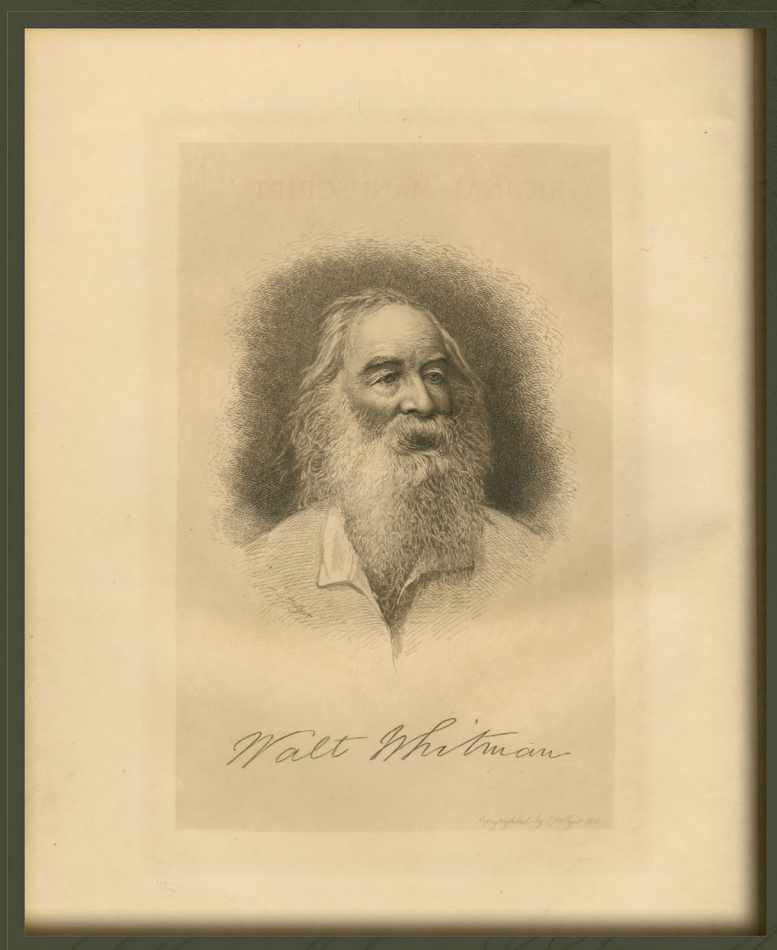


DIVINE STYLE
WALT WHITMAN AND THE
KING JAMES BIBLE

F. W. DOBBS-ALLSOPP



Walt Whitman



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Cover image: Copy of an engraving of Walt Whitman from Codex Ms263. The codex contains the holograph original of Whitman's late essay, "The Bible as Poetry." Although the engraving is not credited in the manuscript, it appears to be a copy of one done by Samuel Hollyer in April 1888, based on a photograph of Whitman by Jacob Spieler at the Charles H. Spieler Studio, ca. 1876.

Background Image: "The Bible as Poetry," Codex Ms263. Both images courtesy of the Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

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3. Whitman's Line: "Found" in the King James Bible?

Perhaps the likeness which is presented to the mind most strongly is that which exists between our author and the verse divisions of the English Bible, especially in the poetical books

— G. Saintsbury, review of 1870–71 *Leaves of Grass* (1874)

"Since *Leaves of Grass* was first published," observes M. Miller, "readers have often assumed that Whitman developed his line from the Bible."¹ This is a startling observation. Yes, there has been a long-running interest in the more general topic of Whitman and the Bible, but the line only very rarely comes in for specific comment. For example, R. Asselineau in *The Evolution of Walt Whitman: An Expanded Edition* does remark that Whitman's long verses "recall above all the Bible," though without further elaboration or substantiation.² And I return below to one of the early reviews of *Leaves* and what is perhaps the most probative perception about Whitman's line as it relates to the Bible. But in fact such observations specifically about Whitman's line are not so numerous, and nothing overly detailed, let alone evidence for a continuous and incisive scholarly debate on the topic. In the chapter that follows, then, I propose to undertake such an inquiry, a probing of the proposition that "Whitman developed his line from the Bible." Once focused on the principal site of textual encounter, the King James Bible, I point to a number of ways in which that Bible may have played a role in shaping Whitman's ideas about his mature line, its length(s), familiar shapes,

1 *Collage of Myself: Walt Whitman and the Making of Leaves of Grass* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska, 2010), 25.

2 (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1999 [1960, 1962]), II, 240. Cf. J. P. Warren, "Style" in *A Companion to Walt Whitman* (ed. D. D. Kummings; London: Blackwell, 2006), 377–91, at 383.

contents, and even in places its very staging. Yet as with so much of Whitman's collaging, the finding is only part of the art. Here, too, what (of the line) Whitman finds is typically worked and reworked such that the finding itself can get obscured and what is made in the process indubitably is made distinctly his own.

The Development of Whitman's Long Line: A Chronology

Before turning to my topic in earnest, however, I sketch the chronological development of Whitman's long line as currently understood. The renewed attention paid to the early notebooks and poetry manuscripts—stimulated in part by the recovery in 1995 of some of the notebooks that had been lost by the Library of Congress during the Second World War³—has enabled scholars to see much more clearly the emergence of that line and to have a better idea of its rough chronology. Presently, the three poems published in the spring and summer of 1850—"Blood-Money,"⁴ "The House of Friends,"⁵ and "Resurgemus"⁶—appear to be the last poems (with line-breaks) Whitman composed prior to the trial lines found in the earliest extant notebooks, most of which date from between 1852 and 1854.⁷ The break with meter in 1850 turns out to be decisive for the development of Whitman's line as it unshackles the major constraint on line-length and opens the way to using lines

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- 3 A. Birney, "Missing Whitman Notebooks Returned to Library of Congress," *WWQR* 12 (1995), 217–29.
 - 4 *New York Daily Tribune* (22 March 1850), 1, <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00089>.
 - 5 *New York Daily Tribune* (14 June 1850), 3, <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00442>.
 - 6 *New York Daily Tribune* (21 June 1850), 3, <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00088>.
 - 7 The surviving notebooks are not always (easily) datable, and clearly there remains much that is missing as well. The earliest notebooks with line-breaks (e.g., *DBN III*, 773–77; *NUPM I*, 53–82, 102–12, 128–35) are conventionally dated to 1854 or a little earlier, with the "Talbot Wilson" notebook (<https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.00141.html>) being the most famous (and important) of the group. For a good recent statement on the issues, see A. C. Higgins, "Wage Slavery and the Composition of *Leaves of Grass*: The 'Talbot Wilson' Notebook," *WWQR* 20/2 [2002], 53–77, esp. 53–61). Both J. Burroughs ("1853 and the seasons immediately following" in *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* [New York, 1867], 83) and J. T. Trowbridge ("in that summer of 1854... he began *Leaves of Grass*" in *My Own Story* [Boston, 1903], 367) date Whitman's initial work on the 1855 *Leaves* to the general period of these early notebooks.

of varying lengths according to the requirements of clause or sentence logic.⁸ A majority of the lines in the three poems remain of conventional lengths. Emblematic of this is the fact that in the case of "Resurgemus," Whitman often simply combines two (or more) lines to make a single (long) line in the revised version of the poem included in the 1855 *Leaves*, e.g., "But the sweetness of mercy brewed bitter destruction,/ And frightened rulers come back:" ("Resurgemus"; eight words/ five words) => "But the sweetness of mercy brewed bitter destruction, and the frightened rulers come back:" (LG, 88; fourteen words).⁹ Crucially, though, the lengths of the lines vary (however modestly) in these poems, and some stretch out beyond the eight-word limit that characterizes much of Whitman's earlier metered verse: "Blood-Money" has the most lines eight words in length or longer, eleven (e.g., "Where, as though Earth lifted her breast to throw him from her, and Heaven refused him," line 7; sixteen words);¹⁰ "House of Friends" has five such lines (e.g., "The shriek of a drowned world, the appeal of women," line 28; ten words); and "Resurgemus" three (e.g., "Suddenly, out of its state and drowsy air, the air of slaves," line 1; twelve words). None of these "long" lines attain the extended reach of Whitman's longest lines in the 1855 *Leaves*, but they all fall squarely within the sweet spot for line-length in that volume, which is from eight to sixteen words per line. Lines of these lengths each occur more than a hundred times and account for 1,641 lines in total—71% of all the lines in the 1855 *Leaves* (see Fig. 15). Already in these initial free-verse efforts, then, Whitman has found the lineal scale that will carry much of his verbiage in the early *Leaves*.

8 S. Bradley ("The Fundamental Metrical Principle in Whitman's Poetry" in *On Whitman* [eds. E. H. Cady and L. J. Budd; Durham: Duke University, 1987], 49–71 [originally published in *American Literature* 10 (1939), 437–59], 54–55) also recognizes the correlation between line-length and "predetermined metrical pattern," though he develops this insight to different ends, with different emphases.

9 I use word counts throughout as a convenient means of measurement. In doing so I do not mean to imply anything about modes of composition.

10 Significantly, lines 13 ("What will ye give me, and I will deliver this man unto you?", thirteen words) and 14 ("And they make the covenant and pay the pieces of silver," eleven words) offer a close version of Matt 26:15: "And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." The lengths of these lines, along with their sentential shaping (see below), are quite literally found in the *KJB*.

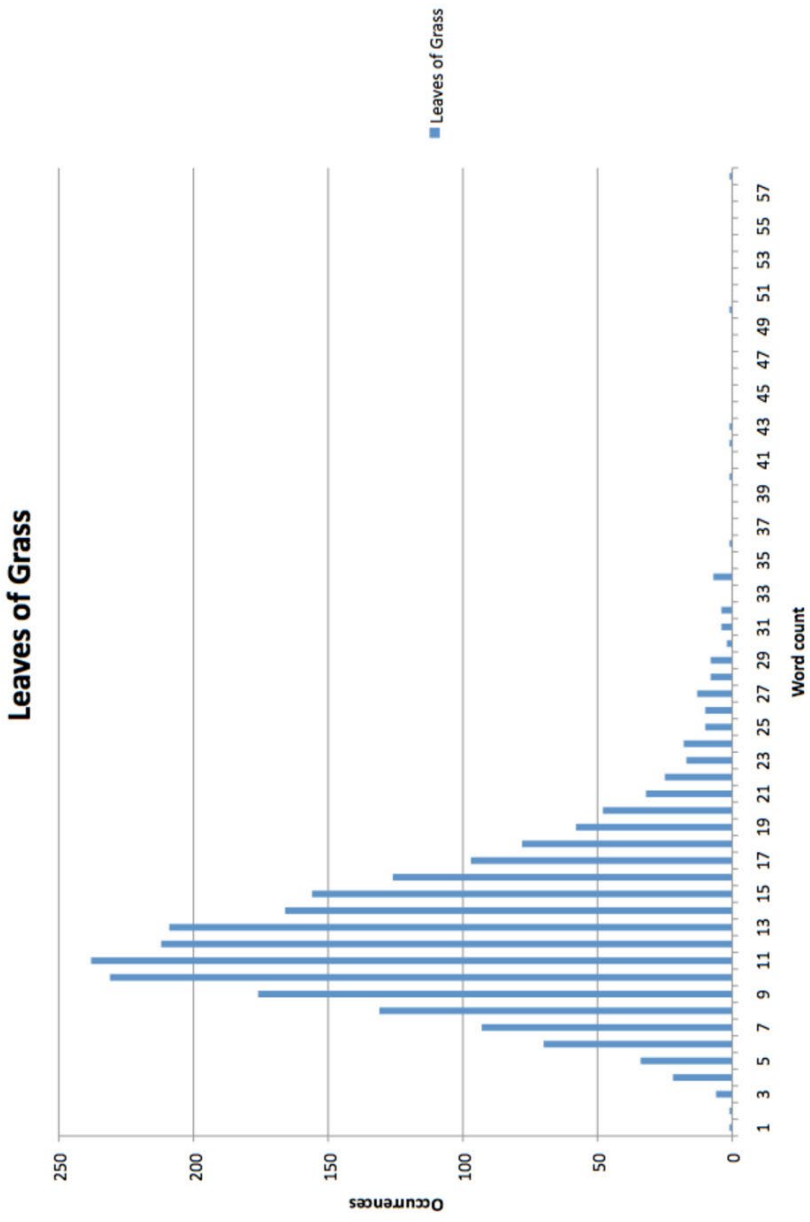


Fig. 15: Line lengths by word count for the 1855 *Leaves*. Computation and chart by Greg Murray.

In the spring of 1851 in his "Art and Artists" lecture, Whitman is still content to quote lines from "Resurgemus" as originally crafted.¹¹ Of the eighteen lines quoted, only one numbers more than eight words ("They live in brothers, again ready to defy you," nine words, *UPP I*, 247). In the recombined version of these lines from the 1855 *Leaves*, the overall number of lines is reduced to ten, and eight of these tally nine or more words, including the nineteen-word "Not a grave of the murdered for freedom but grows seed for freedom.... in its turn to bear seed" (*LG*, 88). The percentage of lines of conventional lengths (eight or fewer words) in the 1855 *Leaves* is still smaller, amounting to roughly 15% of the total number of lines (354 lines, see Fig. 15).

Trial verse lines appear in at least four of the pre-*Leaves* notebooks. The "med Cophósis" notebook is perhaps the earliest of these, with most dating it between 1852 and 1854.¹² Only two long leaves survive, and there is just one set of obvious verse lines, material that anticipates the opening of "Who learns my lesson complete?" (*LG*, 92–93):

My Lesson

Have you learned ~~the~~ ^{my} lesson complete:

It is well—it is ^{but} the gate to a larger lesson—and

~~And~~ that to another; ~~still~~

And ~~every one~~ ^{each successive one} ~~opens~~ to another still¹³

Of the four original lines started here, only the second is long, containing twelve words.¹⁴ Whitman's deletions and additions in lines

11 31 March 1851. Published subsequently in the *Brooklyn Daily Advertiser* (3 April 1851). Reprinted in *UPP I*, 241–47.

12 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.00005.html>. Miller, for example, prefers a date for this notebook later in the period, late 1853 or early 1854 (*Collage of Myself*, 15–20).

13 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00005.001.jpg>.

14 I assume the "—and" at the end of the line (slightly raised) was added after the line-initial "And" of line 3 was deleted. Determining which words to count in Whitman's holographs is not straightforward. My aim in making counts is heuristic, to gain a rough idea about the scale of Whitman's lines at a particular moment. For the purpose of the exercise I have counted words only in lines which could be (more or less) clearly determined to be verse. Passages of verse frequently will consist of a series of lines headed by capital letters and will feature one or more hanging indentation for excessively long lines (i.e., lines that do not

2–3 create the equivalent to the “hanging indentation” that appears in the holographs of other notebooks for rendering the continuation of long lines onto the next manuscript line. This lengthens the line to sixteen words. It also shows Whitman in the process of combining lines, much like what must be assumed, for example, to have taken place in his revisions of “Resurgemus.” Interestingly, Whitman settles on a different combination in the 1855 *Leaves*, going back to the original substructure and working it out differently:

Who learns my lesson complete?

....

It is no lesson.... it lets down the bars to a good lesson,

And that to another.... and every one to another still. (*LG*, 92)¹⁵

The last line quoted here is a combined version of lines 3–4 from the notebook fragment, stretching the line to ten words.¹⁶ While the sample

fit within the narrow widths of Whitman’s manuscripts). I do not count words in what are clearly incomplete lines (my aim here is to assess line-length). Further, I do not count words that have been locally deleted—such words in the holographs are normally crossed out in some manner (e.g., with strikethroughs). In contrast, I have ignored the fact that often whole passages and pages are canceled by a vertical or diagonal line drawn across the whole. My working counts were all generated manually. I do not record precise figures but rely on generalizations. The holographs are complex textual artifacts. One can easily imagine ways to sophisticate this kind of assessment. For my purpose it is enough to gain a general impression about the lengths of Whitman’s lines in any one notebook or manuscript source, the chief upshot of which is that Whitman comes to his preferred line scales over time, in the process of his drafting and redrafting of verse for the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

- 15 Such “re-doings”—or as in this case an “undoing”—are not uncharacteristic of Whitman’s process of composition. Another good example is the “cow crunching” line (*LG*, 34), the published version of which retrieves much from its initial trial in the “Talbot Wilson” notebook (<https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.076.jpg>), after experimenting with an intermediate version, of which the emendations made were ultimately abandoned (cf. E. Folsom and K. M. Price, *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman: An Introduction to His Life and Work* [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005], ch. 2; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 55–59).
- 16 It is unsurprising that the biblicalized “Have you” (the phrase “have ye” occurs eighty-three times in the *KJB* and is especially common in rhetorical questions) has been jettisoned in the published version of the opening line, viz. “Who learns my lesson complete?” (*LG*, 92).

size is statistically irrelevant, the four notebook lines share the same basic profile as found in the 1850 poems.

"I know a rich capitalist" is usually dated to 1854 like most of the remaining early notebooks.¹⁷ Again, there is only one set of verse lines in this notebook. Of the eight lines of verse written out, only two are long (eleven and ten words in length). The profile—lines of variable lengths, mostly short and none that are really long—here, too, is suggestive of the 1850 poems.¹⁸ Moreover, these lines were clearly culled from a passage of prose inscribed earlier in the notebook. Intriguingly, on seven occasions the clausal phrasing of the prose version is circumscribed by long dashes. One of the dashes comes at the end of the passage. Of the other six, five head material that is broken into distinct verse lines in the poetic version (Figs. 16–17). This use of dashes is most reminiscent of Whitman's long riff on Genesis 1 at the beginning of the "Art and Artists" lecture discussed in Chapter One—only here a versified version also exists.¹⁹

Two other early notebooks, the "Poem incarnating the mind" notebook²⁰ and the famous "Talbot Wilson" notebook,²¹ preserve many more lines of trial verse than the two notebooks just discussed. The prevailing line profile in these notebooks is noticeably different. Short lines (eight or fewer words) and long lines (nine to sixteen words in length) appear in almost equal proportions, with long lines being slightly more numerous in each notebook. Moreover, for the first time each notebook preserves lines of seventeen words or more: "Poem incarnating the mind" has four

17 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/nyp.00129.html>. The Marble Collegiate Church of Manhattan was completed in 1854 and the first news of the wreck of the San Francisco started appearing in the New York papers in mid-January 1854. Both are referenced in this notebook.

18 Miller characterizes these free-verse lines (in passing) as "not as long" as in some of the other early notebooks (*Collage of Myself*, 22).

19 *UPP* I, 242. These notebook jottings show that J. Loving's conversion into verse of a similar slice of long-dash circumscribed prose material to be very much in the spirit of Whitman's own practice (*Walt Whitman: A Song of Himself* [Berkeley: University of California, 1999], 171).

20 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.00346.html>.

21 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.00141.html>. On the date, see esp. Birney, "Missing Whitman Notebooks," 217–29; E. Shephard, "Possible Sources of Some of Whitman's Ideas in *Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* and Other Works," *MLQ* 14 (1953), 67n; E. F. Grier, "Walt Whitman's Earliest Known Notebook," *PMLA* 83 (1968), 1453–1456; Higgins, "Wage Slavery," 53–77; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 2–5.

such lines (e.g., “And in that deadly sea waited five ^{How they} gripped close with Death ^{there} on the sea, and gave him not one inch, but held on days and nights near the helpless fogged great wreck”; twenty-two words; all canceled)²² and “Talbot Wilson” has nine (e.g., “I will not have a single person left out.... I will ^{have} the prostitute and the thief invited.... I will make no difference between them and the rest”; twenty-seven words; all canceled).²³ And most of the short lines actually number between six and eight words in length. In fact, the majority of lines in these notebooks range between six and eighteen words in length, as also in the 1855 *Leaves* (roughly 86% of the lines in the latter are of these lengths, see Fig. 15).

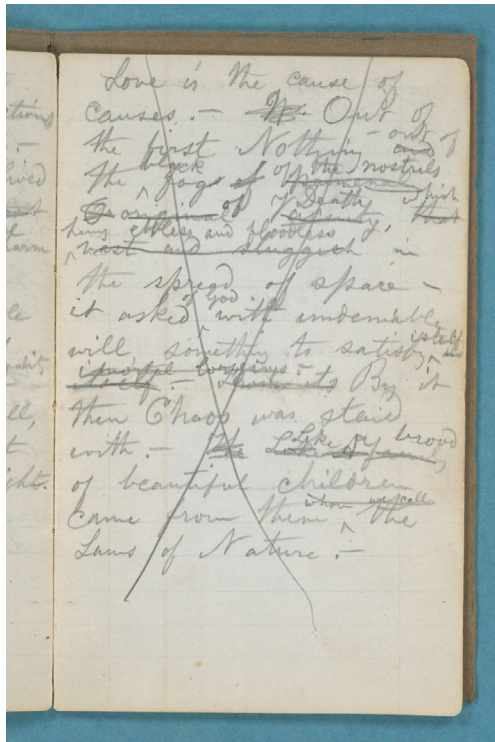


Fig. 16: Leaf 6r from the “I know a rich capitalist” notebook, <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/nyp.00129.011.jpg>, showing the prose version of the “Love is the cause of causes” passage. Image courtesy of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library.

22 https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc_jc.01674.jpg.

23 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.115.jpg>.

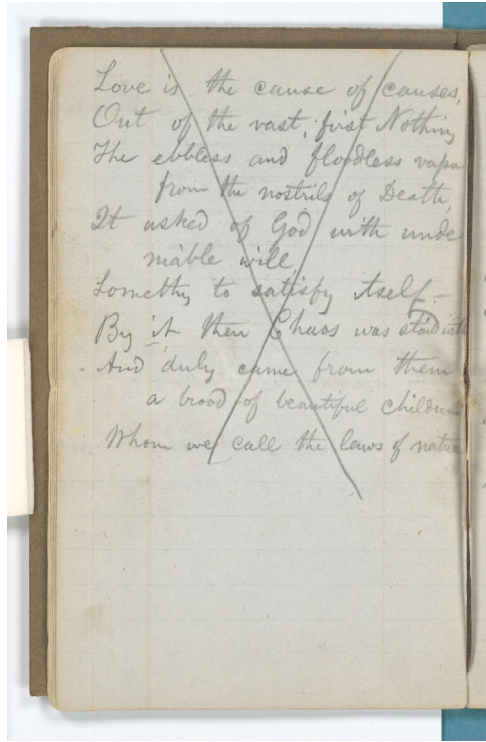


Fig. 17: Leaf 7v from the "I know a rich capitalist" notebook, <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/nyp.00129.014.jpg>, showing the verse version of the "Love is the cause of causes" passage. Image courtesy of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library.

There is one last pre-*Leaves* notebook that may contain verse lines, the "Autobiographical Data" notebook.²⁴ The notebook appears to have been used over an extended period of time (1848–55/56).²⁵ Unfortunately, the original notebook itself is missing, and the passage (material set out in enumerated sections) that some identify as poetry²⁶

24 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/notebooks/transcriptions/loc.05935.html>.

25 Higgins, "Wage Slavery," 76, n. 35; cf. *UPP II*, 86, n. 1 ("period before 1855"); *NUPM I*, 209 (before "winter of 1855–56"); E. Folsom, "Erasing Race: The Lost Black Presence in Whitman's Manuscripts" in *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray Poet* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 2014), 3–31, at 23.

26 E.g., A. C. Higgins, "Art and Argument: The Rise of Walt Whitman's Rhetorical Poetics, 1838–1855" (unpubl. Ph.D. diss; University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1999), 136–39—though Higgins does not argue the point but seems to assume the facticity of verse based on Holloway's transcription.

is not preserved in the extant set of (incomplete) photostats—the transcription of this material is dependent on E. Holloway’s edition.²⁷ It is not obvious that (all of) this material is verse (e.g., Grier refers to the numbered sections as “paragraphs,” *NUPM I*, 212, n. 16)²⁸ and the date of composition cannot be narrowed beyond the range posited for the entire notebook. If the passage is verse, it does not closely resemble “the poetry of 1855–56.”²⁹ There could be as many as fourteen complete lines. Most range in length between seven and eighteen words; there are three longer lines of twenty-one (2x) and thirty-four words. Obviously, much uncertainty remains regarding this material.³⁰

Surviving drafts of proto-versions of lines for the 1855 *Leaves* appear to stand between the early notebook trials and their published versions. For example, E. Folsom has collected a number of the holographs that anticipate “I celebrate myself” from several university collections.³¹ Long lines clearly prevail in these manuscripts—more than two-thirds of the lines are long. Yet proportionately short lines still occur twice as often as they do in the 1855 *Leaves*. Not infrequently, shorter lines in these manuscripts get combined in their published version, as with the revision of “Resurgemus.” The following are illustrative:

27 *UPP II*, 88–89; cf. *NUPM I*, 212, n. 16.

28 Holloway (followed by Grier) sets the sectioned material on separate lines, with initial capitalization, but without indentations for the continuation of longer “lines.”

29 *NUPM I*, 209; cf. Higgins, “Art and Argument,” 136. Both Higgins (“Wage Slavery,” 60) and Folsom (“Erasing Race,” 23) call attention to the material in the notebook (*NUPM I*, 215–16) that anticipates the “mashed fireman” episode in *LG*, 39.

30 Grier observes of the notebook generally, “some of the contents baffle any theory of WW’s development” (*NUPM I*, 209).

31 Folsom, “Whitman.” These consist of the recto or verso of single manuscript leaves and are currently being edited (along with Whitman’s other poetry manuscripts) online at WWA. With some exceptions (e.g., “Light and Air!”, see Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 60–62), most of these manuscripts “clearly date from later than the notebooks” (Folsom and Price, *Re-Scripting*, ch. 2). I counted lines in twenty-eight of the manuscripts that Folsom gathers from the University of Texas (three), Duke University (eleven), and the University of Virginia (fourteen)—several manuscripts were either entirely prose or contained lines that were indeterminable for one reason or another. I consulted the digital images for each manuscript and other transcriptions where available.

1. "Talbot Wilson": For I take my death with the dying
And my birth with the new-born babes³²
- "taken soon out of the laps": For I take my death with the dying,
- LG, 17: I pass death with the dying, and birth
with the new-washed babe.... and
am not contained between my hat
and boots,
2. "You there": You there! impotent loose.. the knees!
Open you ~~mouth~~ ^{send blows} my [illegible] that
I ~~put~~ ^{grit} in you with
~~one~~^a [illegible]th³³
- LG, 44: You there, impotent, loose in the knees,
open your scarfed chops till I blow
grit within you,
3. "Talbot Wilson": I ~~will~~ am not to be denied—I compel;
*I have stores plenty and to spare³⁴
- "You there": I am not to be denied—I compel;
I have stores plenty; and to spare;³⁵
- LG, 44: I am not to be denied.... I compel.... I have
stores plenty and to spare,
4. "You villain, Touch!": 190 You villain, Touch! what are you doing?
Unloose me, ~~Touch!~~ the breath is leaving
my throat; †

32 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.091.jpg>.

33 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/uva.00263.001.jpg>. The related lines from the "Talbot Wilson" notebook, though somewhat different, nevertheless still have multiple original lines that eventually are combined in the 1855 *Leaves* version.

34 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.095.jpg>.

35 <http://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/uva.00263.001.jpg>.

LG, 44:

You there, impotent, loose in the
 knees, open your scarfed
 chops till I blow grit
 within you,

Examples like these suggest that such combining of shorter lines to make longer lines was especially characteristic of the latest stage(s) of Whitman's composition of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The lineal profile of the latter shifts yet again. Whitman's long lines in the 1855 *Leaves* continue to stretch out, and their numbers are even greater. Sometimes the expansion in length is striking, as witnessed above in Whitman's combinatory collaging of shorter lines to make long lines, and sometimes it is more incremental. A good example of the latter is the following line, which accumulates more words in each version:

"Talbot Wilson": I tell you it ^{I know} it is ~~more~~ ^{just as} beautiful to die;
 (twelve words)³⁶

"taken soon out of the laps": I ~~tell~~ ^{hasten to inform} you it is just as good
 to die,, and I know it; (sixteen words)

LG,17: I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know
 it. (eighteen words)

Almost 85% of the lines in the 1855 *Leaves* are long (65.3%) or really long (19.4%). Short lines persist, as they have from the beginning. For example, "Those corpses of young men" is among a handful of short lines from "Resurgemus" that stays unchanged (un-lengthened) from its first publication in 1850 through to the final lifetime edition of *Leaves* (LG 1881, 212). However, the number of such short lines decreases dramatically, accounting for just better than 15% of the lines in the 1855 *Leaves*.³⁷ Whitman's unpublished long poem, "Pictures," which most date

36 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.091.jpg>.

