

Towards Poetic Justice: (Im)material Antiquity in the Works of Albery Allson Whitman

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Two things are acknowledged to be sensible for most, which alter human behavior: origin and land. There are also two, which have been deemed injurious, plus conflicting with the nature of being: a severed world and egotism to some stake in a woman's affections. Still, however, the hue of such deed, bearing upon it the flecks of unsuitableness along with erroneous action, is transformed when the writing of providence becomes traced in its origin. It is essential to stifle some irritation with form in composition, when the code of a writer, unlocking the chance of mixed results, has still through the agency of fortune been the event to some unexpected benefit. This instance was the case with Albery Allson Whitman, whose sociopolitical high verse and epic poems show his insistency on solvency between being and origin.

Among Albery Whitman's five poetry books are his *Leelah Misled* (1873), 118-stanza poem; *Not a Man, and Yet a Man* (1877), 197-page narrative poem; *The Rape of Florida* (1884, reprinted as *Twasinta's Seminoles*, 1885), comprising 251 Spenserian stanzas; *The World's Fair Poem* (1893), comprising two poems; and *An Idyl of the South: An Epic Poem in Two Parts* (1901), another narrative poem, often cited as his finest work.¹ Hereafter, I explore two leading works, *The Rape of Florida, or Twasintas's Seminoles* (1884), and *Not a Man, and Yet a Man* (1877), based on the Blackhawk War (1830-1832), of a former Hart County, Kentucky captive of the Green River Plantation.² He used introductory passages, dedications, narratives, and digressions from his tales to convey thoughts echoed by other Black people in the religious pulpit and print media, lecture, and caucus hall.

Like most Americans, during the nineteenth century, Whitman's existence was enmeshed in the materiality of captivity. As Emerson writes in his address on the Fugitive Slave Law, captivity had veered most dinner tables into a debating club and most inhabitants into investigators of natural law. Before these happenings, American captivity formulated Whitman's existence in explicit and subtle aspects. Through the Fugitive Slave Act, captivity enhanced the ownership of American captors to declare their possession two years before taking over parliament funds to send the USS *Mississippi* into the Pacific. The Northern industrialists who would eventually profit from the Fugitive Slave Law needed further exchange routes across the Pacific, which compelled the opening of Japan.³

I explore his epics through emblematic vernacular notions passed down through philosophical ancientness with literature, pulling firm on the scholarship of literary masterworks and philology. I further discuss that Whitman offers, through a decolonial lens, works with a normative world-making conception that confirms some ideas of what becomes regarded as mutually restricted under colonialism together with its effects. Such

restricted matters are African American/Black and Native American presence; gender, Diaspora, colonialist tongues; and the worldly plus a bit of (im)material. The bond between some immaterial and physical realm is an inter-comparative paradigm central to an insight of opening these texts as a penetrating theme that makes fragrant the world with a mandate of recognition.

This affair becomes glimpsed from three perspectives: there is an ontological case about how beings belonging to/being the property of various ethnical classifications can causally interact, an epistemic question about the illustrative degree of (im)material causal methods, plus a dilemma about some power of philology to relate to and affect spatial/non-spatial beings. I also argue that the current climate of the unexpected post-Reconstruction juncture is a complex dialectical bond of spectacle and tension. In other words, I assert that the artistic production of the post-Reconstruction period is depicted, on the one hand, by an intense depiction of suffering and corruption but, on the other, by a severe engagement with issues about the fate of civilization, politics, and morality. The combination of poetry and prose alters the way the reader interacts with the work. Whitman uses the page as a new space upon which his individuality can be assembled. For the orator must willingly move toward the reader, the other, and share his defenselessness with the likelihood of being opposed. Furthermore, the dialect with which two groups once were in discourse in the language of unrest thus, the ousted must find a new wording, new phrases, to convey a position. Poetry transcends historical supremacy of one denomination over another, for it enables a new path through which one can communicate that which was not articulated prior. The dialect that is often used by those who write in and about exile is poetry, for poetry enables them to break down the possession over narrative and history allotted to the cognitive division of terms, and one must wager forth by reading/listening to what is not presentable under the restrictions of understanding.

James Hays explains in “Albery Allson Whitman (1851-1901), Epic Poet of African American and Native American Self-Determination” that as the first Black poet to use the Spenserian stanza in a poem of epic length, he attempted this form of imperial verse “mastered only by Spenser, Byron, and a very few other great poets” (*Rape of Florida*). Whitman said, seeing “some [Black person] is sure to do everything that anyone else has ever done, and as none of that race [has] ever executed a poem in the stately verse, I simply venture in” (*Rape of Florida*). In his second volume, *The Rape of Florida*, through 257 Spenserian stanzas, he regulates the demanding rhyme scheme with repose, but Hays also claims Whitman’s Alexandrines frequently drag along like Alexander Pope’s verses. Whitman’s historic poem *Not a Man, and Yet a Man* of nearly 5000 lines comprised pentameter couplets, trimeters, unrhymed trochaic tetrameter, tetrameter couplets, and unrhymed hexameter and heptameter. The 145-line Prologue of *Not a Man* is a poetic discourse on liberty’s historical development and the Black American’s birthright to experience freedom. Whitman declares that ever since the Hebrews’ deliverance, the notion of God and independence has proliferated throughout the world.

