Poet of comrades: Walt Whitman and the Bolton Whitman Fellowship

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These I singing in spring collect for lovers,
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)
(from 'These I Singing in Spring')

I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other nations
preparing
(from 'Years of the Modern')

Old age poses special risks for poets. The fear must always be that the diminution of physical capacity will correspond with a diminution of poetic capacity, a fear augmented for male poets by the deeply embedded trope equating virility with poetic power. For Walt Whitman, old age came early. In 1873, at fifty-three, he suffered a debilitating stroke and although he made a partial recovery and lived on – indeed, for nearly twenty years – the most productive period of his poetic career was over. Nevertheless, the impulse to write never left him, nor did he relinquish the metaphor linking creative and sexual power. He chose instead to write a poetry of diminution, of physical frailty, in full consciousness of his previous triumphant proclamations of virile poetic power:

Last droplets of and after spontaneous rain,
From many limpid distillations and past showers;
(Will they germinate anything? mere exhalations as they all
are – the land's and sea's – America's;
Will they filter to any deep emotions? any heart and
brain?)¹

The usual harsh verdict passed on Whitman's later poetry tends to dismiss the bravery involved in the decision, reiterated many times, to go

on writing in the face of ever-diminishing returns. His reputation today rests on the poetry he wrote between 1855, the date of the first appearance of *Leaves of Grass*, and 1871, the date of the fifth edition. Despite his ceaseless efforts to promote his book (which went, in the end, to seven editions), Whitman's poetry took a very long time to find a substantial readership; a milieu for the appropriate reception of his poetry had, in a sense, to be constituted. That constituency did not form until the 1920s, long after his death. Yet Whitman's last droplets of spontaneous rain did germinate something: something wholly unexpected but, once he became aware of it, treasured and wondered at: the love of a devoted band of British readers across the Atlantic in the prosperous mill-town of Bolton, Lancashire.

The story of the Bolton Whitman Fellowship begins in the 1880s and therefore concerns some of Whitman's earliest avid readers. Their letters to the poet in the last years of his life brought him comfort and hope, and the transatlantic visits of two of them in particular gave him a sense of community that, with its exhilarating international reach and promise of further extension, was immensely precious to him. The papers of the Bolton Whitman Fellowship are held on two sites: the smaller collection is held at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester at Deansgate, the larger at the Bolton Central Library. The foundation of the Rylands collection is the bequest of Charles F. Sixsmith, who refused to leave his substantial collection to the Bolton Library following a dispute with the Librarian there.² The archive as a whole, however, is remarkably unified, configured as it is around a central figure. It is the record of the group of men gathered around James William Wallace, known simply as 'Wallace' to his friends, at whose home they met to discuss the poetry and philosophy of Walt Whitman.

The criss-cross trace of thousands of items – letters, articles, journals and photographs – to and fro across the Atlantic between Wallace and his friends in Bolton and Whitman and his friends in Camden is simply too dense to be understood in terms of literary 'influence'. Indeed, although their correspondence contributes much to our knowledge of the early reception of Whitman's poetry, it is doubtful that any merely literary model could adequately characterise their exchange. Wallace and his friends sought not only to understand those poems which were unlike any poetry they had encountered before, but also to make contact with the man who wrote the poems, the man who had vowed to make his own personality the very centre of his poetry. He seemed to them the source not just of a distinctive and radically new kind of poetry, but a source of

vision, of wisdom, of courage and of overarching love, and love was the both the means and the end of the manifold social transformations they envisaged. It seemed wonderful to them that, for the first five years of their correspondence, that man was still available to them, and responded to their professions of gratitude and devotion with characteristic generosity – making gifts of autographed copies of his books to particular correspondents, and sending cards and good wishes in which individuals were named. The Bolton Whitmanites were not the first working people to heed the poet's celebratory message of unity – a unity powerfully connecting individuals without sacrificing any of their uniqueness – but they do seem to have been the first group of working people to receive Whitman's poetry collectively, the first community of non-university readers. In the bustling town of Bolton, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, the frail poet found the readership of which he had dreamed.

Wallace's focus on Whitman dates from 1885, when Wallace was thirty-one. The group that would become the Bolton Whitman Fellowship was by that time already well established as a reading group, but not one dedicated to a particular author. Its initial members were drawn from the parish church and soon became a core group of eight young men. That core group itself quickly expanded to include a dozen or so more members, some of whom were occasional rather than regular attenders. By the time that Wallace first came in contact with Whitman's poetry, they had worked their way through a wide range of authors, including Burns, Carlyle, Emerson, Tennyson, Ruskin, Mrs Humphrey Ward and George Macdonald, as well as Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe.³ It is difficult to pinpoint the first meeting of the group, but one of its members, Fred Wild, who was more or less the same age as Wallace, supposed they were 'about seventeen' when they started the readings, which would give a starting date of about 1870.

For most of its members, the attraction of the group was undoubtedly Wallace himself, his extraordinary sweetness of personality being much remarked upon. Wentworth Dixon, who joined the Fellowship in 1885, noted that his kindness extended even to earthworms, which he went to considerable pains to avoid treading on, prompting a comparison of Wallace with St Francis.⁴ But the more usual comparison was with Whitman himself. Dixon, indeed, claimed Wallace as Whitman's spiritual superior, since Whitman was, one could hardly help noticing, self-promoting, whereas Wallace was utterly selfless.⁵ Hearing Wallace read from Whitman was said to be 'a pentecostal experience',⁶ although it was also agreed that his voice was truly awful: 'rough and husky' and

‘sound[ing] as though he had a “throat affection”’.⁷ The readings took place in the evening at Wallace’s home at 14 Eagle Street, which was ‘one of the worst streets in The Haulgh, Bolton’. The room in which they gathered was nine or ten foot square and soon thick with tobacco smoke.⁸ In the early years, group readings took place three or four evenings a week, after which the men went for a walk, but within two years Monday evenings had become the regular meeting time.⁹

Dixon describes Wallace’s parents as belonging to the ‘artisan class’.¹⁰ Wallace himself was more educated than his parents and is better described as educated working class or lower middle class. The same thing is true of the group as a whole: a brief glance at the various occupations of its members reveals a constituency drawn from both sides of the managerial line. This would seem to be an index of not only the social mobility that characterised Bolton’s and other Victorian mill towns’ working classes, but, more significantly, an index of a new sense of possibility in negotiating employment and social relations – a sense of possibility that this group felt derived directly from Walt Whitman, and which individual members sought to apply both collectively and in their own individual lives. To give but one example: Charles Sixsmith, who worked in Bentinck Mill in Farnworth and in time became its managing director, sought to evolve a new aesthetic of block printing that would be integral to a humanely conceived relationship of the mill-workers to the fabric they produced.¹¹ Sixsmith became a member of the Fellowship in the early 1890s, but in 1885, the time of the Fellowship’s first introduction to Whitman, it boasted a general practitioner, a hosiery manufacturer, a cotton waste merchant, an engineering employer’s federation secretary, an architect’s assistant, a bank clerk, a magistrate’s clerk, a lawyer’s clerk, and one other clerk, as well as two church ministers.¹² In time, these core members of the group would be joined by a very diverse range of people with connections to schools and universities, the Independent Labour Party, the media, and professional collectors of Americana. The list of prominent reformers connected with the Bolton Whitman Fellowship, whether through occasional visits or solely through correspondence, includes Edward Carpenter, Robert Blatchford, Keir Hardie, James Sims, Katherine St John Conway, John Bruce Glasier, Caroline Martyn, Alice Collinge, Caroline Eccles and Ramsay Macdonald. Among other correspondents was the Unitarian minister Reverend Will Hayes (also known as Brother John), who founded in Kent a society devoted to comparative religion that included Whitman among its prophets. The name of that society, ‘The Order of the Great Companions’, came from a line of

