms in the 1860 *Leaves* onwards, like 'Fourth-month and Fifth-month' for April and May (*LG*60: 221), were in common usage. From 1871, he even began to use 'thee' and 'thou'. As Cummings (1998: 73) and others have pointed out, Whitman 'grew up in an environment where Quakerism and Hicksism were synonymous.' Hicks was set apart from Orthodox Quakerism by his emphasis of the 'Inner Light' — typically worded in the Quaker faith as 'there is that of God in every person' — over and above Christian scripture. As Dean (1998: 563) states, the 'imaginative consequences' of that message 'are profoundly democratic.' Extending the idea, in terms with transparent significance to *Leaves of Grass*, Hicks (qtd. in Templin 1970: 169) purportedly said that 'The fullness of the Godhead rests in man and in every blade of grass.' Whitman (*PW*: 455) recalled 'hearing so much of E. H. […] in Suffolk and Queens and Kings Counties' as a boy, 'and more than once personally seeing the old man'. In 1829, his parents took him to see Hicks preach at Morrison's Hotel Ballroom in Brooklyn (ibid. 463) and, while he says he could 'hardly suggest [Hicks's] sermon', he recounts it in terms that bear striking similarities to the 'Outdoors is the best antiseptic' manuscript. He calls it (ibid. 464, 455, 456) 'different as the fresh air of a May morning or sea-shore breeze from the atmosphere of a perfumer's shop', compares Hicks 'to little rills of water, fresh, from perennial springs' and, continuing his liquid theme, mused on the preacher's 'curious quiet yet busy life centred in a little country village on Long Island, and within sound on still nights of the mystic surf-beat of the sea.'

Whitman (ibid. 465) also suggested the similarity between Emersonian self-reliance and the Hicksite interpretation of the Inner Light, observing how one of Emerson's 'lessons or instructions, ("seal'd

orders" the biographer calls them,)' resembled the 'life and theory of Elias Hicks': 'Go forth with thy message among thy fellow-creatures; teach them that they must trust themselves as guided by that inner light which dwells within the pure in heart, to whom it was promis'd of old that they shall see God.' Hicks was for Whitman 'both a spiritual and secular ideal' (Cummings 1998: 70) and we may say that the same is true of Emerson. Whitman (Traubel 1906: 61) said 'I loved Emerson for his personality and I always felt that he loved me for something I brought him from the rush of big cities and the mass of men'. 'We had no friction', he insisted (ibid), 'we were like two Quakers together.' That transcendentalism itself appeared as the secularisation of Quaker doctrine was observed by an anonymous Friend in a letter published in the transcendentalists' own magazine, *The Dial* (1842: 383):

> It is very interesting to me to see, as I do, all around me here, the essential doctrines of the Quakers revived, modified, stript of all that puritanism and sectarianism had heaped upon them, and made the foundation of an intellectual philosophy, that is illuminating the finest minds and reaches the wants of the least cultivated.

Child agreed a couple of years later in *Letters from New-York* (1845: 127, 128) that 'an inwardly revealing faculty, *transcending* mere intellectual perception, will naturally remind many of the "inward voice", believed in by the Society of Friends', though she delineated how the former 'abjure imagination and the Arts, and love to enclose everything within prescribed rules', whereas the latter 'luxuriate in the beautiful'. Earlier I quoted Buell's (1973: 325) summary of Emerson's assumption that 'the primitive impulse is essentially chaste', which I compared to Whitman's serious consideration of the possibilities of cosmic egoism, that every act — sexual acts included — carried the potential to be holy. This was in essence an extension of those dual influences: the doctrine of the 'Inner Light' as interpreted by fellow Long Islander Elias Hicks, and Emersonian self-reliance. As Gould (2007: 5) flags about Charles Fourier, French philosopher and co-founder of utopian socialism, some Hicksite Quakers 'joined Transcendentalists and Unitarians in investigating the utopias inspired by that contemporary of Elias Hicks'. Fourier, among other things, advocated for same-sex love. Henry Clapp Jr — later New York's 'King of Bohemia' and editor of the *Saturday Press*, intended as New York's answer to Boston's *Atlantic Monthly* — travelled to Paris to translate Fourier's work. Fourier's main US follower Albert Brisbane had done this earlier, and Clapp later worked as Brisbane's secretary. *New-York Tribune* founder and editor Horace Greeley became a big fan of Brisbane's (and Fourier's) earlier in the 1840s. Greeley assisted Brisbane in popularising Fourier, but the *Tribune* editor remained 'squeamish about all matters sexual' and 'refused to acknowledge the free-love implications of passional attraction' (Tuchinsky 2005: 481). After the events of 1848, Greeley's support waned. Among Whitman's clippings — once part of his cultural geography scrapbook, the *Archive* suggests — is Clapp's letter 'To the Editor of the N. Y. Tribune' (1857, *WWA*), titled 'Fourier and His Ideas'. Clapp corrects 'certain gross misconceptions', notably that 'Fourier did not advocate the unlicensed gratification of the passions; but he did insist that all the faculties and powers of man ought to be fully *and harmoniously* developed' for the reason that 'they were implanted in us by God for this and no other purpose'. This defence reads as the logical extension of the Quaker 'Inner Light' and explains some of the attraction of Hicksite Quakers to Fourierist utopian experiments. The proceedings of a Friends of Human Progress

meeting (1859: 14), a more radical group than Hicks's, quote an Ira Hitchcock of Oneida, who expressed a sentiment with striking similarities to Clapp's: 'the pure development and exercise of every faculty of our being, produces harmony or happiness'. Gould (2007: 7) argues that Griswold's review of *Leaves* 'connected the dots between the spectacle of Whitman's forbidden sexuality emerging from the darkness of the closet, the shocking liberalism of the Friends of Human Progress, and the Quaker notion of "inner light."' People like Whitman, Griswold (1855, *WWA*) claimed, 'strut abroad unabashed in the daylight', while their detractors are dismissed as 'destitute of the "inner light"'. The review ends with '*Peccatum illud horribile, inter Christianos non nominandum*', 'the horrible sin not to be named among Christians', though Griswold didn't provide a translation.

Beneath his clippings of Clapp's letter, Whitman wrote this: 'Remember Le Bruns [*sic*] illustrations of "Comparative anatomy" where he groups the physiognomy of the native races of animals of a country and the physiognomy of the native races of human beings of the same country.' Le Brun, a 17th century French court painter, produced illustrations comparing human faces with those of animals. He located facial similarities in portraits progressing from an animal to an imagined humanoid version, from a bear to an ursine man, for instance, in an artistic spectrum of supposed shared characteristics. As to why Clapp's letter put Whitman in mind of Le Brun, I present one explanation with the aid of 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 34), below which I've included the scrap of prose (*WWA*) from which these lines likely arose. I've removed the *Archive*'s editorial marks from the latter for ease of reading.

> I think I could turn and live awhile with the animals . . . . they are so placid and self-contained,
> I stand and look at them sometimes half the day long.
>
> They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
> They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
> They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
> Not one is dissatisfied . . . . not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
> Not one kneels to another nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
> Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth.

> It were unworthy a live man to pray or complain, no matter what should happen. Will he descend among those rhymsters and sexless priests, whose virtues are lathered and shaved three times a week,—to whine about sin and hell—to pronounce his race a sham or swindle—to squall out

That the animals are 'self-contained' bears the most obvious relevance to self-reliance, Whitman's conception having first been influenced by Hicks and then by Emerson. The six-line summary of what is to be admired in animal nature alludes to much of what Hicks called for Quakers to reject: original sin, all-consuming 'duty', and subservience to others, current or ancient. Like founding Quaker George Fox before him, and Anne Hutchinson before Fox, Hicks was suspicious of the priesthood, of clergymen who claimed to be indispensable intermediaries in the attainment of salvation. Assuming Whitman's manuscript was the beginning of these lines, Whitman's 'sexless priests, whose virtues are lathered and shaved three times a week' are juxtaposed conceptually with the animals' self-containment, unhampered by shame or guilt over

'their condition'. The particulars of the grooming metaphor also contrast Whitman's bard in a line that drops off after the first edition of *Leaves*: 'Washes and razors for foofoos . . . . for me freckles and a bristling beard' (*LG*55: 28). Price (1991: 75) makes the case that the line is given resonance by the fact that the free lovers typically 'scorned razors'. In my judgement, Whitman conceives of a free lover's Hicks-inflected opposition between sexless, superficially virtuous priests — 'rhymsters' who cheapen language and faith — and natural sexuality, unperturbed by establishmentarian strictures on functions 'implanted in us by God', as Clapp puts it in his Fourierist defence. Assuming a jauntier journalistic tone, Whitman implied a similar dynamic between free-lover beards and Quaker 'hat-honour' in a *New York Leader* article ('City Photographs—No. VII', 1862, *WWA*). He relates a 'trivial episode' at Lindmuller's dance hall on the Bowery to expose its arbitrariness: 'The "officer" (here shaved very clean) rushes through the crowd of dancers, and taps a young man on the shoulder; the said young man having violated the etiquette of the hour by engaging in the merry dance with his hat on.'

As to where the transcendentalist strain lies in this confluence of influences, the crux is self-reliance and Whitman's willingness to explore its logical possibilities. Thoreau's praise of the 1856 *Leaves* (qtd. in Hindus 1971: 67) was qualified by its 'animal' quality: 'There are two or three pieces in the book which are disagreeable, to say the least; simply sensual. He does not celebrate love at all. It is as if the beasts spoke. I think that men have not been ashamed of themselves without reason.' In Whitman's (*LG*56: 354, 355) open reply to Emerson, he upheld 'the divinity of sex' and decried in American literature 'the lack of an avowed, empowered, unabashed development of sex, (the only salvation for the same).' These separate but comparable paradoxes are fundamental to the role of sex in Whitman's democratic celebration of human experience. Templin (1970: 168–69) captures the Quaker contradiction: 'the paradox of the individual and the *en masse*, or of the community achieved through individual intuition of the Inner light'. Buell's (2004: 59) analysis of Emersonian self-reliance summarises the transcendentalist counterpart: 'We are entitled to trust our deepest convictions of what is true and right insofar as every person's inmost identity is a transpersonal universal.' Whitman was alert to the tension inherent in both the Hicksite Inner Light and transcendentalist self-reliance, but he was prepared to take the notion of the self as god further. 'I believe in flesh and the appetites', declares the speaker in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 29), 'Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from'.

Whitman (Traubel 1914: 403) later described Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott as all having 'the same manner—a sort of aloofness: only so far: that coming an inch beyond that would mean disaster for us all'. 'You see', he told Traubel, 'the cultivated fellows all carry that air about with them: it is not dishonest, though an acquirement: yet because of it they in some ways, the best of them, Emerson himself (and Emerson knew it) compare unfavorably with the urchins on the street.' This was an air decidedly different from that of the Fifth-month morning seashore breeze that Whitman praises in Hicks. At first glance, no one would pin Whitman for an 'easy fit' for transcendentalism. Regina Schober's (2018: 189) neat summary of the peculiar marriage between 'a New York journalist and the intellectual culture of the New England literary establishment' captures the apparent incommensurability of concept and class, and so do Whitman and Quakerism seem unlikely bedfellows given the latter's reputation for asceticism. Whitman told Traubel (1915: 19) he 'was never made to live inside a fence' and had he 'turned Quaker', he would

'more than likely not—quite probably not—almost certainly not' have written *Leaves of Grass*. 'I guess you are right, Horace', he said (ibid.), 'We must go outside the lines before we can know the best things that are within.' Nevertheless, the contact points between the doctrine of the Inner Light and of self-reliance would suggest that, alongside his instinctual transcendentalist apprehension of 'something beyond' the Long Island seashore, Whitman's upbringing laid the groundwork for his receptivity to some of transcendentalism's central tenets, namely the idea of the self as god and, more broadly, that of self-reliance. The 'hat-honour' familiarity at the heart of the Quaker doctrine Whitman imbibed as a child calibrates his transcendentalist — and democratic — poetics of New York City. 'Proud flesh looks for hat-honour', said George Fox (qtd. in *Littell's Living Age* 1876: 764). Whitman was simply prepared to make that flesh rather prouder than those religious and secular antecedents.

B r o o k l y n

Having established Long Island as the locus for the awakening of Whitman's transcendentalist instincts, the ground in which the seeds of a predisposition were sown, nurtured by the 'Inner Light', I turn now to Brooklyn, which was his home for longer than any other place. By some measurements, this makes 'Brooklynite' the most authentic of his New York identities. Jonathan Gill (1998: 83) summarises Whitman's tripartite identity: 'If Manhattan signified culture to Whitman, and Long Island meant the beauties of nature, Brooklyn was his home.' The sharp separation of locations for use as chapter headings obscures a certain continuity of environment, however. For one, Brooklyn is part of Long Island. It sits at its westernmost end, so the water endures as a defining feature, and in the forms of rivers and swimming baths. The landscape was fairly consistent, too, as Whitman travelled westwards. As Karbiener (2018: 18) comments, Brooklyn 'was almost indistinguishable from Long Island and encompassed a variety of natural ecosystems', like 'the salt marshes of calamus around Wallabout Bay', 'the "ample hills" of Brooklyn Heights where the hawks still swoop', and 'the grassy meadows of what is now Fort Greene Park'. When abolitionist minister and Emerson devotee Moncure D. Conway (1866, *WWA*) visited Whitman's Ryerson Street home, where the 1855 text was completed, a short walk from Wallabout Bay, he said the poet's room had 'a single window looking out on the barren solitudes of the island'.[4] Wallabout appears in a line I quoted earlier, where Whitman states his particular New York heritage: 'What sobers the Brooklyn boy as he looks down the shores of the Wallabout and/remembers the prison ships'? The first two editions of *Leaves* announced 'Brooklyn, New York' as their author in omitting a name and, in the third, when 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*60: 383) gained that title, Whitman layered that identity with a parenthetical Brooklynite tag: 'I too lived, (I was of old Brooklyn,)'. In the fourth (*LG*67: 188), this line became 'I too lived—Brooklyn, of ample hills, was mine'. He said in a 'Brooklyniana' piece (No. 18. 1862, *WWA*) that the city of his youth 'had such a rural character that it was almost one huge farm and garden in comparison

[4] Conway, graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, was also a 'disciple' of Emerson's, after whom he named his son.

with its present appearance.' Gill (1998: 83) intervenes to say that the family's first Brooklyn address, on Front Street, 'near the port and ferry terminals, was chaotic and dirty, densely populated with white and African-American sailors, carpenters, butchers, clerks, street vendors, artisans, waiters, and bartenders.' This is not quite the 'placid little town' Evan Hughes (2011: 9) claims the family moved to in 1823, though placidity is very much relative, as Whitman acknowledged. Gill (1998: 84) notes that Brooklyn's population 'grew from 40,000 in 1845 to 100,000 in 1850 and to 250,000 in 1855', 1855 being the year it absorbed Williamsburgh, then spelled with an 'h'. It only took twenty years for Brooklyn to go from being classified as a city (rather than a village) in 1834 to being the country's third largest by mid-century. Pannapacker (2007: 200) adopts a term from Raymond Williams to describe the Brooklyn and New York of Whitman's youth as '*knowable communities*, relative to what they rapidly became in the 1840s and 1850s.'

As a journalist, Whitman wrote at length about Brooklyn's growth, often positioning its 'ample hills' in opposition to the squalor and social ills of Manhattan. In a July 1846 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article, he (qtd. in Bergman et al. 1998: 458) expressed grave concerns about the commuter influx of 'thousands who so eagerly rush over our ferries, out of that stifling place, to enjoy our delicious goodness here.' Both the popularity of alarmist headlines and the Whitmanic bard's will to transfigure blur the boundary between writing and reality, smudging the outlines of the journalistic and poetic personae. The issues of crowding and sanitation — particularly where they merged, posthumously, to present the problem of urban burial — were urgent and serious. Brooklyn's rapid growth prompted Whitman ('Brooklyniana, No. 17.' 1862, *WWA*) to write of the 'danger of the events and incidents of more than ten years gone being totally forgotten'. These material realities shaped Whitman's poetic concerns with purification, transformation, solidity, and endurance. Such historical factors influenced the way his transcendental poetry treats death and, in departure from the Emersonian element of his cultural heritage, sings sex and the body.

Muddying the boundary between land and water, the salt marshes around Wallabout Bay are a good place to begin a discussion of Brooklyn's geography and its relationship to Whitman's transcendentalist poetics. In 'There Was A Child Went Forth' (*LG*55: 91), which charts a child's absorption and merging with the world around him as part of what might be called a transcendental curriculum, 'the fragrance of saltmarsh and shoremud' represents the intermingling of land and sea, signals the child's sensory experience of the environment, and exhibits Whitman's pleasure in the mundane. The merge between the child who goes forth and the scene he observes is enacted, too, by the line's sibilance. In 'Song of Myself (*LG*55: 37), the saltmarsh appears in a catalogue that itself merges the sights and sounds listed, grouped by Whitman's anaphoric 'Where'. Beyond the catalogue, another merge occurs between poetry and prose, word and image. The temporal elements of the two images — 'at night', 'the warm noon' — are figured as places.

> Where the yellow-crowned heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and feeds,
> upon small crabs;
> Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon;

As the crab feeds the heron and the water cools the swimmers, the passage of time from night to day is not linear or even cyclical; rather the two elapse at once, as they do elsewhere in Whitman's 'perpetual present' (Erkkila 1989: 90). Similarly, when he commands (*LG*55: 14) us to 'Stop this day and night with me', he insinuates not a measure of time but the primacy of the 'now': 'There was never any more inception than there is now'. Night and day merge as 'then' and 'there' elide. This is made explicit in the final line of the first edition (*LG*55: 95): 'Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light, death is great as life.' There is a unified pattern of opposition in land and water, light and dark, body and soul, here and there, you and I. Emerson (1883: 258) wrote that 'The soul's advances are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line; but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis'. The saltmarsh is an analogue for such a theory of spiritual progress. As the water merges with the coastline, there occurs a transformation of state in the coming together of liquid and solid, a reconciliation of opposites.

Other aspects of Brooklyn's physical environment can be triangulated with Whitman's prose and poetry. For instance, Whitman editorialised to reserve as public space what is now Fort Greene Park, formerly Washington Park. 'At Fort Greene,' writes Jill Wacker (1994: 90), 'elevation is the great leveler.' The park's grassy meadows may well have inspired the title *Leaves of Grass* (Karbiener 2018: 18), which itself expresses the one and the many. 'I lean and loafe at my ease . . . . observing a spear of summer grass', the poet (*LG*55: 13) tells us, Whitman comparing the singular 'I' to the singular 'spear'. In another 1846 *Eagle* editorial (qtd. in Wacker 1994: 90–91) he describes the view of and from the park:

> A thousand people, hundreds of them children, were there. In the sweet marine breezes that come thither even during the hottest days, those young creatures gambolled over the grass. Women and young men walked to and fro. At their feet lay stretched out the hot shingled roofs of the houses of Brooklyn. Around on every side could be viewed a surprisingly splendid scene. You counted six counties. On either side was a sweep of noble river, with the metropolis like a map beyond.

The view of 'the metropolis like a map beyond' resonates with Thomas's (2005: 7) comment about the city's pace of change and how it prompted people to make sense of it: 'That by mid-century New Yorkers needed new guides to their city is evident from the enthusiasm with which in the summer of 1846 they flocked to view a carved wooden model of New York.' The emphasis on youth aligns with Brooklyn's growth as a city, its coming of age. In another *Eagle* article (Whitman qtd. in Bergman et al. 1998: 124) documenting an 'afternoon ramble' through East and South Brooklyn, 'the sound of carpenters' hammers and masons' trowels' soundtrack the city's growth in real time: 'No person who walks often through that part of our city, and beholds the immense proportion of *young people* resident in it, but will surely agree with us.' Fort Greene gave Brooklynites the opportunity 'not only [to] experience the benefits of fresh air, but the ability to survey all of New York City with a possessive eye' (Wacker 1994: 91). Atop those grassy meadows, Whitman's eyeline was trained on the democratic vistas about which he would later write at length in the prose work of that title. 'Democratic Vistas' (*PW*: 203) begins by acknowledging 'an infinite number of currents and forces, and contributions, and temperatures, and cross purposes, whose ceaseless play of counterpart upon counterpart brings constant restoration and vitality.' That ceaseless play climaxes,

or summits, atop the rolling landscape of Fort Greene, from where it was possible to contain the chaos in a single view, a 'sea of forms radically alike and even unique' (Emerson 1884: 27), its contours hugged by water. An animalistic placidity ripples through the editorial's scene. The image of Brooklyn 'stretched out' at the feet of the visitors, casts the city as a fellow loafer. Crucially, the panorama functions like a visual catalogue, unifying disparate elements by containing them within one image. The Manhattanese panorama permitted by Brooklyn's elevated urban parks — the counterpart to Whitman's Long Island vantage points, like Jayne's Hill — therefore offered to unify a city otherwise flooded by difference.

Sat on Brooklyn's 'swelling slopes that rise up from the shore', as Whitman (or 'Paumanok') wrote in 'Letters from a Travelling Bachelor' (4th November 1849, *New York Sunday Dispatch*, *WWA*), one can picture the spotted hawk of 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 55) swooping between the meadows and the heavens, wings outstretched as if to embrace the city below. Puncturing his pomposity and assuaging the pathos of his imminent departure, Whitman's hawk appears almost like a nagging compère, descending to remind him, again, that he's over time, that this one-man transcendental stage play has gone on quite long enough:

> The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me . . . . he complains of my gab and my loitering.
>
> I too am not a bit tamed . . . . I too am untranslatable,
> I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

Andrew Lawson (2006: 97) gives an incisive summary of Whitman's yawp as 'all signifier, material mark, naked utterance.' By this point, Whitman (*LG*55: 47) has gestured many times over to the artifice of translation in asking, insistently, 'The panorama of the sea . . . . but the sea itself?' In a manuscript from around 1850 (*WWA*) he grapples with the same problem using language that later turns up in 'A Font of Type' (*LG*91: 386, 'nonpareil' and 'brevier'). The note considers 'the Panorama done by the best artists, recommended by certificates from clergymen; admission half a dollar front seats twelve and a half cents extra.' Whitman compares this with reality, the landscape 'that lie[s] sprawling like a great fish' versus 'the painted show whose puffs have been in the papers for a fortnight.' 'Puffs irresistible', he concludes, are 'hard to withstand when they [come] in close nonpareil, but in brevier leaded, the hat of the Grand Vizier.' Where the Quaker wide-awake symbolised the refusal to make oneself subservient before another, here Whitman implies the arrogance of subordinating the landscape to artistic impression. Places like Fort Greene offered panoramas that didn't need print or priests, nor charge a fee. They served a distinct democratic purpose.

Via the complaint of a 'hawk' and the poet's 'yawp' in response, Whitman draws from that aural continuity the power, as Thomas Gannon (2007: 142) puts it, 'to transcend the semiotics of human discourse'. The barbaric yawp is sound in its pure form, 'language, as it were, in a state of nature' (Lawson 2006: 97). It aligns the poet with the hawk, man with nature. The critical line on Whitman's 'barbaric yawp' is that it's 'some Emersonian-Romantic ur-language, that "natural" tongue predating human discourse' (Gannon 2007: 144). The 'spotted hawk' over the 'roofs of the world' can also be removed from this abstracted form, however, and traced to 'the hot shingled roofs of the houses of Brooklyn' viewed from

Fort Greene. Beginning with Courtland Y. White in 1944, critics have shown the influence of an ornithological text, J.P. Giraud's *The Birds of Long Island* (1844), on Whitman's avian imagery. Giraud's work details numerous hawk species, yet Whitman settled on 'spotted hawk'. Gannon (2007: 171) suggests that the red-shouldered hawk or red-tailed hawk are both good bets given their markings. I argue for the latter given that in Giraud's (1844: 3) book it is one of the first mentioned: 'The Red-tailed or "Hen Hawk" is found in all parts of the United States, and is with us a constant resident.' Giraud (ibid. 4) notes that the bird's 'flight is vigorous, and it is capable of sustaining itself on the wing for a long time.' The hawk's ubiquity, vigour, and sustained flight would, I think, have held an appeal to Whitman as an imagistic curtain-call for a bard who likewise insists on his own robust omnipresence, his ability to float and glide across continents. By choosing 'spotted hawk' over the specific species, Whitman's intention may also have been democratic in nature, in much the same way that 'gab' and 'yawp' democratise his language — sitting in tension with the more formal 'loitering', and the more obscure literary or foreign terms that are scattered so ostentatiously throughout *Leaves* — and the way that urban parks like Fort Greene democratised space by offering a single meeting point for so many strangers to look upon a city of differences. Like 'the green-backed spotted moss-/bonkers' (*LG*56: 114) piled up in heaps, the image of the 'spotted hawk' simultaneously pinpoints minute details and the wider sweep beneath its swoop.

The meadow environment, alongside 'a sweep of noble river' as the *Eagle* editorial puts it, appears in 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 209). 'Immense' and 'interminable', the landscape is a transcendental expanse against which the poet challenges the reader to 'hold your own'. Drawn individually to a vantage point from the urban milieu, 'out of affairs—out of commerce,/shops, law, science, work, farms, clothes, the/house, medicine, print, buying, selling, eating,/drinking, suffering, begetting, dying' (ibid. 206), Whitman finds 'you', 'Old, young, male, female, rude, low, rejected by/the rest' (210), to be perfect:

> Whoever you are, you are to hold your own at
> any hazard,
> These shows of the east and west are tame com-
> pared to you,
> These immense meadows, these interminable riv-
> ers—you are immense and interminable as
> they,
> These furies, elements, storms, motions of nature,
> throes of apparent dissolution—you are he
> or she who is master or mistress over them,
> Master or mistress in your own right over nature,
> elements, pain, passion, dissolution.

Once more marrying rural and urban, 'motions of nature' necessarily include the human, urban affairs listed earlier in the poem. Though emblematic of the continent, this elevated meadow with views east and west, river sweeping either side, is also the transfiguration of vantage points like Fort Greene. To the east were meadows; to the west, rivers. 'You', singular, stand against a blurred backdrop of 'immense and interminable' difference. Whitman 'attempts to arrange an accommodation, a reconciliation of man and

nature through the medium of spirit' (Thomas 1987: 23). Part of this arrangement is with the future reader, but the poem's vatic dimension is also defined by its physicality, by the fact it instigates the reader to 'hold' their own and, in so doing, it makes the future present, tangible. In another 'Brooklyniana' editorial (No. 17. 1862, *WWA*), Whitman similarly underscores the immediacy of the future as it related to the city of Brooklyn, and in a characteristically physical fashion: 'The child is already born, and is now living, stout and hearty, who will see Brooklyn numbering one million inhabitants!' Conrad (1984: 9) calls this announcement 'an urban and literal revision of a Wordsworthian faith', wherein the child is 'not merely the father of the man' but 'germinates all men, replenishing the city with a million likenesses of himself.' A dually vatic and physical quality is captured by the poet's 'fluid and attaching character' in 'Poem of the Road' (*LG*56: 230, 225), a poem in which Whitman suggests the transcendental expanse not of land and ocean but of urban space, democratically disaggregated within a single image into its individual parts: 'You gray stones of interminable pavements!' Those 'motions of nature', human and urban affairs, are viewed with the same eye. The panoptic quality of the catalogue quoted above is calibrated by the close up of a hand placed on another, lips close to another's ear (*LG*56: 206). There is spiritual and tactile communion between poet and reader, citizen and city, 'fluid and attaching'. Following this duality, the poet (ibid.) models the spiritual life of imagined strangers using imagery of land and water: 'they do not find that/the water and soil tend to endure forever —/and they not endure.'

A prophetic exclamation that imagines spiritual liberation in physical, animalistic terms lends credence to the specific Brooklyn locale of the 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 209) catalogue: 'The hopples fall from your ankles! you find an/unfailing sufficiency!' Sitting atop Fort Greene, Whitman was a stone's throw from Wallabout Bay and its prison ship past, 'the remains of this vast and silent army' ('Brooklyniana, No. 5.' 1862, *WWA*). That Whitman chooses 'hopples' here, not chains, shackles, or irons, makes the point that man is enmeshed in — not separate from — nature. It's also a very particular kind of transcendentalist rejection of restraint. In 'Poem of the Road' (*LG*56: 226), Whitman mingles the language of liberation and of the clergy in reference to his own poetics, his catalogic decrees:

> From this hour, freedom!
> From this hour, I ordain myself loosed of limits
> and imaginary lines!
> Going where I list—my own master, total and absolute,

Structurally speaking, successive exclamations often become sermonic in tone, but inherent in the poet's self-ordination is the notion of the self as god, one explored by the Quakers and, in their turn, the transcendentalists. William Ellery Channing's (1828) 'Likeness to God' is an important transcendentalist forerunner, and Isaac T. Hopper, abolitionist, Quaker bookstore owner, *The Friends' Intelligencer* publisher, and then devotee of the Prison Association of New York from 1845 onwards, is a notable Hicksite follower. Whitman's quip to Traubel (1915: 19) that he 'was never made to live inside a fence' (by either Hicks or Emerson) is displayed and enacted in the lines above. There's a curious interplay between the formal properties of the catalogues and the physical properties of the book that contained them. For instance, the 'fat hymn book' (Allen 1976: xvi) shape of the 1856 edition — 'the chunky fat book' Whitman called it

(Traubel 1953: 153), with little fondness — was 'loosed of limits' in becoming more portable than the 1855 quarto, but it also forced lines to overflow, as in the break between 'limits/and imaginary lines!' While this fragmentation might constitute a form of limitation, Whitman's free verse renders this immaterial because the poem constructs a 'metre-making argument' (Emerson 1883: 15) and 'unlocks our chains' (ibid. 37) in loosing these limits. 'Going where I list' articulates very simply the identificatory logic of the first-person singular, the empathic self-projection that 'sobers the Brooklyn boy as he looks down the shores of the Wallabout and/remembers the prison ships' (*LG*55: 42) — quite possibly from atop Fort Greene.

'The use of literature', Emerson says (1883: 291), 'is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life.' In Whitman's poetic catalogues of imagined panoramas and his journalistic advocacy for literal platforms, urban vantage points, this use is served doubly in that each seeks 'the unfettered, uninhibited gaze' (Wacker 1994: 87) and the totalising vision arising from such perspectives. Apprehending the partial relations that make up the world, Emerson conceives of the poet's organicist role in transfiguring a piecemeal vision into one of wholeness and entirety. 'Now at this rare elevation above his usual sphere,' he writes (1886: 156), 'he has come into new circulations, the marrow of the world is in his bones, the opulence of forms begins to pour into his intellect'. Emerson's 'rare elevation' is the locus of transcendental perception, but for Whitman the concept also had a very material relevance in a city expanding at such pace that it was proposed to flatten Fort Greene for development. In 'Self-Reliance', too, Emerson (1883: 76) invokes figuratively 'the highest point of view' from which one contemplates 'the facts of life' in prayer. Writing for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (qtd. in Brasher 1970: 6) Whitman observed how 'Daily communion creates a sort of brotherhood and sisterhood between the two parties': 'a newspaper conductor' and 'the public he serves'. Communion with the skyline from such a vantage point would nurture comradeship between citizen and city, between people. Aside from Whitman's recognition of these relationships, which he cultivated in poetry, I've quoted mainly from his *Eagle* editorials because the office, as Jerome Loving (1999: 103) describes, looked out onto 'the comings and goings of Brooklyn, as clerks, housekeepers, and the majority of Brooklynites commuted to and from the metropolis of Manhattan for their work.' The office, as Whitman put it (December 1849, *WWA*), lay at 'the open mouth of Fulton street, the great entrance to the city—up whose vista you can see many of the principal Brooklyn buildings'. During his *Eagle* editorship, from 1846 to 1848, Whitman was within eyesight and earshot of his public.

He would frequent the nearby Fulton Ferry Salt Baths, 'adjacent to the *Eagle* offices' (Loving 1999: 103), which had a river bathing area. The proprietor was a Mr Edward Gray, whose 'new and handsome Swimming Bath' Whitman (qtd. in Reznick and Fee 2011: 1050) praised in the paper, while advocating for free baths as were to be found 'in many European cities, of not near our size, where the conveniences of getting water are not near as complete as here.' Whitman (ibid.) compared Gray to 'his New York contemporaries, who have the baths at the Battery.' The *Brooklyn City Directory, and Annual Advertiser, for the Years 1848–9*, compiled by Thomas P. Teale (1848: 269), includes Gray's ad for his 'new and commodious' swimming bath and warm salt baths: 'Gentlemen's bath 60 ft. by 30 and the ladies 30 ft. by 20. A female is in attendance at all times.' Collector Charles E. Feinberg (1958: 84) observes that Whitman 'must have continued as a regular customer of Gray' after his *Eagle* editorship, since he had an 1852 season ticket. In a

most Whitmanic turn of phrase, and one indicative of another local origin for the 'eternal float', Whitman told Traubel (1915: 21) that he was 'a first-rate aquatic loafer': 'My forte was—if I can say it that way—in floating. I possessed an almost unlimited capacity for floating on my back—for however long'. He (ibid. 29) compared 'the instinct, the grasp, the pith, of the printer' to 'swimming—the stroke comes back however long and many the years since may have been.'[5] Earlier, in a Letter from Paumanok (1851, *WWA*), he wrote in similarly characteristic (and phrenological) terms, 'I must have the bump of "aquativeness" large; dear to me is a souse in the waves. Dear, oh, dear to me is Coney Island! Rockaway, too, and many other parts of sea-girt Paumanok.' Conway (1866, *WWA*) noticed this when the pair spent the day loafing on Staten Island: 'The first glow of any kind that I saw about him, was when he entered the water, which he fairly hugged with a lover's enthusiasm'.

'Souse', as in the 'souse upon me of my lover the sea' (*LG*56: 311), appears in the much remarked upon twenty-ninth bather scene (*LG*55: 19–20) where a woman sees 'Twenty-eight young men bath[ing] by the shore,/Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly'. This scene shifts my discussion to Whitman's liquid poetics as they concern sexual transcendence against the backdrop of antebellum Brooklyn.

> Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,
> The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.
>
> The beards of the young men glistened with wet, it ran from their long hair,
> Little streams passed all over their bodies.
>
> An unseen hand also passed over their bodies,
> It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.
>
> The young men float on their backs, their white bellies swell to the sun . . . . they do
> not ask who seizes fast to them,
> They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,
> They do not think whom they souse with spray.

In this scene it is not the fluidity of time that is at stake, but of gender and class. There is also erotic ambiguity in the fellatory image of one 'who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch'. The woman watches from 'the fine house by the rise of the bank' (ibid. 19), 'handsome and richly drest', in opposition to the young men, the (presumably) 'laboring classes' for whom Whitman (qtd. in Reznick and Fee 2011: 1051) advocated free baths in Brooklyn to complement Gray's. He was spurred on by the contemporary popularity of hydropathy or 'water cure' and by the public health crisis in mid-19th century New York, prompting calls like Whitman's for 'the superior sanative condition of the poor' (ibid). As *Eagle* editor Whitman (ibid.) wondered 'How many of the fine promising lads who are yearly drowned in this neighbourhood, would have been saved, if they were furnished with bathing accommodations in the way

[5] Pure coincidence, perhaps, but there is a biographical resemblance to Franklin who, apart from looming large as a self-educated printer, espoused the benefits of swimming in his *Autobiography.* Given Whitman's self-mythologising tendencies and certain other Franklinian features, which Reynolds (1998) argues for in 'Walt Whitman: Benjamin Franklin's Representative Man', it's not beyond the realm of possibility that by making the link between the printer's instinct and the swimmer's stroke he hoped to invite a particular comparison.

we advise.' In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 52), the poet, speaking as 'teacher of athletes', says 'Now I will you to be a bold swimmer'; in 'The Sleepers' (*LG*55: 73) he envisions 'a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked'. The gender and class segregation at bathhouses like Gray's is at first reflected in the twenty-ninth bather scene, before being complicated by 'white bellies swell[ing] to the sun', and the imagistic hint of pregnancy — a dimension that would support the conjecture of those who argue for the menstrual significance of 'twenty-eight'. I understand the female presence, the 'unseen hand', not as a mask for homosexual desire but as Michael Moon (1991: 46) does, as 'a figure of intense indeterminacy'. The hand could be the reader's running down the page, or the poet's for that matter, reviewing his work. Indeterminacy, this being in process, is explicit in this line of questioning (*LG*55: 25): 'What is a man anyhow? What am I? and what are you?' If the hand belongs to the twenty-ninth bather, Moon (ibid. 43) reasons that Whitman 'definitively inverts the two canonical biblical bathing scenes—David watching Bathsheba and Susannah and the Elders', in which Moon identifies the 'patriarchal significances' of women 'being made the unwitting and/or unwilling objects of male voyeurism':

> By contrast, the figure of 'the twenty-ninth bather'—a composite of the young woman and the (male) bather—escapes traditional circuits of authority and desire which render the biblical bathers victimized women and their observers guilty evildoers, in order to enter and occupy a utopian space in which a figure representative of feminine desire and identity can effectively be incorporated into a scene of masculine *jouissance*.

In a chapter on 'Whitman's Transfigured Sensationalism', Reynolds (1989: 330) argues along similar lines that Whitman's 'cleansing rhetoric' strips a '[v]oyeuristic fantasy' of 'malice'. Even Gray's brief advert (Teale 1848: 269) alludes to the threat of male voyeurism: 'A female is in attendance at all times.' I argue it is partly in response to these gendered bathhouse dynamics, microcosmic of the city at large, that Whitman writes a bathing scene in which gender and sexuality mimic the fluidity of the 'Little streams' that run over male bodies, bodies that somehow morph from temples to ribs and swollen bellies. Bodies 'glistening with wet' are at once erotic and ethereal. Sex takes on, as it so often does in *Leaves*, the hue of spiritual transcendence. 'All things swim and glitter' for Emerson (1883: 49); for Whitman, they swim and 'glisten with wet'. Whitman's young men corporealise the 'eternal float' and their nonchalance — 'hankering, gross, mystical, nude' (*LG*55: 25) — rescues it from impersonality. 'A lightness and elasticity – a dissolving away of all heaviness or dullness of spirits – a buoyancy – become a habit of mind and body in the bather', he wrote (qtd. in Reznick and Fee 2011: 1051). The buoyancy of the twenty-eight bathers dissolves into a gender-fluid conception of sexual transcendence. A manuscript jotting (['And I say the stars'], *WWA*) reads 'the semen of God, that swims the entire creation', signifying Whitman's overlapping thoughts of sexual ecstasy, transcendence, and water, not dissimilar from Asselineau's 'brine of life' argument. This 'omnisexual vision', as James Miller (1998: 631) has called it, makes it difficult to 'seize fast' to definite interpretation; 'auto-, homo-, and hetero-erotic impulses' are all in evidence.

Moon's 'utopian space' analysis brings me to John Humphrey Noyes, who lived in Brooklyn during the seed years of *Leaves of Grass*, from 1849 to 1854, as Harold Aspiz (1987: 2) points out. Before his move to Brooklyn, Noyes founded the utopian religious Oneida Community in upstate New York, a

Perfectionist communal society. Noyes then set up a Brooklyn branch which was mainly involved in the preparation, printing, and distribution of his weekly, *The Circular*. One front page (1865: 329) transcribes a conversation 'between a communist and inquirer'. The former conceives of sex and the body in language that one might easily mistake for a prose translation of Whitman's verse: 'You believe that there is singing, and eating and drinking in heaven, and that we go there of course with a part of our organs of sense. Why not with all? If you have an idea that singing is pure, but that sexual intercourse is base, it is because you have been brought up in a world of sin and shame.' Oneida operated on a free love type principle of 'complex marriage'. Women could choose not to have children, and the division of labour was flexible. Noyes believed in a divine kind of electrical energy shared both in prayer and sex, of which Whitman's 'semen of God, that swims the entire creation' can be considered the 'aquative' poet's version. The two conceptions mingle in 'I Sing the Body Electric' (*LG*55: 78) with the poet who 'swim[s] in it as in a sea', 'it' being 'To be surrounded by beautiful curious breathing laughing flesh', 'To pass among them . . to touch any one'. The Oneida Community distinguished between 'propagative sex' and sex for pleasure, or 'amative'. Noyes (1866: 2) counselled 'male continence', ejaculatory self-control, to avoid unwanted pregnancy without preventing 'congress of the sexes'. 'I would have men seek and hope for discovery in this direction,' he wrote (ibid.), 'as freely as in the development of steam power or the art of printing'.

Illustrating the 'bodily intemperance' of Whitman's bathing scene, Grossman (2003: 176) observes that 'souse' also 'carries a definitional strand dating to the seventeenth century synonymous with our current slang term "soused," which denotes a state of inebriation; similarly "spray" in the 19th century could refer to a drunken spree or frolic.' Whitman's choice of word would seem to put a spin on Emerson's (1883: 33) suggestion that the poet 'should be tipsy with water.' I add in support of Grossman's observation that the 'butcher-boy', who directly follows the 'souse with spray', had an intemperate reputation in Whitman's New York. As Richard Stott (2009: 122) notes, 'Butchers in New York remained a group apart', 'renowned as drinkers even in a heavy-drinking age' where 'alcohol was said to counteract the malign effects of dead meat', just as bathing would counteract disease in a crowded city. Noyes's ideas 'were given full coverage in the New York papers, especially during 1852' (Price 1991: 74), most notably — and negatively — by a religious paper, *The Observer*. The free love dimension of Whitman's bathing scene, apart from the implied orgy, is further suggested by the October 1855 *New York Times* article that Price (ibid. 75) quotes and to which I referred earlier, which says that the typical free lover 'bathes freely, and so is not offensive.' The confluence of influences I wish to draw out from these details can be summarised as the interplay in Brooklyn of bathhouse culture, contemporary thinking about water's purifying powers (as part of the wider public health crisis in New York), free love philosophy, and Noyes's 'male continence' theory. The twenty-ninth bather scene inverts biblical bathing scenes, but since 'water is fused metaphorically with the spray of orgasm, wed[ding] the sexual act with innocent frolic in nature' (Reynolds 1989: 331), it also shuns male continence in a manner more radical, I argue, than the free love thinking that spawned that theory, a theory that Whitman-the-Brooklyn-journo criticised a number of times. That it takes place in the water offers to sanitise this sexually radical suggestion, just as Whitman hoped the addition of free baths in Brooklyn would sanitise the population and serve a public health function as New York grew or, as the poet (*LG*60: 313) puts it, 'Bathing myself, bathing my songs in sex'.

M a n h a t t a n

From 'bodily intemperance' my discussion now turns to intemperance of the regular alcoholic sort, to liquid poetics as they concern New York tavern culture, and to some of the historical and cultural sources of same-sex interaction and affection prized by Whitman's barbaric yawp. I argue for the influence of this context on Whitman's intoxicated imagery of spiritual transcendence, especially its sexual dimension, and I compare it with Emerson's drinking and related metaphors for transcendence. Henry M. Christman's (1989: 54) *Walt Whitman's New York* includes the 1855 state census report for the 'Annual Manufactures and Products of Brooklyn'. At $6 million, the most valuable by a long stretch is 'Distilled liquors' (ibid). Michael Kaplan (1995: 600) cites statistics that in 1849 claimed 'the existence of at least 4,524 liquor-selling establishments in New York City', and roughly another thousand by 1855. Kaplan (ibid. 601) highlights the 'distinctively masculine atmosphere' of 'a rough, democratic, male-gendered world of drinking and brawling.' The boardinghouses, of which Whitman noted in 'Wicked Architecture' (1856, *WWA*) there were entire neighbourhoods, were likewise male dominated. Richard Stott (2009: 99) notes that common rooms were seldom big enough 'to accommodate all residents in the evenings', hence saloons, taverns, barrooms, theatres, and so forth filled the gap, or offered a gap to fill. It was probably in Brooklyn (or rather Williamsburgh, absorbed in 1855) that Whitman first tasted, if not the lager he grew fond of, the bier culture that accompanied German saloons (Karbiener 2014: 11). Williamsburgh's large German contingent brought with them the 'gemütlichkeit of the cellar' (ibid. 12). Pfaff's beer cellar on Broadway would later become a significant part of Whitman's (at one point daily) life, as would the professional connection it fostered with Henry Clapp Jr, his *Saturday Press*, and his new American bohemia. In the homely Williamsburgh saloons and at Pfaff's, though, the atmosphere differed significantly from the 'drinking and brawling' taverns. In the 1840s Whitman wrote unremarkable reformist critiques, as he did in *Franklin Evans: or, the Inebriate*, his short temperance novel published in *The New World* in 1842 and then serialised in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1846. The novel's protagonist is a young man who journeys westwards from Long Island to Manhattan's many and varied pleasures, alcoholic and otherwise, from which he eventually resolves to abstain. Whitman (Traubel 1906: 93) would later claim in embarrassment to have written the temperance tract in three days, for financial reasons, 'with the help of a bottle of port'. There was also an intriguing, if mistaken, supposed origin of the name 'Manhattan.' The *New-York Historical Society's* (1841: 73) collection features Moravian missionary John Heckwelder's report on 'Indian Tradition': 'The Delawares call this place (New York Island) *Mannahattanink* or *Mannahachtanink* to this day. They have frequently told me that it derived its name from this general *intoxication*, and that the word comprehended the same as to say, *the island or place of general intoxication*.' Whitman was much concerned with his own Dutch heritage and his city's as the 'fusion of personal ancestry and national history' (Reynolds 1996: 8), so the 'Boy of the Mannahatta' (*LG*60: 5) was likely to have been aware of this mistaken derivation. Besides literature, as Floyd Stovall observed in *The Foreground of Leaves of Grass* (1974), Whitman's most intense interests were in history and geography.

Besides the libations, barrooms were homosocial spaces for men to enjoy 'comradeship', as Whitman put it. Indicating the parallels between the working-class homosocial drinking culture and the wider political sphere, Whitman ('City Photographs—No. VII', 1862, *WWA*) praised the 'real democratic lager element of New York.' The 'jostle' of lovers celebrated by Whitman's bard — 'Jostling me through streets and public halls . . . . coming naked to me at night' — (*LG*55: 50) features in the same 'City Photographs' article as 'accidental jostling […] received with great good nature'. Certain places where 'lovers suffocate' and jostle him also point to particular demographics and locations in the city, such as 'through streets and public halls', 'Crying by day Ahoy from the rocks of the river', 'Or while I swim in the bath' (*LG*55: 50). Respectively, we could read these as public places like taverns and parks, ferries and omnibuses; the sailors of the New York seaport, 'notorious drinkers and fighters' (Stott 2009: 99) attended by a reputation for sexual impropriety; and male bathhouses, like the one on the Battery that Whitman referred to in praising Gray's bath across the river in Brooklyn. To 'swim with the swimmer, and wrestle with the wrestlers, and march in line with the/firemen' (*LG*55: 78) invokes a particular set of groups: the bathhouse swimmers; the roughs, rowdies, and Bowery b'hoys from whom Whitman borrows for his persona and who would congregate at taverns of the kind Kaplan details; and the fire laddies, many of whom were young volunteers embroiled in the bunking culture of firemen's halls. 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' places male camaraderie in the democratised setting of a means of transport that had become available to more of the population, and these social types democratised Whitman's poetry. I suggest that they shaped his transcendentalist poetics in the synthesis of a 'simultaneously homoerotic and democratic' (Erkkila 2003: 115) vision of transcendence, a dynamic modulated by the desire to present a sanitised version of both intoxication and sexual pleasure.

When Amos Bronson Alcott called upon Whitman in Brooklyn in 1856, he wrote afterwards in his journal (qtd. in Myerson 2000: 333) that the poet was 'Bacchus-browed, bearded like a satyr, and rank', wearing 'his man-Bloomer in defiance of everybody', and a 'Red flannel undershirt, open-breasted'. He (ibid. 334) later added that 'pasted, unframed, upon the rude walls' were 'some characteristic pictures—a Hercules, a Bacchus, and a satyr', and that Whitman related to him 'his bathing daily through the mid-winter' and how 'he rode sometimes a-top of an omnibus up and down Broadway from morning till night beside the driver, and dined afterwards with the whipsters'. The man-Bloomer aligned Whitman with women's rights, the red-flannel with the working-class masculinity of Bowery b'hoys and firemen. Nicholas O. Warner (1986: 63) argues that 'the symbol of wine enabled Emerson to translate his own fondness for wine to a transcendental, spiritual level' and 'to be bolder and more emphatic in some of his essays and poems than he otherwise might have been.' Warner (ibid. 60) quotes Emerson's 'Bacchus', a poem that begins 'Bring me wine, but wine which never grew/In the belly of the grape'. I compare this to a line from 'The Sleepers' (*LG*55: 108): 'And liquor is spilled on lips and bosoms by touching glasses, and the best/liquor afterward.' I argue that Whitman's fondness for the working-class men who caroused at New York's taverns is translated into poetry that presents same-sex love and arousal as an intoxicating experience of the sublime. *Leaves* elevates sexual pleasure to a medium by which spiritual transcendence is attained, and takes delight in the natural function of the male body — a form of 'Wine which is already man' and which Emerson calls for that he 'May float at pleasure through all natures' ('Bacchus', Emerson

1856: 190) — using terms that mimic the changed states of consciousness arising from inebriants. The Whitmanic bard's is a state derived not from drinking and one which leads not to the tavern violence that characterised those New York establishments, but to pure pleasure from the natural meeting of healthy bodies. Though the site of this poetic realisation was often the male body, the fluid and sometimes confused identities that stream through *Leaves*, as in the bathing scene discussed above, ensure that it is a democratic ideal to which all are (and must be) eligible.

