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'Since hearsed was Pan': Marvel Melville Underground

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Abstract

This essay reads the "clover" poems of *Weeds & Wildings Chiefly: with A Rose or Two*, and its preface "To Winnefred" as dis-seminal, ionic, and fractal writing. Reading such attests the fabric of Melville's poems as partial reverberation. Its reading is an activity of hearsing: burial, decomposition, yet also recomposition. Re-hearsing: to hear song; or, poetry. Parts and particles of each poem are strewn across the others, and create the stage of interpretation. Verse is an affair of companions, associating ions and Pan in commonality, a poetic sovereignty that is counter-institutional or substitution to static or State institution. Celebrating weeds, wildings, low life, the ground as fundamental redistribution, *Weeds & Wildings,* Melville's ultimate leave-taking, addresses reading, its possible incarnation or actualisation in a hypothetical reader. Its preface, "To Winnifred," structures the relation of writer and reader, writing and reading, by layering the "clover" poems upon the expression *living in clover*. Rehearsing it as the irreducible differance of reader and writer, this essay invokes Melville and his text as living ink lover.

Keywords: Melville, *Weeds & Wildings*, clover, dissemination, living, Pan, reading, wilding, writing

> If there is no thematic unity or total meaning to be reappropriated beyond textual instances in an imaginary, an intentionality or lived experience, the text is then no longer the expression or the representation (be it felicitous or not) of some *truth* that would come to diffract itself or to gather itself in a polysemous literature. In the place of this hermeneutic concept of *polysemy* there must be *substituted* (my emphasis) the concept of *dissemination*. [. . .] For all of that, is dissemination the *loss* of such a truth, the negative interdiction of accessing such a signified? Far from leaving one to *suppose* (my emphasis) that a virgin *substance* (my emphasis) precedes or surveys truth, dispersing itself or interdicting itself in a secondary negativity, dissemination *affirms* the always already divided generation of meaning.[1]

Opening

Dissemination sub-stitutes, -stitutes in the root sense of an institution or constitution that is below, and this substitution or sub-(in)stitution signs, affirms (*firma*, signature), cutting before any supposed whole substance. As such, dissemination is a sub-stitution before any supposed unitary substance. Derrida defines dissemination by way of a prefix "sub-" in this preference of substitution to any supposition or substance, and this preference positions the sub- as ground in its pulverized acceptation of "infinitely divvied, ground up." Meaning is authored by dissemination, which means its genesis is shared among particles.

Ground

The last deleted poem of the "Appendix" for Melville's *Weeds and Wildings* is entitled "Under the Ground," an echo no doubt of the last poem in Part II "A Ground-Vine," in which "a groundling," the "Ground-Vine," "*Intercedes with the Queen of Flowers/ For the merited recognition of Clover*" (the italicized subtitle).[2] The ground-vine aims to win some share of the sun—recognition—for the lowly "Clover" (29) in its appeal to the rose. The word "win" (15, 26), and "winsome" (30) retrieve the importance of this

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *La dissémination (*Paris: Seuil, 1972), 319; 326. Translation mine.

[2] The collection's full title is *Weeds and Wildings Chiefly: with A Rose or Two*. Edition used: *The Writings of Herman Melville, Volume Thirteen*, Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Uncompleted Writings, eds. Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall, Robert A. Sandberg, G. Thomas Tanselle (Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library: Evanston and Chicago, 2017). All quotations of poems therefrom are succeeded by their line numbers, and from its Preface, by the abbreviation NN + page number.

syllable *win* which the collection's preface, "To Winnefred," puts in place and towards and from which our study moves. The words "share" (13, 22) and "share-and-share-alike" (18) also materialize the core proclamation of the Preface ("We are all Communists here" [NN 75]) whose principle—we intend to demonstrate—is Melville's ground poetics in *Weeds and Wildings*. Trace of the collection's basic two part division,[3] "A Ground-Vine" argues on behalf of a common entanglement, palpably recognizant of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* ("And, ranked with grass, a flower may dwell,/ Cheerful" [19-20]). From such entanglement, pragmatic heteronymic obligation follows because the common share of all life ("we plants are all akin./ Our roots enlock" [14-15]) is turned toward space, air, weather, and the sun. The "groundling" first denounces its denial ("Each strives to win/ The sampler space, the balmier air./ But beauty, plainness, shade, and sun – / Here share-and-share-alike is none!" [15-18]). Yet, the richly multiple subjunctive modal, "may," affirms being part and parcel with climate: "And, ranked with grass, a flower may dwell/ […] In bloom that shares the broader weather; Charmful" (19, 22-23). Full of "Charm" and "Cheer," this clover will share also, via the "char-" of the collection, in words such as "orchards," "charters," and "charnel," and in its birdsongs of cheer (as in "Cheer" and "*Chee-chee*"), making of *Weeds and Wildings* a disseminal textual echo chamber. The Appendix's final deleted poem re-entwines this link of rose and clover.

"Under the Ground" recounts the story of the poetic I, presumably Melville, who, on a "footpath" that "threads" "through clover" between a "garden" and an "old tomb," is "marvelled" by the fact of a gardener's boy who crosses his path in order to take roses to inhume in an old tomb. Melville had, at this final moment of his life as writer, precisely just turned his back on its "gloom" so as to stay among the "clovers" that line the path back to the garden. As a writer, he had thought that the way of *his* "thread" amid these clovers could not "read" "th**read**s" toward death. In the paronomasia of "marvel" that resonates in his name, Melville becomes younger than the boy, for "marvel," which is Melville's final verb, his final action, is the synonym for Descartes' "admiration" that itself translates Aristotle's *thaumazein*, the originary or innocent reaction to the 'what is' or the 'that is' (of phenomena as such) that precedes even the question, or act of question. "I marvelled" is what Melville does and it takes the form of a stupefied question: "Roses! you would not these inhume?" That question itself follows his rhetorical question of "whither you wend?" when this question,

[3] The Northwestern Newberry editors' manuscript analysis shows how in the genesis of *Weeds and Wildings* the "rose poems" came before the "clover poems." Melville inverted this order and placed the "rose poems" at the end after the Spring of 1888. "Clover" had been a possible title for the whole, and Melville dubbed its poems "clover-heads" (NN 551-52).

knowing the boy takes the path to the tomb, is a distant echo of the question in "Field Asters," "Whither bound?" which itself denoted bound-for-death. Yet the boy's answer is twice yes, twice "Yea." The "dank" of the dark charnel vault has the "charm" of keeping the roses' bloom, during the time while the boy's "Master" waits to wed his bride ("for against the bridal hour/ My Master fain would keep their bloom"). Thanks to its denotation of a marshy spot, the "dank" is a kindly thought (*dank*, Germanic origin of 'thank' and 'think') whereby Melville's "charnel" becomes "charm." Although this final poem associated with *Weeds and Wildings* was relegated to an Appendix, commentary upon it may ally its alliance between Master and bride with the alliance that "To Winnefred" begins by recalling, be it between Herman and Winnefred or between the scriptor and the reader. That alliance is grounded by dissemination, affirmed, like a vote yea, in and for all its particulars, particles, in and for what we shall attempt to elucidate as all its companions.

