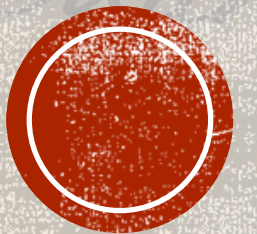
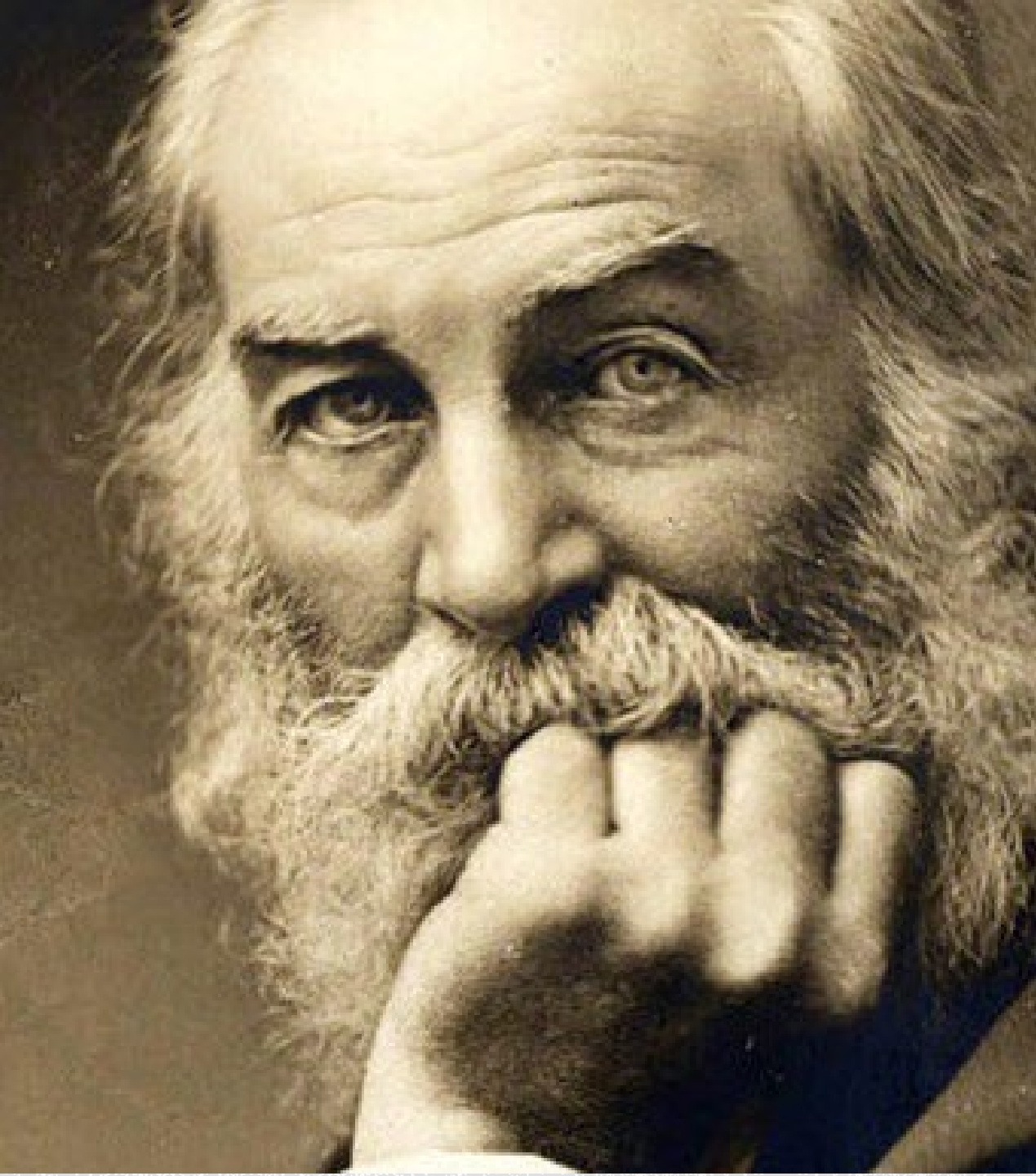


or she I was seeking,
I have somewhere surely lived
a life of joy with you,
All is recalled as we flit
by each other, flung