Emerson (1883: 31) refers in 'The Poet' to the 'animal exhilaration' of 'wine, mead, narcotics'. In *Leaves*, the explicit image of 'delirious juice' in 'I Sing the Body Electric' (*LG*55: 79) calls attention to the intoxicated experience of sexual ecstasy, suggesting exhilaration that was animal in the sense of being natural and elemental, like the ebb and flow of the water:

> Ebb stung by the flow, and flow stung by the ebb . . . . loveflesh swelling and deliciously aching,
> Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous . . . . quivering jelly of love . . . white-blow and delirious juice,

In the third edition, we also find language like 'The mystic deliria—the madness amorous—the utter/abandonment' (*LG*60: 289), 'the close pressure that makes me or any man/drunk, fainting with excess' (ibid. 290), 'to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other/man' (*LG*60: 308), and 'my inebriate Soul' (ibid. 309), the latter confirming, as in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*60: 27), that physical pleasure 'must not abase itself' to spiritual ecstasy. In 'Native Moments' (*LG*60: 310–311), Whitman locates the similarly delirious experience of 'libidinous joys', 'the drench' of passions, firmly in the setting of 'the midnight orgies of young men':

> Give me now libidinous joys only!
> Give me the drench of my passions! Give me life coarse and rank!
> To-day, I go consort with nature's darlings—to-night too, I am for those who believe in loose delights—I share the midnight orgies of young men,
> I dance with the dancers, and drink with the drinkers,
> The echoes ring with our indecent calls,

Those midnight orgies would be at home in New York's 'coarse and rank' taverns, firemen's bunkhouses, or boardinghouses. The bunkhouse is the subject of a chapter in George William Sheldon's *The Story of the Volunteer Fire Department of the City of New York* (1882: 148), bunking being a practice that 'meant sleeping in beds, or "bunks,", in or near the house where the engine, hose-carriage, or hook and ladder truck was kept, so that the sleepers might reach the apparatus in the shortest time possible after the sounding of the alarm.' When one company organised a bunk-room, Sheldon (ibid. 149) writes that the idea 'was received with horror by many of the Quaker members, who feared that the outcome might be—as in many cases it was—card-playing, drinking, and license of various sorts.' Sheldon (150) quotes a foreman's fear that

bunking 'freed young men from the wholesome restraints of home, and led to drinking and carousing' and that there was 'a great deal of temptation in the Fire Department.' Norton's comment (qtd. in *LG*56: 368–369) in *Putnam's Monthly* that *Leaves* appeared as the poetic stylings of 'A fireman or omnibus driver, who had intelligence enough to absorb the speculations of that school of thought which culminated at Boston some fifteen or eighteen years ago', drew on a distinct set of 'incendiary' connotations beyond class. Charles F. Briggs edited *Putnam's Monthly* at that time, a position Mark Lause (2009: 68) notes that 'veteran Fourierists' including George Ripley assisted Briggs in gaining. Briggs's prior professional life as a sailor and then a wholesale grocer likely gave him a more nuanced sense of New York's working class than many of his professional contemporaries.

Leading up to the intoxicated sexual ecstasy of 'I Sing the Body Electric', shortly before Whitman identifies swimmers, wrestlers, and firemen, he relates (*LG*55: 78) two scenes connecting the atmosphere of taverns and firemen's halls with pleasure in 'goodnatured' homoerotic, hypermasculine displays. Unlike articles such as 'Rowdyism Rampant' (1858, *Brooklyn Daily Times*), which decry 'law-defying loafers who make the fights, and disturb the public peace' (qtd. in Reynolds 2013: 57), in these lines Whitman extracts and celebrates 'the play' of masculinity which in 'Poem of Joys' (*LG*60: 268) he calls 'the joy of manly self-hood!'

> The wrestle of wrestlers . . two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, goodnatured,
> nativeborn, out on the vacant lot at sundown after work,
> The coats vests and caps thrown down . . the embrace of love and resistance,
> The upperhold and underhold—the hair rumpled over and blinding the eyes;
> The march of firemen in their own costumes—the play of the masculine muscle
> through cleansetting trowsers and waistbands,

Imagined as the 'wrestle of wrestlers', the fight-scene takes on a significance that isn't locally or temporally bound to a 'vacant lot at sundown', to 'coats vests and caps thrown down'. Its power is more emblematic as 'the embrace of love and resistance', 'upperhold and underhold' in equilibrium. The push and pull of wrestlers is as 'the mad pushes of waves upon the land' (*LG*60: 289); it is, like everything, 'From sex—From the warp and from the woof' (ibid. 290).The poet delights in what is removed from the historical hypermasculine violence of the tavern brawl, or of teenage boys running beside fire companies, eager to share in the display of masculinity, to become a manly 'embrace of love and resistance' and form of play. 'The coats vests and caps thrown down' move so fluidly that the imagined sound of discarded clothes provides the punctuation. Through the movement of antitheses, Whitman locates in the 'wrestle of wrestlers' what he expresses in 1860 as 'the inseparableness of two together' (*LG*60: 289), the natural attraction of 'Two hawks in the air—two fishes swimming in the/sea not more lawless than we' (ibid. 290). He does this in a Calamus poem later titled 'We Two Boys Together Clinging' (*LG*60: 369), present participles tumbling forth breathlessly to expand outwards rather than progress forwards: 'elbows stretching—fingers clutch-/ing', 'eating, drinking, sleeping, lov-/ing', 'priests alarming—air breathing,/water drinking', 'With birds singing—With fishes swimming', 'Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking'. Nestled in an intemperate abundance of physical action is a certain antisociality that one

would associate with working-class tavern violence on the Bowery, for instance, but here it mingles with the temperance of 'water drinking', the purity of nature. The after-work tussle of two apprentice-boys in the city is nature in action, cradled between the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky. Even as the scene blends and pushes words together, Whitman preserves discrete details of 'the hair rumpled over and blinding the eyes', of the fundamentally physical establishment of 'manly self-hood', and of its homoerotic potency. 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 33) works similarly when the poet exclaims 'Blind loving wrestling touch!' Emerson (1883: 31–32) likens 'animal procurers of exhilaration' to 'auxiliaries' that 'help [man] to escape the custody of that body in which he is pent up, and of that jail-yard of individual relations in which he is enclosed'. Whitman inverts this idea, rendering the body the medium by which one is exhilarated and intoxicated, and figuring a network of individual relations (both individual bodies and their individual body parts) as a means of liberation, of 'drain[ing] the pent-up rivers' (*LG*56: 242). Wrestled relations are, themselves, 'act-poems' (*LG*60: 290):

> From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips, and bosoms,
> From the cling of the trembling arm,
> From the bending curve and the clinch,
> From side by side, the pliant coverlid off throwing,
> From the one so unwilling to have me leave—and
> me just as unwilling to leave,

Moving to the firemen and 'the play of the masculine muscle' in 'I Sing the Body Electric', the poet's pleasure in the display overrides even the presumed emergency to which the men are drawn. 'Poem of Joys' (*LG*60: 260) indicates the intoxicated ecstasy of the firemen, another 'madness amorous' (*LG*60: 289) that shares in the elemental power of fire: 'The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.' The fluid crossover of identities from the fireman to the poet is suggested, too, by the indeterminacy of exactly who it is that derives pleasure from the sight of the flames, whether the fireman weaving through the city crowd, the teenage boy eager for a piece of the action, or the poet running to catch a glimpse of 'masculine muscle' heralded by the outbreak of fire. The poet (*LG*60: 260) moves to 'the joy of the strong-brawned fighter, towering/in the arena', which implies not the playfighting of apprentice boys or even of Bowery b'hoys enjoying a drink, a dance, a fight, but a professionalised sport. Stott (2009: 110) explains the transition from street-brawling to prizefighting, noting that 'in the mid-1830s New York emerged as the undisputed center of American pugilism.' Whitman's fighter is 'thirsting to meet his opponent' (*LG*60: 260). That word occurs in one other place, in the 1860 edition (and all thereafter), in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*60: 386): 'Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house, or street,/or public assembly!/Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically/call me by my nighest name!' Gazing at the fighter's 'perfect condition' (*LG*60: 260), the poet's own thirsting is quenched in the next lines by 'the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only/the human Soul is capable of generating and/emitting in steady and limitless floods.' The exact nature of those 'steady and limitless floods' is indicated by a prose manuscript that begins 'The genuine miracles of Christ' (*WWA*), in which those floods are preceded by the words 'the immortal testifier of Love the semen of the Universe'. Compare this with Emerson's conviction, in

'Experience' (1883: 52), that 'An innavigable sea washes with silent waves between us and the things we aim at and converse with.' For Whitman, feeling and understanding are navigable via physical and erotic contact, via the play of muscle that he celebrates in New York's masculine tavern culture but elevates to an ecstatic experience of spiritual as well as physical communion, 'limitless floods' of love and sex. A short 'Calamus' (*LG*60: 371) poem, set in a working-class barroom which yet also resembled Pfaff's, enacts the 'vast elemental sympathy' initiated by something as simple as a touch. Through noise and commotion, crowded drinkers, lewd jokes, the poet shares

> ONE flitting glimpse, caught through an interstice,
> Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room,
> around the stove, late of a winter night—And
> I unremarked, seated in a corner;
> Of a youth who loves me, and whom I love, silently
> approaching, and seating himself near, that he
> may hold me by the hand;
> A long while, amid the noises of coming and going
> —of drinking and oath and smutty jest,
> There we two, content, happy in being together,
> speaking little, perhaps not a word.

In her chapter on 'Transcendental Approaches to Human Contact', Marianne Noble (2019: 81) argues that the poem, via this single, simple act, presents 'an affectionate intentionality' and 'mutual withness'. 'The only interiority here is the desire to come and hold,' she writes, 'a desire that is inseparable from its exterior enactment.' That combination of interior desire and exterior enactment is in another sense an 'act-poem'. In the *New York Leader* 'City Photographs' (No. VII, 1862, *WWA*) article that praises the city's 'real democratic lager element', Whitman related the atmosphere of 'a popular lager beer hall in the Bowery': 'The crowd is dense; they surround the little and big tables, and fill up the interstices.' While those interstices constitute an external space, in the poem's 'flitting glimpse' Whitman hones in on an internal interstice that is 'filled up' by the touch of another. To be 'caught through an interstice', then, is not just to be glimpsed in a gap but to have one's individual selfhood perceived in the context of diminishing physical space, whether in the subtle movement of one hand into another's, within the dense crowd of a beer hall, or in the spiralling city at large. What Whitman draws our eye to here is a mutual coming into being, what David Bowers (1973: 14) words as 'the doctrine of human individuality as both self-transcending and self-asserting–as both acknowledging its oneness with and obligation to something higher than itself, and yet ever cherishing its uniqueness and independence as a distinct being'. When Whitman writes 'Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you,/that you be my poem' ('Poem of You, Whoever you Are' *LG*56: 206), he confirms a poiesis of mutuality that depends on the reader whose hand is at that moment on the poem he once held. He enshrines the criticality of that act to the poem's manifestation, the 'you' on which the 'I' hinges. While I say 'the reader', listening to Whitman has special importance in a poem set in a noisy environment. Ed Folsom (2020: 238) has recently remarked on the importance of listening to Whitman, drawing on earlier work by Garrett Stewart: 'when we *listen* to a poem instead of simply *read* it, we can often hear words that don't appear in print, words that our "reading voices" vocalize by the linguistic

phenomenon of "transegmental drift," when the end of one word adheres to the beginning of the next word to create a new word voiced out of the space between words, unseen but heard.'[6] In the context of a glimpse 'caught through an interstice' of two men in silence, seen but unheard, the notion of words on the page unseen but heard is a most fitting analogical inversion.

Lingering on the significance of same-sex love and embraces to the democratic strain in Whitman's transcendentalist poetics of New York, I'll quote from another 'Calamus' poem, later titled 'For You O Democracy' (*LG*60: 351):

> I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the
> rivers of America, and along the shores of the
> great lakes, and all over the prairies,
> I will make inseparable cities, with their arms about
> each other's necks.

Although the 'inseparable cities' to be made, or corporealised, are America's, to 'plant companionship thick as trees' gestures not just to natural robustness — the 'robust/love' of the 'new City of Friends' (*LG*60: 373) — but to the antiseptic power of nature and democracy as it related to New York. Whitman again draws on that emblem of easy and affectionate familiarity found in Long Island's simple farming communities, modelled in turn by Elias Hicks, which he carried west to the city. We can compare this image to Whitman's 'Advice to Strangers' in an 1856 'New York Dissected' (*WWA*) article for *Life Illustrated*, which underscores 'the dirty city swindle'. 'Every great city is a sort of countryman-trap', he writes. The article's main thrust is to counsel separation and avoidance, to blend into the street rather than out oneself as a country visitor: 'Don't be in haste to make city street acquaintances. Any affable stranger who makes friendly offers is very likely to attempt to swindle you as soon as he can get into your confidence. Mind your own business, as we said before, and let other people mind theirs.' I believe Whitman's arboreal image of companionship grows out of another specific New York corruption, not moral or criminal, but of the ground. Having discussed panoramic parks and tavern culture, it's important to address a subterranean issue related to diminishing physical space in New York: the more people who lived there, the more had to die there. Before parks were established, rural cemeteries met the need for green space and reduced the burden on churchyard burial. Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery, an Edenic garden cemetery, addressed the number of bodies needing disposal and served the democratic-panoramic ideal by offering a better vantage point even than Fort Greene. Across the river, Central Park 'emerged from the garden cemetery vogue of the 1840s' (Wacker 1994: 95). Urban burial was one of a grim constellation of urgent public health issues that plagued 19th century New York, plastered across its

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[6] Folsom (2020: 239) applies Stewart's 'transegmental drift' to Whitman's 'triple-urge sexual chant' in 'Song of Myself (*LG*55: 14) 'Urge and urge and urge'. Folsom shows — or makes heard — how the adherence of the 'd' in 'and' to the 'urge' creates the word 'dirge', which 'allows us to hear in that push of desire the proleptic echo of the inevitable death that accompanies any birth', as well as a word that would become so important after the war. The same drift occurs in the final line of 'From Montauk Point (1888, *New York Herald*), part of which I quoted earlier: 'that inbound urge and urge of waves,/Seeking the shores forever.' In that line, the drifted 'dirge' is counteracted with the poem's final word, 'forever', implying the same endurance that Whitman saw symbolised in the land and water that structured his island birthplace and his island metropolis.

newspapers. Work by Maria Farland (2007) and Lindsay Tuggle (2017) informs my study of this context. Farland argues for the significance of New York's public health crisis ('decomposing city'), and related contemporary science, in shaping *Leaves*. Tuggle's primary focus in *The Afterlives of Specimens* is on the war, but she also writes about 'ecological transcendence over death' (2017: 25, 45) and 'decay as transcendence'. I'll examine how the spectre of urban decay is digested or renewed in Whiman's portrayal of spiritual transcendence, similar to his poetic transfiguration of moral decay into a city of 'inseparable cities, with their arms about/each other's necks', and consider where sexual transcendence fits into the land, or ground, versus the sea.

Read in the context Farland examines, the death-defying stance of the cosmic ego becomes more historically and geographically grounded in what led Whitman (*LG*56: 202) to wonder 'How can the ground not sicken of men?' He poses the question in 'This Compost', originally titled only slightly less pithily as 'Poem of Wonder at the Resurrection of The Wheat.' Besides speaking to 19th century New York's 'preoccupation with decaying organic matter' (Farland 2007: 800), the poem distils into verse Whitman's fascination with organic chemistry. In June 1847, he praised the genius of a book on the subject in a review for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The author was German chemist Justus von Liebig, whose proto-ecological work argued for the cyclicality of nature and matter, the influence of which critics including Reynolds (1996) have observed. Liebig proposed that old atoms are rearranged as new compounds in an endless process of decay and renewal, an image of resurrection reimagined by Whitman (*LG*55: 17) as a deathless, democratic, transcendental consciousness: 'All goes onward and outward . . . . and nothing collapses'. Noble (2019: 42) draws attention to the influence on Emerson's 'innavigable sea' model of human contact of Croatian physicist Roger Joseph Boscovich, referred to in 'Experience' (Emerson 1883: 52): 'Was it Boscovich who found that bodies never come in contact?' To this I compare the Liebigian influence on Whitman — received in the context of a mid-century Brooklyn besieged by issues such as urban burial grounds and its sister city's dizzying scale — and how it informs a view of human contact as not only possible but inevitable: we are always already in contact with one another at an atomic level, 'For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you' (*LG*55: 13). Dissolving without disappearing, the Whitmanian persona is coaxed peacefully 'to the vapor and the dusk', bequeathing himself 'to the dirt to grow from the grass' (ibid. 56). Thus Whitman 'generates an ecological set of connections that renders as metonym what we previously thought of as metaphor' (Folsom 2010a: 270). 'This Compost', the material reality of a cycle to which nature is indifferent, panics the poet. The poem (*LG*56: 202) begins with 'something' vague and ineffable, the speaker refusing to name the toxic interloper in his Romantic safe haven: 'SOMETHING startles me where I thought I was safest'. A series of negations follows, including 'I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet/my lover the sea', then a barrage of questions:

> How can the ground not sicken of men?
> How can you be alive, you growths of spring?
> How can you furnish health, you blood of herbs,
> roots, orchards, grain?
> Are they not continually putting distempered
> corpses in the earth?

> Is not every continent worked over and over with
> sour dead?
> Where have you disposed of those carcasses of
> the drunkards and gluttons of so many gen-
> erations?

The offending 'something' is a sign of death and disease in the soil the world over, yet the health of the Earth remains intact. Whitman catalogues natural abundance in support of this shocking fact: 'The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in/the garden' (203). Juxtaposed with soft sibilance, the plosive 'b' in 'bean' and 'bursts' emphasises the contrast between nature's regenerative powers and the subtlety with which they are enacted. Liebigian science mixes with religious wonder at nature's resurrective properties, parallel constructions portraying an endless cycle within line lengths that ebb and flow, oceanic and antiseptic. Thoreau's is a similar realisation in *Walden* (1854: 340) of 'the strong appetite and inviolable health of Nature': 'Poison is not poisonous after all,' he writes, 'nor are any wounds fatal.'

In a line recalling his poem's original title, Whitman analogises natural endlessness to spiritual immortality: 'The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale/visage out of its graves'. Aspiz (1998: 716) records the line's biblical resonance, read as an allusion to St Paul's sermon on the resurrection of sown wheat in Corinthians: 'the resurrection of the dead […] sown in corruption' but 'raised in incorruption' as a 'spiritual body'. The line recalls Whitman's meditation on the grass: 'the beautiful uncut hair of graves' (*LG*55: 12) in the plural, or 'a uniform hieroglyphic' as a singular blade. Lewis Hyde (2007: 183) suggests that the poet was inspired to write 'The resurrection of the wheat' by a tomb carving he may have seen in the Astor Library in New York in 1855, which depicts 28 stalks of wheat growing from Osiris's coffin. We don't know whether Whitman saw this particular etching among the 'huge compendium' (ibid.) available at that Manhattan library at the time, and given the importance of the King James to Whitman's 'long foreground', Aspiz sounds more convincing. That being said, Osiris is a god of death, rebirth, and vegetation, often depicted with green skin, so the reference would fit neatly with the poem's timbre, and Whitman frequented the Egyptian Museum in Brooklyn, opened in 1853, spending afternoons with its owner, collector Dr. Henry Abbott. Rosemary Gates Winslow (1998: 200) notes that Whitman recommended the museum in an essay for *Life Illustrated* in 1855, which praised Egyptian culture for its treatment of death. Biographer Catherine Reef (1995: 43) argues that Abbott specifically showed Whitman 'ancient drawings of plant life growing from Osiris' corpse' which, if true, would further support Hyde's understanding. Critics have stressed the importance of Osiris to Whitman's poetic persona within wider examinations of his Egyptological influences, so perhaps the 'resurrection of the wheat' line was partly a product of this interest.

Farland (2007: 801) points out that 'scientific bodies such as the New York Academy of Medicine and the Sanitary Commission of New York' circulated ideas about the links between decaying organic matter and disease. She (ibid. 807) quotes historian Ellen Stroud's summary of 'a long struggle in Manhattan to keep the dead from polluting the city.' The following paragraph from the 'Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Investigate the Health Department of the City of New York' (1859: 7, 9), which includes findings from previous years, makes clear the contemporary position on what was to be

done about the problem of 'excessive mortality', such as using nature's 'remedial energies' and preventive medicine to protect the 'future millions by whom the island of Manhattan is destined to be inhabited, making it the chief city of the world'.

> But nature is full of remedial energies of its own, if we were ready and disposed to take advantage of them. The chemist, the pharmaceutist and the surgeon would be spared much of their most painful duty if we could be brought to rely more upon wholesome air, direct sunlight and pure water. The city of New York, thanks to some of its intelligent, energetic and philanthropic citizens, enjoys the advantages of the latter blessing in bountiful profusion. A healthful river flows beneath its streets and avenues, supplying every habitation with sufficient water to allay thirst, to prepare food and to promote cleanliness. The island on which it stands is laved by two noble rivers, whose tides uplift and cleanse the respective streams. Its sewerage is advancing with rapid stretches from street to street, and the fresh breezes from the ocean temper the coldness and moderate the heat of its climate.

For Whitman, 'wholesome air, direct sunlight and pure water' were a democratic ideal. 'The summer-air, the bright sun shining, and the sail-/ing clouds aloft' were the insurance of the health of 'Trottoirs thronged' by 'A million people' ('Mannahatta' *LG*60: 404).[7] 'Hundreds of the miserable occupants of these establishments [who] dwell in cellars, over five feet, as we have noticed, below the street level' are mentioned in the report (1859: 17) amongst the chief spreaders of disease in tenements, 'bad air' being a dominant theme. The publication quotes a Mr G. W. Morton: 'It is from the narrow streets, alley-ways and courts, that the poisonous gases, creations arising from accumulated filth and decaying vegetable and animal matter, are sent forth, and it is in these localities that death reaps his most abundant harvest.' From his Long Island upbringing and the emblematic mossbonker, Whitman was aware of death's 'abundant harvest' in the optimistic sense, but the city's grim material conditions catalysed a desire to affirm that 'there is really no death' (*LG*55: 17), that we are 'not/contained between [our] hat and boots'. A related urge leads him to elevate the poor and disregarded, many of whom were subjugated in a more literal way within cellars below street level. Whitman achieves this by levelling human types within the catalogue's horizontal aesthetics (*LG*60: 232): 'You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs, or obscene/in your rooms,/Who am I, that I should call you more obscene than/myself?'

I've commented several times on Whitman's use of French. Most notably Betsy Erkkila (1980: 3) has examined the radical and democratic import of the poet's attraction to that language, beginning with Lafayette's 1824 visit to America, and the general's stop in Brooklyn.[8] 'Trottoirs thronged' by 'prostitutes flaunting' make a plainly democratic claim about equality, which Whitman also made in singing the body as a leveller. As to the relationship of sex to death in *Leaves*, Tuggle's (2017) notion of 'ecoerotic'

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[7] In a manuscript (*WWA*) note Whitman muses on the wonders of 'Light and air!' I've omitted the editing: 'Nothing ugly can be disgorged—Nothing corrupt or dead set before them,/But it surely becomes translated or enclothed/Into supple youth'.

[8] Whitman was 'among the school children who turned out to see General Lafayette lay the cornerstone of the Apprentice's Library in Brooklyn' (Erkkila 1980: 3). Whitman (*PW*: 507) recorded a personal interaction with the general, first recorded in Burroughs's biography: '[he] took me up—I was five years old, press'd me a moment to his breast—gave me a kiss and set me down in a safe spot.' Erkkila (1980: 3) suggests that although this may be myth, 'this embrace between the young Whitman and the aged Lafayette is in many ways as symbolic as that […] between the young Franklin and the aged Voltaire.'

transcendence helps conceptualise the meaning behind 'leafy lips' and 'polished breasts' (*LG*55: 54) that grow from decaying bodies. Just as the poet sings companionship 'thick as trees' amidst corruption, sumptuousness springs from putrefaction. Since he proposes there is life in death as there is in sex — 'Sex contains all,/Bodies, souls' (*LG*56: 240) — and neither death nor sex should be obscene or offensive, we might read 'the leavings of many deaths' (*LG*55: 54) as 'les petites morts':

> And as to you corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me,
> I smell the white roses sweetscented and growing,
> I reach to the leafy lips . . . . I reach to the polished breasts of melons.
>
> And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
> No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.
>
> I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
> O suns . . . . O grass of graves . . . . O perpetual transfers and promotions . . . . if
> you do not say anything how can I say anything?

Life is 'the leavings of many deaths' in the atomic sense that Whitman came to understand through reviewing Liebig for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, who presented the 'perpetual transfers and promotions' of atoms scientifically. A second sense relates to the way that the mossbonker fertilises the ground in his Paumanok picture, or to 'white roses sweetscented and growing' in 'the domesticated horticulture of a grassy cemetery lawn' (Henderson 2008: 100). A third envisions sex as a means of attaining spiritual transcendence, and climax as a 'little death', or intoxicated change of consciousness that produces new life, so the 'grass of graves' is also 'itself a child . . . . the produced babe of the vegetation' (*LG*55: 16). The panoramic view from Brooklyn's elevated green spaces, like Green-Wood Cemetery and Fort Greene, imposed an image of interconnectedness on Manhattanese chaos. Sexual climax lets the poet hear the whispering 'stars of heaven'. They whisper 'there', in death and in sex, which are preludes to life. The reaching to lips and breasts mimics the poet's soul's horizontal reaching, earlier in the poem (*LG*55: 15), simultaneously to beard and feet, 'plung[ing] [its] tongue' to his 'barestript/heart', which prompts an epiphany:

> Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all
> the art and argument of the earth;
> And I know that the hand of God is the elderhand of my own,

'[A] kelson of the creation', he also knows, 'is love', a kelson, or keelson, being the spine of a ship. Bathed in Long Island's 'atmosphere and traditions' of shipwrecks, and becoming 'Boy of the Mannahatta, the city of ships' (*LG*60: 5), Whitman affirmatively imagines love as the backbone of a colossal ship of creation. It sails onwards and outwards, peacefully and powerfully, through the eternal float, and Whitman's testimonial mode ('And I know…') here borrows its power from Hicks and the Quakers. Crucially, instead of floating up from his body, the poet's soul plunges downwards to penetrate his heart. The soul 'transfers', and both the body and an 'at least quasi-sexual' (Moon 1991: 48) act are 'promoted' to epiphanic status.

Whitman is 'Emerson with a body' in such epiphanies, to borrow Hyde's (2007: 172–173) phrase: 'It was for Whitman to read Emerson's 'Nature' and take it to heart, to feel the soul's tongue move in his breast, an epiphany of animal heat.' Where Emerson's body drifts ethereal, 'uplifted into infinite space' (1884: 17), Whitman's is pinned down by his soul's and it is this insistence on the ground and on the body that prompts his ecstatic transcendence.

Pivoting from 'limitless […] leaves stiff or drooping' (*LG*55: 15) to 'leafy lips' and the like, I'm going to end this chapter with a text from which both Farland (2007) and Tuggle (2017) quote, *The Chemistry of Common Life* by Scottish agricultural chemist James F.W. Johnston. Farland and Tuggle take 1855 as Johnston's publication date to contextualise within popular scientific history the grass that grows, puzzlingly, 'from under the faint red roofs of mouths' (*LG*55: 16), perceived by the poet as 'so many uttering tongues!' Unlike the soul's plunge, these tongues grow upwards. Farland (2007: 820) highlights Johnston's 'highly metaphoric description of the cleansing properties of trees'; Tuggle (2017: 46), his 'image of botanical rapaciousness'. Here is Johnston's (1854: 13) metaphor:

> Over the surface of these leaves are sprinkled countless pores or mouths, which are continually employed in separating and drinking in carbonic acid gas. The millions of leaves which a single tree spreads out, and the constant renewal of the moving air in which they are suspended, enable the living plant to draw an abundant supply for all its wants from an atmosphere already adjusted to the constitution of living animals.

Johnston observed (ibid.) that the 'common lilac-tree with a million of leaves, has about four hundred thousand millions or pores or mouths at work' and 'a single oak tree [has] as many as seven millions of leaves'. I'm using D. Appleton & Company's (NYC) 1854 edition of Johnston's work, not 1855. The chemist's earlier work, *Catechism of Agricultural Chemistry and Geology*, first published in the US (Albany, NY) in 1845, in fact made a similar observation. I propose that the 1845 text is more likely to have influenced Whitman's first edition in the way Farland argues for, even though the 1854 date of Johnston's NYC edition allows slightly more leeway than 1855. *Catechism* differed in its distinct pedagogical intent, as announced by its title. The very first recommendation printed at the book's outset comes from Samuel Young, 'Secretary of State and Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of New York' (1845: 1). As Chapter Two will explore, Whitman took interest in educational reform as a former schoolteacher, as well as a self-educated journalist. *Catechism* (Johnston 1845: 24) presented a similar yet simpler botanical image in a question-and-answer format, which is after all how the meditation on the grass (*LG*55: 16) begins: 'A child said, What is the grass?' Responding to how plants 'suck' carbonic acid from the air, Johnston (1845: 24) says it is thanks to 'a great number of very small openings or mouths which are spread everywhere, especially over the under surface of the leaf.' So, if Johnston's image of mouthy leaves influenced Whitman's 'leafy lips' and 'uttering tongues', it probably did so earlier than 1854 and in a format comparable to the meditation now known, shorthand, by that child's question about the grass. I'd also venture that the influence travelled via an edition recommended by a politician who, besides his educational reform work, was also a New York Democratic Barnburner, chairing the June 1848

convention in Utica that saw Martin Van Buren nominated.[9] The botanical 'rapaciousness', as Tuggle (2017: 46) puts it, of Johnston's scientific image has a dually erotic and 'incorporative' quality. The poet finds this eroticism in spite of and in reaction to the environmental health crisis, and to the ground that should surely 'sicken of men' (*LG*56: 202). Likewise, he finds it safe to let the sea 'lick [his] naked/body all over with its tongues' (ibid. 204) despite its 'unshovelled and/always-ready graves' (*LG*55: 27), the deaths caused by New York's environmental health crisis, by the drowning of young men Whitman mentions in his *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorial, or by Long Island's long history of shipwrecks and tragedies. It is an affirmation of sex, death, nature, and the self. The sexual dimension evinces nature's powers to purify, and by proximity nature 'purifies' the sexual dimension because sex, like death, is simply another natural fact. 'Voices indecent' are by Whitman 'clarified and transfigured' (ibid. 29), granted a share of the present whether living or dead, which he too claims posthumously via his own 'leaves'. As he puts it in 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 206),

> They find themselves eternal, they do not find that
> the water and soil tend to endure forever —
> and they not endure.

[9] Barnburners opposed the expansion of slavery and later left the Democrats for the 1848 Free-Soil campaign, following another convention in Buffalo, in August. Whitman attended as a Brooklyn delegate, having been involved in Barnburner causes during his *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorship, which Ted Widmer (1998: 49) points out probably led to his dismissal because the paper was owned by a 'Hunker', or 'traditional democrat.'

Chapter Two

Vocations

This chapter returns us to Long Island and Brooklyn. It shifts to Whitman's professional life, or his vocations beyond print and periodical culture in antebellum New York, treated separately in Chapter Three for reasons of scale. First, I examine Whitman's work as an itinerant schoolteacher and the performative aspects of the role. I draw on Jason Stacy's (2008) study of the schoolmaster persona in Whitman's 'Sun-Down Papers: From the Desk of a Schoolmaster' editorials to argue for the ways in which Whitman's pedagogy and educational philosophy are found at work in the poetry as well as the journalism, most notably in his use of personae and control of poetic space. Whitman's pedagogical style reflects and presages the development of nascent interests in oratory and theatre, to which he had access in the city and which are traceable in his performative personae. Teaching meant a return to rural Long Island, before journalism and housebuilding took Whitman back to Brooklyn and Manhattan. The to and fro between city and country created an osmotic relationship through which he transformed rural ideals like neighbourly familiarity for an urban environment and vice versa, as seen in Chapter One. In the second half of this chapter, I contend that Whitman's experience with carpentry and housebuilding in Brooklyn exerted significant influence on the uncompromisingly material terms in which he expresses transcendental ideas, as well as on the new modes of existence imagined in his democratic poetics. Taking stock of the poet's liminal position as both nostalgic artisan and free-market entrepreneur, I examine the extent to which the artisanal persona obfuscates the latter in order to preserve the image of what Peter J. Riley (2011: 35) calls an 'existentially pristine poetic vocation'. Riley rectifies the traditional biographical inaccuracy of Whitman's 'poet carpenter' image. I analyse the less pristine facets of Whitman's speculative activities in Brooklyn as informing the contractual, transactional rhythms of his transcendental persona, as well as the formal textures of his *Leaves*. Locating the aggregate effect of these occupational experiences at the intersection between performance, physicality, and authenticity, I show how the interplay of these performed identities and their diverse audiences, real and imagined, are seen at work in Whitman's early transcendental poetry and explain how they relate to antebellum New York.

To set the scene, I'll pause here to consider notions of work and labour in the poetry more broadly before delving into particular occupations. The second untitled poem in 1855, after 'Song of Myself', became 'A Song for Occupations' in 1881. The essential theme endured throughout substantial revisions, that songs (or aesthetic objects) are less important than the people who make them and that we ought to focus on the substance — the labour of real people, or 'the value itself' (*LG*55: 59) — behind the image or object. To illustrate his point, Whitman refers to the objectification and commodification of the natural landscape (*LG*55: 60), including of men and women:

> Have you reckoned the landscape took substance and form that it might be painted in a picture?

> Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung?

Whitman made a similar argument for his books, some of which were after all rather ornate material objects. He denies that his artistic products — letters, lines, leaves — are textual and inanimate in the famous metonymic play in 'So long!' (*LG*60: 455): 'This is no book,/Who touches this, touches a man'. Art and artist, signifier and signified, elide to endorse the utter authenticity of the poetry and the intimacy between artist and audience while Whitman's allusions to the material processes of bookmaking repeatedly draw our eye to its artificiality. It is a classically Whitmanian instruction to read *Leaves of Grass* as paper and types — laboured over, reordered, revised — and to imbibe it as an unedited essence, a life and person distilled. As Folsom (1995: 137) observes, 'The ink and paper have created visual and linguistic signs that reify the poet, construct an identity we can grasp with the eyes and hands as well as with the intellect.' Chapter Three discusses more fully Whitman's ploy to exist as more than a name, a being in motion rather than a word fixed in print, so this chapter will unpack the significance of physical presence as it relates to two occupations: teaching and housebuilding.

Through revisions, 'A Song for Occupations' stands as a 'celebration of labor as life, work as art', as Trachtenberg (1994: 131) says, sung 'in the name of working rather than works produced' (Stacy 2008: 129). Whitman overhauled the initial tone quite dramatically, however. The final version (*LG*81: 169) begins with an abstract declaration; the first (*LG*55: 57) with an imperative that negotiates in terms of give and take, walking the line between intimate and erotic:

> A SONG for occupations!
> In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I find
> the developments,
> And find the eternal meanings.
>
> COME closer to me,
> Push closer my lovers and take the best I possess,
> Yield closer and closer and give me the best you possess.
>
> This is unfinished business with me . . . . how is it with you?
> I was chilled with the cold types and cylinder and wet paper between us.
>
> I pass so poorly with paper and types . . . . I must pass with the contact of bodies
> and souls.

In 1855, Whitman immediately underscores the material processes of labour belied by the finished article. The poet's relationship to his tools is as physical and sensory — the chill of cold types, the wetness of paper — like the reader's to the book through 'the muscular operations of tongues and hands and eyes' (Folsom and Price 2005: 72). Tactile imagery in 'So long!' (*LG*60: 455) expresses this intimacy of 'fingers', 'breath' and 'pulse', of seeing the speaker 'spring from the pages into your arms', who 'you hold, and who holds you'. The aesthetic object itself, a book of poetry, is secondary to the interaction. Whitman's speaker laments that he must 'pass so poorly with paper and types' and so he strikes a tone intimate enough to

overcome distance and appeal simultaneously to the shared experience of the senses. 'A Song for Occupations' insists on the object as a receptacle for meaning defined by the relationships that exist around it, through 'the contact of bodies and souls' and the marriage in metaphor of the physical and spiritual. Until 'the psalm sings instead of the singer' (*LG*55: 64), we must focus on the singer.

The word 'occupation' refers in Whitman's song to the economic sense of having a job, to being occupied by a task or thought, and to occupying, possessively, a (work)place. Along obsolete economic lines, to occupy was to do business and, yet more obscurely, to have sex. The speaker distinguishes between meanings above and beneath the surface, 'the usual terms' and 'never the usual terms' (*LG*55: 57). The 'usual terms' are 'the workshop, factory, yard, office, store, or desk' (61), not those of drunks, thieves, or prostitutes. He gives us a neat distinction between 'Anything you do in public by day, and anything you do in secret betweendays' (61), but sees no real distinction between these 'occupations'. They merge to celebrate 'labor as life, work as art' (Trachtenberg 1994: 131), though Whitman's emphasis on labour and art obscures certain entrepreneurial and managerial realities, both of his poetic persona and personal history. Stacy (2008: 117, 118) writes that Whitman 'placed occupation at the center of the self' and process, not product, at the centre of occupation: 'By removing products of labor from his celebration, Whitman made it impossible to value the worker by anything but labor itself.' Put simply, 'one is what one does' (ibid. 25). Whitman therefore takes seriously Emerson's claim (1883: 23) that if labour is life, or Nature, then the products of industrial progress are as artful as those of nature and her 'vital circles':

> For as it is dislocation from the life of God that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole,—re-attaching even artificial things, and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight,—disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. Readers of poetry see the factory-village and the railway, and fancy that the poetry of the landscape is broken up by these; for these works of art are not yet consecrated in their reading; but the poet sees them fall within the great Order not less than the beehive or the spider's geometrical web. Nature adopts them very fast into her vital circles, and the gliding train of cars she loves like her own.

The role of the 'Whole' and 'Order' in process and motion in *Leaves* is inseparable from Whitman's 'lifelong attachment to the grammatical form of the present participle', which Ezra Greenspan (1995: 92) encapsulates by listing poems: 'The Ship Starting', 'I Hear America Singing', 'Starting from Paumanok', 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', 'A Song of the Rolling Earth', 'Chanting the Square Deific', and so on. Whitman's attachment also relates to the performative quality of the poetry. As Stephen Railton (1995: 9) writes, '"Song of Myself" is not a poem about "what happened"; instead, the poem itself, like any performance, is what is happening as it is being read.' 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 22) displays paratactically this sense of occupation in motion, or 'Order', and it enacts a poetics of radical equality in end-stopped lines that define each figure without division from the 'Whole':

> The opium eater reclines with rigid head and just-opened lips,
> The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,
> The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,
> (Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you,)
> The President holds a cabinet council, he is surrounded by the great secretaries,

The prostitute sits beside the president, though she is also above and before him, chronologically and visually. Whitman gives her three lines, more than every other occupation in a long catalogue. Erkkila (2020: 10) notes that Whitman's 'first-person parenthetical aside […] changes the rhythm and tone of the sequence.' He places the prostitute on equal footing with the president and even uplifts her; her lines occupy more space, disrupting the poem's rhythm and social order.

Occupation in motion and disrupted social and economic order are crucial to Whitman's early years in Brooklyn which were spent moving repeatedly, following his father's ill-fated ventures in real estate speculation. From four generations of farmers, Whitman Sr was responsible for a thirty-acre farm on Long Island. He thought of himself as a carpenter, however, and taught the trade to his sons. In 1823, when Walt was four, his father moved the family to Brooklyn and turned to building houses: 'buying a lot, building on it, moving his family there for a few months, and then selling and moving again once he had built the next house', as John Rietz (1998: 787) puts it. Rietz's summary might however insinuate a more successful business endeavour than was the case. Records show the Whitmans moved at least seven times from 1823 to 1833, but there were only two purchases of land, the remainder of them leases or subleases (Reynolds 1996: 24). Carpenters were in high demand in rapidly growing Brooklyn, then beginning its transformation from rural village to major city, but Whitman Sr's 'nostalgia for the premodern artisan economy' (ibid. 25) was at odds with a changing trade that relied increasingly on prefabricated design. He could be self-sufficient in Long Island villages, but the city called for 'slickness and self-promotion, with more than a dash of craft' (ibid.). This was a demand to which his son would respond quite successfully in the housing market, and then deny that he had done so. In 1830, Whitman left school to support the family. He worked as an office boy for two Brooklyn lawyers (Reynolds 2005: 6) and, though the job itself was of little significance beyond the extra income, he was given a subscription to a circulating library. Whitman (*PW*: 15) later said this was 'the signal event of [his] life up to that time.' His first significant employment was as a printer's devil for the *Long Island Patriot* between 1831 and 1832, after which he worked at the *Long Island Star*. He continued at the *Star* even after 1833, when his family returned to Long Island without him. By 1835, aged sixteen, Whitman was a journeyman printer. He worked as a printer and compositor in Manhattan, until a fire in the printing district left him unemployed. The next summer, he took a teaching position back on Long Island and several other posts thereafter. He returned home to Huntington in 1838 and set up his own weekly, the *Long-Islander*, which he sold the following year. He took a few more teaching posts in the 1840s — the last of them in Whitestone, at the top of Queens, named for the colour of the rocks where the East River meets the Long Island Sound — but mainly worked for various other papers in Manhattan and later Brooklyn. The *Eagle* fired Whitman in 1848, for the reasons mentioned in Chapter One, so he spent a few months in New Orleans with his brother Jeff where he edited the *Daily Crescent*. Back in Brooklyn, he ran a job-printing office, a bookshop, and a housebuilding business, alongside all his journalism and the two books he was working on. One was a serialised Dickensian city mystery novella called *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle,* unearthed only in 2017 by Zachary Turpin; the other was *Leaves of Grass*.

This takes us up to 1855 and the year *Leaves of Grass* was (self-)published for the first time, on the 4th of July, in a tiny printing shop that belonged to the Scottish immigrant Rome brothers. Whitman entered the world of work via a lawyer's office and now, aged 36, his poetry was being printed in a shop that dealt primarily with legal forms, forms roughly the same size as the large pages of the 1855 text.[10] The daguerreotype frontispiece depicts Whitman as a workman, perhaps a little flamboyant and certainly insouciant, but he was never engaged in manual labour for any real length of time. In the first published review of the volume, managing editor of the *New-York Daily Tribune* Charles Dana inferred that the poet 'belongs to the exemplary class of society sometimes irreverently styled "loafers"', noting his 'half sailor's, half workman's' clothing and the '"wide-awake" perched jauntily on his head' (*WWA*), the last of those details holding a certain Quaker hat-honour resonance. As to the half sailor, half workman, I think again of 'So long!' (*LG*60: 451) and Whitman's call for 'plentiful athletic bards, inland and/seaboard'. While the image itself suggests some occupational variety, the reality of Whitman's working life was much more varied. It varied not only by geographical location but also within each location. Beginning in Brooklyn as the family followed Whitman Sr.'s latest venture in housebuilding, it then took him to Long Island and the boarding round of pupils' homes. It also varied by industry, from agriculture and education to housebuilding and journalism, and by virtue of the changing energy of the New York marketplace. Along the way, Whitman studied his intended audience and gathered material for his poetic personae, of which 'The Educator and 'The Artisan' are two.

The Educator

The front cover of Stacy's book (2008) is a daguerreotype of Whitman, taken in the late 1840s or early 1850s. A dandyish, frock-coated figure with cane and hat, this Whitman bears little resemblance to the loafer staring back at us from the 1855 frontispiece. The earlier image shows the poet playing 'the urbane Loco-foco', as Stacy (ibid. 23) puts it.[11] Predating the dandyish daguerreotype by several years, a friend's description of Whitman in 1841 as 'neat in attire' with a 'frock coat', 'high hat', and 'small cane', his lapel 'ornamented with a boutonnière' (qtd. in Perry 1906: 22–23) indicates that this was a look he maintained for quite a while. Letters from this period likewise suggest Whitman's self-image as a sophisticated urban gent among 'rubes in the country' (Stacy 2008: 23). The pose was more than sartorial. In the summer of 1840 Whitman took a teaching post in Woodbury, a small farming village near his hometown. He wrote six letters to his friend Abraham Paul Leech. They read as Whitmanic proto-catalogues, not of the

[10] *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* features stereotypically villainous lawyers, its main antagonist called 'Mr. Covert'. Turpin (2017: 238) writes on the probable parallels between the Whitmans' life in Brooklyn and an episode where Covert swindles a poor carpenter, who is left in financial ruin.

[11] Originally called the Equal Rights Party, the Loco-focos were a Democratic Party faction that existed around 1835–1845. The loco-foco was a recently patented 'self-igniting cigar or match' (Bartlett 1859: 252), sold at John Marck's Park Row store. Erkkila (1989: 20) quotes a local Whig paper in Queens County that described Whitman in 1840 as a 'well-known locofoco of the town'.

exhilarating sort that rushes breathlessly 'onward and outward' (*LG*55: 17) through 'a million universes' (54), but catalogues of complaints: complaints about the post, complaints about the place and, above all else, complaints about the people.

Whitman makes passing reference in *Specimen Days* (*PW*: 16) to 'teaching country schools down in Queens and Suffolk counties' and his nomadic experience of having 'boarded round'. This was nothing like the New York boarding round he sampled from 1835–36 and 1841–45 (Karbiener 2018: 19). In a most Emersonian sentiment, Whitman (*PW*: 16) ranked the country schoolmaster's 'round' among his 'best experiences and deepest lessons in human nature behind the scenes, and in the masses.' Letters to Leech are all we have of Whitman's recollection of that time. Here is a taste of the first litany of miseries (qtd. in Golden 1986: 347–348):

> I believe when the Lord created the world, he used up all the good stuff, and was forced to form Woodbury and its denizens, out of the fag ends, the scraps and refuse: for a more unsophisticated race than lives hereabouts you will seldom meet with in your travels.—They get up in the morning, and toil through the day, with no interregnum of joy or leisure, except breakfast and dinner.— they live on salt pork and cucumbers; and for a delicacy they sometimes treat company to rye-cake and buttermilk.— Is not this enough to send them to perdition "uncancelled, unanointed, unannealed?"— If Chesterfield were forced to live here ten hours he would fret himself to death: I have heard the words "thank you," but once since my sojourn in this earthly purgatory.— Now is the season for what they call "huckleberry frolicks."— I had the inestimable ecstasy of being invited to one of these refined amusements.— I went.— We each carried a tin pail, or a basket, or a big bowl, or a pudding bag.— It was fun no doubt, but cost me two mortal pounds of flesh, besides numerous remnants of my apparrel [*sic*], which still remain, for what I know, on the briars and bushes. […] Our conversation, too, was a caution to white folks; it consisted principally, as you may imagine, of ethereal flashes of wit, scraps of Homeric and Italian poetry, disquisitions on science and the arts, quotations from the most learned writers, and suggestions on the speediest way of making butter.

Woodbury is a 'nest of bears' and 'clowns and country bumpkins', its children 'dirty, ill-favoured young brats, with squalling throats and crude manners' (ibid). Time failed to ripen Whitman's fondness for the town. In the second letter, written from the 'Devil's den' (ibid. 349), he cries 'O damnation, damnation! thy other name is school-teaching and thy residence Woodbury' (ibid. 350), scorns 'coarse gump-heads' and 'pudding-brained bog-trotters', and beseeches Leech to pray for him. The third, from 'Purgatory Fields' (ibid. 351), considers the primitive monotony of local life: 'Making money, plodding on, and on, and on; raising ducks, carting dung, and eating pork, are the only methods of employment that occupy the Woodbury animals.' The fourth 'epistolary gem' (ibid. 353), as its author would have it, describes being treated over dinner to the finer details of the host's experience with ipecacuanha, while the fifth (September 1840) sees Whitman's spirits buoyed slightly by his imminent departure. By March 1841 (ibid. 355), distance had done little to stir nostalgia:

> But that *Place!* O, it makes my nerves quiver as I think of it.— Yes, anathema! anathema, curse, curse, upon thee thou fag end of all earthly localities, infernal Woodbury! But I fear I am getting warm.— Let me push the subject no farther.— The fact is, the most distant mention of that diabolical region, that country of buckwheat dough-nuts, and pot-cheese, and rye sweet-cake, always makes me fall a swearing.— Faugh!

