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CARLOS BULOSAN, WALT WHITMAN, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL JEREMIAD

MAI WANG



IN 1935, THE FILIPINO AMERICAN writer and activist Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956) was living in Los Angeles when he vowed to continue his informal literary education. Disillusioned by the racism and class-based discrimination he encountered everywhere on the West Coast, Bulosan turned to literature in order to understand the historical forces that had shaped his experiences as a field hand and urban laborer among his fellow Filipino American immigrants. Once he devoted himself to his autodidactic mission, Bulosan spent his days at the Los Angeles Public Library. As he details in his essay “My Education,” which was published posthumously in a 1979 issue of *Amerasia* devoted to Bulosan, reading allowed him to contextualize his marginalized life by turning to what many might consider an unlikely canonical source: the poetry of Walt Whitman. Bulosan recalls:

I read more books, and became convinced that it was the duty of the artist to trace the origins of the disease that was festering American life. I was beginning to be aware of the dynamic social ideas that were disturbing the minds of leading artists and writers in America. . . . I studied Whitman with naïve anticipations, hoping to find in him an affirmation of my growing faith in America. For a while I was inclined to believe that Whitman was the key to my search for roots. And I found that he also was terribly lonely, and he wrote of an America that would be.¹

For Bulosan, Whitman serves here as a literary passport to a country that seeks to exclude him and other diasporic writers from the mainstream literary establishment. The poet many consider “quintessentially American” becomes, perhaps counterintuitively, the inspiration for Bulosan’s artistic reclamation of his past as a colonial subject in the Philippines—which was governed by the U.S. during his childhood. Whitman represents a literary past that proves newly useful for the Filipino American writer who articulates a vision of democratic futurity

adapted from the ideals of the American Renaissance. Yet Bulosan also brackets his early naivety with temporal markers that register his shifting interpretation of Whitman's poetry. His former appraisal of Whitman as a symbolic "key" to his roots gives way to a different portrait of Whitman as the prophetic poet of loneliness. What drives Bulosan's shifting portrayal of Whitman? By the end of the passage, Bulosan insists on their mutual status as lone poets of a future that has yet to be written—with the conviction that if America can still be perfected, the end result must be deferred—forming an imaginative bond between them as secular Jeremiahs.



In *The American Jeremiad*, Sacvan Bercovitch identifies Whitman as a notable follower of the jeremiad tradition.² Departing from the historian Perry Miller's portrayal of the jeremiad as a vehicle to express ambiguity, Bercovitch argues that the Puritans transformed the sermon form they inherited from Europe by infusing it with optimism: in their hands, the established "catalogues of iniquities" leading to a climactic moment of divine vengeance was rewritten as a record of present woes that give way to a celebratory vision of future success (6-7). According to Bercovitch, the productive tension between the imperfect reality of the present and the utopian state of the future drove the development of a uniquely American jeremiad tradition that gave form to a "litany of hope" in which the eventual success of the nation was already assured, even if the future had yet to arrive (10-22). Over time, the optimistic jeremiad of the Puritans was secularized, and Bercovitch finds evidence of the jeremiad's reach in the nineteenth-century American literature of westward expansion, including Whitman's work (176-199). Although twentieth-century Asian American literature falls outside the purview of Bercovitch's project, in this essay I demonstrate how Bulosan invokes the jeremiad form pioneered by the earliest Anglo-American orators and advanced by Whitman to write the first Filipino American jeremiad.

Both Whitman and Bulosan deploy the jeremiad by documenting the shortcomings of American society alongside an insistence that the nation remains perfectible, and both writers elevate a deferred ideal of critical universalism that cuts across the divides of race, class, and nationality. Bulosan and Whitman write transnational jeremiads that, while centering on the American experience, branch outwards to imagine an idealized global polity. In their works, the jeremiad becomes a global invective against ongoing social injustice that enables radical future reforms. Critics have missed the influence of Whitman's

nuanced universalism—delivered through the diffuse jeremiad of *Democratic Vistas*—on Bulosan’s semiautobiographical novel *America Is in the Heart* (1946). For Bulosan, channeling Whitman’s defense of America as a perpetual work-in-progress allows him to partially reconcile the contradictions between the failed promise of democracy and his defiantly optimistic faith in his adopted country. Literature offers Bulosan an imagined way out of the dilemmas he encounters as a marginalized Filipino American, even as the production of artistic works remains entangled within a capitalist marketplace that offers writers and readers what Fredric Jameson calls a “fantasy bribe” of utopian healing that may ultimately reinforce the dominance of American imperial democracy.³

Scholars have long recognized how *Democratic Vistas* functions as a “religious catechism” intended to guide a rapidly changing country searching for answers in the wake of the Civil War.⁴ Whitman wrote *Democratic Vistas* as a rebuttal of Thomas Carlyle’s polemic against democracy, “Shooting Niagara.”⁵ Whitman’s defense of democracy was originally written as a three-part essay, and the first two parts were published in *Galaxy* magazine in 1867 and 1868 before the complete essay was published as a standalone volume in 1871 in Washington, D. C., where Whitman had spent the better part of the war ministering to wounded soldiers. It is this figure of Whitman as nurse that emerges throughout Bulosan’s work, especially following his two-year confinement at the Los Angeles General Hospital from 1936 to 1938. Whitman comes to represent a symbolic nurse who tends to Bulosan’s intellectual needs as a patient after his recovery from tuberculosis and other diseases.⁶

The ailing autobiographical narrator of Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* finds a clear antecedent in the prophetic voice of Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*. In the novel, Bulosan’s call for the emergence of a new Filipino American literature is delivered through his protagonist Allos as well as Allos’s encounters with his brother Macario.⁷ To date, no critic has addressed the strong resemblances between Macario’s extended speech at the end of Part Two and Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*. My aim is to show how Macario’s speech is deeply informed by Bulosan’s understanding of Whitman, whom he viewed as a symbolic ally whose work helps him reconcile the suffering of Filipino immigrants with his commitment to enacting progressive reforms in the future.