The Northwestern Newberry editors observe that, leaving its trace on Melville's manuscript, "an unknown hand identified the 'Winnefred' of the dedication as 'Lizzie' (Melville's wife, Elizabeth Shaw Melville)" (NN 547). Directed by that unknown scriptor, the writers of the "Historical Note" of the NN edition weigh in for the biographical equation, without supporting their claim about its inclusion among her other, unspecified, nicknames: "he revised his more-or-less autobiographical dedication to 'Winnefred' (one of several affectionate names for his wife)" (365, "Historical Note, NN). Criticism on "To Winnefred" prolongs this biographical interpretation. The present study will finish in a return to this criticism and the preface.

Noting the oddity of its spelling, the editors comment on the spelling of this apparent name when they induce possible sources for the name, or as it may have been, nickname: "The manuscript spelling is retained, though Melville may have been alluding to St. Winifred, the patron saint of bakers, or the "Song to Winifreda," a poem about happy married life included in Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765)" (NN 365). My reading of "To Winnefred" submits the claim that the implication of the reader is more expansive and complex than these biographical and precursor explanations of, respectively, an empirical reader or possible sources, without however invalidating them: after all, to state the obvious, "Herman" is the husband of his wife, the man of his woman, and thus "To Winnefred" can be from her man. Hearing its title as "Two win if read" or "To win if read", or even "to when if read," implies the structure of readership, the structure of a text into whose activation is built the possibility of the reader-to-come the counterpart of which is the ideality, or ghostliness, of the writer that cannot be said entirely to disappear, if the text is to be

form of any kind and not reduced to sheer and inchoate matter.

The Scene of Interpretation

The poem "Field Asters" stages itself explicitly as questions of interpretation and meaning. The basic phenomenon is "cheer," its existence. In this collection, "cheer" does not beam by itself but rather is charged by the word, the cry of the bird, the "chee-chee," the voice in its phatic expressive activation. This "cheer" is the *quod*—the that it is. It is already open to interpretation and therefore to the *quid*, the what it is, the meaning of the that or *quod*.

In "Field Asters," "asters" and "arrest" interconvert, the same letters (with a double "s" becoming a double "r") rearrange in the differance between "asters" that signify the existence of the phenomena, and "arrest" that denotes the attempt to stop, to seize, to fix (i.e. interpret) the phenomena. This tension concerns what might be called the stoppage that happens in instances of the double 'e-e', as in the "**e**-y-**e**-s" (7) whereby the simple "s-**ee**" (3, 4, 5) happens to be ghosted by an accruing "int-**e**-rpr-**e**-t" (6). The poem is a scene and the seen of reading, but also inversely, a reading of seeing, a scenario of the seen.

There is a triangle of directed gazes in the poem. The stars see ("peep," 2) the flowers, and not the humans. The humans ("us," 8) gaze ("star-gazers," 8) at the stars, not at the flowers. The flowers look at ("scrutinize," 8) humans, not at the stars. This non-reciprocity of gaze puts dissemination at the heart of any supposed dyadic relation between onlooker and looked-at, between reader and text. This ricochet already is an incipient model for the reading gaze or the functioning—concatenation—of the poems in *Weeds and Wildings*. The lack of a one-to-one relation may figure an echo effect in the verbal materiality of the poems, a phenomenon whereby, say, a reader sees a given word, that word looks to, to so speak (by its sound effects, by its letters) other words that by those effects of letters look to, in turn, the reader: in any event, and even without the personification of words being able to "look" elsewhere, this ricochet-effect constitutes, *by scattering*, any one-to-one relation between reader and word.

The meaning of the flowers' scrutinizing "Us" (8) is itself not interpretable, "inscrutabl[e]" (7). This inscrutability is perhaps because "we" do not look at, i.e. interpret, the field asters. They are "seen—," "seen of all," and "seen indeed" (3, 4, 5), but although "seen" it is as if we do not ever arrest that seeing, i.e. reflect upon that seeing, and therefore the poem seems to express the idea that neither their existence

(their "cheer," their being-there) nor their intentionality or consciousness as it were ("what they mean/ when [. . .] their eyes/ Us [. . .] scrutinize") is arrested, i.e., reflected upon, submitted to hermeneutics, to a type of *ti esti* questioning (i.e. the question, what is it? What does it mean?).

"Field Asters" is about a doubling or mirroring: sky and ground, stanza 1 and stanza 2, eyes looking down at eyes looking up, for example. Effect of doubling, the recurrence of "ee" arrests the reading eye and ear: "peep" (2), "seen—" (3), "Seen" (4), "Seen," "indeed," "cheer" (5) make visible such doubling. The m-dash of "seen—" (3) depicts its echo in "Seen" (4), and "indeed" enacts this repeated recurrence. Traces of this "ee" can be seen in other words, albeit separated by interceding letters. For instance, among others, "nam-**e**-sak-**e**-s," "h-**e**-r-**e**," "**e**-v-**e**-ry," "int-**e**-rpr-**e**-t," "**e**-y-**e**-s" or across words such as the title, "Fi-**e**-ld Ast-**e**-rs" (2, 2, 3, 6, 7).

In this poem, and in the context of "Part I: The Year" of *Weeds and Wildings*, how may we interpret this "e-e," what meaning for such a phenomenon, for such a materiality, if instead of looking to the stars, "[We] star-gazers" turn our eyes to it? The poem immediately before "Field Asters" draws our attention to its insistent double ee. "The Chipmunk" consists of three stanzas. The first, in italics announces the suitable weather of the heart of autumn, comparing it to "sherbert" [sic]. The second introduces the seen eponym of the poem, the chipmunk, seen by the poetic I/eye. The chipmunk makes noise gleefully. A contrastive conjunction "But" (11) however intervenes, which is the effect of a "wee" noise and the chipmunk vanishes "whither" the I knows not (12, 14). The third stanza compares to this chipmunk what seems to be the child of the poetic I (and presumably the I's partner who shares his or her hearth): "Baby" (15) whose departure while "Crowing mirth" (16) is occasioned also "By some inkling" (18). The poem "The Chipmunk" records a splitting that is a flitting, a separation. This separation seems to be staged in the poem as that by which a sound is cloven into two or by a second non-identical sound that introduces difference into sameness. "Ee" becomes "e'e" (17); this introduction of a syncope that creates echoing and alterity is corroborated by the way certain words from a given poem are scattered and turn up in adjacent poems across the collection. A word is always already echo, so that when a sound occurs in one poem (such as "crowing mirth") that crowing is already reverberating with the crow who will be in the following poem, as if conjured into existence by the sound/ word. This reverberation is true for potentially all the words but can be seen (and identified as such) in examples such as "star," "crow," "pan," "ver."

