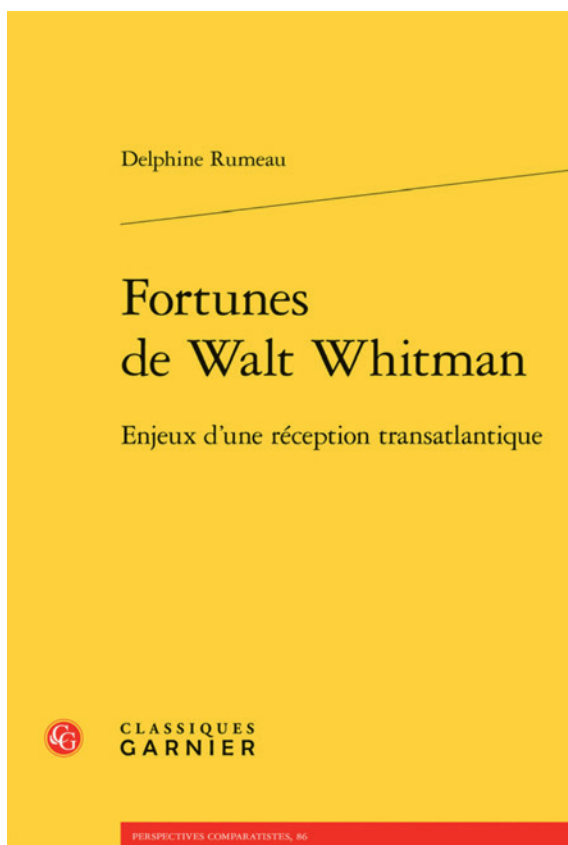

ДИАЛОГ ДВУХ АМЕРИК

HEMISPHERIC STUDIES: INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE

К 200-ЛЕТИЮ УОЛТА УИТМЕНА
BICENTENNIAL: WALT WHITMAN



DELPHINE RUMEAU
FORTUNES DE WALT WHITMAN.
ENJEUX D'UNE RÉCEPTION TRANSATLANTIQUE
Paris: Classiques Garnier, "Perspectives comparatistes", 2019. 769 p.

The subject of this book is Whitman's reception, a topic in itself very much covered by critics, but usually not in a synthetic and comparative manner. The idea was to avoid putting side by side studies on Whitman's reception in such or such national contexts, but instead to illuminate the circulation of receptions and to map out the network of dialogues that were established around Whitman in Western poetic traditions. One of the most striking aspects of Whitman's reception is indeed how dynamic it is. Whitman's declared poetic heirs do not write homages or elegies for him, they address him directly, as a living poet with whom they can engage in conversation and debate. Whitman himself called for such a gesture: he regularly addressed the "poets to come", placing himself under the tutelage of his followers instead of his ancestors. Yet, it remains astonishing how this call to the reader and to future poets resonated in twentieth-century poetry. The other noteworthy feature of Whitman's reception is how broad and varied it is, beyond national boundaries: Whitman's reception is a case study for World Literature, since it is not about one-way "influence," but about back-and-forth movements between the United States and other cultures. The international dimension of this reception was essential from the start. In part, it was a response to Whitman's own salutations to the world, as in the French-titled "Salut au monde," one of the first poems to be translated in many countries and one of the most internationally quoted. Still, why did this call resonate so strongly abroad? This question was the starting point of my investigation.

Paradoxical as it seems, it might well be precisely because Whitman was considered the poet of America that he first had so much appeal for many foreign commentators: interest in his poetry was fueled by interest in America, by the possibilities that it opened as a "new continent" for old Europe, as an attractive and dangerous partner for Latin America, as an emerging power for other parts of the world, even though it is especially in a transatlantic relationship involving Europe and the Americas that Whitman's reception was the most dynamic. Debates on Whitman are often difficult to separate from debates on America, democracy, and modernity, which developed mostly in transatlantic exchanges. Moreover, the European Whitmanians thought of themselves as a cosmopolitan circle: Léon Bazalgette, the first French translator of the full edition of *Leaves of Grass*, dreamed of building the United States of Europe after Whitman's America and was in close contact with his British and German counterparts. Even though Whitmanian networks were never to be as tightly interwoven as in this first, intense, European phase, they remained well connected,

and it is a striking phenomenon how choral Whitman's reception is, how it contributed to establish dense transatlantic and hemispheric fields within World Literature.

The spaces which provide the frame for my study also have a linguistic coherence: exchanges were particularly strong when languages were shared, English obviously, but also French, which was widely read in Latin America (the French reception provided an important prism for the Québécois reception but also for the Brazilian one), and Spanish (the Spanish-speaking American reception had a strong impact on the North-American one). The Russian and Soviet reception also became a major pole in this study. Indeed it sheds an exemplary light on the importance and the complexity of cultural circulation in Russia before the Revolution: Whitman was widely read and interpreted via Western philosophy (especially Nietzsche), via European critics (especially the French and the British), and through local perspectives on primitivism; the Soviet reception also turned out to be crucial, since Whitman was often read in Europe and in America (especially in Latin America) as a political poet, socialist or communist. The Eastern detour was necessary to understand such political stakes, as in the case of Pablo Neruda, one of the great Whitmanian "*compañeros*". The main contribution of this transatlantic and hemispheric perspective is to show that the most innovative interpretations of Whitman were proposed abroad before they came back to the United States: Whitman was read as a gay poet in Britain long before Ginsberg made him an iconic figure, he was a socialist and a communist poet in Europe before he was hailed by American proletarian writers in the 1930's; political interest in Whitman was revived after WW2 in Latin America before it was the case in the United States. Even the idea of Whitman as a "national poet" was developed in Europe (especially in France at the end of the 19th century) well before Whitman was placed at the center of the American canon by F.O. Matthiessen. That being said, this coherence is also more accidental, as it is the result of my own proficiencies in some languages (and lack thereof in others), and more studies of Whitman in a global context, taking into account his importance in China and Japan for example, would certainly be most useful.

* * *

The book is divided into four chapters. The first two have a synchronicity, as they focus on the most intense moment of Whitman's reception,

the turn of the century and the beginning of the 20th century, in Europe, then in Latin America. Both chapters put the notion of “modernity” at the core of Whitman’s reception. The following two chapters are more diachronic: one addresses the “polemical Whitman” while the other focuses on the “Whitmanian body”.