Whitman's 'fashionable melancholia' (Pollak 2000: 24) notwithstanding, the letters add a curious dimension to the self-proclaimed poet of the common man. The peculiar juxtaposition is similar to the disconnect between Whitman's journalistic outcries about Manhattan being one of the filthiest, 'most crime haunted and dangerous cities in Christendom' ('New York Dissected: Advice to Strangers', 1856, *WWA*) and his poetic lust for gorgeous 'Mannahatta'. Suffice to say he hadn't found his calling in Woodbury or the classroom. He viewed his return to the countryside as a disastrous failure; itinerant school-teaching offered an escape from farm labour as the depression began but the occupation itself was born of nothing more than economic necessity. Indeed, in 'The Shadow and Light of a Young Man's Soul' (1848, *WWA*) Whitman's semiautobiographical Archibald Dean leaves the city — '(living out of which he had so often said was no living at all)' — after the devastation of the 1835 fire, poverty being 'as stern, if not as sure, as death and taxes, which Franklin called the surest things of the modern age.' Back on Paumanok after five years in the print and periodical culture of Brooklyn and New York, his self-image was that of the 'in-the-know-city-dweller stranded in the sticks' (Stacy 2008: 23), not of a native bumpkin returning to his ancestral home.

Though they naturally overlap and intertwine, I have split Whitman 'The Educator' into three main parts for discussion: performance, pedagogy, and philosophy. Whitman's letters to Leech are worth lingering on at relative length for two reasons: first, there are so few first-hand accounts of his teaching days; second, and more importantly, they establish a sense of performed identity correspondent to my argument about the effect of these early vocational experiences on the poet's transcendental personae. Whitman didn't simply cease to think of himself a teacher altogether the second the sun had set on his Long Island schoolmaster days. He argued extensively for educational reform as a journalist and envisioned a life as a kind of public teacher, or 'wander-speaker' (Whitman qtd. in Warren 1999: 174) after the publication of his first two *Leaves*. In his 1850s manuscript notes, Whitman thinks of himself as an orator and plans the never-realised series 'Walt Whitman's Lectures' (Eckel 2018: 98–99). He pictures 'A great leading representative man, with perfect power, perfect confidence in his power, persevering with repeated specimens, ranging up and down The States' (Whitman qtd. in Warren 1999: 169), a portrait that is distinctly 'future-founding' — to borrow Sascha Pöhlmann's (2015) phrase — in its procreative ambition. Stacy (2008: 96) sees little proof of Whitman's close reading of Emerson before 1848, though he perhaps felt 'an affinity for the popular notions of Emerson'. Whitman certainty had an affinity for popularity in general, which feeds into the oratorical power of his idealised leading man. Whitman's interests in theatre and oratory (broadly speaking, if not yet specifically Emerson in any depth) had been piqued before he left for those bare but busy schoolrooms: 'I spent much of my time in theatres then—going everywhere, seeing everything, high, low, middling—absorbing theatres at every pore' (Traubel 1906: 455). *Walt Whitman's Multitudes* is 'the story of personas meant for public consumption' (Stacy 2008: 5). The study is meticulous in its scrutiny of Whitman's not inconsiderable journalistic output but leaves little space for the poetry. Here, I borrow from Stacy's periodical focus on the schoolmaster persona and redirect it to *Leaves of Grass*. I widen the parameters for discussion from 'schoolmaster' to 'educator' to consider in tandem Whitman's oratorial and theatrical interests. In so doing, I locate certain facets of his later poetic persona in the demands and circumstances of his role as a country schoolteacher on Long Island.

Performance

The prevailing identity in the letters to Leech is the erudite urban gentleman plucked untimely from his theatregoing life in the big city, dropped in a crude, rural penitentiary. Just as the journalist inhabits various voices, Whitman performs this to comedic effect with self-conscious literariness, clearly for his own entertainment as well as Leech's. There is little doubt, though, that he was truly troubled at this time by teaching and boarding, and perhaps more specifically by 'traumatic public persecution', as Reynolds (1996: 69) reasons.[12] Antithetical to this urban(e) identity are the unaffected farming communities on rural Long Island, the 'Pasturelife, foddering, milking and herding' (*LG*55: 61), scorned in 1840, sung in 1855. The two intersect in a persona who supposedly speaks 'for the endless races of working people and farmers' (ibid. 24) but refers overpage to his 'embouchures' (ibid. 25). Beyond the omnipresent 'I' born of this multiplicity, the effect is almost dramaturgical: a one-man transcendental play on a stage of cosmic proportions. Even as a teenager, Whitman loved the New York stage and especially the Bowery Theatre for its more 'democratic' audience. He admired actors like the 'singularly spontaneous and fluctuating' (*PW*: 495) Junius Brutus Booth — father of John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin — for his utter immersion in the roles he played or became; Edwin Forrest for the 'sheer force of voice and physique' (Meyer 1998: 4) of his American style, his performances in John Howard Payne's 'Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin' which 'permanently filter'd into [his] whole nature' (*PW*: 425), and the 'electric force and muscle' of those audiences. Whitman (ibid. 426) scanned those audiences 'as rigidly as a play', their energy and makeup just as much a part of the pleasure of the theatre as the actors, and action, onstage.

Far from the Bowery stage though they were, the communities in small Long Island farming towns were of Whitman's own parents' generation, and he had fond memories of boyhood on fish-shape Paumanok. Despite his exasperation as a schoolmaster with these rural settings, his frustration exacerbated by the boarding round, the to and fro between country and city improved the fluidity with which he catalogued the spectrum of human experience in motion and counterweighted his own metropolitan sensibilities.

> A farmer, mechanic, or artist . . . . a gentleman, sailor, lover or quaker,
> A prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician or priest.
>
> I resist anything better than my own diversity,
> And breathe the air and leave plenty after me,
> And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

[12] Reynolds (1996: 70) argues that the summer of 1841 — with the publication of his first short story in the *Democratic Review*, 'Death in the School-Room. (A Fact)', the tale of a country teacher who beats a student to death — was when Whitman's personal trauma began to find expression in his writing. Zero documentary evidence exists on the matter, but a story passed down by generations of Southolders alleges Whitman to have been charged publicly with the rape of one or more male pupils with whom he was boarding. Most biographers take at face value Whitman's notebook recollection of teaching at a school in Whitestone for a period of a few months or so during this time (Reynolds 2000: 22).

Diversity is law here (*LG*55: 24): farmers mingle with fancy-men, gentlemen with rowdies, prisoners with priests. Like the universal tongue of the body, the motif of the air vitalises Whitman' ranging democratic vision. He imagines democratic health in terms that mimic bodily health, indivisible from spiritual health, as he later argued in *Specimen Days* (*PW*: 200). In quoting this earlier I emphasised 'outdoor light', in connection with the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Here, 'vitalized […] with outdoor light and air' can again be contextualised within 19th century thinking about different types of airs, namely vital air.

> American Democracy, in its myriad personalities, in factories, work-shops, stores, offices—through the dense streets and houses of cities, and all their manifold sophisticated life—must either be fibred, vitalized, by regular contact with outdoor light and air and growths, farm scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds, sun-warmth and free skies or it will certainly dwindle and pale.

After the simple, monosyllabic line 'And am not stuck up, and am in my place' — syntactically and syllabically balanced either side of the comma, equilibrium in denial balanced by affirmation — follows an archetypally Whitmanian catalogue of declarative statements reinforced by anaphora:

> It is for the illiterate . . . . it is for the judges of the supreme court . . . . it is
> for the federal capitol and the state capitols,
> It is for the admirable communes of literary men and composers and
> singers and lecturers and engineers and savans,
> It is for the endless races of working people and farmers and seamen.

To claim one writes for the illiterate and literary sounds slightly outlandish. Whitman did not find acceptance in the un- or semi-educated audience he sought. This aspect of his 'language experiment' (1904: vii), the amalgamation of foreign, archaic, or obsolete words — eidólons, betimes, vouchsafe — with slang, colloquialisms, or Americanisms — blab, yawp, cute — failed in that regard. Such lines do however testify to the democratic oratorical performance that Whitman sees for his work rather than merely harnesses as a literary device; said aloud, illiteracy is no barrier. And the long elliptical pause, so characteristic of the 1855 *Leaves*, evinces such a performance, functioning as it does to expand the breath required to speak the long lines. The historical context to this also includes the act of public reading, of newspapers and so on, in taverns and other public spaces in 19th century New York.

The simple village life Whitman knew as a boy and returned to as a schoolteacher serves his persona in two ways that pertain to his oratorical ambitions. The first is his recourse to the rural in poetic scenes of public affection, discussed in Chapter One. He repurposes this desire for personal connection in the 'mettlesome, mad, extravagant city' of New York ('City of Ships' 1867: 41a) and its infinite opportunity for 'promiscuous encounters of the democratic street' (Frank 2011: 176–177). As Dickey and Killingsworth (2003: 10) assert about the 'geographical dimension' of 'Whitman's artisanal republicanism',

> The Whitmanian "myself" thus appears […] as the overly familiar bumpkin, treating city strangers like old family friends, confronting urban aliens with the kind of insistent recognition formed in towns where everyone knows you, as Whitman would say, by your "nighest name."

The second has to do with the significance of physical and physiognomic presence to *Leaves of Grass*, related to the physicality of the performers Whitman admired, as well as his interest in the health and fertility of the specimens populating his new democracy, the body politic. In 'I Sing the Body Electric', the speaker reminisces about 'a common farmer' (*LG*55: 78–79), the power of his physical presence as 'village patriarch' (Dickey and Killingsworth 2003: 10), the love he commands. The farmer is a picture of patriarchal 'vigor and calmness and beauty', 'six feet tall', 'over eighty', with 'massive/clean bearded tanfaced and handsome' sons. Loved 'with personal love' by 'all who saw him', the farmer was a 'frequent gunner and fisher' who 'sailed his boat himself'. 'You would wish long and long to be with him', the speaker tells us, pausing to enact that yearning, '. . . . you would wish to sit by him in/the boat that you and he might touch each other.' The 'shape of his head' is a nod to phrenology, that he drinks 'water only' to temperance, the latter a key feature of the schoolmaster persona Stacy (2008) locates in the journalism. Both form part of 'the educator' persona Whitman performs for the audience of multitudes he must contain — symbolically, but in muscular language — as 'teacher of athletes' (*LG*55: 52). The preface-manifesto (iii) opens by stating that America 'accepts the lesson with calmness' and awaits patiently 'the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches'. He declares the 'genius of the United States' to be in 'common people', 'the freshness and candour of their physiognomy', 'the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness'. America's poet 'shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos' (ibid. xi). The figure portrayed in the preface and the poetry is 'A learner with the simplest, a teacher of thoughtfulest' (*LG*55: 24), 'fleshy and sensual . . . . eating drinking and breeding' (29), and yet somehow he drifts across the cosmos in 'lacy jags' (56). Whitman's 'I' is as varied as his audience, stretching beyond the still-new nation's vast expanse to 'you that shall cross from shore to shore/years hence' (*LG*56: 211).

Pedagogy

The diversity of the 'you' addressed by Whitman's 'I' foregrounds the creation of this democratic art, a radical free verse style capable of capturing the spirit of 'fresh lands, inchoate, and in a revolutionary age, future-founding' (*PW*: 287). Whitman's pedagogy also necessarily entailed a sense of performance. Itinerant school-teaching was defined by heterogeneity and motion even if Whitman was also hampered by the isolated conservativism of rural Long Island and wearied by the repetitive nature of the farming life he taught rather than take up but lived in proximity to. Despite the continuing dominance of the rigid methods of instruction to which Whitman would himself have been subjected in his brief formal schooling, the nature of contemporary country classrooms — if not the expectations of syllabi, colleagues, townsfolk — demanded performance. Whitman's classes routinely numbered eighty students aged five to fifteen (Stacy 2008: 23), and the schoolhouses themselves were 'primitive one-room affairs' (Loving 1999: 37). A class constituted a sizeable audience and one that varied considerably in knowledge, experience, and comprehension. Some were beginning school, others not much younger than Whitman was when he took his first teaching post. Terms generally lasted three months and, as was then the norm, Whitman boarded with his students' families (ibid). He moved towns with the terms — he taught in at least ten places — and between families within each term.

The few reviews we have of Whitman's teaching are the reminiscences of ex-students, as well as the less favourable assessment of his Woodbury successor who said 'pupils had not gained a "whit" of learning' (qtd. in Reynolds 2000: 21). A student in Little Bayside, Charles A. Roe, was more flattering in his recollections. Roe told Traubel (qtd. in Freedman 1950: 28) that Whitman 'strangely attracted our respect and affection.' Roe's Whitman is beardless and black-clad, but otherwise imprecise, almost mystical, an ineffable personal and physical presence:

> I had other teachers, but none of them ever left such an impress upon me, and yet I could not mention any particular thing. It was his whole air, his general sympathetic way, his eye, his voice, his entire quality. I felt something I could not describe.

An ex-pupil from West Hills, Sandford Brown (qtd. in Freedman 1950: 30) said he 'would give almost any thin' just to take him by the hand and look in his face', a sentiment not dissimilar from Whitman's towards his beautiful farmer. Timothy Stifel (1998: 592) takes the interlude of half a century between Roe's lessons and his recollections as proof of Whitman's 'effectiveness in the classroom'. I err on the side of caution in this respect, and side instead with Florence Bernstein Freedman's (1950: 28) earlier, more conservative assessment:

> The picture of the young schoolmaster […] which emerges from their reminiscences is colored by the fact that he was now the object of both extreme adulation and extreme vilification. Its outlines are probably blurred also by the lapse of years, or distorted by the enthusiasm of the questioners. Even so, it may be accepted as a fairly faithful tintype, true in its general outline though faded in tone.

Brown's interviewer was a Whitmanian disciple, Dr John Johnston. Brown was a West Hills native, which may have influenced his fondness for Whitman despite not having actually read *Leaves* (ibid. 30). In 1954 the Walt Whitman Elementary School was founded in Woodbury, before Whitman's letters to Leech surfaced to reveal his thoughts about the 'coarse gump-heads' (qtd. in Golden 1986: 350) who populated the town. With the discussion so prefaced, we can be more confident in evaluating certain aspects of Whitman's unusual pedagogy and in locating them in experimental teaching methods popularised by Amos Bronson Alcott, as well as in Emerson's educational philosophies.

Roe's notion of Whitman's 'air' and 'entire quality' is reminiscent of a short 1860 poem (*LG*60: 400), 'To a Pupil.' The speaker, or teacher, asks 'Is reform needed? Is it through you?' In exclaimed direct address, as if picking someone out of a crowd, he asks about the power of personality as it translates to physical charisma and its usefulness in accomplishing reform:

> You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes,
> blood, complexion clean and sweet?
> Do you not see how it would serve to have such
> a body and Soul, that when you enter the crowd,
> an atmosphere of desire and command enters
> with you, and every one is impressed with your
> personality?

It seems Whitman had already begun to cultivate such a persona, and with enough success that he didn't have to rely on books and beatings. 'Death in the School-Room. (A Fact)' made Whitman's (1841) feelings about corporal punishment quite plain, and the pacifist Quaker facet to such a position should not be overlooked. Thoreau quit after brief employment in Concord's public schools, unable and unwilling to punish pupils physically. Much like the mechanics underlying Whitman's moralising prose, Roe (qtd. in Freedman 1950: 29) recalled that the young schoolmaster would discourage lying by exposing a student 'before the whole school in a story' told in 'such a way […] that the guilty fellow knew who was meant'. Whitman 'did not confine himself to books, as most of the teachers then did, but taught orally'. Roe, then in his sixties, was able to recite a verse from a poem called 'The Fallen Angel', which he suspected Whitman had written. Freedman relates 'a rumor among the students that he had written many of the poems he taught them.' If true, the classroom was an early site of Whitman's unrelenting and unabashed self-promotion, its final resting place being his $4000 granite tomb in Harleigh Cemetery, Camden, New Jersey, a monument to himself. The significance of this biographical context for Whitman's poetic persona is also audible in the dually performative and pedagogical mentorial voice that seeks to teach about democratic modes of association and belonging.

Roe's recollections portray a progressive, experimental teacher rather than a conventional one, and an interactive, spontaneous classroom rather than one 'inflexible in rules and severe in discipline', a phrase Whitman wrote in the *Brooklyn Star* and repeated in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* following visits to New York schools (qtd. in ibid: 34): 'two of the best schools we ever knew appeared always to the casual spectator to be complete uproar, confusion and chaos.' His extensive editorial campaigns for educational reform offer a sense of the active engagement that characterised his pedagogy and for which 'To a Pupil' argues in poetic form. Like the preface (*LG*55: xi) envisions 'a man cohered of tumult and chaos', disorder was a value beyond the confines of the classroom, a value that finds formal expression in the book's argument against 'inflexibility in rules'. Like Alcott, Whitman emphasised conversation, stories, and games like twenty-questions, interactive educational methods to encourage independence. The use of simple questions as a springboard for more complex discussions is the rhetorical device at work in Whitman's meditation on the grass, which I suggested in Chapter One may have originated in a pedagogical text. The progression moves from a child's short, monosyllabic question about leaves of grass to richly suggestive lines about theology, democracy, and life after death, which accumulate throughout *Leaves of Grass.* Accumulation itself played an unusually significant role in Whitman's teaching. He would describe 'objects and incidents to the school in a manner that held the interest of all' (Roe qtd. in Freedman 1950: 29), a spontaneous creative cataloguing of some sort. He also had students practice mental arithmetic daily, which Freedman (ibid.) describes as 'a procedure strange enough to warrant special comment.' It seems Whitman held the subject particularly dear. The preface (*LG*55: vii) lists mathematicians among 'the lawgivers of poets' whose 'construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem.' '[A]lways of their fatherstuff', Whitman writes, 'must be begotten the sinewy races of bards' (ibi.). This phrasing merges his poetic commitments to multiplicity and the body. His love of large numbers — of things, places, people, and numbers themselves — is seen in references to 'millions of suns' (*LG*55: 14), 'trillions of winters and summers' (49), 'quadrillions of eras' (51), 'quintillions green' (38), 'sextillions of infidels' (34), 'octillions of

cubic leagues' (51), and 'decillions of years' (92). Such numbers serve to quantify ideologically the infinite procreative energy of 'fatherstuff' and thus the potential of the 'I' and of single acts to accumulate for posterity.

The Whitmanic spin of his pedagogy notwithstanding, Whitman drew from his transcendentalist antecedents: Emerson's educational philosophy, Horace Mann's theory of democratic education, and Amos Bronson Alcott and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's Temple School, where Margaret Fuller taught for a time. Freedman (1950: 55) suggests that lectures delivered in Brooklyn, such as those of the 1833 Lyceum Movement, exposed Whitman to Mann's theory of education as the foundation of citizenship, as did *The Common School Journal* that Mann founded in 1838, containing periodical reports attached to the movement he led to widen access to education. The Temple School in Boston incorporated Quaker beliefs into its experimental pedagogy, namely man's fundamentally divine nature, in its more generalist transcendentalist translation, or 'There is that of God in every person' in the original. The school also espoused a style of teaching that engaged children in conversation. Fuller's later 'conversations', the venue for which was often Peabody's parlour, aimed to encourage women to engage actively in discussions about a range of topics. Lydia Maria Child, who I quoted in introducing my thesis, was one of Fuller's participants. As a document of the Temple School's progressiveness and of the progression of transcendentalist thought, *Record of a School* — an 1835 book with a lengthy preface by Peabody — is an important text. Brook Farm's school thrived on similar principles. It attracted outsiders and, crucially, income to an experiment that was subjected to George Ripley's financial management services. Whitman's later poetic pedagogy was also influenced by Emerson's public personality as a lecturer — the 'wander-speaker' he imagined he might be — and by his theories. 'The great Object of Education should be commensurate with the object of life', said Emerson (2005: 48) at the opening of a Rhode Island school in 1837, that object being 'to acquaint [the pupil] with the resources of his mind'. Whitman's poet seeks correspondingly to teach to us 'no longer take things at second or third hand' (*LG*55: 14), paradoxically to 'teach straying from [him]' (ibid. 52, 53), as if to attract only to repel, and to equip students with a self-reliance that renders his own purpose obsolete:

> I am the teacher of athletes,
> He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own,
> He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

The educator persona functions like 'the best part of Emersonianism', which is 'it breeds the giant that destroys itself' (*PW*: 322). When the poet addresses us, 'Eleves I salute you' (*LG*55: 44), Whitman invokes revolutionary power. The 1867 text (*LG*67: v) begins with an 'Inscription'. 'ONE'S-SELF', Whitman writes, 'that wondrous/thing, a simple, separate person', and then 'I speak the word/of the modern, the word EN-MASSE.' The persona therefore manages to encompass the role of both the authority figure — didactic, if progressive — and that of the insurgent.

Before moving to Whitman's educational philosophy, I want to return briefly to the relationship between democracy, the body, poetry, and fresh air. Whitman 'allied himself completely with the education reformers by emphasizing the role of a nurturing physical and emotional environment' in

children's learning (Reynolds 1996: 80). In an 1847 *Eagle* editorial Whitman (qtd. in Freedman 1950: 160) stressed the dangers of 'insufficient ventilation' in classrooms, as he did in stressing the need for elevated city parks: 'Every school room should possess a very high ceiling, and valves or some other contrivance for purifying the air.' Reynolds (1996: 80) makes the point in passing that Whitman's idea of desirable classroom qualities is reflected in 'the breezy, ventilated feel of many of his major poems' which 'shows his effort to regulate his poetic space just as he had wanted to make the learning environment salubrious.' To flesh this out a little, we might think of Whitman's free verse poetics, unfettered by metrical constraints, and of his end-stopped lines containing discrete images or thoughts, each demanding 'a separate breath rhythm' but nonetheless 'fused […] to the larger structure of the whole' (Erkkila 2020: 9). The whole in Whitman is often of course the catalogue which, like the breath, expands outwards with the accumulation of thoughts and images and contracts in lines of alternating lengths.

Though Whitman's aim in such editorials was reformist in nature, and New York's concomitant health crisis was an important local context, there are wider implications for the 'breezy' poetic atmosphere created in *Leaves.* The preface (*LG*55: vi) instructs us to

> read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . . .

The 'open air' is a prerequisite for breaking free from the conventions of schools, churches, and books, as it is in *Specimen Days* for democratic health. Following the purchase of Whitman's Woodbury schoolhouse in 1927, fundraised by admirers, Alanson Weller (1928: 504) referred to 'An Ideal School', a short poem hung on the wall. Unfortunately Weller didn't quote it, but he summarises it as expressing the belief that schools should have 'light, air, good pictures and books, manly exercise and freedom and understanding between boys and girls.' To connect light, fresh air, learning, physical exercise and freedom is typical of Whitman and his 1855 preface makes clear the significance of physicality. Re-examination, putting 'Creeds and schools in abeyance' (*LG*60: 9), translates each and every part of body — the leveller, a universal language — into 'a great poem'. In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 13) the poet distinguishes between perfume — schools, churches, books — and atmosphere:

> Houses and rooms are full of perfumes . . . . the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
> I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it,
> The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.
>
> The atmosphere is not a perfume . . . . it has no taste of the distillation . . . . it is odorless,
> It is for my mouth forever . . . . I am in love with it,
> I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
> I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The atmosphere is a single diffusive thing, without taste or fragrance, unlike perfumes that crowd shelves and houses and rooms, their persuasion by intoxication. Unadulterated by history, literature, religion, the

atmosphere is — quite literally — a pure form of inspiration. Here, I recall 'The Poet' (Emerson 1883: 33): 'the air should suffice for his inspiration'. Thoreau (1881: 140) asked in his journal 'Is the drawing in of this vital air attended with no more glorious results than I witness?' and answered that 'The air is a velvet cushion against which I press my ear.' For Whitman the purity of the atmosphere lies not only in being undiluted by the thoughts and agendas of others, making it educationally valuable, but that 'Democracy most of all affiliates with the open air, is sunny and hardy and sane only with Nature', of which it is the 'younger brother' (*PW*: 200). Whitman's free verse eschews perfumed European metres, while his long elliptical pauses and end-stopped lines 'ventilate' our reading of the page. Just as these elements foster the reader's imagination of an oratorical performance, so do they aid us by structuring the regulation of the breath, encoding in the text particular physical actions that emphasise the muscularity both of the imagined performance and of the reception. They air the page, visually, by requiring readers to pause for breath at particular points and depths. As the lines expand and contract, the art and the body, the poetic and the pulmonary, meet in the same way that I suggest 'the sound of breaking waves' (*LG*60: 195) replicates aurally the form of the thing transmitted. Whitman attempted to democratise the medium and to compound this effect by making essential to the environment he creates the universal accessibility of air, of breath, and the body. In Whitman's days as a young schoolmaster on Long Island, we see the seeds of his desire to break free from convention, to nurture an environment that would encourage self-reliant thinking, and to ensure the health of a specifically American democracy. In a sense, his own occupational experience of education on Long Island — prompted by the 1835 Great Fire of New York, which destroyed the printing district and left him unemployed — prepared him to receive the educational ideas that attended the 'inception' (I use that word loosely) of transcendentalism in Boston, while the distinct geocultural dimension to those experiences modulated that reception. This dynamic is connected to the way Hicksite Quakerism, a local and even familial context on Long Island, made more ideologically accessible to Whitman the transcendentalism of the New England intellectuals.

Philosophy

Whitman's 'philosophy' of education is another phrase to be used loosely, since he wasn't a systematic thinker. It makes sense to start with an 1855 poem later titled 'There Was A Child Went Forth', which I mentioned briefly in Chapter One on the subject of the saltmarshes around Wallabout Bay, Brooklyn. The poem explores the idea of democracy as nature's 'younger brother' and catalogues a child's development as he absorbs and embodies the world around him, rural and urban, a kind of transcendental curriculum. At the forefront of this Romantic lyric are Whitman's boyhood experiences on Long Island, to which he returned while teaching in its rural villages, of being touched by natural wonders like 'the soothing rustle of the waves' and 'the perfume' not of tradition or convention but 'the sedge-meadows' (*PW*: 14). It is a poem patterned with many Transcendentalist resonances — of the unity-in-diversity principle, of nature as omnipresent provider, of humanity as enmeshed in nature's ongoing order, of fluid identities — and its imagery follows 'two quietly elaborated progressions' (Buell 1973: 172). The catalogue's loose structure and reiterative quality obscure the subtlety of the seasonal progression and the progression of the child, whose

perception expands outwards until his view is of the horizon, which we, the reader, share. As in much of Whitman's transcendental poetry, and in his democratic poetics, there is a traceable phrenological undercurrent in his conception of identity which, alongside his teaching days and exposure to reform, influenced his educational philosophy. David Orr (1992: 183) describes *Walden* as 'a model of the possible unity between personhood, pedagogy and place', and in this poem Whitman maps out a similar ecosystem.

The poem's first lines announce the principle of the transcendental self, or cosmic ego, endlessly curious and ever-expanding in its embrace. They establish the child's experiential learning, absorbing and embodying what he sees, as an ongoing process that parallels natural order. The parallelism is reinforced anaphorically (*LG*55: 90):

> THERE was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity or love or dread, that object he became,
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day . . . . or for many stretching cycles of years.

The opening summarises Whitman's poetics of eligibility, ploughing onwards no matter whether the thing absorbed and embodied evokes pleasure or discomfort, 'for many stretching cycles of years.' The child's identity fluctuates in time with each object he receives, 'with wonder or pity or love/or dread', each no less worthy of admiration than the last irrespective of its (un)conventional beauty. The long ellipsis stands in for the incremental measures of time he would elsewhere list at greater length, but here the juxtaposition of days with years underscores a dual concern with seasonal, temporal change and with perennial cycles that reach to the reader's 'now' (91) — the poem's closing word — and, by implication, beyond to any future reader's. Even time stretches, athletically, to permit the poet's outstretched hand to go forth.

Whitman structures the catalogue using contrast, unifying its disparate elements in alignment with the child's developing perception of what in 'Nature' Emerson (1884: 30) calls 'a ray of relation pass[ing] from every other being to him.' To quote 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 32), the child has 'instant conductors all over', which 'seize every object and lead it harmlessly through' him. Beginning in spring, the child who goes forth perceives and embodies alike 'The early lilacs', 'and the song/of the phoebe-bird', 'and the March-born lambs', 'and the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there'. Insistent polysyndeton merges apparent incongruence, and not just images but senses other than sight, as in the sound of birdsong with the colour of 'the sow's pink-faint litter', which also mixes material and immaterial. Birdsong cuts through the 'noisy brood of the barnyard', and through the implied silence of fish underwater. The 'white and red morning glories, and white and red clover' contrast two colours, yet united in a single image, which recur by blending in 'the sow's pink-faint litter'. The muted and blended grey-brown colours of the phoebe bird recur in the 'mire of the pond-/side', contrasted visually with the vivid lilac, green, white, and red. The broad, blunt simplicity of 'And grass' contrasts with the floral specificity, while the fish, and 'water-plants with their graceful flat heads', mix life above and below 'the/beautiful curious liquid'. That the fish are 'suspending themselves' rather than simply 'suspended' adds motion, by way of the present participle, to an otherwise static image. Whitman's anthropomorphism of water-plants works similarly to

animate the inanimate, and to diminish the divide between human, animal, and plant life. The images progress according to a precise order of fluctuating levels, mirroring the flux of the child's identity: Whitman moves from 'early lilacs', sprouting from beneath the soil, to the 'brood of the barnyard' above ground, to 'the mire of the pond-/side', and then to the water, each more complex than the last. The scene is one of unified natural diversity and, given the attention paid to water meeting land and the specificity of the natural images Whitman uses, insinuates an autobiographical bent. At this stage, the child's education rests on simple observations of birth and growth, sound and colour, land and water. Springtime imagery of birth and renewal, the repeated 'morningglories' of ever-sprouting new life, signals his awakening to the 'beautiful curious' world around him, at first intuited if not understood. As in 'Song of Myself', he is a 'novice beginning experient of myriads of seasons' (*LG*55: 24). Bit by bit, the seeds of his perception germinate and grow to include more of the world around him.

Whitman progresses swiftly, fluidly from the nourishment provided by nature's changing seasons — 'the field-sprouts of April and May', 'wintergrain sprouts', 'light-yellow corn', 'the esculent roots of the garden', 'appletrees covered with blossoms, and the fruit afterward . . . . and wood-/berries' — to a catalogue of human types. But first, a nod to 'the commonest weeds by the road' (*LG*55: 87, 91), no less beautiful or wondrous to the child who 'strangely transmutes' mundane to miracle.

> And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern whence he had lately risen,
> And the schoolmistress that passed on her way to the school . . and the friendly boys that passed . . and the quarrelsome boys . . and the tidy and freshcheeked girls . . and the barefoot negro boy and girl,
> And all the changes of the city and country wherever he went.

Whitman displays the unity-in-diversity inherent in the social order, of which the maturing child comes to realise he must be part. Conventional hierarchy is subverted and again the catalogue grows through apparent opposites: the drunkard and the schoolmistress, the friendly and quarrelsome boys, the 'tidy and freshcheeked girls' and 'the barefoot negro boy and girl'. The child learns that humanity exists within natural paradigms and therefore 'all the changes of the city and country' are subsumed under nature. This also supports the poem's interwoven personal history given Whitman's own moves between city and country, as well as the ways in which both Brooklyn and Manhattan were living compounds of this topos as they metamorphosed during his lifetime. In revising the poem, Whitman (*LG*60: 221) referred not to 'field-sprouts of April and May' but 'Fourth Month and Fifth Month', Quaker terms he heard as a boy on Long Island. Besides the value of democratic 'Friendliness' to Whitman's transcendentalist poetics of eligibility, the fact he made those revisions in 1860 has specific relevance beyond that edition's special religious emphasis. The third edition of *Leaves* had a biblical feel, with its poetic clusters and numbered poems and stanzas, and similarly the Quaker preference for numbered months had a scriptural basis. If transcendentalism is 'the natural religion of democracy' (Buell 1973: 168), Whitman's 'basic purpose', his 'religious purpose' (*PW*: 278), 'tallying the fresh air of sea and land', was well served by including the culture of Long Island Quakerism, even if its asceticism was too prescriptive for one who, like his

transcendentalist antecedents, loved to 'luxuriate in the beautiful' (Child 1845: 128), in the city, the country, or 'wherever he went.'

In the next short section, the poem's (*LG*55: 91) phrenological hue becomes apparent as the protagonist turns his attention inwards to his own parents: to his father 'that had propelled the fatherstuff at night', recalling the preface, and to his mother 'that conceived him in her womb and birthed him'. Aspiz (1966), who has also written about spermatic imagery, sexuality, and the language of transcendence in *Leaves,* argues that Whitman's interest in phrenology does not just colour the poem but structures it in its entirety. 'Phrenologists', he writes (ibid. 660–61), 'maintained that superior children stem only from superior parents.' Becoming cognisant of his parents' significance to his own character, the child sees that his mother is 'mild', 'a wholesome odor/falling off her person and clothes' (*LG*55: 91), whereas his father is 'strong, selfsufficient, manly, mean, angered, unjust'. While the mother is virtuous, the father is 'morally androgynous' (Aspiz 1966: 661). Arthur Wrobel (1998: 522) concurs that 'the structure and content […] depict the systematic progressive exercising by the poem's young persona of different groups of phrenological faculties' and this 'growth is enhanced by the poem's superior mother from whom he inherits his first-rate physical and mental organization.' To read the poem overall as structured by phrenological doctrine might be to underplay the transcendentalist import of holistic, self-reliant, experiential education spring-boarded by nature, but the listed parental qualities still symbolise the child's tallying of his own potential virtue which, though mouldable in education, Whitman did believe to be weighted by heredity and genealogy. The tonal shift and quickened pace at this point in the poem, signalled by Whitman's asyndetic coordination, certainly fosters an impression of a more purely accumulative than absorptive form of identity formation. However, when Whitman joined the Smithtown Debating Society's debate about nature versus nurture as a young schoolmaster, he argued that education and environment had the greater influence on character formation, a belief that held more in common with the Lockean *tabula rasa* than with contemporary phrenology. Indeed, in an 1842 *New York Aurora* editorial (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 50), Whitman describes children as 'fresh from the hands of Him whose architecture is always perfect until desecrated by the conduct of the world.'

Much of Whitman's thinking about education, environment, and phrenology had to do with his projections of the future. In the 'fatherstuff' to which he refers in the preface, Whitman located the ranging vistas of the future that were to be populated by the children of today. He saw his words on the page as its poetic referent: small, singular units that comprise the revolutionary potential of his seminal *Leaves of Grass* to beget countless spiritual progeny. In his 1841 journal, Emerson (1984: 271) expressed his desire for such a book: 'Give me initiative, spermatic, prophesying man-making words.' *Leaves* was such a book, though its poet-prophet's determination to 'drain the pent-up rivers of [him]self' ('Poem of Procreation' *LG*56: 242) was to prove a little too 'spermatic' for the Concord sage. The poet-pedagogue figure is apposite here. The readers of *Leaves*, the 'you' that stabilises the transcendental 'I', are figured as the poet's 'eleves', his intellectual progeny. Whitman establishes a necessarily cyclical relationship between parents, pedagogues, and poets, which he also conceives of in terms of 'a teeming nation of nations' (*LG*55: iii). The physical act of the parents produces the child; the pedagogic act, the refined intellect; and the poetic act, the potential of the poet's spiritual 'children', the citizens of the United States which 'themselves are essentially the

greatest poem' (ibid). Following an iterative process of cultivation, the now improved citizens of American democracy return to the beginning of the cycle, producing children who benefit from their parents' superior morals and intellect, who are refined by the next new and improved generation of pedagogues and poets. As past, present, and future elide in a continuous beginning, Whitman imbues both educative and poetic acts with the 'original energy' ('Song of Myself, *LG*67: 9) of the sexual act, of conception, 'the procreant urge of the world' (*LG*55: 14). The equation also serves to align human processes with natural laws, creation and education couched in the language of sex and the body. And so, in terms that were 'original, transcendental, and expressing […] democracy and the modern', Whitman (*PW*: 205) declared that he would 'promulge new races of teachers'.

Having moved from natural life in process to human life in process, the child who goes forth rather zooms out from the certitude of domestic scenes to the 'flashes and specks' (*LG*55: 91) of strangers in the city. Compounding the tonal shift that accompanies the phrenological turn, metaphysical doubt enters the fray and the child questions what he previously thought would not be 'gainsayed':

> Affection that will not be gainsayed . . . . The sense of what is real . . . . the thought
> if after all it should prove unreal,
> The doubts of daytime and the doubts of nighttime . . . the curious whether and how,
> Whether that which appears so is so . . . . Or is it all flashes and specks?
> Men and women crowding fast in the streets . . if they are not flashes and specks
> what are they?

These doubts are set in a crowded, urban environment of the kind in which Whitman relished 'the fre-/quent and swift flash of eyes' ('City of Orgies' *LG*67: 133), among the other qualities I consider in Chapter One. Whitman states in the preface that the poet 'sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots' (*LG*55: v). These 'dreams or dots' would be the 'flashes and specks' that trouble the child in his 'subjectivist despair' (Aspiz 1966: 663). Aspiz reads a later version of 'There Was A Child Went Forth', after the dots dropped off. In the 1855 version I've chosen to analyse for its proximity both to the historical moment of transcendentalism and to Whitman's educational experiences, the idiosyncratic ellipses — bar the final lines — are spread liberally throughout the poem, but they concentrate in these lines of doubt and alternate more noticeably in length. They create a series of hesitative pauses, but they also 'speck' the page like the chaos of city crowds specks the child's perception. The insistence of the anaphoric, incantatory conjunction falters and is not replaced by the definite article's biblical certitude as it is in the preceding passage about the child's parentage. However, the repetition of both 'in 'The doubts of daytime and the doubts of nighttime' and 'The sense of what is real . . . . the thought/if after all it should prove unreal' concretises otherwise vague 'doubts' as inevitable, coexistent dualities, neither one subordinate to the other. Even in dislocation from natural harmony, there is balance to be found. The effect of sustaining an ongoing, ever-expanding moment that merges the constituents of the catalogue nevertheless wanes at this point, decelerating to coincide with the child's doubts about the transience of what he sees which, having become 'part of him', might mean that he too is transient.

This question hangs in the poem's air, neither answered nor repeated. It draws to a close (*LG*55: 91) as the child's perspective swells, retreating outwards from streets, to vehicles, to ferries, a village, a river, the sea, the sky:

> The streets themselves, and the facades of houses . . . . the goods in the windows,
> Vehicles . . teams . . the tiered wharves, and the huge crossing at the ferries;
> The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset . . . . the river between,
> Shadows . . aureola and mist . . light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown, three miles off,
> The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide . . the little boat slacktowed astern,
> The hurrying tumbling waves and quickbroken crests and slapping;
> The strata of colored clouds . . . . the long bar of maroontint away solitary by itself . . . . the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
> The horizon's edge, the flying seacrow, the fragrance of saltmarsh and shoremud;

In Helen Vendler's (1980: 102) analysis it's 'typical of Whitman that after his momentary vertigo he should tether himself to the natural world of sea and sky.' If we exclude the refrain, the sea and sky have the final word in that they are what remains when the child's perspective has expanded enough to assume so distant a vantage point. Imagistic cyclicality could suggest recourse to the refuge of natural order: in the 'strata of colored clouds' and 'long bar of maroontint' recur the blended palettes of the opening farmyard scene; in the 'horizon's edge, the flying seacrow' the imagistic mingling of motion and stillness; 'in 'the fragrance of saltmarsh and shoremud' the merging of land and water, sight and smell. One might therefore assume that in the recurrence of this natural imagery lies the antidote to the city's intensity. I would counter however that what sea and sky cradle, and what is first to afford some surefootedness — if not answers, per se — in the midst of the child's ontological uncertainty, is the robustness of streets, houses, goods, vehicles, wharves. As Robert Shulman (1989: 130–131) writes, 'Whitman lets the very solidity and vitality of this urban scene suggest not the impermanence and illusion of "flashes and specks" but a reliable, ongoing life.' Emerson (1886: 156) wrote that 'the poet sees the horizon, and the shores of matter lying on the sky, the interaction of the elements,— the large effects of laws which correspond to the inward laws which he knows, and so are but a kind of extension of himself.' In 'hurrying tumbling waves' Whitman recreates the turbulence and pace that disquiets the child in 'Men and women crowding fast in the streets'; in 'quickbroken crests and slapping', the cacophonous and onomatopoeic startle of 'flashes and specks', his father's 'quick loud word'. The once nebulous and disconcerting cityscape mimics the water as the natural and human world — and 'all the changes of the city and country' — merge not only in imagistic terms but aurally, whether via the dissonance of harsh consonants or the sibilance with which the entirety of the final section is laced.[13] In the end, the vertiginous quality of the closing perspective, of sea and sky, permits the child to see that streets, facades, ferries, and wharves are not in fact disintegrated from the whole, that human processes are also, by

[13] 'The streets themselves', 'facades of houses', 'goods in the windows', 'vehicles . . teams', 'wharves', 'crossing', 'ferries', 'seen, 'sunset', 'shadows', 'mist', 'roofs', 'gables', 'miles', 'schooner' 'sleepily', 'slacktowed', 'waves', 'crests', 'slapping', 'strata', 'clouds', 'solitary', 'itself', 'spread', 'motionless', 'horizon's', 'seacrow', 'fragrance', 'saltmarsh', and 'shoremud'.

necessity, natural. Whitman 're-attaches things to nature and the Whole' (Emerson 1883: 23) with the aid of a vantage point of the kind he editorialised for. If *Walden* is 'an antidote to the idea that education is a passive, indoor activity' (Orr 1992: 183), this poem shows Whitman seeking also to remedy the notion that the only proper setting for a transcendental education is a rural one.

Emerson begins his 'nature and the Whole' idea from 'The Poet' with the words 'For, as it is dislocation from the life of God, that makes things ugly'. 'There Was A Child Went Forth' reattaches things both to nature and to god, though the latter reattachment is enacted more subtly. 'Shadows . . aureola and mist' bathe the solidity of the urban panorama in a more diaphanous kind of divinity that Whitman ordinarily reserved to confer (in less translucent terms) upon the individual. I think back to these lines from 'Sun-Down Poem' (*LG*56: 220) and 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 207) respectively: 'Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of/My head, or any one's head, in the sunlit water!' and 'paint no head/without its nimbus of gold-colored light'. 'There Was A Child Went Forth' shows the reader that the movement of the urban processes observed from a vantage point does not merely follow natural order and is itself coordinated rather than haphazard, but almost that it's choreographed. Here I refer back to Chapter One, to oceanic choreography and to Paumanok's seine-haul fishermen. The closing scene is atemporal in a way that supports our impression that its physical components belie something that is at the very least mystic, maybe even sacred. 'The horizon's edge, the flying seacrow' may well be an early prototype of the seagulls in 'Sun-Down Poem' (*LG*56: 213), 'high in the air floating with/motionless wings oscillating their bodies'. Each image strikes a balance between the static horizon's edge or floating, motionless wings and the kinetic flight of the seacrow or oscillation of the seagulls' wings, the effect of which is something like the feeling of sitting in a stationary train as another passes or, for Whitman, standing still on a moving ferry. It's beguilingly timeless, unlike the segmented seasonal progression that secures the child's perspectival foundation.

This effect is compounded by 'saltmarsh and shoremud', where water meets land, advancing into, retreating from, and interpenetrating with a passive landscape. A manuscript draft shows Whitman (~1850–55, *WWA*) considering 'The horizon's edge, the faint shriek of the flying seacrow, the unearthly laugh of the laughing gull', and two variations on 'the smell/odor of saltmarsh and shoremud', which ends up as 'fragrance'. The laughing gull makes its way into 'Song of Myself': 'the laughing-gull scoots by the slappy shore and laughs her near-human/laugh' (*LG*55: 37). Whitman's eventual omission of the 'faint shriek' and 'laughing gull' in makes for a sharper line, a more acute image. It softens the eeriness of the poem's conclusion, the child's induction into the unearthly mysteries of land and sea. To substitute 'fragrance' for 'smell' or 'odor' is to choose, like the aureola, to elevate the mundane or even the unpleasant. Anyone who has smelt saltmarsh is less likely to describe a 'fragrance' than a sulphurous stench. Rather than be seduced by the perfume of poetic convention, Whitman applies his own perfume to the unconventionally beautiful. If we consider the opening to 'Song of Myself', where fragrance comes from 'shelves […] crowded with perfumes' (*LG*55: 13), the manmade lessons of schools, churches, books as opposed to the 'odorless' or unadulterated atmosphere, then we might read 'the fragrance of saltmarsh and shoremud' in anthropomorphic terms. In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 16) the grass is 'A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped'. I suggest 'the fragrance of saltmarsh and shoremud' carries similar

significance. It connotes the child's perception of order and design by something unearthly, as well as his own architecture of a cognitive structure and vocabulary for understanding the questions of life and death — a gesture of interpretive control — to which he 'goes forth' from the simplicities of the farmyard.

The final lines (*LG*55: 91) resume the credal tone established by its first. The timelessness of the preceding images is resolved, at least in part, by Whitman's inclusion of the reader:

> These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes and
> will always go forth every day,
> And these become of him or her that peruses them now.

The hesitant elliptical pause is absent from Whitman's absolutist assertion about the character of 'now'. This is that same iterative process of cultivation, of children continually going forth, as is the path Whitman envisions for American democracy. I say that the poem's timescale is resolved only partially because it concludes by beginning, but more accurately it is a continual beginning stressed in language approaching tautology: the child 'will always go forth every day'. The three conjugations — went, goes, will go — enact the compression that rather expands time in rendering the 'now', like 'the city', infinitely portable; it was 'now' then, it is now 'now', and later it will also be 'now', always and every day. Whitman also reattaches the child to the adult reader, or should I say the presumably adult reader given the dictional formality of 'peruses', a word that accentuates the pedagogic bent of Whitman's persona and the lessons he imagines *Leaves* to teach for posterity. Mediating between child and reader, the poet-pedagogue has us share in the experience of innocent wonderment and bewilderment, to recall being children going forth, to understand the power of observing and absorbing our environment as if conduits for Emersonian rays of relation. That Whitman enlists a child's perspective in teaching this lesson evinces the endurance of the educational perspective and persona(e) in his poetry. Emerson (1884: 16) writes that 'The lover of nature […] has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood.' If Whitman 'played with the children as though one of them' (Weller 1928: 504), he carried the lover of nature's attitude through to his role of educator, as well as that of poet.

The poem's biblical, reiterative style also shapes its formal register. Consider the stilted sparsity of the speaker's edict that 'these become of him or her'. Combined with the repeated refrain, this contributes to the imagined performance allied with Whitman's oratorical ambitions and theatrical interests. Here, however, the speaker's final words seem to come to us from the pulpit of a church rather than a lyceum. This brings me to the priestly component to the Whitmanic poet-pedagogue formulation, to the didactic dynamic that tempers this poem's core self-reliance, and to a reimagining of the priesthood, the extinction of which the preface prophesies (LG55: xi):

> There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile . . perhaps a generation or two . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest.

As Albena Bakratcheva (2013: 45) writes, Whitman's vision 'owed much to Emerson's concept of the Poet-Priest'. The Hicksite influence is also in evidence, however, and Benjamin R. Barber's argument that 'the democracy of Whitman owes more to people like Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson who fled the confines of Massachusetts' (2008: 101) illuminates such echoes in Whitman's prophecy.[14] It counterbalances the Emersonian debt with the fact that Whitman too fled the confines of New England in his figurative departures from transcendentalism. William Dean Howells would later move from Boston to New York, as fictionalised in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. His was a symbolic leavetaking from New England hegemony that Whitman anticipated by several decades, Howells having criticised in 1860 the haphazardness of *Leaves* as 'coarse, sublime, disgusting, beautiful, tender, harsh, vile, elevated, foolish, wise, pure, and nasty' (*The New York Saturday Press, WWA*). Whitman's divergence from Emerson and New England took the form of a democratic poetics that sings the body organically and unapologetically, but which also seized on strategies of self-advertisement that were less symbolic and more calculated, 'the crafty lure' to which the poet refers in 'There Was A Child Went Forth' (*LG*55: 91). These were at the very least latent in Whitman when he took up teaching, since he had already by this time been immersed in New York's print and periodical culture. If Whitman was teaching classes his own poetry, such strategies swiftly exited the confines of latency.