Companions

Let's demonstrate, in detail. First, the process of "ee." The rime of the trisyllabic lines of the italicized quatrain first stanza, consists in "meet" and "sweet" (2, 4). The second stanza that introduces the poetic "I"/ eye who contemplates the "*him*" of the poem's title, "The Chipmunk," is replete with alliterative sound effects or repeated morphemes ("**St**-ock **st**-ill **st**-and," "**P**-ry-*ing* **P**-ee-**p**-*ing*," "**Cr**-i-**ckl**-*ing* **cr**-a-**ckl**-*ing*" [5, 7,9]). The drama of the recurrent "ee" consists in the *way* by which a little, virtually inaudible, sound serves as a clinamen that triggers its scission, its movement: after the "s-**ee**," "p-**ee**-ping," "B-**ee**-ch Tr-**ee**," and "Gl-**ee**-fully" (6, 7, 8, 10), during which the "I" watches the chipmunk's musical fun (i.e. glee), instantaneous or immediate disappearance occurs via the word "w-**ee**" (12). The plosives in "But," "By," "Presto!" (11, 12, 13) are perhaps all effects of a "wee sound," a sound whose description does not only emphasize its quasi-inaudibility and movement ("wee" comes from Germanic *Weg*, 'way', from *bewegen*, 'move') but also signals a human species presence that, in the context of the Anthropocene, is anathema for that which ***Wee**-ds and Wildings* as book of poems is written to save, and against which the poem "When forth the Shepherd leads the flock" protests. This latter poem, a celebration of "A Wilding with the Weeds!" (13), laments the fact that ever since the god of nature was put into a coffin ("Since hearsed was Pan" 16) by "farmers" who take them, i.e. all the weeds, "out" of the biosphere, the hegemony of the human species, of the We that may be heard in "wee sound," has jeopardized that which *Weeds and Wildings* is written to preserve, to wit, what Melville calls "other inutilities."[4] The "wee" emerges not only readably as the human species. Meaning a measurement that is slight, "wee" also denotes movement—"wee" comes from *weigh* and both come from "movement." That movement is intimated in the end rime for "By wee sound": "Whither bound?" (14). Disappearance, evanescence, a movement to no telos, at best to an eskhatos, is intimately near ("Presto!" 13, meaning 'near', 'at hand') to manifest glee, to life.

This separation and this departure, by which the ee, say, of "glee" and its predecessors is split and deviated by the ee of "wee," are graphically represented by

[4] From analysis of the manuscripts, the Northwestern Newberry editors cannot rule out such "inutilities" as justifiably belonging to the heading or title of *Weeds and Wildings*. They remark that the second title for the collection, "before revision, had read, *Weeds & Wildings*/ with/ *Other Inutilities* / and / *A Rose or Two*." The first title was "Wildings and Roses"—but they also add that "Clover" was "an earlier title for the volume or the section" "of Melville's projected volume" "that became" "Weeds and Wildings." They conclude that "[t]here is no decisive evidence for choosing between the two similar titles," i.e. the one with "inutilities" and the one without. "The choice of title is thus essentially arbitrary" (NN 560).

the only ee in stanza three, taking the split form of "E'en." This stanza instances no other ee, and this sole occurrence, I propose, carves into the phenomenon of life's affirmation its inseparable pre-condition, namely its phenomenalization of death, of leaving life or life leaving. This stanza compares the chipmunk from stanza 2 to "Baby" (15). By its "b-b," the word "Baby" repeats the plosives that introduced the "wee sound": "But" and By." This "Baby" may be said to be the child of the poetic I and its reproductive partner, of Herman and Winnefred, as the word "our" in "our hearth" (21) indicates that this baby was their child. But the "Baby' is also the progeny of the scriptor and the reader for whom both the chipmunk and the baby are the metonymic phenomena for an animated text in the time of its reading, which is as much as to say, its writing. The fate of "Baby" is similar to that of the chipmunk: although it was voicing its "mirth" ("Crowing mirth" 16), a barely discernible sound initiates its disappearance. "Flit" here has its Northern England or Scottish meaning of "leaving home," "escaping from." Seemingly, "Baby"—whether gone as when an adolescent departs from home or as when an infant dies—has radically disappeared. In both the case of "wee" and "e'en," it is as if the phenomenon of ee denotes a splitting of "e" into "e" and "not e," into "e" and "'e," that amounts to a ghosting. In the specific case of "e'en," the barely audible sound is recorded by "some inkling/ Touching Earth" (18-19). 'To inkle' is a rare verb that denotes the utterance of an undertone. The verb 'inkle' sounds close to 'in-kill', and "inkling," perhaps an 'in-killing'. Certainly, *Kling*—as in the ring of a bell, a knell—inheres in "inkling," perhaps echoing "knell" in "The Blue-Bird" (l. 10). "Ink[-]ling" seems to be the linguistic ink that inheres in voice as the latter's pre-condition. "By some inkling/ Touching Earth," there is an inkling that touches earth. Earth's touch inkles. Touching earth, either as subjective or objective genitive (earth touches something or something touches earth), utters an undertone, and this inkling is in-killing or denotes the split of "ee" into "e'e." The "e'e" of "e'en" repeats the function of the "ee" in "wee"—the function of "wee" is the split in sound that makes the manifestation of life (in the chipmunk) disappear, depart, without any knowable destination. Hence, "e'en" records the divisive sound that constitutes the manifestation of life in "Baby," its "Crowing mirth," as pre-cisely its very destitution. Its destituting substitution is its supposed substantial constitution. "Baby" in line 15 becomes merely the "By" in line 18 whose agency is the startling "some inkling/ Touching Earth": that enigmatic undertone which however was already announced, as we will now argue, by the "Crowing mirth" of Baby.

"The Chipmunk" does not only do this separation via the intratextual poem. By reverberation among poems, this separation is infused into any given poem whose activation is pre-empted by other nodal points in the collection. The verb "startled"

(17), which means a sudden movement, and both a leap and a fall, comes just before the following poem, "Field Asters" and its reflection upon seeing, and/ or interpreting, "stars" (1). The poem after "Field Asters," "Always with us!," contrasts a robin that leaves in autumn/ winter and returns in spring with a crow, "thou, black Crow" who never leaves, and whose call, "*Caw! caw! Caw!*" is the "foreboder" of death, something that the poetic I, or Melville, is most aware of at the end of his life. In "Crowing mirth" in "the Chipmunk," that vocal manifestation of life by "Baby" is already announced as being the inkling of death, of the "black Crow"/ "Croaker" in "Always with us!" (these two words haunting the "Crickling, crackling/Gleeful []"of "The Chipmunk"). In this way, annunciatory vociferation of death by the "Crow" is already inkling or undertoning in the "Crowing mirth" of Baby that otherwise would be the simple eruption of life's existence. Similarly, the verb "startled" in "The Chipmunk" *already* reverberates the doubling of "star" in the poem right after, "Field Asters." In addition to its denotation—disrupted, unsettled—the verb "startled" makes the split of which the word "star" of "Field Asters" is the emblem—between sky and ground, between "see" and "interpret," between "e" and "e" in all its words ("Peep," "seen" [thrice], "indeed," "cheer") that persists in split occurrences (most evidently in "e-y-e-s")—start to lead the reading of the word "start[-]led" in "The Chipmunk." "Start," but also always already "led," the subject-agent ("start") and the passive-object ("led") in "start[-]led," such is what the poem "The Chipmunk" is about, with the chipmunk whose existence or liveliness (noisily manifest) is coincident with the "wee sound" that is its vanishing, or with "Baby" as we just demonstrated. Thus, the second line, "*Weather meet*" (2), i.e. mete weather, fits with and joins the thirteenth line "Wither bound"; likewise for the anagrammatic "*Heart*" (1) and "Earth" (19), each encapsulated in the therefore portmanteau "hearth" (21).