Whitman's 'Song of the Open Road'. Among the overseas correspondents were the poet AE (George Russell) in Ireland; Albert Aylward, George and Mildred Bains, and Henry and Helen Saunders in Toronto; Willie Ormiston Roy in Montreal; Shigetaka Naganuma in Tokyo; and the poet Bernard O'Dowd in Melbourne. Thus, superimposed on the primary, deeply etched pattern of transatlantic to-ing and fro-ing was a web that centred on Bolton. One strand extended through Millthorpe near Sheffield (home of Edward Carpenter), London (Tennyson's home) and Chatham, Kent (where Will Hayes lived), to France (home of the poet Murger, whom Whitman translated, and the critic Léon Bazalgette). Another strand diverted the line from Bolton to Camden through Ireland, and then extended the transatlantic arc through Montreal, Toronto, London (Ontario), leapt across the Pacific to Japan, and leapt again to Melbourne.

What bound the Bolton Fellowship together was not only their sense of social purpose, which they had in common with many other local reformist and socialist groups, but the sense of that purpose as being embodied and confirmed by Whitman. For them Whitman was the Poet of Democracy, the man who in his life and work best articulated their striving for political representation based on a conception of spiritual equality, a process that would crystallise in the creation of the Independent Labour Party and in other organs of reform. They sought the betterment of society through education, the improvement of the urban environment and the preservation of the countryside, the humane treatment of animals, a holistic approach to manufacture, equal rights for women and a more widespread acknowledgement of the bond of love between male friends and comrades of both sexes. The story of the Bolton Whitman Fellowship is, above all, a story of persistent idealism in the face of adversity: the story of a shared aspiration that endured through the individual privations and suffering of its members and the daunting circumstances of two world wars.

Since what characterised the group itself was an abiding millenarianism, one of Whitman's chief attractions for them was the millenarian spirit intrinsic to his conception of the nation that he famously claimed was a poem in itself. While it was an accident of history that brought the Bolton group first to Emerson and then to Whitman, rather than, say, to William Blake, once the correspondence with Whitman and his friends had begun, the insight of each group with regard to its own social and political situation was brought to bear on its transatlantic opposite, with mutually illuminating results.

Although he was not, in conventional terms, the best-educated member of the group, Wallace remained its undisputed leader from the time of its inception until his death in 1926. There is a sense in which the very ordinariness of his circumstances points up the extraordinary qualities of his temperament that made him such a pivotal figure. Yet it is the particulars of that ordinary life that brought him, at a specific juncture, to a crisis, a terrible neediness that only Whitman could answer. Wallace was born in August 1853. His father was a millwright from Northumberland, his mother grew up in Bolton. His father's work necessitated many absences, including a trip to Russia to equip new mills there,¹³ and it is certain that Wallace was much closer to his mother, a 'kind and gentle woman', who was severely afflicted with rheumatism and lived as an invalid.¹⁴ At fourteen Wallace left school to work as an architect's assistant at Bradshaw's (later Bradshaw and Gass), where he remained until his 'early' retirement in 1912.¹⁵ For most of this time he lived with his mother at the Eagle Street house, caring for her through her daily suffering and, eventually, her gruelling, long last illness. His sorrow at her death in 1885 was profound. In the months that followed, his friends observed a change in him, a new peacefulness and calm. This they would later characterise as resembling the change experienced by both Whitman and the Buddha, clearly demonstrating Wallace's credentials as a prophet.¹⁶ It is Wallace himself who associates Whitman with his mother's last illness and death. He recalls having 'long had a slight knowledge of and much curiosity about Whitman', but it was only 'twelve months before [his] mother died that [he] read for the first time complete copies of "Leaves of Grass" and "Specimen Days", and felt . . . that he, of all men, taught the doctrine of immortality with quite new emphasis and authority'.¹⁷ His response to reading Whitman and '[feeling] the deep thrill of contact with a mighty spirit' was to bring him to the group. Dixon records him 'recit[ing] with great feeling numerous passages from [*Leaves of Grass*]' to the assembled men, who, while they were excited by this poetry that did not resemble any they had encountered before, also found it 'somewhat obscure' and were therefore grateful for the 'lucid explanations [that] were always forthcoming from Wallace'.¹⁸ What Whitman meant to Wallace in his state of spiritual ferment was difficult to articulate even five years later: 'How near & dear you are to me I cannot tell you', he wrote to the poet, 'but I am sure that no author before ever appealed to such depths of a man's nature or aroused such tender personal love'.¹⁹

Carmine Sarracino has noted that several of Whitman's disciples came

to the poet through an experience akin to religious conversion, precipitated by a particular crisis.²⁰ In the Bolton group, both Wallace and his friend Dr John Johnston attest to having separately undergone an experience of this nature and so conform to the pattern articulated by Sarracino in relation to Whitman's more famous followers: R.M. Bucke, Anne Gilchrist and John Burroughs. Wallace referred to the profound change in his consciousness following his mother's death simply as an 'illumination'; much later, in 1915, he would speak feelingly of the advent of religious experience that 'when it happens to a man, so completely revolutionizes his whole outlook on life and all his desires and aims as to amount to a new birth.'²¹ Four years after that he would argue that a kind of crisis had occurred in Whitman's life when he was about thirty-five that had precipitated the *Leaves of Grass*.²² Taken together, these various writings suggest that Wallace himself recognised a parallel between Whitman's experience and his own.

Dr Johnston, who was effectively Wallace's second in command, was something of a polymath. He worked in Bolton as a general practitioner, but he also campaigned passionately for better working conditions in the Bolton mills, and especially for the abolition of child labour. He instructed the St John's Ambulance Brigade and sought in a variety of other ways to improve public health.²³ He kept himself fit by cycling, and recorded in a pamphlet a cycling tour undertaken by 'Fritz and Ian' ('Fritz' was Fred Wild; Johnston, hailing originally from Dumfriesshire, was 'Ian'). Another article contains an account of a journey to attend the passion play at Oberammergau. While he lost none of his affection for Scotland, he cherished none the less the particulars of Lancashire life, and composed several humorous songs in local dialect for the Eagle Street meetings. One of these, written for Wallace's birthday, referred to his friend as the 'Masther' of 'The Aigle Shtrate Collidge'. This good-natured irony was much appreciated: thereafter, the Bolton group referred to itself, half-deprecatingly, as The Eagle Street College.

