those clusters of fragrance and the living color
called purple,
As I opened and closed my eyes with my breathing,
Every so often remembering where I was,
Remembering I had a face and that face had a nose —

This whiff of "The Puberty of Smell" points up the major distinction between Antler and his poetic predecessor, Whitman. Antler has a sharp sense of concentrated specificity that Whitman is often without. Antler gives us Lorca's bullets in the spirit that Whitman gives us: "What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls/ restrained by decorum,/Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips,/I mind them or the show or resonance of them — I come and depart." Antler's best poetry minds the living and buried speech; in that, I commend his work. Antler's other poetry shuts down the vibrating voices; in that, I understand his work. I hope people read his work and take it to heart before, well — before they realize the hard way that he has important things to say.

In some crazed "encounter" way, I want to touch the person that leaps out of this book, the person that is this insanely aware of horror and this able to deal with it. Last Words? *Buy the Book!*

— Paul Taylor
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Krieg, Joann P., ed. *Walt Whitman: Here and Now* (Prepared under the auspices of Hofstra University). Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985. viii, 248 pp. $29.95.

On 25 and 26 April 1980, more than twenty scholars met at Hempstead, Long Island, on the campus of Hofstra University, participating there in a conference held to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the first (1855) edition of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Five years later, most of the papers and addresses delivered at this colloquium were gathered and edited by Professor Krieg, who teaches in the American

Studies program at Hofstra. By the time this review appears in print, over seven years will have elapsed since the original presentation of the commentary in *Walt Whitman: Here and Now* (one essay, though — an updated, discursive bibliography — was produced for the volume in 1984). The publication delay, unaccounted for by the editor, is regrettable, for the book includes some provocative approaches to Whitman that merited prompt consideration in the public arena.

Here and Now consists of a brief preface by Krieg; a few words of greeting from Charles Feinberg, renowned bibliophile and generous friend of Whitman scholars; two essays, both by the prolific William White, that list and evaluate the principal Whitman publications of the years 1979 through 1984 — editions, collections of letters, enumerative bibliographies, biographies, analytical studies, anthologies of criticism; two addresses, one by Justin Kaplan, the other by Milton Hindus, on Whitman's biographers and critics; sixteen scholarly papers by various hands; and a detailed program of the conference. The book's contents are indexed, but not as thoroughly as they might have been.

Both addresses precede the sixteen papers. The one by Kaplan reviews the polemical course of Whitman biography, concluding that "after more than a century of biographical inquiry we still have only the most approximate notion of how and why Walter Whitman, printer, schoolteacher, editor, fiction writer, and building contractor, a shadowy figure in most accounts, untamed, untranslatable, projected his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world. This, of course, is the heart of his mystery." The Hindus address comes to the defense of the much-scorned "hot little prophets," those enthusiastic supporters — William Douglas O'Connor, Richard Maurice Bucke, John Burroughs, Horace Traubel, et al — who surrounded the poet toward the end of his life. Mindful of the damage done the poet by "the literary, professional fellows," Hindus argues that "it is easy for me to imagine Whitman without his critics, biographers, professors, but it is impossible to do so without his disciples."

The scholarly papers are arranged under four headings: "Here and Now: Contemporary Views," "Whitman's Poetics," "Whitman and America," and "Whitman and the World of Literature." In order to emphasize the collection's chief concern — the poet's modernity — I

shall save for last my comments on "contemporary views" and turn first to the section on poetics. Here Jon Rosenblatt examines (mainly in "As I Ebb'd") "the tropes of embodiment," i.e., the projections of poem-as-body and body-as-poem, finding that an equivalence between body and language is cental to Whitman's aesthetic. Gregory M. Haynes identifies two divergent strategies in the poems of *Leaves of Grass*, rhetorical immediacy and symbol-making, and then argues that "Patroling Barnegat" is possibly "Whitman's greatest achievement as an artificer of symbol." And in remarks that he eventually incorporated into *My Soul and I* (Beacon Press, 1985), David Cavitch explores in "This Compost" and "The Song of the Broad-Axe" connections between Whitman's troubled family relationships and his poetic persona.

"Whitman and America," like the preceding section, contains three articles. In the first, Jerome Loving maintains that in the 1855 *Leaves* Whitman's idealization of average men and women is in large measure attributable to his thorough knowledge of and disenchantment with the many American politicians of the early 1850's who failed to represent the common people — leaders such as Daniel Webster or Franklin Pierce, or the "swarms of dough faces, office vermin, kept editors, attaches of the ten thousands officers and their parties, aware of nothing further than the drip and spoil of politics — ignorant of principles, the true glory of man." In the second, Robert J. Scholnick asserts that in both the approach and the themes of *Democratic Vistas* (1871) Whitman very likely was influenced by a series of six essays published (1866-1868) in *Galaxy* magazine by Eugene Benson, a rather obscure American painter and "literary frondeur." The last essay, by William Burrison, insists that a careful reading of *Drum-Taps* reveals there was more than one side to Whitman's nature. He was not only a lover, a healer, a reconciler (as John Burroughs claimed); he was also a warrior, a man possessed of the martial spirit.