The penultimate poem, "Stockings in the farm-house Chimney," is about the stock king, the king of fairies, "Oberon," in whose "clan," is the "something of a man," Santa Claus, who fills the "stockings" of the poem's title (8, 8, 6, 4). The poem celebrates those children or young in mind who are "Happy," because they "believe," and are "Happy in hope! in hope to receive/ These stockings well stuffed from Santa Claus's sleigh" (1, 3-4). The "O" in the king fairy's name, Oberon, gives voice to the wishes of the poetic voice, first about the belief in the fabulous, "O the delight to believe in a wight/ More than mortal, with something of man," and second in the desire for the postponed arrival of truth, "Stay, Truth, O stay in a long delay!" (5, 9). This rime, "Stay/ delay," arrests the circular verse in non-motion miming its wish (the poem's quatrains masterfully suspend movement by iterative horizontal line rimes, for example, "believe/ Eve," "delight/ wight"). "Truth," which here harnesses the *ruth* of

the loss of play or fable ("fable play") and may be the scriptor's avoidance of the Verity given the importance throughout the thirteen poems of the lexemes and severances "Ver" and "-ver," is to be delayed so that the medley of "delight/ wight/ spright," continues, and this combination is the idea that a man-spirit, Santa Claus, he who brings alms, is the "Almoner blest." This counter-truth, in the form of a deferring counter-time, manifests itself in the final two lines of the third quatrain that precisely differ and defer: "let them fo-**rever** with fable play/ E-**ver**-more hang the Stocking out!" The fabulous play here is that of a dream-verse, a revery that endlessly goes back and forth without loss, as the palindrome, "rever" (in "fo-rever") condenses dream (*rêve*, in French) and verse, dream and spring, dream and worm, in a dream-work-worm-word.

"Stockings in the farm-house Chimney" thereby reverses the "croaker, foreboder" of the immediately previous poem, "Always with us!" that itself struggles so to pre-se**rve** its play with "se**ver**," "**Rev**isit . . . fore**ver**" (1, 3) and what it calls "Ver" (20). But "Stockings in the farm-house Chimney" (and "chimney" reactivates the "from our hearth" of the third poem earlier, "The Chipmunk") also announces in the "clan/man" rime (6, 8) the return of "pan" ("Pan" from "When forth the shepherds," "pan" from "A Dutch Christmas," and "companioned" in "Madcaps") and how Melville positions himself, in "A Dutch Christmas," as poet versus Santa. It will again be a question of "alms." "Stockings in the farm-house Chimney" conjures the "More than mortal" "Almoner" as the conjugation of "spright" and "wight" which is the joining of what is *man*, "something of man," while also being fairy-ily "of Oberon's clan." This "man-clan" rime announces the rimes of the fourth verse of the subsequent, and final, poem of this part of *Weeds and Wildings*, "A Dutch Christmas. Up the Hudson/ In the Time of Patroons": "scan:/ pan./ *Van*—/ man" (stanza 4). This man, the "merry Christmas man"—certainly different from the "florist" establishing the "*ran*king with the floral *clans*" in "To Winnefred"—is "Tuenis *Van der Blumacher,*" or 'of the flower-maker' (my emphases). His coming is to a house in preparations for Christmas, at year-end enjoyment of harvests. The poem starts with one word directly motivated by the combination of O and -ver in "Stockings in the farm-house Chimney": the exclamative "O" (5 and 9), "Oberon" (8) and that fabulous play of "forever/ Evermore" (11, 12) condense in the first word of the last poem's incipit, that is, in "**O**-**ver** the ruddy hearth" (1). As in "When forth the Shepherd leads the flock" where "hearsed Pan" (16) was the riming demise of the "**Dan**-del-ions" that "prance" and "dance" (11, 12), the return of "pan" in "A Dutch Christmas"—a simple pan in which "the cream" is being prepared, perhaps for the "pudding" at the end of the poem—announces the verse immediately after it that celebrates festivity:

"**pan**-ting from **dan**-ce," all revel (15). This scene depicted is one where the poetic I has created a delightfully festive atmosphere, "The yoke-cattle's horns did I twine with green holly./ Good to breathe their sweet breath this blest Christmas morn" (22), in a recollection of how he imagines "Winnefred" to have liked the breath of heifers in the preface "To Winnefred." It is in this place that, in the antepenultimate verse, are heard, "Sleigh-bells a'jingle! 'Tis Santa Claus: hail!" The verse remarks upon Santa Claus's magical tour that defies time and forgets not the "one man in jail." That verse prepares the penultimate verse, that contrasts Santa Claus with the poetic I; this contrast operates on the difference between "clever" and "never" and on their respective "alms": "Our Santa Claus a cle[-]**ver** way has, and a free:/ Gifts from *him* some will take who would ne[-]**ver** take from me." The colon introduces the contrast. "Clever" contrasts with "never," suggesting that whereas Santa's gifts are "free," "me['s]" "pudding" is not otherwise free. The final two lines of the quatrain might express some sarcasm: "For poor hereabouts there are none: – none so poor/ But that pudding for an alms they would spurn from the door." One might speculate that the "pudding" over which Katrina was told not to "scan" so as to give its cream its time to rise in the pan is also Melville's verse or writing. Another, dilated or delayed, scan may be needed. His pan, in which he repeatedly places Pan and all Pan's companions, the many ions of communal pans, may well be the pithy moral couplet upon which this first part of *Weeds and Wildings* concludes: "All the same to all in the world's wide ways--/ Happy harvest of the conscience on many Christmas Days." Be it the "clever way" or the "never" way, all in all, all the world-wide ways of these different alms seem to rehearse—to scatter and to reactivate—pan.[5]

Hearsing

Although *Weeds and Wildings,* as its title indicates, celebrates the "profitless" creatures that an ignorantly utilitarian world wishes to extirpate, the burial of Pan ("Since hearsed was Pan") seems to spell their demise ("But alack and alas/ For things of wilding feature!") in "When forth Shepherds [. . .]"). "Buttercup and Dandelion, /

[5] Melville's disseminal *herm**a**neutics* of Pan perhaps recalls that Pan was the offspring of Hermes and of Penelopeia. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, and other sources (theoi.com/Nymphe/NymphePenelopeia.html) note a frequent fusion or confusion between Penelope the weaver and Penelopeia mother of Pan fathered by Hermes. Contributing to this confusion is the possible derivation of Penelopeia from the Greek words *pênê* and *lopas*, meaning "needle and thread."