Critics have long puzzled over Macario’s speech. Michael Denning, for instance, reads the speech as the “epitome of sentimental, populist, and humanist nationalism.”⁸ Similarly, E. San Juan Jr. criticizes Bulosan’s “melodramatic, sentimental praise of Whitmanian democracy and the deployment of the utopian metaphor of ‘America’ as a classless, nonracist society.”⁹ What these critics have

missed, however, is Bulosan's indebtedness to the jeremiad form—drawn from works like *Democratic Vistas*—which is the mode through which the novel turns polemical. Macario's lengthy monologue functions as an optimistic political treatise that serves as a counterweight to the disillusionment Allos experiences after suffering from multiple episodes of violent discrimination. While Whitman wrote *Democratic Vistas* to address a moment of profound political unsettledness and racial conflict, Bulosan similarly addresses cross-racial animosity by posing a solution set in a better time to come. Bulosan adapts the Whitmanian ideal of future-oriented universalism in order to illustrate the pressing need for the Filipino American community to achieve greater equality through organized activism and informal literary activities. Literary affinities help the Filipino American writer overcome the threat of social ostracism, but these activities are always contained within a broader system of racist exclusion from formal employment channels and educational institutions.

In the wake of Bercovitch's influential definition of the secular jeremiad as the form that united American writers through the creation of a "ideological consensus," other critics have argued for an expansion of Bercovitch's nationalist framework.¹⁰ William V. Spanos, for instance, makes the case that Bercovitch's discussion of the American jeremiad should "incorporate and emphasize the 'fact of the frontier'" and recognize the central role of foreign relations—the "threatening other beyond the American frontier"—as other features of the genre.¹¹ Indeed, a close reading of *Democratic Vistas* reveals that Whitman's text coheres around the diffuse form of the transnational jeremiad.



Over the years, the large body of Whitman criticism has offered diverse perspectives on the poet's geopolitics. One group of critics reads Whitman as an inclusive democrat. Jay Grossman demonstrates how Whitman's poetry stages a representative catalog that highlights the "specificity and particularity" of each figure while impeding any "universalized or totalized claims."¹² Similarly, Angus Fletcher has identified Whitman as the "poet of democracy" through his commitment to a style in which "no phrase is ever grammatically superordinate, superior to, any other phrase."¹³ As Gary Wihl argues, Whitman sets out to prove that the "American political order offers unprecedented, true conditions for citizenship."¹⁴ Kenneth Cmiel characterizes Whitman as a writer who blended a belief in individual liberty with collective rule and functioned as both "a liberal defender of freedom and a radical democrat."¹⁵ John Mac

Kilgore summarizes this dynamic succinctly as a process focused on “releasing alternative democratic possibilities occluded by existing legal and nationalist frameworks.”¹⁶ Scott Henkel has proposed that Whitman’s “grassroot politics” calls for the democratization of “all public and private life.”¹⁷

Another group of critics has diverged from the consensus view of Whitman as a defender of democracy. In contrast to Grossman, Wai Chee Dimock reads *Leaves of Grass* as an inclusive text, but only to the extent that it suppresses and minimizes the differences between distinctive individuals by foregrounding a universal definition of personhood.¹⁸ In Dimock’s view, the syntactical “chant of equivalence” gives every figure in the poem a nonspecific “blanket attribute of goodness,” making it impossible to justify affective preferences for anyone in particular.¹⁹ Dimock concludes that Whitman’s poem reveals the underlying “frailty of a democratic poetics, as of a democratic polity.”²⁰ Other critics have also addressed the occlusions within Whitman’s poetry, particularly regarding his stance on race and empire. Ed Folsom has acknowledged the “dominating and imperialistic” strain of Whitman’s poetry, which at times can be read as the “battle hymn of manifest destiny,” and notes that Whitman “espoused the full spectrum of nineteenth-century American racialist views” by the end of his career.²¹ In his reading of *Democratic Vistas*, George Hutchinson notes the invisibility of African-Americans in the narrative and argues that “the whole epic story of black Americans’ experience of the conflict lies outside Whitman’s reach,” thus revealing the limits of the “white poetic imagination.”²² Heidi Kim has explored how Whitman’s vocabulary of Anglo-Saxonism and his celebration of inherited English traits make his universal call for equality problematic.²³

In recent years, transnational literary scholars have departed from the traditional framework of Whitman as the bard of American democracy by reevaluating Whitman as a global figure and exploring the wide-ranging reception of his work. As Folsom recounts, the field of American studies has “shed its provinciality” and recognized that Whitman “has many cultural lives and resides in many languages.”²⁴ While various scholars have unpacked important new dimensions of Whitman’s mixed record on race and imperialism, Bulosan’s positive references to Whitman suggest that he was publicly untroubled by the poet’s ambivalence on the role of minorities in the growing American empire. Whitman’s reluctance to speak at length on racial specifics—the poet’s insistent universalism that can be read as obliterating difference into a simultaneous sameness—may be precisely what appealed to Bulosan. Bulosan selectively evokes a sanitized version of Whitman as the prophetic voice of cross-racial unification—found in the secular jeremiad of *Democratic Vistas*—in *America Is in the Heart*.

The proliferation of critical perspectives on Bulosan has been remarkably unified in its treatment of *America Is in the Heart* as a paradoxical text. Much of the criticism attempts to reconcile or juxtapose the disparate strains of the novel.²⁵ Jeffrey Cabusao has explored how Bulosan anticipates the “multiethnic, ‘globalized’ context of the 21st century” while simultaneously documenting a “neocolonial Philippine society marked by persistent economic inequality.”²⁶ Similarly, Elaine Kim notes how the novel recounts American exploitation of the Philippines alongside Bulosan’s quest to establish a new Filipino American identity.²⁷ E. San Juan Jr. reads *America Is in the Heart* as a text that details how the protagonist’s “Americanized psyche” is “molded by patronizing tutelage in the colony” while also noting the novel’s “radically subversive energies.”²⁸ Lisa Lowe interprets *America Is in the Heart* as a partial bildungsroman: by capturing the “complex, unsynthetic constitution of the immigrant subject between an already twice-colonized Philippine culture, on the one hand, and the pressure to conform to Anglo-American society, on the other,” Lowe argues, Bulosan “troubles the closure and reconciliation of the bildungsroman form.”²⁹ Viet Thanh Nguyen identifies how Bulosan’s novel complicates the rhetoric of “domestic anticommunist liberalism” by presenting America as a “contradictory symbol of both democratic pluralism and international socialism.”³⁰ Similarly, Wolf Kindermann, Tim Libretti, Chase Smith, and Patricia Chu have all identified the novel’s dual portraits of America.³¹ Recently, critics have begun to turn their attention to the role of literature within *America Is in the Heart*. Malini Schueller has examined how Bulosan offers an ambivalent critique of the colonial education system the U.S. implemented in the Philippines yet also turns to Whitman in order to find a source of “radical learning to unite the working classes.”³² Meg Wesling has discussed how “the literary becomes the venue for Carlos’s participation in the idyllic American national dream” even as the narrator of the novel stages a “gap between his own experience and the utopian promise of these texts.”³³ As Steven Yao points out, an “activist view of literature” exists within the novel alongside an endorsement of a “European humanist conception of literature and its function.”³⁴ Taken as a whole, the existing body of Bulosan criticism points to how Bulosan’s reception of nineteenth-century American literature parallels the conflicting ways the U.S. is portrayed as an alternating source of democratic solidarity and racialized oppression both within and outside its national borders.