The first chapter revolves around the “Belle Époque,” the peak of “whitmania” as Swinburne called it. It shows that Whitman was essentially read as a “primitive” and investigates the different meanings that this concept encompassed, meanings that were largely culturally determined and varied from one context to another: Whitman was sometimes a Barbarian (in France or Russia), sometimes an Archaic Greek (in Britain), sometimes a Biblical poet (in Spain). Discussions about free verse and the possibility to import it in other languages and traditions also loom large. I then focus on the debates about the changes in the “distribution of the sensible” (Jacques Rancière’s phrase) that Whitman brought and about the aesthetic revolution that came along. Finally, I argue that the European reception contributed to the view of Whitman as the American national poet. Whitman elicited more commentaries and reactions in Europe than in the United States at that time. Ezra Pound, one of the American authors who most engaged in a strong relation with Whitman, convincingly argued that Whitman “came before the nation was self-conscious or introspective or subjective; before the nation was interested in being itself”. Once it became more self-conscious, a whole array of European readings of Whitman was already available; Pound’s own relation with Whitman was largely shaped by European debates, as the end of the chapter shows.

The second chapter moves from Europe to America, to the invention of a “continental” Whitman, who was able to provide a poetry fitting the vastness of the continent, a geographical poetry. The free verse is also a central element here, but the stakes are different: it is the verse of a poetry liberated from European norms. The topic has already been quite well studied for Latin America (both Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking), but I also show the impact that Whitman’s translation had in Québec and how it contributed to the reorientation of French-Canadian poetry toward Americanness. However, the desire to continue Whitman’s work proved ambiguous and sometimes turned into a will to complement it, if not to correct it. This is especially true for Latin America, where poets emphasized several differences with Whitman, in particular a different relation with the past, be it colonial or Native-American. Such complex relations also existed within the United States: while the Harlem Renaissance (especially Langston

Hughes) claimed a direct lineage with Whitman (“I, Too, Sing America”), other minorities had more critical responses (especially Native-American poets). A part of this chapter reflects on what remains of the Whitmanian ideal of “modernity” in the Americas and examines the trope of the “ruins of the modern” in poems talking back to Whitman.

The topic of the third chapter is the “polemical” Whitman. First, the history of the reception of Whitman as a gay poet is told, with emphasis on the gap between Europe and the United States: while such a reading existed early in Great Britain (linked with the image of a Greek Whitman), in Germany and even in France, it was only with Allen Ginsberg (possibly through García Lorca) that it became common in the United States. The next part dwells on Whitman the “prophet” of a new religion (in Britain, in Canada, but also in Quebec where Whitman was hailed as the poet of the body in the context of a very strict Catholic society). Finally, I study at length the polemical political Whitman, especially the socialist one in Britain (echoed in Germany and France), and the communist one in the young USSR, where Whitman was strongly appropriated: Chukovsky’s translations were widely circulated and underwent several editions (some with a commentary by Lunacharsky), until Whitman became a Soviet classic. This red Whitman then crossed back the Atlantic and became a major figure for American proletarian poets in the 1930’s (as in the “Ode to Walt Whitman” by Mike Gold). After the Second World War, interest for this political Whitman decreased in Europe, while it was fueled in Latin America by León Felipe’s translation, which became very famous. Whitman was appropriated especially by Pablo Neruda, but also by Pedro Mir. Neruda’s readings had a strong impact on Ginsberg (even though he was not a communist himself). A last part of this chapter is about Whitman during the Vietnam War, and its conclusion considers Whitman’s political significance today.

The last chapter deals with more poetic questions. First, it examines reactions to the new conception of the poetic “I” that Whitman brought to the fore, as a plastic and all-encompassing subject, but also as a more complex and fragile entity – Borges and Pessoa were particularly sensitive and responsive to the contradictions of the Whitmanian subject. I then study the fascination for Whitman’s body, the credit that was given (or not) to his will to confuse life and poetry, the man and the book; I especially pay attention to fetishist relations to Whitman, with developments on the “beard” as a relic. The very last part deals with the ideas of incorporation, transmission and heritage, with the conceptions of translation that Whitman’s poetics implicitly advocated. My contention is that Whitman provided an original

idea of poetic tradition that was based on experience and adhesion and that could transcend language. In other words, Whitman founded not only a national tradition but also a transatlantic one.

The conclusion elaborates on this idea of tradition and also tackles the notion of “influence” as Whitman enables us to understand it: not as a constraining force, not as a Bloomian confrontation, but as a form of openness and a refusal of the limits of the self.

* * *

The article “Hemispheric Whitman” that is presented here draws material from the book (mainly from chapters 2 and 3) but does not reproduce directly any part of it: it synthesizes some aspects of the research to emphasize the “hemispheric” or “continental” circulations of Whitman’s receptions.

Delphine Rumeau.

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HEMISPHERIC WHITMAN

Abstract: Whitman's reception is crucial to the history of World Literature in the 20th century. It involves especially transatlantic and hemispheric circulation. This article focuses on the latter and explores the importance of Whitman's poetry for American literatures and cultures, from Northern America (Quebec) to Latin America. Whitman was central to the development of a continental poetry and to the emergence of long poems in free verse that would embrace the immensity of American nature. Yet poets rapidly expressed the will not only to extend Whitman's poetry to the North or to the South, but to complement or even to correct it (especially in Brazil). In this process, Whitman unexpectedly became a reference for Black Americas. This move involves more political aspects, and Whitman was indeed strongly appropriated for partisan motives in Latin America, especially by communist poets like Pablo Neruda. The editorial policy towards Whitman, especially in the USSR and Eastern European countries, constructed the ideologically correct image of the poet who had foreseen communism. Our point is to show how entangled this reception is, what back and forth movements it involves, how Latin American interpretations had an impact on US readings, but also that a few transatlantic detours are necessary to clarify this hemispheric story.

Keywords: Whitman, reception, hemispheric studies, Rubén Darío, Armando Vasseur, Pablo Neruda, Rosaire Dion-Lévesque, Langston Hughes, León Felipe, Pedro Mir.
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Дельфина РЮМО

УИТМЕН В НОВОМ СВЕТЕ

Аннотация: Восприятие творчества Уитмена, особенно по ту сторону Атлантического океана и в Новом Свете, сыграло важную роль в истории мировой литературы XX века. Предметом анализа в этой статье является значение поэзии Уитмена для Нового Света – литератур и культур обеих Америк, от Северной Америки (Квебек) до Латинской Америки. Уитмен – ключевая фигура в становлении поэзии на обоих континентах; под его влиянием появились написанные свободным стихом поэмы, которые должны были выражать величие американской природы. Однако поэты вскоре обнаружили желание не только «расширить границы» поэзии Уитмена на Севере или на Юге, но дополнить ее или даже исправить (прежде всего в Бразилии). В ходе этого процесса фигура Уитмена неожиданно приобрела особый статус среди темнокожих американцев. Эта тенденция объяснялась в большей степени политическими факторами, а в Латинской Америке творчество Уитмена активно наделялось идеологическими смыслами – наиболее склонны к таким трактовкам были поэты-коммунисты, в том числе Пабло Неруда. Издатели Уитмена, особенно в СССР и странах Восточной Европы, выстраивали идеологически безупречный образ поэта, предвосхитившего коммунизм. Задача настоящей статьи – показать всю сложность этого процесса, происходившие в ходе рецепции колебания между разными точками зрения, влияние латиноамериканских интерпретаций на картину, сложившуюся в США; для полноты анализа приведены и отдельные европейские примеры.