Wildings, and the rest,/ Commoners and holiday-makers," appear at first to be doomed to eradication. The line with its colon, "Note them in one test:" introduces a list of lines repeating the word "out" in "scout, rout, without" telling of all, from "farmers" to "florists" who *would* eliminate them (23, 24, 25). But the semi-colon after "them;" (27) pivots the reversal in the poem whereby this "hearsing" fails. To "hearse" is not only to bury in but to rake the ground and open and aerate and seed the ground. Such failure, their success, comes in the spade-like 'v' that redoubles itself in the action verbs of which the children are the agents: "**w**oo" (where the double o-o doubles the v in w), "Lo**v**e," "repri**ev**e," "Retri**ev**e," "in**w**ea**v**e," "ne**v**er" (28-31). The nine-times-in-nine-lines (22-30) repeated end and internal sameness, "them," "them," "them," "them," "them," "them," "them," "them," "them"—the four "them" that would be "out" are equalized by the four "them" that are the direct object of the five "v" verbs—disperses the "hearsed Pan" into a rehearsing of pan, a re-inscribing "dibbling in the garden" (to use this poem's image of planting by making holes in soil with a dibble whereupon, "then the world begins anew" [3-4]). Unlike G. M. Hopkins' "Spring and Fall" Margaret's grieving, Melville's weeds and wildings are "Never sighing" (30), this "never" echoing the "never" of the scriptor signing in "A Dutch Christmas."

Example of "hearsed Pan," the weed or plant "Dandelion" in "When forth the Shepherd leads the flock" is a word that both occurs mid-line in-between "And" and "prance" ("And Dandelions prance") and in the fourth stanza at line-end, "Buttercup and Dandelion." The suffix -ion returns in two other places in *Weeds and Wildings*: in the word "Companioned" in the poem "Madcaps" three poems after "When forth the Shepherd [. . .]" and in the following poem, "The Old Fashion" both in the title and in "old-fashioned" and "old-fashion." This "-ion" from "Companioned" becomes the seed out of which this following poem, "The Old Fashion," develops.

Yet, prior to dwelling on "ion," the word "it" lifts itself from the iterative ground. The poem "Madcaps" functions around two letters, the 'i' and the 't' in "I" (l. 1) and "it" (l. 5) and "It" (l. 10). The story it tells is that of an "I," the poetic narrating voice (adult, we may conjecture) who observes the world which the "I" describes and in which the "I" follows two children. What the "I" observes is "It," which are the "Madcaps" (l. 12) from the title. In between the "I" of line 1 and the capitalized nominal "It" (l. 10) is the iterative "it" which pleonastically repeats the nominal subject: "The *Clover it* throws/ Perfume in their way" (5-6, my emphasis). The iteration of "it" does enable the line 5 to have five syllables, like lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 12, but more importantly the iterative "it" carries into the poem "Clover," which was the title of the

poem before "Madcaps," the quatrain "Clover." "The Clover it" not only makes the previous poem the fundamental influence in the poem, and "clover" not only retrieves the "pleasant figure of speech, *Living in clover*" from the preface "To Winnefred" of *Weeds and Wildings*, with its idea of "clover" being a common plant not sold as property by florists. It also is not limited to announcing the entire latter parts of *Weeds and Wildings* dominated by variations on "Rose," staged in the poem "A Ground-Vine." While that is true, and while the action, in "Madcaps," of "Clover" is to lead the children to the Red Rose ("The Clover it throws/ Perfume in their way/ To the hedge or Red Rose;" (ll. 5-7), it is the emphasis of "it" in line 5 that diagonally connects the "I" in line 1 to the "It" in line 10. Its (and "It"'s) importance is to localize the "Strawberry" (l. 9). "Straw," and "berry," the colors of "Strawberry" can be the referred-to predicate of line 10, "It is Lilly and Cherry." However, line 10, "It is Lilly and Cherry" also could be the identification of the "two children," the "they" and "their," whom the "I's" eye has been following. The capitalized agency of "I"—an adult, but presumably also a poet—is transferred to the capitalized "It" in "It is Lilly and Cherry," where "It is" can **both** be "It, the Strawberry, is Lilly and Cherry" so that "It is" is a personalized pronoun "It" for the noun "Strawberry," **and** a recollective and anticipatory periphrastic impersonal subject of the verb "is" linking the "two children" to "Lilly and Cherry." The two children become strawberry, strawberry is the two children, and that is what all companions are, together with "Butterflies" (11): these companions are "madcaps" and these heads, *caput* or cloverheads, are a kind of chief or head that transfers the capitalization of the adult, "I," to the capitalization of the *companions* ("Companioned") who are the ions of Pan hearsing and rehearsing, singing in this book of songs, the adverb of whose title, *Weeds and Wildings Chiefly: with A Rose or Two*, places their poetic sovereignty above what the poem "A Ground-vine" had temporarily conceded as the "Queen of Flowers," i.e. the "Rose." These ions of Pan are common, communicating all over the "living in clover" poetic signatory and his reader, addressee, destinatory, that when-if-reader, *Winnefred* who makes two win if one is read, *To Winnefred*, an address that joins the infinitive and infinite "to win," with the word *par excellence* for imagination, *if*. Read (Pan names the "reed," also) or re(a)d as, "we are communists here," hear.

This 'ion' of "Companioned" becomes then the charged electron of the collection's next poem "The Old Fashion." As Svante Arrhenius showed in 1884, ions compose materials. Bonded in, say, a solid state, ions when dissolved in, say, water, are sent, electrically, in different directions. Electricity, the movement of such ions, can be channelled into current. In *Weeds and Wildings*, ions might be thought of as the components of words and their redistribution in the collection as the results of

different election, or reading. Also, the suffix -ion, in general, indicates verb action become noun, or a resulting state. In English, "fashion" is both verb and noun. The title therefore reads in two ways, a bit according to what electric or elective charge is given to the "ion": noun + verb, i.e. the Old are those who Fashion, making, shaping, styling, *facere*. Fashion is the verb action of "The Old," but in the poem, these "Old" are Ver, here Spring. Ver is "youthful" and "juvenile" and "eternally new." "Ver" is fashioned by the Old, "Old-fashioned is Ver" (7). This process by which "The Old Fashion" is however the hoary process, the result, the old movement or way, is what the choice of "ion" as word drawn from its Greek verb, *ienai* infinitive 'to go', *ion,* present participle 'going'. 'To go' as in 'to spring' (i.e. "Ver"), but also 'to go' as in 'to leave': "The Old Fashion" recounts the hour, the season, the *hora* or "Year after year" (13). This coming and going is the principle of the "And" as the "end" which is none, therefore iterative, multiple. The "And" (twice in 2, 3, 4, 8), not only shares with Melville's unpublished poem "Pontoosuc" the latter's explicit ionic bond between "And" and "End" but also the very iteration of "ver." In "The Old Fashion," "Ver" veers ionically, electrically, currently, in "forever" (2) and "never" (5), and by rimes adheres in "her" (8), "Year" (twice, 3), and the "-ter" of "after" (3), itself sent to bond with the "-ter" of "eternally" (7). The Old therefore fashion, styling these "var[ious]" ions as phonemes or lexemes, as clusters of letters that the songbirds in the poem, emblematic of these poems as songs, represent in their name, "bo[-]bo[-]link," as if the word itself were the thing it represents, the linkage of echoing and severing sounds, just as their songs "*Chee- Chee!*" "vary never/ In juvenile cheer" (5-6). This "Ver" that is "And the same, and forever," thus "Keep[s] the old-fashion true" (2, 10), reappearing in the poem "Always with us!" in the palindromic rev-ver of its third verse, "**Rev**isit he would, so remains not fore**ver**" (3). Verity, truth, reduces to "ver" iteration, at the level of the *ver* (worm) and *vers* (verse).