My transnational approach in this essay is guided by the perspectives of critical race scholars who seek to move beyond the nation as a primary analytic framework. As Rajini Srikanth describes it, transnationalism seeks to bridge

works centered in the U.S. with diasporic locations found in ancestral homelands, and in doing so, connect seemingly disparate traditions.³⁵ Recently, literary scholar Nan Z. Da has made the case that transnational literary studies can uncover “affiliations, grievances, and imaginaries larger than the nation state” by documenting how “crossings of language and literature mediated formations in places that are generally seen as, and even self-proclaimed as, hermetically sealed.”³⁶ Utilizing this rubric of transnationalism, we can trace Whitman’s critical universalism in *Democratic Vistas* as it reappears in Bulosan’s Filipino American jeremiad, *America Is in the Heart*.

America Is in the Heart was first published in 1946, shortly before the commencement of the Cold War. Bulosan’s novel mines Whitman’s jeremiad form in order to evade the ideological dilemmas he encountered as a writer sympathetic to international socialism but who also anticipates the anti-totalitarian sentiment of Cold War liberalism. Bulosan hints at his remarkable political flexibility by emphasizing his naturalized embrace of Western literary culture rooted in the nineteenth-century canon; alongside Whitman, Bulosan references a litany of American authors as interlocutors, including Hart Crane (whom Bulosan identifies as a “writer in the tradition of Whitman and Melville”), Jack London, Mark Twain, and William Saroyan.³⁷ More than any of these other figures, Whitman functions as both a poetic personification of democratic futurity and a source of the novel’s literary forms.



Although *Democratic Vistas* is commonly read as a meandering study of American politics, it is also concerned with the development of a new literary movement.³⁸ Whitman dissects the problems afflicting democracy and envisions how a transformative literature will unify a polarized society. Throughout *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman reimagines the contours of his globalizing nation in the wake of the Civil War by following the conventions of the secular jeremiad. Critics have noted how Whitman offers, as Ronald Takaki memorably remarks, a “vision of possibility.”³⁹ While the country has survived the attacks of the “Secession Slave-Power,” Whitman cautions against becoming complacent and suggests that its success remains uncertain (19). He locates the source of a second pending downfall in the “cankered, crude, superstitious, and rotten” state of society, which persists alongside a “seriously enfeebled” collective moral conscience, a “scornful superciliousness” in popular literature, and cities populated by a “mob of fashionably-dressed speculators and vulgarians” (11-12). As he announces,

“our New World Democracy...is, so far, an almost complete failure.” Whitman suggests that established social norms and ethical standards need to be constantly revised, and this process of reform must be driven by new currents of thought that attend to the cultural deficiencies no political institution can fix.

After detailing the deficiencies of American democracy, Whitman holds out the possibility of eventual reform and locates the instigator of such positive change in literature. He calls for the creation of a new class of “mighty poets” who can teach common people to understand “what is universal, native, common to all” (9). By insisting that a divided society can be reunited through the strenuous efforts of its citizen-artists, Whitman argues that a distinctive literary tradition will serve as the primary driver of political progress, even if it has yet to come into being. Such a claim anticipates Bulosan’s elevation of literature in *America Is in the Heart*, foreshadowing Bulosan’s belief that a strong literary culture will serve as the guarantor of a democratic state. Yet unlike Bulosan, Whitman defines the end-goal of democracy as the nullification of difference rather than the tolerance of heterogeneity: for Whitman, literature can function as the force of collective “adhesiveness . . . that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all” (24). Whitman seeks to establish an egalitarian equivalence between the various races that finally collapses all distinctions between them. This vision of a future marked by racial fusion cannot accommodate lasting difference, and his rhetoric reflects an insistence on the inevitability of cohesion—as the essay progresses, the many races of America become one race. Whitman identifies a singular thought that animates “our own land’s race and history. It is the thought of Oneness, averaging, including all; of Identity—the indissoluble sacred Union of These States” (26). The erasure of idiosyncratic traits deemed undesirable—both on the individual and the national level—will ensure the cohesiveness of American democracy. Above all, Whitman stresses how a cultural renewal will succeed by “aiming to form, over this continent, an Idiocracy of Universalism” full of “tolerant, devout, real men” (40). This future government will not abide dissent because there will be none, since it will enjoy a fully representative legitimacy once the homogenous national temperament has been inculcated in each citizen. It is easy to see why critics have called attention to Whitman’s problematic evasion of racial antagonisms, which is accomplished through invoking a universal ideal. Josephine Park notes in her study of Whitman’s poetry that Whitman offers a “proleptic vision of continued American expansion . . . along industrial lines of advance.”⁴⁰ In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman is no less insistent about the inevitable establishment of an American empire whose far-flung reach will be accompanied by the

progressive development of a literary culture. Whitman's ambitious reworking of the secular jeremiad is predicated on his affirmation of a country already a colonizing power constantly seeking new territories. At the same time, there is evidence that Bulosan found Whitman's unifying impulse a useful model for formulating his own calls for greater inclusion of the disenfranchised both within the U.S. and in the Philippines.

