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WHITMAN'S POETIC-POLITICAL EXPERIMENT:

JEFFERSONIAN WHITMAN AND WHITMAN'S OLFACTORY TROPES

Tézisfüzet / Summary of the dissertation

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Summary of the dissertation

1. The objectives

This dissertation aims to explore two overlooked motifs in the criticism of Walt Whitman: the influence of Jefferson on Whitman and Whitman's olfactory tropes. The central hypothesis of this dissertation is that putting Whitman's poetic enterprise into the framework of the American experiment of self-government constitutes a basis for the examination of it. I propose that this hypothesis provides us with a framework to link Whitman and Jefferson¹ as well as to better understand Whitman's olfactory tropes. In other words, just as the American Revolution is a theater of Jefferson's American experiment of self-government so *Leaves of Grass* is a theater of Whitman's American experiment of synthesizing three kinds of self-government – personal self-governing, self-government in poeticization, and political self-government. I propose that at the heart of this synthesis is Whitmanian pride – a *motif* of nearly all his verse² –, invigorating pride to continue the American experiment.

That Whitman called *Leaves of Grass* “a language experiment”³ is well known. Yet Whitman's experiment goes beyond language; Whitman links his poetic experiment with the larger American experiment.⁴ Since his youth Whitman had been committed to the American experiment of self-government; Whitman the journalist explicitly employed the phraseology of it – “experiment [test] of man's capacity for self government.”⁵ Whitman was highly aware that he inherited the legacy of the American experiment, with which Jefferson, the author of *the*

¹ In *The Jefferson image in the American mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), Merrill D. Peterson (9) states that “Everyman was his own Jeffersonian. This was due not only to the enigma of the man, but also to partisan memories and to some mysterious attraction that caused men in every generation to interpolate Jefferson in their living worlds.” Among the various ideas on Jefferson, this dissertation centers around the identification of him with the American experiment of self-government as the author of *the Declaration of Independence*.

² Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: Authoritative Texts Prefaces Whitman On His Art Criticism*, eds. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1965), 571.

³ Walt Whitman, *An American Primer by Walt Whitman with facsimiles of the original manuscript*, ed. Horace Traubel (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1904), viii.

⁴ Whitman 1965, 562-563.

⁵ Walt Whitman, *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman: The Journalism I: 1838-1846*, ed. Herbert Bergman (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 55, 481.

Declaration of Independence, was identified.⁶ Furthermore, in Whitman's early poetry the republican ideals America represents for him are connected to his imagery related to the human body.⁷ In Whitman's poeticization of republican self-government, at the core is body, which is forefronted by sensuous perceptions through the five senses. The focus is on the acuity of sense, which pertains to the American experiment. It is a sign of health,⁸ which is in turn an indicator of good physical and mental self-government.⁹ In other words, the acuity of sense signifies the vigor to continue the American experiment. These correspond to Whitman's quest for "new decorums"¹⁰ – the core of Whitman's poetic self-government – which is exemplified by the dense placement of olfactory tropes in the first five stanzas of "Song of Myself," – the very beginning of his poetic enterprise. In fact, as Kenneth Burke notes, Whitman's olfactory tropes – prevalent in his poems – are "Key Terms in Whitman's Language."¹¹

2. Methodology

Since the politics and poetics of Whitman go hand in hand, my methodological framework lies in New Historicism, which is applied to all the parts – including in Part 3, in a sense that it incorporates anthropology.¹² Stephen J. Greenblatt, the coiner of the term,¹³ states that New

⁶ Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson image in the American mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 445-446.

⁷ Whitman 1965, 735; Sueyoshi Kiyotaka, "Walt Whitman's Common Sense" in *Distinguished Szeged Student Papers 2020*, ed. Attila Kiss (Szeged: JATE Press Kiadó, 2020), 33-60.

⁸ Kerry McSweeney, *The Language of the Senses: Sensory-Perceptual Dynamics in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 118.

⁹ Harold Aspiz, *WALT WHITMAN and the BODY BEAUTIFUL* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 241.

¹⁰ Walt Whitman, "Walt Whitman and His Poems," *The United States Review* vol. 5 (September 1855): 205-212. <https://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/reviews/lg1855/anc.00176.html>; Whitman states "He drops disguise and ceremony, and walks forth with the confidence and gayety of a child. For the old decorums of writing he substitutes new decorums." In the same self-review, Whitman repeatedly refers to the dichotomy between "the old decorums" and "new decorums." He states that "Every word that falls from his mouth shows silent disdain and defiance of *the old theories and forms*. Every phrase announces *new laws* [...];" and that "By this writer *the rules of polite circles are dismissed with scorn*. Your stale modesties, he says, are filthy to such a man as I." (emphasis mine)

¹¹ Kenneth Burke, "Policy Made Personal: Whitman's Verse and Prose-Salient Traits" in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Walt Whitman*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1985), 27.