Of Whitman’s work, some have described it as technically ineffective and diffuse, tarnished by lenient versification, awkward transitions in wording, overblown verbiage, and preachy tangents, but he still had a profound talent for affected intellect; for gripping description, romantic narration, the account of tragedy, plus causticness; a wide range of foci; and, the valor to engage diverse along with rugged meters and rhyme schemes in

epic-length poems, fitting his structure to fluctuating tempers with wits. Of Whitman, Reverdy C. Ransom, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) bishop and civil rights leader, wrote, “This man, I think, was lonely. There were few among us with whom he could have [a] communion of mind and spirit” (*The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom’s Son* [1949]: 64).⁴ In his first significant digression, Whitman condemns Memphis, “the pride of the South,” as the site of inane materialism and immorality, promoting slavery, transgression, warfare, starvation, and illiteracy. Conflicted with what W.E.B DuBois in *Black Reconstruction* claimed Thaddeus Stevens’ (a white Radical Republican congressman from Pennsylvania) plans to redistribute the assets of the farmer class was the federal dispossession of Native land and its sale to white settlers and railroad corporations via the Homestead Acts in 1862 and 1866. This plan was to divide Southern territory along the coastline between Florida and South Carolina among freed people in parcels of 40 acres. DuBois felt that Northerners did not take this plan seriously enough, which led to a counter-revolution of property. The federal ruling to hurry the drilling on public lands is redolent of the federal government’s vast land gifts to railway corporations as an enticement for constructing the Transcontinental Railway in the 1860s. In the late 1920s, Vernon Parrington called the Gilded Age phenomenon of the 1870’s the Great Barbecue, in which the powers that be did not invite African Americans/Black people and Native Americans to the cookout ritual.⁵

In 1888, Albery A. Whitman, described as the “gifted” orator, poet, and preacher, was an alternate delegate-at-large from Kansas at the national convention in Chicago. He transitioned from a republican to a democrat in pursuit of “pure politics” and “good government” for democracy.⁶ George Marion McClellan, a slightly younger black poet (1860-1934), assessed some poetry of Black/African American people in an article “The Negro as a Writer” in *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, a 1912 compendium edited by Daniel W. Culp, which addressed Black literature in some context of the pressing issues of the day: “It remains true, however, that he was worthy of a much better place than is accorded him as a [Black] poet, and it is to be regretted that his work is so little known among us” (Culp 279-80).⁷

The Rape of Florida or Twasinta’s Seminoles is a historical romance tale based on the First and Second Seminole Wars. The U. S. Army pursued annihilating an alliance of Seminole Indians and African Americans, many of whom were runaway captives with their Maroon children. The name Twasinta is a fictitious reference to both some native land of some people in this narrative and some people themselves. They are indigenous neighbors of some Seminoles. The hero, Atlassa, and others were primarily loyal to Florida and secondarily to Spain. The three nineteenth-century Seminole Indian Wars (1816-1858) were the second major series of battles in the long-standing struggle—since colonial times—between some indigenous peoples of North America and European settlers. Florida, the site of colonial battles mainly between Britain and Spain throughout the eighteenth century, was regulated by Spain after the U.S. Revolutionary War for Independence. By the treaty between Spain and the United States, Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821. Some multiethnic Spanish Florida peoples are represented here by Twasinta; Palmecho, a Spaniard; Ewald, Palmecho’s daughter with a Maroon woman; Atlassa, a Seminole, plus Mickasuki, the Muskogee. Some Seminoles lived on the land in present-day Florida. While Spain occupied Florida, Seminole land became a refuge for Black fugitivity.

The legendary Twasinta bands of Indians were strongly affected by some Spanish. They also intermarried with Maroons. In this tale, some Seminoles, Muskogee, and other native peoples eventually lost their land and conceded to enabling slavery among their peoples after Spain relinquished Florida to the United States in 1819, which took effect two years later. They were forced from their land in 1830 after Andrew Jackson betrayed the Muskogean people. Soldiers from the U.S. military captured a leader of Florida's people, but he breaks out and reunites with them and becomes a leader of some exiled people on the Trail of Tears (1831-1833). Some will settle in the so-called Indian Territory; others travel as far as Mexico to establish their settlements. Of some Black people in the Florida Indian region, some vastly significant faction was those with a perceived status of importance in the Seminole tribe. A few of these people existed as legal slaves of some Indians, with an actual lesser amount existing as lawfully autonomous; some considerable majorities were runaway or "captured" Black people and their children, all of whom were thus legally the capital of white denizens.⁹