WALT WHITMAN'S "TO A STRANGER"

By Jen A. Becker





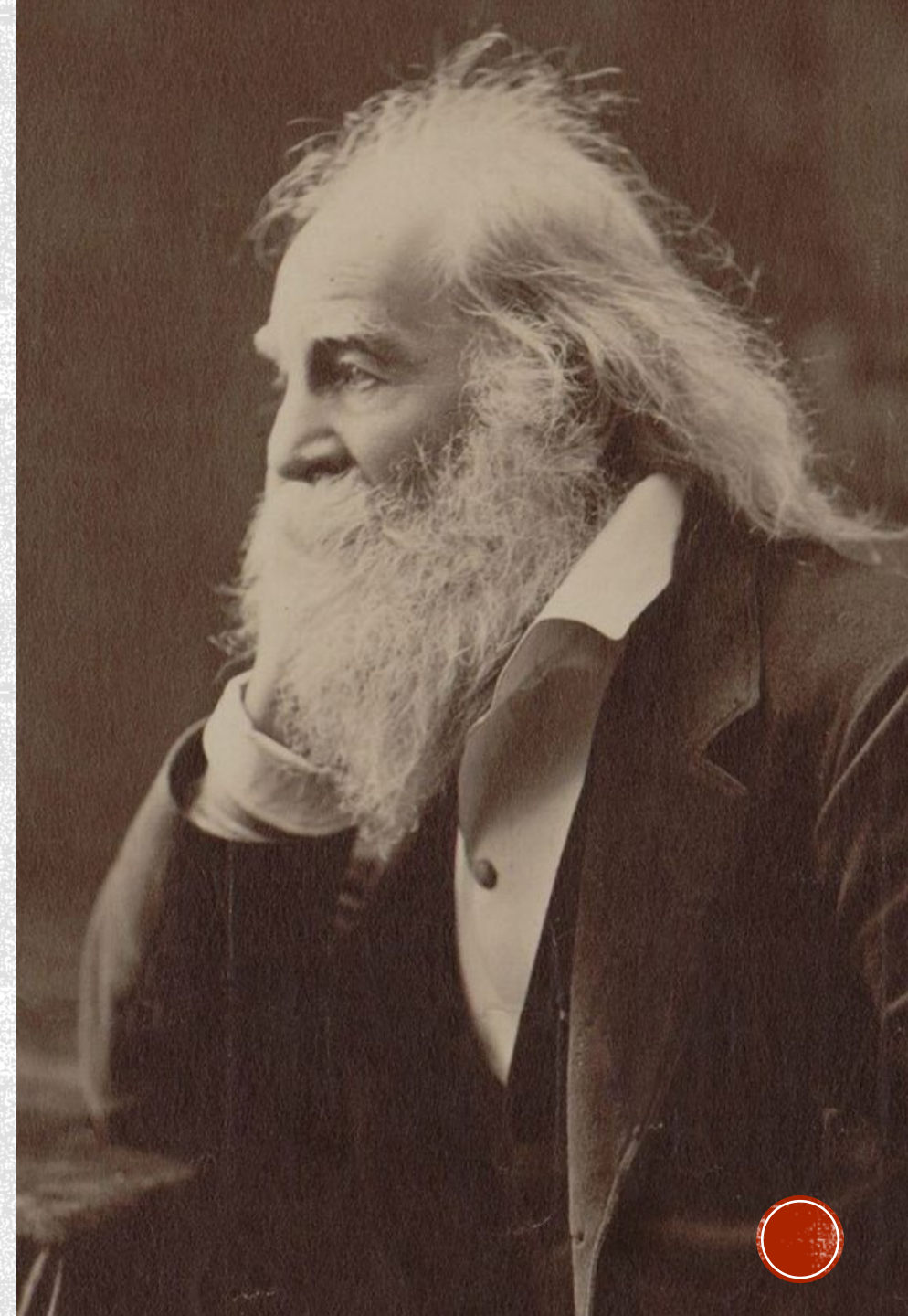
HIS LIFE

- Born May 31, 1819 in Long Island, NY,
 - He was the 2nd of 9 children
 - His family moved to Brooklyn when he was 4
- Died March 26, 1892 in Camden, NJ
- Attended public school until age 11
- Began working at the age of 12
 - Printer, Teacher, Editor, Journalist
- **Did you know?**
 - He also built houses and dabbled in real estate (1850-1855)