¹² Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture" in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (London: Routledge, 1989), 8.

¹³ H. Aram Veesser, "Introduction" in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (London: Routledge, 1989), xiii.

Historicism addresses a space where “negotiation and exchange” between aesthetic and non-aesthetic by bringing back history into literary criticism.¹⁴ Louis A. Montrose states that “this project (New Historicism) reorients the axis of inter-textuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic text of a cultural system.”¹⁵ In a similar vein, the dissertation forefronts political discourse of Jefferson and cultural discourse of olfaction in the reading of the works of Whitman. Furthermore, in the application of New Historicism, the dissertation deals solely with what David Simpson calls “analytic” historicism. According to Simpson’s distinction between “analytic” and “prescriptive” historicism, the former is “a reconstruction of the past (whether text or event) that aspires to the status of objectivity”¹⁶ and the latter is “an attitude to the present and the future, a directive about how we are behaving or should behave in the world.”¹⁷ I want to stress my espousal of “analytic” historicism, which sets the tone and the scope of the dissertation. The aim of the dissertation is to put Whitman’s poetics into the framework of the larger American experiment, constituting “a reconstruction of the past that aspires to the status of objectivity.” Following Simpson’s approach, I will render the influence of Jefferson and the sense of smell what Simpson terms “the historical constituent – more than contexts”¹⁸ – in the dissertation, putting them explicitly in the criticism of Whitman through the attention to details.

Leaves of Grass 1855, the first edition of the book, is unlike other ones. The book witnesses three stages in which *Walter* Whitman – a hitherto political journalist¹⁹ – introduces *Walt* Whitman – a fictive character,²⁰ persona.²¹ It is noticeable that Whitman differentiates his use of

¹⁴ Greenblatt 1989, 1-14.

¹⁵ Louis A. Montrose, “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture” in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeger (London: Routledge, 1989), 17.

¹⁶ David Simpson, “Literary Criticism and the Return to “History,”” *Critical Inquiry* vol. 14, no. 4 (Summer 1988): 727.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 743.

¹⁹ Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7, 43.

²⁰ John F. Lynen, *The Design of the Present: Essays on Time and Form in American Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1969), 287. Lynen states that “Whitman is the most impersonal of poets, an artist

pronouns in the book. Firstly, the pronoun in the Preface is unnamed “He” – a new type of poet.²² Secondly, the pronoun from the beginning to the end of section 23 of a poem later called “Song of Myself” is unnamed “I.”²³ Thirdly, after section 24 of the poem,²⁴ named “Walt Whitman” “I” is introduced. In line with the critics of him,²⁵ Whitman himself acknowledges the experimental nature of the 1855 edition.²⁶ In the book, without actual encounter with readers, and ensuing negative receptions to the book, Whitman could experiment solely on his conviction; he could conclude the Preface with the line “The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.”²⁷

The dissertation features two aspects of Whitman’s poetics – the initial formation and the experimental nature of it. In light of the aforementioned distinctiveness of *Leaves of Grass* 1855, the dissertation prioritizes the 1855 edition of the book. In Chapter 5 of the dissertation, I take the liberty to refer to the other editions of the book since the various instances of olfactory tropes are in order. Chapter 6, though sharing the same objective as Chapter 5 but with the focus on the advent of the poet, refers mostly to the 1855 edition.

3. The Problems

completely concealed by his fictive character, Walt Whitman, Poet, and a man who delighted in his own experience because he supposed it was absolutely everybody’s.”

²¹ C. Carroll Hollis, *LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN Leaves of Grass* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 61. Hollis states that, Walt Whitman is a “persona, something of a device, intended to draw attention to the first American poet to be known by his nickname.”

²² Chaviva M. Hosek, “The Rhetoric of Whitman’s 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*,” *Walt Whitman Review* vol. 25, no. 4 (December 1979): 163-173.

²³ Joseph M. DeFalco, “The Narrative Shift in Whitman’s ‘Song of Myself,’” *Walt Whitman Review* vol. IX, no. 4 (December 1963): 82-84.

²⁴ DeFalco 1963, 82-84.

²⁵ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1959), x. Colwey states that “the text of the first edition is the purest text for “Song of Myself,” since many of the later corrections were also corruptions of the style and concealments of the original meaning; Marki states that “Whitman’s distinctive voice was never stronger, his vision never clearer, and his design never more improvisational than in the twelve poems of the first edition.” (Ivan Marki, “*Leaves of Grass*, 1855 Edition” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, eds. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings. New York: Garland Publishing, 1998, 354)

²⁶ Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden (July 16, 1888 – October 31, 1888)*. (New York: Rowman And Littlefield, INC., 1961), 225.