Harnessing the 'en masse', Whitman's 'priests of man' act as the educator persona teaching his 'eleves' to self-teach. A self-review of *Leaves of Grass Imprints* (10th October 1860, *Brooklyn City News, WWA*) — the supplementary advertising pamphlet to that year's edition, featuring twenty-five reviews, good and bad, published since the first — calls the book 'a gospel of self-assertion and self-reliance for every American reader—which is the same as saying it is the gospel of Democracy.' The porous boundaries between Whitman's pedagogic and prophetic personae are evident, as well as within the teacher-pupil and priest-congregation hierarchy, though his accentuation of 'American' democracy remains constant. I'll come back to the 19th century advertising anomaly that is *Imprints* in Chapter Three, but that Whitman self-reviewed a marketing pamphlet for his own poetry, which naturally included a number of glowing self-reviews, offers a sense of his sheer commitment to himself, or to what might more precisely be called his selves. The first page of *Imprints* (1860: 1) emphasised that the publishers offered 'the accompanying brochure as a circular to all persons disposed to commence the study of the Poems.' This explicit educational intent (or this teacher's explicit expectation of his students) and Whitman's own comparison of his poetry to 'gospel' underline not just the significance of the self-promotional dimension to the poet-pedagogue-prophet persona(e), but a preoccupation with its reception by the classroom-congregation and with the dialectics between the 'I' and the 'you' that organise his democratic poetics. By 1867 Whitman (*LG*67: 75) had revised the speaker's apostrophe to his 'eleves', making the educational intent — and

[14] For Caroline Dall, who Tiffany K. Wayne quotes at the outset of *Woman Thinking: Feminism and Transcendentalism in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005: 1), 'The arc, which we call transcendental, was subtended by a chord, held at first by Anne Hutchinson, and lost in the Atlantic waves with Margaret Fuller.' Dall said this in an 1895 lecture on 'Transcendentalism in New England', standing, as Wayne (ibid.) puts it, 'as one of the last living self-identified Transcendentalists and one of the movement's first historians.'

enduring schoolteacher's perspective — yet more explicit: 'Eleves, I salute you! come forward!/Continue your annotations, continue your question-/ings.'

Amos Bronson Alcott (qtd. in Hitchcock 1974: 146) saw teaching as 'the employment of god'.[15] Some of his most famous recorded lessons were the 'Conversations With Children on the Gospels' (1836). Alcott (ibid. 32) asked his class 'Do you think that were you to use all that is in your spirit, you might also be prophets?' One could be forgiven for mistaking this for a Whitman line, though *Leaves* takes the implications of transcendental egoism to their logical conclusion in daring to suggest the potential holiness inherent not only in all people but in all acts. Whitman (Traubel 1906: 130) later said that the worst of Alcott's 'transcendental mummeries' was 'a most vociferous contempt for the body'. 'An Old Man's Thought of School' was published in the *New York Daily Graphic* (1874, *WWA*) after Whitman recited it at the inauguration of a public school. He likens school to church by quoting (or purporting to quote) George Fox, Quaker founder. Whitman (*LG*81: 308) co-opts the 'profoundly democratic' implications (Dean 1998: 563) of Quaker faith in individual subjectivity, in 'that of God in every person', ideas to which he was first exposed in his Long Island boyhood.

> Only a lot of boys and girls?
> Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?
> Only a public school?
>
> Ah! more—infinitely more;
> (As George Fox rais'd his warning cry, "Is it this
> pile of brick and mortar—these dead floors,
> windows, rails—you call the church?
> Why this is not the church at all—the church is
> living, ever living souls.")

Addressing 'you, America', Whitman (*LG*81: 308) elevates the classroom to the synecdochical embodiment of the 'Union multiform'. He holds its democratic power over and above 'verdicts of election days' and spotlights Fox to accentuate the spiritual import. The teacher is a prophet, the students his congregation, but Quaker reverence for individual subjectivity also disaggregates this new church into separate souls who 'might also be prophets', as Alcott put it to his class. As a journalist, too, Whitman would use ecclesial language (and liquid metaphors) for the teacher-student relation, as in an 1842 *Aurora* editorial (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 53): 'the "schools are let loose," and pour their laughing congregations, into the great tide of mortality that flows through every avenue.' In another (ibid. 112), he said 'the penny press is the same as the common schools among seminaries of education.' A few years later, for the *Eagle* (qtd. in Brasher 1970: 6), Whitman observed how 'Daily communion creates a sort of brotherhood and sisterhood between the two parties', those parties being, as Chapter One mentioned, 'a newspaper conductor' and 'the public he serves'.

Education was 'a spiritual and secular ideal' (Cummings 1998: 70) for Whitman, as were Hicks and Emerson. It was a secular pursuit in its democratic power to design the future, a spiritual one insofar as

[15] Hitchcock doesn't cite the source of this quotation, which I'm yet to find in Alcott's published works.

this is a kind of prophecy; secular in that it should be guided by commitment to reform rather than to the church, spiritual in that the classroom is a church, the site of so many souls awakening not only to their personal relation to the future but to eternity. In parallel to this, the pedagogic and prophetic components of Whitman's poetic persona intersect with the secularity of the radical political ramifications of individuals en masse, and with the spirituality innate in each individual's likeness to god. Stacy (2008: 26, 111) likens the schoolmaster persona in Whitman's periodicals to 'a secular missionary' and describes the 'Bard' persona as 'egalitarian, yet apostolic', both of which could also apply to what I categorise as 'The Educator' persona in Whitman's poetry. Alongside its double role as authority figure and insurgent, self-taught teacher and advocate for self-teaching, these tensions are consistent, for lack of a better word, with the organising principle of Whitmanic contradiction, stitched together with sheer — some would say misguided — conviction in the democratic self. The performance, pedagogy, and philosophy of 'The Educator' naturally intersect with one another, so these sections bleed into each other in much the same way that Whitman's poetic personae do. Questions of performance, physicality, and authenticity likewise inform the other half of this chapter and another of Whitman's personae: 'The Artisan'. The simple yet contextually complex carpenter image fashioned by Whitman carries the pedagogic-prophetic strain through, alongside certain self-promotional aspects.

The Artisan

I'll move now from Mr Whitman the schoolmaster to Walter Whitman Jr the taskmaster. The chapter also swivels to other more literal means of 'building' the future, including a mysteriously persistent myth in Whitman studies. Many have considered that myth 'Sure as the most certain sure' (*LG*55: 14) without much to go on beyond the poet's own mythmaking. I should clarify that 'The Artisan' is something of a titular misnomer in this respect, not of that dimension of Whitman's poetic persona but as a summary of his employment in carpentry and housebuilding in antebellum Brooklyn. This was a phase of his life that he consciously and romantically recast as straightforwardly artisanal, as indeed have many biographers. The question of personae is cardinal to this rewriting. Peter J. Riley (2011: 32) writes on the subject in a chapter titled '*Leaves of Grass* and Real Estate', an inquiry into Whitman's 'keen eye on the fluctuations of the notoriously unstable housing market' in Brooklyn from 1848 to 1855. Riley (ibid.) argues that 'the complications, transactions, and bureaucracy' involved in what has been glossed over as carpentry and housebuilding 'are inextricable from the book's conception and formal makeup':

> formulations of a transacting self […] provided a formal prototype for the recognizable Whitmanic "self"; a self that went on to negotiate the utopian amalgamations and bodily coagulations that underpin the experimental scope of Whitman's poetic achievement.

With reference to the Feinberg Collection's miscellaneous bills and receipts, Riley takes his direction from *The Lunar Light of Whitman's Poetry* (Thomas 1987) and *Walt Whitman and the Class Struggle* (Lawson 2006). Thomas aligns Whitman's 'kosmos' — 'Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos' (*LG*55:

29) — with the energy of 'the antebellum mercantile capitalist economy' (Riley 2011: 33). Lawson (2006) contends that the 1855 *Leaves* shows Whitman considering his class in his speaker's response to the rhythms of the marketplace. He also (ibid. xiv) questions scholarship that presents Whitman's bard as an uncomplicatedly politically proletarian identity, observing the 'somewhat aggressively mixed diction, its pointed, perhaps even charged confrontations between high and low registers.' Lawson's (ibid.) Whitman becomes 'not actually a member of the "working class" but an artisan possessed of a skilled trade and a measure of independence.' Riley's intervention complicates matters further by bringing into sharp relief the biographical inaccuracy in readings that seek rather to simplify this phase of Whitman's life, tending to see him as separate from the marketplace energies and rhythms that are channelled into *Leaves*, and to figure him as a detached respondent to this economic context, one who is acted on by — rather than who acts within — the forces of the market.

By stressing Whitman's liminal position, associated misreadings have him out of work during the 1854 economic slump. They also more generally align Whitman's involvement in real estate with the activities of the artisanal class, wherein they overlook — for the sake of 'his existentially pristine poetic vocation' (Riley 2011: 35) — the fact that he didn't labour so much as hire labour, produce so much as oversee production. Whitman profited enough from the 1854 housing market crash to buy, mortgage free, 99 Ryerson Street in Brooklyn, where he lived with his family during the first publication of *Leaves*. There have been efforts by scholars and readers of Whitman, preservationists and activists, to landmark the property, the last of his many New York residences left standing. Given that the address itself continues to attract attention, it's curious that the economic circumstances of its acquisition have flown largely under the radar in favour of the aforementioned artisanal accounts of the period immediately preceding the first of his book-length forays into poetry. My examination of 'The Artisan' persona in Whitman's transcendental poetics is calibrated by Riley's analysis of the ways in which traditional biographic accounts of the artisan-poet fail to account for the influence of Whitman's speculative role on the contractual and transactional patterns of his poetry. I read Whitman's insistency on an emphatically material conception of spiritual transcendence partly as a product of his experiences in carpentry and housebuilding in Brooklyn. Simultaneously, an overlooked undercurrent of entrepreneurial spirit and managerial perspective inflects 'The Artisan' persona's negotiation of a democratic dialectics. Whitman's reception of New England transcendentalism was complicated by his being both the son of a carpenter and an overseer of production in New York's restless, unstable housing market. The ideological tension inherent in this split identity finds expression in *Leaves of Grass* via the transcendental 'I', its negotiation with 'you', and the formal and symbolic joineries that constitute the book's unusual texture.

The sturdy carpenter

This time I'll begin at the end, so to speak, with an *Atlantic Monthly* piece written a decade or so after Whitman's death: John Townsend Trowbridge's 'Reminiscences of Walt Whitman' (1902). Trowbridge (ibid. 165–166), an early admirer of Whitman's, recalls a conversation about the circumstances of the latter's becoming acquainted with Emerson. This is when Whitman described, in those characteristic terms

so often quoted, the conditions under which *Leaves of Grass* came to be: '"I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil."'

> He was at work as a carpenter (his father's trade before him) in Brooklyn, building with his own hands and on his own account small and very plain houses for laboring men; as soon as one was finished and sold, beginning another,— houses of two or three rooms. This was in 1854; he was then thirty-five years old. He lived at home with his mother, going off to his work in the morning and returning at night, carrying his dinner pail like any common laborer. Along with his pail he usually carried a book, between which and his solitary meal he would divide his nooning. Once the book chanced to be a volume of Emerson; and from that time he took with him no other writer. His half-formed purpose, his vague aspirations, all that had lain smouldering so long within him, waiting to be fired, rushed into flame at the touch of those electric words, — the words that burn in the prose-poem Nature, and in the essays on Spiritual laws, the Over-Soul, Self-Reliance. The sturdy carpenter in his working-day garb, seated on his pile of boards; a poet in that rude disguise, as yet but dimly conscious of his powers; in one hand the sandwich put up for him by his good mother; his other hand holding open the volume that revealed to him his greatness and his destiny, — this is the picture which his simple narrative called up, that Sunday so long ago, and which has never faded from my memory.

Whitman would later deny repeatedly that he had read Emerson before writing *Leaves of Grass* so, as Stephen Rachman (1998: 747) writes, 'Trowbridge's testimony remains an important contravention.' No sooner has Trowbridge contravened an existing myth, though, than Whitman puts him to work framing another. A 'simple narrative' of poetic awakening is constructed — the operative word — in quite calculating fashion to advertise the more aesthetically agreeable origin story of a simple carpenter who, by chance no less, picked up a book that would see his inner poet ignited 'at the touch of those electric words'. The mechanics of the ways in which this narrative connects Brooklyn, labour, and carpentry with Emerson and transcendentalism ('the essays on Spiritual laws, the Over-Soul, Self-Reliance') are especially significant for their conscious omission of the entrepreneurial strain of self-advertisement that Whitman had been imbibing and refining in New York before and while writing *Leaves of Grass*. Indeed, they do so even as they co-opt Emerson and, by extension, the Boston literati. Whitman's skill as an overseer of his own poetic mythos and his enjoyment of production thus complement his intimate knowledge of the literary marketplace to manage his public image by positioning himself outside the housing market, as hired labour and not a hirer of labour.

A look at Whitman's early acquaintance with Emerson will help to reposition the real estate speculator alongside the journalist. If you had only Trowbridge's caricature to work with, it might come as a surprise that in March 1842 Whitman attended and reviewed Emerson's lecture on 'Poetry of the Times' for the *New York Aurora*, one of six lectures Emerson gave at the New York Society Library, this being the one subsequently published as 'The Poet' (1844). Then twenty-two, Whitman became the paper's editor later that month. 'The transcendentalist had a very full house on Saturday evening,' he wrote (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 105) in 'Mr Emerson's Lecture', a rare occasion on which he uses the term 'transcendentalist' and the first time he mentions Emerson in print, notably quite some time before 1854. The following day, the *Aurora* published a 400-word definition of transcendentalism (Rubin and Brown 1950: 10). This is to say nothing of the fact that as a professional journalist, and voracious reader besides, Whitman kept up to date with many of the publications that circulated Emersonian philosophy throughout the 1840s (Stovall 1974: 285, 286–287), nor that in 1847 he clipped and then annotated a *Democratic Review*

article about Emerson's poetry. Greeley, for instance, would reprint articles from *The Dial* in the *Tribune*. Rubin and Brown (1950: 10) note that 'As early as February 28, 1842, the *Aurora* had carried a column definition of transcendentalism.' They (ibid.) quote from it: 'In the language of Mr. Emerson himself—'This is the era of individuality. It is All Souls Day.'" Accepting that Whitman hadn't once laid his hands on a single one of Emerson's essays during that decade already demands of us some faith since the first and second series were published in 1841 and 1844 respectively, and all three of the essays ('Nature', 'The Over-Soul', 'Self-Reliance) Whitman references in conversation with Trowbridge appeared in the first. There's also evidence (outside of the poetry) that Whitman had at the very least read Emerson in a more second-hand, piecemeal fashion and that he was reflecting on this reading critically. Little critical reflection is to be found in the *Aurora* lecture review, though. Whitman closes by saying 'it would do the lecturer great injustice to attempt any thing like a sketch of his ideas.' As if to prove the point, he précised Emerson as having said 'that the first man who called another an ass was a poet.' Loving's (1982: 10) Whitman 'did not miss the salient points of Emerson's lecture.' Gould's (2016) Whitman didn't even attend, let alone write the review. Gould argues that Whitman had no motive for the swipe made at Horace Greeley, *Tribune* editor, 'in ecstasies whenever any thing particularly good was said, which seemed to be about once in five minutes', 'flounc[ing] about like a fish out of water, or a tickled girl'. Whitman admired Greeley, so initially the jab seems a little off. One might also question how much attention Whitman was paying at this supposedly transformational moment given that the poet-ass paraphrase was his main takeaway — at least on the basis of what made it into the article, most of which characterised the audience, not the lecture. It is very likely that Whitman read Emerson soon after that lecture, if he hadn't done so already, but even more likely that he was first taken with Emerson's public personality, the 'aureola' of literary celebrity, rather than with the particulars of his ideas. He parodies the worship of fame, but to be *the* Emersonian poet would have been a most seductive thought. Whitman might not yet have been able to sketch Emerson's ideas, but he was perfectly capable of imagining himself in the limelight.

Folsom (2010a: 269) quotes the manuscript of Emerson's lecture. The paragraph that Whitman paraphrased begins like this:

> All things are symbols. We say of man that he is grass, that he is a stream, a house, a star, a lion, a fire, a day; and if we wish to accuse him any time, we call him a snake, a baboon, a goat, a gull, a bat, an owl, a toad, and an infinity of names beside.

'It is,' as Folsom (ibid.) does, 'tempting to imagine Whitman […] hearing Emerson recite that catalog and beginning to conceive *Leaves of Grass*, to imagine a child coming to him with a handful of grass'. As in some of Whitman's theatre reviews, though, the first half of his *Aurora* article indicates as much, if not more, interest in reporting the particulars of the audience as in the performer, albeit in less flattering terms than he described, for instance, the 'electric force and muscle' (*PW*: 426) of the Bowery crowds. Mostly he compiles an inventory of 'a few beautiful maids—but more ugly women, mostly blue stockings; several interesting young men with Byron collars, lawyers, doctors, and parsons; Grahamites and abolitionists; sage editors, a few of whom were taking notes, and all the other species of literati.' As Stacy (2019: 11) observes, papers like the *New York Aurora* were 'a means of echolocation, a consumable good that helped readers

situate themselves within a community beyond their immediate ken', and 'a print space to imagine themselves as urban sophisticates.' As a journalist, Whitman was not merely observing a public persona at work (in this instance, Emerson's) and taking vicarious pleasure in it, but adopting his own persona and then selling it to aspirant readers who were themselves living vicariously through the paper. Whitman's sketch of Emerson's audience speaks to the class anxieties of an aspiring dandy in his early twenties, frockcoated and keen to curate himself. Nonetheless, Whitman's interest was piqued more than most by the exhibition of people and types and, as Bonnie Carr O'Neill (2017: 66) identifies, his descriptions 'cohere in their movement from crowd to individual and back again.' Reflecting on Gould's argument that Whitman wouldn't have been so lazy as to not attempt the sketch, I read the prod at Greeley as an act of social 'echolocation', and Whitman's allusion to 'ugly women, mostly blue stockings' as a symptom of the same haughty immaturity seen in the Woodbury letters written only a year or two earlier. While it is true that Whitman respected the *Tribune* editor and the paper's reform agenda, Gould overlooks other factors. First, Greeley was a direct competitor for readers. The *Aurora* and the *Tribune* were both founded in 1841. A fellow journeyman printer turned editor, Greeley was a little older than Whitman, he was more established, and he had founded the *Tribune* himself. Moreover, such editorial theatrics, melodramatic battles waged on the newspaper page, were commonplace. For these reasons I suggest that the dig was not as barbed as Gould makes out, more parodic than mean-spirited. If anything, it reflects a young journalist's anxiety that he didn't understand Emerson as well as the other 'species of literati' in attendance, and that this in turn reflected poorly on him professionally. Instead, therefore, he implies that Greeley is anxious to be seen to understand Emerson in what seems to be a fairly simple case of projection. The fact that the very next day the *Aurora* published a definition of transcendentalism evinces such an interpretation.

It's important not to underplay the ever-present New York/New England tension in intellectual posturing of this kind. Emerson was a Boston-native with a Harvard education and all the cultural capital that came with it; Whitman and Greeley had modest farming backgrounds, their university the inky newspaper rooms of New York. Although Whitman's class and upbringing in New York plainly set him apart from many of the New England transcendentalists, almost all of the men having benefitted from a Harvard education and trained for the Unitarian ministry, the poet's conscious refashioning of his acquaintance with Emerson forces into the umbra of his 'existentially pristine poetic vocation' (Riley 2011: 35) the fact that Whitman was most certainly not 'like any common laborer.' At the *Aurora*, the young Whitman cultivated an elevated persona; retrospectively, he his curatorial efforts centred on humbling that image, but in such a way as to make his transfiguration into a poet both more natural and impressive, and to invite some prophet-oriented praise by way of implicit connection to a certain other famous carpenter. Indeed, Bucke (qtd. in Folsom and Price 2005: 20) once described 'the Christ likeness' of the 1854 daguerreotype portrait of the poet used to create the frontispiece for *Leaves*. Whitman's seesaw refashioning makes the contortions of his personae rather slippery, as indeed they are intended to be in *Leaves*. His vacillation between journalistic social echolocation and embodying the 'embouchure' of the labouring classes he would later count himself amongst goes some way to explaining the confused registers of his poetic persona.

In Trowbridge's account, Whitman's experiments in persona saunter off the page to engage in the business of literary mythmaking. Just as Whitman's journalistic outcries about the squalor of Brooklyn and Manhattan sometimes sit uneasily with those cities' sheeny poetic distillations, so does the authenticity of articles such as 'Tear Down and Build Over Again' (November 1845, *The American Review*) — lambasting 'the "restless" activities of property speculators who were radically transforming the urban geography of Brooklyn and New York City' (Riley 2011: 37) — jostle awkwardly with the fact that he would soon be a willing participant in this transformation, and not as a hired hand but hirer of hands. Whitman was anxious to recast this role, and not only retrospectively in battening his own poetic mythos. From 1852 to 1853 Whitman ran a shop from one of three houses he built on Cumberland Street, above which he placed a sign that 'bore the legend "Carpenter & Builder"' (Feinberg 1958: 86). The chronology is worth stressing as testament to the legend's longevity. Feinberg (ibid.) described the sign in his article 'A Whitman Collector Destroys a Whitman Myth', the myth being partially 'the assumption that Whitman ever worked for daily wages as a carpenter.' Some fifty years later, we have Riley chipping away at what Feinberg hoped not just to refurbish but to demolish. Such is the persistence of the carpenter portrait furnished by the very first Whitman biography, John Burroughs's *Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867: 83), of a Brooklyn boy who 'worked with his own hands at the rougher work'.[16] At the risk of extending the architectural metaphor beyond what's reasonable, I'll sketch my argument as it builds on Riley's intervention in traditional biographical accounts of the period. While there is a copper-like durability to Whitman's poet-carpenter persona, and the language of that trade often serves in *Leaves of Grass* to certify his (appropriately revamped) Emersonian credentials, his transcendentalist poetics also bear verdigris formed by the atmosphere of New York's real estate market as well as its literary marketplace.

Whitman's real estate advertisements illuminate the marketplace persona that was 'Walter Whitman Jr', which 'established him at the time as a legitimate business man in the family line' (Riley 2011: 34). Whitman's recollections of 1854 as recounted by Trowbridge make no mention of the fact that the economic depression saw so many carpenters and labourers out of work nor, notably, of being in this situation himself, unlike Thomas and others have asserted. Karbiener (2018: 17) raises the possibility that 'W. Whitman' was by 1853 'literally a household word, which may have encouraged him to leave his tagged name off of his first book of poems in 1855.' Whitman told Trowbridge that he helped build 'small and very plain houses', which was true; he built what were known as 'mechanical' houses, a byword for working class. But if we look at an advertisement that ran for two weeks in the *New York Daily Times* (February 19th, 1853), and which receipts at the Library of Congress indicate also appeared in *New York Sun* and *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, then Whitman's propagandist tendencies make themselves quite apparent. The advert not only included his trading name, 'W. Whitman', but included it in characteristically large type before the description of 'two genteel houses for sale, nine rooms each'. If 'W. Whitman' was a household word, this would both explain its prominence in the advert's formatting and support Whitman's subsequent attempts to distance himself from those years in Brooklyn. On the page, Whitman's ad is

[16] Referring to Burroughs's biography and Bucke's (1883) *Walt Whitman*, Feinberg (1958: 74) notes that the poet 'read and corrected both of these manuscripts, but did not change the stories', so 'the incorrect years and supposedly long absences from Brooklyn are left as Bucke and Burroughs set them down.'

notable for the house price, '$2000', being so prominent in size and order, significantly larger than 'W. Whitman'. I'm unsure whether Whitman advertised 'nine rooms' because nine smaller rooms were deliberately built (or halved post-framing) so as to make the house sound grander, whether he was taking certain promotional liberties in how he defined a 'room', or whether he was looking to capitalise on the boarding-house culture he criticised in 'Wicked Architecture' ('New York Dissected', 1856, *WWA*). That piece focused on the construction of 'insufficient tenements' in Manhattan and the conditions that caused New Yorkers to escape in droves to the cheaper, cleaner suburbs. The series was aligned with work like George Foster's *New York in Slices* (1849), sketches 'so gloomy that they looked forward to Melville's *Pierre*' (Reynolds 1989: 317). Whitman wasn't advertising 'houses of two or three rooms', as he told Trowbridge, so perhaps all three of my suggestions are true to some degree. Certainly all evince the marketplace persona that Whitman manufactured and was later keen to obscure. Much has been written about how Whitman advertised *Leaves* and the significance to this of his familiarity with contemporary print and periodical culture. Less often do critics observe the sales-pitch crescendo to which many early poems build, more often referring to the poet's swagger, his braggartry and bravado. Evidence like these adverts adds nuance to the co-existence of Whitman the newspaperman and Whitman the house builder. In recreating Whitman's desk at the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, Karbiener (2015: 39) contends that he worked at the publication for approximately three years from April 1856 onwards rather than Holloway and Schwarz's (1932) widely accepted suggestion of May 1857. Karbiener suggests (2015: 39) that the office was 'A hideaway, too, for a man with two faces: a hack thinking about word count, a poet thinking about words.' For the years leading up to 1855, when Whitman was enmeshed in print, periodicals, and housebuilding, we might modify the metaphor in order to describe twice as many faces: first, the hack, his eye on the word count; second, the entrepreneur, occupied by contractors, labourers, sales, and inventories; third, the artisan, concerned with the skilled intricacies of building; and fourth, the poet, thinking about the architecture not merely of language but of the future.

There is discernible overlap between the influences of the literary marketplace and the housing market in Whitman's poetic inspiration. Given the finer details of these specific occupations, perhaps Whitman felt some guilt regarding his complicity in a system that didn't share his poetic persona's view of hierarchy, nor reward its constituents equally, leading him to recast or at the very least simplify his part in this process. 'Whitman the poet and Whitman the property speculator are integrated contemporaries', however, which Riley (2011: 41) demonstrates with reference to a notebook dated 1853–55. It shows on one page some characteristic lines, 'The poet is a recruiter', and on the verso some notes relating to the design of a house: 'Front windows on first floor—lights 13x17—Windows five lights high—A sash of two lights across top—the other eight lights made in two door-sides, hung each with hinges.' In Whitman's case the poet was quite literally a recruiter: of labour in reality, and of citizens to his spiritual democracy in imagination. The backdrop to design notes like the above, which do indicate artisanal knowledge, was this entrepreneurial and managerial bent. We might compare this with Karbiener's (2015: 38, 28) observation of how, while conceiving of the Calamus poems for the 1860 *Leaves*, Whitman wrote a draft on the back of an editorial about water works in Brooklyn (ibid. 38) and used the defunct City of Williamsburgh tax forms

as his rough paper. Whitman's 'poetic and building projects curiously syncopated' (Riley 2011: 42), like his journalism would sometimes provide materials (financial and literal) for his poetry.

May-day

By 1855, in spite of the depression, Whitman's speculative efforts were successful enough that he could buy 99 Ryerson Street mortgage-free, though before then the family had moved from lot to lot to cut costs (ibid. 44). Discussing a page from Whitman's notebook, listing real estate ventures from 1846 to 1859, Riley (ibid. 39) underlines the significance of the month of May to these transactions, and of one date in particular. The 1st of May was 'Moving Day', or 'May Day', in New York. This was a curious, chaotic, and fantastically irrational tradition whereby everyone's leases would run out simultaneously. Dwindling space and soaring rents contributed to boarding-house culture, and on 'May Day' boarders — comprising 'nearer three quarters than two thirds' of the renting population by Whitman's estimation ('Wicked Architecture', 1856, *WWA*) — would be turned out onto the street at once to renegotiate their leases or move elsewhere. New Yorkers and Brooklynites moved in their thousands to new residences and also, as Elizabeth Blackmar (1989: 214) puts it, into 'new contractual relations that affected the conditions of their business, trade, and domestic labors.' Unsurprisingly, tempers would fray and fights break out. Whitman would have been among 'the newspaper editors and citizens alike [who] greeted the moving day "uproar" with that distinctive New York fortitude' (ibid.), though it had additional significance to a house builder. In *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* Frances Milton ('Fanny') Trollope (1832: 177–178) catalogues a typical 'May Day' scene: 'Rich furniture and ragged furniture, carts, waggons, and drays, ropes, canvas, and straw, packers, porters, and draymen, white, yellow, and black, occupy the streets from east to west, from north to south, on this day.' Recalling lines from 'There Was a Child Went Forth', one can imagine Whitman (*LG*55: 91) observing the 'flashes and specks' of people and possessions 'crowding fast in the streets', unwitting dancers in a 'hurrying tumbling' urban choreography. Such was the volatile atmosphere he had known since the age of four when the family moved to Brooklyn, following Whitman Sr's real estate ventures, and into which he later entered as a businessman, Walter Whitman Jr, with a good deal more success than his father.

Lydia Maria Child, who thought the city 'in too much of a hurry-scurry all the time, to "lie still in the sunshine" and ripen such fruit' as 'transcendental philosophy' (1845: 128), took a dim view of this moving tradition. Child alludes here to a sentence from Emerson's 'Spiritual Laws', which appeared in his *Essays: First Series* (1841), an essay Whitman quotes in an 1847 piece for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Emerson (1883: 154) said that 'The rich mind lies in the sun and sleeps, and is Nature.' Child (1843: 273, 274) writes that, as 'one house empties itself into another, all over the city', one is 'bewildered with this universal transmigration of bodies'. That transmigration is the principle at work in Whitmanic spiritual metamorphosis, the projection of the self into disparate identities, the flight of the cosmic ego. Material instabilities in antebellum New York balanced Whitman's loafing tendencies, even if — as Conway recalled of his visit to the poet (1866, *WWA*) — he still found time to lie down on Fort Greene, 'stretched upon his back, and gazing up straight at the terrible sun', this being 'one of his favourite places and

attitudes for composing "poems."' When Trollope's son Anthony (1862: 182) visited New York, he said of the 'hurry-scurry' that, despite the city's 'commercial grandeur', he regretted what he viewed as a tendency 'to fawn at the feet of Mammon', to borrow a phrase from journalist John Swinton (qtd in Vrooman 1897: 195). Swinton was at one time a freelance writer for Greeley's *Tribune*, chief editorialist for the *New York Sun*, and later the managing editor of the *New York Times*. He infamously announced (ibid.), at a banquet arranged in his honour by fellow editors and the New York Press Association, that 'the business of the New York journalist is to destroy the truth, to lie outright, to pervert', a profession of 'intellectual prostitutes.' Swinton frequented Pfaff's which is possibly where he met Whitman, whose poetry he admired greatly, and they kept in touch after the poet left for Washington. Trollope (1862: 185) said along similar lines that in New York 'one's ear is constantly filled with the fanatic's voice as he prays, one's eyes are always on the familiar altar.' 'I fancy that every man there,' he conjectured, 'in order to maintain the spirit of the place, should bear on his forehead a label stating how many dollars he is worth, and that every label should be expected to assert a falsehood.' Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889: 253) would later comment on the 'pushing and pulling, climbing and crawling, thrusting aside and trampling underfoot: lying, cheating, stealing.' 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 47) imagines a similar scene, which directly precedes the deictic declaration that 'This is the city . . . . and I am one of the citizens'. The sentiment, or fear, which that deixis sweeps aside, is not dissimilar from Emerson's (1884: 72) comment in 'The American Scholar' about society's 'amputation from the trunk', forcing its members to 'strut about so many walking monsters'. Whitman's present participles help to construct the eerie image of sleepwalking citizens with dimes for eyes, which Erkkila (2020: 123) positions next to a Marx[17] quotation about the worker's sacrifice of 'mind and body':

> Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,
> To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
> Tickets buying or taking or selling, but in to the feast never once going;
> Many sweating and ploughing and thrashing, and then the chaff for payment re-
> ceiving,
> A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

Describing the noise of the May Day scene, Child (1843: 272, 273) describes 'rattling wheels in lieu of singing birds' and the movement of small chairs that 'go ricketting along'. Whereas Riley refers to the metaphorical (and chronological) syncopation of Whitman's projects, my analysis now listens to the more literal sonic properties of the city that the poet inhabited in his various guises, and which inhabited him, in order to assess the influence of the marketplace culture of reinvention. It takes no great leap of imagination to picture how the itinerant qualities of New York's housing market (or of the city more broadly) connect to the Whitmanic catalogue, a recognisably transcendentalist formal inheritance yet put to work in the shape of panoramic paeans to the eddies of urban diversity, not forgetting other more dissonant aural kaleidoscopes. This distinction means that Whitman doesn't lapse into what Carlyle called

[17] Marx wrote for the *Tribune* for over a decade beginning in 1852, having met Dana in Cologne.

'descendentalism', which Asselineau (1998: 290) refers to in assessing the poet's humour and lyricism as 'impelled by the same exuberance and [which] lead[s] to the same exaggerations.' The 'May Day' tradition paraded in condensed microcosmic form a city with a swelling cacophony so its own that its distillation into poetry demanded new ways of grappling with language — 'blab', 'pave', 'sluff' (*LG*55: 18) — as well as longer, looser lines that refused to be 'restrained/by decorum':

> The blab of the pave . . . . the tires of carts and sluff of bootsoles and talk of the promenaders,
> The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,
> The carnival of sleighs, the clinking and shouted jokes and pelts of snowballs;
> The hurrahs for popular favorites . . . . the fury of roused mobs,
> The flap of the curtained litter—the sick man inside, borne to the hospital,
> The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
> The excited crowd—the policeman with his star quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd;
> The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,
> The souls moving along . . . . are they invisible while the least atom of the stones is visible?
> What groans of overfed or half-starved who fall on the flags sunstruck or in fits,
> What exclamations of women taken suddenly, who hurry home and give birth to babes,
> What living and buried speech is always vibrating here . . . . what howls restrained by decorum,
> Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips,
> I mind them or the resonance of them . . . . I come again and again.

Critics have often pointed to the stock-taking qualities of Whitman's catalogues, whether in praise of their scope and function as the 'poetic analogue of democracy' (Erkkila 1989: 88) or as proof of a more indiscriminate will to incorporate, inclining the reader to skim their contents as if checking a list of a more banal sort. It seems sometimes as though any two given 'items' could be switched without significant injury to the whole or, as was the case, new lines could slot into and reinvent existing poems. While that might constitute an order of its own, this catalogue shows definite movement amidst the chaos. The movement isn't merely the speaker's sweeping through the city soundscape, or the view seen as his 'head evolves on [his] neck' (*LG*55: 46) before the dimes on the eyes scene. From 'blab' to 'sluff', 'clank', 'clinking', 'hurrahs', 'groans', and 'howls', there is progression in discordance and repression, amplified and echoed by the 'impassive stones' beneath the boot soles of the body politic. The speaker is detached from the movement he documents: 'I mind them or the resonance of them . . . .' he tells us, punctuating the echoic vibrations of the human and social sphere made possible by the city's material constituents. There's no caring, per se, in the itinerant poet's 'minding', no preference. It's not a feeling so much as an occurrence that models what Whitman describes in 'Poem of the Road' (*LG*56: 224) as 'the profound lesson of reception, neither/ preference or denial'. Whitman's verbal 'mind' — especially in conjuncture with 'I come again and again' — suggests the same embodied praxis of absorption of the child who goes forth, and that poem's refrain.

Sights and sounds likewise 'become of' the speaker, whether they evoke 'wonder or pity/or love or dread' (*LG*55: 90). Here they evoke nothing; they simply are. Embedded in parataxis, this relational model echoes 'The Over-Soul' (Emerson 1883: 256): 'the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.' Noble (2019: 73) argues that Whitman's use of 'to mind' (or its verbal reimagining) 'names the non-dualist thought he models' by removing 'the distinction between the mental organ and its action'; agent and action are equivalent because 'the thing we are doing is one and the same with the body with which we do it.' More broadly, as in 'A Song for Occupations', Whitman marries agent to action in his emphasis on 'labor as life' (Trachtenberg 1994: 131), his insistence that 'one is what one does' (Stacy 2008: 25). Emily Dickinson's 'Myself was formed — a Carpenter —' enacts a similar merge, but where she 'imagines herself as an artisan whose craft is under siege' (Erkkila 1992: 56), Whitman's travelling bard is more conversant in the sleights of hand required to forge a place for oneself in an evolving marketplace, as was Whitman in identifying himself as one of the disappearing class that Dickinson imagines herself to be.

Whitman's onomatopoeia is grist to Noble's reading of 'to mind' as a melding of agent and action. It is a fundamentally embodied kind of language that performs the very thing it describes, as in the 'sluff of bootsoles'. The speaker perceives a sonic phenomenon and then recreates it, muddling sound and language and 'seer and spectacle', or hearer and sound. 'The blab of the pave' joins agent and action by employing 'blab' as both noun and verb, personifying the street itself as a blab in the process of blabbing. For words like 'sluff', invented — or at least reimagined from 'slough' — in response to the New York carousel of sights, sounds, people, and things, the effect is more pronounced because it inhibits (or delays) our recourse to something pre-existent.[18] With that being said, the verbal 'slough', as in to shed something, especially dead skin, is suggestive in its implication of the city as a body of bodies and — given its swamp-like associations — as something like a primordial soup of citizenry, awaiting this poet's tidings of transcendence. Anatomical specimens, matter somehow suspended between the living and the dead, fascinated Whitman. If 'the sluff of bootsoles' is rubber (or skin) being sloughed, Whitman figures 'pave' as a kind of urban swamp of the 'living and buried'. The city itself is therefore as fundamentally embodied as labour is. If we consider alongside the 'sluff of bootsoles' the synecdochic portrait Whitman paints 'When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her pavements' ('A Broadway Pageant' *LG*67: 61), the image accompanying the sound is of a single organism with differentiated extremities. Emerson (1884: 72) worried that the 'original' unit of the individual had been 'so distributed to multitudes, […] so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered.' Where he conceives of the social body as 'one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow' (ibid.), Whitman reattaches the city's inhabitants to a central corpus. The city is both the feet above and the pavement below, so the living

[18] I was born in a place called Slough and can't help but hear the closing lines of John Betjeman's ([1937] 2005: 183) 'Slough' alongside Whitman's 'sluff': 'Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough/To get it ready for the plough./The cabbages are coming now;/The earth exhales.' Kevin J. Gardner (2005: 163) observes in a note on the poem, in terms with significance to Whitman's transfiguration of gorgeous Mannahatta, that Betjeman's poem 'denies the modern city the comfortable fiction of cleanliness.'

matter of its citizens — 'sluffed' away in locomotion — is counted in the same category as the inanimate stones that pave the streets. I contend that this scene is the urban complement to the 'What is the grass?' passage a couple of pages prior. If grass is the 'beautiful uncut hair of graves' (*LG*55: 16), the emergence of life from burial that symbolises a kind of 'ecoerotic' transcendence (Tuggle 2017), then Manhattan's paved streets are the metropolitan equivalent to such a cycle of regeneration. 'I come again and again', the speaker says, which by implication applies to any unit of the crowd in this elapsing urban moment. The sick are 'borne to the hospital', women 'give birth to babes', and so on and so forth, 'again and again.' Like 'so many uttering tongues' of grass 'from under the faint red roofs of mouths' (*LG*55: 16), 'impassive stones' speak by returning 'so many echoes' (18). The poet wishes to 'translate the hints about the dead young men and women' (16) uttered by leaves of grass, and hopes the same to 'receive and return so many echoes' on the streets of New York City.

Citing *Henry IV, Part 2*, Lawson (2006: 113) observes that 'sluff' has metamorphic connotations (as in a snake shedding its skin), which fits within Whitman's transformation of New York and its sonic resonances as part of his transcendentalist poetics of the city. In either case, 'sluff' — and onomatopoeia more broadly — enables Whitman to relate more immediately the nature of the sound to a reader whose perception is less encumbered by the impulse to triangulate the descriptor with other instances of that word, thereby rendering it less reductive. We might first think of 'scuff', another instance of onomatopoeia, before the secondary undertones of 'sluff' emerge. This kind of language is more faithful to the 'resonance' of a given sound, to its vibration rather than its semantic import, and to something more visceral than cerebral. Whitman's vaguely French coinages, like 'pave' and 'promenaders', which straddle two languages, yield similar results. They accentuate sound and rhythm, privileging music over meaning. '(Poem) Shadows' (*WWA*), a manuscript that probably dates between 1850 and 1855, shows Whitman listening to sound rather than speech in transcribing Broadway: '(the heavy base, the great hum and harshness, ~~[illegible]~~ composite and musical,)'. He celebrates the harsh song of an anonymous choir that retains an atavistic resonance despite the din of a 'heavy omnibus' and 'the clank of the shod/horses on the granite floor', sounds that signal more modern times. The lines also show Whitman 'savoring […] the phenomenal aspects of words' (Lawson 2006: 101). The trappings of a fast-growing workforce, bound for rapid industrialisation, are framed by the resonance of something primal, occupying a space beyond language. Mechanical noise, the sounds of labour, neologisms of ambiguous origins, and other non-verbal hurrahs, groans, and howls filter into the poet's own 'barbaric yawp' (*LG*55: 55). The bard's ability to catalogue and relate the polar contradictions contained by the city is upheld as evidence of his suitability for the role, as is his attention to the spiritual vibrations, or implications, of the city's material components. The poet is attentive yet impersonal. By relating sounds rather than words — resonances over feelings — he can 'mind' them without being so subdued by an empathic cost that would inhibit the unfolding panorama. As an overseer who maintains some degree of emotional detachment, the duality of this empathic stance is a distinctly urban feature that can also be sited more precisely in Whitman's managerial perspective as a Brooklyn housebuilder who worked for and employed the working masses.

For Lawson (2006: 13) the catalogue is 'the first survey of the commercial metropolis in "Song of Myself"', and he quotes Marx in likening 'the clank of the shod/horses on the granite floor' to 'a ghostly,

eruptive citation of labor, "the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles and sense organs," in the marketplace.' Lawson's identification of the eruptive ghostliness of Whitman's clank speaks to the dissonant paradox of 'living and buried speech', and it meshes well with my argument that onomatopoeia, which could have evolved as some form of proto-language, works in the passage to accentuate sound and the body over language and the physical process of labour over its commodity, to 'offer no representative of value—but offer/the value itself.' Whitman makes the same offer elsewhere by rejecting the signifier/signified binary, the 'Romantic-transcendentalist party line' (Killingsworth 2009: 25) that Emerson (1884: 28) tows in declaring that 'Words are signs of natural facts.' In 'A Song of the Rolling Earth' (*LG*56: 322), which Chapter One examined in relation to the liquidity of *Leaves*, Whitman inverts Emerson's logic:

> Were you thinking that those were the words —
> Those upright lines? Those curves, angles,
> dots?
> No, those are not the words—the substantial
> words are in the ground and sea,
> They are in the air—they are in you.

He stresses the physical shapes of language, objectifying language as his vaguely French coinages do. The air carries the city's sounds, and the poet inspires that same air to transmit the city's 'sluff's and 'clank's to the reader. Even when he writes to convey a sound, to emphasise something bodily, something conveyed by air, he appears to relish the materiality of those kinds of words. The journeyman printer's perspective is an obvious contextual origin, but Whitman's interest in the building blocks of language, within his poems of materials, also speaks to his enmeshment in more literal forms of building. That 'the clank of the shod/horses' is produced by granite, a ruggedly durable yet porous material that Whitman chose for his own self-aggrandising tomb, is particularly apt to the reportage of an itinerant poet with an insistently haptic and physical programme of transcendental and democratic absorption.[19]

Whitman's speaker contends that contained in the tactile, physical, material knowability of labour, bootsoles, and granite is the equally visible and tangible existence of souls. His rhetorical question is unflinchingly bold: 'are they invisible while the least atom of the stones/is visible?' Amplifying sound over speech and labour over products, the catalogue works as a score to New York, a compilation of the commingled sights and sounds of a place characterised by its own brand of chaos, reflected by housing market traditions such as 'May Day'. The catalogue keeps score, too, by maintaining an inventory or tallying the city, wherein Whitman's democratic poetics means that this more often entails the draw I suggested in Chapter One, the multiplication of selves expressed by the reiterative 'I too' in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', a ratio of 1:1. This is the nature of the schematic sketched by that bold question. 'The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes' (*LG*55: 18) transmit the city's social ecosystem,

[19] As an aside on Whitman's outlandish tomb, one which testifies to a certain enduring craftiness of the kind demanded by the New York marketplace, Reynolds (1998: 32) notes that the poet 'paid the first $1,500 but when he was asked for the last installment of $2,500 he refused to pay it and passed the matter on to his rich friend Tom Harned, who got $1,000 chopped off the bill and paid it himself.'

their passivity juxtaposed with 'souls moving along'. The tangible, visible solidity of stones affirms the spiritual lives of the bodies they bear. Mark Noble (2015: 59) explains the 'extraordinary presumption' made in stating that 'the visibility of "stones" somehow implies the visibility of "souls"':

> In one sense, this amounts to the inverse of La Mettrie's assumption that the materiality of the visible body implies the materiality of the invisible atoms that comprise it. Here the atoms reveal the person. In another sense, Whitman extends the logic of that assumption by insisting that the mechanics according to which we perceive things like crowds and stones do in fact enable us to see hidden things that share their materiality. In the subsequent lines, it thus follows that if stones fashion the minimal (atomic) criterion for the perception of souls, then their "echoes" will furnish heretofore unseen human vibrations that the poet himself intends to "receive and return."

Locating Whitman within a wider context of materialist philosophies, Noble (2015) pinpoints the aporetic challenge inherent in the poet's presumption. Shortly before the 'blab of the pave' scene, the poet (*LG*55: 14) lays the groundwork for this presumption. Whitman's artisanal conception of materiality confirms his confidence, 'Sure as the most certain sure', that 'the unseen is proved by the seen'. In the lines I quote below, Whitman's 'entretied' stands as another of his inventions, vaguely French again, but perhaps related to 'intertie', a horizontal post securing or 'tying' two vertical posts together. It looks like 'entreaty', as in to beseech, but Whitman's French fraternisation lends a politically radical edge, matching the philosophically radical equation of stones and souls. There's no beseeching here, either; the poet informs us that we know what he says to be true and that we can take his perfect construction as a guarantee. His stout, braced stance acts as a hinge between the mystery of his body and his soul:

> To elaborate is no avail . . . . Learned and unlearned feel that it is so.
>
> Sure as the most certain sure . . . . plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in
> the beams,
> Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
> I and this mystery here we stand.
>
> Clear and sweet is my soul . . . . and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.
>
> Lack one lacks both . . . . and the unseen is proved by the seen,
> Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

In Chapter One I referred to 'Starting from Paumanok', first titled 'Proto-Leaf', (*LG*60: 13) where Whitman locates the 'Wondrous interplay between the seen and the unseen' in the Long Island environment of land, water, and air. Here, Emersonian aporia serves as a useful comparison with Whitman's bold claim. In the context of my discussion of the sonic and linguistic (re)percussions of Whitman's New York as they relate to his poetic personae, one of Emerson's early lectures (1966: 224) about the role of the poet contains an illuminating idea: 'He converts the solid globe, the land, the sea, the air, the sun, into symbols of thought. He makes the outward creation subordinate and merely a convenient alphabet to express thoughts and emotions.' Whitman's 'impassive stones' and their 'echoes' — and his bard's determination to make the 'poems of materials, for I think they/are to be the most spiritual poems'

('Proto-Leaf' *LG*60: 9) — are this convenient alphabet, but he stops short of making 'the outward creation subordinate'. I argue that this is due in part to the biographical context discussed under 'The Artisan', the context in which Whitman was led to invent words like 'entretied', the context that 'The American Scholar' (Emerson 1884: 83–84) identifies not in alphabetic but lexicographic, grammatical terms:

> Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town; in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and cooks only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

Taking his cue from natural law, Emerson (ibid. 84) refers to what Newton called 'fits of easy transmission and reflection,' those fits that comprise 'Polarity' and which are 'the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.' Below is a chemical analogy from Emerson's journals (1910: 133):

> Read Chemistry a little, & you will see that its laws & experiments will furnish an alphabet or vocabulary for all your moral observations. Thus very few substances are found pure in nature. […] [T]hose souls that can bear in open day the rough and tumble of the world must be of that mixed earthy & average structure such as iron, & salt, atmospheric air, & water.

Emerson alludes to a constellation of contemporary developments in organic chemistry. For Whitman, Liebig's is the most notable. Whitman's interest in chemistry became entwined with his interest in dictionaries within his wider materialist poetics (*LG*55: 28):

> A word of reality . . . . materialism first and last imbueing.
>
> Hurrah for positive science! Long live exact demonstration!
> Fetch stonecrop and mix it with cedar and branches of lilac;
> This is the lexicographer or chemist . . . . this made a grammar of the old
> cartouches,
> These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
> This is the geologist, and this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathematician.