Working by induction, *Weeds and Wildings* is a sort of Faraday cup, the device named after the coiner of the term of ions in 1830, Michael Faraday, that measures the number and movement of these ions of pan, these companions.

Children, lilly and cherry, butterflies, all companions . . . the ions of pan are the mad caps, the poetic sovereignty: clever-/clover-/never-heads. This companion announces the old fashion, which is the making of Ver, which is the same, forever, year after year, never varying. Chee is the verse of cheer and cherry.

"Butterfly Ditty" also is also written with the drifting and re-landing verbal seeds of "Madcaps" and "The Old Fashion." "Butterfly Ditty" is the song of the butterflies that have flitted from the companioning butterflies in "Madcaps" and this song continues the bobolinks' song of "The Old Fashion." The welling sound of its

final two lines, "they **will** sing/ **While** the **wel**kin is blue" becomes the run-on "We'll" (3, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 9) that is the butterflies' conveyance: "From garden to garden/ Such charter have we" (5-6). This charter (to "rove," "revel,/ And idlers" "be" [7-8]) is what the "we," the butterflies, have, and this "we'll" is continuance of the "**wel**kin" from "The Old Fashion," to wit, it is the idea that the birds, the butterflies, the ions, form a "-kin," from which "Man, Eden's bad boy" has excommunicated himself. The "we'll," the butterflies' "rove" and "revel," are concerned by nothing except by Man: the "rove" and "revel" and "idler" of "we'll" is "Concerned but for this, – / That Man, Eden's bad boy, / Partakes not the bliss" (10-12). This separation (*con-cernere*)—by dint of Man's non-participation—operates by the cuts: by the comma and m-dash in "this, –" and by the sudden flurry, unprecedented in the poem, of dentals and plosives ("but," "-den's bad boy," "Partakes," "not") and the |k| of "Concerned" and "Partakes" not heard since line 1, "Come," "like." Sound—its *phonemalized mobility*—tells the story that was encapsulated in the word "welkin" of the final line of "The Old Fashion" echoing out of which "Butterfly Ditty" resonates.

In this cluster of poems the head, or chief, or sovereignty, conveys a charter that is idle and ideal, poetic. Melville called the poems themselves in *Weeds and Wildings* "clover-heads," "Clover" being the poem that precedes "Madcaps." These "madcaps," these "weeds and wildings," have no end in the sense of a use or utility. They are what Melville the singer-poet strove, like his bobo-links, in the pleonastic line of "The Old Fashion," to "keep […] true" (l. 10: "keep," like "true," means the *wahren*, the keep-true that *Wahrheit* is the name of): to wit, the idle as ideal. The trace of "idlers" in "Butterfly Ditty" is honored in the poem from Part II of *Weeds and Wildings* whose title is a clear echo of the Wordsworthian inscription poem tradition: "Inscription. For a Boulder near the spot/ Where the last Hardhack was laid low/ By the new proprietor/ of the Hill of Arrowhead." Written against property and proprietorship as all of *Weeds and Wildings* is, this inscription poem takes the epitaph form: "A weed grew here.—" Perhaps like the "inutilities" that are the poems in *Weeds and Wildings*, this weed had no use ("Exempt from use"), and "turn[s] no wheel," makes nothing run ("nor run"), is not even aesthetic ("Radiance pure or redolence/ [. . .] this had none"). In the fifth of this six-line poem, the repeated inscription of the spade-like letter "v," reinforced by the "y" in the key pivot word in the poem, "yet," insists on the planting, the downward inscription, rooting/ writing, of this "weed." Redoubled by the conjunctive "And" that starts lines five and six in order to name an end not conceived according to art or economy but only as a supplement that is not sublimatable in either of them, these lines contrast idleness against the utilitarian or the aesthetic. In the recurrence of "it"—"And yet heaven gave it leave to live/ And

idle it in the sun" (5-6)—the scriptor performs a transition from the weed as pronoun "it," first in the dative (heaven gave *to it*) but thereby immediately into the nominative (it *has* leave), that when repeated in line six becomes an accusative (idle *it*, accusative) but with no other direct object than the sameness of this dative, nominative and accusative it. Heaven gave to the weed (to "it") the "leave" not only "to live" but also "to idle it." Grammatically, the "it" of "idle it" is iterative but no direct object attaches to this "it." The verb "idle" expands to existence itself. Such "it" is the seamlessness here of this dative, nominative and accusative "it." The Whitmanian expression "leave to live" brings a new sense which Whitman does not explore in the many instances of "leave" throughout *Leaves of Grass*: permission, stay, furlough. Given leave from economy and aesthetics, the weed idealizes iteration. Its aeration—the plant rehearsing and participating in the air—is idle: without end (utility, art). Therefore, ideal here should be understood in the sense of ongoing in the "And." Yet objective inscription is the condition of possibility of ideality for without it, ideality would be trapped inside itself. Such was Derrida's insight. Here, for Melville, it "idles it in the sun." The solar energy order, unlike the fossil fuel order, functions according to temporal and spatial conditions that the modern petroculture—already revved up in the 1880s—drastically subordinated to accelerated economy and even aesthetics.[6] As in the inscription of the poet as writer, giver of (unwanted) poems, in "A Dutch Christmas," the poem "Inscription" for an epitaph on a "Boulder" is also for the writer himself. The epitaph, "Here grew a weed." is to be inscribed on a boulder that is near "the spot/ Where the last Hardhack was laid low." The periphrasis of "weed" for "Hardhack" forms a sort of contraction of the weed and the writer, their union, the double reference of "Hardhack" as tree and as the old writer of these "inutilities" that are *Weeds and Wildings*. "Weed" as *we'd* , the would or wood of a we, those in common communion, weed and Melville.

To Winnefred

To this issue of reading, of what happens when and if reading occurs, in other words, to this issue of the uncertainty of destination or survival, it behooves us to consider Melville's address to "the reader," or, at least, his sending to the addressee, to the receiver.