²⁷ Whitman 1959, 24.

3.1 The problems related to the influence of Jefferson on Whitman

There are various reasons for the disregard for the influence of Jefferson on Whitman and Whitman's olfactory tropes. As regards the influence of Jefferson on Whitman, first of all, Whitman is a canonical figure in the field of American Studies, and thus the criticism of his works has been influenced by the trend of reading of canonical works, which has decoupled art from politics.²⁸ Even if the criticism on Whitman's political view would be accepted, there is another obstacle to the incorporation of the influence of Jefferson into it; there is a widely held assumption that Lincoln is the president with whom Whitman is associated most,²⁹ an assumption so strong that it precludes the possibility of looking backward further to the relation between Whitman and Jefferson.³⁰ True, in the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman refers to Jefferson only once;³¹ Whitman's numerous references to Jefferson were made in his journalistic works before 1855, when Whitman had not fully established his poetic voice.

The reception of Betsy Erkkilä's *Whitman the Political Poet* – one of a few criticisms on Whitman which include Jefferson's influence on him – indicates that the incorporation of Jefferson into the criticism of Whitman is an uphill task. M. Wynn Thomas notes that Erkkilä's

²⁸ Erkkilä 1989, 7; John E. Seery, "Introduction: Democratic Vistas Today," in *A Political Companion To Walt Whitman*, ed. John E. Seery (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 2. Seery states that "The extent to which one should read Whitman as a "political" poet at all is a matter of dispute in the literature."

²⁹ Shira Wolosky, "Walt Whitman: the office of the poet" in *The Cambridge History of American Literature, vol. 4 Nineteenth-Century Poetry 1800–1910*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 373; The association between Whitman and Lincoln is supported both by a chapter entitled "Memories of President Lincoln" in *Leaves of Grass* (Whitman 1965, 328-339) and by Whitman's saying about the centrality of the Civil War in *Leaves of Grass*, "Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days & Collect* (Philadelphia: Rees Welsh & Co., 1882), 284)

³⁰ There are two points to consider here. Firstly, Jefferson influenced both Whitman and Lincoln, who states that "The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society" (Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln Speeches And Writings 1859-1865: Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings Presidential Messages and Proclamations*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher, New York: The Library of America, 1989, 19). Chapter 1 of the dissertation illustrates that the lineage running through Jefferson to the (new) Republican party, in which Lincoln later played a vital role. Secondly, in the eyes of the critics of Lincoln, the association between Whitman and Lincoln is not on sound footing. It is mere Whitman's (and his critics') one-sided love for Lincoln. (Eric Foner, RECENT BOOK REVIEWS *Lincoln and Whitman: Parallel Lives in Civil War Washington* By Daniel Mark Epstein <http://www.ericfoner.com/reviews/021504wpbw.html>; Mark E. Neely, Jr., "Whitman and the Civil War: A Response to Helen Vendler," *Michigan Quarterly Review* vol. XXXIX, Issue. 1 (Winter 2000) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0039.103>). Given these, the incorporation of Jefferson as the intermediary between Whitman and Lincoln makes the association between the two sounder. That said, I stop here since the relation between Jefferson and Lincoln is out of the scope of the dissertation.

book is groundbreaking in its “bringing politics into Whitman’s poetry.”³² Yet, Erkkilä’s approach as a whole is so epochal that some critics have overlooked her emphasis on the influence of Jefferson on Whitman. Although Erkkilä refers to Jefferson as often as Lincoln through frequent quotes directly from the writings of Jefferson,³³ there is no allusion to Jefferson in Stephen Railton’s review of Erkkilä’s book.³⁴ Part 1 and 2 of the dissertation is a continuation of Erkkilä’s investigation; drawing on her work, I extend the scope and depth of it. The investigation of Part 1 and 2 proceeds from the influence of Jefferson on *Walter* Whitman in Chapter 1, the influence of Jefferson on the formation of Whitman’s poetics in Chapter 2, Whitman’s poetics with the attention to “pride” in the context of the American experiment in Chapter 3, and to the influence of Jefferson on Whitman’s specific poem – “I Sing the Body Electric” –, in Chapter 4.

