ration in the work of creation; hence, whatever he ordains must likewise be immutably good" (161). However, the body must not go unrestrained. Bliss Forbush explains that Hicks taught that the soul maintained "the desires and passions of the body within the bounds of reason and truth" by following the direction of the inner light. In this way, one remained free of sin in sexual matters.[43]

Although Whitman believed in the equality of the body and soul rather than the soul's authority over the body ("Song of Myself," *LG*, 32), he agreed with Hicks that sexual activity should not be without restrictions. Whitman asserted that the partners themselves should control their relationship. He pointed out that love does not require the supervision of "censors, monitors, guardians" (Traubel, 2:331). Aspiz explains that Whitman wanted both partners to experience passion, and that would occur, Whitman believed, if the couple practiced "virtuous marital continence": engaging in sexual intercourse only when the woman was most likely to be fertile. The woman decided whether or not to participate since, Whitman maintained, she controlled the sexual relationship in which she was engaged.[44] By determining their own sexual behavior from the truths revealed within each of them by the inner light, the male and female, like the partners in Section 5 of "I Sing the Body Electric," would be freed from the negative social attitudes and restrictions surrounding sexual activity, and they could unreservedly express their passion for each other.

The male protagonist of this passage of "Body Electric" sees his partner's lovingness as well as her serenity and independence, and he is aware that these characteristics are the result of her being "both passive and active." The female experiences the continuous process of passively waiting for and acting from the direction of the inner light, submitting to the will of God rather than to social forces that limit life. The male observes, too, that she "contains all qualities" and that she is "One with inexpressible completeness, sanity, beauty." She exhibits characteristics of nineteenth-century Quaker women who "set a pattern of wholeness for the women of their age" (Bacon, *Mothers*, 165).

Whitman's rendering of the passive and active woman appears again in "A Woman Waits for Me." Killingsworth correctly shows that Whitman's women are created from a variety of cultural influences, and in this poem they are molded from ideas Whitman found in eugenics and phrenology. Killingsworth points to these two influences as sources of the contradiction and confusion he sees in Whitman's women. He states that "when Whitman tries to unite the volatile sexual female and the great mother, the two figures collide rather than meld" (*Poetry of the Body*, 69-70; "Motherhood," 36-37). But an alternative view comes to light when the women in the poem are looked at from the perspective of another cultural influence, Quakerism. As the poem begins, the male protagonist points to the qualities he admires in women:

A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk,
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possess'd of themselves. (*LG*, 101-102)

Speaking of Whitman's women in general, and echoing language in the first two lines of this poem, Killingsworth contends, "Whitman's women seem *always* to desire sexual nourishment, which only the semen of the right man can provide—a notion that . . . underscores Whitman's (defensive) belief that female sexuality is incomplete, is lacking" (my italics). I agree with Killingsworth's assessment that the "twenty-ninth bather" exemplifies a woman whose sexuality is incomplete (*Poetry of the Body*, 78). However, I see her as spiritually and emotionally incomplete, as well. Whitman in his editorials (as discussed earlier) pointed out that poor physical and emotional health limited the lives of many married women and the lives of their husbands and that women's inability to experience joy weakened the relationships (*ISL*, 117-118). These sickly women appear in this poem as the women in whom "all were lacking." The male protagonist of "A Woman Waits for Me" labels them "impassive" and later rejects them as potential sexual partners since they seem unlikely to be able to actively participate in a sexual relationship.

In contrast, the woman who waits for the male protagonist is complete; "she contains all," he explains. These words bring to mind the

description of the woman in Section 5 of "I Sing the Body Electric": "The female contains all qualities"; "she is both passive and active"; and she is "One with inexpressible completeness." Whitman emphasizes the completeness of the passive and active woman in "A Woman Waits for Me," just as he does in "Body Electric," by focusing on both her physical and spiritual qualities. It does appear that the male is saying that this woman would be incomplete if she did not engage in sexual intercourse, or if she did not contain the semen "of the right man." However, the male's next statement, "Sex contains all, bodies, souls . . .," suggests otherwise: it is another illustration of Whitman's fusing of the spiritual and physical. I have shown in my discussion of Section 5 of "Body Electric" how the male sees his partner's completeness after she has acted like a Quaker minister and spiritual midwife, assisting him in his spiritual birth, an act Whitman portrays as sexual intercourse between the partners; in addition, she is capable of giving birth to children. The female in that passage is complete because she "contains all qualities"—spiritual and physical—and she is "both passive and active," in perpetual unity with God (*LG*, 96-97). I propose a similar reading of the female who "contains all" in "A Woman Waits for Me."

When Whitman says of some women in "A Woman Waits for Me" that "all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking," he means these women are incomplete because they have not yet experienced a union of the spiritual and physical within them, an entering of the soul into the body. Therefore, they lack a unity with God and with other women and men.[45] As I have shown above, completeness is a result of the continuous act of passively waiting for and acting from the direction of the inner light in all matters, including sexual activity, a relationship the male protagonist of these two "Children of Adam" poems appears to understand.

The male protagonist admires men and women who exhibit confidence in themselves as sexual beings. He states, "Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex, / Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers." Killingsworth asserts that Whitman's decision to employ the elliptical structure "hers" rather than repeat for the female "the deliciousness of her sex" suggests that Whitman felt "a slight hesitancy to allow that women have sexual instincts as fully developed as males" (*Poetry of the Body*, 69-70; "Motherhood," 37). But I see in the narrator's statement Whitman's and Hicks's views that sexual desire between a woman and man is good and normal and that both partners have the freedom to experience passion within the limits set by them. Moreover, the male's explanation that this woman "avows [the deliciousness of her sex]" suggests she is one of the women who "contains all," and that one of the things she contains is sex. He goes on to note that "Sex contains all," including "bodies, souls," and "all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth." The male's focus on the female in this passage implies the list is especially applicable to women, although he does not specify either sex.