Ключевые слова: Уитмен, рецепция, исследования Нового Света, Рубен Дарио, Армандо Вассёр, Пабло Неруда, Розер Дион-Левеск, Лэнгстон Хьюз, Леон Фелипе, Педро Мир.

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Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, from its first publication in 1855 to the much expanded "deathbed" edition of 1891, is a landmark in American literature but also in World Literature¹. Whitman famously addressed the "poets to come", revising drastically the classical idea of poetic authority, placing himself under the tutelage of his successors rather than his ancestors. His call was heard, echoed, and answered by numerous poets, especially in the Americas and across the Atlantic. To be more precise, Whitman's reception was initially more passionate abroad, and it is with some delay that his fame developed in his own country; the most challenging and polemical interpretations were conceived and published abroad (for example, Whitman was read as a gay poet in Britain as early as the end of the 19th century, but only after the World War II in the United States, with Allen Ginsberg; as we shall see, the same is true of the most politically radical readings). Whitman actually called for bold interpretations, if not appropriations. He wrote several legacy poems, which stage the dissolution of his body, offered for later incorporation ("I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love / If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles") [Whitman 2001: 77]. Whitman intended to found a new tradition, but he left a legacy of freedom and originality; this paradoxical alliance of authority (Whitman is a father figure for American poetry) and of relinquishment is a key to understand Whitman's incredible success in modern poetry, since he brought new meaning to the concept of "influence", as an active, yet not coercive power. Moreover, Whitman's reception is a story of dialogues, no matter how fictional or truncated they might be: Whitman's declared poetic heirs do not write homages for him, they address him directly, as a living poet with whom they can engage a conversation.

This paper will focus on a part of this dynamic and often entangled reception: Whitman in the Americas, *i.e.* Whitman's "hemispheric" reception, even though, as we shall see, a few transatlantic detours are necessary to understand it fully. Interest and enthusiasm for Whitman's poetry started in Latin America slightly later than in Europe, but was a more prolonged phenomenon, that lasted until well after World War II. Whitman's reception came later in Portuguese- and French-speaking countries of the Continent than in the Spanish-speaking ones. This delay only densified the strata of mediations that filtered Whitman's reception, influenced in Quebec by the French commentaries, and in Brazil both by the French- and the Spanish-speaking ones. I will first show that Whitman was seen in Latin America

¹ On Whitman and World Literature, see [Folsom 2018].

(and in Quebec) as a model for continental poetry, freed from European influences. However Latin American poets soon shifted from the will to be Whitman's counterparts to the desire to complement his work, to give more space to "other" Americas. Finally, I will focus on the political aspects of Whitman's reception, and see what impact they had on US readings. The aim of this paper is not to investigate in full depth each aspect of this reception (I will provide the necessary bibliographical references for more details²), but to show how intricate it is, what back and forth movements it involves, what dense networks of Whitmanian poets it reveals or even creates.

Continental Whitman ("You taught me to be American")

The history of Whitman's reception in Latin America really started with an enthusiastic piece by the Cuban writer José Martí, published in 1887³. The occasion of this seminal article was a reading by Whitman that Martí attended in New York. One should add that 1886 was an incredible Whitmanian year in Europe (with Rhys's edition in England, with Jules Laforgue's translations of several poems into French in the Symbolist review *La Vogue*): it is probably not a coincidence that Martí, well aware of what was published and discussed in France, contributed to the rising field of Whitman commentators. He wrote lavish praise, focusing on the poet's aura, and launched a strong Latin American tradition of portraying Whitman, especially the old poet, the "good old gray," as in Rubén Darío's sonnet "Walt Whitman" in 1890, or, much later, in Jorge Luis Borges' "Camden 1892"⁴ (a sonnet as well, clearly echoing Darío's one, but with a more existential and melancholy note). Martí however was not just interested in the persona,

² I went into more specific aspects in my book, in French [Rumeau 2019]; for the points treated in this article, see in particular chapter 2: 229–325 and chapter 3: 424–521. The bibliography can be consulted online: <https://classiques-garnier.com/fortunes-de-walt-whitman-enjeux-d-une-reception-transatlantique-bibliographie.html?displaymode=full>

³ Martí had written earlier comments on Whitman, but this particular piece had a very strong impact: "El poeta Walt Whitman" [Martí 1887a], then in *La Nación* [Martí 1887b]. The Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez argues that Martí is the one who introduced Whitman to all the Spanish-speaking world ("a los españoles todos") and that he "incorporated" the United States to Hispanic America and to Spain [Jiménez 1942]. Also see [Jiménez 1999], in which Jiménez explains that Darío came to read Whitman thanks to Martí.

⁴ The poem was first published in 1966 in the collected works [Borges 1966]; those additional poems later formed the collection *El otro, el mismo*.

but also in the poetry. He explains that Whitman heralded a new religion of “freedom” (“libertad”) and insists on the formal changes involved by such a revolution: his language is completely new, as well as his composition methods, which arrange ideas in “great musical groupings”⁵.

Shortly after this publication, Whitman became a major reference for Hispanic American poetry. The premises of *modernismo* were sometimes contradictory: while it advocated an aboriginal inspiration (which turned out to be essentially thematic), it also valued some European genres and forms (such as the French version of the sonnet). Yet it is from within *modernismo* that continental consciousness emerged and that a call for a Whitmanian spirit was heard. Whitman appeared indeed as the inventor of American poetry, who embraced for the first time the vast dimensions of the Continent and its wilderness. He was the first “aboriginal” poet, able to turn his back on Europe. As mentioned, Darío published a sonnet addressed to Whitman (who was then still alive), in the ensemble *Medallones*, an addition to the first edition of the ground-breaking collection *Azul*. Whitman is depicted as a “new prophet singing his song” with a chiseled harp made of oak⁶ (a reference to Ossian, a model of primitive poetry).