Moreover, there were free Black people among some Seminoles, plus there were also Seminole slavers and Seminole bounty hunters that enslaved Africans too. These occurrences are as complicated as the Creek's history with Africans and slavery. However, President Andrew Jackson's Major-in-Charge, General Thomas Sidney Jesup, who was in authority in Florida during its considerably critical moment, declared openly in 1836, "This ... is a negro, not an Indian war." The General doubled down on his conviction that if the war were "not speedily put down, the south would feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season," or in other words, that a widespread captive-as-slave coup might occur.¹⁰

In Whitman's epics of frontier history, he lays, what Matt Sandler (2020) refers to as, Jacksonian historical subjects and antiquated poetic forms to the provision of an aesthetic evaluation of colonization, discrimination, and capitalism.¹¹ Although this notion Sandler argues is complicated considering Jacksonian ethics mostly only applied to white men. Sandler's claim is an overreckoning of the universalism of President Jackson's politics that Whitman sought to dismantle through aesthetic fugitivity. In this way, fugitivity is intrinsic to the grind of being Black but is evident transversally.¹² Whitman, too, uses poetry as an expansion of radical eradication. As a Black Romantic poet and African Methodist Episcopal Church minister consumed in post-Reconstruction Black community-building across the South and Midwest, his poetry worked through the cultural (ab)norms of American frontier life and settler colonialism paradoxes. This notion is analogous to the practice of Alexis Pauline Gumbs in *M Archive* where modern (im)materialism clashes with the virtually unimaginable descent of life left in the trace of capitalism. Likewise, this same practice may be seen in *Maroon Choreography* by Fahima Ife; in narrative poems and essays they speculate on the (im)material, ecological, and aesthetic afterlives of Black fugitivity. At the core of art and spiritual genius across myriad communities and nations, this creative impetus affirms portals that shroud space, eternity, and some beaming matrix of existence.

Florida's despoliation is indeed a reference to some systemic process of force and bloodshed by white Americans to remove or destroy Native Americans and African Americans. On another level, the *Rape of Florida* is about some Maroons and Black/African American people who fought for individual freedom in the Seminole War. In *The Idea of Florida in the American Literary Imagination*, Anne E. Rowe provides

an informative discussion of A. A. Whitman's *Rape of Florida* (1865), whose epic "transformed the eviction of the Seminoles from Florida into an allegory of the pillaging of the New World" (20). Through body (material) with the mind (immaterial), they slid into Florida and ravaged a social construct of force. It is, perhaps, through contact with the erotic that the world becomes created. This sensuous manifestation is some potential for a new, more complex awareness of an ability to transform the material world. The body becomes enlightened by a lineage that conforms to materialize the immaterial. Thus, a body turns into a favored agency for envisioning the abstract and the innermost parts; it may convey itself to sensuous manifestation. That which lacks sensual manifestation may well exist as able to define without itself being definable. Some elements become generated in the continual performing out of this paradoxical link of awareness and visibility. And so, it goes in Whitman's tale, one night, a man infiltrated Ewald's (Palmecho's daughter with a Maroon woman) cell to rape her. He hounded her, and she eluded him for a time until "with brute force" he readied to grab her.

One pleading look to heav'n she wildly throws,
And sinks upon her couch still mutt'ring prayers;
Then like a flying fury at him goes,
Flings wide her prison door and publishes her woes! (RF 64)

She broke out, "saved from shame," and returned to Twasinta. There she found out that her father, Palmeche, had been caught and punished to be hanged for the killing of three guards killed when the Seminoles rescued him: "doomed to die for shedding human blood, He who has never caused a mortal pain" (RF 64). To plead for his life, Ewald surrenders. Thus, Ewald's body becomes the means for freedom for her father and tribe, but her body also becomes the site and metaphorical point at which her tribe becomes pillaged.

Since antiquity, carnal pillaging as a literary technique becomes deployed to paint a vivid image and project a maimed view of the power of force—some power of assault on mind together with a body—like the rape of Medusa in the temple of Athens. These representative female bodies are yet all around like the Statue of Liberty, Lady Justice, and Mother Earth, Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), or the second of William Shakespeare's poems written as a minor epic in the 16th century, *The Rape of Lucrece*.¹³ "The Rape of Europa" has been dated to the early 1640s during the years Vouet was in Paris between 1627 and 1649. Even in the bible, the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–22) or Dinah (Genesis 34) are events of tragedy to read. This account of Whitman's poetic justice, even at the expense and injustice of women and others, creates a space to infer the reconciliation of philosophical coding in the poetics. In this space of tradition, along with being a dilemma emerges to negate the female seemingly placed on a pedestal as central to Whitman's creationist vision.