Bulosan follows the logic of the jeremiad in *America Is in the Heart*: beginning with a series of linked anecdotes documenting the deprivations afflicting Filipino peasants living under American colonial rule, Bulosan makes the case for the deferred intellectual liberation of the Philippines—as well as Filipino Americans living abroad—through first enacting political and economic reforms. The semiautobiographical novel opens with scenes from the impoverished childhood of its protagonist Allos, who helps his father farm a small plot of land while his mother sells salted fish and other staples in the surrounding villages. After his father loses the land, Allos and his siblings scatter across the country, and Allos finds work as a servant for an American woman before following his older brothers and emigrating to the United States. Bulosan depicts the continuity of suffering in both countries through Allos's work as an itinerant laborer. Shortly after arriving in Seattle, Allos is forced to journey to Alaska to work at a fish cannery filled with other exploited Filipino migrant laborers. When his contract ends, he returns to Seattle and travels by train to Los Angeles, where he finds a Filipino American community living precarious lives. He reunites with his brother Macario, who supports him by working as a houseboy for a wealthy couple. Eager to embrace his independence, Allos works odd jobs before briefly turning to crime and gambling as he journeys up and down the West Coast before returning to Los Angeles. With his health declining, Allos becomes a prolific reader and educates himself as he spends two years confined to a hospital bed, where he finds temporary relief from persecution through reading and writing. Bulosan documents how Allos embarks on two parallel journeys, becoming involved in the nascent labor movement among his fellow immigrant workers while simultaneously embarking on the solitary project of becoming a writer.

From the beginning of the novel, Bulosan oscillates between presenting a critical portrait of the flawed American institutions shaping the Philippines and underscoring the persistent appeal of obtaining a Western education through informal means. This dual dynamic is most evident in his portrayal of Miss Strandon, the former librarian who employs Allos as a servant once he leaves his village. Bulosan foregrounds the racialized dimensions of their encounter when

Allos delivers food to Miss Strandon at her home for the first time:

“What did you do to your face?” she asked suddenly.

I was ashamed to tell her that I had hoped the white men and women who came to the market with cameras would photograph me for ten centavos. They had always taken pictures of natives with painted faces, and I had hoped that I could fool them with the charcoal marks on my face. I said it must be dirt.

“Wash it off!” she said, giving me a bar of soap. (68)

Bulosan’s transnational jeremiad highlights the connection between the material deprivation of the Filipino people and American colonialism, which is often presented as a form of market exchange. Although Allos finds a way to eke out a profit from the racist view of Filipinos as primitive and interchangeable, he underscores his self-acknowledged sense of shame by recounting his lie to his new employer. Miss Strandon does not comment on the performative aspect of Allos’s self-disguise, and it is unclear if she recognizes the masquerade as such. Instead, she commands Allos to remove the stain of his abjection. The whitening bar of soap takes the place of the intrusive camera that only registers the alleged inferiority of the Filipino body, and Allos immediately accepts Miss Strandon’s offering. The dirt of living as a colonized subject proves to be temporary as the tone of the passage shifts from registering the ongoing injustice inflicted upon Filipinos to revealing how Miss Strandon represents the benevolent side of American interventionism. As she presents him with the soap, Miss Strandon begins to view Allos as an individual capable of self-transformation.

The first encounter between Miss Strandon and Allos leads to his growing and unlikely identification with key figures in American history. One evening, after Miss Strandon explains the history of the Civil War to Allos and discusses Abraham Lincoln’s rise from poverty to become president, Allos reflects:

From that day onward this poor boy who became president filled my thoughts. Miss Strandon began giving me books from the library. It was still hard for me to read and to understand what I was reading. Miss Strandon realized that I had a passion for books, so she made arrangements with the city librarian to let me work with her.

I found great pleasure in the library. I dusted the books and put them in order . . . Names of authors flashed in my mind and reverberated in a strange song in my consciousness. A whole new world was opened to me. (69-70)

As Bulosan traces the rise of the young Allos from destitution to knowledge, he presents the literary exchanges with Miss Strandon as a condensed rehearsal of the jeremiad logic structuring the novel as a whole. After shedding his identity as an indigenous laborer, Allos steps into the role of budding intellectual. What began as a superficial transformation aided by a bar of soap turns into an extended narrative sequence documenting his nascent knowledge of American history and literature. Through their mutual status as poor boys who rise above their stations, Allos pairs himself with Lincoln, the representative archetype of the self-made man whom Whitman also admired. By depicting the library books as the gateway to a “new world” of mental activity, Allos’s first-person narrative is a reflexive song of himself that strongly recalls Whitman’s invocation in *Democratic Vistas* of a “New World Literature, fit to rise upon, cohere, and signalize, in time, These States” (49-50). Both Whitman and Bulosan are oriented towards a future in which novel forms of literature are already established through a cultural renewal that may also serve to justify colonial conquest. Bulosan sets the stage for his later invocations of Whitmanian universalism as one of the novel’s dominant (if at times problematic) frameworks: despite the deep flaws in its implementation, a literary education emerges as the only source of a common language shared by the colonizers and the colonized subjects who learn to embrace Western ideals to serve their own program of self-liberation.

Throughout the novel, Bulosan perpetuates the structure of the jeremiad through his depiction of Allos as a struggling protagonist who alternately advances towards and retreats from the universal ideals he first learned in the Philippines. When Allos moves to California, he experiences a host of hardships and tragic accidents. After his friend José loses his foot while being chased by white detectives during a freight train accident, Allos takes him to the hospital, where the doctor and nurses treat him humanely (146-147). As he walks down the hospital’s “marble stairway,” which is imbued with symbolic whiteness, Allos begins to think about “the paradox of America” in terms that suggest Bulosan’s familiarity with Whitman: “in this hospital, among white people—Americans like those who had denied us—we had found refuge and tolerance. Why was America so kind and yet so cruel? Was there no way to simplifying things in this continent so that suffering would be minimized? Was there no common denominator on which we could all meet?” By elevating the term “America” into the novel’s central metaphor, Bulosan reveals how his jeremiad descends from Whitman’s rhetoric of future-oriented national supremacy—as Bercovitch asserts in his reading America functions as a “civic identity rooted in a prophetic view of history,” and the “identification with America as it ought to be impels

the writer to withdraw from what is” (*American Jeremiad*, 177, 181). After his repeated invocations of America as a contradictory country that both denies and affirms his ideals, Allos seeks “refuge” in a universal discourse capable of “simplifying” the disparities between individuals into a comforting “common denominator”—but the question still remains as to when that future will arrive (147). Like Whitman, whose aggregating impulse in *Democratic Vistas* becomes a remedy for a fractured nation, Allos envisions the eventual growth of a cross-racial consensus in which ideological differences will no longer divide the polity, and he suggests that the flawed present already contains an alternative to racialized violence through an imperfectly enforced code of civil behavior. By describing the hospital as a utopian space where the egalitarian promise of the U.S. is partially realized, Bulosan also highlights the tragic failure of other public spaces to guarantee a basic measure of safety and freedom for marginalized workers. It is only after José becomes disfigured that he is recognized as an individual; in order for his status as an outsider to be minimized, his physical pain must first be maximized. Allos points to the usefulness of ideological constraints in checking the injustices that remain a feature of American democracy.