It was in 1887, two years after Wallace discovered Whitman, that Wallace and Johnston first wrote to the poet, informing him of their personal gratitude for his work and of the Bolton weekly meetings. Johnston spoke of his encounter with Whitman's work as 'his deliverance from *soul-benumbing* scepticism into which, not without pain, he had gradually fallen'. Whitman's books were 'his constant companions, his spiritual nourishment, his continual study and delight'. Whitman had 'ennobled and beautified' his daily life and his work, returning him to a sense of his vocation. Wallace wrote of his 'heavy bereavement' and of his reading of

Carlyle, Ruskin and Emerson, but he claimed for Whitman alone the capacity to answer him in his neediness, asserting that his work was 'a veritable "Gospel" bringing tidings of great joy'. Accompanying this letter, phrased with infinite grace and humility, was a birthday gift of money: '10.00'.²⁴ Whitman, elderly, poor and increasingly ill, his poetry either denigrated or ignored by all but a handful of friends, was delighted to receive the congratulations and the gift, writing that 'the response from those staunch and tender Lancashire chaps cheers and nourishes my very heart'.²⁵ There began a correspondence that endured for the remainder of the poet's life and a link between the Bolton Whitmanites and the North American Whitmanites that would endure unbroken for sixty years.²⁶

One salient characteristic of this transatlantic connection was that individual correspondents remained faithful throughout their lives. Upon their deaths, other correspondents from either side of the Atlantic stepped in to represent them. To take the most obvious example, the correspondence between Wallace and Horace Traubel would eventually be taken over by Minnie Whiteside, Wallace's 'adopted daughter', and Horace Traubel's widow, Anne. The image that comes to mind is that of a flock of migrating birds, where, when the leader tires and falls behind, another bird assumes the position at the head of the flock. Thus, while the individual correspondents varied, the transatlantic connection was faithfully maintained, neither side ever doubting the importance of the other.

It is worth remarking that the appeal of the poet to the Eagle Street College rather than to those with a conventionally educated literary background is entirely consistent with the rest of the story of his dissemination in England. William Michael Rossetti, the foremost and at times the single champion of Whitman's poetry among the literati, had been made aware of Whitman's poetry by Thomas Dixon, a cork cutter in Sunderland, who had bought at (illegal) auction some copies of the *Leaves* from one James Grindrod, a veteran of the American Civil War who peddled books, for a time, in Sunderland. Dixon, who himself corresponded with Whitman, sent the book to his friend William Bell Scott, a poet and sculptor, who made a Christmas gift of it to his friend Rossetti.²⁷ But Rossetti's 'discreetly pruned *Selection*' in which Whitman appears, according to Harold Blodgett, 'as if he had rigged himself in formal morning dress to be admitted at the door of an exclusive English club',²⁸ would not appear until 1868, more than ten years after he had first received his copy.²⁹ Just as the dissemination of Whitman was effected by largely self-educated working men long before he was taken up by literary sponsors in his own country, so much of the discussion of Whitman's

virtues as a poet and a man by The Eagle Street College constitutes some of the earliest Whitman criticism, even though much of it has never been published, and most of it is still not recorded in the standard scholarly bibliographical works. Recent scholars have only begun to mine the Bolton Whitman archive for these early appraisals of the poet.

In addition to the commentary of the various members of the group, which mainly takes the form of letters, lectures and articles, the archive contains a good deal of contextual evidence of the debate surrounding Whitman in literary circles. Some of this is available elsewhere, but Geraldine Hodgson's evaluation of Whitman in *The Co-operative News and Journal of Associated Industry* in 1899, for instance, represents a valuable contribution to early Whitman scholarship – one which contrasts directly with G.K. Chesterton's more typical qualified praise (with reservations on Whitman's abandonment of metre and modesty) five years later.³⁰ A clipping from the *Sunday Times* of 1931 mentions the English as liking Whitman better during his lifetime than did Americans, but the writer does not mention the Bolton group. In his address to fellow Bolton Whitmanites delivered in 1930 in the Swan Hotel in Bolton, William Broadhurst complained of the omission of the Bolton group from John Bailey's English Men of Letters series published by Macmillan.³¹ By the 1950s, the Bolton Whitman Fellowship had been elided completely from official literary history. A review of *Whitman and Rolleston: A Correspondence* in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1952 draws the public's attention to Dubliner T.W. Rolleston's translation of Whitman into German, remarking acerbically, 'It is an ironic fact that the worth of the American poet, banned and neglected in his own country, was first recognized by a few courageous poets and university men in England and Ireland' – a summary that might have caused the surviving members of the Bolton group to deliver a few ironic remarks of their own.³² However, the single most telling item in Sixsmith's hoard in the John Rylands Library must be the newspaper cutting (unfortunately unidentified) concerning one of the first copies of *Leaves of Grass* in London, which was sent to the editor of the *Morning Star*, F.W. Chesson, who used it as a scrap-book.

The high point of the discipleship of the two foremost Whitmanites in the Bolton group was undoubtedly their pilgrimage to see the good grey poet in Camden, Johnston travelling there in 1890 and Wallace in 1891. In doing so, they joined the line of transatlantic visitors who, over the years, had made their way to the poet's door. Among the most distinguished were Edward Carpenter (whom they would shortly come to know) and Oscar Wilde (whom they would not). They kept an informal

diary in notebooks, which were transcribed and eventually published in 1917 as *Visits to Walt Whitman in 1890–91 by Two Lancashire Friends*.³³ The notebooks, now held in the Bolton Library, testify to the special significance of the visit, the preciousness of the time spent with the bard and his associates. They are extremely detailed, recording every item of conversation – even the pointed silence of Walt’s canary (‘The canary said nothing’).³⁴ For Wallace, who was only persuaded to travel at the last minute, the visit to America must have been among the most significant events of his life. Just as he recorded Whitman’s words with meticulous detail, so, too, he carefully preserved his ticket from Liverpool to Philadelphia, together with the official notification of sailing, a table of foreign moneys and an insurance card against personal injury (possibly paid by Johnston).

Wallace and Johnston could hardly have met with the poet without also meeting with his carers and disciples in Camden. The carers were Mrs Mary Davis, Whitman’s housekeeper, and Warren (‘Warry’) Fritzinger, his nurse; the disciples were Horace Logo Traubel – bank clerk by day, editor of *The Conservator* by every other conceivable hour of the twenty-four and Whitman’s amanuensis on demand – and Dr Richard Maurice Bucke, Medical Superintendent at the Insane Asylum in London (Ontario), Whitman’s first biographer and his close friend. While Dr Johnston stayed with Dr Bucke, Wallace stayed with Traubel and his family, the ties then forged between them enduring beyond Wallace’s death.

Traubel was a prolific and loyal correspondent. He wrote to Wallace almost every day – sometimes more frequently – from the time of his return to Bolton until 1897, and more sporadically afterward. He was to send a detailed account of Walt’s last days to the anxious Boltonians (the poet died on 26 March 1892: six months to the day after Wallace’s embarkation at Liverpool) and much news about the realisation of what he understood to be Whitman’s purpose in the world, the promotion of the individual human spirit as the measure of all social organisation, a cause to which he would devote the rest of his life.

Literary historians have been quick to point out that Whitman, a Jacksonian Democrat, did not share the fundamental belief in socialist principles that bound Wallace and Traubel together and which they discussed in their correspondence. That difference between Whitman and two of his most important disciples on either side of the Atlantic has, however, been variously interpreted. Jerome Loving and Michael Robertson, for example, would appear to see the difference as incontrovertible, a bald fact, whereas Paul Salvesson points to Whitman’s hesitant

statement about socialism made at the end of his life and prompted by Traubel: 'Of course I'm a good deal more of a socialist than I thought I was, maybe not technically, politically so, but intrinsically, in my meanings.'³⁵ Wallace, certainly, had no hesitation about including Whitman in his *Calendar of Socialist Saints* (now held in the John Rylands archive). Whether the disciples' differences with Whitman amount to no more than a matter of emphasis or whether they constitute a significant misprision, it is certain that the disciples' views themselves differed greatly. Wallace was interested in a politically instituted socialism that would be informed by the profoundest spirituality, whereas Traubel was primarily concerned with individual freedoms.