The influence of the notion that souls 'must be of that mixed earthy & average structure' and the underlying law of the conservation of energy is palpable in the 'What is the grass?' passage and the cycle of ecoerotic transcendence (Tuggle 2017) that it models, and in 'the least atom of the stones' that Whitman upholds as evidence of souls. The 'mystery' of the unseen 'proved by the seen' is saved from lofty abstraction by colloquial language, the mixed diction undercutting any supposed haughtiness and enabling Whitman to align himself with the 'unlearned' carpenter. The irreconcilably different descriptors of 'affectionate, haughty, electrical' mimic the strangeness belied by the simple line 'I and this mystery here we stand.' As in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' ('I stop here', *LG*56: 215), Whitman's 'here' is pregnant with suggestions that he battens together in one fell swoop. Francis Howard Williams (1895: 185) used 'electrical' energy to explain Whitman's 'extraordinary presumption' in a piece for Traubel's literary

journal, *The Conservator*. He (ibid.) defends Whitman's contention that 'the unseen is proved by the seen' with reference to 'known scientific fact': 'Franklin sees the lightning and by experiment proves it to be identical with a great and subtle agent—electricity.' Though the adjectives Whitman selects are wholly irregular, by bookending the line with 'Stout' and 'electrical' he gestures to that central tension between body and soul, visible and invisible. Contradictions are resolved by the poet's 'instant conductors' that 'seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me', his 'flesh and blood playing out lightning, to strike what is hardly different from/myself' (*LG*55: 32), 'through [him] the/current and index' (29). Just as visible lightning entails invisible electricity, his own 'flesh and blood' proves 'the unseen' soul. Thanks to being so 'plumb in the uprights' and 'braced in the beams', he can bear the load of this claim to intersecting ontological realities, and the weight of the images and identities that accumulate in the poem. Even the artisanal parallel he draws is drawn perpendicularly. With this attitude, stones are as commensurable with souls as uprights are with beams.

Wicked architecture

On the centennial of Whitman's birth in 1919, Canadian suffrage activist Flora MacDonald Denison, together with Traubel, christened a 400-foot granite cliff in Bon Echo, Ontario 'Old Walt' (Folsom 1998: 68). An inscription (*LG*55: 26) was carved in capital letters, each letter two feet high:

> My foothold is tenon'd and mortised in granite
> I laugh at what you call dissolution
> And I know the amplitude of time.

These lines lead directly to one of Whitman's most famous declarations, the lynchpin of his post-transcendentalist poetics: 'I am the poet of the body,/And I am the poet of the soul.' The poet again couches his confidence in the artisanal metaphor of a mortise and tenon joint, and expresses time in language that refers not only to vastness but to a kind of vibration and one, in physics, obtained by measuring its maximum range from a point of equilibrium. The 'amplitude of time' is also noteworthy for its resemblance to a sentence from Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). Whitman rebuilt part of Thoreau's text, cutting out his favourite pages and putting them back together. He also annotated and highlighted it (*WWA*), as he did his cultural geography scrapbook and Thompson's history of Long Island. For instance, he highlighted Thoreau's comment on the 'soberness in a rough aspect, as of unhewn granite, which addresses a depth in us'. He underlined the following, the sentiment of which he put into practice by taking apart and reassembling the book's pages: 'A work of genius is rough-hewn from the first, because it anticipates the lapse of time, and has an ingrained polish, which still appears when fragments are broken off, an essential quality of its substance.' Thoreau's observation of the polish that endures fracture and fragmentation becomes, it seems, 'I laugh at what you call dissolution', and anticipation of 'the lapse of time' translates to the poet's declaration that he 'know[s] the amplitude of time.' The Whitmanian poet's body is an extension both of the natural stone and the skilled labour with

which he crafts the foothold. Here and throughout *Leaves*, Whitman's formal experiments led him to eschew what Robert Hass (1984: 71) calls the 'mortise and tenon of meter and rhyme'. Hass (ibid.) discusses the introduction of balloon frame construction by George Washington Snow in the 1830s, 'a light, quick, elegant construction with great formal variability and suppleness.' Balloon frame building intended 'to replace the ancient method of mortise and tenon—heavy framing timbers carved at the joints so that they locked heavily together—with construction of a frame by using thin studs and nails.' This made construction quicker and gave builders more licence to modify, both of which were important to cities growing as quickly as Brooklyn and Manhattan, and indeed Chicago where the balloon frame was born. It was a distinctively American architectural innovation. The balloon frame drastically reduced the need for skilled labourers like carpenters, however, people possessed of the artisanal knowledge to which Whitman's speaker stakes a claim and with which he buttresses his ideological position.

Eric Rawson (2013: 74) compares 'the new organization of poetic space on the page in Whitman' to how 'American carpenter-architects reorganized space in the construction of American homes' with techniques like balloon framing. He (ibid. 75) likens Whitman's restless revisions of *Leaves of Grass* to the easily modified balloon frame in comparing 'inventive, vernacular structures' to 'the extensiveness of Whitman, who could modify the basic frame of his poetry to accommodate all manner of new interests and perceptions'. While we can with reference to such contemporary developments in house building begin more properly to contextualise the formal textures of the early *Leaves of Grass*, Rawson leaves out some important context to Whitman's reception of this architectural invention. His argument carefully and compellingly tunes Whitman's expansive transgressions of 'prosodic boundaries' (ibid.) to a frequency that was so distinct from the work of New England poets like William Cullen Bryant or indeed Emerson. Rawson implicitly positions New York and New England literary traditions in tension with one another, and he juxtaposes the inflexible definition of New England property boundaries with the changing needs of American cities. Nevertheless, no comment is made about contexts specific to Whitman's home, New York, contexts that distinctly complicate the poet's absorption of new ways of organising physical space into his organisation of poetic space. This omission results in an oversimplification of architectural developments as they impact Whitman's formal experiments — the material trappings of his 'transcendental embrace' (Rawson 2013: 76) — because it means plucking them from the specific ground where Whitman's *Leaves* grew. Rawson (ibid.) states that Whitman 'would have been familiar' with the balloon frame, understood here as spearheading prefab design more broadly. For the purposes of my wider argument about a transcendentalist poetics that is remarkable for its emphatic sturdiness, I'd like to disentangle the particular circumstances of that familiarity.

Architectural solidity is key to thinking about the suppleness of Whitman's poetic experiments in form, what I would delineate as the flexibility of the framework against the traditional rigidity of the artisanal imagery. Ted Cavanagh argues that architectural historian Sigfried Giedion (qtd. in Cavanagh 1997: 5) was incorrect that 'balloon frame' was 'a jocular reference to the lightness of this new type of construction', but that supposed derivation has endured all the same. Even putting aside the balloon frame's reputation, Whitman knew only too well — following his father's financial trouble and his own real estate business — how architectural progress in the form of prefab design might threaten the artisan class

whose specialised skills were called for less and less. His interest not just in architecture but in building regulations and reform lasted well into old age. The *Archive's* bibliographical handlist includes Whitman's copy of an 1881 *American Architect and Architecture* article, 'American Institute of Architects. --Heating and Ventilation. --Building Laws.' Lawson (2006) alludes to writer and activist Solon Robinson, who authored *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (1854), a collection of short stories set in Five Points, an area of Manhattan that included the Bowery, at its eastern edge, and which was notorious for destitution and squalor among other social ills. This same Solon Robinson gave a lecture in New York about balloon frame houses in 1855. The *Tribune* reported the lecture and architect Gervase Wheeler (1855: 412–413) quoted Robinson in *Homes for the People, in Suburb and Country*:

> If it had not been for the knowledge of balloon frames, Chicago and San Francisco could never have arisen, as they did, from little villages to great cities in a single year. It is not alone city buildings, which are supported by one another, that may be thus erected, but those upon the prairie, where the wind has a sweep from Mackinaw to the Mississippi, for there they are built, and stand as firm as any of the old frames of New England, with posts and beams sixteen inches square.[20]

Robinson cites the city-building potential of the balloon frame, and he declares it solid enough to withstand even prairie climates. Just as Boston was at this time the standard against which literary prestige elsewhere would be measured, so is Robinson's yardstick for architectural quality 'the old frames of New England, with posts and beams sixteen inches square.'

Whitman's resistance in rhyme and metre to the 'old frames of New England', to the transcendentalists' aversion to sex and the body, is striking because it affixes new means of being to old ways of building. He sings the soul, but tenons his foothold in granite. Thoreau (1849: 395) writes of the 'old books', 'rude and massive in their proportions', says 'the stucco has long since crumbed away, and we read what was sculptured in granite.' '[A]s an architect plans and builds a house' ('Who Learns My Lesson Complete?' *LG*55: 92), Whitman describes precisely not only the materials and movements involved in construction but the parameters of his own origins and physical structure, which the title imbues with a schoolmaster's fastidiousness even as its implied completeness retains a certain mysticism. Whitman tells us specifically that he 'was born on the last day of/May 1819 . . . . and passed from a babe in the creeping trance of three summers/and three winters to articulate and walk', he 'grew six feet high', and has 'become a man thirty-six years old/in 1855'. Simultaneously, he constructs his conception of spiritual transcendence, deeming each contiguous component of the catalogue — his democracy-framed form — 'equally wonderful'. Unlike the 'promiscuous citizenship' (Frank 2011) enacted in 'City of Orgies' (*LG*67: 133) by the erotically charged 'fre-/quent and swift flash of eyes offering me love', the realisation in 'Who Learns My Lesson Complete?' is more textual than sexual. Anonymity is uncompromised even by stolen glances, chance encounters on Broadway, the crowded ferry, a heavy omnibus. Instead, Whitman presents

[20] Wheeler was British but his book was published in 1855 by Scribner, in New York. The text followed in the traditions of a new kind of publication, the 'villa book'. W. Barksdale Maynard (2010: 461) notes that, unlike the 'architectural "pattern book"', 'dry text[s]' aimed at carpenters, villa books had 'a rich store of pictures and prose': 'In quasi-religious language akin to that of other contemporary reform movements, readers were told that the way they embellished their homes spoke volumes about their moral proclivities'. 'New York City and Hudson Valley were the crucibles of this new literature', (ibid.) which emerged in the 1830s.

his image in plain text that we might more easily 'see' him as he sets up this shared moment 'of seeing and being' (Orlov 1984: 15), centred more squarely on the page, his poetic body, all of which the frontispiece prefaces. The time-transcendent relation of one soul to any other is figured as an embrace (*LG*55: 92), which rather takes place in the mind by means of 'such thoughts as these' prompted by the shared space of Whitman's *Leaves*. Having bared himself to the reader by sharing details such as his exact age, height, and weight — which legitimate him as mature and physically dominant — the poet assumes the stance of a presumptive negotiator, as he does in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 14) on the basis that 'To elaborate is no avail'. Here, he (*LG*55: 92) convinces us by telling us that we are already convinced of 'such thoughts' and that our conviction is a wonderful thing. You already 'know them to be true', so all that's left to do is 'remind you' of this mutually established fact:

> And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each other without ever
> seeing each other, and never perhaps to see each other, is every bit as
> wonderful:
> And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonderful,
> And that I can remind you, and you think them and know them to be true is just as
> wonderful,

In 'Broad-Axe Poem' (*LG*56: 158–159) Whitman pads out his self-portrait, following the additive logic of the catalogue by mapping out each material involved in his make-up as if caught somewhere between sketching a design and hawking a product with a salesmen's pace and loquacity. Unusually, the poem begins with off-rhymed metrical lines (*LG*56: 140), though more expectedly with an anthropomorphic, sexually suggestive image: 'BROAD-AXE, shapely, naked, wan!/Head from the mother's bowels drawn!/Wooded flesh and metal bone! limb only one and/lip only one!' The metre quickly subsides and the axe becomes a symbol not of oppression but democratic progress (ibid. 141–142). Whitman (ibid. 142) juxtaposes traditional timbers and remembered narratives with fresh voyages and the foundation of new cities:

> The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashioned
> houses and barns;
> The remembered print or narrative, the voyage at
> a venture of men, families, goods,
> The disembarcation, the founding of a new city,
> The voyage of those who sought a New England
> and found it,

The 'c' in 'disembarcation' is an idiosyncrasy unique to the 1856 edition, an infinitesimally small drop in the ocean of incessant revisions and additions. Perhaps the original was another of Whitman's attempts to 'Frenchify' particular words and, in so doing, appropriate some revolutionary potency. The poet (*LG*56: 146) conceives of progress towards democracy in typically brawny language: 'Muscle and pluck forever!' He accentuates his own physicality besides his urban promiscuity and working-class sensibilities as 'Passer of his right arm round the shoulders of his/friends, companion of the street', though he makes that same

transcendental claim about reaching across time to 'others continually henceforth' (ibid. 159). He frames the picture with his mission statement as 'Teacher of the unquenchable creed, namely, egotism', with his phrenological perfection, and with his identity as 'Manhattanese bred, fond of Brooklyn, fond of/Broadway'. The poet's 'reckless health' (ibid. 158, 159) promises in turn 'to contribute/illustrations of results of The States', his own 'firmness' to the strength of the union. This is part of what seals his eligibility for that part pedagogic, part prophetic role, the credentials he touts in painstaking detail:

> Of pure American breed, of reckless health, his
> body perfect, free from taint from top to toe,
> free forever from headache and dyspepsia,
> clean-breathed,
> Ample-limbed, a good feeder, weight a hundred
> and eighty pounds, full-blooded, six feet high,
> forty inches round the breast and back,
> Countenance sun-burnt, bearded, calm, unrefined,
> Reminder of animals, meeter of savage and gen-
> tleman on equal terms,
> Attitudes lithe and erect, costume free, neck open,
> of slow movement on foot,
> Passer of his right arm round the shoulders of his
> friends, companion of the street,
> Persuader always of people to give him their
> sweetest touches, and never their meanest,
> A Manhattanese bred, fond of Brooklyn, fond of
> Broadway, fond of the life of the wharves
> and the great ferries,
> Enterer everywhere, welcomed everywhere, eas-
> ily understood after all,
> Never offering others, always offering himself,
> corroborating his phrenology,
> Voluptuous, inhibitive, combative, conscientious,
> alimentive, intuitive, of copious friendship,
> sublimity, firmness, self-esteem, comparison,
> individuality, form, locality, eventuality,
> Avowing by life, manners, works, to contribute
> illustrations of results of The States,
> Teacher of the unquenchable creed, namely,
> egotism,
> Inviter of others continually henceforth to try
> their strength against his.

Six-feet tall, 180 pounds yet lithe ('Stout' and 'electrical'), Whitman confidently and contradictorily cuts a sturdy, solid, free, flexible figure. He is 'rude and massive' in his proportions, to borrow Thoreau's words again, as is the catalogue itself, so packed out that the lines spill over and words fracture with the breaks, as they do throughout the rather sturdy 1856 edition. The sturdy flexibility of the catalogue's self-portrait was described in many identical terms in a self-review of the first edition. The *Brooklyn Daily Times* published 'Walt Whitman, a Brooklyn Boy' (*WWA*) in September 1855, a self-review. The poet's 'Manhattanese' breeding doesn't enter the picture here, but then it was a Brooklyn paper. Whitman announces in usual

form 'the man whom our Brooklynites know so well' and, like a philosophical huckster, asks 'What good is it to argue about egotism?'

> Of pure American breed, of reckless health, his body perfect, free from taint top to toe, free forever from headache and dyspepsia, full-blooded, six feet high, a good feeder, never once using medicine, drinking water only—a swimmer in the river or bay or by the seashore—of straight attitude and slow movement of foot—an indescribable style evincing indifference and disdain—ample limbed, weight one hundred and eighty-five pounds, age thirty-six years (1855)—never dressed in black, always dressed freely and clean in strong clothes, neck open, shirt-collar flat and broad, countenance of swarthy, transparent red, beard short and well mottled with white hair like hay after it has been mowed in the field and lies tossed and streaked—face not refined or intellectual, but calm and wholesome—a face of an unaffected animal—a face that absorbs the sunshine and meets savage or gentleman on equal terms—a face of one who eats and drinks and is a brawny lover and embracer—a face of undying friendship and indulgence toward men and women, and of one who finds the same returned many fold—a face with two gray eyes where passion and hauteur sleep, and melancholy stands behind them—a spirit that mixes cheerfully with the world—a person singularly beloved and welcomed, especially by young men and mechanics—one who has firm attachments there, and associates there—one who does not associate with literary and elegant people—one of the two men sauntering along the street with their arms over each other's shoulders, his companion some boatman or ship joiner, or from the hunting-tent or lumber-raft—one who has that quality of attracting the best out of people that they present to him, none of their meaner or stingier traits, but always their sweetest and most generous traits—a man never called upon to make speeches at public dinners, never on platforms amid the crowds of clergymen or professors, or aldermen or congressmen—rather down in the bay with the pilots in their pilot boats—or off on a cruise with the fishers in a fishing smack—or with a band of laughers and roughs in the streets of the city or open grounds of the country—fond of New York and Brooklyn—fond of the life of the wharves and the great ferries, or along Broadway, observing the endless wonders of that thoroughfare of the world—

It goes on. The similarities are too numerous to mention, and much of it was lifted verbatim into 'Broad-Axe Poem'. Both the review and the poem make one sympathise with Thoreau in his December 1856 letter to Harrison Blake (qtd. in Hindus 1971: 68), which expressed some guarded praise for Whitman and noted an 'animal quality': 'To be sure I sometimes feel a little imposed on. By his heartiness and broad generalities he puts me into a liberal frame of mind prepared to see wonders—as it were sets me upon a hill or in the midst of a plain—stirs me up well and then—throws in a thousand of brick.' Thoreau meant the book's sensuality as well as the 'reckless health' of its poet's will to absorb and incorporate, which were really for Whitman mutually inclusive commitments. It's not enough to tell us that he's a swimmer; he must be 'a swimmer in the river or bay or by the seashore'. Whitman (qtd. in Aspiz 1998: 359–360) made the 1856 edition's intent clear in a notebook jotting: 'Eligibility—I, you, any one . . . any being, no matter who'. The programme is plain in the volume of detail afforded to the 'I' in catalogues such as these, and in the book itself being much enlarged in length, though with its multitudes now contained in the compact sextodecimo format that made it so dense and yet so flexible as a portable object. Whitman densified it, too, by removing the dashes and dots. The programme of eligibility is visible, along with the strain of Whitmanic self-advertisement, in the infamous reprinting of Emerson's private letter of praise in full in the addendum 'Leaves-Droppings', and the words 'I Greet you at the/Beginning of A/Great Career/ R W Emerson' stamped in gold on the spine. Emerson was 'inducted into service as a blurb writer and made *ipso facto* the champion of a book which many would consider obscene' (Loving 1976: 61). 'Leaves-Droppings' included Whitman's open reply to Emerson and nine reviews, good and bad, two of which he wrote

himself. Whitman replied that he was determined to 'adhere to the body' (*LG*56: 346) and expressed confidence that, in a 'few years', sales would 'quite likely' exceed 'ten or twenty thousand copies' annually. The second edition sold very poorly, worse than the first. Even before Whitman's self-promotional transgressions became apparent with the September 1856 publication of the second edition, Emerson (qtd. in Monteiro 1985: 5) had expressed his feelings about the first in a letter to Carlyle in April of that year. In terms that intimate 'a wildness whose glance no civilisation can endure' (Thoreau 1881: 276), Emerson called the book 'a nondescript monster which has terrible eyes & buffalo strength, & was indisputably American', written 'by a journeyman printer in Brooklyn, N.Y.' He told Carlyle that 'if you think […] it is only an auctioneer's inventory of a warehouse, you can light your pipe with it.' 'It is as though the town-bull had learned to hold a pen', came Carlyle's withering reply (qtd. in Altman 1998: 105).

Long self-descriptions like Whitman's self-review were obviously idealised, as was his metamorphosis from simple carpenter to Emersonian poet. Certain physical details were exact, though, and Whitman was, in reality and in poetry, concerned with personal stocktaking. Amongst Feinberg's (1958: 85) bills and receipts — for lumber, labour, and so on — in June and July 1852 there are agreements with a carpenter, 'M. S. Scofield', written with precision and 'plain language'. Feinberg attributes this plain specificity to Whitman's career as a journalist, which doubtless contributed in high degree to the detail we see in these records. But there seems to be something, too, in the fact that while Whitman is carefully writing these contracts, he's also keeping track of his own physical dimensions. The dimensions in the poems are not estimates, it seems, but actual measurements that exhibit his keenness to maintain a self-inventory. These reflect his preoccupation with business as well as with phrenology. In July 1852, Whitman makes a note of his weight, '187'; the following year in November, '1853 Crystal Palace, 179.' This is the New York Crystal Palace Whitman admires in 'The Song of the Exposition' (1871), the venue for the World's Fair held in 1853, 'Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations'. One wonders what occasioned the chance for Whitman to weigh himself. It was noteworthy, though, and took place in the context of a building that provided a space for art, architecture, and commerce to intersect, a space that had a certain democratic value in exposing the masses to an array of cultural artefacts as well as industrial products. These elements all intersect in the imaginative space of *Leaves of Grass*, as they did in the physical space of the Crystal Palace. In an 1857 *Brooklyn Daily Times* article, Whitman praised the building as 'an original, esthetic, perfectly proportioned, American edifice', which Ed Cutler (1998: 74) notes 'all but parallels his conception of his poetics', an 'architectural analogue' to *Leaves*. Even more, this description parallels Whitman's 'perfectly proportioned' poet, who sings an athletic kind of virility as the physiological analogue of the health of American democracy.

So, while in form Whitman created something that was new, looser, more American, more easily modified, in metaphor he would often hark back to older, firmer structures, to 'Framers bare-armed framing a house . . hoisting the beams in their places . . or/using the mallet and mortising-chisel' ('I Sing the Body Electric', *LG*55: 78), and we see this firmness reflected in own physical robustness. Firmness likewise met flexibility in the physical properties of the second edition, which was weighty and substantial yet small enough to be pocketed. The bare-armed framers appear only in the first version of 'I Sing the Body Electric', a page or so before 'the father of five sons' and his physical, physiognomic presence. Parts

of that poem's erotic, explicit celebration of the body were amongst Emerson's advised excisions in 1860, which he hoped would allow *Leaves* to be tamed as a kind of poetic manifesto for New England transcendentalism.[21] Perhaps Whitman redacted his 'Framers bare-armed framing a house' because they initially intercepted two pieces of water imagery: 'The swimmer naked in the swimming bath' and 'the bending forward and backward of rowers in rowboats' (*LG*55: 78). Or maybe he felt the section would be punchier were it to begin with three anaphoric lines instead of being broken up by the framers, or simply that he'd rather not repeat the reference to 'a framer framing a house', 'driving the mallet and/chisel' in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 46). Such speculations are ultimately redundant, but they do give a sense of the easy modifications made possible by Whitman's free verse, and of the modern framework's flexibility against the certitude of traditional artisanal imagery. The image itself is distinctly inflexible in terms of the actions described, the straight lines and the repetitive 'framer framing', but Whitman's unmetered, undulating lines also mean that the image is easily transported elsewhere within the body of the poem.

In 'Broad-Axe Poem' (*LG*56: 143–144), Whitman expands on the image of framers framing, hoisting beams, mortising. The poet merely observes. His attention to detail and to the order of tasks suggests a managerial perspective and a vested interest, plus some artisanal know-how. The insistent present participle secures the poem's 'now', as well as 'jointing' the catalogue in formal terms, while 'echoes resounding' recall the temporal rippling effect of 'impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes' (*LG*55: 18). The men's bodies become extensions of their labour, emphasised by titles like 'floor-men' and 'framing-men' (*LG*56: 143), hyphens fastening the 'is' to the 'does' in 'one is what one does' (Stacy 2008: 25).

> The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,
> The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,
> The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying them regular,
> Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises, according as they were prepared,
> The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their curved limbs,
> Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by posts and braces,
> The hooked arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,
> The floor-men forcing the planks close, to be nailed,
> Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,
> The echoes resounding through the vacant building;
> The huge store-house carried up in the city, well under way,

[21] Whitman made 'I Sing the Body Electric' part of the 'Enfans d'Adam' cluster in 1860.

> The six framing-men, two in the middle and two
> at each end, carefully bearing on their
> shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,
> The crowded line of masons with trowels in their
> right hands rapidly laying the long side-wall,
> two hundred feet from front to rear,
> The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual
> click of the trowels and bricks,
> The bricks, one after another, each laid so work-
> man-like in its place, and set with a knock of
> the trowel-handle,
> The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-
> boards, and the steady replenishing by the
> hod-men;

Whitman carefully relates specific constructive actions, 'in their/places', 'laying them regular', 'according as they were prepared', as if at that moment instructing them to be carried out. As he layers the catalogue, one image atop another, his own 'piles of materials' seem steadily to replenish themselves. The materiality of words themselves comes to the fore in fricatives and plosives, in 'the flexible rise and fall of backs', 'the click of the trowels and bricks'. This could be the view of a 'housebuilder at work in cities or anywhere', but for Whitman this was the perspective of a Brooklyn housebuilder with products and profits to think about. It's as though 'echoes resounding through the vacant building' refer to the finished article, the house for sale as the sum of these actions.

'FIRES'

The scene moves abruptly from wood, bricks, and mortar to fire that 'suddenly bursts/forth in the close-packed square' (*LG*56: 144). The transition occurs via water imagery, or industry: 'Spar-makers in the spar-yard', 'The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips/in easy costumes;/The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-/heads, floats, stays against the sea'. The water, and its eroticism, is carried through the scene in the form of 'slender, spasmic blue-white jets' (145), while Whitman's transition from task to task is smooth, even tranquil. These are arduous tasks, so the poet's tranquillity suggests that he oversees rather than labours. The intervening scene is rendered all the more sudden by the poet's detached position: 'The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work,/or through floors, if the fire smoulders under/them,/The crowd with their lit faces, watching—the/glare and dense shadows' (145). Within the catalogue this turn is sudden, but in Whitman's New York fires were all too common. As writer, publisher, and bookseller Asa Greene (1837: 197) put it, 'Among the novelties of New York, there is nothing perhaps which strikes a stranger with more surprise than the frequency of fires. There is scarcely a day from January to July, and from July to January, when there is not an alarm—a cry of fire—and a ringing of bells.' Apart from his own speculative activities, Whitman's interest in careful building practices and in building regulations — the natural extension of which is his wider concern with physicality, materiality, solidity, those demarcations of his transcendentalist poetics — was born of the very real problem in New York and

Brooklyn of scarce regulations and questionable constructions that meant collapses and fires were frequent. In a March 1842 *Aurora* piece, around a week after 'Mr Emerson's Lecture', Whitman referred to 'good solid accommodations' (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 21); in 'Wicked Architecture' (1856, *WWA*), to 'carelessness of material construction, like the crumbly structures sometimes run up in our city by mercenary builders, that prove death-traps to the inmates'. Riley (2011: 42) states that Whitman was concerned 'with the quality of the work he commissioned and for good reason'. Contextualising the care with which Whitman wrote agreements and documents as a house builder, Riley (ibid. 43) notes the 'anxiety implied in his request that the roof be "well battened"' and lists some major building accidents that occurred in the 1850s, such as 'the caving in of a new two story building on Fulton Avenue' in Brooklyn, reported in the *Eagle*. Fire was an especially serious threat because so many were packed together so densely, often in wooden houses. Whitman takes up the issue of building materials in an 1851 article for the *Brooklyn Daily Advertiser* (qtd. in Reznick and Fee 2011: 1052) titled 'A Plea for Water', 'to save this half-wooden city from ruinous conflagrations.' Structures like balloon frame houses were more vulnerable because their studs stretched the full length of the house, enabling fire to travel upwards uninterrupted. New constructions therefore sometimes came at a cost and, in the city, the human cost was far dearer than upon the prairie, even with winds sweeping 'from Mackinaw to the Mississippi' as Solon Robinson (qtd. in Wheeler 1855: 413) put it. Expanding on Riley's examination of documents that out Whitman's administrative position in building, my analysis positions this 'carelessness of material construction' against the care with which Whitman constructs catalogues like the one in 'Broad-Axe Poem' in an effort to understand why his poet's 'foothold is tenon'd and mortised in granite' (*LG*55: 26).

Whitman's preoccupation with fires was part and parcel of their being a destructive force in a densely populated city, a force that threatened paper-heavy industries like printing and people who made money building wood-frame housing. Alongside these practical concerns, Whitman cherished New York's firefighters and especially the Bowery b'hoys, many of whom were volunteer firemen. He loved to see 'The march of firemen in their own costumes' (*LG*55: 78). Whitman's 'Mose Velsor' pen name, first seen in an 1848 article on the Bowery b'hoys (Turpin 2016: 156), combined a popular Bowery name, Mose, and his mother's maiden name, Van Velsor. 'Mose the Bowery b'hoy' first appeared onstage in *A Glance at New York in 1848*. Richard M. Dorson (1943: 288) writes that it 'became in the words of George C. D. Odell, "one of the greatest successes ever known in the history of the New York stage", 'a unique compound of East Side swell, gutter bum, and volunteer fire laddie'. Even after the character faded from the stage, Dorson (ibid. 298) says 'stories sprang up around a fabled Bowery giant, twelve feet tall, with hands as big as hams reaching down almost to the ground; he wore a red shirt and a red helmet as big as a tent.' At the end of March 1842, a few weeks after the Emerson review, Whitman (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 35–36) penned an article with a title that gives a sense, in line with Chapter One's discussion of Manhattan, of the social culture that surrounded NYC firefighters: 'Temperance Among The Firemen!' 'Whether it be a whim, or from some more tangible cause', he wrote, 'we do have a fondness for the New York firemen.' The following month, the *Aurora* published 'Scenes of Last Night', about a 'fire in Broome and Delancy streets' in Manhattan. Whitman (ibid. 36, 37) related the cacophony — 'the hubbub, the trumpets of the engine foremen, the crackling of the flames', 'the clatter and clang sound[ing] out again with redoubled

loudness' — as well as his awestruck horror at this 'horrible yet magnificent sight!' In March 1844 the *New York Sunday Times and Noah's Weekly Messenger* (*WWA*) published a piece of Whitman's short fiction, 'The Fireman's Dream', which praised 'the sudden life and readiness for action, evinced by the city firemen' and their 'might and main'. Riley (2011: 43) cites an 1845 article for the *Brooklyn Eagle*, 'How to Avoid Dangerous Fires', in which Whitman 'drew attention to the worrying fact that up to three quarters of Brooklyn's houses were constructed out of wood.' Whitman later dedicated a whole piece of the 'Brooklyniana' series (No. 14. 1862, *WWA*) to the origins of the Brooklyn Fire Department: 'Then, just the same as now,' he wrote, 'incendiarism was rife.' He included an inventory of the property destroyed in one particular fire in November 1806, as was common practice for newspapers. When in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 39) the speaker assumes the identity of a fireman, Whitman uses sound to depict the realism of the scene. Plosives underscore the unfurling catastrophe, the metronomic click of picks and long ellipses accentuating the drawn-out experience of one who awaits rescue:

> I am the mashed fireman with breastbone broken . . . . tumbling walls buried me in
> their debris,
> Heat and smoke I inspired . . . . I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades,
> I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels;
> They have cleared the beams away . . . . they tenderly lift me forth.

As Buell (1973: 325) has observed, when Emerson 'describes personality as a succession of moods […] he regards this successiveness as a tragic thing and falls back with relief upon the vision of a Spirit which underlies all such change.' In Whitman, successive identities or personalities are not just assumed or absorbed in some ethereal, spiritual process but consumed. The fireman's identity forms part of Whitman's poetics of absorption, the capaciousness of the transcendental ego (*LG*55: 39): 'All this I swallow and it tastes good . . . . I like it well, and it becomes mine,/I am the man . . . . I suffered . . . . I was there.'

That three-part proclamation perhaps rings truer for the fireman than for others, since it was a familiar one to Whitman, albeit as a bystander and sometimes a reporter. The heat and smoke 'inspired' by the poem's injured fireman formed part of the environment that inspired Whitman to construct something in poetry that wouldn't crumble or fall foul of 'incendiarism', though the latter charge would of course be levelled at the supposed obscenity of *Leaves*'s radical sexuality. At the outset of this chapter, I mentioned the August 1835 fire that destroyed Manhattan's printing district, leaving Whitman unemployed and headed back to Long Island. In December, the 1835 Great Fire of New York ravaged the city. Prior to either fire, building regulations had been imposed in the early 19th century to limit the spread fire in future. In *The Iconography of Manhattan Island 1498–1909*, architect Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes (1926: 1383) lists legislature passed '"for the more effectual prevention of fires and to regulate buildings in the city of New York."' It restricted 'building houses of certain construction within certain limits, and penalties for violation of this requirement.' In 1812 a bill (ibid. 1540) was passed that extended 'the limits within which "Dwelling Houses, Store Houses, and other buildings are required to be constructed with Stone or Brick."' In the 1840s, concerns were raised (ibid. 1817) about fire alarm bells having cracked 'due to their being insufficient in size and weight "to withstand the heavy striking necessary to produce sufficient sound"', and

'The common council therefore [ordered] that a bell of 10,000 lbs. be procured, "to be placed on the cupola of the City Hall"'. The bells had to compete with panoramic cacophonies of the kind Whitman catalogues. In this, I find a correlation with the poet (*LG*55: 55) who 'sound[s] [his] barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.' Another Great New York City Fire came in 1845 but, owing to regulations, it was less destructive. A couple of days after it broke out, the *Tribune*'s (21st July 1845) second page read that 'The loss by the fire of Saturday is very heavy, but not nearly *so* heavy as that by the great fire of 1835.' Under its full account of the tragedy, the paper (ibid.) stated that 'there was no immediate alarm given' and 'the City Hall bell [had not begun] to ring until three o'clock.' The writer (ibid.) made a specific recommendation that in future 'People who have no business at a fire but as spectators must be made to keep their distance' rather than 'the whole scene of danger [being] blocked up by a dense mob', and in its present-tense account it describes 'the crowd which horribly throng and suffocate the streets in every direction for a mile around.' Whitman's *Aurora* (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 37) reportage of 'Scenes of Last Night' (1842) had similarly described — like a graphic prophecy, as well as an early vision of the city as a body of bodies — 'one compact mass of human flesh', in 'every direction around'. The *Tribune* building itself, in downtown Manhattan, had caught fire earlier that same year and was destroyed, and a few years later came the 'Great Brooklyn Fire' which broke out from a furniture shop. Ten years later, for all its vastness and magnificence, its 'glass and iron façades' ('Song of the Exposition' *LG*81: 160), fire decimated the 'perfectly proportioned' Crystal Palace. Incendiarism was another façade to the 'tear down and build again' atmosphere. These were dual anxieties that meet in Whitman's ('Brooklyniana, No. 14.' 1862, *WWA*) exasperation with the mislaying of a fifty-pound fire-bell, procured for the Brooklyn department in 1795 following the introduction of a law requiring every domestic residence in the city 'to be provided with two fire-buckets, at the expense of the householders, and kept always ready for use, under a penalty.'

George Monteiro (1985: 3) points out that the first time Emerson's private letter to Whitman appears in print is in October 1855 in the *Tribune* under the arresting heading, in bold, 'FIRES'. To have a column dedicated to fires was unremarkable, but the letter sits between 'two accounts of catastrophe' (ibid.) and only one is actually a fire, the other a boiler explosion. Monteiro (ibid.) asks 'What editorial hand has framed this?' Andy J. Moore (1998: 161) identifies that editorial hand as Charles Dana's, Susan Belasco (1998: 463) states that Dana was then the managing editor of the *Tribune*, and Whitman even said very plainly (Traubel 1914: 125) 'it was Dana: Dana was city editor of the New York Tribune at the time' and that the editor convinced him to let him use the letter. Gay Wilson Allen included this information in *The Solitary Singer* (1955), a landmark biography. So, all in all, the answer to Monteiro's question would seem to be rather obvious. His suggestion of 'malice or mischief or naivete' (1985: 3) as the guiding force of that editorial hand's placement of the letter warrants a little exploration, however. Dana lived at Brook Farm for a few years in the 1840s and wrote for the *Harbinger*, the transcendentalist periodical founded by Ripley which Emerson declined to be involved with, as he did that communal living experiment. Dana also wrote the first published review of *Leaves* in July 1855 in the *Tribune* (*WWA*). I mentioned the review earlier in this chapter in relation to the frontispiece image and Monteiro refers to it at the outset of his article. Moore (1998: 161) tells us Dana published Emerson's letter in 'an act of friendship' to Whitman. To position your favour to a friend between two disasters seems an unusual decision. Here, I'll weigh Moore's identification

of Dana's 'act of friendship' against Monteiro's 'malice or mischief or naivete' argument, which the latter connects implicitly to the fact that Emerson's letter didn't acknowledge *Leaves* as poetry.

Dana wasn't naïve in professional terms, but he may have naively assumed that Whitman had Emerson's permission, and perhaps Whitman elected not to disabuse him of the notion. Maybe Dana realised that Whitman had in his own naïvety failed to recognise that Emerson's letter didn't recognise his *Leaves* as poetry. There was certainly self-promotional mischief (or bald-faced impropriety, depending on your perspective) on Whitman's part, even if he later blamed Dana. Perhaps there was mischief on Dana's part, but not, I think, because he realised that Emerson was not acknowledging *Leaves* as poetry. Dana's own 1855 review of *Leaves* was mixed, so Whitman was probably indulging in an 'I told you so' moment — he is said to have carried the letter around with him for some time — in having him publish a letter of strong praise from a figure like Emerson, Boston Brahmin, as well as quietly using to his advantage Dana's assumptions that everything was above board. I propose that Dana was compelled to draw attention to the letter by way of its unusual placement on the page, using Emerson to garner literary prestige for a New York poet that he had first reviewed for a New York paper. What Monteiro ignores, though, is a rather obvious link between fires and firemen. Dana seems to have been making a connection between *Leaves of Grass* and working-class Bowery b'hoy culture, the swagger and grit of which colours the portrait of Whitman's bard, a culture increasingly 'associated with sexual licentiousness' (Folsom 2010a: 277). If any malice was at play, it was perhaps in suggesting some catastrophe unfolding in Emerson's apparent inclination to publicly stamp his approval on a poet of such rough ilk, a poet whose language Dana (1855, *WWA*) reviewed as 'too frequently reckless and indecent'. I therefore read Dana's placement of the letter as somewhat qualifying Emerson's praise by reiterating the same comparison he made in 1855, remarking on the poetry's 'rude ingenuousness', its 'uncouth and grotesque embodiment', and on the poet's belonging 'to the exemplary class of society sometimes irreverently styled "loafers."' If Dana was slyly passing comment on Whitman's bragging, then it would make sense to do so by aligning Whitman with a group known for in-fighting between fire companies who, even at the scene of a fire, would compete for the right to claim credit for extinguishing it in order to secure bragging rights. Whitman observes this race in 'The Fireman's Dream', soundtracked by the 'Clang! clang! clang!' of the City Hall bell (1844, *WWA*): 'The up-town engines, were close on the heels of their down-town competitors'.

At the heart of such comparisons, and Emerson's description of Whitman, was the class tension. Whitman said Dana liked his poetry in 'a general way' (Traubel 1906: 397), but felt he was of interest to 'the newspaper men as one of the strange fellows—they look for freakish characters—it is among these I come in.' Charles Eliot Norton (qtd. in *LG*56: 368–9) called *Leaves* 'a mixture of Yankee transcendentalism and New York rowdyism'; later, Bayard Taylor proposed 'half-Bowery-boy, half-Emersonian' in a Whitmanic parody for the *Atlantic Monthly* (qtd. in Gould 1998: 704). Both noted qualities that neatly intersected in reality, as well as print, on one occasion when Emerson and Whitman met in New York, possibly in December 1855. After dining at the Astor House at Emerson's invitation, Whitman led the way to the Fireman's Hall on Mercer Street, which had opened the previous year (Allen 1955: 174). Emerson later told Edward Carpenter (1916: 88) that Whitman had taken him to a 'noisy fire-engine society' and 'was like a boy over it'. Dana's positioning of the letter seems deliberately to draw attention to this strange

mixture, a mixture he had originally identified when he picked up on Whitman's loaferish Emersonianisms. We can summarise Whitman's fondness for New York firemen, their noisy societies, and the closely related Bowery b'hoy culture as, partially, a product of the local context of frequent fires and of the particular threat posed to the print and building industries in which he was simultaneously enmeshed in Brooklyn and New York. That Emerson arranged dinner at a luxurious hotel and Whitman figured the next logical stop was a firemen's hall, albeit an architecturally grandiose one, is a curiously fitting analogue to his poetic persona's mixed registers, as well as his supposedly innocent decision to drop Emerson's private correspondence into the lap of the city editor of the *New-York Tribune*.

The co-habitation of print and architecture in Whitman's life in New York looms large in his material conception of spiritual transcendence. The catalogue carries the itinerant dimension of the transcendental ego, a fitting formal conduit for the movement of New York's housing market, and for the inventory-taking proclivities of a poet-builder. The poet's recourse the city's materials relates to the spiritual identities of its inhabitants as well as to the contemporary reality of frequent building collapses and fires; his emphasis of his own physicality, his red-blooded brawniness, to groups like the volunteer firemen and Bowery b'hoys. Whitman's speculative complicity in the housing market, in the domain of contractual negotiation and transaction, also compelled him to compile a literary ledger of the city that he had helped to build and which had itself helped to build *Leaves of Grass*. Furthermore, it inspired the crafting of an artisanal persona born from the transcendental 'I' but solidified by 'poems of materials' (*LG*60: 9), and then made more 'saleable' to the reader by virtue of the dexterity (rhetorically and literally, in the sense of his resounding physicality) with which the poet transacts the sale. The sale of the product, the book itself, has already occurred by the time the reader interacts with it. What Whitman's persona now negotiates, then, is the reader's relationship with the text, or the individual's relationship to any other individual, the 'I' and the 'you'. The emphasis is on reception and relation, as in these lines from 'A Song for Occupations' (*LG*55: 61):

> All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it;
> Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?

The stress Whitman places on process in building, reading, and writing makes his manuscripts especially interesting within this conceptual context. This is compounded by the fact that the years leading up to the 1855 *Leaves*, the catalyst for Whitman's poetic metamorphosis, were mysterious for so long. The *Archive* features an early manuscript (1850s), which Whitman titled 'Living Pictures'. It contains scribbled lines that were possibly notes for 'A Song for Occupations' (*LG*55: 61), where the speaker asks 'Have you reckoned the landscape took substance and form that it might be painted/in a picture?' 'Living Pictures' (*WWA*, formatted as below) could well describe the imagistic, dynamic properties of the catalogues. The manuscript shows in miniature Whitman restlessly revising as he goes:

> <u>He</u>, who carries bricks ^& mortar to the mason, not less than the mason,
> <u>The</u> <u>mason</u> who lays the bricks, not one tittle less than the builder, who ~~engages~~ employs, him,

> The ^architect & builder of the house, no less than

There is a sense of movement to the lines (from carrying bricks, to bricklaying, to building) that works alongside the levelled hierarchy to highlight labour itself, the carrying, laying, and building, rather than the products or tools of labour. The insertions of 'mortar' and 'architect' show Whitman's will to add and extend, to paint more of the 'living picture' almost for the sake of a fuller inventory, as appears to be the motivation for specifying 'the white or gray stone'. As in the deliberately constructed catalogue of 'Broad-Axe Poem' (*LG*56: 143), however, the movement is orderly and fluid. Agreements, specifications, and receipts written by Whitman offer glimpses of the journalist's perspective in that every detail is 'spelled out in plain language to avoid controversy' (Feinberg 1958: 85). In the 'Living Pictures' manuscript, and likewise more broadly, Whitman rather spells out in plain language every constituent in the chain of labour in order to build a system of human relation that was not just controversial but radical. As a piece of text under construction, a text that is itself concerned with occupations in progress, the textual connotation of the word 'tittle' in the manuscript — as in the superscript dot on a lowercase 'i' — is also significant as an indicator of the radical equality enacted by the poetics. Franklinian in its printer's amalgamation of text and labour, 'tittle' also draws a connection between one type of building and another figurative type, between the written word and action, recalling Emerson's (1883: 14) dictum that 'Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.' In Whitman this is brought into sharp relief by his insistence on the physicality of reading and the materiality of words. He enshrines the reader's role in the creation of the text, as in 'All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it', this proclamation swiftly followed by the direct questions asked of 'you'. When he writes 'My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots' ('Song of the Rolling Earth' *LG*56: 330), he synecdochally substitutes the tongue for words and his building metaphor likens speech to construction. As I have argued, Whitman also made words more 'active' simply by inventing them, as in 'the sluff of bootsoles', the onomatopoeic property of which is more conducive to action. As these kinds of language are forced into contact with each other, they draw attention to themselves as constructed, and to the hand that constructed them. Determined to write 'the dictionaries of the words/that print cannot touch' (*LG*56: 329), Whitman lets 'the poems of materials' (*LG*60: 9) pad out his metaphysical claims, poems that can't cave in or catch fire.

In closing I'll return to 'A Song for Occupations'. In this poem, Whitman frames his material conception of spiritual transcendence using not an artisanal or architectural metaphor but a print-based one that I compared to 'So long!', 'This is no book,/Who touches this, touches a man,' and 'It is I you hold, and who holds you'. In 'A Song for Occupations' (*LG*55: 57), the imaginative ground staging that same play is cold types and wet paper rather than uprights and beams, but it assists in the same objective as the extra-literary contexts to Whitman's New York speculations. Note the negotiation and transaction signalled at the outset of the poem as it first appeared, the give and take, the pushing and yielding, the 'unfinished business' being conducted, and the contract of contact into which we are inducted:

> COME closer to me,

> Push closer my lovers and take the best I possess,
> Yield closer and closer and give me the best you possess.
>
> This is unfinished business with me . . . . how is it with you?
> I was chilled with the cold types and cylinder and wet paper between us.
>
> I pass so poorly with paper and types . . . . I must pass with the contact of bodies and souls.

Trust and risk are at stake in these instructions, issued by a poet who thrusts at us the material dimension of the act by which we come into contact with him. Although softer, more erotic, the iterative imperative echoes his command (*LG*55: 29) to 'Unscrew the locks from the doors!/Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!' The voice is administrative, 'the terms obdurate' (*LG*60: 117).

Chapter Three

Print & Periodical

With some natural imbrication that is part and parcel of Whitman's life in text and context, an overlapping that has its geographical counterpart in this island poet's sensibilities, this thesis has so far been structured roughly chronologically in terms of his relationship to antebellum New York and how it shapes his transcendentalist poetics. Chapter One started from Paumanok, his birthplace, before moving to Brooklyn's ample hills, his home, and then to Mannahatta, his extravagant, intoxicating city. Chapter Two began again with Long Island, its enclosed classrooms rather than its friable shores, and then progressed to Brooklyn and New York, to external constructions of new interiorities. Whitman was in this sense, as Bucke (1883: 19) said, 'the absorber of sunlight' and 'of interiors'. This third and final chapter reflects on another mammoth vocational and cultural context: Whitman's life in 'paper and types', as he puts it in 'A Song for Occupations' (*LG*55: 57), or the print and periodical culture of antebellum Brooklyn and New York. This was the professional sphere in which Whitman was most embroiled and my first two chapters acknowledge this influence most obviously by way of their recourse to the journalism. 'Print & Periodical' swivels in a zigzagging sort of way from the housing market to the literary marketplace. I locate in this culture certain performative, self-promotional, and material and physical features that have already emerged, as well as the public and private dynamic to which Bucke's comment gestures and which is foregrounded by the ebb and flow of rural and urban life.

Chapter Three includes within print and periodical culture the bohemia who gathered at Charles Ignatious Pfaff's ratskeller-style Broadway beer cellar, a group fronted by Henry Clapp Jr and his *Saturday Press*, where Whitman spent a lot of time in the late 1850s. Levin (2010: 59) notes that Clapp's *Press* 'implicitly connect[ed] Bohemianism with a democratic egalitarianism.' Clapp came from Nantucket, a tiny island off Cape Cod and, Christine Stansell (1998: 129) points out, a 'bastion of Quaker reform sensibility'. Whitman's fraternisation with the Pfaffians — who congregated slap bang in the middle of Manhattan's theatre district — was the pre-war culmination of his involvement in New York's art world, to which I also refer in this chapter. Whitman's artistic interests were initiated by his early love of the theatre, particularly the Bowery's 'democratic' audiences: 'going everywhere, seeing everything, high, low, middling—absorbing theatres at every pore' (Traubel 1906: 455). First, some print and periodical history will be useful. On the transcendentalist (and Bostonian) side of this periodical golden age, a quarterly journal — *The Dial* — was published from 1840 to 1844, edited first by Fuller and then Emerson, published for a time by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. During this time, Emerson published *Essays: First Series* (1841), which included 'Self-Reliance', 'Spiritual Laws', and 'The Over-Soul'. As Cole (2020: 70) observes, the periodical 'served as a gathering place for the Transcendentalists, an expression of their interactions with each other and the culture around them.' When *The Dial* ended in 1844, Greeley (qtd. in Gura 2007: 130) called it the 'most original and thoughtful periodical ever published in this country' and hired Fuller as

literary editor for the *Tribune*. Fuller's first article reviewed Emerson's *Essays: Second Series* (1844), which included 'The Poet', 'Experience', and 'Nature'. Fuller's *Tribune* article (qtd. in Bean and Myerson 2000: 5) praised the book's genius but acknowledged some 'justly said' criticisms. Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was published in full in 1845, by Greeley, having first been serialised in *The Dial.* Greeley 'inserted' the book into 'a series of popular paperbacks under the saccharine title "Cheerful Books for the People', as Norman K. Risjord (2001: 115) puts it.