3.2 The problems related to Whitman’s olfactory tropes

Whitman’s olfactory tropes have been overlooked for different reasons. First of all, the main approaches to Whitman’s works have been from the critic’s position that Whitman is a Transcendentalist,³⁵ and thus what seems incompatible with Transcendentalism has been beneath their notice.³⁶ The negative attitude toward Whitman’s olfactory tropes dates back to Emerson himself, who set a precedent by stating that “There are parts of the book where I hold my nose as I read. [...] it is a fine art if he can deodorise his illustration...”³⁷ (That Emerson views Whitman’s olfactory tropes as a breach of the literary decorum conversely shows that

³¹ Whitman 1965, 517. In the poem titled “Election Day, November, 1884,” Whitman said, “These stormy gusts and winds waft precious ships, / Swell’d Washington’s, Jefferson’s, Lincoln’s sails.”

³²M. Wynn Thomas, “Erkkilä, Betsy. Whitman the Political Poet [review],” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* vol. 7, no. 1 (1989): 30.

³³ Erkkilä 1989, 353-354.

³⁴ Stephen Railton, “Whitman the Political Poet by Betsy Erkkilä [review],” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* vol. 45, no. 1 (June 1990): 103-105.

³⁵ Erkkilä 1989, 6-7.

³⁶ Joseph Beaver, *Walt Whitman – Poet of Science* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1951), 121.

³⁷ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Emerson at home and abroad* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882), 360.

Whitman's olfactory tropes typify Whitman's "new decorums.") More generally, since the time of Whitman and Emerson, our society has been more and more deodorized³⁸ – because of the animalistic aspect of the sense of smell³⁹ –, the phenomenon so prevalent that the critics seem under the influence of it; they deodorize Whitman's works in their reading. Just as importantly, although critics point out the import of the five senses in Whitman's poems – Whitman said that "I am the poet of the body"⁴⁰ –, when some of them refer to specific sense, their focus tend to be on the sense of touch, not on the sense of smell.⁴¹

The critical reception of Whitman's olfactory tropes shows that they have been held in low regard. As previously mentioned, sensuous perceptions through the five senses are at the forefront in Whitman's poems. Although the five senses are thoroughly employed by Whitman,⁴² the critical attention to Whitman's sense indicates two trends; whereas it highlights the sense of touch, it downplays the sense of smell. On this, Roger Asselineau's statements are revealing. On the one hand, Asselineau asserts that "there is in him a hyperesthesia of all the senses, particularly that of touch."⁴³ The major critics – for instance, Asselineau,⁴⁴ Kerry McSweeney,⁴⁵ and Larry J. Reynolds and Tibbie E. Lynch⁴⁶ – have noted that touch is the most important in Whitman's sensorium and poetry. On the other hand, another Asselineau's statement indicates that Whitman's olfaction is on the periphery in the criticism; he states "His (Whitman's) sensuality participates in all the activity of his senses, even his sense of smell."⁴⁷

³⁸ David Howes, "Olfaction and Transition" in *The varieties of sensory experience: A sourcebook in the anthropology of the senses*, ed. David Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 144.

³⁹ Stephen Kern, "Olfactory Ontology and Scented Harmonies: on the History of Smell," *The Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 7, no. 4 (1974): 816.

⁴⁰ Whitman 1959, 44; in the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the term "body" here is written capitalized. (Whitman 1965, 48)

⁴¹ Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution Of Walt Whitman: The Creation Of A Book* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press, 1962), 10, 13.

⁴² Asselineau 1962, 13.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Whitman 1959, 11.

⁴⁵ McSweeney 1998, 118.

⁴⁶ Larry J. Reynolds and Tibbie E. Lynch, "Sense and Transcendence in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman," *The South Central Bulletin* vol. 39, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 148.

⁴⁷ Asselineau 1962, 10.

The scant research on Whitman's olfaction includes the works of Burke,⁴⁸ Daniela Babilon,⁴⁹ and Christopher Looby.⁵⁰ While the study of Burke focuses on form, the studies of Babilon and Looby concern contextual reading. My position in this dissertation is that, true, touch is important but olfaction plays a distinctive role in Whitman's poems in terms of the conflation of his poetics and politics. Through the examination of Whitman's language – as in Burke's study⁵¹ –, Part 3 of the dissertation explores Whitman's olfactory tropes as poetic vehicle for self-government. In Chapter 5, through the investigation of two specific poems – “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and “Locations and Times” – I propose dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme as a new analytical concept in Whitman's poetics, and the role olfaction plays in Whitman's epistemology. In Chapter 6, through the examination of the specifics of figures of speech in the first five stanzas of “Song of Myself” – the very beginning of Whitman's poetic enterprise as well as the most important poem in *Leaves of Grass*⁵² –, I attempt to show the centrality of olfaction in terms of both his language experiment and the semantic of the poem.