37 A characteristic use to which these short lines are put in *Leaves*, as recognized by B. H. Smith, is to close runs of Whitman's otherwise more typical long lines, a form of terminal modification (*Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968], 92–93). A good example is the long sentential catalogue that begins on p. 35 of the 1855 *Leaves* ("By the city's quadrangular houses.... in log-huts, or camping with lumbermen") and ends on p. 38 with a seven-word line, "I tread day and night such roads"—by far the shortest line of the catalogue (with the support of a final period as well).

to sometime around 1855,³⁸ mainly features long lines, with only a very few short lines (less than 5%).³⁹

In sum, while Whitman's long line is birthed immediately in his break with metrical verse, the basic trajectory of line usage in the run-up to the 1855 *Leaves* is one of increasing preference for long (and really long) lines matched by decreasing dependence on short lines. The latter persist throughout but in ever decreasing numbers. Really long lines steadily increase (in number and scale), eventually overtaking the number of short lines in the 1855 *Leaves*. From the time of the "Poem incarnating the mind" and "Talbot Wilson" notebooks, lines of between nine and sixteen words in length dominate Whitman's verse exercises and published poems. Still, throughout this period Whitman's line remains strikingly variable and fluid in terms of length. In fact, though many lines settle into canonical shapes for Whitman, many others will continue to vary (and at times disappear completely) in succeeding editions. Long lines continue to be added in the next two editions of *Leaves*, though the trend towards a favoring of foreshortened lines that marks much of Whitman's poetry after 1865 already begins in these earlier editions. Whitman's "finding" of his long line on this view is decidedly processual in nature. After becoming a possibility, it emerges over time in Whitman's "many MS. doings and undosings," stretching out, reconfiguring, even contracting when needed as the poet molds his line to fit his sentences.

G. W. Allen, Parallelism, and the Biblical Poetic Line

Of the two studies that Miller recognizes as having explored the connection between Whitman's line and the Bible "perhaps most definitively," only G. W. Allen truly takes up the topic of the line, and that not without problems.⁴⁰ The engine that drives Allen's analysis is parallelism, which

38 For example, Grier: "at the earliest."

39 <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2007253>.

40 Miller's singling out of Bradley's "Fundamental Metrical Principle" is curious since its chief interest lies in uncovering the "true meter" of Whitman's verse, as the title implies. Neither the line *per se* (beyond how it stages the posited "periodic rhythm" of the verse) nor the Bible come in for any significant comment. Bradley recognizes the contributions made to the understanding of Whitman's prosody by the supposition of biblical influence at the beginning of his article (50) and addresses Allen's arguments a bit later only enough to make room for his own thoughts (60–61). At this point, Bradley does assert that the English translators

he takes as the first rhythmical principle of the English Bible and which he understands chiefly according to Robert Lowth's system (as mediated by various secondary discussions).⁴¹ This emphasis would seem to be well put, for as G. Kinnell observes, "Whitman is no doubt the greatest virtuoso of parallel structure in English poetry."⁴² But in order to unravel Whitman's understanding and use of parallelism, Allen well appreciated that he had to first give attention to the line: "the line is the unit, 'the second line balancing the first, completing or supplementing its meaning.'"⁴³ This is Allen quoting J. H. Gardiner about biblical verse. A few pages later he turns to Whitman, making the same point: "The fact that the line in *Leaves of Grass* is also the rhythmical unit is so obvious that probably all students of Whitman have noticed it."⁴⁴ Miller, more recently, underscores just how crucial the development of his poetic line was to Whitman: "In fact his [Whitman's] notebooks suggest that it [his line] was probably the single

of the Bible employ the same sort of "periodic rhythm" he posits for Whitman, which in turn inclines him more favorably toward the thesis of Whitman's debt to the Bible. Bradley seems unaware that the KJB is a prose translation and that its rhythms, though undoubtedly impacted by what is being translated, are at heart that of English prose.

- 41 G. W. Allen, "Biblical Analogies for Walt Whitman's Prosody," *Revue Anglo-Américaine* 6 (1933), 490–507. The biblicists he cites specifically are S. R. Driver (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* [New York, 1910], 361–62) and E. Kautzsch, *Die Poesie und die Poetischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* [Tübingen and Leipzig, 1902], 2). He also mentions Lowth's original lectures but clearly by way of the discussions of Driver and Kautzsch. In fact, it seems that Allen relies mainly on the work of literary critics for his working understanding of biblical parallelism, especially that of J. H. Gardiner (*The Bible as Literature* [New York, 1906]) and R. G. Moulton (*Modern Reader's Bible for Schools* [New York: Macmillan, 1922]). There is the problem in the latter in particular, as D. Norton recognizes (*A History of the Bible as Literature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004], 227), of simplifying Lowth's thinking to the point of distorting what he in fact says.
- 42 "'Strong is Your Hold': My Encounters with Whitman" in *Leaves of Grass: The Sesquicentennial Essays* (eds. S. Belasco and K. M. Price; Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 417–28.
- 43 Allen, "Biblical Analogies," 491–92.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 493; cf. B. Erkkilä, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1989), 88. In *American Prosody* ([New York: American Book, 1935], 221) Allen simply uses a paraphrase of Gardiner (talking about the Bible) to characterize Whitman: "The first rhythmic principle of *Leaves of Grass* is that of parallel structure: *the line is the rhythmical unit*, each line balancing its predecessor, and completing or supplementing its meaning." Allen's fuller quotation of Gardiner in his latest statement (*New Walt Whitman Handbook* [New York: New York University, 1986 (1975)], 216) makes it clear that Gardiner is talking about the underlying Hebrew.

most important factor in accelerating his development."⁴⁵ And even more emphatically a bit later: "if one event can be described as his strictly *creative* catalyst, judging from the notebooks it would seem to be his realization of new ways of composing derived from his discovery of his line."⁴⁶ What is "so obvious" for students of Whitman, or indeed students of poetry more generally, has only rarely been noticed of biblical poetry. To date, in fact, there has been little substantive appreciation of the verse line and its significance in biblical verse—aside, that is, from issues of syntax (which is not an insignificant matter).⁴⁷ This is a considerable desideratum given that the line by most accounts is the leading differentia of verse—"the only absolute to be drawn," writes T. S. Eliot, "is that poetry is written in verse and prose is written in prose."⁴⁸ Allen's observation is astute and goes to the heart of many issues concerning biblical poetry. It warrants the attention of biblical scholars.

However, the line is also a matter Allen muddles considerably. He is very deliberate in setting up the parameters of his research. The English Bible, by which he means above all the King James Bible,⁴⁹ is the paramount focus of his comments—"I am not concerned here with the Hebrew verse."⁵⁰ This is entirely reasonable since Whitman did not know biblical Hebrew,⁵¹ and therefore whatever sense he may have had of biblical

45 *Collage of Myself*, 2.

46 *Ibid.*, 36.

47 On syntax and the line, see esp. M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980); and now on the line more generally, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "'Verse, Properly So Called': The Line in Biblical Poetry" in *On Biblical Poetry* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 2015), 14–94.

48 T. S. Eliot, "The Borderline of Prose," *New Statesman* 9 (1917), 158. For more general treatments, see T. V. F. Brogan, "Line" in *NPEPP*, 694; "Verse and Prose" in *NPEPP*, 1348. The distinction is a commonplace, cf. C. O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1980) 11; M. Kinzie, *A Poet's Guide to Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 51, 433.

49 Clarified explicitly in the *New Walt Whitman Handbook* (215): "Possibly, as many critics have believed, he [Whitman] found such a structure in the primitive rhythms of the *King James Bible*" (my emphasis). Also in *A Reader's Guide to Walt Whitman* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1970), 24: "No book is more conspicuous in Walt Whitman's 'long foreground' than the *King James Bible*" (my emphasis).

50 "Biblical Analogies," 491.

51 "He was speaking; but as his language was Hebrew, we could not understand a word he uttered." This is Whitman from an 1842 editorial in which he describes his first visit to a synagogue ("A Peep at the Israelites," *New York Aurora* [28 March 1842], 2, <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/journalism/tei/per.00418.html>). Also in the follow-up article: "...wearing by the continuance of vocal utterance, which we could not take the meaning of, we left the place"

poetics would have been mediated through translation (and whatever secondary discussions he may have encountered), above all through the KJB. But, of course, quite famously, the KJB is a *prose* translation of the Bible, including of those portions that are verse (e.g., Psalms, Proverbs, Job, etc.) and that were known to be verse by King James's translators—and indeed by scholars generally well before that period.⁵² The trouble for Allen is twofold. First, the understanding of parallelism that he borrows and deploys in his analysis of Whitman and Whitman's putative use of biblical analogs is a theory derived and elaborated with the Hebrew text of the (Hebrew) Bible in view. It is, in other words, a theory about biblical *Hebrew* poetry. How well that theory may illuminate a translation of the underlying Hebrew is an open question that depends greatly on the nature of the translation and translation technique. The translation of the KJB, for example, may surely be used when illustrating the role of parallelism in biblical verse, and may even show off some aspects quite spectacularly, such as the (semantic) synonymity that often accompanies the Hebrew Bible's parallelistic poetic play—so Allen: “at least in the English translation this rhythm of thought or parallelism characterizes Biblical versification.”⁵³ But this still has the underlying Hebrew as its ultimate target. It is a different matter altogether when the translation itself becomes the target of analysis. In other words, Allen does not pay enough attention, especially initially, to the interference and turbulence caused by translation, to the fact that translation does not offer a transparent view of the translated. There is a mismatch between his theory and the source(s) of his theory, all of which have the Hebrew in view, and his own application to an English prose translation of biblical Hebrew verse.

Symptomatic of this blindness and even more problematic for Allen is the sheer absence of lines of verse in the KJB. I repeat: the KJB, like all of its sixteenth-century English predecessors, is a prose translation.⁵⁴

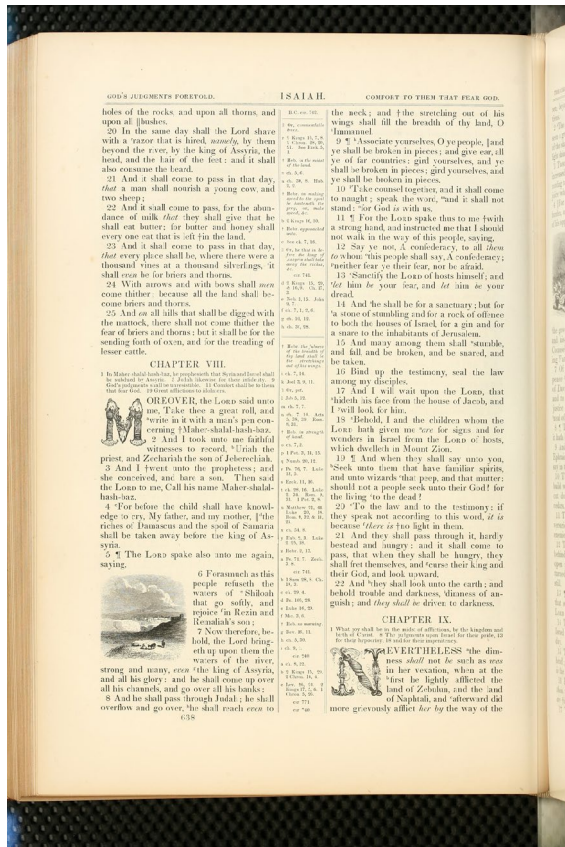
(“Doings at the Synagogue,” *New York Aurora* [29 March 1842], 2, <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/journalism/tei/per.00419.html>).

52 See esp. Norton, *History of the English Bible*, 138.

53 *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 215.

54 I have not uncovered any comment by Whitman observing the prosaic nature of the KJB translation. However, in his tallying up of word counts on the inside cover of his “Blue Book” edition of the 1860 *Leaves* he does note that the editions he is tallying of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Dante’s *Inferno* are both “prose translation[s]” (A. Golden, *Walt Whitman’s Blue Book: The 1860–61 Leaves of Grass Containing His Manuscript Additions and Revision* [New York: New York Public Library, 1968], I, inside front cover [for facsimile]; II, 417 [for transcription]). Whitman does observe

Moreover, there is no formatting difference between the prose translation of the (Hebrew) Bible's prose narratives (and other non-poetic materials) and the prose translation of the (Hebrew) Bible's poetry. They both look very much the same, perhaps with only the smallest bit of extra whitespace in the poetic sections (see esp. Figs. 12, 18–19). This uniformity of appearance effectively levels through much of what distinguishes the underlying poetry of the Hebrew Bible from the prose, and as a consequence disposes readers to read the whole of the Bible uniformly, without a strong awareness of the variety of literary forms and genres in the Bible.⁵⁵



in his note about the number of words in the Bible, "that is assuming the whole space to be compactly filled with printed words"—which presumes a running format customary of printed prose.

- 55 For example, this is already well observed by R. G. Moulton in *The Literary Study of the Bible* (2d ed; Boston, 1899 [1895]), v–vi, 45.

Fig. 18: Isa 7:19–9:1 from the *Harper Illuminated Bible*. In the original Hebrew, Isaiah 7–8 is prose and Isaiah 9 is poetry, but all is prose in the KJB and the page layout is the same.

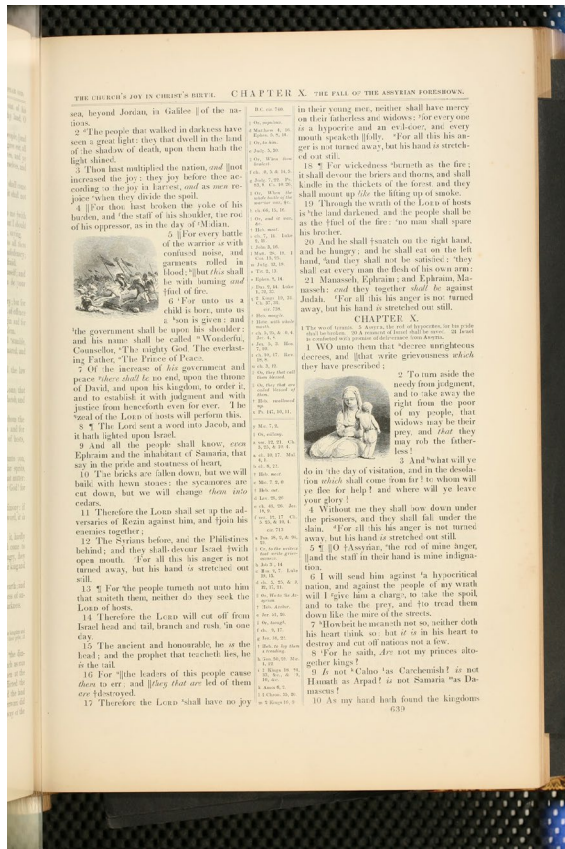


Fig. 19: Isa 9:1–10:11 from the Harper *Illuminated Bible*. In the original Hebrew, Isaiah 7–8 is prose and Isaiah 9 is poetry, but all is prose in the KJB and the page layout is the same.

Though Allen is correct about the importance of the verse line to the prosodies of both biblical Hebrew verse and Whitman, it is not readily apparent what Whitman could have discerned about line structure from a prose translation lacking any formal marking of verse. This is a problem deserving of critical attention. On the strength of scholarly knowledge of the day and more crucially on Whitman's own comments, such as in "The Bible as Poetry" and also earlier in his notebooks (for discussion, see Chapter One), one may posit on Whitman's part a general awareness that the Bible contained poetry, or verse proper. But as to any more specific knowledge regarding the nature of Hebrew verse structure, that is a much more complicated and different proposition entirely,

especially if we presume, as Allen does, the mediating force of the KJB. As D. Norton stresses, “It must be painfully apparent to anyone who has tried to read the poetic parts of the KJB using parallelism as a guide to the true form [i.e., line structure] that it is often no help.”⁵⁶ Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Allen chooses not to use the KJB for his illustrations but instead quotes biblical passages from R. G. Moulton’s “arrangement of biblical poetry in his *Modern Reader’s Bible*” (see Figs. 21–22), which Allen says “in the main” has as its “basis” the “Lowth system.”⁵⁷ That is, unlike in the KJB, verse in Moulton’s edition is frequently lineated, following the example of the 1885 Revised Version (see Fig. 23).⁵⁸ The first of the “many evidences” of Whitman’s indebtedness to the model of the “rhythmic pattern of the English Bible”⁵⁹ is the equivalence of line

56 *History of the English Bible*, 227. This can be done, if exceptionally, as Norton himself points out in discussing Samuel Say, who quotes Ps 78:1–2 in lines of free verse (much like the later RV): “we may say that one eighteenth-century critic was able to read the KJB’s prose as verse” (200–01).

57 “Biblical Analogies,” 492; *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 347, n. 23; R. G. Moulton, *Modern Reader’s Bible* (New York: Mavmillan, 1922). Moulton’s edition is a bit strange. It is based on the Revised Version (Old and New Testament, 1885), which could not have influenced Whitman initially, and differs chiefly in his manner of formatting—in the case of biblical poetry, providing lineation (though this is already in RV in many instances, but not the Latter Prophets except in the most lyrical bits). However, his is not simply another edition and translation of the Bible. He tries to give the whole Old Testament, for example, a narrative shape. He relocates some poems to where he thinks they make the most narrative sense. One often has to hunt for the location of a particular poem in Moulton, since it is not guaranteed to be in canonical order. Equally frustrating, Moulton does not try to translate all biblical verse—for example, he gives only selections from the Song of Songs. And his lineations do not always reflect what contemporary scholars reconstruct as the underlying biblical Hebrew line structure—though to be sure line structure in biblical Hebrew poetry is always a matter of construal. This only adds to Allen’s confusion. Not only is he foregrounding through Moulton’s edition the underlying biblical Hebrew line structure, which has no transparent bearing on Whitman, but even that often gets muddled when Moulton gets things wrong, as he often does. For an overview of Moulton’s project, see Norton, *History of the English Bible*, 371–76.

58 This was the first official revision to the KJB. The New Testament was completed in 1881; Old Testament in 1885; and Apocrypha in 1895. It is also the first time in an official English translation that the translation of Hebrew poetry is printed as “English poetry” (D. Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* [New Haven: Yale University, 2003], 696). This ultimately follows the lead of R. Lowth in his translation of Isaiah in a nonmetrical form of what has become called “free verse” (*Isaiah: A New Translation* [London: J. Nichols, 1778; reprinted in *Robert Lowth (1710–1787): The Major Works* (London: Routledge, 1995)]).

59 *American Prosody*, 220–21.

units, which Allen summarizes at the end of "Biblical Analogies" in this way:

The first rhythmical principle of the Old Testament poetry is parallelism, or a rhythm of thought, *in which the line is the unit. The line is also the unit* in Whitman's poetry, one evidence of which is the punctuation, but conclusive evidence is the fact that the verses may be arranged in synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, and climatic "thought-groups", *just as Moulton prints the poetry of the Bible* (emphasis added).⁶⁰

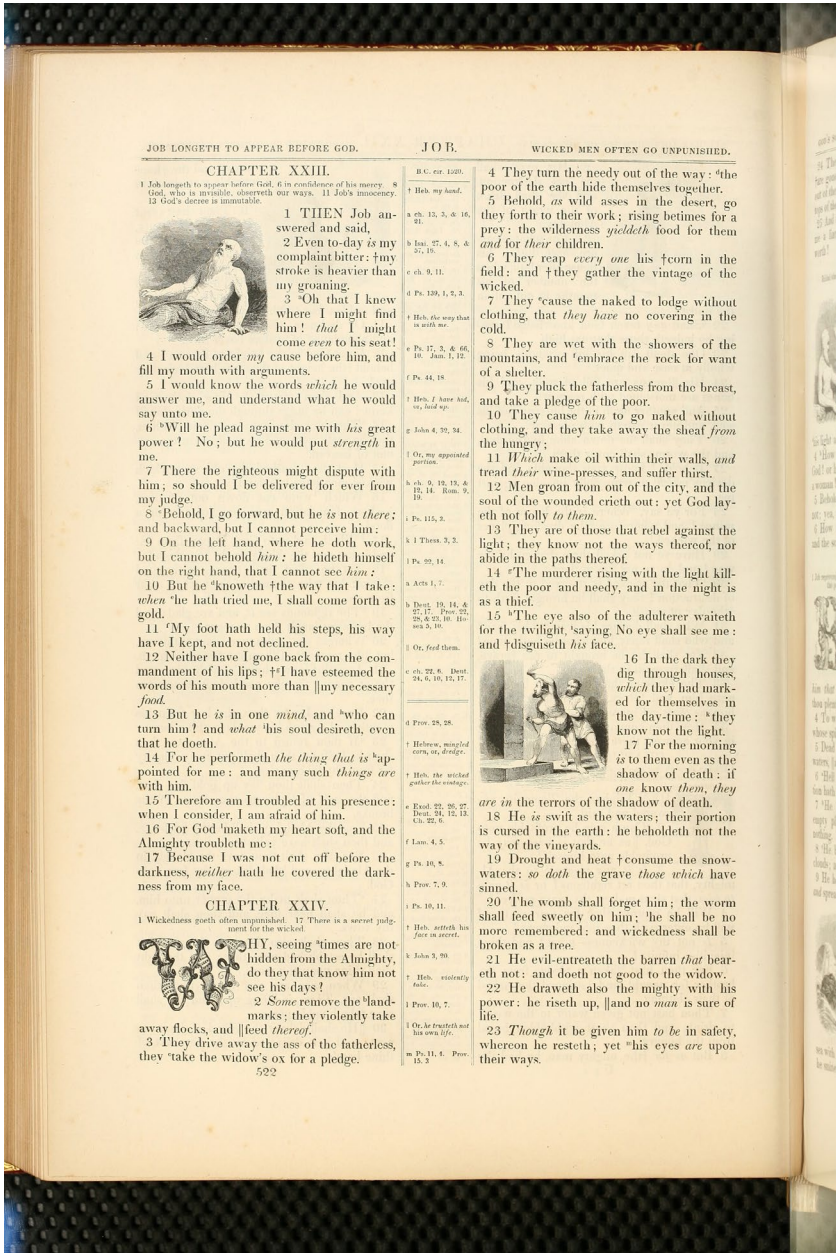
As Moulton prints the poetry of the Bible this seems self-evident. However, the KJB has no such lines of verse, a fact which the use of Moulton's edition effectively occludes (cf. Fig. 20 and contrast Figs. 21–23). F. Stovall raises the possibility of Whitman having access to verse translations of biblical poetry, such as those (of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs) by George R. Noyes.⁶¹ Though possible—certainly such verse translations in English were available, most stimulated by Lowth's originary efforts in his *Isaiah: A New Translation*⁶²—Stovall cannot tie Whitman to any of them. The line forms Whitman prefers are mostly enacted on a (much) larger scale (see below), and Whitman's known biblical quotations and phrasal borrowings invariably come from the KJB (see Chapter Two). Thus it is not clear that this equivalence of which Allen speaks—the line as the chief rhythmical unit—has quite the force that he imagines, at least not on his representation via Moulton's translation, as that is a formatting style that becomes most widely accessible only late in Whitman's life (in the form of the RV).⁶³

60 "Biblical Analogies," 505.

61 *The Foreground of Leaves of Grass* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 187. Stovall does notice how Noyes's translations "arrange the poetry in verse form, and each line beginning with a capital letter and usually constituting a complete statement," recalling Whitman's practice.

62 Cf. M. Roston, *Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1965), 126–47.

63 Allen's later statement in the *New Walt Whitman Handbook* (215–19) is more careful about giving visibility to the underlying Hebrew, but Allen still seems to fudge the boundaries between translation and original and remains enamored by the equivalence of line units: "his [Lowth's] scheme [of parallelism] demonstrates the single line as the unit" (216) and "if parallelism is the foundation of the rhythmical style of *Leaves of Grass*, then, as we have already seen in the summary of the Lowth system, the verse must be the unit" (218).



JOB LONGETH TO APPEAR BEFORE GOD.

JOB.

WICKED MEN OFTEN GO UNPUNISHED.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 Job longeth to appear before God, & in confidence of his mercy 8 God, who is invisible, observeth our ways. 11 Job's innocency. 13 God's decree is unchangeable.



1 THEN Job answered and said,
 2 Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning.
 3 "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!

4 I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.
 5 I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

6 "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.

7 There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

8 "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him;

9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

10 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

11 My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; for I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

13 But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

14 For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.

15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.

16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:

17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 Wickedness goeth often unpunished. 17 There is a secret judgment for the wicked.



1 WHY, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?

2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.

3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

b. c. cor. 120.

1 Heb. my hand.

2 ps. 13, 7, & 16, 31.

3 Job. 27, 4, 8, & 27, 18.

4 Job. 9, 11.

5 Ps. 139, 1, 7, 3.

6 Heb. As way that is with me.

7 Ps. 17, 3, & 66, 10. Job. 1, 12.

8 Ps. 44, 18.

9 Heb. I have not, or, laid up.

10 Job. 4, 29, 34.

11 Or, my appointed portion.

12 Job. 9, 13, 15, & 12, 14. Rom. 9, 12.

13 Ps. 115, 3.

14 1 Thess. 3, 3.

15 Ps. 69, 14.

16 Acts 1, 7.

17 Dent. 19, 14, & 27, 17. Prov. 22, 28, & 23, 10. 11: see 3, 10.

18 Or, feed them.

19 Job. 22, 8. Dent. 24, 6, 10, 12, 17.

20 Prov. 28, 28.

21 Hebrew, mingled corn, or, dredge.

22 Heb. the oxen gather the seed.

23 Dent. 22, 28, 27. Dent. 24, 12, 13. Ch. 27, 9.

24 Law. 4, 5.

25 Ps. 10, 8.

26 Prov. 7, 9.

27 Ps. 18, 11.

28 Heb. setteth his feet in secret.

29 Job. 9, 30.

30 Heb. violently take.

31 Prov. 10, 7.

32 Or, he trusteth not his own life.

33 Ps. 31, 4. Prov. 13, 3.

4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.

6 They reap every one his furn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked.

7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold.

8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.

10 They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry;

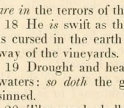
11 Which make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst.

12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.

13 They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.

14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and he disguiseth his face.



16 In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: they know not the light.

17 For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

18 He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.

19 Drought and heat consume the snow-waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned.

20 The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered: and wickedness shall be broken as a ree.

21 He evil-entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life.

23 Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways.

Psalms and Lyrics ☞

An Answer to Prayer

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
 Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am withered away;
 O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed:
 My soul also is sore vexed.
 And thou, O LORD, how long?
 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:
 Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee:
 In Sheol who shall give thee thanks?
 I am weary with my groaning;
 Every night make I my bed to swim;
 I water my couch with my tears.
 Mine eye wasteth away because of grief;
 It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
 For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
 The LORD hath heard my supplication;
 The LORD will receive my prayer.
 All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed:
 They shall turn back, they shall be ashamed suddenly.

Under the Protection of Jehovah

The LORD is my shepherd;
 I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
 He leadeth me beside the still waters.
 He restoreth my soul:
 He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Fig. 21: Psalm 23 from R. G. Moulton, *Modern Reader's Bible* (New York: Mavmillan, 1922), II, 320. Public domain. Formatted as verse following the lead of the 1885 Revised Version of the Bible.

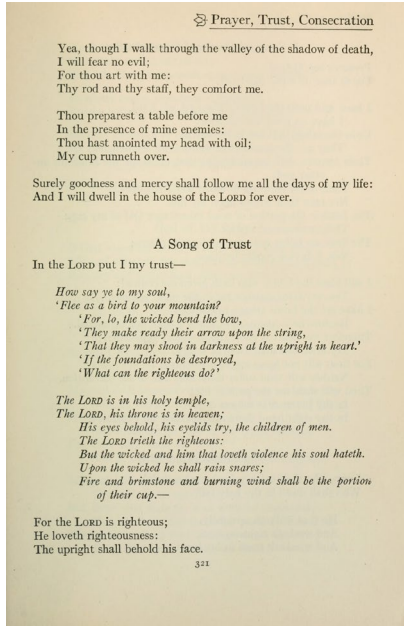


Fig. 22: Psalm 23 (cont.) from Moulton, *Modern Reader's Bible*, II, 321.

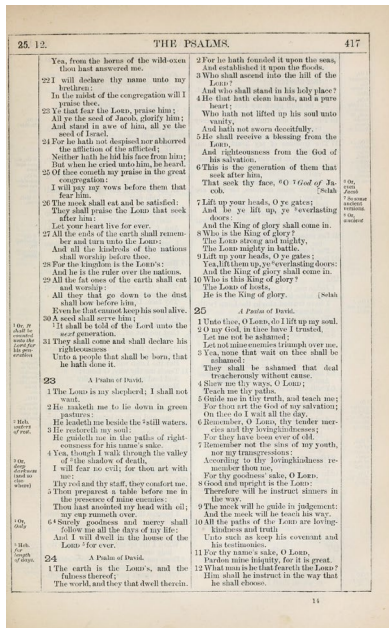


Fig. 23: Psalm 23 in the Revised Version (*The Holy Bible* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1885]). Public domain. First major English translation to lineate the poetry of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job as verse.