In addition to providing him with an opportunity to discuss and clarify his principles, Traubel's correspondence with the Bolton group, and with Wallace in particular, undoubtedly provided him with an arena – perhaps the only arena – in which he could safely air his views about his contemporaries. One of the most difficult views to vent to anyone on his own side of the Atlantic other than his wife must have been his conviction that Dr Bucke (who, like Traubel, was Walt's literary executor) was a person of distinctly limited imagination. Traubel's wife Anne, whose intuitions he respected, did not like Bucke; moreover, she thought his ideas about women were deplorable.³⁶ Traubel went so far as to criticise Bucke's paper on *Cosmic Consciousness* (a spiritual phenomenon inspired by his first meeting with Whitman) as suffering from a lack of creative imagination.³⁷ Wallace himself, Traubel wrote, was able to 'get at the spiritual Whitman more infallibly than [did] "the good doctor"'.³⁸ In response to Wallace's hint that he was likely to 'criticise [Bucke's paper] *sharply*', Traubel expanded on his objections, charging Bucke with a 'provincial intellectualism. It is not intellect', he continued, 'that ships for the longest voyage'. What clearly irked him was Bucke's claim to 'spheric insight', beyond any insight that Traubel might have or aspire to, and thus disqualifying him from judgment.³⁹ By contrast, Thomas Harned, the third literary executor, seems merely to have irritated Traubel: 'Harned', he opined, 'would be a happier man if he cared less for houses & goods'.⁴⁰ Those who show 'little spiritual comprehension of Walt' included Daniel Brinton (another prominent Whitmanite) and the wealthy socialist soap manufacturer Joseph Fels, who paid a visit to the Bolton group early in 1894.⁴¹ John Burroughs, another of Whitman's well-known disciples, came in for criticism for not defending him strongly enough against the charge of self-puffery published in the influential *Christian Register*.⁴² Traubel agreed with Burroughs, however, about Herbert Gilchrist, who was 'such

a good fellow I wish he painted better pictures'.⁴³ To mention Herbert Gilchrist is, incidentally, to evoke a further transatlantic connection, well known in Whitman circles. The painter of the Cleopatra that so 'painfully disappointed' Burroughs was the son and biographer of the redoubtable Anne Gilchrist, a widow who had fallen in love with the poet of *Leaves of Grass* and moved, with her three children, from England to America in order to join him.⁴⁴

Traubel's epistolary style is divagatory; the preoccupations and judgments imparted by him in the course of almost a thousand letters exceeds what can be said of them here. Although the relationship between him and Wallace would cool, it is certain that Wallace and the Eagle Street 'boys' fulfilled a special, irreplaceable role as loving friends. His last words to them, a scrawled note of farewell, were written shortly after the heart attack that would eventually kill him in September, 1919.

Wallace's brief stay with the Traubel family in 1891 resulted in a life-long correspondence not only with Horace Traubel, but also with Anne Montgomerie Traubel. Indeed, Anne quickly became Wallace's disciple in much the same sense as Wallace was that of Whitman. She corresponded with Wallace independently of her husband, Horace himself urging Wallace to maintain the link that was so precious to her. The Traubels named their son after Wallace, and Anne's letters to him after that child died of scarlet fever at the age of four are among the most moving in the archive. Long after the death of her Bolton sage, she continued to write of him to Minnie Whiteside, her correspondence with the Bolton group ending only with her own life in 1954.

It is something of an irony that Dr Johnston's visit to Whitman and his meeting with R.M. Bucke should have resulted in the Bolton group's being put in touch with an important English Whitmanite. When, in July 1891, Dr Bucke made a reciprocal visit to Dr Johnston in England, he met Edward Carpenter in London and brought him to Bolton to meet the group. The whole course of Carpenter's life had been shaped by his reading of Whitman, whom he first encountered in Rossetti's edition while a university student. Like Bucke and Traubel, but in a different way from either, he saw his life's mission as continuing what Whitman's poetry had begun, and to that end he renounced a university career and set about raising the consciousness of working men and women through lectures and writing. He had begun to correspond with Whitman in the early 1870s, and first visited him in 1877. On that occasion they had taken the ferry from Camden to Philadelphia together, but when he next visited him in 1884, he found the poet's health had greatly deteriorated.⁴⁵ His visit to

the Bolton group resulted in some friendships with various members.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, while acknowledging their importance in the local promotion of the poet he loved, he tended to hold the Bolton Whitmanites as a group at arm's length. He did, however, form close friendships with two of them: Dr Johnston and Charles Sixsmith. Johnston and Sixsmith each accompanied Carpenter and his partner George Merrill on holidays overseas, and each often visited the couple at Carpenter's home in Millthorpe, near Sheffield. Johnston was especially grateful for Carpenter's visits during his stint as a Non Commissioned Officer at Queen Mary's Military Hospital in Whalley, Lancashire, and then at Townleys Military Hospital in Bolton during the First World War.⁴⁷ His diaries record his frequently being depressed by his work as a trauma doctor and oppressed by the bureaucracy of the military regime, and also the great relief and even inspiration provided by those occasional conversations with Carpenter, which included 'socialism, spiritualism and mysticism, sexuality and clairvoyance' amongst the topics discussed.⁴⁸

Carpenter's friendship with the Bolton Whitmanites was not, incidentally, welcomed by Traubel. It seems to have pointed up his sense of failure in being unable to establish a personal friendship with the Englishman whose life's course had, like his own, been so thoroughly influenced by Whitman. About a year after Whitman's death he had proposed a collection of essays by the poet's admirers and had invited Carpenter to contribute a piece. But Carpenter replied with a warning against rushing rashly into print, a warning echoed by John Addington Symonds, who was anxious that private material remain private. It was clear to Traubel that Carpenter disapproved of his notes for what eventually became his essay in *In Re Walt Whitman* and had discussed them with Wallace; however, he professed himself unperturbed by Carpenter's disapproval or by his threatening to withhold his sketch of Whitman.⁴⁹ A year later, however, Traubel would praise Carpenter's *Sex and Love* as 'noble – pure in touch, high, absolutely right in motive & general solidity of statement', although 'A few of his details seem dubious'.⁵⁰ He was particularly curious to know what Dr Johnston thought of it, since Dr Longaker (Whitman's physician) greatly disapproved of it. Traubel himself thought Longaker's criticism 'stupid', attributing it to a doctor's professional pride which would 'permit no unholy questions from the laity'. In fact, Traubel's admiration for Carpenter's work led him to place an order for 'a good many' of his pamphlets, with a view to selling them on his side of the Atlantic. But Carpenter, who had already written to Traubel 'rather severely' in opposition to his plans for an International Whitman League, did not

honour the order, and their relationship was damaged beyond repair. There is a lingering wistfulness about many of his references to Carpenter in his transatlantic correspondence. 'I wish he knew me better & loved me more', he once wrote to Wallace.⁵¹