The sense of belonging to the “New World” grew stronger and stronger in late *modernismo* (Rubén Darío came to write much longer poems, with enumerations of the riches of America, especially in his *Canto a la Argentina*) and in a movement that was to be aptly named *nuevomundismo* (literally New Worldism). Among the poets who paid tribute to Whitman and wrote poems with the same geographical and encompassing ambitions, stand the Argentine Leopoldo Lugones, the Peruvian José Santos Chocano, and the Uruguayan Armando Vasseur. Lugones’ long poem, *Las montañas de oro* (prefaced by Darío in the first edition), pays homage to Whitman in terms similar to Darío’s sonnet, with references to the “noble song” achieved by the carving of the “oak”⁷. What was condensed by Darío is now expanded in a poem that intends to prolong Whitman’s work and not only to celebrate it. Chocano’s 1906 collection

⁵ For more commentaries of this text, see [Alegria 1954] (one of the first extensive studies of Whitman’s reception in Hispanic America), and, more recently [Díaz Ruiz 2007].

⁶ “y con arpa labrada de un roble añejo, / como un profeta nuevo canta su canto” [Darío 1994: 178]. Note the insistence on the “canto” (Whitman also regularly sings a song). English translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise stated.

⁷ “Whitman entona un canto serenamente noble. / Whitman es el glorioso trabajador del roble.” [Lugones 1897: 15].

Alma América (Soul America) does not explicitly refer to Whitman, but it seems to take over from Darío (who wrote the “prelude”) and Lugones: in his preface, Chocano declares that his only aim is to be “Poet of America”⁸, and some poems are subtitled “in the yankee manner” (“a la manera yanqui”). Interestingly, this American poem was first published in Europe, in Paris and in Madrid [Unamuno 1906b] (with a prologue by Miguel de Unamuno, who had translated a poem by Whitman and written a piece on him that same year, 1906⁹) [Unamuno 1906a]. Vasseur deserves special attention since he was also the first substantial translator of Whitman into Spanish; he was Uruguayan but his parents were French and he lived in Spain for a while, where in 1912 he published his translation, which would have a tremendous impact on Spanish-language literature. Translating Whitman seems to have been the ultimate achievement of a poet whose work epitomizes the concept of “nuevomundismo”, as shown by the titles *Cantos augurales* (1904, with epigraphs from Whitman, but in Italian, from Luigi Gamberale’s 1887 translation) and *Cantos del Nuevo Mundo* (1907). The prologue insists that Whitman will bring fresh air to Hispanic American literature, which has been too spoiled by European (especially French) “emanations”¹⁰. By breaking the mold of medieval metrics, Whitman gave the American intellect “freedom of creation and expression”. This continental claim is somewhat paradoxical since not only was the book published in Spain, but Vasseur consulted and used at length the Italian translation by Gamberale and the French translation by Bazalgette, published in 1909¹¹: the ways of hemispheric Whitmanian poetry are indeed meandering.

However, Hispanic American readings differed from the European ones: whereas the debate focused in Europe on Whitman’s “modernity” and what it meant, including how modern themes, such as the city, the crowds, technical achievements, could fit in poetry, in Latin America, it was more the geographical, natural, continental aspects of this poetry that were

⁸ “sólo quiero ser Poeta de América.” [Chocano 1906: xii].

⁹ Unamuno later established a link between Martí and Whitman, who both experimented with free verse [Unamuno 1919].

¹⁰ “¡Bendita sea la tempestad de su arte, si logra airear la atmósfera literaria hispanoamericana, tan recargada de emanaciones gallinacéas!” [Vasseur 1912: xii].

¹¹ Enrico Mario Santi even holds that Vasseur knew no English [Santi 1990]; Matt Cohen and Rachel Price convincingly argue though that Vasseur did use the English version [Cohen, Price 2006].

underlined¹². It is still the case with the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who always recognized Whitman as a decisive model for continental poetry: “In truth, it was he, Walt Whitman, the protagonist of a truly geographical personality, who stood up for the first time in history which a continentally American name”¹³. The beginning of the “Oda a Walt Whitman” that Neruda wrote in 1956 stresses which paradoxical Whitmanian lesson (paradoxical since it teaches to get rid of the teacher) that space should always be the object of first-hand knowledge:

Tú	You
me enseñaste	taught me
a ser americano,	to be American,
levantaste	you raised
mis ojos	my eyes
a los libros,	to books
hacia	toward
el tesoro	the treasure
de los cereales:	of cereals:
ancho,	vast,
en la claridad	in the clarity
de las llanuras,	of the plains,
me hiciste ver	you made me see
el alto	the high
monte	mountain
tutelar [...]	that tutors us.

[Neruda 1999–2000: II: 429]

The book is only a springboard that gives access to more beyond it: “a los libros, hacia los cereales.” Getting rid of preconceptions made the

¹² Exceptions can be noted (they tend to have been published a bit later): [Maples Arce 1924]; [Parra del Riego 1925]; [Ortiz Vargas 1939] (Ortiz Vargas was a Colombian who emigrated to the United States).

¹³ “una personalidad realmente geográfica que se levantaba por primera vez en la historia con un nombre continentalmente americano”. [Neruda 1999–2002: V: 359]. Neruda develops this point in his memoirs *Confieso que he vivido*: “if my poetry has any meaning at all, it lies in this unlimited thirst for space, which cannot be quenched in a room. I had to cross this frontier of mine by myself. I had to be myself, to try and spread out like the very lands where I chanced to be born. I was helped on this path by another poet of this continent. I refer to Walt Whitman, my comrade from Manhattan.” [Neruda 1999–2002: V: 688]

poet able to seize the whole variety of nature, the vastness of continental space. Correspondingly, the epic dimension of Whitman's work is much more salient to American Whitmanian poets than it was to European ones. It was already visible in *Las montañas de oro* and *Alma América* and is even more so in Neruda's *Canto general* (1950) – the first canto of which is entitled “Amor América” (the reference to Chocano's poem seems quite obvious and might indicate an epic chain). This epic Whitmanian inspiration was also strong in the West Indies, as explained in Derek Walcott's essay “The Muse of History,” which celebrates Whitman's (and Neruda's) “adamic” vision [Walcott 1998 : 38]; the French Caribbean writer Édouard Glissant praised Whitman in the same terms and also considered him a pioneer of what he defined as “the poetics of relation” [Glissant 1990].

Whitman's reception in Quebec¹⁴ equally foregrounds the continental and geographical dimensions of his poetry. It certainly played a role in reorienting French-Canadian poetry toward an American paradigm, from brief and chiseled forms (which were predominant at the beginning of the 20th century) to longer and more epic ones. It is no coincidence that those who were much involved in this process were Franco-Americans (in this context, the term refers to French Canadians who emigrated to the United States or to their descendants). The main actor in this story was Rosaire Dion-Lévesque (pseudonym for Léo-Albert Lévesque), a lawyer who lived in New Hampshire, and wrote very conventional poems before his discovery of Whitman. Dion-Lévesque read Whitman during a trip to Belgium (the transatlantic detour is to be noted again), thanks to the proletarian poet Jean-Louis Vandermaesen. His enthusiasm was immediate and he started translating some of the poems. Yet in the strict Roman Catholic and clerical society of French Canada, it was no easy matter to find a publisher that would accept it. After several refusals, in 1933, Dion-Lévesque and the publisher Albert Pelletier had to found a publishing house *ad hoc*, Les Elzévir, for Whitman's *Meilleures pages traduites de l'anglais*. The selection was prefaced by the main Franco-American critic of the time, Louis Dantin, and it was praised by French-Canadian poet Alfred DesRochers, whose work is a striking example of this shift from sonnets to long “hymns” and “odes”, full of continental energy.