Moreover, in giving visibility to the line structure of the underlying Hebrew original through Moulton's translation what becomes strikingly apparent—and what would be obvious to any Hebraist—is just how *unlike* the two line units are. The biblical Hebrew verse line is consistently concise, while Whitman's line is famously long (and variable); and the biblical verse tradition is dominantly distichic, featuring couplets (and, less commonly, triplets), while Whitman's verse is prominently stichic. When he does group lines together, their patterns of grouping are quite dissimilar from those in the biblical Hebrew poetic corpus. These are visually apparent even on the most cursory of comparisons (see Fig. 24). Of the two, Allen senses the mismatch in the latter. In his treatment of parallelism in Whitman, he dutifully surveys parallelism involving couplets, triplets, and even quatrains, chiefly because of their prominence in the Bible. But as Allen recognizes, "the number of couplets in *Leaves of Grass* is not great;"⁶⁴ that "parallelism in the Bible does not ordinarily extend beyond the quatrain,"⁶⁵ and perhaps most astutely, that "the couplet, triplet, and quatrain are found more often in the Bible than in *Leaves of Grass*."⁶⁶ I sense in Allen's minimization of this difference—"the number of consecutive parallel verses is not particularly important"⁶⁷—an attempt to stave off potentially troublesome worries for his thesis: for example, if Whitman was so impressed by the Bible's use of parallelism, why is not his own practice of line grouping more reflective of that of the Bible? Of course, it may be that Whitman was simply enamored of the parallelism itself and not the patterns of grouping. But Allen's own logic of exemplifying and commenting on Whitman's use of parallelistic couplets and the like suggests that Allen thinks otherwise,⁶⁸ that he intuitively feels the logic of the worry, though he mostly sweeps it deftly aside.

64 "Biblical Analogies," 494. Allen's added comment, "but then neither are there many [couplets] in the biblical poetry aside from *Proverbs*," is simply wrong. Biblical poetry is dominantly distichic, a fact Allen better appreciates in his later statement. By contrast, on my count, there are only 224 couplets (i.e., pairs of lines set apart spatially and punctuated as a single sentence) in the 1855 *Leaves* (on average less than three per page), and most of these are executed on a much larger scale than the typical biblical Hebrew couplet.

65 "Biblical Analogies," 495.

66 *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 222.

67 *American Prosody*, 223.

68 J. P. Warren, who is otherwise critical of Allen's dependence on Lowth's paradigm ("The Free Growth Of Metrical Laws: Syntactic Parallelism In 'Song Of Myself,'" *Style* 18/1 [1984], 27–42, esp. 28–32), nonetheless remains intent on comparing Whitman's two-, three-, and four-line groupings with those of the Bible (32).

אני מקלס את עצמי, אני שר את עצמי
ומה שאני נוטל ומניח הווי אמה נוטל ומניח,
שכן כל פה השיר לי שיר לך כמו כן.

אני הולך בעול וקורא את נפשי לזה.
אני מסתמך ומתחבט לזאתי, מסתכל בגבש'ך עשבו-קייזי.

לשני, כל פה ששבו, מקרבים מן האדמה הזאת, מן האויר הזה—
לודו כאן לזורים שגורים כאן אלתי, הוורידים כגון איתי,
אני, מן שלשים ועשבו כיום ובחבליית הבריאות, הייני מתחיל,
מקודו לבלתי חול על אם המות.

Leaves of Grass.

differences

I CELEBRATE myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and look at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes . . . the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume . . . it has no taste of the distillation . . . it is odorous,
It is for my mouth forever . . . I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undrugged and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,
Edges, ripples and luzzed whippers lovered, silkthread, crech and vines,
My respiration and inspiration . . . the beating of my heart . . . the passing of blood
The stuff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the stone and darkcolored scro-
rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belched words of my voice words honed to the odies of
A few light kisses a few embraces a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the sunple boughs wegs,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-ticks,
The feeling of health the full-moon trill the song of me rising from bed
and sancting the ens.

Psalm 23

23:1 מקודו לזה

יְהוָה לֹא אֲחַסֶּה-
2 בְּמַדְוָה יִשְׂאֵל יְהוָה
עַל-יָמִי מִקְדוֹת יִתְּלֵבִי:

כִּי נִפְשִׁי יִשְׁבֵּב
יָהוָה בְּמַדְוָה לֹא אֶדַךְ
לִמְנוַח טָהוֹר:

4 יָם פְּרִיאֵךְ
בְּהָרָא צִלְמֹת
לֹא אֲדִיא רֵעַ
פְּרִיאֶךָ עִמָּדִי
שִׁבְתֶּךָ וּמִשְׁעֵנֶיךָ
תִּמְנַחַי:

5 תִּנְהַדְּךָ לִפְנֵי וְשִׁלְחֵן
נְגַד צִרְרֵי
יִשְׁלַח בְּפָנַי אֲשֵׁר
פּוֹרֵץ רִוְחֵי:

6 אֶדָּ וְ מִדְּבַר יְהוָה
כִּי-יִמְרֵי יְהוָה
וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה
לְעַד יְהִיבֵי:

short line

triplet

5/6HevPs frag (Ps 23:2-4)

couplet

Fig. 24: A comparison of the differences between Whitman's typical poetic line and the biblical Hebrew poetic line. Image of p. 13 from the 1855 *Leaves*, public domain. Image of a 5/6HevPs fragment, showing parts of Ps 23:2-4 (Wikimedia Commons). Unpointed Hebrew translation of "Song of Myself" (lines 1-9), after Simon Halkin.

More surprising is the complete silence as to the difference in line length, which is only too apparent, at least if we are to think of the Hebrew original (usually two to four words) or Moulton's translation of that original (normally no more than eight or nine words). If the Bible is Whitman's chief inspiration, wouldn't there be more lines akin to the length of the typical biblical verse line? This is a potentially more damning worry precisely because Whitman's own lines (especially early on) are often so strikingly long with absolutely no parallels in biblical Hebrew verse. Neither worry holds substance, however. Whitman had no access to the Hebrew originals. And he probably did not have ready or ongoing access (if any access at all) to an English verse translation of the likes of Moulton's, which arranges the poetry of the Bible in lines of translated verse, grouped as couplets, triplets and the like according to Lowth's practice. That is, there is no reason to suspect that Whitman had much (if any) first-hand knowledge of either the nature of line grouping in biblical Hebrew poetry or the typical lengths of these lines (when translated into English). These are features of the biblical verse tradition that are elided in a prose translation like the KJB. It surely is not accidental that it is "chiefly the *synonymous* variety" of parallelism that Whitman picks up on and uses so pervasively throughout *Leaves of Grass*.⁶⁹ Of all linguistic elements, semantics—meaning—is the one most readily translatable. The early translators' (beginning with Tyndale) sense of a peculiar affinity between Hebrew and English idioms is spurred in part by semantics.⁷⁰ By contrast, the "core" of parallelism in the poetry of the Hebrew Bible is "syntactic," viz. the "repetition of identical or similar syntactic patterns" or frames, which when "set into equivalence" bring whatever is "filling those frames" (e.g., lexical items) "into alignment as well."⁷¹

The Verse Divisions of the KJB and Whitman's Line

More positively, by refocusing on the textual source that prompted Allen's interest in the first place, the KJB, and the fact that this is a specifically prose translation in distinct formats and page layouts, potential points

69 *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 220–21; cf. "Biblical Analogies," 492–93; *American Prosody*, 222–23.

70 Cf. Norton, *History of the English Bible*, 11.

71 M. O'Connor, "Parallelism" in *NPEPP*, 877.

of similarity between this Bible and Whitman's line more readily resolve themselves. Besides the parallelistic play of meaning (and syntax) and the rhythm effected in part through this play, both characteristics of the biblical Hebrew verse tradition that were accessible to Whitman through translation, Whitman would have literally *seen* the verse divisions of the KJB itself. This is a point made early, though little noticed, by G. Saintsbury in his review of the 1871(–72) edition of *Leaves of Grass*: “Perhaps the likeness which is presented to the mind most strongly is that which exists between our author and the verse divisions of the English Bible, especially in the poetical books, and it is not unlikely that the latter did actually exercise some influence in molding the poet's work.”⁷² The “verse divisions of the English Bible” in the Old Testament correspond almost without fail to the full stop (*sôp pāsûq*) used by the Masoretes to mark the end of a biblical verse. In the narrative sections of the Hebrew Bible, the *sôp pāsûq* tends to demarcate a complete sentence, though the sentences may vary considerably in length and complexity. In “the poetical books,” the *sôp pāsûq* does not demarcate the end of a single line of verse in Hebrew, but two, three, four, and sometimes even more such lines. So as in the prose sections there is variability here, too; however, it is far more constrained and regular, given the simpler clause structures and uniformly concise verse lines (see Figs. 12, 19, 20). The formatting in the KJB is the same, whether for prose or poetry, though because of the latter there is subtly more whitespace on the page in the poetic books (see Figs. 12, 18–19). Numerous aspects of Whitman's mature and signature line—viz. its variability, range of lengths, typical shapes and character, and content—become more clearly comparable to the Bible when thought through in light of Saintsbury's appreciation of the significance of the actual “verse divisions of the English Bible.”

The Lengths of Lines

Most obvious, perhaps, is that the range of line-lengths in the 1855 *Leaves* is roughly equivalent to that of the verse divisions of the KJB, especially, as Saintsbury perceives, in the poetic books (e.g., Psalms,

72 G. Saintsbury, “[Review of *Leaves of Grass* (1871)],” *The Academy* 6 (10 Oct 1874), 398–400, <https://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/lg1871/anc.00076.html>.

Proverbs, Job), and as significant the mix of line-lengths and the *mise-en-page* that this mix effects is strikingly similar in both as well. Consider the familiar Psalm 23 (which Whitman read) lineated according to the verse divisions in the KJB (see Fig. 20):

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Note the overall length of the individual verse divisions and their variety. Compare this profile, first, with Moulton's version of the same psalm, which aims to follow the contours of the original Hebrew line structure,⁷³ resulting in much shorter lines, grouped as couplets⁷⁴—the indentation and spacing are Moulton's invention (see Figs. 21–22):

73 As there is no single source for information on Hebrew line structure in biblical poems, differences in construals are common. In general, Moulton's division of lines here compares favorably to that of the NJV, for example; the division indicated by spacing in *BHS*, to take another example, is somewhat different. And the three long lines in Moulton—"He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake"; "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death"; "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"—are too long to be individual lines of biblical verse.

74 There are likely a good many triplets in the original—according to *BHS*, vv. 1–2, 3, 4 (2x)—though Moulton misses them all.

The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For thou art with me:

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me

In the presence of mine enemies:

Thou hast anointed my head with oil;

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.⁷⁵

75 Moulton, *Modern Reader's Bible*, II. 320–21.

Now consider a few brief selections from the 1855 *Leaves* (see Figs. 25–26):

Trippers and askers surround me,
 People I meet.... the effect upon me of my early life.... of the ward and city I
 live in.... of the nation,
 The latest news.... discoveries, inventions, societies.... authors old and new,
 My dinner, dress, associates, looks, business, compliments, dues,
 The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
 The sickness of one of my folks—or of myself.... or ill-doing.... or loss or
 lack of money.... or depressions or exaltations,
 They come to me days and nights and go from me again,
 But they are not the Me myself. (*LG*, 15)

And:

I am the hounded slave.... I wince at the bite of the dogs,
 Hell and despair are upon me.... crack and again crack the marksmen,
 I clutch the rails of the fence.... my gore dribs thinned with the ooze of
 my skin,
 I fall on the weeds and stones,
 The riders spur their unwilling horses and haul close,
 They taunt my dizzy ears.... they beat me violently over the head with their
 whip-stocks. (*LG*, 39)

Initially, note the typical lengths of Whitman's lines, which, with but a few exceptions (e.g., "But they are not the Me myself"; "I fall on the weeds and stones"), are much too long for a translated line of actual biblical verse but compare favorably with the verse divisions of the KJB. So:

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the
 still waters. (Ps 23:2, KJB) [sixteen words]

I clutch the rails of the fence.... my gore dribs thinned with the ooze of my skin, (*LG*, 39) [seventeen words]

Vs:

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: [nine words; Hebrew: three words]

He leadeth me beside the still waters. (Moulton) [seven words; Hebrew: four words]

Or:

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. (Ps 23:5, KJB) [twenty-two words]

People I meet..... the effect upon me of my early life.... of the ward and city I live in.... of the nation, (*LG*, 15) [twenty-two words]

Vs:

Thou preparest a table before me [six words; Hebrew: three words]

In the presence of mine enemies: [six words; Heb.: two words]

Thou hast anointed my head with oil; [seven words; Hebrew: three words]

My cup runneth over. (Moulton) [four words; Heb.: two words]

Leaves of Grass.

16

As God comes a loving bellfellow and sleeps at my side all night and close on the
 peep of the day,
 And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the house with their
 plenty,
 Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at my eyes,
 That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
 And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
 Exactly the contents of one, and exactly the contents of two, and which is ahead?

Trippers and askers surround me,
 People I meet the effect upon me of my early life of the ward and city I
 live in of the nation,
 The latest news discoveries, inventions, societies authors old and new,
 My dinner, dress, associates, looks, business, compliments, dues,
 The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
 The sickness of one of my folks — or of myself or ill-doing or loss or lack
 of money or depressions or exaltations,
 They come to me days and nights and go from me again,
 But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionate, idle, unitary,
 Looks down, is erect, bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
 Looks with its sidecurved head curious what will come next,
 Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and
 contenders,
 I have no mockings or arguments I witness and wait.

I believe in you my soul the other I am must not abase itself to you,
 And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass loose the stop from your throat,
 Not words, not music or rhyme I want not custom or lecture, not even the best,
 Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how we lay in June, such a transparent summer morning;
 You settled your head adwast my hips and gently turned over upon me,
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my barestript
 heart,
 And reached till you felt my beard, and reached till you held my feet.

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

Fig. 25: P. 15 from the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, NY, 1855). Public domain.

Leaves of Grass.

39

How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steamship, and death
 chasing it up and down the storm,
 How he knuckled tight and gave not back one inch, and was faithful of days and
 faithful of nights,
 And chalked in large letters on a board, Be of good cheer, We will not desert you;
 How he saved the drifting company at last,
 How the lank loose-gowned women looked when boated from the side of their
 prepared graves,
 How the silent old-faced infants, and the lifted sick, and the sharp-lipped unshaved
 men;
 All this I swallow and it tastes good I like it well, and it becomes mine,
 I am the man I suffered I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
 The mother condemned for a witch and burnt with dry wood, and her children
 gazing on;
 The hounded slave that flags in the race and leans by the fence, blowing and
 covered with sweat,
 The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,
 The murderous buckshot and the bullets,
 All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave I wince at the bite of the dogs,
 Hell and despair are upon me crack and again crack the marksmen,
 I clutch the rails of the fence my gore dribs thinned with the ooze of my skin,
 I fall on the weeds and stones,
 The riders spur their unwilling horses and haul close,
 They taunt my dizzy ears they beat me violently over the head with their
 whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments;
 I do not ask the wounded person how he feels I myself become the wounded
 person,
 My hurt turns livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

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

I lie in the night air in my red shirt the pervading hush is for my sake,
 Painless after all I lie, exhausted but not so unhappy,
 White and beautiful are the faces around me the heads are bared of their fire-
 caps,
 The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Fig. 26: P. 39 from the 1855 *Leaves*.

The sharp contrast in length is noticeably apparent between the lines in Whitman and in the KJB verse divisions, on the one hand, and in Moulton's versions, on the other hand. This point may be underscored to good effect by comparing the Hebrew of the latter biblical passage, Ps 23:5, with its characteristic short lines,

תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי | שְׁלֹחַן
 גִּגְד צֶרְרִי
 דִּשְׁנֵת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵאשִׁי
 כּוֹסֵי רִנָּה:

with a set of Whitman's long lines from the beginning of "Song of Myself" in Simon Halkin's Hebrew translation:⁷⁶

לִשְׁנֵי, כָּל פָּרֵד שֶׁבְּדָמִי, מְקַרְצִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת, מִן הָאווִיר הַזֶּה —
 לְיֹוֹד כָּאֵן לְהוֹרִים שֶׁנּוֹלְדוּ כָּאֵן לְהוֹרִים כְּגוֹן אֱלֹה, וְהוֹרֵיהֶם הֵם כְּגוֹן אֱלֹה,
 אֲנִי, בְּן שְׁלִשִׁים וּשְׁבַע פְּיוֹם וּבְתַכְלִית הַבְּרִיאוֹת, הֲרִינִי,
 מְקַוֶּה לְבִלְתִּי תִדּוֹל עַד אִם הַמָּוֶת.

(My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,

Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents
 the same,

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,

Hoping to cease not till death. [LG 1892, 29])

Again, the contrast in line length is stark. Halkin's rendition of the first two lines of Whitman each contains more words (eleven) than in the four lines of the psalm combined (ten words). And though hardly the kind of empirical sifting that would be required to make a

76 Cited from E. Folsom, "'Song of Myself,' Section 1, in Fifteen Languages," *WWQR* 13/1 (1995), 73–89, at 78; cf. *Alē 'Ēsev* [Leaves of Grass] (trans. S. Halkin; Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd, 1984 [1952]).

full case, my strong impression is that the general picture registered by these few examples holds across the board. Dip anywhere into Whitman's 1855 *Leaves* and the poetic books of the KJB and the same rough equivalences in lengths of lines and verse divisions appear. The same point is made by Robert Alter in a wholly different context but in a way that is nevertheless quite telling for my own thesis. He says of the KJB's long cherished rendering of Ps 23:4 ("Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me") that it has "the beauty of a proto-Whitmanesque line of poetry rather than of biblical [Hebrew] poetry."⁷⁷ Alter here, implicitly, joins the likes of Saintsbury in recognizing the connection between Whitman and the KJB, at least in terms of line length.

These word counts serve as a crude barometer of dis/similarity. They cannot be pressed too literally. And yet they are also possibly the surest means of measuring and comparing the gross scales of Whitman's lines (in the 1855 *Leaves*) and the KJB's verse divisions. With the aid of computerization such measures can be quantified (to a degree; see charts in Figs. 15, 27–29).⁷⁸ Fig. 29 is perhaps the most striking, as it shows a considerable degree of overlap between the basic length profiles for Whitman's verse lines in the 1855 *Leaves* and the verse divisions of the KJB in the three specially formatted (in the Masoretic tradition) books of biblical poetry: Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.⁷⁹ The match is not perfect, but it is incredibly close. For

77 R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), xxx. The observation is made in passing, Alter simply trying to be descriptive in elaborating his aim to achieve a more compact rendering of the Hebrew of the Psalms into English. His reach for Whitman, nonetheless, is most appropriate. Cf. M. N. Posey, "Whitman's Debt to the Bible with Special Reference to the Origins of His Rhythm" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1938), 44, where the Psalms are emphasized in their import for shaping the pattern of Whitman's versification.

78 Gregory Murray, Director of Digital Initiatives at the Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, is responsible for generating the computations summarized in the charts in Figs. 15, 27–30.

79 In the received text of the Hebrew Bible (MT) these are the only three poetic books that are specially formatted (in two columns instead of three, with extra internal spacing to mark line division). Much poetry in the Bible appears in a

example, as noted Whitman's sweet spot in terms of line-length in the 1855 edition is between eight and sixteen words, accounting for 71% of all lines in the volume. The comparable core of verse divisions in the three poetic books from the KJB contains between twelve and twenty words, accounting for roughly 76% of the verse divisions in this material (Fig. 29). This overlapping correlation in length gives substantial back-up to Saintsbury's early impressions ("especially in the poetical books"). By contrast, Fig. 30 (comparing the line lengths of Whitman's 1855 *Leaves* and the 1901 ASV [Job], which like the RV offers lineated versions of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job) shows the overall dissimilarity between Whitman's line and the average lengths of translated versions of the constrained biblical Hebrew poetic line.⁸⁰ Fig. 28, which compares Whitman's line to KJB-Pentateuch (comprised primarily of biblical prose), not surprisingly shows a good chunk of the KJB's verse divisions in this material containing more words per verse than does Whitman per line—not surprising because however prosaic Whitman's verse, it is finally verse and not prose. Importantly, however, Whitman's longest lines (forty-seven words or more) are comparable only with the verse divisions of biblical prose (see esp. Figs. 27–28)—he was reading the whole Bible.

running format just like prose. See Figs. 31–32; and for a fuller discussion, see Dobbs-Allsopp, "Verse, Properly So Called." The word counts for the three biblical books here do not include the prose material in Job 1–2 and 42:7–17.

- 80 I use the 1901 "American Standard Version" (ASV) out of convenience, since a version with the necessary XML mark-up was readily available from ebible.org. The ASV is essentially the same as the RV (Americans had been involved in the revision process since the 1870s), inclusive of numerous additions to the translation suggested by an American committee of scholars (Daniell, *Bible in English*, 696–97, 735–37). Both the RV and ASV offer verse renderings in English (formatted stichicly) of some of the poetic sections of the Bible (here Psalms, Proverbs, Job) for the first time in the English translation tradition descended from the KJB. Moulton's translations used by Allen are from the RV—though formatted so "as to bring out to the eye the literary form and structure of each portion of Scripture" (*Modern Reader's Bible* I, 2).

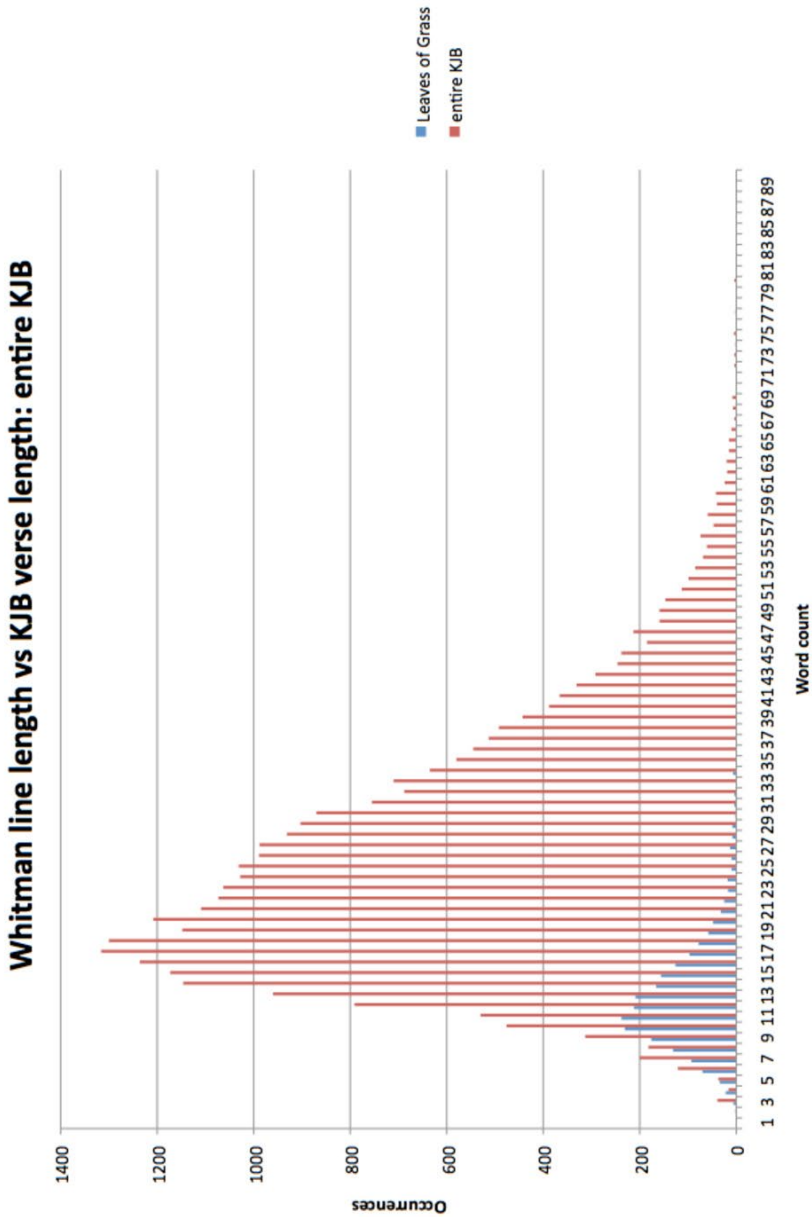


Fig. 27: Comparison by word count between the lengths of lines in the 1855 *Leaves* and the verse divisions of the entire KJB. Computation and chart by Greg Murray.

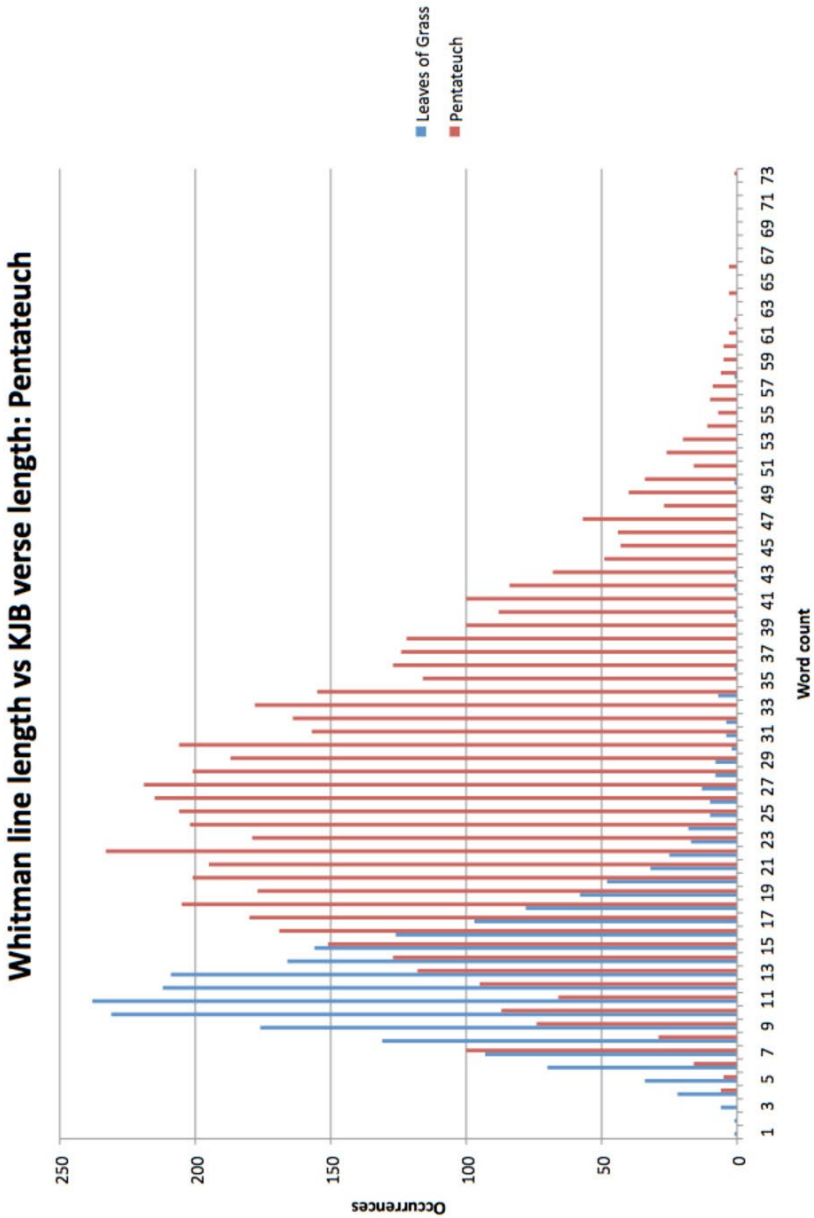


Fig. 28: Comparison by word count between the lengths of lines in the 1855 *Leaves* and the verse divisions of KJB-Pentateuch. Computation and chart by Greg Murray.

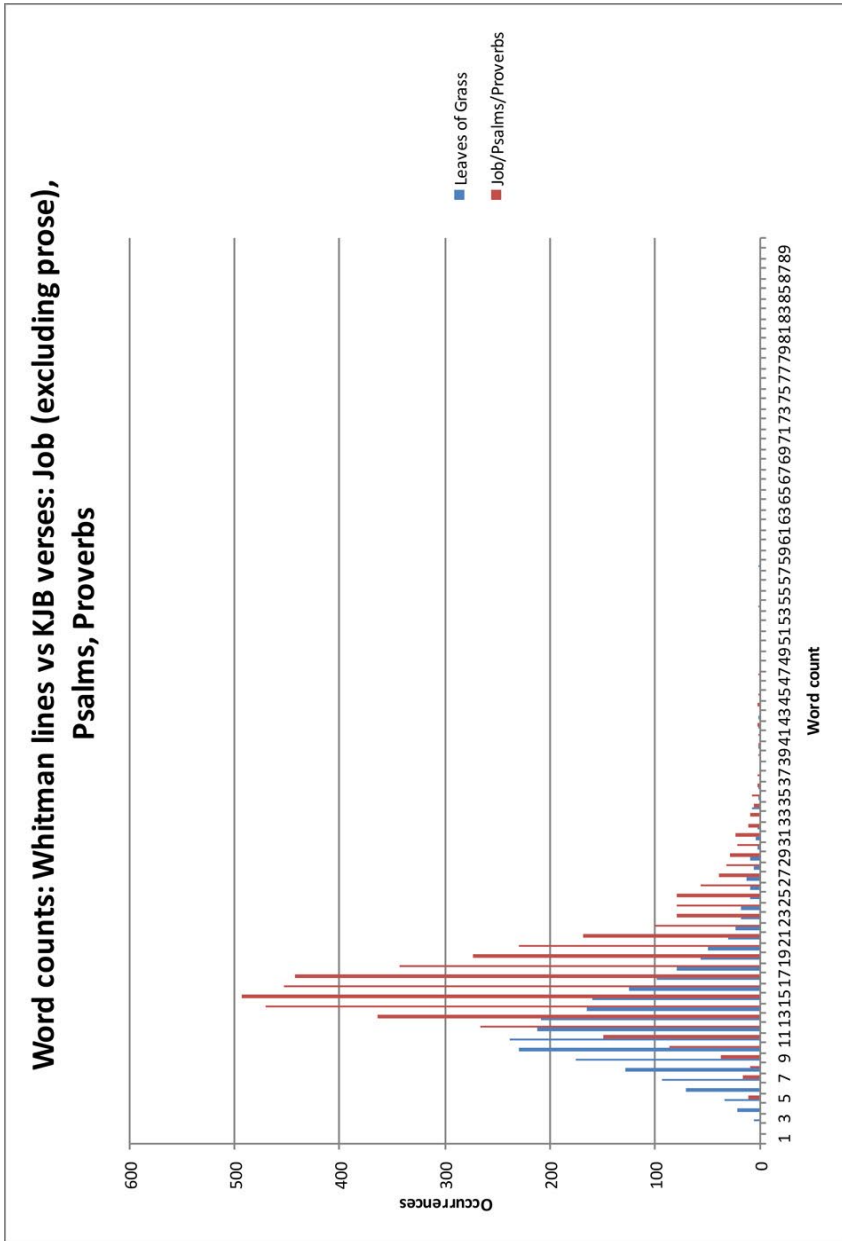


Fig. 29: Comparison by word count between the lengths of lines in the 1855 *Leaves* and the verse divisions of KJB-Job/Psalms/Proverbs. Computation and chart by Greg Murray.