As the novel progresses, the appeal of Whitmanian universalism grows stronger for Allos and his brother Macario. Bulosan stages a partial withdrawal from the world of labor by depicting how the brothers migrate towards literature as a deferred form of political engagement. Reading and writing become imperfect avenues for overcoming the ostracism of the Filipino American community. While critics such as San Juan have traditionally associated Bulosan with revolutionary socialist thought, Bulosan was equally committed to portraying his Filipino American subjects as well-versed in the pacifying universal discourse espoused by Whitman, who insists that artists, not just political revolutionaries, can perfect democracy through literature. This connection is articulated through Macario’s extended speech at the end of Part Two. Speaking on behalf of an international movement of workers, Macario echoes Whitman’s call for “a great original literature” in *Democratic Vistas* as he explores his own vision of an idealized future brought on by “the discovery of a new vista of literature”:

We must achieve articulation of social ideas, not only for some kind of economic security but also to help culture bloom as it should in our time. We are approaching what will be the greatest achievement of our generation: the discovery of a new vista of literature, that is, to speak to the people and to be understood by them.

We must look for the mainspring of democracy, but we must also destroy false ideals. We

must discover the origin of our freedom and write of it in broad national terms. We must interpret history in terms of liberty. We must advocate democratic ideas, and fight all forces that would abort our culture. (189)

Macario's speech deploys the Whitmanian rhetoric of colonial conquest while subverting the dominant view of immigrants as a subordinate group by reimagining Filipino American laborers in the metaphorical role of explorers. By summoning the "discovery of a new vista of literature," Macario proposes an imaginative solution to the problem of cross-racial animosity using terms that bear a striking resemblance to Whitman's call in *Democratic Vistas* for a new American literature that will capture the pending transformation of a globalizing society:

. . . the grandest events and revolutions, and stormiest passions of history, are crossing to-day with unparalleled rapidity and magnificence over the stages of our own and all the continents, offering new materials, opening new vistas, with largest needs, inviting the daring launching forth of conceptions in Literature. . . . (54)

Whitman and Macario both identify a rapid succession of anticipated ideas and events that will culminate in a "new vista" of literature, which promises to be a record of the continuous workings of American democracy as well as a vehicle to transform the cultural parameters of the growing empire and steer it towards a utopian state that will mark the completion of their secular jeremiads. In Whitman's case, the history still being written is enshrined in broad transnational and transcontinental terms, while Macario addresses a subset of Filipino Americans as well as a global proletariat.

Achieving greater fluency through the creation of a populist literature will allow Macario's imagined audience to preserve their own preexisting culture. As in Whitman's work, this new literature will be established through a manifold process: advocating for increased material security is only the first step in a long chain of progression towards the full articulation of formerly inchoate democratic principles. Macario's conception of literature as the best tool to discover the "mainspring of democracy" echoes Whitman's assertion in *Democratic Vistas* that "there can be no complete or epical presentation of Democracy in the aggregate...at this day, because its doctrines will only be effectually incarnated in any one branch" of society.⁴¹ In true jeremiad form, Whitman stresses the limitations of the present and the collective inability to comprehend the "complete" implications of living in a democracy only to locate a potential solution in literary works as the selective carrier of democratic ideals. Likewise, Macario invests in literary activities as the conduit of eventual liberation through a reformation of

thought. For Macario, as for Whitman, literature is the outgrowth of a non-exclusionary form of cultural nationalism. Macario describes the creation of a new Filipino American literature as a form of excavation—by stripping back the layers of racism and classism that have been naturalized by their experiences in the U.S., the unnamed authors of the new movement will attain full-fledged freedom, if only at some indefinite point in the future. Bulosan’s presentation of Macario’s optimistic speech in the middle of a novel replete with multiple episodes of graphic suffering speaks to his characters’ persistent belief in the usefulness of literature as an indirect tool of reform. Yet the question remains: does the dramatic narrative surrounding Macario’s speech refute or support his claim that literature can remedy a multitude of injustices?

The key to understanding the dramatic implications of Bulosan’s narrative partially lies in Whitman. In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman outlines his expectations for the new transnational American literature in terms that anticipate Bulosan’s valorization of reading and writing in *America Is in the Heart*. Like Bulosan, Whitman asserts that the deficiencies of democracy can be corrected through books that pay closer attention to the neglected masses:

Literature, strictly considered, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. . . . I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades-with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes. . . . (19)

Writing in the aftermath of the Civil War, Whitman envisions an imminent cultural renewal arising from an emerging literary compact that resonates with Macario’s insistence that literature should “speak to the people” (189). Whitman places his faith in a precisely calibrated artistic movement that will seek to capture the full range of ordinary Americans. Anticipating Bulosan’s elevation of common workers, Whitman articulates his conviction that a more inclusive literature will take the place of outdated elitist forms. This growing branch of literature should aspire to a lasting fidelity to lived experience that will render the stories of “book-heroes” obsolete (19). Rather than pushing for political reforms directly, Whitman isolates literature as the linchpin in a program of aestheticized regeneration that will allow the United States to regain a unified national narrative as it prepares to become a global power. Whitman’s essay performs a series of maneuvers mirrored by Bulosan’s fictionalized rhetoric in *America Is in the Heart*: after detailing the host of social ills afflicting the U.S., both writers call for the emergence of a new literary movement that will be

capable of ameliorating the flaws of American-led democracy both within and without the nation's borders.