There was also the *Harbinger*, a 'transcendentalist-adjacent' publication. This was associated with the Ripleys' Brook Farm, or rather its transformation into a Fourierist phalanx. The *Harbinger*'s forerunner was *The Phalanx*, a Fourierist journal published in New York from 1843 to 1845 and co-edited by Albert Brisbane, of whom Greeley was an early supporter. *The Phalanx* was then moved to Brook Farm and published as the *Harbinger*, before returning to New York a couple of years later. Fuller, as Mary Lamb Shelden notes (2010: 245), 'praised Fourier for placing "woman on an entire quality with Man" and for seeking to allow sexual freedom to both sexes commensurate with their intellectual development.' After Brook Farm failed, George Ripley also worked at the *Tribune* for well over a decade to repay debts incurred by the commune and its failed phalanstery. Along with Clapp, Brisbane was part of a group of New Yorkers that the press christened the 'Free Love Club' and which caused considerable scandal in 1855. Clapp and Brisbane were arrested after a meeting, which the *New-York Daily Times* and the *Tribune* reported. Stansell (1998: 129) proposes that Whitman's introduction to free love thought came via Clapp, though there is a case to be made for John Humphrey Noyes of perfectionist Oneida experiment fame. Noyes lived in Brooklyn for several years in the 1850s where he set up a branch that helped publish *The Circular.* He was already using the term 'free love' in relation to his ideas about complex marriage. The Pfaff's years are however an important locus for the poet's softening towards such experimentation, for which Hicksite Quakerism and then New England transcendentalism had laid some ideological groundwork. Clapp's Quaker heritage is a curious coincidence, one that Gould (2007) explains in tandem with his free love and Fourierist activism as part of Whitman's 'Quaker paradox'.

By 1845, Whitman, a journeyman printer, had significant journalistic experience not only as a writer but as an editor. Carroll C. Hollis (1983: 204) has observed that the most panegyrical — and anonymous — reviews are 'the only ones that seem consciously to avoid talking about Whitman's journalistic background', his rather substantial background at that. As Whitley (2020: 149) writes, the literary marketplace was undergoing a transition with 'both economic and geographic components: economically, publishing evolved from a "gentlemanly" trade guided by an unwritten code of ethical conduct into the contract-based system of market capitalism that defines the industry today, while geographically the center of literary publishing moved from Boston to New York.' Further, he perceives (ibid.) how Whitman 'experienced New York as a set of institutions', cultural and professional, but 'also worked strategically with Boston publishers and members of the elite Boston-Concord literary scene', like Emerson. By 1845, Whitman had founded and sold the *Long Islander* between teaching terms, for example, writing, editing, compositing, and even delivering the paper. This was the single-man set-up of artisanal production from which the print business transitioned to a more specialised affair and then to the contractual system Whitley mentions. Whitman had also written 'The Sun-Down Papers' for the *Long*

Island Democrat, written and composited for *The New World*, and edited the *New York Aurora*. He had written for the *Democratic Review*, *Brother Jonathan,* and the *Daily Plebeian*, and the (*NY*) *Evening Tattler*, *Statesman*, *Democrat*, and *Mirror*. From 1845 onwards, he wrote for the (*Brooklyn*) *Evening Star*, *Daily Eagle*, and *Freeman* and, from 1849 to 1854, he ran a job printing office and bookshop alongside his freelance journalism and housebuilding business. In the mid 1850s, he wrote for *Life Illustrated*, the phrenological journal of Fowler and Wells, who published the second *Leaves*.

He later edited the Republican-leaning *Brooklyn Daily Times* (1857–59), becoming politically and physically — by virtue of the Grand Street Ferry — closer, as Karbiener (2014) has shown, to Pfaff's and bohemia. From 1859 to 1861, Levin and Whitley (2018: 208) observe that 'King of Bohemia' Clapp and his *Saturday Press* 'published no fewer than forty-six poems, parodies, reviews, and notices by or about Whitman and thirty-five advertisements for the 1860 edition.' Whitley (2020: 157) has more recently proposed a figure of almost fifty items in 1860 alone. In February 1860, Boston publishers Thayer & Eldridge wrote to Whitman and in March he travelled there to meet them and oversee production. He also met with Emerson, beneath the old elms on Boston Common. The new edition was published in May, his greatest commercial success yet. It featured almost a hundred and fifty new poems and two clusters, 'Enfans d'Adam' and 'Calamus'. Emerson focused his recommendations for excision on the former cluster. This third edition saw a second printing but bankruptcy thwarted the third and both the *Press* and Thayer & Eldridge folded in December 1860. This takes us up to the outer boundary of my parameters for discussion. David Dowling (2009: 18) reminds us that by 1860 printing and publishing was New York City's foremost industry, which 'should not be underestimated considering that New York was the largest industrial center in antebellum America, and its biggest industry was the manufacture and sale of newspapers, magazines, and books.'

This third and final chapter is structured in three parts: 'Journeymen Divine', 'Penny Press Flânerie', and 'Public & Personal'. Woven throughout are references to performances and images as they pertain to artistic contexts in antebellum New York, just as the journalism has been woven throughout so far. Such references are presented in digressional form where they bear particular conceptual relevance to my argument, which continues Chapter Two's concern with the material sources of the performative, self-fashioning, and self-promoting aspects of Whitman's post-transcendentalist poetics of New York. As with my lengthy 'Long Island' section, the print mechanics and aesthetics discussed under 'Journeymen Divine' take up more space in this chapter since the journalistic or periodical focus has been more sustained throughout the thesis.

Journeymen Divine

Emerson's 1856 epistolary portrait for Carlyle (qtd. in Monteiro 1985: 5) of Whitman as 'a journeyman printer in Brooklyn, N.Y.' underlines the print at the expense of the not inconsiderable periodical, though these were the poet's origins, earned some twenty years earlier. Perhaps Emerson was trying to get ahead of Whitman's frontispiece, or perhaps he was appealing to Carlyle's 'The Hero as Man of Letters' (1840:

194) which declared printing 'equivalent to Democracy.' Whitman's first job within the print and periodical sphere was aged twelve as a printer's apprentice for *The Long Island Patriot*, using an old wooden hand press at their Fulton Street office. He then composited for the *Long Island Star*, leaving as a journeyman printer in 1835, aged sixteen. Given these beginnings and Chapter Two's focus on the emphatic materiality and physicality that demarcates Whitman's transcendentalist poetics, as well as the poet's self-fashionings, I'll start with printing and bookmaking. Ed Folsom (2005, *WWA*) offers an incisive summary of this context's significance: 'Whitman did not just write his book, he made his book, and he made it over and over again, each time producing a different material object that spoke to its readers in different ways.' The *Patriot* editor, Samuel E. Clements — who fled Brooklyn following his involvement in 'a plot to exhume Elias Hicks's body and take a plaster cast of the head and face' (Karbiener 1998: 406) — gave Whitman his first taste of authorship, 'sentimental bits' (*PW*: 195) now lost. Nor are there any surviving copies of the paper Whitman founded in 1838, the *Long Islander*, for which he was not only editor, pressman, and publisher, but also distributor, with the aid of his horse (ibid.): 'I never had happier jaunts—going over to south side, to Babylon, down south road, across to Smithtown and Comac, and back home.' On his stops, he would gather material for the following week's paper, as he would later do in the more detached, urban fashion of the New York flâneur.

The *Patriot*'s foreman printer was William Hartshorne, later Brooklyn's city printer. Whitman ('Brooklyniana, No. 6.' 1862, *WWA*) credited the 'veteran printer of the United States' with his 'first instructions in type-setting—the initiation into the trade and mystery of our printing craft.' He told the *Brooklyn Standard*'s readership how Hartshorne, who died in 1859 'after a stretch of longevity very remarkable for a printer, was 'often to be seen walking slowly in pleasant weather, through Fulton street, or some neighboring thoroughfare, with broad-brim hat, his cane, and chewing his quid of tobacco.' In this characteristic catalogue from the article (ibid.) Whitman emphasises the sensory dimension to the mechanical, physical act of printing, which at times borders on sensual:

> What compositor running his eye over these lines, but will easily realize the whole modus of that initiation?—the half eager, half bashful beginning—the awkward holding of the stick—the type-box, or perhaps two or three old cases, put under his feet for the novice to stand on, to raise him high enough—the thumb in the stick—the compositor's rule—the upper case almost out of reach—the lower case spread out handier before him—learning the boxes—the pleasing mystery of the different letters, and their divisions—the great 'e' box—the box for spaces right by the boy's breast—the 'a' box, 'i' box, 'o' box, and all the rest—the box for quads away off in the right hand corner—the slow and laborious formation, type by type, of the first line—its unlucky bursting by the too nervous pressure of the thumb—the first experience in 'pi,' and the distributing thereof—all this, I say, what jour. typo cannot go back in his own experience, and easily realise?

Whitman's physical immersion in typesetting is almost palpable. The compositor is 'running his eye over these lines', but it might just as well be his hands. Whitman relishes the shape of the compositing stick, the boxes of letters, the haptic aspects. The sibilant eroticism in 'pallid slivers slumbering' ('A Font of Type' *LG*91: 386) is suggested, too, by the 'the half eager, half bashful beginning', 'the pleasing mystery' of letters, 'the slow and laborious formation', the 'bursting by the too nervous pressure of the thumb'. Fingertips caress contours painstakingly learned, paper and types pressed together like lips on skin.

The way Whitman recalls these mechanical intimacies mimics these lines from 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 25):

> This is the press of a bashful hand . . . . this is the float and odor of hair,
> This is the touch of my lips to yours . . . . this is the murmur of yearning,
> This is the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
> This is the thoughtful merge of myself and the outlet again.

A line of poetry — or any other print — was in a very literal way 'the press of a hand', bashful or otherwise. We hear the reflection of the self by another self, the experience of physical contact, mirrored in 'float and odor', 'murmur of yearning'. On the 'face' of it, what reflects the poet's 'own face' is another's; he sees himself reflected in the eyes of his lover. Thinking of the print corollary, and Whitman's insistence that 'This is no book', we might read depth and height as references to the inky manifestations of the poet's ideas, 'face' as typeface, the 'merge' as the act of printing, 'the outlet' as the reader's interaction with the poet through the printed object. This is also self-reflection, a poet seeing his own likeness in his work, touching his lips to the material object to give voice to the body of his ideas. Whitman's unpublished preface to the 1867 edition (qtd. in Conrad 2013: 97) recapitulates this relationship: 'I almost feel the curving hold and pressure of your hand,' he tells us, because 'no leaves of print are these, but lips for your sake freely speaking.' Likewise, Whitman (*LG*60: 242) writes 'Lift me close to your face till I whisper' and, with emphatic immediacy, an insistence that visually detaches what he offers, 'Here! take from my lips this/kiss'. Whitman told Traubel (1964: 390) he had 'what may be called an anticipatory eye—[knew] how a thing will turn up in the type—appear—take form.' In 'Calamus' 3 (ibid. 346), he anticipates the reader's physical interaction with the book, 'thrusting me beneath your clothing,/Where I may feel the throbs of your heart, or rest/upon your hip'. He imagines himself close to the reader's heart, figuratively and literally, like 'the box for spaces right by the boy's breast', carried forward into the 'new life of the new forms' (*LG*55: iii), as the preface announced. Through 'touching you', he will 'be/carried eternally.' This poiesis of mutuality, as I suggested in Chapter Two, depends on the reader whose hand is at that moment on the poem Whitman once held as a manuscript page.

In that edition's final poem, 'So long!' (*LG*60: 455), 'decease/calls [the poet] forth', concluding what Erica Fretwell (2019: 156) calls 'a game of hide-and-seek by figuring its own spine as a center of gravity that pulls together recto/verso relations', a spine transformed 'into the pliant material of longing, of mystical union.' Whitman's 'far-off depth and height', his 'thoughtful merge', prompted Hart Crane (qtd. in Bloom 2020: 532) to say of the poet that 'The man is both distant and near.' This combination of distance and proximity, remoteness and intimacy, is related to the personal-public dichotomy that critics including O'Neill (2011; 2017) and Whitley (2020) have in recent years applied as a framework for understanding Whitman's life in paper and types, as well as the dynamics of literary celebrity. In an early prose notebook ('No doubt the efflux', *WWA*) under the heading 'The Poet' Whitman writes 'I think ten million supple-fingered gods are perpetually employed hiding beauty in the world'. 'They do their jobs well,' he says, 'those journeymen divine.' The phrase is transposed, in new syntactical arrangement, to the 'The Sleepers' (*LG*55: 71): 'Well they do their jobs, those journeymen divine'. The underlying thought about the poet's role in the world, in Whitman's notebook, is not dissimilar from Emerson's; he infuses the

rude, low, and mundane with sacred beauty. In 'Self-Reliance', too, Emerson (1883: 52) writes that 'He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness.'

Within the context of 'The Sleepers', Whitman's divine yet emphatically dextrous figures take on an explicit homoeroticism, 'And lift their cunning covers and signify [him] with stretched arms', 'a gay gang of blackguards with mirthshouting music and wild-flapping pennants of joy'. There is cunning, too, in the way Whitman's exhibits the relation between his book and his person. In the fourth of his 'Chants Democratic' (*LG*60: 166), he asks 'Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine/leaves, that you also be eligible as I am?' The invitation 'to collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of These States' is also an invitation to distribute *Leaves* itself, presented as the natural outcropping of the nation, and of 'Mannahatta' as its eminent representative. The Feinberg Collection includes Whitman's letter 'to the Editors of Harper's Magazine' (7th January 1860, *WWA*), which sets out the theory behind the poem in terms that reflect the printer's perspective: 'a comprehensive collection of touches, locales, incidents, idiomatic scenes […] as having a huge bouquet to collect, and quickly taking and binding in every characteristic.' In the persuasive self-promotional mode at work in that poem, Whitman asks the editors 'Is there any other poem of the sort extant—or indeed hitherto attempted?' 'Every really new person, (poet or other,) *makes* his style', he asserts. After some flowery patter about reaching democratically to the nation at large, he points to having 'headway enough with the American public, especially with the literary classes, to make it worth your while to give them a sight of me with all my neologism.' This particular and more elitist appeal is in evidence in the poem's ostensibly democratic allusion to 'feuillage'. Whitman quickly and bluntly states his terms: 'The price is $40. Cash down on acceptance.' Finally, he specifies that he reserves the right to use the piece in future and, with this anticipatory eye trained on reception, on the 'sight' of him in public, requires that if *Harper's Magazine* print the poem, his name 'must not be lower down than third in the list' of contributors. Whitley (2020: 149) assesses the shifting centre of publishing power: 'That the once-mighty firm of Ticknor and Fields has faded from memory while Harper's celebrated its bicentennial in 2017 would suggest that the publishing industry's economic journey from social compact to capitalist enterprise and its geographic transition from Boston to New York have long been settled facts.'

The butterfly manicule

Moving from 'the press of a hand' to the pointing of a finger, perhaps the most illuminating signification of Whitman's ambidextrous creative process as a self-promoting poet-printer is the manicule, or 'printer's fist', with index outstretched. The image first appears in the 1860 *Leaves*, with a butterfly perched atop the pointing finger, though sketches of the regular printer's fist are seen in Whitman's earlier manuscripts. In the 1860 text we first see it at the bottom of the contents page and then at the end of the book, overpage from Whitman's insistence in 'So long!' (*LG*60: 455) that 'This is no book'. Properly speaking, we see it on the final printed page. The book's final page, to which the manicule points, is a blank recto. Its emptiness holds the promise of 'pallid slivers slumbering', a forward-looking gesture initiated by the 'spermatoid

design' (Folsom 2010b) of Whitman's 1860 title page.[22] Emerson's essay on 'Books' (1870: 164) lauded the 'vital and spermatic' qualities of certain works, and similar language appears in his earlier writings. The manicule itself was conventional enough, and had been so for centuries before Whitman's particular manipulation and its association with advertising. Within the public space of the newspaper page, it diverted attention to products and services; within private journals, including Emerson's, it marked particular passages. 'New York abounds in the ephemeral productions of the press', wrote Asa Greene (1837: 143) of the crowded circumstances under which ads vied for attention, or the textual instability that had its counterpart in the city's material instability, examined in Chapter Two. On the front page of the *New York Aurora* (6th April 1842, *WWA*), during Whitman's editorship, one manicule points to a dentist's address, another to a doctor's opening hours, and two contain that doctor's address, under the unmissable title 'CORNS! CORNS!! CORNS!!!' The illustrated icons are especially apposite to the latter, which earnestly (and graphically) promises customers 'the satisfaction of carrying away their tormentor, the corn, in their hands.' As evidence of their skill and reputation, the 'corn doctors from Paris' point, figuratively, to 'testimonials from some of the most eminent gentlemen'.

Directly to the right of that advert is a column parodying the figure of the 'mercantile drummer', or travelling salesman, represented by a dandyish caricature that takes up a large portion of the page. Besides the manicules, the only other two images are a sketch of a dollar, advertising the *Aurora*'s 'Dollar Weekly', 'the cheapest publication in the world', to farmers, villagers, and mechanics, and a well-to-do lady having her corns seen to, presumably by a fine Parisian podiatrist. The 'mercantile drummer' writer states that this breed of young men are identifiable by their 'most brazen impudence and familiarity', as well as their appearance of wealth despite any obvious income source. 'Perhaps in the whole of God's universe,' the writer begins, 'no city can show a greater number of that ingenious class who "live by their wits," than our native Gotham.' They conclude the short piece with their observation that the drummers 'come forth at the same time that snakes evacuate their winter quarters'. A letter is included, also anonymous but 'dated at one of the largest and most fashionable hotels in Broadway', which expresses the writer's disgust at the 'swarms of *drummers*'. In *The Perils of Pearl Street*, in the financial district of Lower Manhattan, Greene (1834: 57–58) defined mercantile drumming as 'the soliciting of customers', a practice 'held by some to be neither very modest or very dignified' but a potentially very profitable one in which 'the sale of goods is often expedited.' He (ibid. 60) also acknowledges that the drummers are not without 'ingenuity and tact'. Often, drummers would select countryfolk, those less acquainted in the 'dirty city-swindle' Whitman warns of in his 1856 'Advice to Strangers' for *Life Illustrated* (*WWA*). While the mercantile drummer would 'drum up' business more brazenly, and in person, those somewhat undignified tactics — dressed up as a well-to-do gent who just so happened to know exactly where to find what his mark was looking to purchase — are plain in the doctors' loud, garish advertising strategy, even as they emphasise their 'premium' service.

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[22] Similar arguments have been made about the period missing from many copies of the 1855 text at the end of 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 56): 'I stop some where waiting for you'. Lawson (2006: 99) is one such example. He ends his book with that line, omitting the period, as part of his final contention that Whitman 'cannot bear to end his song […] with so much as a full stop.' Folsom's census of the 1855 text (2006: 77), however, shows that while this is an appealing possibility, 'it has one flaw: the missing period is in fact a printing accident.'

The mercantile drummer's sartorial strategy is not so dissimilar from the language in which Whitman clothes his democratic appeal to the literary and the illiterate, the living and the dead (*LG*55: 24–25), which he sounds triumphantly in the lines leading up to the 'press of a bashful hand': 'I sound triumphal drums for the dead . . . . I fling through my embouchures the/loudest and gayest music to them'. Deliberate pronouncement, in the alliterative, percussive, monosyllabic form of 'drums for the dead', gives way to the casual 'flinging' of 'embouchures'. Moon (1991: 75) reads as Whitman's 'embouchures' as 'fluid, oral, and seminal', to which I would add textual in the sense that he presents the printed text as his mouthpiece in a more literal fashion — 'Here! take from my lips this/kiss' (*LG*60: 242) — and as it relates to the flow of printer's ink, which the journeymen printers of Whitman's youth would often mix themselves. Democratically drumming to the success of the dead, and simultaneously securing his own immortality in print, the poet insouciantly — and clumsily — drops that French word to promote his own refinement. It points to his own sophistication, as well as his recourse to the body, but he shoehorns it in in so manufactured a way that it chafes uncomfortably with the fabricated nonchalance and the democratic import of those 'drums for the dead'. It speaks to the social 'echolocation' that papers like the *Aurora* (Stacy 2019) sought to facilitate for their readership, and which the mercantile drummer seized upon as a sales strategy by curating his appearance.

Eric Conrad (2013: 73) deconstructs how the promiscuous manicule 'defied "the limits of intimate space"', and how Whitman's added butterfly creates 'the poet's fist, a representation of the holy trinity behind *Leaves of Grass* and its author: body, soul, and promotion.' The butterfly manicule, he argues (ibid. 93), 'is a symbolic marriage of the print market and the poet; the butterfly perched on (not crushed by) the index finger enacts the impossible balance of spirituality and materiality that *Leaves of Grass* had supposedly achieved.' As a symbol of metamorphosis, too, the butterfly balances the promotional signifier to portray the dichotomy Charles Eliot Norton (qtd. in *LG*56: 386) identified in reading the first *Leaves*, this 'gross yet elevated, this superficial yet profound' book, which opened my thesis: 'Yankee transcendentalism and New York rowdyism […] fuse and combine with the most perfect harmony.' Used to draw attention to anything from 'black Bombasins', fine silk fabric used for mourning attire, to corn-removal services (*New York Aurora*, 6th April 1842, *WWA*), the manicule's associations in print undercut the profundity of the lines it follows in *Leaves*, tapering Whitman's oracular flights with promotional discourse. This mechanism is not dissimilar from the autobiographical anchors, geographical and human contexts, to which Whitman tethers his rhetorical transcendentalist flights. The last lines of the book (*LG*60: 456) are 'Remember my words—I love you—I depart from/materials,/I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.' The butterfly manicule is a visual equivalent to Whitman's slang slung into formal diction, the placement of something feathery atop an earthy or 'uncouth' base.

In *The Lunar Light of Whitman's Poetry* Thomas (1987: 266) refers to 'the trick Whitman developed after the war of turning up the volume of his rhetoric in order to drown out the noise of his doubts', but I would argue that this trick is in evidence in the antebellum transcendental poetry. Where doubt seems to surface in some of Whitman's transcendental proclamations, the self-promotional or self-advertising rhetoric enters the fray to disguise uncertainty with patter or bravado, building to the sales-pitch crescendo to which I referred in Chapter Two, as seen in his 'Broad-Axe Poem' (*LG*56: 158–159) self-portrait.

Whitman's is in some ways a very Emersonian attitude (Emerson qtd. in Dowling 2014: 56): 'The way to write is to throw your body at the mark when your arrows are spent.' The difference is that Whitman could still fall back on the pointing finger, the self-promotion, to disguise doubt with diversion. Thomas (1987: 266) takes the example of the late poem 'Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood', in which Whitman no longer recognises America 'as having authentic existence outside what [he] authorizes in his poetry'. The poet (*LG*91: 350) announces — in an outlandish fashion reminiscent of his earlier radical equation between stones and souls, in content if not style — that there is 'far more in these leaves and chants' than in the nation's 'visible growth'. The title of Thomas's book helps to conceptualise Whitman's 'mad audacity' (1987: 266). As any materialist study would have it, and indeed as Whitman himself argued about the genesis of his work via the absorption of people, places, and contexts, a text reflects the time and culture in which it germinates. As Whitman puts it in the poem (*LG*91: 347, 349), before his desperate claim, even the 'transcendental Union' of his ode has to gestate in 'incalculable masses of composite precious/materials'. What emanates from the text is lunar light insofar as it produces no light of its own, but reflects what is already there. Thomas (1987: 266) regards Whitman's last-ditch attempt to convince his reader as the 'incipiently schizoid conclusion' of his postbellum crisis of faith. I also view this as an extreme example of what it looks like when Whitman's self-reliant self-promotions fail, when the mercantile drummer misses the mark by going overboard, when promises turn to prattle.

We might consider the butterfly-manicule as an imagistic emblem of some earlier successes, however. Undercutting the manicule's promotional overtone, the butterfly works the other way to dress Whitman's oracular flights — his 'perpetual transfers and promotions' (*LG*55: 54) — in something natural and light, in much the same way he deployed slang amidst high-flown or obscure language. The same is achieved by the book's nonchalant title, *Leaves of Grass*, 'grass' being a printer's term for amateur work, or test pages. The manicule represents something visibly constructed, especially as a persuasive tool, even in the form of something as simple as a hand. The butterfly adds insouciance to that promotional import. Whitman (Traubel 1906: 78) himself used the phrase to 'butterfly about' to describe the inconsequential nature of certain 'story writers' and their 'fragile literary vessels'. Conway (1866, *WWA*) remembered a similar nonchalance in Whitman while they explored New York together shortly after *Leaves* was first published, indicative of his flâneurial sensibilities: 'Nothing could surpass the blending of *insouciance* with active observation in his manner as we strolled along the streets.' There's a photo of an older Whitman, holding a butterfly on his outstretched finger to recreate the butterfly-manicule. He had the temerity to claim it was a real butterfly, not a prop, despite some glaring clues to the contrary that historian William Roscoe Thayer (*Scribner's Magazine*, 1919: 685) pointed out: 'How it happened that a butterfly should have been waiting in the studio on the chance that Walt might drop in to be photographed, or why Walt should be clad in a thick cardigan jacket on any day when butterflies would have been disporting themselves in the fields, I have never been able to explain.' Unconcerned, Whitman assured Traubel (1953: 440) 'Yes—that was an actual moth, the picture is substantially literal: we were good friends: I had quite the in-and-out of taming, or fraternizing with, some of the insects, animals.' I analysed analogous literary mythmaking in Whitman's account to Trowbridge of his becoming acquainted with Emerson, and in the case of the

butterfly portrait it espouses the value of *Leaves* as 'a genuine extension of person', as Sean Francis (2002: 382) puts it. I'll return to the idea that 'the picture is substantially literal' towards the end of this section.

Much more than his incautious self-promotion, Whitman of 1855 (*LG*55: 45) courts outrage by following up a graphic reference to his 'own seminal/wet' by invoking Jehovah, followed by a series of other myths and deities, who he lumps together as 'the old cautious hucksters'. It's not quite the disavowal of the nation's existence outside of his own 'feuillage', but were it not for his rhetorical skill this oracular flight would be hard to save from sounding like delusions of grandeur. After the war he removed the 'seminal/wet', though kept his 'life-lumps' (*LG*67: 79, 78), refusing to fully excise the 'rough' from his 'rough deific sketches'. One wonders whether the original line, like the 1860 text's spermatoid design, was a very literal, sensationalist reading of Emerson's suggestion in 'The Poet' that 'The religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men.' In place of 'summonses to consumption' (Francis 2002: 384) — bar the purchase and reading of the book — the poet dismisses these fellow salesmen by pointing to his own physicality and, more than that, his virility. The rhetorical flow, not to mention its specificity and precision, rescues this oracular flight from sounding like yells issuing from a madman on Broadway, heckling an auctioneer. Its sensationalism is aligned with the *Sun* and the *Herald*, papers 'devoured by Bowery B'hoys and Wall Street bankers', as Charles Capper writes (2010: 196). At its core, though, is a sentiment summarised in a couple of sentences from Emerson's 'Circles' (1883: 397) which, as Kateb (2002: 157) observes '[sound] like Whitman before Whitman got started': 'I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane.' The poet (*LG*55: 45) announces:

> Magnifying and applying come I,
> Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
> The most they offer for mankind and eternity less than a spirt of my own seminal
> wet,
> Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah and laying them away,
> Lithographing Kronos and Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
> Buying drafts of Osiris and Isis and Belus and Brahma and Adonai,
> In my portfolio placing Manito loose, and Allah on a leaf, and the crucifix engraved,
> With Odin, and the hideous-faced Mexitli, and all idols and images,
> Honestly taking them all for what they are worth, and not a cent more,

Here we see the poet measuring, as if for a tailor or carpenter, existing deities for his democratic 'portfolio'. In Whitman's real life, this practice had its counterpart in his enthusiasm for scrapbooking, as seen in his cultural geography scrapbook, as well as in excerpting and rearranging texts like Thoreau's. Equating sexual and textual fluidity as interchangeable self-replications, 'seminal/wet' and printer's ink', Whitman writes 'autobiography in colossal cipher' (Emerson 1883: 40), an Emersonian 'poet in that rude disguise', to quote Trowbridge (1902: 165). 'Each age,' Emerson announced in 'The American Scholar' (1884: 76), 'must write its own books', and here Whitman — himself a product of New York's literary world — is keenly aware that he must also sell them. As to the dual meaning of 'seminal', sexual and in the sense of a creative pioneer, the equation of sexual and textual fluidity supports my conceptual glossing in 'The Educator' about the cyclicality of procreative, pedagogic, and poetic acts in refining the next generation of

children, teachers, and poets. There is an obviously studied dimension to the precision with which the poet sets out his 'portfolio', as well as to his allusion to some lesser-known names. Amongst those obscurities, Adonai carries the 'I' through, its sound repeated in '*my* portfolio'. The poet is a 'journeyman divine' because he prints an extension of his body, which testifies to his pure soul. To borrow another maxim from 'The American Scholar' (Emerson 1884: 75), the 'school-boy under the bending dome of day' sees 'that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal, and one is print.'

To take a phrase from Mack (2005: 13) and stress within it the continuity between carpenter's and printer's perspective, as well as the transcendentalist import, Whitman chooses — in the lines above, but also from Emersonianism — 'to gut that ideology to render the myths more usable.' He finds 'as much or more in a framer framing a house', in men 'ahold of fire-engines', in 'The bull and the bug', in 'Dung and dirt' (*LG*55: 46). Following the blasphemous comparison the poet makes in outbidding his competitors, who are not denigrated so much as levelled like products condensed in the penny paper, or within a housebuilder's inventory, the poet's rhetoric displays enough erudition to simultaneously align him with the more outwardly 'gentlemanly' or intellectually palatable face of sales — the mercantile drummer, for instance — and to position him as prepared to go beyond even the most ill-regarded street-hawkers. Conway (1866, *WWA*) recounted Whitman, near the office of the *Herald*, pointing out one such type of street sale in New York's print world, teenage boys selling obscene books: '"There," said Walt, 'is a New York reptile. There's poison about his fangs I think.' Those obscenities, which Whitman denounced despite what we might view as the suspicious speed with which he picked the boy out of the crowd, were beyond the spectrum of 'strong-flavored romances' to which he refers in his open reply to Emerson (*LG*56: 349), considered valuable because 'the nutriment of the imperfect ones [comes] in just as usefully as any'. As Paul Erickson (2018: 138) suggests, Whitman's operation of a Brooklyn bookshop for a few years from 1849 — a lesser-known fact within the context of the poet's saturation in New York's print world, a saturation with its geographical centre 'in the neighborhood around Nassau and Fulton Streets in Lower Manhattan, which held the densest concentration of printers and publishers in the city, and thus the largest number of pornographers' — puts beyond all doubt that he not only knew about the business of pornography but understood it very well.[23] An outraged review of *Leaves* was published anonymously in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (1856, *WWA*), Leslie being the pen name of an English engraver called Henry Carter who moved to New York in the late 1840s and was commissioned to produce promotional materials by P. T. Barnum, for instance. Refusing to 'aid in extending the sale of this intensely vulgar, nay, absolutely beastly book' by indicating where it might be purchased, the reviewer (ibid.) goes so far as to 'suggest that the author should be sent to a lunatic asylum, and the mercenary publishers to the penitentiary for pandering to the prurient tastes of morbid sensualists.' As for Emerson's endorsement, the author supposes that the letter of approval was forged by this lunatic imitator of 'transcendentalisms', so brazen a transgression would it be to print a genuine letter. Alluding to the manicule, that piece bewails 'the case of Thomas Carlyle, a man with an order of intellect approaching genius, but who for a

[23] 'Pornography' is anachronistic for the period, and Erickson (2018) points out that his essay on 'Erotica' would be titled differently were that not the case. I should point out, vice versa, that I use 'obscene' in the sense of the contemporary yardsticks by which obscenity was measured.

distinguishing mark to point like a finger-board to himself, left a very terse and effective style of style of writing to adopt a jargon filled with new-fangled phrases and ungrammatical super-superlative adjectives'. By way of concluding, the author pictures an Emerson who 'drags [Whitman's] slimy work into the sanctum of New England firesides.'

One would be forgiven for assuming the reviewer was talking about a New York reptile of the kind the poet pointed out to Conway outside the *Herald* offices. The reviewer's unease is expressed in terms of infiltrated space, punctured by Whitman's vulgar hollering. That interloping is not dissimilar from Cornelius Mathews' fears about the Newsboys selling obscene books, as described in *A Pen-and-Ink Panorama of New-York City* (1853: 194), 'sneaking about the hotels, steamboat landings, and public parks, having concealed in his bosom, the seeds of ruin, and stealthily seeking to cast them in the laps of others.' This public dimension is worth stressing because, despite the appearance of New York's parks, streets, and ferry landings in *Leaves*, Whitman 'ignores the easy availability of sexually explicit print' (Erickson 2018: 36). That seedy underbelly is perhaps hiding in plain sight, however, in what he emphasised in its stead, for example by espousing a vision of human sexuality so natural, honest, and pure that we should see no problem with its juxtaposition with Jehovah himself, while also appealing, imagistically, to the contemporary popularity of its 'obscene' antithesis. One excellent means of promoting obscene books was via newspaper reportage of the arrests of leading publishers; journalistic outrage generated publicity. Donna Dennis (2009: 1) gives the example of bookseller John Atchinson who operated out of a shop on Nassau Street within a block that 'housed a dark, congested warren of bookstores, print shops, secondhand and antiquarian book dealers, engravers, lithographers, stationers, job printers, newspaper offices, and small and midsize publishing firms.' Since the 1840s, if not earlier, those blocks were also 'the heart of the city's erotic print trade' (ibid. 1–2). In 1855, a police officer visited Atchinson's store and arrested him for possession of a range of obscene European titles, then bestsellers in New York. Dennis (ibid. 4) quotes from the *New York Atlas*'s report on Atchinson's arrest, which thoughtfully provided his exact address: '[The books] were of the most beastly and revolting nature. There are other shops of the kind in the city, which we hope may soon be similarly visited.' On the face of it, the *Atlas* hopes that the visitors to those other shops would be the police, but they generously provide some practical information to other interested parties.

On the subject of the *Atlas* and performative journalistic outrage cultivated in New York's print and periodical spheres, I'll digress here to add some significant details and acknowledge some new work on Whitman's journalism. The detail is necessary because of the way in which these dynamics draw out the mechanics of outrage in the New York press, as well as some performative self-curations that contextualise Whitman's transcendentalist self-projections. The *Atlas* proprietors, Anson Herrick and John F. Ropes, co-owned the *Aurora*, which we know Whitman edited in the early 1840s. Turpin (2018, *WWA*) notes that the papers 'even shared the same headquarters, at 162 Nassau Street, in Manhattan.' Taking a dim view of Whitman's operations as *Aurora* editor, Herrick and Ropes concluded that he was 'the laziest fellow who ever undertook to edit a city paper' (qtd. in Turpin 2016: 162) and in response Whitman quit. Taking a job at the *Evening Tattler,* he publicly called the pair 'dirty fellows' (qtd. in Reynolds 1996: 102), dismissed the *Atlas* as 'a trashy, scurrilous, and obscene daily paper', and rebuked the proprietors for their 'coarse

manner of familiarity, to push themselves among gentlemen.' Herrick and Ropes retorted that they knew of 'a small, "obscure daily" now under the control of a "pretty pup" once in our employment; but whose indolence, incompetence, loaferism and blackguard habits forced [us] to kick him out of office'. And then in 1858, after such unpleasantness, the *Atlas* published Whitman's 'Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Towards Their Conditions'. It was printed under the 'Mose Velsor, of Brooklyn' pseudonym with all of its masculine, working-class Boweriness propping up the casualness of the 'off-hand hints'. Herrick was still part-owner at the time, while Whitman was editing the Republican *Brooklyn Daily Times*, the *Atlas*'s political opposite.

Turpin (2016: 164) posits that the series on 'manly beauty' was published in the paper for practical reasons — 'Herrick still needed his columns filled' — and that those 'hot remarks were primarily public theater.' He points out that Herrick and Ropes printed two of Whitman's short stories shortly thereafter, in another paper of theirs, *New York Washingtonian*. One was 'The Madman' (1843, *WWA*), which used the byline, or lack thereof, to advertise Whitman's temperance novel, *Franklin Evans*: 'By the Author of "Franklin Evans."' 'The Madman' cautions against friendship 'of that grosser kind which is rivetted by intimacy in scenes of dissipation', an example of what Moon (1991: 54) carefully deconstructs as enmeshed in the male-homoerotic discourse 'encoded in temperance writing' which 'exerts an ambiguous appeal because it provocatively "points beyond" the conventional moralism it ostensibly upholds towards a forbidden world which it in a sense takes as its "real," albeit deferred, subject.' Schöberlein, Blalock, McMullen, and Stacy (2022) have more recently argued that the *Atlas* was the venue chosen for 'Manly Health' — a series with plain interest in the male physique and virility, interests so starkly different from the paper's usual fare — because Whitman was once one of its editors. They (ibid. 190) insert an 1861 *Atlas* article taken from Wendy Jean Katz's online index of antebellum newspapers. The article appears to include Whitman in that paper's editorial history, a poet 'whose dirty and bestial "Leaves of Grass" have since disgusted every decent man who has been snared into reading them, and well entitled him to a term on Blackwell's Island under the statute against indecent personal exposures'. Blackwell Island, today Roosevelt Island, was home to a prison and a lunatic asylum. Reading 'Manly Health' as 'a potential anchor for an uncredited editorial tenure', they observe (ibid. 192) that by this point the poet 'had already shifted his public persona from dandy-newspaperman to poet-tough, rendering a named editorship much less appealing to the image-conscious Whitman.' Using computational stylometrics for related ads, postscripts, and puff pieces, Schöberlein, Blalock, McMullen, and Stacy (2022: 194) make a case for the treatise being more than 'a tossed-off piece for quick remuneration', for its being part of a book project that one could carry around the city, 'a self-help guide to be read on the omnibus, at the counter during a slow sales period, or in the workshop upon the close of day.'

Returning to obscene printed materials in antebellum New York — that is, obscenity of the more straightforward kind than the papers who staged this editorial backbiting — I want to mention George Akarman, star of New York's pornography market. Akarman was arrested in 1857 for publishing a weekly called *Venus's Miscellany*, at which point he was making profits of $12,000 a year (Erickson 2018: 140). He attained this success by posting material to customers — facilitated by growing network infrastructure — in order to circumvent an 1842 federal law that prohibited people from importing such materials and put

something of a dampener on New York's 'pure water connection' (Glaeser 2005: 12). Akarman's publications were entering the homes of a more genteel, affluent audience, or rather those 'slimy works' were being dragged 'into the sanctum' of the private, domestic, and therefore female sphere, depending on one's perspective. Competition intensified as the industry grew and publishers sought to stand out by advertising in covert ways, enabling booksellers to label books and other materials in a coded fashion. Those promotional strategies were the covert inverse of the copywriter shouting 'corns' in capitals to attract 'eminent gentlemen'. The pornographic trade that flourished in antebellum New York presented much evidence that outrage could be extremely profitable, just like editorial spats were plastered over newspaper pages for popular entertainment. As for Whitman's 1856 'mercenary publishers' (*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 1856, *WWA*), Fowler & Wells served that function anonymously for reasons that are not difficult to discern. It was Orson Fowler's brother, Lorenzo Fowler, who conducted Whitman's phrenological exam in 1849 at their Manhattan 'Phrenological Cabinet'. The poet scored highly for amativeness and adhesiveness, and 'a certain reckless swing of animal will' (qtd. in Loving 1999: 150). 'Phrenology in the hands of this budding transcendentalist', Loving writes (ibid.), 'suggested that a sound body was the signature of a healthy soul'. Whitman's 'spirt' simply reflected his amativeness, which in turn was part of his perfect poetic inventory. The poet's virility testified to his spirituality, his 'transcendent selfhood' (Bloom 2004: 44).

To level within the catalogue one's own sexual function and 'the exact dimensions of Jehovah' promised a degree of notoriety in the form of column inches even as the precise mythological and religious imagery signified a certain scholarliness. While the 'hucksters' levelled within the catalogue are in one way the deities and myths the poet measures, he also 'outbids' those trading in the pornographic or erotic material available on New York's streets, wharves, and parks with his vision of sex as transcendence. Like a butterfly atop a 'finger-board', the poet's off-hand lumping together of those 'hucksters' undercuts his self-promotional provocations, his concerted efforts to manufacture attention in the way big names like P. T. Barnum had done with great success. Whitman's 1856 'Leaves-Droppings' are a case in point on the self-promotional sprezzatura front. In his self-reviews, he had a prototype in Barnum's distribution in 1842 of 'fake editorials to the New York press as a way of bringing a museum exhibit into "public notice"', as David Haven Blake (2006: 106) notes.[24] The showman admitted as much in his autobiography, *Life of P. T. Barnum* (1855) and, by doing so within the pages of that third person title, he displayed considerable pleasure in those manipulations in the service of selling a product, just as Whitman would in writing self-reviews or posing whimsically with well-behaved butterflies in winter. Reynolds (1995: 489) assesses a post-war stylistic transition in Whitman's notebook entries, 'increasingly made in the third person, many of them sounding like canned news reports.' Blake (2006: 15) speculates as to why Whitman held onto the cardboard butterfly prop he later swore was a real, living creature: 'Surely if Whitman had been embarrassed by his artifice he would not have kept the butterfly as a souvenir.' There was a shared shamelessness, even a relishing not dissimilar from the way Whitman, a jour printer, savoured paper and

[24] Barnum's American Museum united in a single space exhibits ranging from morbid and freakish to genuinely valuable. Barnum's also helped promote the Crystal Palace Exhibition, which Whitman visited frequently.

types as his representations, the semblances of the self that he would insist were so much more despite his incessant revisions. That relishing is mirrored in the composition of the 1856 *Leaves* as a material object, its sextodecimo sturdiness, lines of ten-point type, well-leaded. It was a resilient little book, less vulnerable to the New York rough and tumble, the textual opposite to 'the crumbly structures sometimes run up in our city to by mercenary builders', as Whitman put it in Wicked Architecture' (1856, *WWA*). He boasted to Emerson in his open reply (*LG*56: 346) 'these thirty-two Poems I stereotype to print several thousand copies of.'

Worshipping surfaces

O'Neill (2017: 87) quotes from Emerson's journal where he puts Barnum's name 'on a list of individuals he considers among the worst of the age'. The Barnums are juxtaposed with 'Thoreau & Alcott & Sumner & whoever lives in the same love and worship as I; every just person, every man or woman who knows what truth means.' As to the pretence of truth, Emerson wondered whether Broadway was the spiritual — or not so spiritual — capital of artifice, pretence, and surfaces. He wrote this in his journal while in New York for his 1842 lecture series:

> In New York lately, as in cities generally, one seems to lose all substance, & become surface in a world of surfaces. Every thing is external, and I remember my hat & coat, and all my other surfaces, & nothing else. If suddenly a reasonable question is addressed to me, what refreshment & relief! I visited twice & parted with a most polite lady without giving her reason to believe that she had met any other in me than a worshipper of surfaces, like all Broadway.

Grief colours this portrait; Emerson's son, Waldo, had died just two months earlier, aged five. He immediately wrote 'This beloved and now departed Boy, this Image in every part beautiful, how he expands in his dimensions in this fond Memory to the dimensions of Nature!' Emerson's perception nonetheless flattens the city, in both its abstract form and in an empty urban magnitude specific to New York, razing Broadway to two dimensions. In 'Poem of the Road' (*LG*56: 225), Whitman worships the material certainty of those surfaces as intimations of spiritual progress, as he does his own body as a testament to his soul. In so doing, he emphasises — or more accurately exclaims — the dimensions and verticality of the things and people that form those ostensibly 'impassive surfaces' and act as the interstices, like 'window-pierced facades'. He is open to the surface as a medium for transcendence, to 'You' and every other face that dances through his perspective:

> You flagged walks of the cities! you strong curbs
> at the edges!
> You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves!
> you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!
> You rows of houses! you window-pierced facades!
> you roofs!
> You porches and entrances! you copings and iron
> guards!

> You windows whose transparent shells might
> expose so much!
> You doors and ascending steps! you arches!
> You gray stones of interminable pavements! you
> trodden crossings!
> From all that has been near you I believe you
> have imparted to yourselves, and now would
> impart the same secretly to me,
> From the living and the dead I think you have
> peopled your impassive surfaces, and the
> spirits thereof would be evident and ami-
> cable with me.

'The picture alive, every part in its best light' (ibid. 226), leads the poet to 'ordain [him]self loosed of limits/and imaginary lines!' Chapter One analysed the poet's self-ordination as part of the interplay between the formal properties of the catalogues and the physical properties of 'the chunky fat book' as Whitman (Traubel 1953: 153) called the 1856 *Leaves*, with its dense newspaper columns. Aside from the poem's horizontal elision of lines, human types, and scenes, it merges public address and direct address via the incessant 'You'. The 'You' transgresses the boundary between the public and the private, as does the 'talk of those turning eyeballs' (*LG*56: 229), via the anonymous urban encounter, transcending linguistic barriers in its recourse to the body. They are not transparent; they are very much opaque, 'and the unseen is proved by the seen' (*LG*55: 14). I suggested in Chapter One that Thoreau's (qtd. in Hodder 2008: 28) 'sauntering eye' has more currency than Emerson's transparent eyeball here because Whitman underscores the bodily, visceral attraction of people to one another, whereas Emerson etherealises the experience of seeing. Emerson looks at Broadway and finds only surfaces, whereas Whitman sees those surfaces disaggregated into their material constituents: flagstones, curbs, planks, posts, porches, entrances, steps, arches. As in 'A Broadway Pageant' (1860, *WWA*), originally published without that title in the *New York Times* on the occasion of a visit by the Japanese Embassy, Whitman sees that 'the facades of the houses are alive with people—/when eyes gaze, riveted, tens of thousands at a/time'. Some perceived Emerson's prose as phantasmagorial, privileging surface, or style, over depth, or sense. Reynolds (1989: 490) quotes Unitarian minister Henry Giles's assessment of how the components of Emerson's essays become 'distorted, jostled, turned upside down in the giddy phantasmagoria of our borrowed vision, [and] are made to reel to and fro in a delirious or intoxicated dance.'

'Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun' (*LG*67: 48), first appearing in *Drum-Taps* in 1865, proposes that the small matter of whether the city streets are all surface, flashes and specks, is inconsequential: 'Give me faces and streets! give me these phantoms in-/cessant and endless along the trottoirs!' Nature's 'primal sanities' (ibid. 47, 48) are ultimately worth no more than 'Broadway, with the soldiers marching', 'the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel', 'Manhattan streets, with their powerful throbs, with the/beating drums'. Whitman (ibid. 49) finishes with a simple line that enacts the final elision, that between himself and his mighty city: 'Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.' Just as the poet argues for the book as his body, thrust beneath your clothing, pulsing with your heartbeat, it is also in the 1867 text that he explicitly reorders his affiliations in line with the city's growing cultural stature: 'Walt Whitman am I, of mighty

Manhattan the son' (*LG*67: 49). He makes Manhattan the heart of the nation, and he makes himself the heart of Manhattan. The fourth poem in 'Chants Democratic' (*LG*60: 165) had already proposed such an equation: 'no less in myself than the whole of the Manna-/hatta in itself'. Drumming up business for the city with his panorama of paper and types, he simultaneously sells his book — an object of surfaces — as an extension of himself. That he does so using military imagery is not just a function of the poem's wartime inception, as can be seen from other journalistic pieces. In his 'New York Dissected' article on 'Broadway' (1856, *WWA*) for *Life Illustrated*, the phrenological journal of his 1856 publishers, Whitman employed similar language to describe that street as 'a curious epitome of the life of the city'. In addition to the thoroughfare's liquid, tidal properties — eddying, roaring, boiling, surging — he notes the 'endless procession', the 'sharp, heavy rattle, as from advanced light artillery', 'charge of wheels', 'full of platoons, of the "industrial regiments," as Carlyle would call them', 'the heavy stone armor of the various patent pavements'. He also seems to describe a mercantile drummer type. 'Creatures of smart appearance', these 'down-town clerks' surface, their 'hair all soaked and "slickery" with sickening oils', 'prim in great glow of shiny boots'. As Stacy (2014, *WWA*) suggests about 'New York Dissected', it invoked 'a precise separation of elements for a better understanding of the whole.' While this most obviously refers to phrenological principles, such as Whitman's own separation into distinct characteristics like amativeness and adhesiveness, we see this same mechanism at work in that 'Poem of the Road' catalogue, wherein the poet disaggregates each surface or material to make a claim for the depth that is visible to those able or inclined to apprehend it. The logic of synecdoche is another related mechanism. However loud or flashy, this urban scene is capable of the same transcendent depth as the splendid, silent sun, just as the Whitmanic virile bard gestures to his 'seminal muscle' as testament to his spiritual health.