Using an allegorical lady symbol, the portrayal of rape no longer embodies the female's suffering but the vaster deterioration of the American legal structure plus the moral insolvency of colonialism. Material metaphors symbolize junctures in Whitman's *The Rape of Florida*, and *Not a Man, and Yet a Man* when the portrayal or indication of rape reveals some material purpose of these epics, the agency. In other words, some subject of reading turns into the object of reading as well. Thus, the medium also serves as the message. Rape, therefore, also persists as a site of personal disruption that a systemic framework cannot entirely understand. Such a political or descriptive technique

performs more omission and unrest, stirring the initial site of trauma. Rape is, therefore, ever, plus never structural, at one time and impossibly a metaphor for other chaos. It is an epiphenomenon, philosophically; or, an effect of central phenomena but cannot affect preliminary phenomenon. As in, rape arises from colonialism but cannot embody the notion.¹⁴

Not a Man, and Yet a Man concerns Rodney, a twenty-year-old guy with old classic heroic virtues. Though “eighty-five percent Saxon,” Rodney is a slave in Saville, a border Illinois village before the Civil War. Counter-balanced with Seville is the Indian Sac Village, where Chief Pashepaho, his daughter Nanawawa, and their tribe live, ideally, in harmony with nature. In the subplot, Nanawawa, though courted by many suitors, merges with a young white captive, and Chief Pashepaho dies. At this point, the underlying vileness in the white town spirals to life. Hunters from Saville, led by Sir Maxey, loot an Indian village, and later one of them shoots Nanawawa. Indian warriors find her body, hound the murderers, and massacre all of them except Sir Maxey, whose horse saves him. Coming upon Rodney in the woods, Sir Maxey urges them to escape, but Rodney scolds his cowardly slave owner, and he singlehandedly dominates the men who attack him.

Eventually, Rodney becomes the captive of Mosher Aylor in Florida. The protagonist falls in love with a beautiful young Creole captive called Leeona, whom Aylor craves to “proffer her a master’s secret love” (*NM* 153). When Aylor discovers the lovers meeting at night, he becomes jealous and imprisons Rodney. With Leeona’s help, Rodney flees, taking haven in a wooded cave. Later, while hiding in the “boughs” allowing his eyes “to take their feast of gaze” on Leeona’s beauty first, eventually:

[A]s the fingers of a dream have caught
 The waving pinions of her free young thought,
 She hears his steps, sleep blends them with her dream,
 Till touch’d, she wakes and bounds up with a scream.
 She screams for aid, till screaming makes her hoarse.
 He grows more furious as she him defies;
 The helpless lamb to flee the lion tries,
 But fear o’ertakes her strength, and daunts her soul,
 Her senses reel, and reason yields control
 To blank unconsciousness, and what ensues,
 Refrain to ask, Oh! man, withhold my muse! (*NM* 153)

The licentious Aylor “filled with blasty lusts” rapes Leeona, and afterward, she bears a child (*NM* 153). Rodney, grief-stricken by ambiguity, makes his way to Leeona at dusk, and the lovers promise to pursue liberty. While Leeona escapes with her infant, Rodney kills the men and dogs hounding her. He then returns to her in the woodland. After months of journeying, Rodney and Leeona make their way to Sussex Vale, Canada, where they marry and live happily among a host of warm friends. Sometime later, curiously, Rodney encounters a dying Confederate soldier Mosher Aylor. With his last words, Aylor begs God for mercy, declares his sins, and pleads for Rodney and Leeona to forgive him.

What becomes overlooked is that Whitman may have accentuated the high verse structure with codes of Black dialect that do not always fit into the Spenserian stanza structure. For instance, after he describes the assault of Leeona by Aylor in “The Flight

of Leona” upon exclaiming, “Oh! *man*, withhold my muse!” (my emphasis; 153), Whitman sometimes interjects with slight digression of Black vernacular narrated into high verse structure. While some scholars have harshly criticized this as a lack, it is an event of evolution and embodiment of negating the rigidity of imperial prose. Whitman added a sense of joy, racial pride, and delicate awareness of collective matters, movingly customized to these poetic abilities.¹⁵ In “The Flight of Leona,” readers are first introduced to her:

In bloom gemm'd depths, where Sylvan branches meet
Above dim paths, that thread a still retreat;
Where light on tip-toe shy, steals o'er your path,
Like some chaste maid unrobing at the bath (153)