Literature serves as a counterweight in *America Is in the Heart*, providing Allos and Macario with a glimpse of a different way of life divorced from the brutal reality of their quotidian lives. Yet it would be an exaggeration to claim that literature functions as a panacea throughout the novel. While Macario's Whitmanian speech envisions a new Filipino American literature that drives sustained social progress, Bulosan also departs from Whitman's portrayal of literature as a democratizing force elsewhere in the narrative. By following the mode of the jeremiad, Bulosan both confirms Whitman's assumption that literary institutions will guarantee collective uplift in the future and registers the limited opportunities for Filipino American writers in the present. Through seemingly minor anecdotes detailing his encounters with other artists, Allos explores how literary institutions in their current form fail to deliver the imaginative liberation for the marginalized envisioned by Macario. In the course of his travels, Allos meets the hungry and emaciated Estevan, who reveals that he "will write a great book about the Ilocano peasants in northern Luzon" (139). Given the overlap in subject matter between Part One of *America Is in the Heart* and Estevan's unwritten work, it is clear that Estevan serves as the tragic double of Allos, mirroring his own ambitions to become a writer. Macario reveals to Allos that Estevan "has not published anything," and soon afterwards Estevan commits suicide. After Allos rushes to Estevan's hotel room and fetches a bundle of manuscripts, Allos describes how he carried the deceased writer's story about the Filipino peasantry around for a decade before he was "intellectually equipped" to understand its significance and "identify myself with the social awakening of my people" (138-139). The posthumous literary exchange becomes a mildly redemptive act that gives Estevan's fiction a new life that supersedes the premature death of its author. Allos steps into the role vacated by the other writer while becoming his ideal reader, symbolically completing Estevan's unfinished artistic mission by incorporating the unpublished work into his own retrospective narration. Allos partially fulfills Macario's optimistic call for a new literary movement, if only through an isolated dyad that will gradually expand to encompass their entire community. Through witnessing Estevan's abbreviated career, Allos arrives at a revised understanding of authorship. Estevan's example teaches him that the solitary pursuit of writing does not always lead to institutional rewards, but it

may still lead to deferred recognition from one's peers.

In order to become a writer, Allos must continually work to overcome the shared material deprivation that led to Estevan's untimely death. The near-impossibility of achieving such a feat, however, is made clear through his encounters with other artists, including Florencio Garcia, another "lonely Filipino writer" who cannot find a publisher (214). Allos recounts his departure from Florencio's apartment as the climactic moment in which their nascent bond paradoxically grows stronger: "I walked down the creaking stairs, looking up at his window when I reached the ground. I saw his ugly face, breaking into tears. I walked back to Cañon Perdido Street and slapped my own face so that I would not cry" (215). The perception of Florencio's tears induces a repressed reaction from Allos, who identifies with the other writer so strongly he must resort to violence to check his emotions. As he descends the staircase, Allos steps into a public space that refuses to accommodate open self-expression among the disenfranchised. Furthermore, Bulosan embeds a literary pun into the scene through the street name: "Cañon Perdido" could easily double as a reference to the 'lost canon' of Filipino American writers who have never achieved enough public acclaim to form a recognized tradition. Bulosan suggests that the silencing of many aspiring immigrant writers takes place in the literary marketplace before their work can be read, and the loneliness expressed by Estevan, Florencio, and Allos at various points in the novel must be read as a consequence of their exclusion from public life even as Allos eventually transforms his loneliness into the basis of a renewed prophetic mission to speak for other Filipino Americans.

Despite the persistent reminders of how other aspiring writers are leading parallel lives of little consequence, Allos tentatively reaffirms a meritocratic vision of the literary profession by foregrounding his own tale of achievement. As he progresses beyond the abrupt endings represented by Estevan and Florencio, Allos presents his life as another iteration of the same narrative with a crucial difference. Bulosan follows the teleological progression of the secular jeremiad when Allos experiences an artistic epiphany: after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, he begins writing poetry in his hospital bed. While coping with his increasingly severe illness, he publishes several poems, and Allos reveals how he feels triumphant by making a "definite identification with an intellectual tradition" (227). Allos surpasses the achievements of the other Filipino American writers by inserting himself into mainstream literary culture, but his desire for inclusion should not be conflated with a naïve longing for full assimilation. As Allos embraces his intellectual freedom despite his ailment, he arrives at a new understanding of literature as unbounded by racial, class-based, or national

divisions:

So from day to day I read, and reading widened my mental horizon, creating a spiritual kinship with other men who had pondered over the miseries of their countries. Then it came to me that the place did not matter: these sensitive writers reacted to the social dynamics of their time. I, too, reacted to my time. I promised myself that I would read ten thousand books when I got well. I plunged into books, boring through the earth's core, leveling all seas and oceans, swimming in the constellations. (246)

Allos enacts Macario's call for the "discovery of a new vista of literature" while simultaneously fulfilling Whitman's criteria for the ideal American poet (189). Like his brother, Allos recycles the language of colonial conquest by stylizing himself as a literary explorer who plumbs the depths of every text. For Allos, reading becomes the first step in forming a radical transnational literary movement, and he insists that literature can serve a leveling function between those of disparate backgrounds by uniting them through a mutual commitment to art. As he shares his observation that "the place did not matter" in his reception of other writers, Allos documents how literature can record the particularities of a country without perpetuating the oppressive structures that organize life outside the non-exclusionary sites of the imaginative world (246).

The novel reaches its utopian climax—and converges with Whitman's central thesis in *Democratic Vistas*—by presenting literature as a unique form of experience predicated on egalitarian intellectualism rather than entrenched hierarchies. While Estevan's and Florencio's careers dissolve under the weight of racist persecution, Allos comes to view literature as an exempt space that enables both readers and writers to disassociate themselves from established affiliations. Yet the counterexamples of the other writers threaten to undercut Allos's carefully calibrated assertion that reading is synonymous with a disembodied form of freedom that exists apart from the economic and political problems he encounters outside the hospital. The tragic lives and deaths of the other writers call the viability of creating a distinctive Filipino American literary culture into question. Bulosan never resolves the lingering tension between the novel's scathing depiction of racism's impact on minority artists and the positive exception represented by Allos, whose difficult journey towards authorship is presented as evidence of the redeeming merits of the institutions that have sustained him. Another way to conceive of this tension would be to posit that Bulosan constructs the novel by shifting between two rhetorical registers: radical socialism, which always presents itself in opposition to those who exploit the laboring immigrant body, and centrist-leaning liberalism, a conciliatory discourse whose affirmation of individual freedom supersedes the challenge

posed by the spectacle of collective suffering depicted elsewhere in the novel. The failures of other immigrant writers are contained within condensed interludes that conform to the arch of the broader jeremiad of Allos's progression from an illiterate peasant to a published poet. Despite Bulosan's critique of how literary labor seldom yields commercial rewards for marginalized writers, Bulosan ultimately presents a unifying vision of an artistic kinship between men that borrows its compensatory logic from Whitman's conception of literature as the shared soul of the globe-spanning nation. The novel's redeployment of Whitmanian terms partially demobilizes its leftist elements and makes the narrative more palatable for a Cold War American readership.