Chapter Two noted Whitman's catalogic, paratactic display of occupation in motion, his formal levelling. I underlined the radical placement of the prostitute over and above the president (*LG*55: 22). This choice acknowledged the world of sex work in New York, even if Whitman didn't acknowledge the printed material that flourished on the 'trottoirs', (*LG*60: 232) and it did so in a way that humanised the profession via the horizontal aesthetic of his catalogic and democratic poetics. In 'Song of Myself' (*LG*55: 22), the prostitute occupies three lines, two more than most, though the carpenter and the jour printer occupy three apiece. Whitman (ibid. 21) moves from the pure contralto singing in the organloft to 'The carpenter [who] dresses his plank . . . . the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild/ascending lisp', and from the lunatic 'carried at last to the asylum a confirmed case' to 'The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws [who] works at his case,/He turns his quid of tobacco, his eyes get blurred with the manuscript'. Our eyes and ears fluctuate as we shift from the low contralto in the raised loft to the carpenter's 'wild/ascending lisp'; from a 'confirmed case' of lunacy, to a printer's 'case'. Just as repeated syllabic sounds serve as linguistic joinery between the lines themselves, so do they enact the 'one is what one does' merge discussed in Chapter Two. Besides the printer's resemblance to Whitman's depiction of Hartshorne with his 'quid of tobacco', his 'gray head' and 'gaunt jaws' suggest what the poet meant about the Brooklyn city printer's remarkable longevity 'for a printer'. His head is grey, not just his hair, washed-out in a way the traces of which we later hear in 'pallid slivers slumbering' (*LG*91: 386). It's as if years of printing black ink on pale paper have rendered him in grayscale. Defiantly, Whitman omits the product — the printed book, the

carpenter's work — entirely. '[B]lurred with the manuscript', the printer's eyes mirror the merge between life and labour as, in Emerson's wording in 'The Over-Soul' (1883: 256), 'the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and spectacle, the subject and the object' are melded. By this point in the poem, the speaker has already posed the question (*LG*55: 17): 'Who need be afraid of the merge?' The image is nevertheless an unsettling one. Starting with the song that echoes from the organloft and the 'wild/ascending' lisp that issues from the 'tongue' of a foreplane, strikingly similar to Emerson's suggestion in 'The Poet' (1883: 18) that 'the carpenter's stretched cord, if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the breeze', Whitman writes a cacophony to accompany the accumulation of disparate images. It reaches fever pitch when sound is merely implied in the 'lunatic carried at last to the asylum', as if overlaid by the filmic dissonance with which the catalogue begins. Printing and carpentry are at once artistic and mechanical. Juxtaposed with the lunatic, the jour printer's gaunt jaws and blurred eyes insinuate some shared delirium, the tunnel vision demanded by physical immersion in the profession.

Before the 'journeymen divine' line in 'The Sleepers' (*LG*55: 71), the speaker announces another kind of self-abandonment: 'I am a dance . . . . Play up there! the fit is whirling me fast.' The typesetter's lifelong unleashing of myriad 'unlaunched voices' ('A Font of Type' *LG*91: 386) seems in 'Song of Myself' to have hollowed his face, as if he were voicing those works himself. That his eyes 'get blurred with' and are not 'blurred by' the manuscript reinforces the refusal to subjugate subject to object, person to product, body to commodity. He is a being in motion rather than a word fixed in print, hence 'It is I you hold, and who holds you' (*LG*60: 455). For the poem's jour printer, the craft itself — the action — is the focus, one intense enough to trigger intoxicating self-abandonment: he is a dance. I refer back to the speaker in 'Poem of Joys' (*LG*60: 260) who admits that 'The sight of flames maddens me with pleasure', enabling Whitman to construct the image of fire dancing in his eyes, a self-reflection that speaks to passions inflamed within the poet by the firemen, rather than the commodification suggested by 'dimes on the eyes walking', which Dowling (2009) reads as part of the mask of anti-commerce that cloaks the self-promoting transcendental ego. Whitman's strategic self-marketing is undeniable, but Dowling's (ibid. 84) totalising elision of 'aesthetic decisions' and 'professional decisions', 'artistic choices' and 'financial choices', overlooks the genuine sincerity of so many transcendental proclamations. This sincerity, Whitman's earnest conviction, also explains the poet's tendency to overstate his position where his confidence wanes. We believe the speaker (*LG*55: 53) when he says, plainly, 'I do not say these things for a dollar, or to fill up the time while I wait for a boat'. It softens us to his erotic and imaginative, if somewhat contractual, leap: 'It is you talking just as much as myself . . . . I act as the tongue of you.'

As Riley (2011: 164) suggests, notwithstanding Whitman's calculations, he was also 'accident-prone'. For instance, Folsom (2006: 72) has demonstrated that the 1855 text was printed on paper used for legal contracts and forms because that's what the Rome brothers had in stock in their Brooklyn shop where they hand-pressed Whitman's *Leaves*. This paper size required substantial spatial rearrangement on the hoof which Whitman did by 'madly proofreading the first sheet off the press' (ibid. 80). To save money, he told Rome to bind together pages containing errors, aiming, writes Riley (2011: 164), 'for an approximate mean average of mistakes bound in each copy.' Forming part of what Gary Schmidgall (2000) has called Whitman's 1855 'stop-press revision', it makes more of a case for the poet-printer's equation of print and

body. Schmidgall (ibid. 73) discovered two different versions of a line from 'Song of Myself': one reads 'And the night is for you and me and all'; the other, 'And the day and night are for you and me and all'. Whitman's revision adds balance, especially between 'usual terms' and 'never the usual terms' or the intersection of public and private, but also weakens the line. Such choices were enmeshed in a poetics of eligibility with its roots in the textual and material instability of antebellum New York, in a culture of accumulation and prefabricated design. That book's textual history, of ad hoc late nights at the printer's case, supports the equation of person and print. I compare Emerson's (1867: 65) detached prosopopoeia in 'Brahma', published in the *Atlantic* in 1857, a poem R. A. Yoder (1978: 163) calls 'sonorously regular' and 'hauntingly impersonal': 'I am the hymn the Brahmin sings.' As established in Chapter One, when Emerson speaks as the sea ('Seashore' 1867: 126) his voice is detached, distantly mystic: 'And, in my mathematic ebb and flow,/Giving a hint of that which changes not.' It's the polar opposite of Whitman's last-minute, fever-pitch exhilarations, his appeals — by turns calculatedly promotional and frenetically honest — to nearness and physical intimacy. Whitman took the 'I' more seriously, partly because he was fixated on the eye(s) that would gaze at the bodies of his ideas for years to come, 'riveted, tens of thousands at a/time' ('A Broadway Pageant' 1860, *WWA*).

'The Mad Poet of Broadway'

I'll detour here from Whitman's juxtaposition of the lunatic and the jour printer to a seldom mentioned New York poet known locally as 'The Mad Poet of Broadway.' In 1836, McDonald Clarke's *Poems of M'Donald Clarke* were published by a New York printer by the name of Jared Bell — best known as the father of billboards, beginning in 1835 with a giant ad for a travelling circus. Clarke, 'The Mad Poet of Broadway', was not native New Yorker. He moved in 1819, the same year Whitman was born. Just as Whitman would later jot lines while on the move, or declaim poetry on Broadway omnibuses, Clarke 'wandered up and down the principal thoroughfare of New York', according to Clark Jillson's (1878: 4) sketch, apparently writing 'from impulse'. A strange, tragic coincidence connected Clarke and transcendentalism in Whitman's field of vision. On the same day in March 1842 that Whitman heard Emerson's 'Poetry of the Times' lecture at the New York Society Library, Clarke drowned in Blackwell Island Insane Asylum. A few days later, Whitman's eulogy for Clarke appeared in the *Aurora*, followed by another editorial and a poem, 'The Death and Burial of McDonald Clarke', which parodied the late poet's style. Clarke was buried in Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery, where his plot became known as 'Poet's Mound.' In 'A Visit to Greenwood Cemetery' (1844) for the *Sunday Times & Noah's Weekly Messenger*, Whitman (qtd. in Noverr and Stacy 2014: 212) admired the 'fitting spot for the repose of this strange child of genius'. I've commented on Emerson's (1884: 16) enshrinement of the 'spirit of infancy' in the lover of nature, discussed in relation to Whitman's schoolteaching days. When Fuller later toured the Blackwell's Island asylum, she penned for the *Tribune* — then tied with the *Sun* and the *Herald* as the city's most popular papers — a poetic 'portrait of suffering' of a woman she saw there, using 'the transcendental principle to undergird her social reform', to expose 'the commodification of the human spirit' (Dowling 2014: 50), and to humanise the figure of the outcast. Fuller actually lived within sight of the island while living at the

Greeleys' farmhouse, which was set in considerable woodland but overlooked 'a grassy ravine that sloped down to the East River opposite the southern tip of Blackwell's Island' (Capper 2010: 194). The divinity Fuller (2000: 101) saw despite the woman's physical and mental isolation is reflected in the *Tribune* article's attention to her innocent, childlike gaze, 'large, open, fixed and bright with a still fire.'

Andrew C. Higgins (2002) has argued for McDonald Clarke's influence on Whitman based on certain stylistic commonalities, as has Reynolds (1996) based on Clarke's varying line lengths and mixed registers, the marriage of slang and formal diction. Clarke also fashioned his own poetic amalgamation of the distance and nearness that Hart Crane saw in Whitman, producing both highly intimate verse and also relating anonymous encounters in Manhattan, the latter of which Reynolds (1996: 89) views as 'summoning eroticism' in a proto-Whitmanic way. Clarke's intimate verse would sometimes imply a reader's response, or even include a fictive one from the woman he wrote to. Intimacy and distance characterised the changes afoot in the print sphere, a volatility to which Clarke adapted. This is the thrust of Higgins's (2002) short essay, 'MacDonald Clarke's Adjustment to Market Forces: A Lesson for Walt Whitman', which Katz (2020) has more recently taken up, briefly but helpfully positioning Clarke within her larger study of the politics of art criticism in New York's penny press. Clarke navigated the shift from the hand-presses of Whitman's apprenticeships to 'the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press' ('Proto-Leaf' *LG*60: 21), and curated public voices for different audiences, moving from a small, intimate readership to much larger audiences by way of the press, 'against the tradition of the gentlemanly amateur poet' (Noverr and Stacy 2014: 114). Port cities like New York had a geographical advantage in the speed at which they could access European texts yet to be afforded copyright protections and the city's 'pure water connection' (Glaeser 2005: 12), within growing network infrastructure, accelerated distribution to other markets. Against this backdrop, newspapers and magazines provided critical platforms for poets. As Charles Fenno Hoffman wrote in *The Literary World* in 1847 (qtd. in Dowling 2009: 1–2), literature 'now makes its home with the Merchant', making the 'seat of commerce […] the centre of literary power.'

Clarke sold his poems to dailies including the *Aurora*, but mainly the *Sun* and *Herald.* Higgins (2002, n.p.) notes that Clarke 'was popular among the Knickerbocker crowd as a source of amusement', 'a bizarre but harmless lunatic'. Whitman told Traubel (1906: 397), too, that he was himself of interest to 'the newspaper men' who looked for 'freakish characters'. Anne C. Lynch Botta (1902: 523) identified Whitman's 'amorphous hybrid medium' as 'the poet of democracy' as an antidote to 'the insipid "Correctness" of […] the "Knickerbocker school."' Higgins (2002) credits Clarke with giving Whitman 'a model of the poet as unappreciated outsider, what David S. Reynolds calls the "neglected artist" myth', as indeed the lunatic of 'Song of Myself' symbolises the social outcast. Whitman's poem for Clarke, printed in the *Aurora* (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 135), takes aim — in the parenthetical mode we now associate with *Leaves*, epitomised by his first-person aside to the prostitute — at '(The scoffs of the multitude spurning,).' No other line is parenthesised, thereby isolating Clarke's detractors in pictorial symbolism of the poet's life as an outsider, not to mention the tragedy of his drowning inside an island asylum. The poem sees Whitman 'trying on' Clarke's style, imitating a newspaper poet while writing poetry in a newspaper. Clarke also experimented with voices. Katz (2020: 60) gives the example of Clarke's poem for a young sculptor, Edward Brackett, who the *Herald* was then promoting 'in a small back-and-forth with the

Commercial Advertiser, which 'started in a lofty style, appropriate to Brackett's statue group from Milton', but ended by praising him 'as destined to wake Yankee Doodle.' There were mechanics behind the artistry, real hands pulling strings behind the printer's fists that peppered the pages of penny papers, so Clarke's writing from impulse, the spark of the divine, was balanced by commercial desires that necessarily had an anticipatory eye.

Beyond observing that Clarke died on the day Whitman heard Emerson speak, Higgins doesn't compare those two poetic models. Reynolds (1996: 82) highlights how the line 'drawn from Emerson to Whitman' obscures the pre-existent 'materials and stimuli' for which the Concordian was a catalyst and discusses Clarke shortly thereafter, but similarly stops short of that comparison. I suggest that Clarke's and Emerson's respective ideas about the figure of the poet coincided in a very particular way in Whitman's life as a journalist and journeyman printer in 1840s New York. To borrow from 'The Poet' (Emerson 1883: 22), 'The Mad Poet of Broadway' would 'embrace words and images excluded from polite conversation', for example in capturing the erotic energy of the anonymous urban encounter. Clarke also saw 'the gliding train of cars' (ibid. 23) within nature's 'vital circles', though this sentiment is rendered as the 'comfortably crazy' poet's (Clarke qtd. in Child 1845: 93) somewhat more slangy 'rackety, whackety railroad power' to write 'an hundred lines an hour', which sounds like a jingle. Writing in his journal following his 1842 New York lecture series, Emerson (1984: 279) recalled 'a good Staten Islander' who said he 'would go hear' him speak because 'he had heard I was a *rattler*.' A 'rattler' was a noisy train or coach, as in the 'rattle of rail-road cars' Thoreau (1854: 180) describes in *Walden*, though in a performance context it implied a rousing speaker, one who 'rattled' the audience with their loud, pacy delivery, presumably rather than the content of their speech, per se, which doesn't quite mesh with Emerson's reputed eloquence as a studied orator, nor his disdain for 'wild hand gestures, foot stomping, or similarly staged antics', as Peter S. Field (2003: 143) reminds us. The 'good Staten Islander' seems to have been recommended Emerson's lecture on the basis of there being excitement to be had, derived only partially from his growing celebrity, and possibly at a length that would justify the cost of the evening. I compare this 'rattle' to Mathews's (1853: 182) description of the New York newsboy's singularly 'quick, snapping cry, uttered while under a full run, and trailing along like the smoke of a steam-pipe with the boat at the top of her speed', tactics used to sell papers that would print the contents of said lectures. The other 'rattler' denoted eccentricity that bordered on the unhinged, hence 'to rattle on', which many equated with transcendentalism anyway but was also available via the 'fanatical reformers' Whitman loved to see at the Broadway Tabernacle (Reynolds 1989: 105). The 'good Staten Islander' almost certainly had this second meaning in mind, too, especially given that New Yorkers, as well as the Staten Islanders and Brooklynites within travelling distance, were increasingly spoilt for choice when it came to lectures. Melville (qtd. in Kopley 2010: 608) went to see Emerson in 1849 precisely because he was said to be 'full of transcendentalisms, myths, & oracular gibberish', and to his surprise found it 'quite intelligible, tho' to say truth, they told me that night he was unusually plain.'

In her *Letters from New York*, Lydia Maria Child (1843: 89) wrote that Clarke 'left a record on the public heart', having been 'the city talk, and almost every child in the street was familiar with his countenance.' Her impression (ibid. 92) of Clarke's poetry was somewhat conflicted and this extended to wondering whether his work constituted poetry at all:

> His strange productions bore about the same relation to poetry that *grotesques*, with monkey faces jabbering out of lilly cups, and gnarled trees with knot-holes twisted into hag's grimaces, bear to graceful *arabesques*, with trailing vines and intertwisted blossoms. Yet was the undoubted presence of genius always visible. Ever and anon a light from another world shone on his innocent soul, kindling the holiest aspirations, which could find for themselves no form in his bewildered intellect, and so fell from his pen in uncouth and jagged fragments, still sparkling with the beauty of the region whence they came.

In Whitman's earlier *Aurora* article (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 106), he notes Clarke's 'abruptness' and 'jaggedness', but says that his 'fugitive effusions', disseminated 'through our paper and others', were 'mostly all imbued with a spiritual flame.' Whitman (ibid.) seizes on Clarke's outsider status and visionary intensity, which he connects with 'the requisites of a great poet': the 'power, in his writing, to draw bold, startling images, and strange pictures—the power to embody in language, original, and beautiful, and quaint ideas'. As Whitman would later put in his own preface (*LG*55: v), arranged in newspaper column format, 'He is a seer . . . . he is individual'. Whitman also laments (qtd. in Rubin and Brown: 108) that the 'fires' of genius 'sometimes enlighten and beautify, but quite often scorch, wither, and blast the soul of its possessor.' If there's meaning beyond the conventional metaphor, I suspect this refers to something Child (1843: 97) reported about the 'fearfully delirious' Clarke who, after moving from the Tombs prison in Five Points to the asylum on Blackwell Island, cried for water because 'his brain was all on fire.' Whitman (qtd. in Rubin and Brown: 109) relates to the *Aurora* readership that Clarke was driven mad by his love for a woman, 'a love, pure and fiery, though uncouth', and by a 'foolish person who deceived [him] by promising to introduce him to the lady whose beauty had maddened him.' When in 'Starting From Paumanok' (*LG*60: 13) the poet declares that he will 'let flame from me the burning fires/that were threatening to consume', 'will give them complete abandonment', he follows it with this parenthetical question that isolates him as an outsider while making a claim to his fitness for the role: '(For who but I should understand love, with all its/sorrow and joy?/And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)' Erkkila (1989: 161) deconstructs how the 'desire to come out poetically' flows between 'public exhortation' and 'private address'. Enmeshed in penny press politics and debates about high/low art, Clarke provided a model of the outsider voice vacillating between the intimate and the public in antebellum New York, which culminated in his most private moments being commodified.

In the public voice of the *Aurora*, Whitman (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 106) basked in the physical production of sound to describe his experience of reading Clarke's verse, feeling 'in the chambers of the mind within us, a moving and responding, as of harp cords, struck by the wind.' This praise is conspicuously different from his response to Emerson's lecture as 'one of the richest and most beautiful compositions, both for its matter and style'. It hints at Fuller's (qtd. in Bean and Myerson 2000: 5) later acknowledgement in her first piece for the *Tribune*, on Emerson's *Essays: Second Series* (1844), that in spite of or perhaps in part because of their richness those writings 'tire like a string of mosaics or a house built of medals', a series of graceful, trailing, intertwisted arabesques. Whitman made a similar distinction in an article for Poe's *Broadway Journal* in 1845, first published in the *Brooklyn Evening Star*, 'Art-Singing and Heart-Singing', after seeing the Cheney Family quartet perform at Niblo's Saloon on Broadway. He lauded the

group's unpretentious, authentically American art form in opposition to 'the Old World', 'her tenors and her buffos', her 'sycophantic influence'. Sycophancy is of course what Whitman lampooned in Greeley's exaggerated, performative response to Emerson. The Cheneys, he wrote, '[put] one in mind of health and fresh air in the country, at sunrise—the dewy, earthy fragrance that comes up then in the moisture, and touches the nostrils more gratefully than all the perfumes of the most ingenious chemist.' He later (*PW*: 464) used a similar metaphor for the sermons of Elias Hicks, which I quoted in Chapter One: 'different as the fresh air of a May morning or sea-shore breeze from the atmosphere of a perfumer's shop'.

The art/heart distinction contextualises a pre-1855 manuscript, 'Rules for Composition' (*WWA*): 'A perfectly transparent, plate-glassy style, artless, with no ornaments', just 'Clearness, simplicity, no twistified or foggy sentences at all—the most translucid clearness without variation.' He starts to write, and then crosses out, 'Mention not God at all', perhaps for its 'twistified' syntax. If Emerson's is a house built of medals, Whitman at his best gives 'glories strung like beads on [his] smallest sights/and hearings' (*LG*60: 379). Matt Miller (2010: 42) points to an 1856 manuscript leaf containing three manicules which similarly shows Whitman reminding himself to 'Avoid all the "intellectual subtleties"'. If the works of Emerson were art-song, the likes of Clarke — 'a true son of song' Whitman called him (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 106) — offered an uncouth yet visceral model for heart-song that imbibed the 'rackety, whackety' lifeblood of the city as if inhaling a 'sea-shore breeze'. The embodied spirituality of Clarke's verse, 'the delicate union of body and soul' (qtd. in Higgins 2002), likewise prefigures Whitman's cardinal concern and his crucial transcendentalist complication. That Clarke distinguishes that union from 'that mangled connexion of foul/or unclean sensations, that squalid minds love' (ibid.) also anticipates Whitman's 'transfigured sensationalism' (Reynolds 1989). Reynolds (ibid. 310) identifies 'the lunatic carried at last to the asylum a confirmed case' as an image derived from the culture of penny-press shock tactics, within which the *Herald* — to which Emerson himself alluded in contemplating the hybridity of Whitman's *Leaves* — is the stand-out example. Whitman does well to avoid 'intellectual subtleties', crafting a transcendentalist poetics that speaks rather to the body in singing the soul, a poet who extends his hand rather than his mind, but the promotional undertones are less subtle. He delights in the idea of the image, as in the titled '(Poem) Shadows' manuscript note (*WWA*), where he soaks in Broadway's 'heavy base, the great hum and harshness', 'peer[s] through the plate glass at the pictures of rich goods', gazes at 'faces and figures', 'all so various, all so phantasmic'.

Clarke's 1836 preface to his *Poems of M'Donald Clarke* shows his continued interest in the directness of his relation to the reader, initiated by the physical act of writing, carried by the printer at his case, digested by the muscular operations of a reader. Following an engraving of Clarke, open-collared, the preface ends (ibid. 12) like this: 'If the life of my poetry is wholesome, it will breathe after the wild spirit that inspired it has been sobered at the terrible tribunal of Eternity, and the weak hand that traced it, long wasted to ashes.' The preface to *The Gossip* (1835) refers in closing to the preceding book's reception and to the act of reading as an oral rather than a visual act. Clarke (qtd. in Higgins 2002) jabs at the New York literary elite: 'It was read not only with tongues, but the teeth of the rats and mice of Fulton street, and they, in my modest opinion, are the most literary part of the Gothamite gentle folks.' In his next collection, Clarke (1836: 29) answers 'one who asked if the Writer had not often been discouraged' by saying that he

'always wore a full cock'd hat', anticipating Whitman's Quaker 'hat-honour' inflected 'I cock my hat as I please, indoors or out' (*LG*55: 25). Below is the first verse from Clarke's 'New-York' (1836: 33), one of two poems by that name in the collection. The staging of the lone poet on the Battery, silhouetted by moonlight, is markedly theatrical.

> I love to lean on the Battery's rail,
> When the ghost of daylight leaves the fading west,
> The Moon half lights the sky, with features pale,
> And the tired City slowly frets to rest.
> For then my spirit fills the azure gloom,
> And begs Eternity, for elbow-room.

Clarke's most remembered line is similarly theatrical: 'Now twilight lets her curtain down,/And pins it with a star' (qtd. in Child 1843: 92).

The volume's second 'New-York' poem also refers to the 'elbow crook' (Clarke 1836: 148) of eternity. Whitman's *Aurora* eulogy (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 106, 109) reflected solemnly that the Mad Poet 'was little fitted for elbowing his way amid the mass', and he took solace in the 'quiet and dreamy spot' (ibid. 109) in Green-Wood where Clarke was buried. Having died with nothing, Clarke's burial was funded by wealthier friends (he was close to Fitz-Greene Halleck for instance) and Whitman (ibid. 107) noted in his eulogy that 'papers are up at several places, to receive subscriptions for erecting a monument', which was erected in marble. Whitman quoted Clarke's 'The Dead Poet' (ibid.) in full, written several years earlier in response to hearing 'a similar scheme' to fundraise for a poet's monument. 'Human pomp is a pitiful thing', Clarke wrote, 'But to decorate death is indeed disgusting!' Just as Green-Wood was New York's answer to New England's Mount Auburn, the country's first garden cemetery, Clarke anticipated that those 'sunrise friends' who might memorialise him in a grandiose fashion having cared little for him in life would do so 'to flatter but selfish passions'. Perceived as such, selfish passions would claim for New York City Clarke's talent, clothe it in white marble, and embed it in ground that, despite its altitudinous democratic value, came to be prime real estate for those who had occupied lofty positions in life. As a tourist destination, too, Green-Wood became a real money-spinner. Mathews's (1853: 144) 'pen-and-ink' panorama of New York has a section on Green-Wood in which the author baulks at 'shop-windows on the common highway of our city' advertising tickets for Green-Wood like 'mere tokens of an ordinary excursion'. He (ibid. 145) similarly looks with disgust at 'daily proclamations' in newspapers advertising the 'hostile systems [that] contend for our living bodies', so that 'we are buried by corporations' that sell tokens 'as to a ball':

> We take stock in graveyards as we do in banks and railway schemes. Graves are bought by the lot at a discount: so much off, if several are taken at a time. We are stimulated to secure the best places, the choice spots, as if they were premium benches at a concert, or private boxes at the opera. Oh, that we have come to live in such an age! No wonder—no wonder—the poets are dead!

The commodification of 'democratic vistas' and of the body itself, within the wider culture of material instability discussed in Chapter Two, formed part of the 'suck and sell' Whitman disavowed in poetry, even

as he commodified his own image, curated a brand, and cultivated celebrity. He was far better fitted to 'elbowing his way amid the mass', or pointing people in his direction within the jostling context of material and textual instability. Clarke was not only an important formal model but something of a caution against the dangers of talent in the wrong hands, hands less adept at working 'at the rougher work' (Burroughs 1867: 83), to invoke Whitman self-mythologised poet carpenter image.

Substantially literal pictures

Dowling's (2014: 50) study of Emerson's mentorial marketisation of transcendentalism argues 'how effective Fuller's transcendental training was for her *Tribune* writing', for example in her sympathetic poetic portraits of the outcast and forgotten. We can formulate the inverse for Whitman. While his transcendentalist instincts may have been awakened on Paumanok's friable shores, the print and periodical culture of antebellum New York defined how he would disseminate them. It also shaped how he would use New England connections to uplift himself and, by extension, New York, just as Greeley did in hiring Fuller. Among ill-fated transcendentalist poets who already had Boston connections was William Ellery Channing II, nephew of the Unitarian preacher. Buell (1973: 240) quotes Bronson Alcott's assessment of the man, who Dowling (2014: 171) calls 'Concord's Mad Poet': 'Whim, thy name is Channing'. Dowling (ibid.) writes that Channing's poems 'had the air of economic speculation about them—the first of them bearing the appearance and function of a versified self-promotional advertisement and cover letter'. Buell (1973: 240) observes that Channing's literal view of 'the doctrine of inspiration', which led to spur-of-the-moment poetry, upset Emerson because he 'refus[ed] even to correct grammatical mistakes in the poems he submitted to *The Dial*.' He (ibid.) relates a 'possibly apocryphal' tale about Channing's collapse, how 'he would "haunt the Boston secondhand shops, buy up his own 'works,' and burn them."' Meanwhile, the young Whitman had seen a Manhattanese-bred 'child of genius' go the way of Clarke despite having a measure of local celebrity and literary-commercial sense.

Besides the emphatic materiality and solidity of Whitman's transcendentalist poetics, within his self-promotions the textual instability of antebellum New York — both within the city and as Boston's literary underdog — clearly looms large. Tellingly, he writes in a self-review of *Imprints* (*Brooklyn City News*, October 1860, *WWA*), the 1860 marketing pamphlet designed with his first Boston publishers, that 'Permanence is written all over the poem'. Its 'peculiar native idiomatic flavor […], to many disagreeable' promises some intrigue, as does the book's 'muscular and excessively virile energy, full of animal blood', but such 'is the ever-recurring indecency of the inspired Biblical writers'. Like Clarke (qtd. in Higgins 2002) he sets up a distinction between 'that mangled connexion of foul/or unclean sensations, that squalid minds love' and the transcendent sexuality for which he stands not only as a writer but as a 'journeyman divine'. 'We believe it was Dr. Dictionary Johnson', Whitman wrote (*Brooklyn City News*, October 1860, *WWA*), 'who said that persons of any celebrity may calculate how much truth there is in histories and written lives by weighing the amount of that article in the stuff that is printed about themselves.' With his pointing finger and pointier elbows, Whitman made his way amid the mass, imbibing it as a formal principle even as he set himself apart from it.

Before even finding a publisher for the 1860 edition, Whitman asked the Rome brothers 'to typeset and print page proofs of the new poems' (Eiselein 1998: 362), his 'anticipatory eye' ever trained on the future, on his reception, on the eyes that would look into his own by opening this new Bible, by which he would merge seer and spectacle. Thayer & Eldridge printed the edition on 'heavy white paper' (ibid.) and, despite Whitman's rough self-portrait for the *Imprints* self-review, the frontispiece portrayed 'a well-coiffured and genteel romantic poet wearing a large, loose silk cravat.' The portrait was an engraving of an oil painting by Charles Hine, who lived in New York while Whitman was writing his third edition. Hine's most famous work was a painting titled 'Sleep', a female nude, which Whitman wrote to his friend about having seen an article in *Watson's Art Journal* (previously *American Art Journal*). The article, Edward Haviland Miller writes in a footnote to the letter (Whitman 1961: 33), reads 'We know no picture of modern date that is in any way comparable with it. It is a work, necessarily sensuous, but utterly devoid of sensuality.' We can compare this with Clarke's distinction between squalid sensuality and sensuous spirituality. Whitman wrote to Hine (ibid.) to express his excitement 'to see the picture', which he was sure 'must be a thing of beauty, glowing, human, & true.' He enclosed Burroughs's 1867 biography and a letter, 'all about my precious self', as if referring to an engraving, stamp, or other imprint. Some of *Imprints* included the latest hearsay about his burgeoning celebrity, which Conrad (2013: 60) summarises as the pamphlet's 'omnibus segments', referring to the rumour that Whitman had become an omnibus driver. *Imprints* included an 1859 article in the *Tribune* which cited the *Boston Courier's* report (qtd. in *Imprints* 1860: 64) that 'Whitman was mounted upon a Brooklyn omnibus, his legs hanging over the side, and his body resting comfortably upon his elbow.' The *New York Constellation* (ibid.) found 'the attempt to stain the supposititious act with a ludicrous celebrity, as having been made in the very worst of tastes.'

Referring to 'The Mad Poet of Broadway's as a bad fit for 'the withering toils of traffic', Whitman (qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 106) lamented that Clarke's 'case has its copies so many times repeated among us.' On the subject of copies and cases, Conrad (1984: 21) sets up the following continuity between housebuilding and the print sphere: 'Whitman the carpenter and house-builder, for whom poetry was an act of making, erected the city. Whitman the typesetter, for whom poetry was the mechanically aided replication of yourself, filled it with fraternal similacra [*sic*].' Conrad doesn't appear to have had in mind simulacrum in Baudrillard's use of that term, wherein simulacra are copies for which there was never or is no longer an original, but rather he invokes its earlier and broader philosophical import, that is an imitation or representation of an original. We can compare this with prefabricated designs of the kind discussed in Chapter Two, but it's also relevant to Whitman's collapsing of signifier and signified in announcing that his is 'no book'. It speaks to the paradoxical instruction to keep in mind the paper and types of which *Leaves of Grass* is composed, as well as to imbibe it as Whitman's unedited essence, a life and person distilled, a 'substantially literal' picture. In the Baudrillardian sense of simulacra, the journeyman printer's 'gray head' and 'gaunt jaws' read as the progressive erasure of the original, or originator, via printed self-replication. That erasure also suggests the world of surfaces that saddened Emerson on Broadway, but exhilarated Whitman as a medium by which transcendence might be achieved. The culture of celebrity was a formal model for such a medium. As O'Neill (2018: 88) words it, celebrity is 'a metaphysical, even transcendental, condition', 'less like the public speaker, who appears intermittently

before specific audiences and then retreats, than he is like the printed text or image, which extends the figure's presence into spaces he does not physically occupy'. Robert D. Habich (2010: 429) relates the tale of a New York dealer in the 1880s who 'offered more than fifty thousand photographs of noted people', stars that could 'be known, owned, collected, and replaced.'

This has implications for Whitman's faith in the body, the image, and his precious third-person self. He used the surface image not only to extend his presence but to enlarge it. I again quote 'To Old Age' (*LG*60: 402): 'I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads/itself grandly as it pours in the great sea.' In his poetic magnifications, real and figurative, he testified to an authentic original — an original he insisted his reader grasp, physically — that never really existed. In other words, he forced the image to perform. Whitman's most famous image, the 1855 frontispiece, is an infamous example of the self-replication or self-magnification that relied on a degree of erasure. I refer here to Ted Genoways's (2007: 98) discovery that Whitman, in trying to make his picture a 'substantially literal' display of the 'goodshaped and wellhung' (*LG*55: xii) poet, asked the engraver, Samuel Hollyer, to enlarge his crotch. Since Hollyer engraved a daguerreotype taken by Gabriel Harrison in 1854, the new enlarged engraving purported to reproduce that original. Harrison was popular and well-known in the city, even within the context of New York's being, as Graham Clarke (1994: 836) points out, 'a major centre with an estimated 1,000 persons directly employed in [daguerreotyping] by 1853' and 'some eight-six portrait galleries.' Harrison, Whitman told Traubel (1915: 506), had seen the poet walking along the street in Brooklyn and shouted to him that he should come and be photographed: '"Old man!—old man!—come here: come right up the stairs with me this minute"—and when he noticed that I hesitated cried still more emphatically: "Do come: come: I'm dying for something to do."' That he called 'old man' is curious; in 1854 Whitman was just thirty-five, but already grey in the way I suggested, metaphorically, about the journeyman printer's grayscale wearing away in the course of long nights at the case.

Despite the democratic value of photography as a form of image making, daguerreotypes came to be associated with the rich and famous. Matthew Brady's (1850) *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* is a case in point, though earlier in 1844 he had opened 'Brady's Daguerrian Miniature Gallery' at Broadway and Fulton. Harrison learned to daguerreotype at John Plumbe's New York gallery on Broadway. In a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorial Whitman (1846, *WWA*) praised Plumbe's work as 'beautiful and multifarious', its '*naturalness*, and the *life-look* of the eye – that soul of the face!' He delighted in this 'immense Phantom concourse—speechless and motionless, but yet *realities*', and 'Time, space, both are annihilated, and we identify the semblance with the reality.' Harrison was prominent in Brooklyn's art scene and had 'democratic sympathies […] quite Whitmanian', as Folsom (2021, *WWA*) points out. 'Wild and unpruned as nature itself' (Whitman qtd. in ibid.), Folsom writes that Harrison 'fought the formation of the American Daguerre Association, founded by prominent photographers to set a high standard of "good taste"': 'If there had to be a fraternal organization, Harrison argued, it would have to be democratic'. Paulo Miller Loonin (2022: 137) has recently examined 'democratic portraiture' in *Leaves* which he for instance applies to the portrait series in 'Song of Myself', its move from the pure contralto to the carpenter dressing his plank, and to the mass portrait, 'which carries a rationale and a purpose that preserves it from oblivionating digression: the many portraits are the vital legitimating content of the mass-portrait, bridging

the gap between the abstraction of the mass and the narcissism of the "I."' Loomin (ibid. 138) points out that because Whitman figures himself in both forms — the 'large-scale self-portrait frontispiece' and the 'small-scale snapshot', 'one image among many on the thickly stacked walls of New York's portrait galleries' — one sometimes feels 'one is reading about different poems' when reading analyses of his epic. Beyond this, we read different Walt Whitmans and we seek to preserve or even own them, as Traubel did in *The Conservator*, and it is important to state the volatility of this vision of the whole.

It's also necessary to disentangle what the daguerreotype meant as a process, an image, an object. Clarke (1994: 836) quotes *The Knickerbocker*'s assessment in 1839:

> Let us endeavor to convey the reader an impression of their character. Let him suppose himself standing in the middle of Broadway, with a looking glass held perpendicularly in his hand, in which is reflected the street, with all that therein is, for two or three miles, taking in the haziest distance. Then let him take the glass into the house, and find the impression of his entire view, in the softest light and shade, vividly retained upon its surface. This is the Daguerreotype! . . . There is not an object even the most minute, embraced in that wide scope, which was not in the original: and it is impossible that one should have been omitted.

The daguerreotype was a mirror-image that could not be replicated. Further, 'it required that the subject remain still and fixed while the image was taken' (ibid. 38), and Clarke quotes Emerson's depiction of the sitting experience: 'in your zeal not to blur the image, did you keep every finger in its place with such energy that your hands became clenched as for fight or despair, and in your resolution to keep your face still, did you feel every muscle becoming every moment more rigid'. Some of the photographic qualities to Whitman's poetry can be conceptualised as the poet's elision of subject and object. He calls for the reader to take his portrait while he poses, except we remain in one place, gripping a stationary object while he glides, effortlessly, over the streets, wharves, rivers, and seas in which we see ourselves reflected, 'speeding through heaven and the stars' (*LG*55: 37). Consider the preface (*LG*55: vii), which itself was prefaced by the frontispiece: 'What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.' I refer back to the fraternal simulacra (Conrad 1984) argument, the self-replications of a poet who wore his virility on his sleeve, so to speak. In Whitman's hands, Emersonian self-reliance — which 'breeds the giant that destroys itself' (*PW*: 322) — is made to enlarge its reflection, a quality sited, and sighted, in a 'looking glass' city, as well as the poet's equation between person and place, body and book. At the end of 'So long!' (*LG*60: 455), and the end of the book, the speaker tells us 'From behind the screen where I hid, I advance per-/sonally.' When he says 'Remember my words—I love you', it both intimately addresses the reader as 'Dear friend, whoever you are' (ibid. 456) and publicly declares the love of the self, contained in the book, the poet's body, reflected in the eyes of that friend. The book's erotic conclusion upholds the energy of the urban encounter initiated by the frontispiece as the reader's fingers 'drowse' the poet, but it also symbolises the onanistic or auto-erotic forms of sex as transcendence, of profoundly democratic self-love and self-worship, that are woven throughout the text, the words, or typeface, that reflect the poet's own face. The mirror images of the stars on display in Broadway galleries in this sense helped Whitman to mount a democratic appeal to the self, one that was also shaped and uplifted, promotionally, by the self-reliant stylings of

Emerson's literary celebrity, as well as by the doctrine of the Inner Light as espoused by his fellow Long Islander, Elias Hicks.

Thinking of *Leaves* as the lunar light of antebellum New York, I propose another celestial metaphor for the city's print world as it manifests in Whitman's poetic self-reflections. Next to a text on 'The Commercial Balances of the World' in his cultural geography scrapbook (*WWA*) Whitman pastes a number of pages from 'Sir John Herschel's Astronomical Observations' from *Littell's Living Age* (1848), which was itself an amalgamation of publications from other periodicals. Herschel was also an experimental photographer who shared with Daguerre his invention of a fixing agent for use in daguerreotyping. Within the portion of the text Whitman kept, the author calls Herschel and his father the brightest names in astronomy, 'a double star' blessed by 'those transcendental powers which give omnipotence to genius'. Herschel senior, who 'was not called to the survey of the heavens till he had passed the middle period life', researched 'the Parallax of Fixed Stars'. Stellar parallax refers to the way stars appear to move due to the way Earth orbits the sun. The spectacle doesn't really move; rather the seer does. Herschel pointed out that measurements between stars were liable to parallax errors which cause stars to appear close together when really the observer has simply moved. 'In searching for double stars suitable for his purpose,' the author writes, 'Mr. Herschel was led to the formation of those magnificent catalogues of double stars by which he enriched astronomy'. The 'double star' of *Leaves of Grass* is the self-replication, or multiplication of the 'I', or cosmic ego, that formulates the 1:1 principle within Whitman's greatest transcendentalist inheritance, the catalogue. As for parallax errors in terms of Whitman's printed image, that is to say the distance between the image, or simulacrum, and the truth, Whitman could perhaps have claimed that his fluctuating images were simply a function of changing perspective, pictures of the same man taken from different angles, angles that depended on where you stood in the 'million-headed-city' (*PW*: 117). Those contradictory self-curations, or 'well-taken photographs' (*LG*55: 48), could be brushed off as the Emersonian inconsistencies of a simultaneously singular and plural journeyman divine, the same member of the 'centripetal and centrifugal gang' in different lights, one actor on an infinite number of stages, which Whitman's paratexts themselves staged by using contradictory public responses to his *Leaves*, the reactions to the action. In the self-reviews presented as public responses, Whitman gives us a self-image reflected in the loving eyes of an imagined public. As Emerson said of 'The Poet', (1883: 28–29) 'that thought which agitated him is expressed, but alter idem, in a manner totally new': 'As, in the sun, objects paint their images on the retina of the eye, so they, sharing the aspiration of the whole universe, tend to paint a far more delicate copy of their essence in his mind.'

Penny Press Flânerie

Moving from packed portrait galleries to crowded streets and newspaper pages, I turn now to the particular journalistic pose of the flâneur within the penny press print sphere. This shift intends to demonstrate the interplay of the one and the many in Whitman, or the unity in diversity principle in transcendentalist terms, transcendentalism being 'the natural religion of democracy' (Buell 1973: 168). I'll

also swivel from my Baudrillardrian reimagination of Conrad's fraternal simulacra argument to Baudelaire's address to his reader, 'mon semblable, mon frère', in the preface to *Les Fleurs du mal*. Erkkila (1980: 52) notes the similarity in publication dates and titles between *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Leaves of Grass*, as well as the fact they are both written by poets of the city. For my purposes, in connection with my analysis of New York's public health crisis as a source of Whitman's material conceptions of transcendence, I would like to emphasise the conceptual resemblance between those flowers of evil and leaves of grass, beautiful bones in sour trousers. Likewise, I would underline the interconnected reader and writer as likenesses of each other. Eric Athenot (2009: 139) calls Baudelaire Whitman's 'faux jumeaux' or false twin. Within the conceptual realm of Whitman's urban transcendentalism, I hear echoes of Norton's 1855 review of the marriage between New York rowdiness and New England transcendentalism in Erkkila's (1980: 52) assessment of the comparison with the Parisian dandy: 'At first glance, Charles Baudelaire, the aesthete and craftsman, would seem to be the complete antithesis of Whitman.' Whitman didn't really know Baudelaire, but that didn't stop him from quoting Baudelaire in warm but oblivious approval in his prose (*PW*: 416), having read these words in a periodical: '"The immoderate taste for beauty and art […] leads men into monstrous excesses."' Baudelaire 'regarded flesh and matter as a hindrance in his aspiration towards the ideal', Erkkila writes (1980: 54, 59), and she further marks the irony that Whitman's first French reviewers, who painted the picture of 'a base sensualist and democratic rowdy', attacked the poet's 'celebration of the same kind of democratic and moral liberty that Whitman had consistently associated with the French.' David Blake (2006: 49) gives us an apt metaphor for celebrity as 'democracy's ironic cousin, a system of value that did not measure virtue of talent as much as an individual's cultural profile.' Whitman's appropriation of Baudelaire for his 'portfolio' is a case in point, as are his clumsily deployed 'embouchures', amongst the other print and periodical image-making so far discussed in this chapter.

Conrad (1984: 15) remarks that the 'idling sensual appraisal of the flaneur is his presumptive incorporation of himself with all those he passes'. Whitman's catalogic recollections of his induction into the mysteries of typesetting would certainly fall within such an appraisal, and he also presumptively incorporated himself in his text via the much-discussed metonymic play. Brand (1991: 74) reads the role of the flâneur in antebellum New York, an emblem of the urban spectatorial model, as having a 'prominent and plentiful existence' in advance of that term's importation. Reviewing Whitman as the true embodiment of that pose, he considers the impressionistic and phantasmic in *Leaves*, the succession of surfaces that Emerson resented in New York's 'plaster-of-Paris' appearance (qtd. in Capper 2010: 212), the absence of depth. The dandyish portrait discussed in Chapter Two, the frockcoated Whitman on Stacy's (2008) front cover, aligns with such a mode. The flâneur would both distinguish himself from the mass and 'echolocate' (Stacy 2019) himself within it, though as Pannapacker (2009: 43) observes the flâneur does not seek to 'merge with' that mass. The title of the first part of Dougherty's (1993) book about spectatorial modes of seeing and being in Whitman, 'I, Not-Me, You, We', invokes Baudelaire's (1964: 10) summary of the flâneur's 'insatiable appetite for the "non-I,"' at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always instable and fugitive.' Those 'pictures more living than life itself' bear obvious relevance to the framework of the simulacrum used to understand poet/reader relations in *Leaves*, as well as the commodification of the body entailed by celebrity culture. Within New York

specifically, its hurry-scurry of surface and sound, that framework also assists in conceptualising the cultural climate to which Mathews protests in *A Pen-and-Ink Panorama of New-York City* (1853: 144), a cacophony of 'daily proclamations' in newspapers advertising 'hostile systems [that] contend for our living bodies'.

Since 'Journeymen Divine' has staged quite a dense backdrop to print and periodical culture in antebellum New York, in this section I offer an extended reading of a single poem from the 1860 *Leaves*. 'Leaf of Faces' appeared untitled among the original twelve in 1855, then 'Poem of Faces' in 1856. I examine the transcendentalist poetics at work in the poem to make a case for reading the interplay between the flâneur pose we see in Whitman's *Aurora* and *Eagle* editorials, for instance, and the transcendentalist ideas he apprehended on Long Island but was still finding the language for. Emerson helped supply that vocabulary, but so did the syntax of Whitman's life in, and out, of New York. Fuller's *Tribune* columns must also be acknowledged, particularly as a key print representation of New England transcendentalism in New York City. Greeley's literary star would use an asterisk as her signature (Dowling 2014: 58), and her writing bore witness to her ability both to be a transcendental idealist and to flourish in a New York of loud, flashy surfaces. She wrote to James Freeman Clarke (qtd. in Capper 2010: 212): 'I like to feel so fairly afloat in mid-stream, as I do here. All the signs of life appear to me at least superficially, and, as I have had a good deal of *the depths*, an abode of some length in *the shallows* may do me no harm.' I also add a geocultural dimension to the aforementioned interplay, of a Brooklyn boy who was both in and out of Mannahatta, and who was also culturally and professionally involved in New York's displacement of Boston as the literary capital of the United States.

At times, Whitman inhabits the flâneur's opposite: the badaud. Unlike flânerie, badauderie referred to gawking or bystanding, not unlike the crowds who would gather at the scene of a fire in New York as 'one compact mass of human flesh' (Whitman qtd. in Rubin and Brown 1950: 37.) Later, those same crowds would gawp at the fire in print on the newspaper page, as well as the incendiary but melodramatic editorial bickering of the kind exhibited in Whitman's falling out with the *Atlas*. In October 1855, the *Tribune*'s readers would have seen listed under 'FIRES' Emerson's private letter to Whitman, on display for all to see. The flâneur and the badaud also help to characterise the topographical counterpart to the interplay of surface and depth that we see in *Leaves*, which relates more broadly to his commingling of the rural and the urban, as well as Brooklyn's location in New York's shadow. Scenes of rural familiarity temper Whitman's detached flâneurial tendencies, personalising the impersonal, like the rhythms of urban language lower the speaker's own pedestal. His detachment also serves the ephemeral nature of his self-projections, however, and it fosters the (self)replications of those projections because he is able to 'mind them or the resonance of them' (*LG*55: 18) without being lost to the empathic cost. Like the poet's mixed diction, the chatter and rattle of omnibus jaunts jostles with the song of the pure contralto, but both offer 'sonic transcendence' (Conrad 1984: 15), a form of intoxication that is also derived visually from the crowd, a sea of bodies in which to swim. Images and themes associated with the sensationalist penny press in some ways induct the reader as a badaud, a passer-by to a spectacle, but this is calibrated by the way in which we co-star in 'Song of Myself' as the 'loving and thirsting eyes' ('Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' *LG*60: 386) who gaze back at the poet's own. As the print corollary to that intoxicated experience of the crowd, Whitman's faces are always, first and foremost, typefaces.