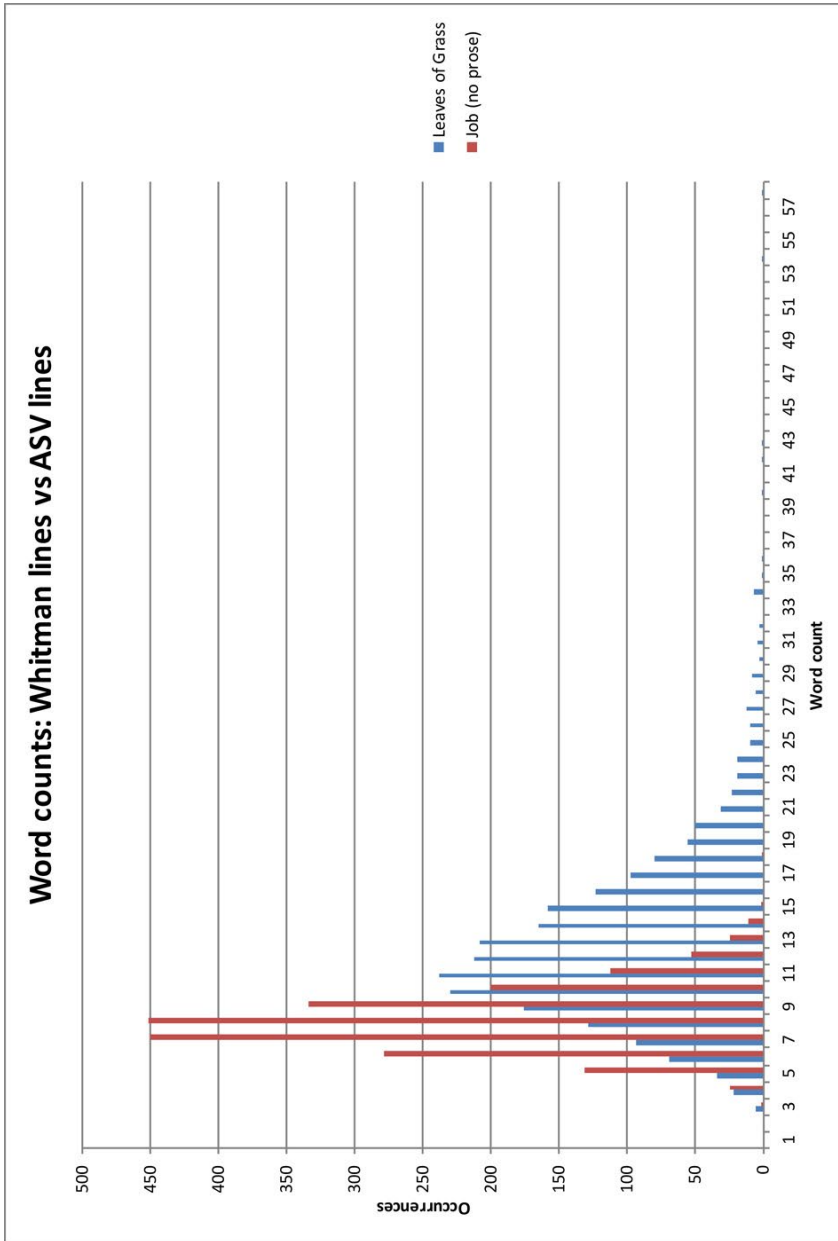


Fig. 30: Comparison by word count between the lengths of lines in the 1855 *Leaves* and the lineated translation of ASV-Job. Computation and chart by Greg Murray.



Fig. 31: B19a (Leningrad Codex), folio 423 recto (Ruth 4:13B-Song 2:5A). Freedman et al., *The Leningrad Codex*. Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, in collaboration with the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center. Courtesy Russian National Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin).



Fig. 32: B19a, folio 394 recto (Psalm 133). Freedman et al., *The Leningrad Codex*. Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, in collaboration with the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center. Courtesy Russian National Library (Saltykov-Shchedrin).

I do not postulate Whitman literally using word counts to generate his poetry or even to mimic (in some hyper-literal way) the variable lengths of the KJB's verse divisions. As Posey wryly remarks, "I suppose nobody thinks that he sat down with a psalm before him and wrote a poem laboriously fitted to the pattern."⁸¹ Rather, the KJB and its verse divisions furnished Whitman with the model for a long(er) and highly variable line that he then fitted and honed to his own liking, as he can be seen doing in his notebooks and poetry manuscripts. This is precisely the manner of Whitman's "inspiration" when he bothers to record it, a brief animating ("spinal") idea that is then worked out over and over ("incessantly") until it is made to Whitman's liking.⁸² Having said that, on at least two occasions Whitman actually counted the number of words and even letters used in (some of) his poems. Most famously, as previously noted, at the beginning of Whitman's so-called "Blue Book" edition of the 1860 *Leaves*,⁸³ the poet records (printer calculations of) overall word counts for *Leaves* (183,500 words, inclusive of *Drum-Taps*), the Bible, and other classic works (see Fig. 33).⁸⁴ Here one has the sense that Whitman is using the word counts to measure his poetic accomplishments to date.⁸⁵ Of equal interest is the verso of a single, 1855 manuscript leaf currently housed in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin (Fig. 34).⁸⁶ Whitman scribbles notes on this side of the leaf about

81 "Whitman's Debt," 142. Although the idea that Whitman perhaps occasionally composed with the Bible open before him should not be completely discounted either—certainly the verbatim quotes in the prose writings show Whitman actively consulting a Bible.

82 See Allen, *Reader's Guide*, 159; cf. P. Zweig, *Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 203. One of many examples comes from the "med Cophósis" notebook. Whitman jots down a note prefaced by pointing hand and the phrase "good subject Poem," <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00005.002.jpg>, which he then follows with an initial idea: "There was a child went forth every day—and the first thing that he saw looked at with fixed love, that thing he became for the day.—". This material eventually is worked (N.B. the canceled saw already in the notebook passage) into the opening two lines of "There was a child went forth" (*LG*, 90).

83 https://whitmanarchive.org/published/1860-Blue_book/images/index.html.

84 A transcription of this leaf may be found in Golden, *Whitman's Blue Book*, II, 417; for image: I, inside front cover.

85 The introduction he was composing for this never published version of *Leaves* would seem to make this explicit, as he notices on the occasion of his forty-second birthday (May 31, 1861), "having looked over what I have accomplished" (*NUPM* IV, 1484).

86 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/tex.00057.002.jpg>. See E. Folsom, "Walt Whitman's Working Notes for the first Edition of *Leaves* of

the size of and a projected arrangement for the 1855 *Leaves* (though the latter differs markedly from the edition eventually published). In an effort to estimate the number of printed pages needed for the volume, Whitman tallies up the number of letters on average used in what he describes as “one of my closely written MS pages”—he estimates using “1,600” letters. He compares this to the number of “letters in a page of Shakespeare’s poems”—“1,120” is recorded. From this he calculates that the printed *Leaves* will run to “about 127 pages”—this turns out to be a little off (the 1855 *Leaves* is 95 pages long), perhaps because of the unusually large page size (“about the size and shape of a block of typewriting paper”)⁸⁷ used in the 1855 edition. Both items plainly show that literal counts of words and letters factored in Whitman’s thinking about his poetry on occasion.

Words in the Bible (the Old and New Testament excluding the Apocrypha) by printer calculation, that is assuming the whole space to be compactly filled with printed words (actual words in Bible 77,592)	895,752
Words in New Testament by printer calculation	212,000
Words in <i>Head</i>	
Virgils works altogether	163,000
Words in <i>Aeneid</i> , a literal prose translation by Davidson (Baskley's)	115,500
Davidson's translation of <i>Eclogues & Georgics</i>	122,400
<i>Eclogues & Georgics</i>	40,500
Words in <i>Dante's Inferno</i> literal prose translation by Dr. A. Carlyle - (printer calculation)	53,100
Words in <i>Paradise Lost</i>	96,500
Words in <i>Boston ed Leaves of Grass</i> by printer calculation	150,500
Blank spaces	33,000
	183,500
Cowper's Works complete by printer calculation	186,000

Fig. 33: Whitman’s comparative word counts on the second leaf of the so-called “Blue Book” edition of the 1860 *Leaves*. Image courtesy of the New York Public Library.

Grass,” *WWQR* 16/2 (1998), 90–95; cf. Folsom’s online commentary at: Folsom, “Whitman.” The date is established by the notice that Whitman had already left “5 pages MS” with the printer (so Folsom).

87 M. Cowley (ed.), *Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976 [1959]), vii.

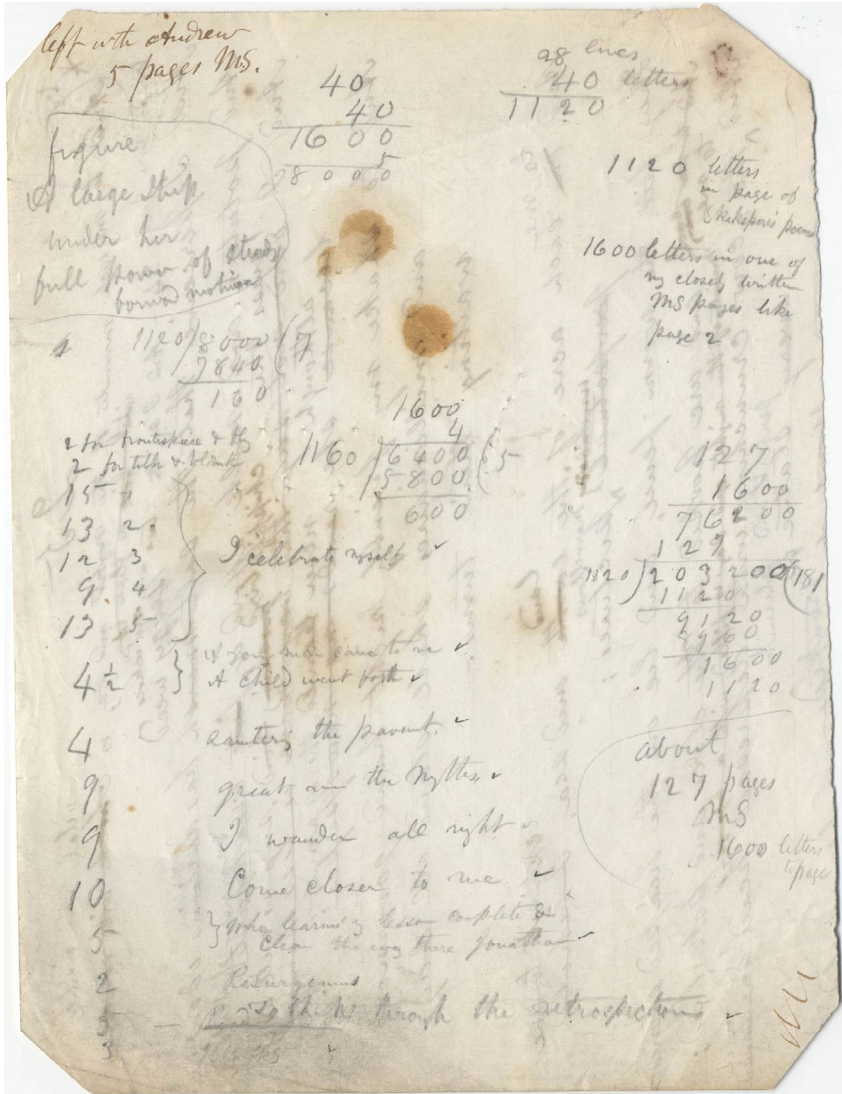


Fig. 34: Verso of "And to me every minute," <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/tx.00057.002.jpg>. Image courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. Estimated average number of letters in what Whitman considers "one of my closely written MS pages," comparing to the number of "letters in page of Shakespeare's poems."

In fact, however, word (and letter) counts alone do not adequately register the expanded spatial scale of Whitman's typically long lines in the 1855 *Leaves*, especially for comparative purposes. The language

material that makes up Whitman's lines and the KJB's verse divisions are dissimilar in a number of important ways. First, the KJB inherited Willian Tyndale's preference for Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, which contrasts strikingly with the many polysyllabic and compounded, often Latinate words—not to mention Whitman's fondness for foreign-derived words of all kinds—that populate Whitman's poems. So even when word counts converge (as they often do, for example, when comparing the lines of the 1855 *Leaves* with the verse divisions in KJB-Psalms, -Proverbs, and -Job), it is frequently still the case that Whitman's lines are more spatially expansive than the KJB's verse divisions—they literally are lengthier on the page. And Whitman's unconventional use of suspension points (...) and long dashes (combined with the large page format) in the first edition of *Leaves* elongates the line still further. The effect of the latter may be illustrated by comparing lines from the first edition of *Leaves* with lines from most of the succeeding editions where Whitman reverts to more conventional forms of punctuation and smaller page formats.⁸⁸ The following examples are emblematic (*LG*, 14; *LG* 1856, 7; see Figs. 35–36):

LG 1855: "You shall no longer take things at second or third hand....
nor look through the eyes of the dead.... nor feed on the
spectres in books"

LG 1856: "You shall no longer take things at second or third hand,
nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the
spectres in books"

LG 1855: "I have heard what the talkers were talking.... the talk of the
beginning and the end"

LG 1856: "I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the
beginning and the end"

LG 1855: "Always a knit of identity.... always distinction.... always a
breed of life"

LG 1856: "Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed
of life"

88 Esp. Asselineau, *Evolution*, II, 241.

The extra-linguistic means (esp. suspension points) for elongating Whitman's lines, allied with their extreme lengths (by whatever count), makes clear that the poetry of the early editions of *Leaves* in particular "was a visual poetry," as Asselineau notices.⁸⁹ Whitman himself (at least late in life) recognized this as well:

Two centuries back or so much of the poetry passed from lip to lip—was oral: was literally made to be sung: then the lilt, the formal rhythm, may have been necessary. The case is now somewhat changed: now, when the poetic work in literature is more than nineteen-twentieths of it by print, the simply tonal aids are not so necessary, or, if necessary, have considerably shifted their character.⁹⁰

Whitman experienced the Bible chiefly visually, in print and through reading, yet the biblical traditions (even when originating in written composition) emerge out of dominantly oral environments. Almost every dimension of biblical poetry is shaped for maximal oral and aural reception, including its typically constrained verse line.⁹¹ This is antithetical to Whitman's visually oriented poetics—as Asselineau emphasizes, "who would, without getting out of breath, declaim the first *Leaves of Grass*; some of the lines contained over sixty words."⁹²

89 *Evolution*, II, 241.

90 WWWC, 1, 163; cf. Asselineau, *Evolution*, II, 240.

91 See Dobbs-Allsopp, "An Informing Orality: Biblical Poetic Style" in *On Biblical Poetry*, 233–325.

92 *Evolution*, II, 241.

14 L e a v e s o f G r a s s .

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the earth much?
 Have you practiced so long to learn to read?
 Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
 You shall possess the good of the earth and sun . . . there are millions of suns left,
 You shall no longer take things at second or third hand . . . nor look through the
 eyes of the dead . . . nor feed on the spectres in books,
 You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
 You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

I have heard what the talkers were talking . . . the talk of the beginning and the end,
 But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,
 Nor any more youth or age than there is now;
 And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
 Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,
 Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance . . . Always substance and increase,
 Always a knit of identity . . . always distinction . . . always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail . . . Learned and unlearned feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure . . . plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in
 the beams,
 Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
 I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul . . . and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both . . . and the unseen is proved by the seen,
 Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst, age vexes age,
 Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent,
 and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,
 Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied . . . I see, dance, laugh, sing;

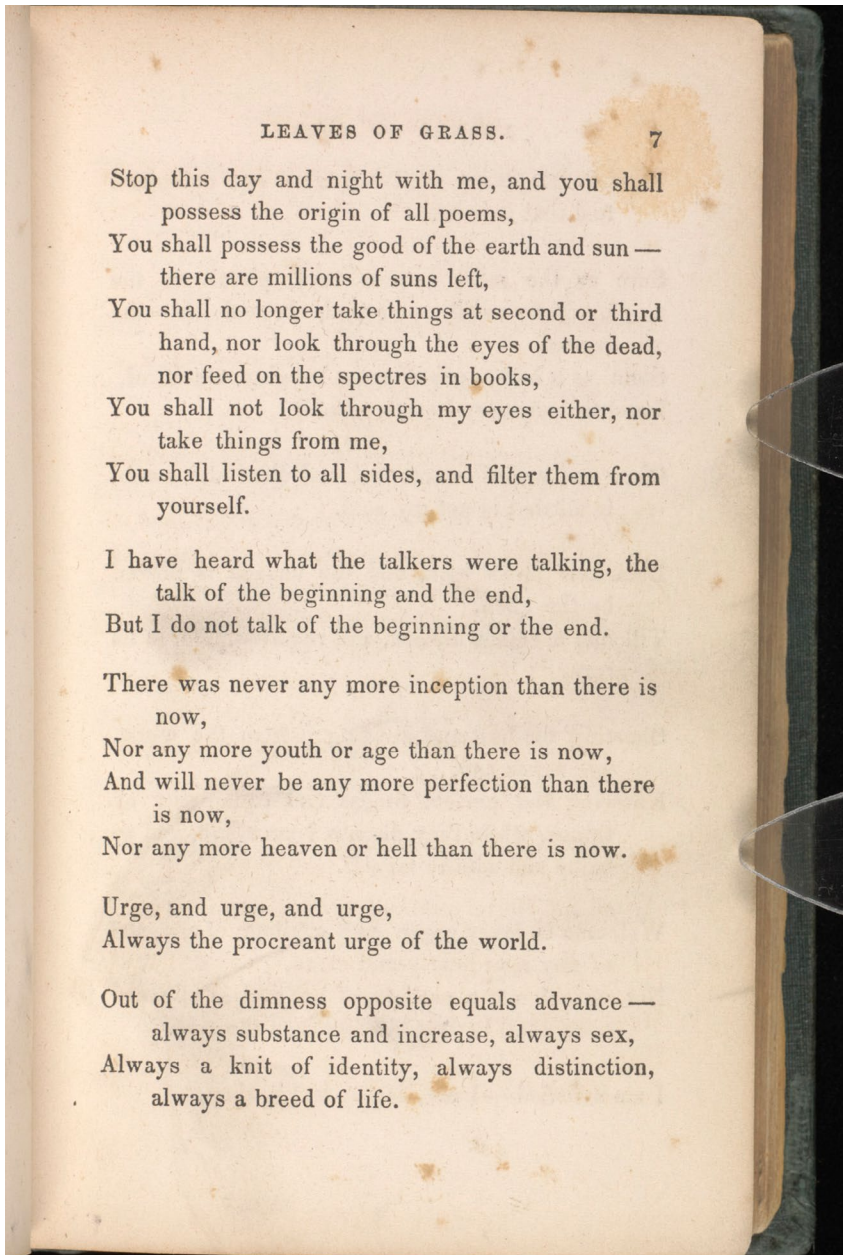


Fig. 36: P. 7 from the 1856 *Leaves*, <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/figures/ppp.00237.015.jpg>. Image courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Interestingly, as K. Campbell and Asselineau observe, over time Whitman's line began to shrink back down toward more conventional lengths.⁹³ The change already starts to appear in some instances by 1860 but begins in earnest with the (build-up to the) 1867 *Leaves*. Here is Campbell's characterization:

In his earliest editions (1855, 1856, and 1860), there are a good many lines that run to thirty or forty words each, and a few that run as high as fifty and even sixty words. To be very specific, there are in the edition of 1856 two lines that run past sixty words each, seven that run past fifty words, sixteen that run past forty words, and forty-two that exceed thirty words each. At the same time there are no poems first published after 1870 with lines that run to as much as twenty-five words, and only one poem published in 1855 or 1856 that retained any considerable number of long lines,—namely, "Our Old Feuillage." In fact, the longest line in any of the poems first published in the eighties comprises only twenty-one words (and there are only two examples of this), whereas the average long line in the poems written after 1880 runs to about a dozen words.⁹⁴

Whitman achieves this foreshortening or lightening (as Asselineau calls it) in a number of ways, including breaking longer lines into multiple shorter lines, reducing the number of words in long lines through revision and emendation, and sometimes simply eliminating the long line entirely. Whitman's "Blue Book" edition provides ample evidence of such revisionary practices, as it anticipates (though also differs significantly from) the 1867 edition.⁹⁵ Consider the following by way of example.⁹⁶ This fifty-four word line from "Come closer to me,"

93 K. Campbell, "The Evolution of Whitman as Artist," *American Literature* 6/4 (1934), 259–61; Asselineau, *Evolution*, II, 241–42.

94 "Whitman as Artist," 260; cf. Fig. 28 (above).

95 K. Price notices that "the Blue Book can be regarded as the hinge on which Whitman turns toward his late style" ("Love, War, and Revision in Whitman's Blue Book," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73/4 [2010], 679–92, at 687); and more recently, K. M. Price, *Whitman in Washington: Becoming the National Poet in the Federal City* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2020). However, the "Blue Book" itself did not serve as the copy-text for the 1867 *Leaves*, since "many of its revisions were never implemented" (Price, "Love, War, and Revision," 683).

96 The examples themselves are identified by Asselineau (*Evolution*, II, 241–42, 371–72, nn. 13–14), though absent references to Whitman's "Blue Book" (Golden's volumes post-date the publication of Asselineau's several volumes). Cf. Campbell, "Whitman as Artist," 260–61.

Because you are greasy or pimpled—or that you was once drunk, or a thief, or diseased, or rheumatic, or a prostitute—or are so now—or from frivolity or impotence—or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name in print.... do you give in that you are any less immortal? (LG, 58)

is revised in the "Blue Book" into four shorter lines, with several cancellations:

Because you are greasy or pimpled,
 Or that you was once drunk, or a thief, or diseased, ~~or rheumatic~~, or a prostitute—or are so now,
~~or from frivolity or impotence,~~ Or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name in print,
 Do you give in that you are any less immortal?⁹⁷

Emendation is the method of reduction in this line from "Proto-Leaf" (LG 1860, 15): "And I will show that there is no imperfection in ~~male or female, or in the earth, or in the present~~—and can be none in the future." The nine canceled words in the "Blue Book" are dropped from succeeding versions of "Starting from Paumanok" (e.g., "And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present—and can be none in the future," LG 1867, 16). And the following long line also from "Proto-Leaf" (LG 1860, 21) is canceled entirely in the "Blue Book" and does not appear in "Starting from Paumanok" in succeeding editions of *Leaves* (e.g., section 19; LG 1867, 21):

See the populace, millions upon millions, handsome, tall, muscular,
 both sexes, clothed in easy and dignified clothes—teaching,
 commanding, marrying, generating, equally electing and elective.

97 Cf. Golden, *Whitman's Blue Book*, II, 145. The lines are also broken up in the 1867 version of "To Workingmen," but slightly differently (and without the cancellations of the "Blue Book" version):

Because you are greasy or pimpled, or that you was once drunk, or a thief,
 Or diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute, or are so now;
 Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name in print,
 Do you give in that you are any less immortal? (LG 1867, 241)

This program of foreshortening also impacted the overall scale of the poems. New poems in the later editions are generally shorter in length.⁹⁸

It is useful to recall that Saintsbury's appreciation of the "likeness" of Whitman's poetry to the "verse divisions of the English Bible" was articulated in a review of the 1871–72 edition of *Leaves*, an edition well evidencing the consequences of Whitman's program of lightening and trimming. There is, of course, more to the "likeness" observed than line-length (e.g., parallelism, rhythm, repetition, diction). However, it does show that the perception of lineal/divisional equivalence persists even without quantification and amidst much abbreviation on the poet's part. Here Saintsbury's specification of "especially... the poetical books" remains germane, as the verse divisions in this material only rarely approach the expanse of Whitman's lengthiest lines (Fig. 29)—Whitman hardly needed to mechanically count words or letters (which of course he could do, and on occasion did) to apprehend the force of the biblical paradigm.

Ideally, Whitman quoting a bit of biblical verse within the format of his mature line, either from the notebooks and early poetry manuscripts or in *Leaves*—akin, for example, to his close version of Matt 26:15 in "Blood-Money" (lines 12–14) would nicely cinch the observations just made. Unfortunately, so far I have not uncovered any such quotations (or seen such discussed). This makes sense, since by the early 1850s Whitman was evolving a poetic theory that forbade explicit quotations from literature like the Bible in his verse. While there are echoes of, allusions to, and even some phrasing from the Bible in *Leaves*, there are no explicit quotations or close paraphrases. And, indeed, none either in the pre-1855 notebooks or early poetry manuscripts where Whitman's long line is being worked and stretched into existence. Whitman only quotes the Bible in his prose writings—and he does that voluminously—and in his poetry from 1850 or earlier.⁹⁹ The closest I have been able to come to this sort of "catching out" is in passages where Whitman's lines have a stronger than normal resemblance to biblical material. An example was briefly discussed in Chapter Two. The line from "I celebrate myself," "Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all the art and argument of the earth" (*LG*, 15), has the shape, feel, rhythm, and

98 Cf. Asselineau, *Structure*, II, 244.

99 See Allen, "Biblical Echoes" and discussion in Chapter One.

some phrasing ("peace... that pass all") of Phil 4:7. The biblical material that provokes Whitman in this instance is prosaic and from the New Testament, although that the provocation is circumscribed precisely by the KJB's verse divisions is both readily apparent and significant.

Also from "I celebrate myself" is this example, where the probable biblical stimulant is poetic: "The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me" (*LG*, 26). This line does not quote or allude to a biblical passage, nor is it aiming to riff on a biblical theme. But it does borrow a phrase ("pains of hell") from Ps 116:3 and is shaped parallelistically very much like the first two-thirds of the biblical verse: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."¹⁰⁰ The verse from the psalm is actually a triplet in the Hebrew original, so the final "I found trouble and sorrow" has no counterpart in Whitman's two-part line. The bipartite shape of the latter is more directly comparable to Ps 18: 5 (=2 Sam 22:6): "The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me." While the psalms' synonymous parallelism focuses two different names for the underworld ("death," Hebrew *māwet*; "hell," Hebrew *šəʿōl*), Whitman opts for a more antithetical feel (pleasures/pains) with a biblical merism, heaven and hell (e.g., Amos 9:2; Ps 139:8; Job 11:8; Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15). Still, the sets are remarkably close in feel and form. And again the general pattern of line-length correspondences briefly sketched earlier holds. The lengths of Whitman's line (fifteen words) and of the KJB verse division of the two psalm verses (Ps 116:3, excepting the last phrase, fifteen words; Ps 18:5, thirteen words) are closely comparable, and they all contrast markedly with the consistently short biblical Hebrew poetic line. The latter are more aptly rendered in a translation such as the ASV:

The cords of death encompassed me:

And the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me;

I found trouble and sorrow. (Ps 116:3)

The cords of Sheol were round about me;

The snares of death came upon me. (Ps 18:5 = 2 Sam 22:6)

100 Cf. Posey, "Whitman's Debt," 225; B. L. Bergquist, "Walt Whitman and the Bible: Language Echoes, Images, Allusions, and Ideas" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1979), 289.

The component lines are half the length of the KJB verse division and Whitman's line and offer a much better approximation of the terse biblical Hebrew lines being translated, which in the Hebrew of these psalmic verses do not exceed more than three words.

Consider further this run of lines from the beginning of "I celebrate myself":

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the
earth much?

Have you practiced so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems? (*LG*, 14)

And the similar set from "To think of time":

Have you guessed you yourself would not continue? Have you dreaded
those earth-beetles?

Have you feared the future would be nothing to you? (*LG*, 65)

Both have the feel and cadence of similarly phrased rhetorical questions posed to Job in the Yahweh speeches toward the end of the book of Job:

Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the
dayspring to know his place; (Job 38:12)

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the
search of the depth?

Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the
doors of the shadow of death?

Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it
all. (Job 38:16–18)

Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the
treasures of the hail, (Job 38:22)

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with
thunder? (Job 39:19)

Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?
(Job 40:9)¹⁰¹

101 There are also runs of "Canst thou" and "Wilt thou" rhetorical questions in this material with a similar cadence to them, as evidenced, for example, in the second

Whitman greatly admired Job and certainly was familiar with the Yahweh speeches.¹⁰² The language has been modernized (e.g., "Have you")¹⁰³ and the subject matter is unique to Whitman,¹⁰⁴ but the run itself is reminiscent of Job (esp. 38:16–18) and the two-part lines in particular ("Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the earth much?" [thirteen words]; "Have you guessed you yourself would not continue? Have you dreaded those earth-beetles?" [thirteen/fourteen words]) in pattern and length are very close to the biblical prototype. Still, Whitman's lines do not quote or allude to Job but rather have a biblicized feel or "flavor" about them, including their scale.

Two final examples, one from "To think of time" and the other from "I celebrate myself," both of which feature the archaic "he that" in proverb-shaped sayings: "He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall surely be buried" (*LG*, 66; sixteen words) and "He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own" (*LG*, 52; sixteen words). The first is shaped as a two-part, internally parallelistic line of a kind that is especially common in the Bible's wisdom books:

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure. (Prov 11:15; eighteen words)

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief. (Prov 17:20; nineteen words)

He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good. (Prov 19:8; fifteen words)

He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. (Eccl 11:4; seventeen words)

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt 10:39; twenty words)

This sort of saying can also be antithetically shaped:

half of Job 40:9 ("or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?").

102 See Bergquist, "Whitman and the Bible," 301, 303.

103 The phrase "have ye" occurs some eighty-three times in the KJB, and "hast thou" some 147 times, both especially common in rhetorical questions.

104 Although Whitman's "Have you reckoned the earth much?" is not so very far from Job's "Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth."

He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known. (Prov 10:9; fifteen words)

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. (Prov 13:24; sixteen words)

Although the content of Whitman's line is not overly didactic, his use of the biblical phrases "he that" (764x in KJB) and "shall surely" (65x in KJB) gives the whole a distinctly biblical feel. The usage of the archaic "he that" is all the more marked (in hindsight) as it all but drops out of modern English translations of the Bible (e.g., RSV: 36x—mostly replaced by "he who"). In fact, Whitman uses the phrase four other times in the 1855 *Leaves* (LG vii, 27, 75, 91) and "she that" once, in a phrase ("she that conceived," LG, 91) with its own biblical genealogy (Hos 2:5; cf. 1 Sam 2:5; Prov 23:25; Jer 15:9; 50:12).

The second line, much more sagacious in tone and content, also finds many biblical counterparts of similar shape and scale:

He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour. (Prov 21:21; twelve words)

He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. (Prov 24:8; twelve words)

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. (Prov 28:23; seventeen words)

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Ps 91:1; nineteen words)

Intriguingly, Martin Farquhar Tupper, a contemporary of Whitman's who was only too happy to mime biblical maxims, uses the archaic "he that" twenty-two times in his 1838 edition of *Proverbial Philosophy*, a copy of which Whitman owned and marked up (see below).¹⁰⁵ Most of these are similar in shape and scale to their biblical models and to Whitman's two lines, including "He that went to comfort, is pitied; he that should rebuke, is silent" (p. 135; thirteen words) and "And he that hath more than enough, is a thief of the rights of his brother" (p. 150; sixteen words). The latter is among the four lines Whitman brackets on that

105 (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1838). The phrase "he that" appears on the following pages: pp. 28, 48, 60, 84, 93, 100, 110, 126, 129, 130, 133, 135, 150, 155, 158, 159, 169, 182, 205.

page. This is quintessential Whitman as a poet-compositor, absorbing the language of others (here from the Bible) and turning it to his own ends: "The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet.... he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you" (*LG*, vi; for the biblical allusion, see Luke 5:23; John 5:8; Matt 9:5; Mark 2:9; cf. John 11).¹⁰⁶

Variability in Line-Length

Moreover, it is the mix of line lengths in Whitman's poetry that is also telling. Whitman's line is not monolithic, as the chronological overview offered above makes apparent. If characteristically long (especially in the early editions of *Leaves*), it is also stubbornly variable. As Allen notices, what is most consistent about it is its "clausal structure," "each verse [is] a sentence."¹⁰⁷ But the "sentence" can be relatively short ("I celebrate myself," *LG*, 13; three words)—Whitman, of course, started out writing metered verse with lines of conventional lengths, and these shorter lines remain a part of his lineal repertoire;¹⁰⁸ or really long ("If I and you and the worlds and all beneath or upon their surfaces, and all the palpable life, were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run," *LG*, 51; thirty-six words); or most often somewhere in between ("A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses," *LG*, 35; twelve words). The undoing of meter not only made possible the increased scale of Whitman's poetic line, it also opened the way to lineal variability, the capacity to shape the sentential wholes out of which Whitman's lines were normally configured as desired, without external constraints.

The Bible, too, in the familiar bi-columnar format of the KJB, is most immediately experienced as a mass of sentences of varying lengths

106 Cf. K. M. Price, *Whitman and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), 67, 75—though the Bible does not figure in the literary tradition Price surveys. The language "Rise and walk" comes from the story of the paralytic, but Whitman likely had in mind one of the raising of the dead stories, such as John 11 (Lazarus).

107 *Reader's Guide*, 163.

108 In the 1855 *Leaves*, 354 lines contain eight or fewer words; only rarely does a line of Whitman's early metered verse contain more than eight words.

segmented by verse (and chapter) divisions. The degree of variability and its underlying sources depends on what part of the Bible is in view. The poetic sections of the (Hebrew) Bible offer the most regularity, since the verse divisions in this material usually circumscribe groupings of two, three, four, and sometimes more poetic lines of roughly equivalent lengths. But even here variability is normative. The biblical poetic line itself, though roughly equivalent (especially within couplets and triples) and ultimately constrained, nevertheless varies in length (normally from five to twelve syllables or three to five words). And since the verse divisions distinguish groupings of this variable line, the pattern of grouping that prevails in any one corpus—sometimes more regular (as with the almost unfailing preference for couplets in Proverbs and parts of Job), sometimes less so (Psalms, Song of Songs, and much prophetic poetry, for example, feature unscripted blends of grouping strategies)—adds yet a further parameter of variability.

The magnitude of such variability increases dramatically when the underlying (Hebrew and Greek) prose portions of the Bible are considered alongside the poetic. In these sections, the verse divisions of the KJB usually reflect the sentential structure of the underlying prose. There are no (explicit) length constraints on these prose sentences, whether translated from Hebrew or Greek.¹⁰⁹ They can be long or short, and length considerations are not prominent in determining the overall discourse logic of a passage of prose. That is, short sentences may follow upon long ones, or not, for seemingly indiscriminate reasons. Regardless, what is presented to the English reader of the KJB, almost no matter which portions of scripture are in view, are blocks of prose sentences of varying lengths set off in verse divisions (and thus made visually uniform). Like the long lengths of Whitman's prototypical line—two, three, and often four times as long as the typical biblical Hebrew verse line (in translation)—the variety of these lengths finds a ready analog in the verse divisions in the KJB. Whitman's own image for his line play—"the [regular] recurrence of lesser and larger waves on the sea-shore,

109 There are pragmatic constraints, however. For example, written Hebrew prose evolved out of a predominantly oral world and was engineered mainly for aural reception (e.g., "and Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding," Neh 8:2). Hence, prose sentence lengths, though variable and unpredictable and longer on average than Hebrew poetic clausal structures, are still ultimately constrained.

rolling in without intermission, and fitfully rising and falling"¹¹⁰—also well describes the mix of the verse divisions in the KJB, and in the poetic books in particular, and the ebb and flow of their rhythm.

That Whitman's writing should bear the imprint of both biblical poetry and biblical prose follows from various considerations. Whitman's trackable quotations, allusions, and echoes come equally from prose and poetic sources in the Bible; the whole Bible was thought of as "poetry" in the nineteenth century, as C. Beyers observes,¹¹¹ and certainly Whitman, even allowing on his part for an appreciation of the genuinely poetic parts of the Old Testament, shared this larger understanding, especially explicit in "Bible as Poetry"—"all the poems of Orientalism, with the Old and New Testaments at the centre";¹¹² and the uniform nature of the KJB's formatting, with only the subtlest differences in whitespace to distinguish (underlying) verse from prose, would itself dispose readers to a uniform treatment of the whole Bible.¹¹³ This double-sided impact is no small matter, since there are few sources that can match the English Bible's diversity of styles. That is, one of the key indicators of the significance of the verse divisions in the KJB for considering Whitman's line is precisely the great diversity of styles, rhythms, and the like that they enfold, composed as they are of material ultimately drawn from poetry as well as prose—and a plethora of kinds, genres, styles in both media. There are likely not many other sources available to Whitman that match his own breadth and variety.¹¹⁴ As will become more apparent, the KJB does not just provide a singular point of contact with Whitman's evolving sense of a line, viz. its expanded length, but many such points, and they are diverse in nature.

110 Perry, *Walt Whitman*, 207; cf. *WWWC*, I, 414–15.

111 *A History of Free Verse* (University of Arkansas, 2001), 57 and nn. 39, 41.

112 *The Critic* 3 (February 3, 1883), 57.

113 Cf. A. McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Anchor, 2008), ch. 5.

114 Cf. H. Schneidau, "The Antinomian Strain: The Bible and American Poetry" in *The Bible and American Arts and Letters* (ed. G. Gunn; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 11–32, at 19.

Caesuras in Whitman

Beyond the gross scale of Whitman's lines, what takes place in them is also often redolent of what is found in the KJB's verse divisions, especially in the poetic books. Consider the nature of caesuras in Whitman—caesura here being understood as "syntactic juncture or pause between phrases or clauses, usually signaled by punctuation, but sometimes not," that is present in every sentence of any length.¹¹⁵ Whitman's caesural division is usually marked by punctuation—"his internal commas and dashes are also often caesural pauses"¹¹⁶—as in the following handful of examples, taken from the beginning of "I celebrate myself":

I lean and loafe at my ease.... observing a spear of summer grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes.... the shelves are crowded with
perfumes,

I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it,

The atmosphere is not a perfume.... it has no taste of the distillation....
it is odorless,

The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and
darkcolored sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn, (*LG*, 13)

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned the
earth much?

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand.... nor look
through the eyes of the dead.... nor feed on the spectres in
books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
(*LG*, 14)

Or the absence of explicit punctuation:

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all
poems,

115 T. V. F. Brogan, "Caesura" in *NPEPP*, 159. The phenomenon is usually discussed in terms of metrical verse, but is applicable to nonmetrical verse. If caesural division is not obligated by rule in nonmetrical verse, patterns of usage may nonetheless emerge for particular poets, as they do for Whitman.

116 Allen, *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 233.

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself. (*LG*, 14)

As God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night and
close on the peep of the day,

And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the house
with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,

Looks with its sidecurved head curious what will come next, (*LG*, 15)

One significance of Whitman's pattern of caesural division lies in its close correspondence to the major syntactic (and phrasal) divisions, also mostly marked through punctuation, in the larger verse divisions of the poetic material in the KJB. Consider as but one example part of the opening section of the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:2–8):

²The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

³The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.

⁵The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

⁶Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

⁷And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

⁸And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

These divisions are punctuated by clausal and phrasal units, typically set off by commas, colons, and semicolons, in a manner analogous to Whitman's caesuras—especially as regards the number of such divisions (per verse) and their characteristic length and syntactic integrity. The source of the major syntactic junctures in these verse divisions, as will

be clear from the earlier discussion, is the underlying biblical Hebrew poetic line structure that gets embedded in the verse divisions of the KJB. This becomes immediately obvious, again, by either comparing the original Hebrew or a translation, such as Moulton's below,¹¹⁷ that explicitly intends to show off the original verse structure:

The LORD is my strength and song,

And he is become my salvation:

This is my God, and I will praise him;

My father's God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD is a man of war:

The LORD is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:

And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red sea.

The deeps cover them:

They went down into the depths like a stone.

Thy right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power:

Thy right hand, O LORD, dasheth in pieces the enemy.

And in the greatness of thine excellency thou overthrowest them that rose up against thee:

Thou sendest forth thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble.

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,

The floods stood upright as an heap,

The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The correspondence in length, cadence, and syntactic integrity between Whitman's caesural divisions, the major syntactic junctures in the poetic parts of the KJB, and the individual biblical Hebrew verse line (in translation) is most striking.

117 *Modern Reader's Bible*, II, 36.

Not surprising, then, the caesural divisions of Whitman's longer lines may even stand on their own as singular lines. For example, the first caesural division set off by suspension points in "Or I guess the grass is itself a child.... the produced babe of the vegetation" two lines later appears as a line of its own, "Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic" (LG, 16). Compare also the following sequence:

Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of the
brush;

Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheatlot,

Where the bat flies in the July eve.... where the great goldbug drops
through the dark;

Where the flails keep time on the barn floor.... (LG, 36)

And:

Ever the hard and unsunk ground,

Ever the eaters and drinkers.... ever the upward and downward sun....
ever the air and the

ceaseless tides.... (LG, 47)

Allen observes similarly that "sometimes the caesura divides the parallelism and is equivalent to the line-end pause" (emphasis added).¹¹⁸ That, in fact, Whitman thought very much along these lines is suggested by how he reshapes the 1850 "Resurgemus" into what becomes the eighth poem of the 1855 *Leaves*. Mostly his adaptation consists in relineating, in combining the shorter lines of the 1850 poem into single, longer lines in *Leaves*.¹¹⁹ For example, "For many a promise sworn by royal lips/ And broken, and laughed at in the breaking" becomes the single line, "For many a promise sworn by royal lips, And¹²⁰ broken, and laughed at in the breaking" (LG, 88). In another example a five-line section is recombined into two long lines:

¹¹⁸ *New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 234. t.

¹¹⁹ Zweig, *Walt Whitman*, 121; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 7.

¹²⁰ Note Whitman even retains the capitalization from the earlier version where "And" was line initial. This was normalized ("and") in 1856 and all succeeding editions.

But the sweetness of mercy brewed bitter destruction,
 And frightened rulers come back:
 Each comes in state, with his train,
 Hangman, priest, and tax-gatherer,
 Soldier, lawyer, and sycophant; (“Resurgemus”)

But the sweetness of mercy brewed bitter destruction, and the
 frightened rulers come back:

Each comes in state with his train.... hangman, priest and tax-
 gatherer.... soldier, lawyer, jailer and sycophant. (LG, 88)

In both examples, what becomes caesural divisions in *Leaves* once stood literally as singular lines in “Resurgemus.”

Line-Internal Parallelism

A related consideration arises in what Allen calls “internal parallelism.” In noting dissimilarities between Whitman’s and the Bible’s use of parallelism, Allen observes, “As a rule it is easier to break up Whitman’s long lines into shorter parallelisms (‘internal’, we shall call them), though this can be done with some biblical lines and cannot be done with many of Whitman’s shorter lines.”¹²¹ He goes on, with some minor equivocation, to say, “Perhaps *Leaves of Grass* contains more internal parallelism than the poetry of the Bible.”¹²² No equivocation is necessary. While there is line internal parallelism within biblical Hebrew verse,¹²³ it

121 “Biblical Analogies,” 494; cf. *American Prosody*, 223. Cf. H. Vendler, *Poets Thinking* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2004), 38 (“the smallest parallels in Whitman come two to a line”).

122 Allen, “Biblical Analogies,” 497.

123 W. G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTS 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 104–91, esp. 144–62. The last line of the triplet in Ps 14:7 offers a good example of line-internal parallelism: *yāgēl ya‘āqōb // yīśmah yīśrā’el* “Jacob will rejoice” // “Israel will be glad.” Internal parallelism in biblical Hebrew poetry is most common in longer lines (usually containing four or more words) that can accommodate the play of matching that is at the heart of this trope.

is not nearly so prominent as in Whitman.¹²⁴ And the reason why this is so is also the telling point. Again, Allen is befuddled because he is comparing apples (mostly) and oranges, the Hebrew line of biblical verse (or a presumed translation equivalent thereof) and Whitman's line. They are not comparable. But when one recalibrates and compares, instead, Whitman's line and the verse divisions in the KJB, then the view quickly comes into focus. If the biblical Hebrew verse line only sparingly exhibits line-internal parallelism (because it often lacks the necessary scale), the verse divisions of the KJB in the poetic books are rife with it because they are themselves most often translations of sets of parallel lines. The only biblical example of line-internal parallelism that Allen quotes is Ps 19:2–4, which he lays out in the following manner:¹²⁵

- (a) Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night
sheweth knowledge,
- (b): There is no speech nor language; their voice cannot
be heard.
- (c) Their line is gone out through all the earth, and
their words to the end of the world.

Tellingly, this does not appear to be Moulton's rendition, which both originally and in the volume Allen claims to cite, replicates the RV, a fair English version of the underlying Hebrew line structure:

Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language;

124 Cf. B. Hrushovski, "The Theory and Practice of Rhythm in the Expressionist Poetry of U. Z. Grinberg," *Hasifrut* 1 (Spring 1968), 176–205 (in Hebrew) (as summarized by E. Greenspan, "Whitman in Israel" in *Walt Whitman and the World* [eds. G. W. Allen and E. Folsom; Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1995], 386–95, at 393). Allen's assertion otherwise—"the biblical poets used it in abundance" ("Biblical Analogies," 497)—is simply wrong, Allen being led astray by his confusion as to what constitutes a line in biblical Hebrew verse and by inattention to translation technique in his secondary sources.

125 Allen, "Biblical analogies," 494.

Their voice cannot be heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth,

And their words to the end of the world.¹²⁶

The wording of Allen's citation is the same—whether taken from Moulton or from the RV itself—though lined according to the verse divisions of the KJB—albeit in a schematized manner:

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth
knowledge.

There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end
of the world.

Interestingly, Allen's confused version of Ps 19:2–4 shows what he claims it shows, namely, line-internal parallelism of the kind commonly found in Whitman, though admittedly not quite in the way that he imagines. The underlying Hebrew lines have no such line-internal parallelism, as Moulton's version makes clear. Rather, the source of the putative internal parallelism in this example is the verse divisions of the KJB, each containing the translation equivalent to a parallel couplet in the original Hebrew. So here, too, there is a match between the KJB (verse divisions) and Whitman's line. And as significant the trope is common in both corpuses (see Chapter Four).

Allen illustrates line-internal parallelism in Whitman by breaking up the parallel caesural divisions in the opening lines of the "Song of Myself" (with Whitman's later addition, e.g., *LG* 1881, 29) and lining them out:

- (a) I celebrate myself,
- (a) and sing myself,
- (b) And what I assume

126 R. G. Moulton, *The Modern Reader's Bible: The Psalms and Lamentations* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), I, 35; *Modern Reader's Bible*, II, 287).

- (b) you shall assume.
- (c) For every atom belonging to me
- (c) as good belongs to you.¹²⁷

Even better is "They were purified by death.... They were taught and exalted" from "Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair" (*LG*, 88), which can be decomposed with confidence into the parallel lines of the 1850 "Resurgemus":

They were purified by death,
 They were taught and exalted.

Such decomposition, while admirably illustrating the parallelism Allen sees, also reveals from a slightly different angle how any biblical model for Whitman's long(er) lines must be on the scale of the verse divisions of the KJB. Otherwise there would be a good deal more such sets of short(er), parallel lines, for these are the more precise equivalents to the parallelistic couple so prominent in biblical Hebrew verse, as a comparison with Moulton's rendition of Ps 19:2–4 readily reveals. And as noted above, the rough equivalence of Whitman's caesural divisions and the underlying Hebrew verse line is what may be predicted if it is the verse divisions of the KJB that have helped to inspire Whitman's typical long lines.

Internally parallelistic lines (whether of two or three parts) are extremely common in *Leaves* and are one of the surest signs of the KJB's imprint on Whitman's mature style. The parallelistic couplet and triplet are the most dominant forms of line grouping in biblical poetry. They provide the basic skeletal infrastructure for the biblical poet's art and are inevitably rendered into two and three part verses in the prose translation of the KJB. Mostly, of course, Whitman has just adopted this parallelistic substructure and fitted it out with his own language material. But the substructure itself and the prominence of semantic synonymy are important markers of the biblical genealogy.¹²⁸ This is even more clear when accompanied by other biblical inflections. For

¹²⁷ "Biblical Analogies," 494, n. 3; *American Prosody*, 223.

¹²⁸ So also Allen: "Whitman's favorite form... is the synonymous" ("Biblical Analogies," 497)—this holds whether the focus is lineally or line internally.

example, the line introducing the thrush from “When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom,”: “If thou wast not gifted to sing, thou would’st surely die” (*Sequel*, 4), is fitted out with archaisms (“thou wast” [50x in KJB], “thou wouldst” [29x in KJB]) and phrasing (“surely die” [22x in KJB]) redolent of the KJB, but also a conditional clause (protasis and apodosis) mapped onto the binary substructure of the underlying Hebrew couplet:

tidbaq-lěšōrī lēhikkf Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,

ʔim-lōʔ ʔezkěrekī if I do not remember you (Ps 137:6; NRSV)

KJB: “If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth” (cf. Judg 9:15; Obad 5; Ps 66:18; 73:15; 137:5; Job 8:18; 9:23; 13:10)

I cite Ps 137:6 because Whitman uses the language from the apodosis in one of his early pieces of fiction (“His tongue cleav’d to the roof of his mouth”),¹²⁹ and thus there can be confidence of his familiarity with such poetically shaped biblical conditionals.¹³⁰ But the main point is to reveal the skeletal imprint of the underlying Hebrew pattern as it is processed through the prose translation of the KJB.

An even more spectacular example may be cited from the 1860 edition of *Leaves*. The following comes from section 34 in the new opening poem, “Proto-Leaf” (later called “Starting from Paumanok”):

³⁴My comrade!

For you, to share with me, two greatnesses—And a third one, rising
inclusive and more resplendent,

The greatness of Love and Democracy—and the greatness of Religion.
(*LG* 1860, 13)

Such “graded number sequences” are both a commonplace in the poetry of the Bible and distinctively biblical. Proverbs 30:18–19 is typical:

129 “Death in the School-Room,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 9 (August 1841), 177–81, <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/fiction/shortfiction/per.00317.html> (reprinted in *EPF*, 57).

130 Cf. the run of four “If they... they...” conditionals in “I celebrate myself” (*LG*, 24), and toward the end of that first poem: “If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles” (*LG*, 56).

¹⁸ There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:

¹⁹ The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid. (KJB)

In both the number sequence ($x//x+1$) is intended to enumerate a definite number ($x+1$) of items, as the items are then listed in the following line/verse division ("Love," "Democracy," and "Religion" in Whitman; the way of an "eagle," "serpent," "ship," and "man" in Prov 30:19; cf. Ps 62:12–13; Prov 6:16–19; 30:21–23, 29–31; Job 5:19–22). What is so distinctly biblical about the trope is how rudimentary number knowledge (e.g., counting, basic arithmetic) is accommodated to a parallelistic frame and biblical poetry's strong preference for couplets—it is a dominantly distichic kind of verse. The latter comes across more clearly in a translation, such as the ASV, which explicitly lineates according to the underlying Hebrew—the KJB is a *prose* translation:

šəlōšâ hēm̄mâ niplēʔû mimmenrî

wēʔarbāʕâ (Q) lōʔ yēdaʕtîm

derek hannešer baššāmayim

derek nāḥāš ʕālê-šûr

derek-ʔōniyyâ bēleb-yām

wēderek geber bēʕalmâ

There are three things which are too wonderful for me

Yea, four which I know not:

The way of an eagle in the air

The way of a serpent upon a rock;

The way of a ship in the midst of the sea;

And the way of a man with a maiden.

The abbreviated counts attested in the graded numerical sequences in the Bible (viz. “three...”// “and four....”) principally result from the shaping force of the distich, and hence one more indication of Whitman’s source.¹³¹

Then there is the parallelism. Since Lowth,¹³² parallelism has been the principal frame of reference for understanding these graded sequences of numbers in the Bible, considered by many a variety of synonymous word-pairs (A-B terms), a “peculiar” sort of “number parallelism.” W. G. E. Watson’s explanation is typical: “since no number can have a synonym the only way to provide a corresponding component is to use a digit which is higher in value than the original.”¹³³ The rub—implicit in Watson’s “no number can have a synonym”—is that these numbers “are clearly not synonymous,” as M. O’Connor emphasizes.¹³⁴ Rather, whatever parallelism is involved in these numerical sequences is the result of the larger informing framework, and not because of any putative synonymous identity between the numbers themselves.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the parallelism itself is another strong indicator of Whitman’s source for such a trope. Whitman’s language is his own, but the trope, as with the proverbial rhetoric in the “med Cophósis” notebook, is quite clearly borrowed from the Bible. In this instance, there is also the added dimension of the stanza or section number (34). Whitman introduces these numbers into (many

131 By way of confirmation, note a graded-number sequence from Tupper (*Proverbial Philosophy: In Four Series, Now First Complete* [London/New York: Ward, Lock and Co., 1888], 381), whose intention to mimic the Bible’s proverbial wisdom is made quite obvious:

Agur the wise, the son of Yakeh, spake unto Ithiel and Ueal,
Spake to those listening disciples, in the spirit of his kinsman Solomon:
He testified of three things and of four, noting fourfold characters,
Dropping his ensamples for all others, classed by threes and fours;
As a matter may be good, or may be evil, or between-wise, or naturally neutral,
Partaking of the neither, or the both, or of each in its separate extreme:
Here Tupper all but cites Prov 30:1—and this chapter from Proverbs itself offers numerous “ensamples,” as Tupper has it, of the grade-number trope, mostly “classed by threes and fours.”

132 *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (2 vols.; trans. G. Gregory; London: J. Johnson, 1787; reprinted in *Robert Lowth (1710–1787): The Major Works*, vols. 1–2 [London: Routledge, 1995]), II, 51–52; *Isaiah*, xxiii–xiv.

133 *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T & T Clark, 2001 [1984]), 144.

134 *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 378; cf. J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1981), 42.

135 For details on the Hebrew phenomenon, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “So-Called ‘Number Parallelism’ in Biblical Poetry” in “Like ‘Ilu are you Wise’: *Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Dennis G. Pardee* (eds. H. H. Handy et al; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2022), 205–24.

of) his longer poems in the 1860 *Leaves* in imitation of the verse numbers from the KJB. Hence, not only are the supporting language tropes borrowed from the Bible (parallelism, graded number sequence) but so is this aspect of formatting. A comparison of page images from Harper's 1846 *Illuminated Bible* (Prov 30:18–19) and from the 1860 *Leaves* (p. 13, sec. 34) offers a stunning snapshot of just how visually alike these are (Figs. 1, 37). This is perhaps as close as one can come to catching Whitman out in his act of imitation of and collation from the Bible.

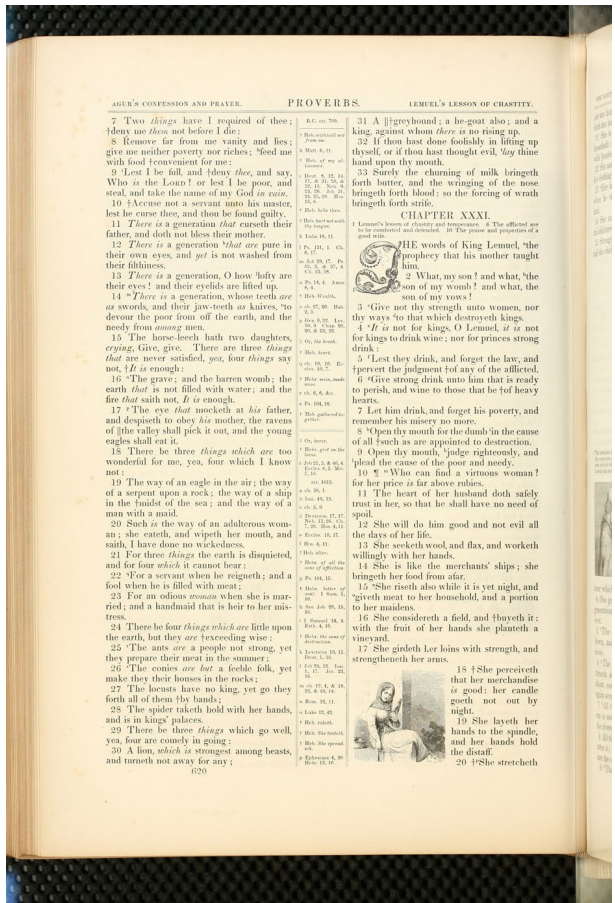


Fig. 37: Prov 30:7–31:20 from Harper's *Illuminated Bible*.