¹⁴ See [Godbout 2010] and [Rumeau 2013].

Complementing Whitman (“I, Too, Sing America”)

However, claiming Whitman’s legacy in the Americas was seldom a mere declaration of affiliation. Latin American Whitmanian poets did not intend to be followers but active counterparts, who took into account the specificities of their lands and cultures. For Spanish-speaking America, two main differences were underlined, in varied proportions: on the one hand, its “Spanishness” or “Latinity”, and on the other hand, its strong native components, its “Indianness”. The claim of a specific Spanish identity might surprise when combined with a Whitmanian one, as it is seemingly at odds with the search for an American aesthetics, freed from colonial models. One has to remember the context of the emerging discourse on “hispanidad”, after Spain lost Cuba to the United States in 1898. The Spanish–American war changed perspectives as the US, once a colony, became in its turn a colonizing power. This explains largely the shift from the euphoric idea of a united continent, to the more conflictual opposition of two Americas, as exemplified in Rubén Darío’s poem “To Roosevelt” [Darío 1905]. Interestingly, Darío suggests that the verse of Walt Whitman (or the voice of the Bible) should be used to reach the American “hunting” president. Whitman (even though his prose expressed imperialistic positions) becomes the spokesman of this “other America”. The poem opposes North America (turned toward the future, power and money) and “our” America, rich of a past both indigenous and colonial, of religion and of love (“Amor”, with a capital letter, is the key word of América, an association that Neruda will put to the fore in *Canto general*). As a matter of fact, Darío considers that South America was able to preserve not only the Spanish past, but Native American civilization. In the preface to his *Prosas profanas y otros poemas*, he developed this idea, in an address to Whitman, with whom Darío shares poetical territories: “If there is poetry in our America, it lies in old things: in Palenke and Uxatlán, in the legendary Indian and the thin and sensual Inca, in the great Moctezuma in his golden chair. The rest is yours, Whitman the democrat”¹⁵. As for Chocano, he is famously known to have said “Whitman has the North, but I have the South”. This quote is difficult to verify, but it certainly provides a good commentary on the subtitle of *Alma América: Poemas indo-españoles*. This subtitle is programmatic: well before the Mexican muralists, Chocano

¹⁵ “Si hay poesía en nuestra América, ella está en las cosas viejas: en Palenke y Uxatlán, en el indio legendario y el inca sensual y fino, y en el gran Moctezuma de la silla de oro. Lo demás es tuyo, demócrata Whitman.” [Darío 1983: 87].

tells the history of the continent partly from a Native American point of view. Again, the connection with Pablo Neruda is strong, since *Canto general* is a remarkable example of how Latin American poets often mean to complete rather than to extend Whitman's continental vision: this epic of America, though profoundly Whitmanian in its geographical poetics and its impulse to catalogue the continent, is also much more historical and preoccupied with the Native American past. In his 1956 essay *El arco y la lira* Octavio Paz, while insisting on the concept of "utopia" as essential to identity constructs of Northern and Southern America, states that it is even far more important to the North, as evidenced in the great "prophetic dream" of Walt Whitman.

In Brazil, this willingness to complement Whitman, or even to correct the flaws of his vision, is even more obvious. The Brazilian reception differs in several ways from the Hispanic American one [Bonetti Paro 1995]. It is a later phenomenon (it started essentially in the 1920's) and it is less direct: European detours have more impact in this case. It is essentially through late French Symbolism that Brazilian poets read Whitman, taking up the connection that was very common in Europe (from France to Russia) between Whitman and Verhaeren. This means that from the start, Whitman was less associated with space and nature than with modernity and urban life. Whitman's name began to be widespread in 1922, a decisive year for Brazilian modernism: he is quoted, along with Verhaeren, at the opening of the preface to Mario de Andrade's *Paulicéia Desvairada*, a groundbreaking work that introduced free verse in Brazilian poetry, as well as slang words from São Paulo. Because it started later, and because it involved a social perspective, it is also tinged with a more critical and compensatory touch. Ronald de Carvalho's collection *Toda a América* (1925) clearly stresses a Pan-American dimension and draws special attention to those forgotten by Whitman (even though Whitman is not explicitly referred to, the catalogues, anaphoras and other stylistic devices clearly hint at his poetry). The last poem in particular, bearing the same title as the collection, emphasizes the diversity of American populations¹⁶. In 1945, Tasso de Silveira (who had been the first to translate some of Whitman's poems in 1927, in the symbolist review *Festa*) still addresses Whitman to tell him about "the other half" of America that he had not "foreseen" and that is now standing with a new song¹⁷. The

¹⁶ "América de todas imaginações, do azteca e do germano, do guarani e do latino, do hispano e do inca, do aimoré e do saxão, do slavo e do africano." [Carvalho 1935: 47].

¹⁷ "Palavras a Whitman." [de Silveira 1945].

willingness to complement Whitman becomes a form of distance in Jorge de Lima's poem "A minha America" (1927), which denounces segregation and the lynchings in the United States, while addressing Whitman to present him with his own new and different America, with its "rainbow of all races" [Lima 1980: 78]. Such a turn is characteristic of the evolution of Whitman's reception more generally in Latin America, from an aesthetic point of view (Whitman as the inventor of a modern poetry, of free verse, of a renewed relation with reality) to a more political one, which leads to denouncing the flaws in Whitman's democratic vision, or at least its betrayal by his contemporaries. I will go back to this aspect in the last part of this paper.