From the onset, readers see Leona in a garden-like paradise of “Sylvan branches,” evoking the Aristotelian illustration of *hyle* and *telos*.¹⁶ The trees on this “dim path” exemplar nonhuman communication networks. In this way, the “chaste maid” defines sylvan rhetoric as illustrating roots and “branches” of new materialist and more-than-human rhetorical theory. Despite the later rape and objectification of her as less-than-human, the dichotomy presents an intriguing space to reconcile the poetic tragedy of objectification parallel to the realism of objectified bodies in literature and reality. Furthermore, she embodies characteristics of Mother Earth to accentuate her beauty, ripe suppleness, and body:

Leona's long locks round her slim waist meet,
The bright waves leap and sigh to kiss her feet,
While her reluctant breasts to view disclose
The lovely hues of life's serenest rose;
And timid rising, like twin moons do seem (*NM* 153)

Her hair near her “slim waist” already sets up readers to pay attention to her body and her aesthetic appeal. She becomes more than a woman—more than human— or some representation of Mother Earth, as sand near an ocean shore as “bright waves” move near and moans “to kiss her feet,” and her “reluctant breasts” seem “like twin moons” (*Not a Man, and Yet a Man*). The dynamic, contrasting movement of her breasts rising as she breathes accompanied by a metaphorical variation—the clear-sounding; beautiful; divine waves, serene youth, the supple, curving female form—and their psychological description conveyed by gesture along with pose timidly rising. The drama of the movement becomes heightened using her body in which the upper and lower parts of the body represent the earth (feet as sand) and the universe (breasts as twin moons) in opposite directions, encouraging the viewer/reader to see her all-around from all points of view. This doubling of woman-as-Earth and woman-as-muse demonstrates Albery Whitman's use of a body to foretell the enforced ravishment of that body—of that earthly and spiritual space. Meanwhile, “Low Aylor” keeps looking at her through the “boughs” as “Lust heaves his bosom and compels his breath” (153). As she lives and breathes in paradise, like Eve, in the Garden of Eden, timidly so, Aylor, like a serpent demon, coils behind a tree while he ruminates in uncertainty to “nearer steal, but then she might awake!” (153).

In *The Rape of Florida* and *Not a Man, and Yet a Man*, a woman becomes hidden by this broader analogy of forced penetration. These symbols of an offense are not about an assault at all. They only utilize rape to symbolize deeper sin. The injury of solitary

women becomes not more than a tool. This occurrence further perpetuates a female body used as some device for economic stimuli, like captivity. Since penetrating some areas of being in literature are often portrayed centrally as penetrating a body of female literary figures, this writing method grants access to antiquity philologically. When using a body as an orifice for dispelling germination of seeds, a space of that womblike realm becomes a destruction and renewal site. A matrixial substance of being stands as the object of an artifact to populate a tale and (re)populate a mind as materializing a/n (im)material trauma of rape—as a poetic tragedy. One of the main theoretical guiding influences in the emergence of ecofeminism in the 1980s is the “rape of the land” model. In essence, ecofeminists contended that some root of modern ecological troubles lay in a patriarchal civilization. The recognition that nature was also in this group was the work of early ecofeminists like Susan Griffin, Toni Morrison, and Carolyn Merchant. The idea that a patriarchal society could “rape the land” stemmed from two theories: (a) that it is the nature of a patriarchal society to dominate and control entities that fall outside of established rules of culture; and (b) that women could reclaim imagery of the goddess in nature (or, Mother Earth) as a source of embodiment and power.

The work on embodiment within the phenomenological framework clarifies the extent to which an embodied identity is dependent on some response of another. It becomes conveyed intersubjectively, related to some viable form of social interactions within which one can noticeably locate. It is also evident that some form of embodiment that remains normatively connected to specific corporeal morphologies or syntactical structures can become limited along with detrimental. Toni Morrison, Judith Butler, and Frantz Fanon described the adverse effects of encountering the illusions and descriptions (metaphors) borne by women and Black/Brown beings (or bodies), which may become internalized to resolve an embodied sense of self. One’s fleshly openness, together with one’s susceptibility to others, is also essential to consider. Through the body, one becomes exposed to some material world and to some brutality that may be perpetrated on persons by others. The susceptibility to collective abuses and some violent behavior risks add mainly to those who neglect to agree to societal (ab)norms. According to Sara Suleri, the trope of colonialism as rape “in which colonized territory is rendered dubiously coterminous with the stereotype of a precultural and female geography” no longer remains “culturally liberating” in part because this metaphor obscures “the anxieties of empire” (16). However, Butler emphasizes the exposure plus instability of everyone’s subjectivity, established by civic systems of signifying, which are also unstable and traversed by disparities. One becomes affected by the outer, the collective, and familial ties, which empower one to presume subjectivity and agency but are also harmful to one in sealing opportunities for some way of being.