Johnston's demanding work as a trauma doctor during the First World War was born of the compassion that made the surroundings of military hospitals more uncongenial to him than the work itself.⁵² It seems probable that at some point during that period he would recall Whitman's work as a nurse during the American Civil War. In fact, Johnston, who had been a member of the Labour Church, was, by conviction, a pacifist and was opposed to both the First World War and the Boer War before it.⁵³ Wallace, too, was a pacifist; indeed, he is said to have 'discountenanced violence in every form and would rather suffer a wrong than defend himself by force'. His opposition to the First World War drew him into conflict with some of the other members of the Bolton Whitman group who thought his views contrary to Whitman's teaching.⁵⁴ Dixon, who reports this disagreement, does not elaborate on it. In the absence of further evidence, it is tempting to characterise various members' conflicting interpretations of Whitman's stance in terms of the radically divergent views embodied in the Drum-Taps section of *Leaves of Grass* that deals with the Civil War. In an early poem in the sequence, 'Beat! Beat! Drums!', Whitman rallies civilians to join the Unionist Cause, urging the necessity of War over any other pressing commitment, in a way that recalls Jesus' instruction to his disciples to let the dead bury their dead (Matthew 8:22). By contrast, further on in the sequence, in 'The Wound-Dresser', the speaker, asked to recall his lasting impressions of the war, dispenses in short order first with any partisan notion of a Cause – '(was one side so brave? the other was equally brave;)' – and then with the notion of soldierly heroism as the proper stuff of legend. What he chooses to recount instead is the scenario of treating the myriad wounded, the fact of the 'refuse pile, / Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and fill'd again'.⁵⁵

There would seem to be little doubt that Wallace's opposition to all warfare was based on religious conviction. Although I have described him as becoming Whitman's disciple through an experience akin to religious conversion, there is nevertheless a continuity in his spiritual development. His background was Presbyterian and his fundamental inspiration remained, like Whitman's, broadly Christian. As a young man, he had gone to St Andrew's Church in Bowker's Row and taught the men's class there, but he later withdrew from public worship, becoming, in Dixon's words, 'more Unitarian than Unitarians' in his belief that the soul of man

was one with the Universal Soul.⁵⁶ In his address to the Fellowship of 1915 on Religion in Whitman, Wallace frames his central claim about the poet in terms of a shared insight:

Whitman knew, as a fact of consciousness, that the central and real being of himself and others is the *Universal and Eternal Life we name God* . . . This realisation was followed by its becoming the inspiration and controlling centre of all his work.⁵⁷

In fact, Wallace's version of Protestantism was tempered not only by Whitman – or Emerson's conception of the Over-Soul delivered via Whitman – but also by various antecedents of spiritualism that arose in the second half of the nineteenth century and persisted into the twentieth, such as theosophy, New Thought and Christian Science. This element shows most clearly in his, and his followers', attitude toward death, so that while some contemporary accounts clearly observe the pieties of the age (Horace Traubel's account of Whitman's last days, for example, or his accounts of the death of his small son), other accounts of dying and of the afterlife evince a conviction of the immortality of the soul in a passionately literal way, whereby the departed are perceived as an intermittent presence, imparting a sense of the numinous to the bereaved and acting as a source of inspiration. The dead, and especially Whitman, endured aetherially just beyond reach, providing a strength and an example for his disciples to follow on their journey toward the beyond.⁵⁸ Wallace himself would, after his death in 1926, become such a guiding figure for Anne Traubel.⁵⁹ Moreover, Anne Traubel's account of her husband's death amounts, in its emphasis on the efficacy of thought in the promotion of healing, to a version of New Thought.

The religious convictions of the Bolton Whitman Fellowship, and particularly of Wallace, are, scholars are beginning to realise, relevant to their interpretation of their intense life as a male group. While many of the members of Eagle Street College were married, the College itself was overwhelmingly a society of men, as their vast collection of photographs shows. The only woman who might have had any depth of knowledge of the psychology of the College was Minnie Whiteside, widowed almost as soon as married and taken in by Wallace as an act of charity. Whilst Minnie was known as Wallace's 'adopted daughter', she was in effect his secretary and eventually also his housekeeper. Wallace was plagued with ill health and with intermittent but painful eye trouble that eventually forced his 'early' retirement. He was both devoted to Minnie Whiteside and dependent on her. Her counterpart in Camden, Anne Traubel, was

more influential in that she participated to some extent in her husband's intellectual life and, for a short time, aided him in putting out *The Conservator*, but her sphere of influence was limited; she took no part, for example, in the establishment of the International Whitman League.

Whitman's 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass* marked the first inclusion of both the Children of Adam and the Calamus sequences. It was the explicitness of the former sequence that attracted the immediate wrath of commentators, the poems that treated the subject of 'adhesiveness' or love between men in highly eroticised language went largely unnoticed. Nevertheless, at that point the general disapproval of Whitman, already considered too vulgarly sexual by some readers – and some non-readers – hardened into villification,⁶⁰ but Whitman stood by both sequences and simply endured the calumny. The Calamus poems, did, however, attract the attention of men investigating their own homosexual desire, such as Carpenter and John Addington Symonds, who first read these poems in Rossetti's edition while at university. It was Symonds whose tortuous wrestling with the forbidden 'subject' of homosexual love that led him to question Whitman directly and repeatedly and thereby elicited the poet's famous refutation:

That the *Calamus* part has ever allowed the possibility of such construction as mentioned is terrible. I am fain to hope that the pages themselves are not to be even mentioned for such gratuitous and quite at the time undreamed and unwished possibility of morbid inferences – which are disavowed by me and seem damnable.⁶¹

Since this declaration was made at the end of Whitman's life, it is, in one sense, his final word on the subject. However, it has generally been acknowledged that Whitman was driven by Symonds' desperate insistence to make it, and even Symonds, obliged to accept the poet's statement, was to wonder 'whether his own feelings upon this delicate topic may not have altered since the time when *Calamus* was first composed'.⁶² By contrast, Carpenter, who would authorise his praise of 'Uranians' by referring directly to Whitman's Uranian temperament, and to the inspiration of *Calamus* in particular, was sensibly circumspect in his conversations and correspondence with Whitman. His series of explicit publications on 'the intermediate sex' in which (following his friend Henry Havelock Ellis) he argued for a biological basis for homosexuality was issued after Whitman's death.

Some of the Bolton Whitmanites were certainly interested in Whitman's idea of adhesiveness. The edition of *Leaves of Grass* in which

Wallace immersed himself was, as we have already noted, a ‘complete’ edition rather than the genteel expurgated edition published by Rossetti. Furthermore, Bolton Whitman Fellowship members had access to the various American editions by ordering them direct from the poet.⁶³ Wallace’s commentary on ‘The “Calamus” Poems in *Leaves of Grass*: An Address in Bolton on Whitman’s Birthday, May 31st, 1920’ is therefore of interest; indeed, it is almost certainly the single most studied document in the entire archive in the last ten years – a measure of the recent interest amongst cultural theorists in masculinity in general and dissident forms of masculinity such as homosexuality in particular.