Like Johnston's leaves of mouths, Whitman's 'Leaf of Faces' suggests an 'incorporative' botanical quality (Tuggle 2017: 46), as well as the 'idling sensual appraisal' (Conrad 1984: 15) of one strolling down Broadway, as one would a gallery or indeed the Crystal Palace Exhibition. I quoted this poem (*LG*55: 85) earlier in discussing Long Island Quakerism as a local seedbed for Whitman's later transcendentalist tendencies, as well as the democratic poetics with which he expressed them: 'Behold a woman!/She looks out from her quaker cap . . . . her face is clearer and more beautiful than/they sky.' The poem's wording changed little through the antebellum editions, though of course the book's changing shape entailed different line separations and the verses were numbered in biblical fashion. I'll analyse the 1860 version while pointing out some small revisions. Whitman begins (*LG*60: 278) by locating his own perspective, 'sauntering the pavement', but adds 'the country':

> 1. SAUNTERING the pavement, or riding the country by-road, here then are faces!
> Faces of friendship, precision, cautious, suavity, ideality,
> The spiritual prescient face — the always welcome, common, benevolent face,
> The face of the singing of music — the grand faces of natural lawyers and judges, broad at the back-top,
> The faces of hunters and fishers, bulged at the brows —the shaved blanched faces of orthodox citizens,
> The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face,
> A wild hawk, his wings clipped by the clipper,
> A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of the gelder.

The place from which the poet perceives these faces is not only geographical but temporal, as announced by the present participle, capitalised to announce the poem's method. The combination of 'here then' signals a temporal elision like the one enacted in the child who 'went forth every day, and who now goes/and will always go forth every day (*LG*55: 91). 'Here then' seizes on the immediacy of the spectatorial mode and of the dailies that printed the flâneur's saunters through a penny press cityscape, a world built in print. Meanwhile, the addition of 'or riding the country by-road' reflects the continuing rural appearance and character of parts of Long Island, including Brooklyn, and Whitman's determination to appropriate those ways of being to the city streets so that he might better establish the physical citizenship defined by 'arms about each other's necks' (*LG*56: 103). Further, we can locate the speaker's swift qualification, 'or the country', in efforts by dailies like the *Aurora*, which never enjoyed any real level of financial security, to widen their readership via the dollar weekly (*New York Aurora*, 6th April 1842, *WWA*), 'the cheapest publication in the world', to farmers, villagers, and mechanics. Whitman's 'here then' makes a similar qualification in temporal terms.

I compare this to my discussion in Chapter Two of the child (*LG*55: 91) who 'went forth every day, and who now goes and/will always go forth every day' and who eventually saunters into the place of 'him or her that peruses [*Leaves*] now.' I also delineated this progression in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (*LG*56: 215) where the tenses bob up and down in 'I saw', 'others who look back', 'I looked forward', 'the time will come', 'I stop here today and/tonight.' In the second section of 'Leaf of Faces' (*LG*60: 279), Whitman makes the same comparison: 'Sauntering the pavement, or crossing the ceaseless/ferry, here then are faces,/I see them and complain not, and am content with all.' The poet's is in many ways the 'spiritual prescient face—the always welcome' to which he refers (ibid. 278). Drifting ethereally, 'as of a dream', the poet balances that nebulous ideal with 'an immobile rock'. Even 'ide-/ality' is fragmented by the line-break to emphasise that word's very materiality, its phenomenality. The faces of people are enmeshed in the natural world, a leaf, just as the (type)faces are presented as the tendrils of an organic 'leaf'. I think back to Whitman's 1846 *Eagle* editorial (qtd. in Wacker 1994: 90–91) about the view from Fort Greene where he describes the 'young creatures [who] gambolled over the grass.' Likewise in pronouncing his transcendentalist rejection of restraint in 'Poem of You, Whoever You Are' (*LG*56: 209), as if looking down at Wallabout Bay and its prison ship past, he declares 'The hopples fall from your ankles!' Again, in 'Leaf of Faces' (*LG*60: 278) those 'shaved blanched faces of orthodox citizens', especially contrasted with the 'pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's', suggest the spiritual vitality weakened or erased by the curtailment of functions 'implanted in us by God', to quote Clapp's defence of Fourier for the *Tribune* (1857, *WWA*). Sexless, superficial virtue — faces 'withdrawn of [their] good and bad', 'castrated' — is thus compared unfavourably with the pure sexuality not only of the natural world but the humans within it, 'hunters and fishers, bulged at the brows' (*LG*60: 278). Simultaneously, they invoke Whitman's later 'pallid slivers slumbering' (*LG*91: 386) because, the poem insists, their 'unmuzzled' best is yet to come (*LG*60: 280).

Whitman likewise depicts the more abject faces of humanity as animalistic. He does so using sensationalist imagery, which Reynolds (2005: 31) identifies in the way Whitman 'shuttled back and forth between the grimy and the spiritual with the aim of cleansing the quotidian types that sometimes disturbed him.' Whitman's speaker (*LG*60: 279) asks 'Do you suppose I could be content with all, if I/thought them their own finale?' What follows is a grotesque rendition of 'too lamentable a face for a man': the poet refers to the 'abject louse', 'milk-nosed maggot', 'a dog's snout sniffling for garbage', but then to the mystical face of 'a haze more chill than the arctic sea,/Its sleepy and wobbling iceburgs crunch as they go.' 'This face is an epilepsy,' he says, 'its wordless tongue gives out/the unearthy cry.' Whitman pictures 'veins down the neck distend[ing], 'eyes roll[ing]', 'teeth grit': 'The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground/while he speculates well.' That line originally accentuated the commodification of the body, its commercial degradation, in the more explicit language of promotional print: 'This face is an epilepsy advertising and doing business' (*LG*55: 83). On the next page (*LG*60: 280), we are invited to stare at sensationalist imagery of 'the face of the most smeared and slobbering/idiot they had at the asylum'. 'I knew for my consolation what they knew not', says the speaker. That consolation is in part the method announced at the outset of the poem, the flâneurial mode that lends detachment to Whitman's imaginative self-projections — and the self-mirroring aspect is plain in the poet's sound-patterned address to 'Features of my equals' — and permits the catalogue's onward motion.

Reynolds (1989: 312) shows that besides the penny press and papers like the *Herald*, to which Emerson compared *Leaves*, Whitman's 'shocking imagery' is born from the American Subversive style and a 'belief that the social corruptions he perceived could be overcome only by passionate defiance.' Reynolds (ibid. 314) also observes the 'pre-Whitmanesque flavor' and 'throbbing rhythm' of some lines from George Lippard's socialist novel, *Adonai* (1851), and we might think here of the Whitmanic bard 'Buying drafts of Osiris and Isis and Belus and Brahma and Adonai' (*LG*55: 45). Lippard also authored the radical-democrat bestseller, *The Quaker City* (1845), which he bragged (qtd. in Reynolds 1989: 83) had been 'more attacked, and more read, than any work of American fiction ever published'. Lippard's *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (1853: 274) paints faces and scores voices in describing in New York a darkness 'peopled with faces, that seemed to be encircled by lurid light.' Among the phantasmic darkness 'full of faces', he writes (ibid.) that 'the air was full of voices; voices whispering, shouting, yelling, all through each other, and yet, every voice distinctly heard,—all the voices that he had heard in his lifetime were speaking to him now.' In his 1850 *The Empire City; or New York By Night and Day*, Lippard's (1864: 133) sauntering narrator's 'admiration for the gorgeous display of human energy' is not without 'a feeling of horror' that 'creeps through our every nerve', horror at 'the unfathomable misery which now staggers to and fro, beneath the cloud of hazy brightness.' Lippard (ibid. 134) moves to Broadway, 'that grand focus', describing 'The lamps of the Park, glimmering through the limbs of leafless trees'.

Beyond the subversive and sensational stylistic features, which place the reader in the role of a gawping passer-by, I want to stress the transcendentalist ideal at work in 'Leaf of Faces', the 'faith that an ongoing mystical process will eventually liberate the divinity in each person' (Aspiz 1998: 219). This is the divine light that cannot be extinguished by the abjection of the city, and which the Emersonian poet (Emerson 1883: 23) 're-attaches […] to nature and the Whole'. In Whitman, the self-projections of the boundless 'I' transmit, 'antenna-like', all the voices ever heard while enshrining the common ground of the body. His perspective, or 'grand focus', transforms 'limbs of leafless trees' into leaves of faces attached to the same trunk, or central corpus, the trunk from which Emerson (1884: 72) believed society had suffered 'amputation'. In 'Faces', Whitman uses the surface — the face and typeface — as the medium by which that transcendence can be achieved, making the crowded city street an ideal venue for such a transformation. Fuller expressed the transcendental ideal in her *Tribune* editorials in a way that served social reform, as in her a portrait of a woman in an asylum, her eyes 'large, open, fixed and bright' (2000: 101). Before turning to the woman as 'a figure from which a painter might study for some of the most consecrated subjects', Fuller (ibid.) praises the value of singing, observing a group of children 'like a nest full of little birds, each opening its bill as the parent returns from her flight.' In 'Leaf of Faces' (*LG*60: 278, 280) Whitman's speaker maintains 'The face of the singing of music' even as he catalogues a procession of grim faces: 'Well, you cannot trick me.' He finds harmony in choral dissonance, a polyphonic cyclicality:

> I see your rounded never-erased flow,
> I see neath the rims of your haggard and mean dis-
> guises.

Recalling Chapter One's emphasis of the liquid poetics that spill from Whitman's island situation, the 'rounded never-erased flow' relates to the re-constitution and re-definition of the sea by fluctuating proportions of materials 'left by the tide' (*LG*60: 196); it is 'never-erased' but simply redefined. This textual fluidity is the re-constitution of the self via a single leaf of multiple faces. The poet couches his 'consolation' (ibid. 280) in terms of building — the material instability of antebellum Brooklyn and New York, the vagaries of its housing market — before he declares its transcendental nature:

> And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,
> And I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,
> The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tenement,
> And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,
> And I shall meet the real landlord, perfect and unharmed, every inch as good as myself.

'This face', he declares (ibid. 281), his own face, 'is a life-boat', 'commanding and bearded, it asks no/odds of the rest.' The faces he paints 'bear testimony' in that they 'show their descent from the Master himself'. The Master is god, 'the real landlord', but it is also the self as god. He 'asks no/odds of the rest' because it is a 'transpersonal universal', as Buell (2004: 59) words the core of Emersonian self-reliance: 'red,/white, black, all are deific'. Reflected in 'the shop-windows in Broadway/the whole forenoon' ('Song of Myself', *LG*60: 71), the poet sees 'this incredible God I am,/To have gone forth among other Gods' (*LG*60: 178). He continues (*LG*60: 281):

> 21. Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,
> Tall and sufficient stand behind, and make signs to me,
> I read the promise, and patiently wait.

Peering at the window, the speaker inverts the position Whitman would take in *Aurora* editorials (qtd. in Noverr and Stacy 2014: 193): 'we went up the stairs of the American Museum, entered the first room, took a chair, placed it in a roomy niche made by the setting in one of the front windows'. That editorial also describes 'an observative mood' (ibid.) which is useful to the transcendental ego. Instead of the authoritative editorial 'we', the poet's 'I' and eye flit through the 'spots or cracks', the 'flashes and specks', lingering intimately but 'patiently' waiting for the whole, the deathless, democratic consciousness of which those faces are a part. Simultaneously, we can read Whitman's ability to speed through identities and images as part of the 'inveterate hack-horse of the daily press' aesthetic, as Greeley (qtd. in Dowling 2014: 55) described his own nature in explaining his frustrations with Fuller's romantic attitude to her *Tribune* duties: 'the notion of waiting for a brighter day or happier frame of mind, appears fantastic and absurd.' That aesthetic is complicated by the flâneur's 'idling sensual appraisal' (Conrad 1984: 15), hence my choice of 'Penny Press Flânerie' for this section's title, which also speaks to the interplay of the one and the many.

Rathskeller Calamus

The dually erotic and democratic conclusion to 'Leaf of Faces' acts as a convenient bridge to the third and final section of this chapter. The most intimate, explicit movement in the poem (*LG*60: 281, 282) provides Whitman's segue to the old Quakeress and to 'The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go, and/does not wish to go,/The justified mother of men.' Just as faces can be read as typefaces, covering penny papers or billboards, the 'justified' mother of men is the text through which Whitman fashions himself, and the print world through which New York's cityscape was established. The self-referential aspect is substantial, since he was himself being written by New York while helping to write, and writing himself into, its literary history. Along similarly self-promotional lines, Clapp's supposedly anti-puffery paper, the *Saturday Press*, the organ of the bohemians who gathered at Pfaff's, seized on Whitman's emerging celebrity not only to sustain itself in a crowded market, which in 1860 it did only due to the financial support of Thayer & Eldridge, but to position itself — and, by extension, New York — as a worthy rival to Boston's *Atlantic Monthly*. That support to some extent enabled Whitman to 'self-reliantly' reject Emerson's advice to excise portions of the book. Whitman (Traubel 1914: 439) said the Concordian saw those portions as risking '"the danger of being tangled up with the unfortunate heresy"' of free love, but this also speaks to Emerson's desire to market *Leaves* as a manifesto for New England transcendentalism. In 'Calamus', that free love is the natural and radical conclusion of self-love, the proud flesh looking for hat honour, and it's more radical in some sense exactly because it is love and not sex that the cluster enshrines. I've referred a couple of times to the poiesis of mutuality with which Whitman enshrines the criticality of the reader in the manifestation of his poetry. Perhaps, though, its self-containment as a democratic act of self-mirroring — 'stand by my side and look in the mirror' (*LG*55: vii) — is best thought of as autopoietic, much like the autoerotic forms of sex as transcendence, the ecstatic, climactic, intoxicating self-realisations made possible by the unreserved embrace of the transcendentalist idea of the self as god. Concurrently, we can understand the self-mirroring as an auto-eroticism related to Whitman's own sexuality, which is cardinally important to the 1860 'Calamus' cluster, and to his time at Pfaff's where he enjoyed the company of the 'Fred Gray Association', 'a loose confederation of young men who seemed anxious to explore new possibilities of male-male affection' (Folsom and Price 2005: 62).

In revising 'Leaf of Faces' for the 1860 *Leaves*, a typographically experimental volume, Whitman italicised the erotic lines that lead to the poem's Quaker conclusion. He does the same in 'A Word Out of the Sea' (*LG*60), better known as 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking', first published in 1859 as 'A Child's Reminiscence' in Clapp's *Saturday Press*. Here is Whitman's (*LG*60: 281) sensual segue to the Quaker conclusion in 'Leaf of Faces', italicised as if 'quivering' the poet 'to a new identity', 'flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike/what is hardly different from myself' (*LG*60: 61)

> This is a full-grown lily's face,
> She speaks to the limber-hipp'd man near the garden pickets,
> *Come here*, she blushingly cries — *Come nigh to me, limber-hipp'd man, and give me your finger and*

thumb,
Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,
Fill me with albescent honey, *bend down to me*,
Rub to me with your chafing beard, rub to my breast
and shoulders.

The lines invoke both a 'leafy lips' (*LG*60: 102) type scene of 'ecoerotic' transcendence (Tuggle 2017) and a sexual encounter in which the woman leads. She gives clear instructions and her imperatives build an argument for what Gould (2007: 17) calls 'the fundamental human right to sexual self-determination' in his work on Whitman's 'Quaker paradox'. It's an important opposite to 'Spontaneous Me' (*LG*60: 304, 305) in 'Enfans d'Adam' ('SPONTANEOUS me, Nature') in which a 'hairy wild-bee […] gripes the full-grown lady flower', 'takes his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and/tight upon her till he is satisfied'. Overpage from the above, the poet (*LG*60: 282) exclaims 'Behold a woman!/She looks out from her quaker cap—her face is/clearer and more beautiful than the sky.' By transitioning from female sexual desire and 'albescent honey' to the Quaker's 'cream-hued linen', the Whitmanic first-person singular singing the body draws on the implications of both the Hicksite Inner Light and the transcendentalist idea of the self as god in order to make sex a democratic means of attaining the ultimate self-respect. Sex is portrayed as a form of transcendence, pure intoxication 'clearer and more beautiful than the sky'. We might also think of 'Earth of the limpid gray of clouds, brighter and/clearer for my sake!' ('Song of Myself' *LG*60: 50), as well as those 'limpid jets of love' (*LG*60: 295) in 'I Sing the Body Electric', which in 1860 was added to 'Enfans d'Adam'.

The speaker in 'Leaf of Faces' is 'content with all' because he knows the faces through which he saunters on the streets of New York are not 'their own finale', and that theatrically-inflected finale — spiritual transcendence — is rendered as autoerotic sexual climax. Emerson (1883: 30) referred to the poet's 'true nectar', to speaking 'somewhat wildly, or "with the flower of the mind"', while Whitman's bard acts wildly, fertilising the flower of the mind with his body, his 'albescent honey.' Indeed, 'Proto-Leaf' (*LG*60: 9–10), the opening leaf to the 1860 *Leaves*, addresses 'Spirituality' as 'the finale of visible forms', and the soul as 'Longer than soil is brown and/solid—Longer than water ebbs and flows'. Supposing, like Emerson (1883: 9) did about the 'one mind common to all individual men', that 'Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same', that we 'sympathize in great moments of history […] because there law was enacted, the sea was searched, the land was found' (ibid. 12), the poet (*LG*60: 9–10) reaches a resolution:

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they
are to be the most spiritual poems,
And I will make the poems of my body and of
mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the
poems of my Soul and of immortality.

Following Emerson's (1883: 10) thought that 'the air I breathe is drawn from the great repositories of nature, as the light on my book is yielded by a star a hundred millions of miles distant, as the poise of my body depends on the equilibrium of centrifugal and centripetal forces', Whitman's poems poise body and

spirit as the human and poetic topos to the topography of land and water, the thoughtful merge and the outlet again.

As I suggested about Whitman's mixed diction — common in New York's penny press — and how it draws attention to language as a material construct, to the hand that constructs it, the literary 'albescent' stands out in 'Leaf of Faces' amongst the simplicity of the italicised speech. It makes another equation between sexual and textual fluidity, between 'pallid slivers' awaiting the virile poet who butterfly-points to the blank recto. Where 'souse with spray' (*LG*60: 36) denotes alcoholic and physical intemperance, 'albescent honey' suggests Emerson's 'wine which never grew/In the belly of the grape' ('Bacchus' 1856: 190), which I compared in Chapter One to this line from 'The Sleepers' (*LG*55: 108): 'And liquor is spilled on lips and bosoms by touching glasses, and the best/liquor afterward.' The 'albescent honey' foregrounds Whitman's use of another symbol of sex, nature, and intoxication. Calamus, a phallic plant also known as sweet flag, grew around Wallabout Bay, the bay of 'Song of Myself', then titled 'Walt Whitman' (*LG*60: 81): 'What sobers the Brooklyn boy as he looks down/the shores of the Wallabout and remembers the/Prison Ships?' In 'Calamus' 4 (*LG*60: 348), it is 'draw[n] from the water, wading in/the pond-side', parenthetically embraced as what 'shall henceforth be the token of/comrades—this calamus-root shall/Interchange it, youths, with each other!' Tracy Auclair (2004) makes an excellent case that since there are many less ambiguous phallic symbols Whitman chose the plant for its psychoactive properties. Whitman talked to Traubel (qtd. in Auclair 2004: 228) about sweet flag:

> But you must be careful how you look it up. There's counterfeit calamus, which is only a rush—has no root. But calamus itself, the real thing, has a thick bulby root—stretches out—this way, like the fingers spread. […] It always grows in damp places, along runs of water—low lands. You can easily get it—it pulls up! Oh! Yes! You will know it by the root, which is really the *only* way to know it.'

As to the mental 'rush', Auclair (ibid. 229) argues that Whitman's enthusiasm here suggests that he 'knew of the calamus root's hallucinogenic potential', supported with reference to the poet's 'literary representations of drugged consciousness'. Further, Whitman met Fitz Hugh Ludlow at Pfaff's, the author of *The Hasheesh Eater* (1857), a novel in the same vein as De Quincey's. Ludlow's work 'portrays the user's simultaneous isolation and connectedness, his hypersensitivity, and his ability to form self-effacing identifications with others', Auclair writes (2004: 231, 233), underlining the Whitmanic import and arguing that calamus served Whitman as 'a means of collapsing personal and public space' and 'reconfiguring his relationship to his readers.'

Whitman's descriptions of intoxicated sexual transcendence pre-date interactions with Ludlow and the Pfaffians, beyond reading of Clapp's Fourierist and free-love notoriety in the papers, as well as any references in *Leaves* to calamus. My 'Rathskeller Calamus' locates the 'root', if you like, of Whitman's faith in sex and the body, his belief in the sensual 'rush' by which one senses something beyond, in the radically liberating philosophical self-respect for which the Hicksite Inner Light provided a model on Long Island before New England transcendentalism supplied some language. I also discern the role of the bohemians and their Broadway beer cellar in shaping that position, the antebellum culmination of Whitman's immersion in New York's art world. Bohemia softened Whitman to free love and related radicalisms and it

provided a venue for the male affection symbolised by the Fred Gray Association. Among the embodied and erotic forms of performance in the art world, the 'sonic transcendence' (Conrad 1984: 15) of the opera is the standout context, and the aria-like italicisation of lyrical passages signals its impact. 'Calamus' 21 (*LG*60: 365) combines the liquid with the musical and erotic, suggesting climactic overlaps: 'A soprano, at intervals, sailing buoyantly over the/tops of immense waves,/A transparent base, shuddering lusciously under and/through the universe'. Marietta Alboni, who performed for a season in New York from 1852 to 1853, was Whitman's most beloved singer and he claimed (*PW*: 19) to 'have heard Alboni every time she sang in New York and vicinity'. The bodily and erotic power of the art is most audible in lines like 'I hear the trained soprano . . . . she convulses me like the climax of my love-grip' (*LG*55: 32). Related to my geocultural concerns, I situate Whitman's use of calamus within the masculine, democratic barrooms of New York City, as well as the more homely (and literary) rathskeller ambience of Pfaff's. This also speaks to the public/personal divide Auclair uses to understand the poems, as critics have done for the print and periodical sphere. Whitman used rural imagery and affection to sustain his urban scenes of homosociality, crafting a transcendentalist poetics of the city that espoused an embodied, physically enacted form of public citizenship with its counterpart in private scenes of intimacy. The 'Calamus' poem (*LG*60: 371) that captures the 'flitting glimpse, caught through an interstice' of two men holding hands gestures to this dual quality. To quote 'Bacchus' again (Emerson 1856: 190), in 'Calamus' the poet expresses the desire to 'float at pleasure through all natures', though Whitman's intoxicated 'eternal float' is, like the liquid poetics of an island poet, more embodied and personal. This float is in touch with the material by philosophical, cultural, and geographical necessity.

Coming back to 'Leaf of Faces' and its scene of female sexual self-determination, I must mention Mary Chilton — whose July 1857 article on 'Sexual Purity' for the *Social Revolutionist* Whitman kept — and her review of the 1860 *Leaves* for Clapp's *Saturday Press* (1860, *WWA*):

> As all of nature's forms are evolved from the same God-origin or substance, though there may be differences of rank, there can be no difference in essence; and those functions which have been deemed the most brutal and degrading, will be found to be first in rank when nature's hierarchy shall be established and observed. A true delicacy will neither emblason [*sic*] the individual act of communion abroad (as, sanctioned by custom, those who lay claim to the highest refinement do daily), nor blush to a crimson when the poet of sexual purity vindicates manhood and womanhood from the charge of infamy, degradation, and vice, on account of growth and development after the order of nature.

Sherry Ceniza (2013: 202) points out that in defending *Leaves* Chilton 'uses the same rhetorical strategies that she uses in her articles in the *Social Revolutionist*' in that she 'takes culturally loaded terms and shades or skews their meanings to create her own reformist view.' Ceniza (ibid.) proposes that we read the opening to Chilton's article as 'a prose gloss' of the italicised eroticism in 'Leaf of Faces.' Bohemians like Ada Clare and Adah Isaacs Menken also saw in Whitman, proud in his man-Bloomer, 'an ally in their battle against the desexualising myths of Victorian respectability', as Zweig (1984: 322) writes. Price (1991: 72) points out that the journal was linked to phrenological publishers Fowler and Wells. In the issue Whitman kept, which had an unusually narrow focus on free love (ibid. 73), 'an anti-free love contributor accused Orson Fowler not only of promoting causes tending toward free love but also of being a free lover himself.' Whitman had

already come into contact with free love ideas in Brooklyn, via Noyes, and in 1855 via the scandal following which Clapp was arrested on Broadway along with other members of the 'Free Love Club', as the press christened it, which was linked to Fourier and passional attraction. The *New-York Daily Times* (19th October 1855) quoted Brisbane as saying 'Taylor's saloon' was the 'grand depot for the female members of these Free-Love Clubs that congregated in Mercer-street', where Whitman's beloved Fireman's Hall was, and also that 'New-York was nothing else than a Great Free-Love Club!' Clapp (ibid.) reportedly slated 'James Gordon Bennett, Horace Greeley, Henry J. Raymond, par nobile fratrum' as 'the glorious triumvirate to whose agency we are indebted for these favors', the favours being publicity generated by scandalised misinterpretations of their aims. To this, and the relevant location specifics, the article's writer added stage directions: '(Great sensation—hisses—cheers, &c.)'

Writing for the *Brooklyn Daily Times* in July 1857, a Republican paper that brought Whitman politically and physically closer to the bohemians (Karbiener 2014), he 'attacked free lovers' (Price 1991: 77). In September, he editorialised about the dreadful 'custom of kissing among ladies' (qtd. in ibid.). Softening discernibly by 1858, he called free lovers 'amiable lunatics' (ibid. 79). Two of his last editorials for the *Times* in 1859 went considerably further. Zweig (1984: 295) points to a provocative piece that suggested 'police ought to "tolerate" well-run houses of prostitution' and, two days later, one in which Whitman openly wondered why unmarried women should remain celibate. A couple of years prior, in 1857, Whitman (qtd. in Bergman 1970: 399) had asked 'Why not a candid and courageous course pursued by writers and speakers, upon the subject of sexuality?' And over a decade before that, Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, as Mary Lamb Shelden (2010: 245) writes, 'praised Fourier for placing "woman on an entire quality with Man" and for seeking to allow sexual freedom to both sexes commensurate with their intellectual development.' 'Leaf of Faces' puts in poetic form a vision of pure sexual intoxication that arises from the notion of the self as god taken to its logical conclusion, a vision that then took shape in the culture of sexual reformism and experimentation Whitman witnessed in antebellum New York, as well as in the rougher and rowdier barrooms frequented by the social types from which the Whitmanic bard borrows the virile swagger that balances his flâneurial dandyisms. Simultaneously, Whitman's vision took advantage of promotional outrage in adapting sensational language associated with the city's pornographic trade, and which Clapp's free-love speech exposed about its press. Indeed, an anonymous reviewer in *The Springfield Daily Republican* (June 1860, *WWA*) quoted and italicised parts of Chilton's review from Clapp's *Saturday Press* to claim that books like Whitman's are 'not unfrequently stuck in one's face at steamboat landings by lousy scoundrels who peddle filth for a living'. The writer was baffled that a book 'about as much like poetry as […] or paring one's corns' had been 'published in the puritanical and transcendental city of Boston', that the poet had been entertained by the *Atlantic Monthly*, and that none of his supporters seemed concerned about his claim 'to have some light superior to that revealed in the Bible'.

The word 'feuillage' brings us from leaves of faces to Pfaff's and calamus. Clapp and Ada Clare, 'Queen of Bohemia', were among those in New York City then writing what they called 'literary feuilletons'. Fanny Fern is a particularly notable mention. Her *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port-Folio* (1853) had a similar vegetative design to Whitman's 1855 *Leaves* and she also took note of Whitman's 'manly' proportions in the frontispiece (Folsom 2006: 82) in her writing for the New York *Ledger*. The *Saturday Press*

had a theatre column titled 'Dramatic Feuilleton'. Whitley (2014: 98–99) adds a qualification to the 'democratic egalitarianism' Levin (2010: 59) suggests the *Press* made an implicit relative of bohemianism. Whitley shows that the *Press* often 'betrayed the anxieties these critics experienced as they sought to establish themselves as tastemakers of American culture against the democratic judgement of theatergoers', which they tried to assuage in that column 'by anchoring their claims to cultural authority to Walt Whitman's emerging status as an American icon.' I commented earlier on Whitman's 'bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States' (*LG*60: 166), as well as his manner of offering them to *Harper's*. In 1855 Whitman (qtd. in Reynolds 1989: 3) 'defined "Feulliton [*sic*]" as "little leaf."' He used it alternately as democratic — the talk of the town and the common people — and as a grandiose literary term, chosen specially for the inner circle. In offering 'Chants Democratic', 'incomparable feuillage' for sale, Whitman appealed to his literary standing before bluntly naming his price. Before moving back to the poetry and closing the chapter, I want to stress that many of Whitman's 'Calamus' leaves were drafted on 'the blue defunct "City of Williamsburgh" tax forms' (Karbiener 2014: 3), scrap paper from the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, Williamsburg and Bushwick having been annexed to Brooklyn in 1855. Bronson-Bartlett (2018: 260) has conceptualised the shift from loose leaves to readymades in private writing practices, comparing Emerson's and Whitman's responses to that shift as 'two strains of literary experimentation': 'one struggling to transcend a culture of mere readymades; the other open to the readymade as the medium of transcendence.' He gives the example (ibid. 276, 278) of the Talbot Wilson notebook, 'the porous interface of the readymade portable ledger', and the 'tentativeness' of Whitman's bindings. This corresponds, within the poet's lifelong revisions, to the wider culture of instability, the shifting seedbed that gave rise to an emphatically material, embodied transcendentalist poetics. In ledgers like Whitman's Talbot Wilson notebook, the indented column was for dates relating to fiscal accounts, and 'material substrates grounded how Whitman thought' (ibid. 280) whether he was recording monies received for construction work or reordering the primacy of spirit over matter. The defunct tax forms were an emblem of that material instability, the backdrop against which Whitman's *Times* editorship offered financial and literal materials for his poetry career.

'Live Oak, with Moss' is an unpublished collection of twelve poems that Whitman included in 'Calamus' in 1860, though out of sequence, disrupting the sustained homosexual love it expressed. That title was struck through, changed to 'Calamus Leaves' (*WWA*). It tells a story of homosexual love, infatuation, and loss. As Erkkila (2011: xi) writes in the introduction to her edited collection of those manuscripts, 'the poet dreams of a city—a public urban space—where men who love men can live and love openly in accord with their desires'. It displays that love 'in all its moods' (ibid), floating in pain or 'at pleasure through all natures' (Emerson 1856: 190). This is 'the new City of Friends' (*LG*60: 373) in which the poet dreams of the 'robust/love' he looks to speak, which was in 'Live Oak, with Moss', 'seen every hour in the actions of the men of/that city,/And in all their looks and words.' Thomas (2010: 643) sees Whitman in this cluster as 'no longer insouciantly content to contradict himself' but seeking 'to capture the inherent contradictoriness, the ingrained ambivalence'. Intoxicated consciousness is a fitting mode heres, though it serves the cluster differently from the 'mystic deliria—the madness amorous—the utter abandonment' (*LG*60: 289) in 'Enfans d'Adam'. The focus is less on 'the midnight orgies of young men'

(*LG*60: 311, 310); here the poet gazes at 'his love' rather than a flitting crowd of 'nature's darlings'. The first poem was recast as 'Calamus' 14 (*LG*60: 360). It sees the poet feverish and fluctuating, looking for the words to express the love contained in a touch.[25] Flames and waves compete as the love of another 'consumes' the self, 'his love whom I/love!'

> NOT heat flames up and consumes,
> Not sea-waves hurry in and out,
> Not the air, delicious and dry, the air of the ripe
> summer, bears lightly along white down-balls of
> myriads of seeds, wafted, sailing gracefully, to
> drop where they may,
> Not these—O none of these, more than the flames
> of me, consuming, burning for his love whom I
> love!

The poet's soul is 'borne through the open air', 'Wafted in all directions' (ibid.), a seed that sails on love and friendship, physically enacted. In 'Calamus' 43, among the original twelve 'Live Oak, With Moss', 'to come' is both sexual and not. Noble (2018: 82) calls this 'affective non-dualism in action.' 'Spontaneous Me', the fifth 'Enfans d'Adam' (*LG*60: 304), begins with a simple 'city of Friends' physical act before moving to the explicit sexuality, 'the glow and pressure', 'whirling its spiral whirl' (ibid. 306), recalling the idle ferryboat intimacy: 'The loving day, the friend I am happy with,/The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder'. The desire is to make the inner flame nonchalantly public, to make it normal. 'The like of the same I feel—the like of the same in/others' (ibid.) testifies to the self-mirroring, even as the poet points to a 'young woman' next in the catalogue. This mirroring, which only exchanges like for like, is captured by the impassioned command in 'Calamus' 4 (*LG*60: 348) to 'Interchange it, youths, with each other!' The ninth 'Enfans d'Adam' (*LG*60: 311), passing through 'a populous city', originally referred to a male lover, 'one rude and ignorant man', a simple rural type, which Whitman appears to have revised from Calamus and transposed to the other cluster. In the final version, the same-sex dimension is suggested by 'imprinting/my brain' and 'detained me for love/of me', the homoerotic mirroring we also see at work in 'We Two Boys Together Clinging' (*LG*60: 369). Noble's (2018: 81) analysis of the interiority of 'the desire to come and hold', the 'mutual withness' that is 'inseparable from its exterior enactment', is pertinent here, as in the 'flitting glimpse, caught through an interstice' (*LG*60: 371), in the Pfaffian bonhomie of the crowded barroom, self-contained in bustling Broadway. In the 'youth who loves me, and whom I love', the 'two, content', the self is transcended and asserted, while the poet sees the fleeting image from the outside and is seen at the centre of it, both observer and observed, seer and spectacle, as if reflected in a mirror or shop window. In 'Kosmos', (*LG*60: 415) this is extended from space to time: 'The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, insep-/arable together.'

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[25] Whitman resolved in 1870 (qtd. in Murray, *WWA*) to give up 'this FEVERISH, FLUCTUATING, useless undignified pursuit of 164'. The number, and changed pronouns, concealed the initials of Peter Doyle, a young horsecar conductor Whitman met in 1865 and knew till he died. Whitman's previous lover, Fred Vaughan, lived with the poet while he finished 'Calamus' and was involved with the Fred Gray Association.

Likewise in 'Calamus' 10 (*LG*60: 356–357), seventh in 'Live Oak, With Moss', the mirroring of poet and lover blurs the boundary between the two, like time and space, poem and person. He addresses 'YOU bards of ages hence!' As self and lover elide, the 'measureless ocean of love' is at once sexual ecstasy and what is elsewhere called 'the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only/the human Soul is capable of generating and/emitting in steady and limitless floods' (*LG*60: 260), and in 'Song of Myself' (*LG*60: 82) the 'Rise extatic through all', 'The whirling and whirling elemental within me.'

> But come, I will take you down underneath this
> impassive exterior—I will tell you what to say
> of me:
> Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of
> the tenderest lover,
> The friend, the lover's portrait, of whom his friend, his
> lover, was fondest,
> Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measure-
> less ocean of love within him—and freely poured
> it forth,

In 'Experience', Emerson (1883: 78) writes 'There will be the same gulf between every me and thee, as between the original and the picture'. He observes, as Whitman did in telling Traubel about picking calamus leaves, the difference between the counterfeit and the reality, the rush and the root. In the lines above, though, the poet gives us his self-reflection as the reality in denying that gulf, his self-reflection in the very form of the poem he asks us to 'mind/not so much'. His denial is contained in that simple, familiar, friendly (and Friendly) image of physical affection, the act poem that requires the reader's body, 'The real poems, (what we call poems being merely/pictures,) (*LG*60: 305). *Leaves*, then, are like 'The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl' (ibid. 106), the printing press 'whirling its cylinders' (*LG*60: 68). The poet describes his past, through fields, sauntering the streets (*LG*60: 357):

> Whose happiest days were far away, through fields, in
> woods, on hills, he and another, wandering hand
> in hand, they twain, apart from other men,
> Who oft as he sauntered the streets, curved with his
> arm the shoulder of his friend—while the arm of
> his friend rested upon him also.

Arms over the shoulder symbolise the 'Buds to be unfolded on the old terms' (*LG*60: 359) in 'Calamus' 13, later 'Roots and Leaves Alone Are These', the breezes 'of land and love', 'set from living/shores out to you on the living sea'. As Thomas (2010: 651) points out, Whitman 'daringly naturalizes the physical processes of sexual arousal, yet it is based on the familiar conceit of the language privately shared by lovers.' Those leaves, like the calamus root and rush and Whitman's *Leaves*, are above and beneath the surface, within and without the poet and poem:

> They are comprised in you just as much as in them-
> selves—perhaps more than in themselves,

> They are not comprised in one season or succession,
> but many successions,
> They have come slowly up out of the earth and me,
> and are to come slowly up out of you.

As the paradox is posed in 'Calamus' 18 (*LG*60: 363), later 'City of Orgies', 'Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.' The 'pageants of you', 'your shifting tab-/leaux', 'your spectacles' give way to 'the response of my own'. The city is the medium by which the radical reimagination of male, and human, love is attained, even as it gives way to the future and 'many successions' of futures. Simultaneously, the shadow of secession looms beside the fertile light of succession. As Thomas (2010: 653) hears, the thanatopsis — 'the low and delicious word Death' with which 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' climaxes, the poem first published in the *Saturday Press*[26] in 1859 — of 'Calamus' 7 (*LG*60: 352) is disconcertingly unavoidable. 'OF the terrible questions of appearances', perhaps 'speculations/after all', hints at the infiltration of the personal by the political, even if those doubts are 'answered' by lovers and friends. 'Tomb-leaves, body-leaves' in 'Calamus' 2 (*LG*60: 342) do not sing so surely of climactic sexual transcendence, of deathless democratic consciousness. There's considerable anxiety to endure, as is obvious from Whitman's own self-aggrandising granite tomb. The poet (ibid. 343) wills the sweet flag to 'Grow up taller'. 'Do not fold yourselves so in your pink-tinged roots,' he commands. He foresees 'immortal reverberations through/The States' and declares that he 'will give an example to lovers, to take permanent/shape and will through The States'. In the 'Chants Democratic' poem (*LG*60: 165) later titled 'Our Old Feuillage', he tellingly and unconvincingly capitalises 'ONE IDENTITY'. The confident transcendentalist self-projection, reflection, and absorption — the lunar self — wanes, compensating rhetorically and typographically with hollow magnification.

It seems appropriate to close this chapter with an unfinished, unpublished poem written in late 1861. 'The Two Vaults' ([1861] *The Vault at Pfaff's*) submerges us in the rathskeller roots of 'Calamus', where Whitman and the bohemians would congregate while Broadway and commerce rushed overhead. It begins like this:

> The vault at Pfaffs where the drinkers and laughers meet to eat and drink and carouse,
> While on the walk immediately overhead, pass the myriad feet of Broadway
> As the dead in their graves, are underfoot hidden
> And the living pass over them, recking not of them,
> Laugh on laughters [*sic*]! Drink on drinkers!

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[26] Thomas (2010: 653) clarifies that the 'models for writing this poem are known to have been Donizetti and Bellini'. In the 1840s, Whitman discovered his love for opera and for instance saw Don Francisco Marti's company during its 'month-long season at the Castle Garden' (Stauffer 1998: 484). In an April 1842 *Aurora* editorial, Whitman ('Sentiment and a Saunter' 1842, *WWA*) described 'listless glances, at the mingled mass' as he 'sauntered down to the Castle Garden entrance', noting 'rather more than the usual quantity of "people from the country," (you can always tell a rustic in Broadway, from his ill-at-easeness)'. Fuller's *Tribune* article (2000: 427), 'The Grand Festival Concert at Castle Garden', bespeaks her uneasiness with the whim of the urban mass during Beethoven's Symphony: 'the impression was almost overpowering, at least to some—not, indeed, to the ladies and gentlemen, who thought that the best time to secure their omnibuses, and who, we do believe, if admitted to the heavenly courts, could not be beguiled from ringing the bell in the midst of Hallelujah to ask if luncheon was ready.'

> Bandy the jests!
> Toss the theme from one to another!
> Beam up—brighten up bright eyes of beautiful young men!

The subterranean speaker yearns for the 'myriad rushing' overhead where 'lamps are lit', 'shops blaze', and 'fabrics and jewelry/are seen through the plate glass windows', windows that reflect 'continual crowds as if they/would never end.' The unfinished end begins parenthetically, though the closing bracket is deferred and, interrupted, Whitman never finishes the thought: ('You phantoms! oft I pause, yearning, to arrest some one of you!' He expresses a 'doubt': 'I suspect all is but a/pageant.' 'Calamus' 40 (*LG*60: 376) signals the same about the 'chattering, chaffering' life of surfaces, commerce, but it is assuaged by lovers:

> THAT shadow, my likeness, that goes to and fro, seeking a livelihood, chattering, chaffering,
> How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it flits,
> How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;
> But in these, and among my lovers, and carolling my songs,
> O I never doubt whether that is really me.

It is as though the cellar — physically detached from the crowd, culturally outside, beneath 'the clank of the world', as the very first 'Calamus' calls it (*LG*60: 341) — germinates the desire to peer out and above, even as that physical space nourishes and liberates the intoxicated physical affection with which Whitman expresses his urban transcendentalism and even as that clank's material and spiritual syncopations modulates his free verse. Stansell (1993: 110) writes that 'bohemia was a corner of the moral topography of the metropolis, an ecological niche.' Whitman's last antebellum achievement, the 1860 *Leaves*, saw him enjoy a measure of celebrity, it gave him the legitimacy of a Bostonian publisher, if not Emerson's endorsement, and it testified to New York's place on the literary map. And yet Whitman (qtd. in Zweig 1984: 295–296) wrote to Emerson in 1862 and referred to his 'New York stagnation' of 'horrible sloughs'. The 'slough' of human locomotion celebrated in the 1855 'Song of Myself', which I proposed as the urban complement to the ecoerotic 'What is the grass?' passage, is now inhabited in the unpublished Pfaff's poem by the poet and his fellow drinkers, 'underfoot hidden'. The rathskeller sparkled with the 'bright eyes of beautiful young men' but not nearly so many as rushed above, the Calamus above ground. We thus hear in the poem a yearning to ascend to the street and 'arrest some one of you'. This is to float upwards publicly, however, unashamed of the natural, intoxicating, democratic, physical, homoerotic love that is expressed privately in 'Calamus'. That love is rooted in the primacy of the comradeship made possible by the 'self as god', fortified by the desire for all to mirror such self-respect, as indeed the poet does in singing body and soul in equilibrium. Those comrades are the poet's likenesses, his brothers, lovers, selves.

Conclusion, or 'A backward glance'

Entranced in one of his 'backward glances' in later life, Whitman wondered aloud to Traubel (1906: 108) whether he had been photographed too much: 'I meet new Walt Whitmans every day. There are a dozen of me afloat. I don't know which Walt Whitman I am.' In terms that imply the 'eternal float' that Whitman, a Long Islander with edges worn by Manhattan's sparkling tides, reinvented from the Emersonian Over-Soul, he expresses an anxiety about the loss of some essential self-hood. I return to D. H. Lawrence's (1960: 91) thoughts about Whitman's will to merge, morph, and absorb, his fear that it meant the poet's 'original self' had 'leaked out' into the universe: 'Oh, Walter, Walter, what have you done with it?' This has its corollary in the simulacrum argument which reimagined Conrad's (1984) analysis of the architectural and textual continuities in Whitman's self-fashionings. What Whitman expressed to Traubel as he leafed through his flitting images perhaps portrays a broader risk of transcendental egoism. Buell (1973: 328) refers to 'the spiritual exhaustion of being torn apart so many times' and to the transcendentalists own dwindling 'gift for empathy' as they aged. For him (ibid. 326), *Leaves of Grass* 'stands as both the culmination and the epitaph of literary Transcendentalism.'

Given the volume of research that addresses the transcendentalist poetics of the Beats, calibrated to Whitman's influence, this is debatable. Some intriguing ripples arise from that panegyric proposition, however. I have taken the 1860 text, after which Whitman distanced himself from Emerson, as the outer boundary of my thesis. I've done so for its proximity to the historical moment of transcendentalism and its proximity to Whitman's life in New York in order to make a case for a post-transcendentalist poetics of New York. In my pre-city analysis, I situated a certain geographical, textual, ideological porousness on Paumanok in order to mount my argument about interlapping locational, vocational, and periodical contexts in Long Island, Brooklyn, and New York. This research contributes to both the New York and transcendentalist strains in Whitman criticism while also extending its focus outside the city to demonstrate the interlapping sights, sounds, and sensibilities that colour *Leaves.* The 'post-' prefix gestures to the chronology, but also to the ways in which I suggest Whitman's New York, the geocultural factor and a particular set of material conditions and instabilities, influenced him to push the 'I' further than his antecedents were willing to. This thesis has understood transcendentalism primarily though not exclusively through the work of Emerson but there is ample scope for further research to undertake a similar conceptualisation and trace it through the writings of Fuller. Argersinger and Cole's (2014) work looks backwards in looking *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism* (2014) and could assist in such a project. Along similar lines, one might trace how Whitman's transcendentalist poetics of New York, which warps and whets New England transcendentalism, evolved in his postbellum *Leaves*. While the antebellum editions contain his best and most transcendental poetry, and as such the rationale for my scope is clear, in the 1860 text we witness some slipping. The war was so seismic and enormous in its proportions that this would require a study all its own, but future research might seek to map that shift in transcendentalism and New York.

As to the particular city I have read, there is malleability in the post-transcendentalist poetical framework to be relocated from New York to New Orleans, for instance, where Whitman lived in 1848. The French connection is an obvious one. It is worth underlining that 'the body' I have analysed as the conceptual site of Whitman's transcendentalist poetics is that of a white man. The transcendentalist vision of the whole and order, the expanse of the ego through so many discrete particulars, can at times lapse into a totalising mode that overlooks or underplays that significance. As Thomas (1987: 151) puts it, the vastness of the vision 'has the strengths of its considerable weaknesses.' Loonin (2022: 140) summarises the issue in relation to democratic portraiture and the circumspect circumscription of its transcendent potential to class: 'the leaves of the tree can be any combination of genders and races and colors and sizes Whitman wishes to enumerate, but the trunk is always white and male.' Whitman of 1860 does point to the empty white page, however, and there is significant potential to address that paradox or limitation alongside the postbellum post-transcendentalist poetics. Stefan Schöberlein's recent *Walt Whitman's New Orleans: Sidewalk Sketches and Newspaper Rambles* (2022) turns to the crescent city as a geocultural and periodical influence on the poet, for example, and collects the poet's writings from that time. Materialist approaches to Whitman are, as Cohen (2020: 9) observes, multiplying alongside the technological world of texts. The discovery of new writings is extending the journalistic substrate to *Leaves*, for instance. Schöberlein, Blalock, McMullen, and Stacy's (2022) research into Whitman's *Atlas* editorship is one such example whereby new methods have provided fresh and fertile ground for research into the new forms the poet anticipated.

Having mused on those potential ripples, I'd like to close with one of Whitman's future-forward backward glances. 'A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads' (1888) surveys some on the making of *Leaves of Grass*, and it sits right at the end of the 'deathbed' edition. Emerson's absence is notable, but Whitman writes 'autobiography in colossal cipher' (Emerson 1883: 40) in such a way his influence — like New York's, almost totally unnamed in *Leaves* — hardly needs naming. Enshrining the importance of 'autochthonous song', he takes his leave (*LG*91: 438), his last leaf, with these lines. They contain in them the multitudes from which his eternal float springs, the rush and the root: his fish-shape Paumanok, Brooklyn's ample hills and ferry crossings, his sparkling Mannahatta.

In the free evening of my day I give to you, reader, the foregoing garrulous talk, thoughts, reminiscences,

As idly drifting down the ebb,
Such ripples, half-caught voices, echo from the shore.

Bibliography

N.B. With the exception of the entry referring to the *Walt Whitman Archive* as a whole rather than any specific item, I abbreviate *Archive* entries as *WWA*. I omit the website address and the general editors, which are the same for all *WWA* entries. Where the *WWA* does name one or more specific editor(s), I include them while still omitting the general editors.

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