In order to arrive at a provisional sense of belonging within the American literary world, Allos must retreat from contemplating the lived experiences of his peers and seek refuge in the solitary activity of self-reform through reading and writing. *America Is in the Heart* completes its circular movement back towards the affirmation of autodidactic learning first presented through the early exchange between Allos and Miss Strandon. Instead of advocating for direct political interventions to end racist discrimination—a strenuous task given the stratified American society he lives in—Allos redirects his waning energies towards continuing his unfinished education. The aesthetic consolations of literature attenuate the need to embark on a more laborious campaign to achieve greater legal recognition for Filipino American immigrants. Here, Jameson's notion of the “fantasy bribe” prevalent in mass culture as a compensatory mechanism points to the limitations of Bulosan's elevation of literature. As Jameson suggests, literature may stand in for a utopian social order that partially addresses social conflict through “symbolic containment structures which defuse it, gratifying intolerable, unrealizable, properly imperishable desires only to the degree to which they can again be laid to rest.”⁴² In *America Is in the Heart*, Allos seeks redress for racialized harm by turning to literary labor for symbolic compensation even as the acute social problems that shape his precarious life remain unresolved.

Allos implicitly argues that the democratic promise of the U.S. will be partially fulfilled through guaranteeing intellectual freedom for immigrants even in the absence of economic security or full citizenship, and he narrates his own transformation into an articulate representative of his transnational community as he explains why he turns to Whitman:

I felt that I was at home with the young American writers and poets. Reading them drove me back to the roots of American literature—to Walt Whitman and the tumult of his time. And from him, from his passionate dream of an America of equality for all races, a tremendous

idea burned my consciousness. Would it be possible for an immigrant like me to become a part of the American dream? Would I be able to make a positive contribution toward the realization of this dream? (251-252)

After recounting many episodes of displacement during his journey up and down the Pacific coast, Allos finally settles on literature as the primary source of his growing identification with American culture. Reading Whitman inspires Allos to imagine an open-ended future full of inclusive possibilities—echoing Whitman’s elevation of literature as the guarantor of cultural progress in *Democratic Vistas*—and to evade the pressing difficulties that stem from his failing health, however briefly. Allos claims literature as a space somewhat removed from the demands and restrictions of daily life. Internalizing the work of Whitman and other canonical authors allows Allos to overcome the formal barriers erected against Filipino American immigrants and complete his project of self-authorization.

Bulosan’s depiction of Allos’s successful autodidactic journey descends from Whitman’s affirmation of literature as the source of uplift, in the process undercutting the critique Bulosan voices earlier in the novel of how America fails its racialized newcomers. However, Bulosan partially reconciles the competing strains of his novel by narrating Allos’s journey towards authorship as an incomplete project that must still work to dismantle racial and class-based barriers. Following Whitman’s jeremiad logic in *Democratic Vistas*, Bulosan envisions the future liberation of Allos, whose Allos’s commitment to reading Whitman will allow him to retrieve the egalitarian roots of democracy and see beyond the horrific acts of violence that stand in contradistinction to the country’s stated commitment to equal treatment. Whitman’s texts will lead Allos to forge an alternate vision of his new country, one removed from the oppression he and other Filipino American workers have encountered. Collecting knowledge from the American Renaissance tradition epitomized by Whitman serves as a way for Allos to repair the psychic damage done to him as a colonized subject and immigrant. By the end of the novel, Allos has taken up residence in an imagined America whose contours are defined by Whitman’s advocacy on behalf of all races, and Whitman becomes the spokesperson for a future country unmarred by inequality and racial division.

★

It is easy to see how Allos’s celebration of Whitman may reveal an unsettling form of political quietism: by concentrating on literature, Allos withdraws

from the conflicts between labor and capital, racist landowners and antiracist activists, that animated him before he became immobilized in his hospital bed. Bulosan advocates for greater intellectual freedom among Filipino American artists while suggesting that such freedoms can be secured without agitating for full legal equality, a goal that only remains achievable at some distant point. The revolution that takes place in Allos's consciousness represents his individualized learning that allows a partial reconciliation of the disparate strands of his experience by deferring to Whitman's authority as the prophetic poet of an idealized future.

Yet read another way, Allos's investment in literature marks his growing belief that the rhetoric of Whitmanian universalism can serve as the last and best defense for minority groups struggling to achieve legibility through legal channels. Allos makes the case that Whitman's democracy—which always aspires a universal span—cannot be classified as the exclusive domain of native-born Americans, and that his immigrant status has driven him to seek out new intellectual affiliations in his quest to forge useful ties to others living in exile. As Allos says to Macario, "It's much easier for us who have no roots to integrate ourselves in a universal ideal" (241). Bulosan invokes a critical universalism that retains its persuasive potency because it never loses its abstract appeal among those seeking a new sense of belonging once they have been uprooted from their home countries. After excavating Whitman's poetry from the American canon that once remained unavailable to him, Allos follows the tradition of his poetic predecessor by defining Whitmanian universalism as a stateless ideology that can travel across national borders and persist from one century to the next.

By invoking Whitman's unifying ideals, Allos envisions a literary community that discards racial and class-based divides in favor of pursuing the common good. This fraternal organization also exists apart from any nation and therefore poses a challenge to the central tenets of the Cold War centrism advanced by public intellectuals like Arthur Schlesinger, who emphasized individual sovereignty and national consensus.⁴³ If Cold War liberals like Schlesinger privilege the free individual and the democratic state as bulwarks against the totalitarian takeover of the world, then Bulosan highlights the internal flaws of this model by demonstrating how even democratic governments can fail to serve the needs of marginalized peoples. Outliers, including laborers and artists, emerge as a vexing problem when they cannot—or refuse to—be fully assimilated into the nation. Bulosan simultaneously affirms and critiques liberalism by depicting Allos's search for a circumscribed form of freedom that is always marked by material deprivation and the threat of intellectual impoverishment. Reading

American literature gives Allos the vocabulary to articulate potential solutions to the problem of racialized oppression, yet Allos remains keenly aware that his declining health prevents him from fully inhabiting the role of a recognized writer. Bulosan depicts the beginnings of a discrete Filipino American literary tradition only to suggest that achieving canonical status is impossible within the timeframe of an individual lifespan. Allos turns to writing in order to create a life removed from the demands to perform continuous labor, yet his literary career is marked by half-starts and defeats. Moving away from the neocolonial educational model pervasive in the Philippines, Allos finds Whitman's work useful as he dedicates himself to a utopian future that must always be deferred.