End-Stopping

Another consideration is the end-stopped nature of Whitman's lines. Early on E. C. Ross points out the structural importance of the line to Whitman's verse¹³⁶ and the fact that "a run-on line is rare in Whitman—so rare that it may be considered a 'slip.'"¹³⁷ Almost every line of Whitman's ends in a major syntactic pause, marked most frequently by commas and periods—this is Allen's "clausal structure" where "each verse [is] a sentence."¹³⁸ Allen seizes on the overwhelmingly end-stopped nature of Whitman's lines to underscore the importance of parallelism to the poet's prosody: "This [end-stopping and the line it reveals] is because parallelism is the first rhythmic principle in Whitman's verse."¹³⁹ Here Allen shows well that he understands the central force of parallelism as a phenomenon to be the iteration of the singular—in this case the singular is the lineal unit. Curiously, Allen neither notes the fact that biblical poetry is also prominently end-stopped, line-boundary normally converging with the end of discrete syntactic units, nor marshals this datum toward his larger thesis. And yet it is one of the outstanding features of biblical verse,¹⁴⁰ so much so that M. Kinzie in her *A Poet's Guide to Poetry* chooses the biblical tradition to exemplify how sentence logic (syntax) may be used to end a line, noting that "Hebrew poetry consists of lines that close at the ends of phrases."¹⁴¹ Most of Moulton's translations cited by Allen effectively replicate in English the end-stopping that pervades Hebrew line structure. Yet Kinzie, however keen her observation, botches things roundly when it comes to illustrating her point. For this she chooses to offer selections from the KJB, lineated as I have been doing according to the verse divisions in that translation.

136 Later scholarship, especially in light of Whitman's notebooks, has only ramified this point. Once Whitman finds his line, it becomes the single most important structural building block in his art, see esp. Folsom and Price, *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman*, ch. 2; cf. Zweig, *Walt Whitman*, 229–30; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 63, 81, 119–20.

137 "Whitman's Verse," *MLN* 45 (1930), 364; cf. Erkkilä, *Political Poet*, 88–89.

138 *Reader's Guide*, 163.

139 "Biblical Analogies," 493; cf. *American Prosody*, 221–22; Erkkilä, *Political Poet*, 88.

140 Esp. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*, 85–86, 120–21, 129; cf. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part I)" *ZAW* 113/2 (2001), 223; *On Biblical Poetry*, 44–45, 55, 133–36, 137, 139, 285–86; Geller, "Hebrew Prosody and Poetics," 510.

141 Kinzie, *Poet's Guide*, 51.

Ps 70:2–4 (vv. 3–5 in Hebrew) is her first example, which she formats in the following manner:

Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: *let them be* turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: *and let such* as love thy salvation say continually, *Let God be* magnified.¹⁴²

To make matters worse she analyzes these "lines," noting in particular that they have "identical opening or closing phrases" (emphasized in the translation) and "begin with capital letters."¹⁴³ Her focus here is patently on the English. None of this—citation, like openings, capitalization—tells us anything about the end-stopped nature of the underlying Hebrew line. It is instructive nonetheless for my larger consideration of Whitman. First, however unwittingly, Kinzie provides a stunning example of a poet construing the KJB's prose rendering of biblical poetry as verse *precisely in the manner I am supposing of Whitman*. That is, the language material segmented by the verse divisions of the KJB is seen (and heard) as singular, lineal entities of verse, one (postulated) stichic unit following on another (with mainly only thematic elements available for grouping purposes)—the initial capitalization with repetitive opening or closing phrases emphasized by Kinzie's analysis also typify Whitman's lineal palette, especially in his catalogues. Another contemporary poet (and critic), J. Hollander, in his delightfully witty *Rhyme's Reason*, offers a similar kind of confirmatory example of what I imagine to be Whitman's practice. In turning to discuss and illustrate "unmeasured verse"—free verse—which he notes has existed "for ages," Hollander begins with "the verse form of the Hebrew Bible," which "as it was translated into English" is for him possibly the "most influential" form of free verse.¹⁴⁴ As is Hollander's practice throughout this little book, instead of citing actual examples he provides his own often very amusing and

142 Ibid., 51–52.

143 Ibid., 51.

144 J. Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (rev. ed.; New Haven: Yale University, 1989 [1981]), 25.

enlightening renderings. His imitation of biblical poetry in English is instructive:

The verse of the Hebrew Bible is strange; the meter of Psalms and
Proverbs perplexes.

It is not a matter of number, no counting of beats or syllables.

Its song is a music of matching, its rhythm a kind of paralleling.

One half-line makes an assertion; the other part paraphrases it;
sometimes a third part will vary it.

An abstract statement meets with its example, yes, the way a wind runs
through the tree's moving leaves.

One river's water is heard on another's shore; so did this Hebrew verse
form carry across into English.¹⁴⁵

This effectively mimics biblical verse, and exactly in the manner of Kinzie's stichic construal of the verse divisions of the KJB, i.e., longer lines (corresponding to the range of lengths of the verse divisions), caesural segments that fall out according to the underlying Hebrew line structure (Hollander's "half-line"). At the same time, it is strikingly reminiscent of Whitman, whom Hollander goes on to discuss in the following paragraph. If Kinzie, by dint of her way of formatting and analyzing the KJB's versions of biblical poems, exemplifies the plausibility of assuming a similar kind of uptake on Whitman's part, then Hollander's efforts spectacularly illustrate what can result when a poet intentionally aims to emulate an Englished version of the biblical poetic tradition (as mediated by the KJB). This is the other side of the proverbial coin. Kinzie shows how the KJB verse divisions can be construed poetically and Hollander how such a construal can lead to an original poetic creation. The two together are quite intriguing for my larger thesis.

A second significance of Kinzie's understanding the KJB as a transparent rendering of the original Hebrew demonstrates how the KJB lined out according to verse divisions is also end-stopped. And the KJB is end-stopped precisely in the manner that Whitman's verse

145 Ibid., 26.

is end-stopped, i.e., mostly in longer segments, punctuated by caesural pauses of various kinds. Hollander's riff on biblical poetry also shows this. Indeed, he goes on in another of his made-up verse illustrations to describe the kind of end-stopped free-verse line that exemplifies both the Bible (whether in Hebrew or English) and Whitman:

Free verse is never totally "free":
 It can occur in many forms,
 All of them having in common one principle—
 Nothing is necessarily counted or measured
 (Remember biblical verse—see above).
 One form—this one—makes each line a grammatical unit.
 This can be a clause
 Which has a subject and a predicate,
 Or a phrase
 Of prepositional type.¹⁴⁶

End-stopped lines are prominent in biblical Hebrew poetry, but they are not so overwhelmingly dominant as in Whitman or the KJB's verse divisions. Almost a third of the lines in the biblical Hebrew corpus are enjambed, the syntax running over line boundaries—definitely not a slip.¹⁴⁷ But most of these run-on lines appear within couplet, triplet, and quatrain boundaries. So even in a couplet containing an enjambed line—for example, the opening couplet in Lamentations 1 ("How lonely sits the city/ that once was full of people!", NRSV)—the couplet boundary itself is almost always closed, end-stopped—syntax running over couplet or triplet boundaries in biblical verse, if not quite a slip, nonetheless is rare, e.g., "Now I would be lying down and quiet;/ I would be asleep; then I would be at rest// with kings and counselors of the earth/ who rebuild ruins for themselves," Job 3:13–14 (NRSV). The end-stopped nature of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ See Dobbs-Allsopp, "Enjambling Line," 219–39; "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," *ZAW* 113/5 (2001), 370–85; *On Biblical Poetry*, 45–48, 137, 138–39, 204, 329, 330–31, 336, 507, n. 22.

the verse divisions of the KJB ultimately refracts end-stopping in the underlying Hebrew, but at the boundary of the couplet (or triplet or quatrain), not that of the line. Kinzie's larger point is on target, and if she muffs the details, she does so in a way that clarifies just how close (and closed) the KJB verse divisions are to Whitman's own lines.

This likeness is ramified when the prose portions of the Bible are considered alongside the poetry. The verse divisions of the KJB in this material, almost without exception, close at a major syntactic juncture, usually a sentence and usually marked by a period (in English translations). At base, then, the KJB, regardless of genre, presents itself as a mass of sentences set off by indentation and numbered verses. This is to emphasize the coercive nature of the verse divisions as they persistently interrupt the reading experience and divide the language material into varied sizes of sentences (or groups of sentences). Since Allen's "Biblical Analogies," scholars have pointed to the prevalence of parallelism in *Leaves* as a leading indicator of Whitman's stylistic debt to the Bible (see Chapter Four). An even more thoroughgoing marker of this debt, however, may be Whitman's predilection for a "rhythm of thought" parsed out sententially, line by end-stopped line. Certainly, the Bible in the familiar rendition of the KJB offers a ready and abundant source of such sententially versified language. In fact, the trial lines in the early notebooks appear to show Whitman primarily preoccupied with shaping his emerging line to fit his sentential mode of thought. Most of these lines, regardless of length, are composed of single thoughts. And the incidence of line-internal parallelism in these lines is remarkably low.

To recognize in the Bible a ready-made model for Whitman's predominantly end-stopped line is not to presume anything about how that model was actually encountered or accommodated. To judge by the three 1850 free-verse poems and especially the trial lines in the early notebooks and poetry manuscripts, Whitman's mode of composition is decidedly non-static, frenetic, constantly in process, doing and re-doing (and un-doing). His proclivity for lines made up of sentential wholes is evident already in the 1850 poems. A remarkable example appears in Whitman's close rendition of Matt 26:15 in "Blood-Money":

Again goes one, saying,

What will ye give me, and I will deliver this man unto you?

And they make the covenant and pay the pieces of silver.

Here Whitman orchestrates his line-cuts according to the major syntactic junctures (cued by punctuation and capitalization) in the (translated) biblical passage: "And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matt 26:15). The impulse toward sententially oriented lines is clearly detectable and the verse division is what holds Whitman's immediate attention. And yet run-on lines also appear in this early material, and sometimes Whitman can be seen resolving these into often larger, rounder syntactic wholes. He often achieves this through his combinatory strategy as frequently in his revisions to "Resurgemus."¹⁴⁸ For example, the shorter, sharper syntactic cuts in

Not a disembodied spirit

Can the weapon of tyrants let loose,

But it shall stalk invisibly over the earth,

Whispering, counseling, cautioning. ("Resurgemus,")

are significantly softened in their revised form in the 1855 *Leaves*:

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,

But it stalks invisibly over the earth . . . whispering counseling
cautioning. (LG, 88)

In the latter, the inter-lineal syntactic dependencies are not totally erased, but they are eased such that the resulting two lines are more easily consumed holistically.

Another good example comes from the "I know a rich capitalist" notebook. Here what is originally conceived of as a prose sentence is broken into short(er) run-on lines of verse. Then the portion of this

148 Cf. Erkkila, *Political Poet*, 58. Similarly, Allen (*New Walt Whitman Handbook*, 219) notices the run-on lines in "Blood-Money."

material included in the 1855 *Leaves* is re-combined into a larger lineal whole:

— Out of the first Nothing and —out of the black fogs of primeval of the nostrilsOr original Vacuity, of Death which that vast and sluggish hung ebbless and floodless in the spread of space—it asked of God with undeniable will, something to satisfy itself¹⁴⁹

Out of the vast, first Nothing

The ebbless and floodless vapor from the nostrils of Death,

It asked of God with undeniable will,

Something to satisfy itself.—¹⁵⁰

Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, the vapor from the nostrils of death (*LG*, 50)

My main takeaway from such examples is to re-emphasize the processual and diachronic nature of Whitman's stylistic development as a poet and to resist the temptation to resort to stridently punctual explanations. I presume that Whitman's engagement with source material—the Bible or otherwise—is of a similar nature, that his culling of the idea for a syntactically closed line, for example, need not have been a momentary revelation nor disentangled from his compositional practice.

It is also worth stressing the centrality of the end-stopped line to Whitman's ever evolving democratic poetics. Like other elements of Whitman's style that connect with the Bible, his preference for end-stopping is invested politically. The singular, end-stopped line as it circumscribes wholeness (syntactically, ideationally, characterologically, imagistically)¹⁵¹ inscribes palpable, material instantiations of particularity and individuality. And when these singularities get grouped into larger gatherings, as they do in Whitman's many catalogues, they

149 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/nyp.00129.011.jpg>.

150 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/nyp.00129.014.jpg>.

151 Whitman gives what is perhaps his most revealing (though non-syntactic) description of this lineal wholeness in an early (Grier: "probably pre-1855") manuscript fragment entitled "Poem of Pictures" (anticipating the long poem "Pictures"):—"each verse presenting a picture of some scene, event, group or personage" (*NUPM* IV, 1294).

become signifiers of equality, of tolerance for difference, of unity amidst diversity—Whitman's idea of "many in one" (*LG* 1856, 180). The long catalogue of people at work early in "I celebrate myself" (*LG*, 21–23) offers a good example. The basic lineal unit is a clausal whole of the following kind: "The" + N(P) [actor noun, occupation] + V [present tense, action] + DO/PP.¹⁵² This basic syntactic template is established in the first nine lines of the catalogues:

The pure contralto sings in the organloft,
 The carpenter dresses his plank.... the tongue of his foreplane whistles
 its wild ascending lisp,
 The married and unmarried children ride home to their thanksgiving
 dinner,
 The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
 The mate stands braced in the whaleboat, lance and harpoon are ready,
 The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
 The deacons are ordained with crossed hands at the altar,
 The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,
 The farmer stops by the bars of a Sunday and looks at the oats and rye
 (*LG*, 21).

Whitman occasionally varies the pattern. Sometimes he adds a second clausal segment that expands on what the worker does or what the work entails (as in lines 2 and 4); other times the added clause introduces a related actor (e.g., "The pedlar sweats with his pack on his back—the purchaser higgles about the odd cent," (*LG*, 22)). At times, Whitman extends the subject of one line into another (e.g., "The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,/ He turns his quid of tobacco, his eyes get blurred with the manuscript," *LG*, 21). But generally the pattern of the base lineal unit prevails repeatedly over the course of the catalogue's sixty-nine lines. The line particularizes and individuates the worker and the work. The individual in all their peculiarity is spotlighted and prized. As these similar syntactic frames are repeated

¹⁵² For Warren's diagnosis of the clausal catalogue and for his comments on this catalogue in particular, see "Free Growth," 27–42, esp. 31, 34.

and brought into alignment, the resulting parallelism both unifies and equalizes that with which the frames are filled—namely, the multitude of people—Americans all!—going about the tasks of daily, democratic existence. Erkkila describes it this way: “Presented in a sequence of separate and end-stopped images, these figures are independent and yet related” through various aspects of Whitman’s “democratic poetics,” including most prominently “the parallel structure of the lines.”¹⁵³ Erkkila continues: “The total effect of the passage is to equalize and fuse in one chain brides and opium eaters, prostitutes and presidents, men and women, by presenting them parallelistically on a horizontal plane.”¹⁵⁴ At the heart of Whitman’s vision for American democracy is “the origin-idea of the singleness of man, individualism, asserting itself.”¹⁵⁵ The end-stopped line is one of Whitman’s primary poetic means for giving expression to this political conviction.

Prosiness

The signature length of so many of Whitman’s lines—that outstanding feature of all long-line verse—makes for an expanded discursive palette onto which the poet often uncoils his thoughts in a leisurely amble otherwise so characteristic of prose. Indeed, Beyers stresses (commenting on a passage from “Song of Myself”) the capacity of long-line poetry to incorporate prose and its sententious rhythms.¹⁵⁶ The increase in the scale of the line offers discursive possibilities that short-line verse simply cannot accommodate. Although there is more to Whitman’s prosody than its prosiness, the latter has been regularly observed (positively and negatively) by readers. In fact, it is probable that “prosiness” itself (in part) led Whitman to the long line that he gradually shapes for himself. Zweig even supposes that much of the 1855 *Leaves* “was first written down as prose.”¹⁵⁷ The pre-1855 notebooks are a blend of lines

153 *Political Poet*, 89.

154 *Ibid.* Cf. M. Edmundson, *Song of Ourselves: Walt Whitman and the Fight for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2021), Part I (Bookshare).

155 From *Democratic Vistas* (1870), *CPW*, 213. On the importance of the individual to Whitman’s brand of democratic liberalism, see G. Wihl, “Politics” in *Companion to Walt Whitman*, 76–86; cf. R. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1998), 25; Edmundson, *Song of Ourselves*, Part I.

156 *History of Free Verse*, 41.

157 *Walt Whitman*, 239.

of verse and prose, and, if anything, there is more prose than poetry. As Miller stresses, Whitman "culled more lines from the prose... than he did from the work in lines."¹⁵⁸ Emblematic is the prose of "There was a child went forth every day—and the first thing that he saw looked at with fixed love, that thing he became for the day.—"¹⁵⁹ from the "med Cophósís" notebook that Whitman turns into the initial lines of the tenth poem of the 1855 *Leaves*, "THERE was a child went forth everyday,/ And the first object he looked upon..., that object he became" (LG, 90). Whole chunks of the 1855 Preface were eventually culled in a similar fashion and lineated to make up part of the 1856 "Poem of Many In One" (later "By Blue Ontario's Shore"; e.g., LG, iv–v // LG 1856, 188–89 [later sec. 10]).¹⁶⁰ And outside of *Leaves*, Whitman would continue to hold his prose and verse close together. There may be no more graphic expression of this than *Two Rivulets* (1876), in which verse and prose appear on the same page, separated by a wavy line running horizontally across the middle of the page (Fig. 8)—"two flowing chains of prose and verse, emanating the real and ideal."¹⁶¹

As Zweig explains, the importance of prose to the development of Whitman's line should not be surprising:

His most influential models were not poems at all but Carlyle's gnarled prose, Emerson's essays, the King James Bible, Ruskin, maybe even Thoreau. There was far more great prose than poetry in Whitman's "foreground." His achievement was to incorporate the advantages of prose—its flexibility, its ability to mold itself freely to an actual speaking voice—into a new line that was subtly accented yet never far from the extended rhythms of prose.¹⁶²

Zweig's emphasis here seems to me to be very much on target. The Bible was only one source among many in Whitman's "long foreground" and his sources in no way fully explain his achievement; they are but only a starting point. Still, Whitman's prosiness, especially in the 1855 *Leaves*, offers (as Zweig notices) yet another point of contact with the

158 *Collage of Myself*, 19.

159 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00005.002.jpg>.

160 <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/figures/ppp.00707.277.jpg>. Cf. Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 19–20.

161 From a letter of Whitman's to Edward Dowden, dated 2 May 1875.

162 *Walt Whitman*, 239.

KJB, itself the premier prose translation of the Bible (in English), and what became a revered English classic.¹⁶³ That is, not only do the lengths of the verse divisions match up well with Whitman's lines, so, too, does the prosaic nature of what takes place within the framework established by these lines, the KJB's manifest prosiness feeding the prosiness of Whitman—recall that it is above all prose (especially in his journalism) that dominates Whitman's writerly output until 1850, and indeed throughout the early 1850s in the immediate build-up to the 1855 *Leaves*. And afterwards, too. He never stops writing prose.

Line-Initial "And"

And beyond the sheer facticity of the KJB as a work of English prose, Whitman's style shows signs, as well, of having been shaped by the prose style of the Bible. This is a topic I return to in more detail in Chapter Five. Here it will suffice to point out one of the more conspicuous indicators of that style as a means of tying Whitman most specifically to the prose of the English Bible. "There was a child went forth" opens with one of Whitman's characteristic extended runs of lines beginning with "And":

THERE was a child went forth every day,

And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity
or love or dread, that object he became,

And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the
day.... or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,

And grass, and white and red morningglories, and white and red
clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,

And the March-born lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter, and
the mare's foal, and the cow's calf, and the noisy brood of
the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side . . . and the fish
suspending themselves so curiously below there . . . and the

¹⁶³ Norton, *History of the English Bible*, esp 358–86.

beautiful curious liquid . . and the water-plants with their
graceful flat heads . . all became part of him.

And the field-sprouts of April and May became part of him. . . .
wintergrain sprouts, and those of

the light-yellow corn, and of the esculent roots of the garden,

And the appletrees covered with blossoms, and the fruit afterward...
and wood-berries . . and the commonest weeds by the road;

And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern
whence he had lately risen,

And the schoolmistress that passed on her way to the school . . and the
friendly boys that passed . . and the quarrelsome boys . . and the
tidy an freshcheeked girls . . and the barefoot negro boy and girl,

And all the changes of city and country wherever he went. (*LG*, 90–91)

Nine of the eleven lines begin with "And." Such runs are most redolent of the English style of the KJB, especially in the narrative passages of the Old Testament. Consider this sample from Genesis 32 (vv. 21–32; see Fig. 4):

²¹ So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

²² And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

²³ And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

²⁶ And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

²⁷ And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

²⁸ And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

²⁹ And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

³⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

³¹ And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

³² Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

I cite enough of the passage so that the repeated "And"s at the head of each verse division may be appreciated. Biblical Hebrew is a highly paratactic language, making do with only a handful of true conjunctions. The main narrative line in classical biblical Hebrew prose is normally carried by a peculiar verbal formation known as the *waw*-consecutive or *wayyiqtol* form.¹⁶⁴ The form may be decomposed historically as a combination of the simple conjunction, *wa-*, and the prefix form of a verb (*yiqtol* is the paradigm form favored by Hebrew grammarians). Tyndale, the first to translate the Bible into English from its original languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic), initiated the practice of translating the simple Hebrew conjunction (*wa-*) primarily with "and," and thus the *wayyiqtol* form is often rendered with "and" plus subject and a verb (usually) in the past tense, and many of those "and"s come at the beginning of a sentence:

So went the present before him and he taried all that nyghte in the tente/
ad rose vp the same nyghte ad toke his.ij. wyves and his.ij. maydens &
his.xi. sonnes/ & went ouer the foorde Iabok. And he toke them ad sent
the ouer the ryuer/ ad sent ouer that he had ad taried behinde him selfe
alone.

¹⁶⁴ *IBHS* §§ 29, 33.

And there wrestled a man with him vnto the breakynge of the daye.
 And when he sawe that he coude not preuayle agaynst him/ he smote
 hi vnder the thye/ and the senowe of Iacobs thy shranke as he wrestled
 with him. And he sayde: let me goo/ for the daye breaketh. And he
 sayde: I will not lett the goo/ excepte thou blesse me. And he sayde vnto
 him: what is thy name? He answered: Iacob. And he sayde: thou shalt be
 called Iacob nomore/ but Israell. For thou hast wrestled with God and
 with men ad hast preuayled.

And Iacob asked him sainge/ tell me thi name. And he sayde/
 wherfore dost thou aske after my name? and he blessed him there. And
 Iacob called the name of the place Peniel/ for I haue sene God face to
 face/ and yet is my lyfe reserved. And as he went ouer Peniel/ the sonne
 rose vpon him/ and he halted vpon his thye: wherfore the childern of
 Israell eate not of the senow that shrancke vnder the thye/ vnto this daye:
 because that he smote Iacob vnder the thye in the senow that shroncke.¹⁶⁵

Normally the King James translators ramify this practice. However, in this instance all the verse initial "And"s are already present in Tyndale's version. Tyndale uses a plain page layout, organized in paragraphs. The look is clean, very much akin to that of a contemporary novel. Verse divisions (with accompanying indentation) do not enter English Bible translations until 1560 and the Geneva Bible (Fig. 38). The latter has a huge impact on the reading experience. In particular, they interrupt the smooth flow of sentences. Tyndale's "And"s blend in nicely with the paratactic style he fashions for his English in imitation of the underlying Hebrew. In the KJB, the verse initial "And"s stand out precisely because of the interrupting force of the verse divisions and accompanying indentations (Figs. 4, 13–14). The presentational difference between the two is helpful in isolating the KJB's impact on Whitman's style. It is not just Whitman's preference for parataxis in general, but how his line initial "And"s mirror—or better, take their inspiration from—the verse initial "And"s of the KJB.

165 From Tyndale's *Pentateuch*, published originally in 1530 (text from *The Bible in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997) (last accessed: October 1, 2017)).

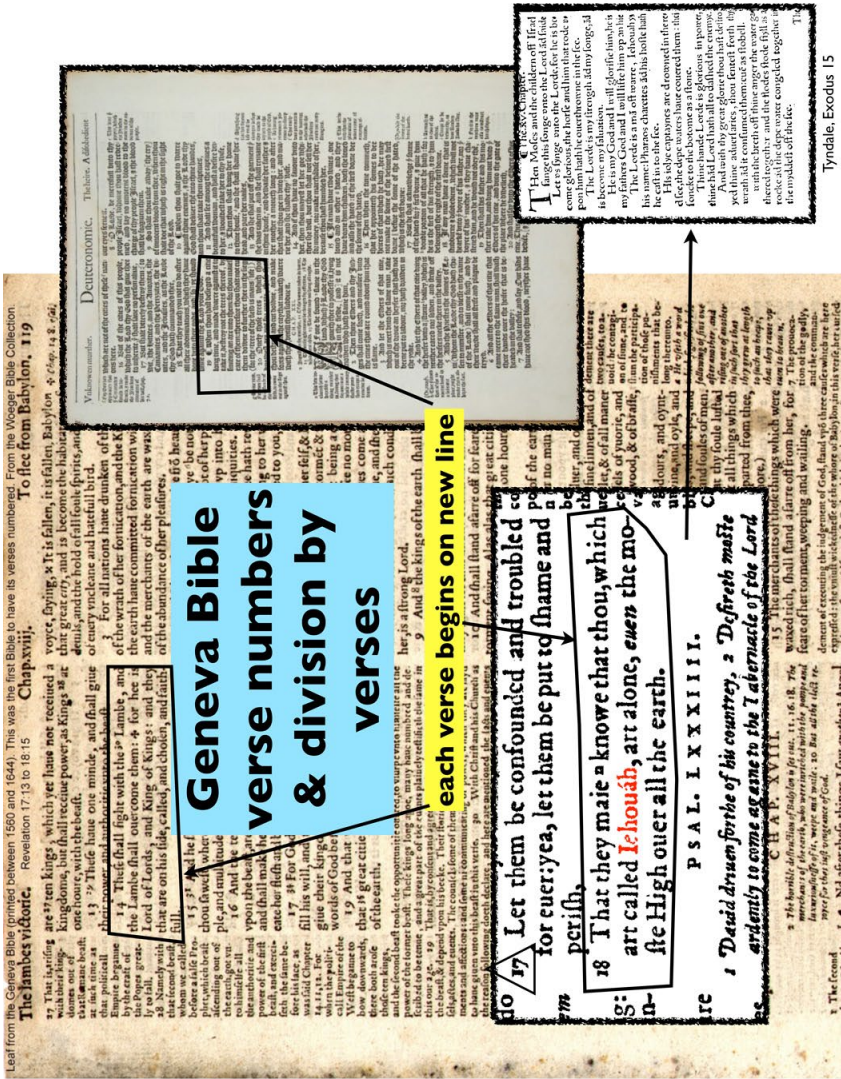


Fig. 38: Geneva Bible (1560) was the first English Bible to add verse numbers and to begin each verse on a new line.

Many runs of line-initial "And" populate the 1855 *Leaves*, beginning as early as the biblically inflected swiftly spreading of "the peace and joy and knowledge" passage from "I celebrate myself" (seven lines start with "And"; *LG*, 15-16). The opening three stanzas from "There was a child went forth" is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the slight slice of prose from the "med Cophósis" notebook out of which the first three lines are fashioned (see above) helps spotlight Whitman actively turning his prose into poetry, including in this instance promoting the sentence internal "and" to head the beginning of a line, now also capitalized: "And the first object he looked upon...." A very literal example of this kind of translation appears in "Blood-Money." Here, Whitman turns a verse internal sentence headed by "And" from Matt 26:15 ("And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver") into an independent verse line, while at the same time translating the KJB's past tense into his preferred present tense: "And they make the covenant and pay the pieces of silver."¹⁶⁶

This is to emphasize that such a stylistic feature is not naive or given and that the KJB by dint of its pattern of translation and page layout offers one obvious model for this practice. Also remarkable is Whitman's use of the past tense in these lines (e.g., "he looked," "object became," "all became"). This, too, is an especially marked aspect of the English biblical narrative style. Other examples of the past tense with initial "And" appear in *Leaves*, including this from "I celebrate myself":

. . . I waited unseen and always,

And slept while God carried me through the lethargic mist,

And took my time.... and took no hurt from the foetid carbon. (*LG*, 50)

However, the vast majority of such "And"-initiated lines in the early *Leaves*, like so much of the rest of the poetry in the early *Leaves*, is staged as nonnarrative discourse of the moment, as if in the timeless present,

166 Whitman's revision of the first line taken from Matt 26:15 from "Again goes one, saying" to "And still one goes, saying" for inclusion in *Specimen Days* (*CPW*, 372) better approximates the KJB's phrasing ("And said unto them") and shows Whitman creating another "And"-initial line out of biblical language and translating from past ("said") to present ("goes, saying") tense.

and thus showing a distinct preference for the present tense (see discussion in Chapter Five).

As with many aspects of Whitman's style, this penchant for heading successive lines with "And" possesses a pre-*Leaves* genealogy. In the twenty-one poems collected by T. L. Brasher in *The Early Poems and the Fiction*,¹⁶⁷ lines headed by "And" appear on average about four times per poem. With the exception of several instances from "Blood-Money"¹⁶⁸ and "Resurgemus," these lines are always short and there are never more than three such lines in succession, and that happens only twice.¹⁶⁹ Of the early notebooks, the "Talbot Wilson" notebook is the one that most anticipates Whitman's use of "And"-headed lines in the 1855 *Leaves*,¹⁷⁰ especially in the increased lengths and usage of such lines and the runs—one leaf (38) alone has a run of four such lines on the recto¹⁷¹ followed by another six on the verso.¹⁷² In much of this material Whitman is also already translating the biblical pattern into the present tense orientation he is establishing for his verse. This selection from the "Talbot Wilson" notebook is generally representative of this early notebook material, though distinguished specifically for showing Whitman working in the past tense (Fig. 39):

I built a nest in the ^Afar in the sky ^here was a sky nest
 And my soul ~~staid there~~ ^flew thither ^to [st?] reconnoitre and squat, and
 looked ~~long upon the universe~~ ^out,
 And saw ~~millions~~ ^he journeywork of ^of suns and systems of suns,
 And has known since that
 And ~~now I know~~ that each a leaf of grass is not less than they¹⁷³

167 (New York: New York University, 1963), 3–52.