3.3 The attention to “odor experience peculiar to Whitman”

Additionally, here I refer to what the critics of Whitman call “jarring”⁵³ or “provocative”⁵⁴ passage in “Song of Myself”: “The scent of these arm-pits is finer than prayer.”⁵⁵ When we focus exclusively on the sense of smell per se, a different smellscape may emerge, which shows that what is “jarring” or “provocative” to the critics may not be so to Whitman. Here the

⁴⁸ Burke 1985, 27-60.

⁴⁹ Daniela Babilon, *The Power of Smell in American Literature: Odor, Affect, and Social Inequality*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2017), 100-109.

⁵⁰ Christopher Looby, “The Roots of the Orchis, the Iuli of Chesnuts’: The Odor of Male Solitude” in *Solitary Pleasures: The Historical, Literary, and Artistic Discourses of Autoerotism*, eds. Paula Bennett and Vernon A. Rosario (New York: Routledge, 1995), 170-172.

⁵¹ William H. Rueckert, “Kenneth Burke's Encounters with Walt Whitman,” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* vol. 6, no.2 (1988): 63.

⁵² Richard Maurice Bucke, *Walt Whitman* (Glasgow: Wilson & McCormick, 1884), 159.

⁵³ Jerome Loving, *Emerson, Whitman, and the American Muse* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 147.

⁵⁴ Babilon 2017, 100.

⁵⁵ Whitman 1959, 49.

perspectives of Helen Keller, without vision and audio but with “the most famous nose,”⁵⁶ are helpful. In fact, Keller is unique in her relation to Whitman. Firstly, Keller was American and a great fan of Whitman,⁵⁷ who came to be “an inspiration to her in a very special way.”⁵⁸ Secondly, she had “the most famous nose.” Finally, she also had great linguistic skills as shown in her writings. The combination of her liking for Whitman, olfactory acuity, and linguistic skill helps us to explore the olfaction-centered world, especially this olfactory investigation into the works of Whitman. In fact, Keller makes an observation about body odor similar to that of Whitman,⁵⁹ which boils down to the two points. Firstly, for Keller, who lives in her distinctive smellscape, the more intensive the body odor is, the better. Body odor is an indicator of the vigor of a person. She might have felt that “The scent of these arm-pits – the strongest body odor⁶⁰ – is aroma finer than prayer.” Secondly, the body odor is a vital constituent in human being; body odor is an emanation of personal uniqueness. More generally, an odor can be something special. Whitman makes an equivalent claim; Whitman’s inclusion of odor in the property of a thing will be addressed in Section 3 of Chapter 5 of the dissertation. Whitman and Keller would be of the same opinion. (Although we are not sure how much Whitman influenced Keller’s thinking.) It may be our socio-cultural conventions⁶¹ that render what is natural for Whitman or Keller “jarring” or “provocative.” Yet, it remains that Whitman’s odor experience is unique.

⁵⁶ Anthony Synnott, “A sociology of smell,” *Canadian Review of Sociology/ Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* vol. 28, no. 4 (November 1991): 442. (437–459)

⁵⁷ Scott Giantvalley, “A Spirit Not ‘Blind to His Vision, Deaf to His Message’: Helen Keller on Walt Whitman,” *Walt Whitman Review* vol. 28, no. 2, 3, 4 (June-September-December 1982): 63-66.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Helen Keller, *The world I live in* (New York: The century Co., 1908), 74-75. Keller states, “Some people have a vague, unsubstantial odor that floats about, mocking every effort to identify it. It is the will-o’-the-wisp of my olfactive experience. Sometimes I meet one who lacks a distinctive person-scent, and I seldom find such a one lively or entertaining. On the other hand, one who has a pungent odor often possesses great vitality, energy and vigor of mind.”

⁶⁰ Boyd Gibbons, “The Intimate Sense of Smell,” *National Geographic* vol. 170, no. 3 (September 1986): 330.

⁶¹ In “Olfaction and Transition,” David Howes points out “the connection between the emergence of the notion of the person and the sudden lowering of the threshold of olfactory tolerance.” (Howes 1991, 145); In *The foul and the Fragrant*, Alain Corbin notes, “the fact that the odors of the “I” were better defined, more intensely felt, could only

I would like to argue that it is worthwhile to expand on the uniqueness of Whitman's odor experience, and propose to create a typology of "odor experience peculiar to Whitman," in which, as shown above, body odor is vivifying, and an odor can be something special. These two features help to link the two motifs of the dissertation – Jeffersonian Whitman and Whitman's olfactory tropes. I propose to show that Whitman's olfactory tropes are the vehicle for invigorating pride to continue the American experiment. While Whitmanian pride intends to provide the vigor to continue the American experiment of self-government, "odor experience peculiar to Whitman" serves as its medium. Through the poeticization of such odor experiences Whitman seeks to renew the vigor of the Americans after the decades of the Founding of the nation. Part 3 of the dissertation focuses on the instances in which Whitman, amid the degenerating American politics, poeticizes such pride through olfactory tropes.