Before that, it is essential to our hemispheric itinerary to show that the complementing process initiated in Latin America also took place in the United States. To be more precise, Whitman's heritage was claimed and endorsed by African American poets but later questioned by Native American ones. Such a difference can partly be accounted for by Whitman's poetry itself (to put it simply, while Whitman wrote racist comments in his prose, his poetry sets black people on an equal footing with white people; in contrast, his poetry pays homage to Native American names, but acknowledges the disappearance of Native American peoples, and encourages Western expansion). It is also due to time discrepancies: Whitman was always an important reference at times of identity redefinitions and claims, at times that were labeled as "Renaissance" moments (the Harlem Renaissance, the Native American Renaissance), and one could argue that Whitman's cultural nationalist rhetoric, his claim to embody all America, still operated in the 1930's, whereas in the 1980's multiculturalism made them less acceptable. That being said, Whitman is generally a very positive figure for Latino poets (Martín Espada is one of many¹⁸), so other factors probably have to be taken into account (in this case, the influence of the Hispanic American reception outside of the US is certainly decisive). The idea of a black Whitman started with African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance¹⁹, such as Alain Locke, who praised Whitman as early as 1917 in an essay on Verhaeren (again the two poets are associated!) and insisted in *The New Negro* that black Americans were the ones who would fulfill Whitman's

¹⁸ Espada wrote the opening piece of the *North American Review* project "Every Atom. Reflections on Walt Whitman at 200", with remarks on Democracy [Espada 2019]; one can also think of the Chicano poet Rudolfo Anaya, who wrote an homage to Whitman in "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico" [Anaya 2015].

¹⁹ See [Hutchinson 1994]. Also see the recent collection of essays [Whitman Noir 2014].

promises. The main figure however is certainly Langston Hughes, who constantly paid homage to Whitman, anthologized his poetry [Whitman 1946] and even included it in the anthology of “negro” poetry that he edited with Arna Bontemps [The Poetry of the Negro 1949] (with some more “non negro” poets, such as William Blake or William Wordsworth, but Whitman clearly occupies the most important place among them). Hughes’ main contribution to Whitman’s fame is the 1925 poem, “I, Too”, which also remains his most famous piece. The poem was written on another transatlantic occasion: after a trip to Nigeria (where, according to his biographer, the only book he took with him was *Leaves of Grass* [Rampersad 1998: 72]), Hughes was stuck in Genoa where his money and passports had been stolen. He finally managed to find a ship that would take him back to the US, but on the condition that he worked as a cook onboard. This biographical circumstance sheds light on the poem, even though its scope is obviously much wider:

I, too, sing America.
 I am the darker brother.
 They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
 I’ll be at the table
 When company comes.
 Nobody’ll dare
 Say to me,
 “Eat in the kitchen,”
 Then.

Besides,
 They’ll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed –
 I, too, am America²⁰. [Hughes 1998: 46]

²⁰ The poem was first published in the review *Survey Graphic*, and then in Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro*.

This poem showcases the two aspects that Hughes was most drawn to in Whitman: on the one hand, the plastic “I”, able to represent much more than his own self (or rather able to represent a self in constant metamorphoses and identifications), able to stand for America; on the other hand the projective (if not utopian) quality of the poem. It is significant that Hughes begins his *Selected Poems* (1959) with a poem entitled “So Long” – the very words that conclude all editions of *Leaves of Grass* after 1860, but with a different meaning, more pessimistic, implying that the dream has been deferred for too long: “So long / So far away / Is Africa” [Hughes 1990: 3] – and puts at the very center of the collection the poem “Old Walt”, which depicts Whitman as a figure of endurance (“Old Walt Whitman / Went finding and seeking”) [Hughes 1990: 100]²¹.

The line “I, too, sing America” became a cue, signaling lineages of poets who claimed the Whitman/Hughes legacy. They were often black poets, such as June Jordan, the author of an important essay, “For the Sake of a People’s Poetry: Walt Whitman and the Rest of Us”, which constitutes the preface to her collection *Passion* in 1980. Jordan writes: “I too am a descendant of Walt Whitman”, and concludes, speaking about New World poets: “we, too, go on singing this America”²². Around the same time, the black Brazilian poet Abdias do Nascimento wonders: “Should I, too, sing Brazil?”, before he “celebrates” the powers of his motherland [do Nascimento 1983: 64]. The line however was also repeated by white poets – and this is in full accord with Hughes’ conceptions of “negro” poetry to be joined and enriched by non-negro “tributaries”.

The Spanish poet Rafael Alberti (who translated several poems by Hughes, including “I, Too, Sing America”) also writes in his poem “Canto América” the line “Yo también canto a América” [Alberti 2003: 161]. Some ten years later, Neruda in his explicitly Whitmanesque poem “Que despierte el leñador” (“Let the Woodcutter Awaken”) begins a stanza with the lines “I, too, beyond your lands America / I go and make my wandering house, I fly, I pass”²³: a whole route is outlined by the repetition and the translation of this line, the motto of a family of poets who complement Whitman in an inclusive vision of American identity.

²¹ On Hughes and Whitman, see [Folsom 2008].

²² The essay is reproduced in [The Measure of His Song 1998: 420].

²³ The poem was first published separately and then became Canto IX of *Canto general* in 1950. “Yo también más allá de tus tierras, América/ ando y hago mi casa errante, vuelo, paso.” [Neruda 1999–2002: I: 688].

African American poets' relation to Whitman changed however in recent years and has become more and more critical. A first (and subtle) example would be the way Yusef Komunyakka rewrote his homage to Whitman, entitled "Kosmos", for a second edition, adding more ambiguous comments (regarding Whitman's vision of Ethiopia) [Komunyakaa 2011]. One can think also of US Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey's 2013 discourse at the Library of Congress on Whitman's Civil War poems that carry the stereotype of African Americans as "passive recipients of freedom" [Staff 2013]. On the occasion of Whitman's 200th birthday, critics were sometimes harsh and polemical, reflecting a tense racial debate in the US [Porter 2019], [Caconrad 2015]. Such a critical distance had been present from the start in Native American responses, even though it was expressed with nuance and ambivalence, as in Simon Ortiz's and Bruce Cutler's poems on the Sand Creek Massacre²⁴ (which took place at the end of 1864, that is shortly before Whitman wrote "Pioneers, o Pioneers", calling for the expansion of the territory westward).

Whitman's reception in a multicultural nation is obviously a vast topic that would require many more examples than the ones I outlined. The point here is to state that foreign hemispheric receptions had an impact on Whitman's domestic reception and that Whitman's work played a crucial role in hemispheric debates, from the aspiration to a continental poetry and a sense of geographical unity, to an expression of historical and political differentiation.

Compañero Whitman ("Salut au monde")

As we have seen, there was an early political reception of Whitman in Latin America, as evidenced in Darío's poem "To Roosevelt" or in some Brazilian instances. This political aspect was however much subdued in the first half of the 20th century (whereas it was essential in Europe), before it came back to the fore after World War II. Neruda's relation with Whitman is emblematic of this shift: the first poems that he translated were sections of "Song of Myself" putting the emphasis on a direct contact with nature²⁵ and

²⁴ "February 12, 1865." [Cutler 1995]; [Ortiz 1981].