The record of Wallace’s commentary is, however, a very carefully censored document. It suggests much, while acknowledging little. There is a sense, most unusual in the archive as a whole, that the written record may be too definite a recording of a daring and exploratory exposition; it evinces a fear of the word, a fear of the monumentalism of *writing*. For example, Wallace’s gloss on the phrase ‘now wading in a little, fearing not the wet’ from ‘These I Singing in Spring’ is ‘(Full of meaning, not to be expressed here.)’⁶⁴ The record of the discussion of ‘Scented Herbage of My Breast’ is similarly reticent: ‘(J.W.W. here read the above poem line by line with expository comments.)’⁶⁵ ‘[P]ink-tinged’ from ‘Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves!’ is glossed literally as pertaining to the calamus root but ‘suggesting the heart’s blood – and at once bitter and sweet to the taste’, which seems a hugely evasive use of a conjunction.⁶⁶

The interpretation of death is the only aspect of the poem with which the recorder seems comfortable, and it is glossed thus: ‘the entrance to this abundant life must necessarily be the *death* of all purely personal desires and aims and of all forms of what we call selfishness.’⁶⁷ There follow a further two pages on death as the fulfilment or culmination of life rather than its negation. Wallace is clearly concerned with the light that immortality should shed upon the conduct of life rather than with the finality of death; that is, he is interested primarily in the moral import of Whitman’s Calamus poems, rather than in any merely literary question of representation. The question is whether and to what extent his moral concerns may have led him to distort the terms in which Whitman represented death, for example, in this sequence:⁶⁸

Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all,
and are folded inseparably together, you love and death are,

Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was calling life,
 For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,
 That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and that they
 are mainly for you,
 That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,
 That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter how
 long,
 That you will one day perhaps take control of all,
 That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,
 That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very long,
 But you will last very long.⁶⁹

In a recent account Harry Cocks has focused precisely on the relationship between immortality and adhesiveness in the thinking of Wallace and other of the Bolton Whitmanites. He argues that Wallace advocates a lifelong abnegation of all selfish passions, that those truly selflessly loving relationships may be eternally validated in the hereafter.⁷⁰ Cocks's careful trawl through the archive has resulted in the amassing of considerable and sometimes extraordinary evidence of what looks very like deferred same-sex desire, and he has equally carefully contextualised that evidence by establishing the connections between Wallace's conviction of immortality and his views on the appropriate conduct of life.

In Wallace's letter of 8 August 1901 to his favourite cousin (which Cocks quotes briefly), what strikes us immediately is the similarity of the terms in which he advises his cousin about the mundane topic of the management of his financial affairs to the terms in which he speaks of adhesiveness. This letter is also of particular interest to us as it evinces his excitement at the spiritual awakening of the world, and America's particular ferment, together with his conviction that profound spiritual change presents a fundamental moral choice:

My dear Cousin,

I was very glad to get your letter yesterday morning.

I have glanced at the papers, some of which I have seen before, and return them herewith.

Supposing that all their claims are justified – what then?

To be able to bend the wills of others to one's own is *not* an advantage. Or, if it is an immediate gain, it is apt to end in financial loss. Such things belong to what is called 'Black Magic', always reprobated by the wise.

To concentrate one's own will and thought of self-perfectionment, to recognise the perfect One in all others, ignoring all contrary seemings, to cease from personal desire in the Trust which comes from knowing that Good

alone rules our lives, in self-abandonment to that – in all this to assist others to self-realization, leaving their wills untouched – this is the right course for us, and this only.

There is a great spiritual movement going on in the world – in America most of all – and in the wake of it come many greedy adventurers and charlatans seeking personal profit only. They appeal to their like, and supply such experience as *they* need for the time. But let us give them a wide berth.⁷¹

It is not only wrong to attempt to bend the wills of others, but also materially disadvantageous; financial loss is the just outcome of such conduct. Devotion to right conduct, on the other hand, requires faith in an utterly benign divinity – Wallace, in this respect, evincing a characteristically Emersonian optimism – together with an emphasis on ‘self-abandonment’, a thread that runs right through Wallace’s teaching and recalls at once the millenarian tradition of his upbringing and the Eastern philosophy that he studied during his period of spiritual crisis.

Controversy about Whitman’s sexuality continues with unabated passion, and the sexual mores of Whitman’s disciples on both sides of the Atlantic are increasingly subject to scrutiny.⁷² The correspondence between Wallace and Traubel reveals Wallace to have been close to Katharine St John Conway, a reformer in her own right whose zeal he much admired. Recent research confirms that he proposed that she become his ‘spirit wife’, an offer which she declined. Shortly afterward she married John Bruce Glasier, but remained a friend to Wallace and a fellow reformer.⁷³ Salveson has claimed that Charles Sixsmith was ‘the most clearly bi-sexual member of the group’.⁷⁴ His claim that Sixsmith had an affair with Philip Dalmas, a gifted American composer and singer who was, for a time, in love with Horace Traubel, has proven difficult to substantiate. Dalmas appears to have been immensely charismatic, charming not only Sixsmith and Carpenter, with both of whom he stayed during his visit to England in 1894, but also Wallace and Johnston. The question of whether Dalmas and Traubel had been sexually intimate shortly before this visit remains an open one.⁷⁵ Announcing Dalmas’s impending departure from America to visit the Bolton group, Traubel joyfully declared, ‘I give Dalmas my *person* for you all’.⁷⁶ A later, jokey letter to Wallace shows Traubel to be well aware of the composer’s charm:

I understand that you had a picture of your group and *Dalmas*. This I have never seen and so I feel slighted. If you wish to regain in my respect you must supply me and explain your dereliction in such a way as will prove me not forgotten.⁷⁷

There would certainly seem to be a subtext here, but how it ought to be read is impossible to determine. What does seem definite is Traubel's later affair with Gustave Percival Wiksell, a dentist and a member of the Boston branch of the International Whitman League.⁷⁸ These discoveries provide a certain context for Traubel's well-known refutation of Symonds' intimation of Whitman's homosexuality in his much-quoted letter to Wallace some ten years earlier:

Homosexuality is disease – it is wreck and rot – it is decay and muck – and Walt uttered the master-cries of health, of salvation and purity, of growth & beauty – always & everything elements vital for up-startings, for blossoming, for repair . . . No espousal of Walt can ever be thorough until the Adamic attitude is not only understood but absorbed. A mere intellectual grasp of the situation will not do. One must emotionally realize it – he must absorb it – he must let it wash through him and over him.⁷⁹

However, he then adds the sentence, 'Revolution alone can cleanse the body of the old discredit', which raises all kinds of questions about what that discredit might consist of: sexual shame or same-sex desire?

Just as Wallace's life traces a trajectory away from external institutions, so the Bolton Whitman Fellowship felt no need of any formal organisation or statement of fixed purpose, a difference that would eventually result in a diminution of warmth, if not a rift, between the Bolton Whitmanites and their American counterparts. For the Americans moved in a contrary direction. Horace Traubel, ever the committee man, conceived and orchestrated an International Whitman League, a loosely federal arrangement with a constitution and fixed dues, with the various branches being virtually autonomous.⁸⁰ Wallace was opposed to the scheme, and proved either inefficient or reluctant when it came to collecting subscriptions for the various Whitman publications that originated from America, beginning with *In Re Walt Whitman*, as Traubel's repeated iterations and increasingly impatient demands show.⁸¹

In the end, one could not say which of these two charismatic figures did more to promote Whitman's message. By the time Wallace gave his final address, 'If Whitman Came to Walker Fold', in 1925, Traubel was dead and his own health was failing. With hindsight, this last address takes on an added poignancy, and his claim for Whitman's greatness is also his testimony of personal faith: 'I myself have for half my life believed him to be the greatest, most significant, and most prophetic figure that has appeared in literature since the beginning of the Christian era.'⁸²

The Bolton Whitman Fellowship seems to have endured until some

time in the 1960s, when John Ormrod, the last of its members, died. Whilst Ormrod's death (probably) marks the end of the Fellowship as established by Wallace, the Fellowship has not, however, suffered a demise. In the 1980s, Paul Salveson, then a Bolton resident, decided, on rediscovering the archive, to revive the Whitman birthday celebrations on behalf of the local community.⁸³ The first of a series of celebrations was launched on 2 June 1984. In Salveson's account,

During the morning, Bolton's chief librarian Norman Parker spoke about Bolton's priceless Whitman collection, and he was followed by local poet and lecturer [Jeff] Wainwright, who spoke on Whitman's life and work.⁸⁴

Salveson himself gave an account of the history of the Bolton Whitmanites that was later published as a pamphlet entitled *Loving Comrades*. The following year saw the strengthening of the transatlantic connection through the visit of the eminent Whitman scholar Ed Folsom, who edits *The Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* at the University of Iowa. In 1987 Sheila Rowbotham gave a talk on Edward Carpenter. In the 1990s and beyond, Jacqueline Dagnall, Don Lee and Gloria Gaffney have organised and led an annual walk, on the Saturday nearest Whitman's birthday, to Walker Fold, the site of Wallace's last address to the Bolton Fellowship. In 2001, Michael Robertson from The College of New Jersey read to two dozen listeners from the *Leaves* and everyone drank from the Loving Cup crafted for the original members of the Fellowship by an American Whitmanite. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, the Bolton Whitman Fellowship has not died, but has seemed rather to have entered and re-emerged from a transforming cocoon.