4. Chapter summary

Throughout the dissertation, I narrow down the scope of my investigation. In Part 1 and 2, my investigation begins with Whitman's departure from party journalist in Chapter 1, proceeds to his choice of poetry as his medium in Chapter 2, and to his choice of the American character as the subject matter of his poetry in Chapter 3, and ends with how he poeticizes the American character with the forefronting of experience in Chapter 4. In Part 3, Whitmanian experience will be put in a different light, with the emphasis on form of his poems, more specifically Whitman's olfactory tropes in *Leaves of Grass*. Still, such tropes are examined against the background of the American experiment; Whitmanian experience in Part 3 is Whitmanian experience in Part 1 and 2 in disguise. In Chapter 5, I propose that the olfactory tropes are the vehicle for invigorating pride – which I introduce in Chapter 3 – to continue the American

stimulate repugnance to other people's odors." (Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Leamington Spa-Hamburg-New York: Berg Publishers, 1986), 61)

experiment. In this framework, Chapter 6 examines how olfactory tropes function in the first five stanzas of “Song of Myself.”

More specifically, in Chapter 1, I expand on Whitman’s involvement in the Wilmot Proviso controversy with the exclusion of what I term “Whitman the future poet bias” – critics’ teleological reading of Whitman’s journalistic works which prioritizes only the part where they can find the association between Walter Whitman and Walt Whitman. Although Whitman’s involvement in the Wilmot Proviso is one of the major catalysts in the making of the poet,⁶² he, then, was still Walter Whitman, not Walt Whitman. I reconstruct Whitman’s silence; when we refer to Herbert Bergman’s *The Journalism Vol. 2* with the focus on Whitman’s editorials on the Wilmot Proviso, it is noticeable that his editorship in *the Eagle* can be divided into four periods: the first period from March to December 1846, the second from January to April 1847, the third from May to August 1847, and the last from September 1847 to January 1848.⁶³ Furthermore, in these four periods, Whitman’s silence and broadside on the Wilmot Proviso alternates: the first being silent, the next broadside, then falling into silence, and finally (desperate) broadside again.⁶⁴ I propose to show that this cycle is related to New York Democratic politics, and that, through the portrayal of his involvement in it, Whitman follows (and eventually transgresses) the party discipline. I provide detailed constituents in the controversy and Whitman’s involvement in it.⁶⁵ I expand on an ideological lineage from Jefferson’s Report of a Plan of Government for the Western Territory 1784, the Northwest Ordinance 1787, the Wilmot Proviso, the Free Soil party and to the Republican party, and in so doing, I examine the validity and role of Whitman’s statements which expressly indicate Jefferson’s influence. It is only when we do

⁶² Erkkila 1989, 44.

⁶³ Walt Whitman, *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman: The Journalism II: 1846-1848*, ed. Herbert Bergman (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 153-389.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For instance, Whitman held a talk with Preston King about the anti-slavery with the reference to Jefferson, which shows that from the outset Jefferson was the mainstay for those who supported the Wilmot Proviso. (Whitman 2003, 164-165)

these – juxtaposition of Whitman’s actions with the making of the aforementioned ideological lineage, the core of which is the author attribution of the Northwest Ordinance to Jefferson, who is also the author of *the Declaration of Independence* – that we can fully appreciate the significance of Whitman’s calling of the Wilmot Proviso “Jeffersonian Proviso.”⁶⁶ Lastly, as the first chapter of this dissertation, its Introduction covers the overarching theme of the American experiment of self-government and its relation to Whitman.

In Chapter 2, I propose that Jefferson’s “ward system” – the subdivision of a county into smaller units in order to promote the revolutionary spirit through self-government⁶⁷ – has bearing on the formation of Whitman’s poetics, and that what connects the two enterprises is the preservation of the American revolutionary spirit. Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s insights into the American Revolution, especially her analysis of Jefferson’s ward system,⁶⁸ I attempt to connect Jefferson and Whitman. This new link between Jefferson and Whitman via the American revolutionary spirit puts Whitman’s poetics in a new light; Whitman’s “interior American republic”⁶⁹ is a further subdivision of Jefferson’s “ward republic.” In fact, Whitman the journalist showed a great interest in Jefferson’s “ward republic,”⁷⁰ but so far the critics of Whitman have overlooked this. Furthermore, I propose to explain Whitman’s choice of the poem as his medium in the context of the preservation of the American revolutionary spirit.