²⁵ Whitman, W. "Pasto de llamas.", transl. Pablo Neruda. [El aviso de escarmentados 1935]

the first lesson he took from Whitman, as he explained in his memoirs, was an appetite for space. When he comes back to Whitman in “Let the wood-cutter awaken” in 1948, the geographical aspect is still quite present (the poem begins with a survey of North America), but it gives way to a much more militant approach: Whitman is summoned to sing the song of Stalin-grad and the USSR (the poem was written shortly after the Marshall plan and intended to denounce it). Similarly in his 1956 ode to Whitman, Neruda begins, as we have seen, by celebrating his guide on the paths of America; interestingly though, the ode moves on to pay homage to the political poet, who helped the slave and the miner. At the end of the ode, Neruda celebrates the “people” (“pueblo”) still able to gather at the call of Whitman and to fight the abominations committed by the US government²⁶. The radical split in the ode between the two aspects, the geographical and the political, is representative of the evolution of Whitman’s reception in Latin America. Once again, a transatlantic detour is illuminating to understand this shift.

Firstly, it should be emphasized that in the first half of the 20th century, Whitman was read in Europe in ways that were far more polemical than in the Americas: he was read as a gay poet, especially in Britain [Harris 2016], Germany and France, and as a socialist poet, in the same countries, and even more so in the early years of Soviet Russia [Stepanchev 1995]. Whitman, who had been banned in translation by czarist censorship, became part of the Bolshevik propaganda. Korney Chukovsky’s translation was republished in 1918 (5 000 copies) [Whitman 1918] and 1919 (50 000 copies) [Whitman 1919], with a postface by Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People’s Commissar for Education, who stated that Whitman had foreseen communism. There were all sorts of separate editions of Whitman’s poems in translation, especially of “Pionners, o pioneers”, a Reconstruction era poem which had become a socialist hit in Britain before it was also widely spread in Soviet Russia (see in particular the *Segodnja* Cooperative edition beautifully illustrated by Vera Ermolaeva [Murray 2019] in 1918, or a more modest leaflet on May 1st 1923). Whitman became part of the Soviet “World Literature” canon, as shown by his publication in the “World Literature edition” (directed by Gorky) in 1922 [Whitman 1922]. Though the apex of Whitman’s fame was really the early 1920’s, he remained a classic through all the Soviet years, and was also largely translated and distributed in communist Eastern

²⁶ I argue in “Federico García Lorca and Pablo Neruda’s Odes to Walt Whitman: a Set of Choral Poetry”, that Neruda also obliquely responds to García Lorca’s ode to Whitman (written during his stay in New York and published posthumously in 1940 in *Poeta en Nueva York*), which lamented for the loss of Whitman’s ideals [Rumeau 2014].

Europe after World War II. This entry in the communist canon is essential to understand Whitman's political success in South America, which was mainly the construct of poets close to the USSR²⁷.

Secondly, a translation of Whitman's "Song of Myself" by the Spanish poet León Felipe in 1941 had a tremendous impact on Whitman's subsequent reception and contributed to its political aura, even though not necessarily communist. Felipe was Spanish, but he crossed the Atlantic many times, living in the United States and in Mexico, where he settled permanently in 1938 after the Spanish civil war. His translation, entitled "Canto a mí mismo" is almost an oath to his new continent; it is also to be read in the context of the defeat of the Republicans in Spain and the context of World War II, which at that point, was leaning towards the victory of fascism. Felipe wrote a prologue (in verse) to his translation, reminding the reader of this dramatic political context and insisting that it is necessary to translate Whitman precisely at such a time ("ahora" was the byword). The prologue portrays Whitman as the poet of Democracy but also of heroism – the heroism of the defeated in particular (at this point Felipe includes a direct quote from Whitman: "Mis marchas no suenan sólo para los victoriosos / sino para los derrotados y los Muertos también [...] ¡Hurra por los muertos!"²⁸). To pay homage to the dead and to the vanquished is not an acceptance of defeat however, and Felipe insists that his translation is a call for action and rebellion. Even more than Whitman, he constantly addresses the reader and engages with him. A poem in the prologue, entitled "He brings you a signal", is a call for the intervention of democracies in the war: it repeats as a mantra Whitman's words "Salut au monde": Felipe might be the one who started the political use of this particular poem (we shall see further examples). The translation itself exemplifies Felipe's conceptions of poetry, which are highly political, even though not in the most common manner at the time: Felipe argues that no one is the owner of a poetic text, that the art of poetry can be imagined as one large poem, actualized in different ways. He literally collectivizes poetry. Consequently

²⁷ This red Whitman had already crossed the Atlantic and was an important reference for US Proletarian Poets, especially at the time of the Great Depression (see in particular Mike Gold or the less radical Stephen Benét). Yet these proletarian writers never had the audience that communist Latin American poets reached.

²⁸ [Felipe 1981: 12]. Whitman's original is: "I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for conquer'd and slain persons" and the quite different "Vivas to those who have failed" (section 18 of "Song of Myself"). The same lines are repeated in the translation itself (*Canto a mí mismo*: 54–55).

there is no such thing as a wrong translation, since all transformations and variations are allowed (he calls his own translation of “Song of Myself” a “paraphrasis”). Felipe makes indeed a lot of changes to Whitman’s text, breaking the long lines into much shorter vertical ones, adding many words (especially interjections), while withdrawing others.

This translation – or paraphrasis – was widely distributed in Latin America, causing controversy. The most important polemic was triggered by another great reader of Whitman on the continent, Jorge Luis Borges. In 1942, Borges published a fierce review of Felipe’s translation in *Sur*, mocking the “conceited little cries” that replaced the ample “psalmic Whitman line”²⁹. In 1943, Felipe replied to Borges in a text entitled “Why does the Spaniard speak so loudly?”, explaining that his people were condemned to yell since their throat was flayed [Felipe 1943]. Of course, Borges’ Whitman had little in common with Felipe’s: Borges was much more sensitive to the “other Whitman” [Borges 1989: 207], delivering a lesson of “scarcity” (“parquedad”), aware of the complexities of the fictional self that he invented. His own translation of *Leaves of Grass* (an anthology), published in 1969 [Whitman 1969], is utterly different from that of Felipe’s.