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[6]Tobias Menely, *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Toward a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

Melville opens *Weeds and Wildings* with an address to his wife (at least if we follow literary criticism) entitled "To Winnefred." Addressed not in fact to his wife's name, this title "To Winnefred" would gain if read, were it to be read, and more than one would win or gain. *Two win if read* has not been gathered by readers who have given interesting accounts of how Melville was not with his wife on great terms (Lyon Evans[7]) even though others (Bryant[8]) have stressed on the contrary that the collection attested their late-found harmony, while others such as Osborne have argued for the addressee being Melville's longstanding virtual interlocutor, Hawthorne.[9] In any case,

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[7] Although Lyon Evans does note that Melville "gives instructions on how the gift poems should be read," his reading approaches the question of the addressee of *Weeds and Wildings* at a strictly biographical level, registering yet not examining the substitution of "Winnifred" for "Elizabeth":"how can we be sure that the affection he expresses for Elizabeth—or rather, for Winnifred (itself a curious discrepancy)—is an honest expression of how he really felt?" *Leviathan. A Journal of Melville Studies* 2007 79-94, 85. In his perceptive response to this article, Scott Norsworthy reinforces the equation of Elizabeth and "Winnifred": "Melville (or his fictive narrator) reminds Elizabeth (or the fictive dedicatee of 'To Winnefred')," "The Melting Mood in 'To Winnifred': A Response to LyonEvans," *Leviathan. A Journal of Melville Studies* 2009: 133-138.

[8] John Bryant, "Melville's Rose Poems: As They Fell," *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, Volume 52, Number 4, Winter 1996: 49-84.

[9] Gillian Osborne stresses that the "primary piece of textual evidence linking Melville's wife to the manuscript as a whole is tenuous": the handwriting of the name "Lizzie," added in pencil beside a dedication "To Winnefred" belongs neither clearly to Melville nor his wife. "Herman Melville, Queen of the Flowers," *Leviathan* Volume 18, Number 3, October 2016, pp. 129-48, 135. While acknowledging the critics for whom *Weeds and Wildings* is entirely a collection for his wife, Osborne argues that it also "worries over and celebrates" Melville's (homoerotic) relation to Hawthorne, and to a lesser, general, extent, to men (132). Building off James Creech's work, she argues that the flowery is a sort of cover: "The floweriness of *Weeds and Wildings* has been interpreted as an appeal to a particular, feminine, reader. Everything else about the manuscript [. . .] hides in plain sight" (133). Under the cover of a conceited address to his wife (we suggest "*living in cover*" within "*living in clover*"), *Weeds and Wildings* would be an address to Hawthorne (the fact that Hawthorne is at this time deceased does not diminish this possibility), and more generally to certain male readers themselves under cover in public. Osborne formulates a question the pertinence of which the present essay attempts to extend further in its reading of "Winnefred" in the dual directions of "When, if read" and "win if read": "whether Melville expected any sort of understanding readership for his late works—even in a very specific reader such as his spouse—remains an open question" (133). We certainly agree with Osborne's assertion: "Reading Lizzie as the only meaningful interlocutor across the manuscript interprets "To Winnefred" too literally" (135), with the caveat that reading "To Winnefred" to substitute for "To Lizzie" is not literally literal at all, as our more literal and literary reading of the address "To Winnefred" tries to unfold. Thus, we endeavor to open Osborne's conclusion, "these flowery confessions performed in the absence of a reader is the work of *Weeds and Wildings*" (144), onto a different way of thinking the work's relation to the ever-uncertain possibility of being-read. Osborne's closing two sentences, "Literature has its individual blossoms, its periods of moldering, and its species-life. Melville suggests here that his writing, and perhaps our reading, like Rip's lilac, does not need him, even if he was responsible for the 'founding' of the plant" (144-45), inspire our attempt to exploit the complex periodic temporality of blossoming, moldering, and

Melville's wife was not named Winnefred.

Melville begins the prefatory address by praise of the clover, the Red Clover, and also the White Clover. To him and his wife, it is "one of the dearest of the flowers of the field," and he passes to why that is so. It is dear **not** because the clover shows the aptness to their own relationship of the figure of speech, "*Living in clover,*" **nor** because Melville found a four-leaf clover forty-four years earlier the month they married, which he calls "a specimen by the wayside," and which would have been happy augury for their marriage. Those explanations not being active, what might be underfoot in his nonetheless leaning, in his italicization, on it? Perhaps, *living in clover* might winningly be read phonically as *Living Ink Lover*. In doing so, we draw breath or inspiration from Tom Nurmi's conclusion to his "Pebbles" chapter: "Melville leaves us in the eco-eschatological time of Revelations, inhaling haunted sprays of planetary precarity. We are healed only by a pitilessly honest, wind-inspired art, kept from despair by our poetic faculty for making and remaking ourselves into artistic communities of belonging and mourning" (Nurmi 224). Encapsulating the gist of his reading of Melville in *Magnificent Decay*, Nurmi's two sentences here also testify to the change of scale between the understanding of the figure of speech *living in clover* which Melville himself disqualifies ("It is not, for example, because [. . .]"; "Neither have we" [NN 75]) and its displacement to a level where the fundamentally disjointed temporality and spatiality of *Living Ink Lover* is in adequation with eco-eschatological time and the space in which breath itself is haunted: *Living Ink Lover* is the genetic structure of life-death to which a phrase like "inhaling haunted sprays of planetary precarity" poetically condenses in its alliteration and assonance (h; hal/ haun; tary/ rity; ray/ tar/ car), and meter (plan-e-tar-y; pre-car-i-ty), its merging of breath and death (inhale/ haunt), and its dissemination (sprays) of global fragility, with the cryptic vestige of Latin *precors* or "pray." The poetic faculty that makes and remakes artistic communities constituted by the yoking of belonging and losing is also at work in the displacement of an anodyne figure of speech into something like what the *Living Ink Lover* bequeaths to us, when and if we read it. Melville and his wife perhaps were not *living in clover*; rather, this infelicitous speech figure might relate to Melville's writing career itself, i.e. to this *living ink lover*, where material inscription amounts to his being a lover of living ink, and to life in the trace, the lover even being this living ink, this limited and in some way unlimited ink. The lover is essentially wed to living ink. The name or compound word "Winnefred" to which the "To" is addressed starts with the letters "Winn." This

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species-life, in our reading of "To Winnefred" and "*living in clover*." Cf. her chapter, "Melville and His Flowers," in *The New Melville Studies*, ed. Cody Marrs (Cambridge University Press 2019), 27-42.

winning initiation already denotes striving, and even love:

> Win: from Proto-Germanic *winnaną, from Proto-Indo-European **wen-* ("to strive, wish, desire, love"). Cognate with Old Saxon winnan (Low German winnen), Dutch winnen, Old High German winnan, Old Norse vinna (Swedish and Icelandic *vinna*, Norwegian vinne), Gothic 𐍅𐌹𐌽𐌽𐌰𐌽.[10]

A living ink lover, in between subjective and objective genitive, in between living ink that loves and the love that, insofar as performative jussive or optative subjunctive, makes ink live and come alive, is it not the name of the relation between writer and reader, between writing and reading, between the scriptural trace on paper and its reactivation by the *lecteur* who selects and elects, recomposes that which is left to lie on the page, and who thereby reactivates the past and otherwise passive inscription? For ink to be living, it is necessary to reactivate the voice that is passive in the script from which the force of the intelligence and thus of the voice of the writer has been eclipsed by the form that remains, the composition that without reading would decay into compost. Derrida signaled this way to respond to Living Ink Lover, to understand the relation of writing and reading, when he wrote the following.