Chapter 3 examines Whitman’s poetics with the attention to the term “pride” in the context of the American experiment. I propose that Whitman poetically synthesizes three kinds of self-government – personal self-governing, self-government in poeticization, and political self-government –, and that in that synthesis, self-government in poeticization is at the center with the term “pride” as a pivotal constituent. In the process, I draw on Matt Miller’s study on the

⁶⁶ Whitman 2003, 348.

⁶⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson vol. XV*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907), 37-38.

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin books, 1963), 248-255.

⁶⁹ Whitman 1855, 205-212.

⁷⁰ Whitman 1998, 374, 456-457.

term “dilation” and “pride” in Whitman’s poetics.⁷¹ Whitman’s putting self-government in poeticization at the center is natural since Whitman chose poetry as his medium, and through his poeticization, he sought to set an example for the other two types – personal and political – of self-government. In overall Whitman’s poetics – and more specifically in his synthesis of three kinds of self-government –, the term “pride” plays the vital role.

In Chapter 4, I forefront the significance of ordinary people’s experience in the context of both Jefferson’s political philosophy and Whitman’s poetics. Jefferson believed that “American social and historical experience (of self-government during the colonial era) had made a democratic American politics possible and proper,”⁷² and demanded “continual cultivation and regeneration of that experience.”⁷³ And I propose that Whitman intensifies common experience⁷⁴ in the context of the aforementioned Jeffersonian experience. I categorize such experience into two types: one on a contemporary solidarity (synchrony), and the other on a sense of continuity with the past (diachrony). While I apply this framework to the poem “I Sing the Body Electric,” I propose that the flow from synchrony and diachrony of experience in the poem demonstrates a process wherein a plain description of everyday experience – mere enumeration of body parts – turns into a unique American experience of self-government which enables its Republicanism.

In Part 3 of this dissertation, the increasing attention is paid to the form, namely, Whitman’s olfactory tropes. Still, the tone and the scope of it remain “analytical” with the textual reading at the center of investigation. Part 3 incorporates both various olfaction-related anthropology⁷⁵ and

⁷¹ Matt Miller, *Collage of myself: Walt Whitman and the Making of Leaves of Grass* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 104-160.

⁷² Brian Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124.

⁷³ Steele 2012, 132-133.

⁷⁴ David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 285.

⁷⁵ Included are: Alfred Gell, “Magic, Perfume, Dream” in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-cultural Studies in Symbolism*, ed. Ioan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977); David Howes, “Olfaction and Transition” in *The varieties of sensory experience: A sourcebook in the anthropology of the senses*, ed. David Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Trygg Engen, *The perception of odors* (New York: Academic Press, 1982); and Trygg Engen, *Odor Sensation and Memory* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

a broad spectrum of existing scholarship on Whitman. Especially, Matt Miller's *Collage of Myself: Walt Whitman and the Making of Leaves of Grass* helps me in both Chapter 3 and 5 of this dissertation with his study on Whitman's key concept of "dilation" and "pride."

In Chapter 5, I explore Whitman's olfaction-centered thinking – his poetics and epistemology – through the investigation of two poems: "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" and "Locations and Times." In the death bed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the two poems are the only the poems which bear the term "correspond" – one of the key terms in the Transcendentalism⁷⁶ –, and which also happen to bear the term "odor." As regards Whitman's poetics, I formulate dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme as a new analytical concept. In the process of conceiving this scheme, I refer to Miller's study on Whitman's "dilation"⁷⁷ – at the level of concept – and Richard A. Law's study on Whitman's "The respiration motif"⁷⁸ – at the level of physiology –, and find that some element – at the level of sense – is missing. I propose that the addition of the elements of olfaction to their studies leads to the integration of three levels with the result of becoming more thorough framework for explaining Whitman's poetics of the expansion of individual consciousness and communal intersubjectivity. Furthermore, through the rewording of dilation into pride, I recast the scheme into another new scheme, *pride*-respiration-olfaction scheme, and thus conflate pride with olfaction, as I do so through the notion of "odor experience peculiar to Whitman." Whitman's olfactory tropes are for invigorating pride to continue the American experiment. It is interesting that Whitman's elevation of olfaction to the medium for pride in both cases occasions olfaction's shift from the periphery to the center among the five senses.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 51-52, 149.

⁷⁷ Miller 2010, 104-160.

⁷⁸ Richard A. Law, "The respiration motif in Song of Myself," *Walt Whitman Review* vol. X, no. 4 (December 1964): 92-97.

As regards Whitman's epistemology, I refer to Marion Harris's study on Whitman's epistemology,⁷⁹ and find that although Harris notes the importance of the five senses in Whitman's poems, she does not specify which sense plays a particular role.⁸⁰ With the clarification of the role of the sense of smell, I attempt to show that Whitman's epistemological correspondence between the material and the spiritual is mediated by the olfaction. I attempt to demonstrate that Whitman's thinking is olfaction-centered through the investigation both of his poetics and epistemology.