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Notes

- 1 Reprinted in *On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 126.
- 2 Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 11.
- 3 Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* no. 1 (January 1979), 144.
- 4 See John Valente's introduction to the 1949 edition of *Democratic Vistas* (New York: New York Liberal Arts Press, 1949), viii.
- 5 Ed Folsom, "Lucifer and Ethiopia: Whitman, Race, and Poetics before the Civil War and After," in *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55.
- 6 For a more detailed treatment of Bulosan's life and his connections to Whitman, see P.C. Morante, *Remembering Carlos Bulosan* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1984).
- 7 Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).
- 8 Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (New York: Verso, 1996), 273.
- 9 E. San Juan, Jr., *Carlos Bulosan: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), xiii.
- 10 See Bercovitch, 176-191.
- 11 William V. Spanos, "American Exceptionalism, the Jeremiad, and the Frontier: From the Puritans to the Neo-Con-Men," *Boundary 2* 34 no.1 (2007), 40.

- 12 Jay Grossman, *Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 141-142.
- 13 Angus Fletcher, *A New Theory for American Poetry: Democracy, the Environment, and the Future of Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 111.
- 14 Gary Wihl, "Politics," *A Companion to Walt Whitman*, ed. Donald D. Kummings (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 76.
- 15 Kenneth Cmiel, "Whitman the Democrat," in David S. Reynolds, ed., *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 206.
- 16 John Mac Kilgore, *Mania for Freedom : American Literatures of Enthusiasm From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 169.
- 17 Scott Henkel, "Leaves of Grassroots Politics: Whitman, Carlyle, and the Imagination of Democratic Vistas," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 27 (Winter 2010), 103.
- 18 Wai Chee Dimock, "Whitman, Syntax, and Political Theory," in *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 62-79.
- 19 "Whitman, Syntax, and Political Theory," 78.
- 20 "Whitman, Syntax, and Political Theory," 78.
- 21 Ed Folsom, "Culturing White Anxiety: Walt Whitman and American Indians," *Etudes Anglaises: Revue du Monde Anglophone* 45 (July 1992), 287-291. See also "Lucifer and Ethiopia," 46.
- 22 George Hutchinson, "Race and the Family Romance: Whitman's Civil War," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 20 (Winter/Spring 2003), 146.
- 23 Heidi Kathleen Kim, "From Language to Empire: Walt Whitman in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Popular Anglo-Saxonism." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 24 (Summer 2006), 1-19.
- 24 See Ed Folsom, ed., *Whitman East and West: New Contexts for Reading Walt Whitman* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), xv. More recently, Yoshinobu Hakutani has examined how the "humanistic and democratic spirit in Whitman" was influenced in part by complex cultural exchanges between the East and the West that shaped American transcendentalism; see *East-West Literary Imagination: Cultural Exchanges from Yeats to Morrison* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2017), 58. Along similar lines, Yunte Huang has explored what he terms the "transpacific imaginary" in the writings of nineteenth-century American writers as a "contact zone between competing geopolitical ambitions" that simultaneously negotiates the "gap between literature and history"; see *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2.
- 25 In the preface of the seminal anthology *Aiiieeee!*, the editors present Bulosan as a paradigmatic author whose autobiography "is the story of every Filipino who went to America"; see Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong, ed. *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975), 49. For a feminist perspective on Bulosan's work, see Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, "Carlos Bulosan's The Laughter of My Father: Adding Feminist and Class Perspectives to the 'Casebook of Resistance,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 32, no. 3 (2011), 64-91. See also the discussion of female

characters in *America Is in the Heart*, in Rachel Lee, *The Americas of Asian American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). For an example of how Marxist criticism has influenced Bulosan studies, see Susan Evangelista, *Carlos Bulosan and His Poetry: A Biography and an Anthology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1985. And for a comprehensive study of how Bulosan emerged out of 1930s Popular Front culture, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*.

26 Jeffrey A. Cabusao, ed., *Writer in Exile/Writer in Revolt: Critical Perspectives on Carlos Bulosan* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2016), 12.

27 Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), 44.

28 E. San Juan, Jr., *Carlos Bulosan: A Critical Appraisal*, 12-16.

29 Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 45.

30 Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Wounded Bodies and the Cold War: Freedom, Materialism, and Revolution in Asian American Literature, 1946-1957," in *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), 161-168.

31 Wolf D. Kindermann, "Asian-American Literary Perception of the United States: 1930-1940s," in *The Future of American Modernism: Ethnic Writing between the Wars* (Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1990), 243-272; Tim Libretti, "First and Third Worlds in U. S. Literature: Rethinking Carlos Bulosan," *MELUS* 23, no. 4 (1998), 135-155; Chase Smith, "The Wild Transpacific West and Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*," *English Language Notes* 52, no. 2 (2014), 113-129; Patricia P. Chu, "America in the Heart: Political Desire in Younghill Kang, Carlos Bulosan, Milton Murayama, and John Okada," *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 47-63.

32 Malini Johar Schueller, "Negotiations of Benevolent (Colonial) Tutelage in Carlos Bulosan," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 18, no. 3 (2016), 425-442.

33 Wesling's assertion that literature ultimately becomes a "vehicle for social justice" in the text (69) mirrors Peyton Joyce's claim that Bulosan "put great faith in the capacity of literature to promote social consciousness" (30); see Wesling, "Colonial Education and the Politics of Knowledge in Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*," *MELUS* 32, no. 2 (2007), 55-77; see also Peyton Joyce, "A Neatly Folded Hope: The Capacity of Revolutionary Affect in Carlos Bulosan's *The Cry and the Dedication*," *MELUS* 41, no. 1 (2016), 27-47.

34 Steven Yao, "The motions of the oceans: Circulation, displacement, expansion, and Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*," *Atlantic Studies* 15, no.2 (2018), 192.

35 Rajini Srikanth and Min Hyoung Song, eds., *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xviii.

36 Nan Z. Da, *Sino-U.S. Literatures and the Limits of Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9.

37 See *America Is in the Heart*, 245-246.

38 Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas: The Original Edition in Facsimile*, ed. Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), xviii. References to *Democratic Vistas* throughout this essay are

cited from this edition.

39 Quoted in Huang, 163. See Folsom, *Whitman East and West: New Contexts for Reading Walt Whitman*.

40 Josephine Park, *Apparitions of Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

41 *America Is in the Heart*, 189; *Democratic Vistas*, 33.

42 Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,” 141.

43 Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1949).