A year after Whitman's death Traubel wrote to Wallace of the 'sweet memories' of Wallace recorded in Whitman's diary: 'little notes of your comings & goings while you visited Camden.'⁸⁵ If the tracings of this immensely fruitful transatlantic friendship were a cause of wonder for the correspondents at the time, they are even more wonderful and compelling for those of us who come after. It is in one of Traubel's many letters that we find the article of faith that best expresses their transatlantic accord:

The ways of friends & congenial souls are too often parted. I look for invention to decrease our difficulties year by year. In the end we will shake hands across the sea. I do not know how it can be done but I know it will be done.⁸⁶

Notes

- 1 Walt Whitman, 'Good-bye My Fancy: Preface Note to 2d Annex, concluding L. of G. – 1891', *Leaves of Grass: The "Death-Bed" Edition*, Modern Library Edition, New York, Random House, p. 656.
- 2 Since the two collections are in every way integral, scholars are obliged to visit both sites: journals and photographs are frequently separated from the correspondence that accompanied them. Hereafter, the John Rylands University Library of Manchester will be referred to as JRULM, and the Bolton Central Library will be referred to as Bolton.
- 3 Wentworth Dixon, 'An Old Friend: An Address Delivered to the Men's Class, Bank St School, Bolton, 7 Feb 1926', JRULM, pp. 3–4; and Fred Wild, 'Sketch of Life of J.A.W. Wallace of Bolton', October 1932, JRULM, p. 3.
- 4 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', pp. 3–4.
- 5 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', p. 9.
- 6 William Broadhurst, 'An Address in Memory of the Late J.W. Wallace, Wentworth Dixon and Dr J. Johnston, delivered at the Swan Hotel, Bolton, 6 Dec 1930', JRULM, p. 2.
- 7 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', pp. 3–4.
- 8 Wild, 'Sketch of Life', p. 5.
- 9 Wild, 'Sketch of Life', p. 3.
- 10 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', pp. 1–2.
- 11 Sixsmith's talk on the subject was broadcast by BBC Radio (Northern Region) on 6 March 1933.
- 12 Paul Salveson, 'Loving Comrades: Lancashire's Links to Walt Whitman', *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 14:2–3 (Autumn 1996/Winter 1997), p. 63.
- 13 Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 62.
- 14 Wild, 'Sketch of Life', p. 4.
- 15 Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 62. Dixon gives the date as 1913, 'An Old Friend', pp. 1–2.
- 16 Wild, 'Sketch of Life', p. 11. See also R.M. Bucke's summary of the pattern of Wallace's life, in which he states that 'The strict parallelism of this case with all the others will be recognized by every careful reader' (*Cosmic Consciousness*, Arkana Books, [1901] 1991, p. 342).
- 17 Wallace's address to the Bolton group, 20 January 1890, reprinted, with some unspecified editorial changes, in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, p. 336. The 'complete' edition of *Leaves of Grass* Wallace refers to would almost certainly have been the 1881 edition.
- 18 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', quoted in Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 63.
- 19 J.W. Wallace to Walt Whitman, 19 September 1890, JRULM.
- 20 Carmine Sarracino, 'Redrawing Whitman's Circle', *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 14:2–3 (Autumn 1996/Winter 1997), pp. 113–27.

- 21 J.W. Wallace, 'Walt Whitman and Religion', a lecture delivered to the Progressive League, Bolton, 28 March 1915; quoted in Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 64.
- 22 J.W. Wallace, 'The Walt Whitman Centennial: The Man and his Message', *The Labour Leader*, 29 May 1919, p. 9.
- 23 I am indebted for these details concerning Johnston's life to Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 63.
- 24 J.W. Wallace and J. Johnston to Walt Whitman, 1887, JRULM.
- 25 Charles F. Sixsmith, 'Centenary of a Prophet: Edward Carpenter's Bolton Following', *The Bolton Journal*, 29 August 1933. Salveson quotes a slightly different version of Whitman's message, delivered by R.M. Bucke, to the Bolton group in 'Loving Comrades', p. 68.
- 26 See Anne Montgomerie Traubel's letter from Philadelphia to Minnie Whiteside, 5 July 1953 (Bolton): 'I received the copy of the Bolton paper containing the account of the Birthday meeting at Ormrod's. To keep the meetings in the homes of all those families for sixty years is beautiful and most unusual'. Anne herself maintained a lifelong connection with the Bolton Whitman Fellowship through her correspondence with Minnie Whiteside. For an account of running of the Fellowship after Wallace's death see Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', pp. 81–2.
- 27 Harold Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1934, p. 14. For a full and entertaining account of the early transmission of the *Leaves* in England, see pp. 14–18.
- 28 Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, p. 28.
- 29 Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, pp. 9, 20.
- 30 Geraldine Hodgson, 'Walt Whitman's Poetry', *The Co-operative News and Journal of Associated Industry*, 30:37 (16 September 1899), pp. 1005–7; G.K. Chesterton: Newspaper cutting [unidentified], 15 October 1904: 'Conventions and the Hero', JRULM.
- 31 'Poet of Big Cities. Whitman's Vision of Skyscrapers. Honours After his Death. Democratic Appeal', *Sunday Times*, 28 June 1931; Broadhurst, 'An Address'.
- 32 'Writing to Whitman': review of *Whitman and Rolleston: A Correspondence*, ed. Horst Frenz, Dublin, Browne and Nolan/The Richview Press, *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 August 1952.
- 33 John Johnston and J.W. Wallace, *Visits to Walt Whitman in 1890–91 by Two Lancashire Friends*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1917.
- 34 A signed copy of Walt's poem to his canary was apparently sent to the Bolton Whitmanites, but has now, sadly, been lost; however, the canary itself was preserved and shipped and is held in the Bolton Library's archive. A postcard of the canary is sold in the Library and Museum shop.
- 35 Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman, The Song of Himself*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1999, pp. 447–50; Michael