In Chapter 6, the dissertation continues to examine Whitman's olfactory tropes in the framework of his poetic-political experiment. With this in mind, I attempt to grapple with the specifics of figures of speech in the first five stanzas of "Song of Myself" – the first poem in *Leaves of Grass* 1855. Whitman calls *Leaves of Grass* "a language experiment," and states that "For the old decorums of writing he substitutes new decorums."⁸¹ It follows naturally that the beginning of his poetic endeavor – the beginning of "Song of Myself" – reflects these Whitman's sayings, and in fact it has a distinctive feature: the numerous presence of olfactory tropes. Yet so far no research has been done specifically on this formal trait of the upfront of the sense of smell. I start the exploration with inquiry into the relation between Whitman and Emerson, and find that the "Whitman the Transcendentalist" approach is not beneficial but rather militates on the specific issue of Whitman's employment of olfactory tropes. Facing this, I incorporate anthropological views on the sense of smell, and approach Whitman's olfactory tropes with the focus on the semantics of odor in Whitman's poetic diction. I propose that this olfactory reading of the beginning of "Song of Myself" demonstrates that Whitman's exploration for new poetic diction and the semantic of Whitman's materialization into a poet – both are correlated – necessitate frequent usages of olfactory tropes. Through three olfactory

⁷⁹ Marion Harris, "Nature and Materialism: Fundamentals in Whitman's Epistemology," *Walt Whitman Review* vol. IX, no. 4 (December 1963): 85-88.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

“celebrations” – calling body odor the fragrance and enjoying it,⁸² coming into contact with the atmosphere,⁸³ and calling breath smoke⁸⁴ –, Whitman metamorphoses into a mythical poet.⁸⁵ Moreover, a close look at this transition shows that Whitman experiences “inner split”⁸⁶ between the New World and the Old World consciousness, but with invigorating pride expressed through “fragrance,”⁸⁷ he overcomes the split and metamorphoses into a mythical poet. The key here is Whitman’s self-government in poeticization, which leads him to elevate body odor to “fragrance.” The dense placement of olfactory tropes in the first five stanzas of “Song of Myself” shows that Whitman entrusted his career as a poet to those tropes, and that they came to become the fountainhead of his ensuing poems in the sense that they signify his entry into a mythical poet. *Leaves of Grass* has undergone extensive revisions, yet those olfactory tropes have remained intact until to the last edition.

5. Findings

Part 1 and Part 2 of the dissertation has provided ample evidence of the so far hidden connections between Whitman and Jefferson through the unearthing of “the unused past” in the criticism of Whitman, which consists both of the writings of Jefferson and of the writings of Whitman mainly before *Leaves of Grass* 1855. With the focus on the central problematic of Part 1 and Part 2 of the dissertation – “Whitman the future poet bias” –, the dissertation shed a new light on the writings of both Whitman and Jefferson in the attempt to connect the two.

As has been seen, Jefferson wields influence over Whitman at the critical junctures: 1) Whitman’s departure from party journalist, 2) his choice of poetry as his medium, 3) his choice

⁸¹ Whitman 1855, 205-12.

⁸² Whitman 1959, 25.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ James E. Miller Jr., *A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 7.

⁸⁶ Howard J. Waskow, *Whitman: Explorations in Form* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 159-161.

⁸⁷ Whitman 1959, 25.

of the American character as the subject matter of his poetry, and 4) his poeticization of the American character with the emphasis on experience of ordinary people.

Part 3 of the dissertation, while with its focus more on form, has continued to examine Whitman's works in the framework of the American experiment of self-government. In conflating Whitman's politics and poetics, the dissertation has demonstrated that Whitman chose olfactory tropes as the vehicle for invigorating pride to continue the American experiment of self-government. In so doing, the dissertation has proposed a dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme as a new analytical tool based on the previous scholarships on Whitman. The scheme has been further developed into another one, *pride*-respiration-olfaction scheme, which helps to show that Whitman's politics and poetics are conflated in Whitmanian pride expressed through olfaction. Another key element in this conflation is the notion of "odor experience peculiar to Whitman": Whitman's notions that body odor is vivifying and that an odor can be something special. Whitman's olfactory tropes which forefront such experience are the medium to signify the aforementioned pride. Whitman's adoption of olfaction as the medium for pride in both instances – via *pride*-respiration-olfaction scheme or "odor experience peculiar to Whitman" – is all the more noteworthy because his so doing occasions olfaction's shift from the periphery to the center among the five senses. Conflating poetics and politics in this manner is Whitman's poetic-political experiment par excellence.

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