Both Felipe’s translation and the proximity of a number of South American poets with the USSR account for the strong political readings of Whitman that developed after World War II. A rather early (and little known) example would be Raúl González Tuñón, a communist Argentine poet (and a friend of Neruda; like him, he was strongly impacted by the Spanish civil war, of which he was a direct witness). In 1945, his *Primer canto argentino* seems to be another “new world” collection; yet the epigraphs show a new political scope: the first one is a telegram from Moscow assuring the author of the USSR’s interest in his war poems, the second one – a quote from “Song of Myself” [González Tuñón 1945]. Turning Whitman into the spokesman of the USSR is the step that Neruda takes in “Let the woodcutter awaken”:

Walt Whitman, levanta tu barba de hierba,
mira conmigo desde el bosque,
desde estas magnitudes perfumadas.
Qué ves allí, Walt Whitman?
Veo, me dice mi hermano profundo,

Walt Whitman, raise your beard of grass,
look with me from the forest,
from these perfumed magnitudes.
What do you see there, Walt Whitman?
I see, my deep brother tells me,

²⁹ “de la larga voz sálmica hemos pasado a los engreídos grititos del cante jondo.” [Borges 1942: 69].

veo cómo trabajan las usinas,
 en la ciudad que los muertos recuerdan,
 en la capital pura,
 en la resplandeciente Stalingrado.
 Veo desde la planicie combatida,
 desde el padecimiento y el incendio,
 nacer en la humedad de la mañana
 un tractor rechinante hacia las llanuras.

[Neruda 1993: 258]

I see how the factories run,
 in the city that the dead remember,
 in the pure capital,
 in resplendent Stalingrad.
 From the field contested
 through suffering and fire,
 I see, rising in the morning moisture,
 a tractor whirring toward the prairies.

“Qué ves allí, Walt Whitman?” is the translation of a line from “Salut au monde”, the poem in which Whitman catalogues all the nations of the world (“What do you see, Walt Whitman?”). “Salut au monde” is indeed the poem that South American communist poets mostly appropriated (as the British and the Russians did with “Pioneers”), at the cost of some misreadings: Whitman’s cosmopolitanism was transformed into “Soviet internationalism”. In 1949, the communist intellectual Gregorio Gasmán published in Chile a translation of this poem, entitled “Saludo al mundo”, with illustrations by José Venturelli (who worked a lot with Neruda) [Whitman 1949]: as his preface to the translation reveals (though in veiled terms to avoid censorship), the publication had a political aim, at a time when Chile was under the dictatorship of González Videla (who had outlawed the Chilean communist party). In 1955 (on the occasion of *Leaves of Grass*’ anniversary), Neruda himself published a translation of “Salut au monde” (and presented it as his own, even though he merely reproduced Vasseur’s translation) in *La Gaceta de Chile*. Until the end of his life, Neruda continued to summon Whitman. In 1972 he delivered a speech entitled “I come to renegotiate my debt with Walt Whitman” (just after he had taken part in the negotiations on the Chilean debt while an ambassador of Chile in France). At the beginning of 1973, not long before Pinochet’s coup, Neruda published *Incitación al nixonicidio y alabanza de la revolución chilena* (*Incitation to nixonicide and Praise for the Chilean Revolution*). In the very first poem, Neruda calls Whitman, his “necessary brother”, so that, with his “extraordinary help”, they can together, “line by line, kill from the root, / Nixon the bloodthirsty president”³⁰. The poem reminds one of Darío’s use of

³⁰ “para que con tu apoyo extraordinario/ verso a verso matememos de raíz/ a Nixon, presidente sanguinario” [Neruda 1973], [Neruda 1999–2000: III: 708].

Whitman to reach the ear of Theodor Roosevelt, but of course, the pamphlet is much more violent in this Cold War poem.

Another important political reading of Whitman should be mentioned, the *Contracanto a Walt Whitman*, published in 1952 in Guatemala by the exiled Dominican poet Pedro Mir. Whitman's presence was already looming in his first (and most famous) long poem *Hay un país en el mundo* (also written in exile, but in Cuba), with its Whitmanesque catalogues. With the *Contracanto*, the response became explicit. Mir shows how Whitman's great invention, a democratic self, has been wrongly turned into a conquering "I", aiming at domination and possession³¹. Mir therefore substitutes the "we" for the "I": the "we" will reinstate the spirit of the Whitmanian message that has been lost. In an interview, Mir said that his poem was a reply to Felipe, who wrongly interpreted Whitman's "Democracy" as "heroism" in the prologue to "Canto a mí mismo" [Galvis 1994]. Mir meant to restore the peaceful meaning of "Democracy". Whether Mir is right or wrong about Whitman (and about Felipe's interpretation of Whitman) could certainly be discussed, but my point here is to underline how intricate this network of texts is. Moreover, the movement of Mir's poem is very similar to that of Pablo Neruda's "Let the woodcutter awaken", from the ideal of nineteenth-century Democracy in the United States, to its later betrayal and its final restoration by a collective (communist) force. Mir's poem is a response to Whitman, but also to Felipe, to Neruda, and probably to García Lorca as well.

Whitman's political aura declined, somewhat, in Latin America after the death of Neruda, and yet more so after the collapse of the Soviet World. Once again however, the South American appropriations had an impact on US readings: Allen Ginsberg, who had sympathies for communist heroes (but was never a communist himself and was even expelled from communist countries for his advocacy of free speech), translated a part of Neruda's Whitmanian "Let the woodcutter awaken" ("Adapted from Neruda's 'Que dispierte (*sic*) el leñador'"³²). Like Neruda, Ginsberg associated Mayakovsky and Whitman in his poems³³ (but more as poets of the failure

³¹ On this poem, also see [Batista 2009] and [Conway 1998].

³² Ginsberg, A. "Plutonian Ode (1977–1980)." [Ginsberg 2006] (sections V and VI of Neruda's Canto).

³³ For Neruda, see "Sobre Mayakovski." *Boletín de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS*. México (15 July 1943) [Neruda 1999–2001: IV: 481]; "Contestando una encuesta." *Ercilla* (17 July 1968) [Neruda 1999–2002: V: 173]; "Dos retratos de un rostro." [Neruda 1999–2002: V: 183]; for Ginsberg, "Death to Van Gogh's Ear" and "At Apollinaire's Grave" [Ginsberg 2006: 175–178–190; 188]; "Ode to Failure", *Plutonian*

of political ideals than as the heralds of the revolution). Thomas McGrath, a communist poet who deeply admired Neruda, wrote a tribute to Whitman in “Revolutionary Frescoes – the Ascension” [McGrath 1978]. More recently, Martín Espada entitled his very political collection *Vivas To Those Who Have Failed* (a line from Whitman), as well as the first poem in the collection, on “The Paterson Silk Strike, 1913” [Espada 2015]. Whitman is therefore again associated with the workers’ struggle. More generally, Whitman seems to have relocated from Latin America to the United States. The move could be symptomatic of a growing distance between the Americas, of the decline of the continental idea that was so strong at the end of the 19th century. Yet Whitman certainly contributed to this continental identity, no matter how complex and nuanced it was in the diverse responses of the “poets to come” in Latin America.

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