- Robertson, 'Worshipping Walt: Lancashire's Whitman Disciples', *History Today*, forthcoming, 2002; Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 62.
- 36 H.L. Traubel, from Camden, to J.W. Wallace, 28 August 1892, Bolton.
- 37 H.L. Traubel, from Philadelphia, to J.W. Wallace, 10 May 1893, Bolton. Bucke's work on *Cosmic Consciousness* originally took the form of a pamphlet that was published in 1893. By 1901 he had expanded it to book length, since which date it has never been out of print.
- 38 H.L. Traubel, from Philadelphia, to J.W. Wallace and J. Johnston, 27 April 1893, Bolton.
- 39 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 6 October 1893, Bolton. See also H.L. Traubel, from Philadelphia, to J.W. Wallace, 26 October 1893 (Bolton), in which many of these criticisms are reiterated and extended to include Daniel Brinton.
- 40 H.L. Traubel, from Camden, to J.W. Wallace, 27 November 1893, Bolton.
- 41 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 11 March 1894, Bolton.
- 42 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 6 November 1893 and 18 December 1893, Bolton.
- 43 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 18 November 1893, Bolton.
- 44 For a general account of this relationship and its transformation from one-sided romantic love to friendship see Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, pp. 87–102.
- 45 Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, pp. 203–4.
- 46 Sixsmith, 'Centenary of a Prophet'.
- 47 Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 63.
- 48 Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 71. Johnston's diaries are held in the Bolton archive.
- 49 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, n.d., but probably 1892–93; incomplete letter (page 2 only), Bolton. Also H.L. Traubel, from Camden, to J.W. Wallace, 8 January 1893, Bolton.
- 50 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 17 May, 8 July, 18 September, 1894, and 5 February and 24 February, 1895, Bolton.
- 51 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 11 March 1894, Bolton; also H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 29 March 1894, Bolton.
- 52 Townleys Hospital was a particular trial, for it incorporated the Bolton Fishpool Institute – that is, the workhouse – and Johnston found the treatment of the preventable diseases of the destitute utterly depressing.
- 53 Salveson, 'Loving Comrades', p. 63.
- 54 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', p. 8.
- 55 See Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, pp. 353–4, 385–9.
- 56 Dixon, 'An Old Friend', p. 8.
- 57 J.W. Wallace, 'Walt Whitman and Religion', quoted in Dixon, 'An Old Friend', p. 12.
- 58 See, for example, Horace Traubel's letter to Wallace of 22 February 1893,

Bolton: 'I have spent the whole day working among Walt's papers. Much needs yet to be examined – two or three barrels of mingled manuscripts letters & scraps of a varied order. Sometimes the sense of my loss overcomes me, and again I seem to expand– to feel myself in a greater presence – one, even, that dwarfs the actual physical man once mine to have known & met & laughed with & kissed'.

- 59 Anne's letters to Minnie Whiteside, held in the Bolton Library, are permeated with a sense of the beyond and the presence of the departed. See, for example, her letter to Minnie Whiteside of 31 December 1937, in which she sends birthday greetings to Wallace's Cousin Jim for his birthday on 14 January and refers to 'that other precious day [26 January 1926, the day of Wallace's death], which would be among the saddest of the year, if I did not believe that nothing really stopped that day but moves upon a plane higher than I have yet reached, still pouring blessing and inspiration on all my feeble acts, mistakes, and aspirations'.
- 60 See, for example, Emily Dickinson's letter of 25 April 1862: 'You speak of Mr Whitman – I never read his Book – but was told that he was disgraceful', *Selected Letters*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge MA and London, Belknap Press, 1986, p. 173. Dickinson's second-hand opinion would certainly have pleased her correspondent Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who frequently attacked the poet, on personal as well as poetic grounds. See Loving, *Walt Whitman, The Song of Himself*, pp. 451, 488n.
- 61 Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, p. 66.
- 62 John Addington Symonds, *Walt Whitman: A Study*, London, 1893, p. 75; quoted in Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England*, p. 68.
- 63 In his letter to Whitman of 9 September 1890 (JRULM), Wallace thanks the poet for the 'pocket book copy' of *Leaves of Grass*. In a further letter, dated 19 September 1890 (JRULM), Wallace reports that Thomas Shorrock, a member of the Bolton Whitman group, would like to purchase the pocket edition, and remits 22/- in payment. Salvesson also mentions that advertisements for editions of the *Leaves* were regularly placed in socialist journals, 'Loving Comrades', p. 62.
- 64 J.W. Wallace, 'The "Calamus" Poems in *Leaves of Grass*: An Address in Bolton on Whitman's Birthday, May 31st, 1920', JRULM, p. 4.
- 65 Wallace, 'The "Calamus" Poems', p. 5.
- 66 Wallace, 'The "Calamus" Poems', p. 7.
- 67 Wallace, 'The "Calamus" Poems', p. 6.
- 68 Wallace, 'The "Calamus" Poems', pp. 8–9.
- 69 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, pp. 145–6.
- 70 Harry Cocks, 'Calamus in Bolton: Spirituality and Homosexual Desire in Late Victorian England', *Gender and History*, 13:2 (August 2001), 191–223.
- 71 J.W. Wallace, letter to James Wallace, 8 August 1901, JRULM.
- 72 See, in addition to Cocks's article cited above, Salvesson's 'Loving Comrades',

- pp. 77–9, and Joann P. Krieg, ‘Without Walt Whitman in Camden’, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 14:2–3 (Autumn 1996/Winter 1997), pp. 85–112.
- 73 Salveson, ‘Loving Comrades’, p. 79.
- 74 Salveson, ‘Loving Comrades’, p. 78.
- 75 A detailed discussion of this issue is provided by Joann P. Krieg in ‘Without Walt Whitman’, pp. 101–5. A measure of Sixsmith’s closeness to Dalmas is afforded by the fact that his bequest to the John Rylands Library includes Dalmas’s own pocket edition of *Leaves of Grass*, i.e. not just a presentation edition.
- 76 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 1 June 1894, Bolton.
- 77 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 11 October 1894, Bolton.
- 78 Bryan K. Garman, *A Race of Singers: Whitman’s Working-class Hero from Guthrie to Springsteen*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 55–6.
- 79 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 10 January 1893, Bolton.
- 80 H.L. Traubel, probably to J.W. Wallace, 20 March 1894, Bolton; H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 24 March 1894, Bolton; H.L. Traubel, from Philadelphia, to J.W. Wallace, 30 March 1894, Bolton; H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace and J. Johnston, 24 April 1894, Bolton.
- 81 See, for example, Traubel’s letter, from Lakewood, to J.W. Wallace, 13 May 1894 (Bolton), in which he reports that he is working to make the Constitution democratic. ‘I really expect to hear from you to the same effect’, he writes impatiently. In another letter to J.W. Wallace of 12 June 1894, he instructs Wallace to write to Alfred W. Beville, a contact in London sympathetic to the establishment of an International Whitman League, with a view to setting up the League’s English branch. Traubel is again impatient, demanding members’ names immediately. In the same letter he enquires whether Wallace has sold any more copies of *In Re Walt Whitman* (1893) at the new price of three dollars. By 13 July 1894, he is brusque: ‘Not a member of the Fellowship from Bolton. What’s the matter’.
- 82 J.W. Wallace, ‘If Walt Whitman Came to Walker Fold’, an Address in Celebration of the Anniversary of Walt Whitman’s Birthday, 30 May 1925, Walker Fold, near Bolton, JRULM, p. 8.
- 83 Salveson also mentions Denis and Wendy Pye, Neil Duffield, Eileen Murphy and Barry Wood, who were (and are) involved in the Bolton Socialist Club and Workers’ Educational Association. He pays special tribute to the staff of Bolton Library; see Salveson, ‘Loving Comrades’, p. 82.
- 84 Salveson, ‘Loving Comrades’, p. 82.
- 85 H.L. Traubel to J.W. Wallace, 22 February 1893, Bolton.
- 86 H.L. Traubel, from Camden, to J.W. Wallace, 10 November 1893, Bolton.

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