168 Whitman's revisions of the poem for *Collect* include adding an additional line initial "And," which brings his rendition of Matt 26:15 closer to the KJB ("And still... saying" // "And said"; cf. *EPF*, 48, n. 3; third illustration after p. 170).

169 "Ambition" (<https://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00148>; *EPF*, 21) and "Fame's Vanity" (<https://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00023>; *EPF*, 23).

170 Line initial "And"'s feature in the "Poem incarnating the mind" notebook as well, but they are not as conspicuous as in "Talbot Wilson."

171 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.075.jpg>.

172 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.076.jpg>.

173 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/loc.00141.075.jpg>.

Nine of the ten legible lines started in the "And to me each minute" manuscript are headed by "And" (Fig. 40):

25

*tr (And to me each minute of the night and day is chock with
something vital and visible as vital live as flesh is

ins in here page 34 — And I say the stars are not echoes

And I perceive that the salt marsh sedgy weed has delicious refreshing
odors;

And potatoes and milk afford a fit breakfast dinner of state,

And I dare not say guess the the bay mare is less than I chipping bird
mocking bird sings as well as I, - because although she reads no
newspaper; never learned the gamut;

And to shake my friendly right hand governors and millionaires shall
stand all day, waiting their turns.

And on to me each acre of the earth land and sea, behold exhibits to
me perpetual unending marvellous pictures;

They fill the worm-fence, and lie on the heaped stones and are hooked
to the elder and poke-weed;

And to me each every minute of the night and day is filled with a
[illegible] joy:

And to me the cow crunching with depressed head surpasses is an a
every perfect and plumbbed statue; grouped

[illegible line]¹⁷⁴

And as observed previously (Chapter Two), "Pictures" is remarkable precisely for its fifty-two line-initial "And"s that form the spine of this long poem.¹⁷⁵

174 <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/tex.00057.001.jpg>. Cf. Folsom, "Working Notes," 94–95, n. 5; "Whitman."

175 The final two lines of "Pictures" appear to be revisions of lines 7 and 9 (cf. l. 1) from "And to me each minute" (<https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/tex.00057.001.jpg>):
"And to me each every minute of the night and day is filled with a [illegible] joy."
=> "And every hour of the day and night has given deposited with me its copious pictures," (after *NUPM IV*, 1300)

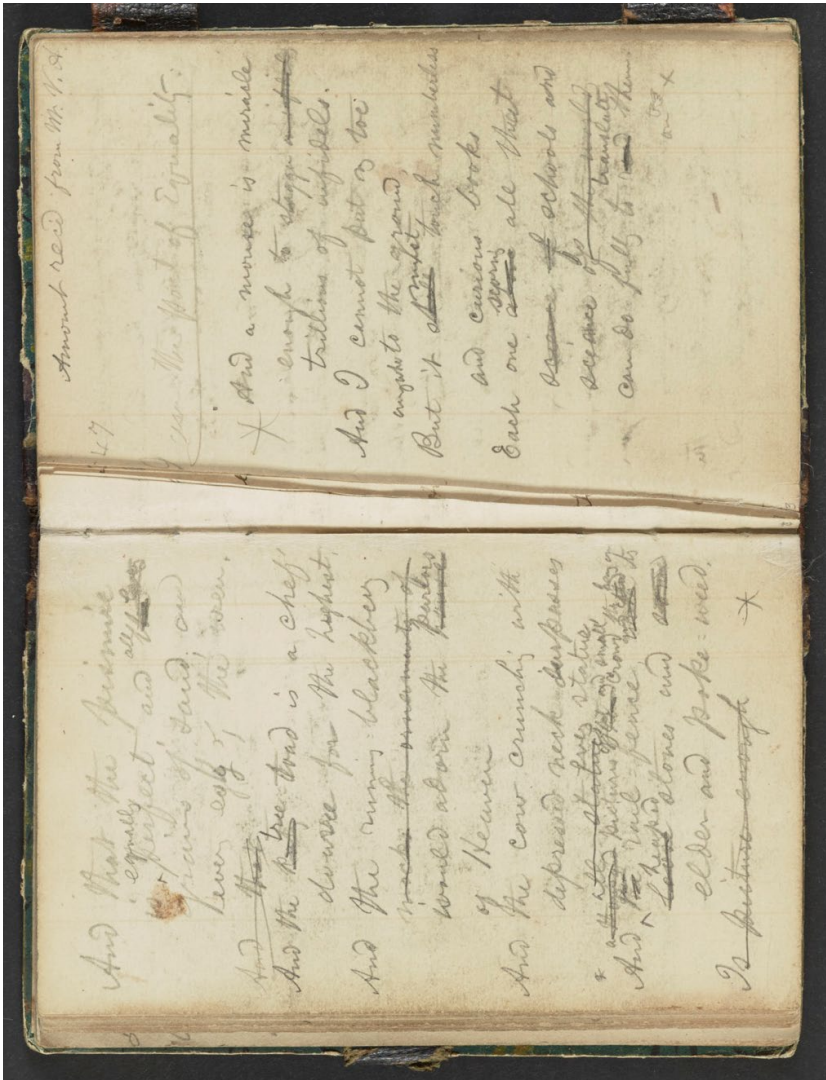


Fig. 39: Leaves 38v, 43r of the "Talbot Wilson" notebook, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss454430217>. Leaf 38v shows a run of "And"-headed lines. Image courtesy of the Thomas Biggs Harned Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, 1842–1937, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. MSS45443, Box 8: Notebook LC #80.

"And on to me each acre of the earth land and sea, I behold exhibits to me perpetual unending marvellous pictures;"

=> "And every rod of land or sea Yet still affords me, as long as I live, inimitable pictures" (after *NUPM* IV, 1300)

L J - vital and visible
 * And to me each minute of the night and day is. ~~check with something as~~
~~what is there it~~
 too in her page 34 - And I say the stars are ^{my} ~~my~~ ^{approaches} ~~approaches~~
 And I perceive that the salt marsh has delicious odors;
 And potatoes and milk afford a ^{rich} ~~rich~~ ^{treasure} ~~treasure of state,
 And I ~~guess~~ ^{guess} the chipping ^{bird} ~~bird~~ sings as well as I,
~~although she never learned the garment;~~
~~because she reads no newspaper;~~
 And to shake my friendly right hand governors
 and millionaires shall stand all day,
 waiting their turns.
 And ~~to~~ ^{to} me each acre of the ~~land~~ ^{land} and sea, ~~I behold~~ ^{exhibits to me}
~~perfect~~ ^{perfect} pictures;
 They fill the worm-fence, and lie on the heaped stones,
~~And to me~~ ^{And to me} and are hooked to the elder and poke-wood;
~~And the cow~~ ^{And the cow} ~~crunching~~ ^{crunching} with depressed head ~~surpasses~~ ^{surpasses}
~~every~~ ^{perfect and plumb} statue ^{and plumb}~~

Fig. 40: Recto of "And to me every minute," <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/figures/tex.00057.001.jpg>. Image courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. A run of "And"-headed lines, though in a different order than the same lines appear in the 1855 Leaves.

The KJB Mediated Otherwise

I have noted the wide popularity of the King James Bible during the nineteenth century and endeavored to connect that Bible to Whitman, presuming (for the most part) his engagement with the printed artifact itself in one edition or another. Mine is an avowedly philological approach, motivated in part to answer Posey's call for "careful investigation and massing of evidence." My "massing" of the manifold ways in which the KJB's verse divisions are suggestive of Whitman's (long) verse line in the preceding pages is one manifestation of this philological method. Of course, the KJB in nineteenth-century America was found otherwise than in the printed pages of its many editions and its influence mediated in myriads of ways beyond readerly encounters with the biblical text itself. General and specific examples are easily identified. Very generally, for example, hymns and sermons were popular conveyors of all manner of biblical ideas, language, and imagery, the ultimate source for which was mostly the KJB. Whitman was an avid devotee of both. A lover of music broadly (e.g., opera),¹⁷⁶ he particularly enjoyed the "popular old camp-meeting songs,"¹⁷⁷ one of which he quotes from in the novella, "Jack Engle."¹⁷⁸ And "Pulpit oratory," as Reynolds observes, "was among his special objects of interest."¹⁷⁹ Abraham Lincoln provides a most specific example. Though no preacher, he used scripture with a "preacherly canniness."¹⁸⁰ Consequently, his speeches, as Alter shows, often bear the stylistic imprint of the KJB, especially at crucial junctures requiring a heightened sensibility of one sort or another.¹⁸¹ Whitman attended Lincoln's second inauguration in person,¹⁸²

176 See C. T. Skaggs, "Opera" in *Walt Whitman in Context* (eds. J. Levin and E. Whitley; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2018), 239–56 (Google Play).

177 Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 39; cf. 176–93.

178 "Life and Adventures of Jack Engle: An Auto-Biography," *WWQR* 34/3 (2017), 262–357, at 300—the two stanzas quoted are from "O, come my soul, and let us take" (or "Come, precious soul, and let us take" ["Calvary or Gethsemane"], see *The Revivalist: A Collection of Choice Revival Hymns and Tunes* (J. Hillman; Troy, NY: J. Hillman Publishing, 18646), hymn #23 (p. 17).

179 *Whitman's America*, 39; cf. 166–76; L. E. Eckel, "Oratory" in *Walt Whitman in Context*, 221–38.

180 *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2010), 16.

181 *Ibid.*, 11–19.

182 For Whitman's report to the *New York Times* about Lincoln's second inauguration, see W. T. Bandy, "An Unknown 'Washington Letter' by Walt Whitman," *WWQR* 2/3 (1984), 23–27.

and therefore heard the second half of that Second Inaugural Address with its many biblical and biblicizing phrasings (e.g., "to bind up the nation's wounds," "to care... for his widow and his orphan") and cadences (e.g., the parallelism of "With malice toward none, with charity for all").¹⁸³ In hearing Lincoln that day Whitman heard language shaped to resonate (in identifiable ways) with the language of the KJB.

Such examples are offered as a reminder that Whitman will have absorbed the KJB in a multitude of ways and through various cultural practices apart from reading the Bible (or recalling its familiar figures and idioms). Whitman's world was a world suffused with the language and imagery of the KJB. Many writers influential for Whitman were also themselves influenced by the KJB (e.g., Milton, Wordsworth, Longfellow),¹⁸⁴ and thus their writings in turn could serve as additional (indirect) conduits of this influence. James Macpherson and Martin Farquhar Tupper were two such writers. Contemporary readers of *Leaves of Grass* most frequently associate Whitman with these poets, and both have been identified as important influences on aspects of Whitman's line.¹⁸⁵ Macpherson was responsible for the English "translations" of the Ossian poems.¹⁸⁶ These were fashioned in "emotive, rhythmic prose" and not as verse.¹⁸⁷ The affinities of this prose with that of the English Bible are patent, carrying a "remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament," in particular, as Hugh Blair noticed in his

183 Alter, *Pen of Iron*, 15–19 (examples taken from p. 18).

184 Cf. Stovall, *Foreground*, 56, 121, 125–26, 128, 194, 238, 266.

185 E.g., A. C. Swinburne, "Whitmania," *Fortnightly Review* 48 (1887), 174 ("his precursors and apparent models in rhythmic structure and style" are "Mr. James Macpherson and Mr. Martin Tupper"); cf. Stovall, *Foreground*, 116–18, 255–58; Zweig, *Whitman*, 149–50; Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 314–16; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 25–26.

186 In 1760 Macpherson announced he had discovered poems and fragments of poems from an epic cycle about one Fingal written by Fingal's son, Ossian (putatively stemming from the third century CE). Over the next several years he published what he represented as his own English prose translations of Ossian's corpus, collected in various volumes: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Garlic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh: G. Hamilton and J. Balfour, 1760); *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, in Six Books: Together with Several Other Poems* (London: Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1762); *The Works of Ossian, the Song of Fingal, in Two Volumes* (London: Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1765). For the debate about the authenticity of the Ossian poems, see most recently the essays in H. Gaskill (ed.), *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1991) and the *Journal of American Folklore* 114/454 (2001).

187 Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 314.

critical dissertation on the Ossian poems.¹⁸⁸ Instances of overlap in content and genre obtain, but perhaps most striking is the prominence of parallelism that propels the rhythmic cadences of Macpherson's prose. And it is likely that Macpherson, who was a divinity student at King's College Aberdeen when Lowth's *Praelectiones* (1753) were first published, was familiar with Lowth's work and especially his theory of parallelism.¹⁸⁹

Whitman routinely noted his admiration for Ossian¹⁹⁰ and recalled to Traubel having always owned a copy of these poems.¹⁹¹ A lightly annotated 1839 edition of *The Poems of Ossian* belonging to Whitman is currently in the Feinberg Collection of the Library of Congress.¹⁹² Most remarkable, perhaps, are the notations Whitman made about a clipping on Ossian from Margaret Fuller's "Things and Thoughts on Europe. No. V" discussed earlier (Chapter One).¹⁹³ In them, Whitman queries the

188 The dissertation was included in the volume of Ossian poems that Whitman owned: James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait and Co., 1839), 79. Cf. Roston, *Prophet and Poet*, esp. 145–46; R. Bauman and C. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 155, n. 20; S. L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2009), 26.

189 Cf. J. Engell, "The Other Classic: Hebrew Shapes British and American Literature and Culture" in *The Call of Classical Literature in the Romantic Age* (eds. K. P. Van Anglen and J. Engell; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2017), locs. 7595–7904 (Kindle edition). It is quite certain that Blair, who actively encouraged Macpherson's work and defended the authenticity of the presumed originals (*Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* [Garland, 1765]), was very knowledgeable of Lowth—indeed, almost his entire assessment is carried out in Lowthian terms (Roston, *Prophet and Poet*, 144–46), and he even cites Lowth explicitly (on p. 114, in Whitman's copy of the *Poems of Ossian*, see below); see also Blair's summary of Lowth in "The Poetry of the Hebrews" in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1841 [1783]), 557–70.

190 For example, in "A Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads" (originally published in *November Boughs* [Philadelphia: David McKay, 1888], 12–13; the essay was also included at the end of the so-called "deathbed edition" of *Leaves* (LG 1891–92, 425–38); cf. *NPM* V, 1808–09.

191 *WWWC* II, 17; cf. *NUPM* V, 1808. "Ossian" is listed among the books Whitman owned as of 1885 ("Walt Whitman in Camden" in *UPP* II, 61) and in a manuscript scrap (date: "between 1890 and 1892") entitled "Books of WW," <http://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/marginalia/annotations/loc.03426.html>.

192 (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1838) (PR3544.A1 1839 Feinberg Whitman Coll.). Cf. Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 314; Zweig, *Walt Whitman*, 150. The two quotations from Ossian embedded in Whitman's "An Ossianic Night—Dearest Friends," published in *Specimen Days & Collect* (CPW, 192) and dated by Whitman in the text to "Nov., '81," are both marked with a bracket in the margin in his copy of *Poems of Ossian* (pp. 273–74, 299; see Figs. 41–43).

193 Entitled "An Ossianic paragraph," <https://whitmanarchive.org/manuscripts/marginalia/annotations/mid.00016.html>. The clipping is from the *New York*

possible relationship between Ossian's poetry and the Bible: "'Can it be a descendant of the Biblical poetry?—Is it not Isaiah, Job, the Psalms, and so forth, transferred to the Scotch Highlands? (or to Ireland?).'"¹⁹⁴ While there is no actual genealogical relationship between the Bible and whatever (written and/or oral) traditions may inform Macpherson's "freely creative" compositions, Macpherson's prose was truly "a descendant" of the style of prose the translators of the KJB used to render "Biblical poetry" and pretty much as Whitman claims, "transferred" from the likes of "Isaiah, Job, the Psalms" to "the Scotch Highlands"—articulated, incidentally, in terms of the kind of collaging that typifies Whitman's own mode of composition in *Leaves*. In fact, in the "Preface" to the edition of Ossian owned by Whitman, Macpherson problematizes the very use of prose in his "translations." He underscores the "novelty of cadence" in his "prose version" and the presence of a certain "harmony" even in "the absence of the frequent returns of rhyme."¹⁹⁵ He lists among the advantages of prose its "simplicity and energy" and the "freedom and dignity of expression" it enables.¹⁹⁶ Macpherson even goes so far as to offer a "Fragment of a Northern Tale," first rendered in the prose that typifies his "translations" of all the Ossian poems and then in verse, with meter and rhyme—the former is easily the more successful of the two.¹⁹⁷ In any event, though Whitman was not enamored with some aspects of Macpherson's style—"(Don't fall into the Ossianic, by any chance.)",¹⁹⁸ he does also write that "Ossian must not be despised"¹⁹⁹ and would have appreciated many of those aspects of style that Macpherson himself highlights, especially "the simple [~~illeg.~~] antique

Tribune, 30 September 1846). See NUPM V, 1806–07.

194 NUPM V, 1807.

195 Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, 34. Whitman annotates the first page of the Preface (p. 33): "Macpherson's Preface as I take it, not to the original edition 1762–63 but the edition of 1773." And in fact the prefaces in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and *Fingal* are very different. And *Works* never appeared with an author's preface. The earliest edition of *Poems of Ossian* does appear to date from 1773 and with this same Preface. Blair also praises the "measured prose" of Macpherson's translation in the final paragraph of his "Critical Dissertation" included in Whitman's edition of *Poems of Ossian* (122)—Whitman again annotates the first page of the dissertation: "By Dr Hugh Blair London 1765–1773" (63); the third edition does date to 1765, and the first, from London, to 1763.

196 Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, 34.

197 *Ibid.*, 34–36. Blair emphasizes that Macpherson's prose "possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen" (122).

198 NUPM V, 1806—which as Grier notices is likely one of Whitman's "earliest bits of advice to himself about style."

199 *Ibid.*

primitively Irish and Caledonian thought and personality in these poems”²⁰⁰ and Macpherson’s disparagement of meter and rhyme (highlighted by the contrasting prose and poetic versions of the trial fragment). In so far as Macpherson’s style was indebted to the KJB, then, the Ossian poems provided another venue through which this style could—and surely did—impact Whitman. Indeed, not only do the Ossian poems refract biblical style but they offer Whitman a most palpable model of how that style could be fitted out with different content—“Is it not Isaiah, Job, the Psalms... transferred to the Scotch Highlands?” *Leaves of Grass* is not so dissimilar, the carrying forward “in another” of “those autochthonic bequests of Asia” such that they “still survive” and “dominate just as much as hitherto” through their “divine and primal poetic structure.”²⁰¹

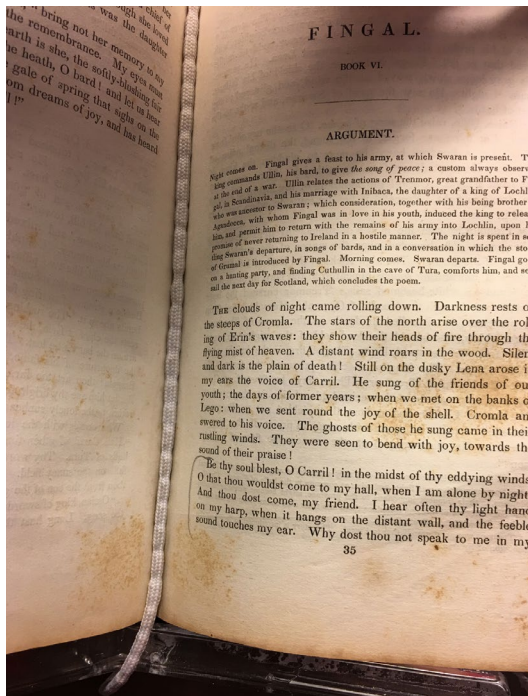


Fig. 41: P. 273 from Whitman’s copy of James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1838) showing bracketed text. Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Washington D. C. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

200 NUPM V, 1808.

201 Whitman, “Bible as Poetry,” 57.

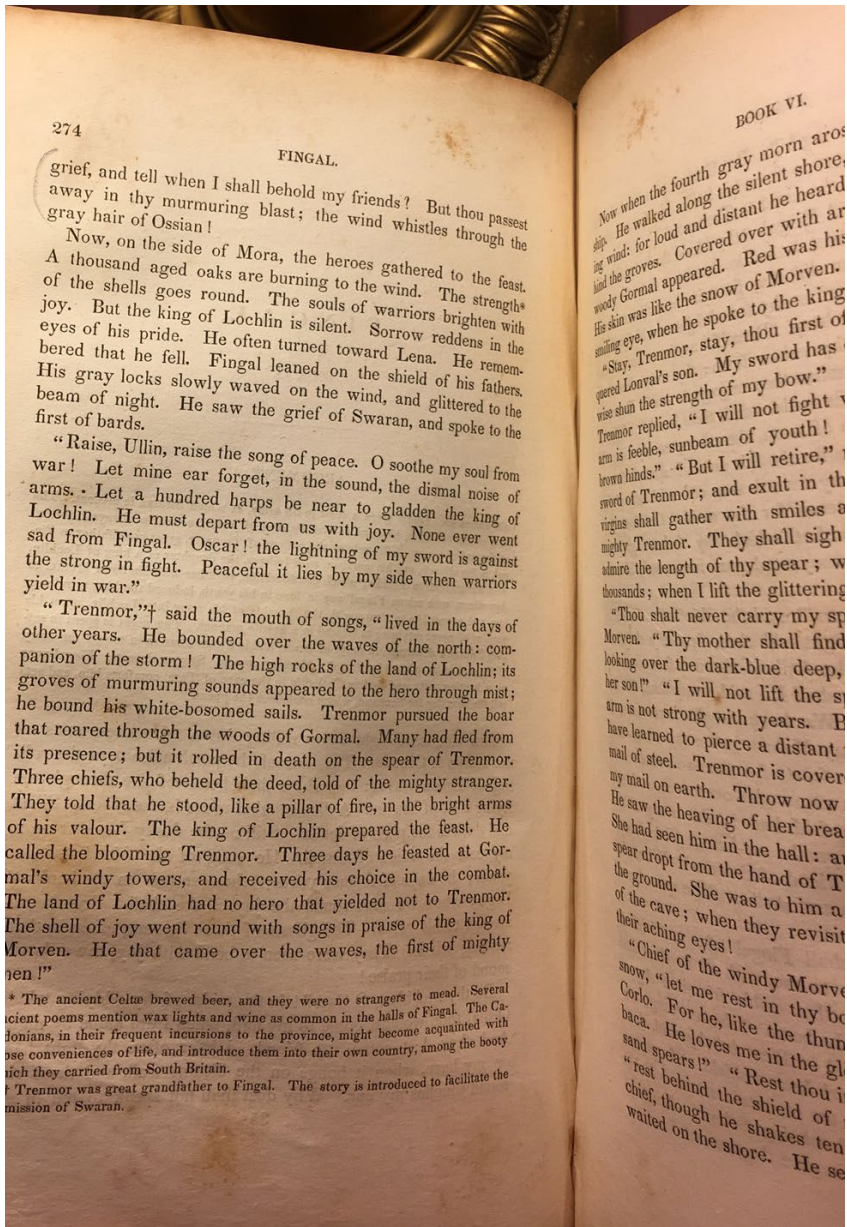


Fig. 42: P. 274 from Whitman's copy of Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* showing bracketed text. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

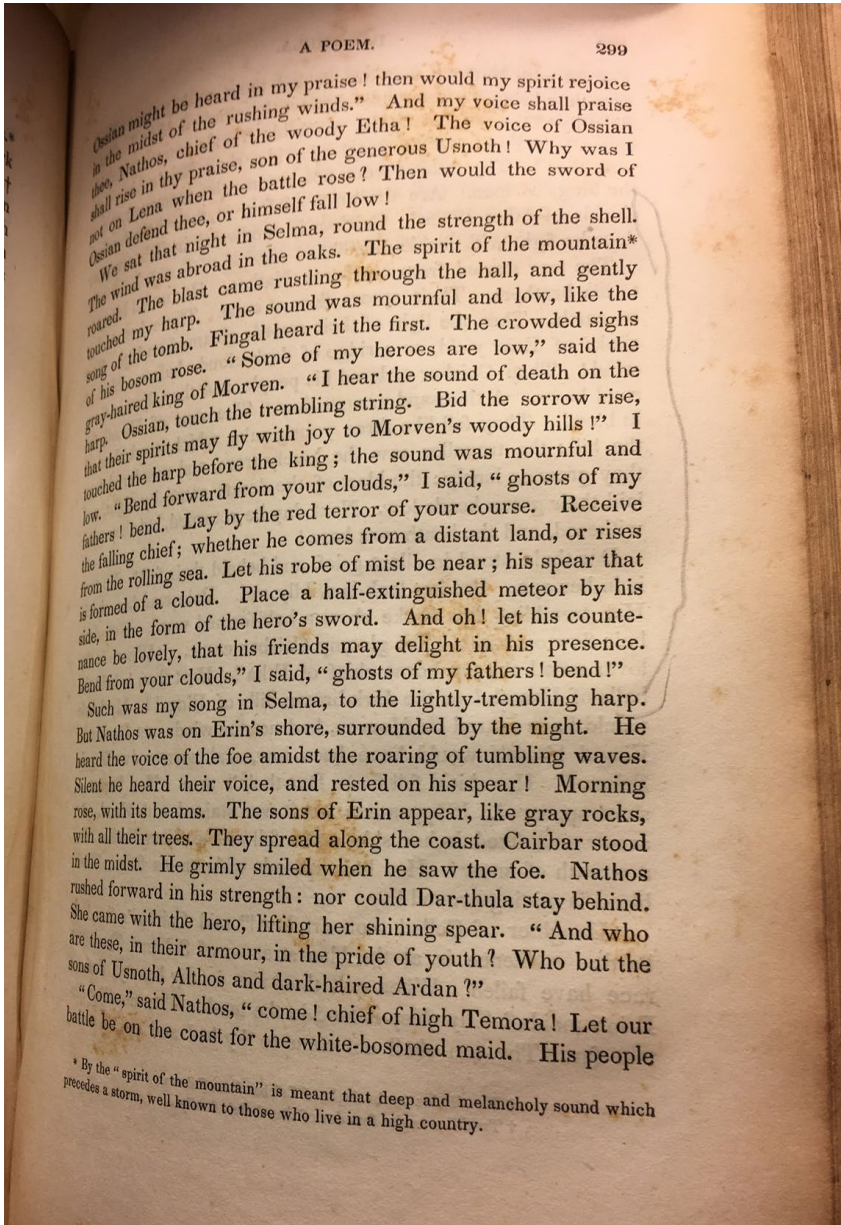


Fig. 43: P. 299 from Whitman's copy of Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* showing bracketed text. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

Tupper was a contemporary of Whitman's whose *Proverbial Philosophy* (issued in many editions) was wildly popular—between two and three hundred thousand copies were sold in America alone.²⁰² Whitman knew of Tupper. He had reviewed positively Tupper's prose work, *Probabilities: An Aid to Faith* in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (20 February 1847): "the author... is one of the rare men of the time."²⁰³ J. L. Coulombe believes it very unlikely that Whitman could have missed press coverage of Tupper's visit to the States in 1851. Stovall thinks that the only reason Whitman did not review *Proverbial Philosophy* in the *Eagle* "is that it was already too well known."²⁰⁴ Several of the early reviews of *Leaves* made direct comparisons to Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*—"the poem [*Leaves*] is written in wild, irregular, unrhymed, almost unmetrical 'lengths,' like the measured prose of Mr. Martin Farquhar Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*."²⁰⁵ And two of these Whitman reprinted in the second issue of the 1855 *Leaves* and again in the 1856 edition.²⁰⁶ Whitman owned and annotated a copy of the 1838 edition of *Proverbial Philosophy*.²⁰⁷ The annotations (consisting mostly of circles or brackets around sets of lines) are in blue pencil and appear on sixteen separate pages, including the title page which is initialed and dated in the upper righthand corner ("WW '75").²⁰⁸ The latter certainly confirm that by 1875 (taking the title-page inscription at face value) Whitman had read Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*. J. J. Rubin argues that "even a superficial examination of Tupper's writings brings the conviction that they did contribute to the composition of *Leaves*

202 J. L. Coulombe, "'To Destroy the Teacher': Whitman and Martin Farquhar Tupper's 1851 Trip To America," *WWQR* 4 (1996), 199–209, at 199.

203 *UPP* I, 136.

204 Coulombe, "To Destroy the Teacher," 199–209, esp. 200; Stovall, *Foreground*, 255–56.

205 George Eliot, "Transatlantic Latter-Day Poetry," *The Leader* 7 (7 June 1856), 547–48, <http://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/lg1855/anc.00027.html>. For details, see M. Cohen, "Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman, and the Early Revisions of *Leaves of Grass*," *WWQR* 16/1 (1998), 23–31.