HIS LIFE

- **Self-Educated**
 - Museums, Books, Theater
 - Open discussions/debates
- **Civil War Years**
 - Visited sick & injured, both Confederate and Union soldiers, to “alleviate some of the mental depression and bodily suffering he saw in the wards.”
 - Wrote *Drum-Taps*
- **Partner - Peter Doyle 16.4**
 - A Confederate soldier Whitman visited in the hospital
 - “the most intense and romantic friendship the poet would have”



HIS WRITINGS

▪ Notebooks

- [Archives](#) of his scanned notebooks are online

▪ Most known for *Leaves of Grass*

- 9 editions of this book over his lifetime
- Each successive issue was not an entirely new edition
 - Changed titles, rearranged or re-grouped poems, modified lines, separated and combined poems, added a few new poems each time

▪ Whitman's Novel, *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*

- Originally published anonymously in 1852 as a 6-part series in New York's *Sunday Dispatch*
- Rediscovered in 2016 by University of Houston grad student, Zachary Turpin
- Published in full in the Walt Whitman Quarterly Review in 2017

▪ Common Themes

- Democracy/Democratic Voice, Individualism, the Natural World

Poem of the Librarian

— first a respectful word to
those who in ~~all~~ ancient
times ^{and} in all times, in unknown
nations, have written wise
words, or taught them —

wisdom comes mostly back to
the projector teller — no matter
if no record —

~~all my poems do.~~
all I ^{write} I write to ^{to}
arouse in you a
great personality

93-

To A Stranger (P)

Passing
Stranger, you do not know
how longingly I look
upon you,
You must be he I was seeking
or she I was seeking,
I have somewhere surely lived
a life of joy with you,
All is recalled as we flit
by each other, fluid,
~~refined~~, affectionate, chaste,
matured,
You grew up with me, were
a boy with me, or a
girl with me,
I ate with you, and slept
with you - Your body has
become not yours only,
nor my body mine.

TO A STRANGER

- Who is the "Stranger" Whitman speaks of?
 - In a different life, under different circumstances, the stranger could be a neighbor
- Why do you think Whitman felt a need to humanize the Stranger?
 - This poem was written during the time of the industrial revolution. Whitman feared that as cities grew, "neighbors" of rural America would be fewer.
 - Whitman wanted people to change their perspective, change how they viewed the people they came across from day to day.
- What is the significance of the all-encompassing "I" in Whitman's poetry?
 - Hoped to identify with the reader on a personal level
 - Call for unity in a divided nation



TO A STRANGER

- [Bram Stoker](#), a stranger to Walt Whitman, felt compelled to write a letter to him after reading *Leaves of Grass* in college.
 - Included in a biography about Bram Stoker “Something in the Blood”
 - Printed in the Paris Review on October 31, 2016
- Inspires articles still today
 - “Walt Whitman on Neighbors and Strangers” by Berny Belvedere (2016)
 - “City with No Neighbors” by Berny Belvedere (2017)
- Parallel Text: [“Walt Whitman ‘more important now than ever’”](#) by Kathleen McGarvey (2017)
- Recommended Movie: “Dead Poet’s Society”

You give me the pleasure
of your eyes, face,
flesh, as we pass - you
take of my beard, breast,
hands, in return,
I am not to speak to you -
I am to think of you
when I ~~walk~~^{sit} alone, or
wake at night alone,
I am to wait - I do not
doubt I am to meet
you again,
I am to see to it that
I do not lose you.