> The field of writing has for originality its capacity to do without, in its meaning, any actual reading in general ; however, without the pure juridical possibility of being intelligible for a transcendental subject in general, and if the pure relation of dependance regarding a writer and a reader in general were not to announce itself in the text, *if a virtual intentionality not haunt it*, then, in the vacancy of its soul, the field of writing is nothing but a chaotic literality, the sensible opacity of a defunct designation, that is to say, deprived of its transcendental function. The silence of prehistorical arcanes and of inhumed [*enfouies*] civilizations, the burial [*ensevelissement* ; also, "shrouding"] of lost intentions and of kept secrets, the unreadability of lapidary inscription detects the transcendental meaning of death, that which unites it to the absoluteness of intentional right [*droit*] in the very instance of its defeat [*échec*].[11]

An actual, empirical, reader can be generally absent, for the originality of the transcendental field of writing is that it is without that kind of subject. But the field of writing would be sheer unreadable materiality were there no general transcendental

[10] https://www.wordsense.eu/winnan/. Consulted 5 May 2024.
[11] Jacques Derrida, *Introduction* to Edmund Husserl, *L'origine de la géométrie* (Paris: PUF, 1962), 85, translation and emphasis mine.

subject (an ideal and perhaps idle subject, a ghost), and if writing were simply writing without the possibility of a retrieving reading: chaotic literality, sensible opacity, imploded signs. Writing, when and if it is read, wins. Two win if read, if or when reading happens, activating that which otherwise is dumb, mute, voiceless, sheer matter, a trace of force without actualizable form. Melville, whose penchant for burning the manuscripts of his printed texts and also his correspondence is oft-attested, addresses *Weeds and Wildings* to the possibility of reading more or less spectrally shrouded by a tradition that has palimpsested onto the address the identity of "Lizzie" or his wife "Elizabeth" or, in the case of Osborne, Hawthorne. Without the ghost of virtual intentionality, the field of writing is vacated of any idea of a soul. Such haunting is the possibility of any meaning. Intentionality survives in a text in the mode of a ghost. This ghost is as much haunting an empirical writer who never commands entirely her or his intention as it necessarily accompanies a reader faced to a text. Addressed to a time of supposed, hypothetical or wished-for reading (To When, If Read), so that what is expressed is an idea that Two Win If Read, two being sender and receiver whereby the receiver virtually becomes the sender returning to the "original" sender thereby made into receiver, this "Living Ink Lover" is a specific incarnation of that "axis of sameness and difference" which Nurmi maintains as the linchpin of his various analytic readings: a writing that would be entirely in the control of its writer would not even be objectified, inscribed or externalized and therefore would *both* not be writing *and* instead remain bound inside its sheer interiority; a reading that could not in some at least minimal way re-activate the meaning of writing would be purely different from that which it "reads" and would therefore not even be reading. Nurmi, Melville, and Derrida take this "textual relation" out of its anthropocentric and limited sense of writing and generalize it to all kinds of traces, of which the "writers" and "readers" can encompass the mineral, the vegetal, the "animal" and the human, in a network wherein "sender" and "receiver" can variously be conceived along a sliding axis of sameness and difference.

This Living Ink Lover that exceeds the life of Melville and his wife not living in clover is a relation on a differantial axis of difference and sameness, of writing and voice, of death and life, of ink and living, a relation whereby Ink is the differance, the pure trace, between Living and Lover. This mediational Ink is itself not something constituted, stabilized. Rather, it is the place of pure movement between "Living" and "Lover": "Living" and "Lover" both attest presence, but they relate through the trace that is "Ink." The Lover might be living in the love for ink, or loves ink that itself lives. Ink mediates these two possibilities of reading: one is that the lover loves an ink that is living, the other is that the lover loves and lives ink into that life. In "living ink lover,"

both sides (living, lover) are played against the middle. A fundamental undecidability is the relation of these two determinations. The ink of inscription is the mediation of sender and receiver, the written and the read, and it names less the substance used by Melville (his manuscripts are overwhelmingly in pencil) than the fact of "burning-in," the Greek *enkaiein*, that gives the word "ink." Nurmi retrieves Derrida's *feu la cendre* (that can mean both "the deceased ash" and "fire ash") to read living as the burning in that living which tracing is. As such trace, ink is the name of the movement between these two determinations that produces their difference, but a difference wherein the one inverts into the other, the living lover of ink into the lover of living ink: "therefore at issue here is not a constituted difference but rather, prior to any determination of content, the *pure* movement that produces difference. *The (pure) trace is differance.*"[12] Such is in play and sway, when and if reading Melville addressing the possibility of reading.

"Winnifred," "*Living in clover*": their communion is reading and writing, read ink, thereby invoking an axis of sameness and difference that can be called the axis of the always the same—the specificity of a literary text, not only after the invention of copyright, is that its reproduction not change one iota of it—and the always different—every reactivation or reading is anew, different. The axis of sameness and difference is that of the written and the read. The life of ink, life only possible as from ink: this relation of living (and) ink implies the spectral virtualization that is in the being of the word, even in the very being of grammar. This is irreducible life-death, that accordion of scales which is the awareness of planetary Melville (to echo Nurmi) or that awareness that was tantamount to Derrida's archi-writing.

> The life of language (*langue*) is also the life of specters. [At issue] is a spectrality proper to the body of language. Language, the word, in a certain manner the life of the word, has a spectral essence. It would be like the date : it repeats itself as itself and is each time other. There is a sort of spectral virtualization in the being of the word, in the very being of grammar. And it is therefore in language already, on language (*à même la langue*, or, "on level with language") that the experience of life-death exerts itself.[13]

The life of the word, like the life of the date, is inseparable both from its arrestation in inscription, in an embodiment of language, and its *revenance* or reactivation from

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[12] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 92. Translation mine.
[13] Jacques Derrida, "La Langue n'appartient pas." *Europe* 861-862 (2001): 81-91, here 88. Translation mine.

precisely this inscription. The very being of grammar, or of the word, and of tracing generally, is the exertion of living ink, the stepping-out of life from ink (the winning out, when and if reading happens, from the ink or the written, of its possibilities for survival or living on, living over, where "living" and "lover" combine in living over, over-living, living-on). "To Winnifred," to win if read and addressed to when, if read: this address says something of the life of writing, of the loving of living ink, the virtual intentionality that must haunt a text for it to exist at all as text and for it to be readable, and thus write-able, at all.

When, if read: names a temporality that binds together, yet irreducibly, a time "when" which belongs to the possibility of a future, and the virtual possibility of actualization, reading, which makes of the receiver the sender of that virtual ghostly subject that haunts the read, or writing.[14]

[14] The poem that Melville positioned as his very "last" sending at the end of his "Uncollected Poetry," "Adieu" expresses this general genial structure of "To Winnifred" and of the "Living Ink Lover."

> Ring down! The curtain falls, and ye
> Will go your ways. Yet think of me.
> And genial take what's genial given
> And long be happy under heaven. NN 292.