206 Stovall, *Foreground*, 256; cf. Coulombe, "To Destroy the Teacher," 200–01.

207 (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1838). The copy is in the Feinberg Collection of the Library of Congress (PR5699.T5 A72 1838 Feinberg Whitman Coll). Cf. Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 315, 620; Cohen, "Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman," 23, 30, n. 5.

208 Annotations appear on: title page, pp. 25, 33–34, 40, 41, 43, 73, 75, 113, 121, 137, 139, 150, 153, 186.

of *Grass*.”²⁰⁹ Intriguingly, two of the seven passages Rubin cites from Tupper as suggestive of Whitman the poet himself circled or bracketed in his edition of *Proverbial Philosophy*. In the first, Rubin cites three lines from “Of Recreation” on p. 113. Whitman circles two lines on this page: “To trace the consummate skill that hath modeled the anatomy of insects” and “To learn a use in the beetle, and more than a beauty in the butterfly” (Fig. 44). The first of these comes immediately after the third line Rubin cites (“The dog at his master’s feet, and the walrus anchored to the ice berg”).²¹⁰ From “Of Invention,” Whitman brackets the following group of lines (Fig. 45), the first two of which Rubin also cites:

And anon the cold smooth stone is warm with feathery grass,
 And the light sporules of the fern are dropt by the passing wind;
 The wood-pigeon, on swift wing, leaveth its crop-full of grain;
 The squirrel’s jealous care planteth the fir-cone and the filbert.
 Years pass, and the sterile rock is rank with tangled herbage;
 And the tall pine and hazel-thicket shade the rambling school boy.
 Shall the rock boast of its fertility? shall it lift the head in pride?
 Shall the mind of man be vain of the harvest of its thoughts?
 The savage is that rock; and a million chances from without,
 By little and little acting on the mind, heapeth the hot-bed of society:²¹¹

209 J. J. Rubin, “Tupper’s Possible Influence on Whitman’s Style,” *American Notes & Queries* 1 (1941), 101.

210 Rubin, “Tupper’s Possible Influence,” 102; cf. Reynolds, *Whitman’s America*, 316.

211 Rubin, “Tupper’s Possible Influence,” 102. The bracketed lines come from p. 153 of Whitman’s copy of *Proverbial Philosophy*.

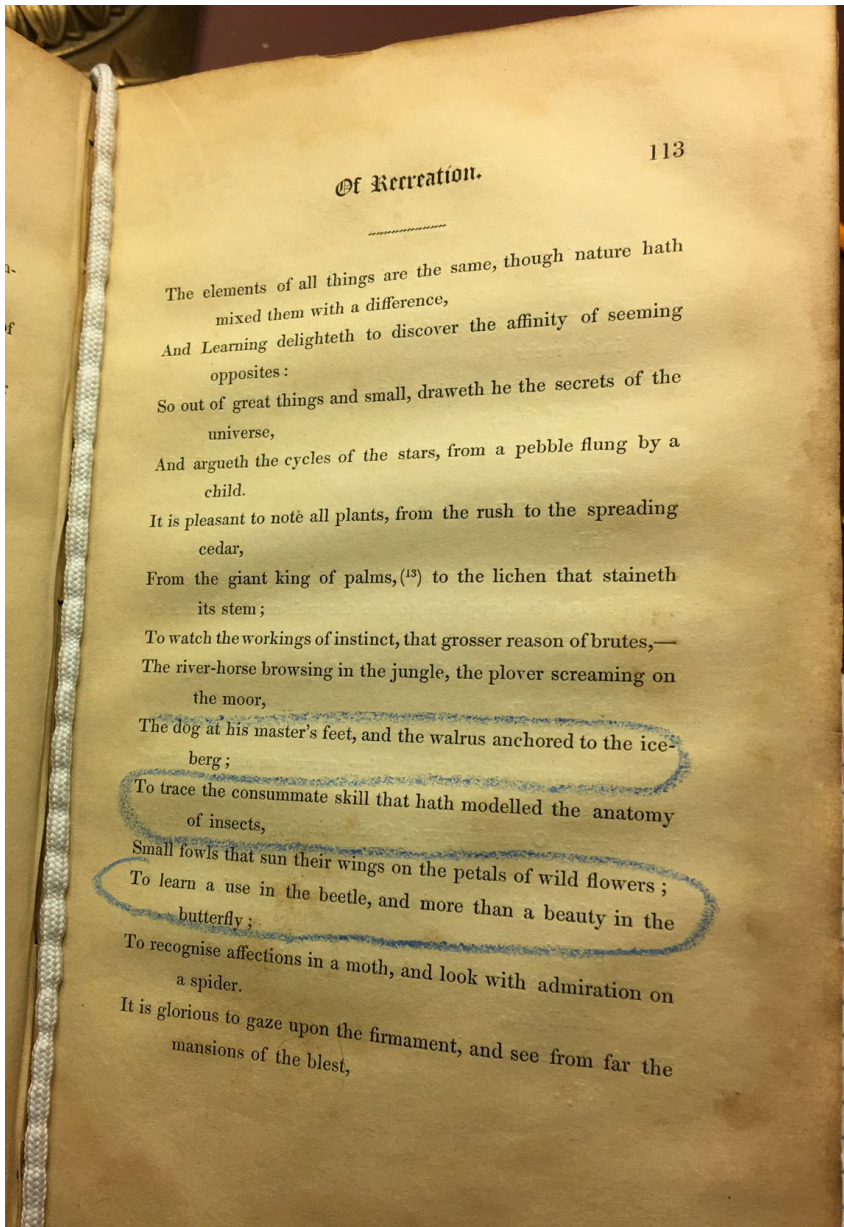


Fig. 44: P. 113 from Whitman's copy of Martin Farquhar Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy* (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1838) showing circled text. Feinberg Collection of the Library of Congress. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

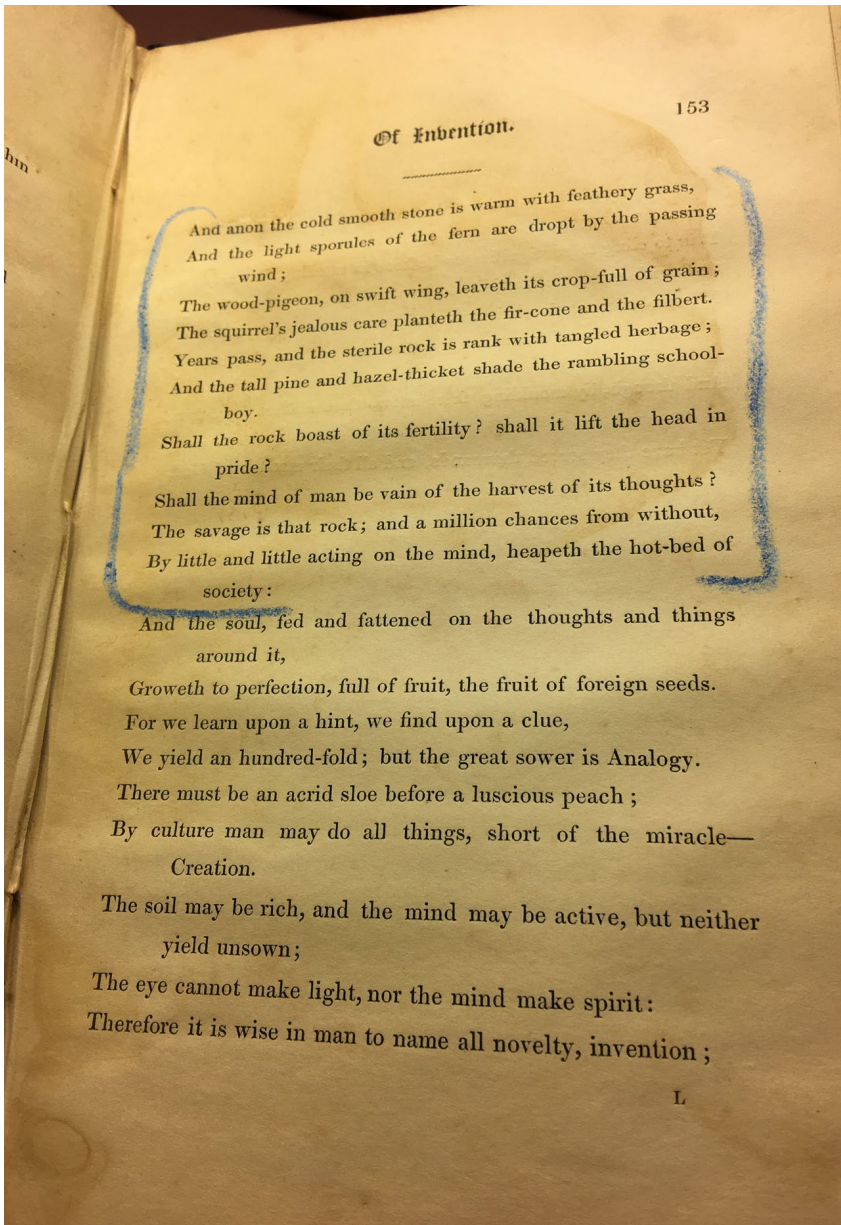


Fig. 45: P. 153 from Whitman's copy of Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy* showing bracketed text. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

Other passages are equally suggestive of Whitman. For example, Whitman brackets material from Tupper's section "Of Memory" that is very reminiscent of parts of "Pictures," including the following:

While wandering in the grove with Plato, and listening to Zeno in the porch?

Paul have I seen, and Pythagoras, and the Stagyrite hath spoken me friendly,

And His meek eye looked also upon me, standing with Peter in the palace.

Athens and Rome, Persepolis and Sparta, am I not a freeman of you all?²¹²

Compare these lines from "Pictures," where Whitman similarly recalls prominent people from world history:

There is a picture of Adam in Paradise—side by side with him Eve, (the Earth's bride and the Earth's bridegroom;)

There is an old Egyptian temple—and again, a Greek temple, of white marble;

....

And here the divine Christ expounds the eternal truths—expounds the Soul,

And here he again appears en-route to Calvary, bearing the cross—See you, the blood and sweat streaming down his face, his neck;

And here, behold, a picture of once imperial Rome, full of palaces—full of masterful warriors;

And here, arguing, the questioner, the Athenian of the classical time—Socrates, this in the market place,

212 Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy*, 41. This material appears on one of the pages (p. 27) that Perry cites as containing "other interesting parallelisms with Whitman's methods" (*Walt Whitman*, 91, n.1). Perry is citing from an 1854 edition published in Boston (Phillips, Sampson, & Co.) that contains the first and second series of Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* (the latter was first published in 1842 and is not included in the 1838 volume that Whitman owned). The other pages Perry identifies as containing similar parallels are pp. 17 and 77 (from the first series; none of these overlap with Whitman's markings) and pp. 130, 142, 147 (from the second series)—only the passage from p. 142 is provided in the body of Perry's discussion.

(~~Θ divine tongue!~~ I too grow silent under your eclenchus,
 O you with bare feet, and bulging belly! I saunter along, following you,
 and obediently listen;)
 And here Athens itself, of ^{—it is} a clear forenoon, ~~two thousand years~~
~~before These States,~~
 Young men, pupils, collect in the gardens of their ^{some a favorite} master,
 waiting for him,²¹³

Not only do these sequences resemble one another, but Tupper's image at the beginning of the section of the "storehouse of the mind" as a "small cavern" or "airy chambers" whose "beams" are laid in a "strange firmament,"²¹⁴ though conceived more biologically, nevertheless is quite like Whitman's picture-gallery image of the mind as a "little house," "round" and "but a few inches" from one side to another, in which "pictures" are hung.²¹⁵

A last example may be cited from the final four lines in the section "Of Wealth," which Whitman brackets and annotates ("wealth" is written in on the bottom right hand corner of the page, immediately under the final line of verse, see Fig. 46):

Wealth hath never given happiness, but often hastened misery:
 Enough hath never caused misery, but often quickened happiness.
 Enough is less than thy thought, O pampered creature of society;
 And he that hath more than enough, is a thief of the rights of his brother.²¹⁶

Compare this triplet of lines from "Great are the myths":

Wealth with the flush hand and fine clothes and hospitality:
 But then the soul's wealth—which is candor and knowledge and pride
 and enfolding love:
 Who goes for men and women showing poverty richer than wealth?
 (LG, 93-94)

213 After NUPM IV, 1297.

214 Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy*, 39.

215 NUPM IV, 1296.

216 Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy*, 150.

These do not seem so much to riff on or mimic Tupper's lines as respond to them with Whitman's own take on the theme.

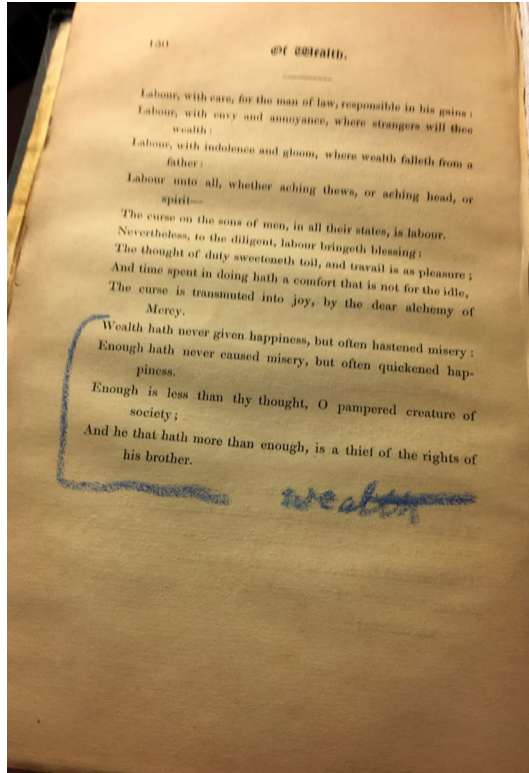


Fig. 46: P. 150 from Whitman's copy of Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy* showing bracketed text and annotation. Photograph by Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp.

One does not have to read too far into Tupper's volume before encountering references to biblical figures (e.g., "Sirach's son," p. 6, the putative author of the biblical book of Ben Sira [or "Ecclesiasticus"]; "Wisdom" personified [pp. 9–10] as in Proverbs [e.g., Prov 8:1; 9:1]; the "Most High," p. 10; cf. Isa 14:14; Ps 82:6; 83:18 [= Hebrew *elyôn*]) and biblicizing idioms (e.g., "dark sayings" [p. 6] ≈ "dark sentences" [as in the Prologue to Ben Sira]; "lips of Wisdom" [pp. 9, 10, 11] picking up on Wisdom's reference to her "lips" in Prov 8:6 and 7; "garden of the Lord" [p. 15] is an allusion to Eden, "the garden of God," Ezek 28:13; 31:8, 9). In fact, *Proverbial Philosophy* is filled with the kinds of "stock" biblicisms (e.g., "lo," "yea," archaisms of all sorts, including many verbs ending in "-eth") of the kind Whitman scrubbed out of the early *Leaves*.

But perhaps most redolent of the KJB is Tupper's use of a two-part line patterned (largely) after the KJB's typical (prose) rendering of the underlying Hebrew parallelistic couplets that dominate in the wisdom poetry of the Bible:

Thoughts, that have tarried in my mind, and peopled its inner chambers,
 The sober children of reason, or desultory train of fancy;
 Clear running wine of conviction, with the scum and the lees of
 speculation;
 Corn from the sheaves of science, with stubble from mine own garner;

 Searchings after Truth, that have tracked her secret lodes,
 And come up again to the surface-world, with a knowledge grounded
 deeper;
 Arguments of high scope, that have soared to the key-stone of heaven,
 And thence have swooped to their certain mark, as the falcon to its
 quarry;
 The fruits I have gathered of prudence, the ripened harvest of my
 musings,
 These commend I unto thee, O docile scholar of Wisdom,
 These I give to thy gentle heart, thou lover of the right.²¹⁷

These are the lines that fill the first page of the "Prefatory" to Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*. The two-part parallelistic line prevails from the beginning. The first line is emblematic, exhibiting the synonymous form of parallelism ("Thoughts, that have tarried in my mind" // "and peopled its inner chambers") in which the subject ("Thoughts") is both fronted (note the initial comma and "that") and gapped in the second clause, all common characteristics of biblical parallelism (see Chapter Four).

Other aspects of Tupper's line beyond a fondness for internal parallelism are equally suggestive of the Bible's informing influence. For

217 Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy*, 6.

example, the lines are unmetred and unrhymed, consistently longer than lines of conventional metrical verse, and start with capital letters and are mostly end-stopped, usually ending with a major syntactic pause marked by punctuation (period, comma, colon, semi-colon, long dash). Significantly, Tupper only very rarely uses lines of more than sixteen words (e.g., "But have lost, as they ran, those apples of gold—the mind and the power to enjoy it," p. 146; eighteen words) or fewer than eight words (e.g. "Like wreathed adders crawling round his midnight conscience:", p. 29; eight words).²¹⁸ The model is quite evidently the Bible's proverbial wisdom, which in the translation of the KJB is regularly segmented into unmetred, unrhymed, and mostly closed verse divisions ranging between eight and sixteen words. And like the proverbial poetry of the biblical wisdom traditions on which *Proverbial Philosophy* is modeled, Tupper's line is not used to tell stories. His style is broadly discursive, nonnarrative.

It is above all this line that most Whitman scholars (grudgingly or not) recognize as influencing Whitman's ideas about his own line.²¹⁹ Indeed, not only do the two share the biblical-inspired attributes just outlined, but they are arranged similarly on the page. Both use indentation to signal the continuation of the verse line onto the next line of printed text and extra spacing to group sequences of affiliated lines. That Whitman was attentive to Tupper's line structure (at least belatedly) is made clear from the fact that the bracketing and circling in his own copy of *Proverbial Philosophy* always respect Tupper's line boundaries—and in several instances these isolate singular lines.²²⁰ In sum, then, Tupper takes much from the Bible, including many formal

218 I have not attempted to quantify my counts in Tupper. My generalizations are derived from paging through and making random counts using the 1938 edition of *Proverbial Philosophy*. Stovall's characterization is similar: "long lines of ten to twenty syllables" (*Foreground*, 256).

219 E.g., Rubin, "Tupper's Possible Influence," 101; Stovall, *Foreground*, 257; C. C. Hollis, *Language and Style in Leaves of Grass* (Baton Rouge/London: Louisiana State University, 1983), 29–32 (he emphasizes Whitman's taking of "external" elements from Tupper); Reynolds, *Whitman's America*, 316; Cohen, "Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman," 25; Coulombe, "To Destroy the Teacher," 199, 205; Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 25–26.

220 On p. 75 ("She tricketh out her beauty like Jezebel, and is welcome in the courts of kings;") and p. 113 ("To trace the consummate skill that hath modeled the anatomy of insects," and "To learn a use in the beetle, and more than a beauty in the butterfly;").

features of his line (e.g., scale, prosiness, lack of meter and rhyme, parallelism, discursive style). And Whitman very “probably got ideas” about form and content from Tupper, with “the most obvious link” being the long, unrhymed, and unmetred line “in the manner of the Bible.”²²¹ What may be emphasized with Miller and M. Cohen is that “if Whitman was influenced by Tupper’s line the influence is still biblical, since ‘Solomon’s proverbs were the model for *Proverbial Philosophy*.’”²²²

Whitman will have found the KJB in many places in addition to its scores of printed editions. Macpherson’s *Poems of Ossian* and Tupper’s *Proverbial Philosophy*, copies of which Whitman owned and read, are two such places.

Conclusions

The several considerations reviewed above suggest a number of conclusions that may be drawn with respect to Whitman’s line and the Bible. First, the point of comparison is between Whitman’s mature line and the verse divisions of the KJB, as originally noted by Saintsbury. Second, the central thrust of Saintsbury’s observation, that Whitman’s line resembles the verse divisions of the KJB, appears also to be well made. I have articulated a myriad of ways in which these are alike. So much so, in fact, that it is hard to imagine, given the place of the Bible in Whitman’s world and worldview (he preferred it “above all other great literature”²²³), that the KJB’s verse divisions were not a major source of influence on Whitman’s ideas about his line. No other proposed source has so many points of contact. The nature of the influence is likely to have been multifaceted and not simply a matter of Whitman aiming to mime biblical style. Miller raises the possibility that Whitman “chose

221 The pastiche of quoted language is from Stovall (*Foreground*, 256, 257) and Cohen (“Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman,” 25).

222 Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 26; cf. Cohen, “Martin Tupper, Walt Whitman,” 25. Whitman’s line is more variable in part because his biblical model is broader than Tupper’s, consisting of the whole Bible, including especially the large swaths of biblical narrative in prose. Consistent with this hypothesis is Tupper’s use of line-initial “And”s. As in Whitman these are not uncommon. However, unlike in Whitman, there are no extended runs of such lines and only rarely do these lines stretch out beyond sixteen words. Tupper’s practice again is reflective of the paratactic style of the poetic wisdom books of the Bible, while Whitman’s extended runs of (sometimes very long) “And”-headed lines are modeled (again, at least in part) after the Bible’s narrative prose (see above).

223 Bucke, *Walt Whitman*, 103.

the line he did because of the work it could do for his words" and because it "was capacious and plastic enough to involve and absorb the full range of language he had already been composing."²²⁴ That is, when it comes to Whitman's discovery of his line, the emphasis should fall as much on the line's suitability to Whitman's own writing capabilities and temperament as on any conscious or unconscious desire to model himself after a specific style. This seems entirely reasonable to me. Models, of course, are important to all writers. But the reasons for choosing (or even happening upon) certain models and not others are never entirely naive, unmotivated, accidental. I do not think it too far-fetched to imagine that the KJB, through Whitman's repeated reading and rereading of it during his life or exposure to it through countless other means, played an important part in shaping the poet's tastes and stylistic sensibilities that eventually would lead him to his preference in line types. But this need not rule out the further possibility of the Bible, as translated and formatted in the KJB, playing a more immediate and conscious role in the formation of Whitman's signature line, a new awakening to the rich and congenial possibilities for a formal verse line informed by the KJB's verse divisions. Something shifted for Whitman between the spring and summer of 1850 and 1855 and one result was a line that in its lengths, variety, caesural rhythms, parallelistic shapes, and prosaic nature came to resemble very strongly the verse divisions of the KJB. Such an array of resemblance is not likely achieved solely by chance. Whitman's program of self-study from 1845–52 included readings about the Bible. The evidence of Whitman's notebooks and poetry manuscripts makes clear the intentionality with which Whitman worked and reworked his verse from the very beginning. And there are the many revisings and restagings of *Leaves of Grass* over the course of Whitman's lifetime, along with the care Whitman took to promote and shape the reception of these volumes. These are the signs of a hyperly intent and intense consciousness at work. This purposefulness pertains to the language material of Whitman's poems but also to how that language material is staged, framed, formatted. Whitman the carpenter, editor, journalist, and printer had an avid "eye for form."²²⁵ Covers,

²²⁴ Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 35–36; cf. Loving, *Song of Himself*, 60.

²²⁵ I borrow the phrase from the twentieth century's foremost epigrapher of West Semitic inscriptions, Frank Moore Cross, who trained his students to be attentive to the smallest details of form, since the ability to make judgements about the development of alphabetic scripts over time often depended on such knowledge.

page layouts, types, titles, bindings, kinds of paper, even, all mattered to this most materialist of poets. It is difficult to imagine someone with such proclivities would just happen upon his line, no matter how loathe he was to disclose its source(s) of inspiration. The restaging of “Resurgemus” for the 1855 *Leaves* provides one concrete glimpse at this hyperly-attuned consciousness at work. The most fundamental adjustments made to the last of his 1850 pre-*Leaves* poems is to relineate it, to resize the older, shorter line forms (usually by combining multiples of them together) to accommodate his new, longer, closed-off lines.²²⁶

And then there is Whitman’s practice of collaging and montaging of found materials, which, as Miller compellingly reveals in his study *Collage of Myself*, anticipates in remarkable ways the embrace of the readymade and found art celebrated in the work of the likes of Picasso, Braque, and Duchamp.²²⁷ Language in many respects is perceived by Whitman as preceding his own creativity. As he explains, in reference to his own poems, “there is nothing actually new only an accumulation or fruitage or carrying out these new occasions and requirements.”²²⁸ The allusion to Eccl 1:9 (“and there is no new thing under the sun”) is intentional, for Whitman understood his making of poems (e.g., a “New Bible”) to include combining “all those that has belongs to the Iliad of Homer and the Jewish^{Hebrew} Canticles called the Bible, and of Shakespear’s delineation of feudal heroism and personality and would carry^{all} the influences of both and all that branches from them for thousands of years.—”²²⁹ The recycling of the trope found in Ecclesiastes itself enacts (emblematically) the kind of composition by collage he is writing about. Whitman even uses the language of the “ready-made” in his letter to Emerson: “The lists of ready-made literature which America

An “eye for form” is the epigrapher’s most valuable tool. For details, see Cross’ collected papers on epigraphy in *Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003). As it turns out, Whitman anticipates Cross. Among the things the “American poets” of Whitman’s letter to Emerson are to recognize is “the eye for forms” (LG 1856, 355).

226 This is emblematic of Whitman’s compositional practice at this period. As noted above, similar reconfigurations appear in some of the poetry manuscripts that stand between the early notebooks and the 1855 *Leaves*.

227 Esp. Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 215–50.

228 Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 87; see CPW 9:12.

229 Entitled, “Poems of a nation,” now in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, Library of Congress (Notes and Notebooks, 1847–1891 mss18630, box 40; reel 25), <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss1863001283>.

inherits by the mighty inheritance of the English language—all the rich repertoire of traditions, poems, historicis, metaphysics, plays, classics, translations, have made, and still continue, magnificent preparations for that other plainly signified literature, to be our own" (LG 1856, 347). As a consequence, whether it is language, tropes, ideas, or material matter, Whitman is only too ready to take it up when found and carry it out; albeit in this "carrying out" he works the found material over and over until he makes it his own and in the process all but rubs away any sign of its finding. In effect, Miller argues, Whitman re-conceives "poetic language as a kind of moveable type to be constantly toyed with and restructured—to see the role of the editor and the corresponding work of revision and visual arrangement of text as equally as important to poetry as the immediate act of creation."²³⁰ The notebooks and early poetry manuscripts, with their abundant strikethroughs and pasted-in and cut-up materials, amply attest to this reworking. They are like photographic stills of the process, all caught in some phase or another. The occlusion that can result has also been well tracked (in places). Whitman's debt to Emerson, for example, has long been appreciated, but what is especially noteworthy for my concern is that no matter how strikingly similar the ideas, "the language is never identical."²³¹ Whitman's absorption of Emerson is so thoroughly processed that the latter's ideas come out sounding just like Whitman. This is true, too, of Whitman's allusions to the Bible in *Leaves*. They are ever elusive, highly burnished, and thus mostly hidden, as Allen saw early on.²³² As with ideas and language so too with tropes. There is again no doubting Whitman's debt to the Bible when it comes to his borrowing of parallelism. Allen's central contention in "Biblical Analogies" remains unchallenged.²³³ But so too does Whitman adapt the trope to suit his art, and thus whatever originating debt there is the trope in being taken up, and thus continued, is also made Whitman's own. And in so doing

230 *Collage of Myself*, 123.

231 Miller, *Collage of Myself*, 82–83; cf. W. S. Kennedy, "Walt Whitman's Indebtedness to Emerson" in *An Autolytus Pack of What You Will* (West Yarmouth: Stonecraft, 1927 [1897]); Stovall, *Foreground*, 296–305.

232 Allen, "Biblical Echoes," 303; cf. Bergquist, "Walt Whitman and the Bible," 81.

233 Even for Warren, who is critical of Allen's dependence on Lowth's biblical paradigm, agrees that the Bible provides a "literary tradition" for *Leaves* and that parallelism remains critical to Whitman's nonmetrical prosody ("Free Growth," 28, 30).

Whitman becomes, as Kinnell well appreciates, “the greatest virtuoso of parallel structure in English poetry”²³⁴ (for details, see Chapter Four).

That Whitman’s mature line may be another bit of his found art would not be so startling given this poet’s omnivorous appetite for the readymade and his printerly eye ever attuned to the visual arrangement of text. That Whitman found his line over a period of time starting with his three free-verse poems of 1850 and continuing till the composition of the 1855 *Leaves* seems true enough. That he worked relentlessly to perfect this line and shape it also is plainly attested. And that as he worked and reworked the language material out of which his line was made Whitman scrubbed away many of the lineaments that would disclose the line’s finding seems yet another empirical datum. And this too is entirely consistent with Whitman’s poetic practice and theory. Was Walt Whitman’s mature line “found” in the King James Bible? The many points of resemblance between this line and the verse divisions of the KJB (especially in the poetical books) make this a tantalizingly appealing thesis. Even my inability to connect (or find) all the dots in order to fully reveal Whitman’s finding of his line for what I think it is seems confirming of the thesis. And yet the fact of the erasure, that final as yet unbridgeable gap, requires at the same time that this thesis be held less tightly, more heuristically. There is much to admire in the “Perhaps” that heads Saintsbury’s initial observation, albeit read ever so slightly against the grain of his intended meaning. From my vantage point it respects the data and as important the artistic temperament behind the data. The question mark at the end of my own chapter title offers “a tip of the hat” to Saintsbury and “a wink and a nod” to Whitman.

234 “Strong is Your Hold.”