The male will form a relationship with a woman who exhibits qualities similar to those of Quaker women with whom Whitman was familiar. These women are loving. Following the thinking of Hicks and Whitman, they see their sexuality in a positive light, "[w]ithout shame." The fact that they are "warm-blooded and sufficient for [the male]" points to their good health, an attribute that allows each to physically express love and receive the physical manifestation of the love of her partner. Like Whitman's mother and the traveling Quaker ministers, these women participate in outdoor physical activities that contribute to their good health. They "know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, . . . defend themselves," and "[t]hey are tann'd," and their skin is pliant and strong. The male protagonist asserts that the women he desires are independent, "ultimate in their own right," bringing to mind Whitman's observations of Costelloe, Van Velsor, and other Quaker women. And giving expression to Whitman's and Quakers' views of the equality of women and men, the male proclaims, "They are not one jot less than I am." Finally, the male notes their serenity and confidence: "they are calm, clear, well-possess'd of themselves," qualities that Whitman observed in Quaker women such as Mott. The woman who waits for the male in the poem "contains all." He and his partner can express their passion for each other without restraint, developing spiritual unity in addition to physical unity as did the male and female in Section 5 of "Body Electric."

Critics have reacted strongly to Whitman's portrayal of the sexual encounter in the following passage from "A Woman Waits for Me":

I draw you close to me, you women,
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but for others' sakes,
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States, I press with slow rude muscle,
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me. (*LG*, 102-103)

Killingsworth sees "a double standard" in Whitman's rendering of "an ideal sexual couple" here. Killingsworth explains that the male has claimed earlier in the poem that he sees the women who wait for him as

his equal, yet the male behaves aggressively as he tries to convince the women to engage in a sexual relationship with him ("Motherhood," 36-37). Erkkila sees a contradiction between Whitman's depiction of women as equal to men earlier in the poem and his portrayal here of a sexual encounter that resembles "the scene of domestic rape" (137-138). Edwin Haviland Miller calls this passage "a masturbatory rape dream" that focuses "upon power over a reluctant victim" (136-137). All three of these views assume the male forces his partner, causing her pain.

However, I see in this scene the love and mutuality of the partners rather than rape. The male declares to her, "I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you," revealing the emotional and physical manifestations of his love. His use of the word "undissuadable" emphasizes his desire to physically express his love for his partner and shows his wish that she not be one of the "impassive women" who would consistently reject his sexual advances. If the female rejects him consistently, the male protagonist would be inhibited from fully expressing to his partner his emotional and physical love for her. Although Whitman is speaking of the Quaker love for all people in this next statement, the concept he expresses can be applied to the passage above in light of his assertion that he deliberately fuses the physical and the spiritual throughout his poetry. He muses, "It is a singular feature in men, that to simply confess a love is not enough: there must be some concrete manifestation of it" (Traubel, 3:209).

Mutuality is evident as the male protagonist takes into account his partner's physical and emotional needs, assuring her, "I am for you, and you are for me," reflecting Whitman's and Hicks's views that both the female and the male can freely experience passion within the limits they set as they follow the direction of the inner light. Even though the male is "undissuadable," he exhibits restraint in the sexual encounter, focusing on his partner's needs and upon her responses to his actions. He limits his actions to those fulfilling her desire for him, assuring her, "I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you." Evidence from the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* suggests that Whitman saw "hurt" as one of the characteristics of sexual intercourse, not as an intention to inflict pain on one's partner. In Section 21 of the 1892 edition of "Song of Myself," the speaker says:

Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable passionate love. (*LGVar.*, 27-28)[16]

The lines above first appeared in the 1855 edition but with two additional lines that Whitman ultimately cut. In them, the speaker says to his lover:

Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight!
We hurt each other as the bridegroom and the bride hurt each other. (*LGVar.*, 28n)

Killingsworth states these lines seem to portray "a homosexual encounter tinged with sadomasochistic delight" (*Poetry of the Body*, 152). But I believe that Whitman is depicting the speaker's mutual and reciprocal "passionate love" with the earth in the metaphor of a sexual encounter between two people physically expressing the emotional commitment they have made to each other in marriage. The speaker's unity with the earth is like that of two people on their wedding night. And in that passion, both partners experience "hurt." The word "hurt" in "A Woman Waits for Me" has a similar connotation—Whitman's perception of the characteristic physical sensations of a woman and man engaged in sexual intercourse on their wedding night.

The male and his female partner in "A Woman Waits for Me" participate in a sexual relationship characterized by the mutual expression of love. Following the direction of the inner light frees women and men from social restrictions surrounding sexuality yet restrains them at the same time. If the male's partner were one of the "impassive women," he would not have been able to express physically his love for her, owing to the woman's poor health and her inability to act spontaneously from emotion. If he did act on his sexual desire for an "impassive" partner, then the sexual encounter Whitman depicts in "A Woman Waits for Me" could indeed be seen as the rape Erkkila has suggested. The male, however, wants as his partner a woman who "contains all," one who can unite with him in a sexual relationship of mutual passion and joy.

The women in "A Woman Waits for Me" and in Section 5 of "I Sing the Body Electric" are free to develop physically and spiritually, and they actively participate in life. They can do so because they experience the continuous process of passively waiting for and acting from the direction of God's truths as they are revealed by the inner light. These women submit to the will of God rather than to social forces that limit life. What appears to some critics as women's passive submission to social forces in these two poems really is an empowered rendering of women as active participants. Further study of the women in Whitman's poetry in the context of his spiritual views and of the Quakers with whom he was familiar will likely reveal other examples and add to the picture of Whitman's ideal woman as serene, independent, and loving—a woman who is complete.

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