In another vein, *The Rape of Florida (RF)* (1884) involves African Americans and Native Americans, both subject to some linguistic plus material practices of non-colored Others, wrestling with existing within and without those imposed structures of being. This event arose in some reconciliation of language with some material realm, which lingered beyond Albery Whitman or Edmund Spenser’s knowledge. From Spenser’s self-identified exile in Ireland to some influence his epic tale *The Faerie Queene* had on the language used for the King James Version of the Bible, to some philological effect present in Albery Whitman’s epic adventure, *The Rape of Florida* is evidence of some power movement of language style has on literature.¹⁷ This effect of linguistic occurrences

leaves traces of inherited transnationality present in most authors' works. Spenser's poetics indicated a probable basis of his doubts about some place of the verse in a culture dependent upon unique discourse but stalled by an underlying language limitation. Spenser's labor on dialect is not just a circumstance of idealism and configuration; it has political along with civic contexts. It is a topic of valuable and harmful patterns linked to exceptional plus disastrous material verities.

I focus on Spenser's craft next to highlight some influences on Albery Whitman. Spenser wrote the poem during a transitional period from Middle English to Early English. During the transition, some dialects spoken in England include Welsh, spoken in Wales, and Cornish, spoken in Cornwall. It is essential to understand Middle English for this epic seeing traces of Middle English features and literacy techniques throughout the story. There was also some development of religious and academic verse in Morality plays. Some main characters become personified abstractions like Good Deeds or Friendship, such as *Everyman* (1505). Whitman uses this same concept as Rodney and his other heroes embody noble and chivalrous qualities. It is also important to remember that Latin remained the language of serious literature when Spenser was alive. There was debate as to whether English would be a dominant language moving forward. Thus, Spenser wrote in English to protect the Elizabethan church's national and moral purity with English tradition. One consequence of the Reformation was the separation of Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church. There were religious and political disputes in which each group looked to the medieval church for historical evidence to support their arguments. This discourse led to an interest in old English plus classical learning, which led to Plutarch, Virgil, Plato, and Homer's English translations. That conscious desire to produce national literature in England led to epics like *The Faerie Queene*.

Book III of *Faerie Queene* contains some philosophical core of the epic poem, meant for reading in private spaces; namely, grace, temporality, and plutonic love unifies the universe with people through virtuous actions returning to God at last in worship. This idea is similar to Aylor in Whitman's *Not a Man* as he finally admits his sins to Rodney and begs for forgiveness from Leona and mercy from God. The heroine of Book III, Britomart, is the daughter of King Ryence of Britain and the lady knight of chastity. She is the most powerful of several types of Queen Elizabeth in the poem. The book of chastity generates a made-up female body that resists penetration, like Ewald in *Rape of Florida*; thus, Elizabeth's famed historical discursive depictions of her impervious body becomes represented as Britomart in the story. For instance, to give virtuous longing a body within a poetics of the dialogue, earlier in Britomart's quest, Spenser will negate forms of identity to produce a feminine bias positioned on some virtue of chastity. However, these identifications produce erotic opportunities which do not lead to marriage. Britomart's friendships become antagonistic, and her identifications become a state of low spirits caused by loss of hope, such that her quest as some personification of chaste desire ends with her "hacking" and cutting Radigund's "dainty parts," a synecdoche for female sexuality.

It is these seemingly immaterial abstractions that establish some matter of poetics. For instance, the only reference to Albery Whitman and the Seminole connection is a note in his epic of "a meeting with a Seminole chief" (Hays 11). Poetic writing embodies a strategy of event and grasps an unfolding structure that cannot be recognized beforehand. Seeing the world of happenings is a realm of change. This Kantian aesthetic understanding in

which nature, through some intellectual process, specifies some rule, not science but composition. Captured structures indicated only through event would infringe some epistemology of existence in a Kantian equation of nature, ever-present in a sense, with an all-encompassing principle of knowledge seeing nature already resides within the psyche. How small-minded to think the universe may be contained in this linguistic form shaped by gender and constructs of time. The purpose must grant evaluation and awareness. On the other hand, Albery Whitman performs the author function the way John Milton recreated material heaven and hell from the immaterial of mind, that is, imagination presupposed to matter—as God. If all that exists is a matter in its movement assemblages, how does the poetic mind establish a space that prior did not live? Whitman offers an answer to this question in CANTO I, the INVOCATION I:

The poet hath a realm within, and throne,
 And in his own soul, singeth his lament.
 A comer often in the world unknown —
 A flaming minister to mortals sent;
 In an apocalypse of sentiment,
 He shows in colors true the right or wrong,
 And lights the soul of virtue with content;
 Oh! could the world without him please us long!
 What truth is there that lives and does not live in song? (*RF* 8)

The Dedication of Whitman's work conveys his faith in Black people to overcome some materialist nature of imperial sovereignty, declaring "whining Petition and complaint are the language of imbecility and cowardice," "*Goody Goodness* is a sort of man worship: ignorance is its inspiration; fear its ministering spirit, and beggary its inheritance" (*Rape of Florida* 3-4). Albery Whitman calls for a strong sense of self-reliance, adamant resistance to oppression, and belief in some signs of oneself as Spirit, as immaterial, and some universal quality of subjective personality. He relates, therefore, to his own life:

I was in bondage—I never was a slave—the infamous laws of a savage despotism took my substance—what of that? [...] Adversity is the school of heroism, endurance, the majesty of man, and hope, the torch of high aspirations. (*Rape of Florida*, p. 4; repeated in II, xi)

Whitman never did believe slavery was a state of mind that could not be overcome. He separated his body, as captive, from his mind, to conceive of and create realms. He thought what from the "savage" does he owe to grant power to "despotism" over his material substance. Laws of matter produce within being plus social (ab)norms an immaterial effect on some embodied host's spirit. This material restriction on freedom begets immaterial bondage. Whitman sought to dismantle this spiritual captivity by depicting poetics' bodily experience to address some (im)material facet of a body of color and "those who deem themselves superior-born" (*RF* II, VII).

Poets such as Edmund Spenser, John Milton, and Albery Whitman took on some daunting undertaking of mediating their notions of imagination with their convictions about the world's material configuration plus the universe around them. They carved out some space between a platonic aesthetic along with materialist physiology. For instance, historical analysis shows Foucault (1994) looked at how subjectivity becomes performed in and by a body.¹⁸ Others, such as Leibniz, propose one considers a body entirely as an ambassador of modification. In his thinking, a body encompasses a

technological, cerebral capacity for transformation rather than only a realm of organic nature with equilibrium. Thus, the existence of bodies does not destabilize some material or immaterial importance of an artifact. Only some interactive works of symbolizing functions give evidence. They are studying works of action via some medial progressions fixed to some bodies functioning in the stories: as disseminating something they are not themselves, as fictitious characters, part of, unfolding awareness without itself offering knowledge. This writing process opens greater possibilities for conveying these creations in poetics. An enchanting work between some clashing stakes of immaterialism plus physical reductionism, these writers delivered an earlier form of inimitable poetics of materialism. To recreate an omnipotent experience, for example, embodied in *Paradise Lost*, Milton incorporated some creationist method of God—to create some material from the immaterial. In that dearth, historical memory, and contemporary time matter in some influence of such an endeavor.

Therefore, by placing some lyrics in some context of Whitman's being and times, this examination shows Whitman's well-crafted understanding of multi-racial-being with the presence or some negated existence in multi-cultural equality. "Poetry," Whitman wrote, "is the language of universal sentiment... Her voice is the voice of Eternity dwelling all great souls. Her aims are the inducements of heaven, her triumphs the survival of the Beautiful, the True, and the Good" (*Rape of Florida* 4). This "voice of Eternity" is transcendent, permeating minds throughout time. The universality of verse coils around delusion and imposed ways of being and uproots "Truth" from some lingering fibers of misappropriation. His work was formulated when Blackness as a race within being-as-statelessness ousted Black yearnings for equality. Language is some most evident and pervasive of the colonial traces, primarily in countries over which the British Empire held influence. This notion becomes visible when one assesses some evidence that many postcolonial writings exist in English. This language "provides the terms by which reality may be constituted" with "the names by which the world may be 'known'" so some effects of language in a colonized nation transcend the essential purpose of speech as transmission and develop more cultural importance (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 283). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o also implies this when he claims, "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 290).¹⁹

Materialism infers the challenge of reinterpreting being on the rationale of the turn in the sciences. Although materialism in its respective manifestations, whether ancient or naturalistic, goes back to a material principle, materialism attempts to give some being to material-less sensibilities. This challenge implies a denial of the hylemorphic techniques of Aristotelian metaphysics, which indicate that something is underlying matter, namely raw material (hylé). This can be informed by the notions from which the form arises. Even phenomenology, which has generated vast criticisms against substantialism, makes use of hylé as a source to something underlying.

In ending, I refer to the literary Historian Parrington's description of the Great Barbecue of the 1870s that Whitman aestheticized:

Suspicious commoners with better eyes than manners discovered the favoritism of the waiters and drew attention to the difference between their own meager helpings and the heaped-up plates of more favored guests. It appeared indeed that there was gross discrimination in the service [...] Then at last came the reckoning. When the bill was

sent into the American people the farmers discovered that they had been put off with the giblets while the capitalists were consuming the turkey. They learned that they were no match at a barbecue for more voracious guests, and as they went home unsatisfied, a sullen anger burned in their hearts that was to express itself later in fierce agrarian revolts (Parrington 23-24)²⁰