In addition to White's "Whitman in the Eighties: A Bibliographical Essay" (mentioned above), "Whitman and the World of Literature" features comparative studies by John Gatta, Jr., Dennis K. Renner, and Adrian Del Caro. Gatta contends that "Emerson's account of enthusiastic transport as a 'transparent eyeball' in chapter 1 of *Nature* has been dramatically reimagined in Whitman's equally famous record of sublime self-realization in section 5 of 'Song of Myself.' "

Wishing to heighten awareness of the tragic dimension of *Leaves of Grass*, Renner points out several parallels between Shakespeare's King Lear and the poet-hero of the *Leaves*. In the process, he discusses Whitman's rarely explicated poem "Faces." Like Constantine M. Stavrou, author of *Whitman and Nietzsche* (University of North Carolina Press, 1964), Del Carlo finds certain similarities between poet and philosopher. Unlike Stavrou, though, Del Caro stresses dissimilarities between the men, proclaiming that "no amount of scholarship on the topic of Whitman and Nietzsche will ever reconcile their differences."

The most challenging contributions in Joann Krieg's volume are to be found among the seven articles of "Here and Now: Contemporary Views." In these, James T. F. Tanner ponders what Whitman's reaction might be, from a moral standpoint, to several recent issues: the Watergate scandal, women's liberation, rights of minorities, the Vietnam war. Howard L. Parsons suggests that the poet "voiced ideas about man, society, and the universe that in many ways characterize the general perspective of the modern mind as affected by the ideas of science." In "Walt Whitman, Feminist," Harold Aspiz demonstrates that even though the poet's opinions about women may not seem truly revolutionary in the 1980's, they definitely accord with those of the feminists and marriage reformers of his era, the views of individuals such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Orson S. Fowler, Eliza W. Farnham.

Four of the scholars in "Contemporary Views" engage the issue of Whitman's homosexuality. Drawing upon his years of formal training at the Seattle Psychoanalytic Institute, Stephen A. Black recommends that we approach *Calamus* through psychoanalysis, bringing to bear on this cluster of poems (with its espousal of masculine comradeship) the clinical attitude of "empathic neutrality." M. J. Killingsworth tries to show that Whitman, because he did not wish to be regarded either as prude or as libertine, cultivated the image of what may be termed "poet of sexual romanticism." Understanding this image, Killingsworth reveals, illuminates the well-known correspondence between the American poet and his English admirer, John Addington Symonds, during which Whitman replied disingenuously to the Englishman's questions about the exact meaning of the broth-

erhood theme in *Calamus*. Having already argued that the *Calamus* cycle represents Whitman's major statement as a gay poet (see *American Studies*, Fall, 1978, pp. 5-22), Joseph Cady now turns his attention to the *Drum-Taps* poems, viewing them, or at least many of them, as important documents of nineteenth-century male homosexual literature. It is primarily by means of "the motif of 'soldier-comradeship' and the elegy convention," says Cady, that Whitman makes in *Drum-Taps* a homosexual affirmation. Like Cady, Alan Helms believes that Whitman was fundamentally a homosexual who wrote poetry in a homophobic society. However, fear of exposure and a strong desire for widespread public acceptance, Helms declares, forced Whitman to conceal his true nature and to employ in his writing "an elaborate system of disguises—hints, clues, and indirections."

Since the appearance of "Whitman's 'Song of Myself': Homosexual Dream and Vision" (*Partisan Review*, 1975) and *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* (University of Texas Press, 1979), both by Robert K. Martin, the gay approach to Whitman has been employed with some regularity. The *Here and Now* articles by Cady and Helms are notable examples of this recent development. To the extent that the gay approach investigates a slighted aspect of the poet and simultaneously promotes the critical virtues of honesty and candor, it should be welcomed. To the extent that it treats of the poet monomaniacally, characterizing his work as exclusively homosexual in nature and thus neglecting its other dimensions — the aesthetic, the linguistic, the political, the sociological, the religious or philosophical — it should be viewed negatively, for its effect will be to diminish the size and significance of Whitman's achievement. These observations notwithstanding, the Cady and Helms essays, along with those by Black, Killingsworth, and Aspiz, may well inspire close re-examinations of or lively debates over Whitman's work. Therefore, in spite of the tardiness of its publication, *Walt Whitman: Here and Now* is an important and stimulating compilation, one that most academic and many of the larger public libraries ought to acquire.

— Donald D. Kummings
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