Vernon Parrington's uneasiness has come to be the concern of most people today. The Second Great Barbecue will form the present culture for years to come. If this epoch generates more social disparity, the resentment and fury of the uninvited guests may be livid. The pillaging of the sacred land persists mostly by white people exclusively who continue to revive the necromantic spirit cult of colored sacrilege on massive historical gravesite every day. Albery Whitman aestheticized this lack of invitation to the barbecue and desecration. Moten, Gumbs, and Ife continue this sort of work in inspiring a poetic reformation of sorts to this phenomenon. In a cultural matrix of configuration, poets blend ethics with materialism to demonstrate highly complex interconnectedness in ways of being. Not only was Albery Whitman tying varying communities of dispossession with other sacred rituals, but he also illustrated often a spiritual bond with nature and reverence of atmosphere around him, of trees, of God, of Earth. In doing so, he paved a different path for artistry in the wake of oppression to find immaterial means of engaging with the ancient and current dilemmas of being.

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Notes

¹“Whitman, Albery Allson 5/30/1851–6/29/1901.” *Encyclopedia of African-American Writing*, edited by Shari Dorantes Hatch, Grey House Publishing, 3rd edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*.

²“Whitman, Albery A.,” *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/1035>.

³See Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Fugitive Slave Law” (1854).

⁴Luker, Ralph E. “Ransom, Reverdy Cassius.” Oxford African American Studies Center. May 31, 2013. Oxford University Press; Davis, LaRose M. “Whitman, Albery Allson” Oxford African American Studies Center. May 31, 2013. Oxford University Press.

⁵The epoch of federal giveaways to industrial capitalism was first described as “the Great Barbecue” by Vernon Parrington in the uncompleted final volume of *Main Currents in American Thought*. See Vernon L. Parrington, *Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920*, at 23-26 (1958).

⁶“A New City Hall Council Bluffs Sadly in Need of a New Municipal Headquarters.” *Omaha Daily Herald*, vol. XXIII, no. 315, August 13, 1888, p. 5. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

⁷Culp, Daniel. W. *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*. New York: Arno, 1969.

⁸See Jimoh, Yemisi, Hamlin, Françoise. *These Truly are the Brave: An Anthology of African American Writings on War and Citizenship*. University Press of Florida, 2015 pp. 175.

- ⁹ Captured from Indians in Florida: Letter from the Secretary of War, House Documents, 25 Congress, 3 Session, No. 225 (Serial 348), 119-20, 57-65; American State Papers, Military Affairs.
- ¹⁰ Court of Inquiry-Operations in Florida: Letter from the Secretary of War, House Documents, 25 Congress, 2 Session, No. 78 (Serial 323), 52; American State Papers, Military Affairs (7 vols., Washington, 1832-1861), VII, 820-21.
- ¹¹ Matt Sandler, *The Black Romantic Revolution: Abolitionist Poets at the End of Slavery*, Verso Books, 2020.
- ¹² See Fred Moten, “Fugitivity is immanent to the thing but is manifest transversally” from *bughson’s tavern* (2008).
- ¹³ Mowat, Barbara A., and Paul Werstine. *Shakespeare’s Sonnets and Poems*. New York: Washington Square, 2006, 2004.
- ¹⁴ See “Obscene Textures: The Erotics of Disgust in the Writings of Ismat Chughtai” (2020) in the journal *Comparative Literature* by Neetu Khanna as she explores how the female body becomes the focal object of violent subjection by both colonial and anticolonial nationalist regimes of discipline.
- ¹⁵ Sherman, Joan R. “Whitman, Albery Allson.” *Oxford African American Studies Center*. December 01, 2006. Oxford University Press.
- ¹⁶ Jones, Madison, “Sylvan Rhetorics: Roots and Branches of More-than-Human Publics, *Rhetoric Review*, 38: 1, 63-78, 2019.
- ¹⁷ Spenser has said, as quoted from *The Works of Edmund Spenser in Six Volumes with a Glossary Explaining the Old and Obscure Words* written by Jacob Tonson in 1715, “In vain he feeketh others to fupprefes who hath not learn’d himself firft to fubdue...” (In vain a man seeks others to suppress who has not learned himself first to subdue) (Tonson 872). The latter words are ironic seeing he spent most of his life oppressing the Irish and Catholic people. Whitman’s choice of the Spenserian stanza is ironic, given the Elizabethan poet’s beliefs towards colonialism. Spenser made his fortune in Ireland, and he greatly supported the growing plantation system there, an indication of England’s pattern of settlement in its American colonies. In 1596 Spenser wrote *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, which called not only for more British settlement but for the use of starvation as a way of controlling Ireland’s native Celtic population.
- ¹⁸ See Michel Foucault. “Psychiatric Power.” In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, pp. 39-50. 1994. *Psychiatric Power* is based on the edited transcripts of a series of lectures Foucault gave at the *College de France* in the winter of 1973–1974.
- ¹⁹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “The Language of African Literature,” *Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 290.
- ²⁰ Parrington, *supra* note 5, at 23-24.

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